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UNDERSTANDING THE PERFORMANCE:
LEARNING IDENTITY AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A Thesis in

Adult Education

by

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Abstract

This interpretive ethnography sought to understand identity as a learning process in the context of domestic violence survivors. It took a feminist perspective and a social justice orientation within Adult Education. Identity was defined according to a contextualized interplay of dynamic senses of self and social, where learning drives changes and gives them direction. Learning was conceptualized using Vygotsky and power via the work of Habermas. A second essential element of the theoretical framework was transformation theory as written by Jack Mezirow. Transformation theory and learning identity were used in parallel lines of analysis.

There were three participants in the study, including the researcher. Data collection was done primarily through dialogic interviews, informal interviews, observations, and documents. The data were analyzed in several stages using a writing method. The stages were creating a standalone narrative for each participant; analysis within narratives that included thoughts, observations, and literature; reading each narrative for points of identity shift; and reading the narrative whole for similarities, differences, and relationships to social discourses.

I found that batterers marginalize victims within their identity processes. Victims used several means to gain power that included escalating confrontations; tapping into external identities and discourses; and empowerment through daily struggle after leaving their batterers. I found that each participant maintained a strong value or belief during the battering relationship, although that value represented a site of struggle.

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No study like this is possible without participants. There is much I could say, but probably not much that I should say here and now. You are strong, intelligent women. It is my privilege to know you, and I am honored that you chose to participate. Hopefully, all of us have learned and grown... I can never thank you enough.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to

Amanda, a daughter of my spirit

and Jessica, my niece.

Both are special young women who have already and continue to face severe challenges

yet have sufficient support, determination, and strength of mind and spirit

to persevere, thrive, and blossom.

I love you and am proud of you always.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Coming to the Problem

Two short stories.

In Fall 2002 I saw a play entitled “Inside (Outside) The Box.” The play is based on the work of Irene Baird, an adult educator who conducts a ten-week reading/writing program for incarcerated women within the Pennsylvania prison system. In the play they read literature written by women like Maya Angelou, Nikki Giovanni, bell hooks, and Iyanla Vanzant. The women write prose, poetry, and letters; they draw; talk; and think about themselves and their stories. Some inmates enroll multiple times.

The play is based on the lives of four inmates. The performance has several elements, including dialogue in which the women tell parts of their stories, slides of their artwork, reading of letters, and other forms of personal narrative. Following the play, Irene and others formed a panel for discussion of the play and Irene’s work. At least a dozen women who participated in the program were present. Nearly all added portions of their narratives in a powerful, spontaneous extra act to the play.

My interpretation is that the women have, at the beginning of the program, little or no idea of who they are. The thinking, writing, and talking provide the beginnings of a history. More importantly, it is a history with a potential for new understandings and articulation what it means to be a thief, drug addict, violent, a victim of violence, or prostitute; articulating those positions in a way that understands and communicates beyond social stereotypes. In writing this history, however fragmented, the authors begin to construct a protagonist in the story - a self, a subject that is not all bad, not completely a victim, but is in fact a human within society.

Creating that subjectivity gives the women a ground to stand on, something by which to understand not only who and where they are now, but where they might go and what they might be. It gives them a location, a position to work from in attempting to do it. The play left a deep impression, and it touched me in a very personal way. In about an hour and a half, I learned about a program dedicated to the very problem I had been working on for almost an entire year – since the day I ended my violent marriage.

For me, domestic violence was a loud silence. I didn't talk about it. I didn't write about it. I only thought about it when I saw it coming and when I was hurting afterward. I began to see a therapist, an intelligent woman who did a brutal, wonderful thing: She made me tell her, in detail, about the physical altercations that took place. Reluctantly I told her about livid bruises all down the right side of my body from slamming into a wall; of being held by the neck against a plaster-and-lath wall and strangled, certain I would die at the moment his free hand was fisted and cocked back to smash my face into that unyielding surface. I told her about feeling, hearing, my hair get ripped out by the roots and vicious, detailed threats about how he'd ruin my life if I ever told anyone. Assigning words in order to communicate the sequence of events to another person, even in confidence, made it real and horrific in a material way. My therapist, some time later, mentioned in passing "the time you cried..." and it startled me. I thought that I cried every time I spoke to her.

I carried the memory of the words I used to tell the story the last time he hurt me. The last time, he hit me in the face for the first time. It was only a light slap; I still remember the sound and the feel of it, the way my head moved. It didn't even hurt, really. Of course, getting a light slap in the face is a lot less noticeable when you feel like

you've just been scalped and then what remained after the scalping was set on fire. That slap, however, seemed like a harbinger of things to come. He was getting more comfortable hurting me, he was hitting me in new ways.

I thought about it for a week. That slap, the power of the stories I was forced to tell, and a few other things combined to give me the courage to face that overwhelming, paralyzing silence. I went out, grabbed two people that I trusted, sat them down and told them about my problem. It wasn't a secret anymore. I was able, was forced, to do something about it, and I did so the very next night. To clarify: I didn't just "do something," I set myself up in such a way that I had to do something, was forced to act.

After the police were gone, and my husband was gone, and the children were back in bed, I locked the door (the police had taken his keys). I put bells on the doorknob, a chair in front of the door, and stacked things on the chair that would make loud noises if someone tried to force the door. Then I took the phone upstairs; I spent the remainder of the night with every muscle tense, the phone clutched to my chest, ears straining for sounds. I did not sleep.

Situating myself in social discourses.

At one point, soon after exiting the violent marriage, I had an experience that proved to be pivotal in my understanding of myself and my situation. It allowed me to understand both in terms other than personal ones. The experience has to do with the heterosexual norm of an "attractive" woman in "mainstream" U.S. culture.

I was newly out of the violent marriage, at best of average physical appearance, overweight, with lots of emotional baggage. I had many responsibilities – concern for my young children, household management, and a demanding educational schedule primary

among them – that really precluded a social life. I had neither the time nor the inclination for “going out” or dating. I was friendly, thoughtful and cheerful at school, though, and in general. I was affectionate, could be fun, related well to many people, and was quite sensitive to the thoughts and feelings of others. While those are nice things, they are not uncommon and certainly not what I would have considered the most important things about me. I had to conclude (if somewhat ruefully) that between my looks and my baggage I should have been unattractive or perhaps even repellent to many men.

And yet, that was not the case. Almost immediately men began expressing interest in “friendship” or “relationship.” Puzzled, I began to reminisce, thinking not only about the present, but also back through the years. The men I can remember having attracted are of an impressive variety of ages, races, nationalities, abilities, and religions. I could discern no pattern except that the same lack of pattern was occurring after my separation. So that was no help, either. I could not understand it, though I wanted to. At that point I did not want to attract men.

So I began to look outward for reasons, beyond my personal attributes at discourses of the attractive woman. Besides youth and physical beauty, there are many powerful, less visible but pervasive aspects of what constitutes an “attractive” woman in mainstream US culture. A strongly, perennially attractive woman in this society will have a particular value set and certain character traits. Under values, for example, she will have a strong sense of responsibility and well-developed ethic of care for family. Under character traits, she might be cheerful, thoughtful, cooperative, helpful, and generous. Perhaps she will have elegance and grace. Add to that that single women, no matter their desire or proclivities, are considered “available” and therefore are always on display like

goods on a grocery shelf. It is possible, as I do, to have a very powerful combination of those traits and values. In fact, I found that my “self” sometimes disappeared entirely for suitors, as my socially visible persona apparently eclipsed potentially problematic traits or values that are more difficult to discern and evaluate.

The main point of this example is that we can only understand the individual situation in terms of the larger social discourses on what constitutes “attractive.” I learned to be “attractive” according to social norms and therefore we cannot understand the phenomenon if we talk about it solely in terms of my personal traits. Using ideological discourses, a person can see and understand herself through two sets of lenses which provide an odd sort of double vision. As in the example, one is the experiential self with specific behaviors, memories, etc.; the other is her discursively constructed subjectivity. Seeing myself as a discursively constructed subject, however, requires articulation of at least some social discourses. In a way, one could say that I discovered society and social discourses because of domestic violence.

When I saw myself working within and as a product of social discourses, things changed radically for me. I understood domestic violence differently – any single person’s sole personal responsibility for the situation at hand became moot, and social responsibility became a new point of concern.

“Recovery” and the discourses of Battered Woman Disease.

After exiting my abusive marriage, I engaged in an amazing process. I’ve written voluminously, including both scholarly and personal writings. I’ve talked to people. I’ve paid attention to what’s going on around me. I’ve read, critiqued, reflected. I’ve coped, feared, managed, healed, figured, cowered, triumphed, failed, planned, squeaked by.

Some of the things I learned, some of the events that impacted me most, have helped shape what I want to study.

“Battered Woman Disease” is the name I’ve given to a social phenomenon I encountered. In Battered Woman Disease, domestic violence is framed as an illness and assigned to specific individuals and couples, who must then work toward “recovery.” Domestic violence is considered deviant, particular behavior, and in assigning the disease to a battered woman, she is re-victimized (in this respect the batterer is victimized as well). Battered Woman Disease (BWD) neatly hides the role social structures and norms play in condoning or fomenting domestic violence. Making domestic violence an individual disease allows us to think of it as an aberrant occurrence that happens to other people, and therefore isolates it. Assignment and enforcement of the discourses of Battered Woman Disease allow “Us” to feel safe and normal. It allows “Us” to feel pity for “Them,” the abnormal and different, while simultaneously foreclosing the possibility for any sense of social responsibility.

To better understand BWD as a function of discourses, it is necessary to discuss recovery. The word “recovery” is often used in describing the period following a woman’s exit from a domestic violence situation. It is my contention, however, that “recovery” posits a particular portrayal of the problem. The discourse of recovery in BWD assumes several things which need to be examined. First, it assumes a prior state from which one has departed. Second, it assumes that the prior state is a desirable one, and third that a victim should be/is making an effort to return as nearly as possible to that state. That state, for the purposes of this discussion, is called “normal.”

Making a distinction between “domestic violence” and “damages incurred through domestic violence” allows for closer examination of the recovery discourse. There are very real damages sustained, both physical and psychological, through living in a domestic violence situation. A victim does indeed have to heal, to recover, from those damages. This is not to say that one is recovering from domestic violence.

The idea of recovering from domestic violence is a different phenomenon entirely. I realized, to my dismay, that upon going public with my domestic violence problem, I’d caught Battered Woman Disease. It didn’t just come from my husband. In fact, it didn’t even mostly come from my husband. It came from the people who didn’t want to babysit for me, the members of my family who thought I should reconcile until they found out my son had been physically hurt, from people who think it’s okay for a husband to beat or throw out a wife who doesn’t “behave,” the social workers at the County Assistance Office who treated me dreadfully when I sought financial help, and from the many well-meaning people who wanted to pity me without understanding the problem.

Battered Woman Disease has very little to do with me personally. People seemed to want to see me in such a way that I was different from themselves. They did not want to see my (abnormal) story in their own lives, or in what they viewed as normal society. Some questions/statements I encountered demonstrate this: “How could you have married such a horrible person?” (implication: the batterer is a wholly terrible person, not mixed good and bad like “normal” people); “You really shouldn’t date until you learn how to choose a man” (implication: the man I married was different than other men, my personal choices were defective; neither was “normal”); “I don’t understand how he could be like

that – I always thought he was such a nice guy” (implication: not only was he was a wholly horrible person, but the scoundrel wore a mask of deliberate deceit to fool “normal” people like the speaker).

When one has Battered Woman Disease, one is ill and needs to be treated. Therapy, abstinence from romantic relationships, perhaps antidepressants are suitable medication. Family and friends, focusing on “the important things in life,” and “learning to be strong” are in order. One tells her story for a while to sympathetic, yet fascinated listeners. They desire “healing” for the battered woman, for her to be able to return to “normal” and so help by providing advice, a listening ear, a friendly spirit, until she is ready and able to “move on.” The idea of recovery as related to Battered Woman Disease, then, is the return to a state of perceived normalcy. From the perspective of a battered woman, the upshot of Battered Woman Disease is a new (and powerful) external imposition on identity: an overtly social one that is subtle and difficult to resist.

Rationale and Purpose

My personal experience and research suggest an inadequate understanding of domestic violence as a phenomenon created by and lived in the everyday lives of people in North American society. Accompanying ignorance (or denial) there seems to be a shunning of responsibility by the general public for both the existence and abolition of domestic violence. As I wrote in the previous pages, these conditions enable domestic violence and its related problems to continue largely unchallenged -- “challenge” being the idea that domestic violence is a pervasive social flaw that we as a society seem to be unwilling and/or unable to identify and grapple with in any systematic way.

As a researcher, I align myself with those who posit domestic violence as a normative social phenomenon with effects that appear in social discourse and individual lives (e.g., Mani, 1998; Schechter, 1982). As a survivor, my view on domestic violence is the view of an insider. I've attempted in this work to offer readers a scholarly view on domestic violence from the inside out. The device with which I do this is identity – looking at identity in women going into, during, and after a heterosexual, domestically violent marriage. Using identity as an organizing concept, I explore relationships between individuals (via personal narratives) and social (via discourses) of domestic violence. Doing this exploration in terms of identity emphasizes that behaviors and beliefs conducive to the perpetuation of domestic violence are learned, and that domestic violence can be examined as a social construction created by and contributing to our identities.

One might reasonably ask what all this has to do with adult education as a profession and a field of study. From the 1950s and 1960s to the present, the practice of American adult education has become increasingly professionalized (Welton, 1995). We have tried hard to figure out who we are, what qualifies as “adult education” and what doesn't. Guidebooks and histories were written. We seem, however, to have an identity crisis not too dissimilar from the dilemma faced by feminists in a lengthy struggle with the notion of “women” and what that means (Riley, 1988). We found, like feminists, that there is no single definition of adult education, no single purpose or unified perspective, and it is therefore difficult to draw a boundary.

Our recent histories reference universities and adult education programs, publications, formal evaluation, credentialing and concern over continuing professional

education. Today we have entire subfields dedicated to workforce education and human resource development, which tend to revolve around the continual updating of skills in a world that is sucked up into a veritable cyclone of change (Spear & Mocker, 1989). One tendril of adult education that has strong roots but is somewhat marginalized in the histories is the tradition of adult education for democratic social action (Welton, 1995; Schied, 1993). Much of this tradition was located in the work of Lindemann, Horton, and more generally in civil rights and worker's movements. While the women's movements are not generally addressed in the adult education literature, their work in education for social action is also significant. Welton, using the works of both Schied (1993) and Rockhill (1985), argues that the professional field was constructed in the 1950s and 1960s to silence the progressive left. That effort was not completely successful, as we have, in name at least, a strong progressive cadre present at such gatherings as the Adult Education Research Conference (AERC). I think it is arguable that much of the language of the progressive left has been revived, co-opted, and tamed to serve those same professional interests, but that's an argument best left for another day.

Welton cites the work of communitarians who tell us that all institutions are educative, and that the learning of the individual is inextricably linked to institutional (systemic) contexts: "Institutions, as patterns of social activity and clusters of roles, form individuals and shape character by enabling or constraining possible courses of action, and ways of interacting with others... The new, or emergent social learning paradigm, would construct the boundary of the field as wide as society itself, and would include everything that forms the outlook, character, and actions of communicative agents in space and time. All of society is a vast school" (p. 133-134). Michael Newman (1993,

1994, 1999) is a fine example of a scholar who writes in the tradition that Welton envisions. Newman writes about the interplay of relationships between learners, learning, education, and social context in unpretentious and insightful ways. He writes stories in which concepts are implanted, contextualizing them, and then addresses the embedded ideas in a much more explicitly theoretical fashion.

It is my intention to locate this work specifically in the tradition of adult educators like Welton and Newman who are bent on fostering democratic social action, who wish to define the field of adult education with breadth and fluidity. Violence against women is a social issue that has been around for millennia, a fact that is so obvious and so distressing that nearly every article or book I've read about domestic violence points it out immediately. It is as significant a problem today as it was a hundred, two hundred, or five hundred years ago, yet somehow the vast efforts in adult education that take place in the domestic violence movement over as short a time span as the last twenty years have not come to the attention of academic adult educators in any significant way.

This study is an exploration, a preliminary investigation that is intended to flesh out some ideas about learning. There are complex relationships that exist between learners, learning and education in any context. The word "educate" has multiple definitions, mostly begun with verbs such as develop, provide, stimulate, refine, guide, cultivate, strengthen, form, instruct, regulate and discipline (Dictionary.com, 2003). If this list is in any way accurate, "educate" is a transitive verb – that is, an educator is deliberately acting on learners in some way (Baptiste, 2001) and therefore should undertake her activities with the greatest care. If I am to practice my chosen profession responsibly in an area as serious as domestic violence, I must first attempt to understand,

in context, relationships between learners and the learning that I wish to take place. Only then can I have some confidence about which phenomena I am planning to act upon, what I would like to do with the phenomena, and how I would like to do so with various educational interventions.

The purpose of the study is to understand identity as a learning process, specifically in the context of domestic violence survivors. I take learning and education seriously, which inevitably shaped my experience of domestic violence. The domestic violence context was chosen for my experience and understanding of learning identity that emerged in a fledgling form from that experience. It was also chosen as an area of social interest that is woefully neglected in academic adult education circles. Both areas were chosen because I have a passion for them – I learned some important things personally from my experiences as an adult educator and a survivor of domestic violence. I wanted to articulate that learning, clarify it if I could, then see if it could be made useful to other survivors and to my chosen field.

Organization of the Study

In chapter 2, I outline the research methods for the study. Chapter 3 includes the theoretical framework, which was written in several parts. One of those is a section on definitions for violence and battering. A second is an identity construct that I use in conjunction with Mezirow's transformation theory for data analysis, which is addressed in the section following. Chapter 4 is by far the longest chapter in the study. It contains three main sections as I outlined in the data analysis section – Background & History, Battering, and Aftermath. Each study participant has a narrative portion within the section. Within the chapter are found comments and discussions of the literature which I

used to shed light on particular points in a narrative section. At the end of each section is a short discussion on identity shifts that I saw through that portion of narrative. Chapter 5 represents the final major section of the study. The first part of this chapter is comprised of a bringing together of the identity construct and narratives for discussion in a detailed analysis and address of the research questions. The final chapter contains reflections, comments, limitations, implications for practice, and addresses future research.

Chapter 2: Methods

Each of the research questions contained in the next section address some aspect of the study's purpose. The following sections of this chapter outline my research questions and methods.

Research Questions

☞ *What representations do women survivors offer of their domestic violence experiences?*

“Domestic violence experiences” included time lived with battering and after the victim left. I wanted to reconstruct stories of participants' experiences with domestic violence. It was not what “really happened” in an objective sense that was important; what was important was participants' perceptions of what happened, the memories and observations and feelings that help shape our learning and shifts in identity. My job as researcher was to help mold the tales into a form that allowed for reading them against cultural discourses of domestic violence and one that was relatively consistent so the tales could also be placed in dialogue with one another.

Each participant was interviewed three times, and each recorded session lasted two hours (Riessman, 1993). I collected other original narratives as well, including journals, fiction, and email records of participants. Afterward, I negotiated a narrative with each participant. Specific negotiations are described at the beginning of each participant's narrative in Ch. 4.

☞ *What is the process by which participants reshaped identity as domestic violence survivors?*

With this question I was trying to understand and describe how women changed the way they lived identity as survivors rather than ongoing victims of domestic violence. I worked on the assumption that changes would take place if a woman were to successfully leave a violent marriage, stay out of it, and not enter another one. An identity framework (described in Ch. 3) provided a means to relate and examine personal narratives and cultural discourses of domestic violence. I placed the tracing of identity shifts for each participant at the end of each major section of narrative (Background & History, Battering, and Aftermath).

How do the representations of participants relate to cultural discourses of domestic violence, as seen through a lens of learning identity?

One of the tasks of this study was social critique. It was important, therefore, to go beyond simple analysis and reporting. In keeping with the interpretive ethnographic method, a story needed to be told in order to reach the readers, to engage and provoke a reading of themselves. With the third research question, then, I showed linkages, as well as some of the contradictions and tensions, in the relationships between battered women and society regarding domestic violence. Much of this is written within the narrative texts, using my voice-as-researcher in italics.

Research Method: Interpretive Ethnography

When developing this project, it became clear that I needed to examine the individual and social together. It is not possible to act on one and not the other (Cunningham, 1993). I decided to use the work of Norman Denzin (1997, p. xv), who describes interpretive ethnography as the study of culture – a creative, complex, emergent process – from the perspective of the interacting individual. The researcher interrogates

moments or periods of interaction in attempting to understand how and in what ways the self and others are mutually constructed, as well as working to understand how people construct and live meaning in daily life. It is important to recognize that in this type of study, culture is seen as located in people rather than people located in a culture. Culture is located in a variety of different spaces, not necessarily dominated by physical places, and so some of the techniques for data collection and analysis were different from more traditional ethnographic methods. For example, ethnographic fieldwork – observation of a living culture in real-time – was not a major feature in this study.

As Denzin (1999, p. 510) says, “An interpretive ethnography...is one that is simultaneously minimal, existential, autoethnographic, vulnerable, performative, and critical.” Interpretive ethnography is autoethnographic in that it begins with the researcher, going beyond acknowledgment of the researcher’s existence to her visibility and inclusion. According to Ellis & Bochner (2000), autoethnography uses personal narrative to connect the personal with the cultural; an author functions as both academic and personal self in telling and attempting to understand experiences (p. 740). “These narratives begin with the sting of personal memory, epiphanies, and existential crises in the person’s biography. The writer moves from these moments into critical readings of those personal, community, popular, and expert systems of discourse, which offer interpretations of such experiences” (p. 514). They are intended to offer lessons, encourage compassion, promote dialogue, and advance understanding rather than arrive at particular inevitable or non-debatable conclusions. Ellis and Bochner note: “The crucial issues are what narratives do, what consequences they have, to what uses they can be put” (p. 748).

Introduction to the Study Participants

Typically one can have depth or breadth when engaged in qualitative research, but without extraordinary resources one cannot have both (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 118). The focus for this study is depth. I selected three participants, of which I was one. The other two women were survivors of domestic violence that I knew, and who knew that I went through a similar experience. There was a significant degree of understanding and trust (Fontana & Frey, 2000) that pre-dated the study. Having three participants resulted in sufficient narrative data to yield constructive dialogue while keeping the quantity of data limited enough for me to become intimately familiar with meanings, themes, and details of each person's story, and with each person herself.

The decision to participate was a difficult one, and both participants considered for several weeks whether or not to participate, as well as how honest they would be. Participation in the study also required a significant investment of time and energy – a serious consideration, as all three have demanding schedules and lead busy lives. Battering is a traumatic event in a person's life; engaging in depth with the experiences, even years later, can be difficult. Participants had to consider whether re-engaging traumatic memories and feelings was a worthwhile endeavor. Both women thought that the study was worthwhile and that it might be helpful to them personally. I was sure that I could work well with each of them.

I was very concerned about the participants becoming overwhelmed or harmed in some way by our interviews and discussions. My solution was time. I was counting on time to be a mitigating factor even though I couldn't be absolutely certain about the effects of participation, owing to differences in types and durations of battering, and

differences between us as people. If all of us were out of the battering relationship for a long enough time span, I reasoned, time might serve as a solid enough buffer to insulate participants from emotional and psychological damage. Maryann has been out of a violent relationship for about 15 years, Wanda for eight, and I, whose experience is by far the most recent, for three. None of us was in a serious relationship or married at the time that the study began.

We experienced different types and durations of battering that ranged from psychological to sexual. The severity ranged widely also, although there were common touchpoints between us. We had very different socioeconomic backgrounds. Maryann was upper-middle class growing up, Wanda was working class, and I grew up in the military. One of us is Christian, one was raised Christian but now follows the ways of Buddhism, at least philosophically, and one of us does not follow any particular spiritual tradition. Racially we are homogenous Caucasians.

Data collection.

Following Rossman & Rallis (1998), I used interviews as the main data collection technique. Pertinent information included participants' thoughts, beliefs, and subjective views. Dialogic interviews, conversational narratives in which "researcher and participant together develop a more complex understanding of the topic," (p. 125) were the interview type that formed the bulk of our interactions. Informal interviews and observations, that is, chance meeting and casual conversations, were also a significant data source. I kept field notes for each interaction in a notebook, in addition to reflections on the data and dissertation process.

Coffey & Atkinson (1996, p. 75-76) note that interview transcripts are not the only sources of narrative data, and that everyday life is full of stories. For this study the addition of personal narratives was desirable and possible. Each of the participants had done some writing, including journals, letters, and fiction.

The interviews were conducted in three stages over three weeks. My intention was to conduct the interviews as follows: First was to be general interview(s). That is, I wanted each participant to tell her story. This was not to be an exploratory stage, but rather a way to get an approximate timeline, layout and understanding of events. At this time I also planned to gather contextual information – demographics, education, etc. In the second stage, I planned to query the story, asking for details and other potential sources of narrative such as journals, letters, music, social group memberships, etc. The third stage was to involve identification and discussion of emergent themes, processes women used in coping with domestic violence and its aftermath, and the learning that took place. It was also to be a time to go back for details to clarify and illuminate themes, processes, points, and stories.

Our interviews didn't follow the plan precisely. The first interview was indeed focused in a fairly straightforward manner on the participant's background and some of the violence. This did work well both informationally and as a way to ease into more difficult subject areas such as the battering. The second interview picked up as a continuation of the first, moving into violence and its immediate aftermath, while the third one dealt more with fallout, long-term effects, and the participant's present state of being.

Even though the interviews were not formally structured, there was a logic to them and certain subject areas were targeted and probed (Arskey & Knight, 1999; Fontana & Frey, 2000). The background portion of the interviews addressed, broadly, a participant's upbringing. This helped contextualize the narratives of battering and post-battering, and gave an identity-sketch prior to entry into the battering relationship. Probing included (but was not limited to) inquiries about social class, education, religion, geography, jobs of parents, and ways of being treated as children and young people.

The second epoch we focused on was the period of battering. This spanned parts of the first and second interviews with each participant. We spoke in some detail regarding the forms that violence against her took and how they affected her as a human being. Also, if there were officials, official offices, service agencies, or medical personnel involved at different points, I probed for details of those interactions. Family members' and friends' knowledge of the relationship were also probed, along with their actions and reactions.

A third focus was identity in the period immediately after leaving the battering relationship (the final time, if there was more than one). We discussed change, the intersection between the individual and larger social entities, critical events and their handling, struggles with feelings, and how she managed finances. This generally moved us to a final area, identity in the present moment. All participants were past a "critical" stage, post-battering, when we struggled with major personal and life issues. As such, sufficient time and events had taken place so we had time to reflect, to work through those issues, and to have a better sense of who we were after leaving our situations. This part was less a chronological focal point than a gleaning of commentary and comparison

made by the women during interviews. It tended to be reflective and was not limited to one interview or subject area.

My personal data were collected from a variety of sources. The two main ones were personal journals, letters, and email correspondence written during the period when I was leaving my situation and the first year afterward. However, the data did not cover all of the areas mentioned above (I didn't spend time in my journals outlining my background as a child, for example) and I employed two other methods for personal data collection. One was writing it out (autoethnographic, memoir, autobiography) and another, less extensively used, was interactive interviewing (Ellis, Kiesinger, and Tillman-Healy, 1997) and notes taken as I interacted with other participants. I frequently found that our conversations would spawn personal reflections.

Data Analysis

As Richardson (2000b, p. 923) notes, a significant part of one's analytical ability lies in writing. Writing is inquiry. She notes that writing is creative, an ongoing exploration of constructions of world, self and others. That is, writing is about telling, but it is also a way of knowing. As we compose and edit, writing is construction and reconstruction of meaning. It is not "accurate" or complete. For this study, Richardson's point is particularly notable. I am a prolific writer who uses that practice as one of my principal methods for making sense of the world. At each stage of the writing process, a certain aspect of data analysis took place.

Analysis of my data happened in several stages. The first one was to put together a stand alone narrative for each participant. (The process of negotiating the narratives is explained at the beginning of each participant's story). This is not uncommon; Coffey &

Atkinson (1996) write of personal history as a retelling of events, where the past is given meaning in the present. The retelling, as they suggested, provided insight into characters and events: “How the chronicle is told and how it is structured can also provide information about the perspectives of the individual in relation to the wider social grouping or cultural setting to which that individual belongs” (p. 69). The insight led me into the second stage, where I began noting insights, comments, and questions for each one. This particular stage spanned almost the entire process of analyzing data, going on from the end of the first stage until completion.

After I had made an initial pass at commenting on narratives and an unsuccessful attempt at data analysis that was external to the narratives (my idea of an analytical dialogue chapter following the narrative chapter), I restructured the three narratives into their present form. That is, I broke the narratives into three chronological stages named Background & History, Battering, and Aftermath. While I still had parallel narratives of a sort, this structure also formed a larger narrative. My rationale for doing so was that, when I tried not to “violate” the integrity of each narrative and leave the stories to stand alone, I ended up with stories in “splendid isolation.” I was not a part of each story, and my thoughts and observations were not located in places that were useful in providing insight at the moment.

By breaking up the narratives, I accomplished two things. One was that I had comparable areas of each person’s experience in one place, and a form that would allow me to view the narratives in a holistic way. A second was that this “liberated” the locked narratives, which allowed me to insert myself into the texts and be visible as researcher. The third stage of analysis, then, was an evolution of the second stage, placing my

observations and comments in-text for each portion of each narrative. As a late part of the third stage of analysis, I added literature to shed light on the commentary. According to Coffey & Atkinson (1996), the “analysis of narratives can ... focus on the social action implied in the text. This can involve taking a slightly less systematic and structured approach to narrative analysis, deriving more context-dependent infrastructure and focus to explain the effect...of the story or tale” (p. 62). Much of the literature was domestic violence literature, though some of it was also literature I used to make comparisons or shed light on a social issue.

Coffee & Atkinson note that “the idea of function can be brought to the fore and used as a principal analytical unit” (1996, p. 62). In the fourth stage of analysis, I read each section for possible points of identity shifts. I identified the points of identity shift, my principal analytic unit in this state, typically as struggles although I also included significant happenings or insights. From there I tried to determine the learning (change in relationship with self and social context) that took place, and thus a direction for the identity shift. I also used thematic or structural elements by which to analyze the narratives – identifying parts of the narratives that correspond to some of the various social discourses on domestic violence. The functions are both cultural inscription and sense-making of individual experience. The unit of narrative shifted at various points between the discursive themes and the participants themselves during analysis. The fourth stage of analysis occurred during the end of stage three and after – there was overlap here as well; none of the data analysis stages were discrete.

A fifth and final stage of analysis was reading the narrative whole for similarities, differences, and commentary on social discourses of domestic violence and adult

education. This is consistent with Riessman (1993), who writes that narrative analysis has to do with understanding how people interpret things; “Because the approach gives prominence to human agency and imagination, it is well suited to studies of subjectivity and identity” (p. 5). Reissman then moves on to say that the value of narratives is that they ‘speak culture’, that is they reveal quite a bit about social life. “Narrators speak in terms that seem natural, but we can analyze how culturally and historically contingent these terms are” (Rosenwald & Ochberg, 1992a, p. 5).

A corollary to writing is the issue of representation. There is great latitude in how one can do the study and in how one may present it, but representation is always problematic (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Riessman, 1993). Narratives are not “natural” but constructed according to norms and cultural understanding. One of my tasks as researcher was not only to write and to understand writing as a central mode of analysis, but also to examine and problematize the writing itself.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

In Western cultures, domestic violence has been an issue closely related to patriarchal traditions involving women as property or legal dependents, in situations where their male family members were authority figures (Yalom, 2001). Until relatively recently, the last 35 years or so, there was virtually no recourse for a woman who lived in a domestic violence situation. Domestic violence was known, but not spoken, and any woman who said anything faced severe repercussions (Hague & Wilson, 2000). While changes in the last three and a half decades have been dramatic, it is nonetheless a relatively short time and domestic violence remains a highly problematic, normative social practice (Fine & Weis, 2000).

This chapter has several sections. The first one addresses definitions – more or less how I think about domestic violence and related terminology. The second section addresses adult education literature on domestic violence in an effort to locate and place the issue within my home field of study. In the next two sections I present a sketch of feminism, feminist perspectives, and women and learning in adult education. Fifth is a discussion of identity and the self, moving specifically into the Transformation Theory of Jack Mezirow. After that I move into a parallel discussion centered around non-unitary notions of the self, learning identity, and identity as related to issues of power.

Domestic Violence: Problems of Definition and Terminology

Definitions are a major issue in the domestic violence literature; one sees terms like assault, abuse, violence, battering, family, intimate, and domestic all used in something of a hodgepodge -- but what constitutes each and how much territory it covers

differ greatly (Horsman, 2000, p. 4). Key terms/concepts are discussed and defined below.

Gelles & Straus state that “Abuse is essentially any act that is considered deviant or harmful by a group large enough or with sufficient political power to enforce the definition” (1988, p. 57). Some, including Gelles & Straus, use a definition of abuse based on physical violence. Prominent surveys such as the National Violence Against Women Survey (1998) also focus on physical violence. Other researchers have begun to use broader definitions that include psychological and emotional abuse (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000). Psychological abuse according to Flowers (1996, p. 15) is mistreatment with threats, intimidation, degradation, “mind games,” and violence toward other persons or objects. Flowers’ definition does, however, fall in line with Straus & Gelles’ notion of abuse as “mistreatment” signifying a deviance from social norms.

One striking element of the literature is the concept of normality. Horsman points out that while few can agree on exact statistics, there is an increasing acceptance that violence is widespread (2000, p. 24). Gelles & Straus (1988, p. 24) suggest that the norm in American society is for violence to be present in homes – which includes everything from yelling to sibling fights, verbal abuse, battering, and murder. Mostly the violence is fairly low key, and this “low-key” violence defines what is normal. For Gelles & Straus, violence that moves beyond these accepted norms is abuse. This is an interesting perspective on abuse, because it means that much of the domestic violence that occurs in our society is not abuse. It is non-deviant violence.

Jenny Horsman (2000), in her book *Too Scared to Learn*, clarifies various positions and problems with defining violence and the stakes involved. She points to an

ideal norm that pervades much of the discourse on domestic violence, and it is this norm that is held up as a standard. The ideal norm is that of a family as loving, caring, happy, and free of serious or open conflict. Nonviolence means non-physical (except child spanking) and refraining from, keeping private, or labeling “infrequent” spectacular displays of verbal or other violence. The problem is not the existence of an ideal norm, but that the ideal norm is taken as the standard within families.

By extension, families that demonstrably do not meet this ideal norm are deviant families. Essentially, we assume the ideal norm unless we are unavoidably shown that the family interaction is less than ideal— which is actually closer to our lived realities. While less-than-ideal interactions are far from unusual, observed physical violence seems to make psychological and emotional violence visible and speakable. An occurrence that demonstrates the presence of the second, what I will call “deviant-family” norm, might be the pictures that appear on the front of many publications about domestic violence. Often, the image is a photograph or image of a woman or family. The image will be torn (usually diagonally, for some reason) or placed behind broken glass in a photo frame (see, for example, Ammerman & Hersen, 2000; Arriaga & Oskamp, 1999; Gelles, 1993; Roleff, 2000). This suggests that something (the photograph and by extension the person(s) in it) was whole, but having been involved in a domestic violence situation is now broken. The image serves to isolate and pathologize those people involved in domestic violence. A better image might be a photomosaic. Photomosaics are an art form where a larger image is formed from many smaller, thematically related ones. An image that coincides better with the viewpoint of Straus & Gelles might be a photomosaic of the United States or perhaps the Earth (see Robert Silvers,

<http://www.photomosaic.com/rt/2.htm>), with all of its peoples, torn asunder. Creating an image in this way would eliminate the double standard and suggest a more accurate picture of larger social groupings as “broken” and violent. Smaller groups, such as families, are indicators of the social state and not highly deviant at all.

What we see, then, are high levels of non-deviant violence in households accompanied by a rhetoric of the “ideal” norm. Thinking about the term in this way, “abuse” is a political word, overtly ideological, and geared toward obscuring double standards regarding norms and practices surrounding violence in North American society. If we avoid the common and highly problematic term “abuse,” the question of definitions remains open. Dobash & Dobash (1998a) point to another difficulty in defining violence. There exists a tension; if one defines violence broadly, it appears larger and more problematic, but makes research and solutions for addressing violence very difficult to manage. Conversely, focused definitions of violence offer clarity but the definitions can become self-referential and lose their significance across audiences. Indeed, Dobash & Dobash (1998a) back away from a concrete definition of violence and instead define violence in terms of the issues surrounding it.

Horsman (2000, p. 27) has an important contribution to make when considering violence: “When I refer to violence, I want to encapsulate the complex interconnection of all types of violence and include a recognition of the power of systemic violence to shame, silence, and exclude.” The types of violence she lists include verbal (e.g. put-downs); oppression and marginalization around issues of poverty, class, race, ability and language; physical harm; historical violence like colonialism; sexual; and emotional. Horsman contextualizes violence and links it to everyday life and social practice.

Keeping her contribution in mind, I will now examine another set of terms and definitions.

This set of terms originates with people who work directly in the public arena of domestic violence – advocates for victims and domestic violence attorneys fall into this category that I have labeled “activists.” Activists offer yet another term – battering: “Battering is a pattern of behavior used to establish power and control over another person through fear and intimidation, often including the threat or use of violence” (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV]). This definition includes several key terms and has some implications. It uses the terms “battering” and “violence” and is written by a coalition that opposes domestic violence. The word violence here seems to refer to physical violence – attacks upon the victim’s body. Battering, however, goes far beyond the physical to include the range of acts and dynamics described by Horsman in the paragraph above. For the NCADV, domestic violence is a situation where a deliberate effort is made to gain power and control by one person over another by the act of battering. As an activist definition, its purpose is slightly different from those in many academic texts. It does not hedge, was not written to exclude those effects that are not observable and measurable, and it offers a reason (establishing power and control) for domestic violence.

I would like to extend that definition for the purposes of this study by specifying control *to an end* – the abuser has a concrete goal (not necessarily articulated) that is achieved by establishing control. The goal is an abuser’s domination – usurpation – of a victim’s identity processes. The victim is marginalized in the processes to the greatest degree that the abuser can manage, using battering behaviors as described above. By

isolating a victim and controlling interaction with others, an abuser reduces the potential for the victim to develop a functional sense of the social. Verbal degradation tells a victim what she is and is not; physical and emotional attacks reduce her will and ability to resist domination. Constant reinforcement is necessary to retain control over another person's identity processes, and even then it seems that control would rarely be absolute.

Battering occurs in a wide variety of intimate relationships across cultures and geographies (Dobash & Dobash, 1998a). For this study, because of the participants involved, the context of battering is limited to heterosexual marriages and the term "domestic violence" is used in that way. Battering as used in this study is an umbrella term that adds together a broad definition of violence, places it in an intimate partner context, and further adds the element of control for domination of identity processes.

Adult Education and Domestic Violence

There is not much literature in mainstream adult education that addresses domestic violence. The one article that explicitly speaks to domestic violence was written in 2002 by Miller & Mullins. It is titled *Lifelong Learning to Reduce Domestic Violence*. The article establishes domestic violence as a social ill and discusses different angles by which educational programming can help address and prevent it.

A few articles mention domestic violence in passing (e.g., Kilgore & Bloom, 2002; Kothari, Chand, & Sharma, 1999; Ziegahn, 1992). There is a greater tendency to see domestic violence mentioned in connection with literacy issues, possibly because domestic violence is a known barrier in pursuing adult basic education (ABE) (e.g. Collins, 2000; Horsman, 2000).

In part of a larger search of studies in Dissertation Abstracts International (DAI), I found only eleven studies that directly related domestic violence and adult education. Of these, five merely mentioned domestic violence in relation to another subject of primary interest, e.g. parenting programs. Nine represented planning or evaluation of programs that included training for church leaders, police, and homeless shelter staff, programs for at-risk parents, Batterer Intervention Programs (BIPs), and child abuse programs.

A few studies dealt specifically with the learning and education of battered women. Two, by Susan McDonald (2000) and Mojab & McDonald (2000), dealt with legal education and informational needs of battered immigrant women and how to best go about addressing them while remaining sensitive to a context that included significant barriers to learning. Another study (Yensen, 1994), using a grounded theory approach, explored the role of learning for domestic violence victims in pursuing productive, non-violent directions in their lives.

There are two papers in the 2000 Adult Education Research Conference (AERC). One is by Irene Baird (2000) which addresses battering and incarcerated men, and the other is by Heald & Horsman (2000), regarding literacy and domestic violence. The presence of at least a few conference papers but near-absence of scholarly journal articles suggests that people who study and address domestic violence within adult education do write about the issue to a certain degree, but that domestic violence has received no more than a passing notice at the academic level.

Feminism and Feminist Perspectives

There are as many feminist perspectives as there are leaves in a forest. Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones (1998) write about feminist theorizing and perspectives, telling

us what they believe feminism is – first, a refusal to accept perspectives on lived inequality between men and women which suggest that inequality is in any way natural or inevitable due to inherent characteristics of men and women. Secondly, feminist theory and critique seek to explore and explain the inequalities: “Feminist theory is about thinking for ourselves – women generating knowledge *about* women and gender *for* women” (p. 1, italics in original). Their implied goal is to find ways to end such inequalities, seeking social change that will benefit women.

I will use the work of Chris Weedon (1997) to give a glance at feminism in the US over the last century or so. The first-wave feminist response to biological essentialism with associated female inferiority, according to Weedon (1997), had male and female essentially the same and removed biology as much as possible from the equation. Unequal educational opportunities, for example, was cited as a reason for apparent differences. Some feminists did not reject the idea of essential difference completely, arguing that yes, women were different from men – but still women needed access to education and other resources to develop their differences appropriately. By and large the first perspective dominated, and we then moved into “sameness” as the foundation for liberal feminism. Liberalism was individualistic and based on the dominance of rationalism, transcending one’s body through the mind. Women were to be included on the basis of sameness – women were just like men. Liberal feminism did not challenge the idea of male and maleness as normative. There were no challenges to androcentric social structures or to the sexual division of labor.

Second wave feminism was grounded in socialism and radical critiques of it. Women’s issues were not well received among Marxists, generally considered to be a

non-issue or viewed as a bourgeois-centered phenomenon. Some thought that natural conclusion of the class struggle would free women. Socialist feminism, separate from the Marxists, challenged the notions of public and private and other structures; class and gender were both used to construct oppression due to difference. Socialist feminists, while using the Marxist method and framework, did not subsume all forms of oppression under economics (Weedon, 1997).

Materialist feminism is not biologically essentialist, yet can still be considered essentialist since it creates a universal category called “woman” and claims that this category is oppressed historically, across locations and cultures. However, the materialist feminists do not claim intrinsic attributes for the category of “woman;” instead, it claims that women as individuals and groups are shaped by the material forces in their lives (Weedon, 1997; Hennessy, 1993).

Radical feminists wished to reclaim the body, and came up with the famous slogan “The personal is political.” Oppression and exploitation of women were intrinsic and pervasive through every aspect of society – the concept of patriarchy. They rejected sameness and used the body to celebrate and try to give positive meaning to the notion of female difference, using women-centered research in a quest to ‘recover’ lost femaleness. So we were back to difference, but difference was to be celebrated and explored – a departure from the deficiency model from earlier years (Weedon, 1997).

During the second wave a strong critique emerged of “feminism” as representing only white, middle-class, heterosexual Western women and then claiming to represent “women” as a whole – an essentialist, universalizing viewpoint not dissimilar to the male-dominated traditions that these early feminists critiqued (Nicholson, 1990). Those

who critiqued this early work and have helped open up different avenues for feminism included many groups such as third world feminists, postcolonialist feminists, lesbians, and feminists not of the racial majority in a country, such as African American and Latina feminists in the United States.

An essentialist feminist perspective describes women in terms of inherent characteristics: “essentialism’: the mode of thinking which treats social phenomena like gender and sexuality as if they exist prior to and outside the social and cultural discourses, practices and structures which give rise to them” (Jackson, 1998). Essentialist approaches have tended to be those which argue for an essential femininity or construct a female totality that is subject to some form of oppression (for example, radical and Marxist feminism). A classically essentialist book is *In a Different Voice* (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan contends that psychology as a field has systematically excluded women, subsuming them under generalized, but androcentric, models of psychological development. In the book, she described distinctively female developmental traits and patterns of moral development. *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1997), another classic, has strong roots in the work of Carol Gilligan. Belenky et al focus on distinctively feminine ways of “knowing,” also from a psychological perspective.

In a sharp turn that began around the early nineties, post-structuralist feminism took a position that was a polar opposite to past decades of feminism, rejecting essentialist positions completely. These feminists questioned whether there were distinctively feminine traits to be uncovered, or a meaningful category “woman” (Hughes, 1995). Instead, they interrogated categories like gender that seemed to be

natural and were treated as a given (Riley, 1988). They claimed that gender was a discursive product, continually constructed by its expression (performance) in daily life (Butler, 1997). For the post-structuralist there was a rejection of truth narratives, embracing of multiple perspectives, provisionality, and competing, contradictory discourses (Hughes, 1995).

Hughes writes that “it is no longer productive, or even possible, to discuss relationships of power and equality using universal analytical tools such as class, race or gender because these meta-narratives conceive of power, for example, as being in one group’s control, and being exercised upon another to their detriment. In place of this is a de-centred power dynamic which is localized and relational...” (p. 217). Part of what made post-structuralism attractive was the challenge to a coherent, stable self; Francis writes “Foucault (1980) argues that the self is not fixed: instead it is positioned and positions in ‘discourse’ – socially and culturally produced patterns of language, which constitute power by constructing objects in particular ways” (1999, p. 383). It challenged notions that reason and science are objective, reliable, universal foundations of knowledge (Flax, 1987). Another advantage is that gender as a discourse may be deconstructed by post-structuralist analysis – an analysis that can be empowering or liberating. Finally, the idea that we are positioned/positioners in discourse would seem to be useful and offering potential for agency.

One of the main critiques of post-structuralist feminism is that the rejection of meta-narrative categories such as gender was seen as leading to a complete relativism that did not seem to permit a ground to stand on in order to pursue feminist goals, and

could seem to be disempowering by virtue of its practice of deconstruction (Weedon, 1997). Becky Francis (1999) makes this critique relative to research in education.

Francis' problem with post-structuralism is the rejection of truth narratives, or meta-narratives. According to Francis, this rejection does not allow for any political will. She identifies "fundamental conflicts" that render post-structuralism and feminism incompatible. One is that feminism, Francis claims, is modernist by definition: "it is argued here that feminism is an inherently modernist theory in that it supposes a founding subject ('womanhood'); and is based on the 'truth narrative' that patriarchy oppresses women, and the moral assumption that such oppression is wrong, and that we should work to end this oppression" (p. 385). Francis believes that feminism is emancipatory, with a goal of removing oppressive power relations. That emancipatory project requires a universal female subject that post-structuralism cannot accept – a fundamental, irreconcilable difference. The second is that deconstruction is not useful in fulfilling "the feminist need for a system to explain the socio-economic reality of gender difference" (p. 385). Essentially, she makes the argument that post-structuralism allows for little that is constructive and results in political paralysis. She also finds that post-structuralist theory is too far divorced from "reality."

Bronwyn Davies rebuts this type of argument, however, writing "the point of post-structuralism is not to destroy the humanist subject nor to create its binary other, the 'anti-humanist subject' (whatever that may be), but to enable us to see the subject's fictionality, whilst recognizing how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real (1997, p. 272). She sees agency as lying in the inscription of the self, and in the "reflexive awareness of the constitutive power of language that becomes possible through

post-structuralist theory” (p. 272). I agree with Davies, and suggest that Francis has a narrow view of feminism, or at least what feminism “ought” to be. For me empowerment is not about “removing oppressive power relations.” Empowerment is more a process that teaches about discourses and agency. Agency is the ability to have understandings of relationships (between self and context, others in context, institutions, etc) and to act on them.

Materialists and poststructuralists are generally at odds, creating a tension that I found in myself as my poststructuralist feminist influences and critical adult education background collided. Poststructuralists forced me to think dynamically in terms of change and relationship, of impermanence, and insisted that I question meanings at every turn. It was, for me, a seething, disruptive, disturbing way of thinking. It permitted me to name contradictions and discontinuities, without necessarily needing a correct answer or even a correction. Materialist feminists were concerned with understanding social structures, totalities and forces, which I found very helpful in describing and understanding domestic violence within a social context. It meshed with much of the reading I had done in adult education.

This tension between materialism and post-structuralism is largely what attracted me to the work of Rosemary Hennessy (1993), a materialist feminist who tried hard to use these odd bedmates in a complementary fashion. Hennessy’s project was to address the crisis of knowledge on a historical subject, particularly women. She wanted to keep social totalities for the purposes of critique and address, and at the same time address women as a discursively constructed subject that is never monolithic and is differentially positioned. Emancipatory movements like feminism, she argued, require normative

grounds. However, norms need not be aimed at hiding or dismissing difference.

Differences in values help to create and mold norms. Norms are not necessarily part of master narratives or totalizing theories, but rather ground rules upon which a society functions. What is necessary is not the dismissal of norms but rather rewriting them. Her work is not completely successful, but it represents a place in which to locate the beginnings of my work.

Feminism itself is something with which I personally have a troubled relationship. I was raised in a strongly anti-feminist environment, and the idea that I might be a feminist anyway did not occur to me for a long time. When I began taking a few courses in Women's Studies and realized that I was a feminist (though I hadn't a clue as to what sort of feminist I might be), the idea of feminism and the feminist literature were tremendously liberating and powerful – even intoxicating.

My main problem with feminism rose from another critique – that someone who is a feminist is female *first*. Mohanty writes about this when she address “women” as a category of analysis: “I am referring to the crucial assumption that all of us of the same gender, across classes and cultures, are somehow socially constituted as a homogeneous group identified prior to the process of analysis” (1991, p. 56). I would argue, along with Mohanty, that one's feminism is not necessarily spearheaded by gender; to me, it seems more likely to be defined by the axis or axes of difference (including gender) and their intersections that a woman finds most oppressive. It is at those intersections that I would locate my feminism, and because of that feminism for me cannot be about gender alone. I'm not sure if that is even legitimate, and so my feminism is still tentative, halting even as it is angry, joyful, strong-willed and curious.

Women and Learning in Adult Education

Tisdell (1998) critiques the adult education literature (presumably North American) for reducing people to generic adult educators and learners, while Joyce Stalker (1996) is an outspoken critic of androcentric (male-oriented) research in adult education. They and others have noted that there is growth in discussion of women as learners (Tisdell, 1998; Stalker, 1996; Hayes & Flannery, 2000). Too often, Tisdell says, women are treated as a generic group. There appears to be a greater balance of literature about women in adult educational contexts, covering areas such as barriers to participation (Stalker, 1998; Horsman, 2000); re-entry into higher education (Mezirow, 1975); and incarcerated women (Baird, 2000). While the theoretical literature relating to women and learning in Adult Education is growing, specifically feminist literature is still quite sparse (Stalker, 1996, Hayes & Flannery, 2000).

