

“I Could See Colors Again”: How Women End Emotional Abuse by Accessing Agency

by

Fiona Ivy Eisenberg

A Dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York
2011

COPYRIGHT 2011

Fiona Ivy Eisenberg

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Social Welfare in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Professor Elizabeth Danto

Date

Chair of Examining Committee

Professor Michael Fabricant

Date

Executive Officer

Professor Martha Bragin

Professor Darrell P. Wheeler
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Abstract

“I Could See Colors Again”: How Women End Emotional Abuse by Accessing Agency

by

Fiona Ivy Eisenberg

Adviser: Elizabeth Danto, Ph.D.

The stages of terminating an abusive relationship have been widely researched. In contrast, the research on women who have terminated emotionally abusive relationships is limited. Even fewer studies examine two other dimensions: the experiences of emotionally abused women who are not poor and who do decide to end abusive relationships. This qualitative study fills this gap by identifying which specific psychological and social factors motivate socially non-marginalized women to terminate emotionally abusive relationships.

The literature review includes the historical and legislative background regarding women and abuse, and relevant social theories (feminist, intersectionality, social role, and investment) and psychodynamic theories (attachment, object relations and relational-cultural). The study incorporates the tenets of qualitative inquiry within a grounded theory approach, which allowed for themes to emerge based on the data. The criteria for participation in the study were self-identification by the participant as a heterosexual woman who had experienced emotional abuse by an intimate partner within a relationship that lasted a minimum of two years, completion of a college degree, minimum income of \$40,000, at least six months post-abusive relationship, and ability to pay for rent without the assistance of public funding or the ability to own a home without the assistance of public funding, at least one family member and one friend who can be relied upon for emotional support.

The most significant finding was that the subjects actualized social and psychological agency that had been suppressed by and during the emotionally abusive relationship. The study indicates that access to resources does not lead to the ability to secure services, nor do resources alone enable women to extricate themselves from emotionally abusive relationships. A sense of agency, strong support system, the desire for a professional life and social role pressure emerged as the psychological and social factors that constructed the women's internal and external struggles to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. When combined, these factors formed the core category "Suppression of social and psychological agency vs. actualization of social and psychological agency." This study has widespread implications for clinical practice, social work education, legislation, and future research.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Doctors Elizabeth Danto, Darrell P. Wheeler and Martha Bragin for their time and support. I would especially like to thank Elizabeth, my Chair, who has continuously supported me with her commitment, expertise, energy and leadership. Her guidance and faith in my abilities have significantly contributed to my training and education. Elizabeth gave her time generously and responded to my questions and concerns with a combination of wisdom, extensive knowledge of social work and a sense of humor.

I would like to thank Dr. Bruce Grellong and Judith Levitan, LCSW for their support of my research, and my fellow Doctoral colleagues, Deirdre Downes, Gary DeFraia, Larry Ianotti and Andrew Schmidt whose camaraderie and humor were an integral part of my success, and Sandrine Petit for her loving childcare and help with my computer malfunctions.

I am grateful to my family and friends for their ongoing support, especially my mother, Ethel Eisenberg, Beth and Peter Doyle and Joan Klein. I would like to thank my son Myles, who championed me through this entire journey with his curiosity, spirit, empathy and joy for life.

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction	1
II.	Research Question	3
	Key Terms	3
	Emotional and Psychological Abuse	3
	Intimate Partner Abuse	4
	Intimate Partnership or Relationship	5
	Agency	5
	Role Model	5
	Social Resources	5
	Social Status	6
	Social Stigma	6
	Socially Non-Marginalized	6
III.	Purpose of the Study	7
IV.	Scope and Nature of the Study	10
	Emotional/Psychological Abuse	10
	Intimate Partner Abuse	15
	Socially Non-Marginalized Women	16
	Socially Marginalized Women	18
V.	Concepts	20
	The Complexities of Terminating an Abusive Relationship	20
	The Stages of Terminating an Abusive Relationship	22
	Higher Education, Access to Resources and the Termination of an Abusive Relationship	23
VI.	Significance to Social Work	26
	Education	27
	Practice	28
	Program Planning	28
VII.	Literature Review	30
	Introduction	30
	Historiography of the Literature on Intimate Partner Abuse	31
	Historiography of the Literature on Emotional and Psychological Abuse	36
	Legislation	38
	Theoretical Perspectives that Inform Our Understanding of Intimate Partner Abuse	39
	Social Theories	39

	Feminist Theory	39
	Social Role Theory	42
	Investment Theory	44
	Psychodynamic Theories	47
	Object Relations Theory	47
	Attachment Theory	50
	Relational-Cultural Theory	55
	Postmodern Theories	56
	Intersectionality Theory	58
	Theories of Agency	59
	Theories of Narrative	65
	Reported Findings	67
	Focus on Minority and Low Income Populations	67
	The Termination of Abusive Relationships	69
	Emotional/Psychological Abuse	76
	Conclusion and Evaluation of the Literature	82
	Termination of an Abusive Relationship	83
	Emotional/Psychological Abuse	84
	Methodologies	85
	Gaps in the Literature and Rationale for the Proposed Study	87
VIII.	Research Methodology	88
	Qualitative Inquiry	88
	Grounded Theory	90
	Research Design	92
	Interview	92
	Sampling	96
	IRB Concerns/Human Subjects	97
	Limitations	100
IX.	Results of the Research	102
	Introduction	102
	Coding Process	102
	Duration of Emotionally Abusive Relationship before Termination	105
	First Awareness of Emotional Abuse in Relationship	105
	Open Acknowledgement of Emotional Abuse	106
	Coping Mechanisms That Supported Termination	106
	Impact of Other's Reactions	107
	Personal and Parental Expectations of Self	107
	Action Taken to Formalize Termination of Relationship	108
	Psychological Factors that Promoted Termination	109

	Social Factors that Promoted Termination	109
	Obstacle to Terminating Relationship	110
	Psychological Factors	111
	Sense of Agency	111
	Sense of Self-Awareness	111
	Identification with Early Role Models	111
	Conflict in Family of Origin	111
	History of Emotionally Abusive Relationships	112
	Social Factors	113
	Formal Education and Employment Opportunities	113
	Social Status	113
	Other's View of Social Status	113
	Perception of Self as an Adult	113
	Support of Family and Friends	113
	Conclusion of Research Results	125
X.	Findings from the Research	126
	The Model	127
	Description of the Model	129
	Paired Theories and Coded Findings	130
	Paired Theories and Coded Findings by Code	132
	Transcript Analysis of the Psychological Factors Associated with Terminating an Emotionally Abusive Relationship	134
	Fear of Being Alone	134
	Idealization of an Emotionally Abusive Father	137
	View of Mother as Narcissistic	141
	Turning to Family of Origin for Support	144
	Responsibility to Make the Relationship Work	147
	Sought Therapy in Effort to Repair Relationship	151
	Thoughtful Process before Termination	153
	Transcript Analysis of the Social Factors Associated with Terminating an Emotionally Abusive Relationship	162
	Social Role Pressure	162
	Ambivalence about Motherhood	166
	Unclear about Parent's Role Expectations	168
	Impact on Role Modeling of Children	170
	Sense of Agency	172
	Educational and Professional Pursuits	176
	Sought Legal Counseling when Terminating the Relationship	178
	Sense of Optimism about the Future	180
XI.	Concluding Discussion of the Study and New Information	182
	What Remains Unnamed Does Not Exist - The Term Emotional Abuse Not Used	182
	Social Support as a Key to Ending Emotional Abuse	186

The Capacity to Disentangle from Financial and Sexual Manipulation	188
Women Find that Emotional and Social Freedom Comes with Social Blame	194
Thriving with Peace Post -Relationship Trumps Fear of Being Alone	198
A Limitation of the Current Study	202
Implications of the Study for the Social Work Profession	202
a) Clinical	202
b) Educational	203
c) Social	205
d) Legislative	206
Future Research	207
Appendices	209
Appendix A: Informed Consent Form	209
Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire and The Interview Guide	214
Appendix C: Excerpt from Open Coding Guide	216
Appendix D: Sample Transcript	222
References	230

I. Introduction

Some women terminate abusive intimate relationships. Many others remain in the relationship, tolerating ongoing emotional and physical mistreatment. The complexities behind the question of why some women stay in abusive relationships and others end them remains obscure. Current research has focused on why women stay with abusive men and continue to live with their abusers for many years or until one partner dies (Ferraro, 1997). The stages of terminating an abusive relationship have been discussed in many previous studies (Ladenburger, 1998; Fiore-Lerner, 2000; Burke, 2001 and Crane and Constantino, 2003). In contrast, the research on women who have terminated emotionally abusive relationships is limited (Lachkar, 1998).

Even fewer studies examine two other dimensions: the experiences of emotionally abused women who are not poor and who do decide to end abusive relationships. (Weitzman, 2000). This qualitative study will begin to fill this gap. In this study, I developed the research question and principle concepts, including the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship for women with access to resources and higher education and the complexities and stages of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship.

The literature review includes the historical and legislative background regarding women and abuse, and relevant theoretical perspectives. These theories will inform the study of the problem and will provide different lenses for examining the psychological and social factors associated with ending an emotionally abusive relationship. Social theories include feminist theory, intersectionality theory, social role theory, and

investment theory. Psychodynamic theories include attachment theory, object relations theory and relational-cultural theory.

Reported findings from previous studies are analyzed, and an evaluation of the trends and gaps in the available literature are presented. The study incorporates the tenets of qualitative inquiry within a grounded theory approach, which is appropriate when there no theory has been specifically aligned (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Themes were allowed to emerge based on the collected data, and though the focus of the study is on emotional abuse, incidents of physical abuse may be disclosed and have been noted. The additional data may be used for comparative purposes. Originally, the sample indicated thirty women ,however, the themes were saturated after twenty-two interviews. The participants were sourced through a combination of mental health agencies, matrimonial law firms, physicians' offices, and snowball sampling.

II. Research Question

Which psychological and social factors motivate socially non-marginalized women to terminate emotionally abusive relationships? This question had two components.

- 1) Do the psychological factors of a sense of agency, self-awareness and identification with early role models influence the decision to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship?
- 2) Do the social factors social status and employment opportunities influence the decision to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship?

Key Terms

The definition of study terms cover both psychological and social factors. Psychological factors include early and adult attachment styles as they relate to a women's sense of security or insecurity in intimate relationships. Social factors are defined as social role expectations, intimate relationship history, history of partner abuse, support networks, economic circumstances, help-seeking behaviors, parenting issues, and concerns over the loss of social status and stigma.

Emotional Abuse

For the purposes of the study, the terms emotional and psychological abuse will be used interchangeably, as reflected in the current literature. The term emotional abuse is defined as those behaviors in which one partner inflicts emotional or social pain, such as humiliation and intimidation (Shepard & Campbell, 1992; Tolman, 1989). According to the National Coalition against Domestic Violence, psychological abuse is

defined as “the systematic perpetration of malicious and explicit nonphysical acts against an intimate partner which can include threatening the physical health of the victim and the victim’s loved ones, controlling the victim’s freedom and effectively acting to destabilize or isolate the victim.” The effects of emotional abuse include deteriorated self-esteem, depression, anxiety, negative job performance and parenting issues (Chang, 1996).

Emotional abuse occurs without concurrent physical abuse or in conjunction with physical abuse, and is presumed to be understudied due to its insidious nature which is often not recognized by victims as constituting abuse (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005). Emotional abuse can be as damaging as physical abuse, although it may lack visible scars. Emotional abuse consists of a continuous pattern of domination, verbal attacks, silent and emotional withdrawal, oppression, and condescension, which systematically erodes the victims sense of self-worth and agency (Chang, 1996). “The very nature of emotional abuse has the potential to undermine a women’s sense of self in all areas of her life” (Marshall, 1996, p.380).

Intimate Partner Abuse

The term intimate partner abuse is defined as a continuum of negative behaviors including verbal and emotional attacks, economic manipulation, physical assaults and sexual withholding and/or assaults that are inflicted upon an individual’s intimate partner. The abusive behaviors are detrimental to the physical and mental health of the victim (O’Leary & Maiuro, 2001).

Intimate Partnership or Relationship

For the purposes of the this study, I am only including intimate partnerships or relationships that refer to the legally binding marriage between two heterosexual adults for a minimum of two years, the common law marriage of two heterosexual adults, a relationship without a legally binding contract between two heterosexual adults who have cohabitated for a minimum of two years or a dating relationship between two heterosexual adults that has existed for a minimum of two years.

Agency

The term agency refers to the capacity for an individual's autonomous action in the face of often overwhelmingly complicated social constructions (McNay, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the term agency was used to describe the essence of a women's sense of self-empowerment over her life and the ability to maintain control over her choices.

Role Model

The term role model refers to the caregivers for whom the study participants learned and modeled, either consciously or subconsciously, their own social roles within intimate relationships.

Social Resources

The term social resources is based upon education and financial levels. The minimum educational level for a study participant is a two year associates degree and the minimum financial level is a salary of \$40,000. The access to these social resources indicates that the participants are not eligible for public assistance or Medicaid benefits.

Social resources also includes the availability of at least one family member and one friend for emotional support.

Social Status

The term social status refers to the individual's perceived societal position in relation to others, regarding power, money and privilege.

Social Stigma

The term social stigma is defined as social disapproval of an individual's circumstances as it relates to the prevailing cultural expectations and norms.

Socially Non-Marginalized

Social marginalization refers to the relegation of individuals to a lower social standing, forcing them to feel isolated and unimportant (Mullaly, 2007).

For the purpose of this study, the subjects are referred to as non-marginalized. The women do not access any means tested public programs including public assistance, housing assistance, or Medicaid insurance, have completed a minimum of two years of college, have a minimum income of \$40,000 and have at least one family member and one friend as social support systems.

III. Purpose of the Study

The goal of the study is to gain knowledge about what psychological and social factors motivate socially non-marginalized women to terminate emotionally abusive relationships. Women who do not use public means tested social programs, such as domestic violence shelters or community mental health counseling were studied. The goal of the study seeks to build on the base of intimate partner abuse research while exploring a population that has been impacted by emotional abuse, yet understudied.

The prevalence of emotional abuse among women with higher education, resources and support systems, is a social problem that has been largely overlooked in the explore literature. The available data on the extent of partner abuse stems primarily from police reports and emergency room records. Economically and socially disenfranchised women are over represented in these documents. Moreover, only the outcomes of physical abuse are reported. Little is known or documented about college educated women with social resources who experience abuse (Swift, 1997). This population of abused middle and upper-middle class women is hidden (Weitzman, 2000).

The lack of research on emotional abuse may also be linked with the belief that emotional abuse always precedes physical abuse. Some researchers have embraced the reality that emotional abuse exists independently of physical abuse (Andersen, Boulette & Schwartz, 1991;Herman, 1997; Kirkwood, 1993, NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Emotional abuse does not always indicate the occurrence of physical abuse, however, the presence of physical abuse is almost always accompanied by emotional

abuse; of (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005). Life-threatening violence and physical aggression receive public attention because of their potential immediate consequences; however, the potential for long-term health and mental health consequences of emotional abuse cannot be ignored (Hornung, McCullough & Sugimoto, 1981).

These women may be under-represented in the social work and psychology literature because of their reluctance to seek help (Weitzman, 2000). The myth that domestic violence and abuse affects only the disenfranchised is perpetuated by the larger society and is often accepted by the victims (Weitzman, 2000). According to Lachkar (2000, p. 90), on the surface, it is easy to say, “They have it all”, which belittles and minimizes the experience of emotional abuse for women with resources. Judgments based on their social status are discriminatory. The purpose of this study is to unearth the psychological and social factors that impact a woman who has social resources’ decision to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. The knowledge gained through this study has the potential to provide improved methods in social work education regarding the signs, symptoms and treatment of emotional abuse, broader outreach of service provision and enhanced practice methods for social workers in the field.

Further research would lead to an increase in society’s awareness of the problem, validate psychological abuse as a social ill and educate women about the signs of emotional abuse. Approaches to service provision would be broadened, therefore reaching a larger group of women in need. Legislatively, emotional abuse should be added to the list of domestic abuse that is recognized by the Violence against Women Act

(Title IV Sec. 4001-40703, H.R. 3355, 3402, 1994, 2005), and provide the same legal recourses as other forms of abuse.

Partner abuse has been exposed in the past thirty years as a valid social problem. Prevention, education and treatment programs have increased, heightening the awareness for society about the issues and complexities involved in abusive relationships. The next phase requires the examination of the effects of emotional abuse on women of all educational and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Abused women have increased access to information; however, there remain psychosocial barriers that continue to prevent abused women from terminating an abusive relationship. Social and psychodynamic theories provide insight into the complex issues regarding the termination of an abusive relationship for women viewed as non-marginalized by society.

IV. Scope and Nature of the Study

The population studied are formally educated women who have access to social resources and who have ended emotionally abusive relationships. Psychological factors (early attachment formations, the internalization of role models' behavior) and social factors (social role expectations and issues regarding social status and stigma) were explored in an effort to understand why some women are able to terminate these relationships and others were not.

This is a qualitative inquiry using a grounded theory approach. Qualitative research matches the scope of the study because it exposes and covers specific issues regarding emotional abuse that have not been previously researched. Qualitative inquiry also encourages in-depth exploration of “collusion” and “denial” regarding socially non-marginalized women. Visibility and invisibility within the context of intimate partner abuse and what is viewed by society as privileged, will be unearthed through qualitative inquiry. The emerging themes will, hopefully provide a window into the hidden issues embedded within the termination of emotionally abusive relationships for this study population.

The scope of the study will be delineated by four areas; emotional abuse, intimate partner abuse, socially non-marginalized women and socially marginalized women.

Emotional Abuse

Intimate partner abuse exists on a continuum, including verbal, emotional, economic, sexual and physical assaults, each detrimental to the physical and mental health of the victim (O’Leary & Mauro, 2001). The extent of partner abuse in the United States is well documented with 3.5 million violent crimes committed against family

members and 1.7 million of those crimes committed by a spouse (United States Justice Bureau of Statistics, 2006). Although psychological abuse is listed on the continuum of abuse, it remains a stepchild in the field of inquiry. There are no available statistics reflecting the lack of recognition of emotional abuse as equally, if not more, devastating to the victims, as physical abuse.

The negative effects of emotional abuse for victims and their children are aligned with those of physical abuse. Victims are more likely to experience poor physical health, mental impairment, difficulty concentrating, poor work performance, a higher likelihood of substance use and an increase in suicidal ideation or attempts. Children who are exposed to emotional abuse are more likely to be involved as victims of abuse as adults, experience behavior problems, and develop symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (National Coalition against Domestic Violence, 2009).

Existing research suggests that psychological abuse may be the key toxic ingredient in all forms of abuse and aggression (Geffner & Rossman, 1998), rendering it an area of inquiry that could provide further knowledge about women who are either purely emotionally abused or the victims of concurrent sexual and physical abuse.

The potentially devastating impact of a pattern of continuous and insidious psychological abuse by an intimate partner is an area of inquiry that requires further attention. Although both scholarly literature and the media give well-deserved attention to the harms of physical abuse, they neglect to address the psychological damage to women and the social ramifications of emotional abuse.

Researchers have shed light on the devastating impact of psychological abuse as an individual form of abuse that requires further attention (Adams, 1988; Marshall, 1994;

Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Marshall, 1993; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993; Vitanza, Vogel, & Marshall, 1995; Geffner & Rossman, 1998). Emotional abuse is not the beginning level of abuse as defined by the Conflict Tactics Scale, the most recognized scale for studies on physical abuse (Straus, 1979), but is a dangerous and debilitating issue in its own right (Chang, 1996).

Emotional abuse has been inextricably linked to physical abuse, and although it exists within the parameters of physical abuse, it merits its own body of research (Lachkar, 2000).

The Journal of Emotional Abuse, introduced in 1998, reflects the recent acknowledgement of emotional abuse as a legitimate area of inquiry and provided a voice for this emerging field of concern (Geffner & Rossman, 1998). Emotional abuse has been a clinically accepted concept for many years, most specifically in the assessment process of abused and neglected children, (Geffner & Rossman, 1998). Nevertheless, there is no diagnostic category for emotional abuse in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV-TR as there are for relational problems associated with sexual and physical abuse (Sable, 1998).

Acts of psychological abuse are more subjective due to the insidiousness and ambiguity of assaults, while acts of physical abuse can be defined objectively due to the nature of observable injuries (Moffitt, et al., 1997). Pure emotional abuse occurs without concurrent physical abuse (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005). When emotional abuse is considered at all, it is often seen as an adjunct to physical abuse and not a distinct phenomenon (Sable, 1998).

The terms used to describe emotional abuse, such as psychological abuse, emotional blackmail (Follingstad, et al., 1990; & Forward & Frazier, 1997), psychological maltreatment (Tolman, 1989), psychological aggression (Murphy & O'Leary, 1989; O'Leary, Malone & Tyree, 1994; Stets, 1991), and coercion (Tedeshci & Felson, 1994), indicate there is a definitional dilemma among scholars. The lack of consensus regarding the definition of emotional abuse has made it difficult to compare research findings (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005).

Emotional abuse is viewed by some researchers to be the worst kind of abuse, because it is perpetrated by the victim's most trusted partner and used to engender shame and erode self worth. At its core, emotional abuse is a continuous pattern of non-physical degradation that aims to maintain power and control over an individual by eroding their self-worth (Geffner & Rossman, 1998; Lachkar, 2000; Burks, 2006). Women who experience emotional abuse have their sense of certainty about themselves, their partners and their perceptions and beliefs, diminished (Vitanza, Vogel & Marshall, 1995).

Condescending remarks continue to do damage long after the incident occurred, while bruises and broken bones heal. Emotional abuse is ongoing and omnipresent, causing long-term harm (Lachkar, 2000). Women who have experienced emotional abuse consistently report that this form of abuse is more damaging to them than physical abuse (Kirkwood, 1993; Orava, McLeod & Sharpe, 1996). Patterns of partner abuse were identified by Johnson & Ferraro (2000), who noted that the controlling behaviors of emotional abuse can gradually erode and alter women's views of themselves.

The perpetrator engages in overt or subtle acts of aggression without the use of physical violence to degrade, humiliate and demean their partner in an effort to gain or

regain control over the relationship (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005). According to Loring (1994), emotional abuse consists of two distinct types: overt and covert. Overt abuse is defined as openly demeaning one's partner through the use of criticisms, put-downs and insults, whereas covert abuse is more subtly applied. Other examples of emotional abuse are forms of humiliation, threats of harm to the children and stalking (Ali, 2007). In Lachkar's study (2000), emotional abuse was defined as the attempt of one partner to destroy the will, needs, perceptions and desires of the other through an ongoing conscious or unconscious process.

Controlling, terrorizing and demeaning emotionally abusive behaviors were categorized by Moffit, et al. (1997). These include, damage to household items, disposal of an important item, anger towards partner regarding meal preparation, insult or shaming of partner in front of others, locking partner out of the house, keeping partner from work or study, restricting partner from seeing family and friends, threatening to leave, restricting partner's use of phone or car, treating partner as stupid, ridiculing partner, insulting partner's appearance, and throwing or smashing something during a disagreement.

Name-calling, continuous criticism, undermining insults, withholding affection, false accusations and possessiveness are other features of emotional abuse. The possible manifestations of such abuse extend from momentary withdrawal or disinterest to angry comments and severe psychological torture (Sable, 1998).

Intimate Partner Abuse

Intimate partner abuse is a social problem that crosscuts socioeconomic strata, ethnicities and sexual orientation and includes verbal, psychological, economic, sexual and physical dimensions (National Coalition against Domestic Violence, 2009).

According to the Justice Bureau of Statistics (2006), 3.5 million violent crimes were committed against family members and 1.7 million of those crimes were committed by a spouse. Of these, 5,200 resulted in the death of the victim and in 2003, 30% of all female murder victims were slain by their husbands or boyfriends (Uniform Crime Reports, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2003).

The effects of intimate partner abuse reverberate throughout our society, and impact the victims, their children and their families. The consequences of partner abuse have been acknowledged by mental health professionals and are included as a focus of clinical attention in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV, American Psychiatric Association, 1994). The clinical categories for abuse include physical abuse of a child or adult, and sexual abuse of a child or adult. Adult physical abuse is defined either as spouse beating or as the abuse of an elderly parent. Diagnostic criteria for emotional abuse is not mentioned.

In 2003, the estimated cost of medical care, mental health services and lost work productivity due to partner abuse was \$8.3 billion (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006). Nursing studies, such as Crane and Constantino (2003), have demonstrated that physical and psychological abuse are associated with arthritis, chronic pain, migraines, speech disorders, sexually transmitted infections, ulcers, pelvic pain and intestinal issues.

Between 3.3 and 10 million children witness domestic violence each year (U.S. Justice Bureau Statistics, 2006) and are more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs, engage in sex work and run away from home. These children have increased levels of anxiety, low self-esteem and a higher propensity to engage in abusive relationships as adults (Levendosky, Graham-Bermann & Humphreys, 2001). Abusive situations present risks for children, both physically and emotionally, which can foster feelings of victimization and entrapment (Levendosky, Graham-Bermann & Humphreys, 2001). Partner violence significantly impacts the morbidity, mortality, injuries, infectious diseases and emotional problems of victims (Hamberger, Ambuel & Guse, 2007).

Socially Non-Marginalized Women

The term marginalization is used to refer to those individuals on the fringe of society who have been affected by unfortunate circumstances. Women who are perceived by society as non-marginalized, have higher education, employment opportunities and social support systems, including family and friends. Some authors suggest that despite higher educational levels and financial stability, women with resources remain in abusive relationships in proportion to their poor counterparts (Fugate, et al., 2005).

Without reliable data, the actual incidence of partner abuse and the termination of abusive relationships among educated women with resources remains obscure. Available statistics indicate that low levels of income are aligned with higher levels of domestic violence; however, certain factors are unaccounted for that might explain this gap. Help-seeking individuals may not reflect the population of intimate partner abuse victims as a whole (Waldrop & Resick, 2004). The low-income victim may appear on statistical reports when entering a domestic violence shelter or applying for public assistance

benefits, while a victim in a higher socioeconomic strata will be unlikely to disclose her abuse to a public agency (Aardvarc, 2009).

The educated women with resources may take private action, such as fleeing to family/friends or calling a moving company, however, her situation is not documented on any official record, therefore, skewing the abuse statistics to reflect poor women as overwhelmingly the victims of abuse (Aardvarc, 2009). While it is necessary to rely on the existing data about the demographics of partner abuse, it is also necessary to be aware of what the statistics do not take into consideration.

According to Kalmuss and Strauss (1990), employed women are less dependent on their husbands and have the resources to leave, while unemployed women lack the resources to terminate an abusive relationship. It is widely believed that educated women with either successful careers or social resources have the ability to extricate themselves from abusive relationships (Weitzman, 2000).

Research seeking knowledge about the impact of economic stability on partner abuse has also examined relationships in which the women's economic resources are greater than the male partner (MacMillan & Gartner, 1999). Evidence favoring a gender analysis of income and partner abuse found that women who had a higher occupational status or earned more money than their husband, precipitated escalating forms of abuse (McCloskey, 1996).

The available studies regarding women's socioeconomic status in relation to the increased or decreased risk of partner abuse is contradictory. It is currently unknown what impact household income or employment status has on a women's risk of being abused by her partner or terminating the relationship. Cultural definitions of "need" and

“oppression” are not inclusive of women who are socially viewed as non-marginalized, and a lack of resources cannot always be measured in economic terms (Weitzman, 2000).

Socially Marginalized Women

The term marginalization is used in the study to refer to women who lack both social, (higher education, family/friend support systems) and economic resources (employment opportunities, savings). The concept of marginalization is important to the study because it is a socially constructed idea that is used as a barometer of an individual’s entitlement to public social services. The term implies that some women are “in need” of society’s help, while others, who are viewed as non-marginalized, are not.

The literature pertaining to poverty defines the term marginalization as a process of being pushed to the margins of society in relation to economic status or position. Marginalization is largely used to denote both social exclusion and poverty (The Burnel Report, 1989). Women who access means tested public programs, such as public assistance, Medicaid, food stamps, and public housing are viewed by society as marginalized or disenfranchised.

The available literature indicates that poor women and women of color are the representative victims of domestic violence. Research in the field of partner abuse is abundant; however, the sample populations are either poor women, women of color or ethnic minorities (Lockhart, 1987). There is limited research on educated women with resources who are also victims of domestic violence.

Research about socioeconomic status in relation to partner abuse, focuses on women who lack resources, and either remain with an abuser for economic reasons or

seek financial and program assistance from the public sector. One perspective is that diminished resources lead to stress and conflict that can culminate in abuse between partners. Included in this view, is the notion that partner abuse would escalate when economic resources are scarce and lessen if either one or both partners were employed (MacMillan & Gartner, 1999).

A U.S. Justice Department survey of hospital emergency rooms found that black women were disproportionately represented among women treated for domestic abuse and that domestic violence resources were utilized more frequently by disenfranchised populations (Swift, 1997). Minority and lower socioeconomic patients have less consistency with a single health care provider and are more apt to receive care in an emergency setting (Hamberger, Ambuel & Guse, 2007).

The domestic violence literature is based predominantly on studies about women of color and lower socioeconomic status rather than a more inclusive sample of women in our society. Many have argued that in racial minority communities, neighbors live closer together, police involvement is not viewed as shameful and that poverty-related factors may increase the likelihood that the police will be called for a domestic disturbance (McCloskey, Sitaker, Grigsby & Malloy, 2006).

V. Concepts

The Complexities of Terminating an Abusive Relationship

Women's decisions to leave or remain with abusive partners each present a set of risks; untangling the dynamics involved is a complex matter that requires further study (Choice & Lamke, 1997). Leaving an abusive relationship may compromise economic stability, incite retaliation from the abuser and cause disruption for any children in the home (Stewart, 1987). On the other hand, remaining may cause long-term emotional and physical complications for both victims and children.

Women often opt not to report physically abusive incidents to the police for fear of retribution by their partner (Bornstein, 2006). Police involvement brings public scrutiny for both the abuser and the victim, exposing private matters, affecting employment and evoking shame. The order of protection has limitations of physically protecting women from their abusers and women have been murdered by their partners even with an order of protection (Anderson, 2003).

Research has repeatedly attempted to delineate the factors that prevent women from terminating an abusive relationship (Herbert, Silver & Ellard, 1991). Results from early studies on stay/leave decisions have indicated support for the influence of several factors on the decision to leave an abusive relationship (Fiore-Lerner & Kennedy, 2000; Burke, 2001; Crane & Constantino, 2003).

Length of relationship, economic hardship and love were found to contribute significantly to relationship decisions (Strube & Barbour, 1984) and longer relationship length was predictive of less intention to separate (Waldrop & Resick, 2004). Positive aspects, including love for the man, hope that he will change and the desire to maintain

their children's paternal relationships have also been reported by women as reasons they remain in the relationship (Peled, Eiskovits, Enosh & Winstok, 2000).

Resources, such as money, education, employment, family /friends, and the legal bond of marriage have been discussed as structural barriers for women that inhibit the termination of abusive relationships (Herbert, Silver & Ellard, 1991). Shame has also been posited as a major factor in women's reluctance to disclose abuse, therefore forcing them to adjust their expectations and utilize internal strategies that allow them to stay (Buchbinder & Eiskovits, 2003). The social aspects of shame and stigmatization may increase the pressure to stay when thoughts of leaving are entertained.

In the field of stress and coping, researchers have posited that it is possible for abused women to evaluate their relationships in a way that minimizes the presence of abuse, by engaging in complex cognitive maneuvers that reorganize the meaning of the abusive situation (Herbert, Silver & Ellard, 1991). Examples of this strategy include focusing on the rewards of the relationship rather than the costs, focusing on persons deemed more unfortunate or imaging situations that are worse.

This type of downward comparison serves as a coping mechanism in situations in which a women's self-worth is threatened (Herbert, Silver & Ellard, 1991). According to Schweizer (1986), abused women live in "life-worlds" that allow them to define their abuse in acceptable ways. In order for a woman to terminate the abusive relationship, she must redefine the meaning of abuse.

Lenore Walker's (1979) classic, "The Battered Woman" portrays women who stay in abusive relationships as helpless victims. This view is by no means universal. Some researchers view staying in an abusive relationship as the result of a rational

decision making process that is based on a perceived cost benefit analysis (Peled, Eiskovits, Enosh & Winstock, 2000). The assumptions about the degree of freedom and choice abused women have in terms of deciding their fate, however, remains controversial among mental health professionals.

The Stages of Terminating an Abusive Relationship

The process of terminating an abusive relationship is different for each woman. Researchers have attempted to define various stages of termination in an effort to provide a framework for understanding the internal struggle these women experience. Most often, for abused women, the decision to stay or leave is not defined at a single juncture; instead, it unfolds over time (Fiore-Lerner & Kennedy, 2000).

Burke (2001) identifies four phases of the termination process. The first, titled the “before” period is when the abused women has not had thoughts of leaving the relationship. The second phase, titled the “during” phase, is when the women is enduring life within an abusive relationship; the third phase, titled the “intent to act” phase, is when the women has thoughts of leaving her abuser and planning her escape, and finally, the “acting” phase when the woman physically extricates herself from the abusive situation.

Ladenburger (1998) proposes three phases to capture the experience of acknowledging abuse, living with abuse and terminating the abusive relationship. The binding phase occurs early in the relationship when women may overlook signs of abuse in an attempt to maintain their perception of an ideal partner. The middle or enduring phase, when there is recognition of ongoing abuse, and the disengagement phase, in which steps to start a new life occur (Crane & Constantino, 2003).

Apparently women are more likely to stay in an abusive relationship when their alternatives are poor; when taken together, level of satisfaction, irretrievable investments, and the quality of alternatives affect whether an abused woman thinks she will be better off with or without the relationship (Choice & Lamke, 1997). Bornstein (2006) discussed economic and emotional dependency as core reasons why women stay in abusive relationships; women's economic dependency has also been associated with a decreased likelihood of terminating an abusive relationship.

The previous studies only tell the stories of women perceived as marginalized by society. One motivation for this study is to tell the other story: women with economic and social resources remain in abusive relationships despite seemingly better alternatives.

Formal Education, Access to Resources and the Termination of an Abusive Relationship

Little is known about the factors associated with the termination of an abusive relationship for educated women with resources (Few & Rosen, 2005; Koepsell, et al. 2006; Pearlman, et al., 2003). The available research remains unclear about the position of race or socioeconomic status on the decision to seek help and/or terminate an abusive relationship.

Research on physical and emotional abuse has emphasized that the lack of available resources, such as money, education and social support systems are the reasons why women remain with their abusive partners. Cultural and social stigmas may also inhibit the termination of an abusive relationship. Abused women are described by some researchers as helpless and trapped in relationships due to economic factors (Gelles, 1974; Strube & Barbour, 1983), while others posit that women who are sufficiently

motivated to leave do so, despite their lack of economic resources (Rounsaville, 1978).

The implication is that women with a variety of personal and structural resources feel more control over their situations and are more successful at terminating abusive relationships (Choice & Lamke, 1997). Strube and Barbour (1983) and Rusbult and Martz (1995) noted a positive association between a woman's economic independence and the termination of an abusive relationship among women of a lower socioeconomic status while available data on educated women with resources and empowerment is not available.

Even less known are the factors associated with the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship for college educated women with resources. The limited research indicates that women with resources also struggle to terminate abusive relationships. However, it is unclear what constitutes the struggle and if the factors are the same, overlapping or different from the factors involved in terminating an emotionally abusive relationship for women who are less advantaged.

Social stigmas may be associated with a reluctance to seek help for partner abuse. According to Goffman (1963), the stigmatized individual uses techniques such as "passing", in which the deviant behavior is hidden, and "covering", in which the individual diverts attention away from the deviant behavior.

College educated women with access to resources may avoid being labeled with socially sanctioned undesirable characteristics. Prospero and Vohra-Gupta (2008), for example, studied the prevalence of reporting partner abuse among college students. Eighty-six percent of the students reported being victimized, however, only 16% sought

out mental health services. The reasons cited for reluctance to seek help included, embarrassment, ineffectiveness and social stigma.

VI. Significance to Social Work

The lack of examination and recognition by the social work profession of abuse among women with resources is a legitimate problem that requires attention. In my experience among social work colleagues, it has become apparent that their knowledge about either treatment options or referral sources for emotionally abused women with resources is inadequate. Weitzman (2000) noted antagonism and opposition among social work colleagues upon discussing her work with educated women experiencing partner abuse. Women who are perceived by society as non-marginalized are overlooked as victims in need of services and may feel they have less access to help than their counterparts (Weitzman, 2000).

The first social work services in aid to battered women were initiated by radical feminists in the late 1960's. Over time, domestic violence services have been co-opted by mainstream social work institutions (Davis, 1987). Social work has become the primary source of social services for victims of partner abuse (New York State Coalition against Domestic Violence, 2000). Pleck (1987) and Gordon (1988) emphasize that true reform against family violence requires that it be acknowledged as a public issue, not a private matter; as a social problem, not a personal one (Lentz, 1999).

The arenas for disclosure of partner abuse are predominantly publicly funded institutions, such as hospital emergency rooms, police precincts and domestic violence shelters, all locations less likely to be utilized by women with resources. Abuse victims are often encountered by a police officer or a medical professional in a hospital emergency room when reporting an incident of violence or seeking treatment and later

referred to a domestic violence service provider who is a social worker. (Bornstein, 2006).

The commitment of social workers to represent disenfranchised populations includes all women suffering from abuse, including those with education and resources. Exposure of abuse among the more socially advantaged segments of society has been viewed as controversial and threatening to the status quo (Weitzman, 2000).

The body of social work literature pertaining to partner abuse is broad. Publications include the *Journal of Family Violence*, the *Journal of Marriage and Family*, the *Journal of Violence and Victims*, *Violence Against Women*, the *Journal of Violence, Maltreatment and Trauma*, the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* and the *Journal of Emotional Abuse*. The articles overwhelmingly address women of color, minorities and poor women within the context of partner abuse. This indicates a gap in the social work literature regarding college educated women with social supports who also are victims of abuse. This has significance for social work in the areas of education, practice and program planning.

Education

The information garnered through this study will provide previously unavailable material regarding the issues surrounding emotional abuse. Social work educators on all levels will have access to new literature that provides a complete view of the effects of emotional abuse and the extent of emotional abuse across socioeconomic lines.

Course materials that reflect the multi-dimensionality of emotional abuse in all its forms, such as manipulation, degradation and control will be a useful tool in the field. Social work students will be better prepared for practice if the curriculum included a

specific instruction on the assessment of emotional abuse. Although some graduate level social work schools, including Fordham, Hunter and New York University, offer electives on family violence and trauma, it is not a required part of the curriculum. Social workers, both in an intern and professional capacity, will be better equipped to assess, treat and/or refer victims of emotional abuse, if instructed and properly prepared.

Practice

Increased knowledge about the factors associated with the termination of emotionally abusive relationships for non-marginalized women would improve social work practice. The qualitative component of the study will provide rich details about the complexities of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship for women with resources.

Because current literature on emotional abuse has not examined this particular perspective, this study will provide a more complete view of the problem. Practice tools, such as intake and assessment forms could be redesigned to be inclusive of the specific issues regarding emotional abuse. Client evaluations will be more comprehensive and accurate if practitioners are guided by a tool that delineates different forms of intimate partner abuse. Clarification of the forms of emotional abuse based on the client's description, will improve the clinician's ability to formulate a relevant treatment plan.

Program Planning

Service provision to emotionally abused women could be expanded by initiating an inclusive approach to accessing services. Social work agencies that either accept health insurance or provide mental health services on a fee for service basis, could distribute literature advertising their services in locations that might be accessed by

college educated women with resources , such as their primary care physician, obstetrician/gynecologist, attorney's office, employee assistance program or houses of worship. Social work services could be more impactful if different avenues of marketing were utilized that addressed women of all socioeconomic backgrounds.

Innovative approaches for accessing treatment, would uphold the profession's mission of providing services for all individuals in need. Therapeutic interventions must be reflective and appropriate of who and where the woman is in the abusive relationship (Crane & Constantino, 2003). The arenas for social work service could be expanded to include locations where educated women with access to resources might feel more comfortable to discuss their abusive experiences. Sugg and Inui (1992) identified barriers for medical and mental health professionals in identifying signs of abuse. They found that higher socioeconomic patients were asked about abuse much less frequently, thereby perpetuating the myth that intimate partner abuse occurs only among individuals suffering from poverty.

The data culled from this study may help social workers provide a broader range of service options. Future work includes making important distinctions among types of abuse and among different populations. The knowledge provided by practitioners to each other and to the public about these distinctions is vital for policy development to reflect new information learned about abuse (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000).

VII. Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is divided into three parts covering previous research on intimate partner abuse. The first part presents the historical literature pertaining to intimate partner abuse as a general topic, while the second part reflects the historic literature specific to psychological abuse. The third part of the literature review covers theoretical perspectives that inform the study of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship.

Intimate partner abuse, inclusive of emotional, physical, sexual and economic components, has been presented and portrayed in literature for centuries. The perceptions of what constitute intimate partner abuse varies and are largely based on the literary source, the author's location in history and his/her position in society. The following section of this literature review will cover the interpretation of historical accounts and descriptions of abuse towards women by their husbands, and the progressive advancement by women in the 19th and 20th Centuries, who named the problem of partner abuse and addressed it through legislative action.

The inclusion of historical literature provides locations within which to frame the ongoing issues regarding emotional abuse towards women by their partners and the experiences of terminating abusive relationships. Interpretations and definitions of what constitutes partner abuse is subject to the influence of social and cultural constructions and the experiences of those reporting and recording the events.

The available historical literature regarding the descriptions of partner abuse focuses on the concepts of wife "chastisement" and issues related to physical violence,

which were reported primarily on lower socioeconomic groups. The lack of discussions about partner abuse among the more socially advantaged segment of society supports the view by some social historians that the recorded experiences of a given time, are decided by the dominant social group and deny the existence of the same problem within their own group. The analysis of the historical literary representations of partner abuse will provide the reader with insight into the way the mistreatment of women by men, has been perceived and discussed throughout history.

