HE LOVES ME; HE LOVES ME NOT:
ATTACHMENT AND SEPARATION RESOLUTION OF ABUSED WOMEN

by

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He Loves Me; He Loves Me Not: Attachment and Separation Resolution of Abused Women

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Abstract

Working within an attachment perspective, I examined women's success at emotional separation from abusive partners. The attachment patterns of 63 abused women were assessed shortly after having left their abusive relationships. Six months later, their psychological adjustment, and their perceptions, feelings, and behaviours regarding the separation were assessed. As expected, attachment patterns associated with a negative self model (fearful and preoccupied) were over-represented. Further, preoccupation was associated with more frequent previous separations from the abusive relationship, lower self-esteem, greater trauma, lower overall adjustment, and continuing emotional involvement with partners after separation. These findings suggest that preoccupation may be a risk factor in successful separation resolution from abusive relationships. Results are discussed in terms of attachment and traumatic bonding theory.

Acknowledgments

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> There is this poem...When I read it I thought...that's why I stayed.
>
> There is a man in a cell and he reaches for this bar because he is in total darkness and if he tilts his head just so, he can see some light. So he just hangs on to this bar in desperation. And he's hanging on and fighting so hard just to get this bit of light that he doesn't realize that the cell door is open, and it's always been open. I think I was hanging on in desperation and hope that it would get better...But I could never see it getting any better (Subject No. 052).

The professional and lay communities have exhausted countless hours and resources trying to answer the question of why women stay with partners who repeatedly abuse them, both emotionally and physically. Why is it that these women, like the woman in the quotation above, fail to see that the cell door is open, and has always been open? The question rests on the reasonable assumption that once having been badly beaten an individual would seek to avoid being beaten again. But as Gelles (1987) notes, "unfortunately, the answer to why women remain with their abusive husbands is not nearly as simple as the assumption that underlies the question" (p.108).

A major factor is that there are many external variables contributing to the perception that the cell door is not always open. Cultural norms that still accept violence as a private affair between "consenting" adults or hold the woman responsible for not keeping the relationship running smoothly, combined with an unsympathetic justice system and scarce economic resources, make the task of leaving an abusive relationship an

insurmountable one for many women (Gelles, 1987, Strube, 1988). In a study addressing this question Gelles (1987) comments,

> Even though 75% of the women who had been struck had tried to get outside help, the end result of this intervention was not totally satisfactory. The outlook for women who are physically beaten and injured by their husbands is not good. For those who have few resources, no job, and no idea of how to get help, the picture is grim. But even the women who have the resources and desire to seek outside help often find this help of little benefit (p.121).

In trying to solve the question of why women stay in abusive relationships, somewhat consistent findings have emerged from research focusing on external factors such as a woman's particular job skills, employability, social class, and number of dependents (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982; Pagelow, 1981; Rounsaville, 1978; Strube, 1988). For example, in a study interviewing the members of families in which domestic violence had occurred and a comparison group of neighbouring families, Gelles (1987) identified three major factors which affected a woman's decision to stay with an abusive husband rather than seek intervention. A woman was more likely to stay with her assailant when the violence was less severe and less frequent, when she had been victimized by her parents as a child, and when she had not completed high school and was unemployed. Gelles concluded that fewer resources equate to less power for women, leading to entrapment in their marriages, and a decreased likelihood that they will seek outside intervention.

Similar findings emerged in a review article by Strube (1988). Factors related to women's decisions to remain with abusive partners included a woman's personal investment in the relationship (relationship length, marital status, and commitment), a lack of economic resources to establish an independent lifestyle, and less severe and less frequent abuse. Contrary to Gelles findings, Strube reported that women who remained in abusive relationships were less likely to report having been victims of abuse as children.

However, research has not consistently found that economic and social factors are central to women's decisions to leave abusive partners. For example, Rounsaville (1978) found that the availability of outside resources (fewer dependents, higher paying jobs, higher socioeconomic status) did not discriminate those women who left their partners from those who did not. Rather, circumstances related to the relationship (such as severe abuse, fear of being killed, and/or learning that the husband was also abusing the children) were more predictive of women's decisions to leave. "When these circumstances prevailed, it did not seem to matter whether there were adequate resources or not. Given sufficient motivation, women even with few resources found a way to leave" (p.17).

