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The cessation of marital violence.

Etiony Aldarondo-Antonini
University of Massachusetts Amherst

THE CESSATION OF MARITAL VIOLENCE

A Dissertation Presented

by

ETIONY ALDARONDO-ANTONINI

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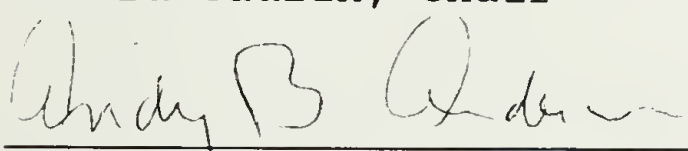
Approved as to style and content by:

Howard Gadlin, Chair



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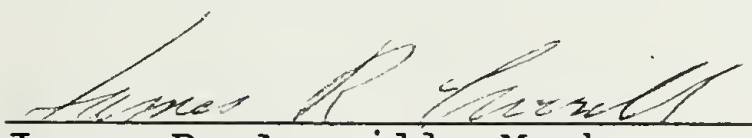

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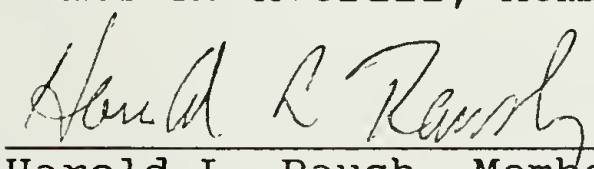

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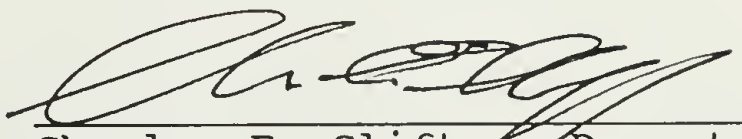

Charles E. Clifton, Department Head
Psychology Department

To my parents

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Once talking about his theory of personality, George Kelly said: "I must make this clear at the outset; I did not find this theory lurking among the data of an experiment nor was it disclosed to me on a mountain top or in a laboratory. I have, in my own clumsy way, been making it up". It seems to me that dissertations are also made this way.

Many people and institutions have contributed generously to the preparation of this dissertation. For support in the recruitment of couples, I would like to thank Carlos Sluzki. For discussions about data management and statistical analysis, I would like to thank my committee member Andy Anderson. I would also like to give a warm thanks to my committee members Jim Averill and Harold Raush for their support, their interest in the study, and their critical comments on the integration of quantitative and qualitative data. To my chair person, Howard Gadlin, I owe special thanks for reminding me what I was doing when I seemed to forget and for demanding that respect, friendship, and commitment to social justice be part of both our relationship and my dissertation.

I started writing this dissertation while I was a Ford Foundation Minority Dissertation Fellow from 1989 to 1990. Thanks to the Ford Fellowship I had freedom to dedicate a full year of my life exclusively to this project. I am also thankful to The American Psychological Association for a Dissertation Award which help me cover research expenses.

In this study, I included data collected by the Family Research Laboratory at The University of New Hampshire. Thanks to Murray Straus, co-director of the FRL, and to Kirk Williams, who was in charge of the Panel Study on Deterrence Processes, for their support, encouragement, and consultation in using the data set.

I wrote much of this manuscript in the facilities of the Laboratory for the Assessment of Language Skills at the University of Massachusetts during the summer of 1991. Thanks to Mike Royer for facilitating office space and computer equipment. Thanks also to my friend Carlos Cano for his hospitality and support during this period of time.

Finally, I want to thank my wife, Maria Carlo, not only for being a valued critic of the manuscript and a cherished statistic consultant, but also for the many ways in which during the process of writing the dissertation she made our life seem easy when it was not.

ABSTRACT

THE CESSATION OF MARITAL VIOLENCE

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ETIONY ALDARONDO-ANTONINI, B.A., TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

M.S., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

PH.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Directed by: Professor Howard Gadlin, Ph.D.

Research on the cessation of violence is important in light of the dramatic increase in public and scientific interest on family violence. Although the marital violence literature more than tripled during the eighties, much of the work has focused solely on the correlates and determinants of marital violence, ignoring the issue of how couples eliminate violence from their relationships. This is an exploratory study of the cessation of men's use of violence against their female partners. Longitudinal survey data were used to evaluate cessation rates, the relationship between demographic characteristics and risk factors for wife abuse and cessation, and the help seeking behavior of partners who ceased the violence. In depth interviews with two couples who had ceased the use of violence were used to elucidate the characteristics of the cessation process. It was found that contextual factors such as financial hardship, increased number of children at home, increased levels of marital conflict, and inadequate conflict

resolution skills were negatively related to the cessation of violence. On the other hand, cessation was associated with immersion into a social network that supports non-violence, development of alternative ways to resolve conflict, and the partners' commitment to the relationship.

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INTRODUCTION

> We have thought of peace as passive and war as the active way of living. The opposite is true. War is not the most strenuous life. It is a kind of rest cure compared to the task of reconciling our differences... From War to Peace is not from the strenuous to the easy existence; it is from the futile to the effective, from the stagnant to the active, from the destructive to the creative way of life... We may be angry and fight, we may feel kindly and want peace--it is all about the same. The world will be regenerated by the people who rise above these passive ways and heroically seek, by whatever hardship, by whatever toil, the methods by which people can agree.
>
> Mary Parker Follet
> The New State

Over the past decade there has been a dramatic increase in scientific interest in family violence. In 1982 family violence was introduced as a heading in the Psychological Abstracts (a publication which contains abstracts from professional journals from various disciplines within the social sciences since 1927). That year 61 abstracts were included. Subsequently, the number of references to family violence has increased steadily. In 1982 family violence reports accounted for 0.19% of the abstracts (61/31348). Since that year 824 publications have been listed under the this heading. The latest records, for the year 1989, show 106 references to family violence which amounts to 0.30% of the total number of publications that year (106/35568).

A more direct indication of the increasing popularity of the topic of marital violence is suggested by the addition of a "battered females" heading in 1988 and the

inclusion this year of headings such as "partner abuse", "emotional abuse", "shelters", and "physical abuse".

Similar interest in marital violence is evident in abstracts appearing in the Dissertation Abstracts International Index. These abstracts are indexed by descriptions used in the title or anywhere in the written abstract. From 1861 to 1976 no reference is made to marital violence or spouse abuse. For the past 15 years, however, more than 300 hundred references to spouse abuse or marital violence are listed. The increased interest in this area of research has also sparked the emergence of a number of professional journals (Child Abuse and Neglect, Family Violence Bulletin, Journal of Family Violence, Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Violence and Victims, Victimology: An International Journal) specifically geared towards family violence research.

Fortunately, a number of reviews (Frieze & Browne, 1989; Margolin, G., Sibner, L. G., & Gleberman, L., 1988; Strube, 1988; Gelles, 1985; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Bagarozzi & Giddings, 1983; Stahly, 1978) and annotated bibliographies of marital violence research are now available (Engeldinger, 1986; Social Sciences Bibliographies, 1979) A close look at these publications and some of the most recent articles suggest that marital violence research has progressed along several lines of inquiry. In general, research has focused on questions of

a) incidence and prevalence (e.g., How often do partners engage in violence towards each other? How many men severely abuse their wives?); b) correlates and causes of marital violence (e.g., Are alcoholic partners more violent than non-alcoholic ones? Does the incidence of wife assault increases with the level of marital conflict? Is the use of violence associated with the use of other forms of coercive power at home?); c) battered women's decision to stay or leave their assailants (e.g., Is learned helplessness a reason women stay with their assailants? Under what conditions are battered women more likely to leave?); and d) questions about the treatment and control of violent husbands (e.g., Do violent men benefit from treatment? Are legal sanctions effective in reducing redicivist violence? Do perceptions of sanctions reduce the likelihood that husbands will assault their wives?).

To be sure, the complexities of wife abuse extend far beyond academic walls into court rooms, shelters for battered women, clinics and hospitals, and above all into our own homes. Hardly a day goes by without disturbing reminders, from official news sources and private conversations, of how destructive people can be against those who they once vowed to protect. There are no simple solutions to wife abuse. Changes in penal codes for wife abusers, consistent law enforcement, protective services and shelters for battered women, awareness groups, treatments

for abusing husbands, and public condemnation of the use of violence against women are part of the solution. Another part of the solution, which has lingered in the background of every attempt to deal with wife abuse, has to do with peoples' competencies to eliminate physical aggression from their intimate relationships.

In this context, it is interesting to notice that although much of the work in this area is conducted with the implicit goal to change the conditions that promote and sustain violence, change or the cessation of violence is hardly ever the subject of study. Moreover, relatively little attention is given to research suggesting that violence does not always herald the demise of the relationship; that many couples actively seek for solutions to end the violence; and that at least some of them cease being violent (Bowker, 1983; Margolin & Fernandez, 1987; Feld & Straus, 1990).

As a result of this tendency to overlook the resources, competency and agency of partners in violent relationships, we often cast, albeit implicitly, men who engage in violence and their victims as odd and deficient. The idea that violent men are incompetent or mentally deranged continues to influence both our explanations of violence and our research endeavors. In doing so, we limit not only our capacity to learn about how people resolve the use of violence in their relationship, but also our capacity to

improve services and policies designed to intervene in violent relationships. Ultimately, we also deprive partners engaged in the use of violence from knowledge they may find inspiring and constructive.

This study takes a step forward into the exploration of the cessation of violence in intimate relationships. The study seeks to learn about the conditions that promote and sustain the cessation process and the changes in the lives of those people who "rise above" the violence and find "the methods by which people can agree".

Background of the Study

Originally, I set out to study the cessation of violence through interviews with volunteer men and women who succeeded in eliminating the use of violence without the help of mental health professionals. I wanted to learn not only about cessation but also about the natural course of violence in couples' relationships, so to speak. The combination of a slow recruitment process and limited resources made this approach impractical. After research consultations with Dr. Murray Straus and Dr. Kirk Williams at the Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, I broadened the scope of the study to incorporate data from a three year panel study on deterrence processes they had conducted. These data not only permitted me to pursue my interest in the cessation of violence, but also made possible the evaluation of patterns of cessation and

persistence of violence, sociological factors associated with cessation, and interventions used to stop the violence.

Thus, the study that follows relies in both survey data and case studies to investigate the cessation of wife abuse. Each method of inquiry, and each data set, permits the exploration of important aspects in the lives of men who ceased the use of physical aggression against their female partners. Together, these two approaches present a more comprehensive picture of these men and the elimination of wife abuse than either approach could produce alone.

The Research Problem

This study is based on two assumptions. First, men's violence against their female partners is intentional. Although the intention may not always be apparent, the issue is that under some circumstances some men prefer to use violence over other forms of conflict resolution. Second, men who abuse their wives, are capable of changing their preferences, behaviors, opinions, and affective experiences in relation to the psychological, interpersonal and social contexts in which they exist.

As mentioned above, both survey data and case studies are used here to evaluate the cessation process. In the first part of the analysis I document the patterns of cessation in the survey data and evaluate the social conditions, individual characteristics, and interventions related to the elimination of wife abuse. Using national

survey data, the following questions are addressed: What are the rates of cessation and persistence of wife abuse? What are the characteristics of men who cease using physical violence against their female partners? In which ways do these men differ from men who persist using physical violence against their female partners? To what extent is the cessation of wife abuse related to the characteristics of the couple and the social conditions in which they life? What kind of interventions are used by women and men in stopping wife abuse?

The analysis of survey data provides a general context for the analysis of case studies--a sort of book stand, holding the stories of people who ceased wife abuse. In the second part of the analysis I look at the individual and interpersonal contexts associated with the cessation of wife abuse. In depth interviews are used to explore the changes in the lives of partners and their understanding of the process which led to the resolution of wife abuse in their lives.

In accord with much of the research literature in wife assault, violence in this study is defined as "an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person" (Gelles and Straus, 1979). Other forms of violence such as sexual and psychological violence are implied but not dealt with directly in this study. Terms such as wife assault, wife

abuse, and husband-to-wife violence have equivalent meaning in this text and are used interchangeably. The term marital violence is used when the emphasis is placed on the couple rather than on the perpetrators or the victims of the violence. The term couple in turn is used to mean both married and cohabiting couples.

Next, I review those aspects of the research literature on marital violence that are most relevant for a study on the cessation of wife abuse. Theoretical considerations in the study of cessation will be presented in a later section.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Incidence and Prevalence Studies

Incidence and prevalence studies are the backbone of much of the existing marital violence research. These studies present an impressive account of the extensive and serious nature of violent behaviors among married and cohabiting couples in the United States. The main sources of data on the incidence of marital violence come from two National Family Violence Surveys (Straus, Gelles, Steinmetz, 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1986, 1990); the National Crime Survey (Gaquin, 1978); regional surveys on wife assault (Frieze, 1980; Nisonoff & Bitman, 1979; Schulman, 1979); and studies of volunteer samples (cf. Straus & Gelles, 1990).

The National Family Violence Re-survey conducted by Murray Straus and his colleagues at the Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire, presents the most current and arguably the best data available on the incidence of marital violence in American families. Since a detailed description of the survey is presented in the methods section, it would be sufficient for now to know that the data consists of telephone interviews with 6,002 married and cohabiting couples across all 50 states. Straus and Gelles (1986) reported that approximately one out of eight husbands, or 11.6% of the sample, were recorded to assault their wives. On the other hand, 12.6% of the wives carried out acts of violence against their husbands during that

year. Overall, the national survey data indicated that 16.1% of the couples participating in the study, or one out of six couples, reported at least one incident of physical assault in the year preceding the survey. Of those couples, 39.13% reported experiencing "severe violence", including acts such as kicking, punching, biting, stabbing, or using guns. Applying this rate to the population of married or cohabiting couples in this country, Straus and Gelles estimate that somewhere near 8.7 million couples experienced at least one assault in the 12 months prior to the survey, and 3.4 million of them engaged in some form of severe violence.

It should be noted that considering underreporting and failure to recall acts of violence these figures should be treated as "minimum rates. The true rates of family violence are higher by some unknown amount" (Straus, 1990, p. 20). Even if the "true rates" of marital violence were no higher than what has been suggested, they provide ample justification for a systematic study of cessation processes.

Before leaving this topic, a caveat must be mentioned. Today, there is considerable debate over how to account for the seemingly comparable rates of husband-to-wife and wife-to-husband violence. Many marital violence researchers are careful to warn us that the high frequency of wife-to-husband violence does not mean that couples in the United States are mutually violent; nor does it curtail the

importance of wife abuse as a social problem. For these investigators women's violence is better understood in relation to the consequences and meaning of the violence for the partners (Pagelow, 1981, 1984; Bowker, 1983). As Gelles and Straus assert not everyone sympathizes with this interpretation:

> Perhaps the most controversial finding from (surveys on marital violence has been) the report that a substantial number of women hit and beat their husbands.... Unfortunately, the data on wife-to-husband violence have been misreported, misinterpreted, and misunderstood. Research uniformly shows that about as many women hit men as men hit women. However, those who report that husband abuse is as common as wife abuse overlook two important facts. First, the greater average size and strength of men and their greater aggressiveness means that a man's punch will probably produce more pain, injury and harm than a punch by a woman. Second, nearly three-fourths of the violence committed by women is done in self-defense. While violence by women should not be dismissed, neither should it be overlooked or hidden. On occasion, legislators and spokespersons like Phyllis Schlafly have used the data on violence by wives to minimize the need for services for battered women. Such arguments do a great injustice to the victimization of women (1988, p. 90).

In this study violence committed by women against their male partners is not dismissed as unimportant to understanding the cessation of wife abuse. However, because of methodological and pragmatic considerations, no attempt is made to assess in detail the cessation of wife-to-husband violence.

Risk Factors for Wife Assault

Sailing around the brisk politics of marital violence research, we can now move into a consideration of the characteristics of partners and couples found to be associated with wife assault. Risk factors refer to an attribute or characteristic that is associated with an increased probability to either the use of violence or the risk of being victimized. It need not be a cause of violence or victimization (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). In the absence of a data base on the cessation of wife assault, those factors associated with a high incidence of wife assault offer initial empirical grounds, a map if you wish, for the exploration of characteristics of couples and partners that may be related to cessation.

Numerous risk factors for wife abuse have been identified through studies of battered wives. Shelters for battered women, courts, and mental health clinics often provide access to motivated audiences for this work. Typically, the input from these women is obtained through questionnaires and interviews; the women are encouraged to describe their present situation, the dynamics of their couple relationship, their previous experience with violence, their partner's previous experience, the response of institutional sources of help, and to complete personality measures for themselves and their partners.

Research on the characteristics of partners and couples involved in marital violence often relies on volunteer participants. Participants in these studies are recruited in many ways; they may be recruited through public advertisements, presentations at local churches and civic organizations, payment offers, or by word of mouth. They may be preselected from police records, or may participate in exchange for therapy free of cost. (cf. Bowker, 1983; Gelles, 1987). Although much of this work, like studies of battered women in shelters and clinics, is limited to female volunteers, there is an increasing number of studies including the participation of both partners (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Telch & Lindquist, 1984; O'Leary & Curley, 1986; Margolin, John, & Gleberman, 1988; Lloyd, 1988).

Finally, data obtained from surveys of random samples drawn from the general population are also used to identify potential risk factors for marital violence at the individual and couple level.

With such a diversity in research methodology and sample, it should not come as a surprise that an array of individual, social, and demographic variables have been submitted as potential risk factors for husband to wife violence. Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) evaluated the consistency of 97 risk factors for husband-to-wife violence across 52 studies of marital violence. Included in the evaluation were studies with samples drawn from the general

population, studies with samples of battered women at shelters and clinics, and studies using volunteer samples. Every study involved a nonviolent comparison group and presented appropriate statistical analyses.

Hotaling and Sugarman found that witnessing parental violence during childhood or adolescence, sexual aggression towards the wife, use of violence towards children, high alcohol consumption, low income level, occupational status, low educational level, and lack of assertiveness were all consistent risk factors for men's use of physical aggression against their female partners. On the basis of this evaluation Hotaling and Sugarman (p. 114) stated that, "Batterers are exposed early in life to family violence, are less assertive, and possess fewer educational and occupational resources than nonviolent men. This review also finds that batterers are much more likely to engage in other forms of antisocial behavior than men who are not violent towards their wives."

In agreement with Hotaling and Sugarman' analysis, the two National Family Violence Surveys have also identified heavy drinking and poverty in men as risk factors for wife abuse. Additional risk factors for husband to wife violence identified through these surveys include unemployment, preoccupation with economic security, dissatisfaction with standard of living, stress, lack of community ties, number of children living at home, asymmetry in decision making

power between spouses (both male dominance and female dominance), verbal aggression, high level of marital conflict, youthfulness, years of marriage, and physical punishment during childhood (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980; Straus and Gelles, 1990).

If there is such as thing as a typical wife beater, say Gelles and Straus,

> (he) is employed part-time or not at all. His income is poverty level. He worries about economic security, and he is very dissatisfied with his standard of living. He is young, between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four...and has been married less than ten years. While he tries to dominate the family and hold down what he sees as the husband's position of power, he has few economic or social resources that allow for such dominance; not only does his neighbor have a better job and earn more money than he does, but often so does his wife (1988, p. 88).

The situation is somewhat different concerning the characteristics of women that may be related to a high risk of victimization. Different studies have differentiated battered women from non-battered women on variables such as self-esteem, educational level, age, race, and drug use. However, in their evaluation of these and 37 additional potential risk markers Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) found that the only consistent risk factor of women's victimization by men was "witnessing violence as a child or adolescent".

Potential risk factors for wife abuse such as the experience of childhood violence and holding traditional sex role expectations have been found to differentiate battered

women from non-battered women but not from non-battered women in discordant relationships (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). That is to say, the differences between victims and non-victims of violence often dissipate when the levels of marital satisfaction and marital conflict are taken into account. According to Sedlack (1988, p. 324) "other victim-related risk factors with substantial support have been shown to be products of the abuse rather than precursors (cf. drug use, notable psychopathological symptomatology, and apprehension/tension/anxiety)". With regard to this issue, Gelles and Straus state:

> There is a great tendency to blame the victim in cases of family violence. Battered women have frequently been described as masochistic.... There is not much evidence that battered women as a group are more masochistic than other women. There are, however, some distinct psychological attributes found among battered women. Victims of wife beating are often found to be dependent, having low self-esteem, and feeling inadequate or helpless. On the other hand, battered wives have been found to be aggressive, masculine, and frigid. In all likelihood these contradictory findings are the result of the fact that there is precious little research on the consequences of being battered, and the research that has been conducted frequently uses small samples, without comparison groups....Another problem with assessing the psychological traits of battered women is the difficulty in determining whether the personalities were present before the battering or were the result of the victimization (1988, p. 89).