Historiography of the Literature on Intimate Partner Abuse

The historical descriptions and portrayals of women's roles, particularly within intimate relationships, have primarily been written by men. In a review of the historical literature regarding partner abuse towards women, it is necessary to remain mindful that many views are inherently biased by the voice of male privilege. This section provides an historical timeline of the discussion of women's roles within marriage as prescribed by men and followed by the efforts of women to eradicate partner abuse and to gain equality within their intimate relationships.

The subordination of women is historically rooted in patriarchy, i.e., the institutional rule of men. The first commonly recognized law of marriage in the Western world was established in 753 B.C by Roman Romulus, who proclaimed that married women were to conform themselves entirely to the temper of their husbands and the husbands to rule their wives as necessary and inseparable possessions (Dobash & Dobash, 1977, p. 427).

Throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, women were legally flogged, exiled or killed for committing adultery or other smaller offenses. Christianity supported the

hierarchical family structure that embraced the subordination of wives to their husbands (Dobash & Dobash, 1977). In ancient Western societies, women, whether slave, concubine or wife, were under the authority of men and law, and treated as property. Men ruled in government and society, and husbands ruled in the home (Lentz, 1999).

The domestic arena was considered private territory, and largely ignored by societal rule. The privacy of homes was sacrosanct, particularly in those where men and women had been socialized to dominant and submissive roles respectively. The home was considered a man's castle and what happened within, was his domain (Davis, 1987).

Violence towards women has not only been tolerated by society, but also accepted as practice until recent history. The concept of chastisement was an integral part of society that allowed men to physically punish their wives. Any perceived threat to a husband's authority warranted correction; the acceptance of a particular form of chastisement was tied to its justification, based on what the wife had done to deserve the scolding or beating (Lentz, 1999).

Throughout American history, beginning with the Colonial era, there were different and loose interpretations of "appropriate" wife scolding. The Rule of Thumb Doctrine is thought to be derived from an English Law (1782) declared by Judge Sir Francis Buller, which allowed a man to beat his wife with a stick no thicker than his thumb (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000). The Rule of Thumb then became an acceptable practice of American husbands (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000).

The overarching patriarchal system in developed countries, such as the United States, did not acknowledge women as separate entities and restricted their rights to own property or vote, therefore, perpetuating women's status as second-class citizens. The

existing family ethic dictated women's place in the home, their subordination to the male of the household, and as interpreted by religious beliefs, the natural order, which stated that men bore rule over their wives (Abramovitz, 1988).

Wife abuse was presented as a social problem in the 19th Century among other women's rights issues and reviewed at the Seneca Falls Convention (Seneca Falls Doctrine, 1848). The statement, "In the covenant of marriage, she is compelled to promise obedience to her husband, he becoming, to all intents and purposes, her master; the law giving him power to deprive her of her liberty and to administer chastisement" (The Seneca Falls Declaration, 1848), resulted in the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions (1848), wherein wife abuse was recognized as a legitimate social ill.

Migration to the United States and the industrialization of production provided women with increased social exposure and contributed to the transformation of the right of husbands to chastise their wives from acceptable practice to random and vicious expressions of male domination (Morgan, 1981). By the end of the 19th Century, the Rule of Thumb had been discredited in law; however, no state specifically legislated against wife beating (Lentz, 1999). Prosecutions for spousal assaults occurred sporadically and only in extreme cases.

Feminist reformers recognized that women's lower legal status was an underlying cause of domestic abuse and attributed the problem to the rule of men. Women achieved progress in political, social and economic areas, however, problems such as marital rape and physical abuse continued without recourse. Forms of domestic abuse largely remained behind closed doors whether those doors secured an isolated farmstead, tenement or fashionable townhouse (Lentz, 1999). Frances Cobbe noted in 1878, that

wife –beating exists in the upper and middle classes more than is generally recognized though it rarely extends beyond an occasional blow or two of an unserious kind (Kolmar & Bartkowski, 2000).

Women’s issues, long unaddressed and sublimated in the patriarchal system, were brought to the surface by the growing women’s movement. The newly emerging feminist groups challenged old stereotypes and attitudes and at its inception, the movement had both humanist and political goals (Morgan, 1981). Major shifts in the definition of partner abuse emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s, bringing attention to domestic violence and its impact on society (Morgan, 1981). Women were empowered to defend themselves and fight for equal rights under law. The feminist battered women’s movement has been widely credited with creating public awareness of wife abuse as a social problem, establishing safe places for victims of intimate violence, working to eliminate gender bias in the law, and creating equal protection for battered women (Gagne, 1999). The movement made the arena of partner abuse more visible and encouraged survivors to seek help, while social programs were instituted to protect and assist battered women, including preventive, educational and shelter services (Gagne, 1999).

Feminists such as Walker (1979) named the existence of domestic abuse with terms such as “battering” and “marital rape” and began to put into place an underground network of shelters and safe houses for women and children. Only then did significant numbers of mental health professionals, social science researchers, police, judges and policy makers begin to notice and seriously address the widespread incidence of wife abuse (Bograd, 1988).

The feminist movement of the 1960's was at the forefront of domestic violence awareness, and positively influenced a collective societal recognition of the problem. The negative effects on families and children were acknowledged by society and resulted in increased funding allocated for battered women's programs. Heightened awareness generated greater resources for victims as well as legislation in many states to criminalize stalking and marital rape (Wood, 2001).

The scholarship on partner abuse began to focus on the interconnections between violence, poverty, welfare and homelessness in the 1990's (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). This work became relevant during the era of welfare reform in 1996, when states were offered the responsibility to exempt battered women from some of the more restrictive mandates (Johnson & Ferraro, 2000). Despite these exemptions, the promotion of marriage remained an integral part of welfare reform and advocates for women charged that marriage promotion may encourage women to remain in abusive relationships (Abramovitz, 2006).

While the 1990's marked an era of progress for women in the area of partner abuse studies overwhelmingly addressed the problems of low-income women and the ill effects of physical violence. Surveys and crime statistics continue to indicate higher levels of partner abuse among low-income couples, contributing to the myth that abuse among higher income couples is not a social problem (Weitzman, 2000).

Throughout the late 1980's, and 1990's, a proliferation of movies, television dramas and talk shows focused on the ill effects of domestic abuse. Celebrities including Halle Berry, Farrah Fawcett, Robin Givens and Tina Turner, openly discussed their experiences and journeys related to intimate partner abuse. The domestic and child abuse

case of Joel Steinberg and Hedda Nussbaum(November 2,1987) was front page news, causing outrage and horror from society and the murder of Nicole Brown Simpson (June 12, 1994), dominated to media for months, highlighting the problem of domestic violence in all facets of society. Most recently, the pop star, Rihanna, was publicly assaulted by her former boyfriend, Chris Brown, whom she initially protected, which prompted renewed attention to the complex issues involved in abusive relationships(February, 8, 2009).

Despite the increase in media coverage of domestic violence, there continues to be a dearth of attention to the social ills involving emotional abuse. The discussions about intimate partner abuse have focused on the issues and impact of physical violence. Pure psychological or emotional abuse, were not examined with the same voracity as physical violence, therefore, augmenting the myth that psychological abuse is not as serious, dangerous or in need of attention, as physical abuse.

B. Historiography of the Literature on Emotional Abuse

The historiography of the literature regarding emotional abuse towards women, has evolved from male dominated portraits such as Shakespeare (1623), to more inclusive voice of male and female social workers (Lachkar,2000) and psychologists (Tolman, 1989; Dutton, 1992).

William Shakespeare's "The Taming of the Shrew" (1623) was one of the earliest extensive literary example of the insidious effects of psychological abuse. Love and marriage are the concerns of the play in which the husband conceives of a plan to break the will of his wife who is deemed as "difficult" in personality. He endlessly derides her with condescending and cruel remarks as well as with food and sleep deprivation.

“Making a sermon of continency to her, and rails and swears and rates, that she, poor soul knows not which way to stand, to look, to speak and sits as one new-risen from a dream. And this, I will curb her mad and headfast humor, he knows better how to tame a shrew now let them speak” (Shakespeare, 1632, Act 4, Scene 2). The wife’s compliance and adoration of her abusive husband at the end of the play is a sickening display of male domination and the crushing of a woman’s spirit through ongoing psychological abuse.

The dangerous impact of emotional partner abuse has only recently been acknowledged in the literature. A heightened awareness of this social problem is beginning to gain momentum through the media. The recent television interview (September 14, 2009) of Whitney Houston by Oprah Winfrey highlighted the singer’s experience of psychological abuse within her fifteen year marriage including the agony, pain and destruction of her spirit. The process of terminating her abusive relationship was also discussed. The interview not only demonstrated the extent of emotional abuse as a valid problem, but also confirmed the existence of this particular form of abuse among women who are economically independent.

Large-scale research studies have overlooked the importance of differentiating among types of partner abuse. Psychologically oriented crimes such as emotional abuse and stalking have been recognized, yet largely unaddressed by the legal system (New York Times, February 15, 2009, p.24). According to the most recent report from the Justice Department, only one in three stalking cases is ever reported to authorities, despite a finding that 3.4 million people were subjected to a “course of conduct that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear” (New York Times, February 15, 2009, p22.).

Though legal implications of psychological maltreatment have been largely unexplored, some aspects of the legal system do address the issue (Ammerman & Hersen, 1992). “Mental cruelty” is the term used in divorce wherein the court determines if the case involves unprovoked, offensive conduct that caused embarrassment, humiliation or anguish to the defendant (Ammerman & Hersen, 1992). Marital torts and custody are other areas of the legal system that refer to psychological maltreatment.

Legislation

Passage of the Violence against Women Act of 1994 (Title IV, Sec. 4001-40703, H.R. 3355) signaled a significant change in the government’s efforts to control crimes such as domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. The Violence against Women Act (1994) explicitly recognized domestic violence as a serious crime that harms the immediate victims, in addition to families, children and the larger community (United States Department of Justice, 2006). In 2005, The Violence against Women Act was reauthorized (Title IV, Sec. 4001-40703, H.R. 3402).

State laws regarding the issues of domestic violence vary. New York State, for example, has different laws pertaining to assault, stalking and harassment and each of these is delineated by the degree of the crime (WomensLaw.org, 2009). Currently, no specific laws or protections exist that pertain specifically to the emotional abuse of women.

Theoretical Perspectives that Inform Our Understanding of Intimate Partner

Abuse

Several social, post modernist and psychodynamic theories provide a framework for understanding partner abuse within American society. No specific theoretical perspective directly addresses the problem of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship. Selected theories do help to frame the construction of the social problem and provide different lenses with which to understand the problem and provide a departure point for further inquiry. The theories discussed below are not exclusive to either physical or emotional abuse; rather, they shed light on the problem of partner abuse in all its forms.

Social Theories

Social theories attempt to make sense of how individuals' attitudes and behaviors develop based upon the impact of cultural and social norms. Feminist, Social Role and Investment theories will be discussed as they each pertain to the topic of partner abuse in American society, with the purpose of informing the proposed study about terminating emotionally abusive relationships.

Feminist Theory

The task of producing a concrete historical understanding of what it means to be a woman in a given society is one of the most important aspects of feminist theories (Moi, 1999). The experience of being a woman in American society is varied and based on multiple factors, including socioeconomic position and education level, however, the experiences of being a woman who is emotionally abused, although varied in degree and

type, unifies women across socioeconomic strata. Although there are discrepancies in viewpoints among different feminist theories, collectively, feminist theoretical perspectives provide a framework for understanding the evolution of the recognition of partner abuse and its effects on women and society. Feminist theorists also provide analyses of gender roles in society that contribute to the problem of emotional abuse towards women.

Feminist theory, a symbolic social theory, provides an historical context for understanding the social construction of gender roles and an evolutionary perspective of the increased awareness by society that partner abuse is a legitimate social ill. Utilizing a feminist lens to analyze intimate partner abuse, encourages deeper exploration than is provided by the historical status quo (Danto, 2008). There is not one theory that can be defined as “feminist theory”. Rather, a number of theories developed during the 1970’s reflected feminist consciousness and awareness and were rooted in a commitment towards activist goals (Chavetz, 1988). Traditional, liberal and radical feminism each consist of ideas and concepts that strive to provide knowledge about the subordination of women (Abramovitz, 1988).

The root causes of women’s oppression are a gendered division of labor, stereotyped gender roles and male dominated social systems (Chavetz, 1988). Gendered division of labor is an ancient practice; one in which most men have profited by establishing and maintaining social structures that contribute to the subordination of women’s positions (Feagin, 1997). Objectification, discrimination, oppression, patriarchy and stereotyping are major concepts threaded throughout feminist ideology.

Traditional feminist theory views gender as the primary source of women's oppression due to a patriarchal system in service to men's positions of power (Chavetz, 1988). According to this perspective, the established economic and political systems define a set of values that foster the subordination of women. The primary goal embedded in feminist ideology is the dissolution of a patriarchal system because only comprehensive social change would end gender inequality and ensure the protection of women's rights, interests and issues.

According to the liberal feminist perspective, the rights of women and sex discrimination are the key components of oppression (Abramovitz, 1988). Liberal feminists have favored state intervention in policies and laws that support the rights and equality of women, such as equitable divorce laws, reproductive freedom and service provision for rape, incest and battered women, and have called for the state's protection against domestic violence (Abramovitz, 1988).

Radical feminism, which is credited with bringing the issues of domestic violence to light, is a branch of feminist theory that views women's oppression as rooted in the patriarchal structure of society and the reason for the social construction of women's dependence on men (Abramovitz, 1988). Radical feminism is most closely related to the topic of intimate partner abuse. The domination of men over women is highlighted as the long standing reason for abusive behavior towards women and radical feminists have focused attention on issues such as domestic violence, rape and incest.

Intimate partner abuse is informed by all the tenets of feminist theory, including oppression, power and gender inequality. Feminist scholars discuss the interplay between the cultural constructions of femininity in relation to intimate partner

abuse (Andersen, 1997). Dobash and Dobash (1978) argued that the patriarchal structure of the family sanctioned violence against women, a view that is still active in feminist theoretical literature (Brandt, 2005). Straus (1979), who introduced the Conflict Tactics Scale also supported the view that partner abuse was a function of cultural stereotyping and rigid marital roles. Bograd (1999) contends that feminist ideology regarding the issue of partner abuse consists of men's differential access to resources, their self-proclaimed superiority over women and the commonality of partner abuse in family life. The feminist perspective suggests that while it may be useful to study abusers and the interaction between abusers and victims, the typical power differentials in heterosexual romantic relationships are dictated by gender role socialization and further research should focus on the experiences of the victims (Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997).

According to Nicolson and Wilson (2004), gender role socialization, explains how abuse is a means for men to gain and maintain control and power over women. The use of gender narratives in Wood's study (2001) displayed how participants identified themselves within the social construct of Western culture. The identification with either male dominance and superiority of men vs. deference and dependence of women, was aligned with feminist ideologies.

Social Role Theory

Social role theory informs the problem of partner abuse by providing a framework for understanding the influence of societal pressures on women to conform to roles that may increase their vulnerability and influence their decision-making processes regarding the termination of an abusive relationship.

The historical background of research on sex difference within the context of social behavior led to the development of social role theory (Archer, 1996). The theory is both one of origins and process and proposes that there are both distal and proximate causes for men and women's different behaviors (Eagly & Koenig, 2006). Sex differences in social behavior stem from the historic position of women and men, including the division of labor into homemakers and paid employees (Archer, 1996). The theory is among the most influential explanations for why gender stereotypes are confirmed (Vogel, et al., 2003). The characteristics associated with social roles have been referred to as "communal", such as nurturing and yielding for women and "agentic", or assertive, for men (Archer, 1996). The term "role" is most often used to refer to the expected behavior of individuals who occupy specific social categories (Lynch, 2007).

These categories include statuses, such as mother or father in a family and reflects the cultural values of a society (Biddle & Thomas, 1979). Learned at an early age, social roles are normative expectations that represent consensually shared beliefs and are socially sanctioned (Deaux, 1985). Social roles for women and men evolve into expectancies of social behavior through socialization, resulting in the learning of certain sex-typed skills and beliefs (Eagly & Koenig, 2006).

One version of role theory contends that an expectation of "proper" behaviors implies the compliance with behaviors that conform to socially held norms (Stenius, et al., 2005). Vogel, et al., (2003), examined the relationship between emotional vulnerability and adherence to social roles in romantic relationships and determined that the confirmation of gender stereotypes within intimate relationships can have far-reaching consequences.

Emotional vulnerability can result in the reliance of over learned role behaviors because those roles require the least amount of risk or cognitive effort (Vogel, et al., 2003). The social roles expected of women, to conform and adhere to certain behaviors, may impede their actions to terminate abusive relationships. According to Pipes and LeBov-Keeler (1997), one factor that may contribute to some women remaining in psychologically abusive relationships would be the presence of a belief that most women have to endure psychological abuse. Whether women with traditional gender role attitudes are at greater risk of abuse is equivocal. Some researchers maintain the possibility that women with egalitarian attitudes, especially with respect to their intimate partners, may be at more risk for abuse (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1990).

Social role theory can be a useful lens for exploring the complexities of terminating an abusive relationship for women. This study sought to gain insight into the understudied aspects of particular role identities for educated women with resources, and the effect those expectations place on this particular population of women within the context of terminating an abusive relationship.

Investment Theory

Investment theory serves as an informative conceptual lenses for the study about the social and psychological factors associated with terminating an abusive relationship. Tenets of the theory suggest that a woman's perception of her investments in the abusive relationship are a major component in her decision making process about ending the relationship. Investment theory posits that commitment to a relationship arises form three independent factors: satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size (Lehmiller & Agnew, 2007). In contrast to theories that contend abused women remain

in relationships due to masochistic tendencies, pathological personalities or a pattern of learned helplessness, the investment model emphasizes the nature of interdependence in ongoing relationships to understand decisions to remain in or leave an abusive relationship (Rusbult & Martz, 1995).

Aligned with both interdependence theory (Kelley & Thiabaut, 1978) and feminist theory, investment theory suggests that asking why women stay with an abusive partner implies that blame is directed toward the victim. Rather, these theories ask, “What social factors constrain women from leaving?” (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Investment theory asserts that individuals can feel strongly committed to completely unsatisfying relationships and that the concept of happiness is not the penultimate reason for remaining in an abusive relationship.

Abused women do not report high levels of satisfaction within their relationships (Strube, 1988). Investment theory contends that it is commitment, the degree to which an individual feels psychologically attached to the relationship and intends to maintain it, not satisfaction, the degree to which one favorably describes the relationship, as the key factor in understanding decisions to remain in or leave the relationship (Rusbult & Martz, 1995).

The investment theory proposes three factors that affect commitment to an unsatisfying relationship. Alternative quality refers to the attractiveness and availability of alternatives to the relationship and investment size; the number of resources that are entwined with the relationship (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Attractive alternatives, such as a different living arrangement, employment opportunities and access to support systems may weaken the feelings of commitment for abused women, while women who are less

advantaged may maintain their feelings of commitment due to a lack of viable alternatives (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). The contemplation of abandoning one's investments such as emotional energy, time, mutual friends and shared marital possessions may also enhance an abused woman's commitment levels.

Social theories provide a framework for examining the problem of emotional abuse towards women. Feminist theories seek to offer insight into the ways that being a woman in American society is impacted by male domination and power. Social role theory posits that women's behaviors are socially constructed and learned through the early socialization process, which inculcates social norms and is a manifestation of influences by those most powerful in society. Investment theory proposes that women remain with emotionally abusive partners because they do not want to give up what they see as social and emotional investments, for example, social status and economic stability. Each of the aforementioned social theories is useful for understanding the experiences of emotionally abused women and their decisions to terminate these dangerous relationships.

Psychodynamic theories examine the complexities of an individual's inner processes as they pertain to the formation of relationships from early childhood to adult romantic partners. The inclusion of psychodynamic theories in the study will provide an additional lens with which to gain a deeper understanding of the complexity of issues an emotionally abused woman experiences and her decision-making processes for ending the emotionally abusive relationship.

Psychodynamic Theories

Psychodynamic is an umbrella term for the theoretical perspectives that focus on the psychological aspects of an individual's early childhood development and the impact of their early childhood experiences on personality construction and adult emotional functioning . A review of classic and contemporary psychodynamic theories, including object relations theory, attachment theory, and relational-cultural theory is integral to the study of emotionally abused women who terminated their relationships.

Object Relations Theory

Object relations theory provides an important lens with which to study women who terminate emotionally abusive relationships. The theory delineates the developmental processes that lead to the individual's capacity for the involvement in mutual adult relationships. Object relations theory posits that the more subjective dimensions of infant experience, such as "maternal preoccupation", "good-enough mothering" and the "holding environment" are related to attachment style, which as noted previously, is aligned with the study of emotionally abused women. The theory reflects the saliency of both psychological and physical protection in the process of ensuring secure attachment (Sable, 1998). The various models of object relations theory serve to inform the issue of intimate partner abuse.

Douglas Fairbairn's (1941) position represented a radical departure from classical psychoanalytic conceptions regarding the nature of the earliest relationships between mothers and infants (Brandell & Ringel, 2007). Fairbairn (1941) theorized that a developmental process was rooted in an individual's evolving capacity for relatedness to

others, and he noted three stages of development; infantile dependence, quasi dependence and mature dependence.

Initially, the infant's dependence on the mother is absolute. In the middle phase of development, the child differentiates themselves from objects and an inner world gradually forms, which consists of internal representations of these objects (Brandell & Ringel, 2007). Mature dependence is accomplished when complete differentiation of self from object is achieved, allowing for the individual's capacity to engage in mutual relationships. The child's ability to renunciate compulsive attachments to objects, both animate and transitional, marks the achievement of maturity. For woman who are emotionally abused, the final renunciation of compulsive attachments is delayed or unsuccessful.

Douglas Fairbairn's (1941) perspective has been applied to the analysis of battered women's syndrome and the understanding of how early developmental environments may predispose certain women to unconsciously seek out abusive partners (Celani, 1999). A developmental history characterized by the continuous rejection of her legitimate needs serves as a prerequisite experience of a woman who ultimately seeks out abusive partners (Celani, 1999). The rejected child becomes developmentally frozen and more attached to the very object that rejected her, a dynamic similar in abusive relationships.

Donald Winnicott (1960) reinforced both the significance of the earliest object relations between infant and mother and the quality of mothering as central factors in the healthy development of an individual. The concept of "good enough mothering" is attributed to Winnicott (1960), who posited that the mother's ability to offer her baby an

optimal degree of comfort and environmental constancy was necessary. The provision by the mother, for the infant's needs at the appropriate times, would foster the healthy maturation of the individual. Winnicott (1960)'s perspective informs the complex issues regarding women who experience emotionally abusive relationships. The connection lies between the quality of early childhood attachment and the type of attachment style formed in adult relationships and the ability for the adult to feel safe and secure within a romantic relationship. In healthy adult relationships, a sense of safety and security feel safe and secure within a romantic relationship. In healthy adult relationships, a sense of safety and security are derived through a mutuality and reciprocity between partners, whereas, in abusive relationships, the victim may feel a sense of security that derives from a skewed and unequal partnership.

Otto Kernberg's (1975) developmental object relations theory, emphasized the internalization of both self and object representations. The failure to develop adequate differentiation of these representations increased one's susceptibility for psychological distress (Cogan & Porcerelli, 1996). Identification, through gender or position in the family, might also determine the child's attachment and construction of their inner world. The internalization of frustrating objects enhances the child's intense need for acceptance while also enduring experiences of crushing rejection (Celani, 1999) similarly to the experiences of emotionally abused women while engaged with the abusive partner.

Intimate partner abuse is informed by Kernberg's (1975) perspective because abused women more frequently exhibit dependency features. This may indicate a lack of emotionally stable object internalizations. Clinicians in the abuse field have considered

that long-standing object relations pathology is a contributing factor in the types of partners sought by abused women (Cogan & Porcerelli, 1996).

Attachment Theory

Relationships involving abuse are inextricably linked with intimacy and prompt the inquiry: how can someone love, defend and remain attached to a partner who is psychologically abusive towards them? (Henderson, et al., 2005). Attachment theory has greatly contributed to clinical aspects of social work in areas such as child welfare, domestic violence and sexual abuse. Understanding an individual's historical attachment style provides insight into the struggle involved in the termination of abusive relationships and informs the type of intervention best suited for the client.

The origins of attachment theory can be traced to various scientific and social fields, including, social work, psychoanalysis, biology and behaviorism (Brandell & Ringel, 2007). Contemporary attachment theory is based on the understanding of human development and helps to explain the complex relationship between childhood and adult relational experiences. The formalization of the theory in the late 1950's, marked a continuation of a multi- disciplined perspective that contends that early attachment and bonding are crucial in the trajectory of human development.

John Bowlby (1973) examined the need for infants to have both emotional and physical proximity to their caregivers and posited that these forms of attachment provide a foundation of security needed for the healthy development of an individual. Internal representations of close attachment relationships start in childhood and become incorporated into the personality structure of an individual (Henderson, et. al, 2005). The nature of the attachment style impacts the social relations that form later in life.

Bowlby (1973) and Ainsworth (1968) concurred that infants had internalized experiences with their mothers, and created internalized models that dictated their expectations and responses to both the caregiver and others. These attachment styles were classified as “secure”, “ambivalent” and “avoidant”. Secure attachment is predicated on the relationship quality between the infant and the mother, rather than on the provision of material goods from the mother to infant (Brandell & Ringel, 2007). Internal representations or working models of close attachment relationships begin in childhood and are incorporated into the developing personality structure, eventually guiding the formation of later social relationships outside of the family (Henderson, et al, 2005). Bowlby (1973) proposed that that these internal working models reflect the extent to which individuals believe themselves to be worthy of love and attention.

The dynamics of emotional abuse are linked with attachment theory’s concept of relationship quality as a predictor of secure attachment style. According to Bowlby and Ainsworth (1968), the absence of a strong relational quality between mother and infant would negatively impact the individual’s capacity for a healthy attachment style in adult relationships. The provision of material “love” is not sufficient to engender secure attachment in an infant. It is not uncommon in an emotionally abusive relationship, for the perpetrator to provide material goods as a form of manipulation under the guise of love, rather than engaging in a relationship of emotional reciprocity (Tolman, 1989). Attachment theory assumes that women are more vulnerable to emotional abuse in adult relationships when the quality of their early childhood attachment was insecure (Henderson, et al.; 2005).

Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory did not assume that individuals followed a set path of attachment style from childhood to adulthood, but allowed for the influences of environment to impact the individual's internal working models (Henderson, et al., 1997). Bowlby (1973) maintained that the strength of attachment bonds was unrelated to the quality of attachment and that threatened individuals would continue to seek closeness to their attachment figure. He perceived family violence as a form of disordered attachment behavior, that stemmed from a need of the victim to preserve bonds (Sable, 1998). This dysfunctional pattern of attachment can increase an abuse victims' risk for developing psychological distress.

Karen Horney (1950) also departed from classical Freudian theories about the development of the individual, instead focusing on the antithesis of healthy growth, known as neuroses. Horney's (1950) contribution to the field of psychoanalysis, includes the concepts of alienation, self-realization, the idealized image and the examination of emotional attitudes such as domination, self-effacement and dependency. According to Horney (1950), a variety of adverse influences, impact a child's inability to develop a feeling of belonging. The caregiver's own neurotic needs, such as being dominating, overprotective, intimidating, over indulgent, irritable, erratic, hypocritical or partial to other siblings, contribute to a child's developing profound insecurity.

The basic anxiety created for the individual prevents the formation of healthy human relationships in which the move toward or against others is not mutually exclusive (Horney, 1950). The outcome of this anxiety takes the form of being clinging rather than affectionate or compliant rather than appeasing. The self-effacing adult longs for help, protection and surrendering love, which is common among women who experience

emotional abuse. Love and sacrifice are viewed as intertwined and love is the ultimate sacrifice (Horney, 1950). Rather than feeling confident about her own self-worth, the victim of emotional abuse seeks out a partner who she sees as strong and capable, and who provides her the feeling of being accepted. In terms of dependency in relationships, Horney (1950) cites the frequency of insulting behavior towards the self-effacing individual by the partner she idealizes.

The various models of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1973; Ainsworth, 1968; Horney, 1950) and the formation of neuroses, have been applied to adults and adult relationships. The changes that occur throughout an individual's development affect the content of attachment relationships from infant-caregiver to reciprocal adult romantic relationships (Henderson, et. al., 2005). Adult attachment theory describes the ways romantic partners respond during times of distress and adult attachment orientations predict romantic relationship dynamics as well as emotional and behavioral issues that can be improved thro relationship dynamics as well as emotional and behavioral issues that can be improved through clinical intervention (Gormley, 2005).

Insecure attachment has been posited as having negative effects on individuals who are victims of abuse (Sable, 1998) and unhealthy attachment styles have been associated with men's and women's intimate partner violence (Gormley, 2005). According to Bartholomew (1997), insecure individuals stay in long-term relationships despite abuse and that experiences of abuse have been linked with fearful and preoccupied attachment styles (Henderson, et al., 2005).

Patterns of attachment found in early childhood relationships can be located within the context of romantic relationships (Clymer, Ray, Trepper & Pierce, 2006).

Secure adult romantic attachments are characterized by emotional safety and trust. Ambivalent attachments are characterized by a desire to become enmeshed with a partner in conjunction with preoccupied simultaneous worry about the lack of reciprocal feelings. Avoidant attachment involves extreme discomfort in getting too close to a partner (Clymer, Ray, Trepper & Pierce, 2006).

A dilemma for victims of emotional abuse is that they simultaneously view the aggressor, the source of pain, as the source of protection. The greater the abuse and intimidation, the greater the increase in the victim's attempt to connect with the abuser. Children, who experience a parent as rejecting, may become more attached in an effort to maintain proximity to their caregiver (Henderson, et al., 2005). The attachment behavior system responds to the threat of separation by increasing the tendency to seek closeness. The victim's feelings of rejection, which are discounted by her abuser, further complicate the effects of emotional abuse. Psychological injury is either denied or justified to the extent that the abuse victim becomes confused about her own sense of perception and agency (Loring, 1994).

The concepts of domination, submission and dependency within the context of abusive relationships and psychoanalysis have been examined by Benjamin (1988). Infancy is the origination of dependency on another and continues to develop over time. The evolution of an individual's propensity for relationships that are defined by power and control and domination and submission, are predicated on the circumstances of early attachment relationships within the context of the formation of self-image (Benjamin, 1988).

The concept that abuse can strengthen attachment bonds has been incorporated into an outgrowth of attachment theory called traumatic bonding theory (Henderson, et al., 1997). Traumatic bonding proposes that an abused woman's loyalty to her abuser is linked to both the power imbalance of the relationship and the victims' negative self-image (Dutton and Painter, 1993). The combination of abusive incidents in conjunction with positive, affectionate behaviors creates "intermittent reinforcement", a cycle that strengthens the emotional bond between the abuser and the abused. The tenets of attachment theory serve to inform the complex issues about women who experience and terminate emotionally abusive relationships.

Relational-Cultural Theory

During the late 1960's and early 1970's, feminist writers challenged traditional psychodynamic theories, asserting that they did not accurately reflect the experiences of women. Introduced by the feminist theorists, Jean Baker Miller, Judith Jordan, Janet Surrey and Irene Stiver, relational-cultural theory emphasized gender differences, and the power of caretaking and relationships in women's lives. Factors associated with the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship can be examined through the relational cultural theory- lens. The concepts of mutuality and reciprocity through relatedness are ruptured in emotionally abusive relationships.

The theory assumes that a woman's self develops, not from the separation and individuation path towards adult autonomy, but from the interpersonal connections experienced through relationships (Collins, 1993). The goal of development is not to form a separate self, but rather to participate in relationships that foster the well-being of those involved. One's sense of self is experienced as part of a larger relational unit

(Miller & Stiver, 1997). Isolation is viewed as one of the fundamental sources of suffering in people' lives, therefore the movement toward mutuality through connection is at the core of relational development.

Negative developmental issues arise when the need for mutual empathy in the relationship is not met (Collins, 1993). According to Jean Baker Miller (1988), disconnection occurs when a child or an adult is prevented from mutual participation in a relationship, causing outcomes such as depression, anger, isolation and an increased strive for connection. The reciprocity within an abusive relationship is distorted and the victim' becomes self-deprecating, contributing to the ongoing nature of emotional abuse. Relationships involving partner abuse increase the victims' efforts to enter into a connection and acceptance in the relationship, and render her in a state of diminished self-worth.

The theory directly addresses the power dimension of relationships and posits that the less powerful person has greater difficulty in affecting the course of the relational interaction (Collins, 1993), as in an emotionally abusive relationship, wherein the power dynamic is skewed. According to Collins (1993), the construction of a social system in which relationships of mutual empowerment existed, in contrast to the current systems, that are based on power and violence, would decrease the problem of partner abuse.

Post-Modernist Theories

Post modernist thought is emblematic of producing a new way of viewing society and of valuing cultural works and their makers (Gay, 2008). There is not one conceptual frame that defines postmodernism, however, the overarching position is that there is no absolute way of representing history (Danto, 2008). The term post modernism refers to

the period prior to World War II and its revival in 1945 when an historical shift in theory occurred that viewed human identity as deeply connected to culture (Ferguson & Wicke, 1994; Danto, 2008). Post modern thought is included in the literature review because of its influences on feminist ideology which is informative to the study of women who end emotionally abusive relationships.

Feminist theoretical perspectives were influenced by post- modernism which was an important movement for helping feminists explore problematic issues within modern and political theory (Ferguson & Wicke, 1994). Unearthing certain postmodernist perspectives related to female identity and agency provides another lens with which to understand the problem of emotional abuse towards women in American society, and how it is has been both overlooked and acknowledged as a legitimate social issue.

A revised and fine tuned analysis of women in society evolved during this period and continues to impact contemporary feminist perspectives. The idea that social constructions and social norms were at the root of the formation of a woman in society, became one of the battle cries of post modernist thought. Biological determinism, the sexual ideology which supports the belief that science can answer the question of women's role in society, was rebuked by post modernist theorists, who insisted that a full historical and non-essentialist understanding of sex and the body, be explored (Moi, 1999).

The post- modern theories that inform feminist thought, intersectionality theory and theories of agency, will be discussed and a brief review of narrative theory will be included as it pertains to the qualitative nature of the study.

Intersectionality Theory

Early theory of intersectionality emerged in the late 1960's and early 1970's, when both the civil rights and women's movements gained momentum and third wave feminists focused on differences. Women of color often did not define their discriminations as the same as their white counterparts and theorized that a multiplicity of forces, such as racism, sexism and socioeconomic status, shaped identity. By the 1980's, feminist ideologies began to splinter and different issues became the central focus of particular camps (Stewart, 1987).

Earlier feminists, who were predominantly white and middle class, were accused of presenting theories with an assumption that all women were white. Their essentialist views of women, as a collective body did not resonate in contemporary society (Samuels & Ross-Sherriff, 2008). The fragmentation of feminist thought into epistemic communities caused the stagnation of progress in areas concerning social class and race (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004).

Intersectionality theory is aligned with the feminist goals of equality, while also recognizing the need to acknowledge women's differences. Both the feminist and intersectionality theorists agree that fundamental changes within our societal structure must be addressed and changed to reflect the realities of women's hardships and experiences.

Intimate partner abuse is informed by intersectionality theory's focus on a culturally inclusive lens. Bograd (1999) discusses the need for integrating into this theory, the idea that for many women, partner abuse is not the primary or sole form of abuse they experience. Whereas the traditional feminist perspective viewed gender as the

primary source of oppression, Bograd (1999) asserts that not all women experience abuse equally and that the inclusion of race, class, sexual orientation and nationality strengthens and informs the earlier theories. Gender can no longer be used as a single analytic frame without also exploring how issues of race, family history and social class affects the experience of being a woman (Samuels, Ross-Sheriff, 2008).

The concept of inclusion and an acknowledgement of differences are aligned with this study about college educated women with social resources who terminate emotionally abusive relationships. Gender, race and ethnicity are not the only identifiers for college educated women who suffer from emotional abuse. Intersectionality theory supports the reality that there are multiple factors that influence the lives of women and may cause them to be involved in emotionally abusive relationships. The need for further research on intimate partner abuse that emphasizes socially sanctioned differences of women, is indicated by the tenets of intersectionality theory and the apparent gaps in the literature on abuse.

Theories of Agency

Throughout the post modernist period, feminists ,social critics, philosophers and sociologists, weighed in on the social construction of women's roles and the concepts of empowerment and agency. Simone de Beauvoir's (1952) "The Second Sex", was a groundbreaking analysis of womanhood, in which Beauvoir declared that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 267). Civilization produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine" (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 267).

Declaring inequality of the sexes, de Beauvoir highlighted the negative impact of patriarchy on the healthy development of woman and stated that both a lack of autonomy from male power and the lack of freedom to shape one's destiny, were the major causes of women's self deprecation. Women are taught from early childhood that their role is to acquiesce towards men, to please and renounce her autonomy (de Beauvoir, 1952). Rank and hierarchy of the sexes is present in her household and confirms that the same hierarchy exists in the larger culture.

Simone de Beauvoir (1952) posits that the issue for women is the conflict between their fundamental desire for autonomy and the demands of a cultural situation which constitutes her as inessential and that for a woman, dependency is interiorized (de Beauvoir, 1952). The traditional path towards marriage deposits her in a reenactment of the roles she learned in childhood and she begins the ardent tasks of "holding" her husband, and "managing" a man. "One must discover and humor his weaknesses and must cleverly apply in die measure flattery and scorn, docility and resistance, vigilance and leniency. If she wants to win the game she will contrive a skillful mixture of affecting tears and brave smiles, of blackmail and coquetry" (de Beauvoir, 1952, p. 469).

The construct of marriage reinforces the male's dominant role. "Marriage incites man to a capricious imperialism: the temptation to dominate is the most truly universal, the most irresistible one there is" (de Beauvoir, 1952). De Beauvoir's perspective speaks to the issues involved in an emotionally abusive relationship. When power and domination issues exist, it is often the woman who submits or attempts to repair the situation, despite her role in the problem. "The supreme necessity for women is to charm

a masculine heart; it is the recompense to which all heroines aspire” (de Beauvoir, 1952, p.288).

Women who have been emotionally abused often describe instances in which they felt guilty or shamed when abused by their partner and became docile in attempts to curtail the abusive behavior. The concepts presented by de Beauvoir (1952) were scorned by many, who accused her of degrading men, however, she opened an important conversation about the way women are socialized and the impact of the accepted cultural norms on a woman’s sense of her own freedom and agency, particularly within the context of a marriage. In each generation we are born into an ongoing cultural tradition from which we are individually appropriated through the process of socialization (Archer, 2000). de Beauvoir (1952) posits that the concept of a woman’s sense of agency is challenged by the predominant male culture, yet, possible to achieve.

This study sought to gain further knowledge about the role of agency for women who terminate abusive relationships. What is the impact of socially and culturally constructed expectations on women regarding their sense of agency within an abusive situation? Pierre Bourdieu (1990) linked the everyday details of life to a more general social analysis of power and posited that large scale social inequalities are established through the subtle inculcation of power relations upon bodies and dispositions of individuals (McNay, 2000). His principle tenet is that symbolic domination shapes and organizes the sociocultural conditions of gender equality (Dillabough, 2004). “Masculine domination legitimates a relationship of domination by embedding it as a biological nature that is itself a naturalized social construction” (Bourdieu, 2001).

Symbolic violence, the term coined by Bourdieu (1991), refers to a form of domination which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity, therefore, one cannot be dominated without being compliant (Bourdieu, 1990). Socially constructed agents, such as the educational system, are the wielders of symbolic violence because they establish the emblems of success and reinforce gender role expectations (Moi, 1999). The term social magic is a socially sanctioned act which attributes an essence to individuals, who then struggle to become, what in fact, they are already declared to be (Moi, 1999).

Regarding women's capacity for freedom and agency, he does not underestimate the difficulty of breaking loose of patriarchal chains, however, he sees women as complicit in their own oppression (Moi, 1999). The challenge for women is to resist the desire to be "good", meaning compliant, submissive and helpful to those in power. How women orchestrate these tasks without getting caught is an essential question regarding a women's sense of agency (The London Feminist Salon Collective, 2004). According to Bourdieu (1990), women's liberation cannot occur without women reproducing the power mechanisms that confine them to their place. Bourdieu (1990) and Moi (1999) both highlight the problems of socially constructed roles that women are expected to fulfill.

Margaret Archer (2000) asserts that society contributes something rather than nothing to making us what we are, but we, as human beings, determine our priorities and define our personal identities in terms of what we care about. Individuals rank their own priorities, however, there are numerous social forces and discursive powers of the social order which influence the direction of one's priorities (Archer, 2000). Self-worth is often

vested in projects such as family, career or community, and the success or failure of these endeavors is taken as validating our worth or damaging it. Women who are emotionally abused by their partners may evaluate their self-worth based on the success or failure of their relationships which are socially and culturally constructed entities.

Post modern theories include psychoanalytical perspectives, which distinguish the subject from individual, self from ego and posit that self, individual and ego are equivalent narcissistic constructs (Layton, 2004). The multiple versions of agency that are internalized are not equally powerful because they are subject to cultural prescriptions and approval (Layton, 2004). Definitions of agency and intimacy are defined through a gendered lens, therefore, making it difficult for women to feel unselfish about fulfilling agentic needs.

The concept of agency for women conflicts with both the traditional and contemporary notions of romance and love. Within Western cultures, romance and gender narratives are pervasive. The primary gender narrative casts men as domineering, and superior, while women are cast as subordinate, forgiving, loyal and accommodating (Wood, 2001).

Fairy tales may inculcate the notion of a Prince Charming who rescues the damsel in distress, providing an early framework of the workings of romantic relationships (Wood, 2001). Rarely is a woman's agency recognized as part of the story (Layton, 2004). Rather, underpinning the genres of romance fiction and film is the notion that relationships provide security and dissolve the woman's anxiety about being abandoned or unlovable. The man of her dreams is to become her parent, friend, lover, and she, the center of his universe; the one needing to be rescued by him in order to feel complete.