To further investigate the question of whether women stay in abusive relationships primarily because of inadequate resources, Sullivan and Davidson (1991) conducted a longitudinal intervention study. Transition house women who received one-on-one training in accessing needed community resources (such as employment, finances, child care, and social support) were compared with a control group of abused women who received no additional post-shelter services. At a ten-week follow-up, women working with advocates reported greater self-perceived effectiveness in accessing needed resources. Sixty-four percent of the intervention group thought that the programme had been instrumental in helping them to remain abuse free, and only one woman said that it had not been at all helpful in this regard. However, due to the low numbers of women who actually returned to their abusive partners within the ten weeks, researchers were not able to find significant differences between the control and intervention groups in their experiences of further abuse. The researchers highlight the importance of longer term follow-up to examine whether programmes such as these can prove beneficial in keeping these women from returning to their assailants. What the study does not tell us, however, is whether differences between intervention and control groups are due to the training and services the advocate provided or simply to the presence of a supportive person.

Strube (1988) recounts many of the methodological weaknesses in the abuse literature that may account for some of the inconsistencies in these studies. He notes that samples which are highly selective, compounded by difficulties of conducting longitudinal research due to high attrition rates, and the reliance on self-report and retrospective accounts, make causal attributions ambiguous and representativeness unknown (Strube, 1988).

It appears there has been less research focus on possible psychological variables that may help unravel some of these questions (cf. Gelles & Harrop, 1989). To push the original analogy further, research examining only external factors seems to be illuminating what allows abused women to feel that the cell door is open or closed. It does not tell us about the many women who stay when the cell door appears to us to be open, when they do have at least the economic resources to leave, nor about those who leave though the door appears to us to be firmly closed. It also does not tell us why, with similar resources, one woman will call the police after one aggressive gesture from her partner while another will suffer repeated violent beatings without so much as calling a neighbour.

Some researchers have postulated that women with abusive partners commonly experience "psychological entrapment" where individuals escalate their commitment to a previous, though now failing, course of action in order to justify the time, effort, and emotional involvement that they have already invested (Brockner & Rubin, 1985). A few psychological variables have been identified that may moderate the magnitude of this entrapment such as self blame and self esteem (cf. Strube 1988).

The theory of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) has also been postulated as an explanation for why abused women have difficulty leaving abusive partners. This theory states that when individuals believe they have no control over an unpleasant environment, they lose all motivation to change or alleviate their situation. This theory has been challenged, however, by a study finding that abused women who were resigned to the fact

that the relationship was not going to change were more likely to leave the relationship than those who were not (Campbell, 1987).

In all, these theories and studies do not provide a comprehensive picture of psychological variables associated with abused women's decisions to stay or leave. The limited inquiry into this area may be due, in part, to the thorny issue of determining whether women's psychological distress preceded the violence or was a consequence of their victimization. There is a legitimate concern that a focus on psychological variables which may predispose women to being with violent partners could lead to the erroneous conclusion that they have asked for their victimization in some way. It is imperative that the demoralization, hopelessness, and depression that many abused women suffer should not be turned back on them as a means of excusing or justifying why they were battered (Gelles & Harrop, 1989). Attachment theory, however, is one paradigm which allows us to address the psychological component as both a potential antecedent and a consequence of abuse. In the present study, I will look at attachment patterns of women having recently left an abusive relationship to examine some of these potential psychological contributors. The goal is to examine how specific attachment patterns predict which women may be at greater risk for returning to their abusive relationships.

Attachment Theory

Attachment theory was first proposed by John Bowlby to explain the propensity of human beings to form strong affectional bonds as well as the emotional distress caused by separation and loss from particular others (Bowlby, 1979). He suggests that a behavioural attachment system is organized homeostatically, "with its own internal motivation distinct from feeding and sex, and of no less importance for survival" (Bowlby, 1988, p.27). Bowlby proposes that children internalize experiences with caretakers in such a way that attachment patterns are incorporated into the personality structure, forming internal working models, or mental representations, of the self and others (1973). A child's confidence that an attachment figure is likely to be accessible and responsive rests on two dimensions:

> Whether or not the attachment figure is judged to be the sort of person who in general responds to calls for support and protection; [and]...whether or not the self is judged to be the sort of person towards whom anyone, and the attachment figure in particular, is likely to respond in a helpful way...Logically these variables are independent. In practice they are apt to be confounded. As a result, the model of the attachment figure and the model of the self are likely to develop so as to be complimentary and mutually confirming (Bowlby, 1973, p. 204).