With regard to the couple, the characterization of violent couples that prevails in the marital violence literature includes a male dominant power structure, where

the husband makes all major decisions, closely monitors his wife's actions, and uses physical violence to control and assert his power over her. Frieze and Browne (1989, p. 184) add, "male initiation of violence is typical, but, over time some wives will fight back (Saunders, 1986). Once violence has occurred, it tends to be repeated. Over time, the violence becomes more severe and more frequent".

Evidence of the Cessation of Wife Assault

In the previous section the statement was made that the frequency and severity of wife assault increases over time. This is an unfortunate reality in the lives of many battered women which is well documented on studies of battered women recruited from shelters and clinics (Walker, 1984; Giles-Sims, 1983; Pagelow, 1981, 1984). In recent years, however, evidence from different sources has begun to surface which suggests that there may be a relatively high rate of cessation even among the most frequent perpetrators of wife assault.

Let us start with a consideration of some indirect evidence for the cessation of wife abuse from research on the effects of legal sanctions in recidivist wife assault. In 1984, Sherman and Berk reported their evaluation of the effectiveness of three modes of police intervention in cases of wife assault. In their study, a total of 314 men reported to the Minneapolis police for wife assault were randomly assigned to arrest, separation or mediation

interventions. Six months later they found the rates of recidivism to be 19%, 28%, and 37%, respectively, for the arrest, separation, and mediation groups. That means that 63% of those men who received the least intervention by the police were not reported to assault their wives within six months. In a similar evaluation of police interventions Dutton (1986) found that about 60% of reported wife assaulters, who had not received any formal intervention, did not produce additional police reports of wife assault for the next three years.

Somewhat more direct evidence has also been provided in studies of marital violence. Washburn and Frieze (1980) evaluated the characteristics of battered women recruited through different techniques. "The majority of the women recruited from public advertisements had not been battered recently. Either the violence had not occurred for a long time, or the relationship had ended prior to the interview" (Frieze and Browne, 1989, p. 174). While working on a larger study in marital conflict Margolin and Fernandez (1987) noticed that 26 out of 108 couples interviewed (26%) had experienced at least "one incident or highly sporadic incidents of physical aggression within their histories, but no violence within the past year" (p. 250).

More recently, O'Leary, Barling, Arias, and Rosenbaum (1989) conducted a longitudinal analysis of the prevalence and stability of violence among 272 couples from Onodonga

and Suffolk counties in New York. The couples volunteered to participate on "a study of marriage and the family". O'Leary et al., assessed the couples one month before their marriages, 18 and 30 months later. The percentage of couples in which either the man or the woman engaged in at least one act of marital violence were 57%, 44%, and 41% across the premarriage, 18-months and 30-months assessments. Although the authors were not concerned with cessation rates, the data would seem to suggest reductions in the rates of marital violence of 13% and 16% respectively, 18 months and 30 months after the initial assessment.

To my knowledge there are only two studies (Feld & Straus, 1989; Bowker, 1983) and one theoretical paper (Fagan, 1989) directly focusing on the cessation of marital violence. Bowker's (1983) study on women's ways to stop their husbands' physical violence was the first study in the field of marital violence to focus on cessation. He used media advertisements, presentations to interest groups, word of mouth, and referrals from social agencies, to recruit 146 women in the Milwaukee area who had been assaulted by their husbands in the past and who had not experienced violence from their partners in the year preceding the study. Each woman was interviewed for about two hours.

Overall, the women in Bowker's study were active in the pursuit of solutions to their husbands' violence. They used different means to stop the violence. They also recruited

the assistance of various people, social organizations, and professional groups. Bowker organized the efforts of women to stop the violence into personal strategies (i.e., talking, promising, threatening, avoidance), the use of informal sources of help (i.e., relatives, friends, in-laws, shelters for battered women), and the use of formal sources of help (i.e., lawyers, mental health professional, social service agencies). Friends and social service agencies were the most commonly used sources of help. Avoidance was the most commonly used personal strategy.

Although no single personal strategy or source of help proved to be effective for the majority of women in this study, 30% of the women reported that tactics of social disclosure such as talking to friends, neighbors, and relatives "worked best" to stop the violence. Social and legal interventions worked best for another 30% of the sample. Twenty three percent of the sample said that self-defense tactics including hiding, taking shelter, and physical violence worked best. The tactic reported as least effective in stopping the husband's violence was doing nothing (31%). Interestingly, social and legal interventions which were helpful to 30% of the women were also rated as working the least by 28% of the women.[1]

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[1] Gelles and Straus' (1988) extended Bowker's research by analyzing women's ways of coping with wife-assault among 3,000 female respondents to the 1985 National Family Violence Re-survey. Their findings were consistent with those presented above.

Bowker also asked women participants what they thought worked "best" or "least" to enable or force their husbands to stop the violence. Thirty percent of them said that the threat of divorce was the most important factor in their husbands' willingness to end the battering. Another 25% of the women attributed the change in their husbands' behavior to their interest in having a healthy couple relationship and the realization that the use of violence "was fundamental for the process that forced them apart over the years" (p. 123). Fear of police or criminal action was identified as the impetus for change by another 25% of the female participants.

Bowker's study is meritorious for its contribution to the understanding of couples' resources and capabilities to eradicate the use of physical violence in intimate life. It challenges us to rethink the common view of partners in violent marriages as odd and deficient and in particular the view of battered women as passive accomplices of their assailants. Moreover, his work supports the view of other feminist advocates and socially minded researchers (Yllö & Bograd, 1988) that substantial revisions of power imbalance (i.e., male domination) in relationships may be necessary for violent men to stop assaulting their female partners.

Bowker's study, however, has some limitations that are important for the purpose of this study. First, the lack of a comparison group makes it impossible to determine if

couples who succeed in eliminating wife abuse from their lives differ in demographic characteristics, risk factors for wife abuse, help-seeking behavior and resources for change from couples who continue the violence. Second, the cross sectional design of the study invites caution in the interpretation of the effectiveness of help-seeking behavior and other changes in the lives of violent couples. Third, Bowker's study relied on women's reports of cessation, leaving open the question of men's experience of these processes. Finally, Bowker's self-selected sample of female participants may be qualitatively different from the general population of women who may succeed in eliminating their victimization at the hands of male partners.

Feld and Straus (1989) used panel survey data for a preliminary analysis of cessation in wife abuse. They used the 1985 National Family Violence Survey data as baseline to identify respondents that reported any occurrence of husband-to-wife violence. They re-interviewed these respondents (n = 420) a year later to determine the rate of cessation over a one year period. They found that 33% of the husbands who had assaulted their wives 3 or more times during 1985 were reported to use no physical violence at all against their wives a year later. On the other hand, 57% were reported to have severely assaulted their wives while the remaining 10% used minor forms of violence (i.e., pushing, grabbing, slapping, throwing things) against their

wives. Among the husbands who in 1985 engaged in 1 or 2 acts of violence towards their wives, 58% did not assault their wives in 1986. Nineteen percent and 23% of the husbands in this group committed severe and minor forms of violence against their partners in that order.

Although the overall rate of continuation of wife assault was high (67% for husbands who assault their wives 3 or more times a year and 42% for less violent husbands), these data confirm what other studies had previously suggested--that a significant number of couples stop the continued use of violence. Obviously, these analyses don't allow us to determine how many of the couples that stop do so only temporarily, or in other words, how many of these cases may be "false positive" (Feld & Straus, 1989).

Bowker's (1983) and Feld and Straus's (1989) studies stop short of identifying specific processes of cessation, but offer a blueprint for a systematic analysis of the conditions that may promote and sustain these processes. Patterns of cessation and persistence in husband-to-wife violence need to be explored. Couples with histories of wife abuse, who succeed in stopping violent behavior, need to be compared to violent and to nonviolent couples, on demographics, risk factors for wife abuse, and resources for change. This analysis should be based on data collected from the same couples at various moments in the course of their relationships. It is with this blueprint in mind that the first part of this study was conducted.

Theoretical Considerations

Before the methodology and findings of the study are discussed, a brief review of some theoretical issues is necessary.

Bowker (1983) concluded the analysis of his study on the cessation of wife beating by asserting that

> perhaps the best way to summarize these results is to say that almost any strategy or help source can ultimately work. The crucial factor is not always the nature of the strategy or help source; what really matters is the woman's determination that the violence must stop now. Once the batterers in the Milwaukee study became convinced of their wives' determination to end the violence, they usually reassessed their position in the marriage and decided to reform. Of course, this is only true for those husbands who valued their marriages and wanted to continue them.

How could we account for the fact "that almost any strategy or help source can ultimately work"? How does the woman's determination that "the violence must stop now" arise, and how is it sustained? How does her determination convince the husband to stop the violence? What is this transformation like for the husband and the wive? When does it start? How is it communicated? How is this transformation sustained? Bowker leaves it to the interested reader to find answers to these and other questions, and to integrate them into a coherent theoretical framework.

In Feld and Straus's (1989) view the occurrence of violence responds to a combination of several conditions including neutralization of normative pressures, presence of

motivating factors such as stress and power struggles, the instrumentality of violence in achieving desired ends, and the permissive response of others to acts of violence. Accordingly, they suggest that cessation of husband-to-wife violence may occur in response to continued normative pressures against the use of violence, changes in motivating factors (i.e., relief of financial stress), failure to accomplish desired ends or the occurrence of undesired outcomes, and the punitive responses of others.

From this perspective we can begin to understand how different strategies and sources of help can work in stopping violent behavior. Public disclosure of wife assault to relatives and friends could lead them to disapprove of the action and the offender (explicitly or implicitly), and to pressure the assailant to stop the violence. Public disclosure could have other negative consequences such as losing a job. Arrest and prosecution of assailing husbands could rekindle normative social pressures and offset any personal gains for using violence against their spouse.

Feld and Straus also takes us a step further than Bowker's analysis by allowing us to consider factors independent of the victims initiative to stop the violence that may lead to cessation. In this view, a combination of events such as getting a higher paid job and moving into a new neighborhood could potentially alter some men's

preference for the use of violence in intimate relationships.

A theoretical account of cessation needs to include not only the conditions fostering the occasion for violence to stop, but also the processes by which the change from violent to nonviolent relationships is achieved. Recently, Fagan (1989) provided a framework for such a theory. His formulation of cessation processes in wife abuse draws from Bowker's (1983) data, from deterrence studies, and from the literature on the cessation of other behaviors such as opiate addiction, eating disorders, tobacco use, and alcoholism. Fagan proposes that the process of cessation starts with "building a resolve or discovering motivation to stop", then moves into "making and publicly disclosing the decision to stop", and ends in the "maintenance of new behaviors and integration into new social networks" (p. 404).

> For Fagan, the motivation to stop arises
>
> when external conditions change and reduce the 'rewards of violence,'.... That process and the resulting decision, seem to be related to one of two conditions: a series of negative, aversive unpleasant experiences from family violence, or corollary situations in which the positive rewards, status, or gratification from wife beating are removed.... Both the victim and societal responses may combine to bring about these changes in the objective conditions that sustain battering" (p. 404-405).

Fagan adds that external events raising the cost of marital violence have to "succeed in creating a change in the balance of power in the relationship, [so that] the batterer

may either decide to stop or to move on to another relationship" (p. 407). Thus, marital power is the key element in the initiation of the cessation process. Without revisions in the balance of power, Fagan would seem to suggest that cessation could not begin.

The transition from a resolve to stop the violence to expressing the decision to stop "is particularly difficult, for old behaviors have been disavowed, but new ones have not yet been developed or internalized" (p. 404). In this stage batterers and their wives are thought to distance themselves from social networks that may tacitly or openly express support for the violent behaviors. These are replaced by new social and emotional networks that may strengthen the decision to abandon violence. Nonviolent skills also need to be developed to deal with those situations that once led to violence. In addition, Fagan asserts that, "What is clear is the need for alternatives and substitutes for the now disavowed behavior, but they may be ineffective if not accompanied by revised definitions of marital power and standards of gratification for dominance in the family" (p. 409).

Maintenance of nonviolent behaviors is the last stage in the cessation process described by Fagan. It builds on the accomplishments of the discontinuance phase to the extent that it involves "further integration into a nonviolent identity and social world, maintaining the costs

of battering, acceptance and institutionalization of changes in the balance of power in the relationship, and refinement of the batterer's skills to manage anger and conflict" (p. 410). The key elements to the success of the maintenance phase are (1) that batterers be able to replace new social supports for "peer supports and those elements of the social organization of the family life that support battering" and (2) that they are able to build "social and psychological buttresses to maintain a life free of violence against wives" (p. 411).

Fagan's theory of cessation raises many questions of interest for research on the cessation of wife assault. In particular, it raises the question of the proper role of marital power in the cessation of wife assault. In agreement with feminist analyses of wife abuse (Yllö & Bograd, 1988), Fagan works with the twin premises that male domination in couple relationships is an important cause of wife abuse and that the empowerment of women is necessary for the violent behavior to cease.

Although this study is not designed to test the relationship between marital power and cessation in wife abuse, both the panel data and the case studies are used to explore this relationship.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Panel Data

The data presented in this chapter are part of Panel Study on Deterrence Processes completed at the Family Research Laboratory, University of New Hampshire. The panel study uses the 1985 National Family Violence Survey (Straus & Gelles, 1986) as baseline for two follow up surveys conducted in 1986 and 1987. The 1985 survey consisted of telephone interviews with a national probability sample of 6,002 married or cohabiting couples (18 years of age or older) selected through random digit dialing. Oversamples for African Americans, Hispanics, and residents of sparsely populated states were also included. A random procedure was used to designate the partner to participate on the telephone interview. Thus, one member of the couple was interviewed. Each interview lasted an average of 35 minutes and was conducted by Louis Harris and Associates. Eighty-four percent of couples eligible for the study completed the interviews (Williams, 1990).

In 1986, attempts were made to contact 1,395 respondents who in the 1985 survey reported <u>any</u> act of physical assault against their partner and who agreed to be re-interviewed. Attempts were also made to re-interview a random sample of 1,508 respondents with no previous history of violence. A total of 1,409 couples completed the follow up survey. The 1987 follow up survey included 1,195

respondents to the 1986 survey. The overall attrition rate from the 1985 subsample to the third wave of interviews was 69.8% for both men and women (Williams & Hawkins, 1989). Thus, 772 respondents completed all surveys.

Only data obtained from people who completed all three surveys are reported in this study. The mean age for the women and the men in this study were 43 (n=611) and 46 (n=600), respectively. In terms of the ethnic distribution of sample there were 533 Whites, 108 Black Americans, 71 Hispanic Americans, 32 American Indians, 13 Asian Americans, and 1 Pacific Islander. Nine respondents did not identify their ethnic background. Sixty percent of the husbands were Protestant, 27% Catholic, 1% Jewish, 2.% other, 8% none, and 2% were not recorded. Among wives 62% were Protestant, 28% Catholic, 1% Jewish, 2% other, 6% none, and 2% were not recorded. All respondents were married or living together with a partner at the time of the first interview. The median length of marriage was 15 years. Nineteen couples in this sample separated or divorced within the next two years. Seven hundred and forty three respondents lived with the same partner over the course of the study. The median range for annual family income was between $25,000.00 and $30,000.00.

Although this sample is comparable to the 1985 national probability sample with respect to major demographic variables, it shows a disproportionate loss of couples with

high frequency of husband-to-wife violence from the 1985 survey (Feld and Straus, 1989). The high rate of attrition and the disproportionate loss of violent couples from the 1985 survey suggest that the panel data may be biased. That is, the follow up sample may misrepresent patterns of cessation and persistence of wife abuse. It may be that the lost couples had separated, terminated their relationship, or ceased violent behavior in which case the sample would overrepresent the continuation of violence and underrepresent the rate of cessation. On the other hand, if a majority of the lost couples continued the violence the sample would underrepresent the level of continued violence and overrepresent the level of cessation in the general population (see Feld & Straus, 1990, p. 498). The reader is then advised to keep in mind the limitations of this sample in evaluating the presentation of results and discussion of findings.

The Conflict Tactics Scale

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) is the measurement of marital violence used in the National Family Violence Surveys. It is also the most widely used measure of intrafamily violence, used in at least 200 articles and five books (Straus & Gelles, 1990). The scale is comprised of 19 items on tactics used to resolve interpersonal conflicts. The items are presented on a continuum from nonviolent to severely violent tactics. The first three items (items A

through C) tap into the use of reasoning as way of dealing with conflict (i.e., "discussed the issue calmly"). Items D through J are concerned with verbal aggression (i.e., "did or said something to spite") and other forms of intimidation such as "threw or smashed or hit or kicked something". Items K through S deal with the used of physical aggression, ranging from "threw something" at partner to "used a knife or fired a gun".

Specifically, respondents in this sample were presented with the following instructions:

> No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with another person or just have spats or fights because they're in a bad mood or tired or for some other reason. The also use many different ways of trying to settle their differences. I' am going to read some things that you and your partner might do when you have an argument.

Respondents were then asked to indicate how many times in the past 12 months they, and their partners, have tried "to settle their differences" through the use of the various tactics. Responses were coded on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 was used for only once, 2 used for twice, 3 used for 3 to 5 times, 4 used for 6 to 10 times, 5 used for 11 to 20, and 6 used for more than twenty. A coding of zero was given to respondents who report never using a given tactic.

The CTS was used to generate individual and couple scores for the use of verbal aggression and physical violence. The physical violence score was further subdivided into "minor" and "severe" violence. A short

version of the CTS, including items K through S ("threw something at partner" to "used knife or fired gun"), was also used in this study to measure the occurrence of physical violence in relationships recorded as nonviolent on every year of the study. In this version respondents were asked to indicate if any of these acts of physical violence had "ever happened at any time in the past".

Data Analysis

The analysis of the panel survey data was conducted in four stages. First, percentages of husbands, wives, and couples involved in physical aggression against their partners were obtained for each wave of the study. These percentages were used to examine the prevalence rates for husband to wife, wife to husband and couple violence. McNemar's chi-square tests for dependent samples were used to determine the significance of variations in the percentage of partners engaging in physical violence during the three examinations. Next, matrices of transitional probabilities were constructed by crosstabulating dichotomous categories (i.e., violent, nonviolent) on each index of physical violence obtained from the conflict tactics scale. This procedure generated the conditional probabilities of physical aggression over the course of the study for both husbands and wives. It was also used as the basis for constructing measures of cessation of wife abuse. The cessation of wife abuse was analyzed in terms of type of

couple relationships and the severity of violence they had engaged in. Then, analyses of variance, chi square tests, and tests of differences in proportions were done to evaluate the differences between men who ceased wife abuse, nonviolent men, and persistent wife abusers on key demographic characteristics and risk factors for wife abuse. In the final analysis multivariate logistic regression analyses were computed to determine the relative effects of each independent variable on the probability of the cessation of wife abuse.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Patterns of Marital Violence in the Panel Data

Before focusing the analysis on the cessation of wife abuse, I present preliminary analyses of the occurrence and severity of physical aggression in the sample data from which men who ceased the use of physical aggression against their female partners were selected. First, I present a global view of the recorded occurrence of wife abuse and wife to husband aggression in the panel data. Then, I present prevalence rates for marital aggression, including husband to wife violence, wife to husband violence, and couple violence. I also present the prevalence rates for specific acts of violence included in the conflict tactics scale.

Figure 1. shows the reported patterns of husband to wife physical aggression over the years of the study. The vast majority of the men were recorded as not having committed any act of physical aggression against their partners over the three waves of interviews. Close to one fifth of the men in the sample were recorded to engage in some form of wife abuse in one of the three waves of interviews. A little over eight percent of the men were recorded as violent two out of three years. The smallest group was comprised of men who were recorded as assaulting their female partners every year of the study. As Figure 2. shows the reported patterns of wife to husband violence were very similar to those presented above.

Prevalence Rates

Prevalence rates refer to the occurrence of physical violence over the course of a year. They indicate the base rate probabilities of violent behaviors for each wave of the study--that is, the probability that men and women would engage in violent behaviors against their partners on a given year. Knowledge of how much physical violence took place among couples in this sample each year and the general changes in patterns of violent behaviors from year to year would provide an appropriate reference point against which subsequent analyses of cessation can be evaluated.

Figure 3. shows the prevalence rates of husband-to-wife violence by severity in each year of the study. In every year of the study there were higher rates of minor forms of husband-to-wife violence than severe forms of wife assault. In general, the rates of wife assault for year 2 were lower than the rates for years 1 and 3.