The woman's willingness to enter a self-effacing relationship is based on her anxiety that connections are unreliable, conditional and that her own assertiveness might be the reason relationships fail (Layton, 2004). According to Benjamin (1988), women seem to have the propensity for what may be called "ideal love"- a love in which the women submits to and adores an other who is what she cannot be. The established gender narrative in Western culture is maintained by the portrayal of women who subordinate themselves to men and love songs that admonish women to "stand by your man" (Wood, 2001).

Femininity is linked to passivity which encourages the notion that only men have rights to social or sexual agency (Benjamin, 1988). Social and cultural norms are inculcated in women's sense of who they are, and often contributes to a submissive position in intimate relationships. "Many girls are left with a lifelong admiration for individuals who get away with their sense of omnipotence intact; and they express admiration in relationships of overt or unconscious submission" (Benjamin, 1988, p. 109). When a woman's desire for mutual recognition is unmet within the context of a romantic relationship, it may be replaced by the concept of ideal love; a substitute for her own agency (Benjamin, 1988).

Women who experience emotional abuse by an intimate partner and actually terminate the relationship, exhibit a defiance and a strong sense of personal agency. Yet, there are still societal barriers that inhibit this sense of agency. Capezza and Arriaga (2008) posit that people blame victims of abuse in an attempt to establish control and make sense of discomfoting events. Stereotypes of women, such as the housewife, the sexy woman, the career women, etc. affect how women are perceived by society and

influences peoples' reactions towards them with empathy or blame. It is plausible that because a career woman is seen as more competent, perceivers may think she has the ability to leave an abusive relationship more easily than a housewife (Capezza & Arriaga, 2008). Achieving and maintaining personal power and agency has historically been one of the primary struggles of being a women. The ongoing pain of experiencing emotional abuse by an intimate partner, creates an added burden to a woman's struggle for self-worth and personal agency.

Theories of Narrative

Post Modernist theories of narrative were developed and evolved which emphasized the impact of historical and cultural constructs on the telling of life stories. The study of women who terminate emotionally abusive relationships is informed by theories of narrative, which have been extensively used in the studies of difficult life events and major life decisions (McAdams, 2006). People carry their stories with them and they are remade, performed, edited and lived out in the social environment of everyday life (McAdams, 2006). People live their lives as stories and the story of an individual's life is a central aspect of their self- discourse (Rodden, 2008).

The pioneering scholarly work in narrative theory over the past three decades has focused on the "how" of narrative, posing questions about storytelling and story construction (Rodden, 2008). One of the methodological areas to emerge from the postmodernist movement is narratology, in which the life stories told by individuals are recorded and contain rich details about cultural influences (Danto, 2008). Narratology is the ensemble of theories of narratives, images, events and cultural artifacts that tell a story (Bal, 2009).

According to Cebik (1986), four levels of narrative theory exist. These include narrative and temporal discourse, narrative and historical constructions, narrative objects and narrative functions. Beneath every narrative theory lies a rational standard for acceptability of truth and organization of the world (Cebik, 1986). The construction of a narrative of one's life involves a cognitive process through which critical experiences are integrated into a coherent story thereby giving them meaning (Borochowitz, 2008). According to Wood (2001), narrative imposes coherence on those experiences that do not necessarily make sense to the storyteller.

Socially constructed norms and traditions impact the telling of one's life story. Life narratives are strongly shaped by culture, class, gender and the psychosocial constructions of the self (McAdams, 2006). Narratives are context bound and are shaped by social, cultural, political and historical factors (Boonzaier, 2008) and the interpretation of narrative text is subjective and susceptible to cultural constraints (Bal, 2009).

The life stories articulated by women who have experienced emotional abuse are reflective of social and cultural influences on the role of women within romantic relationships. Women's narratives contain culturally embedded stories of romance and fairytale, which are often employed to make sense of abuse and violence within a relationship (Boonzaier, 2008).

Reported Findings

Focus on Minority and Low Income Populations

The available data regarding intimate partner abuse has primarily been gathered through police reports, emergency room records and from domestic violence programs and shelters. These sources are over representative of low-income and minority women. Studies regarding the help-seeking behaviors among abused women have highlighted inner city and ethnic minority populations (Lipsky, et al., 2006; Few & Rosen, 2005 and Brandt, 2006).

Although domestic abuse is a broad social problem that exists in all segments of society, regardless of race or class, it has been considered primarily as a lower class problem in which minority women are abused at higher rates than white women (Lockhart, 1987). Stewart et al (1987). highlight the dearth of research on the white middle and upper-middle class population. They argue that studies of family violence have focused almost exclusively on working class communities and socially marginalized families, rather than on the middle-class population. After an extensive search of the literature, this author could locate only limited research or authority-based articles that dealt with a study population of abuse victims that had higher education and economic resources, or, were specifically impacted by psychological abuse.

Typically, researchers who study intimate partner abuse gain their participants through notices posted in places where women gather, such as laundromats or child care centers, through newspaper advertisements, word of mouth or the solicitation of individuals from shelter and police sources. This practice has been criticized for reinforcing classist and racist presuppositions about both abused women and their partners (Fontes, 2004).

Early studies of domestic abuse were based on sociological and criminal perspectives and focused on behavioral acts that constituted a transgression of cultural norms (O'Leary & Maiuro, 2001). Studies on partner abuse have evolved to reflect theoretical perspectives from different disciplines, such as social work and psychology. The focus in these areas, however, has been on minority populations and women in the lower socioeconomic stratum.

Straus, Gelles and Steinmatz conducted the first landmark study on family violence in 1976. The study included self-reports by 2,143 American couples of different ethnic groups. Eleven percent of the black women compared with 3% of the white women were victims of abuse. The authors concluded that wife abuse was 400% greater among black couples than their white counterparts (Lockhart, 1987). Race alone might be misleading, and factors such as income, education and employment should also be considered in order to construct accurate claims.

Pearlman (1993) collected data from police forms, which legally mandate the reporting of domestic violence and sexual assault. The findings indicated that across all levels of neighborhood poverty, the risk of police-reported domestic violence was higher for Hispanic and black women than for white women. This study was limited by its reliance solely on women who were willing to report incidents of domestic violence to the police; the results were therefore skewed by the overrepresentation of poor minority women.

The New York City Health Department (1994) reported that more than half of the 1,156 female homicides from 1990-1994 involved black women; 29% were Latinas and only 16% were white. A United States Justice Department Survey (2006) of emergency

room care found that black women were disproportionately represented among domestic violence survivors. Evans-Campbell, et al. (2006) examined American Indian/Alaska Native women in New York City, and the prevalence of interpersonal violence in their lives. Among the respondents, 65% had experienced some form of violence, with 40% reporting domestic violence. These studies reflect only a portion of women who experience various forms of partner abuse and focus on minority populations.

The Termination of Abusive Relationships

Previous studies on the termination of abusive relationships focus on minority and low income women who have experienced predominantly physical, rather than emotional abuse. The previous studies also examine either help-seeking behavior patterns by abused women or the decision making process of remaining in or leaving an abusive relationship (Strube & Barbour, 1984; Schweizer, 1986; Moss, 1996 ; Choice & Lamke, 1997; Fiore-Lerner & Kennedy, 2000; Martin,et al., 2000; Davis, 2002; Stanton, 2002; Fiorello, 2002; Brandt, 2005).

“Factors Related to the Decision to Leave an Abusive Relationship” by Strube and Barbour (1984), was one of the first studies to examine the complexities of terminating an abusive relationship. Participants, who had reported incidences of domestic abuse, were culled from a combination of referral sources, including attorneys, physicians and law enforcement officials. Quantitative analysis revealed that 77% of the women had decided to leave their abusive partners. Those who left had less time invested in the in the relationship, non-legally binding relationships and fewer children in the home. Women sighted love, legally binding marriage, a greater number of children and economic hardship as reasons for remaining in the relationship The process by which

abusive men entrap their partners and the process by which those women engineer their escape were examined by Kirkwood (1993) and Johnson & Ferraro, 2000. The metaphors, a “web” of entrapment and a “spiral” of escape vividly describe the details involved in the process of leaving an abusive relationship.

The complexities of domestic abuse among Orthodox Jewish women was examined by Horsburgh (1995). Cultural and social factors specific to the Orthodox community presented multiple barriers for women regarding their stay-leave decision-making processes. Economic dependency compounded by cultural, community and spiritual pressures inhibited the women from leaving their abusive partners. Despite a range in educational and socioeconomic levels among this sample, the study is reflective of a very specific minority population of women and not generalizable.

Follow-up to the Strube and Barbour (1984) research, was a conceptual model of the stay/leave decision-making process for abused women by Choice and Lamke (1997). The two step model proposed the questions, “Will I be better off?” and “Can I do it?” to be inherent in the decision making process for abused women. The model was derived from a combination of theoretical perspectives, including Learned Helplessness Theory (Walker, 1979), Psychological Entrapment Theory (Brockner & Rubin, 1985), and Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thiabaut, 1978). The study findings indicated that satisfaction, irretrievable investments and quality of alternatives were critical factors in the decisions to leave an abusive relationship (Choice & Lamke, 1997).

The experience of terminating an abusive relationship among thirty battered women whom had been out of the relationship from two months to thirty-eight years was explored by Moss (1996). The sample consisted of both Caucasian and African

American women who were recruited from a battered women's support group. Through a qualitative descriptive approach, the author sought the participants' descriptions about ending their abusive relationships and restructuring their lives post-relationship.

Categories such as "Being In", "Getting Out" and "Going On" emerged with sub-themes in each. The overarching result of the study indicated that physical termination of an abusive relationship was only the beginning of many subsequent struggles and challenges ahead and emotional scars were deep rooted taking years to erase and in some cases, never being able to do so.

Research focused on the stay-leave decision making of battered women was conducted by Fiore-Lerner (2000). Two hundred women from a rurally located community in Montana, who identified themselves as currently in a violent relationship or having experienced violence in a past relationship, volunteered for the study and were accessed through advertisements. The sample included primarily Caucasian women (92.6 %) with the balance being American Indian (3.6%), Hispanic (1.6%), African American (1%) and Other (1%).

Participants were categorized by the length of time they had been out of the relationship, which ranged from six months to two years. Women who had left a violent relationship within the past six months reported the highest level of specific trauma symptoms. Cross-sectional analyses indicated that psychological variables, such as coping and self-efficacy depended on how long a woman was out of the relationship. The use of tailored interventions for abuse victims based on the specific point in their decision-making processes, was indicated.

A series of hypotheses relevant to the process of leaving an abusive relationship

was examined by Martin, et al. (2000). Seventy female residents of an urban domestic shelter were interviewed about the subjective estimates of their own risk upon returning to the abuser and their decision certainty to leave the abuser. The women's perceptions of personal risk reflected an unrealistic optimism, with personal risk estimated as significantly lower than known statistics indicate.

Davis (2002) examined the leave-taking experiences of abused women. Seventeen participants identified themselves as having had abusive experiences with an intimate partner. Based on the use of a phenomenological method, no generalizations were drawn from the findings; however, descriptions of the various leave-taking experiences provided insight into the complexities of terminating abusive relationships.

Significant factors that influence women's decisions to leave abusive relationships were sought through Fiorello's (2002) research in "A Qualitative Study of Women who Leave Abusive Relationships". Qualitative inquiry, incorporating open-ended interviews with the concept of emergent themes, was utilized for the study of ten women who had successfully left an abusive relationship.

The sample included seven white, two black and one Filipino woman who were recruited through advertisements from domestic violence agencies, churches and an adolescent residential treatment program. Criteria for abuse included physical, sexual or emotional abuse with a requirement that the participants had been removed from the relationship for at least one year. Theoretical perspectives informing the study included, Family Systems Theory, Feminist Theory, Learned Helplessness Theory (Walker, 1979), Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change Theory (Brown, 1997).

Two main themes emerged from the data collection; “Factors that Influenced the Women’s Decisions to Leave” and “Factors Relevant to the Women’s Decisions Not to Return to their Abusers”. The first theme consisted of four reasons for leaving; the occurrence of a life-threatening incident, the inability to set limits in the relationship, recognition of one’s needs, and feelings of traumatic loss. The second theme included feelings of loneliness, child custody issues, threats of violence towards her family, symptoms of depression, anxiety, PTSD, paranoia and chronic nightmares.

The overall outcome of the study indicated no single explanation for why a woman leaves an abusive relationship. Multiple factors such as family of origin, worldviews, self-schema, family expectations and religious or cultural beliefs all play a role (Fiorello, 2002). Limitations of the study included the use of a sample of women that self-identified as having been abused and who were asked to remember abusive incidents from points in the past. The retrospective nature of this type of recall is subject to ordinary forgetfulness or motivated memory loss (Fiorello, 2002).

“Difficult Decisions: Factors Involved in the Process of Women Leaving an Abusive Relationship” (Stanton, 2002), aimed to identify consistent patterns in the process of leaving an abusive relationship and to distinguish key factors involved in the decision-making process. Qualitative inquiry, which included both a formal questionnaire previously designed by Dutton (1992) and semi-structured interviews developed by the author were utilized. The participants were sourced through their participation in an outpatient therapeutic program for victims of domestic abuse. Twenty women, with an income of less than \$30,000 per year, who had all experienced either physical or psychological abuse, were interviewed.

Theoretical frameworks were not specified; rather, the psychological dimensions of abuse and the use of the DSMIV (1994) were noted. Through the use of a grounded theory approach, seven themes emerged, including, “There was Hope for the Relationship to Work”; “There was No Set Pattern to How the Abuse Occurred”; “Other People Knew of the Abuse”; “Some Women Took Steps to Stop the Abuse, While Others Did Not”; “Support from Friends, Family, and Professionals is Important for a Permanent Ending”; “There is No Commonality in the Reason or Event that Caused or Would Cause a Women to Leave the Relationship Permanently”, and “There are Negative Effects to Leaving the Relationship; There are Negative Effects to Staying in the Relationship”. The right timing was sighted as the major reason for leaving the relationship when they did, with no specific incidents noted (Stanton, 2002).

Limitations of the study were the use of a non-random sample of women not representative of other geographic areas and women who had received therapeutic intervention for the abuse. The study relies on self-reported data involving the participant’s construction of the past, which might possibly include only a general idea of the events or a distortion of them (Neisser, 1982). Despite the limitations, the author contends that the similarities in the women’s stories indicate a level of homogeneity (Stanton, 2002).

Victims of chronic partner abuse (7 black, 21 white) were interviewed by Few and Rosen (2005). The qualitative study based on women’s narratives, described how perceived vulnerabilities, such as economic dependence, fear of retribution by their partners and child custody issues influenced the women’s decisions to stay in or leave the abusive relationships. The racial differences were considered and explored for their

implications regarding decision-making. The outcome revealed that race did not impact the behavior or decision making of battered women.

Recent qualitative work about the complex issues for women involved in terminating an abusive relationship were examined by Brandt (2005) in “Why She Left: The Psychological, Relational and Contextual Variables that Contribute to a Woman’s Decision to Leave and Abusive Relationship”. The study intended to gain insight into the final moments that lead to an abused woman’s decision to leave her abusive partner.

Twelve women who had previously participated in a larger study at a domestic violence shelter were culled for interviews. The criteria for participation included fluency in English, and that the participants had made the decision to leave the relationship. The sample consisted of urban women of color and recent immigrants with low socioeconomic status; all the women were receiving public assistance benefits. One woman had completed high school, while four had not and one participant had attended some college. The average length of time removed from the abusive relationship was four months (Brandt, 2005).

The study utilized the principles of grounded theory, therefore, hypotheses were not contemplated in detail. Five theoretical perspectives informed the study; Learned Helplessness Theory (Walker, 1979), Perfect Love Theory (Towns & Adams, 2000), Transtheoretical Model of Behavior Change Theory (Brown, 1997) and Rationalization Theory (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983).

Four themes were identified. “Impact on Their Children and Their Relationship with Their Children”; “Shift in Women’s Sense of Efficacy that no Longer Allowed Them to Tolerate the Abuse”; “Actual Escalation of Violence or the Recognition of a

Potential Escalation in Violence” and “The Discovery of a Partner’s Infidelity”. The author presents limitations of the study noting the importance that these outcomes be recognized as specific to the sample population and that the data came from women’s recollections of past situations. The definition of abuse, the barriers that prevent a woman from leaving an abusive relationship and the ways in which she experiences the relationship, depend largely on the intersection of race, culture, class and socioeconomic position (Brandt, 2005).

Decision making processes and help-seeking behaviors are well represented in the existing abuse literature. While the populations studied largely reflect specific groups of minority women, they fail to address the factors that affect the stay-leave decision-making process for educated women with access to resources. Similarly unaddressed in the abuse literature, are studies that focus solely on the impact of psychological abuse within the context of terminating a relationship for women viewed as non-marginalized by society.

Emotional Abuse

Studies regarding psychological abuse have recently emerged in the field (O’Leary & Maiuro, 2001), though most studies on partner abuse have overwhelmingly focused on physical violence. Research has focused on the following areas: clarification of the definition and terminology of emotional abuse and the relationship between physical and emotional abuse (Follingstad, et al., 1990; Chang, 1996; Marshall, 1996; Raphael, 1998; Geffner& Rossman, 1998; Ali, et al., 1999; Lachkar, 2000; Schumacher et al., 2001; Elliston, 2002; Kaukinen, 2004; Lammers et al., 2005; Burks, 2006; Queen, 2007; Temple, 2007; Grasamkee, 2007).

The connection between physical abuse, either as a precursor to or in conjunction with emotional abuse, has been examined by Follingstad, et al. (1990). The role of emotional abuse in physically abusive relationships was assessed in an effort to determine if relationship length correlated with the severity of abuse and if the victims viewed the behavior as abusive.

Risk factors for male-to –female partner psychological abuse were examined by Schumacher (2001). The challenge of making an assessment of emotional abuse due to its ongoing and pervasive nature was found to be complex. Predictions of emotional abuse are more difficult than those for physical abuse (Schumacher, 2001).

National data of 7,408 participants, examined the relationship between men and women's economic contributions within marriage and the risk for husband to wife physical and emotional abuse (Kaukinen, 2004). Utilizing feminist and stress frustration theories, when status incompatibilities favored women, the likelihood of both physical and emotional abuse increased.

The effects of partner violence and psychological abuse over time was researched by Temple (2007). Participants included 835 African American, Euro-American and Mexican American low-income women. This study's goal sought to determine if types of abuse affected different populations of women similarly. Utilizing latent growth modeling to examine stability and change over periods of time, findings indicated that partner violence decreased over time for all groups, while psychological abuse decreased only for the Euro-American women.

Definitional and experiential studies on psychological abuse are also prevalent in the abuse literature. Chang (1996), Lachkar (2000), O'Leary and Maiuro (2001) and

Burks (2006), all have contributed to the literature on emotional abuse by attempting to provide knowledge about the definition and context of psychological abuse, and its effect on women. Chang (1996) focused on the issues regarding emotional abuse solely in marriage, while O’Leary and Maiuro (2001) addressed the holistic perspective of psychological abuse in relationships. Lachkar (2000) examines the impact of emotional abuse among high functioning women through a psychodynamic lens.

Qualitative inquiries about the experiences of women either living in or extricated from emotionally abusive relationships were developed by Raphael (1998) and Queen (2007). They used structured interviews to unearth the nuances of women’s experiences with emotional abuse. Themes that emerged suggest that emotional abuse is not associated with any singular experience rather; it is experienced over periods of time, and contributes to the pervasive detrimental effects on women’s mental health.

Research aimed at educating society about psychological abuse and the help-seeking behaviors of women was presented by Marshall (1994), who identified six distinct clusters of abuse. Cluster one included women who had sustained the most serious abuse, violence and sexual aggression, however, with partners who did not denigrate them or attempt to control their finances. Cluster two included women who also sustained serious abuse, although more subtle in nature than Cluster one. Cluster three participants scored relatively low on abuse, but reported having controlling partner types who attempted to isolate them and enforce secrecy. Cluster four participants sustained the least abuse, however, the abuse was overt and more public in nature. The women in clusters five and six were similar; both having high abuse, moderate violence and sexual aggression.

The role of emotional abuse as a precipitating factor for depression in a sample of 40 women attending therapy was examined by Ali, et al. (1999). The results indicated that emotional abuse was associated with an increased likelihood of major depression revealing elevated scores on the Beck Depression Inventory (1961). The effects of attachment style on the interrelationships among emotional abuse, physical aggression and relational stability were examined by Weston (2001).

A quantitative inquiry of eight hundred and thirty-five ethnically diverse low-income women revealed that insecure early attachment may increase the likelihood of insecure attachment in subsequent relationships and the history of abuse sustained on one relationship may impact the quality of future relationships. A strong relationship between emotional abuse and women's view of themselves indicates the need for further research in the area of abuse and attachment style.

The relationship between adult attachment, psychological maltreatment and early childhood experience of emotional abuse was researched by Gray (2000). The project was a retrospective study involving one hundred couples ages eighteen through eighty. A measure to assess childhood experiences of emotional, sexual and verbal abuse was used. The relationship between psychological abuse and traumatic stress responses for women living in a domestic violence shelter was found to be stronger than those of physical abuse and trauma (Elliston, 2002).

Two forms of psychological abuse, subtle-overt and domineering, were explored within the context of both experiencing or perpetrating abuse by Grasamkee, 2006. Ninety-three women participated in extensive interviews. Results indicated that the participants were experiencing more subtle-overt psychological abuse than they were

perpetrating. Although the result may represent perceived reality, an alternate explanation is that it is more difficult for the women to give unbiased reports of their own perpetration (Grasamkee, 2006).

Self-report instruments for the assessment of psychological abuse include, The Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979), The Verbal Aggression Scale of the CTS, The Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1989) and versions thereof, however, each scale has limitations (Grasamkee, 2006). Marshall's (1999) initially designed a scale to include both subtle and overt psychological abuse, however, subsequent analyses did not reveal a distinction between the two and later research utilized a single scale measure (Grasamkee, 2006).

Research on psychological abuse has progressed. Nevertheless many questions regarding the different experiences and effects of psychological abuse, among different populations, remains unanswered. The literature supports the fact that emotional abuse, absent of physical abuse, is a serious social problem requiring further study. Ongoing emotional abuse contributes to the pervasive damage to both mental and physical health. The above referenced studies indicate that the experience of emotional abuse for women can have far-reaching negative effects on society. Further attention in both educational venues and treatment facilities could effectively decrease the problem. The excavation of available literature specifically regarding the termination of psychologically abusive relationships, among educated women with resources proved limited; only three studies were discovered that had some relevancy to these concepts.

Previous studies shed light on the gravity and pervasiveness for women of the factors involved in terminating abusive relationships, and indicates the need for further

inquiry. The lack of scholarly work that incorporates the issues of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship using a sample population of non-poor women with higher education, exhibits a departure point from which to continue the exploration of this distinct social problem.

Conclusion and Evaluation of the Literature

The literature on partner abuse indicates an overwhelming amount of research has focused on socially marginalized women, with little inquiry or knowledge about their socially non-marginalized counterparts. The lack of inquiry into the abuse of educated women with resources, may derive from society's dismissal to recognize that abuse exists in all segments of society (Weitzman, 2000).

Partner abuse has been considered to be primarily a lower class problem in which racial minority women are abused at higher rates than white or racial majority women (Lockhart, 1987). A comprehensive review of the abuse literature indicates that poor women and women of color are the representative victims of domestic violence. The myth that domestic violence and abuse affects only the disenfranchised is perpetuated by society and is often accepted by the victims (Weitzman, 2000).

The trend to study poor women of color within the context of partner abuse is notable. Data collected through women from domestic violence shelters, prisons and emergency rooms is targeted in an effort to ameliorate the ills of domestic abuse among socially marginalized women. Data on domestic abuse by ethnicity has been culled largely from police reports, which indicate higher reporting rates of abuse among black and Latina women than white women (The New York City Health Department, 1994; Pearlman, 2003).

The prevalence of abuse experienced by women with higher education, resources and support systems, is a societal ill that has been overlooked. Little is known about educated women who have suffered the negative effects of abuse (Swift, 1997); the literature indicates the existence of a societal belief that educated women with careers or

access to social resources have the ability to extricate themselves from abusive relationships. The available literature fails to address the complex issues faced by educated women with social support systems who are emotionally abused. The need for new research that includes abused women from all segments of society is indicated.

Termination of an Abusive Relationship

The trend in the available literature pertaining to the termination of abusive relationships remains focused on socially marginalized women. The decision to remain with or to leave an abusive partner has been studied utilizing samples of inner city and ethnic minority women (Lipsky, et al, 2006, Few & Rosen, 2005 and Brandt, 2006) however, the decision making process for terminating an abusive relationships for educated women with resources is unknown (Few & Rosen, 2005; Pearlman, et al., 2003).

The literature on partner abuse includes numerous studies about the complex factors that impact the decision-making process of whether to stay in or leave an abusive relationship and research has attempted to delineate the factors that prevent women from terminating abusive relationships (Herbert, Silver & Ellard, 1991). Consistencies in the literature indicate that there is not a singular factor associated with terminating an abusive relationship, moreover, factors are multifaceted (Fiorello, 2002; Stanton, 2002 & Brandt, 2005), and the decision to stay or leave is not made at a single juncture (Fiore-Lerner & Kennedy, 2000).

Comparisons of the current literature about decision-making and the termination of an abusive relationship indicate the existence of similar categories. Women have identified reasons for leaving abusive partners including, the length of time invested in

the relationship, the legal status of the relationship, the number of dependent children, relationship satisfaction and the quality of alternatives (Strube & Barbour, 1984; Choice & Lamke, 1997). Fear for their children, fear of increased abuse, a renewed sense of self-efficacy, and having social support systems have also been reported by women as reasons for terminating abusive relationships. Economic and emotional dependency have been cited as core reasons why women stay in abusive relationships and women's economic dependency has also been associated with a decreased likelihood of terminating an abusive relationship (Bornstein, 2006).

The complexities of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship for educated women with resources has not been explored, therefore, it is unknown if the same categories of decision-making experiences apply as the ones noted by socially marginalized women.

Emotional Abuse

The substantial amount of literature on partner abuse primarily focuses upon the negative impacts of physical rather than psychological harm. Emotional abuse is often seen as an adjunct to physical abuse and not a distinct phenomenon (Sable, 1998). Research on emotional abuse may be less extensive because of a belief that emotional abuse always precedes physical abuse. Some researchers have embraced the reality that emotional abuse exists independently of physical abuse (Anderson, Boulette & Schwartz, 1991; Herman, 1997; Kirkwood, 1993, NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Life-threatening violence and physical aggression receive attention because of their serious immediate consequences; however, the potential for long-term health and mental health related issues caused by emotional abuse cannot be ignored (Hornung, McCullough &

Sugimoto, 1981). Emotional abuse is insidiousness and may be more easily hidden from the public than physical abuse and it often goes unrecognized as abuse by victims (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005).

The available studies that address pure psychological abuse have increased in the past twenty years (Lammers, Ritchie & Robertson, 2005). Studies regarding emotional abuse have focused on the definitions of emotional abuse, the relationship between physical and emotional abuse, and the negative ramifications of psychological abuse on the physical and mental health of women (Follingstad, et al., 1990; Chang, 1996; Marshall, 1996; Raphael, 1998; Geffner& Rossman, 1998; Ali, et al., 1999; Lachkar, 2000; Schumacher et al., 2001; Elliston, 2002; Kaukinen, 2004; Lammers et al., 2005; Burks, 2006; Queen, 2007; Temple, 2007; Grasamkee, 2007).

The available literature about psychological abuse contributes important knowledge about the ill effects of a specific form of partner abuse, however, an untapped area remains; the incorporation of knowledge about the experiences of terminating emotionally abusive relationships for educated women with resources.

Methodologies

Comparative analysis of the current literature reveals consistencies in conceptual ideas and methodological approaches. The current literature pertaining to studies on partner abuse relies heavily on quantitative analysis that utilizes the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus, 1979). Qualitative research utilizing phenomenological and grounded theory approaches is represented in studies on physical abuse and the termination of abusive relationships (Fiorello, 2002; Stanton, 2002; Brandt, 2005). The similarity of

emergent themes in previous qualitative studies indicate a consistency in findings about the factors associated with terminating physically abusive relationships.

Studies regarding emotional abuse have incorporated quantitative analyses to measure the level of emotional abuse within a relationship, yet have not examined the factors associated with terminating these relationships within a qualitative inquiry.

Gaps in the Literature and Rationale for the Study

Partner abuse is overly represented in the social work and psychology literatures as a social problem affecting minority women with little or no access to personal resources. The studies have been conducted almost exclusively on working class communities and socially marginalized families, under representing the middle-class population (Stewart, 1987).

The available data has been culled from samples of women who are in the shelter system (Brandt, 2005), utilize emergency room services or are involved in publicly funded programs that aid victims of domestic abuse (Stanton, 2002). The negative effects of partner abuse on educated women with resources have largely been ignored by the social work field.

The lack of research about the impact of pure psychological abuse, victims who are considered to be socially non- marginalized and the factors associated with terminating these dangerous relationships indicates the need for further inquiry into a serious social problem.

VIII. Research Methodology

Qualitative Inquiry

The human agony and confusion caused by a partner's emotional abuse cannot be adequately captured through a quantitative study. The personal and intrusive nature of this study requires flexibility, an inherent part of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative inquiry is suited to the proposed study because it allows for the unwrapping of issues involved in the termination of an abusive relationship. Inductive inquiry does not identify reality as an absolute truth; moreover, it is exploratory and assumes there is a level of puzzlement by the researcher. The hunches of the interviewer serve as a guide in the process of uncovering pertinent information while the puzzlement drives the inquiry. While quantitative inquiry is deductive, qualitative inquiry requires an inductive process; the data to be measured is the respondent's experience (Mintzberg, 1983).

Qualitative epistemology implies a linkage between the interviewer and the participants through an interactive relationship (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The investigator is an involved participant who engages in a transactional process throughout the study. Unearthing the meaning for respondents of their experiences as victims of abuse, can only occur if they feel at ease with the interviewer.

Qualitative inquiry supports the role of the researcher from an emic (insider) perspective, as a subjective participant, rather than the etic (outsider) objective observer of a quantitative researcher (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The interviewer is the instrument of the research and encourages the flow of dialogue between parties. The study of women who have terminated emotionally abusive relationships involves the interviewer to enter an intimate realm of their lives. Proximity to the respondents is necessary in order to gain

entrée into their world and establish trust so that they feel safe and comfortable to discuss their personal experiences of abuse.

The use of language in inductive inquiry allows for the respondents to describe their daily lives and the instances of abuse they experienced and the choice of language helps to illuminate the respondents' experiences. Janesick (1994) noted that there is nothing more precise than the use of language to describe the qualities and intricacies of life's components. Descriptive details obtained through the dialogue allowed for the stories of emotional abuse to be explored. The humanistic nature of this study required the use of qualitative inductive inquiry, personal contact and empathic neutrality.

People's realities are apprehendable through the construction of their own experiences, according to the relativist ontological perspective. Constructions are based on specific details that may be shared with other individuals and although constructions are not necessarily "true", they are the realities experienced and expressed by the studied group (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Relativism allows for the possibility of multiple subjective realities, such as the experiences of abuse victims. The outgrowth of feminist ideology, intersectionality theory, speaks to this concept. Women, as a collective, do not view their experiences of abuse in one way nor do they prioritize multiple injustices they may have experienced. Similarly, social role theory is aligned with the relativist perspective of this study. Internalized notions of "appropriate" role behaviors are viewed differently by women depending on their cultural influences and family of origin.

The identification or explanation of social processes is aligned with the grounded theory approach introduced by Glaser and Straus (1967). The theory calls for the continual interplay between data collection and analysis in order to produce a theory

during the research process (Bowen, 2006). When exhaustive reviews of the related literature do not uncover the specific topic of one's research or when the existing research covers populations other than the one of study interest, grounded theory is appropriate. The lack of information regarding this study topic validated the researcher's decision to utilize a grounded theory approach.

A researcher cannot suspend all knowledge from the literature and individual experience, and the use of a grounded theory approach demands the researcher must start without a hypothesis. The researcher attempts to discover, understand and interpret what is happening within the research context (Bowen, 2006). This study involved a volatile subject matter, and the researcher had to allow for the development of theory. The need for the researcher to employ sensitizing concepts was especially important in a study that evoked strong personal feelings.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is based on the concept of emergent themes that are revealed through analysis of the data, which is gathered and analyzed immediately after collection. The resulting analysis is the basis for deciding which data should next be collected (Bruce, 2007). Emergent themes are categorized in such a way as to yield a theory (Bowen, 2006). Categories or themes should not be forced or selected out of preconceived understandings of the area studied; moreover, they should emerge as the researcher analyzes the data (Bruce, 2007).

Structural coding is the primary phase of the coding process and involves identifying themes through the examination of the research questions. Open coding is the secondary phase, which involves the identification of major categories of information.

Axial coding is the delineation phase in which one open coding category is identified as the core phenomenon. Finally, with selective coding, the researcher takes the model revealed and develops a hypothesis or proposition that interrelates the categories and assembles a story that describes the interrelationship. Further data collection occurs through theoretical sampling, which implies that participants are chosen because they best help to inform the theory development

A grounded theory study employs constant comparative data analysis. New data is constantly coded and compared with previously developed codes to generate concepts and saturate a theory. The study is considered complete when there is enough data to saturate the model and no new themes are identifiable. Sufficient data has been collected at the point in which the codes/themes have been exhausted (Bruce, 2007). The purpose of a grounded theory inquiry is to develop substantive or formal theory from which further inquiry on the study topic may be pursued.

Research Design

Interview

The interview guide is an original instrument developed by the author. (see Appendix C). The goal of the guide was to obtain knowledge from college educated women about the psychological and social factors that motivated their decisions to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. The estimated time to complete the interview was two hours. The sessions were audio recorded for the purposes of capturing all the details and nuances of the interview which were transcribed solely by the author. .

The first objective of this interview was to allow formerly abused women to tell their own stories in their own terms (McCracken, 1988). The guide was structured to walk the respondents through the experiences of their relationship and family histories and social role expectations that illuminated the factors associated with terminating an emotionally abusive relationship. Each dimension was an umbrella for systematic questions that encouraged the women to elaborate in detail about their lived experiences. The process was one of discovery about how women make choices within the context of abuse. Questions were presented in an open-ended fashion and presupposed that the respondents had something to say about their experiences (Patton, 2002).

The overarching goals of the interview guide were collection of the data in a logical, comprehensive and descriptive manner that accurately portrayed the experiences of the participants and elicited information that provided new knowledge about the factors associated with the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship. As noted by Patton (2002), the purpose of an interview is to find out the essence of what is in someone else's mind. Feelings, thoughts and intentions cannot be observed. The goal of

the interview, therefore, was to unearth, through open-ended inquiry, the meanings people attach to what goes on in their worlds (Patton, 2002).

The interview guide is a tool that encompasses a list of questions or issues to be explored. It provides a framework within which the interviewer can formulate questions and determine which information is most pertinent to the study. Questions and probes are systematically determined with the goal of eliciting a maximum amount of detailed information within a time-limited period (Patton, 2002).

This study utilized a standardized open-ended guide that consisted of a pre-established set of questions that were intended to unearth the same information from each respondent (Patton, 2002). The standardized open-ended interview guide provides a consistency of the instrument, control over the interviewer's inadvertent bias, and an efficiency through highly focused interviews (Patton, 2002).

A standardized open-ended guide allowed for the collection of cohesive data about the women's experiences and how those experiences impacted their decisions to terminate the relationship. Women who have experienced emotional abuse require sensitivity and an acknowledgment of the volatile, personal nature of the topic by the interviewer. A salient part of the interview process was the establishment of rapport with the participants. As noted by Patton (2002), rapport is built on the ability to convey empathy and neutrality, while being understanding without judgment. The interviewer must establish a balanced rapport by being casual and friendly while also being impersonal and directive. The language chosen for the interview must foster the creation of a shared meaning between participants and interviewer. It is especially important, due

to the personal nature of the topic, for the interviewer to demonstrate interest, respect and attention as the women tell their stories.

Key components of the interviewing process include active listening and the use of appropriate probes. Listening promotes the discovery process and tells us what we want to understand rather than what we expect to hear. The interviewer must listen deeply, maintain rapport and pay close attention to the gestures made in response to a question. Tactical errors are made when the interviewer smiles at the wrong time or fails to comprehend intended humor from the participant (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Probes clarify issues, elaborate details, offer structure, simulate scenarios and provide support and recognition for the respondents. The probes correspond to each general question and focus on areas such as the details of their family and relationship histories, social role expectations and the decision-making processes within the relationship.

The questions may lead to information and key words that might not have been anticipated, necessitating improvisation during the interview. Data collection for this project was conducted by using tape recording and transcription. Recording an interview provides the benefit of accuracy through a verbatim account. The pressure of writing notes is lifted off the interviewer and enables better rapport between researcher and interviewee. The opportunity for the interviewer to hear themselves and their responses during the interview is another benefit of taping. The tradeoffs of utilizing a recording device include possible discomfort by the participants, and less vigilance in active listening by the interviewer.

The dimensions of the interview guide began with an overview of the relationship referenced for the study. The questions focused on the participants' initial awareness of

abusive behavior within the relationship and the ways in which they coped with the abuse and/or sought help. The purpose of this section was to establish an historical starting point with which the participants could explore the trajectory of their abusive relationships. The next dimension of the guide explored the nature and environment of the participant's family of origin. Questions focused on the experiences and descriptions of their parent's intimate relationship, family dynamics and their own feelings of security within the family system.

Social role expectations were explored in the third dimension of the guide, with an emphasis on what expectations the participant had for herself as a female adult and the social role expectations of her parents. The areas of role expectations encompassed education, career, marriage/relationship, parenting and any perceived differences in their role expectations compared with their larger social arena.

Intimate partner history was explored in the next dimension of the guide followed by the termination of the emotionally abusive relationship. Questions focused on the initial contemplation of ending the relationship and the continuation of the termination process. Questions focused on self-reflection, help-seeking behaviors by the participant, the effects on children, the participants' concerns about money, social stigma, loss of status, fear of being alone and the exploration of the costs and benefits to terminating the relationship. The steps taken to formalize the ending of the relationship and the participants' feelings about her decision were explored.

The final key dimension of the interview guide focused on the stage of post-termination. The participant was asked about her self-perception after terminating the relationship and her reflections about the obstacles she faced.

Sampling

The original sample was to consist of thirty participants in an effort to ensure a robust study and a saturation of themes, however, themes were saturated after twenty-two interviews. The three most recent dissertations regarding the termination of physically abusive relationships included ten women, twelve women and twenty women. (Stanton, 2002, Fiorello, 2002, Brandt, 2005).

The decision to interview women who have already terminated an abusive relationship was based on concerns by the researcher that the volatility of the subject could negatively impact the participants if they were still involved in the relationship. Participation in the study could expose women to a risk of harm, if they were still connected to the abuser. Women no longer in the abusive relationship are less likely to be vulnerable to physical and mental health safety issues (Brandt, 2005).

The strategies used in qualitative sampling provides an in depth focus on relatively small samples that are selected through purposeful sampling methods. The researcher must select information rich cases relevant to the discovery process in order to illuminate the question to be studied (Patton, 2002). Intensity sampling involves prior information about the cases and requires the researcher to do exploratory work to determine the most suitable examples for the study. Information rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely, but not in an extreme or unusual way, serve as the best selections (Patton, 2002). The study required a selection of women who had identified themselves as having terminated an emotionally abusive relationship.

The criteria for participation in the study were the self- identification by the participant as a heterosexual woman who had experienced emotional abuse by an

intimate partner within a relationship that lasted a minimum of two years, the completion of a Two year Associates Degree or a Four year Bachelors degree, a minimum income level of \$40, 000, a period of at least six months that the participant has been out of the relationship, the ability to pay for rent without the assistance of public funding or the ability to own a home without the assistance of public funding, the identification of at least one family member that can be relied upon for emotional support, and the identification of at least one friend who can be relied upon for emotional support.

The initial participants were be sourced through a divorce support group that is conducted under the auspices of the Jewish Board of Family and Children’s Services and The Jewish Community Center of Manhattan. Additional data sources included snowball sampling which ensured a level of diversification. This study did not seek to uncover relationships between the experiences of college educated women who have terminated emotionally abusive relationships with race or ethnicity, but rather, with education and access to social supports.

Snowball or chain sampling identifies cases of interest through people who refer other people who refer yet other people (Patton, 2002). Existing participants referred new participants and the researcher may utilized other sources of sampling that included referrals from private therapists, private physicians and matrimonial attorneys.

IRB Concerns/ Human Subjects

Any research topic can be a sensitive one, though some areas of research are more likely to be threatening than others. According to Lee and Renzetti (1990), sensitive topics include research that intrudes into a deeply personal experience, involves the study of deviance or social control or deals with things considered sacred by participants, such

as family, love and sexual integrity. The study met the criteria for a sensitive topic, therefore, a focus on ethical principles and respect for the participants was of paramount importance (Fontes, 2004).

The core of the study involved the participation of women who have experienced hurtful and damaging emotional abuse, some for long periods of time. The participants in a study about intimate partner abuse may experience a lack of clarity about the research process to which they have consented, and the potential for emotional risk varies depending on the individual's coping mechanisms (Fontes, 2004). Due to the volatile nature of the study topic and the exposure of the participants to raw emotional content, it was imperative that any possible mental health risks be addressed and that appropriate clinical referral sources were made available.

The initial group of participants were accessed from a voluntary divorce support group offered through the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services and The Jewish Community Center of Manhattan. The group leaders are Licensed Certified Social Workers with broad clinical treatment experience. Women who had agreed to participate in the study had all previously terminated an abusive relationship at least six months prior to the interview and had voluntarily chosen to attend the divorce support group.

The initial meeting with each participant included an information session about the study focus, an overview of the interview topic areas, request for signed consent, and a review of treatment referral sources. A demographic questionnaire obtained accurate descriptions of the participants in order to assure that study criterion were met.