Though the caregiver-child relationship is formative in developing and maintaining these internal representations, mental models are based on relationship interactions throughout the life-span. Internal working models tend to gain their own momentum and guide the formation of later relationships outside the family. Thus, Bowlby's notion of continuity of relationship patterns is not simply a set of transferred responses from previous relationships. Nor are subsequent relationships continually constructed anew. Rather,

> Individuals select and shape each other in terms of the dispositions, inclinations, and expectancies brought from prior relationships...[They] tend not to combine these dispositions in random fashion, but to recreate aspects of relationship systems previously experienced (Sroufe & Fleeson 1986, p.53).

There have been a number of research approaches addressing the question of how these internal working models may operate in adulthood. Main (Main & Goldwyn, 1988; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985) developed the Adult Attachment Interview (AAI) to categorize parents into three attachment groups corresponding to the three infant attachment styles initially proposed by Ainsworth and her associates (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall 1978). Main et al. (1985) found an association between caregivers' recollections of

their childhood experiences, as assessed in the AAI, and the quality of their present relationships with their own children.

A second research perspective, initiated by Hazan and Shaver (1987), has focused on the question of how internal working models may affect the quality of adult peer relationships (see also Collins & Read, 1990; Feeney & Noller, 1990; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Kobak & Hazan, 1991; Simpson, 1990). Using a self-report measure of attachment, Hazan and Shaver (1987) found that attachment patterns paralleling Ainsworth's original classifications of infant attachment (secure, avoidant, and ambivalent) also emerged in adult romantic relationships. This suggested there may be a parallel between affectional bonds that are formed between adults and affectional bonds formed between children and their caregivers. These researchers also found that subjects reporting different attachment patterns indicated different kinds of love experiences, and entertained different beliefs about the course of romantic love, the availability and trustworthiness of partners, and their own self-worth. As Hazan and Shaver (1987) comment, "experience affects beliefs about self and others and these beliefs in turn affect behavior and relationship outcomes" (p. 522).

Attachments are proposed to be hierarchically arranged, with the primary attachment figure ranked in the uppermost position. Parents tend to be permanent members of the hierarchy, though their positions shift as the child matures. Throughout development, changes occur in the content and structure of an individual's attachment hierarchy, precipitating a shift from asymmetric complimentary attachments (such as the infant-caregiver relationship) to more symmetric or reciprocal relationships, that are common to adult romantic attachment relationships. Bowlby hypothesized that when lasting pair bonds form in adulthood, the sexual partner ascends to the top of the hierarchy and assumes the position of the primary attachment figure. To address the question of how this transfer from complimentary to reciprocal attachments takes place, Hazan and Zeifman (1994) conducted a study with children and adolescents 6 to 17 years and a second study with

adults 18 to 82 years asking them about the nature of their important relationships. These researchers found that attachments appear to be transferred component by component beginning with proximity seeking (approaching and staying near the attachment figure), followed by safe haven (turning to the attachment figure for comfort, support, and reassurance), separation protest (resisting and showing distress at separations from the attachment figure), and finally secure base (using the attachment figure as a base from which to engage in non-attachment behaviours). The first completely reciprocal peer attachments, those that contain all four components, are attachment relationships with romantic partners. Hazan and Zeifman (1994) conclude that "the establishment of a fully-developed attachment in infancy and childhood, the endpoint of complementary attachments to parents, may be the starting point of the process of reciprocal (peer) attachment formation" (p.164).

To assess the quality of adult attachment relationships, Bartholomew has used Bowlby's two dimensions of positivity of self and positivity of hypothetical others to construct and validate a four-category model of attachment (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Griffin & Bartholomew, in press). The positivity of the self dimension indicates the degree to which individuals have an internalized sense of their own self-worth. Thus individuals with a positive self dimension will be self-confident, rather than anxious in close relationships. The positivity of other dimension refers to the degree to which others are seen to be supportive and trustworthy, thus contributing to an attitude in close relationships of seeking others out, rather than avoiding intimacy. Bartholomew has identified four prototypic attachment patterns in terms of the intersection of these two dimensions. The *fearful* pattern is characterized by a negative self and other model (high anxiety and high avoidance), and the *preoccupied* pattern is characterized by a negative self view and positive view of others (high anxiety and low avoidance). In contrast, a *secure* pattern is defined by both a positive view of self and other model (low anxiety and low

avoidance), and a *dismissing* pattern is defined by a positive view of self and a negative view of others (low anxiety and high avoidance).