Using McNemar's chi-square test of differences in proportions for dependent samples, a significant reduction in the prevalence of overall physical violence perpetrated by husbands against their wives was found from year 1 to year 2 (X^2=9.57, d.f.=1, $p < .002$). There was also a significant reduction of minor husband-to-wife violence from year 1 to year 2 (X^2=9.39, d.f.=1, $p< .002$).

From year 2 to year 3 there were significant increases in the prevalence of overall violence ($\underline{X}^2$= 8.38, d.f.=1, p< .004), minor violence ($\underline{X}^2$= 4.72, d.f.=1, p< .029), and severe husband-to-wife violence ($\underline{X}^2$=4.20, d.f.=1, p< .040).[2]

Additional McNemar tests showed no significant differences between the prevalence of husband-to-wife minor violence and severe husband-to-wife violence from year 1 to year 3.

Concerning the prevalence rates of wife-to-husband violence, 19.9% of the wives committed some act of violence against their husbands during the year preceding the completion of the first wave of interviews. In the following two waves of interviews the prevalence rates of overall wife-to-husband violence were 12.5% and 18.4%. The prevalence rates for minor violence against husbands were 18.5%, 12.5%, and 16.0%, respectively, for the first, second and third waves. The prevalence rates of severe violence against husbands were 7.0%, 5.1% and 8.4% on each wave in that order.

Using McNemar test, women were found to significantly reduce the rates of overall violence ($\underline{X}^2$=25.09, d.f.=1, p< .00001), and minor violence ($\underline{X}^2$=17.78, d.f.=1, p< .00001), against their male partners from year 1 to year 2. No

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[2]The stated alpha levels are specific for each test of significance. The reader should keep in mind that since alpha increases with the number of test conducted the actual alpha level may be different from those used here.

significant differences were found between the prevalence rates of severe women's violence over the same period of time.

Between the second and third years wives significantly increased their rates overall violence ($\underline{X}^2$=15.67, d.f.=1, p< .0001, minor violence ($\underline{X}^2$=5.88, d.f.=1, p< .0153) and severe violence ($\underline{X}^2$=10.73, d.f.=1, p< .0011).

From the first to the third year there were no significant differences in the wives' rates of overall, minor, and severe violence.

As the above analyses indicate, the prevalence rates for husband-to-wife and wife-to-husband violence are similar. As illustrated in Table 1., the similarity between husbands' and wives' reported use of physical violence is also evidenced when looking across the prevalence rates of individual acts of aggression included in the CTS.

The prevalence of marital violence can also be assessed by looking at the percentage of couples where either the husband or the wife was reported to use physical violence against his or her partner, where both partners were violent as well as the percentage of couples where only one of the partners was violent (see O'Leary et al. 1989). Figure 4. shows the prevalence rates of overall violence among couples over the three years of the study. The rate of physical violence was consistently higher in relationships where both partners were recorded as violent than the rate of physical

violence in relationships where either men or women alone were recorded as violent.

Summary

A substantial amount of physical aggression was recorded for the couples in this sample. Close to a third of the men (30.4%) in the sample were recorded as using physical violence directed against their female partner in at least one year of the study. The prevalence rates for wife abuse fluctuated from a high of 17.6% recorded during the first wave of interviews to 12.8% recorded in the second wave.[3] The proportion of women recorded as violent was similar to the proportion of men. The evaluation of prevalence rates also showed that there were changes in the rates of wife abuse, wife-to-husband violence, and couples' violence across the three waves of interviews. In general, the use of physical aggression between partners went down in year 2 from year 1 base rates and up again in year 3.

Patterns of Cessation of Wife Assault

Let us turn now to a consideration of the patterns of cessation of marital violence implied in the previous section. Our concern here is with the cessation of wife abuse and not with the differences between the occurrence of wife abuse and wife-to-husband violence. Although changes

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[3] The prevalence rates presented here differ from the prevalence rates based on the entire sample of 6,002 couples interviewed in 1985. The rates for year 1 reported here are greater than those of the entire 1985 sample because of the overrepresentation of violent couples in the panel data.

in the patterns of wive's use of violence are not inconsequential to the study of the cessation of wife abuse, in depth analyses of these data are beyond the scope of this study. In the analyses that follow, data concerning wive's violence towards their male partners is considered specifically to address questions with respect to the cessation of wife abuse.

To start, we can look at year to year cessation rates of wife abuse--that is, men recorded as using no physical violence following at least a year of recorded violence. Figure 5. shows the percentage of men that stopped using physical violence from year 1 to year 2 and from year 2 to year 3. In general the rates of cessation of wife abuse were higher from year 1 to year 2 than from year 2 to year 3. In terms of severity of violence, a greater percentage of men who had engaged on minor acts of violence against their female partners reported no act of violence a year later than men who had severely abused their spouse. Perhaps the most important finding shown here is that following a year in which violence occurs, a substantial proportion of men, including the perpetrators of the most severe acts of wife abuse, seem to stop the use of physical aggression against their female partners. On the other side of the coin, however, is the disturbing fact that between approximately 40% and 52% of the men in the sample who assaulted their female partners on a given year continued the violence over the course of the ensuing year.

Conditional Probabilities of Wife Assault

With such high rates of cessation and persistence of wife abuse occurring from year to year, it becomes important determine the stability of these changes. Would men stop the use of physical violence in their relationships only to engage in violent behavior a year later? Is the year of no violence part of a larger pattern of violent behavior for these men? How likely are men to sustain the cessation of wife abuse? Matrices of conditional probabilities were constructed using all three years of the panel data to address these questions.

Figure 6. shows the conditional probabilities of husband-to-wife overall violence over the course of the study. The graph presents the conditional probabilities that men would be recorded as engaging or not engaging in acts marital aggression in a given year given their previous history of wife abuse. The probability of no husband-to-wife violence in year 3 given that there had been some form of wife abuse in year 1 ranged from .367 to .667. Notice that the probability of violent behavior in year 3 given that there had been physical violence in the first two years of the study is much greater than the probability of violence in any other condition. The probability of no wife abuse in the third year of the study was highest for men with no history of violence over the first two years of the study. The same patterns was found for minor and severe forms of violence.

Men with histories of wife abuse are more likely to report no physical aggression against their wives following a year of cessation, than following a reported year of violence (p=.667 and p=.367). The probability of this event, however, was only slightly greater than the probability of no husband-to-wife violence after reported violence against a wife in year 2 but not in year 1 (p=.652). This finding suggests that many men with histories of wife abuse are involved in recurrent patterns of aggression against their female partners. They may be abusive, cease for as long as a year, and then be abusive again. Thus, knowing that an abusive husband has ceased the use of violence for a year provides only minimal encouragement for hoping that violence would not occur again in the near future.

Figure 7. shows how men recorded as violent during the first year of the study were distributed across patterns of cessation and stability of wife assault. Forty percent of the violent men in year 1 were recorded as ceasing the use of physical violence against their wives for the following two years. Almost a fourth of the men (23%) persisted in their use of violence every year of the study. As suggested by the graph of conditional probabilities a substantial percentage of violent men (37%) were in and out of violence, so to speak.

Summary

There is much change in the cessation and persistence of wife abuse from year to year in this sample. Close to two thirds (60.7%) of the men in this sample who were recorded as violent in year 1 were recorded as nonviolent in year 2. For these men the probability of cessation of wife abuse increased for year 3. This group represented over a third of the recorded violent men in year 1. Almost a forth of the men persisted in abusing their wives every year of the study. The findings also indicate that a large proportion of the violent men in this sample were involved in recurrent patterns of wife abuse.

Men Who Ceased the Violence Against Their Partners

The remaining analyses of the cessation of wife abuse will focus on the group of men who ceased the use of physical violence against their wives for two years. There are both theoretical and empirical reasons for this choice. Given the fluctuations in the patterns of cessation and the persistence of wife abuse from year to year described in the previous section, men able to extend the cessation of wife abuse for two years are a unique source of information about the cessation process. Data collected on these men in year 1 can be used to explore the factors that may be associated with the cessation of wife abuse for the ensuing two years of the panel study. On the other hand, the analyses presented in the previous section, alert us to the possibility that a two year measure of the cessation of wife

abuse may include men involved in recurrent patterns of violence who may become physically aggressive once again in the future. The bias introduced by this group of men may have complex effects on the associations that are studied here. Although additional follow up data would help offset this bias, such information is obviously lacking here. However, for the purpose of this study the grouping of men who ceased assaulting their wives for two years is more reliable than any other arrangement possible in this sample.

With this cautionary note as background, let us continue with the evaluation of the couples where the men ceased the use of physical violence. Who are these people? To what extent are they similar and different from partners in nonviolent relationships and couples with persistent wife abusers? First, lets look at key demographic characteristics of these couples.

Demographic Measures

A group of eight demographic measures was included in this analysis, because of their association with wife abuse. The age of the partners in the couple, their marital status, the number of years they had lived in their community of residency, the number of children younger than 18 living at home, and the years that the couple had been living together were all obtained by asking respondents for the specific response.[4]

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[4]Level of education has not been found to be associated with increased risk of wife abuse. In this sample, there were no significant differences among non-violent,

Annual family income was measured in four intervals, ranging from none to fifteen thousand dollars (coded as 1 for annual income) to forty thousand and more (coded as 4 for annual income). Information concerning employment status was obtained by asking respondents whether they (and their partners) were employed full time, part time, unemployed, retired, a student, house keeper, or something else. Given limitations in sample size, these responses were recorded in this study by grouping unemployed, part time, student, house keeping, and something else into a single category. In terms of occupational status, respondents were asked to describe the kind of work they did and the kind of work their partners did. This information was coded using the Bureau of Labor Statistics revised Occupational Classification System into either "blue collar" or "white collar" in accord with a procedure proposed by Rice (see Straus & Gelles, 1990).

Analysis of Demographic Data

The age of men who ceased wife abuse ranged from 23 to 76, with a mean of 42. All but one of the couples was married. These couples had been living together for an average of 16 years. On the average, they had one child living at home. Most of the men were employed full time

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persistence, and cessation groups on this variable. For descriptive purposes, it is instructive to know that the vast majority of both men and the women in each group had at least graduated from high school.

(79.6%). Almost half the women had full time jobs (44.4%). On the average their annual family income was close to $30,000. Both men and women were as likely to be blue-collar workers as white collar workers. Additional demographic information is found in Table 2. and Table 3.

As Table 2 and Table 3 show, there was much variability in the demographic characteristics of men who ceased the use of physical violence against their wives. Some were young men, others were older, some were below the poverty line, others were relatively wealthy, some were full time workers, others were unemployed or retired, some had very little formal education, others had completed graduate school and professional programs, etc. The diversity in the group of men who ceased the violence is not surprising considering that the occurrence of wife abuse is not confined to men with specific demographic characteristics.

Table 2. compares couples who ceased wife abuse, nonviolent couples, and couples with persistent wife abusers on demographic data coded as continuous variables. Analyses of variance showed significant differences in the men's age, the number of minor children at home, and the number of years the couple had been living together. Additional t-test showed that the group of nonviolent men were significantly older than the group of persisters ($\underline{t}$=3.94, d.f.= 30.98, 2 tail p< .0001) but not significantly different from the group of men who ceased the violence. No

significant difference was found between the mean age of men in the cessation group and men who continued the use of violence against their female partners. With respect to the number of minor children living at home, couples in which the men were persistent wife abusers had a significantly greater number of children than couples with no history of wife abuse (t=-2.10, d.f.=32.74, 2 tail $p<.05$). No significant differences were found in the number of minor children living at home between the persistent and cessation groups and between the nonviolent and cessation groups. Both nonviolent men and men who ceased wife abuse had lived with their female partners for significantly longer length of time than persistently violent men (t=5.05, d.f.=39.29, 2 tail $p<.0001$ and t=-2.54, d.f=78.08, 2 tail $p<.05$, respectively). There were no significant differences in the number of years couples had lived together between the nonviolent and cessation groups. As shown in Table 2. the nonviolent, cessation, and persistence groups were not significantly different in the mean number of years lived in the same community.

Table 3. presents the percentage of men in each group at different levels of demographic variables coded as either nominal or ordinal scale. There was a significant difference among the groups of men on their marital status and their annual family income. Additional tests of differences between the groups showed that men in both the

nonviolent and the cessation groups had higher annual family income than men in the persistence group (chi square=24.68, d.f.=3 , p<.0001 and chi square=10.52, d.f.=3, p<.05, respectively). There were no significant differences between men in the cessation group and nonviolent men with respect to annual family income. In addition, men in the nonviolent, cessation, and persistence groups were not significantly different with respect to occupational and employment status.

Summary

From the above description it would seem that on the average, the men in this sample who ceased the use of physical violence against their female partners were relatively stable with respect to employment, family finances, emotional security, and integration into the community. In comparison to nonviolent men, men who ceased wife abuse were younger and had more children living at home. These men also had higher annual income and lengthier couple relationships than persistent wife abusers. Men who ceased wife abuse did not differ statistically from nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers in their occupational status, employment status, and number years lived in the same community.

Additional Risk Factors for Wife Assault

Continuing with the evaluation of the characteristics of the partners in this sample who ceased wife abuse, we now

look at differences among the couples who ceased the violence, nonviolent couples, and couples with persistent wife abusers on factors associated with an increased risk of wife abuse. The risk factor measures included in this analysis were included either in the first or second wave of interviews. Some risk factors for wife abuse identified in the review of the literature were missing from this analysis because they were not included in the first two waves of interviews. These factors included concern over financial security and satisfaction with standard of living.[5]

Risk Factor Measures

Physical Punishment in Childhood. Physical punishment was measured in the first year of the study by asking respondents how often, during their teenage years, they were physically punished (i.e., slapped or hit) by each parent. Given the relatively small number of men in the cessation and persistence groups, responses were coded 0 for none and 1 for one or more times.

Parental Abuse. In year 1, respondents were also asked if they remembered times during their teenage years when either parent hit or threw something at the other parent. The responses were code 0 for no and 1 for yes.

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[5]Measures of stress and marital power included in the second interview but not in the first, were included in these analysis because of their theoretical and empirical importance in the study of wife abuse.

Marital Conflict. Marital conflict was measured in the first wave of interviews by asking respondents how often, in the past year they had agreed with their spouse on issues regarding "managing the money", "cooking, cleaning, or repairing the house", "social activities and entertaining", and "affection and sex relations". Their response choices ranged from "always agreed" (coded 1 for conflict) to "never agreed" (coded 5 for conflict). The scores ranged from a 1 to 4.75 with a sample mean of 2.08 and a standard deviation of .73.

Stress. Stress was measured in the second wave of interviews by asking respondents whether or not they experienced in the last year the following stressful events: troubles with the boss, getting laid off or fired from work, the death of someone close, pregnancy (or pregnancy of partner), serious sickness or injury, serious problem with health or behavior of family member, sexual difficulties, in law troubles, and large increase in hours or responsibilities on the job. Responses were coded 1 and 0 for the occurrence and the absence of the stressful event, respectively. The stress index used in this study consists of the sum of the stressful events reported by each respondent. The scores ranged from 0.0 to 6.0 with a mean of 1.10 and a standard deviation of 1.12.

Verbal/Symbolic Aggression. Verbal aggression was measured by using the Verbal Aggression Index of the

Conflict Tactics Scale administered during the first year of the study. The items included in the index are "insulted or swore at her", "sulked and/or refused to talk", "stomped out of the room/house", "did or said something to spite her", and "threw, smashed, hit or kicked something". The responses were coded none, once, twice, 3-5 times, 6-10 times, and 20 or more times. In turn, these were coded 0,1,2,4,8,15, and 25. The index was obtained by adding the coded responses of the six items. The scores ranged from 0.0 to 113.0 with a mean of 10.19 and a standard deviation of 16.24.

Alcohol Consumption. The men's alcohol consumption was measured by using the drinking index in year 1. Respondents were asked to state how often they consumed alcoholic beverages. The response choices ranged from never (coded 0 for frequency of drinking) to daily (coded 6 for frequency). Respondents were also asked to state the average number of drinks they have when they drink. The index is the product of the number of drinks by the frequency of drinking. The scores ranged from 1.0 to 36.0 with a mean of 7.13 and standard deviation of 6.19.

Balance of Marital Power. The measure of marital power used in this study was obtained in the second year of the study by asking respondents to indicate "who has the final say" in making decisions on issues regarding buying a car, having children, what house or apartment to take, what job

either partner should take, whether a partner should go to work or quit work, and how much money to spend each week. The response choices were: husband only, husband more than wife, husband and wife exactly the same, wife more than husband, and wife only. A combined measure of the extent to which men or women tend to have the final say in family decisions and the degree to which men and women share in making decisions was used to classify each couple as male-dominant, female-dominant, equalitarian, and divided power. This was done using the procedure described by Coleman and Straus (1990). First, a decision making power index was computed by scoring responses for each decision from 1 ("wife only") to 5 ("husband only") and summing these scores. The raw score index was then transformed to a 0-100 scale to indicate the percentage of the maximum score. In this way, low scores (less than 33%) indicate wife dominance in decision making and high scores (66% or more) indicate husband dominance. Second, the shared power index was computed through the sum of those responses indicating that the decisions were made by "husband and wife exactly the same". Couples with a score of 66% or more on the shared power index were classified as having an equalitarian power structure. Couples who shared less than 66% of their decisions and had a score of less than 33% on the decision power index were classified as female dominant relationships. Couples sharing less than 66% of their

decisions and having a score greater than 66% on the decision power index were defined as male dominant. In this sample, 19% of the couples were classified as male dominant while the remaining 82% was evenly distributed between the equalitarian and divided power types. There were no wife dominant relationships in this sample.

Analysis of Risk Factors

Test of differences in proportions (Blalock, 1979) were used to evaluate the differences on the experience of physical punishment by parents among the three groups of men in this sample.[6] A significantly smaller proportion of men in the nonviolent group experienced physical punishment by their mother than men who persisted in the use of violence. There was also a significantly smaller proportion of nonviolent men who were physically punished by their fathers than were persistent wife abusers (Z=-1.65, p=.0495). No significant differences were found between the nonviolent men and men who ceased wife abuse, and between men who ceased and persistent wife abusers in their experience of physical punishment by either parent. Table 4. shows the differences in the experience of physical punishment among men in the sample.

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[6]The test of differences in proportions is a general test used to evaluate if the proportions of two dichotomized nominal scales differ significantly from each other. In this case it is analogous to a chi square test. The reduced number of chronic wife abusers in this sample precluded the use of chi square.

Table 4. also shows the differences in the experience of parental violence among men in the sample. Significant differences were found between nonviolent men, men who ceased the violence and persistent wife abusers on their experience of physical violence perpetrated by their fathers against their mothers. Nonviolent men experienced significantly less father-to-mother violence than both men who ceased the violence and persistent wife abusers ($\underline{Z}$=-5.39, $p<.0001$, and $\underline{Z}$=-4.23, $p<.0001$, respectively). There were no significant differences on the experience of aggression from father to mother between men in the cessation and persistence groups.

The third panel on table 4. shows that there were no significant differences in power structure among the three groups in the sample.

Now lets turn our attention to Table 5. where the analyses of variance for risk factors coded as continuous variables are shown. Significant differences were found between nonviolent, cessation and persistence groups on measures of marital conflict, stress, verbal aggression, and alcohol consumption. Additional t-tests showed that nonviolent men had significantly lower scores on the marital conflict measure than both men in the cessation group ($\underline{t}$=-3.56, d.f.=60.60, $p<.005$) and persistent wife abusers ($\underline{t}$=-5.99, d.f.=33.92, $p<.0001$). Men who ceased physical aggression against their wives were also found to have

significantly lower scores on the marital conflict scale than persistent wife abusers (t=2.69, d.f.=61.32, $p<.01$). With respect to the measure of stress, men in the nonviolent and cessation groups were found to have significantly lower scores than men in the persistence groups (t=-3.19, d.f.=32.39, $p<.01$ and t=2.14, d.f.=46.26, $p<.05$, respectively). No significant differences were found on the stress scores among men in the cessation and nonviolent groups.

Nonviolent men also had significantly lower scores on the measure of alcohol consumption than persistent wife abusers (t=-2.28, d.f.=11.59, $p<.05$). No significant differences were found between men who ceased the use of physical violence against their female partner and both nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers.

Finally, both nonviolent men and men who ceased the violence had significantly lower scores on the measure of verbal aggression than persistent wife abusers (t=-6.88, d.f.=30.38, $p<.0001$ and t=3.89, d.f.=43.64, $p<.0001$, respectively). The verbal aggression scores for the nonviolent group were also significantly lower than the scores for the cessation group (t=-5.42, d.f.=56.04, $p<.0001$).