The women were offered an opportunity to review the data and provide feedback if desired and the researcher provided assurance that all audiotapes were to be erased at the end of the project and no identifying information was to be used in publication. I advised the women of a number of clear decision points throughout the interview, where they could decide whether or not to continue. For example, “The next few questions concern the most recent emotionally abusive incident. Do you want to continue?” This process allowed the women to feel more in control of their participation in the interview. (Fontes, 2004).

Confidentiality of the data was reviewed and any questions from the participants were answered openly and honestly. In general, researchers do not enjoy any legal rights of privilege regarding the communication between themselves and research participants. The possibility for research data to be subpoenaed for the use in criminal or civil litigation does exist, despite protests of the researcher or participants (Human Research Committee, University of Colorado, 2009). Legislatures or courts have not granted researchers an absolute privilege to protect the confidentiality of their data. The Supreme Court’s interpretation of the First Amendment fails to provide such a privilege and statutory or judicial rules of evidence do not ordinarily provide an explicit privilege for researchers (Traynor, 1997).

The consent form does not usually include mention of subpoenas because the event is unlikely, however, and it was not determined by the Hunter IRB that the issue of subpoenaed records is plausible, therefore additional language was not included on the consent form that indicated the existence of such a possibility (Human Research Committee, University of Colorado, 2009; Royer, 2009). The issue about whether or not

it was necessary to disclose on the written consent form, the unlikely possibility of a subpoena for a participant's information was not instructed by the Hunter IRB. The most frequently encountered scenarios in qualitative research where a researcher may be called to testify are: when the study participants engage in illegal activity in the researcher's presence or the participants tell the researcher about past illegal activity (Traynor, 1997).

Every best effort will be made to advocate on behalf of the participant to protect their privacy if a request for disclosure of such information is requested (Royer, 2009). It was also made clear that the inquiry was intended for the sole purpose of information gathering and not intended for therapeutic purposes. Participants were free to refuse response to any question or to withdraw from the study at any time.

Considering the amount of studies conducted on intimate partner abuse, it is remarkable how little has been addressed about the impact on researchers who conduct this type of work. Researchers participate in the project along with the participants, therefore, their well-being is also a legitimate ethical concern (Fontes, 2004). The most commonly reported effect on researchers who study intimate partner abuse appears to be emotional distress. The work can be emotionally exhausting, draining and overwhelming. The researcher prepared for these possible outcomes by maintaining an ongoing support system both professionally and personally.

Limitations

Validity and reliability are often questioned when open-ended interview data are used in qualitative research designs. This study was not intended to draw causal relationships or to prove a hypothesis; it was intended to generate ideas about the factors associated with the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship for socially non-

marginalized women. The use of qualitative research trades generalizability for depth (Patton, 2002).

The use of audiotapes increases the strength of reliability because it provides an accurate record of the data; however, it does not guarantee the reliability of the observations made by the interviewer. Transcription of the data does not reveal nuances such as tone, inflection, volume or speed of speech, and is only a partial representation of the responses.

The sample consisted of twenty-two women who had self-identified as victims of emotional abusive and had terminated the abusive relationship. The sample was not representative of other geographic areas outside of New York City, therefore, limiting the generalizability of the study, however six participants experienced an abusive relationship while residing outside of New York. The use of a semi-structured interview guide limited some details of the participant's stories in service to summarizing data.

The validity of the interview answers comes from the respondent's ability to convey her experiences in a comprehensible manner. The reliance on self-reported data from the participants' reconstruction of past memories is another limitation of the study (Neisser, 1982). Self-reported memories can be distorted or they can closely represent the events as they occurred. There is no guaranteed way to distinguish between actual reality and what the participant reports as reality. The interviewer must trust that the experiences and information recorded are accurate.

IX. Results of the Research

Introduction

Data was retrieved through the use of a standardized interview guide (See Appendix C for the complete interview guide). Multiple readings of the transcripts and listening to and transcribing each recorded interview, enabled me to begin the process of identifying themes and analyzing the rich information that emerged. The hours spent analyzing the data provided me with deep intimate knowledge of each participants' story and the vocal intonations and linguistic nuances helped shape the content. Due to the sensitive subject matter, the participants were deeply reflective about their situations, and they expressed emotions ranging from sadness, anger and confusion to strength, optimism and jubilation.

Coding Process

Coding of the data was implemented through the processes of structural, open, axial and selective coding systems. Data coding was utilized to delineate pertinent information into emergent themes that ultimately led to new theoretical information. A key characteristic of grounded theory is the concept of emergent design. Data was gathered and analyzed immediately after collection and used as the basis of decision making about what data to collect in the next part of the analysis. Personal reflections throughout the interview were noted. Examples of reflective memo-writing were interspersed throughout the open coding section.

Throughout the interview process, data was analyzed and major themes were expected to emerge which were then categorized in such a way as to yield a theory, as recommended by Bowen, 2006.

The overall theory was generated by the themes that emerged from data analysis, which captured the experience drawn from varied situations. (Bruce, 2007). Core concepts were identified and provided the framework for category definition. Types of categories included causal, strategic, intervening conditions or consequences. (Giske & Artinian, 2007). Coding methods were utilized, beginning with structural coding. This process involves identifying themes through the examination of the research questions. Structural coding was initially used as a tool to identify the categories of data being sought through the interview guide questions. (See Appendix D for the complete structural coding guide).

Structural Coding: (Examples from the Study)

The Relationship Referenced for the Study

How long were you involved in an emotionally abusive relationship before ending it?

Structural Code: S-LENGTH

At what point were you aware that your ex-partner was emotionally abusive?

Structural Code: S-REALIZATION

Family of Origin Environment and Relationships

How would you describe your parents' relationship when you were growing up?

Structural Code: S-PARENTSRELATIONSHIP

How did you feel when changes occurred within the family system? i.e. moving, change in parent's marital status.

Structural Code: S-TRANSITIONS

Social Role Expectations

What did you expect from yourself as a female adult?

Structural Code: S-EXPECTATIONS

What do you think your parents expected from you as a female adult?

Structural Code: S-PARENTSEXPECTATIONS

Termination of the Emotionally Abusive Relationship

When did you first contemplate ending the relationship?

Structural Code: S-CONTEMPLATION

What were you concerned about most?
Structural Code: S-CONCERN

What happened to end the relationship? Was there a specific incident?
Structural Code: S-END

How did you feel once you made the decision to end the relationship?
Structural Code: S-DECISION

What steps did you take to formalize the ending of the relationship? i.e. move out, seek legal counsel, other.
Structural Code: S-STEPS

Post-Termination of the Emotionally Abusive Relationship

Do you perceive yourself as changed, if you do, because you ended the relationship?
Structural Code: S-CHANGED

Looking back, what was the biggest obstacle to ending the relationship?
Structural Code: S-OBSTACLE

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

Do you think that having a sense of agency (self-strength) was a motivating factor?
Structural Code: S- AGENCY

Do you think that your sense of self-awareness was a motivating factor?
Structural Code: S- SELFAWARENESS

SOCIAL FACTORS

Do you think having formal education was a motivating factor?
Structural Code: S- Education

Do you think that having the support of family and friends was a motivating factor?
Structural Code: S- Support

After establishing structural codes, results of the research were organized by categories of inquiry and the corresponding questions in the interview guide. Some interview questions became folded into others after analysis, due to replication of data. The number of the interview question is presented with its correlating responses. The following represents the actual interview questions with the number of participant answers.

Questions from the Interview Guide: Open and Close Ended Questions

Duration of an Emotionally Abusive Relationship before Termination

1. How long were you involved in an emotionally abusive relationship before ending it?

The length of the emotionally abusive relationships ranged from between zero to two years to between twenty four to twenty six years, with the most cited amount of years between three to five. Both the ranges of nine to eleven years and eighteen to twenty years were the second most often cited lengths of the emotionally abusive relationships.

0-2 yrs = 3 3-5yrs =4 6-8yrs =2 9-11yrs =3 12-14yrs = 1 15-17yrs = 1

18-20yrs = 5 21-23yrs = 0 24-26yrs = 2 30-32 yrs = 1

First Awareness of Emotional Abuse in the Relationship

2. At what point were you aware that your ex-partner was emotionally abusive?

The length of time involved in the relationship before being aware of emotionally abusive behaviors ranged from not realizing it was emotional abuse until after the relationship ended, and between one to three years, the most often cited length of time. Four to five years and twelve to thirteen and fourteen to fifteen years were the least cited.

Not Until After Over = 6

1-3yrs into relationship = 10

4-5yrs into relationship = 3
6-7yrs into relationship = 0
8-9yrs into relationship = 0
10-11yrs into relationship = 0
12-13yrs into relationship = 1
14-15yrs into relationship = 1
Over 15 yrs into relationship = 1

Open Acknowledgment of Emotional Abuse

3. Did you openly acknowledge the existence of emotional abuse?

The participants openly acknowledged the existence of emotional abuse in their relationships less frequently than they acknowledged it. Six participants reported that they openly acknowledged the existence of emotional abuse in the relationship, while sixteen participants did not openly acknowledged the existence of emotional abuse.

Yes = 6

No = 16

Coping Mechanisms that Supported Termination

4. How did you cope with the emotional abuse? Did you tell family or friends? Did you seek help? If so, from whom?

Various coping mechanisms that supported the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship were noted by the participants. In some cases, the coping mechanisms were connected to the larger society and the impact of socialization of women.

12 Participants responded that they Shared Information about the Abuse Selectively

10 Participants responded that they Sought Therapy

4 Participants responded that they Initially Blamed Themselves for the Abuse

4 Participants responded that they Protected Their Partner's Privacy

4 Participants responded that they Minimized the Abuse as a Justification to Stay

3 Participants responded that they Compartmentalized Their Abusive Life

3 Participants responded that they Felt Social Stigma and Shame

4 Participants responded that they Did Not Define the Abuse and Denied its Existence

Impact of Other's Reactions

5. How did you experience other people's reactions when you told them about the emotional abuse?

The majority of participants reported having a strong social support system, while other participants noted they felt they got different levels of support from different individuals in their lives and some participants did not feel a sense of validation by the larger society when they were open about why they terminated their relationships.

8 Participants reported that they had a Strong Support System

4 Participants reported having Different Levels of Support from Different Individuals

3 Participants reported they Did Not Feel Validated by Society

2 Participant reported feeling Social Role Pressure From Others

Personal and Parental Expectations

An investigation into the personal and parental role expectations of the participants revealed that the majority of women desired a professional life, were ambivalent about the prospect of motherhood, ambitious in their school and career goals while also feeling external traditional social role pressure. The participants reported that overwhelmingly, the expectations of their parents reflected a lack of clarity and a sense of traditional social role pressure.

Personal Expectations:

9. What did you expect from yourself as a female adult?

17 Participants reported that they Desired a Professional Life

7 Participants reported being Ambivalent about Motherhood

9 Participants reported feeling Social Role Pressure

6 Participants reported being Ambitious in Their School and Career Goals

3 Participants reported having a Fantasy about Adulthood

3 Participants reported Desiring a Traditional Female Social Role

2 Participants reported Desiring Protection

2 Participant reported Desiring Motherhood

1 Participant reported being Ambivalent about Marriage

1 Participant reported having No Personal Expectations

Parental Expectations:

10. What do you think your parents expected from you as a female adult?

12 Participants reported having Unclear Expectations from Their Parents

8 Participants reported feeling Social Role Pressure from Their Parents

3 Participants reported being encouraged to be Self Sufficient and Have a Professional Life

1 Participant reported that parents expected her to be Ambitious in School and Career Goals

Action Taken to Formalize the Termination of the Relationship

17. What steps did you take to formalize the ending of the relationship?

The most frequent response to the question about the steps taken to formalize the termination of the relationship was having a sense of agency, seeking legal counsel and

having a strong support system. Only three participants reported seeking help to formally terminate their relationships by accessing social services.

11 Participants cited having a Sense of Agency

12 Participants cited seeking Legal Services

11 Participants cited having a Strong Support System

4 Participants reported Moving Out of the home shared with their ex partner.

3 Participants reported Seeking Social Services

2 Participants cited being the Primary Wage Earner

1 Participant reported concern over Financial Entwinement

2 Participant Sought Therapy

Psychological Factors that Promoted Termination

The majority of the participants reported that having a sense of agency and self-awareness promoted their ability to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship.

22 Participants cited having a sense of Agency

22 Participants cited having a sense of Self-Awareness

Social Factors that Promoted Termination

The desire for a professional life and having a strong social support system were the most often cited social factors that promoted the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship. Ambition in school and career goals and concern over the impact on their children were also important social factors that promoted termination. At least one quarter of the participants noted that being the primary wage earner in their relationship also promoted their ability to terminate the abusive relationship.

17 Participants cited the Desire for a Professional Life

11 Participants cited a Strong Support System

6 Participants cited having been Ambitious in School and Career Goals

6 Participants cited concern about the Impact on their Children

4 Participants cited being the Primary Wage Earner

Obstacles to Terminating Relationship

14. What were you concerned about most? Looking back what was the biggest obstacle to ending the relationship?

The major obstacles to terminating an emotionally abusive relationship were cited as the fear of being alone, financial concerns and social stigma. Feeling guilt about being the individual who terminated the relationship, and facing the reality of the loss of a dream were also frequently noted obstacles in terminating the abusive relationship.

12 Participants reported a Fear of Being Alone

11 Participants reported having Financial Concerns

7 Participant reported feeling Social Stigma

4 Participants reported feeling Guilt about Initiating the Termination of the Relationship

4 Participants reported Holding On to the Good Times or the Loss of a Dream

3 Participants reported feeling that Society Sympathized with the Their Partners Who Were Left

2 Participants reported feeling Confused about the Emotional Abuse

2 Participants reported concern for the Impact on Their Children

1 Participant reported Fear of Repercussions by Abusive Partner

1 Participant reported having Trouble Envisioning the Future

1 Participant reported giving up sex with partner because Sex was the Glue

Psychological Factors

The specific psychological factors that promoted the women's ability to terminate the emotionally abusive relationship were presented as close ended questions after the completion of the open ended questions. The following are the tabulations of the close ended questions regarding the psychological factors that motivated the women to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. (See Appendix C for the complete interview guide).

Sense of Agency

Do you think having a sense of agency (self- strength) was a motivating factor to end the relationship?

Yes = 22

No = 0

Sense of Self-Awareness

Do you think that your sense of self- awareness was a motivating factor to end the relationship?

Yes = 22

No = 0

Identification with Early Role Models

Do you think that your identification with early role models was a motivating factor to end the relationship?

Yes = 8 (Did not Want to Repeat)

No = 14

Conflict in Family of Origin

Do you think that the way conflict was handled by your parents was a motivating factor for you to end the relationship?

Yes = 8 (Did not Want to Repeat)

No = 14

History of Emotionally Abusive Relationships

Do you think that having a history of emotionally abusive relationships was a motivating factor for you to end the relationship?

Yes = 4

No = 18

Social Factors

Close ended questions regarding the social factors that promoted the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship were presented. The support of family and friends, having formal education and employment opportunities and the participants' expectations of themselves as adult women were the most salient social factors noted.

Formal Education and Employment Opportunities

Do you think having formal education and employment opportunities motivated you to end the relationship

Yes = 18

No = 4

Social Status

Do you think that your view of social status was a motivating factor to you to end the relationship?

Yes = 12

No = 10 (Kept me In)

Other's View of Social Status

Do you think the way you experienced other people's views of social status motivated you to end the relationship?

Yes = 3

No = 19

Perception of Self as an Adult

Do you think the way you perceived yourself as a female adult was a motivating factor for you to end the relationship?

Yes = 15

No = 7

Support of Family and Friends

Do you think having the support of family and friends was a motivating factor for you to end the relationship?

Yes = 22

No = 0

The second step in my qualitative data analysis was the process of open coding. Reflective notes were written in the right hand margin of each transcript as a process to establish open codes. Major categories of information were identified through the open coding process. For illustrative purposes, transcripts are presented using the process of segmentation to reveal discrete meaningful units of text that were selected for interpretation and analysis. (Wheeler, 2008). . Examples of open codes are presented to illustrate the process of delineating codes that emerged from the transcripts. (See Appendix E for the complete open coding guide)

Open Coding

One consistent theme was the participants' inability to use the terminology or definition of emotional abuse.

3. Did you openly acknowledge the existence of emotional abuse?

TR#1, pg 1 "I don't know that I had those words in my mind until maybe after we ended. Uhm, I knew at some point obviously that I couldn't live in the emotional environment I was in. But, I don't know if I would have said if someone asked me is he emotionally abusive.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR# 2, pg.1 "I still grapple with that phrase. I've been told he was and I can isolate times where things he said, were, uhm, for lack of a better term, tell me he has serious problems, but the phrase emotionally abusive is still hard for me. It makes me feel like a victim.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

REFLECTIVE MEMO: The participant still has difficulty defining her abuse as emotional abuse. She struggles with the phrase and feels like it makes her sound weak.

TR# 4, pg. 1 "I didn't understand that it was emotionally abusive. In fact, I am just learning about emotional abuse. I thought this was just normal you know you are having an argument and nobody's perfect and I have to learn how to deal with this".

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

REFLECTIVE MEMO: Participant normalized male dominance as the prescribed social role in a marriage. She justified his behavior based on social roles and used that as a denial of his abuse.

TR# 5, pg.1 “I couldn’t define it as emotionally abusive until after, until I got out and looked back”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

TR# 7, pg.1 “I think I didn’t typify it as emotional abuse until later on, but I knew something was wrong before that.”

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

REFLECTIVE MEMO: The participant has difficulty pinpointing what is wrong in her relationship and knows something is not right, yet she is unable to define the abuse.

TR# 15, pg. 1 “I haven’t labeled it that way. I now see it but I haven’t shared that.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR # 20, pg.1 “There were times that I can recall from very early on that he did emotionally abusive things. The way he spoke to me, but I may not have recognized it at the time or I accepted it you know like as part of the ups and downs of marriage”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not use Term Emotional Abuse

TR # 21, pg. 1 “I didn’t call it that until much later after I was out of it. I don’t think I was able to say that”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

TR # 22, pg. 1 “Well, I never used the word abuse because I didn’t know that it was abuse. I thought it was just a fight or but it was interesting because I would always look back and say wait a minute we are not really fighting, he is just being mean to me.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

The exploration of where or to whom the participants turned for help revealed that the women often sought help form a therapist. Following are examples of transcripts that cite the use of therapy which lead to the open code: Sought Therapy.

4. How did you cope with the emotional abuse? Did you tell family or friends? Did you seek help? If so, from whom?

TR# 1, pg.1 “I did tell friends and eventually family because of my son. For a long time I kept saying to him come to therapy with me, come talk to me with someone. And he refused!”

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

TR# 2, pg. 2 “I had just moved to a different state so I didn’t have the support system I was used to and he was very anti-therapy and me sharing it with anybody because it was so private.Uhm, what I did do was asked him to see a therapist and he said no, and eventually I went into therapy.

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

REFLECTIVE MEMO: The participant expresses her frustration with her partner for being unwilling to get help, yet she does not give up completely and is able to seek help for herself. Sense of resiliency.

TR# 3, pg. 1 I said you can't come back unless you go to therapy. I went to a therapist with him, a marriage counselor and finally the marriage counselor said are you going to put up with this?

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

TR# 6, pg. 1,2 "I went to a psychiatrist (crying) and spent about six months trying to talk about and work it out and I guess that was my emotional separation from him to say this is what I have to do"

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

TR# 7, pg.1 I had done therapy on and off so I discussed it. I didn't use the terminology, emotionally abusive, but I suggested that several times over the course of the relationship that we do therapy together. He refused and then it was official that we were separating . I suggested magnanimously that we do joint therapy so WE could understand how we got to this place instead of just saying, I didn't want to provoke and say how did YOU get to this place? We did like six or seven sessions."

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

REFLECTIVE MEMO: Despite the participant being so intelligent and capable, she struggled with upsetting her partner by naming the abuse and she had to gently cajole him to go for therapy. She sounds bitter and belittling of her partner that she felt she had to treat him with protection rather than openly tell him he was emotionally abusive. Also note anger towards herself for joining him in the "blame".

TR# 15, p.1 "Probably in our marriage and relationship we saw ten different couples therapists"

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

TR # 22, pg. 1 "I begged him to go to therapy, he went with me once and said it was a huge waste of his time and complained and said he doesn't believe in it."

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

The participants described their parent's relationships when they were growing up and how they experienced each parent. Two themes that emerged from the data collection were the participants' view of their mother as narcissistic and the idealization of their father despite his being abusive. Following are some examples of the themes that led to the open codes: Views Mother as Narcissistic and Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behaviors.

6. How would you describe your parents' relationship when you were growing up?

TR # 1, pg. 3 "Well at age 58 she got her husband to sell his business and they moved to Florida and she played golf and mahjong from then on. She got her agenda but she was very dependant. She couldn't write a check without okaying it with him. When I asked my mother to help me out with money for a car she wouldn't; give it to me, but my father did, gambler that he was."

OPEN CODE: Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behavior

OPEN CODE: Views Mother as Narcissistic

REFLECTIVE MEMO: Participant sounds angry at her mother for standing up for herself and getting things in life she desired.

TR #2, pg. 9 My father was mean to my sister, he was abusive to her, he hit her when we were very very little and I remember that. I remember hiding with my mother scared of my father what he was gonna do. And I am much closer to my father than to my mother, because my mother had a lot of other mental health stuff going on and my dad and I always had a lot more in common. But what I realized recently, was that although they fought all the time and my father yelled all the time it was always out of frustration, it was never demeaning. It never cancelled out anyone's worth".

OPEN CODE: Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behaviors

RELECTIVE MEMO: Participant vacillates between anger at her abusive father and protecting him or idealizing him. Almost as if she really says he was abusive it will break through the wall of denial she has built to cope with the reality.

TR # 7, pg.2 My mother was a very narcissistic, self centered egomaniacal you know, wanted things on her own terms and her way. And uhm, she never really wanted children, but she had three so there were quite a few issues in the marriage. My mother's way of dealing was to be a full time career professional and she didn't have time for the family. Well, just you know, she would just bitch and moan and complain all the time you know she was too busy for this and too busy for that."

OPEN CODE: Views Mother as Narcissistic

REFLECTIVE MEMO: Participant sounds angry but she also seems hardened to what she is saying about her mother.

TR # 9, pg. 8 "Actually my father can sometimes be a little abusive to my mother. He criticizes my mother sometimes and I guess I didn't pay attention to it very much. He would apologize. Ultimately but he would still do it again. My father just really worshipped her, he just did. I mean uh, he (long pause), not that I think that material things are an expression of ones love, but you know my father always bought my mother gifts, he took her on wonderful vacations, he always made sure to remember every anniversary, every birthday."

OPEN CODE: Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behaviors

REFLECTIVE MEMO: Participant seems unable to completely acknowledge her father's abusive behavior and tempers it with excuses.

TR # 21, pg. 2 as a young girl my father was kind of a double edged sword. He was a kind loving father but he had a very bad temper and he could go off at a seconds notice and he could scream and below and he could do odd kinds of angry outburst. Not directed toward my mother always toward co- worker or toward me or towards my brothers. Now he came home and heard that things that he didn't like then he would take his strap and give it to us. So that was the way he was and then seconds later as soon as he could calm down, he was the sweetest little lamb ever and very warm and loving and couldn't ask enough questions about how to help me I school, and how to be , kind of what good things I could do and be supportive.

OPEN CODE: Idealized Father Despite Abusive Behavior

The open codes extracted from the transcripts were then listed by the number of times each specific code was cited.

List of Initial Open Codes

The following initial open codes were derived after the analysis of the first fifteen transcripts. The early repetition of these codes indicated their strength and importance to the study.

<u>CODE</u>	<u># TIMES CITED</u>
Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse	9
Responsibility To Make Relationship Work	5
Sought Couple’s Therapy	7
Shared Information Selectively	9
Protected Partner’s Privacy	4
Initial Self-Blame	3
Holding On To Good Times	3
Minimized Abuse as Justification to Stay	5
Compartmentalized Abusive Life	2
Fear of Being Alone	9
Different Levels of Support	2
Social Role Pressure	11
Strong Support System (Family and Friends)	15
Sense of Agency	16
Poor Communication in Family of Origin	1
Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behavior	6
Views Mother as Narcissistic	5
Acknowledges Mother’s Sacrifices and Strengths	1

Idealizes Parent's Relationship Despite Abuse	4
Aware of Parent's Marital Issues	8
Parentified Child/Caregiver	2
Idealizes Parent's Relationship	4
Ambivalent About Motherhood	7
Desired Professional Life	13
Desired Traditional Feminine Role	2
History of Boyfriends Since High School	1
Ambitious in Educational and Professional Goals	7
Late Bloomer Sexually	1
Desired Protection	2
Fantasy About Adulthood	3
Ambivalent About Marriage	1
Unclear About Parent's Expectations	7
Encouraged to be Self-Sufficient	2
Partner Unsupportive of Career Goals	2
Public Humiliation	3
Fear of Partner	1
Long Process Before Terminating Relationship	8
Impact on Children	6
Partner Infidelity Motivated Termination	1
Authorities Notified by Outside Party	2
Gave Up Parts of Life to Please Partner	4

Financial Concern	8
Social Stigma	3
Loss of a Dream	2
Financial Manipulation by Partner	2
Fear of Being Incapable	1
Sense of Relief	2
Analogous to Feeling about Leaving Abusive Parent	2
Sense of Optimism	4
Sense of Loss	1
Sense of Depletion	2
Sense of Validation	1
Moved Out	2
Sought Legal Counsel	10
Concern About Financial Entwinement	3
Sought Social Services	3
Primary Wage Earner	2
Guilt About Terminating the Relationship	3
Crazy Making of Abuse	1
Sex as Glue	1
Excuses for Abusive Behavior	1
Envisioning the Future	1
Fear of Repercussions by Partner	1
Society Blames Women Who Terminate the Relationship	8

Sexual Manipulation	9
Financial Manipulation	6

Constant comparative data analysis was employed. New emergent data was consistently coded and compared with already developed codes to generate concepts and to saturate a theory. The next step in the data analysis involved the condensation of the open codes into a hierarchal list. The most often cited themes were noted and tabulated as the total number of responses that indicated a particular theme. The following is an example from the list of the predominant open codes.

The proposal for the study indicated the completion of thirty interviews, however, the themes were saturated after the completion of twenty-two interviews. The goal of a grounded theory study is to gather enough data to fully saturate the model, which is achieved when no new themes are identifiable. As noted by Bruce, 2007, sufficient data has been collected at the point in which the codes/themes have been exhausted. After twenty-two interviews, the open coding process indicated a saturation of relevant themes.

List of Most Predominant Initial Open Codes

<u>CODE</u>	<u># TIMES CITED</u>
Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse	12
Shared Information Selectively	11
Fear of Being Alone	10
Social Role Pressure	14
Strong Support System (Family and Friends)	17
Sense of Agency	22
Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behavior	7
Views Mother as Narcissistic	5
Desired Professional Life	17

Ambitious in Educational and Professional Goals	7
Unclear About Parent's Expectations	9
Long Process Before Terminating Relationship	11
Impact on Children	8
Financial Concern	9
Sought Legal Counsel	13
Society Blames Women Who Terminate the Relationship	9
Sexual Manipulation	11
Financial Manipulation	7

Conclusion of Research Results

The intensive process of transcription, coding and analysis of the data revealed themes that richly encapsulated the process of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship for women with social resources. A sense of agency, strong support system, the desire for a professional life and social role pressure represented a combination of psychological and social factors that enhanced the internal and external struggle for the women to ultimately terminate an emotionally abusive relationship.

Although there were variations of the relevant themes, distinct elements of the collective women's experiences led the researcher to the construction of a core category by implementing both selective and axial coding which will be discussed and detailed in the findings of the research..

X. Findings from the Research

Intensive transcript analysis uncovered sixteen distinct psychological and social factors, each of which (separately or combined) contributed significantly to the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship. Analysis of the data also uncovered correspondences between these factors and key theoretical perspectives that were noted in the study's literature review. A model was developed that summarizes the key themes that emerged from the coding process. The model and its description constitute this chapter's first segment, followed by a summary that pairs the most frequently cited codes with their explanatory theory. The second part of the chapter integrates selections from data (the coded transcripts) with "Psychological" factors. The third part of the chapter is handled similarly, but is related to "Social" factors.

Axial coding was the third step in the qualitative coding process and it focused on one open coding category that became the core phenomenon. Categories were then created around this core phenomenon. The process of coding the transcripts allowed for in-depth comprehension of the data and the development of the core category. Qualitative data analysis does utilize selective coding, which is the limiting of those variables that are related to the core category (Giske & Artinian, 2007). Selective codes are useful in generating theory. The overarching goal was to deconstruct and then reconstruct the data in the effort to generate emergent theory (Wheeler, 2008).

Selective coding was the final coding step. The researcher took the model that emerged from the transcript analysis and then developed a hypothesis or proposition that showed how the categories are interrelated. A narrative was assembled to describe that interrelationship (Giske & Artinian, 2007). The model was built around the following

selective codes: not using the term emotional abuse, social role pressure, responsibility to make the relationship work, fear of being alone, strong support from family and friends, and the ability to access the sense of personal agency exercised in professional life. The selective codes are presented in model form with their associated theoretical concepts (Charmaz, 2006).

The Model

As is seen in the Figure “Model” below, what emerged as the core theme of the entire study was a transformative process. In this process, the subjects actualized social and psychological agency that had been suppressed by and during the emotionally abusive relationship. This is the most significant finding of the study and will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

MODEL

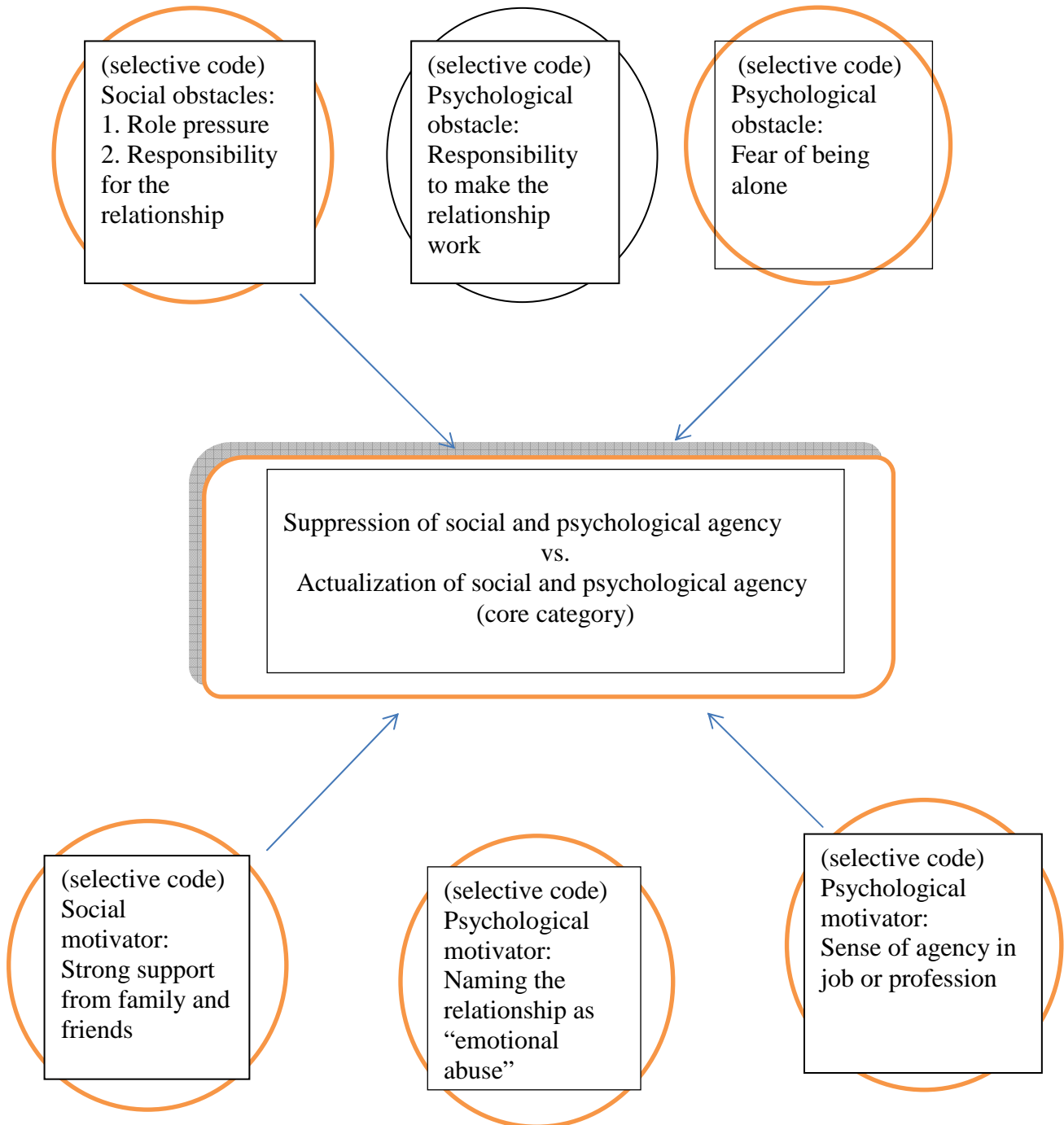


Figure 1.

Description of the Model

Selective codes display specific obstacles to the initial termination of the relationship and specific motivators that encouraged and supported termination of the abusive relationship. Obstacles and motivators represent either a psychological or social factor that had an impact on the participants' decision making processes.

The significant social obstacle was social role pressure. The inculcated role pressure on women to be married, maintain the appearances of a happy family life and represent themselves to others as “doing what was expected of them” presented an obstacle to termination. Social role pressure, when combined with the two psychological obstacles, (responsibility to make the relationship work and fear of being alone) reinforces the already significant barriers to terminating relationships. Overcoming the three obstacles ultimately allowed for the women to extricate themselves from an emotionally abusive relationship. Figure 1, the model, displays the three obstacles in the upper third of the figure, while the motivators to terminate are shown in the lower third.

The social motivator to terminating an emotionally abusive relationship was the participants' strong support of family and friends. In the interviews, the women overwhelmingly claimed that this factor was preeminent in their ability to fully terminate the relationship. Coupled with the psychological motivator, a sense of agency in job or profession, the participants described an inner strength that propelled them to end the emotionally abusive relationship.

The dramatic new finding that represents the selective code, naming the relationship as “emotional abuse”, served to put a name on the women's' experience and give them a sense of validity to terminate the relationship. The new finding demonstrated that women

did not know the definitions of emotional abuse nor did they have the language to express their experience in a way that carried weight in the larger society. The discovery for themselves that emotional abuse does, in fact, have definitions was almost an epiphany like experience, which along with all the selective codes contributed to the formation of the core category: suppression of social and psychological agency vs. actualization of social and psychological agency. The model represents the culmination of data analysis and led to the discovery of the core category through a multistep coding process. The next section will delineate the coded findings with theoretical perspectives.

Paired Theories and Coded findings

1) “Leaving” factors

Among the psychodynamic theories applied to this study, attachment theory explains why the support provided by the family of origin, and esteemed by the subject, helped sustain and motivate the subject to leave the abusive relationship. Relational theory is relevant to the process of leaving *after* the subject had exhausted all efforts to repair and/or maintain the abusive relationship. Finally, the theory of agency stands out as significant in both the psychological and social arenas because it explains why the women were able to leave. Many of the subjects were the primary wage earners who saw their careers and work as strengths. In order to affirm a voice in the relationship, most of the subjects initiated couples therapy in attempt to work out conflict. The ability to articulate the feeling of “I can’t live like this anymore” motivated them to action. She defended herself psychologically and socially when friends of family members generated (consciously or not) feelings of guilt for terminating the relationship.

The two sets of social theories most useful for explaining how the subjects were able to leave emotionally abusive relationships, are feminist theory and narrative theory.

Historically speaking, the subjects felt that the opportunity to pursue education and career ambitions were products of the feminist movement. Feminist theory explains their sense of themselves as empowered women. Feminist theory is also seen in their expressed desire to *NOT* repeat the gendered divisions of labor, including the social subjugation of women that she witnessed as a child. Narrative theory helped the women make sense of their experience of emotional abuse. By telling her story in the present, a woman could disengage from the earlier life narrative imbued with a middle class value system. Interestingly, she did not use the language or terms of emotional abuse until she had left the relationship. Narrative theory explains how naming the relationship as “emotionally abuse” helped her actualize her sense of agency.

2) Staying factors

The psychodynamic theories include attachment, a theory that serves to explain both “leaving” and “staying” factors in this study. In the latter case, transcript analysis showed that material love was interpreted as a substitute for caring love. This was reminiscent of early experiences of intransigent emotional connection to the mother despite her rejection. Object Relations theory deepened this explanation. Subjects often saw similarities between her own experience of emotional abuse and the abuse perpetrated by her father on her mother and sometimes herself. This early familiarity with abuse had “taught” them to “walk on eggshells” in order to maintain the paternal relationship and to tolerate parental behavior that was, in fact, sadistic and rageful. Moreover, this tolerance was armored by an idealization of the father, anger toward the narcissistic mother, and by the impression of feeling closer to the father than to the mother. Lastly, relational theory

explains why many of the subjects felt compelled to repair the relationship and attempt to gain reciprocity and empathy before she could leave.

Social role theory and investment theory were the two main social theories used to deepen the data analysis. Social role theory explains how the subjects found themselves conforming to a range of gendered behaviors. For example, they blamed themselves for the abuse and for their seeming failure to comply with gender roles. They felt the “loss of a dream” (being married with a family and a loving husband), and expressed wistfulness and longing for “good times” (vacations, dinners, couples social life). Because of their subjugated positions, they tolerated their partners’ demeaning language, refrained from defining these behaviors as abusive, and abandoned some personal interests and friends in an effort to accommodate their social roles. The women’s particular subjugation to financial enmeshment with their partners was clarified by investment theory. This data, when analyzed through the lens of investment theory, showed that the emotional abuse generated a fear of being financially ruined if disentangled, and the concurrent fear of “breaking up the family” with children.

Paired Theories and Coded Findings by Code

The most often cited open codes were extracted from the data. These were paired with relevant theoretical perspectives. What follows is the itemization of the open codes corresponding to theories.

Most Cited Open Codes		Theoretical Perspective
1) Leaving factors:		
Strong Support System (Family and Friends)	18	Attachment
Psychological Agency	22	Agency
Began to use the term “emotional abuse”	12	Narrative
2) Staying factors:		
Fear of Being Alone	9	Object Relations
Idealized Father Despite Abusive Behavior	7	Object Relations
Responsibility to Make Relationship Work	8	Investment theory
Sought Couples Therapy	9	Relational/Cultural
Shared Information Selectively	10	Social Role
Social Role Pressure	14	Social Role
Viewed Mother as Narcissistic	5	Object Relations

Below is an inventory of the psychological, social and postmodern theories that were appeared most frequently during the process of analyzing the transcripts. These theories are integrated throughout the sections that explore the transcript analysis. It should be noted that some of the factors, either psychological or social, can reappear in several theoretical groupings.

Psychological, Social and Postmodern Theories with most Cited Open Codes

Social Role Theory

Social role pressure
 Ambivalent about motherhood
 Unclear about Parent’s Expectations
 Impact on Children (To set an Example)
 Society Blames Women Who End Relationship

Object Relations Theory

Fear of Being Alone Greatest Concern
 Idealizes Father Despite Abusive Behavior (Reaction Formation)
 Views Mother as Narcissistic

Attachment Theory

Strong Family Support system

Relational/Cultural Theory

Responsibility to Make Relationship Work
Sought Therapy in Effort to Repair Relationship
Long Process Before Able to Terminate Relationship
Aware of Parent's Marital Conflict and did not want to replicate

Theories of Agency

Sense of Agency
Desired Professional Life
Ambitious in Educational and Professional Goals
Sought legal counsel
Optimism about the future

Transcript Analysis of the Psychological Factors Associated with Terminating an Emotionally Abusive Relationship

The transcript analysis revealed that seven psychological factors could be explained by theory. These factors were: the fear of being alone, idealization of an emotionally abusive father, view of the mother as narcissistic, turning to family of origin for support, responsibility to make the relationship work, sought therapy in effort to repair the relationship, and thoughtful process before termination. What follows is the analysis of each of these factors, as seen in excerpts from the transcripts and as explained by theory.

Fear of Being Alone

The interview questions that attempted to explore the primary concerns and obstacles for terminating emotionally abusive relationships revealed that the fear of being alone was noted most often by participants. Twelve of Twenty-two women replied that the fear of being alone presented the greatest obstacle or concern in terminating the relationship. Participants expressed an intrinsic fear of being alone, and this is supported by aspects of both psychological and social theoretical perspectives. Psychologically, the fear of being alone, harkens back to the theoretical tenets of object relations theory,

which addresses the psychological development of internal attachment style from early childhood

For some participants, the fear of being alone was clearly stated outright as in Transcript # 7, pg. 5 “ So, being alone is like my biggest fear, but I realized I was alone in that marriage for many years, so I went through the worst of it already.” Transcript # 8, pg. 6 “It wasn’t the finances I was most worried about, it really wasn’t the finances. It was much more about being alone.” Transcript # 9, pg. 12 “I wasn’t worried about financial security because I knew that I could support myself. I don’t really want to be alone so that actually has been my fear.” Transcript# 12, pg. 5 “But I was afraid, I didn’t want to be alone.”

These quotes reveal the deep need to be emotionally connected with someone, akin to the inner yearning for relatedness as explained by object relations theory. These statements are an example of Zosky’s (1999) idea that dependency needs that have been unmet in childhood will continue to be a need on a primitive level as an adult. As noted in TR # 18, pg. 4 “I think because I was afraid that I have felt like I needed someone to live in the house for security. I felt more comfortable that way.” TR # 19, pg 9 “I think I want to be with someone. I didn’t want to be alone and I think that was a significant part of it too”. In different versions of the object relations model, the “other” is experienced as a functional part of the self in an effort to escape a dreaded sense of isolation and emptiness. The great fear here is of separation and loss of objects altogether (Greenberg and Mitchell, p 111, 1983), as evidenced by the significant number of participants who repeated the fear of being alone.