Attachment as it Relates to Women in Abusive Relationships

How then can we understand the attachment system as it relates to abused women? Why do women have strong affectional bonds to their abusive partners? Attachment to an abusive partner becomes more readily understandable when one considers Bowlby's proposition that the strength of attachment bonds is unrelated to the quality of the attachment relationship (1973, 1980, 1982). Bowlby believed that strong bonds are formed in conditions of threat which activate the attachment system leading the threatened individual to seek proximity to an attachment figure. Research has shown that abused children are still attached to abusive caregivers, albeit insecurely (e.g., Browne & Saqui, 1988; Cicchetti & Barnett, 1992; Crittenden, 1984, 1988, 1992; Youngblade & Belsky, 1989).

Other researchers take Bowlby's claim one step further, proposing that the strength of attachment bonds *may be* related to the quality of attachment. They suggest that intermittently punitive treatment from an attachment figure actually enhances the strength of the attachment. Rajecki, Lamb, and Obsmacher (1978) reviewed the literature on maltreatment effects in non-human subjects and found evidence for increased infant attachment in situations of intermittent maltreatment in birds, dogs, and monkeys. Rajecki et al. noted that infant bonding to abusive parents would not be inhibited unless the abuse was persistent and consistently punitive, and an alternate attachment object existed. Seay, Alexander, and Harlow (1964), in a study examining infant monkey bonding to abusive surrogate mothers, noted that all infants persistently attached to their surrogate mothers regardless of neglect or extreme physical punishment (such as noxious air blasts, extruded brass spikes, and hurling the infant to the floor). Research has also shown that bonding is most powerful when the punishment occurs intermittently. Fischer (1955) found that

intermittently indulged and punished dogs showed significantly greater human orientation than a consistently indulged group. [1]

The formation of strong emotional attachments under conditions of maltreatment has also been documented with human subjects. For example, people taken hostage have subsequently shown positive feelings towards their captors (Bettelheim, 1943). Bettelheim described how some prisoners in Nazi prison camps attempted to emulate their torturers by sewing scraps of material together to imitate SS uniforms.

The notion that intermittent maltreatment enhances the strength of attachment bonds has been incorporated into a social-psychological theory of traumatic bonding (Dutton, 1988; Dutton & Painter 1981; Dutton & Painter, in press), offering a potential explanation of why women stay with and return to their assaulters. Based on an attachment perspective, traumatic bonding theory explains women's loyalty to their abusers and tenacity neither by intrinsic forces such as the woman's own personality, nor solely by an analysis of external factors such as socioeconomic variables. Dutton and Painter propose that a battered woman's strong attachment to her mate is linked to two particular features of abusive relationships that combine intrinsic and situational forces - namely, a power imbalance, and intermittency of abuse (1981, Dutton, 1988; Dutton & Painter, in press).

In unbalanced power relationships the dominated person's negative self-appraisal escalates, and she becomes increasingly less capable of functioning without her dominator. With her now magnified perceived reliance on him, her actual dependence on him is increased, thus making it less and less likely that she will leave the relationship. Correspondingly, the dominator develops an inflated perception of his own power which

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[1] These animal research studies have been included to provide a comprehensive review of the phenomenon of strong attachments forming to abusive caregivers. By citing this research it is not my intention to condone it. To the contrary, I feel it is crucial in our continuation of this research that we cease experiments with animals that we have determined would be unethical to conduct on human subjects.

exacerbates this self-feeding cycle of power asymmetry. Dutton and Painter (1981) comment,

> What may have been initially benign, even attractive, becomes ultimately destructive to positive self-regard. In the process, both persons...become welded together to maintain the psychological subsystem which fulfills the needs created in part by the power dynamic itself (p.148).