In Hayes' chapter in *A New Update on Learning Theory*, she writes of relationship and connectedness as widely touted ways of women learning and knowing. Other characteristics commonly attributed to women as learners include the subjective, affective, and intuitive. Hayes notes that these "presumed" orientations "fuel stereotypes that women are not, or cannot be, competitive, autonomous, or self-directed" (2001, p. 37). Hayes does not critique underlying assumptions about the desirability of being competitive, autonomous, and self-directed. More recently, according to Hayes, nonrational ways of thinking and knowing have been re-characterized as valuable and the rational has been criticized as being overemphasized to the detriment of all. In her analysis, Hayes uses sex, gender, and femininity as terms but isn't really all that clear

about what they mean. She appears to endorse a view that is opposed to essentialist views of men, women, and their learning.

Women as Learners, authored by Hayes & Flannery (2000), professes to use mainly a feminist poststructuralist perspective (p. 15), using a “kaleidoscope” metaphor to describe and guide their writings. At the same time, Hayes & Flannery have as their inspiration *Women’s Ways of Knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule). Indeed, they use two themes, connection and subjective knowing, that are drawn directly from *Women’s Ways of Knowing* to organize their text. They use the phrase “women’s learning” in a collective sense throughout the book. For me, this has the effect of essentializing women from the beginning – it implies the idea that we can get a hold on learning for all women, which is more in line with Belenky et al than with poststructuralist feminism. Hayes & Flannery (2000, p. 18) write, “Much of the literature fails to go deeply into what women *as* women are saying about their learning,” a statement that is also incongruous with a poststructuralist perspective.

Hayes & Flannery seem to be more or less bringing the work of Belenky et al directly within the field of adult education instead of psychology. Their contribution is valuable– it makes more visible the need for theoretical work with women and learning in adult education, and makes an attempt to do so. Indeed, it is the first major work dedicated to that project.

Identity and Notions of the Self

Flannery (2000), in *Women as Learners*, authored a chapter on identity. She connected learning and identity, doing so from a humanistic perspective: “Women have choices about whether to change aspects of their identity” (p. 54). The idea of having a

noun-identity and being able to make choices about what to be are part of the humanistic notion of the self.

Dirkx (2000) writes about a developmental focus that has emerged in Adult Basic Education (ABE) and health professions education, noting that the idea of “self” is important to why people are in adult education and what they are doing there. Clark makes the case that the way we think about the self determines the way we think about learning and education. They use the chapter to look at assumptions undergirding the unitary self, then lay out some problems created by the notion of the unitary self as related to adult learning. Then, they look at alternative models of the self.

Clark & Dirkx go through a brief historical sketch of changes of “self” in the West, arriving at the unitary, modernist notion. In humanistic psychology there is a core self that may be found, which the individual may not only find but then develop toward an authentic self. The authentic self – here Clark is paraphrasing Carl Rogers – “is self-directed and autonomous, responsible, complex, open to experience, accepting and trusting of self and others” (p. 106). Finding it is a rational process. No one claims that emotions are not there, but the important thing toward finding and developing the autonomous self is reason. The core self is “harmonious” – conflicts come from outside the individual or when an individual deviates from being other than the authentic self. It evolves and is highly individualistic. Power lies with individuals, and sociocultural forces play a secondary role. Psychoanalytic thought, they claim, also seems to support humanism. It follows a course where one works through issues to arrive at a more authentic self that is less in conflict with others and the world at large. Psychoanalytic

thought supports an individual self; it is different from humanistic psychology, however, in that people can not be completely self-aware.

One major work in Adult Education that is grounded in humanistic notions of the self is the transformation theory of Jack Mezirow.

Mezirow's transformation theory.

Some years ago, Jack Mezirow published a short piece on perspective transformation. In it he sketches out major tenets of the idea and the problem it addresses, "... learning how we are caught in our own history and reliving it" (1978, p. 101). "There are certain challenges or dilemmas of adult life," he writes, "that cannot be resolved by the usual way we handle problems – that is, by simply learning more about them or learning how to cope with them more effectively" (p. 101). Mezirow lays out a problem that is faced by many people in different part of life, and is also the sort of problem faced by women in battering situations. This problem is faced by entire societies, a point that Mezirow makes about consciousness-raising in this same article.

In a way that is remarkably passionate, he suggests that adult educators need to go beyond objectives-based learning and performance to a much deeper understanding of adult education and adult learning. His effort to do so started nearly 30 years ago with a study of women who were returning to work after a break of some type (1975) and has continued with books and articles over the years detailing, explaining, and refining his work. His contribution has been explored and expanded by a variety of empirical studies (see Taylor, 1997, 1998, 2000). It has attracted intense debate and spawned numerous papers, articles, studies, dissertations, and calls for development of ways to bring perspective transformation to adult learners.

Mezirow makes a few points in this article that I'd like to underscore. First, he uses the word "maturity" and also words such as "wiser," "higher," and "gradient" that suggest ascendancy toward maturity via perspective transformation. The route to maturity is critical reflection. As one becomes mature, one gains more abstract perspectives and becomes more critically reflective: "We move through successive transformations toward analyzing things from a perspective increasingly removed from one's personal or local perspective..." (1978, p. 104).

Another point is that "moving to a new perspective and sustaining the actions which it requires is dependent upon an association with others who share the new perspective." He adds that the unnamed others must offer support and reinforcement, calling it a "sustaining relationship" (1978, p. 105). Later he qualifies the association with others, specifying that they are others with "a more critical awareness" (1978, p. 109).

According to Mezirow, "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to future action" (2000, p. 5). The goal of adult learning for him is the development of a reliable system of understanding and beliefs, gleaned from examination and critical review of experience and prior beliefs, upon which to base decisions and action (2000). Presumably this is maturity – but it implies a stationary goal; one may become more mature and still have to make change because one's society changes. He also assumes that the system is always going to be somewhat rational.

In his 1981 article, Mezirow expands on his ideas quite a bit. He sketches out "generic" areas of human learning that include technical, practical, and emancipatory. Technical is the sort of knowledge generated in hard sciences by which we can

understand and control our environment. The second, practical, is where one finds communicative action. This sort of understanding and its accompanying form of inquiry “has as its aim not technical control and manipulation but rather the clarification of conditions for communication and intersubjectivity” (1981, p. 5). He names ethnography, history, and other types of inquiry as the mechanisms for understanding. The third area, emancipatory learning, Mezirow claims for his own. He says that “emancipation is from libidinal, institutional or environmental forces which limit our options and rational control over our lives but have been taken for granted as beyond human control. Insights gained through critical self-awareness are emancipatory in the sense that at least one can recognize the correct reasons for his or her problems” (p. 5). Mezirow offers ideology critique as an example of critical social science that can result in emancipation.

Mezirow then moves on to discuss education for emancipatory action, which he describes as perspective transformation and names the “most distinctively adult” type of learning (1981, p. 6). For Mezirow, this type of learning comes to be through critical reflection:

Transformative learning involves an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one’s beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particularly premises, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, an ability to take action based upon the new perspective, and a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one’s life. (1991, p. 161)

Mezirow treats perspective transformation as a developmental process, described best by steps, even though he states specifically that perspective transformation is not a stage process (1991, p. 160). There are ten steps, as follows: A disorienting dilemma; self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; a critical assessment of assumptions; recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared; exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; planning a course of action; acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; provisional trying of new roles; building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. He notes (1981) that the severity of the dilemma is related to the probability of perspective transformation – if it's a big one, the probability is much greater.

Mezirow suggests that the desired understanding, however, is “enabled and constrained by the historical knowledge-power networks in which it is embedded” (2000, p. 7) and therefore the networks and associated ideologies need to be brought forward into the learner's awareness, examined, and critiqued. This idea seems analogous to the concept of social discourses.

In addition, Mezirow brings in an idea called “contractual solidarity” that he takes from the work of Irwin Singer. Contractual solidarity comes from psychoanalysis. It essentially means that one joins another person or group and adopts that identity without giving up individuality. He wishes to promote this kind of process of identification, rather than what he seems to view as a simple, uncritical identity transference. His goal is for learners to develop a contractual solidarity with society – participation with maintenance

of complete autonomy. The term is indicative of a rather flat, simplistic view of learners, suggesting that a unified person uncritically makes unilateral adoptions of other identities and corresponding values (1981).

Mezirow is quite clear that learning is context-specific (1991, 2000). He takes it beyond that single claim, however: "...the content of a comprehensive learning theory cannot be dictated exclusively by cultural interests. What we have in common are human connectedness, the desire to understand, and spiritual incompleteness" (p. 7). Cultures may enhance or inhibit our awareness of these commonalities.

Communicative learning is a complex process that involves critical judgments made during dialogue with one or more other people. Judgments may be made concerning accuracy and completeness of shared information; perspectives; assumptions; and other areas of the dialogue. Also, there are Habermas' ideal conditions for dialogue, which include equal opportunity for all involved in the discourse to participate fully; openness to alternative points of view; honesty of all participants; and so on (Mezirow, 1991).

A second key element of Mezirow's theory is the frame of reference, also known as a meaning perspective. A meaning perspective involves our essential "self" and the structure of assumptions and expectations that frame our views (1991, p. 167). In shorter terms, a meaning perspective is the set and structure of filters through which we view the world. Meaning schemes are a specific subset of the meaning perspective, including beliefs and attitudes (Mezirow, 1991). In later texts, the meaning scheme is referred to as a "habit of mind." A habit of mind is a set of assumptions by which we frame particular experiences. For example, one aspect of the meaning perspective is our moral-ethical

habit of mind, which includes the assumptions we make about what is moral and ethical, and what is not. When we express one or more habits of mind, we are said to take a point of view (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow continues to discuss the philosophical foundations of his ideas concerning critical reflection, based on the assessment of reasons. Mezirow, as suggested in the critique written by Clark & Wilson (1991), has a tendency to apply universal principles and decontextualize transformation. It is not well situated within a personal or a social theory. While Mezirow objected and claimed that they misunderstood him, (1991b), Taylor (1998) notes that research supports Clark & Wilson's critique. Mezirow has modified his position (1996) but much of the critique remains relevant.

Collard & Law lay out what they consider a "fundamental" problem in Mezirow's work: "the lack of a coherent, comprehensive theory of social change, a lack diffused throughout the internal structure of his theory, evident in his selective interpretation and adaption of Habermas, and partially dependent on problems within Habermas' own work" (1989, p. 103). Newman also critiques Mezirow for separating perspective transformation from social change (1993), as does Cunningham (1992). Hart (1990) also critiques in this area, although she does so from the perspective of power. She notes that he uses the work of Jürgen Habermas, which is centered around a critique of power, yet neglects to add this dimension to his theory. The problem has to do with a process that encourages individual to change perspectives in an emancipatory way without demanding critique of larger social totalities. One further critique is noted by Taylor (1998) who cites the work of Coffman (1989, 1991). The critique suggests that Mezirow does not address social change that stems from perspective transformations that occur within a group. The

critique suggests that agency attended by a sense of social responsibility might develop more within a group than in an individual.

The most detailed discussion of critical reflection occurs in Mezirow's 1998 article. Critical reflection can safely be regarded as the central concept around which Mezirow's theory was constructed (Brookfield, 2000). He endorses universal standards relating to informal logic that constitute criteria one may use to evaluate reasons, and other standards, the "[c]ontext-specific principles that govern the proper interpretation in physics, history, economics..." (p. 186). As fields evolve, so do the principles by which reasons are evaluated. The principles that he calls "context-specific" are in fact content-specific. He allows for context only within the limited confines of a particular academic field, addressing neither a larger social context nor the less academic arenas in which people live.

For Mezirow, reflection is a central component of intentional learning, and I agree. It deserves attention on those grounds alone. He uses Dewey for his definition of reflection, stating that reflection is in fact validity testing – testing the grounds on which an idea rests to make sure it is acceptable. Mezirow gives a nod to the emotional dimension of reflection, but then proceeds to explicitly sever the two:

There has been sporadic, if not explicit, recognition of the conative and affective as well as the cognitive content of reflection, and transformation theory affirms this by recognizing the roles of line of action and intuition in the learning process...For purposes of understanding how to facilitate adult learning, educators will gain insight by confining the concept of

reflection to Dewey's definition: *Reflection means validity testing.*"

(Mezirow, 1991, p. 101, emphasis in original)

He continues, in a later paper, referring to critical reflection as "principled thinking" that is ideally "impartial, consistent, and non-arbitrary" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 186).

Mezirow does acknowledge informal reasoning, but the tone of his work suggests that it is a poor second to critical reflection; he cites Siegal and Halstead when discussing informal logic, without endorsing or claiming any ownership of the concept (1998, p. 187). Indirectly, he even makes an argument for "the universal validity of such concepts as rationality, reason assessment, and critical reflection" (p. 187). Mezirow goes on to say that he is not arguing for critical reflection and rationality as universal truth, but is simply stating that they work better than "other options" (p. 188). "Other options" are neither named nor discussed.

Emotion and intuition, considered unreliable forms of thought in need of rational control, are traditionally the province of women and other non-normative groups (Gauthier, 1997). They are separated, othered, deprecated. In his summary of critical reflection Mezirow refers to "our personal world of feelings and intentions" (1991, p. 116) in a way that tacitly suggests encapsulation and separateness. In fact, many of his references to the "affective," "conative," "feelings," and other related terms are both passing and dismissive. He has been roundly critiqued in this area, and several empirical studies support this critique (Taylor, 1998).

Identity is an area in which Mezirow also falls comfortably into the male-dominated rational tradition. He displays a tendency to isolate the self, not really dealing

with even a generic self in any but the most arid fashion. Clark and Wilson (1991) address in some detail these issues with self, maturity, and the “generic” learner that Mezirow posits. The generic learner will be the normative learner – i.e. a white heterosexual male free of any disabilities or differences that will lose him his normative franchise. Clark & Wilson quote Welton, who says “the self exists separate from structure...[It] is essentially disengaged, disembodied, and dehistoricized. Mezirow may in fact have reified the masculinist ideal of the ‘unencumbered subject’” (1991, p. 80).

Clark (Clark & Dirks, 2000) claims that the central problem of Mezirow’s work is his notion of the self. She uses Weedon to make her point: “For her, multiplicity arises from the interplay of these powerful social forces on the individual. She believes that our experience of multiplicity is complex and operates both within and beneath conscious awareness, and that these selves are always in process and often in conflict with one another” (p.115). We want coherence, but that coherence is also a construction.

Brooks, in *Women as Learners*, takes a look at “women’s transformative learning” (2000, p. 139). In line with the rest of the book, she discusses characteristics of connectedness and caring using the work of Gilligan (1982), Belenky et. al. (1997), and others. She points to studies which seem to suggest that the importance of relationship goes beyond White, middle class women. While Brooks notes that there are critics to the relational/caring perspective and cites a study, she does not expand on these other perspectives. While clearly oriented to a literature that is widely criticized as universalizing and essentialist, Brooks seems also to want to distance herself from that categorization:

In considering this literature in the context of women's transformative learning, I want to emphasize that none of the cited theorists claim that the qualities they identify are unique to women or that they are solely a result of either nature or socialization. (2000, p. 143)

Brooks spends time in her chapter exploring the usefulness of narrative in transformative learning. In keeping with the quote above, she maintains some distance from the essentialist literature with which she begins her chapter. It almost seems like she writes that section in order to connect her quasi-related chapter to the rest of the book. It is hard to pin her down, as she uses people like Bruner along with Foucault and doesn't seem to give as clear an idea of her position as I might like.

Theoretically, Jack Mezirow's work is the closest in type to my project – it describes learning as a means for development of identity. Furthermore, his is among the best work in US Adult Education in terms of development and empirical investigations. His ideas and thoughts to me were clearest, and least stilted, in his 1978 article on perspective transformation. As time went on and he delved more deeply for theoretical developments and explanations, his work became more circumscribed, more prescriptive. The many detailed critiques spoke to the quality of his ideas and the severity of its problems.

Mezirow's work has been integral to my own thinking, up to and including the critiques of his views. The next sections offer ideas that are oriented toward the same goal as Mezirow's work (that is, learning as a mechanism for identity development), but come from different traditions and literatures. Much of what I wrote developed in line with his ideas or in reaction to the problems with Mezirow's transformation theory. In

moving from the theoretical to the empirical, it seems appropriate for now to continue the parallels. Finding strengths and weaknesses in both perspectives through the data informed my understanding of each.

A Non-Unitary Notion of Self and Identity

There have been numerous criticisms within Adult Education regarding humanistic assumptions of a unitary self (Usher, 1997, Clark & Dirkx, 2000). Clark and Dirkx (2000) want to move beyond the unitary self that they believe has been reified in adult education and which is mainly informed by humanistic psychology. Tennant (2000) writes, “focus on the self as text or narrative offers new possibilities for understanding learning and its relation to self-development and change” (p. 88).

They argue for a shift to a non-unitary self, which Clark associates with postmodern discourses: “We experience ourselves as fragmented and often under siege...[a] plurality of voices and positions, creating a vertigo of competing claims to truth, marks the postmodern era. The unitary model of the self no longer works to capture this complex and contested experience...” (p. 105). The self becomes associated with words like verb, process, emergent, discourse, relational, and ideology.

Tennant (2000) certainly agrees with Clark & Dirkx about humanistic psychology and its impact on adult education. For him, the developmental literature does not give enough emphasis to the power of social forces in shaping people’s lives.” According to Tennant, the psychological approach to development tends to see us as developing strength in an effort to oppose social forces and thus be ourselves (the authentic self) to a greater degree. He sees ascendance of the self and ever more pronounced separateness from society and social forces. Tennant notes that

“the link between personal and social change is a matter of individuals acting authentically and autonomously...now this view of the self, which is largely informed by developmental psychology, has been criticized as being overly individualistic, of portraying social problems as largely individual problems with individual solutions, of accepting as given the social world in which the self resides” (p. 91).

And thus social forces and structures go unchallenged.

Tennant and Clark & Dirx have different, but equally important issues with developmental psychology and its impact on adult education: Tennant is concerned with the separation of self from social, while Clark & Dirx find that the experiential self is better represented by postmodern discourses that do not portray a unified experience.

Critical pedagogy does not avoid the trap of individualism, according to Tennant; it merely shifts the focus from a unified individual to a monolithic social Other. Through ideology critique, one more or less analyzes and uncovers one's ideological positioning to become liberated from false consciousness. The rational, unified self of modernist discourses remains unchallenged. He suggests that a solution is to have a view of socially constructed subjectivity that avoids the assumption of a unified self. Tennant wants us to move “from theories of the knowing subject, to theories of discursive practices” (2000, p. 92). The debate then changes to narrative and discourse and how they shape and position the self.

Tennant writes about uses of narrative, coming at the end to the Relational Self, where relationships takes center stage and selves/aspects of self are positioned and narrated in a secondary way. Tennant mentions “relational pedagogy” -- critical self-

reflection, but without searching for “an invariant or definitive story” (p. 97). In fact, doing so would create a problem because definitive stories limit the possibilities for exploring multiple types and sets of relationships. Tennant wants us to go from learning new meanings to learning new categories of meaning.

I’m not sure that Tennant goes quite far enough in emphasizing the fragmentation of self/ves. While Tennant’s criticism of ideology critique is on target, I would like to emphasize that ideology critique represents an excellent avenue for the articulation of discourses. While it may not free us from them, that articulation represents a form of agency and allows for more sophisticated, relational perspectives. As noted in the section on poststructuralist feminism, Tennant mentions the critiques of absolute relativity where there are no standards, absolute moral values, or notion of democracy. He suggests that having such standards is fine as long as we do not remain fixed in a given position.

The focus in the next section is on identity from feminist perspectives. The idea behind this discussion was not to define “identity” conclusively. Rather, it was intended to provide a way to talk and think about social dynamics or situations as they relate to and affect the individual, without assuming a unified self. The spirit behind this section of the chapter came largely from a postmodern/ materialist/ feminist perspective taken from Rosemary Hennessy (1993).

The identity concept used in parallel to transformation theory was a heuristic device, with history and context used to understand and ground identity. It needed to be dynamic for the purposes of learning and change. Using this framework, I was able to speak in terms of individuals, individuals as part of groups, groups, social classes, etc. I

had to address specifics not only of the individual, but also how the individual and pertinent social groups relate at a given historical moment.

Identity is defined as *the contextualized interplay of a sense of self; sense of social; and struggle/ cooperation with other agencies*. Each discussion in the following pages represents a pivotal point upon which the definition is constructed. The approach I tried to take can be summed up best in the following statement: “Feminist theory of the future will need to take account of the ways in which the social worlds of women are shaped both materially and discursively, and be alert to the structural constraints on our lives as well as the scope for agency and creativity” (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 7).

The sense of self.

Judith Butler (1999) provides a place from which to start this discussion of identity when, early in *Gender Trouble*, she discusses coalitional politics. Talking about coalition membership creates problems when (as often happens) we arbitrarily assign identity to a member. For example, if a number of feminists gather around a social issue such as domestic violence, participants are often assumed to be feminist *first*; all her other cultural characteristics –black, Jewish, poor, Hispanic, lesbian, or a particular type of feminist are mostly ignored. Such assumptions articulate identity within available cultural terms. The effect is to “type” coalition members and close in advance much flexibility in thinking about each one and how she relates to the larger group. Furthermore, with predetermined identities come predetermined structures and relations for dialogue – further cementing identification and the ways people may interact. If largely generic pre-fabricated identifications are discarded, then our notions of identity may become fluid enough to form, change and dissolve as needs ebb and flow (p. 21-22).

According to Hekman (2000), Butler's "inessential woman" replaces the fixed identities of foundational coalition politics. This inessential woman is "constructed by the discourses constituting her world" (p. 290). Butler thinks of identity as a verb, though, not a noun. It is something that people do: "Indeed, to understand identity as a *practice*, and as a signifying practice, is to understand culturally intelligible subjects and the resulting effects of a rule-bound discourse that inserts itself in the pervasive and mundane acts of linguistic life" (Butler, 1999, p. 184, italics in original). She is clear that this practice is not a foundational act, but is rather an ongoing process. For Butler, speaking of identity in any noun form, as a label or as something that one can choose from a selection of available options, would be a major error.

Alcoff (1997) agrees with Butler that identity is never fixed, then offers a definition of identity that she borrows from the work of Teresa de Lauretis (1984): "The identity of a woman is the product of her own interpretation and reconstruction of her history, as mediated through the cultural discursive context to which she has access" (p. 349). There are several serious problems with Alcoff's borrowed definition. Hennessy critiques Alcoff for attempting to combine postmodern and humanist subjectivity, stating that according to Alcoff, a subject is discursive but can choose her discursive position. The notion of "free choice" embedded in humanist discourses is incompatible with postmodern frameworks (1993, p. 74). The definition above, in other words, places the subject outside of discourses so she can make her own interpretation and treats identity as an internal self-possession.

Identity defined in this way cannot accommodate the idea that identities are partially imposed. Furthermore, the definition assumes that an individual believes in a

single, unified noun-identity, even if it is temporary and located in an historical moment. While there are some serious problems with the definition, it has potential if we alter it in small but crucial ways and then look at it as a component of identity: “A woman’s *sense of self* is the *process* of her own interpretation and reconstruction of her *body and* history, as mediated through the cultural discursive context to which she has access” [italics added]. Framed this way, it does not require awareness or examination of the discursive context.

The sense of self is not, however, purely an internal phenomenon. Some aspects of identity are externally imposed, in ignorance of or without regard to a woman’s sense of self. Stereotyping is one example. It often has a negative undertone and typically uses a pejorative construction to classify and label individuals. In general, stereotypes provide a shorthand for talking about people. Even if an individual does not see herself in a particular way, others may impose an identification upon her and treat her accordingly. Knowing how she is perceived and identified, a person may act the part assigned. Such acts may or may not be conscious, may or may not be desired. This situation represents a manifestation of identity that is not representative of a woman’s sense of self. If the identification imposed is acted frequently enough, however, its ideological assumptions, language, and behaviors may indeed become part of a woman’s sense of self. Such treatment and manipulations of discourses can strongly influence the ways in which a sense of self is constructed (or is not constructed). Stereotypes represent a real situation in which a person is constructing herself at the same time, in cooperation and in struggle with, external agents. Thus, identity is actively and continuously constructed by self and others, in cooperation and struggle, via the discourses constituting their worlds. She

performs identity/ies; the identities she performs may or may not be in line with her sense of self and become a part of her sense of self.

The sense of social.

Carla Kaplan (1992) and Linda Alcoff (1997) were both concerned with creating a useful notion of identity upon which to base a feminist politics. Alcoff wanted to use “reality” – that is, material elements, to create temporary, dynamic identities and position them for the best pursuit of the project at hand. Kaplan suggested that there needs to be no such material reality in order to construct an identity, preferring instead a values-based “representation as hypothesis” (p. 76). For her identity is truly an heuristic device, constructed and used for working in coalitions and toward particular goals. Significant features of both constructions are first, that the identities thus created do not have a single aspect or belong to any one person and second, that the constructions represent an effort to create identity based on an understanding of where certain people fit in the larger social milieu (p. 84). The identities suggested by Kaplan and Alcoff do not clearly address the nature of the relationship between individual and social, but they do suggest a second element of identity – the sense of social.

This problem, addressing the relationship between individual and social, is part of Hennessy’s larger project. Addressing the relationship allows Hennessy to create a mode of analysis that can accommodate individual subjectivity and at the same time permit a critique of problematic social totalities like racism and sexism. While she tenaciously tries to connect the individual and social, her object is not a focus on the subject but on conceptualizing and placing the subject within a system for the purpose of social critique.

For Hennessy, the social is “an ensemble of productive spheres” (1993, p. 30) that are reinforced and modified by daily living. The spheres help determine each other and work together systematically in forming social relations. Furthermore, relationships between the spheres can be understood at different social levels and historical moments. The first sphere, mode of production (economic, political, and ideological), focuses on productive forces and relationships. This sphere produces both things and life – this amounts to the quotidian results of people working and living. The second sphere, social formations, emerges when we look at various combinations of the forces of production from the first sphere. What new forces and formations emerge, and what are the relationships? People are usually engaged in a complex array of interrelated activities, so any given force of production cannot exist in isolation. Conjunctural moments, the third and broadest category, looks at institutional mechanisms (presumably produced in the second sphere) brought to bear on forces and relationships at a particular historical moment in a particular social formation. Essentially, the conjunctural sphere contextualizes and allows examination of a “big picture.” It is therefore dynamic, localized, and global for the purpose of analyzing totalities such as patriarchy and racism (p. 30-31).

A sense of social exists, then, when a person sees herself within Hennessy’s ensemble of productive spheres, as the product of and as a contributor to the social milieu. Hennessy still insists, however, that we address the relationship between the discursive (socially constructed subjectivity) and non-discursive (experiential self) within a systemic social logic (1993, p. 74). What is the means by which she can see and understand herself within the social? The connection, Hennessy argues, may be made

through ideology. Ideology is “the medium of social action and the mechanism through which subjects are constructed... ideology produces what can be seen, heard, spoken, thought, believed, valued – in other words, what counts as socially made ‘reality’” (p. 75). Foley offers a description of ideology that elaborates on Hennessy’s perspective:

...ideology refers to the various ways in which social meanings and structures are ‘produced, challenged, reproduced, and transformed’ in both individual consciousness and social practices and relationships. Ideology in this sense is an active process, one that is constructed...by people. Ideology in this sense performs both positive and negative functions. It holds a group or society together by creating shared frameworks of meaning and values. It can also be a means of domination...[b]ut hegemony is continually contested... (1999, p. 14-15)

In summary, the social is the interconnected, discursive set of productive economic, political, and ideological spheres that are reinforced and modified by lived experience (performance). A sense of social exists when a person sees herself within, as a product of, and as a contributor to the social. The connection between the self and social may be made through ideology, which is the medium for social action as well as the mechanism by which subjects are constructed and understood.

Learning Identity

I once heard someone define learning as “a change in my relationship with myself.” I’ve modified this to say “Learning is a change in my relationship with myself and my social context.” Neither statement is particularly well grounded in the literature, but they lend themselves to the idea that learning is how we ascertain who we are, where

we belong in the social order, and how we go about occupying that position. For my purposes, then, learning is one of the “ways,” or mechanisms, as Foley (1999) noted, for producing social meanings, structures, and challenges in individual consciousness, social practices, and relationships – in other words, ideological development. Learning, in short, is a means by which we form identity. It could be considered one of Hennessy’s productive forces.

Hennessy does not look at the individual as closely as the social and does not examine learning at all. Mezirow did look at learning as a process of revising interpretations of one’s experience to guide future action; the revisions, for him, occur mainly through critical reflection. Lev Vygotsky was a socially-oriented Russian psychologist whose work is on learning and development in children. His is not as narrow a perspective on learning as Mezirow’s, and it has far greater depth and sophistication in describing the process. Vygotsky appears to work from a modernist idea of the self, but his perspective on learning was sufficiently differentiated and dynamic that I believe it to be compatible with identity as described in the preceding section.

Vygotsky.

In the introduction to Vygotsky’s *Mind in Society* (1978), Cole and Scribner offer a succinct statement of Vygotsky’s notion of mediation:

“sign systems (language, writing, number systems) are created by societies over the course of human history and change with the form of society and the level of its cultural development. Vygotsky believed that the internalization of culturally produced sign systems brings about behavioral transformations and forms the bridge between early and later forms of

individual development. Thus for Vygotsky, in the tradition of Marx and Engels, the mechanism of individual developmental change is rooted in society and culture.” (p. 7)

I propose that we think of Vygotsky’s culturally produced sign systems as ideological discourses that mediate between the individual and the social, where learning is the descriptive term for internalization and subsequent changes in behavior.

Signs, Vygotsky notes, are internally oriented rather than externally oriented like tools. He says that sign use is a “means of internal activity aimed at mastering oneself; the sign is *internally* oriented.” (1978, p. 55, italics in original). But this is not entirely true; the use of signs is also aimed at mastering others. Concepts like hegemony, domination by control of truth discourses and therefore what is real or true, are based on this idea. Signs are, it would seem, both internally and externally oriented. Vygotsky seems to acknowledge this, obliquely, when he says “The use of artificial means, the transition to mediated activity, fundamentally changes all psychological operations just as the use of tools limitlessly broadens the range of activities within which the new psychological functions may operate” (1978, p. 55).

Vygotsky elaborates on internalization, marking three stages: (1) an operation that initially represents an external activity is reconstructed and begins to occur internally. (2) An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. (3) The transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one is the result of a long series of developmental events. For him, “All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals” (1978, p. 57). Tentatively at this point I conceive of learning as a descriptive term for internalization and changes in behavior.

If learning starts as interpersonal operations, and one accepts the premise that all interactions between people are marked by power relations (Cervero & Wilson, 2001; Forester, 1989), then we must seriously consider the role of power in learning. I will use the work of Vygotsky to demonstrate more clearly this need. When writing about his well-known Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), Vygotsky puts the differential between what one can do and what one is working toward in positive terms, using words such as “guidance,” “collaboration,” and “assistance” (1978, p. 86), but the interactive nature of “assistance” is an issue with power implications.

Power is not always exercised in the interests of the learner, as is demonstrated by the most cursory examination of the “assistance” provided battered women by their abusers in learning that they are worthless, stupid, ugly, and completely inept. “Guidance” is definitely provided by an abuser in teaching someone exactly how to be a battered woman. Perhaps there is “collaboration” between government agencies and social service personnel in teaching a battered woman that she will not be able to secure resources that she desperately needs to get out of a battering relationship. If she is successful in all this learning, she will have achieved a new developmental level.

This distortion of “assistance” is the sort of phenomenon that led John Dewey to discriminate between simple experience and those experiences that are “worth while educationally” (1938, p. 33) in his principle of continuity of experience (p. 35-37). For him, “growth, or growing as developing, not only physically but intellectually and morally, is one exemplification of the principle of continuity.” While experiences leading to learning and development such as that described above might not qualify as growth in

Deweyan terms, they are no less real, no less likely to result in learning, and therefore must be accounted for.

According to the definition laid out earlier, power is an important aspect of domestic violence. I demonstrated that power is a central force in learning as well, and therefore it must be conceptualized for this study. Hennessy's focus is on understanding the systemic more so than close examination and work with the subject. Her object is not to deeply understand and work with the subject for its own sake, but rather to conceptualize and place it within a social framework. In fact, she comes close to reducing the subject to a social class, as one sees in her rejection of Foucault's definition of power and displacement of it with a classical Marxist one:

Crucial to a global social logic is a systemic understanding of power as exploitation, a theory quite at odds with post-marxist notions of power as a diffused network of forces. Exploitation conceptualizes power as a process whereby the accumulation of surplus value in the form of social resources by one 'class', *depends on the work of an exploited class*.
(p. 32, italics in original)

A problem related to this is found in Hennessy's treatment of exploitation. Early in the book, she claims a general feminist commitment to "end exploitation and oppression" (p. 8). However, in the quote above she defines power in terms of exploitation. By implication, taken to its logical conclusion, the end of exploitation would mean the elimination of power. While there is not much danger of that happening, conceiving power in terms of exploitation alone is severely limiting.

For example, one can readily identify aspects of structural power in patriarchal family structures, normative violence as shown on television, or social invisibility of individuals and classes of people. However, one can just as readily see aspects of diffused power in interpersonal relations like those that involve physical domination or emotional violence. Often we see a curious mixture, where one person calls upon social structures in individual situations. For example, this mixture happens when someone uses social stereotypes to demean or dominate another individual. Power resides in a context, where environment and group activities influence learning processes. It is characteristic of interactions with other identities such as teachers and batterers, and in the thoughts or reflections of a learner. Power is ubiquitous in a Foucauldian sense (Fairclough, 1992), and is structural as well.

A second point is that thinking of power as exploitation and therefore in only negative terms may be counterproductive. Power is not a bad thing – agency is an aspect of power, and few activists would be interested in its elimination. Power, for the purposes of this study, should be understood as having different aspects, appearing at many different levels of social interaction, to all players, in combination, etc. It is far more than exploitation and requires a more sophisticated articulation.

Identity as an act of power.

How, then, to consider the nature of power? Power has been implicated at various points in the development of the identity construct. Power seems to be a chameleon-like concept. It changes appearance and takes different forms in different contexts. Within this identity construct, for example, one can see power relations as related to interactions with

other identities, impacts of interactions within smaller and larger social environments, and with learning.

Like a chameleon, power should be described partly in terms of its context. I'd like to describe some aspects of this particular context that shape power, and then some possible appearances that the power might take. The notion of learning identity has to do with the learning of an individual that shapes how she understands herself, her world, and where she fits in it. Power in this situation would seem to be held in the ability to control and interpret interactions.

The work of Habermas (1987) helps provide understanding of power as a steering medium within social systems. Social systems are built and sustained through human actions, but are inherently unstable for the same reason. With this in mind I'd like to get a sense of the batterer, victim, and how they relate to each other and society.

First, we are dealing with intra- and inter- actions at the individual level. Here, we may have very direct applications of physical force, such as pushing someone or helping someone stand up who has fallen down. Second, we have the force of words and impacts of direct verbal and non-verbal interactions. These have a small realm of application; typically the person or persons who experience them directly. This level is about the power involved in what people think, in what they say or do during a particular encounter. It seems likely to affect a person in an immediate, personal way.

At the next contextual level, we have a relatively small sphere of interaction, such as those created by the interactions between a husband and wife and their immediate environment. The "sphere of interaction" needs to be examined a bit more. Both Habermas (1987) and Hennessy (1993) consider the sphere of interaction to be a social

sub- or microsystem that is seen as a context inclusive of identities, environment, and the politics of interaction within the sphere. For Habermas, regulating exchanges between people there is communicative interaction; between people and their environments (for which linguistic communication is a functional impossibility, see. 1987, p. 263), exchanges are regulated by steering media.

Because this is a bit larger than the individual level, we have a small-scale system created by the network of forces created in the interactions of a few people. The network of forces is not extensive in that it does not go beyond their immediate environment and is relatively temporal in nature. There are systems and structures here, although the system is relatively ill-defined and the network of forces quite small. This seems to be the sort of thing embodied in a household, where there is a location, a routine, and largely understood rules, customs, or norms regulating interaction in that space. It is temporal in the sense that the household exists only as long as the people in it make it exist. As soon as they leave, it dissolves. It should also be noted that this is a base-level system and so shares characteristics of simple interaction and a larger system.

At the macro level, the combination of forces contained in various spheres of interaction becomes much larger and more abstract, forming social systems. This is the system that is the focus of Hennessey's analysis.

Communicative interaction, in essence, has to do with embracing a process of democratic decision making by creating a dialogue for the best communication between parties. It requires certain conditions to be met (i.e. that a speaker is honest and has good intentions) to create such an ideal dialogue (Welton, 1995). I would argue that in a battering situation, ideal communication with a victim is not an objective; within larger

social spheres of production, communicative interaction is not an option. In essence, a batterer is technicizing a victim's lifeworld – so, instead of communicative interaction, I describe interactions within the sphere as primarily using a steering medium. Habermas writes “The exchanges between system and environment and the exchanges among functionally specified units within a system – be it an organism or a society – have to take place by way of some medium or other. It seems obvious that communication in language is such a medium, and that special ‘languages’ such as money and power derive their structures from it...mutual understanding in language is ...an important mechanism for coordinating action...” (p. 259). For Habermas power is a medium, a special language that coordinates between organisms and their environments. For him, it is “a steering medium anchored in the political system and exhibiting structural analogies to money” (p. 257).

Habermas uses the work of Talcott Parsons to think in some detail about power as a steering medium within a societal subsystem. There are a few important points that Habermas makes regarding power; one is that “...there seems to be an inherent tendency for power potential...to degenerate...A party in power has not only to husband its deposit of power; it must keep it fresh by realizing it in action and engaging in confrontations of power from time to time; it must demonstrate it has power through testing it” (p. 269). The second important point regards claim and redemption... Habermas writes that power claims are backed by “disposition over means of enforcement that can be used to threaten sanctions or to apply direct force.” Finally, Habermas notes that power has a tendency to “get bound up symbiotically in the person of the powerful” (p. 269.)

Those three points are particularly pertinent in the case of domestic violence situations. In a case where we have a small sphere of interaction that is not governed by the rules of communicative interaction but instead by a steering medium of power, institutional power is also immediate and personal. The cycle of violence in battering relationships may be seen as an exemplar of the first point. The cycle of violence according to Lenore Walker has three phases: 1) tension 2) acute battering and 3) honeymoon. The tension is a buildup phase in which one party attempts to placate the abuser, “walking on eggshells” to prevent battering from occurring. At a certain point the tension breaks and a battering incident takes place. After the incident, the batterer may be contrite, sweet and loving, showering the victim with gifts and apologies. The cycle then returns to the tension phase; over time typically the cycles will escalate – tension and honeymoon phases become shorter, and the violence becomes worse until in some cases it is fatal. Not all domestic violence scenarios have a honeymoon phase (Walker, 2000).

In Habermasian terms, the batterer is keeping his power potential fresh by bringing about new demonstrations of it periodically in an acute battering phase. Furthermore, since a batterer tries to make sure that all means of enforcement are under his control, power over interactions on individual and social levels are quite literally bound up in the person of the powerful.

One point that Habermas and Parsons do not address is the frequency of demonstrations of power potential within a sphere of interaction. In the case of domestic violence, it seems entirely possible that the frequency of displays might have some relationship to the stability or security of the power potential.

Chapter 4: Narratives and Analysis

I negotiated narratives with each of the participants (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 2000). Descriptions of the negotiations are discussed in the first section, Background and History, of each woman's narrative. Narratives were based on data and shaped by the purposes of the study, which included an effort to address events or issues that the authors thought would speak, disturbingly, to readers. To accomplish this, I made use of a creative writing style.

One of the techniques I used was the employment of separate voices. The main voice is a voice of narration, although the narrator changes from time to time. One particular voice of note is the voice of Heather-as-researcher, where I am commenting on the main text. This commentary ranges from descriptions and feelings to analysis and discussion of literature. It takes the appearance of italics to set it off from the main text.

Mine was the first data that I had. I began by reading through my journal and email writings. As I read, I identified various recurring strands and major events, highlighting the text and recording their locations on index cards. I went back through the data according to the index card for each strand and wrote out the content of each strand in a roughly narrative form. By doing this, I was able to determine how prominent a strand was in the journals, when it occurred, how significant it was, patterns within that strand, how it related to other strands, and possibilities for larger themes related to identity, domestic violence, and learning. I then used the strands to construct the narrative by "weaving" them back together, arranging elements of each strand by date, significance, and frequency of occurrence.

Maryann's and Wanda's narratives did not start in transcript or journal form and were coded differently from the raw, written data described above. Instead, using the strands from my narrative as foundation codes, I identified common threads between the strands and new ones as well, recording again on other index cards. The complete set of themes achieved at the end of coding all three narratives was foundation material for data analysis.

Starting Points: Background and History

This section is in one sense preliminary. Exploring shifts in identity requires a context and a point of entry, and some background is therefore necessary to get a fairly deep, holistic sense of each participant as she went into her battering relationship. Each section is prefaced by a short description of the negotiation process I used for constructing participant's narrative. At the end, I describe some aspects of identity for each woman. The process of writing identity will be repeated at the end of each of the other two main sections of this chapter, Battering and Aftermath.

Wanda.

Wanda's narrative was difficult to write, as she was less overtly expressive than Maryann or me. Her feelings and opinions were no less present, but it was difficult to capture detail and nuance in the narrative. She expressed an opinion of herself as a not-terribly-gifted writer and preferred to review a narrative that I composed based on our interviews rather than writing or co-writing one with me. I initially shaped the narrative directly from interview transcripts, letters and personal documents that she gave me as part of the data set, then edited based on observations, conversations, and field notes.

Wanda is the eldest of us, at around sixty years of age. She was soft-spoken when we met, so much so that interview transcripts were hard to make and I wondered after the first interview if I should get a better microphone. She appeared to be, not exactly apprehensive or overly nervous, bracing herself, perhaps. We made tea and settled ourselves comfortably on a sofa in a bright room. The microphone sat between us. I was pretty nervous; this stuff is such serious material and I was such a novice that I wasn't sure I'd be able to get it right. I was emotionally raw and weary from a long interview

with Maryann the night before. I figured that history and background were relatively easy and should get us started, and so we began.

Wanda told me that she grew up in a family with five children, her grandmother, and parents all in a 3-bedroom house. They lived in an industrial coal-and-steel town in Pennsylvania. She told me about herself, sister, and grandmother sharing one bedroom, with boys in another and parents in the third. When she was growing up, Wanda's mother worked inside the home; she didn't do paid work until after Wanda left for college, when she started working in a garment factory. She worked until she was sixty-two.

Wanda's mother interrupted us briefly. Her elderly mother recently came to live with Wanda, as she is not as strong as she used to be and becomes easily disoriented. They bought a house together – it's a pretty, comfortable place with a fenced backyard and wooden floors.

Wanda's father, now deceased, was a steel worker who had a decent income and supported the family financially. She qualified this by telling me how, every couple of years, the steelworkers went on strike. The family would lose all the savings they'd put away; and they would have to start all over again. Her father retired at a younger age than her mother because of health issues. He had quit smoking several years before retiring, but Wanda believes his emphysema was aggravated because of working in the steel mill. She told me a little about how her family lived:

We weren't "fancy rich" you know, dad would give mom so much a week to buy groceries and when we were on str...when *he* was on strike – [muttering] when "we" were on strike – huh! ...then, they didn't have food stamps as such but they did have a coupons kind of thing. I took blue

cards to the store and we were able to get rice, bread, cheese, noodles, potatoes and canned meat. And milk. And ...we managed. And you know, you knew what you were gonna have for supper one day. I mean, Monday was this night, [chuckling] Tuesday was this night and Sunday was roast beef, mashed potatoes and gravy. [chuckling] So mom handled it pretty good.

My father was not an affectionate kind of person – not abusive, he wasn't mean, he was just busy. He was, uh, caring in the sense that he was a provider and he made sure that everything was taken care of. Mom was more affectionate with us kids, but we didn't see affection at home. When dad was around was the whole thing was children were seen not heard. It's kind of what I grew up with. "Behave yourselves, don't make noise", but it wasn't "nasty" kind of stuff.

Wanda continued with a description of how things were strict when she was growing up, but she seems to believe they were good and she grew up in a happy home. *I wondered about the snort and comment regarding who was on the strike. She doesn't seem to have thought much of the strikes. Or did she simply see a hardship created by strikes when she was a child while benefits of the strike were less obvious? She seemed anxious to present family life in very balanced terms – not a glowing description, perhaps, but not a super-hard life. An absence of affection, though, I'm not sure what to make of it but will file it away to think on. Wanda doesn't describe a personal relationship with any family member during this part of the conversation; it's very general stuff.*

Like many families that deal with shift work, night shifts were the hardest on children because they had to keep quiet during the day for their father to sleep. She reminisced a little bit, recalling fondly times when her dad was on a three-to-eleven shift and they'd have a dinner treat of grilled cheese sandwiches, to the children's delight. On Sundays, the family would pack into a large car and go for a drive, sometimes to see Wanda's other grandmother. *Wanda's voice was warm and her face looked happy as she reminisced about the weekend events.*

Wanda told me of difficulties with depression, to the point where she would hurt herself from a very early age. She has many thin, pale scars on her arms and wrists. If you ask, she will tell you frankly that she'd hurt herself as a young girl and had suicidal tendencies for a long time. She believes her depression is due to a biological, chemical imbalance that has been with her for a long time. Medication alleviates the symptoms. She told me that while she was married and had children at home, she never considered suicide. *Wanda seems to have needed something to live for that was "more" than herself. It seems evident that her choosing medicine for a profession, marriage and children along with the medication helped her manage that serious condition.*

Wanda said she had not dated at all during her teens and young adulthood, the sole exceptions being one blind date while she was in college and a date to the junior high prom. She told me that she remained at home after high school and began attending a local college that was part of a large state university system. It was very small, situated in an old elementary school building. The bookstore was in an outbuilding and she estimates a total enrollment of no more than 50. After a year of preparatory coursework, Wanda moved to a large Eastern city and pursued her studies in medicine.

During this part of our discussion Wanda seemed delighted with describing her tiny preparatory college in detail. She spoke of school and work with a firmer, more brisk tone that I interpreted as notes of confidence and pride in her voice.

From then she pursued her life as a doctor, to which she was very dedicated and quite successful. It gave her a strong feeling of worth and of pride in herself and her achievements. Eventually she moved from the practice of medicine into medical education. She said, "I was very independent. I traveled... I ended up moving to West Virginia."

Wanda seems to have a strong working-class identification and to have grown up in a strongly patriarchal environment. They had a stereotypical family with a father-breadwinner-head of household working for wages and a stay-at-home mom with kids.

Wanda doesn't appear to have had a very positive self-image as a child and young adult. She struggled with depression and was not active socially. On the other hand, Wanda either did not have, or did not express, any doubts about her intelligence or general competence. She describes her professional life in a matter-of-fact way that does little to emphasize the magnitude of her achievements. To me, she seems self-effacing. One gets the sense that she has accepted hardship as a normal part of life and sees little need to complain about unfairness or lack of attention/affection from others.

There is a strong sense of personal agency and pride that I picked up from her descriptions of herself as a professional. It was all the more notable because of her lack of confidence socially. At this early stage, her choice of professions and care of an elderly parent suggest that she has long had a very strong ethic of care.

Wanda didn't voluntarily give much detail about formative events or people in her youth. This was a pattern. Interviewing Wanda required effort and very intense concentration. She answered questions but didn't volunteer information, which is consistent with what she said about herself in a later interview.

Heather.

Negotiating a narrative for myself as participant and researcher was a delicate process. My preferences for tone and shape of narrative were negotiated internally in something like “real-time member-checking.” The substance of the narrative evolved through a practice of extensive writing during the first year after my separation, some of which was in a journal and some in a letter form. The writings covered a lot of territory, from a detailed examination of thoughts and beliefs to passing comments on the everyday.

It is interesting that, as long as my narrative is, the first several drafts included virtually none of my childhood and youth. I’d handwritten a little of it while I was writing about battering, but left out most of the detail. This part is very hard for me in several ways. It is in this part, if anywhere, that I feel really vulnerable to readers. Many of the events described occurred long ago and I had come to terms with them in various ways. Writing this not only required articulating them, but required me to think about them in my role of researcher. And, of course, there is a real possibility of upsetting people I care about: my family.

I grew up in a military family. My father held an enlisted rank in the US Navy. I was born in Japan. We lived in several places – southern California, Italy, South Florida, and Maryland being the major ones. While I was growing up we had one or two long stays but mostly we moved about every three years. We were neither wealthy nor poor. We were what I call military class – we didn’t exactly fit in the working class as I understand it and we sure didn’t fit into the middle or upper middle class. We were closer to working class than anything, though.

I was and am rather proud of the travel we did. It did indeed offer a different perspective, and I had experienced many things that others I knew, especially the people I knew after we left the military, had not. It also left me somewhat rootless and unable to answer common questions like “Where are you from?” I struggled with the idea of home for many years.

Things were okay for us in San Diego. In fact, I remember it rather fondly, as much as I remember. My memories of early childhood are very spotty and I remember virtually nothing before age five or six. There was one significant formative event that bears mention – I’ve never tried to write about it before. When I was five, I was diagnosed with a hip condition, Perthes (for a little background on Perthes, follow this link: http://www.surgerydoor.co.uk/medical_conditions/Indices/P/perthes.htm). In my five-year-old understanding, the ball part of the ball and socket that forms the hip deteriorated. I was in the hospital for a few days – three, if I remember right – and then bound into casts. My legs were swathed in plaster from ankle to thigh and held apart at 90-degree angles by two wooden bars (I believe to immobilize the joint while bone grew back). They stayed that way for thirteen months, although every few months I’d have the casts off for a few days and would ride in a wheelchair or drag myself on floors to move about.

I was pretty feisty (though not rebellious), and I’m sure I frustrated my mother and doctors. I broke those casts and bars countless times – my mother used to say that I gained 50 pounds each time she took me back to the hospital because of all the plaster repairs she made on my casts between visits. I jumped off swings, went down the slide into the sand, hung upside down in the monkey bars (and got stuck), climbed trees, and

tried to ride the tricycles in kindergarten (with legs propped on handlebars and hands on pedals). Pity was not in my lexicon and I believe I occasionally offended well-meaning people by scorning their proffered assistance. There were only two really bad parts of this experience. One was my kindergarten teacher, who (to my way of thinking) believed that damaged legs meant that one had a damaged brain and treated me accordingly. The other was learning to bend my knees and walk again after my casts were removed the final time. That was excruciatingly painful. In later years, though, the experience gave me some insight into what it is like being a handicapped person.

As an undergraduate I gave a speech in speech class about the experience (and got a perfect score). Feeling it deeply, I spoke of people not meeting the eyes of handicapped people, not knowing how to talk naturally, not making contact, crossing the street to avoid them, and so on. It was a case where I was one of us (fully able) and one of them (the disabled). Like many others, I sometimes struggled with feelings of distaste and did not always handle interactions with the severely handicapped as well as I might have liked. Still I believed that I had a better understanding of that particular prejudice than many people do.