The fear of being alone was coupled with concerns about being incapable of coping alone with children, as noted in Transcript # 12, pg. 9 “Fear, fear of doing it on my own. Fear of doing it on my own with children.” Fear of being alone, in addition to the concern about social stigma and its impact on the children was also noted in Transcript # 15, pg. 7 “How horrifying, how embarrassing, what would it do to my kids? I’d lose my whole life. What does that mean? I don’t want to be alone.” Perceived social stigma due to being alone can reflect inadequate and insecure internal object representation; in turn, this can lead to difficulty with autonomy in relationships, and dependency. Otto Kernberg (1975) noted that abused women exhibit dependency features more frequently than non-abused women.

Despite the primary concern about the fear of being alone, the women, upon reflection, acknowledged that this fear had a major impact on their ability to extricate themselves from the relationship and, ultimately, to initiate its termination. As noted by Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), the intense attachments to compensatory internal objects must also be renounced and the child must feel loved as a person and believe that his own love is welcomed and valued. Maturity is achieved when a child renounces his/her dependent relations with his/her external parents and experiences themselves as separate from them. The study participants endured this internal struggle to renounce internal objects in an effort to overcome the fear of being alone.

The fear of being alone is reinforced through socially constructed concepts as posited in social role theory. Women tend to be socialized to achieve the status of “married woman.” The cultural expression, “Sadie, Sadie Married Lady” represents congratulatory wishes and acknowledgement, with a sort of wink and nod, to a woman’s

social achievement in becoming a wife. This social pressure on women to find a partner, when coupled with unresolved dependency needs from childhood, resulted in a heightened fear of being alone. Participants, who acknowledged that the fear of being alone inhibited them from terminating sooner, were also eager to help other women in similar predicaments to overcome socially constructed fear.

Idealization of the Emotionally Abusive Father

Eight of the twenty-two women noted that their fathers had perpetrated emotionally abusive behaviors on their mothers. At the same time, these participants expressed love and admiration towards their father, and also tempered stories of the abuse with denial and excuses. As discussed by Zosky (1999), the need for significant relationships with objects overrides the classical psychoanalytic theory in which drives are the primary force that motivates relationships. In Transcript #1, pg 3, despite her father losing the family's money and paying virtually no child support, the participant speaks of him wistfully and defensively, as if protecting him from criticism. "Between the time I was 7 and the time I was 12, when they divorced, things got very bad between them, things got very bad for my father, he gambled away a business. After they were divorced, my father called me every night, he was great. We saw him every Sunday me and my sister and he gave us thirty-five dollars a week cash in child support. Cash! It was 1960. When I asked my mother to help me out with money for a car she wouldn't give it to me, but my father did, gambler that he was." TR #2, pg. 9 "There was a lot of yelling growing up in my household. My father was very unhappy. I remember hiding with my mother scared of my father, what he was gonna do. And I am much closer to my father than to my mother, and my dad and I always had a lot more in common. But what I

realized recently, was that although they fought all the time and my father yelled all the time it was always out of frustration, it was never demeaning. It never cancelled out anyone's worth." The description of her father's abusive behaviors and the fear it caused is palpable, yet the participant defends her father's actions and minimizes the abuse.

TR # 9, pg. 8 "Actually, my father can sometimes be a little abusive to my mother. He criticizes my mother sometimes and I guess I didn't pay attention to it very much. He would apologize ultimately, but he would still do it again. He was sometimes not always sensitive in how he spoke to her but you know my mother was the queen. I mean uh, he (long pause), not that I think that material things are an expression of one's love, but you know my father always bought my mother gifts, he took her on wonderful vacations, he always made sure to remember every anniversary, every birthday." Initially, the participant describes her father's abusive behavior as "a little abusive" and minimizes the abusive action. She attempts to protect her father and, in a parallel process, to soften the impact of his aggressions with gifts, vacations, and idealization. TR # 12, pg. 9

"When my mother died my father said to her, 'You're my best friend'. My father would say to my mother I love you he would buy her gifts, he would go shopping with her. They fought. Because that was my father's personality. He had a lot of rage. My mother was a very quiet, unassuming person and I don't remember her fighting back. The way he yelled at her was abusive." The participant describes her father as a devoted, loving husband and assigns importance to buying her mother gifts and verbalizing his feelings for her, yet in the same breath, she states without hesitation, that he was verbally abusive to her mother. She does not question the abuse, but merely accepts it as his personality. The realization that her father was emotionally abusive came much later in this

participant's life. Throughout her childhood and adolescence she was unable to define her father's destructive behavior.

TR # 19, pg. 3-4 "I know that my father kind of went off the deep end you know he would, his temper was flared and I didn't sort of put that together that that was abusive and what that could do to me emotionally. He was so erratic and you never knew what foot you were on. It's very hard to love that back. I think he probably destroyed that other kind of love by his behavior. I think I had a pretty normal childhood, but my father could go off at any moment so there's that sense that I think I always walked on eggshells to some degree. He would just go off he just had a temper and anything could set him off. (laughs). We would laugh at stuff but I probably felt somewhat terrorized as a child and my mother, she didn't know how to handle him, I didn't feel protected. And he was the warmer parent so that was very confusing. Because he was much warmer more huggy more outwardly loving. So I remember he would come home from work and I would go running to greet him but I did have memories of that and my mother was much colder"

The participant describes how her father's rage and outbursts caused her to feel "terrorized" yet she relished his warmth towards her as well. Despite the acknowledgement of the father's destructive and hurtful abuse, she speaks about him with a tone of forgiveness and understanding.

The need for participants to depict their emotionally abusive fathers in an idealized light is supported by object relations theory. According to Greenberg and Mitchell (1983), Fairbairn suggested that the choice of which parent represents the exciting object is determined partly by the biological sex of a child and partly by the emotional relationship with each parent. The idealized version of an emotionally abusive

father indicates that the painful reality of the fathers' maltreatment towards their mothers was, possibly, too overwhelming to acknowledge or accept. TR # 21, pg. 2 "As a young girl my father was kind of a double edged sword. He was a kind loving father but he had a very bad temper and he could go off at a seconds notice and he could scream and bellow and he could do odd kinds of angry outbursts. Now he came home and heard that things that he didn't like then he would take his strap and give it to us. So that was the way he was and then seconds later as soon as he could calm down, he was the sweetest little lamb ever and very warm and loving and couldn't ask enough questions about how to help me in school, and what good things I could do and be supportive."

Defense mechanisms are the ego's unconscious struggle against intolerable ideas. Reaction formation, in particular, involves the repression of an instinctual impulse such as cruelty, and spurs a reaction into the reverse. An example of reaction formation is the expression of love and sympathy towards a cruel and unavailable caregiver in an attempt to conquer the unbearable negative affect of that caregiver (Freud, 1936). Reaction formation explains, in part, why the participants presented idealized narratives about their fathers, as well as the emotional struggles caused by observing abusive behaviors towards their mothers and in some cases themselves. The reality, too overwhelming to endure consciously, triggered reaction formation the defense mechanism as a way of coping with the intolerable material. In a sense, relating a decidedly positive and loving view of an emotionally abusive father allowed for the participants to be protected from rage and self-hatred.

View of Mother as Narcissistic

In contrast to their view of the emotionally abusive father who was loving, nurturing and exciting, six of the nineteen participants referred to their mothers as narcissistic. Narcissistic people tend to appear as grandiose, self-centered, entitled and lacking the capacity for empathy (Zosky, 1999). Participants commented on the lack of satisfactory communication between themselves and their mothers. This could be attributed to generational differences or social mores but, in the participants' experience, the lack of communication was painful. TR # 1, pg. 3. I had so many negative feelings towards my mother for not understanding that I could feel differently about my father than she did. There was no way I could feel anything positive” The same woman also expressed her disappointment with her mother's narcissism. TR # 1, pg. 7 ” My mother was too self involved so she wanted me to bring her pride, you know she wanted to be proud of me but she never asked me what I did.” For another participant, the perception of her mother's narcissism resulted in self doubt. TR # 3, pg. 2 When I was 14 she dated an ex-wrestler. She picked horrible people, she had an alcohol problem, they had an alcohol problem. She was violent, beyond violent, she was very violent. She broke my brother's teeth, she backed me up against a wall and beat the hell out of me, I moved out at 15 because from a 15 year old perspective, I thought I was the catalyst.”

Participants occasionally acknowledged their mother's professional achievements and strengths but disparaged them as loving mothers. As stated in Tr.#1, pg. 3, “Well at age 58 she got her husband to sell his business and they moved to Florida and she played golf and mahjong from then on. She couldn't write a check without okaying it with him. I thank her to this day because if my parents hadn't divorced, let me say it in the positive

way, the fact that my mother divorced my father gave me permission not to be miserable". TR # 7, pg.2 "My mother was a very narcissistic, self-centered egomaniacal you know, wanted things on her own terms and her way. And uhm, she never really wanted children, but she had three so there were quite a few issues in the marriage. My mother's way of dealing was to be a full time career professional and she didn't have time for the family. Well, just you know, she would just bitch and moan and complain all the time you know she was too busy for this and too busy for that."

TR # 10, pg. 9 "My mother was kind of a liar. I was very susceptible to flattery because my mother growing up, I looked a lot like her and she would just rip me apart, like your ears are huge your head is huge you are filled with moles. She always worked. She was an incredibly interesting strong woman. Not a good mother but an incredibly interesting smart woman. I guess she was the one that was dissatisfied, that made you feel bad about yourself and wasn't very nurturing."

One participant was forthright about the impact of her mother's mental health problems on her childhood. TR # 14, pg, 7 "My mom had borderline personality disorder. (laughs) I mean it is undiagnosed but it is pretty clear. Yea, I mean the only rule in the house was don't piss mom off but every day like you'd piss mom off. There was a lot of yelling and I think there might have been some hitting, but I don't remember, not frequently but she did some typical borederliney stuff like she didn't perceive a separation between us and her and she would do these weird trust fall things where she would basically put her arms around us and then put all of her weight. It was when we were little, just to see if we would sustain her, and of course we never let her fall. When I

was eleven she kicked me out and I went to live with my father. I would say that my dad tried to keep stuff away from us and my mom tried to involve us.”

During one of the interviews, a participant became visibly angrier as she described her mother’s selfishness. TR # 19, pg.3-4 “She took care of the house but it was confusing, cause like I would make my own lunch she slept till ten in the morning. We went to school on a bus and I remember I’d feel bad if I had to wake up her if I missed the bus or something. I think she liked to stay up late and so she slept late. And when I think about it now I am like what the hell was she doing? This woman did not work. She cooked, she cooked great we had great meals, she didn’t make breakfast or lunch. She made dinner. I know she had help sometimes so I don’t know. She did not spend time with us or look at our homework. I mean I was close with her, I would have said she was loving but now looking back I see there wasn’t great stuff. But she was very into the women’s movement and we all went to Washington to march for abortion rights so we did travel and did stuff together.” Like the other participants who viewed their mothers as narcissistic, participant # 19 concluded her answer by noting her mother’s strengths, such as marching in Washington for women’s rights.

The depiction of a narcissistic mother is consistent with tenets of object relations theory. According to Fairbairn, it is too painful for a child to long for an object which is physically or emotionally absent a good deal of the time (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983) and as a child encounters rejecting or persecutory interactions with their caregiver, they must internalize the negative aspects of the loved parent in order to control the object in the internal psychic world (Zosky, 1999). In this study, the participants’ view of their mothers as narcissistic stemmed from internalized early childhood experiences. While

some moderated the impact of the narcissistic mother, others had longstanding negative visceral reactions. Some of these participants were bewildered by their mothers' behaviors and felt cheated of an emotional bond that they craved.

The participants who viewed their mothers as narcissistic expressed feelings of personal worthlessness coupled with disdain of the mother. Their difficulty in assessing healthy adult relationships may be attributed to unresolved dependency needs. The capacity for dependency, trust and intimacy as an adult, can be determined by the level of trust and nurturance internalized from relationships in early childhood, and the outcome of healthy emotional development is the product of consistent empathic attunement provided by caregivers (Zosky, 1999). The findings indicate that the participants' perceived their mothers as having narcissistic qualities that ultimately impacted their adult lives, particularly in their self perceptions in relation to adult intimate relationships.

Turning To Family of Origin for Support

The findings indicate that the participants overwhelmingly sought support from family members in the process of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship. A major finding of the study is that those who received this support were able to leave the emotionally abusive relationship. Sixteen of twenty-two women cited their family members as the primary individuals who provided them with emotional and financial support. Even some of the participants who described their difficult relationships with family members were embedded in the family system.

One participant described her initial reluctance to seek help from a sister she viewed as unsupportive. Despite ambivalent feelings about her sister's willingness to understand her situation, the participant did ultimately confide in her sister and received

the support she needed. TR #2, pg. 2 “ I have one sister who is very opinionated so I thought I am only going to say good things. But my sister was actually pivotal in my leaving, I gotta say that was really her shining moment in our life because we don’t have a lot in common” (starts to cry). She was very supportive and said I was really a saint, that she doesn’t know how anyone could do that. She kept checking in on me and no judgment, no nothing and for her that really made an impression on me cause that is not her M.O.. It really let me open my mind. Once I told my whole family they were extremely supportive.”

In some cases, it was a family member who suggested the participant leave the relationship. And for the majority, their family’s financial support and guidance played a significant role in their being able to terminate the abusive relationship. TR # 4, pg. 2 “I wore a dress that Z. thought was too low cut and he started a big thing at a brunch for my family. I was sitting with my mother and I said what am I supposed to do? I can’t change my dress I live in New Jersey and we are in New York. I was outside greeting people and he kind of pulled the front of my dress saying anyone can look down and see your breasts and I’m going home, I’m leaving. In front of everybody, my mother saw this and uhm, my sister who was furious and when my phone rang ten minutes later from him she said if you answer that! My children who are grown had seen it before but this time they said to me you are not going home! And I stayed with my sister and my mother”.

TR # 5, pg. 2 “Once I remember we were up at my parent’s house visiting for the weekend and they called me on my phone cause we were screaming and it was so disturbing to them... Ten weeks into our marriage, it got so bad that a police officer came up and to this day I am not sure whether he was just strolling by, but I bet someone called

the police. My parents were very supportive. Their comment was if you decide to leave the relationship we will be supportive, if you stay we'll be supportive."

TR # 9, pg. 7 "I started to tell my family and they were really shocked and they were dumbfounded. They were sad that I hadn't told them but they understood why I hadn't told them because I was trying to protect them more than myself because I think it would have been devastating for them to hear about the abuse."

TR # 14, pg. 2 " I talk to my dad a lot and I called him in Argentina one night after a really big argument and I told him I was really flipping out and he said let me talk to him, and it was like the best thing ever because it sent a message to my ex that someone had my back and that's a good thing. (starts to cry). There is my sister who lives in Hawaii which is really convenient if I have late night issues. My friends were totally supportive. Getting their pitchforks and torches saying lets get him! "

TR # 15, pg.11 "My sister and her husband were very supportive once I made the decision, I never looked back. She's been great about the divorce". TR # 4, pg 7 "My sister said get a lawyer! Fortunately, I got a lawyer." TR # 5, pg 9 "For financial reasons, my father suggested that I file for divorce to put it on the record in the court and the apartment was growing in value and I had purchased it and it was to protect him from claiming it. I told him I filed for divorce. My dad helped me, he spoke to a lawyer and got the one page form and I did it myself."

TR # 13, pg. 8 "I went along with the pro se divorce. I was so weakened and my priority was just to get him out of there so it was like whatever it takes. I don't care if I don't have the apartment or my stuff get him outta here because if I don't I am never going to move on in my life. My parents help me out with money, my mom helps me pay

my rent and they watch my daughter so I don't have to pay for babysitting. I have a lot of help from my family." TR # 20, pg. 2 "I mean my parents were incredibly supportive."

As noted by John Bowlby (1973) the strength of attachment bonds is unrelated to the quality of attachment and that threatened individuals would continue to seek closeness to their attachment figure. We can see this in the transcripts: whether the participants reported negative and strained relationships, or close positive relationships with their family members, it was the family to whom they turned for support. The findings indicate that, when in need of strong emotional and in some cases, financial support, the power of attachment to family members overrode any historically difficult family relationship. This finding echoes Henderson, et al (2005), in that children who experience a parent as rejecting, may become more attached in an effort to maintain proximity to their caregiver indicating that troubled associations with family members are relevant to attachment.

Responsibility To Make the Relationship Work

Eight of twenty-two women specifically noted that they felt a responsibility to make the relationship work. They sought outside help from professionals and attempted to understand and fix the problems of the abusive relationship. According to their descriptions, they felt the burden of responsibility to find solutions to the conflict. Additionally, some of the participants normalized the problems in the relationship as a way of minimizing the abuse and assuming responsibility to resolve the issues. Both relational cultural and social role theories help to explain this finding.

The social role theorist David Vogel and his colleagues (2003) have shown that social pressures influence women to conform to stereotypical role behaviors. This

experience showed up in the transcripts. One participant described how her ex- partner convinced her that he was not being emotionally abusive and insinuated that she had the responsibility to figure out whatever issues were affecting the relationship. TR# 2, pg.1 “It makes me feel like a victim. When I approached my ex-partner and used those words he convinced me that I was wrong”.

Normalization of abusive behavior was also noted by participants as a way for them to assume (consciously or not) responsibility for their partners’ abusive behaviors. As noted by Lempert (1996), for most women, abusive episodes are only a portion of the complex interactions with their partners. TR# 4, pg. 1 “I thought this was just normal. You know, you are having an argument and nobody’s perfect and I have to learn how to deal with this. I tried to talk to him about it but it didn’t work very well because he knew better than I did about things and, as I now know, it was the classic well you made me do it.” TR# 4, pg. 2 I had always kept everything a secret so for me, I’m older, you don’t get divorced, you stayed with your husband. And I really felt through this all, I took most of the responsibility because I fell in love with this man who was so wonderful for the first couple of years and I really looked at it as I , obviously, I must have doing something wrong. Someone couldn’t have been that good and then not be, unless I was doing something”. TR# 6. pg.1 “I knew I was depressed, I knew there were a lot of red flags, and I knew I didn’t feel right, but I thought it was my fault because that’s how I was made to feel”.

Relational cultural theory is known for its emphasis on gender differences in motivation for caretaking relationships in women’s lives. The responsibility to make the relationship work is evidenced by a participant who described avoiding making her

partner feel bad even though he was abusive, and also assuming joint responsibility for the relationship problems. TR# 7, pg. 1 “I didn’t want to provoke and say how did YOU get to this place?” and TR # 17, pg. 2 “It was kind of , well on one part its why do you put up with that and on the other part , I don’t know, for me I thought I must not be doing or saying something right and if I had said it at a different time of the day or if I had said it a different way, like what I was doing wasn’t right.”

The push to keep the relationship going, which was encouraged by her female friends, was noted by participant # 21, pg. 1 “I shared it with family and friends that I knew that the relationship was not healthy in certain ways and uhm, but that there was always the need to cope and manage and keep it going. So the ways I coped with it were ways that enabled me to keep it going.” Great amounts of energy were expended to help the abusive partner. As noted by Lempert (1996) the maintenance of the cultural tradition is presumed to be a responsibility of wives and is taken for granted as a factor of American domestic life. TR # 22, pg. 1 “I tried so many ways to discuss it with him, holy cow. I begged him to go to therapy, he went with me once and said it was a huge waste of his time and complained and said he doesn’t believe in it. I bought him a book on anger management, a workbook, I bought him these CDS I got online about how to treat each other nicely. Did I try to talk to him? I tried and I cried and that never got a response out of him, sometimes I spoke to him and I would say that was really hurtful you could have said such and such, I tried. I am very calm and I have patience like forever I really have a lot of patience and he needed someone with a lot of patience. So yes, to answer your question, I tried to talk to him in lots of ways”.

The participants' descriptions of an internalized pressure to make the relationship viable is another tenet of relational cultural theory, which posits that a woman's self develops, not from the separation and individuation path towards adult autonomy, but from the interpersonal connections experienced through relationships (Collins, 1993). In each interview, women expressed their commitment to their partners, along with the prescribed worldview that "marriage is work."

The fact that it was their partners who were dispensing the abusive language and behaviors did not seem to deter the women from forging ahead through many attempts to find a solution which would repair and cement the relationship. The women seemed driven to sustain the connection through various attempts they thought would repair the relationship. These distinct strategies, which included seeking therapy, a thoughtful process before terminating the relationship and efforts not to replicate their own parents emotionally unhealthy relationships will be examined in upcoming sections.

Social role theory provides a framework for understanding the influence of societal pressures on women to conform to roles that may increase their vulnerability and influence their decision-making processes regarding the termination of an abusive relationship. Inculcated from early childhood, social roles are normative expectations that represent consensually shared beliefs and are socially sanctioned (Deaux, 1985). Gendered social roles for women and men evolve into expectancies of social behavior through socialization, resulting in the learning of certain sex-typed skills and beliefs (Eagly & Koenig, 2006). These learned and shared beliefs influenced the participants to locate strategies that would maintain the emotionally abusive relationship. The societal

pressure on women to preserve their relationships and to be solution-oriented enhanced their internalized pressure to make the relationship work.

Sought Therapy in Effort to Repair Relationship

Fifteen of twenty-two participants reported seeking therapeutic services before deciding to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. Some women sought therapy for themselves as a support; others encouraged their partners to join them in couple's therapy while others reported that their partners refused to attend therapy. Despite the different paths to therapy, the participants reported little satisfaction or resolution through couples counseling.

The common theme of seeking therapy in an effort to repair or change an emotionally abusive relationship is striking. As noted by Miller, et al. (1983) mutuality is achieved through reciprocity while isolation is viewed as one of the fundamental sources of suffering in people's lives. The study showed that individual therapy actually provided the women with more productive support and direction in the process of terminating the abusive relationship. In each scenario, however, it was the women's internalized role pressure to find some type of remedy for the abusive relationship and to initiate the discussion about seeing a therapist. Relational cultural theory is aligned with the similarities between seeking therapeutic intervention and the responsibility to make the relationship work. The determination to fix the damaged relationship was expressed by participants who described their feelings of desperation to find solutions rather than give up on the relationship. As stated in TR# 1, pg.1 "For a long time I kept saying to him come to therapy with me, come talk to me with someone. And he refused!" TR# 2, pg. 2 "Uhm, what I did do was asked him to see a therapist and he said no, and eventually I

went into therapy because I thought I was going to hurt him. I didn't tell anyone until after I left my husband, five years later, what had been going on."

The participants efforts at avoiding isolation by seeking therapeutic interventions validates relational cultural theory. TR# 3, pg. 1 "I told him he was nasty as hell and you can't come back unless you go to therapy. I went to a therapist with him, a marriage counselor and finally the marriage counselor said are you going to put up with this? Is this how you are going to live?" TR# 6, pg. 1,2 "After a friend gave me a book because apparently she could see signs, a book about emotional abuse, uhm, and that opened my eyes. And so, I went to a psychiatrist (crying) and spent about six months trying to talk about and work it out and I guess that was my emotional separation from him to say this is what I have to do." TR# 7, pg.1 "I had done therapy on and off so I discussed it. I didn't use the terminology, emotionally abusive, but I suggested that several times over the course of the relationship that we do therapy together. I suggested magnanimously that we do joint therapy but he refused and then it was official that we were separating".

The participants' attempts at help-seeking are also explained by relational cultural theory, as evidenced in the following statements. TR # 10, pg 7 "I am a good researcher. The Family Justice Center referred me to Henry Street Settlement." TR # 11, pg. 7 " I also started going to the GPAC single parent's groups and I did one of the separating/divorcing support groups and I found them really helpful". TR # 14, pg 3-4. "Well, I found Sanctuary online and I called them. They were pretty fantastic. I lucked out. I got lots of support." TR# 15, p.1 "Probably in our marriage and relationship we saw ten different couples therapists". TR # 19, pg 1-3 "I contacted Safe Horizons, I contacted the police. I was connected to FECS of the city and I was able to go to their

domestic family group. I reached out sometimes and told people some things but it was the therapist I told things to.”

Some participants spent years trying to convince their partners to attend therapy and found the outcomes disappointing. “TR # 20, pg. 6-7 ‘The next ten years was about trying to heal the marriage. It was around my son’s thirteenth birthday we started going to couples therapy. We went into therapy and even there he would just like talk the whole time. We would have to have like 2 sessions in a row because I would get like 2 minutes to talk and he would go on and on about all the things that were wrong with me. Finally I said I am not going couples therapy anymore and I just went to my own therapy.”

Thoughtful Process before Termination

Each one of the study participants underwent a thoughtful process before ultimately terminating the relationship. The length of time that participants remained in emotionally abusive relationships varied but what did not vary was the on-going thoughtful process. Fifteen of twenty-two women described in great detail the events that led up to their eventual breakup and how these incidents contributed to the process of their decisions.

Women’s’ tendency to engage in a thoughtful processes is supported by the tenets of relational cultural theory. Expressions and descriptions of their internal struggles to maintain or abandon the relationship are evidenced in the following transcript excerpts; the statements reveal the nuances and lengthy self-reflections involved in the decision to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. TR # 5, pg. 8 “It didn’t happen at one clean time. We were at a family reunion which we have every year and I told my cousins who were married with kids I thought something was really wrong and my parents

already knew. Both of them at the end of the weekend gave me feedback and said this is not right. I can't put my finger on it but something is not right. And that was the beginning of me feeling like I had to start saying no. I made a turn but I didn't say to him at this point, but I changed the picture."

Some participants described a series of incidents that led them to terminate the relationship. TR # 6, pg. 6 "The first major incident was the incident when he was sick in the hospital but I didn't do anything. That was when he said I didn't visit him enough in the hospital and pull together the business. Uhm then , oh I know, we were going out of the building and it was raining and I had an umbrella and my son in the stroller and I think we were getting into the car to run some errands and I'm fumbling with the umbrella I've got this stroller and I put up the umbrella and he says 'don't let me get wet'. And I said 'Well you should have brought an umbrella, you knew it was raining'. I turned and started walking towards the corner to get in a cab or the car or whatever and I have the stroller and he kicked me from behind. I didn't fall but it was a kick and the way he looked at me before that happened was a death look. I mean, how dare I say something like that to him? Uhm I think that was probably the final incident."

For other women, the process involved a struggle to tell themselves the abusive behavior was part of the ups and downs of relationships. TR # 7, pg. 4 " I knew things weren't going the way I'd like them to go, but I didn't contemplate ending it then. My mother had always said you have to work every day at making a relationship work and I took that much too literally, and to the extreme, uhm, I decided and then I was pushing more for the joint therapy and he wouldn't do that, I was becoming more and more unhappy and the thing that put me over the edge was when we worked with a financial

planner. He persisted in knowing more than everybody and he was right and it was going to be done his way and there were beginning to be some very significant financial issues. And he would not work with me or the financial planner and I sat through that meeting and I became very numb and frozen and I realized this was the end. This was not going to work. Then it was that I really began to realize that this marriage was you know, then you begin to contemplate should I stay? Should I go? Yada, yada yada. You'd been in the relationship a long time so. Then I took me a few years to get out of it."

Public humiliation and exposure of the abuse also affected the process of termination. TR # 8 , pg. 4 "He called me a stupid bitch in front of my good friends and I wanted to die. They told me I can't put up with this and don't let him talk to you like this so I started to get really depressed because not only was there abuse but it was becoming public. One Sunday he got physical with my daughter and I immediately called the therapist. She said she had to report this incident to child protective services and that's when the ball started rolling."

The extent to which the following participant deliberated her situation is palpable. The public exposure of the abusive situation ignited her decision to terminate the relationship. TR # 12, pg. 4 "Well actually I am slow. It was already 17 years into the relationship. Several things happened and it was a real process. He was a real maniac and he was having road rage fights in the car like cursing and sticking your finger out. It was very scary. Then I got passed over for director job because I had cut my hours to four days a week and that was a big blow for me. Once before when I got promoted he said 'Oh no! Now you are going to have to do more work and I am going to have to do more for the children. I used to go to this group for professional women and he hated when I

did that or went to my therapist. I think he was jealous that I had these things going on. He threw my son out and he is sixteen and my son went to school the next day and told the guidance counselor who called family services (crying). This is the beginning of the end. So ten days after this whole episode I came home and he said you're not pretty, you're not smart and all that horrible stuff. I got my kids and said that's it grab your things we are going to Maryland to my sister."

The realization of the negative impact on her daughter ultimately spurred the following participant's decision after a long thoughtful process. TR # 13, pg. 11 " I felt in control for the first time and I was like screw it I have to do this and I don't care what I lose. It was a definite turning point. There is this helpless innocent being that I have to protect from this situation and I am an example and this is not the example I want to set for her. I mean she was a mirror. All these things, the victim stuff either you are a victim or you are helpless or you are going to start doing things you think you re capable of , cause you have to show your daughter you can."

TR # 15, pg. 7 "I think there were two tip offs that finally pushed me over the edge and I say they were within a month of me realizing that I wanted to end the marriage, that I kind of made the decision. So, it was like up until that point, I was fighting to keep the marriage alive and uhm, I think that from the moment, I think there were a lot of flags. There was this really weird, every night I tried to please him and some of the stuff he was asking for was very positive so he always wanted us to have a sit down dinner every night and it wasn't the way I grew up and we fought about it for years and years. I finally just did it like very night. I'd get home from work cook dinner, I'd run home get home cook dinner, set the table and the kids and it was all you know a nice happy family

(sounds derogatory). I set up my life like everything he wants I'm gonna do it and lets see how this goes. And like two months in it was not one wit better. If anything, he was angrier and more depressed. The dog would sense it and I was like if this is what it's doing to the dog, what's it doing to my kids? What is it going to do to them when they get older? I got diagnosed with cancer and I'm in remission and it was the worst year. I remember fighting about something he said 'do you want to go through this cancer alone?' it was just such a wake up call. You know that when he said that it might have been like I can't die this unhappy, I was crying myself to sleep every night."

From the beginning of the dating relationship through sixteen years of marriage, the next participant endured multiple episodes of emotional abuse before terminating the marriage. TR # 16, pg. 3 "You know I first contemplated ending it when , I mean just thought about like get me out of here, the first time, uh, he cut me down. Uhm, well, I would say it was about two months in and uhm, we had gotten married and we moved upstate and he was finishing his degree, and I was still in college. We lived in a forty foot trailer in upstate New York, and I had brought my record collection and I LOVED my record collection. He just started pulling my records out and spreading them all over and flinging them on the ground and I said 'Hey, hey, take care of my records man. You got to wipe them and you got to hold them like this!' and he looked at me and he took a bunch of them and threw them on the ground and started scraping them together and I just freaked. How could you do that? The he spit at me and he spit on the records and then he left and that was the first time. And then things just started happening. Well he raped me. I didn't realize I was being raped until many many years later. I'd say no, no, and it would insist on a brutal level. Or he would get out of bed and pull all the covers off

and start yelling that I was his wife and how could I refuse. We were camping and my little son puts his hand on my husbands butt and said “that’s my daddy and love him.” I’m in heaven and he said something about how he didn’t like the way the enchiladas tasted, he started to call me a bitch and a whore and my kid is sitting there and becomes very quiet. Uh, also in front of the family in front of friends, if I had an opinion, if I showed any sign of uh, the way I look at it or any sign of being a person separate from him, he just couldn’t stand it anymore and humiliated me or shot me down.”

TR # 17, pg.4-5 “I contemplated it the first year and I was told to stick it out. He demanded that I work and then when we had kids he demanded that if I worked then I provided and paid for child care for the girls and even if he wasn’t working; when the nanny came he would go to the beach and surfing. Before we had kids we bought this house and we went into escrow right when I was leaving town and he uhm, he said they are not going to approve the loan because your name is on it because you have bad credit and but I had always been on top of paperwork but we had just gotten married and I really trusted him and I was like ok, I’ll sign what you want me to sign so I signed and he said I’ll put your name on the house as soon as I can and I was sure that this was fine. But then of course when we were getting divorced he came back and said I own the house. He controlled everything, everything. Certainly in the ideas of physical abuse it wasn’t you know, extreme violence by any sense of the thing but the thing that pushed me over the line on the eve of a Thanksgiving. I gave each girl half of a chocolate cupcake and the girls being kids started getting crumbs on the floor. I was kind of walking back and forth taking care of them and he was standing there doing nothing. I said I’ll take care of it. He goes ‘no you are too much of a fucking idiot to take care of it’, in front of the girls (voice

sound disappointed). And he just went after me. I'm done. Done. I'm like what are you going to do now? Do I go get the car and leave now?"

TR # 18, pg.1 "I think it was passive aggressive. I said to myself, R. you can't do this anymore. TR # 19, pg. 6 "When I finally really decided to end it took some time cause I had to kind of somewhat plan it and figure things and when the end came I had processed and planned it and at that point it was more of an abuse strategy and how to stay safe."

TR # 20, pg. 6-7 "There was an incident that changed my view of the marriage and uhm, where I felt betrayed and uhm, I still stayed in the marriage another ten years. And it got worse after that and I think because I started pulling back. I think if I look back on it, I started creating a separate life for myself. Five years into the thing I turned 40, I remember it was my 40th birthday, the judge ruled we had to leave our rent stabilized apartment in three months. And he said no, no, no, they always give you six months when you have kids and he went to the judge and the judge said I don't like when lawyers abuse the system and you have to be out in two weeks. And, I just remember crying he kept saying what's the big deal? You're so spoiled. This is nothing, people go through much worse things. That was the end of the marriage for me."

TR # 21, pg. 4-55 "Ok, so basically the behavior that I saw right away was behavior that lasted all the way through except for some more severe times. The behavior was basically uh, basically, it could be ignoring me, walking in front of me, it could be calling me names not overtly in the beginning but some way of discounting me in whatever small way it was. I knew he was harsh, he had a persona that was what's the word not aggressive but more of a tough guy persona. There were moments and days

clusters of time that were fine and then things would get very annoying and we'd go back and try to start that cluster again and that was the way the relationship flowed. I never wanted to divorce all those years I wanted to keep it together. I started to see that things were shaky and I suggested that he might get some help but he didn't want it. He started to visit these strip clubs in NY then when we went to La he would go to Las Vegas and gamble. After a while I intercepted his conversations on the internet with women and I confronted it but he wasn't going change anything. I found out he was taking our money and using it in Las Vegas."

TR # 22, pg. 2 "If I was excited about something out of the house or him he didn't like it. That opened up a lot for me. I realized that we never fought it was just him being so mean to me. I started a business teaching chess and I started another small business and I had the three kids. So, he uhm, and he wanted certain things done around the house you know a specific way and he would give me a list everyday this list, a long long list of what he wanted me to do that day. There was calls that had to be made, arrangements, bills paid, mail to file and I would say I'm an adult don't you trust me to do it? Whenever he would have something it was never a question it was always a command. He would say 'You'll go to the store today.' I would say did you mean to say Are you going to the store today and he'd say no I'm not asking you. You'll call such and such today not will you? About 5 years ago I was in a play and I got a babysitter and made dinner before so I could go and he made my life miserable during that time he said I fucked him up and I inconvenienced him. Last year I got this job and he was getting more and more angry with me and I was getting more disgusted that I had a husband who can't celebrate my happiness. I did want to say that part of why I hung on so long was the

stigma I felt about getting divorced. He went over to my little girl and said your mommy doesn't love me anymore your mommy doesn't want you to have a daddy and your mommy wants a divorce. It was so awful. Your mommy wants you to grow up without a daddy.”

None of the participants abruptly terminated an emotionally abusive relationship. Rather, they all noted going through a long thoughtful process before ultimately deciding to the end their relationship. The longer the length of the relationship, the longer was the thoughtful process before terminating the abusive relationship. Participants described variations of a back and forth thought process, noting patterns of both the positive and negative moments throughout the relationship's course while also weighing their alternatives. The efforts to continue to try and make the relationships work, indicates an alignment with relational cultural and social role theories.

One major aspect of development in relational cultural theory is not to form a separate self, but rather to participate in relationships that foster the well-being of those involved. The long thoughtful process before terminating a relationship indicates that the participants yearned for a relationship that provided them with reciprocity and their willingness to attain that end. However, the reciprocity within an abusive relationship is distorted and the victim' becomes self-deprecating, contributing to the ongoing nature of emotional abuse. The internalized drive to maintain the relationship sometimes overshadowed the emotionally abusive behavior and it was only through a long thoughtful process that the women could extricate themselves from the abusive partner. The women felt an internalized social role pressure to make their relationship work and attempt to fix the problems even without the participation of their partners.

Transcript Analysis of the Social Factors Associated with Terminating an Emotionally Abusive Relationship

Transcript analysis revealed eight social factors associated with the reviewed theoretical perspectives: social role pressure, ambivalence about motherhood, unclear about parents' role expectations, impact on role modeling for children, sense of agency, educational and professional pursuits, sought legal counsel when terminating relationship and sense of optimism about the future. Social role pressure, ambivalence about motherhood, unclear about parents' role expectations, impact on role modeling for children, can be analyzed according to the of social role theory. Sense of agency, educational and professional pursuits, sought legal counsel when terminating relationship and sense of optimism about the future come under the umbrella of theories of agency.

Social Role Pressure

Social role pressure was recorded by fourteen of twenty-two participants as a significant influence on their major life decisions. One aspect of social role pressure was expressed by the women as an internalized coercion that was affected by the larger society. Others felt pressured by their parents' demands. Internalized social role pressure was expressed by eight of twenty-two women.

Traditional social role theory contends that social roles establish a shared sense of reality or a social field. As noted by Lynch (2007), specific roles embody regularities in the cultural environment. One participant discussed her internal social pressure to get married and have children by a certain age. She also suggested that social role pressure had compelled her to settle for what she considered her best option for marriage. TR #2, pg. 2 "I didn't talk to my family because my family had never liked any of my boyfriends and I really wanted to be married and have a family. I had decided that this was the BEST

guy out of all the guys I dated and he was the nicest and most smartest and all these other things, uhm, so I didn't want any negative anything about my marriage or the choices I had made. Since I was already thirty-one when I got married I wanted to have kids right away and I didn't want anything to get in the way of that."

Other women noted the influence of the historical time on social role pressure supporting Montgomery's (1998) idea that social roles are typically used to refer to the behavior expected of individuals who occupy particular social categories. TR # 5, pg. 5, "We come from a white picket fence environment and from my perspective things were easy. My father worked, my mom was at home raising the kids. I was definitely raised in an environment of the woman just takes care of what needs to be taken care of. It was very traditional and the women really kept it together and served the dad, served the man. And I think I really learned that model and there is stuff about that model that I love. Caretaking, I love cooking and there is something I love about it."

TR# 18, pg. 1 "It was very traditional. We dressed a certain way we weren't mod, the food was very healthy at home and my mother wanted us to have a good background. There were a lot of roles at home, we had a chart and boys didn't do the woman's work.

Other women experienced social role pressure by way of parental expectations. According to Vogel, et al. (2003), behaving consistently with normative expectations may be easier and less risky than behaving in a non normative manner. The notion of "towing the proverbial social role line" is demonstrated in the following statements. TR # 17, pg 1" I told my family I think I made a terrible mistake and so they were asking me what it was and my father said 'don't throw the baby out with the bathwater'. Yea, my

parents have been married now for forty years and no one in my immediate family has ever been divorced, so then I stopped telling them.”

TR # 19, pg. 5 Uhm, I think I always planned to get married and have children at some point, I knew I didn't want to do it until I was thirty. Thirty was my cutoff cause I enjoyed being single in my twenties.” TR # 21, pg. 1 “Nobody was ever able to say to me or wanting to say to me this is terrible get out. Uhm, so the friends really tried to show me, build me up as best they could by saying you know you're really a great person, your this your that so that I could go back and look at it and stay in the marriage and see myself in a better light.” Lempert (1996) discusses the existence of an ideological responsibility that is reflected in maintaining appearances of relationships to others as harmonious. TR # 22, pg. 1 “There are no bruises and I look happy all the time; we had our shit together, he was making money and we went on vacations and all of a sudden you are calling him an abuser, like what's wrong with you? A lot of people in my life had no clue and I felt like I had to defend myself around them. Social role pressure is indicated by the participants as ingrained within their decision making processes.

Parental imposition of social role pressure was noted by twelve of twenty-two women. TR # 1, pg. 7 “I think it is not an accident that I did drop pursuing theater professionally and became a teacher. My whole father's family were teachers, this was you know, you be a teacher that's what you do. My mother's family, well neither of my parents finished college. I was the first one to finish college. My mother didn't understand and I wanted to go to graduate school. Her expectations were not too deep” TR # 2, pg. 9 I thought I was supposed to help people from a very young age, my mother, my father and my grandmother told me that I was like the salve of the family.”

TR # 4, pg. 10 “My father suggested being a teacher or a nurse. Because then you could be home with your children and that’s what we did.”

TR # 7, pg. 3 You know my parents always said go to school. My parents raised us all to go to college and get a higher education, one of my sisters is a lawyer and another one is a psychologist, but they also always expected us to get married and have children. TR # 8, pg. 5 “They expected me to be them. They sent us to college but we weren’t supposed to have a career, but my mother always loved the fact that I was an artist.”

TR # 9, pg.11 “You know, that like every parent, they wanted their daughter to meet somebody and get married and have children.” TR # 12, pg. 9 “I think what they really wanted was for me to get married and have children. And then it was ok we don’t have enough money to send you to private schools so you can go to SUNY, but if you were boys we could send you because boys have to go and make a living.”

TR # 15, pg. 6 “I think my dad got stuck with two girls and that generation didn’t have high expectations for girls, you know I think he was very surprised that we both got into Harvard. My brother was the underachiever of all of us but he was the boy.” TR # 16, pg 2 I was cautioned by my mother that I didn’t want to get into a world and have to compete with men, so that I shouldn’t want to be a scientist I should want to MARRY a scientist and that I shouldn’t want to be a doctor but I should MARRY a doctor. Late fifties early sixties. Well it was very confusing because you had all this possibility, and then you had you know also the fifties father knows best culture.”