The second feature of traumatic bonding situations is that abuse generally occurs intermittently. Violent episodes are often countered with the onset of positive behaviours, described by Walker (1978) as the "contrition phase" of the abuse cycle, comprised of apologies, promises to change, and proclamations of love. This alternating situation of warm and affectionate periods, interspersed between punitive aversive stimuli, creates a well known learning theory paradigm known as intermittent reinforcement. It has been shown to be the one of the most effective learning models, producing persistent patterns of behaviour that are difficult to extinguish (Amsel, 1958; Harlow & Harlow, 1971; Scott, 1963; Seay, Alexander & Harlow, 1964). Intermittent abuse and power asymmetry then serve together to strengthen an emotional bond with the assaulter which interferes with a woman's ability to leave and remain out of an abusive relationship. As Dutton and Painter (in press) comment,

> The batterer becomes temporarily the fulfillment of [a woman's] hoped-for fantasy husband and at the same time, his improved behavior serves to reduce the aversive arousal he himself has created, while also providing reinforcement for his partner to stay in the relationship (p. 8).

The attachment process thus formed "is like an elastic band which stretches with time away from the abuser and subsequently 'snaps' the woman back" (Dutton & Painter, in press, p. 8). As the initial trauma subsides the traumatic bond emerges as an increasing focus on the "good-times" of the relationship followed by a dramatic shift in the woman's

belief about the relationship. This shift alters her memory for previous abusive episodes and distorts her perception of the likelihood of future abuse.

This theory was validated in a study by Dutton and Painter examining various psychological variables associated with spouse abuse. In a discriminant function analysis of the most attached and least attached abused women, Dutton and Painter (in press) found that both the intermittency and the amount of total physical abuse by their partners were significant contributors in discriminating between these two groups. Women were more attached to their partners when there was more abuse and the abuse was inconsistent.

Dutton and Painter's traumatic bonding theory incorporates the concept of attachment processes, but their research does not specifically examine individual differences in attachment that might make certain individuals particularly susceptible to less adaptive separation resolution. Bartholomew's attachment model (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991), based on the two dimensions of self and other representations, is constructive in helping us to unravel why it may be that some women stay in, and return to abusive relationships. For example, a women with a preoccupied attachment orientation (a negative self-model and a positive model of others) will be more likely to reconstruct situations throughout her relationship history that reaffirm her negative perception of herself and an idealized version of her partners. "The unfortunate consequence of the desperate...love style seen in the preoccupied individual is subsequent disappointment or even revictimization" (Alexander, 1992, p.189). Caught in this cyclical trap of seeing herself as unworthy of her idealized abusive partner, the possibilities for this individual to leave her relationship, particularly without the alternative of another relationship to turn to, become limited, if not impossible.

It was the goal of this study to examine, through an attachment paradigm, the psychological variables that were related to poor resolution of relationship separation, thus illustrating a psychological profile of women who are at higher risk of returning to their abusive partners.

Hypotheses

Descriptive

I expected that attachment patterns associated with a positive self-model (secure and dismissing) would be under-represented in this sample, and attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model (fearful and preoccupied) would be over-represented.

Though the positive self-model of the dismissing and secure prototypes would make both kinds of individuals unlikely to become involved or stay in abusive relationships, the contrary impulses of the dismissing pattern (i. e. a positive self-model, and negative other model) suggests that the dismissing individual may be even more unlikely than a secure person to remain in an abusive relationship. The dismissing individual is not only characterized by high self-confidence, but also a lack of investment in intimate relationships (Bartholomew, 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). This combination of high self confidence and limited investment may make dismissing individuals especially unlikely to maintain commitment in problematic relationships.

There is also a rationale for expecting attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model to be over-represented, both from a traumatic bonding and an attachment perspective. One of the key features of traumatic bonding theory, the asymmetrical power balance, suggests that the dominated person's negative self-model deteriorates further as she becomes increasingly dependent on her oppressor. Her feelings of low self-worth thus escalate in a cyclical power imbalance that deteriorates her feelings of worthiness as her oppressor's power increases, making it increasingly difficult for her to leave. Attachment theory sheds further light on this dynamic. As Bartholomew and other attachment researchers have suggested, the prototypical fearful or preoccupied individual operates with an internal working model of themselves as unworthy and undeserving of love. Thus, individuals with a negative self-model are more likely to see the abuse directed at them as justifiable, that they deserve it, and that perhaps they may be responsible for it in some

way. Without the inner resources to understand that they deserve more, these individuals are unlikely to readily leave an abusive relationship.