Before leaving this topic, it is instructive to point out that in the above analyses, including analyses in which statistical significance was not attained, almost invariably

men in the cessation group obtained moderate values in comparison to the values obtained by nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers--that is, the scores for men who ceased wife abuse fell between extreme scores obtained by the other two groups of men. Since it is possible that this pattern may have occurred by chance, we need some way of evaluating this trend. For this purpose a variation of the Sign Test was used. The probability of obtaining the same pattern across comparisons was obtained by assigning a positive sign (+) to items where the value for the cessation group fell between the values of the other two groups and a negative (-) sign to items with a different pattern of values. There were 16 (+) and 2 (-) items. Using the binomial distribution table we find that the probability of getting this pattern of results by chance is .0006.

Summary

The bivariate comparisons presented in this section highlighted some differences between men who cease wife abuse, nonviolent men, and persistent wife abusers. We found that nonviolent men had suffered less physical punishment by their parents, experienced less parental abuse, had lower levels of conflict and stress, consumed less alcohol, and were less verbally aggressive against their female partners than persistent wife abusers.

With regard to men who ceased wife abuse, we found that they experienced more parental abuse, had higher levels of

conflict, and engaged in more verbal aggression against their wives than nonviolent men. These men also had lower levels of conflict and showed less verbal aggression against their wives than persistent wife abusers. Men who ceased wife abuse did not differ significantly from persistent wife abusers on their alcohol consumption, level of stress, experience of parental abuse, and physical punishment by parents.

One must be cautious, however, about inferring from data such as the above that these group of men are unique with respect to key demographic variables and risk factors for wife abuse. The above results are limited by the small sample of violent men (i.e, persistent wife abusers and men who eventually ceased wife abuse) studied. Nevertheless, the findings are consistent with the review on risk factors for wife abuse presented earlier. This is particularly true with respect to the differences between nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers.

Severity of Violence and the Cessation of Wife Assault

Now that we have evaluated some key characteristics of men who ceased wife abuse and persistent wife abusers, it is appropriate to consider the nature of the violence used by these men. Two issues are of concern here. First, do men who ceased wife abuse differ from persistent wife abusers in the severity of the physical aggression used against their wives? And second, are there differences in the frequency

of husband-to-wife violence between these two groups of men? With regard to the first issue, a greater percentage of men in both groups (cessation, 72.2%; persistence, 64.5%) were recorded to engage in acts of minor violence than in severe forms of wife abuse (cessation, 27.8%; persistence, 35.5%). Moreover, the observed differences on the severity of wife abuse between these groups of men proved to be non-significant (chi square=.55, d.f.=1, p=.46).

With regard to the second issue, t-tests showed that men who ceased wife abuse had significantly lower average frequency of minor violence (m=1.94) than persistent wife abusers (m=4.06; $\underline{t}$=2.51, d.f.=37.24, 2-tail p<.05) but were not significantly different in the average frequency of the more severe forms of violence (cessation, m=.61; persistence, m=1.03; $\underline{t}$=.98, d.f.=45.48, 2-tail p=.33). This last result is consistent with the statement made earlier, that the panel survey data used here is missing a disproportionate number of the most violent men identified in the 1985 National Family Violence Survey.

Summary

In general, men in this sample who ceased wife abuse did not differ significantly from persistent wife abusers in the severity of acts of husband-to-wife violence recorded in the first year of the study. However, these men showed a lower frequency of husband-to-wife violence than persistent wife abusers; this was particularly true with respect to

acts of violence that could be considered as minor or "ordinary violence" (see Straus, 1990).

Here again, one must be cautious not to conclude prematurely that the frequency of acts of violence against female partners can be used to differentiate men who may cease the violence in the future from persistent wife abusers. The finding from a previous section that men who ceased wife abuse and persistent wife abusers differ with respect to marital status, annual family income, level of marital conflict, and verbal aggression indicates that the relationship between the frequency of wife abuse and cessation may be complex. Later, we will take a closer look at the differential effect of these factors on the cessation of wife abuse. Before doing that, however, it is necessary to evaluate women's responses to the violence and the help seeking behavior of both men and women which may be relevant to the cessation of wife abuse.

Coping with the Violence

Although the previous analyses have focused on characteristics of individuals and joint characteristics of men and women that may be associated to the cessation wife abuse, it is of theoretical and practical importance to also consider the efforts made by these couples to stop the violence. Three issues are of concern here. First, do wives of men who ceased wife abuse respond differently to the violence than wives of persistent wife abusers? Second,

do these women differ in their long term strategies to stop their victimization? And third, do these couples differ in their utilization of sources of help?

Measures of Women's Responses to Violence and Help-seeking Behavior

Response to Violence Measure. In the first year of the study women were asked to select among eight possible responses the ones that described what they did in response to the most recent occurrence of the most violent behavior. The choices were hit back or threw something, cried, yelled or cursed at him, ran out of the house, called a friend or relative, called the police, and other. Responses were coded (1) when the response was chosen and (0) when the response was not selected.

Personal Strategies Measure. In this study, personal strategies refer to the means used by women to stop the violent behavior of their husbands. In the first interviews, women were told "Here are 8 things that some people have used to try to get their (spouse/partner) to stop hurting or threatening them". Immediately after, they were asked "Did you ever try" talking him out of it, getting him to promise to stop, avoiding him or avoiding certain topics, leaving home for two days or more, threatening to call the police, threatening to get a divorced, physically fighting back in any way you can? Responses were coded (1) yes and (2) no. For each affirmative response respondents

were also asked "How effective was it?" Responses ranged from a very effective (coded 5) to made it worse (coded 1).

Sources of Help Measure. In the first year of the study respondents were asked "In the past year, did you seek help for a family or personal problem from any of the following sources?" A list of 15 sources of help was read to respondents. Responses were coded (1) yes and (0) no. In accord with Gelles and Straus (1988), items in this scale were classified into "legal sources of help" (i.e., lawyer or legal aid, police, and district attorney), "human services" (psychologist or psychiatrist, family counselor, alcohol and drug abuse treatment services, community mental health center, doctors or nurses) and "informal sources of help" (i.e., friends and neighbors, relatives, and religious leader, battered women's shelters). Moreover, this classification was used to evaluate the sources of help used by both men and women.

Women's Response to Violence

With regard to the women's response to violence, the data showed that crying was the immediate response to violence most commonly mentioned among the women in this sample. Almost a quarter (24.2%) of the wives of men in this sample who eventually ceased the violence, and over a third (36.8%) of the women living with persistent wife abusers mentioned crying as one of their responses. Yelling or cursing at the violent husband, running out of the house,

and running to another room were mentioned by 12.1% of the wives of men who ceased. Three percent of these women called a friend or a relative. None of these women reported calling the police in response to the violence.

Figure 8. compares the responses to the violence of women living with men who ceased the violence and women living with persistent wife abusers. A greater percentage of women in relationships with persistent wife abusers were recorded on every response category than women coupled with men who ceased the violence. Notice the differences in the reported use of physical and verbal aggression in response to the violence. In terms of physical aggression, none of the women related to men who ceased the violence reported using physical aggression in response to the violence in contrast to more than a third (36.8%) of the women coupled with persistent abusers. With regard to verbal aggression, more than twice as many women with chronically violent cohorts reported yelling or cursing at the violent partner than the women with husbands who ceased the violence.

Long-term Strategies Used by Women to End the Violence

We are now able to compare the long-term preventive tactics used by victims of violence to end their victimization. Table 6. shows the percentage of women in this sample who reported using each strategy included in the personal strategy measure. The most common strategy to prevent future violence reported by women in the cessation

group was avoiding their male partners or avoiding certain topics of conversation. Almost two thirds (62.5%) of these women reported using this strategy. More than half (53.3%) of the women in this group reported trying to talk their husbands out of being violent. The third most common preventive tactic among female partners of men who ceased the violence was getting them to promise than they would not use physical violence again. This strategy was reported by a third (33.3%) of these women. Leaving home for 2 days or more, physically fighting back, and calling the police were the least common strategies reported by these women, in that order.

Table 6. also shows that with the exception of the avoidance of interaction, women living with persistent wife abusers reported greater participation in long range tactics of prevention than women whose spouse eventually ceased the violence. This difference was most noticeable with respect to their use of threats to call the police, their attempts to get their spouse to promise that they would not be violent again, and their decision to leave the house for a couple of days or more.

With regards to the perceived effectiveness of these strategies, the data shows that on the average the women in this sample judged every strategy to be at least slightly effective in preventing future wife abuse. It is instructive to notice, however, that the preventive use of

physical violence had the smallest average effectiveness score reported by both groups of women. Among the women whose husbands eventually ceased the violence, those who left the house for a couple of days, who got their husbands to promise that they would not be physically violent again, or who talked them into not being abusive, reported the highest average effectiveness.

These findings must be interpreted with caution since the measure of effectiveness used here does not differentiate between women's perceptions of the long term and short term effectiveness of their actions. Moreover, it is impossible to discern from this measure if the responses were considered effective in reducing the frequency of violent episodes, decreasing the severity of the violence, or stopping the occurrence of violence.

Sources of Help Used

Let us now turn into a consideration of the sources of help sought out by women and men involved in husband-to-wife aggression presumably in an attempt to deal with the violence. Data obtained from nonviolent couples is used here as a baseline against which the reported use of sources of help by couples involved in husband-to-wife aggression can be meaningfully compared.

With regard to the women in this sample, informal sources of help were the most commonly reported. Close to a third (30.3%) of the women in the cessation group and over

two thirds (68.4%) of the women in the persistence group reported using this type of help. Less than a fourth (15.2%) of the wives of men who ceased the violence and close to a third (31.6%) of the wives of persistent wife abusers reported seeking human services. The percentages of women in nonviolent relationships reported to use informal and human services of help were 11.4% and 13.6%, respectively. Legal sources of help were used by small number of women on each group (persistence, 5.3%; cessation, 3%; nonviolent, 1.4%). Thus, these data suggest that the presence of wife abuse is associated with increased efforts to seek out for help. The same pattern holds when looking at the average number of sources of help used by women. Table (sources) shows the analyses of variance done for these data.

With regard to the utilization of sources of help by men in this sample, the data showed that human services (19%) and informal sources of help (19%) were the most popular sources of help among men who ceased the use of violence. None of the men in this group reported using legal services. Although, a higher percentage (25%) of persistent wife abusers reported using informal sources of help than men who ceased the violence, their reported use of human services (8.3%) was less than half of that of the men who ceased wife abuse. In fact in this sample, persistent wife abusers were as likely to report using human services

as they were to report using legal services. To put these differences in perspective, it is useful to know that human services was the most common source of help mentioned by nonviolent men (8.7%), followed by informal sources of help (6%) and legal services (2.2%). In terms of the average number of services used, the differences among men in this sample were non-significant.

Summary

In general, women in relationships with violent men are busy attempting to put an end to their victimization. In this sample, women whose male partners eventually stopped the violence were less likely to respond to the violence with physical or verbal aggression than women living with persistent wife abusers. Whatever the reasons for this difference may be, one must be cautious not to interpret this to mean that failure to cease wife abuse indicates that the women may be fueling their own victimization through the use of violence. As argued later in the discussion section, the data presented here simply do not address this issue.

With regards to the effectiveness of long-range prevention strategies reported by women to eliminate the use of violence by their male partners, in this sample different strategies were judged to be effective for different women. In general, however, avoidance and tactics involving the use of verbal negotiation were judged to be slightly more effective than other forms of prevention.

With regards to the use of services outside the home, in general informal sources of help were favored by the couples in this sample over human and legal services. Perhaps the most important difference found here was that more men who ceased wife abuse sought out the help of human services than both nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers.

Multivariate Analysis of Cessation

Up to this point we have learned that couples in this sample that ceased wife abuse and couples where the men persisted in the use of violence differed across various categories of demographic characteristics, risk factors for wife abuse, and help-seeking behavior. We are now in position to evaluate the net effect of each of these variables holding constant, statistically, the effect of all other variables on the cessation of wife abuse. And, by extending this analysis a little bit further, we are also in position to evaluate the combined effects of these variables on the probability of the cessation of wife abuse.

Logistic regression ("logit") was the multivariate statistical technique used in this study (Aldrich & Nelson, 1984). Logit is the multivariate technique of choice when working with a dichotomous dependent variable such as cessation or persistence of wife abuse. In this study, logit allowed us to evaluate the net effect of each independent variable by concurrently holding constant the

effect of all other independent variables on the cessation of wife abuse. Since logit is a function of the probability of an event occurring, it also allowed us to explore the relationship between combinations of independent variables and the probability of cessation of wife abuse.

Three logistic regressions were computed for the cessation of wife abuse. The first logit was based on data provided by female and male respondents. The second and third logistic regressions included information provided exclusively by male and female respondents, respectively. These separate analyses were necessary to evaluate the effects of variables of theoretical and practical importance such as the men's use of human services, women's use of physical aggression in response to their husbands' violence, and women's experience of parental abuse.[7]

To be sure, there are some limitations to the strategy of multivariate analysis used here. First, by doing separate logistic regressions I reduce the sample size on which the analyses are based, thus reducing the power to

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[7]Although, it would have been ideal to compute a single logistic regression for the cessation of wife abuse including all the independent variables of interest, this analysis was not possible given the limitations of the data set. In the Family Violence Survey some questions (i.e., frequency of violent acts) were designed to generate information about the respondent and his or her partner. Other questions addressed only the respondent. Since logit excludes from analysis cases in which there are any missing values, some independent variables could not be included within the same logistic regression analysis.

detect possible differences. Most importantly, however, when the sample size used to compute a logistic regression is small, the Wald statistic which is used to test the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient is 0 may not have a chi-square distribution. Under these circumstances, the accuracy of logistic regression could be hampered. This could conceivably create difficulties in the interpretation of results. Considering the exploratory nature of this study and the theoretical and practical importance of these variables, however, I decided it would be instructive to evaluate the effects of these variables on the probability of cessation in separate logistic regression analyses. [8]

Logistic Regression Analyses

In each analysis, the initial logistic regression equation included all the demographic and risk factors measures previously associated with the cessation of wife abuse regressed on the measure of cessation. The equation was then simplified by removing, one by one, those measures which by inspection had the highest probability and were not significantly related to the cessation of wife abuse ($p>.2$).

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[8]As an alternative to this approach responses given by male and female respondents could have been combined into three couple variables (e.g., parental abuse, use of physical aggression in response to violence, and sources of help). Then, these new variables could have been included within a grand regression analysis. I decided against this alternative, in part, because these couple variables were not are as relevant to this analysis as were the original individual variables.

Section A of Table 7. shows the regression coefficients, t test values, and significance levels obtained in the first logistic regression. Being married, having relatively low levels of marital conflict, and relatively high annual family income were significantly related to an increased probability of cessation when all other independent variables were held constant. The number of children living at home and the number of years the couple had lived together were also found to have tenable relationships with the probability of cessation; the first one had a negative relationship to the probability of cessation; the second had a positive relationship with the probability of cessation. Measures of verbal aggression and marital violence showed the weakest relationship to the probability of cessation in this analysis.

Section B of Table 7. shows the simplified logistic regression equation. Measures of wife's violence, husbands' verbal aggression, and number of years the couple had lived together were eliminated from the final equation. Removal of these variables increased the level of significance of the measures of wife-to-husband verbal, number of children living at home, and husband-to-wife violence.

The results of the second logistic regression including men's use of human sources of help as independent variable are given in Table 8. Section A of Table 8. shows that among the male respondents in this sample the measure of

their use of human sources of help was significantly related to the probability of cessation when the effects of the remaining independent variables were held constant.[9] High annual family income and low husband-to-wife verbal aggression also showed tenable relationships to the probability of the cessation of wife abuse among the male respondents. Moreover, section B of Table 8. shows that these two measures were significantly related to the probability of the cessation of wife abuse after the logistic regression equation was simplified.

Let us turn to the logistic regression based on the responses given by female respondents shown in Table 9. This logistic regression equation includes the independent variables used in the first regression analysis plus the women's use of physical aggression in response to their husbands violence and their experience of parental violence during their teenage years. Section A of Table 9. shows that high levels of marital conflict, women's use of physical violence in response to wife abuse, witnessing parental violence, and high frequency of marital violence significantly reduced the probability of cessation when all other independent variables were held constant. For these

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[9]The Wald statistic becomes small when the absolute value of the regression coefficient becomes large. A small Wald statistic can lead one to fail to reject the null hypothesis that the regression coefficient is 0, when in fact one should reject it. When this is the case, one can base the hypothesis test on the differences between the two likelihood-ratio chi-squares (Norusis, 1990).

women, being married was also found to significantly increase the probability of cessation after holding constant the remaining variables. In the simplified regression equation the measure of husband-to-wife verbal abuse was significantly related to the probability of cessation of wife abuse. Meanwhile, both measures of marital violence were eliminated from the final logistic regression equation.

Summary

The results of the three logistic regression analyses illustrate the diverse ways in which the probability of cessation of wife abuse can be affected by social and structural characteristics of the couple, and the equally diverse ways those characteristics affect the probability of cessation of wife abuse when victims and perpetrators of the violence are considered separately. These results suggest that the probability of cessation of wife abuse increases among married couples without children, earning a moderate level of income, with relatively low levels of marital conflict, where the woman refrains from excessive use of verbal aggression, and where the man does not engage in high frequency of wife abuse.

With regard to the men in this sample, the above results suggest that the use of human services is an important factor associated with an increased probability of cessation of wife assault. The results would also seem to suggest that having the financial resources and engaging in

relatively low levels of verbal aggression increased the probability of cessation of wife abuse among these group of men.

As far as the victims of the violence is concerned, perhaps the most conspicuous results were that the probability of the cessation of wife abuse was negatively related to the women's use of physical violence in response to the use of violence by their male partners and also negatively related to the experience of parental violence from both father and mother. The probability of ending their victimization was also increased if they were married and reported relatively low levels of marital conflict. Although in the first model the use of physical violence between spouses was negatively related to the probability of cessation for these women, in the final model they were not significantly related to cessation. The change in the effect of physical violence on the cessation of violence suggests that physical violence may have been highly correlated to variables included in the model or to some of the variables discarded through the elimination procedure.

At this point, it is important to try to avoid misunderstanding by placing some limitations on the above results. First, two of the logistic regression analyses were based on relatively small samples. Thus, these findings should be considered with caution. Second, this study is concerned with the cessation of wife abuse among

men in general and not among the most severe wife beaters. Although it would have ideal to conduct more refined analyses of the frequency and the type of violence used by men who ceased the violence, such analyses were not possible with these data. Finally, this study is designed to see what we could learn about the cessation of wife abuse from people who reported stopping and not to explore in detail why some people persist in their use of violence. If nothing else, the analyses presented above, and the case studies that follow, alert us to the fact that the cessation of wife abuse is a complex issue which defies simple interpretations and prescriptions for change.

Table 1. Prevalence Rates of Individual Acts of Aggression Included in the Conflict Tactics Scale.

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Threw Something	4.1	7.4	3.9	4.8	4.8	7.1
Pushed, grabbed, or shoved	7.9	14.8	10.9	10.4	12.5	11.6
Slapped	3.5	5.7	3.0	3.4	4.2	5.1
Kicked, bit, or hit	1.8	3.9	1.7	2.5	3.1	3.8
Hit or tried to hit with something	2.3	4.7	2.5	3.4	2.5	5.5
Beat-up	.9	.4	1.0	.4	.9	.9
Choked	.4	.4	.8	.6	1.2	1.0
Threatened with knife or gun	--	1.0	.6	.6	.6	.8
Used knife or gun	.3	.3	1.0	.5	2.2	.5
Total	17.5	19.9	12.8	12.5	17.0	10.6

Table 2. Mean Differences in Demographic Characteristics for Men in the Nonviolent (NV), Cessation (CES), and Persistence (PER) Groups.

	NV	CES	PER	F	D.F.	MSe
Demographics						
Age	46.3	42.4	36.8	7.26**	2,474	193.26
Years living in same community	19.9	18.1	14.1	2.11	2,485	540.06
Number of children under 17 at home	1.1	1.1	1.7	3.41*	2,480	5.85
Years together with present partner	19.2	16.1	9.7	8.18***	2,485	1445.14

* p< .05, ** p< .01, *** p< .001

Table 3. Percentage Differences in Demographic Characteristics for Men in the Nonviolent, Cessation, and Persistence Groups.