TR # 17, pg. 2 “My family is really traditional, my mom stayed home my father went to work. It was important what my brothers were going to be when they grew up

and where they would go to school; for me it was like well you can go to school if you want, like teaching is a good job for you because you could be a mother and teach. I was definitely pushed towards being a mom. I never really thought about having a career, you get your MRS degree, if you want to you can go to State school which is cheaper and its nice to have a little education kind of thing.

TR # 18, pg. 2 “I was taught to think everything was rote. It was traditional you know. You respect your parents and you don’t ask them a lot of questions. You follow those rules. It’s fear. College was only for the men and the girls were expected to finish high school. Boys had to work that was known. I wanted to get married right out of high school but it didn’t work.” TR # 22, pg. 1 “My mom was divorced and remarried and she knew how hard it was with little kids and she didn’t want that for me. She and my stepfather were really pressuring me to stick with it. At one point she said to me can’t you just drink a glass of wine before he comes home and I was like ah no”.

The traditional socialization process for girls and the demands of family to conform to traditional gender roles, when combined, resonate with social role theory. Through transcript analysis, the three social factors that emerged most frequently were: ambivalence about motherhood, unclear expectations from their parents, and concern over the impact of their role modeling influences on their children. Social role theory has explanatory uses for each of these factors.

Ambivalence About Motherhood

Seven of twenty-two participants said that their feelings of ambivalence about motherhood had started in childhood or adolescence. They seemed to struggle with the idea that women can have both a professional and “traditional “ family life with children.

Lynch (2007) notes that social structures create demanding role obligations, and therefore coping with the requirements of multiple roles can be a source of conflict for an individual. Social role expectations influenced the participants' perspectives about the feasibility of attaining both goals, as noted in the following transcripts. TR # 1, pg. 6 "It was the middle of the feminist movement. I pursued a theatrical career. I had an early marriage to my high school sweetheart. I did not grow up dying to become a mother, I think I didn't want to be a mother, I wanted to be on Broadway." TR # 3, pg. 5 "I wanted to be an actor. That's all I ever wanted. I did not want to get married, no, no! I remember thinking that there was something different about me because there were all these girls hugging and kissing their pillows and I thought could there be anything more pathetic? I just thought, why would you want to do that? Why?"

TR # 6, pg. 5 "I always knew I wanted to be a vet from the second or third grade, so my primary focus growing up was achieving that goal so it was all about school and my parents obviously reinforced that very strongly. I didn't want children actually (laughs). I didn't want to go through the pain. Uhm and I felt that there were enough kids in the world that I would always adopt". TR # 7, pg. 3 "I expected I would go to school, I would have a career, I would get married and I went through a lot of vacillation about having children. Then when it was too late I realized how badly I wanted them so (laughs) shit happens."

TR # 10, pg. 10, 11 "Did I want to be a mother? No, but I love it. TR # 12, pg. 6 "I don't know if I wanted children until I got in my thirties and then I desperately wanted children. TR # 14, pg. 9 "I certainly was afraid to think about getting married or having kids cause I didn't know what to expect from myself." These statements bring to light the

women's' lack of certainty about their ability to have both a professional life and motherhood. Traditional social role expectations had been inculcated in their experiences, and had negatively impacted their ability to envision combining motherhood with a career.

The influence of social role expectations by the participants' parents had an impact on some participants, who noted their own lack of clarity about what their parents expected of them as adults. The confusion they experienced internally was exacerbated by external messages they were receiving from parents.

Unclear about Parent's Role Expectations

Eleven of twenty-two participants described feeling uncertain about what exactly their parents expected of them as adults. Most were aware that the completion of college was an unspoken expectation; anything beyond earning a degree was ambiguous. TR # 5, pg. 7 "I always thought they expected the superwoman package but I never asked them if they had any expectations. I don't know."

TR # 6, pg. 5 "We never talked about it and I didn't feel it from them, uhm, and again, they didn't talk about it so I didn't really know what their expectation was." TR # 9, pg.11 "That's a very good question because I think that was a lot of my issue growing up is that I put a lot of expectations on myself that they didn't really have but that's how I interpreted it. I think expectations, my parents wanted me to professionally succeed because that's what I wanted and think that you know, that like every parent, they wanted their daughter to meet somebody and get married and have children." TR # 10, pg. 11 "Not much."

TR # 12, pg. 9 “I think what they really wanted was for me to get married and have children. I got very mixed messages from them. One minute it was education, I mean my sister and I were at the top of our high school class, but they never told anybody how good we were in school, and my mother would always say, 'You're not as smart as you think you are'” on one hand and she would say “its good to have a career because you never know what's going to happen' (laughs). And then, we don't have enough money to send you to private schools so you can go to SUNY, but if you were boys we could send you because boys have to go and make a living. It was very mixed and some of my mother's friends' daughters were getting married at like twenty-one and I remember she was like 'You don't have to get married right away'. Ok, but the expectation was ultimately, marriage, children because I knew that's what my father wanted.”

TR # 13, pg. 10“That's a good question! I had no idea and now that I'm in therapy a while, recently I realized they all wanted to save the kids in a way so in a way they expected us to be the victim a little bit. So instead of giving me the tools to succeed in the first place, I would be in constant victim state and they would go 'Well help you out with this we'll help you out with this.’”

TR # 15, pg. 6“I think my dad got stuck with two girls and I think that generation didn't have high expectations for girls, you know I think he was very surprised that we both got into Harvard. My brother was the underachiever of all of us but he was the boy. My mom was pretty tuned out and I think my dad was I think he'd gotten into the rut of it's much easier to let girls go play.”

TR # 17, pg. 2 “My family is really traditional, my mom stayed home my father went to work uhm, as far as my two brothers it was important what they were going to be

when they grew up and where they would go to school and to me it was like well you can go to school if you want uhm a little bit like teaching is a good job for you because you could be a mother and teach. I was definitely pushed towards being a mom. And that's what I wanted to be. I never really thought about having a career. It was like you get your MRS degree but more like if you want to, you can go to State school which is cheaper and its nice to have a little education kind of thing”.

TR # 19, pg 6 “I think there was just this assumption that I would get married. I think my mother was a bit of a feminist so probably the working and having my own business at some point they liked that a lot, they respected that a lot”. TR # 20, pg. 5 To marry a nice boy who would take care of me. I should go to college just in case but you know. TR # 22, pg. 7 “They were really good at not putting pressure on me. Maybe it would have been good if they had pressured me a little bit. It was more like are you happy?”

As they thought about this, all the participants who remembered unclear messages from their parents about adult role expectations also wished they had received more concrete – but less gendered - direction.

Impact on Role Modeling for Children

Eight of twenty-two participants expressed their concern about the impact on their children of witnessing emotionally abusive behavior. Although each participant had a different trajectory, the common theme of concern over negative impact on children clearly emerged in the study. The sound of incredulousness and fear is heard in the following sentence. TR # 6, pg. 7 “What is he going to do to our son?” I called the therapist that's when the ball started rolling.”

The abuse of alcohol coupled with emotional abuse triggered another woman to terminate her relationship. TR # 11, pg. 8 “I was disturbed by how he was treating me. I didn’t want them to be raised around an alcoholic who was becoming nastier to me in front of the kids. That’s where they learn that women and mothers are not important.”

TR # 12, pg. 4 “So he threw my son out and he is sixteen and my son went to school the next day and told the guidance counselor who called family services (crying). This is the beginning of the end. So ten days later I came home and he said you’re not pretty you’re not smart and all that horrible stuff. I got my kids and said that’s it grab your things we are going to Maryland to my sister.” The existence of emotionally abusive behavior over time was the impetus for these women to terminate the relationships.

TR # 13, pg. 11 “ I felt in control for the first time and I was like screw it I have to do this and I don’t care what I lose. So, it was a definite turning point. There is this helpless innocent being that I have to protect from this situation and I am an example and this is not the example I want to set for her. I mean she was a mirror. All these things, the victim stuff either you are a victim or you are helpless or you are going to start doing things you think you are capable of , cause you have to show your daughter you can.”

TR # 15, pg. 7 “I think there were two tip offs that finally pushed me over the edge and I say they were within a month of me realizing that I wanted to end the marriage. We would have dinner and the kids would run out of the room, even the dog would run out of the room. The dog would sense it and I was like if this is what it’s doing to the dog, what’s it doing to my kids? What is it going to do to them when they get older?”

TR # 20, pg. 7 “Getting him out. Out and way from the kids”. TR # 22, pg. 2 “My two younger kids witnessed him doing something really bad in front of them. I got this job and he was getting more and more angry with me. I was in the kitchen cleaning and he said good when you finish cleaning up here you go clean up all my fucking puke upstairs. My daughter was right there and she was 7. After that episode in front of the girls I wanted him to move.”

Concern about the social role modeling on display in an emotionally abusive environment frequently inspired the women’s decisions to terminate the relationship. In making the decision to leave, however, the participants were attempting to shield their children from harm and inculcate a positive social role model for future example. The remainder of this chapter will show how “agency” was the key factor that enabled the participants to shift from a “staying” decision to a “leaving” decision.

Agency

All of the following social factors will be explicated through theories of agency, and all influenced the participants’ decisions to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship. The factors are: sense of agency, educational and professional pursuits, seeking legal counsel and a sense of optimism about the future.

Sense of Agency

One hundred percent (twenty-two of twenty-two) of the participants described having a sense of agency as a key motivator in their process of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship. From finding alternative living arrangements to seeking out support from friends and family, therapists and legal professionals, the sense of agency drove the women to forge ahead and terminate their relationships. TR # 1, pg 10

“I found a one bedroom sublet around the corner.” TR # 2, pg 7 “I put a call in to this woman who I was barely friends with and I told her what happened and I knew she did not like my husband, so I knew she would want to help me. She had a friend of a friend who was looking for a boarder. I lived with her for a year and she became a very close friend. So I was very lucky, she didn’t charge me any rent until I knew what I was doing. A year and a half later, I moved to New York.”

TR # 6, pg. 6 “I got an apartment a few blocks away and had that all set up. I was prepared to just move once I told him I wanted a divorce”. TR # 6, pg. 7 “I was speaking to an attorney for a bit before and I didn’t have a lot of money to work with so I just went to an attorney down the block who really wasn’t equipped to handle such a situation, but it was a start. Uhm, and then I think that day I served him with papers.” TR # 6, pg. 7 “I felt so empowered and so strong. I felt like I was moving in the right direction by taking these steps.”

Dettman et al. (2005) posit that women in subordinate positions create and utilize cognitive and behavioral strategies to negotiate social situations such as resisting dominant forces and solving problems. TR # 7, pg 5, 6 “I interviewed two or three divorce attorneys who were recommended and I decided on the one I was going to use. I started pulling things, I started making copies, all the tax returns, I inventoried all the artwork, you know I just started doing all the things you do. And then when it came time to, we have a ton of work done on the house, to put it on the market, I managed 98% of that project, I packed up the house.” TR # 9, pg. 12 “I felt empowered and I also felt proud because I went to the lawyer myself.” TR # 9, pg 12 “I was proud that I didn’t have my parents with me, I didn’t have my brothers with me this was kind of like my mess and

I had to clean it up for myself and I had to take responsibility as an adult and I'm really glad I did that."

Other women asserted themselves in terms of their living spaces as noted in TR # 10, pg 7 "I said please get out of my house and he got out of my house. I remained in the apartment with my son and then he got me evicted. Then I went to court and made him get me another apartment. He filed for divorce even though I was the one who asked him to leave. I actually went up to the Justices' chambers but they weren't going to talk to me but I found out where I could get some help. I am a good researcher. The Family Justice Center referred me to Henry Street Settlement." TR # 11, pg. 7 I happened to meet a mom who saw my pain and her father owns these apartments and she got me on the waiting list and I got my apartment. We're starting to build a life. TR # 12, pg. 8 "I didn't know how I was going to get him out of the apartment. I was talking to social services and I said I left him for good and they said good, so they said my name is clear (laughs) that I did the right thing and one of my son's friends mother gave me the name of a divorce attorney, so I called him and then my sister came up with me and I went to family court and I kicked him out. I said, 'I want an order of protection'."

TR # 13, pg. 8 "My priority was just to get him out of there so it was like whatever it takes. I don't care if I don't have the apartment or my stuff get him outta here because if I don't I am never going to move on in my life". TR # 13, pg 12 "I feel like I am on a different path now and I'm enlightened and I have my daughter so it all happened for a reason. What doesn't kill you makes you stronger. (laughs). I am lucky to have the clarity I do now. In some ways I feel so blessed".

TR # 14, pg 3, 4 “Well, I found Sanctuary online and I called them. They were pretty fantastic. I went to figure out what the hell to do. They helped me find a lawyer and I brought every document to her and she said ‘you need to fight for this, you need to fight for this and this isn’t so important’. I had moved and I continued with creating another support network, so by the time I left I had moved, baked bread in my apartment, started doing tango more and I developed a social network and I joined an online meet up divorce group.”

The termination processes described by the participants involved a sense of agency that Hyden (2005) refers to as the relationships between power, responsibility and activity. This configuration is reflected in the ways abused women position themselves within their narratives of leaving. TR # 14, pg 14 “I realized it was abuse, I lost myself so instead of saying I changed, I came back to myself. I needed to go through all of that so I knew I made the right decision and I honored my vows as much as I could.” TR # 17, pg. 88 “I feel like a totally different person. Oh absolutely, absolutely. I searched the internet and found an apartment and then when he went to work, I had seven of my girlfriends move us out in a day with the sheriff. Then I called him and said we're gone we moved out the girls are safe and they're with me and then I called his sister and then I called his therapist and told her the girls and I left.”

TR # 19, pg.8 “I felt really strong but I was scared shitless honestly. The whole thing could have blown up again what I realized was that I had the upper hand. It took a while unfortunately I am smart but not that smart and it was the emotional thing. When I got to my mom’s friend I felt very strong and I felt very lucky and strong and it felt great and those next few weeks I was on a high cause I felt really fantastic that I got out and I

had a future”. TR # 20, pg , 8 “It took a lot of work to get to this place. I would tell anyone who is in this position that they can find their strength. You can have a better life, there is a better life out there and you don’t have to be treated badly. I got my power back.” TR # 21, pg. 6 “The good thing is that it led to very deep questioning within myself that our relationship was really, really, messed up and that I could do better in my life”. TR # 22, pg.7 “I think I found who I was all along but had lost that. I feel so free right now”.

During the interviews, exploring the women’s sense of internal agency revealed an interesting dimension: some felt they always had personal strength that was subverted by the abuse; others felt they had gained a newfound sense of agency through the experience of living in – and leaving – the emotionally abusive relationship. The latter group of women described their decision processes as triumphs over previous weaker selves, while the former group described their agency as reborn.

Educational and Professional Pursuits

Seventeen of twenty-two women spoke passionately about their educational and professional ambitions and goals. Despite generational differences, the participants expressed their valuation of a professional identity either in addition to a family life or in lieu of a traditional female social role. Internal strength and a sense of agency are exemplified by the participants’ ongoing desire to pursue educational and/or professional lives.

TR # 1, pg 6, 7 “It was the middle of the feminist movement. I pursued a theatrical career. So then I kind of dropped that and went to grad school and I found out I was very good in early childhood and I went to grad school again. Yea, I wanted a

professional life.” TR # 2, pg. 9, 10 “I wanted to be an archeologist and an actress and a teacher, I have many, many interests as I got closer to artistic ones at various times, I always felt guilty if I wasn’t helping people and I would try to combine it with helping people”. TR # 3, pg. 5 “I wanted to be an actor. That’s all I ever wanted”. TR # 5, pg. 6 “I imagined I would have a career and law wasn’t in the picture but it would be a career that was paying and I could take care of myself and I would be married and have kids. The total package, superwoman.”

TR # 6, pg. 5 “I always knew I wanted to be a vet from the second or third grade, so my primary focus growing up was achieving that goal so it was all about school. I didn’t think about anything else beyond that growing up. TR # 7, pg. 3 “One of my sisters is a lawyer and another one is a psychologist. I expected I would go to school, I would have a career”. TR # 9, pg. 10 “I always knew I would have a career because I was very motivated in school. I was so focused on getting through college and then I went to graduate school. I have an MBA in healthcare administration. I was pre-med undergraduate and I got waitlisted at medical school and I realized that I didn’t really want to be a doctor. I think that’s what everybody else wanted me to be.”

TR # 10, pg. 10, 11 “I had a good career very quickly. TR # 12, pg. 6 “You know, I really envisioned having a career. My career meant a lot to me. I went to SUNY Albany for math and then I have an MBA from Wharton. I don’t sound it, but, and I have an MBA from Wharton at a time when women didn’t go and I say is that really me? My career was very important to me. I knew I was going to work, I knew before I had children that I was going to have a career.” TR # 13, pg. 10 “To be a high achiever. To be really successful in the arts. I studied theater in college. TR # 14, pg. 9. “I was raised to

be self-sufficient and I had a plan to be a professional. I went to college in Kalamazoo, western Michigan and I got my masters from at Wayne State in Detroit.” # 16, pg 2 “I wanted to be a scientist. And I fluctuated between wanting to be a scientist and wanting to be a doctor. I was very very interested in science. And I read like a maniac. My nose was always in a book”

TR # 19, pg. 5 “I am smart and I realize that more and more now that I am very smart, but because I was an artist that was kind of less important and it just wasn’t called out. I’m very analytical. I run my own business.” TR # 21, pg. 3 “I expected a profession of course but I didn’t expect to be the breadwinner but I knew I would go to college. I went for teaching, I got my masters and I taught”. TR # 22, pg. 7 “When I was a kid I was going to be a famous actress. Once I had a kid I was like oh my god I need to work. Then I needed something else after I had a kid. I was working at Columbia, got a bachelors and then I started the MSW at Columbia”.

Whether the participants identified themselves as always having a sense of agency or as finding strength through their experiences, their collective ambition in educational and professional pursuits emerged as a common theme. Personal lives largely defined the erosion of their self worth through insidious abuse. Through it all, the participants excelled professionally.

Sought Legal Counseling when Terminating the Relationship

More than half of the participants, thirteen of twenty-two, sought legal counsel as a step in formalizing the end of their relationships. The prospect of seeking professional legal help was daunting, and the intricacies of the power relationship between client and attorney was particularly difficult for those who were extricating themselves from

power-laden emotional abuse. The participants sought this help because they believed in their personal agency. This is described by Taylor (1985) as an individual's capacity for action. The process of obtaining an attorney was different for each participant, but for all of them, the strength necessary to make it happen was the result of a sense of personal agency. TR # 3, pg. 6 "First I went to a collaborative lawyer and he began the process but he was \$400 an hour. He was a good guy and pointed me toward someone who was much less expensive." TR # 4, pg 7 "My sister said get a lawyer! Fortunately, I got a lawyer."

TR # 5, pg 9 "For financial reasons, my father suggested that I file for divorce to put it on the record in the court. The apartment was growing in value and I had purchased it and it was to protect him from claiming it. So I told him I filed for divorce. My dad spoke to a lawyer and got the one page form and I did it myself." TR # 6, pg. 7 "I was speaking to an attorney for a bit before and I didn't have a lot of money to work with so I just went to an attorney who really wasn't equipped to handle such a situation, but it was a start. TR # 7, pg 5, 6 "I interviewed two or three divorce attorneys who were recommended and I decided on the one I was going to use".

TR # 8, pg 5 "Then I got a lawyer and proceeded to do it." TR # 9, pg 12 "I remember saying to the attorney, how did I get here? And he said, trust me there are a lot of girls like you who wind up in my office. So he made it very comfortable for me" TR # 12, pg. 8 "One of my son's friends mother gave me the name of a divorce attorney, so I called him". TR # 14, pg 3,4 "Sanctuary gave me some information about someone who used to work in their legal department but who was now working at one of the big firms. This lawyer was awesome. TR # 15, pg. 10 "I went to mediation". TR # 22, pg 6 "So I

got a lawyer which pissed him off because he wanted to mediate the whole thing and I was not going to do that". In the end, participants who sought legal help felt their inner strength triumphed over the feelings of inadequacy and lowered self-esteem they experienced throughout their abusive relationships.

Sense of Optimism about the Future

Jubilation, freedom, elation and optimism about the future were some of the feelings the women said they experienced after terminating an emotionally abusive relationship. According to Taylor (1985), the idea of agency refers to the individual's capacity for self-reflection and self-evaluation. The sense of agency in conjunction with the view of self is exemplified in the following statements.

TR # 2, pg 6 "It was pure excitement." TR # 3, pg 9 "Giddy, giddy! As soon as he was gone I went and bought paint. I knew what color I wanted to paint it. I'll take the smaller room they'll take the bigger room. I feel giddy." TR # 6, pg. 7 "I felt so empowered and so strong. I felt like I was moving in the right direction by taking these steps." TR # 13, pg 12 "I feel like I am on a different path now and I'm enlightened and I have my daughter so it all happened for a reason. I am lucky to have the clarity I do now. In some ways I feel so blessed." TR # 16, pg 8 "I felt great. I moved the week before I had to start work and I don't know how I did these things but the night I moved I bought a little bottle of champagne and I turned on my Bonnie Rait record and I had my little TV."

TR # 19, pg.8 "I felt really strong I realized was that I had the upper hand. It took a while I felt very strong and I felt very lucky and strong and it felt great and those next few weeks I was on a high cause I felt really fantastic that I got out and I had a future".

TR # 20, pg , 8 “I feel like I am finally the woman I wanted to be with my music and I am starting to feel like I can be in a healthy relationship. Great.” TR # 22, pg.7 “It was like a weight was lifted and a shroud was gone. It was like immediate. It was like the second he left the house I had the music blasting and I was dancing around the house. It was like I could see colors again. I could hear music it was like holy cow! I think I found me who I was all along but had lost that. I feel so free right now”.

Listening to the participant’s initially anguished stories about living with emotional abusive and their individual decisions that led to termination of the relationship, allowed this researcher to absorb and feel the nuances of each struggle. The expressions of joy, independence, personal agency, accomplishment and peace made palpable the women’s responses to the question about how they felt when they made the decision to end the relationship.

Conclusion of the Findings

The psychological and social factors associated with terminating an emotionally abusive relationship that emerged in the transcripts were analyzed through the lenses of relevant theoretical perspectives and provided rich insight into the women’s’ decision making processes. In addition to the factors that aligned with presented theories, new and unanticipated themes emerged through the data analysis and will be discussed in the next chapter of the study. The most significant finding of the study was that the subjects actualized social and psychological agency that had been suppressed by and during the emotionally abusive relationship. This proposition will be further elaborated in the next chapter.

XI. Concluding Discussion of the Study and New Information

Introduction

Throughout the course of this study, salient and consistent themes emerged that were not anticipated nor initially hypothesized by the researcher. This last chapter of the dissertation will present a review and analysis of the new factors that were unearthed. The chapter will close with recommendations for education and research in social work practice as well as social welfare policy and legislation.

Five distinct themes reflected the complexities of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship for women with access to social resources. The psychological and social factors that emerged as representative of obstacles and motivators to the women's decision process included: the term "emotional abuse" not used, social support critical to the termination, building capacity to disentangle from financial and sexual manipulation, coping with the social blame experienced by women who find emotional and social freedom, and that thriving trumps the fear of being alone. When combined, these factors formed the core category "Suppression of social and psychological agency vs. actualization of social and psychological agency." What follows is a review of the most significant information gleaned from the study, and also the conclusions to be drawn from this information.

What remains unnamed does not exist - the term emotional abuse not used

Given all they experienced in the relationship, their levels of education and their Discussion of the Study and New Findings exposure to the realities of the world, still the women never used the term "emotional abuse." No definition was used by the participants for the type of abuse they lived through while involved in the relationship,

nor did the larger society provide any recognized or valid definition of emotional abuse. Sixteen of twenty- two women reported not naming the relationship as emotionally abusive.

The women's' collective inability to acknowledge and define their abuse as emotional was initially an obstacle in the process of understanding their experiences and making the decision to end the relationship. Despite the inability to name the abuse, the women depended on their inner strength and sense of agency to disengage from their emotionally abusive partner and eventually, name the abuse as emotional. Some of the participants were able to define it as such only after they were out of the relationship. Throughout the termination process and afterwards, the women noted that they had come to recognize the abuse as emotional and to name it as such, and that this was a key psychological motivator in the termination process.

The passage of time allowed for some women to reflect and to name their experiences of abuse even though, while living in the relationship, they were unable to utilize the term emotional abuse. TR#1, pg 1 "I don't know that I had those words in my mind until maybe after we ended. I knew at some point obviously that I couldn't live in the emotional environment I was in. But, I don't know if I would have said if someone asked me is he emotionally abusive. . TR# 4, pg. 1 "I didn't understand that it was emotionally abusive. In fact, I am just learning about emotional abuse. I thought this was just normal you know you are having an argument and nobody's perfect and I have to learn how to deal with this". TR # 19, pg 1 "I didn't get it till I got, I went to reach out. It's when she handed me a sheet that listed abuse, like do you recognize any of these? Basically have you been scratching your head trying to figure all these things out and it

was like really speaking to me.” That the women had no terminology or definition for their experiences reflects society’s continued lack of acknowledgment about the debilitating effects of emotional abuse.

Some of the participants resisted defining their situations as emotionally abusive, or even excused their partner’s behavior in order to avoid acknowledging the reality of emotional abuse. TR# 15, pg. 1 “I now see it. I just glossed over it. TR # 16, pg. 1 “I just wanted it to go away, however, family and friends would notice and say things to me and I would say ‘Oh, you just don’t understand’.” TR # 20, pg.1 “I accepted it you know like as part of the ups and downs of marriage”.

The women knew that something was not right in their relationships but they did not define the problem as emotional abuse. As poignantly noted by DuBois (1983), what remains unnamed does not exist. TR# 6. pg.1 “I didn’t recognize it as such. I knew I was depressed, I knew there were a lot of red flags, and I knew I didn’t feel right, but I thought it was my fault because that’s how I was made to feel”. TR# 10, pg.1 “I didn’t identify it as an emotionally abusive relationship until after 9/11, the way my husband reacted to me”. TR # 16, pg.1 “I knew that what was happening was incredibly unsettling and humiliating but I didn’t know much about handling it or how to label it or get help” TR # 18, pg. 1 “I don’t think anybody said anything. I am more emotional and he was more quiet so people may have said well that’s me. Since he was so quiet it was more accepted.” TR # 22, pg. 1 “Well, I never used the word abuse because I didn’t know that it was abuse. I thought it was just a fight or but it was interesting because I would always look back and say wait a minute we are not really fighting, he is just being mean to me”. The abusive partner’s influence over their victim’s internalized inability to

name emotionally abusive behaviors is palpable in the following transcript. TR # 2, pg. 1
“I felt uncomfortable with the term emotional abuse and the phrase emotionally abusive is still hard for me. It makes me feel like a victim. When I approached my ex-partner and used those words he convinced me that I was wrong”.

Clinicians are not exempt from this failure to name emotional abuse. For example, this subject participant expressed her disappointment and exasperation at a clinician’s lack of knowledge. TR #19, pg.1 “I was seeing a therapist with him and alone and told her things that should have clearly been considered abuse and she didn’t get it she didn’t help me and direct me. I had to send her that sheet because it just was shocking because it was like yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes and yes Id been scratching my head trying to understand all of this”.

The women’s collective inability to name emotional abuse indicates the prevailing lack of information and knowledge available for both the women who encounter this type of abuse, and for clinicians who treat them. Information concerning the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse is neither readily accessible nor sufficient. Wider distribution of the appropriate terminology would help break down the social barriers that prevent women from ending emotionally abusive relationships. Furthermore, this lack supports a perpetual message that normalizes emotionally abusive behaviors within intimate relationships. For the victim , knowledge gained through this study can provide insight into the problem of emotional abuse by naming it. And for the social work professional, this knowledge will inform services that are attuned to the needs of women who experience emotional abuse.

Social Support as a Key to Ending Emotional Abuse

This study shows that social support from family and friends is paramount in the successful process of terminating emotionally abusive relationships. Access to a strong support system provided the women with a social motivator, eased the pain for some, and overall was instrumental in their ability to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship.

The importance for women to maintain connectedness with friends and family members cannot be overestimated. In fact, isolation from these individuals may inhibit the ability of an emotionally abused women to terminate a relationship. TR #1, pg.2 “My friend was very supportive. But my sister was actually pivotal in my leaving, I gotta say that was really her shining moment in our life because we don’t have a lot in common” (starts to cry). Once I told my whole family they were extremely supportive.

TR # 5, pg. 2 “My parents were very supportive. Their comment was if you decide to leave the relationship we will be supportive, if you stay we’ll be supportive. My dad helped me tremendously financially, part of it to pay attorneys part of it was to move out and get my own place.” TR# 6, pg. 1,2 “A friend gave me a book because apparently she could see signs, a book about emotional abuse. She was a dear friend and I talked with her about it and she said she didn’t know how to tell me”. TR# 9, pg.2 “I told one girlfriend everything because I needed to have somebody to talk to, so that was my way of being able to cope.” The participants acknowledged their good fortune to have strong support systems, noting they would not have known what to do without that level of support. TR # 9, pg. 7 “ I think that I am lucky in that some people go through something like this that don’t have a good support system. I had an amazing support system”. TR # 14, pg. 2 “My friends were totally supportive”. TR # 11, pg. 7 “That’s how I got my

apartment. I happened to meet a mom from my son's summer camp and they saw my pain and her father owns these apartments and she got me on the waiting list and I got my apartment." TR # 17, pg. 8 "I remember I was with a friend trying to figure out what to do and he said you'll have more courage than you think you do". TR # 19, pg. 8 "I have a friend of my moms who is like a surrogate mother and she was aware of some of the problems so if I needed anything I could go to her and that's what I did". TR # 22, pg. 1 "I had a couple of friends that I confided in when it got really bad, I just needed someone to cry to; a couple of times said you know he's being really abusive".

Strong support from family and friends emerged as a clear motivating factor for the women to terminate the abusive relationship. In conjunction with the other motivating factors unearthed through data analysis, the strong support from family and friends contributed to the actualization of the participants' social and psychological agency. The importance for women to maintain relational ties by fostering their familial and friend relationships is an essential component of personal agency. In contrast, social isolation would present barriers to the termination of an emotionally abusive relationship.

The impact of social support should not be dismissed by social work professionals. True, the women in this study already had family and friends on whom they could count. But what we learn is that the same would be true for women who do not have access or a history of the same support. In other words, social workers should develop support groups for emotionally abused women, regardless of their social class, because isolation prevents women from disengaging from abuse. What we also learn is that women who are emotionally abused experience enormous pain despite the support to which they have access.

The Capacity to Disentangle from Financial and Sexual Manipulation

The women in this study described financial and sexual manipulation as a “web” of emotional abuse in which they felt caught. Kaukinen (2004) notes that, because financial contributions are an important part of men’s construction of a traditional masculine role, employment, education and income that threaten that masculine identity increases the risk for both physical and emotional abuse. Stark (2007) discusses the center of coercive control which includes an array of tactics that subordinate women. Coercive control is achieved through exploiting a partner’s resources including money and sex. While often described by survivors of physical abuse, the same financial and sexual humiliation is experienced as controlling power in emotional abuse. In this study, financial and sexual manipulation triggered such confusion that they initially suppressed their psychological agency in an effort to maintain the relationship. Eventually, the actualization of their social and psychological agency prevailed and they were able to recognize the financial and sexual humiliations they were subjected to as components of emotional abuse.

a) Financial manipulation

Financial manipulation occurred when an unsupportive partner was envious of his wife’s professional ambition and success. TR # 1, pg. 9“ I was a nursery school teacher making all of \$5000 and I decided I wanted to get a social work degree and he flipped out and said how are we going to afford it? He was threatened when I changed my hair (laughs). He was jealous. That’s when I knew. I was looking in my full length mirror and I really had a feeling that I was coming apart. And it really scared me. I just felt like I had a little out of body moment and I said I can’t do this I gotta get out. I was going crazy.”

TR # 12, pg. 4 “Once, when I got promoted he said ‘Oh no! Now you are going to have to do more work and I am going to have to do more for the children.’”. TR # 22, pg. 2 “I started a business teaching chess and I started another small business and I had the three kids. I was doing so well and winning all these grants. He was like, I hate you.”

Participants expressed their concern about ways in which the partner enmeshed their finances. TR # 7, pg. 4 “We were in meeting with our financial planner He persisted in knowing more than everybody and he was right and it was going to be done his way and there were beginning to be some very significant financial issues. And he would not work with me or the financial planner.” Other participants were deceived by partners who stole money from their joint accounts and had hidden IRS problems. TR # 8, pg 4 “Well, I opened our joint bank statement and it was either forty or sixty thousand dollars was taken out without me knowing it. I was in shock. When I asked him about it he yelled ‘You stupid bitch, you don’t get that this is up front money for the business!’” TR # 10, pg 1,2 “I never co-signed anything we owned. I never looked at the IRS returns I signed, never. When my grandfather passed away I got an inheritance and I put the money in our joint account. When we went to the safe deposit box after 9/11 I realized he moved all the money out. I had no key.” TR # 13, pg 2 “I was earning the bulk of the income but he controlled the checkbook and he would give me an allowance for the week.” Yet another participant described how her husband encouraged her to pay the bulk of the bills while he saved his earnings for his retirement. TR # 14, pg 11 “ He was socking away ten times more than I was into a retirement account and he was yelling at me because I wasn’t putting more but I was paying the maintenance and all these utilities and the travel to see my family. But he never saw that, he saw it as a great personal

failure of mine.” The following participant’s husband tried to steal the house from her by lying about putting her name on the documents. TR # 21, pg 6 “To this very day I am sure there were other accounts he had. He started to gamble with our money. I found out he was taking our money and using it in Las Vegas. I confronted it but he wasn’t going to change anything.”

Financial manipulation and abuse were significantly noted among the participants’ experiences in emotionally abusive relationships. Women who earned more money than their partners mirror what Kaukinen (2004) refers to as status reversal wives: those who have higher educational attainment, contribute a greater amount to the household income and are more likely to be employed than their husbands. Nevertheless, both the women who were the higher earners in the relationship and those who were more financially dependent on their spouses ultimately recognized the abuse and took back control over their financial lives. In other words, they eventually triumphed over the suppression of agency and reached actualization of agency.

Social workers must recognize the impact of financial abuse in intimate relationships, regardless of the social class of their clients. We have seen its prevalence in this study. The women are generally middle-class and have access to social support. Nevertheless, they were subjected to the same kinds of emotional abuse – here framed as financial – that one finds in destructive intimate relationships. The disparagement, denigration, scorn and unsubstantiated criticism attack the sense of agency. Social workers must reinforce this agency in order to help women emerge from these attacks and help restore them to the place they were before the attacks.

b) Sexual manipulation

Different forms of sexual manipulation, humiliation and abuse were described by participants as part of their emotionally abusive relationships. Stark (2007, pg. 273) states that control over sex is often explicitly linked with other forms of gendered obedience. For example, public humiliation was experienced by a participant when her new husband openly flirted with young women in their community. TR #2, pg 8 “My husband was off talking with to the twenty year olds and I look across the room and he’s playing with this girls hair. It was the first time I saw him physically flirt with anybody else, and I thought this is not acceptable. That I will not take, I don’t know if it is emotionally abusive but it is something stupid and mean. I left.”

Another form of sexual manipulation occurred when partners blamed the women for their own sexual dysfunction. As said succinctly by Simone De Beauvoir (1952, p. xxvii) “No one is more arrogant toward women, more aggressive or scornful, than the man who is anxious about his virility.” TR # 2, pg. 8 “I think the most damaging emotional abuse had to do with the sexual piece because it was so subtle. Slow and subtle and I can’t believe I fell for it. Part of it was he was withholding and blaming my body for things he couldn’t do. He couldn’t have sex, but he blamed MY body for not being able to take him in.”

Stark (2007) discusses a pattern of disabling a victim’s capacity to respond to abuse by targeting areas of gender identity in which her self esteem may already be poor such as her looks or sexual acumen. TR # 18, pg. 3-4 “We tried to have a baby by artificial insemination and it was a lot of work to try and get pregnant and when we were trying he would jerk off and then he couldn’t supply me with the sperm. He said I didn’t give him

enough notice.” TR # 5, pg 2,3 “We had no intimate contact at all. We saw a sex therapist who gave us homework and we never consummated the marriage.” TR # 6, pg 2 “He blamed me for his hair loss because he has thinning hair and that I didn’t have sex with him often enough and the testosterone level was declining.”

Humiliation and degradation, verbal insults and sexual deprivation made for the experience of emotional abuse. Jessica Benjamin (1988) discusses the idea of a parallel dynamic within relationships in which one gives, the other refuses, one criticizes and the other feels annihilated. TR # 3, pg 1 “Sex became less and less and it was always negative and he was very like ‘foreplay is boring suck my dick’. Always withholding of affection. All you see on his open laptop is a teenage face sucking a giant dick. Porn. That’s gross you have two teenage girls at home.”

In contrast, but also noted by Jessica Benjamin (1988), many girls have a lifelong admiration for men who get away with their sense of omnipotence in tact. They grow to idealize a man who has power and desire. Eventually, she says, some women seek a form of reparation in these types of relationships and are drawn to ideal love as a chance to obtain a positive father-daughter identification. She contends that through this process they will realize their own sense of desire. TR # 10, pg 4,5 “Our sex life was our life. It was our glue and I sort of didn’t recognize the manipulation. He used sex and money. He sensed it and the reward was ‘I’m so incredibly attracted to you, I can’t live without you’ and the thing is I know, he had affairs. I feel like I was a mistress more than a wife.” A tendency towards submission is associated with unattainable yearning and self abasement, which in turn if unresolved, later emerges as ideal love, the wish for a vicarious substitute for one’s own agency (Benjamin, 1988, p. 124).

For the following participants, sexual routines were dictated by their husbands who demanded their submission to sadism and humiliation. TR # 13, pg 11 “He would plan sex out like an itinerary. Like you give me a blowjob and then I’ll do this to you and we didn’t kiss. He would put a loose leaf binder on my head so he could look at the porn.” TR # 15, pg 9 “He wanted to have sex like three times a day and he would throw shit and berate me and he said he would go to prostitutes if we didn’t. It didn’t matter if I didn’t want to, he didn’t care. Now I look back and I can’t believe I was with someone who had sex with me when I was crying and didn’t care.” TR # 22, pg 7 “Once I was working on my laptop the kids were asleep and he was watching a ball game and for no reason out of the blue he looks at me and says ‘sex with you really sucks’ and it was like a stab in my heart. My initial reaction was I really want to cry but I held it back. I got up, maybe I was ignoring him, and he elbowed me away, he said get away I don’t want you. The next day he said don’t expect the apology call. He told me he wanted anal sex. I felt like I did not have a choice to get out of it.” Stark (2007) notes that forcing women to engage in anal sex against their will is a common form of shaming. TR # 16, pg. 3 “He would get out of bed and pull all the covers off and start yelling that I was his wife and how could I refuse and he had a lot of stress and I had to help him relieve the stress.” These transcript excerpts show how sexual manipulation is part of a broader pattern of humiliation and dominance in emotionally abusive relationships (Stark, 2007).

Indeed, as heard in this study, the verbal insults, degradation and assaultive sexual incidents show that the range of emotionally abusive behaviors extends beyond simple name-calling. Nevertheless the participants were able to access and actualize their social

and psychological agency in order to overcome sexual humiliation within the context of emotional abuse. This is important information for social workers. It does not mean that social workers should rely on the idea that women have any kind of “inherent” resilience. Too often we are inclined to tell clients “if some can, so can you.” What it does mean is that social workers must listen very carefully to their clients who experience emotional abuse as powerfully as if it were physical abuse. The women in this study tell us that sexual abuse was often non-physical. Therefore social workers should be attuned to non-physical yet equally destructive emotional abuse seen in both financial and sexual manipulation.

Women Find that Emotional and Social Freedom comes with Social Blame

Overwhelmingly, the women felt blamed by others for their decisions to terminate an emotionally abusive relationship – all the while acknowledging the strength of social support. Interestingly, the disapproval and criticism came largely from other women. The eventual termination of the emotionally abusive relationship as seen in this study’s core category, the suppression of social and psychological agency vs. the actualization of social and psychological agency, was individual and self-motivated. The women took control of their lives and balked at socially constructed pressure and negativity directed at them by their peer group, sometimes at the expense of what they had considered friendships. TR # 1, pg. 7 “It’s harder to leave. There is more guilt attached to it. If you’re left you’re the pained injured party and oh my god how could they do this to me? But when you are in an emotionally abusive relationship, and you decide you’ve had enough, people don’t feel sorry for you. And, in fact, they are jealous of you. They tout

their suffering, but I'm getting out. There is more guilt associated with it. The standard how could you do this and what about your son? TR # 2, pg 11 " I feel that there is a lot of sympathy for the people who were left because I felt that my husband had really checked out years before. But I think it probably helped my self esteem and people's reactions because people were angry at me. I lost all my friends in Rhode Island, part of that community. No one reached out to me. You know fifty people who I would spend every weekend with for five years. Gone, in a weekend. No one asked me what my side of the story was."

Blame is levied by society like an angry parent might scold a child. The victim of emotional abuse is put on the defensive. For example, a high level of education caused some "friends" to question her claims of emotional abuse because she must have been "too smart not to recognize that." Somehow they assumed that women with educational accomplishments are immune to an insidious pattern of abuse. TR # 9, pg 15, "Just because I am a smart person and professionally accomplished I don't make mistakes in my life. And they think that smart people should know better."

Some did not understand the need to end the marriage as long as her husband was providing material and monetary support. As noted by De Beauvoir (1953, p.468) "To "catch" a husband is an art; to hold him is a job." TR# 10, pg.6 "I would talk to my good friends and say you know he is really putting me down. My sister and my girlfriends would say don't complain so much. He would do things like meet me when I was meeting a friend and purposely say honey go shopping! And take out a roll of five hundred dollars. Oh my god what do you have to be unhappy about in the marriage?"