Things started to change with my family while we were in Italy. I liked it when the ship was out – it was like we were happy for two weeks at a time. Then my sister and I would lie quietly and try not to be noticed for two weeks while the ship was in port and my dad was at home. We were afraid. My father didn't beat us or anything, but he was controlling, intimidating, and impossible to please. At the same time, I lived in a place where I could run free, see the sheep going through town, and wander about on neighboring mountains. I was able to see sights like the beautiful cathedrals in Rome, the

ruins of Pompeii, Mt. Vesuvius, and wonderful old castles. I have a particularly pleasant memory of my father. Because we lived in a mountain chain we had spectacular views of thunderstorms taking place in the valley below. One night he took my sister and me out in such a storm. I remember how he tried to explain lightning, atoms, electricity and other such things; it was probably a bit dangerous, but it was an incredible experience! I have an abiding fondness for thunderstorms to this day.

Why is it that I always feel compelled to point out that it wasn't so bad, that it could have been worse? That if I did something well, I also did things poorly? Makes for a pretty pathetic "victim" narrative.

In Florida things were worse. I was an androgynous tomboy and a voracious reader who, according to my peers, "talked like a dictionary." I was a frequent victim of the female bullies in my age group. My mother was unhappy and my teenaged sister was rebellious. I mostly tried to remain inconspicuous. While I usually dreaded doing things with my father because I could not completely escape his attention at those times, it was not always terrible and we did interesting things like boating, fishing, and scuba diving. It's a lot of fun to pick up live conchs of different varieties, to see sea horses, net for shrimp, and hang out with groupers. I liked it that my parents liked doing interesting things.

Maryland was pure misery. We'd left the military and I felt insecure - naked, almost - when we left the Navy. It was the first time I'd heard of "health insurance" and "civilian" seemed like profanity. My sister and father fought often. She'd rebel against his authoritarianism and he'd clamp down harder. She left home at 18, when I was 14. He was angry all the time, it seemed. My mother and I would ask him to do something, and

he'd refuse. Then he'd be hurt and even angrier when we went on ahead without him. My mother had begun working outside the home, although my father was opposed to it and never took her earnings seriously. It was a cold war, the War of the Words. I hated my father and even began to think he'd made a game out of seeing how fast he could make me cry.

It was a strange sort of thing. It was sort of like I, as a member of my father's family, was smarter and more capable than everyone else in the world. I remember, for example, how my father would pit me in chess against a fellow he worked with and then boast when I beat him. At the same time I was stupid. Incredibly stupid, inept, and unable to do a single thing right. Not only was I stupid, I was also told I was fat (not true - I was quite slender), ugly, and my friends were worthless. I don't think that I was unlike other teenagers in having much angst, but the verbal cuts that took place in my home went beyond the pale and I learned to hate myself as well as my father. My self-confidence was very low. I was incredibly stupid, yet smart. I was never the best. I'd long ago concluded that "second place" was the story of my life, and I'd never be the best, or even really good, at anything.

I hated my high school where I was always an outsider. I had not lived in the area since childhood, like so many of the other students. I had few friends and most of those I didn't believe were true friends. I had to be careful about my best friend because he came out as gay (we had many long, late-night conversations while he was wrestling with his sexuality and internalized homophobia) and my father was incredibly homophobic as well as racist. One problem I did not have was dating, however. I attracted men almost

without effort, and usually was dating or had a boyfriend through high school and college.

Being a “brain” (one of the intellectual elite) protected me in high school. I did well but not as well as I could have. I felt that my parents did not care about my schooling, as they never showed any interest until report cards showed up. Even then my father would not say anything although I was sure someone would if there was a bad grade, so I kept the grades pretty high. My parents never seemed to want to go to events, complaining about the inconvenience, the teacher in charge, or something. They seemed proud enough of my achievements to brag to others, though, since they sometimes told me of bragging about my achievements. I left home for college (on scholarship) as soon as I could and never looked back.

My parents separated at the time I left for college and it was a bitter four years. At the same time other unpleasantness developed. My mother had been my best friend when I was growing up. I adored her. My friends adored her, and she was close to most of them. She was smart, personable, and beautiful. She would tell me she was proud of me and that she loved me. Yet, she did some things when I was a teenager that were incredibly dishonest, indiscreet and, I thought, unforgivable. I began to question why she’d never stood up for me and my sister against my father. I was angry with her for nearly five years! All the while I struggled with these issues, I hated myself. I thought I was ugly, stupid, and worthless.

My parents remained separated because they’d not been able to agree on what a divorce settlement should be. It looked like their case was going to go to court. Both parents were sure that they were right, that they’d “win,” so they wanted to fight it out in

court. That was bad; my sister and I were in a quandary because we thought we'd have to testify and our parents each wanted us to take their sides. To avoid the court case, at the tender age of twenty-two I negotiated (from a few hundred miles away by telephone) and wrote my parents' divorce settlement. Neither was happy with the result, although I thought it was equitable and they agreed to sign it. I considered the fact that both were unhappy to be a sign that I'd probably done a pretty good job.

In retrospect one would think that we didn't have it so bad. Both parents were responsible, free of addictions and concerned for the well-being of their children. The violence in my home was seldom physical. We had plenty to eat, a roof over our heads, and some extras. Later, I thought more about how my father was angry all the time. Now I think that he was probably hurting emotionally himself. I believe that he was the best husband and father that he knew how to be and we must have seemed terribly ungrateful. He was isolated and unloved in his own home. In more recent years, when I learned more about the history of my extended family, I gained quite a bit of perspective on and appreciation for all the things that my father was not. My views on my parents became more balanced and compassionate with time, and my relationships with all family members improved.

As a youngster, I thought that because of my travel and experiences, I had a wider view of the world than most kids. I usually felt like an outsider for the same reason. I was not that confident socially, but not without friends or dates. I believed that I had better experience with and sympathy for people who suffered because of some social issues (such as disabilities and homosexuality) than other young people did. I knew what it was to live as a linguistic minority.

However, the anger, control, and intimidation in my home undermined much of my confidence, and I lived with ever-fluctuating contradictions regarding my body, intellect, and self-worth. On the whole, I was never able to completely deny my intelligence because there was undeniable evidence (grades and scholarships, for example) and I think I showed evidence of a certain amount of agency as a result. I, like Wanda, grew up in a strongly patriarchal setting. I was raised in the 1970s and 80s, in and outside of the United States, within a conservative military family.

I have wondered many times why my specific memories of childhood are vague and spotty in so many places. I tended to remember feelings and impressions first and very few events in specific detail. Because of that, I actually checked much of what I've written with various members of my family to see if my memories matched theirs.

Maryann.

At the beginning of our negotiations, Maryann was emphatic that any part of the narrative written in the first person be composed and edited by her only. Every word and punctuation mark that is not in italics is Maryann's. Our compromise, suggested by Maryann, was to have two voices, her own and myself as a narrator that would allow me to comment and make transitions. She used our interview transcripts, her existing writings, and new writings. We began a back-and-forth practice where Maryann would send me text she'd written and I offered editorial feedback in order to shape the document. We maintained frequent communications as the document evolved. She gave me permission to cut text in order to make the document a manageable length, although I asked her approval of any cuts I made. It was at this final stage that my comments were inserted as the narrator's voice.

In terms of tone, we wished to capture the sense of being beaten from all sides and by almost everyone without reprieve, as well as sensations of fear and of being utterly alone. There is a lot of history in Maryann's story, and I thought quite a bit about how much of it to include. Still, even if it is a lot, it's essential and I concluded that I would take all the space necessary.

I was one of 6 children in an affluent family. Dad was a well-educated medical professional who made good money, but he was not a kind man. My mother had a bachelor's degree at a time when very few women went to college. Although her own parents had been working class, she was very conscious of her role in supporting my father's career and promoting a good image in society. *I wondered about this. Would a working-class woman not know her role in support and such?* She was a schoolteacher

for years until she had her children, then she stopped working outside the home. Most of my parents' friends were the country club set – Doctors, Lawyers, College Professors. In addition to my father's income, he had some family money. Growing up, I was aware that we had a lot of privileges that other kids didn't have – we traveled a great deal and owned a summer home. We were very comfortable. *To me things like “family money” and “comfortable” were euphemisms for “rich.” I actually felt rather small sometimes during these parts of the discussions, rather gauche, and was uncomfortably aware of my working-class background.*

My father was never around much. He lived with us, but he was busy with his career and various social organizations. He'd come home from work, eat dinner and then go out again to a meeting or back to the office. He was a very intelligent, articulate man, and he could verbally disembowel someone with amazing skill; we grew up with constant criticism and derision. It was extremely rare to ever hear him say something kind to any of us. As I got older, I discovered that he was not this way just with his family, but he had a reputation in his profession for being powerful and ruthless. He was well known for being vicious to people he did not consider allies. Professionally, my father wasn't a man to be toyed with; he was very good at playing the political game and he had a lot of power. I can remember hearing stories over the years of people saying that my father had destroyed careers, and had destroyed peoples' lives.

I don't think my father had a clue how to relate to children, except as a pool of free labor. He didn't seem to know how to talk to us, so most of the time he ignored us. We were OK with that, because when he noticed one of us, we became the target of his sarcasm and criticism. He viewed childcare as being strictly women's work and so if he

happened to be in the room when one of us would require adult intervention, his response was never to interact directly with us, but to yell for my mother to come and take care of it. By the time I was 12, I had figured out that I knew more about cooking, caring for children, changing diapers and running a house than my father did. He didn't even know how a stove worked! I lost a lot of respect for him when I realized that he was completely dependent upon having his wife or children cook his meals, do his laundry and clean up after him. I began questioning just how powerful my father really was, and why I was being ordered to respect and obey him without question, when clearly there were many things that I understood better than he did. He may have been a superstar in his profession, but his profession was not my world, and in my world he was appallingly helpless and ignorant.

Serious case of stereotype gender roles here – mother supporting father, mother and children responsible for his care and feeding. I find it interesting that a child of 12 years would be able to question the power of a parent that way, and to make a distinction between home and professional worlds so well. This also is one side of the story. If he didn't know how to relate to children, does that mean he didn't like them?

My mother had 6 children to raise. Although we had cleaning ladies and other people my parents would hire periodically to help out, I felt that my mother was pretty overwhelmed. My father focused much of his cruelty and verbal abuse on her. She used to confide in me a lot, since I was the oldest girl and she would tell me about the nasty things he had done or said to her. When I was about 7, Mom went away and we didn't see her for months. I vaguely remember that they told us she had a nervous breakdown,

and for several months, a college student lived with us and became our primary caregiver. The doctors put mom on Valium, which I believe she was addicted to for years.

Maryann's relationship with her mother seems to be ambivalent. She feels sympathy for her mother, as her mother bore the brunt of her father's temperament. Her mother's confidences really bothered her. Much of Maryann's recollection appears to be colored by who and what she is now, as well as her study of sociology and domestic violence. It is as though she feels sympathy but not a lot of respect for her mother. Next to her father, her mother was weak. I wonder, though, if her mother was protecting her and the other children?

Even after she returned, my mother spent a lot of time in bed for the next several years, and we were virtually raised by this college student for the few years that she lived with us. This student and I didn't get along very well. I was the antithesis of what she thought a proper girl should be. I was a tomboy, very independent and feisty. I remember she often said to me, "No man will ever want you." and "You will never find a husband." I was frequently reminded that I was a real disappointment and as the oldest daughter, I had obligations to my family, which I was not fulfilling. After she left, I felt a sense of responsibility to look out for my younger siblings. I took on a lot of the parental responsibilities as a child. By the time I was 12, I often cooked dinner for our family of 8, and did much of the housecleaning as well.

This is also interesting. Maryann says she didn't agree with the "proper girl" theme, but at the same time she appears to have absorbed it rather well. This seems to be an imposition on her sense of self, though one could just as easily say that she was "formed" and "molded" as children should be.

I was a loner and was painfully shy. I had a speech impediment through the first few years of elementary school, which contributed to my shyness. We moved several times when I was in grade school and I had a tough time adjusting to new friends and new schools. I was very conscious of the fact that having traveled and lived in other places, I'd had a lot of experiences that my peers had never had, and realized that I had a broader perspective on the world than the other kids, and even many of my teachers. What saved me was that I loved to read, and I would bury myself in my books, partly to avoid the agony of trying to make friends and fit in with the other kids. *This is so reminiscent of my own childhood and way of dealing with things that I have to smile as I read it.* This worked pretty well for me until fourth grade, when the class bully attacked me and I successfully defended myself against him. This gave me a reputation as a "bad ass," which led to many more fights, but I was never caught fighting. The teachers may have turned a blind eye to it because nobody wanted to mess with my mother. There were a few instances where something happened at school and my mother raised hell with the principal. I can remember seeing the faces of the principal and the teacher when my mother was finished with them, and I was shocked when I realized that she actually had more power than they did. She had always been so insistent about us being very respectful to our teachers. I'd always been taught that I should not question authority - especially because I was a girl. That message came through to me loud and clear when I was growing up: A proper girl always obeys the authority figure, with unquestioning compliance. *There are several things here. One, of course, is the return to power. This narrative is saturated with it! With Maryann trying to figure out who was in charge so she could obey, and early discovering contradictions – like her mother, who was*

subservient to her father, having so much power over those whom her mother told her to obey.

By the time I got into junior high, I was hoping to lose my “bad ass” reputation. Although that image of “the feisty tomboy who would kick your ass if you messed with her” is probably a much more accurate description of who I really was, I was trying very hard to be more like the young lady my mother expected me to be. Although I avoided getting into fights in junior high, I wasn’t exactly successful in becoming a docile conformist. I was a practical joker and had started thinking up pranks and then playing them on other students and occasionally on my teachers. More often I would think up some stunt and then talk another student into doing it for me. I didn’t play these jokes on people for the attention, because I rarely allowed anyone to know that I did it, or thought of it. I think it was my way of dealing with feeling lost in a school environment, which seemed full of illogical bureaucratic rules.

This sounds a great deal like a person living in conflict. She was in struggle with identities around her, well aware that she was out of sync with the “proper young lady of good family” discourse that surrounded her on a daily basis.

The conflict between my parents was bad during those years, and my mother often spoke of feeling trapped in a miserable marriage. I felt very much in the middle of this conflict because each time my father would do something spiteful to her, she would recount the incidents to me. In spite of her unhappiness, Mom did what she could to be a great parent. She sewed many of our clothes, maintained a huge garden each summer, and we canned or froze most of the vegetables we would eat through the year. She was aware that my father was not around enough to be much of role model for us and when he

was present, he was critical and demeaning. She tried to compensate for this by making sure that we had other role models; we were active with sports, the arts, scouting, and other interests, which meant she had to chauffeur 6 kids to these many activities. *On the one hand, her mother committed a terrible breach of what I would consider a responsible parenting for making her child a confidante. Maryann has said as much. Then, Maryann writes about “good parenthood” in terms of material things like canning and sewing. Then she writes of an equally terrible breach – keeping children around someone who was critical and demeaning, but trying hard to show them how not to be critical and demeaning by providing other role models. If Maryann’s mother taught the children anything, it seems to me, it was how to create and live with unbearable contradictions.* But these efforts were overshadowed by the fact that there were so many days when she was so depressed that she didn’t get out of bed, and when we did see her, she lost her temper more often. I remember running through the house when she was mad at me, trying to get away from her, and fearing that her anger was so out of control that she might kill me if she caught me. There were several incidents when one of us narrowly escaped being seriously injured by a flying bottle or scalding water. She was always horrified by the incident the moment it was over and she realized how close she had come to injuring or killing one of us, and she was always very apologetic and tearful. I became more and more emotionally detached with each incident, especially the ones where I was the victim. Eventually it became a permanent state. For the next 10 years of my life, I almost never cried or laughed. I rarely felt afraid, just numb most of the time. When I did feel anything, my emotional repertoire was reduced to mostly anger or shame, and whatever I felt, I rarely showed to anyone. *We move back toward another*

contradiction – a mother lost in depression and her own cycle of violent, battering behavior.

I don't remember much of 8th or 9th grade, when that bright, feisty, independent kid I had been, just disappeared. *It is clear that she values those traits now, although she seems to feel that they were devalued by those around her when she was a child. I got a real sense of her being angry about this. In the following section she was just as angry while seeming terribly hurt and betrayed. The molestation she writes about was sexual.*

When I was about 14, a boy who was several years older started molesting me. He was someone my parents highly respected and he was treated with a lot of deference in my family. I had looked up to this boy, but he consistently seemed to ignore me or treat me with derision. The first time that he arranged to be alone with me, I was flattered that he finally seemed to notice me, and I felt so empty when I realized what his real motives were. I agonized for months over telling my mother. I wasn't sure if the boy would get into terrible trouble, which would be my fault because I had told on him, or if my mother would do nothing and I would be left to resolve this myself. My mother was barely able to cope with her life as it was, and I didn't want to be the one to cause any further hardship. I think the molestation occurred for almost a year before I finally convinced myself that if I told my mother what was really happening, she would protect me from him, but when I finally worked up the courage to confide in her, I was stunned by her response. She accused me of being a whore (that was the first time I'd ever heard the word – I looked it up later that day to see what it meant) and she accused me of instigating it. She told me I had caused so much embarrassment for the family if anyone ever found out about this and I had put her in such an awkward position. I don't think

she ever told anyone else in the family about it, but she must have said something to the boy. He never came after me again. I never witnessed any consequences for the boy, and she withdrew from me emotionally. I was truly devastated. I no longer trusted her to be there for me in any way. She had made it very clear that I could, and would, be sacrificed to protect the reputation of a more powerful male, and to avoid embarrassing the family.

Yet another trauma. This is the sort of trauma that many, many abused people encounter. First, one is victimized. Then, when one finally finds the courage to try to address it, those who could help discredit, ridicule, and deny. It is a double whammy and the second trauma is at least as bad as the first. If not worse, because in the first instance one can be pretty sure that the abuser doesn't have one's best interests in mind. The second, betrayal of responsibility and love bonds by a parent, is devastating. I wonder if Maryann made the gender connection then, or more recently as an adult. The gender connection comes in clearly, however.

At that point I realized I was on my own and there was nobody looking out for my best interests. That reality had probably been true for many years, but it hit me hard. I decided at that point that I didn't have any parents. A lot of things changed then. Although my grades had been slipping a little in the past year, since the boy had started molesting me, I had been a very good student. I placed in advanced classes and was earning very good grades. But after that, I spent most of my time in school reading library books or drawing elaborate sketches and ignoring what the teacher was saying. I had a lot of Attention Deficit issues, which weren't diagnosed at that time, so maintaining good grades required a huge effort on my part. *Maryann is referring to Attention Deficit*

Disorder (ADD), a condition where a person basically cannot pay attention to any one thing for more than a brief period. Such people often appear disorganized and unable to keep track of things or events. I would spend hours on my homework, and then not be able to find it the next day to turn it in. I was frequently embarrassed in front of other students because I didn't have my homework, and the teachers thought I hadn't done it at all. This didn't happen once a month, this happened two or three times a week -- it was my normal routine. I suspect that my ADD issues probably became worse for me at this point because of the added stress of my life at home, and the increased workload of Junior High. I was used to doing my homework twice and doing extra work to keep my grades up, but as things got worse at home I cared less and wasn't willing to put in that extra work anymore. I felt that I was just going to be a failure as a student; no matter how hard I tried, I could not get it together and I had begun to believe that I was just dumber than the rest of the kids in my classes.

A clear downward slide here.

A year or so after I felt my mother had abandoned me, my father suddenly noticed that I existed. The year I turned 15 and acquired breasts, my father made a point of taking me to work with him and showing me around to all of his friends. He would introduce me to his colleagues, who had known me for years. He would say, "Hey, here's my daughter! Gee, you haven't seen her in a while, have you? Look what happened! Isn't she something? We have our very own Jayne Mansfield here!" I had no idea who Jayne Mansfield was, but I felt like I was being put on display for all these men. I don't have any memory of my father touching me in any way that would be inappropriate, but I certainly felt that he saw me in a different light once puberty hit. I

interpreted his behavior as meaning that I was only valued for my looks, and given the number of times he'd told me that I had done something stupid, the message I internalized was that the only value I had, especially to men, was to be sexy, look good, and act stupid.

Jayne Mansfield was an actress, a platinum blonde who had a sensational career in the 1950s and 60s, and gained world renown as a sex symbol. She died at age 34 in 1967 as the result of a car accident. Maryann repeatedly mentioned the Jayne Mansfield comment during our interviews and other interaction -- clearly she believes that her father only saw her as a sex object.

I remember only small bits and pieces of the years when I was in Senior High. *Another point. All three of us have had memory problems of one type or another that I shall try to highlight as we go through. Memory loss is a fairly common side effect of trauma and symptom of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.* I was a loner at home and at school. As a student, my grades were mediocre, and I wasn't alarmed at this, since I didn't think of myself as anything but a dumb blonde. *The "dumb blonde" is a cultural stereotype that appears to have had particular power for Maryann – note that she says it several times in the following pages. The dumb blonde stereotype refers to women with blonde hair as being attractive, often buxom, but having little or nothing by way of intelligence or common sense.* I had learned that playing stupid allowed me to fade into the background, and not to feel as hurt when I made a fool of myself in front of other students. I became so good at playing that role that I actually believed it. *This is a good example of acting unnatural roles until we adopt them as part of our identities.* I tried to hide my figure. I spent a lot of time in the nurse's office during the school day. I started

getting migraine headaches and when I went to the nurse, she would call my mother, who would refuse to drive to the school to pick me up. *Another point about abuse and it affecting victims' health in myriad ways. It appears that Maryann grew up in a non-physical battering situation and suffered one of the known effects on children in domestically violent homes, that of chronic physical complaints (Zink et al., 2004).* The nurse would just put me in a darkened room and let me sleep for the rest of the day. After awhile, they didn't bother to call my mother anymore, and I began stopping in the nurse's office anytime I just felt overwhelmed, so I could sleep to escape from my life for a few hours. I don't know why the faculty or administrators at my high school were not alarmed that I was sleeping through so many of my classes. If my guidance counselor had looked at my IQ scores, he should have been concerned that I was barely passing my classes. But I would not have admitted that anything was wrong, even if they had asked me. I didn't trust anyone. There was one teacher I felt very connected to and I might eventually have confided in him, but he was evidently as depressed as I was, as he committed suicide during my junior year. *Yet another trauma.* I remember feeling like once again, I had been abandoned, but I wasn't particularly surprised. I had begun to accept that trauma and tragedy were a normal part of life and I had begun to doubt the fairy tale that someone was supposed to step up and be there for me. I also began to consider the possibility that suicide was an acceptable option. *I would assume this means that anyone who is not family as she said a while back that she didn't have parents. I am not really surprised about her thoughts of suicide. She doesn't seem to believe that she had anything, or anyone that cared about her for her own sake.*

The only guy I dated in high school was four years older than me. He was a decent, hard-working guy with an easy-going temperament and I was in love. After dating for a year, we started planning to get married when I graduated. Although I wanted to become a paramedic, I doubted that I was capable of achieving that, so marriage looked like a more realistic option, and certainly my best hope of getting out of my parents' house. A few weeks before my senior prom, I found out he was seeing another girl behind my back. I ended the relationship and gave up my hopes and dreams of that new life with him.

For some of us this wouldn't have been as big a trauma – not that it isn't for an adolescent, but perhaps it was magnified as she finds trust and happiness trumped again.

Once again, I felt betrayed and abandoned and I saw this as proof that men especially could not be trusted. I decided that if men only valued women as sex objects and not as real people with feelings, then I would have to avoid men altogether, or change my expectations. I decided to just accept that all men wanted or expected from me was for me to be sexy, look good and act dumb. Because I personally didn't value those traits, I seriously underestimated how highly men valued them. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was a very pretty young woman, with a figure like Marilyn Monroe. If I had believed that a woman with a pretty face and a great body could exploit men, my cynicism at the time probably would have allowed me to play my assets for all they were worth, but I was still very naïve about men, and I was still idealistic enough to hope that I might meet someone who would love and appreciate me.

This is interesting indeed. Men especially; she really generalized to all men about valuing sex and stupidity in women. She paints a victimhood that is pretty severe, has

seen power games, and yet somehow remained completely naïve? I'm not sure I understand this.

The summer after I graduated, I enrolled in fire school and got my certification as an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), so that I could start working at the local fire company. I did very well in the class and soon starting training at the station. I was also enrolled in college...No one ever really asked me if I wanted to. There was no discussion about my goals or expectations. It was irrelevant to them what degree I got, or how well I did; I was expected to stay in college long enough to find a husband. I was there for the "Mrs." degree; that is simply how it's done. My mother had very specific expectations of me and she made it very clear, "You will marry a boy from good family who is well-educated and making good money and that's the way it is. You are only going to find that type of young man in college, so go." So once again I got that sense that my needs were not relevant to anybody. Nobody seemed to care what I wanted to go to college for; just as long I went. I don't think I had enough fight left in me then to argue with them. I was incredibly depressed. I spent a whole lot of time sleeping, and crying myself to sleep at night. So, I went to college. I don't remember going to many of my classes, but I went to college.

The "Mrs. Degree" is a colloquialism for "marriage certificate." This is another social class reference and another to gender roles. Maryann herself seems to have felt invisible, an unperson. She rebelled in a passive way by not going to classes, it would seem.

One of the reasons I didn't go to class was because I found the emergency rescue work so much more interesting. That job was the best and worst experience for me. It

was very challenging work and I felt I was doing something worthwhile. But I was one of only three women working with about 40 men and I was not savvy or worldly about men at all. *Even though by now you had concluded that men are not to be trusted, and they only see women as sex objects? This comment seems almost disingenuous.* Most of the men were not happy about having a woman around the firehouse and I was the subject of much ridicule and harassment. Everybody there had a nickname and mine, of course, was Jugs. *The word “Jugs” is slang for “breasts.”* This was well before we had sexual harassment laws and there was a constant environment of sexual jokes and innuendo, much of which I didn't understand, but was too embarrassed to let them know. There were one or two incidents where someone grabbed my ass, and before I had even thought about what I was doing, I had knocked him on his ass. They all found this very entertaining and laughed a lot, but after a couple of months no one tried to grab me anymore. I think that by that point in my life, I was just mad at the world, and I had figured out that the only way I was going to survive with these guys was to be more of a bad ass than they were. My old habit of just fading into the woodwork and trying to be invisible was definitely not possible there; as soon as I walked into the station, I was the center of attention – Barbie in bunker gear.

Another cultural reference and again, gender. Barbie is a doll, a toy, that has large breasts and a very small waist – it is almost a caricature of the idea of female beauty in the United States. The bunker gear part of it is of military origin and was about her doing a masculine job, that is, emergency medicine. Again there are references to sex and sexual harassment. I can really see Maryann having lots of problems, as she is very attractive according to some cultural norms. She is not tall, and she definitely has the

large breasts and small waist that are so desirable. While I don't know if this counts as trauma, it certainly isn't going to contribute much to personal safety or a place for learning a new way to be.

During my first semester of college, a guy I had broken up with raped me in my dorm room. I have very confusing and conflicting memories about what happened. He was slapping and punching me. I was so stunned; I didn't defend myself like I would if it was one of the guys at the fire company doing this to me. I don't know why I didn't fight back sooner. When he threw me down on the bed I did fight back, but by that time he was kneeling on my legs and had my arms pinned above my head. I struggled, but couldn't get out from under him and he raped me, and then he left. I took numerous showers that night, trying to get the smell of him off me. I stripped the sheets off the bed and slept on the mattress. But I remember avoiding the bed and sleeping in the closet – I don't really know where I slept. I paid one of the girls down the hall to get me a case of rum, and I got drunk for days. I left my room only to go to the bathroom. I kept replaying it over in my head, trying to understand why I couldn't get out from under him. The insides of my thighs were purple, where he had dug into me with his knees. It was really painful to walk and I passed some blood for the first day. I didn't show up at the fire company for my shifts – didn't call in sick, just didn't show up at all. I don't remember much of the next few weeks, but eventually, I moved back to my parents' house and told my mother what had happened. I don't think she believed that this guy had attacked me. She made some vague comment about me spending too much time at the fire company with all those men, implying that I was sleeping around with several of the other firemen.

To make matters worse, I began vomiting every morning, and realized I was pregnant. There was no discussion about what I wanted, or how I felt about any of this. Mom made an appointment for me at a local clinic to have an abortion. I was angry, but I don't remember putting up a fight. I had so much hatred for this guy, I would start throwing up when I remembered what happened. I was so traumatized by the rape itself and terrified of ever seeing this guy again, I didn't do much but sleep and cry. *It is interesting that in her speech and writing, whenever she is talking about a man that she doesn't like, she uses the phrase "this man" or "this guy." I don't know if it is significant, but I pondered possibilities of her using it to objectify or distance herself from sources of hurt.* So my mother took me to the clinic. I couldn't stop crying; I was so exhausted and afraid and alone. The caseworker couldn't calm me down and told me that she couldn't let me continue with the procedure like that. I was at the clinic for most of the day until I was finally too exhausted to cry any more and they did the procedure. It was just like being raped all over again – it was slower and more clinical, but still felt like a rape.

Maryann cried while telling me this story, and says she has not made a habit of telling it to anyone over the years except her various therapists. On the one hand I feel humbled and proud that she told it to me, angry that yet another trauma has happened, and a bit of conflict that I'm presenting something to the whole world that she has kept under wraps for years. As she worked on writing this, she told me she wasn't sure how to tell it – telling it to therapists gave it one shape that mirrored the tale she told in our interviews, but to her certain details seemed incorrect – like sleeping in the bed when she

feels certain that she spent some time sleeping in the closet. She doesn't trust her memory or the sequence of events, but does know that the rape and abortion took place.

Once again, too, her mother seems to have done extra damage, compounding the trauma immeasurably by her behavior, and then we get a triple dose of hurt with abortion. And all the while, it seems, Maryann is being told implicitly that she doesn't count. She writes so calmly; in earlier drafts, this was all written didactically – as it is here – and also in passive voice. She says that that enabled her to write all this down and yet still keep some distance from it. During the interviews, however, she mostly spoke in first person and a more active voice.

Several weeks later, I went back to work at the fire company, but I was still living at my parents' house. I was working 40-50 hours a week, which kept me away from my parents and too busy to think about anything. I earned a reputation for being fearless on emergency calls. I wasn't reckless and was careful never to put my patient or any of my colleagues in danger, but I would not have hesitated to give my life to save somebody else, because I wanted to die. I wanted out of here and, that seemed like a good way to do it, to give my life saving someone else. I was also fascinated by how calm and clear-headed I would become when I was in serious danger of dying; I truly did not feel fear.

Fascinating, this desire to help others. First the choice of career paths, and then the maintenance of saving others' lives as a goal. In however small a way she seems to have valued her own life, because Maryann wanted to give her life to save someone else rather than commit suicide.

There was a line officer in the fire company who was fourteen years older than I was. They called him an "old timer" because he'd been in the fire company for more

than 10 years. Mark was a legend for his exploits in saving peoples' lives and risking his own. He heard about my reputation and was impressed, so he arranged the crew schedule so that we would work together. We hit it off really well, and from then on, I worked a lot of shifts with him. Mark was the first man in my life who respected me intellectually. *So there is hope, perhaps.* He would tell me that I was smart, and he never hesitated to challenge me with something new. He played the role of teacher and mentor to me for about 9 or 10 months, then the relationship went beyond that, and we became lovers, even though he was married. Although no one would dare to say anything negative about me in front of Mark, I was no longer thought of as a professional.

This must have hurt, because in spite of the sexism, the rescue work seems to be the closest she came in her young adulthood to finding a niche, a place to be respected and seen as a human being, a place to be safe. This was the first time in her life where she not only had respect from others but thought that she deserved it. It is also interesting to me that they'd have lost respect for Maryann as a professional because she had sex with a colleague, but she makes no mention of other EMTs losing respect for Mark as a professional. Evidence of a double standard, gender based.

Mark had a reputation as a womanizer and I was perceived as the latest notch on his belt. After so many years of being emotionally shut down, and not trusting anyone, I had allowed myself to trust and to feel something again. Given how seriously depressed and emotionally beaten down I was at that time in my life, I have always thought that falling in love with Mark probably saved my life. I felt like a worthwhile, intelligent, competent person when I was with him, and I could not imagine how I could survive if I couldn't see him every day. I felt like I had no good options. I could not stay in that

situation, as Mark's mistress, but I could not leave him without feeling like I had cut my own arms off. After much personal anguish I decided I could not remain the mistress to a married man, and I decided to leave town.

While Mark might have "saved" her life, it looks to me like he also sent Maryann further down the destructive course her life had already taken. He may have saved lives, but I'm not so sure that he valued them. Horsman writes that "once trust has been betrayed, especially in childhood, a person expects to be betrayed again. This intense distrust leads to a woman continually looking for the meanings behind superficial words...Trust can often be all or nothing, so any breach of trust is major (p. 104). This is crucial in Maryann's case as her trusts were betrayed over and over again by a variety of people. During our interviews her anger and anguish over various breaches of trust came through loud and clear. While Maryann doesn't appear to see it this way, I see this affair as a major breach of trust on the part of her lover.

Driving home from the station one night, I decided that I could not live with my life any longer. I had been dealing with too many traumas and crises over the years, I could not even imagine a future that was free of that constant emotional pain and isolation, and I just decided I didn't want to do this anymore. I was tired of fighting and surviving, only to get kicked in the teeth again. I decided to stop surviving this game I would never win. I rammed my car into a tree at exactly 50 miles an hour. I had chosen 50 because I felt like I was flipping a coin that night, and had a 50/50 chance of surviving. The damage to the car was so severe, I should have died that night, but miraculously I suffered only lacerations to my face, but no broken bones and no internal injuries. I was pretty dazed until I arrived at the hospital and then I was just pissed off,

but I couldn't let anyone see that. I pretended that I was upset from the accident and told everyone that I had didn't know what happened – I must have fallen asleep at the wheel. I didn't have faith in anything at that point, but I absolutely believed that a very real spiritual presence had saved me, and that I could never try to kill myself again. Some people would find that inspiring; I just felt trapped here. I was emotionally in shock for weeks after the accident because I was convinced that I was living in hell and there was absolutely no way out.

How many times have I read through this, fearing that somehow this project would go awry and I would add to this woman's pain? Maryann told me that she never told anyone this story, including therapists. She felt a spirit in the car with her and made a deal that even today she feels honor-bound to keep. No matter how bad things get, she declares she will never again try to suicide.

I moved out of town and spent the next year of my life working odd jobs, living with friends, or sleeping in my car. After a year of this nomadic life, I found a steady job and started volunteering at a local fire company. Things were looking up, until one afternoon when I had a really bad emergency call. I have very little recollection of that day and don't really want to remember it. A woman and her children were butchered by a man in their own house. That night, I woke up screaming, with very vivid dreams of the murder and over the next few weeks I began experiencing frequent flashbacks, nightmares and insomnia. I don't remember if anyone suggested I see a counselor at that time. I'm reasonably sure that I would have refused, out of fear that they might lock me up permanently. I was unable to work and went back to my nomadic life, sleeping on

other people's couches, or living in my car. I also drank a lot, trying to block out the images that haunted me.

This is terribly understated, according to the graphic description she gave in her interview. She believes she might have seen the inside of the house, because her nightmares of the scene were far too accurate. The emergency workers as a group had a very hard time.

Maryann's childhood and young adulthood appear to have been nothing short of a living nightmare. She was raised in the 1960s and 1970s in a strongly patriarchal family where there were clear expectations of the young woman she should be. I saw strong threads of what she considers to be issues of social class – her status and duties as a member of the upper middle class, for example, as well as the importance of appearances. It reminds me of the movie "The Mona Lisa Smile," where young women at Wellesley College were earning their "Mrs." degrees and the tough time that a few women had in fighting that pressure. It also looks like she did her best to run away from those expectations when one considers her refusal to study and choosing to go into emergency medicine professionally.

Maryann had strongly negative parental figures – unsupportive at best. She was forced to grow up earlier than other children as the eldest daughter, caring for younger siblings and an unstable mother. Maryann experienced verbal and sexual abuse, rape, abortion, attempted suicide, the suicide of a teacher she cared about, and witnessed a gruesome death. Any of these would be a terrible experience, but to have all of them happen in a person several years shy of 25 gives one the feeling that she was constantly encountering some terrible experience, again and again and again without surcease and

without any useful mechanism that could help her handle them. I get, if anything, a mental image of relentless, pounding surf on a structure that is not maintained, until it collapses and pieces float in and out on the tide.

It seems clear that she saw herself as a strong, intelligent young woman who was basically squashed – imposed upon by other identities and cultural stereotypes, particularly class and gender related ones such as a proper young woman, sex object, and dumb blonde. She did not believe that she was intelligent by the time she reached adulthood. This is a good example of struggles with and impositions on identity I mentioned in an earlier chapter. She lived with serious contradictions and seems to have been doing power analysis from an early age.

While the thread is not as prominent, I see an ethic of care for others in her story. Caring for siblings, caring for a parent, wanting a husband and children of her own, and her aspirations of becoming an EMT are evidence of this. I get a clear sense of herself as a protagonist; Maryann presented a fairly strong image of a sad young woman who only wanted to love and trust, and to find a place of safe happiness. Because of the betrayals of others, she was unable to. No one, it would seem, cared about Maryann for her own sake.

If I were to have a reservation about this recitation of her childhood, it would be that Maryann has clearly thought about this a good bit and done some analysis as an adult. I suspect that much of what she wrote here was far less developed and/or more implicit when she was a child or young adult. I do not get any real sense of agency in Maryann at all during her childhood. She seems to believe she was entirely at the mercy of forces beyond her control.

It is hard not to notice some similarities across stories. One of those similarities was a patriarchal family. All of us lived in families that were dominated by fathers, although in very different ways. None of us had a loving, gentle father. I really wondered about that when I realized it. We all had relationships with mothers, though they varied in quality. And none of us had confidence in ourselves socially.

We had extraordinarily different socioeconomic backgrounds and day-to-day experiences as children, and we grew up in different decades. Two of us, Wanda and myself, tended to be non-confrontational types who preferred not being noticed to engaging in conflict; Maryann seems to have shifted between those two positions. Two of us, Maryann and myself, traveled fairly extensively and viewed those experiences as useful, but also as making us “outsiders” relative to other children. Also like me, Maryann desperately wanted to get out of her parents’ house.

Battering: Going in and Getting Out

This part includes stories of marriages and violence that took place. Here, more than in the first section, I bring in the literature in a reflective way, considering the narrative itself. These sections of the narratives seethe with struggle, learning, and change through time, and it is here that we can most clearly see struggles with identity as well as related events.

Heather.

My narrative is a bit different from the others because I have an insider's view of my thoughts. I included them, although it means that there are three voices— my narration, my thoughts, and my thoughts as researcher working with data.

I used to think that I didn't have it so bad. Things started well for us. The man I married, who became my batterer, was unencumbered and disliked the way my ex-husband treated us, my toddler and me. He was sweet, loving, kind, and gentle. But then there was that first argument we had soon before Christmas as we were driving. We were talking about relationships; because of an affair his ex-wife had during their marriage, he couldn't tolerate the idea of marital infidelity. He said it was the ONE thing he couldn't deal with. The one thing I couldn't deal with, I said, was a lack of communication. He wasn't having any of that and insisted that my concern was insignificant and his was deadly serious. We had an argument but eventually let it go. I was disturbed. After Christmas, in the early spring, he went into a big depression of sorts. He was unresponsive, unhappy, angry. Since we all get down sometimes, I did what I could to

pull him out of it. His mother said he'd always been moody and I didn't worry about it too much. It became a pattern.

We moved about 2 ½ hours away from our old town. He was quirky, irritable – the first time he talked about suicide was during our first year here. We were in the townhouse. We'd argue; I'd be after him about the laundry, he'd be after me to get a “real” job rather than have a graduate assistantship. I never understood why my job and money didn't count. That was the beginning of his tirades about school. He hated that I was in school and sniped all the time. Maybe that's why the school-related money didn't count. I believed in school and wanted to stay – it was the one thing I'd always been able to do pretty well. I knew that advanced degrees would help my career along considerably, too.

Potty-training my son was hard. We were too harsh, too controlling, dictating what needed to be done, when and how. I was too. Uneasily so, but I was. The whole “drill sergeant” thing of my husband's really turned me off, but I didn't try hard enough to stop it. I mean, this was my son's dad as far as I was concerned. His birth father sure didn't seem to want to be. So I felt that I needed to show confidence, to support him as dad.

We moved to a different house and things were really bad. My husband was always angry, always. We argued often. And when I got pregnant...egad! He was happy, as he really wanted a baby. He was not happy with me. I was still in school. Money was tight. My husband was hateful, hurtful (verbally). I was used to this; it's always been like that for me since childhood. He wouldn't willingly help around the house – even laundry when I was hugely pregnant. Once he threw a laundry basket down the stairs when I

asked him to carry it for me. My husband worked at a local factory and worked a different shift (day, early night, or late night) each week. He also seemed to think that working swing shift excused him from all other duties. And my educational program was a huge obstruction. Always, always he was after me – I was selfish, I was hurting the family. He didn't seem to get the concept of long term benefit that required short term sacrifice.

My younger son was born. Then even more pressure; now we had an infant too! Problems began with layoffs and money was tighter yet.

I suppose this could be seen as a “the signs were all there” bit. They were – but they were relatively innocuous and not all that inconsistent with my history and understandings of interactions with others. “Batterers don’t look like batterers – they look like people.” Possessiveness and jealousy are often found in battering relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1998a, p.149-150). While my husband never accused me of infidelity, he was clearly very concerned about it.

I really thought I was working hard to have a good marriage and family, although I didn't want to lose myself to it. Yet, things deteriorated almost from the beginning and we remained caught in the throes of major power struggles. I tried hard to refrain from saying nasty things – i.e. digging him about a low-paying job or his heavy weight. Somehow, though, he seemed to think that I was putting him down all the time – i.e. “you think that because you're in school that you're so much better than me.” I didn't think I was better, but didn't see any reason to discount the value of my education either.

Male power and authority are an area of strong interest in battering relationships. There is a consistent patriarchal mentality; Dobash & Dobash (1998a) write:

It is clear that these men do not believe that women have the same right as men to argue, negotiate, or debate. Instead, it is a nuisance and a threat to his authority, and violence is often used to silence debate, to reassert male authority, and to deny women a voice in the affairs of daily life.

Frequently, men cannot remember the source of the argument, just that she wouldn't stop talking/ arguing/ negotiating when he wished it to be over. Nagging, "going on and on," and failing to "shut up" are frequently given as reasons for violence. (p. 153)

A failure to shut up was one of my main problems. In fact, it was a failure to shut up that brought about our first violent episode.

I would add that any factor that is likely to reduce his apparent dominance is going to be a source of severe conflict. In my case that was certainly education and income. He had a high school education and I was pursuing a doctorate; I worked half time and made a little bit more money than he did.

The reference below is to the first time I wrote about domestic violence. This first section covered roughly 3 months.

I begin this story on Oct 30 for two reasons. It was about then that I finally began to keep a written record of the horrible events; before that I censored even that private space, my journal. Nowhere was there a record of dates, times or descriptions of violent events, nor even many descriptions of sadness and frustration. Typically my journals

lasted a long time and recorded my progress at whatever project I was working on. The second reason for the start date is that I did my doctoral candidacy exam on Oct 30. So what? That may well have been a spark held too near the combustible combination of layoff, money being tight, depression, and confused and angry resistance to domination (from both my husband and me). On Oct 31 once again things erupted – so those few days represent a pivotal juncture and a reasonable place to start.

It is truly ironic that my first mention of and much of my subsequent writing on unhappiness, marriage, and domestic violence is wrapped up in discussions of domestic chores, in particular housecleaning; housework is my personal bugbear. It represents a particular point of interest in this reflection. Never having been outstandingly successful at being a ‘good woman,’ many different criticisms surfaced over time from pretty much all family members -- of those, the most persistent one has been cleaning. I changed positions on the subject regularly. As a rule I resented that the responsibility and the labor were considered mine by some mysterious means of which I was not aware and on which I was not consulted. From time to time I would scold myself and resolve to do better, work harder, but there were no gains to be made in so doing, no lessening of criticism or increase in assistance, and my resentment would inevitably resurface. I tried compromise as well. I would take responsibility for the management and some of the labor, if cooperation from other responsible parties were to be had. No luck there, either. I floundered in that particular mud-puddle for many, many years – guilty and angry by turns, anguished that I couldn’t get it right and angry that I felt I had to.

I'd been struggling with housework and femininity for a long time. It was a weak point for me and I do believe that he took advantage of it. Both of us thought I should be a better housekeeper and both of us had similar ideas of what my role should be.

Dobash & Dobash (1998a) offered some interesting insight. They note that domestic violence conflicts, like many other conflicts between intimates, are often fairly small things that are of interest primarily to the couple. They name four themes based on their research: "men's possessiveness and jealousy, disagreements and expectations concerning domestic work and resources, men's sense of the right to punish "their" women for perceived wrongdoing, and the importance to men of maintaining their power and authority" (p. 144). The domestic issues tend to center around housework, child-rearing, money, family and friends.

Historically, they note, women carry the bulk of the responsibility for domestic chores like cleaning and cooking. It is ongoing, tedious, hard work. The men, however, often set the standards, judge outcomes, and punish her when the work fails to meet expectations. Add to this that standards are often ridiculously high or capricious, so the situation is set up for her to fail to meet his expectations (p. 145-147). When she doesn't meet the expectations, the batterer then claims that she provoked him.

In my own case the standard held up was that set by my mother-in-law, a stay at home mom whose home positively gleamed – disorder was the Sunday paper having different sections scattered around for a few hours. My other female relatives (mother and sister, both stay at home moms) weren't quite as meticulous, but they also kept very clean homes.

Dobash & Dobash (1998a) also write about emotional needs as a source of conflict and that women are primarily responsible here as well. Batterers frequently elevate their personal needs – emotional and physical -- above the needs of other people in the household. Women living with batterers are often punished if they do not anticipate and meet those needs even at the expense of other people. This happened in my own case but is highlighted even more in Wanda’s and Maryann’s narratives. Wanda’s husband clearly saw himself as paramount in terms of needs – i.e. his anger at her leaving him alone for an hour while she took a solitary stroll. Maryann’s wanted hot dinner on the table even if he arrived home at 4 a.m. My case was not so extreme as theirs; it was very frustrating and a source of great anxiety that nothing I did brought him any satisfaction – unless it was my unhappiness that brought him satisfaction.

If anyone initiated physical violence, it was me. I grabbed his shirt collar in my fists once. Got right up in his face and yelled at him. He laughed at me. Laughed! He was almost six feet tall and a good 350 pounds – he knew I couldn’t hurt him. Another, after the first time, can’t remember when. In the hallway, next to the stairs –

Never have I felt such fury. I loathe him, I want to hurt him, hurt him so badly that the desire consumes me. He doesn’t care, he won’t care, won’t work with me, refuses to, nothing I do makes a difference, it is always wrong, he doesn’t care. My temples pounded as I screamed at him I have never wanted to hurt another being like that. I want to hurt him and I almost don’t care. I grabbed his face. Thumb under jawbone, digging up sharply into his chin. Fingers splayed on his cheek, on the right side. I dug my nails into his face, hard, squeezed my thumb and fingers and I want to hurt him for real, what kind of person am I? My fingers, hand, arm shook. I dropped them. Sick, revolted, crying,

ashamed. I swore I'd never ever touch someone like that or be so angry, so angry that I crossed this line I clearly saw between caring and not caring. I never have. Revolting, it's revolting, I'm revolting, the shame, reluctance, I want to dress it down. How could my loved ones love me if they knew what kind of person I am? I can't make him care, talk to me, work with me on our marriage.

I am not a heroine in this story, so let's just get that idea out of the way now, okay? Thanks.

A battering relationship seldom occurs where one person is a passive victim, never attempting to touch the other. In a study of prevalence of controlling behavior, Dobash et al, (1996,1998b) find that women are nearly or equally as controlling using behaviors such as shouting, swearing, name-calling, criticizing, threatening, and nagging. Slaps, pushes, grabs, throwing objects, and punching walls are common with women. Many studies using the Conflict Tactics Scale have found that women are equally as battering and controlling as men, even going so far as to call much domestic violence "mutual combat" or "mutual battering" (Steinmetz, 1977-78; Straus, 1980). However many of these studies do not take into account the level and seriousness of the violence (Johnson, 1998). The second thing to point out is that battering is not an act – it is a series of acts that form a pattern. I would be very surprised if most couples had not, at one point or another, touched their partner in a violent fashion. I did. I wondered for a long time if I was a batterer because I'd touched him with a desire to harm. The question kept me awake for many nights. I learned that I am not above the baser human behaviors, but concluded that I am not a batterer because I didn't have a pattern of violent behavior or a desire to dominate my partner.

The times he hurt me are all a jumble. I remember the first one vividly enough. Quite so, in fact. He was at his desk looking, as usual, at pictures of naked women with huge breasts. We began to argue – I don't remember why, now. But we were angry. It was late and the boys were in bed. He got up eventually to leave the room. *He never wanted to solve anything, would go to great lengths to avoid it. Not talk to me for days.* This time I refused to get out of his way, wouldn't let him run away yet again. He tried to move me and I didn't budge. There was a door behind me, a wall to my left, a twin bed to my right. More scuffle as he tried to move me. I don't know exactly how, but I ended up diagonally

across the bed

(how did I get here?) can't breathe at all at all bed's pushing up he's pushing down neck is tense it hurts it hurts

He asked:

“Are you going to stop being such a bitch?”

he let up thank god

I answered:

“Are you going to stop being such an asshole?”

(did I say that? Good for you, girl!) again again he's doing it again he's heavy

He pressed.

I didn't breathe.

Again:

“Are you going to stop being such a bitch?”

Air. Eyes are throbbing

Again:

“Are you going to stop being such an asshole?”

(I can't retract, I can't cave in if I do I'm done I'm done its all over for me) can't move can't breathe can't

He pressed.

Repeat.

(...howzabout that, people really will die for principles, just like in the stories.

Amazing...) he's off I hurt my neck my throat I hurt I almost died I could have died I would have died but I will not submit not not notever (I would actually die rather than submit. Extraordinary...I didn't know you had that much substance to you.)

A short while later–

“I'll call the police.”

“If you do that...if you tell anyone...I promise I will always be there. Wherever you move... whenever you turn around... I will be there. If you go to the movies, I will be there. If you go to work, I will be there. I will *always* be there. You can never be sure that you’re safe. I will ruin your life.” *His tone is chilling, he is incredibly intense and articulates each word with precision. Each word is imbued with venomous threat.*

I am not a heroine. I always feel the guilty twitch – was it my fault? I escalated the confrontation. Deliberately. By refusing to back down, to get out of the way, I pushed it. How can it be right and wrong at the same time? You can only back away so far before there’s a cliff behind your heels. But when is it right to escalate a confrontation, to move in a direction that could end in violence? I could have avoided being hurt...I could have let him go again. And I didn’t, so am I not responsible? What if both responsibilities are there and they conflict directly? I am always right, and I am always wrong, and there is no resolution. There is only survival.