	Percentage of:		
	Nonviolent	Cessation	Persistence
Demographics			
Marital Status			
married	98.3	98.1	74.2
not married	1.7	1.9	25.8
Occupational Status			
blue collar	48.1	51.1	58.1
white collar	51.9	48.9	41.9
Employment			
full time	76.7	79.6	71.0
part time or unemployed	8.9	7.4	22.6
retired	14.4	13.0	6.5
Annual Family Income[a]			
none-15,000	12.5	15.4	45.2
+15,000-30,000	37.2	38.5	25.8
+30,000-40,000	20.9	13.5	16.1
+40,000 & over	29.3	32.7	12.9

[a]Chi Square = 26.15, d.f. = 6, $p < .001$

Table 4. Percentage Differences in Risk Factors for Wife Abuse Among Couples in the Nonviolent, Cessation, and Persistence Groups

	Percentage of:		
	Nonviolent	Cessation	Persistence
Men's Risk Factors			
Hit as teenager			
by mother	42.7	65.0	75.0
by father	42.2	47.4	66.7
Observed spouse abuse			
father hit mother	6.3	45.0	41.7
mother hit father	6.3	19.0	16.7
Women's Risk Factors			
Hit as teenager			
by mother	33.6	51.6	68.4
by father	21.8	45.2	55.6
Observed spouse abuse			
father hit mother	6.9	3.1	26.3
mother hit father	3.7	3.1	22.2
Joint Risk Factors			
Power Structure			
equalitarian	42.7	31.4	30.0
divided power	40.2	43.1	43.3
female dominant	17.2	25.5	26.7

Table 5. Mean Differences in Risk Factors for Wife Abuse for Among Men in the Nonviolent (NV), Cessation (CES), and Persistence (PER) Groups.

	NV	CES	PER	F	D.F.	MSe
Risk Factors						
Marital conflict	2.0	2.4	2.8	26.18***	2,472	12.45
Stress	1.0	1.2	1.9	9.7***	2,485	11.69
Verbal aggression	5.6	20.2	44.6	147.77***	2,483	25229.00
Alcohol consumption	6.0	7.2	10.2	3.22***	2,152	92.23

*p< .05, ** p< .001

Table 6. Long Term Strategies Used by Women to End the Violence and the Perceived Effectiveness of Each Strategy.

	Percentage of women:	
	Persistence (n=19)	Cessation (n=31)
Strategies		
Talking him out of it	57.9 (4.5)[a]	53.3 (4.3)
Getting him to promise to stop	57.9 (4.1)	33.3 (4.4)
Avoiding him or certain topics	57.9 (3.9)	62.5 (4.3)
Hiding or going away when he hurts you	26.3 (4.0)	22.6 (3.3)
Leaving home for two days or more	31.6 (4.0)	9.6 (4.7)
Threatening to call the police	42.1 (3.5)	6.3 (3.5)
Threatening to get a divorce	--- (3.5)	--- (4.0)
Physically fighting back in any way you can	63.2 (3.7)	18.8 (3.2)

[a]The numbers in parentheses are the mean values for the effectiveness of each strategy.

Table 7. Logistic Regression Analysis of the Cessation of Wife Abuse Using Data Obtained from Male and Female Respondents.

Independent Variable	Logit Coefficient	Std. Error	t	p
A. Cessation of wife abuse including all couple variables				
Marital status	-3.6271	1.6078	2.256	.0241[a]
Marital conflict	-1.6459	.6218	2.647	.0081[a]
Annual income	.6398	.3309	1.934	.0531*
Number of years living together	.0432	.0328	1.314	.1888
Wife's verbal aggression	-.0198	.0263	.752	.4523
Husband's violence	-.1034	.1470	.703	.4818
Husband's verbal aggression	-.0149	.0226	.661	.5085
Wife's violence	.0120	.1163	.103	.9175
Number of children under 17 at home	-.3899	.2438	1.60	.1097
B. Cessation of wife abuse after elimination procedure				
Marital status	-4.1809	1.5119	2.765	.0057[a]
Marital conflict	-1.4089	.5470	2.575	.0100[a]
Annual income	.6237	.3023	2.063	.0391**
Wife's verbal aggression	-.0363	.0176	2.062	.0392**
Number of children under 17 at home	-.3693	.2349	1.572	.1160
Husband's violence	-.1197	.0956	1.253	.2103

[a] Significance values for these variables ($p < .01$) were obtained after testing for the differences in likelihood chi squares.

* p< .1, ** p< .05,

Table 8. Logistic Regression Analysis of the Cessation of Wife Abuse Using Data Obtained from Male Respondents.

Independent Variable	Logit Coefficient	Std. Error	t	p
A. Cessation of wife abuse including all couple variables				
Use of human Services	4.1181	3.1116	1.323	.1857[a]
Husband's verbal aggression	-.1297	.0877	1.480	.1390
Annual income	.9311	.6436	1.447	.1480
Number of years living together	.0961	.0928	1.036	.3002
Marital conflict	-.9693	.9778	.991	.3215
Wife's violence	.1435	.2334	.615	.5386
Husband's violence	-.2681	.4779	.561	.5748
Wife's verbal aggression	.0130	.0563	.232	.8169
Marital status	-.3562	2.0791	.171	.8640
Number of children under 17 at home	-.0624	.4084	.153	.8785
$N = 32$, $X^2 = 16.413$, d.f. = 10, $p = .0884$				
B. Cessation of wife abuse after elimination procedure				
Use of human services	4.1600	3.0597	1.647	.0996[a]
Husband's verbal aggression	-.0056	.0870	1.987	.0470**
Annual income	.9296	.6431	1.691	.0908*
$N = 32$, $X^2 = 14.98$, d.f. = 4, $p = .0048$				

[a] Significance values for these variables ($p < .01$) were obtained after testing for the difference in likelihood chi squares.

* $p < .1$, ** $p < .05$

Table 9. Logistic Regression Analysis of the Cessation of Wife Abuse Using Data Obtained from Female Respondents.

Independent Variable	Logit Coefficient	Std. Error	t	p
A. Cessation of wife abuse including all couple variables				
Hit back as response	-71.2640	133.059	.536	.5922[a]
Marital status	-51.4407	761.1270	.068	.9461[a]
Marital conflict	-31.9695	32.9739	.970	.3323[a]
Father hit mother	13.2329	454.6631	.028	.9768[a]
Mother hit father	9.0742	616.9196	.014	.9883[a]
Wife's violence	2.4895	2.6787	.929	.3527[a]
Husband's violence	1.6257	1.92867	.843	.3992[a]
Husband's verbal aggression	-.5013	.5240	.957	.3387
Number of years living together	.3833	.4381	.875	.3817
Wife's verbal aggression	.1492	.2611	.572	.5676
Annual income	-.1870	1.6953	.110	.9122
Number of children under 17 at home	-.5855	2.5001	.234	.8148
$N = 45$, $X^2 = 48.647$, d.f. = 12, $p = .0001$				
B. Cessation of wife abuse after elimination procedure				
Hit back as response	-26.5681	179.3330	.148	.8822[a]
Marital status	-27.7893	180.2641	.154	.8775[a]
Marital conflict	-1.9021	1.1330	1.679	.0932[a]
Father hit mother	11.5049	99.4866	.116	.9079[a]
Mother hit father	5.6195	95.4647	.059	.9531[a]
Husband's verbal aggression	-.0715	.0337	2.121	.0340*
$N = 46$, $X^2 = 44.28$, d.f. = 6, $p = .0001$				

[a] Significance values for these variables ($p < .01$) were obtained after testing for differences between the two the likelihood chi squares.

* $p < .05$

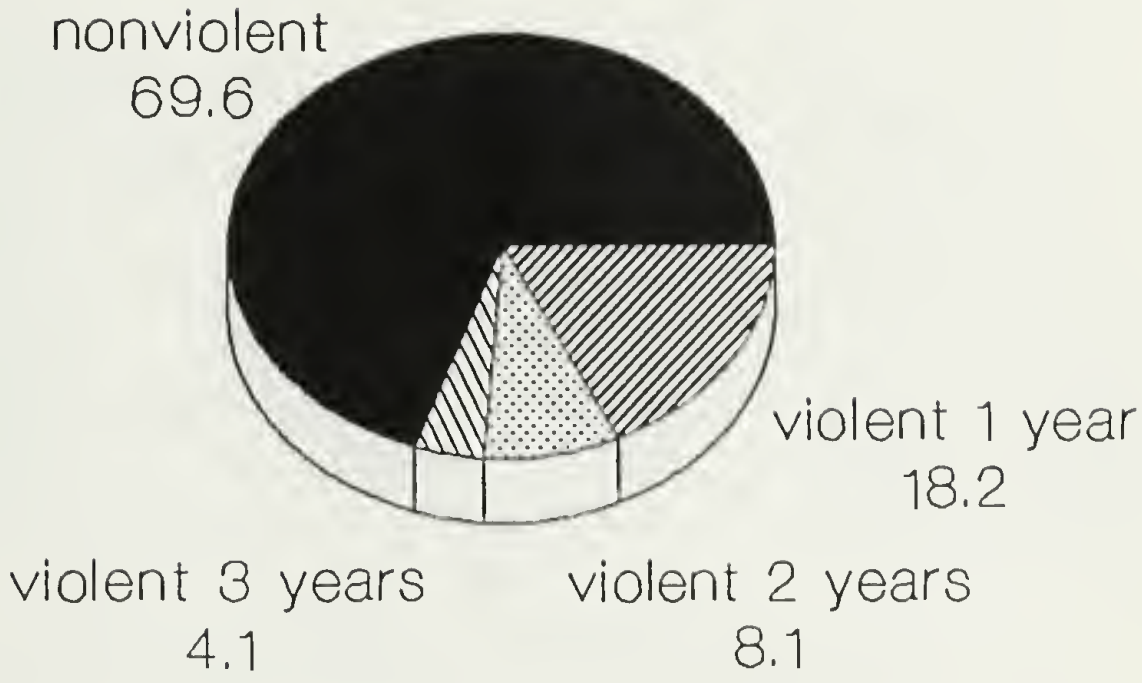

Figure 1. Reported Patterns of Husband to Wife Violence from Year 1 to Year 3.

Figure 2. Reported Patterns of Wife to Husband Violence from Year 1 to Year 3.

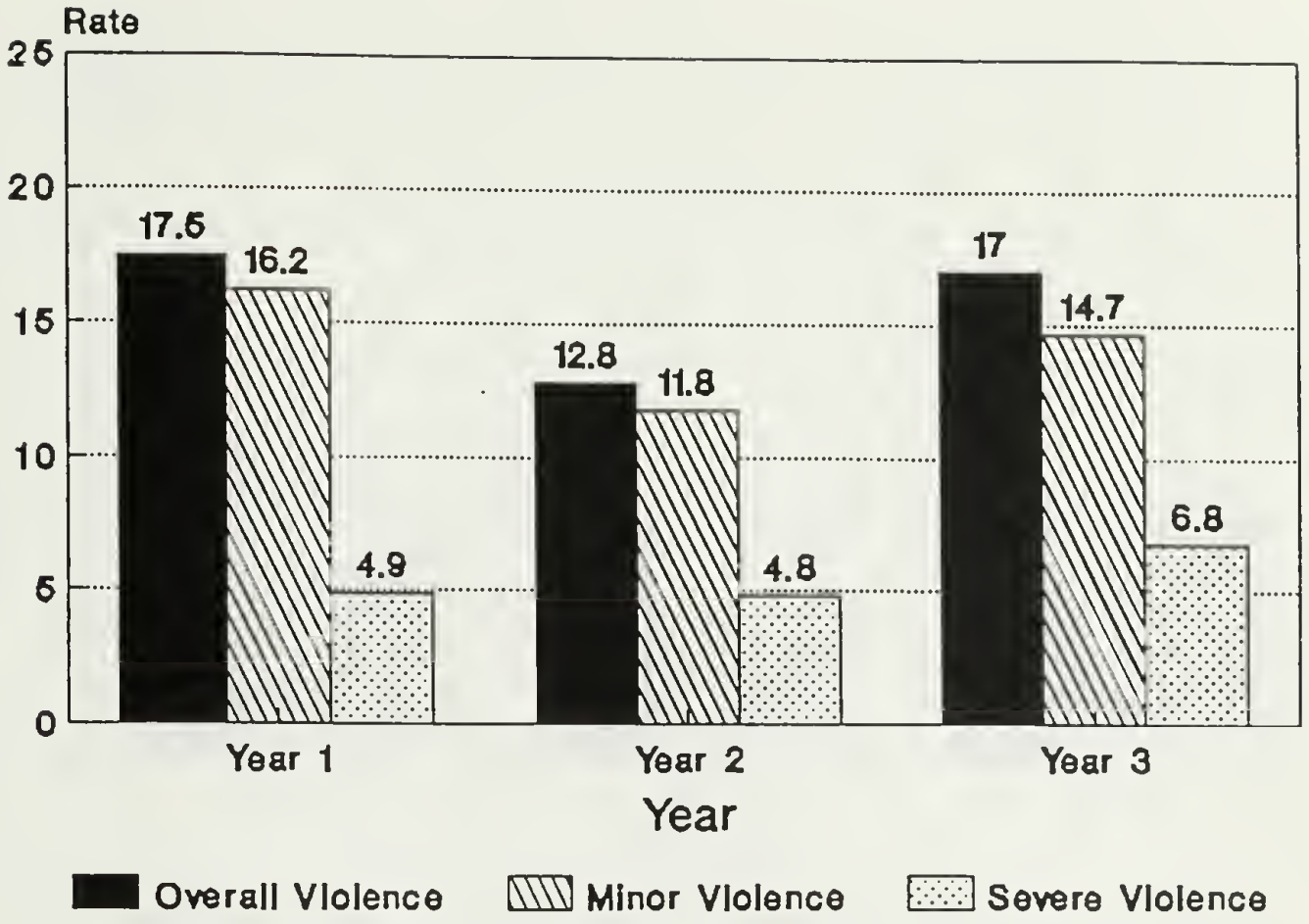

Figure 3. Prevalence Rates of Husband to Wife Violence over Three Years.

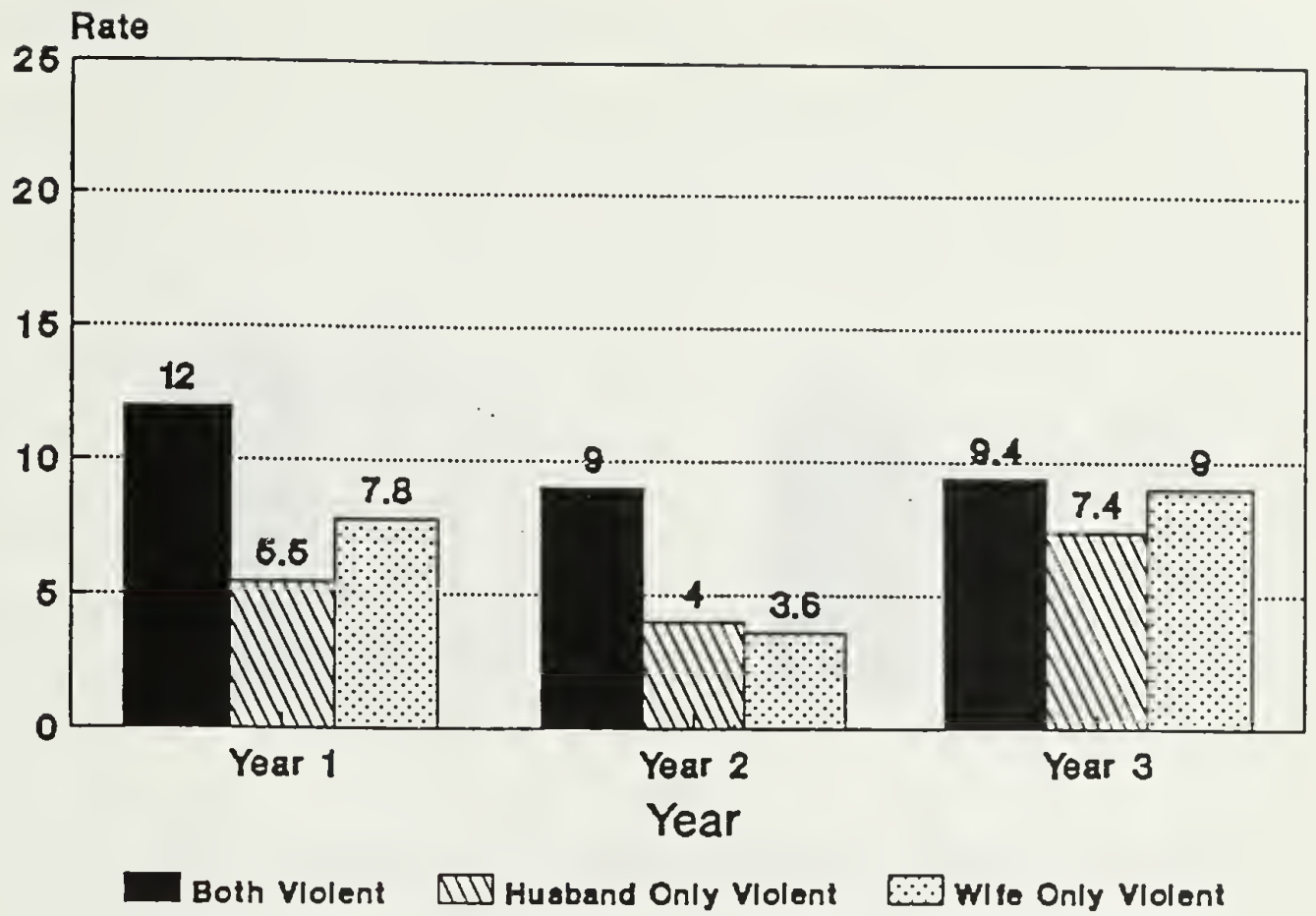

Figure 4. Prevalence Rates of Overall Violence among Couples over Three Years.

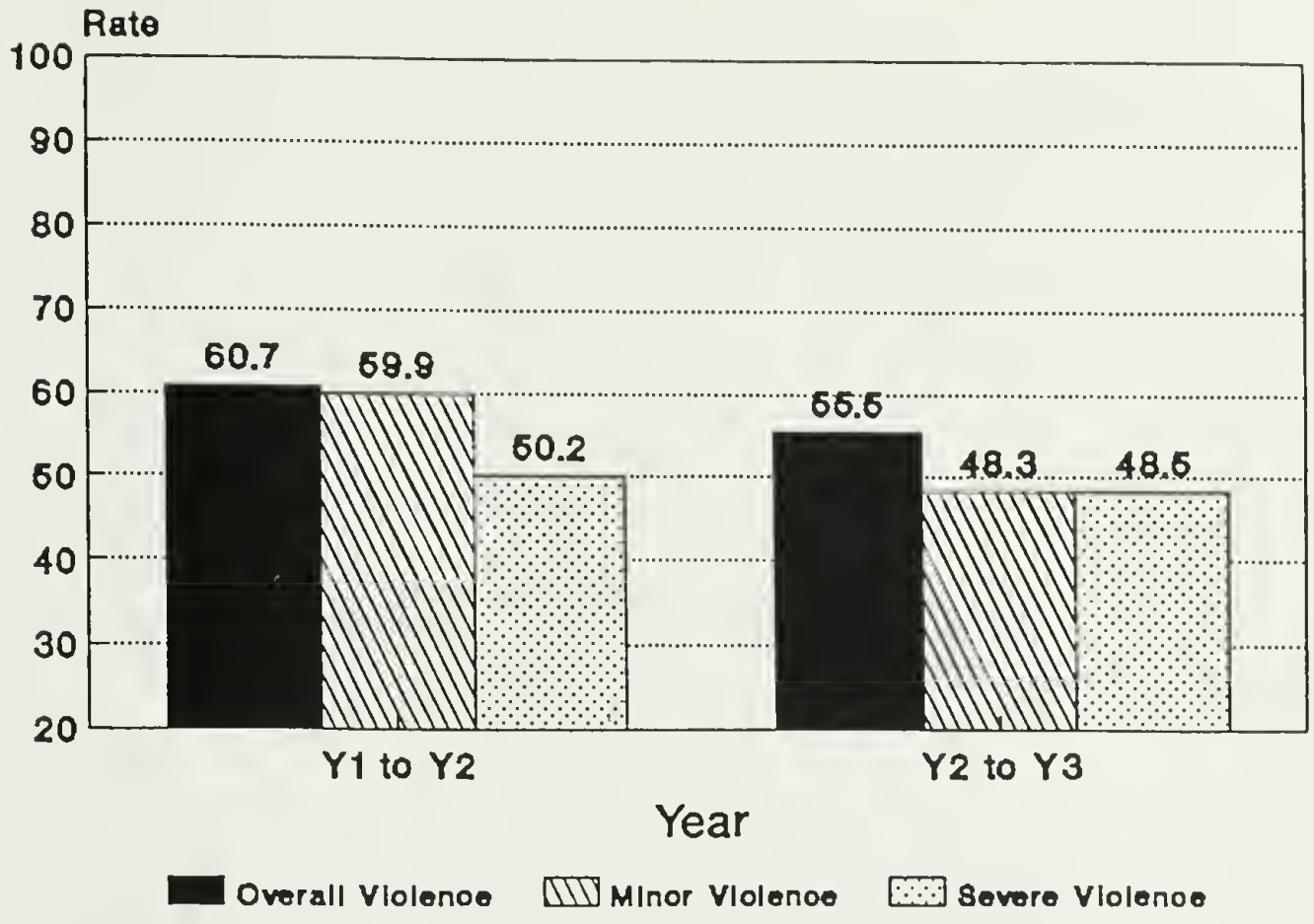

Figure 5. Percentage of Men Who Ceased the Use of Violence across Years.