Literature examining the psychological variables associated with spouse abuse is consistent with these theoretical frameworks. Research shows that, in comparison with non-abused women, abused women have lower self-esteem (Burke, Stets, & Pirog-Good, 1988), less sexual assertiveness (Apt & Hurlbert, 1993), feel more controlled by outside forces, and have higher needs for approval and dependency (Frisch & MacKenzie, 1991). Attachment researchers have also found links between attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model and greater psychological distress. For example, fearful and preoccupied attachment patterns have been found to be negatively related to self-concept (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, Griffin & Bartholomew, in press), positively related to anxiety (Griffin & Bartholomew, in press), positively related to depression (Carnelly, Petromonica, & Jaffe, 1994), and positively related to measures of dependency (Bartholomew & Bartel, 1994). Though it is unknown whether these variables are antecedents or consequences of the abusive relationship, we would, nevertheless, expect these variables to be concurrently associated with a negative self-model.

Relationship Variables and Security of Attachment

I will look at the associations between attachment patterns and a group of relationship variables describing the nature of the relationship (length of the relationship, number of previous separations from the current relationship, receipt of physical and psychological abuse, and intermittency of abuse).

Researchers have found that secure individuals report higher satisfaction and cohesion in their relationships and lower levels of conflict (Collins & Read, 1990; Koback & Hazan, 1991; Kirkpatrick & Davis, 1994; Mayseless, 1991; Pistole, 1989). They are also more likely to use compromising and integrating conflict resolution strategies and less likely to engage in negative conflict (Pistole, 1989). Therefore, I predicted that higher security ratings would be associated with less severe and less frequent physical abuse (both

receipt and infliction), less receipt of psychological abuse, and lower intermittency of abuse scores.

Relationship Variables and Insecure Attachment Patterns

Because of the dismissing individual's positive self-model, I expected the dismissing attachment pattern, as the secure, to be associated with less severe and less frequent physical abuse (both receipt and infliction), less receipt of psychological abuse, and lower intermittency of abuse scores. Further, due to the dismissing individual's tendency toward lack of involvement in intimate relationships, I expected dismissingness to be related to shorter relationship length. I did not hypothesize any association between dismissingness and the number of previous separations.

I also predicted particular outcomes for the preoccupied and fearful attachment patterns. First, I expected that preoccupation would be positively related to intermittency of abuse since preoccupied patterns in childhood attachment have been shown to be related to inconsistent parenting. Avoidant patterns, conversely, are most often related to rejecting parenting styles (Ainsworth, 1982; Crittenden & Ainsworth, 1989).

I also expected that preoccupation would be related to difficulties in making a clean break from the relationship. Individuals with a preoccupied attachment pattern are characterized by compulsive caregiving and partner idealization (Bartholomew 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Kunce & Shaver, 1994), and thus potentially greater difficulty in extricating themselves from destructive relationships. The conflicted, self-centred, needy, and angry preoccupied individual would not be likely to stay in an abusive relationship for a long duration, and may be likely to have numerous reconciliations throughout her leave taking process. Thus, I predicted that preoccupation would be related to shorter relationship length and to more previous separations from the current relationship because of the preoccupied individual's unrealistic optimism about her partner's ability to change, and her own ability to influence that change. A prototypical fearful individual, on the other hand, with an avoidance rather than an approach orientation, may be less likely to

return to an abusive relationship because she would not necessarily idealize her partner, nor be moved to adopt a compulsive caretaking role to influence relationship change. Therefore, I hypothesized that fearfulness would be related to longer relationship length, and negatively related to the number of previous relationship separations.

It is possible that preoccupied women may use leaving as a strategy to induce changes in the relationship whereas fearful women may leave solely to end the relationship. This hypothesis is consistent with Smith and Chalmers' (1984) findings that multiple leavers have as their primary objective a desire to stop the violence whereas single leavers have as their aim a re-evaluation of the relationship or a desire to establish their own residence.