The following participant discussed her disappointment with a value system laden with social stereotypes. TR# 11, pg.2,8 “I didn’t tell my family or friends because they thought I was the bad guy. I think he would call them from work and say that L. is acting crazy and angry. Just typical words of pegging women as the crazy and angry overemotional. Poor him to be with me and things like that. It’s like our culture invalidates the differences and the power goes to the boys. A certain group of women have to avoid me for their own survival.”

Although forty-eight years have passed since Betty Friedan’s work appeared, American society continues to inculcate a stereotypical gender based ideology in which women are timid about rocking the intimate relationship boat. Friedan (1963, p. 296) stated “when a culture has erected barrier after barrier against women as separate selves; when a culture has erected legal, political, social, economic and educational barriers to women’s own acceptance of maturity, even after most of those barriers are still down, it is still easier for a women to seek the sanctuary of the home. It is easier to live through her husband and children than to make a road of her own in the world.” This was the story of the study.

The pressure to maintain a happy appearance lengthened this participants’ emotionally abusive marriage. The shocked reactions by longtime friends suggests that the socialized response regarding emotional abuse is “don’t ask don’t tell” TR# 15, p.1,10 “I mean so many people came up to me after I said I separated and said oh my god I thought you guys had a perfect marriage. But at the same time he would say incredibly rude or undermining things or get mad at me in front of people.”

This social pressure stirred up feelings of guilt for “breaking up the family.” At the same time, they were angered by the social demand to explain their decisions to terminate an abusive relationship. TR # 15, 10 “I am very overwhelmed by the feeling of guilt for my kids. I feel like any relief or happiness I have is sort of overshadowed. It feels like everyone thinks there had to be a reason that they should know about and the reason is he was a fucking asshole. It’s been incredibly annoying but some people have asked me and they thought I had a perfect marriage. It’s such a catch twenty-two but when I tell people what he actually did to me you can see it in their eyes. They want to know, they feel like they have a right”. TR # 22, pg, 1 “It’s very hard for people to understand it. Like they don’t believe me. There are no bruises and I look happy all the time we had our shit together, he was making money and we went on vacations and all of a sudden you are calling him an abuser, like what’s wrong with you? I had a lot of people in my life who had no clue. Like after all the shit I’ve been through and I have to defend myself to you?”

TR # 17, pg. 2 “I just don’t think my friends got it. You know I don’t think anybody really could understand it and I would tell a story of what happened and they’d be like you’re kidding me! My friends didn’t have that kind of relationship so they couldn’t really get it and then we had kids so it was harder.” TR # 18, pg. 4 “I know what I’ve done and I know this study is to help other women. It is very hard and I didn’t readily see abuse because abuse is black and blue and he never put his hand on me, but I realize now that it was abuse. People don’t talk about it.”

Some therapists and clergy showed lacks in understanding emotional abuse as glaring as non-professionals. The women were shocked and angered. TR # 19, pg 1 “I went to the temple on 100th street and talked to the rabbi who was clueless. Then I

contacted Safe Horizons, I contacted the police. My friend B. was really the one who helped me though it cause she had been in an abusive relationship in college so she was the one who when I was really at that point, I mean I wasn't admitting this to everybody, but she knew. I was seeing a therapist with him and alone and told her things that uhm should have clearly been considered abuse and she didn't get it she didn't help me and direct me."

The lack of support some women felt from their peer group and the larger society reflects a continuation of gender stereotypes that are inculcated in early childhood socialization and continually reinforced. Women with education and access to social resources are susceptible to social role pressures that can influence their actions and behaviors.. Negative reactions towards the participants caused them to feel sadness, disappointment and frustration about the way women are socialized. Despite negativity and social barriers presented by some peers, the participants were able to actualize their sense of personal and psychological agency to extricate themselves from abusive relationships.

The implications for social workers are clear: learn about emotional abuse. Not all social workers recognized the signs, nor were they able to develop appropriate clinical or programmatic interventions.

Thriving With Peace Post-Relationship Trumps Fears of Termination

A significant and promising finding that emerged through data analysis, was the unanimous expression of decisiveness, strength and optimism. The process of terminating an emotionally abusive relationship was arduous and lengthy, fraught with alternating

moments of strength and weakness. Ongoing self-questioning regarding the validity of naming the behaviors as emotional abuse, the impact on the family, social standing and finances were powerful aspects of the decision making processes.

No matter the path to termination or the length of time the process involved, each participant expressed a sense of freedom, exultation, happiness and peace after their decision. For some participants it was a sense of relief. TR # 1, pg. 9, 10 “I just felt thank god I don’t have to deal with this anymore.” Others described getting their power back, feeling validated in their decisions and newfound senses of joy and freedom. TR # 6, pg. 7 “I felt so empowered and so strong. I felt like I was moving in the right direction by taking these steps.” TR # 12, pg 10, 7. “I learned to stand up for myself. I have a lot of pride and I’d rather be alone and I am alone. I have eaten practically every meal alone, my cigarettes are my friend, I just you know am very alone in the world, but I have pride.” TR # 13, pg. 11, 12 “ I felt in control for the first time and I was like screw it I have to do this and I don’t care what I lose. I feel like I am on a different path now and I’m enlightened What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. (laughs). I am lucky to have the clarity I do now. In some ways I feel so blessed.” TR # 14, pg 14 “I lost myself so instead of saying I changed, I came back to myself”.

Some participants wished they had terminated the relationship sooner. TR # 20, pg , 8 “I wish I would have ended it sooner at least five years earlier”. TR # 15, pg. 710, 11 “[When] I got diagnosed with cancer, he said ‘do you want to go through this cancer alone?’ it was just such a wake up call. You know that when he said that it might have been like I can’t die this unhappy. Once I made the decision, I never looked back. I kick myself, I wish I had done it sooner.”

From jubilation to peaceful contentment, participants always felt they had made the right decision. TR # 3, pg 9 “Giddy, giddy! As soon as he was gone I went and bought paint.” TR# 9, pg.2, 12 “I’ve clearly had a lot of distance from it and I think it is kind of healing also still to recognize the choices that I made. I felt empowered and I also felt proud.” TR # 16, pg 8 “I was definitely motivated to leave I was certain that this was going to happen and I felt great. I moved the week before I had to start work and I don’t know how I did these things but the night I moved I bought a little bottle of champagne and I turned on my Bonnie Rait record and I had my little TV.”

TR # 17, pg. 8, 9 “I feel like I am in a good place. I didn’t really care about me as far as social stigma but for the girls I felt like it was of value for them to have a two parent household. I feel like a totally different person. Oh absolutely, absolutely.”

TR # 19, pg.8 “I felt really strong but I was scared shitless honestly. I felt very lucky and strong and it felt great and those next few weeks I was on a high cause I felt really fantastic that I got out and I had a future”. TR # 20, pg , 8 “I feel like I am finally the woman I wanted to be with my music and I am starting to feel like I can be in a healthy relationship. I got my power back. I felt totally powerless which is how you feel when you are abused”.

Reflection about the past and journeys to freedom from abuse are expressed in the following transcripts. TR # 20, pg , 8 “It took a lot of work to get to this place. I would tell anyone who is in their position that they can find their strength. You can have a better life, there is a better life out there and you don’t have to be treated badly.

TR # 21, pg. 6 “The good thing is that I am not with him anymore and the good thing is that it led to very deep questioning within myself that our relationship was really ,really, messed up and that I could do better in my life. I just feel so grateful”.

TR # 22, pg, 1, 7 “I have been in therapy and support groups and now I recognize not everyone can understand and it doesn’t matter. It was like a weight was lifted and a shroud was gone. It was like immediate. It was like the second he left the house I had the music blasting and I was dancing around the house. It was like I could see colors again. I could hear music it was like holy cow! I think I found me who I was all along but had lost that. I feel so free right now.”

In conclusion, we can see that, despite some ongoing emotional and financial struggles, the women expressed a sense of contentment in their lives post- relationship that far outweighed their initial fears. Major obstacles to the women’s ability to terminate an emotionally abusive included the fear of being alone, financial concerns and social stigma. Twelve of twenty-two participants cited the fear of being alone, while eleven and seven respectfully cited having financial concerns and facing social stigma. Yet after battling and overcoming these issues, the women are thriving and peaceful after terminating the relationship.

Having analyzed the psychological and social factors that made this possible, it is clear that the role and possibilities for the social work profession are underestimated and underutilized. This stems from two on-going beliefs: 1) that emotional abuse is not as damaging as physical abuse; and 2) that women with resources do not need services. Both of these beliefs have been seen in the practice and the research literature alike.

However, the profession would do well to learn that all people locked in emotionally abusive relationships can – and should be provided with support.

A Limitation of the Current Study

In-depth analysis and coding of qualitative data revealed significant information about an understudied social problem. Although the sample size was more ample than previous studies on related topics, a limitation of the research was a relatively small sample size of women who hailed from the New York tri-state area. Duplicate research reaching participants from a larger geographic pool will determine if the findings are consistent among women who have terminated emotionally abusive relationships and have access to social resources.

Implications of the Study for the Social Work Profession

This study has widespread implications for clinical practice, social work education, legislative programs, and future research.

a) Clinical

Some participants noted a lack of knowledge or expertise from therapists regarding issues of emotional abuse, specifically among victims who had access to resources. Knowledge from this study could spur and enhance the design of clinical tools such as assessment and training techniques for therapists working with victims of emotional abuse. Recognition of the signs and symptoms of emotional abuse will enhance the therapists' ability to treat clients. Therefore, social workers should acquire a

specific language and skill set necessary to validate the client's abuse as a distinct form of abuse and not comingled with the definitions of physical abuse or domestic violence.

Because women with access to social resources do not generally seek help from public programs, independent therapists in private practice must be able to recognize patterns of emotionally abusive relationships and feel confident about openly addressing the problem. Family physicians and Obstetric/Gynecologists also need to be more aware of the impact of emotional abuse on patients and include questions about this problem in their standard repertoire. As noted by Lo Fo Wong et al (2008), doctors should acknowledge the advantage of their position as a professional confidant and ask women about abuse. Participants noted that they might feel comfortable disclosing this if asked by their gynecologist.

The increased awareness about emotional abuse among women with resources provided by this study will serve to delineate and distinguish the problems caused by emotional abuse from physical abuse. Clinicians can help their clients recognize emotional abuse and work with them to tap into their sense of agency. We have seen that women who terminated emotionally abusive relationships regained or gained the strength necessary to reclaim their lives. The ability to access inner strength and agency was unanimously noted by the study participants; therefore knowledgeable clinicians should be prepared to focus on the clients' sense of agency while terminating an emotionally abusive relationship as the core of treatment. Widespread and available clinical material would enhance the therapeutic experiences of women who terminate emotionally abusive relationships.

b) Educational

The knowledge gained through this study indicates that curriculum for schools of social work should be expanded to address the distinct issues related to emotional abuse. The current system usually combines all forms of abuse into one generalized course. Trauma programs have proliferated in the social work arena, however, the specificity of emotionally abusive behaviors needs to be included and emphasized in a course or program that aims to train social workers for work with traumatized clients.

While the social work curriculum is rightly grounded on the principles of serving disenfranchised populations, students must be taught that there are many ways in which individuals are disenfranchised. Simply having access to social resources does not preclude disenfranchisement. Most women with access to resources who terminated emotionally abusive relationships expressed a lack of awareness or knowledge of how to access professional help.

Future professional social workers require an educational environment that encourages openness towards all clients in need of services, including the middle class. The current economic downturn may prompt the social work profession to expand service provision to clients who may not have accessed such services in the past. In addition, as we have seen, emotional abuse is not relegated to a particular social class. It is, therefore, important to assess this particular problem regardless of the client's income, race, or employment status.

Social workers must recognize and validate the negative effects of emotional abuse on all affected persons. As we have seen in this study, simply having access to resources does not lead to the ability to secure services, nor do resources alone enable women to extricate themselves from emotionally abusive relationships. Weitzman

(2001) discussed the resistance of some professional social workers to treat women with social resources. Women with access to resources who are emotionally abused are, without question, a population in need of skilled social work services.

c) Social

Societal messages and cues to young girls continue to subliminally inculcate ideological perspectives that support the subjugation of women within intimate relationships. Although cloaked in less inflammatory language than the first part of the 20th century, messages that support stereotypical gender roles persist. Many women continue to retain an idealized notion of a marriage relationship in which they abdicate control and power to a man.

Knowledge gained from the study would enhance curricula in elementary and middle schools that address social role identification by providing information about emotionally abusive behaviors within relationships. The existing formats focus primarily on dating violence, bullying and sexting, all of which have been discussed more recently in the media- as they should be. Organizations such as “respectworks .org” focus on dating violence and stalking, sexting and internet intimidation. Still, additional media attention should be directed specifically at emotional abuse and would enhance the general knowledge base and provide girls with invaluable tools for developing non-abusive relationships.

The mainstream media have paid attention to stories of emotional abuse and its effects among a certain group of women with resources – namely celebrities. Pop culture icons have terminated emotionally abusive relationships either by self disclosure or exposure from the media. We can mention Rihanna, Halle Berry, Whitney Houston,

Denise Richards, Brooke Mueller, Mariah Carey, Elin Nordergen, Oksana Grigorieva, Elizabeth Edwards and Meredith Baxter. Perhaps these stories will encourage the future generation of women to be less tolerant and access their sense of agency if faced with emotional abuse. Expanded discussion about the vicissitudes of emotional abuse would stimulate others to share their stories and inspire girls to recognize emotionally abusive behaviors. Social media outlets have the power to portray emotional abuse as an insidious form of abuse that is as detrimental as physical violence.

Networking sites with far reaching audiences such as Facebook could be used as tools for sharing useful and powerful information about the signs of emotional abuse. Internet sites for professional organizations such as NASW, The Bar Association and The American Medical Association and professional networking sites such as Linked-In could have links to anonymously-accessible sites offering support and information about emotional abuse.

Literature in the form of flyers, brochures and small cards with pertinent information would be distributed in locations that are accessed by women with resources, including churches, synagogues, therapists', physicians and attorneys' offices. Hair salons and dermatologists' offices, non-stigmatized places frequented by women, could display information about emotional abuse.

d) Legislative

Americans could well learn from the French government. The most significant step towards a change in United States legislation regarding domestic abuse is the French parliaments' recent approval of a groundbreaking law that makes psychological violence

an offense (Reuters, 6/30/10). The law was proposed by both the left wing opposition party as well as the ruling majority in an effort to increase the measures aimed at protecting victims of domestic abuse. France's minister of family affairs, Nadine Morano stated that the recognition of psychological violence is important because "it is not just blows that hurt, but also words." According to a report in the New York Times, "the law stipulates that letting a wife, husband, partner or concubine act or repeatedly say things that could damage the victims life conditions, affect his/her rights and his/her dignity or damage his/her psychological or mental health is subject to a three years jail term and a 75,000 euro fine", about \$102, 750". (New York Times, 2/25/10).

The addition of a similar law in the United States would be a triumph for victims of emotional abuse who feel invalidated by society and who would seek justice from their perpetrators. Findings from the study should increase legislator's support for including "emotional" as a valid form of abuse in both divorce litigation and criminal cases. Legislation at all levels (federal, state and local) should be called on to view emotionally abused women as deserving of equal protection under the U.S. Constitution.

Future research

The available body of literature pertaining to women and emotional abuse has expanded over the past ten years. Nevertheless there continues to be a dearth of research about the specifics of women who terminate these relationships. The lack of data about women who have social resources, such as formal education, careers and family support, is significant. This study initiated an inquiry into an understudied topic. Future research will serve to validate the findings and expand the knowledge base about the termination

of an emotionally abusive relationship. The relatively small sample size indicates the need to replicate the study with a larger pool of participants. This would enhance the validity of the data and provide more information for the social work profession.

Further studies would benefit by interviewing women from a wider geographic area and at specific intervals of their post-termination states, i.e. six months, one year, two years, five years, ten years, fifteen years, twenty years, twenty-five years and thirty-years. Breaking out the participants for study by definitive stages of post-relationship termination may elicit differences in their recollections and insight into the struggles and motivations to leave.

The women interviewed for the current study were primarily from a specific group, urban women of middle and upper middle socioeconomic class. Studies conducted with women from varying class backgrounds would provide comparative data in which similarities and differences may emerge.

Appendix A- Informed Consent Form:

The goal of the proposed study is to gain knowledge about what psychological and social factors motivate socially non-marginalized women to terminate emotionally abusive relationships. The researcher is Fiona Eisenberg, LCSW and Doctoral Candidate at The Hunter College School of Social Work/CUNY Graduate Center of New York. Fiona Eisenberg will explain the proceedings to you, including the interview process and the methodology of the research project.

This study involves women who have completed a minimum education level of a two year college degree and who do not utilize any means of public assistance. It is anticipated that 30 individuals will participate in this study. Participation in the study is completely voluntary. The estimated time of the interview is one and a half to two hours and will be conducted in a location that is mutually agreed upon.

The nature of this study involves memories of painful experiences that may cause some participants emotional distress. If at anytime, you require either a break in the proceedings or to terminate your participation in the study, you are free to do so. Current or future inquiries concerning the goals of the research will be fulfilled upon request.

I, _____, have agreed to participate in research on intimate partner abuse. I understand that participating in this project requires that I take part in tape-recorded interviews with Fiona Eisenberg. I am aware that I will be asked questions about the nature and extent of the emotional abuse that I experienced from one intimate partner. I realize that the purpose of this interview is to gain information specifically about the termination of that relationship and should I request a referral for services following the interview, that information will be provided to me by the

researcher. I further understand that this information will be used for Fiona Eisenberg's dissertation. If the researcher becomes concerned that you are a danger to yourself or others she will alert the appropriate individuals. I am aware that:

- 1. My responses will remain confidential. The interview tape recordings will be properly disposed of upon completion of the project. There will be no identifying information used in publication.**
- 2. Pseudonyms will be used when descriptions of situations are used and all steps to protect my identity will be taken. A numerical coding system will be utilized so that no personal identification is jeopardized. All tapes and transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet in the home office of Fiona Eisenberg and Fiona Eisenberg is the only person with access to the cabinet.**
- 3. I do not have to respond to any questions I do not feel comfortable with.**
- 4. I have the freedom to withdraw consent for use of any or all of my information at any time.**
- 5. I have the freedom to withdraw from participating in the project at any time without suffering any negative consequences.**
- 6. I will have the opportunity to review the written project should I wish to.**
- 7. I will be given counseling referral information if I so request.**

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the researcher, Fiona Eisenberg at (917-756-8854) or her faculty advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Danto at (212-452-7032). You should contact the Hunter College IRB Office (212- 650-3053) if you have questions about your rights as a subject or if you feel you have been harmed as a result of your participation in this research. I have read the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study. I have received or will receive a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

Printed Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Printed Researcher's Name _____

Signature of Researcher _____

Date _____

**HUNTER COLLEGE OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
AUDIO TAPE RECORDING RELEASE CONSENT FORM**

Protocol # _____

Researcher: Fiona Eisenberg

Title: Women Who Terminate Emotionally Abusive Relationships: The Psychological and Social Factors.

As part of this project, an audio recording will be made during your participation in this research project. Please indicate below the uses of these audiotapes to which you are willing to consent. This is completely voluntary and up to you. In any use of the audio tapes, your name will not be identified.

1. The transcribed audio tapes can be studied by the research team for the use in the research project. _____
Initials
2. The audio tapes can be played for subjects in other experiments. _____
Initials
3. The audio tapes can be played at meetings of scientists interested in the study of Emotional Abuse. _____
Initials
4. The audio tapes can be played in classrooms to students. _____
Initials
5. The audio tapes can be played in public presentations to non-scientific groups. _____
Initials

You have read the above description and give your consent to the use of audiotapes as indicated above.

Participant's Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Referral Resource List for Participants:

The Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services
Alan and Kathryn Greenberg Counseling Center
120 West 57th Street
New York, New York 10019
212-397-4250

National Institute For The Psychotherapies
250 West 57th Street- Suite 501
New York, New York 10017
212-582-1566

William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy
20 West 74th Street
New York, New York 10023
212-873-7070

Appendix B- Demographic Questionnaire and The Interview Guide

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Age_____
2. Level of Education: Two Year Associates___ Four Year Bachelors___ Master's Degree___ Doctoral Degree___
3. Occupation_____
4. Income Level: \$40,000 to \$75,000___ \$76,000 to \$100,000___
\$101,000 to \$150,000___ \$151,000 to \$200,000___ Over \$200,000___
5. Rent Home___ Own Home___
6. Married/Partnered___ Single___ Separated___ Divorced___
7. Have Children: Yes___ No___
8. If Yes, What Age(s)_____

Appendix B continued

Interview Guide

A. The Relationship Referenced for the Study

1. How long were you involved in an emotionally abusive relationship before ending it?
2. At what point were you aware that your ex-partner was emotionally abusive?
3. Did you openly acknowledge the existence of emotional abuse?
4. How did you cope with the emotional abuse?
Did you tell family and/or friends?
Did you seek help? If so, from whom?
5. How did others react when you told them about the emotional abuse?

B. Family of Origin Environment and Relationships

6. How would you describe your parents' relationship when you were growing up?
7. How did you feel when changes occurred within the family system? i.e. moving, change in parent's marital status.
8. How do you remember the way conflict was handled between your parents?

C. Social Role Expectations

15. What did you expect from yourself as a female adult?
16. What do you think your parents expected from you as a female adult?

D. Intimate Partner History

18. How many intimate relationships did you have before you met your ex-partner?
19. Did you experience emotional abuse in any of these relationships? Can you describe the emotional abuse.

E. Termination of the Emotionally Abusive Relationship

20. When did you first contemplate ending the relationship?
21. What were you concerned about most?
23. What happened to end the relationship? Was there a specific incident?
24. How did you feel once you made the decision to end the relationship?
25. What steps did you take to formalize the ending of the relationship? i.e. move out, seek legal counsel, other.

F. Post-Termination of the Emotionally Abusive Relationship

26. Do you perceive yourself as changed, if you do, because you ended the relationship?
27. Looking back, what was the biggest obstacle to ending the relationship?
28. Looking back, would you do anything differently?

Appendix C – Excerpt from the Open Coding Guide

OPEN CODES FROM INTERVIEW GUIDE QUESTIONS:

Questions # 1-2 are closed ended.

1. How long were you involved in an emotionally abusive relationship before ending it?

0-2 yrs = 3 3-5yrs =4 6-8yrs =2 9-11yrs =3 12-14yrs = 1 15-17yrs = 1

18-20yrs = 5 21-23yrs = 0 24-26yrs = 2 27-29 yrs = 0 30-32 yrs = 1

2. At what point were you aware that your ex-partner was emotionally abusive?

Not Until After Over = 6
1-3yrs into relationship = 10
4-5yrs into relationship = 3
6-7yrs into relationship = 0
8-9yrs into relationship = 0
10-11yrs into relationship = 0
12-13yrs into relationship = 1
14-15yrs into relationship = 1
Over 15 yrs into relationship = 1

3. Did you openly acknowledge the existence of emotional abuse?

TR#1, pg 1 “I don’t know that I had those words in my mind until maybe after we ended. Uhm, I knew at some point obviously that I couldn’t live in the emotional environment I was in. But, I don’t know if I would have said if someone asked me is he emotionally abusive.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR# 2, pg.1 “I still grapple with that phrase. I’ve been told he was and I can isolate times where things he said, were, uhm, for lack of a better term, tell me he has serious problems, but the phrase emotionally abusive is still hard for me. It makes me feel like a victim. When I approached my ex-partner and used those words he convinced me that I was wrong”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

OPEN CODE: Responsibility to Make Relationship Work.

TR# 4, pg. 1 “I didn’t understand that it was emotionally abusive. In fact, I am just learning about emotional abuse. I thought this was just normal you know you are having an argument and nobody’s perfect and I have to learn how to deal with this”. I tried to talk to him about it but it didn’t work very well because he knew better than I did about things and as I now know it was the classic well you made me do it. If you hadn’t acted a certain way I wouldn’t have had to do this”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

OPEN CODE: Responsibility to Make Relationship Work.

TR# 5, pg.1 “I couldn’t define it as emotionally abusive until after, until I got out and looked back”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR# 6. pg.1 “I didn’t recognize it as such. I knew I was depressed, I knew there were a lot of red flags, and I knew I didn’t feel right, but I thought it was my fault because that’s how I was made to feel”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

OPEN CODE: Responsibility to Make Relationship Work.

TR# 7, pg.1 “I think I didn’t typify it as emotional abuse until later on, but I knew something was wrong before that.”

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR# 10, pg.1 “I didn’t identify it as an emotionally abusive relationship until after 9/11, when things because of other difficulties on our marriage, started exacerbating uh, the way my husband reacted to me”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR# 14, pg.1 “Uhm, it took me awhile. Once I realized that it was abuse, uhm after this one horrible argument.”

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

TR# 15, pg. 1 “I haven’t labeled it that way. I now see it but I haven’t shared that.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse.

Transcript # 16, pg.1 “I would say that that’s is true. I knew that what was happening was incredibly unsettling and humiliating but I didn’t know, I thought, that, I didn’t know. I didn’t know much about handling it or how to label it or trying to get help”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

TR # 17, pg. 1 “Oh, yes. I mean a lot of the emotional abuse was also intermixed with a lot of verbal abuse. And so in the beginning it was like wow, this kind of surprised me. I was shocked as to why he was treating me this way you know please stop. It was a lot of like calling it out and then it was a lot on his side like, I never said that or your too sensitive you get my sense of humor. More of that kind of thing. You know or the silent

treatment for days and days and then it was like nothing ever happened. Everything was oh so wonderful and it was like a rollercoaster.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

TR # 18, pg. 1 “I don’t think anybody said anything. I am more emotional and he was more quiet so people may have said well that’s me. Since he was so quiet it was more accepted. Right, it was my fault right.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

OPEN CODE: Did Not Feel Validation From Society

TR # 19, pg 1 “I didn’t get it till I got I went to I had to reach out cause I was in a situation where I thought I could get hurt badly. I went to the temple on 100th street and talked to the rabbi who was pretty clueless which shocked me but he did reach out but he was like I don’t; know people who have this so I started to reach out and then I contacted Safe Horizons, I contacted the police. My friend B. was really the one who helped me though it cause she had been in a an abusive relationship in college so she was the one who when I was really at that point, I mean I wasn’t admitting this to everybody, but she knew. And uhm having had her own experience, she was helpful and she was the one who suggested I contact uhm FEGs an through contacting FEGs I was connected through he FEGS of the city and I was able to go to their domestic family group. And when its when she handed me a sheet that listed abuse, like do you recognize any of these? Basically have you been scratching your head trying to figure all these things out and it was like really speaking to me because I had brought things up to different people at different times and nobody, I was seeing a therapist with him and alone and told her things that uhm should have clearly been considered abuse and she didn’t get it she didn’t help me and direct me, and I had mean to send her that sheet because it just was shocking because it was like yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes and yes I’d been scratching my head trying g to understand all of this”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

OPEN CODE: Sought Social Services

OPEN CODE: Did Not Feel Validated From Society

OPEN CODE: Did Not Feel Validated by Therapists

TR # 20, pg.1 “There were times that I can recall from very early on that he did emotionally abusive things. The way he spoke to me, but I may not have recognized it at the time or I accepted it you know like as part of the ups and downs of marriage”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

TR # 21, pg. 1 “I didn’t call it that until much later after I was out of it. I don’t think I was able to say that”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

TR # 22, pg. 1 “Well, I never used the word abuse because I didn’t know that it was abuse. I thought it was just a fight or but it was interesting because I would always look back and say wait a minute we are not really fighting, he is just being mean to me. (laughs). So then did I discuss it? Yes. I tried so many ways to discuss it with him, holy cow. I begged him to go to therapy, he went with me once and said it was a huge waste

of his time and complained and said he doesn't believe in it. Uhm, he uhm, I bought him once a book on anger management, a workbook, I bought him these CDS I got online about how to treat each other nicely. Did I try to talk to him? I tried and I cried and that never got a response out of him, sometimes I spoke to him and I would say that was really hurtful you could have said such and such, I tired. I am very calm and I have patience like forever I really have a lot of patience and he needed someone with a lot of patience. So yes, to answer your question, I tried to talk to him in lots of ways”.

OPEN CODE: Did Not Use Term Emotional Abuse

OPEN CODE: Responsibility to Make Relationship Work

4. How did you cope with the emotional abuse? Did you tell family or friends? Did you seek help? If so, from whom?

TR# 1, pg.1 “I did tell friends and eventually family because of my son. For a long time I kept saying to him come to therapy with me, come talk to me with someone. And he refused!”

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

TR# 2, pg. 2 “I had just moved to a different state so I didn't have the support system I was used to and he was very anti-therapy and me sharing it with anybody because it was so private.Uhm, what I did do was asked him to see a therapist and he said no, and eventually I went into therapy because I thought I was going to hurt him. I didn't tell anyone until after I left my husband, five years later, what had been going on”.

OPEN CODE: Protected Partner's Privacy

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Initial Self-Blame

TR# 3, pg. 1 “I told him he was nasty as hell so he left for about a month. I said you can't come back unless you go to therapy. I went to a therapist with him, a marriage counselor and finally the marriage counselor said are you going to put up with this? Is this how you are going to live? I told my sisters and my family”.

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

TR# 4, pg. 2 “We had gone to counseling for about a year, but that didn't go very well. I moved out for a couple of months and stayed with my sister. But I was horribly ashamed. I had always kept everything a secret so for me, I'm older, you don't get divorced, you stayed with your husband. And I really felt through this all, I took most of the responsibility because I fell in love with this man who was so wonderful for the first couple of years and I really looked at it as I , obviously, I must have doing something wrong. Someone couldn't have been that good and then not be, unless I was doing something. “Some friends knew but nobody ever really knew what he did. I couldn't tell people he called me the names he did.”

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Responsibility to Make Relationship Work

OPEN CODE: Protected Partner's Privacy
OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively
OPEN CODE: Holding on to Good Times
OPEN CODE: Initial Self-blame

TR# 5, pg. 4 "I told my parents. I told some select people. I spoke to his siblings. I was trying to get help from his family."

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

TR# 6, pg. 1,2 "After a friend gave me a book because apparently she could see signs , a book about emotional abuse, uhm, and that opened my eyes. I don't think she ever said anything , she just you know , if you want to read this it might be helpful. After I read the book I really felt like it could have been written about me and him and it took me a really long time to come to the conclusion that maybe I shouldn't be in this relationship. And so, I went to a psychiatrist (crying) and spent about six months trying to talk about and work it out and I guess that was my emotional separation form him to say this is what I have to do. me that's why she gave me the book The friend who gave me the book was a dear friend and I talked with her about it and she said she didn't know how to tell me."

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

TR# 7, pg.1 "I didn't share it in terms of emotional abuse. I shared it more like my husband is very difficult and I don't think I'm getting what I need and I had done therapy on and off so I discussed it. I didn't use the terminology, emotionally abusive, but I suggested that several times over the course of the relationship that we do therapy together. He refused and then it was official that we were separating . I suggested magnanimously that we do joint therapy so WE could understand how we got to this place instead of just saying, I didn't want to provoke and say how did YOU get to this place? We did like six or seven sessions."

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Responsibility to Make Relationship Work

OPEN CODE: Minimized Abuse as Justification to Stay

TR# 8, pg. 2 "I told my mother and she would be a sounding board."

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

TR# 9, pg.2 "I've clearly had a lot of distance from it and I think it is kind of healing also still to recognize maybe the choices that I made. I'd love him and I think he did love me , I think we were just very incompatible. Uh, uhm, I think I was starting out my professional career so I got a lot of satisfaction from the work that I did. So I think going to work everyday and feeling like well I can't be that stupid I can hold down a job and I'm managing people and I have a responsible position where people are relying on me therefore I can't be all bad. So, you know that part of my life was really good. Uhm and even with his ridiculing me and criticizing me, I somehow managed to keep that, I compartmentalized, I think that part of my life. I did not tell my family because I really though it wouldn't be a good idea. I really felt that my father and my older brother in

particular would have confronted my ex husband and I was afraid of that, just because I was afraid they would get into a really bad argument with him. I told one girlfriend everything because I needed to have somebody to talk to, so that was my way of being able to cope. I had one friend I could talk to and she was my best friend all the time.”

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

OPEN CODE: Protected Partners’ Privacy

OPEN CODE: Compartmentalized Abusive Life

TR# 10, pg.6 “I mean I would talk to my good friends and say you know he is really putting me down. You know it’s interesting because I think that our dynamic and the reason it took me so long to realize what this was, our dynamic was such that I always blamed myself for everything. My sister and my girlfriends would say don’t complain so much you have beautiful trips and you have beautiful this and a beautiful that. Come on you know so what? He gives you so many things, and he would do things like meet me when I was meeting a friend and purposely say honey go shopping! And take out a roll of five hundred dollars. Oh my god what do you have to be unhappy about in the marriage? We had started a bit of marriage counseling and at that point I was getting very angry and expressing it.”

OPEN CODE: Shared Information Selectively

OPEN CODE: Initial Self -Blame

OPEN CODE: Sought Therapy

OPEN CODE: Minimized Abuse as Justification to Stay

OPEN CODE: Did Not Feel Validation from Society

TR# 11, pg.2 “I didn’t tell my family or friends because they thought I was the bad guy. Cause I think he would call them from work and say that L. is acting crazy and angry. Just typical words of pegging women as the crazy and angry overemotional and as things would go on that thought he was working hard and it was my fault. Poor him to be with me and things like that.”

OPEN CODE: Did Not Feel Validation From Society

TR# 12, pg. 5 “I told my sister. Leave him she kept saying, maybe you should leave him. But I was afraid, I didn’t want to be alone. I really thought about it when he first told me about his depression and I thought about it and I said no, if he had a real illness like a medical illness would you leave him? I said I knew he had psoriasis and a herniated disc and I guess you know I was a little bit older and I was happy to find and educated Jewish man who wanted to have a family. I wanted to make it work. I was seeing a therapist for a long time, but I don’t think she really helped me.”

OPEN CODE: Fear of Being Alone

OPEN CODE: Minimized Abuse as Justification to Stay

OPEN CODE: Compartmentalized Abusive Life

Appendix D: Sample Transcript

Transcript # 20: K.A. 1/10/2010

R: How long were you involved in an emotionally abusive relationship before ending it?

P: Well, I was married for nineteen years and I don't know that is was always emotionally abusive, I think there were different levels. I think its hard to really know when it became emotionally abusive or when I experienced it as that. So lets say I was married to this man for nineteen years.

R: Ok, and you addressed my next point which is to ask you at what point were you aware that your partner was being emotionally abusive? Was there a turning point where that was clear to you?

P: There were times that I can recall from very early on that he did emotionally abusive things. The way he spoke to me, but I may not have recognized it at the time or I accepted it you know like as part of the ups and downs of marriage, so uhm, but as the marriage went on uhm, there was an incident that changed my view of the marriage and uhm, where I felt betrayed and uhm, I still stayed it her marriage another ten years. And it got worse after that and I think because I started pulling back. I think if I look back on it, I started creating a separate life for myself.

R: After this incident?

P: Yes.

R: Do you want to talk about it now? If you feel comfortable.

P: Yes. Well had my husband was lawyer and he worked for himself and he kind of thought he was smarter than everybody in the world, and although that appealed to me on some level, we had bought a condominium right before the market dropped and the market dropped 30% and he got a bunch of people together in the building to renegotiate the sales price and everybody else signed except him, because he thought he could do better.

R: But he negotiated it?

P: Yea. He thought he could do better for himself, he didn't like the working of it and I remember begging him to sign it. Begging because I had babies and I wasn't working and I was totally dependent and he just refused to do it and he would scream ad yell and have tantrums, he said no, no , no we can take this to court and win and he takes it to court and five years , meanwhile we are paying like a rent stabilized rent, and five years into the thing I turned 40, I remember it was my 40th birthday, the judge ruled we had to leave the apartment in three months. And he said no, no, no, they always give you six months when you have kids and he went to the judge and the judge said I don't like when lawyers abuse the system and you have to be out in two weeks. And, I just remember crying and I remember Justin who was like in kindergarten and saw me crying and it was just like this moment where I, and I really wanted to leave the marriage and he kept saying what's the big deal? You're so spoiled. This is nothing, people go through much worse things and it was all this protecting his own ego. So, I ended up putting my stuff in storage and

moving into my parents house with the kids and he stayed and moved his office into a friends apartment.

R: Did you consider that a separation?

P: No, No, he would come up with me sometimes but sometimes he didn't. but I would get up at 6 and drive into the city and luckily my parents were in Florida so the house was empty. All I did in those times, I wanted to keep the kids stable and for my son to be on his bus everyday. he went to Hunter. And he went to Hunter all the way through. And Daniel, West Side Montessori but I really had no place in the city, sometimes I would go this place where J. had his apartment but it was really awful. Really. It was so disruptive. And he said do you want to rent an apartment in the city? And I said no, lets just buy another apartment we had the money, I mean my parents were incredibly supportive. But I had to move all my stuff out in like a week and uh, Daniel was a baby and then he got chicken pox I just could take it he got chicken pox on the day of Justin's birthday party and I just couldn't take it. (starts laughing). I mean the whole thing is you stop focusing on your self and on what you need to do which is keeping the kids safe. And we had just bought a house in fire island and that is actually what kept our marriage together that we could go out there for the summer. Spend the whole summer there, but I never, that was the end of the marriage for me. I felt sort of like Scarlet O'Hara, I'm never going to let anybody do this to me again, I'm never going to lose control of my life again. That's when I really started working. But I think it changed. I started being interested in other men. I started not liking him anymore and he got angry ad the next ten years was about trying to heal the marriage yet this underlying anger and he would never admit that he'd made a mistake so there was this constant anger in our relationship. He was very mean.

R: Do you want o talk about some of the emotionally abusive behaviors now?

P: We can, I'm going to have to remember them. He was always screaming. My kids and I joke about it now. He would say things like You're not my equal or he was always screaming about something at the kids too. He would do passive aggressive things, mostly aggressive, I mean he would never hit me or get physical but it was really always screaming about something and I never knew how he was going to react so I would always tiptoe around the house, you know the book Walking on Eggshells? Which is really about bi-polar disorder, but that's how it felt. And so I started going out with my girlfriends if he would stay with the boys and I did decide I wanted to go back and do something in the arts and I got involved with producing a play and he hated that. It totally threatened him that I was finding a new life, new people that I was he wouldn't let me spend any money on it and he just hated the whole thing and I was out a lot and he would stay with the kids and then what started happening the kids got older. We had moved back into the city after having a board turndown and we had to go back to Scarsdale from fire island and then I found us an apartment that didn't need board approval and we had the cash we didn't need financing so we just bought it and did the renovation when we lived there and that felt like we could start over.

R: After this betrayal did you tell family and friends about it and what was going on?

P: No, I was ashamed. Yea.

R: How did you cope?

P: I guess just living my life and he wasn't always mean hoping that trying to please him trying to make sure he wouldn't get excited and mostly spending my time with the children and there were times when he was fine and fine about as the kids got older it got worse.

R: So you didn't tell family or friends or seek help from anyone at this time?

P: No.

R: I just want to switch gears a bit and ask you about your family of origin.

P: Ok.

R: So, how would you describe your parents relationship when you were growing up?

P: Uhm, I think they had , well, let me say it this way, I think they had a good relationship, they were both German , they both came here as children, in 1938 with their families and uhm, so they met here later on so they grew up in this very, you know they grew up in Washington Heights, so they met in 49 they got married in 1950, my sister was born in 1951, my dad was working for this little company y which he eventually took over and built up, but so by the time I was one which was 1955, I guess he was doing well. The GI bill, he bought a house, and uhm, they left Washington Heights with my grandmother. Uhm, so anyway, my father was the center of the house . There were the kids and my mother and my grandmother, who bickered with each other, but when my father came home he was the king. So I grew up learning to put men on a pedestal and my father was very strict and he , he could be I don't; know if I would go so far as to say abusive but he was not always nice to my mother, he was mean and she would end up crying a lot. He had sort of this benevolent dictatorship so that's what I knew about men.

R: And when you say he was the king do you mean that when he got home from work all the focus was on him?

P: Getting him his drink, you know it was a typical 50's kind of thing. Watch the news, watch Walter Cronkite and then have dinner and my mom and grandmother would serve him dinner and the kids would eat before so we were out of the way.

R: What were you doing when they were eating dinner?

P: I guess I was doing my homework or I was in my room, we had one TV so I guess we were allowed to watch some TV at night.

R: How did they relate to each other?

P: My father would comment on the food but he usually did that when other people were around. (laughs). Criticize her cooking and he would sort of teas us. He wasn't really interested in our lies and what we had to say. He would say how's school but he wasn't really interested in hearing g bout it.

R: Did he spend time with you one on one?

P; No, No. On the weekend he played golf, I mean he was just not around and he traveled a lot.

R: And did your mom spend time with you one on one?

P: I would guess so, yea. But I more remember and emotional relationship with my grandmother. She babysat alto and my parents went out to meetings at night and they had a lot of freedom because they had a live in babysitter.

R: When changes happened in the family, anything significant, maybe like when your younger sister was born, how did your parents deal with changes? Did it seem stable and calm? Or chaotic?

P: No, I think there was . . .I didn't feel safe. When M. was born I had a really hard time. In fact I used to get sick on the way to school and feel sick in my stomach d het off the bus and I remember and it wasn't right away when she was born, cause I was in fourth grade when she was born. She was born right after Kennedy was shot. And uhm, I felt like the world was in chaos and I had a lot of fear and I remember in fifth grade feeling sick before school but once I got to school it was ok. But I didn't want to leave home.

R: Do you think that your parents were aware of how you were feeling? Did you talk to them about it

P: No, no. I never talked to them about any of it. And I remember they sent m to the school shrink, my parents must have gone to the school and said they were worried about me because I was getting sick. I mean it was very limited psychology. And then I went to the psychologist and they asked me did I like school? And I was always the actor, I knew how to be in public so I said I don't know what your are talking about and I did really well in school.

R: But inside, you had anxiety. Do you think it had to do with a new baby?