These questions worried me a great deal. The issue was one of escalation, submission, and responsibility –there was a sort of Catch-22 embedded in the situation. If I escalated confrontations, I was wrong for doing so. It moved us unerringly toward physical violence. At the same time, to back down was to give in – in other words, to allow myself to be controlled yet again. The whole ethic of negotiation and conciliation that often can be helpful in navigating relationships was perverted into a control tactic. This reminds me very much of Michael Newman and his discussion of Nelson.

In Maeler’s Regard (1999, p. 19-24), Michael Newman writes about Nelson Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC). The ANC tried for decades to use non-violent protest to gain rights and freedoms for Black South Africans, and the result of their efforts was “more and more repressive legislation, and fewer and fewer rights” (p. 20). Newman continues: “Mandela identifies and attacks the meanspirited politics,

the pseudo-legalities, and the repressive violence which made up the government's policy of apartheid, and which mediated the conflicts" (p. 21). This, to me, looks like a domestic violence situation on a macro scale – all the way down to the abusive party dictating the medium in which any and all interaction takes place and systematically eliminating any possibility for agency that the victim may uncover in the medium. It is oppression.

Newman quotes Mandela in the decision to endorse violence. "All lawful modes of expressing opposition to this principle [of white supremacy] had been closed by legislation, and we were placed in a position where we had either to accept a permanent state of inferiority, or to defy the government" (p. 22). This describes precisely the situation that I found myself in – imagine my surprise at gaining some insight into my dilemma from South African struggles! There are times when escalation of conflict is necessary, because there is no other way to find resolution that is acceptable to an oppressed party. It is not always easy to recognize in civil struggle, but it is harder yet to recognize it when you share a home with it.

I wonder how often so-called "mutual battering" is an example of this sort of situation.

Once when I got home my son Wesley was in bed, my husband ensconced on the couch in a darkened, twilight-dusky living room. He was silent, the room stark. I asked "Where's Wesley?" He pointed upstairs. I ran up the stairs and found my son, *so scared, my son was dead, he's dead he's dead in bed* in bed, lying awake. He'd had a bowel movement in his pants earlier, and his dad got mad. My husband's large hands left prints on his four-year-old behind, bloodless white handprints outlined in dark bruises dotted with speckles of dried blood where the soft skin had ruptured in the areas between his

fingers. I kept my son home for a week so no one would find out. I was furious, read my husband the riot act, recognized and named it abuse. He apologized to Wesley. *This is the scene of my daymares; there were so many! Halfway home I would start to speed, envisioning coming home and he has blown out his brains. I see blood and hair and twilight sun on the living room wall as I run up the stairs like before, so scared, but now my son was dead, he's dead he's dead in bed and*

Eventually I got my husband to swear on a Bible that he'd never do it again. Not to either of us and under no circumstances was he to spank Wesley. He threw the Bible across the room afterward. In the interest of prudence, I tried not to leave them alone. My son couldn't do anything right either.

The third and last time he hurt me was on Halloween. We'd gone to Wal-Mart. He was sullen and angry and I knew he'd go off like a rocket if I said anything. Sat in the car, silent. Boys silent. Finally – it was a Wednesday and I had class – I got out of the car and started to walk home. He caught up in my car, with my keys, and asked what I was doing. “Walking,” I said. He drove off. Didn't suggest I get in the car again, or that maybe this ill-omened trip was left for another time. Left me stranded without money, wallet, keys, or car, and went home. *Did I expect him to strand me? Didn't I ask for it? Shouldn't I have stayed in the car? Did I abandon the boys?* Walked several miles. It was cold and misty but a woman stopped and drove me the rest of the way to town. I walked home: he'd locked me out. I started to go through a window and he opened the door. Baby was on the couch. He didn't want me to pick up the baby and grabbed my hair. *Did I use the baby? Did I?* Wrapped his fist in it. Yanked me. I was bent double but picked up baby anyway. I held him – as the fight progressed, I was holding the baby.

Didn't let him go at all. *Protect each other? Protect him? Protect me? Comfort? Leverage? Anguish, anguish, I don't know!* Somehow we moved into the kitchen.

He grabbed my hair, pulled me over sideways a second time. I tried to knee him in the groin, missed. He twisted hard and I tried with one hand to grab his hair. *Let go let go you're hurting me* I did but it was short *AGONY he twisted my hair his fist ripped I heard it rip. Oh, that hurt. It hurt. It hurt a LOT I heard it ripping its coming out don't defend its worse its worse it hurts*

He let go. It fell out in hanks for the rest of the day. I think some of his fell out too, so apparently I'd done a little better than I originally thought. I was yelling - about what he'd done, I think. He slapped me. Once. Don't think it was hard. It was almost tentative. Eventually stopped, but as always no apology or sadness or sign of remorse at all. There might have been a honeymoon period for some women, but there sure as hell wasn't one for me.

I am no heroine. Not at all.

No good solution. None. No winning. Wouldn't get counseling, said he needed to do it in his time but his time never came. I didn't always act right, but backing down was wrong sometimes.

After the episode on Oct 31 my husband told me, while we worked in near-silence on cleaning tasks, "he'd not be tempted to hurt me if the house stays clean." It was crucial that he said this; numerous similar justifications on his part combined with serious resentment about the whole business resulted in my rejecting such feeble excuses as ridiculous, and brought to maturity a process of examination I'd begun on my own as well as with the help of a therapist. It is a difficult position – to be sure that a situation is

wrong, even though my own training, my husband's training, family and social expectation all had me cornered.

This brings us back to the discussion about battering relationships and housework. While I certainly had qualms, I did not accept the blame this time. Cavanagh et al (2001) write "Commentators, activists and professionals generally agree that the majority of violent men attempt to rationalize their violence and use a range of tactics to minimize, deny and blame others, particularly their partner, in order to mitigate their own culpability." It is hard not to accept it, especially when they can legitimately point to something you have done that is less than perfect behavior. He would point to the fact that I "started" it, for example, as if that somehow justified his behavior. I was terribly ashamed of my actions even though I hadn't repeated them and could never rebut.

I was angry, it is true, but the writing of this period displays just as much or more a sense of relief – of release – as anger. Following a description of the Oct 31 event (about a week later), I wrote

God it feels good to write it down, to not pretend! Last week after the – event- I went to classes AND NEITHER PROF KNEW ANYTHING WAS WRONG." It's amazing what good actors we are. My whole body ached from the contortions I'd been forced into, my scalp was on fire, hair was coming out in clumps, my mind was a mess...and yet I continued to function so well that no one knew that I'd so much as had a bad day.

The release from having to pretend was enormous. While my nature was not to be secretive, I was probably more open than was really necessary simply because I could be. I was no longer ashamed about who I was. Pretense and secrecy were distasteful.

Our separation was also an interesting event. I thought about what I wanted to do for about a week. Initially, I decided that I'd wait until after the holidays because that would give me time to arrange things, put away some money, and so on. At the end of

that week, I found two people that I trusted and spilled the story to them. They were both shocked and somewhat horrified. One suggested that I call a battered women's shelter in town for help and/or advice. I could not remember if I decided right then or after I called the resource center, but I did realize that in about three months he'd be coming around to another violent cycle and I didn't want to be there to experience it.

I did feel obligated to give him one last chance, though, and so I came up with a compromise. The shelter advocates gave me some good advice and the names of several therapists who dealt with violent men. If he would voluntarily go for therapy, I thought we might stand a chance. If not, I had decided that I was done. Following their advice, I made a plan for action. The next day would proceed as normal. After class, I would go home with my list of names and ask him to seek therapy. I told a trusted friend, however, that if I did not call by a certain hour to tell him all was well, he should send the police to my house. I had about a two-hour window to work with. *The course was a women's studies class, actually, that I credit with giving me some good things to think about – I realized during that course that I'm a feminist.*

My husband had had a good evening with the children and was in a good mood when I arrived home. Diffidently, I gave him the names and asked him about getting therapy – he went stone-faced and the conversation deteriorated from there. I do not remember the entirety of it. I do remember at one point I tried to call the police myself and he ripped the phone out of the wall. After that I did my best to stall him and kept my eye on the clock. The deadline passed, my friend called the police, and eventually they arrived. There are only a few things that really stand out at that point. One was the look of fury on his face when the red flashing lights stopped in front of our house. That look

was probably a good thing, because my husband answered the door and the police saw it too. To be more accurate, the officer saw a very large, very angry man answer the door and a frightened, weeping woman clutching an infant behind him. The policeman, a tall red-haired fellow, called someone right there using a little device he held and did not come in the house. Shortly more cars arrived (I think there were four – there were at least four). A few of them took him outside, and one came in to talk to me. Since there was no sign of violence except for the telephone, they did not arrest him. The officers took him upstairs to get some clothes and asked him to leave. Shortly thereafter I woke the children and loaded them in the car. A few of the officers followed me up to the District Justice's office (at my request) to get an emergency protection order.

The next morning, first thing, I went down to the courthouse to get a Protection From Abuse order (PFA). It took all morning, most of it waiting, but I did get one and a hearing date on the matter a few weeks hence. When I went to go home, I drove by my house because he'd come back while I was out. I returned to the courthouse. The police served him with the order, removed him from the house, and I was able to return.

After having set things in motion on November 8, there exists a strange tone in the journals that shows internal conflict. There is definite fear, but also a conviction – conviction? – that he loved us, and we him. Simultaneously, I could see a determination that the harm outweighed any love, then a questioning of how love could be expressed with “bruises, threats, and torn hair.” I began to doubt the seriousness of the situation, and wondered about my own responsibility/role in the violence as mundane life moved in again. I wrote that my sense of fair play clamored for attention, demanding that he deserved another chance – even while I desperately didn't want to give him one.

I felt terribly, terribly guilty about that. This is also pretty common in domestic violence situations. That is, there is downplaying, self-blame, and fear of changing the situation because that means failure (O'Neill & Kerig, 2000).

Similar feelings and conflicts existed regarding my loved ones and what I perceived as a nearly complete lack of support, moving into betrayal. Today my analysis of the situation might reveal a picture slightly less accusatory than my journal paints at that time, but I remember my hurt and fury with remarkable clarity. I'm going to include a section of the journal, partly because it represents the apex of my fury, and because even now – many months after the anger has subsided – I think I was right. This judgment on that disconnect... so crystalline, so clear... was having material consequences as my relationships with family become restricted for the most part to fairly superficial levels.

The background was most of my family and friends' determination that I needed to attempt reconciliation with my husband -- until they learned about the harm to my son. My mother knew much earlier than anyone else about the violence. Not because I told her, but because she happened to see me soon after one of the episodes when the evidence was undeniable. I had bruises ringing my neck, and it's pretty hard to explain that as clumsiness. She was uncertain, vacillated, said we should take pictures but never made a move to do so. When I asked her what she would do if she were me, my mother said she'd probably go back home, however reluctantly.

Even at the time, I was surprised by her answer. This is not an uncommon reaction when you consider ideas that are ingrained in us, such as the saying that marriage vows are forever, "through better or worse" and so on. I had a telephone conversation shortly thereafter that crystallized my anger and understanding of the

situation. Read the following passage; the language remains faithful to the original because I want you to understand exactly how angry I was. Fortunately this text is a lot easier to read than the one I wrote that day – the original is all but illegible:

I talked to Ralph today. My anger-I vented some, told him how angry I am with our friend Cindy [about her lack of support]. He talked about how bitchy Cindy is...he said the only reason she hasn't been beaten is that she's married [to] a wimp. If she'd talked to HIM that way, he'd have beat her a long time ago. I went off – I should have hung up. He backed off – said it was a mistake – he'd have thrown her out. LIKE IT'S HIS FUCKING RIGHT TO DO SO! So if a woman is bitchy, she should be either beaten or thrown out. Jesus, what kind of friends do I HAVE? What the bloody fucking hell is the matter with these people?

Is there something wrong with me that I see a problem with this? Why is it the woman's job to be nice to the man? To keep him from being mad, to be on her best behavior so he has no cause to do anything to her?

IS THERE NO END TO THIS SHIT?

So the moral of the story is: [read a bitter tone]

If a woman 'misbehaves', she's going to
get fucking HAMMERED.
Even by the 'nice' guys.

I don't apologize for it, although I am a bit embarrassed. Even then, in the midst of my guilt/anger, and as a part of my guilty internal conflict, life felt so exhilarating! "Being alone feels good in many ways. I can manage myself and my household, tend to the boys with a lot less pain and aggravation..." One entry simply reads, "I AM FREE!" while another is [read a jubilant tone]: "I'm free to pursue a doctorate; isn't that amazing? I almost don't know what to do. After Wesley goes to bed I think I'll write a paper."

About the bitter comment at the end – life is not like a movie; more often than not vulnerable parties get clobbered. Several times I considered studying the use of firearms

in greater depth or taking up one of the martial arts – I did not want to be so vulnerable again.

That last bit actually represents a pretty good bit of analysis and shows a beginning of connection of my own situation to a larger social picture. I am not a heroine. I am a survivor – they are two entirely different things, and being a survivor of domestic violence is seldom clean or pretty. I'm entirely too aware of my own actions, of my feeling of having contributed to the situation, of being involved in a power struggle. When all is said and done, though, only he can control his temper, and only he can control his actions. Only he can recognize that what he is doing is unacceptable – as I did – and move the event into the category of “mistake” rather than the category of “pattern.” It sounds so easy. There is no way to capture the anguish at knowing I was “breaking it open” and making the violence public, of feeling that I personally was responsible for wrecking our marriage and breaking up our family.

While I didn't write out my life story between childhood and my marriage, it is hopefully clear that my sense of self included the notion of failure in womanhood, as exemplified by my struggles with domestic chores. Nearly all of this was seen through a fairly conventional lens of femininity and marriage. I did not find my body beautiful, becoming more overweight along with my husband. In fact, the only really redeeming virtue I felt that I had was my intelligence and love of education.

In the earliest part of this section, I see an unsuccessful struggle on my part for recognition of things that I really valued, such as education, communication, shared household responsibilities, and income. I see a struggle on my husband's part for recognition of the importance of marital fidelity, my working in a non-student

employment situation, things that affirmed his masculinity such as fatherhood and position as head of household, and my paying more attention to my responsibilities as wife and mother. In areas that overlapped, such as responsibility for housecleaning, I had a weak point – our White American Lower Middle Class ideology and our upbringings lent weight to his side of the struggle and weakened mine.

I could say convincingly that my learning was that my cherished values did not matter to my husband. I learned that I would be bludgeoned into submission in areas that we shared values, even if the values were ones that I didn't like or even agree with. My lack of clear conviction in what it meant to be a "good" woman meant that I was struggling with myself, my husband, and what I perceived as social norms simultaneously. At this point I would say that there is no evidence of a placement in the larger social picture, other than roles (wife and mother) and reasonably respectable members of the lower middle class. I did not see myself as a producer of the larger social milieu.

When we move into the section dealing with conflict and violence directly, there seems to be the same struggles plus a few more. I struggled for the right to speak against his silence and with the subsequent labeling of myself as strident or a nag. His struggle seemed to be for silence. I wondered what he hoped to accomplish by fighting for silence; could he have hoped somehow to teach me to behave by being silent? Or was my rejection of his silence a way to position me as the aggressor? We had struggles that escalated to a physical level, and then other struggles over who was responsible for the events and whether/how to keep our shame hidden.

Other, subtler struggles were with me as a person who had violent potential and as a person escalating conflict. Because of my determination to succeed in marriage I wanted to support my husband, and tried to see his actions as mistakes in the face of growing evidence that painted a picture of domestic violence. Again my self doubt was an avenue for possible exploitation and gain of power on his part by labeling, shame, and blame.

Such a marbling of events, actions, and thoughts that seemed very right and horribly wrong is not a recipe for conviction regarding oneself and one's beliefs. In terms of power, I was strengthened by not caving in at a crucial point (the bed scenario). I was weakened in several ways, particularly my various doubts about myself and my actions, and by becoming complicitous in covering up physical harm to my son and myself. In addition, I would say that I was weakened by my stressful concern over my son's well-being, suffering daytime terrors and following through on my determination not to leave husband and children alone more than necessary. Finally, I was dreadfully weakened by fear – by the demonstrated danger to my life and by his threats to ruin my life if I told anyone.

I learned that I was capable of not submitting but that the danger to me was very real. Physically defending myself yielded incredibly painful retribution, so that was not an option. I learned, to my sorrow, that I was capable of base and treacherous behaviours such as the covering up of violence to my son, and lying to others about the violence to myself. I learned that things could always get worse, and I believed that they would continue to get worse until he killed me. I learned that I could not force him to communicate, which was a terrible blow because I believed it was the most essential

element of marriage. And I learned that I could no more make him into what I thought of as a good husband than he could force me to be what he thought of as a good wife.

After our separation my struggles changed significantly. I struggled with myself at this point and with people that I knew. Internally, I struggled with my commitment to marriage and the possibility that I had exaggerated the severity of the situation. I struggled with a lack of understanding and support in the areas where I'd most expected it to be there, namely from close friends and family. The overwhelming concern for preserving the marriage made me feel like I didn't count at all. This was compounded by people's reactions when they found out that one of the boys had also been harmed. This was the point, I believe, when I began to wonder about social forces. These people, if any, I thought would have been on "my side." So why weren't they?

My beliefs in who I was (after the third repetition I was able to name myself a battered woman) changed. At about that time, I was able to name myself a feminist and say with some conviction that the beliefs I had about gendered roles and responsibilities were unjust. I no longer believed them.

Maryann.

I met Jeff while when I started back to college. I had a part-time job tending bar, and he was one of the regular customers – a very intelligent, articulate man, although he only had a high school education. *It's notable that all three of us had this assessment of our spouses.* He had gone straight to work in the factory after he graduated from high school. I knew nothing about alcohol or alcoholism in those days. The regulars all drank beer from quart mugs, and I thought a guy who could drink that much beer and not appear to be intoxicated was a man who could handle his beer. I never saw him appear to be drunk in the first year that I knew him, although he would drink several quarts of beer every evening. I didn't know that such a high tolerance for alcohol was a danger sign. Jeff talked a lot and so I got to know him better than most of my customers. He was ten years older than me, and significantly more mature than the guys in my college classes, which made him much more interesting to me. *I wonder about the maturity – mature in what way?*

After we'd been dating for several months, when I noticed that he was not too excited about dating a woman who was in college. He saw no reason why a woman needed a college education to run a household and raise kids, and he certainly thought it was wrong for a woman to be better educated than her husband. He was divorced and Jeff told me that his ex-wife had been in college and had an affair with someone she met while in one of her classes. He never told me to drop out of school, but he was very aggressive about voicing his opinions, and he made it very clear he found my desire to be educated to be a very unattractive quality. I was doing OK in my college classes, but still didn't know what I wanted to major in, or what I wanted as a career. I wanted to have

children and I wanted to get some distance from my parents so that I could feel like I was running my own life. I still didn't believe that I was actually smart enough to ever graduate from college, so I quit school again, and started working several part-time jobs waitressing and working in various retail stores.

We were engaged after we'd been dating for six months, and I moved into Jeff's apartment. *There is a tendency toward short courtship in battering relationships. There is a discussion about this tendency in Wanda's section, which comes next.* I was beginning to realize that Jeff was very outspoken and opinionated. He talked incessantly and was very sure of himself in everything. He was not intimidated by my parents, which was pretty attractive to me, because I really needed to get myself outside the realm of their control. Jeff was very exacting in how he did everything and he had a very organized and well-established routine. My life had been so chaotic, and I was always going in three different directions at once. I thought that being with someone who was much more organized than I was would be good for me. But the closer we got to the date of the wedding the more he became controlling. I didn't have any close friends, but Jeff complained about the few people I would talk to on the phone occasionally. When some of my co-workers would plan to go out for an evening after work, he insisted that he did not want me to go along. He was irritated with the fact that I spoke with my mother on the phone almost daily, especially as we were trying to get the wedding plans together, and he would sulk and bang things around every time I talked to her.

About a month before the wedding, Jeff's controlling, demanding behavior was becoming more frequent and I tried to convince myself he was just under a lot of stress about getting married. I began to have serious second thoughts about the wedding and

told my mother I thought I was making a big mistake and I was thinking of calling it off. She was angry that I should suggest such a thing. The invitations had just been sent out and although Jeff and I had wanted a very small wedding, she had invited over 300 people. For her, my wedding was a big social event and a chance to make a social statement. She was already very disappointed that I was marrying a working class man with no college education, but canceling the wedding at that point would have embarrassing to her. She suggested that I get a divorce if I was still so unhappy in a few months. *This appears to be another betrayal on Maryann's mother's part. The rationale for not canceling the wedding when Maryann had grave doubts about her fiancé sounds like a social class issue that is often associated with upper classes. It is a concern for having the "right" appearances and a fear of public embarrassment.*

We had planned to have no alcohol at the reception, because we were afraid that several of Jeff's friends would get really drunk and obnoxious and do something embarrassing in front of my parents' friends. The wedding and reception both went smoothly, but I had an overwhelming feeling of dread throughout the day. My feet felt like lead when I walked down the aisle and I spent quite a bit of time considering just how bad the consequences would be if I actually worked up the nerve to turn around and walk back up the aisle before he got the ring on my finger. But I didn't have the nerve to do that in front of so many people, and the thought of having my parents and Jeff so angry with me at once was too intimidating. I would have no support from anyone if I made that choice and no place to live. The option of getting a divorce in a few months was not something I considered. When I took my vows I felt bound to them and resolved to make this marriage work, no matter what it took.

I was nauseated for days after the wedding and spent much of my honeymoon in the bathroom. We did manage to get out and do some sightseeing, and Jeff was pretty patient about my feeling so ill. But once we flew back home, his demeanor changed noticeably. Suddenly he began laying down orders like a drill sergeant. He went through my closet and threw out half of my clothes. He said I could not wear anything that he did not approve first – no tight-fitting tops or skirts cut above the knee, etc. He had never complained about what I wore before, so this caught me by surprise. He grabbed my wrist and pulled me into the kitchen and told me he was going to teach me how to really clean a house. I had been cleaning his apartment for six months, but when I told him that, he completely lost it and started screaming and swearing at me, telling me what a complete slob I was and how incompetent I was at cleaning. He demanded that dishes had to be washed in just a certain way, wiping in one direction when I washed, and in another direction when I dried. He had always rinsed his dishes in boiling water and I had been doing that for months to humor him. He wanted to floor mopped in a specific order, mopping only a certain number of tiles at a time, before I moved across the floor. After he was done lecturing me on how to clean the kitchen, he grabbed my wrist again and pulled me into the next room, specifying the exact way I would clean each room. Every time I started to speak, he ordered me to shut up and listen and became visibly angrier, so I just stood there, staring at the floor, while he yelled and dragged me from room to room.

Hers is definitely the strongest case of overt battering behaviors. Controlling her clothing, her order and way of cleaning, that cleaning was her duty, putting her down, and not allowing her to speak are all examples.

In the first few months, I became afraid of his temper. He had a very short fuse and I often could not predict what would set him off. At first, he rarely touched me, but would start throwing things and would smash something against the wall or pound his fist down on the table. At that point, I only spoke to my mother over the phone, and only when Jeff was at work, because he had ripped the phone out of the wall one day when she had called and I had talked to her for about 5 minutes while he stood over me, signaling me to hang up. I had told my mom that I had some serious concerns about Jeff's behavior, and she dismissed my fears and said she thought I was probably making a big deal out of a few minor disagreements. She pointed out how verbally abusive my own father could be at times, and said a woman's job is to make the best of the situation -- that's why marriage vows say "for better or for worse".

The permanence of marriage vows came up in my narrative as well. Each of us was really concerned about fulfilling that obligation. Keeping the peace by pleasing our batterers was one of the main things we did and a broad area of control as well.

So I did everything I could to keep the peace. I learned to read every nuance of Jeff's body language and every slight change in his tone of voice, to try and anticipate whether I was doing something wrong. I learned to have dinner timed perfectly, to be served hot, on the table at exactly 6:00 p.m. and would clear his dishes away and have the kitchen spotless an hour later when he would want me to sit down in the living room and watch his TV shows with him. I wasn't particularly interested in his shows and had tried to sit and read a book once while he watched, but during the first commercial, he stood up, snatched the book out of my hands and shredded it into a dozen pieces, dropping them in my lap, as he calmly told me that television is something we do together.

This segment seems like a dramatic way to demonstrate learning that takes place in how to be a battered woman. Notice that Maryann was told what to do, what not to do, was verbally put down and Jeff used aggressive behavior to enforce his demands. She became more afraid and learned that her goal was to pay attention to Jeff and please him. When Maryann questioned this emerging pattern, she received no support from her mother.

When we had been married for eight months, my doctor found that my blood pressure was dangerously high. He was afraid that my birth control pills were the culprit. He ordered me to 24 hours of bed rest and told me to stop taking the pills immediately. I was concerned about getting pregnant, but he had been treating me for recurring infections of my ovaries for the past year, and he told me then that he was pretty sure that my ovaries were scarred from these numerous infections. He said he would be very surprised if I would ever have children. I was devastated by this news. The one goal I had always had in my life was to have children. I had never found a career that excited me, except the notion of nurturing and raising my own children. I cried for several days and was seriously depressed for weeks after that, until I started feeling nauseated every morning. I went back to the doctor for a pregnancy test and then waited for them to call me with the results.

They called me at work with the test results three days later. I was overjoyed when they told me the test came back positive and I immediately called Jeff to tell him the news. He just said, "That's *good* news?" Then he told me that he had news for me. He had just received notice that the rumors he had been hearing at work about the plant closing were true. Management had just given layoff notices to half the men and the rest

of them would lose their jobs within the next few months. Jeff had enough seniority to still be working for a while, but unemployment was guaranteed sometime in the next three months.

Jeff was really devastated by the plant closing. He felt strongly that a man should be the breadwinner in the family and his job was a big part of his identity. Though he didn't say so, I'm sure that the prospect of having the additional responsibility to provide for a child was also weighing heavily on him. Meanwhile, I was hit hard with morning sickness at all hours of the day and I had a really difficult time keeping any food down. Jeff took this as a challenge and began buying books on nutrition and neonatal development. He planned out a rigid diet that I would adhere to, with each ounce of food carefully designed to provide a perfectly balanced diet. I could not tolerate milk, so he forced me to eat kale with every meal, because he'd read that it contained calcium. This diet became a new source of many fights, because if I took a second helping of any food, or did not eat every bite of another, it would throw off his carefully balanced diet and he would fly into a rage. At first, I tried to comply, but after a few incidents where he forced me to finish what was on my plate, until I threw it up again, I became very uncooperative. I told him I would eat as much as I could, but I absolutely refused to eat until I vomited. This sent him into a tirade about how insane pregnant women are, but after that, I ate what I could and he lived with it. I was excused from cooking his breakfast in the morning, because raw eggs instantly sent me running for the bathroom. He couldn't figure out how to argue with a woman while she's projectile vomiting, so after a few days of that, he decided to just cook breakfast himself.

Within a few months, Jeff received his layoff notice and he would complain for hours about the evils of foreign competitors who were driving American manufacturers out of business. He refused to look for work, although he had to make it appear that he had attempted to find work to keep his unemployment benefits, so he filled out applications at a few local employers who he knew were not hiring. *Much of this mirrors the situation I had, including my husband's devastation about the job loss. I wondered about Jeff, though. If he was devastated by the plant closing, why wouldn't he look for work? If supporting his expanding family was a big part of his identity, I would have thought he'd be searching high and low for new employment.* He began spending most of his days at the bar, standing at the door at 4:00 when they opened and staying until well after closing. I was relieved to have him out of the house, so I could be left alone in peace. Although I never knew exactly when he'd be home (any time between 2:00 and 4:00 a.m.) he expected his dinner to be hot and on the table by the time he'd walked in the door and finished washing his hands. He had started coming home visibly intoxicated, which was new for him. On a few occasions, he staggered in the door, and didn't make it past the easy chair in the living room. When he didn't walk back to the kitchen, I went to see where he was and found him passed out in the chair. I put his dinner away and went to bed and when he woke up the next morning he didn't say anything about it. If it would avoid a fight, I could pretend it was perfectly normal for him to come home and pass out in the living room, so I didn't make an issue of it. Most of the time, he was in a foul mood when he came home drunk and he was often looking for something to fight about.

I was growing more and more sleep deprived, trying to be awake to serve him a hot meal at all hours of the night and I was reaching a point of exhaustion. My morning

sickness still had not let up, even though I was starting into my second trimester. My doctor ordered me to be admitted to the hospital because he said I was becoming too dehydrated and exhausted. The hospital staff let me sleep for most of the first two days and put me on an IV to get my fluid levels up. The doctor stopped in and told me that although I had not confided much to him, he had suspected that things at home were becoming very stressful for me, and he had actually had me admitted so that I could have a safe place to get away from my husband for a few days. I was stunned. I had not said anything to him or his staff about what was going on at home, partly because Jeff insisted on coming to every doctor's visit and objected strenuously anytime I suggested that he wait in the waiting room. I would imagine the doctor could probably read a lot, just from my demeanor around Jeff and the tone of voice that he used when he spoke to me.

Later that day, a social worker showed up in my room to ask me how everything was going with my marriage and if there was anything she could do to help me. I became defensive with her, and I really thought that she and the doctor were making this situation seem more serious than it was. I told her what I had been telling myself for months -- that Jeff was under a lot of stress because he'd just lost his job and was about to become a father. I thought it was pretty understandable that anyone would be stressed out under those conditions. Then she said something that I hadn't really considered before. She agreed that most men would be feeling a lot of stress at a time like that, but she asked me if I thought that all men would deal with their stress the same way Jeff did. Did I react to stress the same way Jeff did? Did I treat people that way? She told me about a local women's shelter and tried to give me a brochure, but I refused to take it. I did not consider myself a victim of domestic violence and I was a little bit offended that she

seemed to. Jeff never actually hit me – he grabbed me, shoved me and verbally abused me daily, but I thought that women who go to shelters are the people you see on TV with black eyes and broken ribs. *This demonstrates the powerful effect that can be had by alert medical personnel. Note how very tight the confines were of her world; they were so tight that Jeff would search her purse when she left the hospital. There is also a point to be made Maryann's perceptions of women and domestic violence. It does not occur to many for some time that what they are experiencing is in fact battering. Another interesting point is that her interaction with hospital personnel and social worker represents an outside influence that Jeff couldn't control, and it surely planted the seeds of an idea in her mind.* I was also afraid to take the brochure from her because Jeff would search through my purse and anything I brought home from the hospital, and I knew if he found it, he would really be angry. After three days, I was much better rested and no longer dehydrated. I had actually kept down almost all of the food I ate at the hospital. They discharged me.

As my pregnancy progressed, the morning sickness finally stopped, but I was much more tired more often. I had stopped waiting up for Jeff at night and was now going to bed by 9:00 and setting the alarm for 1:30 a.m., being careful to always reset the alarm back to the exact time he'd set it previously. But several times I slept through the alarm and he arrived home to find me still asleep. He then woke me up by throwing a pitcher of cold water on my face or grabbing me by the ankles and yanking me out of bed, onto the floor. I'd get up and run to the kitchen, hastily preparing his dinner, while he screamed at me and threw things against the wall.

The tension between Jeff and I got worse as my pregnancy progressed. *This is interesting because the “between” doesn’t seem like a victim’s position. I think perhaps she moves herself into and out of it. When she refused to eat more than she could, for example, she did not try to please Jeff and remained adamant in her position and did not read at all like a victim. She was clearly still afraid, but I get a sense that she also felt that this was a bizarre situation and she was beginning to withdraw from it emotionally and intellectually.* His excessive drinking was becoming pretty scary. He would come home so visibly drunk that I wasn’t sure he always knew who I was. He would say things that were just so bizarre, even when he was sober. I began to suspect that maybe he was also doing drugs. I would have no way of knowing how much money he might be spending, since he controlled all of the money – I didn’t even have a checkbook. He began accusing me of having an affair and planning to leave him, even though I never was allowed to leave the house without him. He drove me to work and picked me when my shift was over. He often stopped by to watch me and would grill me later if I talked to any men while I was working. He freaked out once when I was working in a retail store and the manager asked me to work back in the loading dock ticketing new sale items that had just come in and needed to be out on the floor by the next day. Jeff walked through the store several times over the course of two hours and could not find me. He was sure I was out with some boyfriend and went back to the office and demanded to see me immediately. The manager came back and got me and told me that Jeff had been harassing the other clerks and I needed to get him out of the store. When I came out of the back hallway, Jeff demanded to know where I had been and who I had been with, while the manager stood there dumbfounded. I explained to Jeff where I had been and

the manager verified my story and then asked Jeff if there was a problem. Jeff told him that the problem was that his wife is employed by his company to wait on customers out on the sales floor, not to ticket merchandise in the back room. The disturbing part of the encounter was that I don't think Jeff realized that his behavior was inappropriate.

Maryann's husband was very concerned about her having an affair, as my husband was. Jeff was not only very concerned about it, but he limited her wardrobe and more or less accused her of having sex with every man she spoke to. Extreme possessiveness and jealousy of a woman are one of the common behaviors of battering men (Wilson & Daly, 1998). If we go back to Dobash & Dobash (1998a) this is one of the four common areas of dispute in battering relationships.

The next day, the manager called me into his office and said that Jeff had really shaken up several of the other employees with his stalking me through the store on several occasions and he had been very confrontational with a few of them when he demanded to know where I was the previous day. *"Stalking" is an interesting choice of words. It is a behavior that happens during and after battering relationships, and is closely related to possessiveness and jealousy.* The manager said he was notifying me that Jeff needed to stop coming into the store. He could wait outside the doors to meet me when my shift was over, but if he continued to lurk in the store whenever I worked, they were going to have to fire me. I dreaded telling this to Jeff. I knew he would be livid, but I had to do this to keep my job, and with Jeff not working, we really needed the money. When I told Jeff what the manager said, he said that only proved that I had indeed been in the back room screwing some guy, and Jeff said he knew as soon as the manager verified my story that the guy I was screwing was my manager! This twisted bit

of logic was so outrageous I actually burst out laughing when Jeff said it, and he cracked me across the face with the back of his hand, knocking me back against the wall. This was the first time he had actually hit me. I didn't react to it. I just sat on the floor, holding my face, not looking up at him, but watching out of corner of my eye in case he was going to hit me again. He stood over me and very calmly told me that I had better hope that he never caught me with any of the men I was screwing, because when he did, he would kill both of us. Then he slammed out the door and went to the bar, leaving me sitting on the floor shaking. I put ice on my face and called in sick the next two days because the bruise on my face was faint, but the swelling was just noticeable enough that I knew the other women would notice it, and since they all knew that Jeff had been banned from the store, I knew they would all be watching me and gossiping about it anyway.

Note that the level of violence was escalating and included not only violence but death threats. Here her laughter over an "outrageous" statement seems to support my suggestion earlier that she moves into and out of a victim role. This situation to me looks less like a belief that Jeff was right or in charge than a practical knowledge that she must appease him to survive.

Jeff began to threaten to kill me more frequently, and it usually came up when he was accusing me of trying to leave him. He kept saying that he would kill me if I left him. He made me sit and watch the news on TV with him, and every time a news story would come on that talked about a man killing his wife or girlfriend, he'd look over at me, not saying anything – he would just stare at me, like he was trying to see how I was reacting to that story. Once in awhile Jeff would make some comment, like how much

the woman deserved it and how the legal authorities had no right butting into a man's business. "He has a right to keep his own woman in line, doesn't he?" *Property, ownership, and patriarchy are intimated in sociocultural explanations of domestic violence. One of the many facets is entitlement. Basically, in this situation a man sees a woman as belonging to him. It is her duty to be obedient and he has a right to discipline her as needed. Dobash & Dobash write "The evidence of masculine identity lay in...the outcome of not letting a woman/wife win, of putting her in her place, or showing her who was boss."* On the same page they add, "Minimization and denial are characteristic of men's accounts of their violence against women. Elaborate accounts are difficult to obtain; elements seem to be forgotten or are not counted as "real" violence. Partial or total amnesia, tunnel vision, and other "syndromes" seem to prevail among men violent to a woman partner" (1998a, p. 167).

He went on a really heavy drinking binge one week, where he didn't come home at all one night. I called the emergency room when he still wasn't home by 6:00 a.m., but they said he had not been there. He finally showed up by 10:30 that morning, reeking as usual, of beer and cigarettes, but he also smelled like perfume. He didn't eat anything, but fell into bed and passed out. He woke up surly and verbally abusive, and showered and waiting at the door when the bar opened again at 4:00 that afternoon. I didn't ask about the perfume. Although he came home by 3:00 a.m. the rest of the week, he seemed more drunk than usual. He was barely able to make it to the kitchen and I have no idea how he managed to drive home without hitting anything. I regularly scanned the newspaper for reports of hit-and-run accidents that might possibly be him, because I had told him repeatedly how worried I was about his driving drunk. Of course, that always

erupted into a major confrontation, so I was hoping that he might get arrested and that would solve that problem.

After that week of heavy drinking, his whole personality changed dramatically. That was the week that he started having really scary hallucinations. He would imagine that things were crawling up his arms or some monster had jumped out from behind the refrigerator. He would stand there screaming and yelling and on a few occasions, I could understand enough of what he was saying or doing to realize that he thought the monster was tearing off his arms or chewing on his leg. He was utterly terrified of snakes – even when he was sober. Some of his worst hallucinations were when he would wake up at night and start flailing around trying to kill the snakes he thought were in our bed.

These episodes were extremely frightening to me, because Jeff was acting so bizarre that I felt like he was a complete stranger to me. The first few times it happened, it felt surreal. I kept asking myself if I was imagining this. Jeff didn't believe me when I told him about these hallucinations. He never remembered any of it the next morning, in fact, I think he was blacking out for days at a time, not remembering anything about where he had been or what he had done. Jeff had stopped eating the dinner I had ready for him when he got home, and I realized after the first few times he hallucinated, that he didn't seem to be aware that I was there. I would talk to him and ask him what was happening, but most of the time he didn't seem to hear me, and when he did actually talk to me, I don't think he knew who I was. After the first two times this happened, I began to take these episodes in stride and realized that although he was screaming and carrying on a lot more, he was not really threatening me when he hallucinated. *Maryann seems to have developed an ability to accept what should be unacceptable. She assessed what was*

acceptable not by the quality of Jeff's behavior, but by the probability of danger to her.

When the hallucinations would start, I would just sit on the stairs and quietly watch and listen and try to figure out what he was imagining – like a twisted game of charades. Since he was not longer eating when he got home I stopped cooking dinner for him, although I still made sure I was awake when he arrived. I never knew what his level of intoxication or insanity might be when he got home, and I didn't want him to catch me unawares if I was sleeping. When he was a little more lucid, he usually wanted to fight about something and would start yelling and banging things around. His tantrums had started to escalate to the point where he would grab me and throw me against the wall or shove me into a piece of furniture. One night when he seemed really out of control, I ran up the stairs and shut myself in the bathroom. He tried to kick the door in but the hallway outside the bathroom door was so narrow that he couldn't get enough leverage to kick the door in. On several occasions, when I sensed that his rage was out of control, I ran into the bathroom and pushed the shelf unit in front of the door and slept on the bathroom floor all night. *Maryann notes that the level of violence had escalated. It's interesting that she would say "out of control" as if his rage and behavior were really controlled the rest of the time, or had been controlled before this point.* I also began to sleep there on the nights when he was hallucinating. Although he seemed less violent during his hallucinations, I just didn't trust what he might do.

By the fifth month of my pregnancy, I was learning to survive on 3-4 hours of sleep a night. I was afraid of Jeff all of the time and began to believe that he might actually kill me. My pregnancy did not show noticeably until almost my sixth month, but suddenly, within a two-week time span, I could not fit into any of my clothes. Jeff

controlled all of the money and he refused to let me buy any new maternity clothes. One day, while he was standing in the kitchen, I picked up the phone and dialed the store where I work. I told the assistant manager that I would not be able to come in to work the following day and wanted to give her enough warning to find someone else to cover my shift. Jeff glared at me from across the kitchen table, not sure what I was doing. Then the assistant manager asked if I was all right and said, yes, I was fine, but I can't fit into any of my clothes and Jeff was refusing to buy me any maternity clothes and since I could not work in my bathrobe, I would have to stop collecting a paycheck until Jeff bought me some clothes. By the time I had finished that sentence, Jeff had ripped the receiver out of my hand and had slammed the phone down so hard he cracked the plastic. I stood my ground, and as he glared at me, I glared back. *Victim resistance* He started screaming at me, asking what the hell I thought I was doing. I told him I wasn't doing anything except what I was told. He had told me I couldn't have new clothes so I was accepting his decision, but it was definitely against store policy to allow me to work naked. He was livid, and started smashing things. I just stood there, hoping that the manager was going to call me back to make sure I was OK after she heard him slam down the phone. Sure enough, the phone rang, but he snatched it up, before I could reach it. He told her I was busy and could not come to the phone. I don't know what she told him, but he paused and listened to her, and then threw me a nasty look and shoved the receiver at me. She asked if I was OK and I said that I was for the moment, but Jeff was pretty angry. He was amazed that I was actually saying this to her. I was amazed that I said it too, but I was about at the end of my rope with the almost daily verbal and emotional abuse, and being forced to wear nothing but my bathrobe was the final insult. I

was not willing to just comply with this new arrangement and I was willing to escalate this as far as it needed to go. I also knew that by telling someone who Jeff saw as an authority figure, it was less likely that he would actually hurt me because he couldn't do it without getting caught. *Maryann was getting to a point where she would say that Jeff's behaviors were not normal or acceptable. Again she accepted a risk of death or serious injury, but appears to have concluded that continuing to live the way she had been was both unnatural and wrong. Even with a willingness to escalate the situation (a willingness that resembles a decision that I made) was executed strategically as she determined how to do so while minimizing risks.* The next day, Jeff took me to get two new outfits I could wear to work. I would be wearing the same outfit 2-3 times a week, but at least I had something I could wear out of the house. He refused to buy me jeans or any casual clothes – only clothing for work. He said I had no reason to leave the house except for work anyway and maybe if I had to walk around the house naked, it would remind me who was in charge.

A week or so later, we got into a really fierce argument about something. I don't even remember what it was about now. I had started wearing Jeff's jeans and flannel shirts around the house – although they were way too big for me, I could at least get them buttoned. I only remember fragments of what happened. I remember he had been in a foul mood all day and I had been walking on eggshells to try not to trigger his temper. *The term "walking on eggshells" struck me as Maryann used it here. It is one that I see or heard often. While I am unsure of its origin, it has become a catch phrase in assessing domestic violence situations. One sees it, for examples, on web sites that have checklists to help someone identify if she is battered. I'm not sure if Maryann's articulation is*

spontaneous or if it is a reflection of her studies. At some point he flew into a rage about something. He grabbed me and threw me against the wall. It happened so fast, I didn't have time to brace myself for it and my head slammed back hard against the plaster. I think I was dazed, because I wasn't sure what had happened. I remember that my legs went out from under me and I slid down the wall and was just sitting there when he grabbed me by the front of the shirt. He dragged me into the next room, telling me something about teaching me who was the boss and then he let go of me and dumped me in a heap on the floor. I think he stood there for a few minutes screaming at me, but I don't remember for sure. I remember looking up to see him walk to the door and close it and lock it. He had done this before, to make sure I could not run out of the house. I felt a real sense of dread as I heard the lock click into place and I got up as fast as I could and half ran, half staggered toward the back door. The back door was always locked – we never used it. Jeff had built a small folding desk that attached to the wall and when it was folded down, as it was at that moment, it obstructed most of the doorway. Jeff knew the desk was in my way and started walking slowly back towards me, taunting me, and telling me I might as well forget it. Was I too stupid to see that the back door was blocked? I didn't even slow down. I twisted open the deadbolt lock and as I twisted the doorknob, I yanked the door open as hard as I could, hoping to at least get it open far enough to stick my head and shoulders out to scream for help. I must have had a lot of adrenaline going at that moment, because I yanked that door open so hard, it ripped the desk halfway out of the wall. The door was open just barely enough for me to squeeze through. I had to push myself through with my arms to get my hips and pregnant belly out and I probably scraped a good bit of skin off in the process. As my bare feet touched

the porch, I sprinted as fast as a pregnant woman can run, out into the snow. I ran across our yard and the yards of several of the neighbors, hoping that if he was right behind me, he would have to tackle me in front of witnesses. I finally looked back and he was not behind me. I ran to the local convenience store a few blocks from our house. I ran up to the counter, panting, and before I could say anything, the clerk told me I would have to leave because I had no shoes on. I told her to please call the police because a man was chasing me and was probably going to kill me. She just repeated the store policy about footwear. I insisted that I was in danger and she needed to call the police. She reluctantly did so and then asked me again to leave. I'm sure that I must have looked like a vagrant, in bare feet, and jeans and a flannel shirt that were so big on me they were clearly not my own clothes. I told her if I stepped outside he would see me when he drove past. She insisted that I leave and the customers behind me were making rude comments because they were tired of waiting to buy their milk and cigarettes. So I reluctantly walked out the front doors and stood half hidden by a stack of milk crates, while I waited for the police to arrive.

Maryann strategically tries multiple times to use the public eye to protect herself. The clerk's responses have the flavor of people who look on while a man is mugged, a woman is raped, or a robbery is committed. It would be easy to vilify that clerk, but I question whether we should do so. This is where we are apt to see "Someone Other Than Us" in terms of both the victim (running in her bare feet, in the snow, without a jacket) or an apparently uncaring clerk (who was probably very frightened and terrified that the source of this strange person's fear would walk into her store and do something terrible. In essence, I suspect that the clerk is trying to protect herself.)

Jeff didn't drive past; he pulled into the parking lot, and parked the car right in front of where I was standing. He strode up to me and without a word he grabbed me by the wrist to drag me back to the car. I twisted loose and backed as far against the wall as I could. I yelled at him to leave me alone, and I turned and ran back into the store. He followed right behind me, but didn't grab me. He ordered me to get in the car and put his arm around my shoulder as if to guide me out the door and I twisted away from him and loudly told him to get away from me. Then the clerk told me to leave again. She was almost yelling now and said we could not have this argument in the store. I told her he was going to hurt me, but she was adamant that I leave. As I stepped out the door again, I started yelling loudly at Jeff to leave me alone, hoping that one of the customers coming in or out of the store would clearly see that I needed some help. I backed against the wall and Jeff grabbed me again. I twisted free and planted my foot against his chest and pushed as hard as I could. I yelled, "I am not going with you! Leave me alone!" Jeff staggered back but he kept coming at me, demanding that I "get in the damned car". I kept shoving him back with my feet. At first I was afraid to actually kick him – I didn't want to hurt him, but he kept coming at me and the other people in the parking lot were just standing there watching or walking past us, pretending that they didn't see this man trying to drag this woman into a car against her will. *While it is probably distressing to read this segment, be careful before you blame these people...How many of us have watched a mother scream and swear at a child in public, and then looked the other way? They are as ordinary as you and I. What one of those people didn't have a family they cared about, or felt that it was okay to get themselves beaten up by a crazy man? For that matter, how many simply decided that this was "a couple thing, just an argument" and so*

the police didn't need to be involved? I don't defend these people, but don't believe that they are people unlike us. I was completely exhausted when the police cruiser finally pulled into the parking lot. Jeff suddenly stepped away from me and I let my legs just go out from under me as I slid down into a heap on the sidewalk. My feet were completely numb from the cold concrete and my hands were shaking visibly. I just waited for the police officer to walk over to me. I had known him years ago when I was in the fire department and called him by name. He acted as though he didn't recognize me and asked me if there was a problem. I stared at him and asked if he recognized me. He said yes, he did, but what seemed to be the problem? I was really hurt and more than a little ticked off that even this man who used to be a pretty good friend of mine, wanted to disassociate himself from me – as if a woman who has been assaulted by her own husband is someone not really human. So I replied to him in the same cold, detached tone of voice that he was using with me. I told him that my husband was trying to drag me into his car and take me home against my will. He looked down at my bare feet as he jotted down notes, obviously noting that I was not wearing my own clothes, and asked why I didn't want to go home. I told him that my husband had thrown me against a wall several minutes ago and I was afraid if I went home that he would kill me. The officer, my friend, never looked me in the eye through this interview. When I told him I thought Jeff might kill me, he looked down at his shoes and then back at the police cruiser while he told me that there was nothing the police could do in a domestic situation like this. *This officer also didn't get a pregnant woman out of the cold at night in the wintertime. The lack of solid police support was not uncommon a few decades ago, before solid training procedures were implemented in many police departments across the country (Lombardi,*

1998). I couldn't believe he was saying this. I replied, "So what happens then – are you guys gonna drive around and finish your shift and then you'll just scan over the police report about my homicide when you get back to work tomorrow afternoon???" He looked down at his shoes again and didn't say anything for a full minute or two. I told him he could not leave me here. I was in danger. He replied that the only place they could transport me to was the local domestic violence shelter. He said this, as though that was not an option anyone would actually consider. *I wonder why she thought that? And why he might have spoken in such a way.* I told him that would be fine with me.

So he and his partner drove me to the local women's shelter. During an intake interview that lasted at least 20 minutes, the staff person assured me that I was very safe there for the night. I had been shaking violently since I had arrived, but halfway through the interview, the exhaustion caught up with me and started to cry. I asked her what would happen if Jeff found out where the shelter was and showed up at the door. She assured me that the location of the shelter was a well-kept secret and I had no reason to be afraid. I told her that I had known where the shelter was for the past 2 years and living in a town this small, there are NO well-kept secrets. I warned her that he was very likely to show up at the door. Finally, I was shown to my room, where I was able to fall into a warm bed and sleep the first deep sleep I'd had in weeks.

In the middle of the night, one of the staff came into my room and woke me up. She said that my husband was on the phone and was insisting that I speak to him. I told her I didn't want to talk to him, but instead of leaving, she asked me if I would please just come out and talk to him for a few minutes. I told her that I had just been told in my intake interview that I was not allowed to talk to him on the shelter's phone and the

shelter would enforce my wishes not the speak to him. The woman looked at me with tears in her eyes and acknowledged that this is not how they usually handle these things, but she said he had been calling incessantly for hours and had been harassing her until she just didn't know what else to do. She said that he had told her that if I would just come to the phone to talk to him, he would stop calling her back. She had the same fear in her eyes that I'm sure I had in mine – that feeling of dread when you realize that the person you are dealing with cannot be reasoned with and does not recognize the rules of common courtesy, or policy and procedure or even the law. He was like the Terminator -- he would just keep coming and coming until he had accomplished his mission. Seeing her fear confirmed my feeling that no matter what I did, I would never be able to get away from him and no one and nothing was going to stop him from doing whatever he wanted to do. I was not polite or accommodating on the phone with him. My answers were short and rude, “No, I will not be coming home . . .No. I do not want to talk about this . . .I don't give a damn if you can't sleep without me there. Go drink yourself into a stupor until you pass out! . . . There is nothing to discuss. It is two o'clock in the morning and you are disturbing my sleep. Don't call here again!” I hung up on him and started walking back to my room. I turned at the door and asked woman, “Did you really believe him when he told you he won't call you back? Don't you know these guys will tell you anything you want to hear?” I could hear the phone ringing as I climbed back into my bed and fell back asleep.