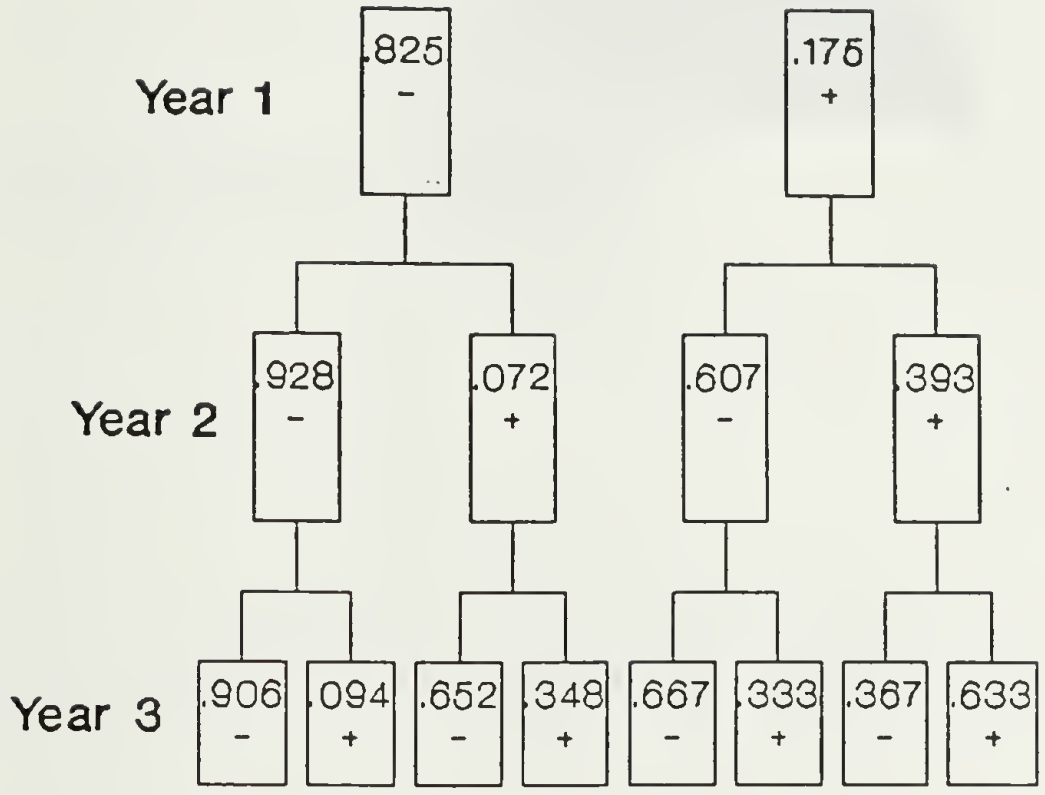

Figure 6. Conditional Probabilities of Wife Assault at Year 2 and Year 3 Given Violence or Nonviolence in Year 1.

+ = violence, - = nonviolence

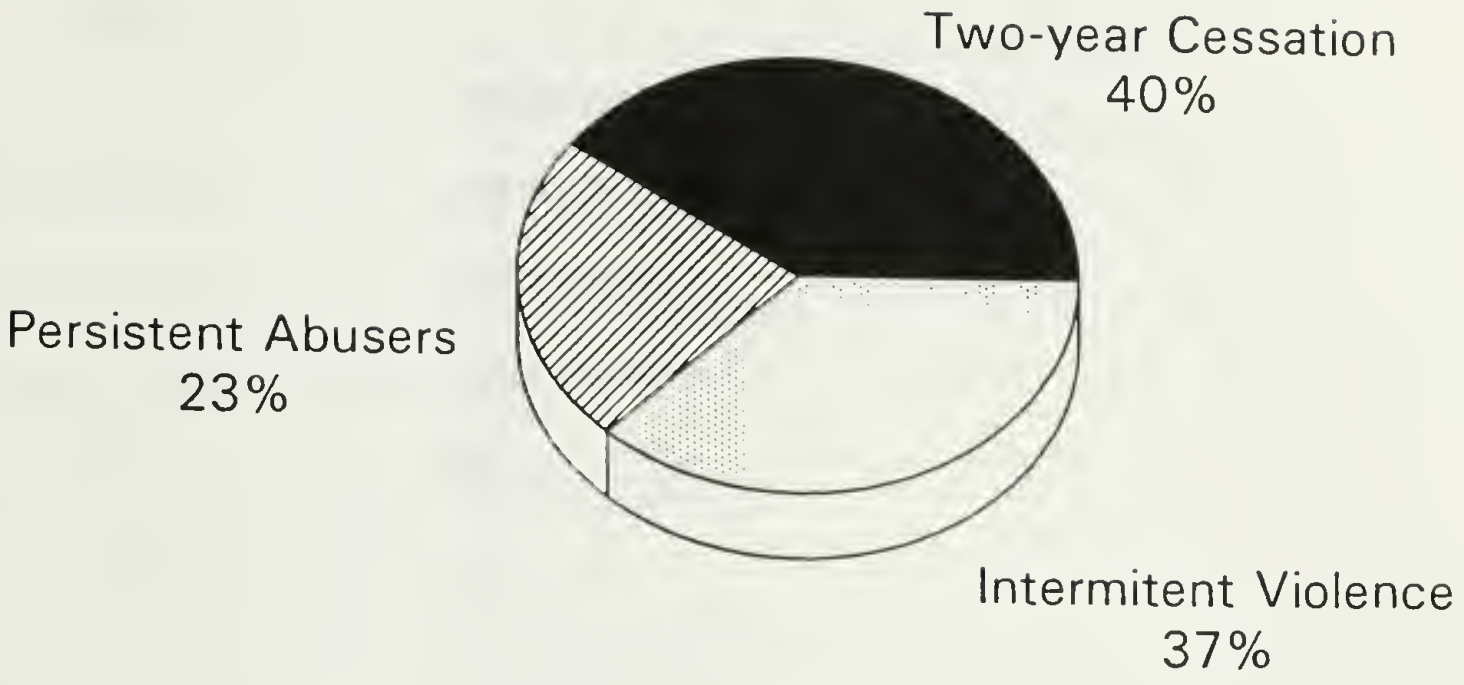

Figure 7. Percentage of Men Who Ceased, Persisted, or Engaged in Intermittent Violence from Year 1 to Year 3.

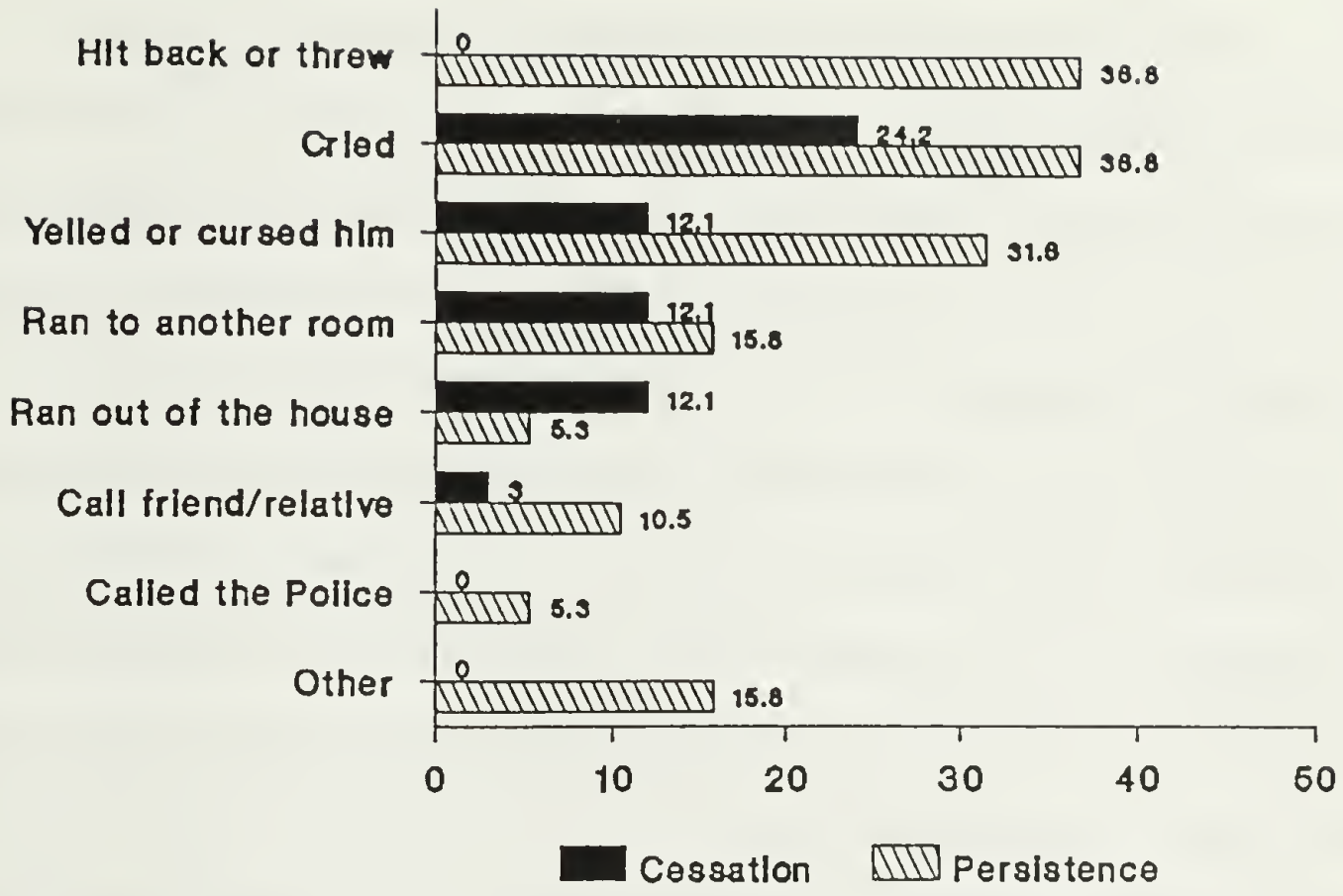

Figure 8. Women's Responses to Physical Violence

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF PANEL STUDY

Before leaving the analysis of the survey data, it is necessary to tie up some loose ends, address some potential criticisms, and discuss some issues that have only received minimal attention in previous sections.

Let us begin with the most basic question of all: What are the rates of cessation of wife abuse? In order to answer this question we analyzed a panel data consisting of three waves of interviews with a sample of 772 couples. We found that many men (between 60.7% and 55.5%) in this sample were able to stop the use of violence against their female partners after a reported year of violence. We also noted that among the men recorded as violent in the first year of the study a substantial percentage (40%) of them ceased the violence for the remaining two years of the study.

It is difficult to evaluate the accuracy and the significance of these rates in the absence of data appropriate for comparison. Fortunately, a report on a longitudinal study conducted by Daniel O'Leary and his colleagues at the State of University of New York, Stony Brook, provides the necessary information to generate such data (O'Leary, et al., 1989). As pointed out earlier in this text, as part of a general study on marriage and the family, this team of researchers evaluated the prevalence and stability of husband-to-wife violence among 272 volunteer couples. The Conflict Tactics Scale was used to

measure the occurrence of husband-to-wife violence 1 month prior to marriage, 18 and 30 months later. Although they did not report rates of cessation of violence, they provided the conditional probabilities of husband-to-wife violence over the course of their study. These probabilities were used here to estimate the rates of cessation on that sample. After transforming these data we found that almost half (49%) of the 84 men in their sample recorded as violent in the first assessment were recorded as nonviolent 18 months later. The cessation rate from the second to third assessment was similar (47%). A little over a third (35%) of the couples reported two and a half years of cessation of husband-to-wife violence.

On the basis of the present study and the cessation rates obtained from O'Leary et.al.'s work, it is evident that the cessation of husband-to-wife violence is not such a rare occurrence. Although the rates of cessation of violence are somewhat higher in this study than in the study by O'Leary and his colleagues, these variations could be the result of differences in the age and the level of violence among the men in these groups. On the average, men in O'Leary et al.'s sample were almost 17 years younger than the men in this study (M=42 for this study, M=25.3 for O'Leary et al.'s study). Youthfulness is considered an important risk factor for wife abuse (Straus & Gelles, 1986; Straus et al. 1980). Accordingly, the prevalence rates of

husband-to-wife violence among the men in O'Leary et al.'s sample was more than twice as high as those obtained with our sample. We should also consider that the disproportionate loss of the most violent men from the sample used in this study could have contributed to the variation in the cessation of violence observed between these two studies. On the other hand, considering that these two studies used different methodologies, were substantially different in their prevalence rates of husband-to-wife violence, and were based on different age groups, it is somewhat surprising that the differences in the rates of the cessation of violence were not more pronounced.

In all fairness, however, the above considerations should not be taken as reason to rejoice. The majority of men (60%) recorded as violent in the first year of this study, as well as the majority of men in O'Leary's sample (65%), were involved in either persistent or intermittent patterns of wife abuse. Although the relatively high rates of the cessation of wife abuse brings hope for change in the lives of couples where men are violent towards their spouse, these data clearly show that men who use physical violence against their female partners are more likely to continue using violence in the future.

Let us turn now to a consideration of the individual and social characteristics associated with the cessation of

wife abuse. The first thing to notice is that men who ceased the violence shared many characteristics with both nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers. Whereas nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers differed on all of the key variables used for comparison, men who ceased the use of violence against their female partners did not differ statistically from nonviolent men with respect to annual family income, marital status, length of marital relationship, and number of children living at home. They were not statistically different from persistent wife abusers on their experiences of parental abuse, physical punishment as teenager, and level of alcohol consumption. In terms of occupational status, employment status, power structure, and stress, men who ceased did not differ statistically from either nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers.

The second thing to notice is the ways in which men who ceased the violence differed from the rest. As a group, these men had witnessed more physical violence among their parents than nonviolent men. They were significantly different from both nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers on their moderate level of marital conflict and frequency of verbal aggression. With respect to the frequency of husband-to-wife violence, men who ceased the violence were found to have engaged in violence against their female patterns half as many times as persistent wife abusers.

Considering the large number of social factors on which men who ceased the violence and nonviolent men could have differed, the results presented earlier suggest that these two groups are not that different in terms of demographics. Amid this apparent similarity, these groups are different with respect to their socialization into the use of violence among spouses. The opposite statement is true with respect to the differences between men who ceased the violence and persistent wife abusers--that is, these men were similar with respect to their socialization into the use of violence in the family and different on various social characteristics that increase the probability of wife abuse.

The above considerations raise a further question: How do we account for the relatively moderate levels of marital conflict, frequency of verbal aggression, and frequency of husband-to-wife violence among men who ceased the violence? One way, but probably a minor way, would be to think of these patterns of behavior as socialized behaviors, or more generally as socialized tactics of conflict resolution. In this sense, men who ceased the violence would be thought of as having been exposed to moderate levels of conflict, verbal aggression, and physical violence in their families of origin. A more complex account of these differences would take into account the interaction between socialized forms of conflict resolution and other factors associated

with an increased probability of wife abuse. In this sense, factors such as relative economic stability, commitment to intimate relationship, relatively low levels of stress, and reduced child care responsibilities could be seen as minimizing the occasions for discord and argument between spouses, thus counterbalancing the socialized preference for the use of inadequate forms of conflict resolution such as verbal aggression and physical violence.

With respect to the characteristics of female partners, evidence was also found for the negative effects of the socialization into the use of violence at home and the cessation of wife abuse. In accord with studies on the relationship between physical punishment and spouse abuse (Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz, 1980), we found that women with nonviolent male partners had less experience with physical punishment during their teenage years than women in relationships with violent men, irrespective of whether or not the men were able to cease the violence. We also found that women in relationships with men who ceased the violence experienced less parental violence than women in relationships with persistent wife abusers.

Not only were women in the persistence group more likely to have witnessed violence by their parents but they were also more likely to respond to their partners' violence with physical and verbal aggression than women in the cessation group. In fact, none of the women in the latter

group reported using violence as response. Does this mean that women are better off refraining from engaging in acts of aggression in response to their patterns' violence? If one uses the cessation of violence as criteria for the utility of this response, the answer would seem to be yes. That is, in this context the use of violence by women would seem to be ineffective in achieving the long term cessation of husband-to-wife violence. Obviously, this argument can only be made if one is willing to infer causality from the association between the continued use of violence and the women's violent response.

Although it is appealing to think that we may know at least some way of reducing the probability of incidents of wife abuse, it is dangerous to think that a nonviolent response would be the most appropriate response on every case. Bowker's (1983) study of woman who had lived with violent husbands, Gelles and Straus (1988) analyses of women's strategies to stop their victimization, and this study all show that at least some women consider the use of violence as an effective strategy. On the other hand, it is by no means a trivial finding that none of the women in this sample whose husbands ceased the violence reported answering the violence with acts of aggression. For these women responding in non-aggressive ways was clearly useful.

The fact that women in relationship with men who ceased the violence did not hit back in response to the man's

violence is consistent with the notion that they were not socialized to use violence against their spouses. This is not to say, however, that women in relationship with persistent wife abusers are to be blamed for their victimization (by fueling the violence) or that many of them hit back simply because that is what they know how to do best. Such misunderstandings are likely to occur if one chooses to ignore that persistent wife abusers in this sample engaged in acts of violence on the average more than twice as many times as men who eventually ceased the violence, or if one chooses to ignore that these women also have less financial resources and more children to care for than other women. In the context of repeated physical threat for themselves and their children, and relatively few resources for independent living, hitting back may have benefits not obvious from the available data.

Let us turn now to the long term strategies reported to be most effective by women in relationships with men who ceased the violence. Although the data on this topic are far from conclusive, women's judgments on the effectiveness of different strategies suggest that reasoning, verbal negotiation, and avoidance tactics held some promise in preventing future episodes of husband-to-wife violence. The most common strategies used by more than half of the women in relationship with men who ceased the violence were avoiding their husbands or avoiding certain topics and

trying to talk them out of using violence in their relationship. Unfortunately, the relationship between the use of personal preventive strategies and the cessation of wife abuse is very tenuous. Not only did women in relationships with persistent wife abusers make comparable judgements regarding the effectiveness of their strategies, but they used almost every strategy more frequently than women with partners who ceased the violence.

If we are able to put on check our enthusiasm and desire for the elimination of wife abuse, the above finding is not so discouraging. Given the array of contextual factors associated with the incidence of wife abuse it is encouraging to know that almost every preventive strategy used by women has some effectiveness, at least on the eyes of the wives facing violent husbands. Of course, the issue for us to discern is what counts as an effective strategy for these women. Under some circumstances some strategies may be effective in reducing the frequency of wife abuse, changing the form of the violence, or decreasing the intensity of the episodes. Under different circumstances a strategy may even be effective in getting the husband to cease the use of violence. Unfortunately, this issue can not be adequately addressed in this study.

Another interesting finding of this study was that men who ceased the use of violence were more likely to seek out help from human services such as psychotherapists, family

counselors, and doctors than were both nonviolent men and persistent wife abusers. In fact, men who ceased the use of violence were twice as likely to report using human services than persistent wife abusers. Still, the majority (81%) of the male respondents who ceased the use of violence did not use human services. These men were as likely to reach out for the help of a friend or relative as they were to seek help outside the home. Of course, the same considerations mentioned for evaluating the effectiveness of personal strategies used by women apply here. If we are willing to assume that these men sought out help in part for issues associated with the use of violence and we take the absence of violence as a criterion for the effectiveness of these services, then human services and informal sources of help could be said to hold the greatest potential for helping these men stop the use of violence. Clearly, the jury is still out on this issue.