Resolution of Separation and Security of Attachment

I expected that attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model (fearful and preoccupied) would be associated with difficulty in coming to terms with the separation, thus indicating patterns that may be at higher risk for returning to abusive relationships. Attachment patterns associated with the positive self-model dimension (secure and dismissing) should thus be related to scores indicative of a more adaptive separation resolution.

To examine resolution of separation, attachment ratings were related to two groups of variables. The first concerns the psychological well-being of these women six months after the separation. Included here are self-report measures of self-esteem, trauma symptoms, and relative life satisfaction. The second group of variables, also measured at the six-month follow-up, concerns women's thoughts, feelings, perceptions and behaviours concerning their partners and the recent separation. Included are self-report measures of their continuing emotional involvement with their former partner, the possibilities of potential reconciliation, and the degree of contact (including sexual contact) they had with their partners during the last six months.

Specifically, I hypothesized that attachment security would be related to greater psychological well-being (i.e., higher self-esteem, lower trauma symptoms, and greater relative life satisfaction) and more adaptive separation (lower scores on continuing emotional involvement, less desire for reconciliation, and less partner contact - both social and sexual).

Resolution of Separation for Insecure Patterns

Because I expected low mean ratings and little variability on the dismissing scale, I did not make specific predictions for the dismissing pattern with outcome variables. In addition, to the degree that some women will have dismissing tendencies, it is difficult to predict how this would effect their separation resolution. It may be that the negative model of other, characteristic of the dismissing prototype, would enable these individuals to separate from their partners more readily and more completely. However, it could also be argued that the repressed and defended coping style of the dismissing individual could make these individuals particularly vulnerable to dealing with an extreme trauma such as partner separation (Bartholomew, 1990). Thus, if relationships do emerge between dismissingness and outcome variables, it is difficult to predict the direction of these relationships. I did, however, expect particular profiles to emerge for the preoccupied and fearful patterns.

The fearful and preoccupied attachment patterns differ in terms of the valence of the other model, which has implications for how these two patterns might be expected to correlate with experiences of separation resolution in abusive relationships. Research indicates that the prototypic preoccupied individual, with a positive view of others, is approach oriented, active, expressive, caregiving, and idealizing about his or her romantic relationships. The internal working model of the preoccupied individual is based upon an uncertainty that the caregiver will be predictably available, responsive, and sensitive when called upon. Preoccupied individuals are familiar with a parenting style that involves partial or inconsistent reinforcement of attachment needs, where separations or threats of

abandonment are used as a means of control (Mayseless, 1991). Because of this low predictability, the preoccupied individual experiences high separation anxiety and displays both a suffocating neediness and angry protest behaviour towards the attachment figure, often simultaneously (hence the term "ambivalent" which has also been used to describe this attachment pattern). This internal representation of an attachment figure who is sometimes available, and sometimes not, may make the process of separation especially difficult for the preoccupied woman in an abusive relationship. She may be less likely to see the relationship as truly over, since low predictability, inconsistency, and threat of abandonment have played such an integral role in her internal working model of relationships. Perhaps it is the inconsistency, or intermittency, of abuse in the current relationship that reaffirms her internal working models and keeps the preoccupied woman emotionally involved even after she has left the relationship.

In contrast, fearful subjects, characterized by a negative view of others and an avoidance rather than approach orientation, are shy, withdrawn, non-disclosing, and low idealizers (Bartholomew, 1990, 1993; Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991). Fearful individuals, with an internal working model based on caregiving that is consistently and predictably punitive, hostile, and rejecting have little confidence that their cries for help will meet a helpful response. Rather, they expect to be rebuffed, and often try to become more emotionally self-sufficient. An internal representation of others as constantly rejecting may make the fearful woman at lower risk than the preoccupied woman for returning to an abusive relationship as she holds no idealized belief that things could change for the better.

Thus, I expected that the degree of preoccupation would be positively associated with continuing emotional involvement with partners, with wanting to return to the relationship, and greater partner contact (both social and sexual) throughout the six month period . The degree of fearfulness would be negatively related to continuing emotional involvement, to the desire to return, and to partner contact.

Secondary Analyses

It is worth noting that though attachment theory may help to explain the kinds of attachment experiences that are associated with women who may be more vulnerable to returning to abusive relationships, this is not to suggest that external factors such as social and economic resources are irrelevant. In a series of secondary analyses, I examined how two sets of external variables (social or counselling support, and economic resources) were associated with women's attachment patterns and separation resolution.