I wonder if the staff person had any training, or took Maryann's warning seriously? There is ample research showing that battered women are the ones best able to predict what their batterer will do (Weisz, Tolman, & Saunders, 2000). They've spent a

lot of time and effort studying him in order to be able to act in a manner that will be least likely to get them into trouble with the batterer. This does seem like it could be a lack of training, or a lack of backbone. What is clear from this is that Maryann does not believe that these “helping” people were willing to help her unless she forced them to. Or that they were competent.

I don't remember how many days or weeks I stayed at the shelter. The last few months of my pregnancy are just fragmented memories. Mostly I remember being afraid all the time. My post-traumatic stress symptoms were a familiar part of my existence again. I had nightmares and night terrors every time I closed my eyes, even if I was just taking a short nap, so I feared falling asleep. I had graphic nightmares of Jeff torturing me until I did what he demanded and several recurring nightmares of being brutally murdered – sometimes Jeff was killing me but the killer's face changed sometimes and could be any one of several men.

I acquired a counselor at the women's shelter. Attending regular counseling sessions was a requirement for staying there. I had been in and out of counseling over the years, even before I had met Jeff, and I was rather disillusioned with the process. I had more than my fair share of major life events during my childhood and adolescence and most of the counselors I had met were overwhelmed with my life story when I gave them my history during the initial intake. Over the years, I had learned to filter what I told a new counselor about my past, because I knew that the entire story would usually scare them. The counselor at the shelter seemed both overwhelmed by my history and intimidated by my husband. I attended the sessions as per my agreement, but didn't feel like I was gaining anything from the experience. *Again, questions of competence.*

I don't have a very clear memory of the time I spent in the shelter. I can't remember how long I was there or how many times I went back. I know there were several stays. I'm not sure where I went when I left the shelter. I think I may have stayed at my parents' house sometimes. I don't remember much about my parent's reactions to all of this. I was worried about being a public embarrassment to them and I felt ashamed that I my husband was so violent and abusive. *I wonder about this sentence...there is a grammatical error, but how key! Was it "my husband" or "I and my husband." I wonder, too, if Maryann has considered her role in this relationship other than as a victim. I see some resistance, and she appears to be somewhat proud of it, but she doesn't talk about it outright. Class has come back into play here, as embarrassment to her parents becomes a major concern for Maryann.* I recall that although at first, my mother encouraged me to make the best of it and stay with him for better or for worse, her feelings about that changed when he began to isolate me from her. She was accustomed to talking to me on the phone several times a week and I was often the person she would confide in when my father was being abusive. When Jeff stopped allowing me to talk to her on the phone, she was upset about that, but my parents were afraid of Jeff and as much as they wanted me and the baby to be safe, they didn't want him to bring the abuse and harassment to their house. *I'm not sure about all parents, I suspect that there would be widely varying reactions to this. I have to wonder, though, if her parents were that influential, why did they not get an order of protection for themselves, to keep him away? It is implied here that Maryann's mother's interest was self-interest. This may or may not be the case, but after Maryann's stories of abandonment I doubt that she'd believe in her mother caring about her for her own sake.*

I vaguely recollect that the last trimester of my pregnancy was relatively peaceful, as Jeff was terrified that I might leave him for good, so he was eager to do whatever it took to win back my affection. He believed that any child of divorce was somehow irreparably scarred for life and he did not want our child to grow up that way. Whenever I left him, Jeff would suddenly become terribly apologetic and would promise to do anything just to get me back. He would be utterly charming and considerate and would swear to me that he would never lose his temper with me again. He blamed the pregnancy and his state of unemployment for his short temper. He blamed his ex-wife for his paranoia that I was having an affair. *Jeff is laying a lot of blame here, which is a battering behavior consistent with the literature (Cavanagh et al, 2001).* He pleaded with me to give him one more chance, so that his child would not have to grow up in a broken home. Several times I gave in to Jeff's pleading and promises and moved back in with him. Everything he was promising me was exactly what I had hoped to hear him say. There was nothing I wanted more than to keep our marriage together and for a long time, I believed that if I was just a better wife and was just a little more patient and understanding, I could make this marriage work. So I would return and give him another chance, and within weeks all of Jeff's promises were soon broken. Although he could maintain some level of self-control when he was sober, Jeff was still verbally and emotionally abusive as soon as he started drinking again. *Interesting points on batterer behavior, how manipulative it is. Oddly, with this behavior the batterers clearly seem to know what the norms are. And there is also evidence of self-blame on Maryann's part. How many will dismiss this case, since the batterer is an alcoholic? He seems to have felt*

just as entitled when he was sober as when he was not. Alcohol is generally considered a significant influence (Fals-Stewart, Golden, & Schumacher, 2003) but not a cause.

By the time our son Bobby was born, I had begun to consider the possibility that Jeff was not going to change and I could not adapt enough to live with him as he was. I was exhausted from living in fear. Even when Jeff was in a good mood, I would carefully consider everything I said or did in his presence, considering whether this might be something that would make him angry. His mood could change in a split second and I was always on guard. Still, I could see no way to get out of the marriage alive. The police had not been supportive the night they took me to the shelter, and even the staff at the shelter had not impressed me as being particularly competent. *Here Maryann states openly her questions about the competence of people that she thought were supposed to help her.* I felt I could not rely on these people to protect me and the baby from Jeff when they were clearly afraid of him too. When Bobby was born, I felt even more trapped in the marriage because I had to protect my son now, as well as myself. Being a mother made me feel enormously vulnerable, perhaps because for the first time in my life, this child was something I cared deeply about and was willing to make any sacrifice necessary to ensure his welfare. *This is a position that many mothers are in and part of what makes getting out of a situation like this one enormously difficult. Any risk Maryann takes for herself, she is also taking on behalf of an infant.*

Bobby was a very easy-going baby, but I had a lot of trouble breast-feeding him and after a few weeks, the doctor thought he wasn't getting enough nourishment.

I wondered about this when I first read it. There are ample signs in Maryann's narrative of physiological reaction to her situation in the form of illness. Physical health

issues arise from domestic violence. Most obviously, of course, is damage from the violence itself. Injuries are dramatically different depending on the type of abuse; injuries to the head such as lost teeth or broken noses, neck and breasts, damage to abdomen including loss of fetus during pregnancy, bruises, cuts, and back problems are not uncommon. In some of literature on health and intimate partner violence, Campbell (2002) writes “Intimate partner violence has long-term negative health consequences for survivors, even after the abuse has ended. These effects can manifest as poor health status, poor quality of life, and high use of health services” (p. 1331). She continues to add that injuries, fear, and stress create chronic health problems such as headaches, eating disorders, chest pain, and hypertension. I wonder if this was related to her shortage of breast milk for the infant.

He was colicky when we put him on formula and would scream in pain for hours. This drove Jeff absolutely nuts, and although he really tried to spend a lot of time with the baby, feeding him and changing diapers and holding him, Jeff gradually found Bobby’s crying to be more and more irritating. When the baby cried, I would rush to quiet him before Jeff would get angry, but with the colic, he was inconsolable and Jeff would yell at me and tell me I was an incompetent mother. I did not want to train the baby to think that he was going to be picked up every time he squeaked, so Jeff and I would have fights when the baby would fuss about being put down for a nap and I would just let him cry. Jeff accused me of abusing the baby because I allowed him to cry. Although I had been willing to do a lot of compromising over the past 18 months to keep Jeff happy, when we disagreed about parenting, I stood my ground and was not willing to raise a child by Jeff’s dictates. *This is interesting – I wonder why that is. Maryann seems*

to have considerable confidence in her ability to be a good mother. Her commitment to good parenting also appears to take priority over her willingness to appease Jeff. Of course, this enraged Jeff because he was used to me conforming to his every demand and he was really worried when I stood up to him and refused to do everything his way.

Although I was standing my ground, I was afraid that Jeff might lose his temper someday when Bobby started crying and might hurt the baby so my vigilance to anticipate and avoid Jeff's temper extended to everything Bobby did as well and I watched and listened closely to every interaction between them to make sure Bobby was safe. *This sounds familiar...it's what I did with my husband and older son. Wanda did it as well.*

Jeff finally was pulled over for driving under the influence about a month after Bobby was born. It was another night when he didn't come home until 5:00 a.m. and I was ready to call the ER when he stormed in the door. He was ranting and raving at the stupidity of the police department and the supposed government conspiracy against hard-working American citizens. Then he told me he'd been pulled over and from the sound of the story he told me, I got the impression that he'd been belligerent with the police, but somehow he avoided being arrested. He refused to take a breathalyzer, and they refused to allow him to drive home so the police had dropped him off at the door. Nice to know the police could be so accommodating. A few days or weeks later, Jeff discovered that by refusing to take the breathalyzer, he automatically forfeited his driver's license for a year. He was livid and threatened to sue the police department for not informing him of his rights. I assumed that since they weren't actually taking him into custody, the police didn't need to read him his rights and they had probably tried to explain to him what would happen if he didn't take the breathalyzer, but he probably didn't shut up long

enough to hear them. I didn't make any comment on this issue, but just nodded and looked sympathetic when Jeff would go off into his daily rant about the corruption of the legal system and the government conspiracy against him. Needless to say, this added stressor of Jeff's impending court hearing for DUI and the certainty that he would lose his license and have to depend on me to do all of the driving was creating a lot of stress. He had always insisted that he drive me everywhere. I have no recollection of ever driving the car with Jeff as a passenger prior to this. Being the driver was strongly symbolic for Jeff – I could not see how he could allow a woman in the driver's seat. *This looks sort of like a symbol of his feelings of entitlement as well as a very literal example of his need to control where Maryann went, how she got there, when she got there, and with whom. It is very symbolic, although batterers have often been "in the driver's seat" even when the victims appeared to be driving themselves and spent a great deal of time in full view of the public.*

When Bobby was about 3 months old, I was upstairs while he was napping. I heard him start to fuss and then quickly start crying loudly and I rushed downstairs to quiet him before Jeff started yelling. As I was halfway down the stairs, the baby suddenly stopped crying, in the middle of a wail. This seemed strange but I thought perhaps Jeff had just picked him up. As I walked into the baby's room Jeff was standing over the crib and suddenly stepped back from it. He had a pillow in his hands and looked startled that I had walked into the room. I rushed to the crib to pick up the baby, who had started crying again as Jeff stepped back from the crib. Before I could even think about what I was doing I started yelling at Jeff. I demanded to know what he had done. He said he did nothing, but he looked terrified. I demanded to know why he had a pillow in his

hands and why the baby had stopped crying so suddenly. He kept denying that he had done anything wrong. Jeff had never seen me really enraged but I was close to it that day and he was visibly shaken by my anger. I thought he was also shaken up by the realization that he had just tried to smother his own son. This was the turning point for me. Now that my suspicions were confirmed, that Bobby was in danger from this man, I resolved to leave and not return until Jeff had stopped drinking and changed his behavior significantly. *In this case as in many others, the safety of children – responsibility for dependents – is a key factor in deciding to leave. The risk she accepted by leaving was no less than the risk she would be accepting by staying. She did think about returning, however. This is a different sort of risk, and it underscores Maryann's commitment to her marriage vows in spite of Jeff's bizarre and violent behaviors. It is significant that Maryann noticed Jeff's reaction to her rage, as she seems to be realizing more and more that she can wield a certain level of power in their relationship whether he likes it or not.*

Several friends from work offered to help me move out. They all knew that I would only have a few hours to pack up everything that was Bobby's and mine and be out of the house in a matter of hours, while Jeff was at the bar. Two of them brought their boyfriends along to protect us if Jeff happened to come home early that night. So we agree upon a time and day and they all gathered at a local diner about the time that Jeff usually left for the bar. I waited until he'd been gone for 20 minutes before I called the diner and gave them the go-ahead. They arrived at the apartment with several pickup trucks and each had an assigned room. I moved from room to room, specifying what should and should not be packed. I was trying to be careful not to take anything that was Jeff's. It took most of the evening, but we had everything, including the baby furniture

packed and loaded into the trucks. The apartment would look like it had been stripped when Jeff arrived home drunk in a few hours. My friends would take my belongings to a friend's empty garage where I could store it for free and they dropped me and Bobby off at the women's shelter. I had insisted that I stay there, instead of at a friend's house, even though I did not feel that safe there. I was afraid that Jeff would be completely out of control when he came home to find me gone, and this time, with all of my belongings gone too. I was sure this would send the message to him that this time, I was gone for good, and I was afraid of what he might do. I felt that staying with a friend would only endanger my friend. *A sneakaway departure was a wise decision, I think. If he is not there, he will not pull a gun and shoot anyone.*

Maryann's struggles seem to have included self-doubt as much as mine and Wanda's did. She continued struggling with the feeling that she lacked intelligence, and older demons like relations with her domineering parents.

One problem Maryann did not seem to have was a lack of faith in her ability to be a good parent, as demonstrated by her willingness to stand her ground against her husband when challenged about Bobby. She cared very much about her child, did her best to care for and protect the infant, and was outraged that her husband attempted to smother the child.

Maryann demonstrates significant learning and subsequent changes in belief and behaviors in this section of the narrative. She learned, for example, how to manage his temper to the degree possible to prevent herself from being hurt. Later, however, she learned that no amount of management would completely prevent her being hurt, perhaps seriously. Being a "better wife" would not make the marriage work.

She certainly struggled with Jeff's alcoholism, increasingly controlling and/or bizarre behaviors over time. In part she struggled against them, but she also struggled to accommodate them as much as she could.

An interesting part of her struggle and learning relates to the times when she encountered other personalities during her marriage. One, the encounter with a social worker whilst in the hospital, planted the seed that grew into understanding of her situation as a battering one. Most, however, seem to have been considerably less positive. Repeated encounters with police, shelters, counselors, anonymous public witnesses, family, and a store clerk seldom resulted in belief, sympathy, or help. She learned, in fact, that these people would probably not be willing and able to help her and she was therefore on her own. What this did was move her toward greater personal independence, but to a less trusting position as well. It also demonstrated a heightened awareness of the larger society, its intricacies and its shortcomings.

A very serious part of her struggle appears to be Maryann's strong physiological reactions around the time of her wedding, during her pregnancy, and at other times. She seems to have struggled with a fear of being killed and eventually believed that she would be. In this sense she was concerned for her health but otherwise did not seem, at the time, to connect the issues of personal health and domestic violence. She does now, with her references to PTSD and its symptoms in the narrative.

Wanda.

Raymond, who had a daughter to a previous marriage, lived in a small city in Alabama. They met at a veteran's (VA) hospital, which was roughly 70 miles from her residence and his. The university medical school for which Wanda was teaching had students in the VA hospital, and she was their supervisor. Wanda and her students rode a bus between towns.

Raymond was a veteran from Viet Nam, an amputee who lost his right leg at the knee. He had problems with it and with his left leg that had also been damaged -- both at the young age of 20 years.

Raymond had had psychological problems at that point, although no one told Wanda about them. "After we married, I found his records [chuckle] at the hospital and they were probably about a foot thick. And most of them were psych."

Two of the three participants' cases had characteristics which will almost certainly bring the Woozle Effect into play. Gelles (1988, p. 37-51) named the Woozle Effect, a principle gleaned from A.A. Milne's stories of Winnie the Pooh. In the story Pooh is walking around a tree. He has seen a set of tracks in the snow and wants to follow them to find the mysterious Woozle that is making the tracks. Piglet joins Pooh and together they track the Woozle – then Woozles, for suddenly there are two sets of tracks! Eventually, as they grow weary of walking and despair of ever finding the Woozle, Christopher Robin climbs down from the tree and points out that the tracks do not belong to a mysterious Woozle, but in fact are Pooh's and Piglet's own footprints. Gelles' analogy is that domestic violence is not a function of other people (the Woozle, so to speak) but of all of us. We are Piglet and Pooh, and domestic violence is not a function

of people other than us. This principle appears in various forms throughout domestic violence literature, often accompanied by horror at the idea of such violence combined with tactics for minimizing or making it invisible (Horsman, 2000).

The Woozle Effect here lies in the fact that Raymond was a veteran of Vietnam with physical health, mental health, and substance abuse issues. Substance abuses are generally not considered to be the cause of battering behavior, though they do exacerbate it greatly. Also, substance abuse becomes a source of conflict when it drains the family income, among other things (Dobash & Dobash, 1998a, p. 149).

Wanda told me about the first time she encountered Raymond in the VA hospital, from which he was being discharged. When they met, he tried to make eye contact while she tried not to:

Of course I was always uncomfortable with anybody...I'm not a very sociable person. We finally made eye contact and he asked if he could take me out to dinner, and if he could come see me where I lived. I told him I live too far away, I live in the other direction from where he lived. Well, he'd come down and see me so he wanted to know where I lived. I gave him my post office box number [laughing]. But I did give him my phone number and thought, 'well this way, you know, if he comes, he comes. If he doesn't, he doesn't know where I live.'

Wanda seems to have been cautious with Raymond in once sense; she'd been on her own for many years and was used to looking out for herself. "He came down, called me to say he was in town and he wanted to meet with me, so we met in town. I didn't show him...tell him where I lived yet. [chuckle] And we went to dinner. And that's

basically where we first kind of got know each other. Sitting, eating spaghetti.”

Raymond was a charming person, pleasant to talk to. He was very intelligent, according to Wanda. While Raymond hadn't graduated from high school, he could hold up his end of a conversation and she believes he'd have done well had he attended college.

Theirs was a very short courtship, only three months. This is where it doesn't make sense that Wanda was very careful. She looked out for herself in one way, but was almost wanton in the sense of finding a husband. If you look at characteristics of battering relationships, one of the ones that crops up is a short courtship of less than six months. Maryann's was also quite short.

He proposed to her during a long-distance telephone call, and after she'd considered for a day or so she said 'yes'. She told me, "It was a conscious decision. I decided I wanted to get married before I died. I didn't wanna die a virgin." Raymond was the first man who paid her any attention, she said, and who made her feel attractive. "You know, I just didn't have the experience of having dated and there weren't guys around who made me feel good. And you feel like, "somebody loves me." Whether or not I loved him at that point, I couldn't tell you. I was "in love with love" kind of thing, you know?"

My first thought was to wonder how Raymond knew she had low self-esteem and was vulnerable. I don't really know if my thoughts are correct, but it looks like he zeroed in on her. I wondered why she thought so poorly of herself in terms of attractiveness. It seems as though she felt this was her one chance, and she needed to grab it.

According to Wanda, Raymond was an outdoors person who loves going out and spending time in the woods. Their honeymoon was in a deserted, abandoned farmhouse

that had none of the usual amenities; running water, for example. It had a wood-burning stove. They slept on an old mattress, left there by hunters who use the abandoned farmhouses to stay in while hunting.

The second day of their honeymoon, Raymond's mother and stepfather showed up, along with Raymond's cousin, his best friend, his friend's wife, and their five kids. Wanda cooked for 11 people on a wood-burning stove that she didn't know how to use. There was no intimacy:

...when we were on our honeymoon, it was like, 'nah...we won't bother with it'. So I...cried myself to sleep for the whole honeymoon, if you want to call it that. Like I said, I knew that I was in trouble. I should have known...I should have known then, but I didn't. Too much wanting to make it succeed... In retrospect, I can say, I should have known better. No one had a honeymoon like my honeymoon! [both laughing] No one ever better have a honeymoon...it was bad. Took a shower...when it rained, because the water would run off the roof and I could...stand outside and wash and rinse in the rainwater as it came off the roof.

I didn't know for a while exactly where this story fit in. I'm still not sure that I know. She says that she knew she was in trouble, she should have known. I'm left wondering, how could she have known? And how did she end up in an abandoned farmhouse; was she supposed to have a 'surprise' honeymoon? Was she consulted about going there? Clearly she was surprised and horrified at the gaggle of guests who showed up at their farmhouse. It seems such a stark contrast, the successful physician and the distressed woman cooking for 11 who was washing in rainwater on her honeymoon.

Before getting married, Wanda had committed to teaching a summer course for her old employer, 140 miles from where she now lived with her husband. In order to meet that obligation she sublet a room, compressed classes, and traveled back and forth for six weeks.

Somewhere along the way, and was pure paranoia or maybe it was instinct, I got the impression that Raymond was making it [having sex] with Jack's [Raymond's best friend] wife. [pause] I never said anything. It was more that...[exhale]...you know, sometimes you touch people when you look at people and it's okay. But there was just something a little odd, like the touch was a little prolonged, the look was a little...more intimate, than just a glance...Couldn't swear to it. It was just my...No I think he was having an affair with her. But I couldn't tell you. It was just my suspicion and ...I was just jealous. Just me. Whether or not, I don't know. I never did ask. I hadn't said anything but somewhere that suspicion sat. And that suspicion was the foundation of a lot of other suspicions too.

This represents an interesting tension throughout my conversations with Wanda – It is very clear that she believes the things that she's telling me and is certain that they are true, but she seems to feel equally obligated to express considerable self-doubt.

Just over a year later, they had their first child. Wanda became suspicious about another girl, Raymond's God-daughter who was deaf and only communicated with sign (Raymond knew sign language). One night he didn't come to bed at all when his God-daughter was there, although Wanda never actually saw anything inappropriate going on

between them. She repeatedly checked the living room where the two were on the couch, but finally Wanda fell asleep in her own bed. “I just had suspicions. Again. Suspicious, and jealousy, I guess. It’s more suspicion than anything.” She never said anything and believes that if she had, he’d have denied it.

Those events, combined with the fact that Raymond had been charged with statutory rape in another state at age 17, increased her suspicions. “She was I don’t know what age. Nowadays I believe she was probably about 14 and just looking... But he said she was 17 or 16... her parents got mad and he said they were petting and necking but they didn’t have sex. He wasn’t prosecuted, he was just sent back... So I’m not sure of that story, frankly. I just heard his version of it.”

Over time, Wanda’s suspicions were borne out. There were proven love affairs outside their marriage, including some that Raymond at least attempted with minors. He blamed Wanda for these, suggesting that he had love affairs and pursued teenagers because she was not loving enough toward him.

This is difficult. These stories were horrifying to me. I wondered why Wanda did not take a proactive role in protecting Raymond’s God-daughter from molestation. While she may not have been able to make Raymond come to bed, she might have been able to put the girl to bed. Secondly, the charges of statutory rape seem very odd in the sense that it seems almost certain that there was more of the story than Wanda was told. It looks to me like Wanda did not want to believe in Raymond being a sexual predator and could continue to believe so (albeit uneasily) as long as she wasn’t presented with physical evidence. And finally, he blames the victim.

Raymond definitely lied with regularity and manipulated Wanda. He seems to have been possessive of her, but feeling as though he had some right to other women and girls when he wanted them. She seems to believe that no one, friend or family, was considered over Raymond's needs, whims and desires. This trend is consistent with the literature surrounding batterers and their elevation of personal needs above all else (Dobash & Dobash, 1998a).

Given notice where they lived because of illegal pets, Wanda told me that she and Raymond bought a house. Their younger child was born after they'd been in the house for about a year. Wanda continued to work in medical education at a nearby university. Sometimes Raymond watched the baby and later both kids. Sometimes his family would watch the children and they also employed paid childcare. Raymond himself received veteran and disability benefits, but did not work a paid job.

Raymond began having difficulty with the area of the amputation, however, and suffered great pain. He wore a prosthesis when Wanda met him, though his disability was virtually unnoticeable. Because of the medical problems and accompanying inability to wear his prosthesis, Raymond went about on crutches, which in turn made it difficult for him to watch a baby. Wanda reports the beginning of a series of surgeries on his leg and how, naturally enough, Raymond at the same time took drugs for pain: "Surgeries were they first took off the kneecap which was still attached, and they went up a little higher on his leg, and they kept shaving a little more off his leg. So some uh...amputation that was at the knee, it became an amputation that was probably about...um...mid...mid-thigh maybe." Over several surgeries his products for pain changed, becoming greater in strength and in the volumes he took.

Raymond went on and off the painkillers, but eventually got to the point where he took them frequently in quantity so that he was stoned. "...he was snowed on Demerol. He was taking up to...3000 milligrams of Demerol a day. Now, the maximum dose I usually give to anybody in the hospital is 100 milligrams per dose four times a day." Wanda described it as a "lethal" dosage, but said he'd built up a very high tolerance for the drug.

I struggled with myself at this point, feeling for Raymond's pain and difficulty with amputation. My own mother is a below-knee amputee on one leg, and I have heard often enough about pain and difficulty with prostheses. I had a peripheral part of her experience of the accident, surgeries, pain, physical therapy, depression and grieving over the loss of the limb. I understand a little bit about the day-to-day difficulties of this physical disability. Because of the stories I'd heard, though, and the fact that my study participant was a woman who suffered because of Raymond's actions, I didn't want to feel any sympathy for Raymond. My desire to deny him any sympathy was overruled; in this area I really felt for him. I was also amazed, floored, really, at the volume of painkillers he took. The impact didn't really hit home until Wanda told me the maximum that she would prescribe for patients and I could make a comparison.

At this point Wanda and Raymond were married for about five years. She was not happy, but could tolerate the situation. *This "tolerance" seems to spring from the same belief that marriage vows are forever seen in narratives of Maryann and me.* Her fears were for the children. Wanda didn't think he wanted to hurt the children, but felt that he was not capable of taking care of them. One example she gave was about one afternoon when Raymond was watching their young son and decided that he was going to cook

beans for supper. He was “out of it” on painkillers enough that he fell asleep. “The beans burned down, you know, burned to nothing and he...well, they didn’t catch fire but they started burning. And...smoke started pouring out and it set off the smoke alarm. And that didn’t wake him.” The child was frightened by the noise and buried his head in the couch. Eventually, choking on the smoke woke his father. On another occasion their daughter was accidentally left home alone and began wandering around town, looking for her father, until a neighbor took her home and watched her for the day.

This is serious child neglect along with the drug addiction. I was sort of lulled by these stories at first. There are no lurid descriptions of browbeating, no physical beatings, very little that is dramatic at all. However, when I went back and examined it some points are very clear. One is that Raymond was concerned with himself only. In this short period of time, Raymond had shown no sense of responsibility or respect for even one family member or friend. Another was that he was manipulative and adept at maneuvering to minimize the effects of his actions.

Their marriage was not happy, Wanda said, although “I never fought because I was not...I am not a confrontational person...I’m more of the kind who would...try to smooth things down when things would go out of hand. I’d start backing things down smoothing things out.” She reports that he yelled a lot at the kids and became more controlling over time. In response to my questions, Wanda told stories of Raymond’s attempts to control her and the children. On sunny days after school, for example, the children might not be allowed out to play. Or he’d have them out helping him cut wood at night until after midnight, even if they had school the next day. To spare the children, Wanda would substitute herself as helper and then go to work the next day. Raymond ran

a “business” (under the table, that is, unregistered and strictly against government regulations) cutting wood that represented a financial hemorrhage – Wanda estimated that it lost two to three thousand dollars per month.

There are several interesting pieces to this. One is that Raymond does seem to need to control things even while he faced a reality in which he had little significant control over many aspects of his life. I would say that Wanda is the one who had the most direct control over Raymond’s life. Acts like the woodcutting business might be targeted at her...i.e. if he can manipulate or control the person who has the most power, then clearly he is in charge. A key piece is Wanda’s non-confrontational demeanor; it looks like Raymond used this trait to manipulate her.

Wanda’s younger child was 13 when things started changing again. She said:

Raymond had surgery done to his ankle, then was in the hospital probably in September with this *huge* abscess on the side of his ankle – about the size of a golf ball or a lemon. You have to realize Raymond was sick so much now, I mean, I never started a semester without him being in the hospital. He was in the hospital about 4 or 5 times a year anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. He wouldn’t take care of it. For example, the day after he got out of the hospital he went out in the woods, driving his pickup. He started running fevers, for which he was put on different antibiotics when we’d take him back to the hospital. In December he was spiking temps up to about 104 every evening. The holidays made it hard to get in to the hospital, and then it was New Years’ ...and he just kept getting worse.

Raymond began hallucinating and she finally convinced him to go to the Emergency Room. The doctor, “[s]he just yelled all over the place at me because he now had pneumonia.” While he was there, he kept getting worse – extremely hallucinatory, hard to arouse, many things. The doctors tried different things without effect. Eventually Wanda got a direct line (unheard of, she told me when emphasizing the severity of the situation) to the doctor, who admitted defeat and recommended sending Raymond up to a large medical center. Once there the hospital staff began doing tests, but Raymond, she said, had decided that Wanda had him committed and told the staff they weren’t to tell her anything. She had to convince him that he was only in the hospital. That very night, he went for emergency open heart surgery because the infection had gone into his bloodstream, back to the heart, lodged in the valve and had eaten his microvalve away completely. So, she told me, without open-heart surgery immediately he would be dead within 48 hours.

Wanda explained a lot of the medical side of Raymond’s various problems to me. One could see both the doctor and the teacher as she explained the concepts using convoluted medical terms, and then putting them into a form that a layperson could understand. She did so with confidence and without condescension for my ignorance, translating and placing things into a context to help me understand the impact of different situations. It was fascinating to watch her shift between the very meek, self-doubting manner I observed when she spoke about herself as a young woman or jealous wife and this brisk, confident doctor.

The surgery was successful, “but he never really...was right after that. He...was not recognizing things, just...bizarre statements... Then he started spiking temps again

and again they didn't know what was going on. The surgeon did exploratory surgery ...all the bacteria that had been in his blood and all the stuff had finally ended up in the spleen. The spleen is kind of like the body's septic system. His spleen abscessed again. And he [the surgeon] says, 'I went in,' and he says, 'actually as I lifted it into the pan, it ruptured.' He says, 'he could have died any minute.'"

"[exhale] So many times, so many opportunities."

There are a host of things going on here...it seems very clear that the physical medical issues were a great contributor in Wanda's case. It also seems clear that she -- Wanda, who of all of us seems the most gentle -- really regrets that Raymond didn't take one of several splendid opportunities to die gracefully.

Raymond went back into the Intensive Care Unit. He was hooked up to a ventilator and was in a coma for weeks. According to Wanda, "[t]he doctor said, 'You need to make a decision because eventually he's going to have to go on, like, dialysis, full life support. Do you want that?'" Wanda and Raymond had talked about that and he had no desire for life support. Then she "went home, went to church, told the pastor. He asked the congregation to pray. Damn! Did it again! He woke up the next day."

The "did it again" comment was in reference to God hearing prayers and taking a hand. I believe that this time she's referring to God hearing the prayers of the congregation on Raymond's behalf.

"Church became very important to me during that whole period...I think it was about the time that he became [ill] that I started going to church, yes. Going to church on a regular basis because it was...was helpful to me." When I asked Wanda about this helpfulness, Wanda gave me many examples of how God intervened in her life, usually

for the better. One example was when Wanda desperately needed a job some time after leaving Raymond. She had looked and looked, applied and interviewed, without success. She could no longer hold out financially. Knowing that she had done all she could, Wanda placed the matter in God's hands. The next day, she got a call for what turned into an excellent opportunity. *Wanda learned over time that she was cared for by a loving Christian God. She mattered to Him, and He helped in her times of deepest need. God could see and value the loving care that she gave and the hard work she did, and could forgive all her mistakes non-judgmentally. In addition, Wanda's church provided a haven of other caring people, especially the pastor and his family. I think this belief was a strong part of her ability to get out and survive. What is more difficult to capture than Wanda's words here is her face when she talked about her relationship with God. I'm not sure I've ever seen anyone who could be better described as "being nestled in God's hand."*

Raymond eventually came home but Wanda's comment was that his personality seemed permanently altered. "He was doing flashbacks to Viet Nam..." He was more violent, paranoid, and out of touch with his surroundings. As an example, Wanda says that "he...would pick up, like, a pencil, and hold it like a knife toward Jesse. You know, 'I know you, you're one of those Cong,' you know, the Cong Cong...[s]o the kids kind of kept a large perimeter that they didn't go near him. He would use his crutches to hit at them..." If one of the children stayed home from school they would hide from him and not let him know that they were there. When he passed out from the pain drugs he was taking again, the children would emerge, eat, and go to the bathroom. They did not tell Wanda about this practice until later, when they were adults.

Wanda feels that Raymond became progressively more threatening toward her, although he never actually hurt her physically. He played with his guns frequently. She says he had an M-1 (a military rifle), a multitude of hunting rifles, a .357 Magnum, and a .45 automatic (both are handguns). He kept his .357 Magnum, loaded, under the pillow at night, “and I’m sleeping on the pillow beside him. You know, it’s like, I don’t know if I’m going to wake up tomorrow.”

“I was genuinely afraid.”

Who wouldn’t be? Part of the game seemed to be making sure that no one could tell if he was really sane or not, whether he really intended harm or not.

Wanda told me stories about different avenues various family members used to protect themselves: One day she “was vacuuming the rug and caught all this fishing...cord, all this fishing line on the sweeper. I said something to Jesse, and he had made, like, fishing line across the floor just above the floor level so that if Raymond came in to kill him, he’d fall. He’d trip over the fishing [line] and crash. Kay had an escape route out her bedroom. And Jesse became afraid of his bedroom because his bedroom only had one window and it wasn’t really a good place. I mean, she had some place [space]...she had a bigger room, more room to get away from Raymond. Jesse didn’t have much room, so he stopped sleeping in his bedroom. And when I said something about him, ‘why are you sleeping on the couch all the time?’ ‘Well, my bed just isn’t comfortable.’ I think he was sleeping [there] because he was closer to the front door.”

It seems that everyone was living on a razor’s edge, waiting for disaster but having no place to escape to.

We discussed whether he was fully insane, or if Raymond really knew what he was doing. She said

Oh I think he knew. I think he could flip in and out, but I think it was both. He would call me at work...uh, one day I was lecturing and he called me and said uh, he left a message with the secretary – it was an emergency. So I...told the students to take a break, went and made the phone call. ‘What’s the emergency?’ Well, he was going to kill himself. And if I didn’t get home, right now, the kids would be the ones who walked in and saw his brain splattered against the wall. And he might or might not wait ‘til he could...I mean, he might or might not kill himself. First, he might do the kids first, and then kill himself...he said, you know, I never know who’s going to come through the door. I’ve got my gun. You know, so...it’s a fear he put into me. He may not have said, ‘I’m going to kill the kids.’ But he did say, ‘I’m going to kill myself.’. And the kids may make it or not.

That was the first time he did it. So I went home, cancelled class, went back in the classroom and said, ‘I’ve got a family emergency,’ you know, ‘we’ll catch up with this tomorrow.’ Cancelled class. The rest of the class. Headed home, walked in, didn’t know what I was going to find, and I saw him sitting in his chair with this black thing in his hand. I mean, my...heart was in my stomach because I figured he was just going to pick it up and shoot me. ...

Well, I walked on into the room and I says, ‘what’s going on?’ That wasn’t a gun in his hand, it was a flashlight. Well apparently he had a...had a hamster. The hamster had gotten loose, and he couldn’t find it. This was his way of bringing me home so I could hunt for his hamster.”

Wanda asked him why he’d done this. “He says, ‘ ‘cos I knew you wouldn’t. I knew this would get you to come home’ [exhale] Oh, I wanted to kill him. I mean, I was...I started thinking about ways of killing him.”

Wanda said she never thought about leaving him because she still felt bound by her vows, but she did think about killing him. Leaving him was economically not the best thing for her. She told me, quite frankly, that she hated him. She was not sorry about her hatred, but instead spoke of ongoing shame and embarrassment, of feeling stupid for the decisions she made. “I should be smarter than that. Here I am, you know, hopefully an intelligent woman...” Wanda still feels guilt as well. She says she didn’t talk about it to other people “[b]ecause I knew what they were going to say...Stupid!” Wanda had several conflicting priorities – feeling that she had to protect the children, for example, but also that divorce wasn’t an option – “a marriage is forever” even though divorce was not unheard of in her family. She did what she felt she had to do to succeed with her family.

Several points of interest here; this paragraph is pretty crucial. One is that she felt stupid. It’s important that she felt strongly that she’d be judged by others, which recalls our norms. I suspect that the knowledge was strong and especially confounding in her case. As a doctor, she would occasionally see or treat people who lived in abusive

situations. How, then, could she be caught in one herself? Her ethic of care is so strong...I have to wonder if her desire to kill Raymond wasn't a complete rupture, or flip side, of that ethic. In a direct conflict of priorities – keeping the marriage whole, caring for Raymond, and caring for children – the children would win.

Wanda was successful professionally. At work, she had one confidante, but that avenue was limited because the confidante eventually stopped being available. Plus, Wanda felt that she needed to be home as much as possible to protect the kids and look after Raymond. He was less and less mobile with time, less able to take care of himself, and this appears to have made him very angry. He threatened Wanda's life on many occasions and she was terrified.

Yet another control tactic – two, actually. Death threats, and requiring her presence at home. This is difficult, because again I have to feel a certain sympathy for Raymond. I can understand his anger over an obviously deteriorating physical condition and feel sympathy for both his mental anguish and his physical pain. That does not give him the right to do what he did to Wanda and their children, and my angry reaction to such horrifying treatment almost completely negates the feelings of sympathy.

Eventually she became frightened enough that she did start trying to tell people. She says that they didn't believe her: "One time he was on the phone, we'd been talking on the phone, and he was threatening me and he was so angry...he was so...he was just so much bitter and hate...[t]he nurse walked in the room, [he] laid the phone down on the bed beside him, and he told the nurse that, you know, whatever. It was a pleasant conversation, I could hear every word that was going, sounded like a completely different person. No anger, no...bitterness, none of this..." She tried to tell his family as well,

without success. Raymond had a remarkable ability to shift demeanor from angry and hostile to pleasantly charming, and seems to have done it regularly – even during periods when he was supposed to have been completely unaware of his surroundings.

Another point that suggests manipulateness over illness. I have spent a lot of time trying to sort out how the medical/psychological stuff works. It is impossible for me to untangle illness from manipulation.

Wanda began to keep records: “I started...I did start try to journal a little bit more in terms of...if I die, I want people to know what happened, and I kept the stuff at work. And I started leaving all important papers out of the house, leaving it at the office.” The records Wanda kept and gave to me as data throw into stark relief the severity of her situation. The word “threats” that she used repeatedly during our interviews doesn’t capture the stomach-turning promises he made of killing the entire family, killing random people, garroting Wanda since there was no ammunition for his many guns, slashing Wanda’s throat while she slept, or using a wire hook to rip out her insides so he could watch her die slowly – all things that I found in a few pages of her written records.

Raymond, Wanda says, was cruel to the children. She told me that the children thought she knew about the extent of his cruelty, though Raymond did much of it when she was not around. They were also aware that she tried to protect them. Wanda began to be more afraid as her daughter started to develop physically. “He started her calling [sic] ‘a little slut’, accusing her of sleeping around...um...I mean we’re talking a kid who’s, like, in girl scouts, going to church...I mean, she’s a good kid. She...she’d be leaving for school in the morning, ‘no need to bother coming back you little slut you could learn to

live off the street’.” And, Wanda reiterated, Raymond had a liking for young girls. Later, her daughter said that she was never touched inappropriately by her father.

This jealousy is fairly common in batterers, and so is the namecalling. I wonder if incest was a tabu he was not willing to break and that is why he attacked his young daughter about her sexuality.

Wanda’s son began sleeping on the floor beside his parents’ bed. She believes her son was trying to protect her. He slept on the bedroom floor beside Raymond so Raymond couldn’t get out of bed. Raymond, according to Wanda, liked the arrangement because that way he could poke Jesse awake and make him run after a snack or drink. She thought a lot that year, and she told me that the breaking point came when she watched him harming the kids. First, “the kids and I went through the house and removed every bullet we could find. We knew if he took the guns out he’d notice it. And there were bullets *everywhere*. He had them in his nightstand drawer, in his gun case, in the closet, in boxes by his chair, you name it there were bullets. We searched the house up and down ... And we had a friend of ours take them away.” There were boxes and boxes, clips, loose bullets, shoulder straps with bullet loops. The loose bullets, Wanda estimated when I asked, filled a standard plastic storage container about half full. *The container Wanda pointed to as she spoke was of the sort large enough to hold a folded comforter or several blankets. And that was the loose bullets alone.*

Wanda recited to me the story of the event that prompted separation from her husband. One night, their daughter was at a Halloween party, a Girl Scout sponsored event for mentally disabled kids. Kay was to be picked up at a pre-established time. Wanda was afraid of leaving Jesse alone with Raymond, so she tried to arrange things so

she would be gone a total of 10 to 15 minutes. Either Jesse wouldn't go, she said when I asked, or Raymond wouldn't let him. "Left at the last possible moment, went down there to pick her up, pulled into the parking lot, the kids were leaving, no Kay. No Kay. She had stayed around and was chatting with people. When she got into the car, I was almost in a panic because we had been there longer than I had anticipated....Probably 30 minutes."

The protection seems to have been ingrained, habitual, and important enough to cause panic. This is not at all unlike the hyperalertness that Maryann and I displayed in trying to protect our own children.

When Wanda and Kay got home, Raymond was coming down the hall, he was screaming at Jesse...Jesse was in his bedroom...and he was crying, and uh... 'What's going on?' 'I told him to clean his room and he hasn't done it and you've got 5 minutes to get this room clean kid...So tried to smooth things over like we usually did...Give him his iced tea, to get him all calmed down and at the same time try to settle Jesse down. Talked him [Jesse] into cleaning his room so that he wouldn't aggravate his dad further...So... Raymond... uh... I remember the kitchen... I mean... if you ever have anybody stomp on crutches, he did. Uh, Jesse hadn't done a thing... or if he had done anything it was just minimal. You know how... kids will maybe pick up something and then sit for a little bit, pickup something else... Raymond ...knocked him to the ground...he got Jesse to the floor and he went down to the floor. Now, he is not strong when he's standing because of his...um, lack of mobility and

having to be on crutches. But because he's been walking crutches for at least 20 years or how long, very strong in the arms. So he went down to the floor with Jesse. That way he has his strength. And he, basically tried to grab Jesse [around the] neck. He got his one hand...He got one hand behind, you know, like where his hand locked like they do on wrestling, and tried to snap Jesse's head back...One behind his head and one on his...forehead, maybe. But he was trying to do that. Jesse was screaming, um...Kay and I ran down the hall, both of us trying to grab [Raymond]...get his grip off Jesse. He did release one point, and that time he reached down and grabbed Jesse by the testicles and twisted. Jesse just screamed. It was horrible. And then he got hold of Jesse's head and was pounding it against the doorframe. At this point he had knocked the door off the hinges. And...was pounding Jesse's head against the frame of the door. Kay ran next door to get [the neighbor] 'cos I yelled and told her go get her, and ...came over, and...finally got him off of Jesse...

[B]y the time they got there, Jesse had got out of the situation, however, he was in his room...they were separated. Got Raymond into the living room, I think [the neighbor] got there about the time he was in the living room. And, in the meantime, then I tried to call his aunt... she had a lot of...control with Raymond. She was a good steady influence in the family. If anybody in the family I trusted, I trusted Janet. So uh...called her to come, you know, uhhh...tried to call her...she...there was no

answer. Then, his cousin ...called in the midst of this... and in meantime too, I called the police.

I was frightened, I was angry, I was in tears..."

The neighbor arrived first. Raymond yelled at him and at Wanda, but by the time his cousin and the police arrived, Raymond was calm. He told the police that Wanda made the whole thing up. The neighbor's and the cousin's stories conflicted, however there were the signs of struggle and Jesse's injuries – injuries that required a trip to the emergency room.

Again we see evidence of manipulation and duplicity. The stories she told provide sufficient evidence to suggest that this was a very common, very effective tactic for Raymond to use. When he was convincing to nurses or officials, Wanda was the one who looked mentally unstable. He built on this directly in his letters, suggesting that he could push his case for her mental instability even further by mentioning her childhood scars from self-mutilation. In the letter he claims that this is the worst sort of betrayal, however, and he would never do it to her as she'd done it to him.

Wanda had surreptitiously been packing belongings for some time in case of an emergency exit. She grabbed this cache, and the children, and they left. A day later they went home and Raymond was evicted due a state law regarding battering situations. In an abuse case, the abusive party was to leave and the damaged party or parties retained the primary residence. They remained in the house until her younger child finished high school, though the Wanda ended the marriage when her younger child was 14 years old, after 19 years.

Clearly the police weren't fazed by Raymond's story. Wanda got a protection order and reinstatement into her home.

There was a hearing on child abuse, for which Raymond received probation. Wanda believes that he got off lightly because there was sympathy for his disability:

“he was on crutches...he couldn't hurt anybody...Raymond's defense was, 'I don't remember. Ever since I got sick when I was in Columbus, I don't remember...And he did have some retrograde amnesia from the original surgery on his ankle to getting out of the hospital in Columbus...but then he used that after that. 'I don't remember. If you say so, it must be, but I don't remember it ever happening. If you say so, I guess it happened, but I don't see how it could have and I don't remember it happening... And, during ...the testimony...he said something to me...she [daughter Kay] made a comment back, and he said...I don't remember. 'I don't remember doing such and such'... um, but was something that she didn't say anything to him about.”

After that event, Kay refused, ever, to have contact with her father and does not to this day.

According to Wanda, Raymond harassed them. He drove by frequently and bought a house only a block away, one that required him to drive by Wanda's house to get home. He also came onto the property when she and the children weren't home. “He would then stop the truck out on the road, and honk the horn and...he'd want something, you know, out of the house...and I'd get it for him. Might be a...tool out of the garage, you know, a monkey wrench or whatever.” Raymond eventually got his guns as part of

the divorce settlement, and Wanda was afraid that he would shoot her. That feeling receded as time passed.

Yet, he continued to manipulate and control their lives to some extent. Wanda's case could easily be considered problematic by some simply because Raymond never actually hit or hurt her physically. This woman, who was systematically terrorized for 19 years, would not qualify even to be a statistic if one paid too much heed to that only addresses physical battering (e.g. Gelles & Straus, 1988).

Psychological abuse has long been considered a factor in battering situations although it has not been as extensively studied as physical violence. It is more difficult to identify and definitively label as "violent" or "abusive." There have been a few good studies on psychological abuse. Follingstad and deHart (2000) attempt to understand and identify psychological abuse by conducting a study that included contextual variables related to different acts and surveying psychologists about what would be considered abusive. For example, a single instance of harsh criticism might not be considered abuse, whereas ongoing acts over months or years would more likely to be considered abusive. Based on the work of Loring (1994), one could say that the dynamics of psychological abuse are not necessarily the same as the buildup of tension/release/honeymoon periods named in Walker's (1984) cycle of violence. Rather, psychological abuse shows more of a linear escalation over time. It is implied that the linear escalation is also present in battering relationships where physical and psychological violence are both used. Psychological abuse is also less readily identified by victims; it can be quite subtle and more effective than physical violence. Typically psychological violence is not named "abuse" until physical violence occurs.

One definition of psychological abuse is “an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another” (Loring, 1994, p. 1) where the inner self is constituted of ideas, feelings, characteristics, etc. Follingstad and deHart (2000, p. 901) identified 12 categories of psychological abuse including

threats to physical health; destabilizing woman’s perception of reality; isolation, restriction, or monopolization of mobility, information, or social activity; treatment as inferior, humiliation/degradation; verbal abuse/criticism; jealousy/suspicion; intimidation and/or harassment; use of male privilege and/or rigid gender roles; economic abuse; control of personal behavior; emotional or sexual withholding/blackmail; and failure to live up to role expectations,”

with over 100 items placed in the various categories. It emerged that in many cases a behavior may or may not be considered abusive based on intent, perception, and especially frequency and duration. Like physical violence, psychological violence is likely to emerge over time and is visible as a pattern of domination. Individual instances typically are easily explained and/or dismissed.

While all that is informative it still doesn’t get to the main point. The point is, Wanda’s was a battering situation because of what Raymond was trying to do and why. Wanda could be the poster child for psychological abuse in a marriage, though I believe there are millions of others, largely unreported because psychological abuse saturates our culture and is tacitly sanctioned. Maryann gave a good example in her descriptions of her parents’ marriage.

I am taking as a central point Wanda's very strong ethic of care. Up until her marriage, she focused it almost entirely upon her patients and students. In marrying, however, there occurred a significant shift such that her ethic of care was also strongly focused on husband and family. Parenthood provided another notch in her level of care and devotion to family. I would think it easy to see from the data that she had high levels of devotion and feelings of personal responsibility in those areas of care. Her earlier uncertainty regarding those issues, i.e. never marrying and dying a virgin, would no longer be a significant factor for her.

A struggle was with her uncertainty regarding fidelity and jealousy with respect to Raymond. Clearly this would bring the personal attractiveness factor back into play. I am certain that he would have seen her having an affair as something else she "did to him" but it seems almost certain that he zeroed in on her shyness and knew of her inexperience as far as dating men went. He did accuse his daughter of being a slut, which suggests that the mentality is there. It also highlights trouble with the social norm of faithfulness in marriage.

She had difficulty with Raymond being unable and/or unwilling to care for small children because of his substance abuse and physical disability. Another struggle was to protect the children from both his anger and control while also trying to keep him relatively happy and protecting his self-esteem. Wanda struggled with her shame and embarrassment over her situation, as well as with non-help and support from family. Also on the rise were her fears for herself and her children. Kay was sexually mature and Wanda's husband was, she felt, a sexual predator. Raymond's hostility to Jesse was on the rise and his threats to kill all three were regular. This warred, however, with her

commitment to marriage vows and family. Eventually her responsibility for the children's safety prevailed.

All the small struggles fed into what I see as a larger struggle for Wanda. Over time her little-expressed anger increased. Care was how Wanda maintained some self-worth, plus it was how she gained and kept the affection of others as well. In Raymond's case, all her care yielded no positive results, and she learned that nothing she did, none of her practical and loving care, would ever yield positive results. She was clearly angry over his apparently deliberate manipulation of her and others (e.g. the hamster event and conversations with nurses while she was on the telephone). Her anger seems to have developed into an active hatred, where she wanted Raymond to die and even thought about ways of killing him herself.

I speculate that Raymond needed and wanted someone to take care of him; however, that person would also see him as needy rather than strong, and so his need to dominate and diminish that person may indeed have been great.

Wanda did have some positive learning, however, that is significant. When Raymond spent an extended time in the hospital, she found that she and the children could live happily without conflict and with love. In a larger social sense Wanda continued locating herself as a caring and responsible doctor; she also located herself within a church that provided a good environment for her. Her move toward a deep Christian faith was, I would say, a significant shift in learning and identification and it was outside of Raymond's realm of control.

Aftermath: Learning Identities After Battering

The times of marriage and battering varied quite a bit in length, from less than two years to 19 years. This section, however, covers approximately the first year following each woman's exit from her battering relationship. It was also a time of turmoil and change, although the sources were much different.

Maryann.