It should hardly bear repeating that the results of the analyses of the panel survey data discussed above should be understood in reference to the relatively small number of couples that could be included in different analyses and the disproportionate loss of the most violent men over the three waves of interviews. Limitations of sample size also made it impractical to include men involved in recurrent patterns of wife abuse in any of the major analyses. Comparing recurrent wife abusers with men who ceased the use of

physical violence against their female partners could have advanced more refined interpretations on the relationship between demographic characteristics, risk factors for wife abuse and the cessation of husband-to-wife violence. For the same reason it was also impractical to conduct elaborate analyses of the differences in the frequency of severe and minor acts of husband-to-wife violence among men who ceased the violence and persistent wife abusers. Considering the disproportionate loss of the most violent men from the sample data, one must keep in mind that the associations presented above may be different for this group of men.

Hopefully, future research on the cessation of wife abuse would be able to address some of the considerations raised above. In my view, the importance of the aforementioned analyses stems not from revealing the truth about the cessation of wife abuse, but from leading the way into the exploration of the conditions that may promote and sustain the cessation of wife abuse.

CHAPTER 6

CASE STUDIES

Throughout the preceding sections we have looked at the cessation of wife abuse through the eyes of marital violence researchers, so to speak. We have been concerned with exploring the relationship between the cessation of wife abuse and social factors found to be associated to the occurrence of wife abuse. We have relied on survey data for this exploration. We have talked about the cessation of violence in terms of probabilities. In this section we do something different. Here we look at the cessation of wife abuse through the eyes of men and women that are going through this process. We talk about the cessation of violence in terms of the meanings and the experience of this process for these people. The three main questions guiding this section are: How do these partners understand the cessation of violence in their relationship? How does this change come about? How do they deal with potentially violent situations now? But more of that shortly. First, I would like to make some comments about how these data were collected.

The two couples presented below volunteered to participate on a study on the cessation of wife abuse. Peter and Jill learned about the study through a public service announcement broadcasted by a local radio station. Joe and Liz were told and encouraged to participate in the study by their former couple's therapist.

After the initial contact, I gave both couples a choice of where they wanted the interviews to take place. With the exception of one interview which took place at one of the participant's college, they preferred to have the meetings at their homes. I visited their homes three times on consecutive weeks, each time for approximately 2 hours. Our first meeting included both partners; we talked about the couple's history, the nature of their conflicts, and the nature and course of the violence in their relationship. For the second visit, I scheduled an hour long interview with each partner; we discussed his or her family, social, and developmental histories; we talked in detail about their experience and understanding of the violence; we also discussed the cessation process, including help-seeking behavior, and their perceptions of changes in their lives that might be related to the cessation of violence. On the third visit, I met with the partners together to tie up loose ends, clarify conflicting data, and elaborate the discussion of the changes in their relationships since the last incident of violence.

Participants were very forthcoming and responsive to the questions. The more we talked about the violence and about the changes in their relationships the more it became apparent to everybody involved that there was a very important sub-text to the interviews. This was particularly true with respect to the first and last interviews where

both partners were present. The questions were mine but the answers were theirs. These couples have been struggling with issues of trust and fear. They viewed and used the interviews as a relatively safe ground to work on those issues.

Given the above considerations, the interviews at times resembled couple's therapy. At times, I pointed out similarities and differences in their accounts and their experiences of the cessation process. At other times, I probed to resolve inconsistencies in their stories and check my understanding with both partners. Yet, at other times they wanted to check their understandings with me and wanted to know my opinion. The meetings often got emotionally charged; on many occasions I felt it was appropriate to drop a topic, to lighten up the conversation, to give them the space and the opportunity to distance themselves from the subject of our discussion. Both couples were appreciative of the interview process and requested that I have dinner at their home after the last interview.

Joe and Liz[10]

When I interviewed Joe, he was 40 years old. A caucasian man, born in Rhode Island, he had three children from a previous marriage. He had a seventh grade education and had been in the auto body repair business for

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[10]The identifying information included in the case studies was altered to protect the identity of the participants.

approximately 16 years. He owned a fair number of real estate properties and was earning over $50,000 a year. For many years Joe collected motorcycles and guns. He did volunteer work with the finance committee in town.

Joe grew up in Rhode Island, with a sister 11 years older than he. He was 9 years old when his sister moved out of the house. After approximately 15 years of relatively no contact, they had renewed their relationship about a year and a half before I met him. Joe reported that his parents were hard working european immigrants who would often argue but who were never violent. He reported having being "spoiled" by their attention and generosity. Joe said he "could hardly remember being hit" by his parents.

Joe was 15 years old when his girlfriend got pregnant. That year he dropped out of school, got a job, got married and moved into a public housing project with his wife. He reported that they were both very violent and had frequent physical fights for the first four years of their marriage. Typically, they went from verbal aggression to fist fights that stopped when they were "too tired to continue". On at least one occasion he reported threatening her with a gun. At the time he considered marital violence part of everyday life:

> I thought everybody fought like that pretty much. A lot of my friends did. We lived in a housing authority building you know and many people did. The cops were always coming there into somebody's house for a fight. It seemed like the normal way of life.

Joe said that for many years he thought of himself as a very tough guy. As part of a group of motorcycle drivers, he spent much of his social life in bars and on the streets. He reported that bar fights and brawls over women were quite common for him during those years. Over the years he "out grew" this life style which he viewed as "stupid" by the time I met him; moreover, as a business man, he "did not have time for those things anymore". Joe did not give up the motorcycle-bar scene completely until a little over ten years after he met Liz.

Liz is a white woman who had just turned 38 years old when I met her. She had an eleventh grade education. She had worked as bus driver for elderly people, bank teller, and office clerk. She was in charge of customer services and rental accounts at an office building owned by her husband when I interviewed her. Liz had a 16 year-old son from a previous relationship. She had been a cocaine addict for about 4 years. When I interviewed her, she had been "clean" and involved with narcotic anonymous groups for 4 years.

Liz was born and raised in Rhode Island. She had three older brothers. Her oldest brother was killed in an automobile accident some 10 years before our first meeting. Another brother had been in prison for drug related charges and got out on parole a couple of days before our second interview. She said that her brothers were substance

abusers who were always in trouble and that she preferred to keep at a distance from them.

Liz's parents divorced when she was 16 years old. She never witnessed physical violence between them. Although she minimized her father's use of physical punishment against her, she remembered that he often "beat up on the boys". Moreover, she reported being "sexually molested" by her father when she was about 14 years old. She did not mention any abuse by her mother. During our last meeting, Liz reported keeping regular contact with her mother and no contact with her father.

After Liz's seventeenth birthday she left home to go to California in search of "something better". There she got involved with a man who was verbally and physically abusive to her. Fearing for her life, she escaped from him and eventually returned to her mother's home. A month after leaving California, she found out that she was pregnant by this man. Some years ago, Liz found out that the biological father of her son had been convicted of murder and was on death row.

Liz and Joe met through his first wife, who was a co-worker of Liz. Joe and Liz started seeing each other and going away for weekends. Liz learned that Joe beat his wife through a common friend. "It didn't stop me though", Liz told me, because with her, Joe had been "very quiet, fun, and caring". Liz's opinion was after she met Joe "he pulled

(her) out of the rut" where she had been living throughout her life.

Joe started beating up and threatening Liz with his guns within months after they started seeing each other. Typically, Joe would get obsessed with the idea that Liz was seeing other men, either because his wife would tell him that or because he would interpret that from her behavior. He would get jealous and would accuse Liz of cheating on him. Most of the time Liz would not respond to his accusations; at times, however, she would get incensed at being accused of something she had not done and curse at Joe. After she cursed him almost invariably Joe beat her up.

Joe was still married when he moved in with Liz. After they moved together, the beatings and the gun threats continued. During the first 7 years they lived together Liz left him "because of the violence" at least 7 times. She explained to me that she always returned because

> I guess I felt I couldn't find anyone else. I think that was a lot of the reason. You depend on him for so many years. I mean I knew just how he was. So why just start over? I think that was a lot of it....(It was like) am I going to throw it away now? I can't.

Liz and Joe married after 9 years living together. By that time Liz had become addicted to cocaine. This is when both Liz and Joe said that the "violence got worst". They told me that for about 2 years Joe beat up Liz "every day or almost every day". Again Joe never considered his use of violence to be wrong:

> I don't think that at the time I thought that (the violence) was a big problem....I thought that if I hit her, the next time she'd think twice before doing it.... Like I said, I know now that for a person who is addicted to drugs nothing matters and that is not the way to handle it. But, at the time I thought well if I hit her today maybe she'll think twice before she does it again, which never worked.

The last time Joe beat up Liz was 5 years ago; she had told him that she was going to a narcotics anonymous meeting. When she returned home Joe found a cocaine pipe under the driver's seat of her car. Liz recalled what happened that night:

> I was supposed to go to a narcotic anonymous meeting. I didn't go. I went and got high. I came home and of course I had spent all my money. So, I told him that my money was stolen. He knew I was lying so he beat me and kept beating me. He started throwing things. He threatened me with a gun.... I would get up and tried running. He'd get me. It was continuous abuse for about maybe 3 hours....I was scared to move. So I finally I budge my way down near the back of the door. He was sitting in the living room. I kept watching. He had the gun and that was what stopped me from going out the door from the beginning because I thought sure he'll pull the trigger. (He had) a hand gun. So when I thought he wasn't paying attention, I mean, I flew out the door. I almost knocked down my neighbors' door and spent the night there.

Liz never called the police in regard to her husband's beatings. She feared that the police would find out about her drug use and would want to know where she was getting the drugs. Often, however, she thought about "hiring a hit man to kill Joe".

Shortly after the incident mentioned above, Liz was arrested for embezzlement of money at the bank where she worked. She had been stealing money to support her

addiction. Both Liz and Joe were very apprehensive about discussing this topic and only said that she "spent some time in prison".

Joe spoke about how humiliated he felt after his wife's drug problem and legal problem became publicized through the media. He felt that he could not continue living with Liz under those circumstances. Since he did not want to separate, Joe decided to sell the home and the business and moved to a remote town in northern New England where they used to visit for vacation. He wanted to go away "to start all over again". About the decision to move Joe said,

> "Well, I knew we had to have some drastic change because nothing else was working. That is why I came up with the idea to move, which I thought was probably one of the best ideas I ever had".

In order to do this, Liz noted that was important for them to keep the past for themselves.

> We want to put it behind us. We don't want people to know. You know we left that behind. I mean we are still dealing with it, but we just believe that it is not anyone else's business but ours.

Joe and Liz moved to their new home about 4 years before I interviewed them. They reported that their lives "slowed down" considerably after moving to the new town. They had a ranch, some commercial real state, and a new auto body shop in the area. He had sold his motorcycles and bought some horses instead. He had also become interested in bird watching. Shortly after moving, Liz got a job as a clerk at a local business office. She also continued attending narcotic anonymous meetings.

They like being away from "the crime and violence" in the city where they once lived. They also spoke about the benefits of being away from families and friends. As Joe said,

> I thought getting away from family and getting away from friends and coming up here was a big plus. We both like this place. We both like living like this. We are out in sticks here. She loves this place. I love this place and that is important. Sometimes the family gets (too) involved and that is no good.

In their new setting Joe continued keeping close tabs on where Liz went and how much time she spent outside the home. He said he was "scared" that she would use drugs again. After almost two years of no major episode of aggression, one day Liz took longer than expected to return home. Upon return she found that Joe

> smashed things when I was gone all that time looking at used car with my son. He thought because I took so long, plus he had a couple of beers, he thought that I took so long because I was out getting meds is what he said--out getting drugs. I remember that. He smashed (the living room) and ran outside.

When I interviewed her alone Liz added,

> For some unknown reason the state police was coming down the road (that day). I ran in the house and said "the state police is here". "You called the cops!", (he said). "I never call the cops", I said. And I said (to the cop) "hi can I help you?" He saw that I was upset. He goes "what is wrong with you Mrs.?" I said nothing, a family argument. "No I think is more than that".... I came in the house and (Joe) says "if that cop, the state trooper comes in, I am going to kill him". He flipped! I said "don't be stupid". "Watch me", (he said). And he went got his machine gun and stood up in the hallway. He was waiting for the state trooper to come through the door. I said "no. You are going to come outside"...He did come outside....He wasn't violent with me but he could have killed somebody.

A year later, Liz began to experience recurrent episodes of depression. She became withdrawn, irritable, and quit her job. She experienced dramatic mood swings and often spent the night out in a hotel when she felt that way. Although Joe got enraged at Liz every time she did this, and was at first verbally abusive to her when she returned home, he was not physically violent. Joe described his decision not to use physical violence in the following way:

> At first I got really angry and I figured she was doing drugs. But then it didn't figure. I figured to myself there is a problem here and she needs help. Things didn't add up or make sense. I would leave in the morning and everything would be ok; she would get coffee ready, get things ready for when I get home, go buy me cigars, and I would get home and she wouldn't be home.... Things just didn't add up. I knew there was a problem where she needed help not me to scream at her.... I knew there was something more to it than her trying to do something bad to me or to herself. The way she explained it was that she couldn't help herself.... What kind of made me think about it was the movie The Two Faces of Eve....It is about a woman that has two lives and would do the same thing just change from one to the other....(I figured) she had a problem and needed some help from a psychiatrist of some sort.

As Joe described in our last meeting, there was an additional motivation for him to stop the violence. "You know, I look down on some people. It is like I think I am better than them. And this way, when the violence comes out I am no better than them anymore".

Both Liz and Joe described the cessation of violence in their lives, primarily, in relation to Joe's changes. For example Joe said,

> I noticed that a lot of my values and a lot of my thoughts have changed pertaining to violence. You know like my ideas, my whole ideas of life in general, helping others or volunteering for the town or bird watching. You know, years ago it would be out of the question, anything like that... I don't know whether is growing up or I can't just put my finger on it. It is a whole different thing.

Speaking more in detail about his change in values he added,

> Before I wanted to feel in charge; you got to do what I say because I am the boss; this is the way is going to be or else. I wanted her to do what I wanted her to do... Now, I just want her to do the right thing [Which is what?] Like what I do. I go to work. I come home and make something or if I am bored I build something. You know, I watch birds. You know just the right thing. No trouble, no drugs, just be normal people and do what normal people do. And get up in the morning and enjoyed life a little bit.

From Liz's perspective she is able now to express her opinions more than she did in the past. She thinks that "he is much more mellow, easy going. He is not a hard ass like he used to be in Rhode Island. He had that macho image. He had to keep up with the rest of the fellows down there".

Liz and Joe contacted a psychologist who began couple's therapy ten months prior to our interviews. They described their marital life since the beginning of therapy as the "best time of their lives". They said that they are learning to communicate with each other and to trust each other again.

As indicated by the following exchange Liz, however, carries a heavy burden for all the years of beatings.

> [You said you that you were fearful of him before. You are not so fearful now?] I am not as fearful now, no. Because if I think that he is going to be angry with me, like when I take off, I could come back home at

night but I am scared to. I am scared he is going to slap me. So, I'd call him the following morning and tell him "I'll be home if you promise you won't hit me. [If you knew that he wouldn't beat you if you come back at night would you come?] Probably but I am scared. I am scared.... [So even now five years after the last time he hit you, you worry that it could happen again.] Yes. [Do you think that he feels the same way, that it could happen again?] I think so. I am not sure though. I am sure he would love to hit me sometimes, but he knows that won't solve any problems. He does know that, but I still have it inside my mind.

Peter and Jill

Peter is a caucasian man originally from Massachusetts. He was 28 years old when I interviewed him. He attended college for a year and a half, left school to go traveling through the United States, and was back in college completing a biology major when we met. Peter wanted to finish his degree to work in science, as he said, "because that is where my heart is. I love science". Peter was relatively active in community affairs; he would often volunteer to help other people build or repair their homes and did volunteer work at a community kitchen. Over the years he has worked as a painter and done kitchen work in restaurants. He was unemployed during the time I interviewed him.

The youngest of three boys, Peter had a fairly good, although distant, relationship with his brothers. His parents divorced when he was 5 years old. Peter could not recall ever seeing his parents fight. Instead, he remembers them being relatively friendly to each other. He reported always having a good relationship with both parents.

After the divorce Peter lived at home with his mother and his two brothers. He saw his father 3 to 4 times a week. Although Peter said that his mother relied heavily on physical punishment for disciplinary purposes, he did not consider her to be abusive. Peter recalled being slapped by his father once because Peter "was being a real jerk" to his grandmother.

Peter was 13 years old when his mother's boyfriend moved into the house. They eventually married. Peter reported never seeing any kind of violence in their relationship. He described his stepfather as caring and responsible.

Before meeting Jill, Peter had a couple of intimate relationships lasting about a year each. Although on his view his relationships were relatively longer than the relationships of his peers, he reported growing up thinking that intimate relationships, in general, did not last. When the time came to end a relationship he just packed and moved on.

Peter described himself as "a nonviolent guy". He reported never being physically violent towards any of his girlfriends. Prior to his relationship with Jill, he recalled having experience with violence only as a kid fighting with his brothers.

Jill was a 35 year-old white woman, who grew up in Canada. She had a bachelors degree in sociology and worked

as a recreational therapist for people with physical and mental disabilities. She was active in a co-counseling network, and like Peter, did volunteer work at the community kitchen and other organizations.

Jill grew up in a Catholic family, with two older brothers and two older sisters with whom she got along well. She attended Catholic school. Her siblings had moved out of the house by the time Jill was 10 years old. Although Jill reported never witnessing physical violence among her parents, she described her home as unsafe and filled with "violent tension". She spoke about her father as a "tyrant", "a very violent man" who did not need much justification to beat her:

> "I think that in my childhood the most prevalent thing was fear of violence.... I used to try to predict it. I spent a lot of time as a child trying to predict what things were going to happen so that I could avoid things. [Avoid getting scolded or getting...?] Yes getting hit or just, I mean I think that a lot of what happened was basically the violence but the energy behind what he would say was terrifying. [In what sense do you mean?] Well I mean it is like you could just sense this monster who was contained. I mean I remember thinking as a young child that I wasn't going to get killed because my father was an usher in church and it wouldn't look good. You know I wasn't just going to see an article in the paper that said An Usher Killed His Daughter....in order for me to even think that is like a really good indication of that."

In our first couple interview both Peter and Jill also suggested that they had come to suspect Jill's father had sexually abused her as a child, but nothing else was said in this regard.

Peter was 21 and Jill 28 when they met at a "tribal gathering", a sort of alternative lifestyle convention "usually held in the wilderness". For the next year and a half Peter visited Jill every three or four weeks. They both said that their relationship was pleasant and rewarding during this time. Peter decided to moved in with Jill and her son after she gave him the ultimatum; "you either make a commitment or get out".

A month later Jill got pregnant. Neither one of them was particularly prepared or excited to have another baby. The house was still in construction and had no roof over much of it; they had no water plumbing, refrigeration, or electricity. They were both unemployed. They lived on $216.00 a month of welfare and $60.00 of food stamps. They both recognized that the situation was particularly hard for Jill who was mentally and physically drained.

During this time Peter and Jill began to experience difficulties in their relationship. Jill viewed the problems as a difference in their priorities and their commitment to the relationship. She wanted a family and a husband who would want to take care of her and the children. On her view, Peter "was young and still wanting to be free" to be on his own.

Peter agreed with Jill's opinion and highlighted the difficulties he had in growing into a new identity and role. In his words,

When Jill was last hit by her father she was 18 years old. Her father slapped her in front of a friend for reasons which Jill could not recall. Shortly after, Jill moved to Chicago with a man she thought she would marry. The relationship failed and Jill returned to her parents house. She became confused, depressed, suicidal, and finally suffered a "complete breakdown".

Jill spent the next year recovering from the breakdown. During this time she began college where she got excellent grades. She said that her parents never thought she would go to college because they did not think she was "college material". During this time she also got a job teaching babies how to swim.

Jill had several intimate relationships none of which she described as including any physical violence. Her oldest son, David, was born of one of these relationships about eight years before I interviewed her. Her son was two and half months old when she moved to a piece of land she owned in a remote area of northern New England. For the first few months she lived in a tent with her baby while building the house, at times alone, and at other times with the help of friends and "basically anybody that came by".

Peter and Jill had known each other for eight years and had lived together for seven years when I met them. Jill's son was nine years old. They also had a five year-old daughter.