P: Yes, entirely. All the attention was on the new baby. They had a baby nurse my grandmother was upset too because she got moved to the basement and they had this other baby nurse and so she was like, that usurped her role and they wouldn't let me touch the baby at first, I mean it was really old fashioned. Then as I got older all I wanted to do was protect M. I guess I felt there was something I needed to protect her from and I wanted to love her. Because I always felt unloved.

R: What role did your older sister play?

P: She dropped out. She still is very non communicative and depressed. She wouldn't even talk to me in high school and then she got married right after college. Now I am like the big sister. Her husband was an alcoholic and she doesn't talk and she doesn't try to heal herself she is sort of paralyzed. She has a low self image.

R: And your parents were not survivors of World War II, they got out before?

P: Right. They felt prejudice. I had nightmares my whole childhood. When I was little they had shown us those news reels of dead bodies and at home it was constant inundation of fear. I used to have dreams about the Nazis would come to my house and I would have to choose like a Sophie's choice thing but they were terror dreams and I wouldn't go into my a parents bed. There was a real rigidity in our house you had to be a

certain way and the worst time that that came out was on Jewish Holidays I had to wear a certain thing and look a certain way. I felt like such a weirdo because my friends parents were American and my parents were European and I felt so weird. At my friends houses we could go into the refrigerator but not in my house. You couldn't . I begged my mother to buy pop tarts, I wanted to be normal. There were never leftovers .Everything in the frig was according to size, it was about control. They had to have a lot of controls in their life. My mom is very shutdown and stoic and angry. I mean she says you know its hard for her to be really happy.

R: Do you remember your parents being loving towards each other?

P: I do. I remember them sitting on the couch together and hug and touch. They have been married for sixty years and they are constantly bickering. Even though they bicker all the time they do love each other. They are very nurturing of each other.

R: Do you remember what you expected for yourself as a female adult?

P: Well, (sigh), I wanted to sing. I studied music in college at Suny Binghamton. I studied voice. I wasn't a great performer I didn't have the ego or the drive or the confidence to do it and that was one of the things, there wasn't a lot expected of me.

R: Well, that was going to be my next question. What do you think your parents expected of you as an adult?

P: To marry a nice Jewish boy who would take care of me. I should go to college just in case but you know. I really wanted to have children, but I was not great with men. I never had a lot of boyfriends I had I didn't have a lot of confidence in that area so I used my sexuality to get men. And so I didn't have good relationships when I was in college and my twenties.

R: How many intimate relationships of significance have you had prior to your marriage?

P: Two.

R: Was there any emotional abuse in those relationships?

P: No, not at all. When you say significant, I mean I loved this guy in high school but we didn't consummate but I was always in love with someone who was unreachable. And then I had a boyfriend in college who was very sweet and he turned out to be gay, but he was a really nice boyfriend. We slept together and I got pregnant and had an abortion when I was nineteen. I couldn't tell my parents, my girlfriend went with me. His parents wouldn't let him talk to me after that. He was from upstate and I was like the bad New York girl or something and then of course he moved out to California and was gay. So, I didn't tell my parents anything, anything. They didn't get it they just I think they get it more now but they were very in their own world they didn't understand what was happening in the sixties. They became more conservative and I used to have big fights with my father, like they voted for Nixon and we became estranged that way and I remember my father would say things to me like 'Boys aren't going to like you if you don't shave your armpits' or you know, so there was a lot of that kind of abuse as a child. Like he would make jokes like 'you could wear a band aid for a bra' when I was like thirteen. Inappropriate, it was so incorrect and so inappropriate and he had this teasing thing which was mean. I was

very sensitive to it because I didn't; have boyfriends but there was this idea that this man could say anything he wants and get away with it.

R: Did your mom intervene?

P: No power. Never, ever. She would say go apologize to your father. Like one time my father came home and I was watching TV and I didn't kiss him hello and he didn't talk to me for three days until I apologized to him. That's what it felt like. Maybe it wasn't three days but that's what it felt like.

R: Where did you think that came from? Was that his upbringing?

P: Yea. In other words you respected your father no matter what.

R: And your mother?

P: Yea and your teachers. Authority. And men were authority so who did I marry? Another authority he was just a different authority than my father. He was one of a maverick and a free spirit and he was smarter than everybody and he knew more than everybody.

R: You said that early on now you could say that things were emotionally abusive that you then could not identify as such. When was it that you decided to end your relationship?

P: I think it was five years after I lost the apartment and had to move. About. It is interesting I around 1994 we moved in and things were ok and then he started fighting with everyone on the board, he fights with everybody he's an angry person so it was also around my sons thirteenth birthday we started going to couples therapy.

R: Who initiated going to therapy?

P: Me. I started becoming less interested in him after 1994 and in 1998 I contacted this guy who I had an affair with before I was married and we had an affair. And I did it because I wanted to have an affair and it was great. I felt like my life changed. I lost weight and I was excited, and I started running again and I don't know that my husband ever knew but he must have sensed something. And then like all people who have affairs we had better sex and you think it helps the marriage and you are happy and you come up with all these reasons why its ok and that went on until we got divorces. And he was married too. I started thinking about going back into the arts and then this guys won a Grammy and I emailed him to congratulate him and then we started meeting and having a lunch. That's how it started. This was my fuck you and a significant part of ending my marriage. It started the process for me but this guys also wasn't that nice. He ended up not being nice to me either. He had a lot of affairs. It felt safe to me because he wasn't going to leave his wife. He would drop and disappear and it was on his terms and it was another one of those relationships where I put him on a pedestal. Finally he met somebody else. I felt horrible even though I knew this was a guy who cheats on women. He was a guy who cheated on his wife for forty years. This affair went on for ten years. I finally got rid of him. After I got divorced I was healing myself and I didn't have to have that kind of relationship anymore but it was a long process. I think my ex husband suspected and he started getting angrier and then he really got bad towards me. So then we went

into therapy and even therapy he would just like talk the whole time. We would have to have like 2 sessions in a row because I would get like 2 minutes to talk and he would go on and on. Talking about all the things that were wrong with me. I also went on antidepressants and it changed my life. Totally. And finally I said I am not going couples therapy anymore and I just went to my own therapy. It was such a waste of time with him. I think the therapist was taken with my ex. I've been on Celexa and it's great. So it was a combination of the Celexa, the affair and his getting angrier that around 2000.

R: What types of formal steps did you take to end the relationship?

P: Well, it was a lot of processing in my head. I remember I was already thinking about leaving him I could figure out how to do it and I wasn't making that much money then, but then I started to make more money and you know you have to process everything. I decided that uhm, I strategized in my head, and of course things were getting worse and worse with the fighting and the kids and I went in to therapy six months before my 50th birthday and I said, to the therapist I need to figure out if I am staying in this marriage or leaving this marriage by the time I turn 50. I needed help so when I turned 50 I told him I wanted to separate. I went away for my 50th birthday with some girlfriends for the weekend we went to a bed and breakfast and it was nice. My older son really suffered. My kids did really go through a hard time with their father.

R: Did you get an attorney?

P: I decided that I wanted the apartment and I wanted the kids to have their home so I gave away everything else and we agreed on joint custody and he wrote up the agreement and I had a lawyer, but she made me sign something that said she didn't agree with it so I couldn't go back and sue her.

R: How do you feel it turned out?

P: I feel like I gave away a lot of money to get out.

R: What were you concerned about most in the process of ending the relationship?

P: Getting him out. Out and away from the kids.

R: Were you concerned about money?

P: No. Cause I was making money by then and my parents have money and they were willing to help me and my parents had put away money for college.

R: Since you initiated ending the relationship, do you perceive yourself as changed in anyway?

P: Yes! (emphatically). I got my power back. I felt totally powerless which is how you feel when you are abused.

R: How did your friends and family react when you told them and were they aware of the abuse?

P: Oh yes, they knew. They saw it. My parents felt like they wanted to stay out of it. And they saw that he was volatile but they didn't see the really bad behavior. And my ex started calling my father to try and get his on his side and I finally told my father you

cannot talk to him, you need to be on my side. My sister told me she hated him a Should leave him and so id call my friends. When I did they were all like Yea! One of my best friend sin Fire Island said to me that when she first met us she couldn't believe the way he talked to me. And I was always crying a lot he was so mean to me.

R: What was the biggest obstacle for you to end the relationship?

P: Uhm fear of being alone and I guess financial.

R: How do you feel no about being alone?

P: Great. You know what? I had a lot of friends and I am lucky enough to live in Manhattan it is huge. I have access to activities and single women. I go to the theater. I think its much more isolating in the suburbs.

R: Do you think that having a sense of agency motivated you to end the relationship?

P: Yes. I think I had it and that was my rebellious part with my family but I had a lot of fear on top of it that I had to release.

R: Do you think your identification with early role models impacted your decision to leave the marriage?

P: It definitely had to do with it feeling like I had to make it work but ultimately they were supportive of my leaving and said they would support anything I wanted to do.

R: Do you think having formal education and employment opportunities impacted your decision to terminate the relationship?

P: Absolutely. I think its huge at least 80% because you know he was just yelling at me this is the way people see it. So if I couldn't afford it I wouldn't have left maybe. Sometimes is was good sometimes it wasn't so bad.

R: Did social status keep you in the marriage?

P: Yes. I think here was less stigma than there was earlier on but it was definitely the idea of being a single woman was scary. It is very much a couple world and I feel sometimes even now that I am not part of a couple world. Holidays, weekends. I go with my friend and family. It took a while to feel happy.

I feel like I am finally the woman I wanted to be with my music and I am starting to feel like I can be in a healthy relationship. It took a lot of work to get to this place. I would tell anyone who is in their position that they can find their strength You can have a better life, there is a better life out there and you don't have to be treated badly. I wish I would have ended it sooner at least five years earlier and I think my kids are healthier now because they didn't have a place that was safe. They never knew how their father would react when they are home he would heave these violent outbursts and scream. It won't hurt the kids as much as staying in a terrible marriage. Maybe though this was the right time for me. I did forget to tell you that I begged him to go on medication for his anger, but he refused.

REFERENCES:

- Aardvarc (2009).
- Abramovitz, M. (1988). *Regulating the Lives of Women: Social Welfare Policy From Colonial Times to the Present*. Boston, MA: South End Press.
- Abramovitz, M. (2006). Welfare Reform in the United States: Gender, Race and Class Matter, *Critical Social Policy*, 26 (2), pp. 336-364.
- Adams, D. (1988). Treatment Models of Men who Batter: A Profeminist Analysis. In K. Yllo & Bograd (Eds), *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Aguilar, R.J. & Nightingale, N.N. (1994). The Impact of Specific Battering Experiences on the Self-Esteem of Abused Women. *Journal of Family Violence*, 9, pp. 35-45.
- Ainsworth, M.D.S. (1968). Object Relations, Dependency, and Attachment: A Theoretical Review of the Infant Mother Relationship. *Child Development*, 40, 969-1025.
- Ali, A. (2007). Where is the Voice of Feminism in Research on Emotional Abuse? *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 73-77.
- Ali, A., Oatley, K. & Toner, B. (1999). Emotional Abuse as a Precipitating Factor For Depression in Women. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, Vol. 1 (4), pp. 1-13.
- Ammerman, R.T. & Hersen, M. (1992). *Assessment of Family Violence: A Clinical and Legal Sourcebook*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Andersen, S.M., Boulette, T.R. & Schwartz, A.H. (1991). Psychological Maltreatment of Spouses. In Ammerman, R.T. and Hersen, M. (eds.), *Case Studies in Family Violence*, New York: Plenum.
- Anderson, K.L. (1997). Gender, Status and Domestic Violence: An Integration of Feminist and Family Violence Approaches. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 59, pp. 655-669.
- Anderson, D.J. (2003). The Impact on Subsequent Violence of Returning to an Abusive Partner. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, Vol. 34, Issue 1, 93-112.
- Archer, J. (1996). Sex Differences in Social Behavior: Are the Social Role and Evolutionary Explanations Compatible? *American Psychologist*, Vol. 51, No. 9, pp. 909-917.

- Archer, M. (2000). *Being Human: The Problem of Agency*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Bal, M. (2009). *Narratology: The Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*. 3rd Edition. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bartholomew, K. (1997). Adult Attachment Processes: Individual and Couple Perspectives. *British Journal of Medical Psychology*. 70, pp. 249-263.
- Beck, A.T., Steer, R.A. & Garbin, M.G. (1988). Psychometric Properties of the Beck Depression Inventory: Twenty-five Years of Evaluation. *Clinical Psychology Review*, pp. 77-100.
- Benjamin, J. (1988). *The Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism, and the Problem of Domination*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Biddle, B. & Thomas, E. (1979). *Role Theory: Concepts and Research*. Huntington, NY: Robert E. Kreiger Publishing Company.
- Bograd, M. (1988). Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse in Kersti Yllo & Michelle Bograd (Eds) *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 11-26.
- Boonzaier, F. (2008). "If the Man Says You Must Sit, Then You Must Sit": The Relational Construction of Women Abuse: Gender, Subjectivity and Violence. *Feminism and Psychology*, Vol. 18 (2), 183-206.
- Bornstein, R. F. (2006). The Complex Relationship between Dependency and Domestic Violence. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 61, No. 6, 595-606.
- Borochowitz, D.Y. (2008). The Taming of the Shrew: Batterer's Constructions of Their Wives Narratives. *Violence against Women*, Vol. 14, No. 10, 1166-1180.
- Bourdieu, P.(1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P.(1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). In L. Spillman (Ed.) *Cultural Sociology*. Oxford:Blackwell Publishers, 23.
- Bowen, G.A. (2006). Grounded Theory and Sensitizing Concepts. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5 (3).
- Bowlby, J. (1973). *Attachment and Loss, Volume 2, Separation*. New York: Basic Books.

- Brandell, J.R. & Ringel, S. (2007). *Attachment and Dynamic Practice*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Brandt, J. (2005). Why She Left: The Psychological, Relational and Contextual Variables that Contribute to a Woman's Decision to Leave an Abusive Relationship. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol. 66, (8-B), 4473*.
- Brockner, J. & Rubin, J. (1985). *Entrapment in Escalating Conflicts: A Social Psychological Analysis*. New York: Springer.
- Brown, J. (1997). Working toward Freedom from Violence: The Process of Change in Battered Women. *Violence against Women, 3, pp. 5-27*.
- Bruce, C.D. (2007). Questions Arising about Emergence, Data Collection, and Its Interaction with Analysis in a Grounded Theory Study. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 6 (1)*.
- Buchbinder, E. & Eiskovits, Z. (2003). Battered Women's Entrapment in Shame: A Phenomenological Study. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, Vol. 73, No. 4, pp. 355-366*.
- Burke, J.G., Geilen, A.C., McDonnell, K.A., O'Campo, P. & Maman, S. (2001). The Process of Ending Abuse in Intimate Relationships: A Qualitative Exploration Of the Transtheroetical Model. *Violence against Women, 7, pp. 1144-1163*.
- Burks, B.K. (2006). Emotional Abuse of Women in Lundberg-Love, P.K. (Ed) & Marmion, S.L. (Ed); "Intimate Violence against Women: When Spouses, Partners, or Lovers Attack." Westport, Ct: Praeger Publishers/ Greenwood Publishing Group, pp. 235.
- Burnel Report. (1989). Poverty, Economic and Social Consultative Assembly, Brussels: European Communities Economic and Social Committee.
- Capezza, N.M. & Arriaga, X.B. (2008). Why do People Blame Victims of Abuse? The Role of Stereotypes of Women on Perceptions of Blame. *Sex Roles, 59, 839-850*.
- Cebik, L.B.(1986) Understanding Narrative Theory. *History and Theory, Vol. 25, No. 4 Beiheft 25, Knowing and Telling History: The Anglo-Saxon Debate, 38-81*.
- Celani, D.P. (1999). Applying Fairbairn's Object Relations Theory to the Dynamics Of the Battered Women. *American Journal of Psychotherapy, Vol. 53, No.1, pp. 60-73*.

- Center for Disease Control Prevention. (2006).
- Chang, V.N. (1996). I Just Lost Myself: Psychological Abuse of Women in Marriage
Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 54 (11-A), pp. 4258.
- Chavetz, J.S. (1988). *Feminist Sociology: An Overview of Contemporary Theories.* Itasca, Ill. F.E. Peacock. Chapter 1 & Chapter 2, 1-65.
- Choice, P. & Lamke, L.K. (1997). A Conceptual Approach to Understanding Abused Women's Stay/Leave Decisions. *Journal of Family Issues, 18, No. 3, pp. 290.*
- Clegg, S. (2006). The Problem of Agency in Feminism: A Critical Realist Approach. *Gender and Education, Vol. 18, No.3, 309-324.*
- Clymer, S.R., Ray, R.E, Trepper, T.S. & Pierce, K.A. (2006). The Relationship Among Romantic Attachment Style, Conflict Resolution Style and Sexual Satisfaction. *Journal of Couple and Relationship Therapy, Vol. 5 (1), pp. 71-89.*
- Cogan, R. & Porcerelli, J.H. (1996). Object Relations in Abusive Partner Relationships: An Empirical Investigation. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 66, (1), pp. 106-115.*
- Collins, B. (1993). Reconstructing Codependency Using Self-in-Relation Theory: A Feminist Perspective. *Social Work, Vol. 38 (4), pp. 470-476.*
- Crane, P.A. & Constantino, R.E. (2003). Use of the Interpersonal Support Evaluation List (ISEL) to Guide Intervention Development with Women Experiencing Abuse. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 24, pp. 523-541.*
- Danto, E. (2008). *Historical Research.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Davis, L.V. (1987). Battered Women: The Transformation of a Social Problem, *Social Work, 32, (4), 306-311.*
- Davis, R.E. (2002). Leave-Taking Experiences in the Lives of Abused Women. *Clinical Nursing Research, 11 (3), pp. 285-305.*
- Deaux, K. (1985). Sex and Gender. *Annual Review of Psychology, 36, pp. 49-81.*
- De Beauvoir, S. (1952). *The Second Sex.* New York: Knopf.
- Dettman, M., Johnson, L. (2005) "Resisting Domestic Violence: Survivor and Advocacy Perception of Domestic Violence Law, Social Policy and Activism" Conference Paper *American Society of Criminology Annual Meeting, Toronto, pN. PAG, Op; Abstract.*

- Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, IV. (1994). American Psychiatric Association: Washington, D.C.
- Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, IV-TR. (2000). American Psychiatric Association: Washington, D.C.
- Dillabough, J. (2004). Class, Culture and the Predicaments of Masculine Domination: Encountering Pierre Bourdieu. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, Vol. 25, No.4, 489-506.*
- Dobash, R.E. & Dobash, R.P. (1977-1978). Wives: The “Appropriate Victims of Marital Violence. *Victimology, 2, pp. 426-442.*
- DuBois, S.B. (1983). Passionate Scholarship: Notes on Values, Knowing and Method in Feminist Social Science. In Bowles, B., and Klein, R.D. (eds.), *Theories of Women’s Studies*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London and New York, pp. 105-116.
- Dutton, M.A. (1992). *Empowering and Healing the Battered Woman*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.
- Dutton, D.G. & Painter, S.L. (1993). Emotional Attachments in Abusive Relationships: A Test of Traumatic Bonding Theory. *Violence and Victims, 8, pp.105-120.*
- Eagly, A., Mitchell, A., (2004) “Social Role Theory of Sex Differences and Similarities: Implications for the Sociopolitical Attitudes of Women and Men” In Praeger Guide to the Psychology of Gender. Paludi, M.A. (Ed); Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group, p. 183-206.
- Eagly, A.H. & Koenig, A.M. (2006). Social Role Theory of Sex Differences and Similarities: Implication for Prosocial Behavior in Sex Differences and Similarities in Communication, 2nd Ed. Dindia Kathryn (Ed); Canary, Daniel J. (Ed). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.
- Elliston, E.J.W. (2002). Why Don’t They Just Leave? The Effects of Psychological Abuse on Sheltered Women. *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 62 (7-A), pp. 2570.*
- Erlanger, S. (2010).”France May Make Mental Violence a Crime”. New York Times, February 25, p. A 10.
- Evans-Campbell, T., Lindhorts, T.Huang, B., & Walters, K. (2006). Interpersonal Violence in the Lives of Urban American Indian&Alaska Native Women: Implications for Health, Mental Health and Help-Seeking. *American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 96, Issue 8, 1416-1422.*

- Fairbairn, W.R.D. (1941). *A Revised Psychopathology of the Psychoses and Psychoneuroses in Psychoanalytic Studies of Personality*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952, pp. 28-58.
- Feagin, J. & Feagin, C.B. (1997). *Social Problems: A Critical Power-Conflict Perspective*. 12-24.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2003).
- Ferguson, M. & Wicke, J. (1994). *Feminism and Postmodernism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.
- Ferraro, K. (1997). *Battered Women: Strategies for Survival in Violence Between Intimate Partners: Patterns, Causes and Effects*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Ferraro, K.J. & Johnson, J.M. (1983). How Women Experience Battering: The Process of Victimization. *Social Problems*, 30 (3), pp. 325-339.
- Few, A.L. & Rosen, K. H. (2005). Victims of Chronic Dating Violence: How Women's Vulnerabilities Link Their Decisions to Stay. *Family Relations*, Vol. 54, No. 2, 265-279.
- Fiore-Lerner, C. & Kennedy, L.T. (2000). Stay-Leave Decision Making in Battered Women: Trauma, Coping and Self-Efficacy. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 215-232.
- Fiorello, J.L. (2002). A Qualitative Study of Women who Leave Abusive Relationships. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering*, 62 (12-B), 5961.
- Follingstad, D.R., Rutledge, L.L. Berg, B.J., Hause, E.S. & Polek, D.S. (1990). The Role of Emotional Abuse in Physically Abusive Relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol. 5, Number 2, pp. 107-120.
- Fontes, L.A. (2004). Ethics in Violence against Women Research: The Sensitive, The Dangerous, and the Overlooked. *Ethics and Behavior*, 12 (2), pp. 141-174.
- Forward, S. & Frazier, D. (1997). *Emotional Blackmail: When the People in Your Life Use Fear, Obligation and Guilt to Manipulate You*. London: Bantam Press.
- Fugate, M., Landis, L., Riordan, K., Naureckas, S. & Engel, B. (2005). Barriers to Domestic Violence Help-Seeking. *Violence against Women*, Vol. 11, Issue 3, pp. 290-310.
- Gagne, P. (1999). Identity, Strategy, and Feminist Politics: Clemency for Battered Women Who Kill. *Social Problems*, Vol. 43, No. 1, 77.

- Gay, P. (2008). *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*. New York: W.W. Norton Co.
- Geffner, R. & Rossman, B.B.R. (1998). Emotional Abuse: An Emerging Field of Research and Intervention. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, Vol. 1, (1), pp. 1-5.*
- Gelles, R.J. (1974) *The Violent Home: A Study of Physical Aggression between Husbands and Wives*. California: Sage Publications.
- Glaser, B.G. & Strauss, A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Gordon, L. (1988). *Heroes of Their Own Lives*. New York: Viking.
- Gormley, B. (2005). An Adult Attachment Theoretical Perspective of Gender Symmetry in Intimate partner Violence. *Sex Roles, Vol. 52, Nos. 11/12, pp. 785-795.*
- Guba, E.G. & Lincoln, Y.S. (1994). "Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research" in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Ed), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 105-117.
- Grasamkee, L.M. (2007). Experiencing and Perpetrating Subtle-Overt and Domineering Psychological Abuse: A Study of Community Women. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol. 68 (2-B), pp. 1304.*
- Gray, C.A.(2002). Psychological Maltreatment and Adult Attachment in Women's Romantic Relationships: The Role of Having Experienced Emotional Abuse In Childhood. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol. 64(2-B), 963.*
- Hamberger, K.L.; Ambuel, B. & Guse, C.E. (2007). Racial Differences in Battered Women's Experiences and preferences for Treatment from Physicians. *Journal of Family Violence, 22:259, pp. 259-265.*
- Henderson, A.J.Z., Bartholomew, K., Trinke, S.J. & Kwong, M.J. (2005). When Loving Means Hurting: An Exploration of Attachment and Intimate Abuse in A Community Sample. *Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 20, No. 4, pp. 219-230.*
- Herbert, T.B.; Silver, R.C. & Ellard, J.H. (1991). Coping with an Abusive Relationship: How and why do Women Stay? *Journal of Marriage and Family, 53, pp. 311-325.*
- Herman, J. (1997). *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

- Horney, K. (1950). *Neurosis and Human Growth: The Struggle Toward Self-Realization*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.
- Hornung, C.A., McCullough, B.C. & Sugimoto, T. (1981). Status Relationships in Marriage: Risk Factors in Spouse Abuse. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, pp. 675- 692.
- Horsburgh. (1995). Lifting the Veil of Secrecy: Domestic Violence in the Community. *Harvard Women's Law Journal*, Vol. 18, p. 171.
- Hotaling, G.T. & Sugarman, D.B. (1990). A Risk Marker Analysis of Assaulted Wives. *Journal of Family Violence*, 5, pp. 1-13.
- Hyden, M.(2005) "I Must have been an idiot to Let it Go On: Agency and Positioning in Battered Women's' Narrative of Leaving" *Feminism and Psychology*, May, 15(2), p 168-169.
- Janesick, V.J. (1994). "The Dance of Qualitative Research Design: Metaphor, Methodolatry and Meaning", in N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Ed), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 209-219.
- Johnson, M.P. & Ferraro, K.J. (2000). Research on Domestic Violence in the 1990's: Making Distinctions. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62, pp. 948-963.
- Kalmuss, D. & Straus, M. (1990). Wife's Marital Dependency and Wife Abuse. In M. Straus & R. Gelles (Eds.). *Physical Violence in American Families*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers.
- Kaukinen, C. (2004). Status compatibility, Physical Violence, and Emotional Abuse In Intimate Relationships. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 66, pp. 452-471.
- Kelley, H. & Thiabaut, J. (1978). *Interpersonal Relations: A Theory of Interdependence*. New York: Wiley.
- Keller, E.F. (1985).*Reflections on Gender and Science*, Yale University Press, New Haven.
- Keskinen, S. (2004) "Between Abstract Individualism and Gendered Lives: Negotiating Abused Women's Agency and Identity in Therapy" In *Healing Plots: The Narrative Basis of Psychotherapy*: Lieblich, A. (Ed); McAdams, D. (Ed), Josselson, R. (Ed). Washington, DC American Psychological Association. pp. 67-87.
- Kernberg, O.F. (1975). *Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism*. New York: Aronson.

- Kirkwood, C. (1993). *Leaving Abusive Partners: From the Scars of Survival to the Wisdom for Change*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kolmar, W. & Bartkowski, F. (2000). *Feminist Theory: A Reader*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing.
- Lachkar, J. (1998). *The Many Faces of Abuse: Treating the Emotional Abuse of High-Functioning Women*. Lanham, MD: Jason Aronson.
- Lachkar, J. (2000). Emotional Abuse of High-Functioning Professional Women: A Psychodynamic Perspective. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, Vol. 2 (1), pp. 73-91*.
- Ladenburger, K. (1998). Exploration of Women's Identity: Clinical Approaches with Abused Women in Campbell, J.C. (Ed). *Empowering Survivor's of Abuse: Health Care for Battered Women and their Children*, pp. 61-69. London: Sage Series on Violence against Women.
- Lammers, M., Ritchie, J. & Robertson, N. (2005). Women's Experience of Emotional Abuse in Intimate Relationships: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, Vol. 5 (1), 29-64*.
- Layton, L. (2004). *Who's that Girl? Who's that Boy? Clinical Practice Meets Postmodern Gender Theory*. Hillsdale, New York: The Analytic Press.
- Lee, R.M. and Renzetti, C.M. (1990). The Problems of Researching Sensitive Topics. *American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 33, No. 5, pp. 510-528*.
- Lehmiller, J.J., & Agnew, C.R. (2007). Perceived Marginalization and the Prediction of Romantic Relationship Stability. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 69, 1036-1049*.
- Lempert, Lora Bex, 1996 "Women's Strategies for Survival: Developing Agency in Abusive Relationships" *Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 11, No. 3 pp. 269-289*.
- Lentz, S.A. (1999). Revisiting the Rule of Thumb: An Overview of the History of Wife Abuse. *Women and Criminal Justice 1110 (2). 9-27*.
- Levendosky, A.A. & Graham-Bermann, S.A. (2001). Parenting in Battered Women: The Effects of Domestic Violence on Women and Their Children. *Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 16, No.2, 171-192*.
- Lipsky, S., Field, C., & Larkin, GI. (2006). The Role of Intimate Partner Violence on Race and Ethnicity in Help-Seeking Behaviors. *Ethnicity and Health, Vol. 11, (1), 81-100*.

- Lockhart, L. (1987). A Reexamination of the Effects of Race and Social Class on the Incidence of Marital Violence: A Search for Reliable Differences. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 49, No.3, 603-610.
- Lo Fo Wong, S.; Wester, F.; Mol, S.; Romkens, R.; Hezemans, D.; Lagro-Janssen, T.(2008) "Talking Matters: Abused Women's Views on Disclosure of Partner Abuse to the Family Doctor and its Role in Handling the Abuse Situation". *Patient Education and Counseling*, Mar. Vol. 70, Issue 3, p386-394.
- London Feminist Salon Collective. (2004). The Problematization of Agency in Postmodern Theory. *Gender and Education*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 25-33.
- Loring, M.T. (1994). Emotional Abuse. New York: Lexington Books.
- Lynch, K.D. (2007). Modeling Role Enactment: Linking Role Theory and Social Cognition. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 37:4, pp. 379-399.
- Marshall, L.L. (1993). Coping and Health in Psychologically and Physically Abused Women. Paper presented at the meeting of the Kansas Series in Clinical Psychology, Lawrence, KS.
- Marshall, L.L. (1994). Physical and Psychological Abuse. In W.R. & B.H. Spritzberg (Eds). *The Dark Side of Interpersonal Communication*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Marshall, L.L. (1996). Psychological Abuse of Women: Six Distinct Clusters. *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp. 379-409.
- Martin, A.; Berenson, K.R.; Griffing, S.; Sage, R.E.; Madry, L.; Bingham, L.E. & Primm, B.J. (2000). The Process of Leaving and Abusive Relationship: The Role of Risk Assessments and Decision Certainty. *Journal of Family Violence*, Vol. 15, Issue 2, pp. 109-122.
- McAdams, D.P. (2006). The Role of Narrative in Personality Psychology Today. *Narrative Inquiry*, 16: 1, 11-18.
- McCloskey, K.A.; Sitaker, M.; Grigsby, N. & Malloy, K.A. (2006). Over-Representation of People of Color as Intimate Partner Violence Perpetrators: The Case for Examining Multiple Points of Contact. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, Vol. 13 (1), pp. 19-40.
- McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Newberry Park, CA: Sage.
- McMillan, R. & Gartner, R. (1999). When She Brings Home the bacon: Labor-Force Participation and the Risk of Spousal Violence against Women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 61, pp. 947-958.

- McNay, L. (2000). *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory*. Cambridge, U.K. Polity Press.
- McNay, L. (2004) "Agency and Experience: Gender as a Lived Relation" *The Editorial Board of the Sociological Review, Issue 1, p. 174-190*.
- Miller, J. (1988). *Connections, Disconnections and Violations*. Wellesley, MA: Stone Center, Wellesley College.
- Miller, J. & Stiver, I. (1997). *The Healing Connection*. Wellesley, MA: Stone Center, Wellesley College.
- Mintzberg, H. (1983). "An Emerging Strategy of Direct Research" in John Van Maanan (Ed), *Qualitative Methodology*, Newberry Park, CA: Sage, 105-116.
- Moffitt, A.C., Krueger, R.F., Magdol, L. and Margolin, G. (1997). Do Partners Agree About Abuse in their Relationship? A Psychometric Evaluation of Interpartner Agreement. *Psychological Assessment, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 47-56*.
- Moi, T. (1999). *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* by Tori Moi. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Montgomery, J. 1998. "Toward a Role Theoretic Concept of Embeddedness" *American Journal of Sociology, 92-125*. and Lynch, Karen Dana, 2007. Modeling Role Enactment: Linking Role Theory and Social Cognition. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior, 37; 4, 0021-8308*.
- Morgan, P. (1981). From Battered Wife to Program Client: The State's Shaping of Social Problems. *Kapitalstate, 17-39*.
- Moss, V.A. (1996). The Experience of Terminating an Abusive Relationship. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol. 57 (3-B), pp. 1713*.
- Mullaly, B. (2007). *Oppression: The Focus of Structural Social Work*. In B. Mullaly, *The New Structural Social Work*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, pp. 252-286.
- Murphy, C.M. & O'Leary, K.D. (1989). Psychological Aggression Predicts Physical Aggression in Early Marriage. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 57, pp. 579-582*.
- Murphy, C.M. & Cascardi, M. (1993). Psychological Aggression and Abuse in Marriage. In R.L. Hampton, T.P. Gullotta, G.R. Adams, E.H. Potter III & Weissberg, R. (Eds), *Issues in Children's and Families Lives: Vol. 1 Family Violence: Prevention and Treatment*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

- National Coalition against Domestic Violence. (2009).
- Neisser, U. (1982). Snapshots or Benchmarks. In Neisser (Ed). *Memory Observed: Remembering in Natural Contexts*. San Francisco: Freeman.
- New York City Health Department Statistics. (1994).
- New York State Coalition against Domestic Violence. (2000).
- NiCarthy, G. (1986). *Getting Free: You Can End Abuse and Take Back Your Life*. Seattle: Seal Press.
- Nicolson, p. & Wilson, R. (2004). Is Domestic Violence a Gender Issue? Views from a British City. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 14, pp. 266-283.
- O’Leary, K. & Maiuro, R.D. (2001). *Psychological Abuse in Violent Relations*. New York: Springer Publishing.
- O’Leary, K.D., Malone, J., & Tyree, A. (1994). Physical Aggression in Early Marriage: Pre-Relationship and Relationship Effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 62 (3), pp. 594-602.
- Olson, E. (2009) “Though Many are Stalked, Few Report It”. *New York Times*, February 15, p. A 22 -24.
- Orava, T.A., McLeod, P.J. & Sharpe, D. (1996). Perceptions of Control, Depressive Symptomology and Self-Esteem of Women in Transition from Abusive Relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 11, p. 167-186.
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). (3rd Edition). *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Method*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pearlman, D.N., Zierler, S., Gjeslsvik, A., Verhoek-Oftedahl, W. (1993). Neighborhood Environment, Racial Position and Risk of Police-Reported Domestic Violence: A Contextual Analysis. *Public Health Reports*, Vol. 118, Issue 1, p. 44.
- Peled, E., Eiskovits, Z., Enosh, G., & Winstock, Z., (2000). Choice and Empowerment For Battered Women Who Stay: Toward a Constructivist Model. *Social Work*, Vol.45, Issue 1, 9-25
- Samuels, Gina, Miranda and Ross-Sherriff, Fariyal. (2008).
- Pence, E. & Paymar, M. (1993). *Education Groups for Men Who Batter: The Duluth Model*. New York: Springer Publishing Company.

- Pipes, R.B. & LeBov-Keeler, K. (1997). Psychological Abuse Among College Women in Exclusive Heterosexual Dating Relationships. *Sex Roles, Vol. 36, Nos. 9/10, pp. 585-603.*
- Pleck, E. (1987). *Domestic Tyranny: The Making of Social Policy against Family Violence from Colonial Times to the Present.* New York: Oxford University Press.
- Prospero, M. & Vohra-Gupta, S. (2008). The Use of Mental Health Services among Victims of Partner Violence on College Campuses. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma, Vol. 16, Issue 4, pp. 376-390.*
- Queen, J. (2007). Becoming Emotionally Abused: The Lived Experience of Adult Women in Intimate Partner Relationships. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol. 68 (4-B), pp. 2257.*
- Raphael, F.B. (1998). The Experience of Seven Women Moving from Long-term Emotional Abuse by an Intimate Partner to a Path of Self-Reclamation. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences And Engineering, Vol. 59 (5-B), pp. 2430.*
- Reuters: guardian.co.uk (2010). "France Outlaws Psychological Violence in Attempt to Tackle Domestic Abuse. Law Proposed by Members of Parliament from Ruling Majority and Opposition Wins Backing of Centre-Right Government". June 29, 20.05 BST.
- Rodden, J.(2008). How Do Stories Convince Us? Notes Towards a Rhetoric of Narrative. *College Literature, 35, 1.*
- Rousanville, B. (1978). Barriers to Identification and Treatment. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 48, 487-494.*
- Royer, M. (2009) Moses and Singer, LLP. New York, New York.
- Rusbult, C.E. & Martz, J.M. (1995). Remaining in an Abusive Relationship: An Investment Model Analysis of Nonvoluntary Dependence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 21, pp. 558-571.*
- Sable, P. (1998). Almost All in the Family: Emotionally Abusive Attachments. *Journal of Emotional Abuse, Vol. 1 (2), pp. 51-67.*
- Samuels, G.M. & Ross-Sherriff, F. (2008). Identity, Oppression and Power: Feminisms and Intersectionality Theory. *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 5-9.*

- Schatzman, L. & Strauss, A. (1973). *Field Research: Strategy for a Natural Sociology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Schumacher, J.A. (2001). Risk Factors for Male-to-Female Partner Psychological Abuse. *Aggression and Violent Behavior, Vol. 6, Issue 2/3, pp. 255-268*.
- Schweizer, P.A. (1986). Battered Women: A Phenomenological Analysis of Staying and Leaving. *Dissertations Abstracts International, 48, No. 01A, 0226*.
- Shakespeare, W. (1652). *Taming of the Shrew*.
- Shepard, M.F. & Campbell, J.A. (1992). The Abusive Behavior Inventory. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 7, pp. 291-305*.
- Seneca Falls Doctrine (1848).
- Stanton, B.K. (2002). Difficult Decisions: Factors Involved in the Process of Women Leaving an Abusive Relationship. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, 63 (10-B), 4926*.
- Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women on Personal Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stenius, V.M., Veysey, B.M., Hamilton, Z., Andersen, R. (2005). Social Roles in Women's Lives. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services and Research, Vol. 32, Issue 2, pp. 182-198*.
- Stets, J.E. (1991). Psychological Aggression in Dating Relationships: The Role of Interpersonal Control. *Journal of Family Violence, 61 (1), pp. 97-114*.
- Stewart, C. (1987). Family Violence in Stable Middle-Class Homes. *Social Work, Vol. 32, 6, 529-531*.
- Straus, M.A. (1976). Sexual Inequality, Cultural Norms and Wife Beating. *Victimology: An International Journal, 1, 54-76*.
- Straus, M.A. (1979). Measuring Intrafamily Conflict and Violence: The Conflict Tactics Scales. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 41, pp. 75-88*.
- Strube, M.J. & Barbour, L.S. (1984). Factors Related to the Decision To Leave an Abusive Relationship. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 46, pp. 837-844*.
- Sugg, N.K. & Inui, T. (1992). Primary Care Physicians' Response to Domestic Violence: Opening Pandora's Box. *Journal of the American Medical Association, 267 (3), pp. 3157-3160*.

- Swift, P. (1997). At the Intersection of Racial Politics and Domestic Abuse. *The Buffalo News*.B7.
- Tedeschi, J.T. & Felson, R.B. (1994). *Violence, Aggression and Coercive Actions*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Temple, J.R. (2007). Effects of Partner Violence and Psychological Abuse on Women's Mental Health over Time. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 67 (8-A), pp. 2920*.
- Tolman, R.M. (1989). The Development of a Measure of Psychological Maltreatment of Women by their Male Partners. *Violence and Victims, 4 (3), pp. 159-177*.
- Towns, A. & Adams, P. (2000). "If I Really Loved Him Enough, He Would Be Ok": Women's Accounts of Male Partner Violence. *Violence against Women, 6, pp. 558-585*.
- Traynor, M. (1997). *Countering the Excessive Subpoena for Scholarly Research*. Cooley, Godward and Kronish, LLP. FindLaw Library.
- United States Justice Bureau of Statistics. (2006).
- University of Colorado at Boulder Office of Research Integrity. (2009). *Privileged Communication and Compelled Disclosure*.
- Violence against Women Act. (1994). Title IV, Sec. 4001-40703, H.R. 3355.
- Violence against Women Act Reauthorization. (2005). Title IV, Sec. 4001-40703, H.R. 3402.
- Vitanza, S., Vogel, L. & Marshall, L.L. (1995). Distress and Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Abused Women. *Violence and Victims, 10, pp. 23-34*.
- Vogel, D.L., Wester, Vogel, D.L., Wester, S.R., Heesacker, M. & Madon, S. (2003). Confirming Gender Stereotypes: A Social Role Perspective. *Sex Roles, Vol. 48, Nos.11/12, pp. 519-528*.
- Vogel, David, L., Wester, Stephen R., Heesacker, M. (2003). Confirming Gender Stereotypes: A Social Role Perspective. *Psychological Reports, 92 (1), p. 75-83*.
- Waldrop, A.E. & Resick, P.A. (2004). Coping Among Adult Female Victims of Domestic Violence. *Journal of Family Violence, Vol. 19, No. 5, pp. 291-302*.
- Walker. (1979). *The Battered Woman*. New York: Harper and Row.

- Weitzman, S. (2000). "Not to People Like Us": Hidden Abuse in Upscale Marriages. Basic Books.
- Weston, R. (2002). The Mediating and Moderating Effects of Women's Attachment Style on Interrelationships among Emotional Abuse, Physical Aggression and Relational Stability. *Dissertation Abstracts International: Section B: The Sciences and Engineering, Vol. 63(12-B), 6148.*
- Winnicott, D.W. (1960). The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment: Studies on the Theory of Emotional Development. Madison, CT: International Universities Press.
- WomensLaw.org. (2009).
- Wood, J. (2001). The Normalization of Violence in Heterosexual Romantic Relationships: Women's Narratives of Love and Violence. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 18, 239.*
- Wood, J. T. (2005). Feminist Standpoint Theory and Muted Group Theory: Commonalities and Divergences. *Women and Language, Vol. 28, Issue 2, 61-65.*