I stayed out this time, moving in with my parents once Jeff had calmed down a little, but he still harassed us by phone on a daily basis, calling me endlessly for hours. If we didn't answer he would let it ring for 8-10 minutes at a time. I would walk over to the phone and just lift the receiver and hang up again immediately, but he would call right back. I documented how many hours at a time he would call us and when I called the phone company to report it, the person I spoke to was incredulous and anxious to file charges against him, until I gave her my name and his name and she realized that we had the same last name. She asked if he was related to me and when I told her he was my husband, she completely changed her tune and told me that they will not prosecute harassment cases when the perpetrator is a family member because it just becomes too complicated. Once again, I got the message that no one was going to step up and do their job or protect me in any way. This made me feel like no matter what I did, there was no way to escape this man's constant harassment and control of my life.

This harassment is of the same sort that Wanda experienced, although certainly more aggressive.

Jeff was ordered to have a psychological assessment for his DUI, to determine if he should go to jail or go to rehab. He was belligerent and hostile to the counselor who

did his evaluation and she was so afraid of him *I don't know if Maryann was present at the first meeting but suspect from a comment below that she was not. The counselor may not have been afraid of Jeff, but simply acted strategically. While Maryann may indeed be correct, I think this is an assumption she is making.* that she had a very tall, heavysset male counselor with her the second time she met with Jeff to tell him the results of the DUI. I was asked to be present at this meeting. Jeff interrupted the woman continuously, telling her that her evaluation was a joke and questioning her credentials and qualifications to evaluate him. Each time he would interrupt, the woman would stop speaking and the man who was with her would interrupt Jeff and shut him down. This man handled Jeff and his verbal intimidation very effectively. He clearly was not afraid of Jeff and by the end of the meeting, Jeff was just sulking quietly in his chair. I was very impressed with this counselor. Jeff was sentenced to 28 days in rehab, and I called this male counselor a few weeks later and asked him if he would take me as a new client. He asked why I wanted to work with him specifically. I explained to him that I had never seen anyone actually handle Jeff effectively and not be afraid of him. He agree to work with me and I began the first really effective counseling of my life. I worked with this counselor for more than a year, through my separation, Jeff's stay in rehab, and the divorce. He became the first person in my life who was there for me when I needed him. He taught me how to communicate assertively and how to stand my ground with people, including my parents and Jeff. He helped me build up a sense a self-worth and he was the first person to actually convince me that I was an intelligent woman.

I wondered about the logic of Maryann's selection. Was it that he demonstrated his competence as a counselor in handling Jeff? Or did he demonstrate himself a strong enough personality to deal with Maryann successfully?

After I left Jeff, I reenrolled in college. My GPA that was so low, no school would have me, so I started out as a non-degree student. I earned straight As in my first semester back to school, despite the fact that I was working part time, and a single parent. Jeff spent his 28 days in rehab and although he finally sobered up, it was a rude awakening to realize that even without the alcohol, he felt that he had a right to control our son, and me but he was trying to change. In an effort to win me back, he offered to pay rent for me and the baby to move out of my parents' house and live in a house of our own. I had lived in apartments all of my life and this was the first time I had a house of my own. It was more work, to keep up with a 2-bedroom house, but it was good for my self-esteem. When Jeff got out of rehab, he rented an apartment for himself several blocks away – close enough that he could ride his bicycle to our house, but far enough away that I felt like he was not right on top of us.

I still felt smothered by this man and so I spent as little time with him as I possibly could. Now that I could have several hours each day without hearing the sound of his voice, his derision and abuse, while I was processing through the issues of my marriage and my low sense of self-worth with a talented counselor, I was beginning to stand a little taller and feel a little more confident. I think Jeff noticed this change in me and it really scared him to see that I could actually be happier when I spent a lot less time with him.

Note that Maryann worked hard to increase her exposure to outside influences and that this resulted in a loss of control on Jeff's part.

Again, much of these months when we were separated are difficult to remember. I was focusing more and more on my college classes and really enjoying being a student again. I was beginning to recognize that I was a relatively intelligent woman, and enjoyed stopping into my professors' offices to continue discussing some topic from class in more detail. My grades were excellent and I felt that I was discovering a part of myself I had not known was there. Jeff felt extremely threatened by my success in college and tried to sabotage me at every turn. I began to realize that I should not let him know when I had major exams scheduled, because he would make a point of showing up at my door and starting a fight the evening before every major exam and he would refuse to leave so that I could study. I caught him trying to take one of my textbooks one day when he was at the house to pick up Bobby, but stopped him before he could sneak my book out the door. When I confronted him about this, he stated that he had every right to stop me from doing something that was destroying all of our lives. He accused me of sleeping with all of my professors and picking up college men after class. I had grown tired of being accused of sleeping with every man I had a conversation with and I dismissed his accusations as his usual paranoia.

It's important to record that Maryann sees continued attempts to manipulate her life and describes the harassment in some detail. It's not unusual batterer behavior; sometimes a rearguard action as in this case, but all too often it is successful in bringing a partner back.

One afternoon he stopped by the house just after I had finally gotten Bobby to sleep for a nap. The baby had not been sleeping well for several days and Jeff had been repeatedly harassing me by phone for several days, so I had simply unplugged the phone from the wall so that I could have some peace and quiet in my sleep-deprived state. I was hoping that Bobby would take a long nap so that I could get some sleep myself, when someone started pounding loudly on the front door. Jeff pushed past me into the room when I opened the door a crack to tell him to go away. I ordered him to get out of my house and without even slowing down, he marched up the stairs, loudly stating that he was here to see his son. I told him Bobby had just finally gone to sleep and he better not dare wake him. He ignored me and barged into the baby's room with me following behind him. Bobby awoke and immediately started to cry as his father banged the door against the wall when he flung open the door. The Jeff turned to me and started yelling something that didn't really make sense, about me being abusive to the child, to have him taking a nap at this time of day. I told him that the child had not slept well for days and I was letting him get some sleep whenever he could. Jeff started lecturing me about how incompetent a parent I was and I started yelling back as the baby screamed in the background. I turned and walked across the hall to into my bedroom, hoping that Jeff would follow me out of the baby's room. He did, slamming the door behind him. I turned to face him as he walked into the room and was backhanded across the face. I flew. I flew backwards onto the floor, as I lay there, waiting for my vision to clear, I began feeling this rage building in me. I vaguely remember glaring at Jeff and then I slowly picked myself up off the floor. I don't know how I did it, but the next thing I remember, I had Jeff by the front collar of his shirt and I was dragging him with one hand

into the hallway and to the top of the stairs. Then threw him down the stairs. He flew over the five steps to the landing and crashed in a heap against the wall. Without a word, he scrambled to his feet and stumbled down the rest of the stairs, tripping and falling on his face at the bottom. He quickly picked himself up and ran full tilt out the front door. I stood there shaking for several minutes, not believing that I had actually done this.

Almost an hour later, after I had calmed the baby down and got him back to sleep, another knock came at the door. I was sitting at the kitchen table holding ice to my face. I ignored the knock, having no desire to speak to Jeff. The knocking continued so loudly, I was afraid it would wake up the baby. I flung the door open, ready to start yelling at Jeff to leave us alone, but a local policeman was standing there. We sat at the kitchen table while he explained that Jeff had showed up at the police station intending to file a complaint of assault against me. I was incredulous. When the officer asked me what happened, I recounted the incident of Jeff barging into the house and refusing to leave, waking the baby and then knocking me across the room with a backhand. The officer looked embarrassed and said, that yes, it was pretty obvious that I had been struck in the face. He looked at me skeptically and said that Jeff had claimed that I picked him up and threw him down the stairs. I told him that I wasn't sure exactly what happened or how it happened, but it sure seemed to me like I had thrown him down the stairs. The officer asked if I had threatened to kill Jeff. I replied that I wasn't exactly sure what I had yelled at him as I threw him down the steps.

I'm sure he could see that I was visibly shaken up by this experience, and I asked him how I would go about getting an order of protection against Jeff and should I press charges of assault? He looked at me as though he'd been dreading that question and

admitted that I could try, but it would look suspect since Jeff had filed charges against me first and all of it would probably be thrown out of court but I'd have to pay the legal fees. He said he wanted to avoid escalating this any further and there was no good reason why the two of us couldn't resolve our disputes like two mature adults. I told him that Jeff has threatened to kill me and I was afraid for the baby. He asked when this had happened. The last death threat had been a few months ago, when Jeff was still drinking. The policeman dismissed the threat as being irrelevant now that Jeff had been through rehab and did not appear to be drinking now. I replied that with or without alcohol, this man was insane. I reminded him that he had just had a conversation with Jeff and I asked him if Jeff appeared to be either rational or capable of compromise. He didn't answer the question but just repeated that he hoped we could work this out in a civil manner. He said that he would go talk to Jeff and tell him that the evidence actually looks much worse against him and it would appear that I acted in self-defense. I asked if he would also tell Jeff to stay out of my house and leave me alone. He said that was a problem that Jeff and I had to work out between ourselves.

My conversation with the police that day reinforced my feeling that I was definitely in this thing alone, but I was more shaken up by the fact that I could have killed Jeff by throwing him down the stairs. I realized that this situation had now escalated to a point of no return, where one of us was going to be dead within a year or two if I did not get away from this man. A few days later, I went to the legal aid office and filed for divorce. I was put on a waiting list and they told me it would be at least a year before I could meet with an attorney. I couldn't believe what they were telling me. I explained that I felt the baby and I were in danger. They agreed to represent me to draw up a

visitation schedule for the next few months, but insisted that there was no attorney available to meet with me to discuss the divorce. I asked if someone could meet with me to discuss an order of protection and they seemed skeptical about this, but grudgingly admitted that if Jeff seriously injures me at some time in the future, I could call them back and they would see if they could fit me into the schedule.

Working out visitations with Jeff was a nightmare. Jeff hired and fired a new attorney every few weeks. He saw the visitation schedule as one of his last opportunities to control me and he was also very unhappy that I had enrolled in college classes again, so he would demand a visitation schedule where Bobby was with me when my classes were scheduled and he would be with Jeff when I was available. He thought this would force me to spend money on childcare if I wanted to go to college. Jeff at first insisted that all of his visitation time with Bobby should be spent at my house, since that was the environment that Bobby was most comfortable in. I refused. Then Jeff generously invited me to spend as much time as I liked at his apartment when he had Bobby, and he often pressured me to join them for dinner or spend an afternoon with them, “like a family” as Jeff would often say.

I do not know if at this point Jeff was employed again, but hiring and firing an attorney every few weeks takes funds. The following segment is written less didactically than the other pieces. Parts of it, although not all, came from writings she had already done before we started this project. I edited a title and date out at this point in the text to protect Maryann's anonymity. I also deleted specific name references to third parties.

I felt the familiar gnawing pain in my stomach that cold Sunday morning in December, as I pulled up outside my ex-husband's trailer to pick up our son after his

weekend visitation. I checked my watch as I turned off the engine. 8:03 – 3 minutes late! What was wrong with me? Why couldn't I get here on time? Why must I always give him more reasons to scream at me?

The trailer looked so serene in the cold morning, with the snow still undisturbed on Jeff's steps and yard. I paused before climbing the stairs, enjoying that moment of peace, and gathered my nerve for one more hostile diatribe from Jeff. I wondered if I stood any chance of getting out of that trailer in less than 30 minutes. I took a deep breath and knocked at the door. He would not have the baby dressed and ready to go, and he would insist that he had not had time to feed him yet. I knew he would refuse to let me leave with Bobby until he had mixed up his cereal for breakfast and fed it to him, narrating the child's meal with his latest verbal barrage recounting how I was destroying our son's life, and what a complete failure I was as wife, mother, and human being.

There was no answer to my knock. I pounded with my fist, thinking perhaps he was still asleep. Still no answer, and no sound of movement inside the trailer. Jeff had no car, since he'd lost his driver's license for DUI, but his ancient bicycle with the child safety seat strapped onto the back was leaning against the railing. There were no footprints but my own on the porch to indicate that anyone had entered or left the trailer since the snowfall the day before. I began to feel alarmed. Was he unconscious? Drunk? Dead? I replayed our last conversation in my head as I paced outside the door. He made so many threats in the past few months that if I signed the final divorce papers, he would kill me, or our son, or both. The phrase he used the week before kept replaying in my head, "I told you that if you divorced me, you'd never see your son alive again."

I began to panic, picturing my son's lifeless body lying inside that cold trailer. I kicked the door repeatedly, yelling out Jeff's name, and was answered only by silence. I stood there for several minutes, to calm myself. Finally, I took a deep breath and climbed back into my car, trembling so badly I fumbled to get the keys into the ignition.

As the reality of the situation hit me, I shook so violently that I could hardly drive the car home. Tears streamed down my face and I struggled to keep from hyperventilating while Jeff's threats echoed in my head. I fought to keep the car on the road as mental images flashed in my mind of the many different ways he had threatened to kill the child over the past few months. I imagined Bobby's pale body floating face down in the bathtub, with his father's lifeless corpse slumped on the floor and the blood splatter trickling down the wall from where he had blown his brains out after drowning the child. I imagined Jeff pointing the gun at my son's head while he slept and I flinched as I heard the blast. I pictured Jeff holding a pillow over Bobby's face, my son's tiny hands and feet flailing helplessly for a full 2 minutes before they twitched one last time and grew still. I was hysterical by the time I reached my house 15 minutes later. I fumbled with the phone and redialed several times before I dialed Jeff's number correctly. I let the phone ring 30 times and then tried again, but there was still no answer.

I called my attorney at home. I kept my voice steady enough to tell [him] what had happened, but he was nonchalant when I told him that Bobby was gone. He assured me I was just overreacting again to another one of Jeff's sick games. I reminded him of the many times Jeff had threatened to harm our child and me. [My attorney] sounded annoyed and dismissed my concerns, chastising me for allowing this man to manipulate

me. He assured me that if I waited a few hours, Jeff would show up. After I hung up the phone, I collapsed on the floor and sobbed. Finally, after a good long cry, I calmed down enough to think. I knew there was no point in going to the State Police. They would dismiss my fears just as [my attorney] had.

I forced myself to wait two more hours and then I drove back to the trailer. I pounded again and again, and then stood there leaning against the door, crying for several minutes. I forced the images of their dead bodies out of my mind. I had to stay calm and rational enough to find my child. If I fell apart now, Jay and the police would just write me off as a nut case, and I needed them to take me seriously.

I walked back to car and closed my eyes, remembering the deep breathing exercise that my counselor had taught me, which I had been practicing for months. I focused on my breathing - nothing but the air moving in and out of my lungs.

This paragraph about her procedure for calming herself was written by Maryann in italics, but for the sake of voice clarity I removed them.

Visualize the air, flowing deep into your lungs as you inhale.

Wait for the natural pause at the end of a full intake . . . then picture the air flowing back out as you exhale. The first few breaths are jerky and uneven; keep breathing . . . slowly . . . deeply. With the third breath you feel your diaphragm begin to relax. Your breathing is smoother. Now make the air coming in blue, clear, crisp, winter air. Watch it change color in your lungs to a deep blood red, as it carries out all the fear and panic and rage that flows through you. Warm the air flowing in; turn it a golden

yellow, full of strength, and hope. Breathe that golden air. Let it calm you and strengthen you.

I don't know how long I sat there breathing, meditating, collecting my strength, but when I finally opened my eyes, I felt calmer and my mind was clear.

When I arrived home, my parents had returned from church. I told them what had happened, as calmly as I could, downplaying my fear in front of them. I didn't want them to panic and I needed to focus on keeping myself together and finding my son. I didn't have the energy to deal with their concerns on top of my own. I spent the day fighting the nausea and fear that were gripping me. I called my attorney two more times that day before calling the State Police. They told me that nothing could be done before the child had been missing for at least 24 hours. I spent the day pacing the house, trying to remember something that would give me some clue that I had missed – some change in behavior I should have noticed in Jeff, that would have warned me this was coming. I realized I hadn't actually spoken to Jeff for four days. Jeff had been using our visitation schedule as the only means he had left to force me to see him. He had dictated a visitation schedule where we both had Bobby every other day. Although this allowed me to see my son more often, it also forced me to be abused by Jeff more frequently. Any time I picked up the child, he would draw out the exchange for an hour or more, using me as a captive audience and lecturing me endlessly before finally allowing me to leave with the child. He would often insist that we sit down and eat a meal together “as a family” before he would release Bobby. Then he interrogated me – demanding to know where I had been for the past 24 hours and if I was dating anyone and how many of my college Professors was I sleeping with? On one occasion, after an hour of Jeff's verbal

abuse, I drove to the police station to ask for an officer to accompany me back to the trailer to retrieve my son. They refused to be bothered with such a domestic squabble and told me that if I made such a request again, they would charge me with filing a false report.

Since the police were not going to enforce my visitation schedule, I decided that my best recourse was to have the visitation schedule modified. I filed for full custody of Bobby and requested a full psychological evaluation be administered to determine whether Jeff was safe to be left alone with the child. The judge had ordered temporary joint custody of Bobby where we each had the child for four days one week and three days the next. This new arrangement allowed me some reprieve from the sound of Jeff's voice for several days in a row, and I had begun to feel hopeful that once his psychological evaluation was complete, that the courts would limit how much access he had to Bobby and to me. I had just completed my part of the psychological evaluation the week before and Jeff was scheduled for his in the next few days. Now I realized that this must be what had triggered this new act of vengeance. I was horrified at the thought that I might have done something to put my son in so much danger.

I spent a long sleepless night, wandering through the house, sitting in Bobby's empty bedroom, pacing and thinking and fighting off the fear. Until that day, I never wanted see or hear from Jeff again for the rest of my life. I had just spent the past year being threatened, stalked and harassed by this man as I tried desperately to get out of our marriage alive. His choice to kidnap our son set into motion the greatest paradox of my life. I began a manhunt that day, to find a man I never wanted to see again. Jeff had been desperately trying for the past year to force me to focus my attention on him, while I had

been struggling to cut him out of my life as completely as I could. Now, my days would be filled with phone calls and letters and interviews with police, private investigators, and the media, in an ongoing quest to hunt him down. My nights were filled with graphic nightmares of what he would do to my son and to me when I finally did find him, yet I had to search – I could not live without Bobby.

It seemed to take forever for the first 24 hours to pass. After so many months of dealing with my husband's distorted perceptions and twisted reality, I had mistakenly expected to find my dealings with the legal authorities to be somewhat more rational. After 24 hours of sleepless pacing and frantic worry over my child, I was exhausted and numb when I stopped at the police barracks to finally file a missing persons report. The trooper informed me that I would have to wait an additional 24 hours to file a report on a missing child, because they thought the chances were pretty good that the child had simply run away. I repeated to the trooper that this child was 16 *months* old – his legs weren't long enough to run that far. But the trooper insisted that he couldn't fill out a report yet and questioned why I was worried if the child was with his father. I left the police barracks and called my attorney to ask for his help. Finally, my attorney seemed to be taking me a little more seriously and he called the police barracks himself and insisted that if the police would not fill out a missing person's report, he would pursue legal action against them. When a child disappears today, federal law requires police departments to file a missing person's report immediately, but in 1986, it was only under threats from my lawyer that the police would open a file on my son's disappearance.

I remember those first few months after Bobby's disappearance as flashes of desolation, terror, and betrayal. I could not force myself to eat or sleep, and I lost 26 pounds in the first six weeks of my son's disappearance. I would sit down for a meal, shovel food in my mouth and chew, but I could not swallow. As the weeks passed, I watched my eyes sink into my skull and my skin hang more loosely from my bones. Ironically, as the numbers on my scale grew smaller each week, my grief weighed heavier on me, making it increasingly difficult to move. There were many days during the first few weeks when the effort required to get out of bed was too much, so I spent the day lying there, staring at the wall, and weeping.

The grief of Bobby's loss was so intense I actually experienced it as physical pain, like someone had thrust a dagger into my chest. Although I had been living in fear for my life and my son's life for more than a year, and had braced myself for the possibility that Jeff might actually do something truly horrible, the shock of it still left me numb. There was no way I could have prepared myself for the anguish of walking the earth everyday, knowing that my son was in serious danger and I was completely helpless to protect him from it.

For many months, I staggered between reason and insanity. The intensity and changeability of my grief was particularly unnerving to those around me. One week I was a fireball of energy, the next week I was so shackled by my depression, I could not move. People who wanted to be supportive didn't know what to say or do to help me; the only time they'd even heard of a child being kidnapped was on the Television Movie-of-the-Week. Even the local psychologists had never treated a parent of a missing child, so I was an unknown entity to everyone. I suffered intense guilt over not somehow protecting

Bobby from his father. My mind was preoccupied daily wondering whether he was safe or cared for or even alive, and the ambiguity of not knowing was agonizing.

My fears for Bobby's safety grew with each passing week. In my waking hours I didn't allow myself to think about the possible danger and abuse he might be facing. Each time I heard another news report about an unidentified child being found dead or injured, I would fight the panic that rose in me. But, the images I refused to see in the daylight consumed my mind in the darkness. In sleep I was possessed by visions of Jeff murdering me or my child in a twisted expression of rage and revenge. I awoke screaming every night, drenched in the surreal blood-sweat of my terror. I soon grew terrified of sleep. I would drive myself for days, refusing to close my eyes and let the demons in, but I would always lose that battle, eventually betrayed by my own body. *This is another segment that Maryann had originally written in italics to describe a dream.*

I stand in a grassy field. My son stands beside his father about 100 feet in front of me. Bobby turns and sees me and breaks into a full run yelling, "Mommy! Mommy!" Tears stream down my face as I see the joy in his face and my heart is so full, it aches. He runs in slow motion toward me, his blond hair bouncing with each stride. He reaches his arms out to me and I kneel down with my arms outstretched as he nears me. A movement behind him catches my eye and I look up to see his father glaring at me with a look of utter hatred. He reaches behind his back and pulls out a pistol. He raises the gun slowly and aims at the child who is right in front of me, running full tilt. The roar of the gun drowns my scream as my

son's chest explodes into fragments of bone and blood and tissue that pelt my face and chest and legs moments before the blast propels his rag doll body into my outstretched arms. I hear someone screaming and screaming as I tilt his head back and look into his face. His eyes are wide with a look of surprise, but the smile hasn't quite disappeared from his mouth as he stares unseeing into my eyes. The screaming rings in my ears and my skin stings from the impact of bone fragments. I am in my bed, trying to brush off the blood and bone embedded in my clothes and skin. I can't get them off me, I can't breath, the screaming is deafening. Someone is shaking me; the screaming stops suddenly ... the silence rings in my ears. All I can hear is my frantic, hysterical gasps as I try to brush off the blood, the bone...

The dreams would often be graphic visions of Jeff murdering Bobby, and after a year of watching my son die almost every night, I felt I could not take more of this torture; I began to pray that I would die. I closed my eyes each night begging God to take me in my sleep, growing more bitter each morning as I awoke to find myself still alive in this hell.

As I researched more about grief and talked to parents whose children had died, I learned that grief often looks and feels like insanity, but that knowledge wasn't always so reassuring. I began to consider insanity as a seductive refuge from my reality. I fantasized about soft, padded walls, imagined gentle hands and reassuring voices bringing the momentary pinch that would transport me into dreamless sleep, safe from the night terrors that invaded my mind. I imagined the security of being swaddled, snug and contained by a

white jacket. But I knew if they let me enter that world, that I had nothing here to call me back, so I clung tenuously to whatever threads of sanity I could grasp.

I continued to search, in spite of my fears, not because I was incredibly brave, but because the thought of living the rest of my life never knowing my son or even knowing if he was alive, frightened me more than any death Jeff might have planned for me. At least if Jeff killed me, this emotional agony would finally stop. I have encountered many other parents of missing children who experienced similar fears for their own lives. Many of them refused to actively search for their children out of fear that they or their children would be killed if they ever found their ex-spouse. They often questioned why I continued to search when I knew I was most likely pursuing my own death. I don't know why some of us give up looking while others feel driven to prolong the nightmare, even after our finances and energy and hope and sanity have long been exhausted. I truly understand the parents who reach a point where they just need it to be over. As long as a parent continues searching, and hoping, the grief remains unresolved and cycles round and round repeatedly through the denial, anger and depression, like an amusement park ride out of control. The only way to get off that ride is to find the child, dead or alive. Either way, the parent finally has a conclusion to their loss and they can finish the grieving process. The parents of children who are still missing can never resume a normal life unless they find a compromise. For some parents, I think that compromise is to emotionally detach from the pain by mentally declaring the child dead. Once a parent declares the child dead to them, in their minds, their grief can conclude its cycle with acceptance and they can begin their lives again. I considered that option, many times, but I couldn't do it.

I dealt with the destructive ambiguity of my grief by developing a different compromise. I grieved for blocks of time, or specific events in Bobby's life that I had missed. I mourned every birthday for the year in his life that he'd lived without me. I grieved that I didn't get to watch him learn his alphabet, or learn to count, or sing the children's songs I wanted to teach him. I watched other parents with their children and lamented that I could not feel those little arms hugging me, or those big blue eyes smiling at me. I wandered through the house at night and stood in his empty, silent bedroom and grieved that I could not watch him sleep and listen to his steady breathing in the darkness. In the fall of his 4th year, I grieved that I couldn't enroll him in preschool and then Kindergarten in his 5th year. Focusing on those events and blocks of time made my grief less ambiguous and helped me to accept what I had lost. Once I had admitted to those small losses and grieved for them, I could tuck them away in little compartments where they wouldn't tear around in my heart, repeatedly wounding me.

Maryann studied kidnapping and parents' grief for lost children, among other things. This story goes on for much longer than the year or so after separating from a battering husband than I have allowed myself to study here. I did not include much of the kidnapping since it occurred after final separation and divorce. It is complex, fascinating and terrible. She did find her child after four long years of searching. Her search took her across many states. Eventually she founded an organization that helped parents of kidnapped children search as well as helping them deal with their grief. She used the media fairly extensively to publicize her search, finding that the efforts of police and others were far greater

when dealing with both organization and a well-known case. I am acquainted with Maryann's son, who is a remarkable young man.

Maryann's first year out was more unusual than mine or Wanda's. She struggled with harassment and manipulation in a manner not too dissimilar from that which Wanda experienced, although I would say that Maryann's batterer was much more aggressive in both. Maryann's situation predates Wanda's by about seven years.

There is evidence that, before the kidnapping, Maryann continued to care for Bobby to the best of her abilities and resources. Some examples are her expressed concern over his difficulty sleeping, fear for Bobby's safety, ongoing grief in the child's kidnapping and refusal to stop searching. There is no sign in the writing that she accepted her husband's accusations of being an incompetent or abusive parent.

In her struggles, Maryann discovered that Jeff could be handled, both by the therapist that she considered competent and later by herself. Maryann, in her own aggression (becoming angry, throwing Jeff) learned that he could be intimidated, and that she could in fact fight back. As the story progresses, she depicts him more and more as a somewhat cowardly and contemptible bully, and less as a terrifying batterer/husband.

While I am not sure that Maryann regained a great deal of confidence in therapists and social services at large, it is clear that she found she could be helped by a good therapist. She learned that she could be happy on her own,

without husband or parents placing their long shadows over her day to day existence.

Maryann found that she was intelligent and could be successful in higher education. As a young child, she seems to have viewed herself as bright. As she grew, however, that changed until she viewed herself as “dumb” through her teen and younger adult years. Upon moving out of her battering relationship, Maryann’s opinion regarding her intelligence shifted again in a more positive direction and then stabilized. Furthermore, she interpreted her history considerably differently. Maryann no longer believed that she was ever “dumb;” instead, she concluded that she erroneously believed that she was unintelligent because she was treated as such. This is not only an example of a shift in Maryann’s sense of self, it also represents an excellent example of the struggle one may have with other agencies and the impact of stereotypes (“dumb blonde”).

Her view of herself seemed to become much more positive and powerful such that she began what should have been a remarkable transformation. There is a remarkable evolution in my sense of Maryann through the narrative. Early she seemed to be a victim of the forces of oppression around her. Late in her narrative she comes across much more powerfully.

The trend of her identity shifts was interrupted. While it wasn’t in a good way, I would say that Maryann’s sense of social developed enormously as she began the search for her missing child. There is a theme, repeated throughout this portion of the narrative, regarding unhelpfulness on the part of the legal system.

Her conviction that she did not matter to authorities such as the police or legal system, and that they were not there to help her seems to have deepened.

There is evidence of other struggles and learning surrounding both the trauma of her Bobby's kidnapping and Maryann's search for her son. One part of this is the struggle against renewed efforts to control her by her husband – by kidnapping their son, Jeff damaged and controlled Maryann emotionally, intellectually, and to some extent physically.

The struggle and search developed Maryann in different ways, however. She began to identify as the parent of a missing child, researching it, researching grief, seeing the larger social problem of kidnapping and finding others like herself with whom to identify and share her search.

Wanda.

Wanda told me that during the year between their separation and divorce, she received many pleas from Raymond to get back together again and save their marriage. Some of those pleas were in three letters that Wanda saved, and which she allowed me to see. The letters tell us a little more about the circumstance and a lot about the relationship between Wanda and Raymond. I will discuss the letters in some detail so as to clearly demonstrate a situation that had a significant impact on Wanda.

In the first letter, the first thing Raymond does is set up his letter as an exercise in futility – “You won’t agree, of course...” and he defines her thinking “You will, no doubt think...” He uses “of course” and “no doubt” three times in those two sentences.

Raymond then moves immediately into words about Viet Nam, writing about the things he had to do to survive and how he didn’t enjoy doing them. *This was referring to killing, I presume, although he never says so definitively.* He writes “And I never, but never, did any of those things I did in Viet Nam.” A short while later: “Sure, I got angry a lot of times and thought, or maybe even said, ‘I could kill that person’.” Raymond points out that he believes everyone capable of such thoughts. *All told, this to me paints a picture that rationalizes his behavior and minimizes it by virtue of it not being what he did to survive in the war zone.*

After this section of the letter, Raymond moved on to pointing out reasons why Wanda could be considered psychologically unstable (her scars and struggle with depression since childhood), and how if he’d wanted to have her put away in a mental institution he could have. This he never did because to him, that was “the worst betrayal.” *One of the implications here is that she did commit the worst betrayal. He is also playing*

against some of her own weaknesses; Wanda did indeed struggle with severe depression; if Raymond had chosen to slander her the impacts could have been severe, like losing her license to practice medicine, losing custody of the children, etc. I doubt that he could have done it, but he could certainly have made her life very difficult. He is making threats, painting her as faithless, and playing on a weakness of hers that may not have much real use but will almost certainly raise anguish and perhaps shame.

He then shifted grounds again to one of the child abuse hearing. The wording here is important, so I quoted the letter directly:

“Yet you described yourself as an expert. Not my words, but the assistant prosecutor, and my lawyer used the term, and you agreed I guess, because I never heard a rebuttle from you.” *Note the twisting here...because she didn’t contradict two other people’s descriptions of her as an “expert,” she therefore is guilty of describing herself as such.* He then delineated her betrayal in more detail: “You said I was psychotic, and that the doctor at the V.A in Clarksburg called me psychotic, and dangerous” but stresses that his medical records never reflected that exact diagnosis. Raymond then stepped back to a more understanding position, writing that the doctor’s reading of someone else’s chart, or Wanda’s misunderstanding, was probably the culprit in his misdiagnosis. Next, he noted that a problem written in his records numerous times was a “delayed stress or shock syndrome.”

I do not know the accuracy of Raymond’s claims, and it is not terribly relevant here. Note that he is positioning her and other medical practitioners to have made a mistake in their diagnosis of his condition, and offers an alternative explanation. It is as

though he is offering her an “out” from the worst sort of betrayal – an amnesty, if you will.

It is at times like this that I have to remind myself that the study is not about veterans’ post-traumatic stress or whether or not Raymond was “really” violent and manipulative, or whether he was, but it was due or partially due to post-traumatic stress. I catch myself thinking that yes, the war obviously damaged this man. What disturbs me is that he’s anxious to point it out, to use it as a defense. To me this suggests that he knows what he’s doing and that he has a good excuse to use at will, something that I see as fairly sophisticated manipulation.

Raymond wrote about how he knew when she didn’t care for him anymore...but he kept thinking that maybe she’d change, that he prayed to God several times daily to make her love him again and strengthen their marriage. However, God didn’t listen, and that must be because of “all the hell I raised in Viet Nam. I really did have a reputation that I am now ashamed of. But I can’t change the past.” He came back around to the subject of anger:

Of course I had a temper that you seen or witnessed on occasion. But having said that, I can also say I never laid a hand on you. I mean, how could I physically harm the person I loved most. Sure I did, yell and scream at the kids and I guess I got angry with you.

And I did get mad at Jesse because he refused to clean his room the way I wanted it to be cleaned, and straightened up. And I will admit readily I was very wrong to push Jesse. Jesse and I had a long talk and I told him I was so sorry I pushed him into a confrontation. And you know what? Jesse

FORGAVE me. He is my son, and I am his father and that's the way it's going to be. I won't let anything come between myself and Jesse. I love that boy more than life. I only wish Kay would stop her lying and become my daughter, and that we love each other.

Again there is admission of severe anger and a minimizing of his behavior, as well as an emphasis on forgiveness by Jesse. It is very interesting to note the reaction to Kay – her desire to have nothing to do with him is considered “lying” and it seems that there can be no love until she comes around to his way of thinking. This occurred in his discussion of the magistrate as well; everyone who opposed him was lying about him. Throughout these letters Raymond returns to certain themes again and again. Raymond returned to Wanda's betrayal and his unanswered prayers for their marriage.

And then this:

But maybe you were praying to get rid of me, as a husband and father.

I think, It's my belief, that more happened and you were advised by nameless others to obtain the divorce. One day Wanda, I'll find out who.

And when I do, I'll take him or her or them, to court, and I will completely destroy those person.(s) by a lawsuit, I shall attempt to get their last penny.

I have found out, long ago, that what goes around, comes around.

There will be NO threats, or intimidation. But I will attempt to find out who gave you some of the things you had done to me, and that you yourself had done to me. I will not harm anyone. But I will try my utmost to destroy their life and home...

Raymond proceeded to name the first people that he was going to destroy and their crimes against him. *It is interesting that he places Wanda with his enemies, says she's done horrible things or had horrible things done ...but it's THEM that Raymond overtly threatened and not Wanda. It is just as interesting that he doesn't consider this part of his letter to be threatening. If I were the recipient of this letter, I would read it as "Return to me, or I will destroy you like I'm going to destroy them."*

Raymond ended the letter by telling her he was angry and isn't now, and feels only pity for her: "Its odd but I really am not angry. But I do feel sorry for you. One day Wanda you are going to have to pay, but I don't mean with money for everything. And I feel that there's not going to be anyone to help you when the time comes. And you really are going to know the meaning of lonely." The letter ran to a length of 8 pages.

Second letter. Much of this letter declared Raymond's love for her and the kids "even after all you have done to me." He told her that he doesn't remember trying to harm the kids, spending the best part of a page stressing how poor his memory was. He wrote "With all the times I've been in the hospital and all the times I have been sick I guess maybe you have the right to get rid of me any way you can." *Note that this is a return to the thread of the last letter about Wanda's alleged desire to "get rid of him."* The letter finished with talk of how lonely he is, and his expressed hopes that Wanda wasn't experiencing the same emotions. *It seems fairly clear that he was hoping that she is lonely. He mentions it in every letter in tones of both sorrow and threat.*

The final letter...In this letter Raymond described a "journey" that is a description of Wanda having him committed to a psychiatric hospital. He mentions the presence of deputy sheriffs. At the jail (*not a ward, interestingly...are they the same in his thinking?*)

he told us how pitifully weak and small he is. Then, his journey described how he knows that Wanda was just trying to get him out of the way so she could have everything, even his treasured guns. He mentioned her future dreadful loneliness in this letter as well.

The letters underscore Raymond's fear of being committed to a mental institution; he repeated it over and over. He used a calm, reasonable tone when writing, yet alternated between threats that he'll "get" the people who stabbed him in the back -- typically legally, for such things as testifying in a hearing or taking his ammunition -- and assurances that he could never hurt a human being, especially his loved ones.

The letters nauseated me. From where I sit, the letters paint him as a victim of what others did to him, as so thin and sick that he could never hurt anyone. And, he throws in pretty large dollops of guilt, hinting that Wanda is incapable of forgiveness and claiming that she's using any excuse she can to get rid of a sick man because it's too much work to take care of him. They were incredibly manipulative, down to the last P.S. where he said that he didn't think she liked their last name, so she should change hers; and their daughter who also hated him could change hers; but that the son who loved him couldn't change his.

Cavanagh et al (2001) write about this a little bit, noting that the way a batterer defines violence is very important and relatively unchanging over time (including resistance to influence by Batterer Intervention Programs [BIPs]); generally, they don't define their battering behaviors as "violent" or out of line relative to social norms. In Wanda's case, the batterer doesn't consider his behavior to be psychological terrorism -- cajoling, threatening, and manipulating. I would like to stress that this behavior is occurring during a time when Raymond is trying to get Wanda to return to him, so is

trying to be loving, understanding, and forgiving. The letters are solely about what others have done to him, with brief admittance of inappropriate behavior toward a child that is immediately explained away. No where in the letters do I see true concern for Wanda, any hint of interest in her perspectives, etc. In short, the letters are completely self-centered. Cavanagh et al continued on about women's resistance to the batterers and developing strategies to challenge a definition of violence that doesn't include harm to their persons, belongings, etc.; we have a conflict between agencies, although they note that the batterer has "powerful social and cultural messages which reinforce 'masculine' behaviors and the use of violence to control and dominate women" (2001, p. 697).

Raymond, then, probably did not see his threats to ruin people's lives, to kill Wanda using any of a variety of creative and painful methods, his manipulative actions and lies as violent, battering, or abusive behaviors. One can clearly see a sense of entitlement, and a sense that everyone who has something negative to say about him is either mistaken or lying.

Imagine the effect that these letters could have on Wanda, a doctor. Her profession, her mission, is to preserve and nurture life. By suggesting that she wants to get rid of him, there is a possible effect of undermining her identity as a medical professional and as a wife – both of which were very important to her.

Wanda believes Raymond's desire to remain married had more to do with economics and retaining the status quo than any real desire for her company. His rationale, according to her, was that she was being too unreasonable, and he reverted to an amnesia explanation; if she said it happened then it must have, but he must have been too ill to remember. She believes firmly that he was lying about his lack of memories.

During the initial period of separation (about 4 months) Wanda lived in fear. Wanda took what she considered to be reasonable precautions to protect herself and the children – fixing windows in their ranch-style house so they couldn't be opened far enough for human entry, for example. She notes that there was evidence of attempts to enter the house and cites as examples a broken pane in a basement window, with pry marks where someone tried to force it open. Neighbors saw Raymond prowling on the property when she was not home.

Wanda managed the fear consciously, refusing to hide or become a recluse: she “just tried to talk myself into not being afraid. Tried, you know, don't let it rule my life.” She attempted to reduce his incentive to harm her or the children by giving him items of his from the house –tools, wood, or other personal belongings. Eventually she returned his guns as part of their divorce settlement. She managed some joy, since she and the children were happier and she had more time in a summer off from teaching.

Wanda negotiated on her own terms with her fear: refusing to hide, but trying to lessen a need for fear by returning his personal belongings. It seems that she tried to pick her battles fairly carefully. She exercised various ways of reducing fear concretely by fixing the windows and maintaining close contact with her neighbors.

The next two years after that were very, very hard and Wanda told me that she has forgotten a great deal. *Note here the memory loss theme.* Kay finished high school and Jesse was in junior high. He started getting into a lot of trouble. At first it was pranks, like knocking down the hay bales in a farmer's loft. Jesse starting using drugs. He became very closed, refusing to communicate regarding abuse, divorce, and his personal feelings on any matter of significance. He was savvy, though. Wanda tried to get Jesse

into counseling, using an incentive – the car Jesse wanted. They had a written contract; if he went to see the psychologists and *talked*, she'd get him the car. He kept his end of the contract – by talking about everything under the sun except for problems, issues, or feelings: “Well, he went, and he talked...but he talked about cars, he talked about baseball, he talked about whatever he wanted to, except himself. So finally the psychologist called and said, ‘you know, I’m not getting anywhere past with him. He’s just not opening at all.’ And Jesse says, ‘well, it’s not in the contract,’ he said, ‘all I had to do is go and talk.’ So he went and talked. And had never really talked *about* what happened.” Because he’d kept his end of the contract to the letter, he did get to keep his car. *Wanda laughed about how he’d outsmarted her, and I was impressed that she kept her word because he’d kept the letter, if not the spirit, of their contract.*

In addition to using drugs, the 17-year-old youth began dating a 26-year-old woman who was living at his father’s house. Jesse and his cousin and his friends ended up at Raymond’s frequently, where Jesse’s father was supplying teenaged kids with “beer and pot and sex.” Finally Jesse moved out of his mom’s house and into his dad’s house, where he lived with the woman in the basement of Raymond’s house. Eventually the two moved out of the house and over the border into another state.

Wanda tried to prevent this since her son was legally a minor, but was unable to make progress. She used openings as they presented themselves to press her case. One such example was after an apparent suicide attempt, when Jesse was hospitalized and the hospital contacted her. Wanda tried reporting the matter [living with the older woman] to social services and a police department, neither of which responded. She hired an attorney, who told her “ ‘forget it. Not in this state. He’s 17, even though [technically]

he is under age, uh...here it's like, "it's what boys do." Nothing wrong with it,' You know, they don't look at it...now she says if he had [been] under 16, they'd have stopped it, but because he was 17...[s]o...for boys. If it'd been a girl it'd have been the opposite."

While Wanda made clear her disapproval of both living arrangements and ongoing illegal activities, she continued telling Jesse that he was loved and welcome at home. He went back and forth a few times when he and the woman would have a disagreement. She filed abuse charges against him as well, though Wanda believes the older woman to have been the abuser. Eventually his move home remained permanent.

In February of his senior year of high school, Jesse was caught selling drugs out of his car at the high school. Although Jesse was 17, he was with several 18-year olds who were all arrested. His car was confiscated. Wanda said "I went down to the police station and he was just...he acted more like he was really really really embarrassed more than anything. He was upset too, but it was almost like he was ashamed, embarrassed..." Jesse wasn't expelled from school. He was put on a 2-week suspension and refused to go back upon its conclusion. Jesse had some more trouble, but eventually ended up at home, working steadily at a local restaurant. He was to be tried on the drug charges as an adult because he had every appearance of a deadbeat: "he was in a dead-end job, had quit school, the offense was serious...serious enough."

During the period following separation and divorce, Jesse journaled. Wanda read his journals (while he was still at home) to monitor his progress, when she realized that he was suicidal. Wanda provided him with lots of evidence that she cared, and established short-term, concrete schedules for him: "Did a lot in, 'tomorrow we're going

to do such and such.’ Some very definitive...this is what we’re gonna do so that it gives something for him for every day. Without him knowing that I knew, because if he’d known I’d broken the trust, and gone in and read his journal...but I did a lot of that.” Eventually he improved.

Wanda’s daughter Kay had graduated and was in college at the time, though facing her own challenges. During that year she was raped.

Wanda said, “It was a messy year. I hit...I crashed that year.” Wanda herself was a mess; she couldn’t talk without crying and as a result began avoiding people or being very stoic. One day, a small thing – realizing she couldn’t afford a small item from an office supply store – tipped the scale. She told me how she drove toward a river bridge and contemplated it... how she could maneuver her car through an opening...and gave serious consideration to suicide. She didn’t drive her car off that bridge – she crossed it instead.

Paula Wilcox (2000) addresses impacts on living standards for women leaving domestic violence relationships. Her study is a relatively small-scale qualitative one, but it is illustrative of this case and the others in this dissertation. Wanda was in fact the best off of any of us, as she had a position that was stable and paid well. Wilcox writes that women leaving domestic violence relationships bring loads of heavy debt with them – most participants in her study carried, on average, debt that amounted to approximately seven times their weekly income. Many were in arrears on their debts. Other elements of the financial hardships include outlays for a “new” life, poor housing, sole responsibility for everything, high expenses, difficulty obtaining child support, little if any savings, and insufficient funds for any holiday or social activity unless someone else pays for it. Not

only do the women typically have low incomes, then, but the loads of debt and credit problems follow them for years afterward and squeeze already tight budgets further.

Wanda says she'd never thought about "the last straw" which drove her to near-suicide, but the events she spoke of as traumatic prior to her "crash" were largely about the children. Jesse left soon after the separation and was getting in trouble, and Kay blamed herself for his being in trouble because she'd left for college. Kay herself was raped. Wanda felt, upon reflection, that the accumulated anger and hurt turned inward, and brought her to the edge of suicide.

Soon thereafter Wanda went to a psychiatrist at a treatment center for help and medication. The process of medication itself was problematic, as it took time to find one that had desired effects in moderating her depression without intolerable side effects. She went to a counselor off and on for a year or so, of which this is her summation: "Most of what I was seeing, going in and seeing 'how are you doing, how are you feeling?' and then getting a prescription...Well...I had been in and out of counseling for so many years it's kinda like I can tell you what the answer's gonna be to his next question. Because I know what the next question's gonna be [laughing] or the next statement he's gonna make."

I wondered about the cursory examinations she describes. Did Wanda not go to the right sort of treatment center, or did that psychiatrist know enough about Wanda's history to work in a DV framework? Counseling has an enormous literature surrounding domestic violence. Articles abound on issues in counseling for child witnesses and their trauma (Levendosky, Huth-Bocks, Semel, & Shapiro, 2002; Kilpatrick, Litt, & Williams, 1997), batterers and victims (Lawson, 2003; Hage, 2000; Chalk & King, 1998;

Rosenbaum & Leisring, 2003; Pierce, 1998;); marital therapy for domestically violent couples (Hargrave & Sells, 1997; Stith, S., Rosen, K, & McCollum, E., 2003, 2004; Op-Ed, 1994) and batterer intervention programs (Gondolf & White, 2001; Arias, Dankwort, Douglas, Dutton, & Stein, 2002), to name a few. What I did not find are pieces on ineffectiveness of counseling for battered women and possible explanations for it, an area that would have been helpful for this study.

She clarified further: “I guess, I understand that situations can cause depression. I also know that I’ve had depressive episodes since I was a child. My first thoughts of suicide were at age 8. Um...my first attempts were probably when I was...12, 13. You know, it was kind of like it was a long term thing. I had been in and out of counseling for depression for a long time before I was even married, and, as far as I was concerned by this point now I had decided it was not psychological, it was physiological, the medication will work and that’s it. I knew...I know there’s situational depression, and I think my biological depression was compounded by my situational depression.”

An interesting distinction, and I don’t know enough about it because I don’t know medicine. Wanda has a medical background and tends to see things from that perspective. She peppered our conversations with many lengthy medical descriptions that all but made my eyes glaze.

In our conversation Wanda told me a bit about the changes that occurred in her over time. She had always occupied various roles, she thought, most of which she was comfortable in and with which she could function well. She was a faculty member, a mother, a doctor. Wanda couldn’t function outside of those roles, however, because then she had nothing telling her who she was or what she should be doing. Wanda said “I was

not an entity...socially.” She believes it was an ongoing problem, not one that resulted from her marriage. *It may have been, but the marriage almost certainly exacerbated it.*

About the time Wanda started going to church or soon thereafter, “that’s when Wanda started changing... Wanda started arguing with the physician, Wanda started putting her foot down. ..Wanda went to church. Wanda became a social person in Sunday School.” The process had begun when Raymond had an extended stay in the hospital and continued after he came home. *This is crucial to my argument about shifts in identity. The church seems to be part of an “anchor” that provided a safe space and source of identification that was empowering; it is equally significant that her husband was away for a time which might have allowed other influences – less negative – to have their effect.* She said “He was angry all the time with me. I’d go for walks in the evening. I took an hour every evening for myself and would go for a walk. Put a headset on and just walk. Partly just was getting rid of all my tensions for the day, part of it was getting away from the house. Uh...but it was for me. And he would get very angry about my going out and leaving him by himself for an hour...Wanda became a person. Wanda is now a person who I can...well, see standing in with the president of the college, the provosts, and with the dean [chuckle] to argue [for a program]... ‘Do you want to be status quo, or do you want to move ahead?’ I can go in there now and argue my points, I can hold myself up ... I was not that person 5 years ago. I talked to people on the phone and they say it’s just like talking to a completely different person.” She takes spontaneous trips with friends and family as well.

Certainly this is evidence of a fairly major shift. It is notable that she says she “became” a person – as if she wasn’t one before.

We talked in greater depth about her relationship with the church as well. Wanda felt support from both God and church as separate entities. She believes strongly in the power of prayer; she gave examples of times when she'd worked hard without result, finally given up on something and put it in the hands of God, and then God had answered. She gave me examples of finding her job and selling her house, both of which occurred right when things were at a breaking point for her financially.

I suspected that Wanda had another problem as well. Deciding whether to ask about it, and asking about it, were very scary. My hands shook, and my voice was very low. I was unsure exactly how to handle it, but decided that it would remain completely off the record (not even having my initial query taped) until she said it was okay. So, I stopped the tape to ask her if I could ask about it. I had observed at different times in our acquaintance that she would usually have some wine when we were together, and she'd often been drinking when we talked on the telephone. My concern for offending her warred with my concern for her personal well-being. I thought it would probably also be relevant for this work. I asked Wanda, point-blank, if she had problems with alcohol. She replied that she didn't at the time of the abuse; her alcoholism began afterward. Wanda told me that it began gradually, because she'd get a glass of wine with dinner... "and finally I worked up the courage to buy some wine, bring it home and then it just kind of like...perpetuated." She drank because she was lonely, and as an escape from the many pressures in her life. Now her mother lives with her, and while Wanda is still a functional alcoholic, she believes that her intake has decreased.

At this point it wasn't a matter of interviews, it was a matter of one woman concerned for another, and I asked her pointed questions about her intended course of

action, as well as telling her that I'd been worried about her for some time – partly about the alcoholism, but also about the problems possible by reactions between her depression medications and alcohol. After we had begun talking, I told her that I was sort of surprised that she'd answered so readily, and openly. She replied:

“ Well I...when we first talked about doing this, you know, this is something I thought about now, you know, how frank can I be? And I thought, ‘well, you wanna be honest, you know, if you’re going do this ...’ ”

I was very gratified that she'd thought so hard about her participation, amazed and deeply complimented as well. We had a followon conversation as the interview wound down; I was still somewhat shaky, and the next section was no less disconcerting.

Our conversation was about therapy and psychologists. Wanda told me (about our interviews), “You got further than any psychologist that ever worked with me!” *This really took me aback – I am not a therapist, and was not trying to do therapy.* She told me that the therapists, psychologists, etc have basically a program of questions and responses. I asked if that worked at all for her, if that was “real” therapy. She replied, “No. That’s what makes it [our work] different...That’s why I’ve been frank with you, because it’s not real therapy. Because a therapist wouldn’t be doing what you’re doing.” I followed up, saying “you said I had gotten farther and my question would be, ‘to what end?’ ‘To what goal?’”

Wanda replied that she doesn’t voluntarily tell therapists (or most others) anything important to her. She said, “But I just...ask me the question, I’ll answer. But I’m not gonna volunteer... The [d]ifference is in making me and not making me. In terms of...giving me the opportunity to say what I want to say, what I feel I need to say,

but I'm not ready just to blurt it out to...anybody. It's in the asking... First visit she asked how things are going. And I told her. And I said something wrong about...about myself drinking a little more than usual. She's never asked me since." In Wanda's opinion, the therapists expect her to volunteer information, because that's what she's there for. We joked about where her son had learned the tactic he used to obtain his car – from her.