> When Jill and I first met it was great. And I thought I believed in a lot of the things she was saying. I went along, and really what I was doing was dropping a big part of my life behind me to join with Jill's life. And that was a bad move. I needed to bring all of me here and then sort out how to blend it all.

Their dissatisfaction with life and with each other gradually turned into general hostility and verbal aggression. As Jill said,

> There was a tremendous amount of hostility, which really felt, I mean felt riddled with violence. I mean I would walk out in the road just feeling ugh! And I had gotten called some names that meant violence to me. You know, to hear the word cunt to me it is something, it is just the last thing I can hear.

Peter's first act of physical violence against Jill occurred during their second year living together. They argued for reasons they could not recall. Peter walked away from the discussion and got into his truck to leave the house. Jill tried to get into the car. Peter pushed her out and drove away.

Later that year, Peter and Jill separated for the first time. Peter took care of the kids every weekend and kept frequent communication with Jill. After almost 4 months they decided to live together again.

After a short period of relative tranquility, Peter and Jill began to have increasingly frequent arguments concerning Peter's relationship with Jill's son, David. No mention was made of any use of physical punishment by Peter against David during our interviews. Instead, Jill expressed concern that he was being "irrational" and unfair

with her son. Although Jill saw a value in letting them work out their problems and often tried to do so, in general she felt that Peter was not acting as a "rational adult" and she was driven to interrupt their arguments in support and protection of her son.

Peter and Jill went to see a marriage counselor who could help them to deal with the situation between Peter and David and the increasing hostility between themselves. They stopped therapy after a couple of meetings because they felt the therapist minimized their problems and did not seem to understand them.

Their difficulties resolving conflicts continued. In 1986, Peter and Jill went camping to the midwest. They started to argue at a bus depot. Peter refused to continue with the discussion and began to walk away. Jill, said Peter, "grabbed me and started beating on me, and pulling my hair out". Peter did not respond with violence. Instead, he left, spent the night away and returned the next morning.

A year later, Peter and Jill went through what they called "the bad period", which lasted between 4 and 6 months. During this time, arguments were constant and would blow up into verbal aggression and physical violence every 2 to 4 weeks. Peter described the cycle of violence in which they were involved in the following terms:

> I think the violence happened once every two to four weeks because there was always this time of unrest building up to it, and then afterwards you always had to look at it and do something. Getting there was like

> a relief, afterwards. So, then there was the down time afterward, building down and then another couple of weeks building up.

Typically, arguments would turn into verbal aggression, Peter would push her away, and would leave the house. Often Jill would try to prevent him from leaving and would challenge him by putting her face close to his and say things like "Oh you'd just love to hit me now wouldn't you"? Jill's reasoning for doing this was that she

> wanted something to happen.... I was not willing to go on with what was going on. There had to be some cataclysmic thing happening because it wasn't going anywhere...The moment I talked to you about this or that, he'd literally turn around and walk away.... It is not violence when someone is driving you to the grave. It is not violence because you are being overworked and totally undone....Obviously, what I wanted was for him to listen to me. And for him to want to hear what I was existing like.

The most damaging episode of violence took place in the summer of 1987. Jill' account of this incident was that:

> (Peter was) not talking nice to David or criticizing him or something like that and I just came in and ushered him out...I was trying to talk to David but I heard in the back "Oh fucking cunt, bla, bla, bla, bla, bla". I just, I came in and said (to him) "take off your glasses so that you can punch somebody". So, I was the person that was going to throw the first punch. He pushed me away and I hit the chimney and broke a couple of ribs.... That was the biggest because that was the one I got hurt the most.

After the incident Peter reported being angry at Jill and at first refusing to take her to the hospital. He later changed his mind and drove her to the hospital. Once there they told the doctors that Jill fell at home by accident.

Afterwards Peter and Jill decided that the violence had

> even know why she wasn't letting me see the kids, really. So I said, "If I do this, it would look good in the courts". All these other people said that "if the father files the petition first, it looks better in the courts". If we were going to go through the courts, I would have to file a petition to have my kids, all out. They said that "You file for more than you want and the courts shave it back. If the man files first it looks really good". Well anyway, I said "Well let's check myself in you know. Let see if I can set up some kind of counseling". So I went to this place and said "I've been told that I am a violent man. I don't necessarily see it that way but I'd like to do something about it".

In addition to his fear of loosing his children Peter was motivated to seek counseling by his concern over viewing himself as a "violent man". In a phone conversation Jill had told him "You are a physically abusive man. You are a violent man". Peter said he was moved by her comment and began to wonder

> Am I? Has it come to that? Am I an abusive man? So I went and got these eight sessions. I wasn't making much money at the time so I got them real cheap. It was like $10.00 a session. It was really good. Basically, it was just hanging out with this guy and telling him a little of this. He would tell me as much about himself as I would tell him about myself.

After six months of separation Peter and Jill got back together. Jill had asked him if she should consider the relationship over so that she could "process the loss and move on" with her life. This way they began to talk about the possibility of reconciliation. A few days later Peter returned home.

Both Peter and Jill were eager to talk about how their relationship had changed from the time of the violence. The changes, they said "were gradual" and touched different

aspects of their lives. From the very moment Peter stepped foot in the house again the rules of the game had changed. Jill explained:

> I was asking him to do a 180 degree turn on a lot of the ways that we were patterned in our relationship. I mean, I feel like I didn't give it to him spoon by spoon. We didn't sleep together for a long time. We didn't have sex at all for probably two months after he moved back here...We were always very sexually attracted to each other. For a long time that had been the only way we connected. It was like I figured "listen we got that one down. We got to leave that one for a while. We got to try to meet on some other ground because if we are just going to meet in that ground we are not going to meet any further than that".

In terms of the relationship their process of change included both building up trust and confidence in each other to resolve conflict without escalating into violence and revising the balance of power in their relationship. In regard to the first issue, Peter mentioned that Jill "had to re-learn how to say things, to say what she wanted and felt. Each time that she was able to do that and see that I was open to hearing it then the next time was that much easier to go further. I mean it was really building back". "There was a whole process", said Jill,

> "of going slow and saying 'Uh, I don't think that is right. That is not what I meant'. You know just being real gentle with the whole process. I think that we have gotten into a place in our relationship were we were both coming from different sides. We had completely given up on communication".

With regard to revisions in the balance of power Peter said,

> I think that a lot of the problem for me was being threatened by a woman having more power than me and my retaliation was coming out in the physical sense; "I can always be more powerful than you in the physical

> sense". I think that was the underlying reason for the violence.... I thought about that then, but I would never admitted to anybody. I think that I knew that then. I didn't see any way out to sort of balance things. I mean, we definitely needed to find a balance for both of us. Jill doesn't hesitate to say that I am wrong about something. If I just say something to my children and she doesn't like it, then she'll say it right then without even thinking, when may be she should just let it slide. That to me is like, you are taking my power away from just communicating with my children. Even if am not being a rational being with what I am saying, it is stripping more power from me. That is not a way for me to learn that I am not being rational. I'd just rebel against that..... Now, she has balanced it a lot. She lets us work out some of it and then she says something. I am in a place now where I can accept it more although I don't necessarily agree with her all the time.

From Peter's perspective "one of the biggest changes" that enabled him to listen to Jill and not want to be either verbally or physically aggressive with her, was a redefinition of his commitment to Jill and to the family:

> Well, I never really had a grasp, an inside grasp from the heart or from inside, of what commitment was. Somewhere along the line, over the last year or so, I grew into loving the commitment. My commitment to you (Jill) and my family is now a commitment to me also. I never saw it as a two way kind of thing. I always saw it as alright it is something I have to give you. I said before that I was committed to you and the kids, you know, like "Ok, I am the father of this child so I'll see that through...", but feeling a commitment and living a commitment are totally different. And, that is a place where I have definitely got to. That is one of the biggest changes that I can notice.

In addition to the above mentioned changes, Peter and Jill said that it was very important for them to have a group of friends they could talk and "be honest" about their problems without fear of being rejected by them. Friends were particularly important for Jill:

> My friends were people that were not saying, you know, "Dump this guy. He is not being nice to you". The people I hung out with were not that way at all. The people that I looked to for emotional support were not people that wanted us separated.... I am sure that probably each one of them has had a physical violence part of their background, but I just think that these people were not desperate to have it all be over. They weren't desperate to have it neatly packaged away. They were willing to see me through my process and didn't doubt me for a moment.

As much as Peter and Jill were proud of their personal changes and accomplishments in relation to the cessation of violence, they made it clear that changes in the "circumstances" of their lives where also very important. The roof of their bedroom was completed only few months before I interviewed them. Until then, they had slept in the living room. The basic structure of the house and other conveniences were in place so relatives and friends could now visit and have a place to stay. They did not have to walk long distances to get water anymore. Clearly, they did not take lightly the strenuous conditions in which they lived for most of their intimate life. As Jill put it to me,

> The exhaustion factor is something that needs to be looked. I mean, I think that is just something making the bed for future violence. It is just that people get really irrational and emotionally blown out of kilter when you are always, always, always exhausted.

In our last meeting Peter and Jill told me that although they argue more than they would like to, they were convinced that things were manageable and getting better. Moreover, they had decided to get married before the end of

the year "for the symbolism". As Jill so succinctly declared, "I want people to know that we are a family".

CHAPTER 7

THE PROCESS OF CESSATION

One need not subscribe to the idea that the two couples presented above exemplify the cessation of violence to appreciate their struggle to stop the use of violence and to apply their insights to our understanding of how this process takes place. Stopping the violence for these couples was neither a spontaneous occurrence nor a response to a single event. The cessation process they described was hesitant, filled with uncertainty, lack of trust, and clouded with the potential for additional violence.

Before moving ahead with the discussion a caveat must be mentioned. Any discussion of case studies is limited both by the data included in the descriptions and by the conceptual orientation guiding the analysis. I used Fagan's (1989) characterization of the cessation process in abusive relationships as a guide for the organization and analysis of the case studies. As mentioned earlier, Fagan's model for the cessation of violence includes 1. building a resolve or discovering a motivation to stop, 2. discontinuance of violence, and 3. maintenance of new behaviors and integration into social network. Adopting such a model, meant that potentially important aspects of the cessation process such as epistemological and psychodynamic issues were not emphasized. I also refrained from elaborated discussions of the changes in the lives of the women.

With that cautionary note as background, let us look at the circumstances leading Peter and Joe to the decision to cease the violence. The motivation for Joe to stop the use of violence arose in the context of circumstances which increased the personal cost of the violence. As he grew older he became a successful business man. On his own account, the violence and his wife's drug problem became personally demeaning and humiliating for him. The humiliation expressed by Joe, points, in part, to his perception that public disclosure of violence was detrimental to his acceptance and identity in a social network comprised primarily of fellow business people and clients rather than motorcycle gang members and other players on the bar scene. Another important catalyst for Joe's decision to cease the violence was his perception that the violence was ineffective in altering his wife's behavior. Moreover, the use of violence was having undesired effects for him since it was driving her deeper into the addiction and depression. It was in this context, that he decided "she needed help" and not to be beaten.

Peter decided to cease the violence after he was out of the home and under the perception that reconciliation was not an option as long as he was violent. For him the motivation to cease the violence arose, in part, out of the fear for the loss of his children and also in part out his desire to reconstitute an image of himself as a "nonviolent guy".

For both Peter and Joe, maintaining the resolve to cease the violence relied, in part, on the neutralization of the rewarding effects of using violence. For many years Joe's use of violence helped him not only maintain dominance in the relationship, but also preserve a stereotypical image of a dominant male congruent with the values of those in the subculture of violence of which he was a part. In moving away from old friends and relatives, he not only changed a slower paced country life for a city life, but he also removed himself from a social network which for many years condoned his used of violence. In this context, one can sympathize with his statement that moving away was "the best decision" of his life. In the new town he spent most of his time with Liz. When he associated with people it was in the context of his business or in the town finance committee. Although we did not discuss the acceptance of violence in this new social network, it would seem safe to assume that neither violence nor a dominant male stereotype were emphasized in the new social network. To be sure, integration into this social network further increased the cost of violence for Joe.

In the case of Peter and Jill, his involvement in counseling was important to strengthen his resolve to cease the violence. An active and supportive network of people who believed in their commitment to the relationship and in their capacity to have a nonviolent relationship was also

important. In addition, I suspect that the planned separation of sexual relations from their interpersonal conflicts served to neutralize some possible sources of gratification for his use of violence. For Peter, the use of violence signaled the temporary end of hostility in the relationship and the beginning of "a building down" period in which sexual intimacy was an important part. On their own account, even during the "worst period" they always felt connected through sexual intercourse. I would like to suggest that this sense of connectedness served to lessen Peter's remorse for the use of violence and the fear of losing her and the children. Thus, the no sex policy not only kept the focus of the reconciliation on the issues that needed work, but also helped interrupt the cycle of violence and maintain Peter's resolve to cease the use of violence.

For couples who have been involved in patterns of wife abuse and who are resolved to cease the violence, integration into a nonviolent social network and neutralization of forces that promote the use of violence may not be sufficient to maintain a nonviolent relationship. These couples must also develop appropriate skills and strategies of conflict resolution (Fagan, 1989).

Both couples presented above were struggling with developing appropriate ways to resolve their conflicts. Peter and Jill reported spending time talking about their differences in a "gentle" way without the "urgency" that

characterized their past interactions. They also reported relying on "humor" as a way to break the impasses in their discussions when those arose. Joe and Liz preferred to avoid conflicts. Although they professed a desire to "communicate better" and discuss their problems, they were not at all confident in their capacity to do so. Couple's therapy had become a safe ground for discussing their problems, a training ground for them to develop competency, and a supportive context to strengthen their confidence.

Although these two couples have common elements in the cessation process, they are qualitatively different with respect to the most important aspect on Fagan's model, the revision in the balance of power in their relationships. Although Joe expressed a desire for their relationship to be more balanced than in the past, he remained in control of all the significant decisions in the house and continued to exert dominant power in punitive ways to deal with marital problems. He changed from wanting Liz to do what he wanted her to do, to wanting her to do the "right thing. To do like I do". In the context of this couple's history of violence and male domination this is not a small change. From the perspective of an observer, however, it would be naive not to acknowledge the potential inadequacy of Joe's new orientation to the relationship as a deterrent to the occurrence of future violence. Although Joe no longer believes in punishing his wife for not doing what he wants

her to do, he believes it is correct to punish her for her wrongdoings. Moreover, he continues to define the right way of living for his wife in reference, primarily, to the satisfaction of his needs rather than her needs. He learned that violence was not useful in correcting her addiction and stopped it. Yet, he has not given up the idea that the use of violence could serve to correct other behaviors he may perceive as wrong doings on her part.

In the relationship between Peter and Jill the power dynamics were different from those presented above. She owned the house where they lived; she had completed a college degree and he had not; she had a job while he was unemployed; and, she was seven years older than he. From a mechanical view of power, we could say that the power in the relationship was tipped in her favor. When I met Peter, he had become cognizant of this power differential and believed that violence had been a way, albeit inappropriate, for him to assert his power. The cessation process in their relationship included revisions in their management of conflict with the children which ameliorated his perception that she was taking his "power away from just communicating with my children". During this time Peter also returned to college to complete his bachelor's degree. I believe that both of these events signaled potential revisions in the balance of power in their relationship.

Assuming, as Fagan does, that significant revisions in the balance of power are necessary to maintain the cessation of violence, the above cases raise the following questions: first, What kind of revisions of power are to be considered significant for the cessation process to occur? Second, how do we account for the cessation of violence in the absence of apparent revisions in the balance of power? Perhaps the most important question arising from this discussion is how do we define the cessation of violence?

At the conclusion of this section we are left with more questions than answers. If the two case studies presented above are in any way representative of the cessation process, then we should acknowledge not only the complexity of the process, which by now should be obvious, but the possibility that cessation may be realized in multiple ways. That is, of course, an issue of empirical and theoretical import for future research to address.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUDING REMARKS

When we began this study we adopted a rather simple definition of cessation. In straight forward behavioral terms, we talked about cessation as the absence of physical violence against women in relationships with previous histories of wife abuse. That definition was sufficient to identify men in the panel survey data who had stopped the use violence. It was also helpful in identifying an appropriate comparison group of men who did not stop the use of violence; these men were the so called persistent wife abusers.

The above mentioned definition of cessation was first challenged when we identified other men who seem to engage in violent acts in some years but not in others. Uncertain about whether or not these men should be considered violent men, or men on their way to cease the violence, we excluded them from further analyses. In doing so, we refined our definition of cessation to include only those men who had ceased the violence for two years. Now, if we had had a fourth year of data collection and found that some of the men that ceased for two years reported violence in the fourth year, would we have included these men in the cessation group or would we have refined the definition of cessation to include only those men who ceased the violence for three years? Clearly there is something unsatisfying about a definition of cessation that is so dependent on how much data there is at the researcher's disposal.

Now, perhaps the most clear evidence for the need of a more elaborate definition of cessation came not from the panel data but from the case studies. The lives of these couples illustrated a point often made by feminist and other socially minded researchers, that wife abuse goes far beyond the use of physical violence and includes complex emotional issues and power dynamics. Moreover, at least one of the case studies showed that the use of physical violence can stop in a context of coercive male domination and fear. Although at the beginning of the study we could afford to exclude emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and intimidation from the exploration of the cessation process, at this point, it would be not only naive, but also inappropriate to suggest that the cessation of violence could be understood without careful consideration of these issues.

In accord with Fagan's (1989) work, this study suggests that the cessation process is a gradual process influenced by contextual factors reinforcing normative pressure against the use of violence, and also influenced by the neutralization of unwanted sources of support for the use of violence. The study suggests that contextual factors such as financial hardship, increased number of children at home, increased levels of marital conflict, and inadequate conflict resolution skills are adversely related to the cessation process. On the other hand, aid for the cessation process came from the couple's commitment to the

relationship, their immersion into a social network that supports non-violence (including human service providers), and their development of alternative ways of resolving conflict.

These findings have both practical and theoretical implications. With regard to the practical implications, we need to continue supporting the creation of treatment facilities for violent men. Talking alone is not sufficient to cease the violence. A more systemic approach to this problem is needed (Goldner, Penn, Sheinberg, & Walker, 1990) where men are encouraged to immerse themselves in social contexts that disavow the use of violence and offer them alternative ways of validating their view of themselves and their social identity (Stordeur & Stille, 1989). Eventually, it may even be useful for some of these men to get involved in organized efforts to stop wife abuse (Goldolf, 1987). Human service providers need to be informed of the possible characteristics of the cessation process and the active role they can play in supporting a man's decision to cease the violence and promoting the cessation process. In addition, this study suggests that the use of violence at home among parents and from parents to children appears to interfere with the cessation process in adult life. Information must continue to be made available for parents to know not only about the negative short term effects of their use of violence but also about

the ways in which their violence will continue to affect their children's lives for years to come.

With regard to theoretical implications, this study suggests that eventually a theory of cessation should include different mechanisms by which the cessation process could be realized. More complex understandings of power dynamics than the male dominant power model need to be advanced. As an appropriate theory of change, such a theory needs to address the role of social factors, developmental issues, morality, and psychological issues on the cessation of violence.

We are, of course, at the beginning stages of research on the cessation of violence. Additional research is needed to evaluate with confidence the findings presented here. First, we need to know more about the motivations and considerations of men to stop using physical violence against their female partners. We need to know about the conditions that promoted this considerations. Second, we have to learn about how couples manage the consequences of the use of violence (i.e., lack of trust, lack of self confidence, anger, resentment) during the cessation process. In this context, we need to learn about the psychological changes and changes in morality that may be associated with the cessation of wife abuse. Third, we also need to explore the differences in the cessation process among couples with histories of severe violence and couples with histories of minor forms of physical violence.

In addition to the research mentioned above, it would be instructive to compare men involved in recurrent patterns of wife abuse with men with more prolonged histories of cessation on risk factors for wife abuse and on the characteristics of their relationships. These comparisons could help us advance our understanding of factors that may deter the impetus to eliminate the use of violence and factors that promote the change. Eventually, we must also study the relationship between the cessation of physical violence and other aspects of the victimization of women such as sexual and emotional abuse.

As a final remark, I would say that precisely because we are at the beginning stages of research on the cessation of violence we ought to give a great deal of consideration to how we define this process. Research on the cessation of violence is of potential interest to different players on the political arena of marital violence. In the absence of carefully thought out definitions of cessation, research, which could otherwise be of much help to eliminate the occurrence of violence in intimate relationships, is apt to become the focus of ideological speculation.

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