It seemed to me that the major difference between myself and therapists was an expressed interest in knowledge about and concern for her as a person. I would say that Wanda wants to be cared about, but she's going to let other people show her that they care. My emotions during this...wow. I was petrified, partly, because I thought perhaps I'd been doing something wrong as a researcher –taking on a role of therapist that I wasn't qualified to take. I was partly relieved, because my inquiry was something that Wanda seemed to view in a positive way; as causing her to talk and reflect and think about herself. And partly, I was pleased and proud. I do care about Wanda, and was glad that she could see it. It seemed that perhaps I was doing okay after all, in spite of my worry.

I had noticed how often Wanda seemed to take for granted an ethic that nearly always places the care of others before herself, and I asked her about it. She was very matter-of-fact in her acknowledgement of this ethic of care, and its centrality to who she is. That ethic is so strong that suicidal tendencies she'd had her whole life were suspended during her pregnancies and the growing years of her children, she thinks, because she "had to be there for them." She took care of herself to the extent she needed to so she can care for others.

I would argue that late in the marriage, when Raymond was in the hospital with near-fatal illnesses, was when Wanda came to believe that her ethic of care could and should include care for herself to at least some degree. Hence her walks alone in the evening.

Wanda does not believe herself to be happy now, nor miserably unhappy. She faces each day as a practical matter, and sees herself as generally unreflective. Her point of contentment has been having a stable place of her own. She has a good relationship with God, does some good for other people through her work and finds contentment and self-worth in that. She tends to her children and mother as they need tending, while maintaining an active concern for their well-being.

One of the struggles that Maryann faced after her separation was harassment and continued attempts to manipulate. Whether or not Raymond was psychotic was not as important as her belief that he was; once she believed that he was psychotic, she seemed better able to guard against his words, like in the letter, and take them less to heart than she had while attempting to be functionally married. It would also have heightened her fear that he truly would try to kill her, the children, or anyone else, however, increasing her levels of fear-alertness but also increasing her strength regarding a decision to separate him from the children.

Wanda learned to live with fear and manage it, protecting herself and the children to the degree possible and managing her fear the rest of the time. This also represents a shift, as she did not allow herself to be intimidated or mastered by the fear.

Wanda, throughout her nearly two decades of marriage, never gave up her ethic of caring for others or, apparently, her belief in her ability to care for others. Among the

elements of “care” that I could identify in this aspect of her life were fidelity to her husband, care of him during times of medical distress, appropriate care for children, commitment to marriage vows and contributing to finances.

One point of Raymond’s attack on Wanda was on her as a caring person, for example in his accusation that she wished to get rid of a husband who was frequently ill. He appears to have used it as a point of entry, trying to use her strong sense of responsibility toward others to get her to stay with him. It looks to me like her care ethic was used and stressed by her batterer during marriage. That is, he accused her of being uncaring in various ways, while he continually violated much of what she considered caring behavior – neglecting or harming children and being unfaithful are two examples. Part of that may also have been Raymond’s lack of care for himself – Wanda cared for herself physically to the extent that she needed to care for others. Raymond, however, continually indulged in behavior that damaged his own body. Examples include the addictions to painkillers and not allowing for appropriate care for himself after surgery on his ankle.

Raymond was unable to convince Wanda that she was uncaring, or cared poorly. The care ethic was a central part of their struggle, resulting eventually in what I saw as an unbearable tension for Wanda and eventual rupture that allowed her to exclude him from her realm of responsibility.

Another area of struggle was parenting the children after separation. Wanda had a lot of trouble with her son in particular, who was troubled and in trouble. While she wasn’t able to completely protect either child as much as she wanted to, Wanda developed an axiom that she has repeated to me many times. “If you show them that you

love them, everything will be all right.” Note that during her struggles with Jesse, she made sure he knew her home was open, she maintained contact, and tried where she could to intervene in what she saw as his best interests.

A serious struggle was the one for Wanda’s own mental health. I did not see significant changes or learning there; I saw mainly a recognition that she needed to deal with physiological and situational depression and a determination to do so. That determination could be said to have existed already.

An experience that contributed directly and significantly to shifts in Wanda’s sense of where she belonged in the social fabric was Raymond’s absences while he went into the hospital for extended stays. During those times, Wanda developed a stronger relationship with her church that seems to have given her not only a place as a social being, but a stronger sense that she was a person who deserved a little personal time. Her confidence in herself as a person increased dramatically. She retained it after he came home even in the face of Raymond’s anger. I also mentioned this development late in the narrative as an extension of her ethic of care to include herself.

Learning, I have noted elsewhere, is not always learning that has positive effects for the learner. I believe that Wanda’s alcoholism is an example of this. She learned that it could help her relax and manage her many cares, it could help her escape them.

Perhaps I should also consider non-shifts in identity, although I hadn’t thought about it before. Wanda’s ethic of care was very strong. Raymond, despite his attempts to make her feel incompetent or uncaring as a doctor, mother, and wife, did not appear to have made even a small dent in her ethic of care. He could not invalidate it. In fact, the

places where she felt most comfortable – church and work – both supported and nurtured that ethic.

Heather.

This is part of a letter that I wrote to my dear friend and confidant, Ashton James, at about the 3-month mark. The pages following represent journal writings, and a story written from the journals for the next 9 months. I did a lot of thinking and writing during that time, so much so that I am frankly amazed now – I wrote close to twelve hundred journal pages during that year. I also remained in close contact with a few people via phone, letters, and email -- the primary friendship was with Ashton James. I wrote the following letter at around the turn of the year; it encapsulates a lot of the struggles I was engaged in just then.

Dear Ashton,

This is one of those letters that one starts writing knowing full well that it may never be mailed. I do that a lot – I seem to think best when talking to someone, but then my thoughts are a little too close and I can't send the letter out. If you only knew how many! You would laugh. This one is a reflection on certain changes that have taken place over the last while and I guess you'll let me know what you think if you receive it.

I am maundering a bit this morning, and I thought perhaps if I spent a little time writing it down and maybe even sharing it that I could scrape together enough energy to move into some thing that needs doing.

I'd like to believe in the beauty of the human soul, and I do. I have seen it in a few people. What I don't understand is why so many of the people I know are emotionally crippled, who believe that feeling is a handicap that must be overcome in order to live a full, productive life. Why are people in this country so prosaic, so often shallow? What makes me different? I also don't understand why we subscribe to so many things without thinking harder...and occasionally I wish I had done so.

I am talking, of course, about marriage. I've been attempting to stave off the shame, the humiliation I feel about my current situation. A good deal of it, though not all, comes from feeling that I failed in marriage...again. I know, intellectually, that I gave a hell of a lot and went way and above the call of duty. But I am still ashamed. I flinch when people talk about marriage. I have spoken to you to a limited degree, but have refrained much; I failed myself, that is for sure, and the pain is intense. Perhaps that has a lot to do with the fear and anguish I feel about being judged by the people I respect.

And so I am trying hard to think about it, and to work my way through this particular... challenge. Part of my issue is the institution of marriage as it operates in this country. It is

wrong, I think, to place people under contract first, then hope that people can keep it together with chewing gum and bailing wire. While the contract has its uses in a legal and in a limited social sense, the beauty of marriage does not lie in the institution of marriage. The beauty lies in the relationship that exists, and could exist outside of the confines of a legal contract. In point of fact, I suspect that the institution of marriage as it is practiced is too confining, too rigid, to allow the full exploration of a relationship.

There are few people with whom I can really engage on an intellectual or personal level. Most people I know are unwilling and unable to embrace thought, feelings, words. Therefore, the loveliest parts of me, the ones I enjoy and treasure most, lie dusty on a mental shelf. Engaging with close friends allows me to appreciate these things in them and in me. I can feel the beauty of my own soul, and not be embarrassed by it. Why can't it be that way with a partner?

I always thought that people I heard were right: the divorce rate is high simply because people are not willing to stick it out through thick and thin. I thought, the beauty of a marriage is a function of maturity, of history and shared experiences during the contract. I think I was wrong. In some cases perhaps that does work and I suspect in all cases it contributes, but obviously it didn't work in mine. I married for the wrong reasons...twice. Different ones each time, but nevertheless the wrong ones. So what does marriage mean, if it does not mean what I always thought it did?

I'm not sure and can only speculate. Try as I might, I don't see the concept of marriage as completely without meaning. I still love to see a wedding band that is beat up, scratched, worn smooth, creating an indent on someone's finger because of its eternal presence. I never removed my wedding band unless forced to do so, and then only under protest. I do not wear one now.

And I grieve for my misunderstanding of its import.

Ashton's reply to the letter that I sent after all is worth recording, at least in part:

My ... observation is that your concern may be more complex than stated. The point made regarding the possibility of wonderful and enduring relationships outside of marriage is certainly on target. However, the shame factor may be a combination of marriage and children rather than just marriage. The fact is that since most people operate at the concrete level, the reality of your having been married numerous times would mean little if you were childless.

There are several somethings to think about in this letter and reply. Shame is a common and very significant part of domestic violence situations, as you saw in the narratives of both Maryann and Wanda. You notice that I commented on a general lack of energy and also start trying to examine my beliefs about marriage.

In January I told my husband I wouldn't get back together with him, and he clearly didn't believe me. That was partly my own doing, for I really wanted to help him as he saw doctors about his health, went to therapists etc and therefore I spent time with him. I even let him come back to the house one time as a guest, to see how it felt and whether I thought it was feasible. It felt like having an intruder here, what a nightmare! It made my skin crawl.

After we separated my husband asked about getting marriage counseling. I hedged on that for a while, as I recall, and eventually refused when I realized that I wasn't going to get back together with him. Say, why do people, so often, only think marriage counseling is a good idea after there's an incredible mess? That is an interesting comment about our outlook on things, perhaps. Anyway – I was also afraid of counseling with him. It was sort of like – “This man could have easily killed me several times – the first time he laid hands on me it was lethal violence. Do I *have* to deal with him?” I didn't want peace at any price, to subject myself to manipulation, to be on the receiving end of further guilt. I figured that I manufactured guilt pretty well on my own, and I didn't need any more help with that.

Marital therapy for domestically violent couples (Hargrave & Sells, 1997; Stith, S., Rosen, K, & McCollum, E., 2003, 2004; Op-Ed, 1994) has its place in the literature. There is a lot of literature, some of which gives advice on how to go about it. Other literature that I am more inclined to endorse in most cases, suggests that marital counseling for domestically violent couples is often a very bad idea. It sets the woman up for manipulation by her partner in the session, for example. Even if the counselor can set up an equal-power speech situation, there is still a time coming when they are no longer

in session. If she says the wrong thing in the session, there may well be repercussions for her if she and her partner leave together. I hadn't thought that through at the time – all I knew was that I really, really didn't want to go and resisted the suggestion. I was also somewhat resentful.

At one point in February, I wondered why he kept saying that he loved me, and kept wanting to get back together. I'd been telling him for a while that I had no plans to do so. While I didn't like being alone I didn't want my husband back. I alternately was happy and feeling guilty about it. I went through a period of sadness about it: "I am sad these days about the whole thing..." I wrote at another time that "There were periods of joy, periods of thoughtfulness from my husband --- but never really viewed him as my equal. I thought he would grow and bloom, but he didn't." *But how oppressive was I, wanting him to be certain things? How much did that sap his confidence and make him feel threatened? Probably a lot, I am ashamed to say.*

This is a point of entry that is crucial in its own way. This is where people can point and say "She did this to herself – See? She admits it!" There were times when I agreed with this assessment, but it does not stand up to further analysis. It is a phenomenon called "victim blaming." Even now I am sad thinking about it.

I was determined to be on my own, to do my own thing, to find my own happiness and learn how to tend to my well-being. I actually thought about happiness a lot. At one point I wrote, "And today, Heather, how are you? I am vibrant. Why vibrant, Heather? I am celebrating life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Oh, my! A truer statement was never made!" *I think I had a euphoria going, really.*

That same day, I wrote the following:

By the way, there's a movie on about Birmingham, AL – the bombing of the Baptist church, murdering four black girls and the race riots that ensued. It got me thinking...it wasn't that I was oblivious, but I did have the all-American attitude that race wasn't my problem because I didn't think I acted in racist ways. And then, I didn't really *see* the poor, the beaten women...god, but I had my head in the sand! Of course it matters! Not caring about our social ills is silent complicity. Race was a big deal when/ where/and with whom I grew up. My father was the biggest factor in that. And I remember the reactions of kids I went to school with when interracial dating began to take place. So what *do* I think about the race thing? How often I said that race doesn't matter to me! How often I heard the term "color-blind." Can I say now that it doesn't matter? No, of course it matters. Besides, it seems insulting, degrading, and self-centered to say that someone's race doesn't matter – race is part of what makes us who we are. And it was just as bad to behave as if I didn't have a race to not matter.

It's sort of like people wanting to "let" me forget that I was battered. It is part of what made me who I am! Good or bad, it still "is" and I don't want it to be unspeakable. Who is it who *really* wants to forget that I was a battered woman, anyway?!

It is interesting that I began to reflect more on issues and connect them to other social issues. I think it represents truly significant learning and is indicative of a broadening of horizons and ability to, or at least a willingness to try to, see perspectives that were not my own. There were several items like this scattered throughout the narrative. While I don't comment on each, they are there because they are indicative of the ways in which I changed beliefs and the directions that I took. It is almost classic Mezirowean critical reflection.

So, I had some happiness. I also had, if you can believe it, problems making decisions. I remember once that I was with a friend at the grocery store, and we'd decided to pick up some fruit juice to drink. I stood there, staring at the shelves, unable to pick juice at a market. I was embarrassed, but I just stood there. Eventually I think I grabbed something almost at random – cranberry juice, maybe.

Anyway, part of this was that every small task felt like I had to wade through an enormous vat of taffy to get it done. I wrote, “I must find a way, I *must* shake the lethargy!” By March, I wondered if I just completely lacked discipline, and why I have to fight so hard for every little thing...I considered that perhaps the need was simply for discipline, as I believed that I had long been poorly disciplined in most aspects of life. I began to work on it, and later journals more or less shifted to that focus.

*An inability to make decisions and feeling lethargic are both indicators of depression. It should not be surprising to find this here. It represents a struggle that is invisible to many people, however. They might see incompetence, or carelessness, or disorganization especially if the problem persists for more than a few months. Yet, I'm **still** struggling with some of the issues that I outline in this narrative, several years later.*

Another part of the experience was what I called “crashes.” I had my first one - a major one – at the beginning of February. It occurred when everything is too much, and the boys happened to be away on the same weekend. I just fell apart for a while, and then resumed life normally on Monday. I felt that I ruined a lot of should-have-been-productive weekends that way! Anyway, that first episode was pretty momentous so I recorded the entries here:

Journal – February 2

I am bowed down, crushed, bone weary tonight. I should have been working long before now, but I am just too damn tired. Maybe I'll read later. I have no energy and no drive and I just want to cry. The boys are finally both away at least so they won't suffer from my bad mood.

Journal – February 3

I've crashed, hard. Vomiting, hiding in bed, crying. I called my mom for help and she didn't know what to do to help me. I called and left a message for Ashton – should I call my old therapist?

I feel confused, overwhelmed with some creeping sort of paralysis. I am sick of feeling like this depressing problem-surrounded person. I don't want to be a burden to my friends and family. Nonetheless, my situation is serious. I do not think, at the moment, that (*I need help*) can get by on my own. I just—can't. I'm frightened, I'm worried, I'm sick, I'm sad. And I'm alone. What's up with me?

Ashton called at about 2:30 or 3:00. I was asleep when he called. It was an interesting conversation – wow. I was really upset about crashing the way I have; upon analysis of my schedule and the happenings of last week, he concluded that I in fact did an excellent job handling things. I don't know that I agree; I could have done some (several) things much better.

He was upset with himself for not having called and going off for an afternoon and spent some time chewing himself out right there on the phone. I'd never heard him do that before, and it startled me. Does he really care that much about me that he'd be mad at himself over missing a call? I've never seen him do that, it floored me. Finally I told him he wasn't obligated and he shouldn't worry about it so much. It wasn't a crime. He went on about how he was and it did matter that much, he *should* have called, and finally I said “Ashton, self-flagellation is *most* unbecoming.” In my stuffiest tone. He retorted, “You're the expert!” and I replied “That's how I know!” We both laughed, he stopped, and I am feeling better.

I had other crashes later in the year, but only a few major ones like that. *That was pretty scary. You note that I was worried about the children seeing my difficulties and being harmed by it. I had a fairly strong physiological reaction, which surprises me because it is not something I would have expected of myself. One thing you see there is that I thought I could have done things better. I spent the whole year feeling that way, never really considering that still being alive, in school, and relatively sane were major accomplishments. It was always about being together, being organized, and getting work done. I was astounded about Ashton's anger with himself over not calling – it affected me profoundly to see evidence that someone really cared about me for my own sake.*

Below are the beginnings of my extensive ruminations on graduate school and the role that I thought it played in helping me get out and stay out of my violent marriage.

Note that I identified strongly with school, feeling that I was both happy and belonging there.

My husband was determined that I should leave grad school and get a real job. He could never convince me that education was a bad thing- I still think it was my saving grace. Grad school is so different! Professors are different, not distant, but rather they are live people. Real people with problems and families and triumphs. I like that, I like it a lot. They are our teachers and our mentors, but they are not our betters. Oh, and I became part of an awesome study group in my program – as far as I am concerned that sort of thinking is what living is all about. There is so much to read and know, though, that I often find myself in despair of any deep understanding.

In spite of serious financial pressure, I was determined to stay in school. It was demanding, and things were crazy with pressure from school itself. Yet still – in a tension of sorts – I was happy and becoming happier. Periodically I asked myself, “Where is the balance? How can I juggle so many things successfully?” *And I was never satisfied with the amount of work I got done.*

I thought that Women’s Studies, my graduate minor, was both blessing and a curse to me. I didn’t like it that people were mired in their own thoughts and unhappiness, as I characterized one course that I said “basically ... turned into a complaint forum about how bad it is to be a woman.” Also, I thought, that particular group of people didn’t seem willing to look at bigger pictures about women and stuff. In this class, I wrote of an example concerning “development,” where people were not even willing to address a very basic “development of what, for whom, and to what purpose?” It was the first time I wrote explicitly about social responsibility. Later, there was a major blowup in that class resulting in one student leaving the university and the country. I was furious at what I saw as a prof’s abuse of her power and horrible handling of the situation. After much thought, I sent out an email to the class saying “Let’s talk about this.” The prof pointedly

ignored me, the class followed her cue and no one replied publicly...but many of the international students in the course approached me privately, saying they agreed and appreciated what I had written but didn't feel safe saying that to the group at large. I almost left Women's Studies but didn't, thinking the reading was great and WS was in more than one university. All of us, I thought, have suffered through bad classes from time to time.

This event was pivotal in its own way. This description hardly catches the anger and confusion I felt, as well as my sense of betrayal at finding this sort of think happen in a Women's Studies class, which I felt was supposed to identify and oppose oppression. It actually made real some of the criticisms I had heard and read about Western feminism, race, class, privilege, etc. I realize as I write this that I withdrew from the WS program quite a bit. I liked my readings and some of the people in the classes, but I distanced from the program itself. I'm not sure exactly what that means in the bigger picture, really.

I was also getting into research, doing observations and interviews, and my curiosity exploded. I was petrified and horribly clumsy at conducting interviews! I began thinking about feminism and women in adult education and got really upset about an article I read for the WS course I mentioned above: "Just read a *very* offensive statement in an article on feminist narratives and policy arguments. This author (male) suggests that policymakers would be best approached about domestic violence in terms of "the needs of the entire family" (Eckhart, p. 8) rather than in addressing the experiences and needs of the victim. The effect of this would be to render the abuse and the abuse victim invisible, to redefine her (yes, 'her') in terms of her family. What a terrible, terrible thing

to suggest! “Family preservation services”, my Aunt Fanny! Crap. Nuts. Talk about someone who is all wet.

It’s almost funny – my journals abound with intellectual discussions between myself and my readings. I would have to demonstrate a certain amount of pride about that -- school was a truly important source of intellectual stimulation, and it had me looking at myself and my surroundings in a whole new light. This is exactly the sort of effect that Jenny Horsman is looking for, I think, when she writes about literacy programming as a source of holistic assistance for learners (2000).

Thinking about my growth...I wrote in January, early: “It has been sudden and explosive, enormous.” *This assessment still seems accurate, even though the stuff is less dramatic and easily visible as time goes on. I think I can be proud of myself in many ways. It was a different way of thinking for me than any I had used before, and I believe it was incredibly powerful.*

At one point, I wrote “I never learned to develop and maintain close friendships. I wasn’t (and am not, really) very good at it.” I had had few that really lasted and I believed that I let people go rather easily for a variety of reasons ranging from a nomadic military childhood to a fatalistic assumption that sooner or later the friendship would expire. I felt that my aloofness was not really by choice. I wrote, “I just never fit in – people had their friends and they had their families and they didn’t need me. Or, really, want me.” I did join groups for periods, but never for long or really well. With my family somewhat distant...I really wanted to belong to *something*. Eventually, that belonging became graduate school and myself and my small family (not all biological).

I wonder about that really strong desire to belong to something. Even the word “belong” is a little strange, although I used it consistently. It was as if for many years I needed to be owned by something that was not just me. It seems like I was a solitary person who could not bear solitude.

Yet, during this period my skill and belief in friendship changed rather profoundly. My most significant friendship, as I wrote earlier was with Ashton James. Here is one entry: “I am amazed at Ashton. He is the busiest person I know, every waking minute is occupied. Yet, he said that if I needed him I should call – Wow!! And he means it! Wow. Wow. He said he would if necessary drop some otherwise important activity because I am higher up on his priority list. What an amazing thing! No one else said anything like that – and meant it.” It was important that we had a long history – I had known him for over ten years. During that history, there was always good advice and listening and never, ever asking me for anything or wanting me to be anything in particular. No trying to “fix” me – listening, caring, believing in me even when I didn’t believe in myself. There seemed to be only a desire for me to be as me as possible. At times I was awed... Everybody, I thought, should have such a friendship once in a lifetime. I hoped that I could learn to share that sort of friendship with others.

I celebrated my friendship with Ashton for the entire year. I was worried though, and feared becoming too dependent on his friendship and judgment. I wanted to be me; for better or worse, I wanted to make my own decisions and thought myself capable of doing so. For the first year, he called nearly every day for at least a few minutes. As time went on, he gradually reduced the volume of calls and more or less weaned me off of them. I struggled with the weaning process – in a sense I was spoiled, and those phone

calls were one of the highlights of any given day. Busy as he was, there was always a minute to make sure that I was alive. *I was so impressed, and so humbled, and felt like someone truly valued me as a human being. That someone cared enough that I was alive to do that sort of thing for such a long time meant a great deal to me.* Not everything was support and domestic violence, though. We talked about politics and religion, families and politics, love and war. We talked about lots of things and most were as ordinary as corn flakes.

I gained other people during this time; for example, I got back in touch with a favorite cousin, one of the people that I really think of as family. I was also becoming reconciled with George and Catherine, Wesley's grandparents. It had been some years since my divorce from their son. Circumstances had changed, and it was a relief for them to see me as a person again, as something other than an evil ex-wife. In April, we went with them on an excursion. It marked the beginnings of a wonderful friend/ parent/ daughter/ grandparent relationship.

While I still maintained a characteristic aloofness, my other friendships developed – some because of the battering, others after it. I found new friendships with women, of which a surprising number had encountered abuse themselves. While theirs was less a day-to-day friendship than Ashton's, it provided a means to have fun and was always validating. I encountered and understood the value of small acts of kindness.

We experienced the entry of another friend/family member, a young woman named Miena Kay. I have an entry about when I found out what a special person she was: just a few short comments she'd made about her history and what she'd done with the serious problems she faced. I wrote, "I don't know a whole lot about her, but this is a

young person who should not languish for lack of a strong, (sigh) older friend to whom she can turn. So I invited her home for dinner on Friday (she's off) and we'll go from there." It was pivotal experience, because it placed me in a different role than I'd ever occupied before. I continued to develop a friendship with Miena Kay over several months, having her over for dinner and later inviting her to spend Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays with us. She accepted. "She wrote me a really nice email last night, thanking me and saying that such invitations are rare."

At about the same time, I was developing a special female friendship with a woman named Dada Zuri. She was intelligent, and fun, and we were easy together. "She says she admires me. If she admires me (blush) then how can she not admire herself?" and "I look forward – finally – to the development of a real, deep, female friendship. This is amusing, since I have been working hard to conquer my desire to 'belong.'"

Commentary on this developing friendship continued through the end of the journal.

Several things are worth pointing out about this section. One is that it seems certain that my friendships were on the rise and of a good quality. Another is that as I wrote this it seemed necessary to note them, and cherish them all. I wondered about it a bit, and conclude that I wrote about it as much as I did because these developments seemed like a minor miracle. For a while I remember thinking of myself as "le papillon emergent" or "the butterfly emergent."

I was still concerned about the boys and how to be a good parent to them – very much so. It was hard to do, I thought, when I was both front line and reserves. When I was sick, they still needed to eat. When I was tired or blue or angry they still needed to bathe. When I was ready to burst, they still needed me to take care of them. I felt that I

was not allowed to be human as long as I was a parent. One of my major concerns was providing a gentle, happy home for the children. But, I wondered, how not to yell when I was at my limit and Wesley was fibbing, making excuses, splitting hairs, doing everything but being helpful?

I decided that if I wanted Wesley to respect women and everyone else, I needed to treat him with respect – children were people too. And for that matter, I had concerns for helping Wesley deal appropriately with anger at me or other authority figures. I was the only parent here, so he had no recourse if I was impatient or angry or unfair. I was not always consistent. I had a great deal of concern for what I wanted them to learn from me and what kind of example to be.

There is a shift in perspective regarding parenting and what sort of people children were to me. I was keenly conscious of taking advantage of my parental power – power that in our society is virtually unquestioned and absolute as long as it is not too obviously abusive (Gelles & Straus, 1988). My feelings of responsibility were very strong, and yet I also felt trapped by them. It made for an uncomfortable tension and a certain amount of guilt over my failures.

In late March I was very angry over what I saw as my husband's abandonment of Wesley. Wesley wasn't his biological son, but had been his son before Matthew was born. When my husband had to leave and move in with his parents, there was room enough for Matthew to visit, but "the house was too small to accommodate Wesley too." I was very, very angry. No one ever suggested other arrangements, for example having one child at a time on alternate weekends, or having the boys sleep at a close-by relative's house where there was more room. I wrote, "what a reason to sacrifice the love

of a small boy!” He also claimed to be afraid of child abuse charges. I remained angry about that for a long time and felt that it was best to sever ties quickly and cleanly, so Wesley would think it was only my decision that he not see his dad and not that his dad had deserted him. It was painful; on March 29 I wrote “Wesley is well enough. After last night I begin to think that remaining elsewhere would be a good thing for Wesley, so he doesn’t see my husband. He was crying last night, wanting to go with my husband to his parents’ house, wanting to hug and kiss my husband. It’s hard sometimes not to be bitter in that area.” *I’m afraid that I/we tried very hard – and with some success - to cram my husband into fatherhood roles because I so desperately wanted Wesley to have a father who cared and could be a good role model. What a monumental mistake.*

I wrote about trust for Maryann many pages ago, but I am going to place the quote here as well. Horsman writes that "once trust has been betrayed, especially in childhood, a person expects to be betrayed again. This intense distrust leads to a woman continually looking for the meanings behind superficial words...Trust can often be all or nothing, so any breach of trust is major" (2000, p. 104). Above is a case of what I considered total betrayal, although my husband and his family didn’t see it that way. My own reaction to issues of trust was to redefine the word for myself over time- which was only recently articulated in the form you see here: “Knowledge of self, others, and context are key; so is knowledge of the relationships between them. Trust is the degree of confidence one has in her assessment of self, others, and situation.” In the definition of trust that I made for myself, I more or less left out any expectations of other people’s behaving in desirable ways, deciding instead to have faith in my own assessments of what I believed they would do and take risks based on predictability of behavior. I could

therefore trust someone implicitly who was a complete scoundrel. This insight came as I was working on Maryann's piece, and has shaken me a little.

It was hard on the children, Wesley in particular because Matthew the baby was – well – a baby. I was on the phone one day and Wesley came up and requested to speak without having any idea who was on the other end of the phone line. “He asked for a name and then proceeded to tell the person that Magnus is his cat now because his Daddy had to leave and this was why...My poor, darling Wesley! How I love you. But if I dwell on this I will become angry, and so I will not.”

I put Wesley to bed one night with a bear not Winston, as Winston was dirty. This was the big teddy bear out of Matthew's crib, and it didn't have a name. I told Wesley a story, and to work the bear into it I asked him to name it. He named it after my husband. I asked him why, and he said “because he doesn't have a daddy anymore.”

This certainly gave me a new, albeit sad, appreciation for children having to deal with the consequences of their parents' decisions.

Roles were a fascinating thing and I talked about them a lot – sometimes overtly, sometimes not. I wrote once about recognizing my feminism and fighting it for so long: “much of what I know matured before I was willing or able to acknowledge and/or embrace it....one woman told me that we have to understand the position of traditional (“traditional”?!?) wives and mothers, not take away their identity and power. I would agree although I think that's a pretty strongly raced/classed/ romanticized idea...but it is not okay in my book for them to refuse to understand my position, to actively undermine my identity and power, to insist on constructing a role and cramming me into it. That is not acceptable!” *It seems fairly clear that while I might not know what I was, I wasn't*

about to let someone else tell me what I should be. In fact, when it happened I went into a bit of a reactive mode, frightened or angry to repel what I perceived as unwelcome intrusions. In a reflective mode after one of those episodes, I wrote,

“I went back through a few of my old journals and I think I should probably burn them. So much is sad or angry or both that they are quite painful to look at, to remember. Do you know how many times I wrote, for example, about my husband’s silences, yelling, sleeping apart, swearing? ‘Tis a terrible thing and I’m glad it’s done. Never, never again will I allow myself to be treated in such a way. Not ever, and not by anyone.”

I thought that anger as such was not a huge part of things for me anymore. However, at one point I wrote “I think Ashton is right about the anger – it’s strange, though, because it’s not an emotional anger. It’s more an intellectual anger, a desire to engage, to do battle. It’s increased sensitivity – ” I wrote more about oppression, and much of my reading was social-justice oriented.

Ironically, I felt guilty if any time or resources were used for myself, even when I knew that the use was necessary. My entire self-care regimen, which revolved around nutrition, exercise, sleep, and time for self, was laced with guilt. Self-care was a prominent theme for about six months and I still return to it from time to time. And, guilt also when I didn’t get enough done or felt myself succumbing to the lethargy or disorganization that plagued me.

Finally in March my husband realized that we were not going to get back together, and he recognized that dirty tricks and tantrums (we’d had an argument the week before about blame) would damage his relationship with and ability to have full access to his biological son, Matthew. In this same entry I wrote about my leadership

role, and that I was glad that he would not fight it. *Is that because I wanted to be in control for its own sake, or because I didn't trust him? Both – I had no confidence in his ability to place the child's needs or desires above his own, and I certainly didn't want him to be able to control me. I was deathly afraid of the kind of situation that Maryann had to deal with.* At the end of that month, my husband came to my house to discuss finances. Of course I had someone present so that we were not alone. I was worried, tense beforehand and took a walk and a shower to calm down.

By March, “managing” had become another theme: “All the niggly details of daily life keep getting in the way; I look to find a way to attend those while not neglecting my studies...” Organizing life started relatively late in the game; March was six months after our initial separation. I was determined to make better use of my time, combat fear, overcome the lethargy that dogged my footsteps, be a good parent, succeed in school, have financial stability and have a happy, comfortable home. I considered at length how to go about it. Eventually I concluded that mainly I needed discipline and planning – good intentions were simply not enough.

I wanted to identify necessities/indulgences, bad habits. I knew that I wouldn't fix it all overnight, but a plan and perseverance would get me where I wanted to go. Laying it all out on paper, I got a look at the bigger picture and identified priorities. I had to schedule times so that things would get done, or they wouldn't. And I was so bad at keeping schedules or following lists....I was sure that mastering the organization of my life would make me powerful and able to deal with nearly anything that came along.

In retrospect I wonder about the wisdom of this, this impossible task. Was I setting myself up for failure by trying to believe I could do it all if I just worked hard enough?

Countless journal entries contained assessments and commentary on my productivity for any given day, as well as thoughts on how I was doing with my push toward organization and better management of my life. I began to understand exactly how intimately connected these small things were for stress management and overall happiness. Everything went better when I had peace of mind. I didn't want to be unhappy or guilty-feeling, and eventually these were more important than the inconvenience of the consequences that resulting from not attending to daily tasks. I learned about my work habits and dealing with distraction as well.

Housework was particularly difficult, because it was a problem for me for so many years. The social expectations surrounding housework were something that I resented greatly – yet, having no partner, it was my sole responsibility. So I struggled not only with the logistics and mechanics of home-tasks, but also with my personal resentment of them. In the last journal it faded from overt focus and became a part of my daily commentaries on productivity and organization.

My relationships with family really suffered for a while. At first I confided in my mother a great deal, but I really began to struggle after a while, and felt a need to impose a bit of distance. It was a back and forth: She was my mother, and I loved her deeply. She was smart and funny, great company and frequently perceptive. She was my best friend when growing up. Yet, in some ways she seemed one of those who was complicit in my staying for as long as I did in a domestically violent marriage, and who if anything

hampered me while I was looking for a different path. I experienced mixed relations with my sister as well. Soon after I separated, she and I were to go to a concert together. She was angry. It seemed that she more or less told me that the violence and failure of marriage were my fault, and she had a headache. We barely spoke the entire time. As I became more liberal, she became more conservative, and I felt that we had a very hard time communicating about anything beyond family and children. My father and I have had an on-again off-again relationship. Ideologically we are worlds apart and always have been. Yet, there is certainly respect and even love there between us. He's always been very vocal in his support of my education, though I believe he would have preferred that I go into a more lucrative field. For a time he supported me financially when I needed it, even though I had a terrible time swallowing enough of my pride to ask for it. Eventually there was a problem, however, over which I felt both anger and betrayal.

Trust and betrayal, they keep coming back again.

At the end of April I was still having difficulty with those ongoing problems related to focus and energy:

Still working on my personal 'energy crisis', that is, wondering where my drive has gone and seeking to find and direct and use it again. The signs are that my drives must be different than they used to be, and my sources of inspiration quite different.

School, by itself, isn't enough any more. Love, by itself, isn't enough. Children are not enough. I started to write a note to the gods tonight, and ended up with several pages. I'm asking for help: let's face it, I need help.

But I got to thinking about how shameful it would be if I didn't pull myself out of this. Literally, shame on me forever. I have all the right equipment, and not to do so would be spitting on those gifts and achievements that are mine.

Not only that, but I could be – will be – in a position to help other people, the citizens of purgatory who need assistance. Being who I am, having the

experience I have had – it is my responsibility to use what I have and make a contribution to humankind. There are too few of us who can; not to do so would be a most dreadful failure on my part.

My road is still long, and still hard – but there is a really good reason to travel it. I think there will be great happiness along the way, and that's important. Right now, though, the crucial thing is to really internalize that sense of responsibility.

Of course, that entry wasn't the final say. Still sometimes I resented things and worried, and failed.

Had an hour-long telephone conversation this afternoon. I came off sounding faint hearted and pathetic, and I am thoroughly disgusted. How low shall I sink?

Am I an adult or not? Am I the strong woman everyone makes me out to be or am I just a really good actress? Am I going to spend my life complaining about how horrible it is, or am I going to do something with it? This puling, complaining, feeling sorry for myself has got to go.

I don't give a damn if I don't have the energy to get it all done. The fact is that I have to get it all done whether I have the energy or not.

Having the motivation and the energy would sure help, though.

And then I'd come out of it again. There were several low points. February was bad, and so was April. "I am ashamed of myself – for the way I've been cowering for the past few months. It was me, I who told my husband that to be afraid is fine and normal. When you allow that fear to rule your decisions, to dictate your actions, then that is cowardice." But then I pulled out at the end of the month and started to feel human again. Actually, that was another turning point. I was learning about problems, and problem-solving using multiple angles of address, for example finances. Managing stress, I'd come up with many techniques. By the end of April my thinking had changed almost completely to discipline. Less than lethargic, I was feeling a need to discipline myself to a much more significant degree than I ever had.

It was also at the end of April that I first read about Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and clinical depression. My blood ran cold when I read their definitions and saw their symptoms in myself. Still, I was determined to come out of it.

I kept trying, working to get the daily situation stable enough that I could think of other things, like my upcoming comprehensive exams. At the end of May I was still struggling:

It is true that discipline is still a serious issue for me. But I want, genuinely, to not only pass my comps but also to be able to be systematic and thorough in my studies. Structuring my approach strictly is the only way I know of to do it. Basically, I need to force myself into a course of action.

Month after month this struggle continued. Eventually I acknowledged progress:

The stuff of dreams is not glamour. Or miracles. The stuff of dreams usually is persistence first; effort; creativity; and to an extent discipline. I've habitually considered myself to be undisciplined, but this is only partially true. About some things I am very disciplined, and with others I can be. My thoughts and work are becoming the stuff of dreams. *Later, I continued:* "Life is fun, and it is good, but it is also a serious business that needs to be tended conscientiously. When you have real responsibility, you must, you must attend to it. I can forgive myself the inevitable mistakes; understand the importance of persistence as well as small victories; and believe in the significance of my tasks.

What I can not forgive myself is the willful neglect of my duties. I am not Ashton – I will most likely not work all day and all night. Nonetheless there are things that must be done. I guess maybe I grew up after all. Putting things to practice can be fairly difficult, though.

If one approaches life as an incremental process in which one continually keeps trying, shaping, reshaping – working incrementally – understand that Ethics are not so much applied as ethics, diverse, contradictory, and changing, one understands and may function better. Themes, recurring, will emerge, will persist, will identify themselves and recruit your efforts. My home is one such. So is language, so is discipline.

Wesley continued having a tough relationship with his father, and I had suspicions of abuse. I had a great fear of state agencies and shook at the thought of

starting investigations because then they would inevitably also look at me. I did not pursue beyond collecting stories and contact information of witnesses to some of the incidents. All the incidents were second hand, through others, and it would have been difficult to make a convincing case.

Believe it or not, I struggled with the whole idea of myself as a smart person. I wondered, I marveled, I hoped, I shied away from the whole idea. In the end, I decided that I *was* intelligent and *did* have things to offer. It was clear that that IQ test didn't measure some of the most important, valuable things about me. I also came to understand that talent was not enough. One has to nurture one's gifts, hone them, learn discipline, I thought. I needed to grow to use what I had, and stop being such a loose cannon. "*Loose cannon*" is a colloquialism essentially meaning that there is a force of some type that is directionless and potentially damaging to things around it.

While I was on the receiving end of some pointed, obvious compliments at school, I told myself not to take the stuff about intelligence too seriously; people were being supportive and trying to do something for my self-esteem. "You know, I have a complaint – it is a terrible complaint at that. Sometimes I wish people wouldn't focus on how damned smart I am and instead help me learn to be a good scholar. That said, I'm not complaining about being smart or that profs seem to think that I can just 'do' things."

I also began to think about being female and intelligent:

Being female in this culture makes me second-class. My role is support. I can work, accomplish, earn a degree – and still there will be this frustration. My sons feel free to challenge me; men to approach me, harass, dominate, or interrupt me; blame me for the failure of a marriage; and so on.

Being Black or Hispanic has the same gig going, though the stigma are different. Whereas being female can only be "reduced" by acting male

(and is disapproved of – unfeminine), being Black or Hispanic can be alleviated (to a limited extent) by becoming white. I can think of several Black men who are as European as I am, for example, and are highly successful.” I didn’t mean “acting” white per se; I meant that their blackness will “recede” in the minds of people around them depending on how they sound, dress, their jobs, and all that. That is all perception, and has nothing to do with us as people.

The word “gig” is a colloquialism referring often to a musical performance; however it can also refer to a set of circumstances more generally. This is some pretty decent evidence of efforts to do critical reflection, relating gender and racial issues. The original context was my frustration with wanting to be a career person, but feeling that I would always have to be relegated to a secondary, support role.

Normality, violence, and gentleness ... I expected violence. Someone told me that not hitting was normal, and I thought it was idealism. *I’ve spent a lot of time since I wrote that trying to figure out who was right, but I haven’t managed to answer it yet. I am not sure that I can, especially in light of all the writing I did on normality earlier.*

Beginning in late June, comprehensive exams dominated my journal. Putting together the questions, I planned answers in the journal and did much analysis there. I had all sorts of interesting thoughts that resulted; I even wrote at one point “What is the possibility that critical projects – emancipation – is our vent for collective human guilt? We work for freedom & equality KNOWING that they cannot be achieved. We in fact are working toward goals that are contrary in both operation and notion to all our centuries of existence. Why? Absolution.”

I don’t think that I really agree with that, even though I wrote it – it still gives me pause for thought, however.

My personal sphere began to move outward a little bit as well, and I believed that my disciplinary efforts were starting to bear fruit. “My inclination to work around my home, to keep it neat and make it comfortable is increasing. It has much to do with feeling comfortable, confident; with wanting to be a good example for the boys; and with the general blossoming that I’ve been doing.” Discipline turned into a workaday issue that was mentioned in passing or as part of my short, nearly daily assessments. I made a few further distinctions: “To me it’s not about doing as much as possible in an efficient fashion; it’s more about choosing what to pick up wisely.” I contradicted this later, writing that I needed to make good use of time even though idleness was not as much a problem as it had been.

Finances were nothing short of nerve-wracking. I lacked good cash flow for the most part and was inconsistent in my care of bills and things. At one point I had nearly a year’s worth of unopened envelopes that I’d kept chucking into a box. I did what I had to when things reached a crisis point, and some of the crises were really bad, too. Funding childcare was a *huge* problem. Eventually my habits and resources improved, as did my creativity. A few times I had to ask others for help; but I didn’t want to be rescued and found having to beg for help a humiliating endeavor (depending on who I was asking). I learned a lot about swallowing pride and asking for help when I needed it. At a creeping pace, financial stability improved. Persistence was the key. *I learned about not offering to help someone unless you mean it. Empty offers, or abrupt and unannounced withdrawals of help, are devastating.* I learned about having multiple resources, and had begun considering ways of starting multiple streams of cash flow. The time didn’t seem to be right, however.

I wanted to be happy, and spent much of the year learning how in very concrete ways. It is clear that, while organizing life became less an overt focus, it was an active part of my bigger picture – the daily assessments, for example, and then the occasional overall assessment: “I am still troubled about the managing of children and home. One feels the need to work on those even while maintaining school and working my physical self-care routine back in.”

I still cared about my husband, and made an effort to check on his wellbeing. I always asked, and sometimes we would take a drive or have a meal to talk about things. Even with that caring, I was glad that he could not live with us. During this month my husband came to retrieve the remainder of his belongings. His brothers came with him; they were polite, but not friendly, and I was sad because I’d always had a very good relationship with my husband’s family. And yet, I was so happy to have his stuff gone! The house felt much more like it was mine. I wanted to redecorate. *For me, that’s really saying something!*

We still interacted occasionally, particularly surrounding children: “I met my husband this morning and we had an unproductive conversation about Wesley. He appears to be the same as ever – gloomy, unwilling to take a chance, to stand for something, to seek life and love and happiness. I’m really glad to be me.” As time went on, my husband became less and less friendly and more formally polite in his demeanor toward me.

My stress levels were rising with the advent of written comprehensive exams. I thought to myself, “Comps are coming. I’m going to fail, I’m not organized enough, not disciplined enough, how can I pass the comprehensive exams??” I worked hard to get

organized and focused, but with only modest success. In a contradictory way, perhaps, I also had hopes of eventually becoming a scholar. *There is a really clear path of my development academically, one that was strong and consistent through the journals. Grad school was my place, my thing, which helped define me and what I was supposed to be doing. Again, a space of belonging.*

On July 29, during the middle of my comprehensive exams, my grandfather passed away. He was a wonderful human being- like most of our family, I adored him. I ran around getting plane tickets and stuff together and off we went to Oregon. It was wonderful to be out there, with family I'd not seen for twenty years and who were as liberal as I. August 5 would have been his 85th birthday. On August 11 (my comps were due on Aug 15) a friend of mine was murdered. I turned in the exams on their original due date, having written them in three weeks instead of the usual four (the program offered an extension, but there was a significant schedule conflict and I couldn't take it). *It was a hell of a time...just awful.*

In September, I had a mini-meltdown and cried, off and on, for two days even while I went on about my normal business. I wrote:

Jesus, Mary, & Joseph. What the bloody hell makes me think I'm going to be able to keep it all together? What makes me think I can do it? How can I realistically hope to keep the house clean, get the bills paid, raise children, attend classes, and write a dissertation?

Why have I allowed myself to believe that I'll find a partner some day? Why do I think it'll make a difference? Why don't I just believe that it'll be the same, only with more responsibilities? Oh, and you forgot – you're supposed to be physically fit and the picture of health, too! Yes, all this and cheerful, thoughtful, doing and giving. PTO mom, involved parent, bent on social improvement and self-actualization, and isn't that all just crap?

Jesus, Heather! Thinking that there is happiness, a future, a loving and equal partnership? Who are you trying to fool? What, if you only wait long enough, work hard enough, mean well enough it will happen? You are a naïve, stupid, rock-headed idealist who hasn't a clue about how life really works!

There are no guarantees that everything is going to work out. And there are certainly no guarantees of happiness. How can I hope to provide for my children and see to their happiness? How can I do that well? What's wrong with wanting a little help, a little wiggle room once in a while? Why do I feel so damned selfish because I've been getting enough sleep?

When does it get easier?

In how many different ways can I try to resolve and run things better? Do I clean at night, pay bills at night? Do I read and write at night? Do I plan, organize? Do I relax, pet the cats, listen to music or watch a movie? (*Not.*) Or do I do all of the above? Hell, maybe I should continue to sleep at night! Be selfish – Rest! Maybe I should make some hot chocolate or tea or something, get to my reading, do my paper.

Right about now, I wish that someone would do something thoughtful for me. There is no one, of course, and it won't happen. And why should I look to others to know when I need a thoughtful gesture or loving touch? Can I do them myself, for myself?

Oh, help. What do you do? Where do you turn? Do you turn anywhere or do you just keep it to yourself? I know what you do. You keep it to yourself. You don't burden anyone with aloneness or overwhelmedness or frustration. And you just keep on going. There'll be a little fun here and there, and the occasional achievement to celebrate. The boys will grow, the challenges will change and maybe it won't seem so hard.

When will you learn discipline? When will you make the best use of your resources? When will you be a free, independent, self-reliant woman?

I actively worked on my various neuroses (mushrooms and wasps, for example). I also knew that I needed to occasionally be able to distract myself. A hobby, an interest, something...I considered my pens, photography, and music, and how they were a help to me.

By this time more day-to-day mentions of the boys and their activities were taking place. Wesley was using his mental image of Ashton as a role model for good behavior at times. He learned to tie his shoes – in fact, he figured it out almost immediately. I worried about parenthood in general, and about being a single mom raising two boys, and about how difficult that is to do in this society. “Parenthood...what are the functions of parenthood? How do you do them, and when have you messed up?” It was so clear that Wesley desperately wanted a father, and because of some of the bad examples he’d gotten at school I would have liked for him to have a good role model. Wesley wanting to know if I had a boyfriend (Ashton) and if I were planning to get married soon. He asked pointed questions and wanted a picture of Ashton to put on his wall. In fact, Wesley had moved toward an active interest in having a “proper” family again, so showed strong interests in any male adult that he saw me interact with. Wesley started kindergarten, and problems started right at the beginning of the year. He messed his pants every afternoon between school and YMCA because he was afraid that if he went when he needed to, that he’d be left behind. Then a few days later, he had five bowel movement accidents – most unusual – unhappy at school in the full-day kindergarten. As he told me, he just wanted to be at home.

During the fall, Wesley learned a little about doing laundry and I was thinking about teaching him more daily maintenance skills, and some appreciation for the work involved with those daily maintenance chores. I used that effort to teach myself discipline and provide the boys with a good example. I noted more about my son, including how much better he works if I am right there and how he thrives on the interaction even if the chore itself is quite tedious. I spent time thinking about children and responsibility in

today's society – do we teach them to be responsible? “How, how can I be a better parent? I don't want to yell, be angry or impatient. Last night I yelled at him. There must be better ways – I hope this is one.” What was I going to do when he realized that there were limits to what I could do, the restrictions or discipline I could impose?

In the fall, my husband and I experienced our first serious altercation in many months. “He blames me, thinks I “ran out on our marriage.” He cannot get past the blame game or assimilate the idea that forced acknowledgement of error is self-serving. Acknowledging (forced) error when neither party can be sure is doubly so. We cannot communicate!! I won't do it his way and he can't do it mine. It is frustrating, agonizing, painful.” At this time I was finally filling out divorce forms.

I knew I needed a better idea of what I was getting into as far as partnerships go, and how I'd want it to work. I talked about it with several people: “We spoke ...about polygamy, marriage as a social phenomenon, and some issues like romanticized notions of marriage and the selfish mentality of many folks.” I was concerned, when thinking of partnership, about sustainability – remembering what special means, not losing sight of partners once the “new” wore off, of having bad judgment, of living with a man who expected me to be the household slave: “And quite frankly, I can live alone with the boys well enough if any man thinks he can work a job, I can work a job, and I can do everything else.”

Other issues, like intelligence, education, maturity, judgment, and everyday activity continued to resurface as well. I thought about communication – a partner reading cues and not having to explain everything; being “hard-headed” and realizing that was another way of saying I was a woman with opinions and

strong convictions. I considered specialness, room to be imperfect, and shared decision-making. Shared household responsibility was another of the issues – not “help” – responsibility. I considered questions: How would I or could I fit into someone’s larger contexts, or he into mine? When?

I looked again at my socialization to try to understand what is good about it, how I wanted to work it into myself and my grander scheme:

[A] man...intelligent, with drive, initiative, thoughtfulness, perception, and emotional maturity. No other would do, as the force of my personality knocks them flat.

I know better than many that a woman’s position in a Western (US) household is “supposed” to be subordinate. Have I gone looking for a man to whom I can be subordinate? Perish the thought! Must consider it, though.

For long, it has been the job of women to enable the proper function of not only self, but also men & family. It’s as if no one has ever gotten around to fully exploring the potentials of true partnership. This is not excessively surprising, because a true partnership is based on respect. We have been taught to oppose, to dominate, to submit – but not to respect.”

Things shifted in other ways, as well. I thought less in terms of being open to interest from particular males to thinking of men that *I* was interested in pursuing, or who were worthy of me.

Once, I dated a man just to go on a date. I wanted to see what it was like again. It was patently obvious during dinner that this was not someone for me, although he didn’t seem to see it. He spent a lot of time laughing at my views and telling me that we could keep each other good company – quietly, of course, no one need ever know. “*Keeping each other company*” was a euphemism he used for *having sex*. This brings me to another part of the story -- date rape that he attempted and nearly succeeding in doing – the only time I ever went out with

him. I didn't even write it in my journals at the time. This same man made me furious with persistence, aggression and gross disrespect, including uninvited and unwelcome handling of my person. I was horrified and again turned off to dating.

I continued to contemplate my potential, and respect that I received from others: "Respect – for me? What do I do? How do I handle it? Is this a good, grounded thing? From whence does this respect come? Is it common? Am I imagining much it, that I'm seeing it in people like x, w, z, a, b, c, and d? An attitude of respect from other students? I also noted a compromise – "between socialization and my independent tendencies is that tendency to step into leadership roles only when I see both a need AND a vacuum." I wondered if that was a feminine trait.

Journal 4 was dominated by graduate school as much as journal 3 was. I'd often write about readings, what I thought, and how they pertained to me; i.e. on Aug 28: "Weedon – p. 15 states my own dilemma, one that I haven't yet worked through. She says of women that "they found themselves expected to manage family life, paid work, and public life without any fundamental changes in the structure of work or the sexual division of labor." During this time period much of it was about Women's Studies. I was considering identity.

The reference is to Chris Weedon (1999). She is not the first person to say this, and I encountered it in other places such as Yalom's History of the Wife (2001).

On other occasions I'd write about my dissertation or things going on in the program -- e.g. other things like my work as a TA. I always wrote about meetings with my advisor. I wrote often about loving school and liking the work I do; I was incredibly stimulated by my project. Occasionally I'd simply make observations: "It is good to be

uncomfortable – that means that my position is non-dominant, non-normative. I'm in a position to understand difference ...let us say that I am developing an appreciation of the exploration of difference as a way of knowing/ appreciating others and knowing /appreciating/critiquing self."

I spoke of myself as compassionate, viewing people as partial and appreciating what is there, then continued: "prolific writing is a good way to order your life...All my thoughts stir around in here, not just "academic" ones. I mean, really, how much focus on identity, on values, on creating meaning and finding direction has there been in my journals over the past year? Of course the questions are getting more complicated and also harder to answer. Scholarship really is about life's questions."

I was feeling pretty good, things were going well at home and at school. They were going so well, in fact that I wrote:

I'm at a point now where I need to be careful – I can see me getting arrogant. So much has gone well lately, and there has been so much affirmation, that it's impossible not to feel good.

Add to it that I can see a certain amount of the evolution, the growth, the intellectual maturation, and things become truly difficult to manage. How does one remain humble? How does one look past simple knowledge and find wisdom?

People started turning to you because of who you are. There is no need to be arrogant in your intelligence or your maturity; those very things corrupt your value. Your value to others lies in being yourself, thoughtfully. We have to work with what we have, and work toward modification of those elements that are untenable for us. The question, of course, is which is what, and how to work with them."

There seems to be a certain fear of success here. I reflected on the journal and writing itself. I indulged in journals I liked because it made me feel good. And, I liked

sending cards and whatnot because it could accommodate my vice and bring a bit of cheer to others.

I spent a little further contemplation on belonging, “my desire to belong somewhere, with some group. I’d have been saved a lot of grief if I didn’t have that desire.” I believed that I tended to be “fiercely independent” and living at the “fringes” of such groups. I then considered my family as a place to belong to, writing “I will never be self-contained, but my desire to “belong” to something will probably be curbed a good bit. Having brought it into the foreground, some examination and adjustment are in order. One could say that my love for people generally gives me a place in the world, and my love for family and self give me a local address.” Later, I suggested that the desire to “belong” may be a bit misguided, as it can assume that neither the group nor the individual change significantly.

My ex said at this point that I ran out on the marriage; he pointed to the counseling he’d been doing during the year and basically said that I was wrong not to give him another chance, not to go to marriage counseling, all that. Especially considering that he could blame medical and psychological problems like depression and high blood pressure. I didn’t really buy that, but it gave me some more twinges of guilt.

I continued noting shorter, less frequent calls with Ashton. I missed them a bit, but thought that perhaps the reduction was good for my independence. This trend continued over the next several months as I made the adjustment to more moderate levels of contact. I continued contemplation of relations with other people.

I believe, with some support, that I have an extraordinary degree of sensitivity to other people and situations. It is up for thought because of an emphasis on the degree of sensitivity as well as the broad spectrum of qualities that seem to be embedded in it. I have known that I am sensitive

to word choice, implications, peoples expressed and unexpressed opinions. And, where possible, I accommodate them. (is this arrogance? What does this mean, “accommodate”?) That this sensitivity should be really well developed and tuned had not occurred to me per se.

The closing elements of the year’s writings are worthy of note in their own right.

On November 1, an entry says that I “Had a good Halloween with the boys, and didn’t think about last year’s Halloween at all.”

Then, about a week later...

Haven’t written for several days, and it feels sort of strange. It’s a major part of life now. Am struggling in several areas, though they vary widely. Must get the bills paid. Too much to read and feeling unfocused, scattered. Yet things go well.

I daydream sometimes about being the best, and about doing great things. At the same time, I begin to get a glimmer of what ‘good’ is and why I could be thought of in that way. So I’m afraid of my arrogance and yet at the same time I’m afraid there is an element of truth. I am one of our best, but what does that mean and what do I do with it? It feels like a responsibility more than anything else.

So, is that a complaint? And if it is, is it one of those ridiculous ones?

Today is a very special day in the larger scheme of things – it was a year ago today that I took action to free the children and myself – Happyversary, Heather! I have been jubilant all day.

Much analysis is contained in the writings above. I think it is fairly clear that I began analyzing myself and my situation within a larger social framework fairly early on. One can see this in the writings about marriage, race, intelligence, and femininity, in the grappling with literature. I placed myself within the larger social framework and worked with the implications. It’s a remarkable development, and if that’s not raising consciousness I don’t know what is.

I responded to the social situation and individual ones as well. My struggles remained within a cluster of themes, including shame, happiness, and guilt; apathy and

indecision; parenting; roles; self-care; managing and organizing my life; handling stress; and dealing with intelligence. I no longer denied that I was intelligent, eventually resolving that issue for myself. My belief and celebration of intelligence were often awkward and uncomfortable, however.

My confidence as a social being was abysmally low during the first while after separating from my husband. I struggled with the feeling that people I knew and society at large did not care that I existed, and I did not know how to relate. Gradually, however, as evidenced by my making of friends, my confidence began to increase.

I would have to add, though, that I sort of wonder if I didn't have a bit of a desperation going – desperate to be a super-being, to get everything done and do it well, to shake the traces of depression and struggle from me. I did not see that resolution in this text.

The articulation, analysis, and learning involved in these various struggles resulted in significant shifts in my beliefs and behaviors, in who I was and what I wanted to do. I learned a lot about social issues, and seeing them in the everyday matters of life. No longer could I see the individual as separate from the social. I learned about friendship, family, and belonging in a way that I had not before, and in ways that resulted in understandings of all that were better suited to me. It's pretty hard not to see Mezirow (1991) and perspective transformation in this story, and I think it is. What's interesting about that to me is that this shift happened AFTER I got out.

We shake our heads about women who go back to an abusive man, whatever the reasons. I didn't let mine come back, not once, and it was not the sort of "kudos to her!" that one might expect. Dave's attitude about my not giving him another chance is present in others I know as well. It seems like a "damned if you do, damned if you don't" thing to

me. If I didn't let him come back I was not willing to save the marriage. "Success" stories where "abusive couples" work out their differences are really celebrated in some of the articles I read (Stith, Rosen, & McCollum, 1993). Yet, if I let him come back and he got violent again, I would be just another dumb woman who didn't get out of a battering relationship when she had the chance. It's a terrific double bind. In a way that I would not have been able to do before, I made a choice and took a stand. It seems that no matter what I did, I would lose in the public opinion. In some ways, I had to stop caring about public opinion in order to retain some confidence in myself. I believe that I made a good decision, even now, and I learned that there are some things for which I wouldn't give second chances.

People always want to know what "mystery catalyst" suddenly gets women going and out of the relationship. Personally, I think we should also ask more questions about what happens afterward. It's tough getting out, but I think you can tell in these narrative parts that it's just as tough to deal with the aftermath.

Chapter 5 –Discussion and Findings

Learning Identity and Domestic Violence: A Discussion

This chapter examines the data through learning identity and transformation theory lenses. First, I look more at shifts in the sense of self. I then move to social themes. I examine power and representations before I draw conclusions.

Exploring shifts in the sense of self.

There were similarities between all three narratives that were very consistent with the domestic violence literature regarding battered women and the difficulties with getting out of battering situations.

All of us started with a fairly low self-esteem going into the battering relationships, particularly regarding social matters (Bigby, 2000; Bratslavsky, 1984). We used descriptive words like “outsider,” “loner,” and “reserved.” There is evidence of shifts from that initial position. Wanda, for example, took special delight in describing herself as more social within the context of her church. I described the development of a network of close friends. While Maryann did not make specific note of changes in herself as a social being, she did participate actively in education and dialogue with her professors. This indicates movement in a similar direction. These changes suggest a shift in the sense of self that included ourselves as social beings, and at the same time the rudiments of a sense of active belonging to larger social groupings.

Another similarity was that we had all received threats of death or stalking if we left. Each of us consciously accepted a strong possibility that we would die and were in a situation where we actually thought that we would die. Each of us also accepted the same risks we took on behalf of our children and we did what we could to protect them. In

deciding to leave we accepted financial hardship, reduced resources, social stigma, and loss of family and/or friends during a time when we lacked confidence and suffered a state of severe emotional and psychological distress.

What this amounted to was a material struggle to survive that took place amidst emotional and intellectual chaos. Each of us became accomplished at assessing and navigating different situations, and all of us felt that we struggled through and began to handle various challenges competently. While we knew fear, few day-to-day challenges seemed insurmountable and there was very little that intimidated us after we had spent some time away from our batterers learning to survive in the “aftermath” stage. Furthermore, we all believed that we could and did handle high levels of stress on an ongoing basis.

All of us had spent a good while becoming progressively less assertive as we spent much of our time and energy trying to be what our partners thought we ought to be. We tried to divert conflict using various means that included being very attentive, giving batterers what they wanted, trying to be what they wanted us to be, and various other tactics. After a certain point in our marriages, however, we shifted toward more assertive behavior. Maryann and I both escalated conflicts knowingly, for example, and Wanda took walks alone in spite of her husband’s displeasure. That assertiveness spread into areas beyond intimate relationships – consider Wanda’s comment that she can stand with a university provost and president to make her points or Maryann pushing the police and her attorney to help in the search for her missing child.

Our relationships to broader day to day activities became more immediate, and our struggles were close to realities that involved life and death. I thought of it in terms of

layers of security, how far a person or group is removed from abject poverty and danger of death. There is a clear shift in use of power as reflected in the learning identity construct. Our spheres of interaction changed radically. The immediate sphere of interaction created by the husband and wife within a household was shattered. The power medium created by the batterers had essentially evaporated, leaving a near-vacuum. Each of the participants gained or regained the ability and responsibility to make decisions in an environment less hampered by criticism or sabotage. Mistakes were merely mistakes rather than a venue for vituperation, and we learned that we were competent. In short, it seems that we were empowered and came to know it. It represented a change in our relationships internally and externally simultaneously.

All of us had a strong ethic of care and were raised in patriarchal families. The patriarchal family in this case was one where the father was head of the family and the mother was a stay-at-home mom for the bulk of our childhoods (Bratavsky, 1984). Each of us initially had fairly similar values regarding marriage, vows, and our duties as the wife in a family. This discourse is a common one in the US, in which we were raised and were surrounded by throughout our adulthoods as well. We believed going into our marriages that we were getting married for the rest of our lives. However, when we and our children were in danger and it was clear that remaining in the situations violated other values such as our parenting ethic, all of us had to give up a cultural conviction that if we were good enough wives, our marriages would last forever.

One could see changes in habits of mind from Mezirow's point of view, but they seem to have been learning from the struggle itself more so than critical reflection. This learning and change fell more into learning within technical and practical domains.

Mezirow does not make a connection between learning in those domains and learning in the emancipatory domain, a connection that would be vital for holistic approaches to learning. This raises questions for me about the possibility of learning due to struggle in the technical and practical domains resulting in transformation. We were empowered through technical learning, that is learning to manage our immediate surroundings. Is not empowerment a part of emancipation? My own work does not divide types of learning into different domains. I am not sure if that is a strength or a weakness, but it is certainly a point for further consideration.

The next several paragraphs take a more focused look at individual struggles, learning, and shifts in the sense of self.

Maryann displayed several significant shifts in her interpretations regarding the matters of intelligence and her primary roles. Going into her twenties, Maryann highlighted closely related, stereotypical discourses of the “dumb blonde” and “sex object.” After marriage, however, she drew upon a “subservient wife” discourse that she learned in childhood. At this point we can see a shift in her sense of self as she took on a new role and drew upon a discourse with which she was familiar. Maryann’s internalized discourses were reinforced by her husband, who spoke to her about herself using such descriptives as promiscuous and stupid. He was also very clear about his more-powerful position as head of the household, her obligation to submit to his rule, and her duties regarding domestic tasks. Maryann shifted again into a parental role at the birth of her child and into roles of traumatized woman in recovery under the care of a competent therapist, and capable student in higher education. It seems evident that Maryann accessed several new discourses that acted in a useful contrast to the old ones. Her parent

discourse seems to have formed from more than just her own parents, however, and she valued it highly.

After leaving her batterer, Maryann began to change her opinions on the matter of her intelligence. She also changed her interpretations of the matter of intelligence from her youth. She began denying a culturally specific stereotype (“dumb blonde”) that she felt had been applied to her since she reached puberty. While she rejected a cultural stereotype, she essentially used this to change her position relative to intelligence as she knew it, i.e. someone who could think logically and succeed in school. She did not change her beliefs regarding intelligence itself. This could be seen as equivalent to one of Mezirow’s changes in meaning schemata.

Late in her narrative Maryann shifted again into a role of traumatized parent of child who has been kidnapped. It appears to have disrupted but not derailed the changes that had already taken place. Maryann did not believe she was unintelligent as a result of the kidnapping, for example. She reacted differently to trauma than she had in her childhood; this time she was not without agency as she had been in earlier years, agency that she used it to remain functional and find her child.

These changes were in line with Butler’s notion of the inessential woman (1999) and my notion of the sense of self (p. 38). I noticed, however, a question of time – presumably it is a partial reconstruction and interpretation that is temporal, located fleetingly in the present moment and reinforced with similar reconstructions. Maryann did seem to be aware of the discourses at the time of the interview and was critical of them, but I do not know if she was aware of the discourses at the time of her marriage.

In a parallel vein using Mezirow's work, this description also seems to give us a partial glimpse at one of Maryann's frames of reference. It is a frame that relates to socially constructed gender roles and subsumes specific habits of mind related to her intelligence, sexuality, and wifehood. In line with his work, some habits of mind were present but dormant (i.e. a wife role, which Maryann had never experienced) or formed in response to the demands of a new role.

I took on a white, working-class notion of womanhood that laid out a primary role for me as housecleaner, cook, and family caretaker when I was unable to conform to it. I went into my marriage with a sense of what both I and my husband were supposed to be. I struggled with that knowledge because I did not believe it fit me. I also went in with a self-identification as student – something that I liked, was good at, and thought would benefit my family over time. I had roles before and during battering as parent, student, wife, and employee. My husband seemed to believe that my primary roles should be wife and mother first, employee next, and student an undesirable last. We had different ideas about what I should be, and certainly different priorities. Partly due to my education and partly due to the battering, I recognized the struggle and rejected the reified notion of womanhood that I was unable to fit. Over time, I modified my personal definition of what it meant to be a woman, such that my opinion of myself could be something other than a failure. I was a woman, an intellectual and student, who also was part of a family and had responsibilities that accompanied all roles. This change can readily be seen as an actual perspective transformation as per Mezirow, where I did not change my position relative to a norm (as Maryann did with intelligence) but rather changed the norm itself to

one that worked better for me. Doing so seems to have required articulating the discourse, figuring out some ways in which it did not work for me, and changing it.

We can also see in the data some aspects of the sense of self for that did *not* change. Wanda's strong ethic of care is an excellent example of this. Even though it was manipulated and used against her by her batterer, she retained the ethic. I believe that her having done so was instrumental, because nearly all of her self-respect seems to have been embedded within that ethic. What did shift regarding the ethic was her area of responsibility. We can see Wanda begin as a physician with professional obligations to patients. She then added a disabled husband and children. The major struggle for Wanda appears to have been with her husband's apparent determination that her attention focus almost solely on him, and then removing him from her area of responsibility.

I had a similar strong point with my belief in education, and Maryann had one with parenting. I should note that each of these areas was a site of serious struggle. It seems as though these strong beliefs were part of the process of control (e.g. if you really care, you will do this; if you were a good parent, you would do that) and part of the process of resistance (e.g. education that will result in long-term benefits to family is not an act of selfishness; a good parent nurtures a child, rather than harming him/her).

I was able to identify ongoing sites of ambivalence – where the participant was unsure how to construct herself and failed to do so or changed it sporadically depending on what was happening and how she felt. One example from my own narrative is belonging. I never viewed myself as having roots or belonging anywhere. I tried at times to belong to families, groups, or churches. At other times I would remain aloof and try simply to coexist with other people, touching their lives in only peripheral ways. While I

developed some sorts of belonging, such as friendships, that issue remained a site of ambivalence. It seems likely that our batterers were opportunists – there is sufficient evidence to say with some confidence that our batterers picked up on areas of uncertainty such as my desire to belong or our social lack of confidence and exploit them in ways that created further instability for us. It seems also that batterers picked up on our areas of strong belief and used those in a different way, to tie us to them or control us.

In this section I described shifts primarily in our senses of self that included different types of shifts and demonstrated some crossover into shifts in the sense of social. I identified them primarily by identifying sites of struggle, significant interaction, and points of learning. I described shifts toward empowerment, changes in relation to perceived social norms and changes to the norms themselves. I described what appear to be some core discourses that caused us each some very serious difficulty in our marriages. Through these, we could see the construction of self in cooperation and struggle with self, others, and social discourses. We could see in a fairly rich way the influences of our contexts and socialization. I described some aspects of the sense of self that did not change, locating them as sites of struggle and sites of ambivalence. These descriptions suggest that we can have very different types of relationships with discourses that I did not describe in my initial work on the sense of self. Finally, I noted batterer perception, manipulation of different aspects of the sense of self, and opportunism. I should note a personal observation that seems to underscore the depth and breadth of the subject area. I often felt as though I had to be an expert in everything to speak definitively about anything. I felt that I had a multidimensional, shifting target that defied capture in a given shape or moment. While I believe that this was one of my goals – to have a

dynamic notion of identity – I found actually working with it to be difficult and at times unnerving. At best, I felt able to capture only a minute cross-section of the complexities.

Using Mezirow's perspective, I found many shifts in meaning schemes. I discusses several and there remained many more embedded in the narratives. I also saw evidence of at least one change in frame of reference, or perspective transformation. I would say, however, that that transformation was done only partly through critical reflection. Mezirow's work did not emphasize or detail nearly enough the roles of emotion and interaction with others, a conclusion that supports existing critiques. His work does not acknowledge the significance of ambivalent meaning schemes, of keeping meaning schemes, or meaning schemes as a site of struggle.

The next section of this chapter focuses more explicitly on the sense of social and aspects of the narratives pertaining to it.

Social themes.

This section directly addresses social themes, where the last section focused on changes in the sense of self. I have to stress that the senses of self and social are not truly separate. They are interpreted through the same or heavily overlapping ideological discourses and have a dialectical recursive type of relationship that is akin to a feedback loop.

At best, going into our battering marriages, it seems that we were relatively undeveloped in the area of social sense. I would not say that it was completely absent, but more that it was rudimentary and uncritical as there was evidence of some limited placing of ourselves in the larger social milieu. We each knew that we were female, for example, and some behaviors or roles that were socially accepted as feminine. Each of us was able

to place ourselves in a socioeconomic class sense, and knew what that meant regarding our relationships with other people of our acquaintance. Our thoughts of the social early on were primarily related to gender and family roles, as well as our jobs. I saw little evidence of connection to even immediate communities in strong ways, let alone larger social organisms such as state or federal government. Our community connections appeared mainly to be employment-related. Later, as I noted above, there is evidence that we began locating ourselves more within social groupings, such as Wanda with her church and Maryann with her university. I saw no evidence in early stages that we saw ourselves in any sophisticated way as related to social issues or as contributors to the construction of society and culture.

However, it does appear that working our way out of the battering relationship and dealing with the aftermath helped to develop the sense of social, as social awareness increased and social issues emerged as important for each of us after battering. It evolved very differently for each of us. It appears that much of the development was due to our struggles with reactions of others to our domestic violence situations and our struggles with elements of our social structure such as the police, shelters, and welfare services. Two scenarios follow.

All participants had some difficulty with others in terms of family and friends (Brown, 1993; Horsman, 2000; Levendosky, Bogat, Theran, Trotter, et al., 2004). Each of us was surprised and somewhat hurt by the lack of support we received from people that we thought would be “on our side.” We lost some family members, as Wanda was rejected by her husband’s family even though they had been aware of the violence and tried to ameliorate it in the past. I had difficulty with others in terms of understanding the

violence and my position relative to it, feeling as though my own hurts were acceptable until violence against my older son was revealed. Maryann's onetime friends in the police seemed not to recognize her, and her parents were both helpful and unhelpful.

Our experiences with social services were mixed, which seems like it might be a positive indicator of changing times. Maryann, whose experience occurred almost two decades ago, got very little by way of help from the police or social services. Indeed, to all appearances they largely hindered her. Wanda's experience occurred almost ten years ago. Relative to her batterer she appears to have had a good experience, up to keeping her place of residence and having the batterer removed. My own experience was quite positive with the police, women's resource center, and the courts. However, when I went for financial help to public assistance, I was treated so poorly that I retreated from the experience in anger and confusion. I was not informed of state services that would have applied and been beneficial to me.

I would like to talk about these two situations in terms of "othering." The problems we had with social aspects of being a battered woman were pervasive, in particular social discourses of recovery and normalcy (Horsman, 2000). We as survivors felt fundamentally changed, essentially different from many of the people we knew, after leaving the battering relationship. Our friends and families refused to engage the issues, sometimes blaming us. We harbored feelings that we were very small and did not matter to others, and felt a blow to our developing power and agency. I made the point in the narratives that domestic violence is often silenced, medicalized, or treated to the "Woozle Effect" (Gelles & Straus, 1988). Often domestic violence is seen only as a function of "broken" people rather than fomented or condoned in the actions of ordinary people. The

quandary that appeared was embedded in unexpected treatment from people and agencies that we had expected to help us in a time of need. We were frustrated and confounded by others' lack of understanding and/or interest in the same issues.

We spent some time critiquing such responses, as can be seen in my own analysis of responses that positioned a woman to be beaten or cast out of her home if she was judged to be behaving poorly by her partner. In the introduction you saw me interpreting personal experiences of attractiveness through a lens of social norms. Later, I discussed the reproduction of race relations in the US through my own attitudes and beliefs. Maryann faced issues around kidnapping and issues of belief or support from social services. She critiqued the perspectives of the police regarding the safety and competence displayed in her initial attempts to get help in searching for her child. She critiqued many of her encounters with law enforcement and social services, eventually concluding that she did not matter within those spheres and was by and large on her own. Through this disconnect we began seeing ourselves differently as well as our position within the social.

It seems in some ways that the disconnect between what we had expected in these situations and the responses we encountered was as much or more a disorienting dilemma that would result in perspective transformation than the battering itself. Only after I had been in a marginalized position of "other" was I able to begin seeing the effect that some of my own attitudes etc had on social realities – an indicator of critical awareness.

In my own case and in Maryann's there seems to have been quite a bit of critical examination of norms, assumptions, and premises that took place. The sense of social became much better developed through critical reflection after we had been in a marginalized position enough to make visible, articulate, and critique some cultural

assumptions and attitudes. In my case this went beyond issues related to domestic violence into areas such as race relations. This resembles a process of Freirean conscientization or feminist consciousness-raising, processes that Mezirow likened to perspective transformation (1981). This area of change in identity seems most closely related to what Mezirow intended with critical reflection and perspective transformation. It seems possible that critical reflection is more closely related to the sense of social than the sense of self. If these data are any indicator, the type of dilemma may make a difference as to when critical reflection is more likely to occur. In our battering situations we were marginalized at a very local level. Upon emerging, however, we found ourselves marginalized within our parent culture.

It appears that critical reflection was not necessarily the kind of learning used to get and stay out of the battering relationships. The battering situations were not rational, and I am not sure that rational thinking would apply. However, it was a very powerful kind of thinking that benefited us after we were out and trying to make something out of ourselves. This was unexpected; I had anticipated seeing stronger signs of Mezirow's idea of transformative learning in response to such a dramatic disorienting dilemma. Transformative learning does not seem to have been absolutely necessary to develop a functional, or even beneficial, sense of self. Wanda, who did thrive and did not return to domestically violent relationships, showed the least development in the sense of social. Furthermore, the other two participants who developed further in this area developed in conjunction a sense of social responsibility and an imperative to act. Ironically, the evidence contradicts Mezirow's position regarding social action and supports his critics (Collard & Law, 1989; Cunningham, 1992; Newman, 1993).

In the following section, I examine in greater depth several aspects of learning and power that emerged from the data.

Power.

In an earlier chapter I speculated that power in a domestic violence situation is held in the ability to control and interpret interactions. Power as I described it (p. 46-50) was laid out from the work of Habermas at three contextual levels – physical force, the force of words and impacts of direct interactions, and power as medium within the household sphere of interaction. I examine each in a discussion of isolation.

One of the developments in these battering relationships was isolation, which is a common characteristic of battering situations (Dobash & Dobash, 1998a; Follingstad and DeHart, 2000) For each of us the isolation or attempts to isolate took different forms. For me it was school, my main source of significant interaction outside the family – my husband was determined to get me out of school; it seemed that if I would only quit school and get a “real” job that he approved of we could have the kind of life he wanted. I was also isolated by the demands of school itself, family duties, and by the need to hide domestic violence. Wanda was isolated in a different way. She had the care of a semi-invalid husband who was at times a complete invalid, plus a job, children and protecting the children from him. Professionally she did have exposure to the outside world, but amidst her other cares there was little time for her to take advantage of it. Raymond, by way of his needs and demands, appears to have made sure that Wanda’s attention was focused on him as much as possible. Maryann was isolated more in the literal sense of the word. Jeff hovered around when she was on the phone with her mother and made her keep the conversations short. She was unable to have friends, attend college, he watched

her at work, she could not leave the house if she was not in his company, and was not permitted to drive.

Relative to power relations as described earlier, it is readily established that significant interactions between each of us and broader social spheres were constantly minimized using various tactics. The key there is *significant*. All of us held jobs, so we did have some way to interact with others. But since we were preoccupied, worried about what was happening at home or were watched by a spouse and fearing getting hurt later on, our interactions became more fleeting and had little depth to them. Although indirectly, the batterers were laying the rules for our interaction with others outside the home. Literally, they appear to have used the power medium created in the household to control the victims' interactions with other people and institutions. While this appears to have been effective to some degree, it seems to me that it was a fairly weak part of the control weave that surrounded us, because the power was indirect – it was power from a small sphere of interaction taken and wielded in a much larger, more complex one. Looking at instances like Maryann's encounter with a social worker while she was hospitalized, it seems virtually impossible to completely prevent at least some significant interaction between a woman and larger social spheres.

It would seem, if we consider work and pre-relationship memories as examples, that there were spheres of interaction that were beyond the batterer's control (though not beyond his influence). For example, none of the batterers were present during the participants' childhoods. In all cases there were periods of work when the batterers were not physically present and so there were interactions that were not under his direct control. No matter how strongly or overtly our batterers controlled our actions, it was

always possible to reach outside the sphere of interaction for sources of power over which the batterer had no control. Availability alone seems not to have been enough, however.

We all endured substantial levels of emotional and psychological violence for extended periods, above and beyond any physical violence. It was physical violence, especially attacks on children that occurred in all three cases, which could not be seen as “normal” or be explained by difficulty in life’s circumstances (for example, job loss). It was the physical violence that made the psychological, emotional battering speakable and sparked us to reach outside the household sphere of interaction.

This would seem to be in line with findings in domestic violence research that the odds of complete domination are much greater if the victim’s relationship with her batterer closely mimics that which she already knows historically (Dobash & Dobash, 1998a). She’d have fewer resources – different spheres of interaction and strong convictions – upon which to draw. Any interaction at all, whether books or TV, memory, or a neighbor’s glance, would seem to increase the probability of a break in control, especially if ongoing battering forces the victim closer to conclusions that the violence is not reconcilable to any norm she knows and values.

Victims appear to have gathered power from sources outside their abusers’ spheres of influence and used that to claim some control over relationships with self and others. It is almost impossible to do in complete isolation, something an abuser seems to intuitively understand. It seems that it was the words, artifacts, and memories of *other people* that were the sources of our agency – since we were wound up in a power relationship in which our agency was suppressed, we needed other people and/or

institutions that were outside that relationship. If having like-minded people present was necessary, it seems that it had much to do with protection and affirmation while a person is pulling herself out of and in some ways opposing the main stream.

This analysis of power usage follows fairly well along with the third Habermasian contextual level I described earlier. The medium of interaction seems to have been woven using the network of forces created by interactions between batterer and victim at the first and second contextual levels. For a while I wondered if I even needed the third contextual level, as I could probably describe with some proficiency specific interactions at the first and second levels which helped to minimize significant interactions with others. Power as steering medium, however, seems to best describe the indirect nature of power used to minimize or direct interactions of the victim with larger social contexts.

The power medium also seems to serve as a way to prevent communicative interaction between the batterer and his victim. A good example is silencing. I was silenced by silence itself, by shouting, vicious verbal cuts, and physical battering. Wanda was silenced by several things. She saw herself as non-confrontational, which largely ruled out one possible method of communication. She was also silenced by threats to herself and children, as well as her near-constant focus of attention on Raymond. Maryann was silenced by verbal and physical means. If the study participants were silenced, we would not have been able to speak up regarding equity in interpersonal interaction or about the rules of engagement within our small sphere of interaction. If communicative interaction was not an objective of a batterer, then it seems that somehow he needed to keep his victim from communicating on her own initiative or with an agenda of her own.

Much of this weaving of the power medium occurred at the second contextual level of direct verbal interaction, although it contributed to the third and was backed by the first, direct application of force. It seems that it was necessary to have some communications from the victims, however allowable types of communication from the victim was written into the set of rules that constituted the steering medium – one example is communication that indicates compliance. In my own case, for example, my husband asked if I was going to “stop being such a bitch.” Clearly there was only one right answer, and it was an answer that would have further cemented our positions and the rules for engagement between us. Being a “bitch” meant opposing him and trying to change the conditions of silence to which I was subject. The main kind of communication that the batterers discouraged was communication with relatively equal power between principals.

While this analysis seems to fit reasonably well into the theoretical framework, it seems to me to lack dynamism. There is insufficient subtlety to the descriptions of power interactions and various forces present. While I was influenced by works that dealt with Foucault (e.g. Hennessey, 1993 and Fairclough, 1992, among many others), I believe that this work would benefit in terms of nuance and dynamism from a deliberate injection of Foucauldian power analysis within the contextual levels of power that I described. I should note, however, that within Mezirow’s transformation theory this discussion could not have taken place at all; he provided no mechanism for discussions of the influence of power on learning (Hart, 1992).

Again I should underscore the opportunistic nature of these battering relationships. Much of the interaction was ordinary or about ordinary things. I suspect

that this ordinariness may be part of the difficulty inherent in learning new ways to think and relate to other people after leaving the battering relationship, and may be related to the reasons why so many women move into a cycle of battering relationships. The literature is replete with references to generational domestic violence and has been for several decades (e.g. Pizzey, 1978). I suspect too that the ordinariness factor is part of what masks the severity and importance of domestically violent relationships.

If batterers isolated their victims to the degree possible, controlled the medium of interaction within a very small household sphere, and tried to monopolize power within the sphere, then it seems that the removal of the batterer would have an interesting effect. Upon our leaving the batterers or having them removed, many of the power relations and structures that ruled our daily lives were also removed. This seems to have created a certain level of chaos, and/or a power vacuum. We needed to move in spheres of interaction that we hadn't had access to before and could not necessarily move well in. Those spheres of interaction included smaller ones, such as family and friends; larger ones such as institutions; and the conglomeration that makes up our social system. It would also include, to some extent, the relationship of the victim to herself. I described this vacuum and some of its effects earlier, but it is a good time to return to it and point out another effect.

I found that each of the participants found a long-term source of identity, energy, and strength external to herself, and suggest that this was an intuitive answer to problems with identity processes that were reeling. In Wanda's case it was her church; in Maryann's case it was education and the search/work with parents of kidnapped children, and in my own case it was graduate school. We each connected to a place where we were

validated and perhaps even cherished, then stuck with it for at least a year as shown through the end of the narratives (although in each case the actual time period was at least 3 years). This effect is consistent with the work of Jack Mezirow, who suggested that people dealing with disorienting dilemmas find people or groups to stabilize them and whose beliefs they can then adopt.

We began or resumed more communicative interaction (interactions with authentic dialogue and less obviously asymmetrical power relations) with people and engaged more directly and freely with diverse social spheres of interaction. While we found long-term sources of external identification, perhaps I should note that those sources were ones that allowed or encouraged us to find meaning ourselves. It would be foolish to say that their perspectives didn't become part of our own – when we consider my social justice orientation as an example that seems ridiculous. But they didn't claim our identities for themselves.

Representation.

As I approached the end of this task, I looked at my research questions, questions that have haunted me, written in blue and green marker over a year ago and taped to the window shade in front of my desk. They were written on lined paper, but the lines have faded now. The first question is, *What representations do women survivors offer of their domestic violence experiences?* I wondered if I'd answered it – were not the narratives the answer to the question? It is easy to forget in all the writing and rush to even ask. The stories seem to be only part of the answer. They contain descriptions of thoughts and deeds and interactions. I thought, *What stories were Maryann and Wanda trying to tell me, and did I hear them? What story was I trying to tell?*

Our representations of our experiences were in some ways very different, although they contained similar elements. Each of us presented ourselves thematically, positioning ourselves relative to our situations. Maryann's theme, I believe, was victimhood and trauma. Her story, to me, is the story of a woman struggling to survive, fight objectification and find agency in spite of events that constantly threatened to overwhelm her. The story she tells is about pursuing her agency and being even though people and social institutions mostly failed or betrayed her.

The story Wanda was trying to tell did not reach out and grab me and shake me, demanding to be recognized in the way the other two did. It seemed much more subtle, and she seems to have found a different sort of resolution than Maryann or me. Wanda's story is an almost melancholic tale about a desire for happiness, for peace, to be recognized and loved for her own sake. While Wanda has friends and family whom she cares for, it is God who recognizes and loves Wanda for her own sake, asking little in return – much as Wanda has long done herself for others.

My narrative was the story of working out what sort of person to be and how to be that person. It was especially difficult for me, because the person I wanted to be and the person I thought I ought to be were so dramatically different. My story is written at two levels, however, because this dissertation is itself a part of my representation. I wanted to understand my struggles and find out if they bore any resemblance to the struggles of other women in a similar situation. I was fascinated by what I experienced and wanted to show it to other people, to share it with others if it could be made useful. My story was not only a story of coming to be, but also of how I believed it happened.

Conclusions

This chapter has been devoted to analysis of a process of identity formation in battered women and its relationship to social discourses of domestic violence, which were my second and third research questions. Included in that analysis was an examination of the role of social discourses, which is the third research question. We shaped identity through many, varied learning processes that seem to have been extraordinarily complex in form and relationship.

On the more individual level, much of the story appears to be empowerment through resistance and struggle. I saw this at three points: a willingness to escalate confrontations in an effort to alter the balance of power in the household sphere of interaction, retaining and strengthening relations to some external identities and discourses and using them to help break out of the sphere of interaction, and empowerment through direct struggle with daily activities even when we were not always successful. On the social level, we struggled for significant interaction with people and institutions that allowed us to circumvent the weave of power that surrounded us in our battering relationships.

We demonstrated a great deal of shifting in our relationships to common discourses, with a general progression toward more positive views of ourselves and our abilities. That progression included a move away from beliefs and attitudes ingrained since childhood. We had to reject some cultural beliefs, and in a few cases changed the discourses we accessed completely. I should note that there appears to have been plenty of room for shift without completely changing discourses in almost all cases. It seems, then, that only occasionally was a discourse completely untenable for us. In most cases, it was the relationships we formed with the discourse that were key. Undeniably, however, participant representations were wrapped up in cultural discourses.

In a larger social sense, we expanded our awareness of social groups and discourses due to marginalization, which occurred at immediate as well as impersonal institutional levels. We did so basically in self-defense, as we were blindsided by blaming and denial reactions instead of the help we had expected. Our awareness of social groups developed partly because of a power vacuum that occurred upon separation. It had a destabilizing effect, which we ameliorated partly by clinging for an extended time period to external groups that allowed us space for our struggles. These same groups provided us with access to experiences and new discourses.

I found that “cultural discourses of domestic violence” I’d named in my original research question, that were so central to our representations and identity changes, were rather difficult to pin down because I did not clearly specify which discourses of domestic violence. I originally meant discourses I found in the literature that were directly related to domestic violence, such as those written about by Horsman, Dobash & Dobash, or even Straus & Gelles. However, I found that some of the normal social discourses with which we were raised and that were most relevant to our battering situations were ones that were not, strictly speaking, supposed to be about domestic violence at all.

Critique of the Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework I used was made of an identity construct of my own and the transformation theory of Jack Mezirow. We started with similar ideas. I used his work in parallel to my own.

The sense of self, which I defined as “the process of her own interpretation and reconstruction of her body and history, as mediated through the cultural discursive context to which she has access,” was a stable and useful part of the identity construct. I

was able to use discourses to describe aspects of the sense of self, and the position relative to the discourses to help determine how we were interpreting aspects of our identities at a given point and time. While it hadn't been in my original plan, I was also able to make visible areas of identity that did not change and sites of ambivalence. I was able to make visible significant interactions and struggles that occurred internally, with stereotypes, and with other people. The construct was not particularly useful for identifying types of changes in relationships with discourses. I also did not deal with the time spans involved with changes in relationships.

The sense of social was a solid idea but did not come as much into play as I would have liked. Much of that may have been that we really did not have strong senses of social. It may also have been the relative newness of the idea to me. It served well to locate us inextricably in a social context and to help identify some of the different areas of social interaction and awareness. The spheres of interaction were good but I did not examine them far beyond the immediate household and smaller social groupings. Marginalization seems to have been a key to the sense of social developing, and it might be appropriate to name that as an area of development – using the work, for example, of postcolonialist feminists to explore this idea.

Learning and power were both instrumental to the process, woven throughout the work. I used the learning idea to identify sites of struggle and interaction and to pinpoint the direction of change in relationships with self and others where I could. I did not really describe different types of learning, however, or examine how different types of learning might result in different directional shifts. Nor did I address the significance of interactions and the impact they had on learning. I had only a general process. I think that

the construct did very well in making visible and addressing issues of power. The power aspect seems to be targeted to a particular context, and may not necessarily be readily adapted to other contexts. It did, however, lack some subtlety and nuance that I think could have made the analysis much richer. Forms of agency became very clear in the analysis as well.

The construct was well suited to interpretive ethnography, as it worked in a very focused way from the perspectives of the study participants. A final note is that the construct looks really good in its theoretical form and was extraordinarily useful. It was, however, very complex and difficult to use with data, and in fact was somewhat intimidating.

Using the identity construct together with transformation theory worked remarkably well. I was able to gain insight into each through the other. While my use of Mezirow's work largely supported existing critiques, I was able to understand his work in a grounded way. I was frequently able to see changes in habits of mind and occasionally able to see changes in frames of reference. Mezirow did not theorize the learner, contextualize the learning, provided no way to address issues of power and was emotionally truncated – all findings that supported existing critiques.

I found that Mezirow made no connection between domains of learning (technical, practical, emancipatory), choosing to focus solely on the emancipatory domain. He did not consider the possibility of emancipatory learning taking place in the other domains, and there was evidence to suggest that this could happen. His work also failed to address the impacts of habits of mind or frames of reference that might not change or be ambivalent, and the significance of these as sites of struggle.

I did find his work most useful in looking at the development of the sense of social. The most significant developments I saw in that area happened through critically reflective processes that resemble transformative learning or conscientization. With a more inclusive, less technical-rational notion of critical reflection, transformative learning might be very useful in that area. In an amusing contradiction, development in the sense of social also included a feeling of social responsibility which demanded action and would lend itself quite well to social action. This might be the potential that Mezirow's critics saw, and what he himself denied.

Chapter 6: Ending Matters: Comments, Implications, and Recommendations

This chapter addresses a few final matters, including comments on the method, limitations of the study, some implications for practice, and areas for future research.

Visible and Vulnerable: Comments on the Method

This study could not exist if it were not for my own domestic violence experience. It was shaped by that experience and what I learned (and continue to learn) as a result. Therefore, any pretense that I was “outside” the study would have been a deception of the highest order. The researcher in interpretive ethnography is as visible as the participants. Any embarrassment or shame associated with exhibiting such “private” or “personal” stories does not, as far as I’m concerned, attach itself to us. It belongs to those who are embarrassed for us, who are uncomfortable and want us to move on as quickly as possible, who refuse to engage the social issue of domestic violence to any significant degree.

Visibility does beget vulnerability, as many ethnographers have shown (Behar, 1996; Ellis, 1995). The vulnerability is not simply in being visible in the text. Vulnerability also comes from taking sides, aligning myself openly with a particular moral and political position. Interpretive ethnographies make no pretense of being value-neutral; they are concerned with communication and power and exploring moral and ethical questions (Bertram, 1998; Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 741). They are critical, but operate within a politics of hope. In short, I have taken sides on a contentious social issue. I was not raised to take strong sides on political issues – politics were for other people, and we who were relatively powerless were at best armchair critics. To take even

this much action moves me into territory I have not occupied before. It sounds grand and it worked well for me, but it still felt dangerous.

Interpretive ethnography is an activist approach to research. Denzin (1999, p. 512) points out that a moral ethnographer looks for moments when people resist oppression and structural inequality, grapple with the forces in their lives and attempt to gain greater influence thereby. I used narratives for empowerment, working to reclaim stories for battered women that were generally interpreted from a discourse that marginalizes them. Our experiences were not simply tales; I tried to learn and write lessons that could be used for social criticism, individual and social change. I tried to use interpretive ethnography as social commentary, to challenge views and deeds in my readers; I certainly hope it made you uneasy in places, perhaps angry in some, and certainly allowed you to see yourself implicated from time to time. If so, I succeeded in using the particular, the individual, the personal to challenge the status quo: “[n]arrative as a political act, minimal ethnography with political teeth” (Denzin, 1999, p. 510).

The method allowed me to take a moral position, and it also allowed me to work as a fully functional human being. I was able to use words like compassion, love and hate, conduct criticism, use logic and experience joy – all overtly, without guilt or shame. It was empowering, contributing a layer of certainty that one could do serious, high-quality research without shunning such messy, traditionally un-academic terms. Another aspect that was more problematic was my extraordinary, although not unexpected, emotional involvement with the dissertation at all levels.

The identity construct was sufficient to help see and understand the interactions that took place, as well as some ways that they influenced identity shaping through time.

It needs further development – there are marvelous opportunities for more work with power, studies with other groups of people, a better grounding in social theory.

Limitations

I eventually found that there was only so much that I could do with one study, and identified some factors that bounded it. My data would have been much richer had I followed up more skillfully in the interviews, particularly those with Wanda. As I analyzed and wrote, I found over and over again that I could have probed further for detail in her stories.

A second limitation is that there were cultural axes of difference that I did not use in my analysis. This study was written about White women in a largely White (rural Pennsylvania, USA) environment. I did not, however, do a race analysis. There is a lot that could have been said about culture, race, and domestic violence that I did not touch upon in this study. White Privilege (Kincheloe, 2000), for example, could well have been a factor for each participant in our gaining the cooperation of police. Religion was another area that I did not deal with in depth during analysis. Maryann and Wanda were both members of a Christian church and I was not, although Wanda was the only one whose involvement with the church appeared to have any depth. That aside, we were all raised within a culturally Christian environment, and therefore the dissertation is oriented toward a Western, Judeo-Christian world-view. I did not do a class analysis, although I mentioned it and believe firmly that it was indeed a factor. I mentioned at the beginning of each person's personal background where we placed ourselves class-wise but did not pursue the matter beyond that to consider how class affected their experiences of domestic violence.

Collard & Law (1989), among others, note in their critique of perspective transformation that “Mezirow is unsure about where to locate his emancipatory theory” (1989, p. 105). While I do not claim to have laid out a theory, I do have to acknowledge that at this point I do not have any answers. I do not know what to say about how to emancipate people and do not at this point have prescriptions for social action. Given my orientation toward social justice, this is an issue and represents an avenue that I will need to explore in future work.

There are also problems inherent in bringing certain areas of theory together. I brought areas of theory together that are generally considered to be at odds, knowing that there were tensions between them. Poststructuralist feminist thought, for example, is not all that compatible with historical materialism. While that in and of itself is not a huge problem, I believe I would have to do much deeper readings of my theoretical foundation material.

Implications for Practice

I believe that an effective educational effort to help women leaving battering situations would have to address several key points. One of those is to make available long-term sources of identity support for battered women. Shelters work on a crisis model; their job is to provide a safe residence and the beginnings of education and/or counseling to help women move out of battering relationships. Some women need to move out to make space for incoming women seeking shelter. In general, shelters are not well-suited to providing woman with a long term identification and type of experience. I also suspect that the aura of crisis and distress endemic to shelters might be a bit too distressing to be healthy or productive for many battered women on an ongoing basis.

Most educational programs are also not suited to long-term identification. They start and end. A fairly long course might take several months; many that are available to needy people are very short, more in tune with resume writing workshops or budgeting seminars. One exception, as we saw in my data, was higher education. In that case it was less *what* people were studying than it was that the women had someplace to go, people to talk to, a source of experiences, and a certain level of responsibility. It is the only truly long-term (years) educational initiative that I know of that is readily available to many adults. It is not practical for all battered women; educational level and costs may be prohibitive, and there are also issues of childcare.

A second point that would need to be addressed is the availability of experiences. All of the study participants were involved with some activity, something that gave us purpose as well as possible different perspectives. The problem here is that not many battered women have leisure time; they have real problems of food, housing, and employment. Therefore, it seems that activity which involved paid work would be desirable. One example might be provision of some much-needed child care for people who cannot afford to pay that much.

A third is making available different ways to interpret old and new experiences. This is where the educational part of things comes through. The best mental model I had was a cross between Irene Baird's Freirean model of adult education for incarcerated women and the Highlander Folk School. Highlander provided education, but it didn't provide answers. Instead it helped people find useful information and a way to use their own experiences in their own interests. A program provided by a center member would be just as valuable as one created and designed by the institute itself.

I also had in mind a physical place to go, something like a YMCA or community center. Instead of a geographic community center, however, I am thinking of a center of community for people who suffered oppression – a Center for Abused Peoples if you will. The YMCA/YWCA model is not a bad one to work from, as it includes a physical place to go, people to call, programs to help with structure and with women getting a grip on themselves and their realities.

There are some unique issues that would need to be considered. For example, I believe that battered women learning how to be something other than battered women need some room to fail and make mistakes. Many of our educational and employment models are not at all forgiving of failing too much for too long. Often women get a few months of latitude, and then are expected to behave as if battering experiences had never happened. It seems evident that the process of learning to be something other than battered women developed over the course of a year and arguably well beyond. We did a lot of messing up and if that holds true across women, which seems likely, there must be considerable latitude.

There are practical problems such as funding and special problems unique to this population. For example, we would be dealing with batterers and/or stalkers. There would be real danger. We would almost certainly have to use security of some type and deal with harassing phone calls. It is possible that women we knew would be killed, which would create its own set of problems.

No educational model that I know of provides this type of service for its own sake. It is a sort of second-stage intervention that bears further investigation on my part.

There is a great deal at stake with this population; further empirical and theoretical research is needed to move responsibly toward that goal.

Areas for Future Research

Further research should be done on learning identity with battered women – a single, small study such as this offers only a beginning. This identity construct has not been used yet by or for populations other than marginalized white women, although I believe the identity construct would be a good tool to adapt for use with a variety of marginalized populations. A concern for theory such as this is leaping into the educational activity too soon, which could be disastrous with at-risk groups.

The sense of social described in this paper bears further development, particularly using the work of groups that identifiably have a strong sense of social. One group is people who live along marginalized axes of difference, for example postcolonialist feminists like Gloria Anzaldua (1987) and Uma Narayan (1997). The learning identity construct as a whole would benefit from further reading of broader identity literatures. It is in its infancy and would benefit from extensive empirical research from a variety of traditions. The construct is well suited to research with marginalized populations, yet can readily offer insight into mainstream social identities as well.

Significant exploration needs to be done in researching and developing theory in the area of learning and power. While we have long understood that learning relationships are power relationships, educators and learning theorists have focused on positive aspects for the most part. More problematic negative aspects must be examined and a better, more holistic understanding of learning and power developed.

The identity construct was deliberately made so that it could allow for exploration of power in learning for individuals and groups. It was not intended to be individualistic, although there is only a placeholder for group identity. I have not explored that aspect of the construct at all.

This study is interpretive ethnography: working at the intersection of biography and culture as seen from the perspective of the interacting individual. Collard and Law note the history of Mezirow's work and its roots in interactionism, then note that

In a provocative critique of interactionism, Fisher and Strauss (1978) claim that problematic areas in interactionism reflect "the liberal-conservative bind entailed by arguing the virtues of active, creative individuality and of secure, stable association" (p. 488). This is evident in the interactionist stance toward social change which looks to individual voluntarism and reformism, through limited collective action, as an evolutionary, moderate way of addressing problems of power and inequity. In our view, the notion of perspective developed by Becker et al. (1968) and adopted by Mezirow et al. (1975) incorporates these assumptions about human beings, social relations, and social possibilities. (1989, p. 102)

In essence, Collard and Law are arguing that a voluntary, "trickle-up" approach to social change is insufficient. If I were to further develop my work on learning identity without an eye toward social change or larger social groupings, it would be all too easy to become the subject of similar critique.

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Frostburg State University	1994
B.S., College of Liberal Arts and Sciences Major: History	
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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

- Hart, M., Brigham, S., Gouthro, P., Nash, H., & Alfred, M. (In Press).
Symposium: The Ambiguities of Home: The Shifting Meanings of Learning Across Spaces, Places, and Identities. *Proceedings of the 43rd Annual Adult Education Research Conference*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia.
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HONORS AND DISTINCTIONS

Rose Drexel Award in Education	2003-2004
Robert Graham Endowed Graduate Fellowship	2002-2003
Fischer Fellowship in Adult Education	2001-2002
Graduated with University Honors, Frostburg State University	1994
Frostburg State University Merit Scholarship	1990-1994
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