Counselling support. In this sample, only 6% of the women had returned to their partners in the six month period, an uncharacteristically low return rate, where return rates ranging from 22% to 78% are the norm for a similar time frame (e. g., Gelles, 1987; Neilson, Eberle, Thoennes, & Walker, 1978, cited in Dutton, 1988). Perhaps these women were able to stay out of their abusive relationships because of some therapeutic intervention that they had experienced during the six month period. I wanted to determine whether the associations I might find between the fearful and preoccupied patterns and separation resolution (specifically the hypotheses concerning preoccupation and poorer psychological adjustment) would still hold when counselling support was held constant. It is possible that these associations could be explained by the counselling support received, or the perceived effectiveness of that support. For example, perhaps preoccupied women might look less well adjusted because in spite of their efforts to seek help, they have not found that help to be effective and are therefore not benefiting from the social support available to them. Thus it may be that a lack of useful support is mediating the relationship between preoccupation and psychological distress.

I was also curious to discover if attachment patterns (specifically fearfulness and preoccupation) were related to the degree of help sought and the perceived effectiveness of that help. I expected that preoccupation would be positively related to the degree of counselling support sought, but negatively related to perceived effectiveness. This is consistent with prototypical preoccupied individuals' approach orientation and their feelings

of dissatisfaction that others cannot give them what they need. Conversely, I expected fearfulness to be negatively related to the degree of counselling sought, since fearfulness is characterized by low proximity seeking and a tendency to deal with problems on one's own. I did not hypothesize a relationship with fearfulness and counselling effectiveness.

Economic support. Consistent with the prototypical secure individual's adaptive and resourceful style (Hazan & Shaver, 1990), I hypothesized that security would be positively related to employment and income and negatively related to needing to return to the relationship because of money. I made no specific hypotheses for the insecure patterns.

I also expected that those who were in a more stable financial situation would suffer less psychological distress (e.g., Hackler, 1991). Specifically, I hypothesized that employment and income would be positively related to self-esteem, satisfaction, and overall adjustment, and negatively related to trauma symptoms. Needing to return because of money would be negatively related to self-esteem, satisfaction, and overall adjustment, and positively related to trauma symptoms. I also expected that greater financial need would precipitate greater emotional involvement with the partner and more difficulty negotiating the separation. Specifically, I expected that employment and income would be negatively related to emotional involvement, reconciliation, and contact, and that needing to return because of money would be positively associated with these variables.

Again, I also wanted to examine the relationship between insecure attachment patterns and separation resolution independent of economic resources. Would the hypothesized results still hold when economic variables were held constant?

Method

Overview

This study is part of a larger project that looked at 75 abused women over a six month period, once shortly after they had left their abusive relationship and again 6 months later. The women completed questionnaires at both time periods. Time 1 questionnaires included measures about the course of the abusive relationship, the severity, frequency and

intermittency of both received and inflicted physical abuse, as well as a measure of psychological abuse. At time 1, participants also responded to an extensive, semi-structured, audio taped interview about their most recent and prior relationships. I assessed the attachment patterns of these women (based on their time 1 interviews), conceptualized in terms of Bartholomew's four-category model (1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz 1991). At time 2, participants completed questionnaires examining their resolution of separation from their abusive partners. Questionnaires concerning self-esteem, trauma symptoms, and relative life satisfaction were included to assess overall psychological well-being. Questionnaires focusing on continuing emotional involvement, reconciliation, and partner contact were included to assess women's feelings, perceptions, and behaviours concerning the recent separation. Also at time 2, participants responded to questions about external variables such as social and economic support. As there were some women who completed questionnaires and not interviews, and others who completed interviews but not questionnaires, the sample for the present analyses was 63 women. Also, numbers vary across analyses due to missing data (n's are reported in the tables).

Participants

Sixty-three women who had recently left a psychologically or physically abusive relationship participated in this study. Physically abused women were recruited through Vancouver transition houses and shelters, or from partners of men who had been clients in a treatment programme for abused men (n = 40). Psychologically abused women (though some were also battered) were recruited through newspaper advertisements (n = 23). The average age of participants was 31.4 years, and the average time in the abusive relationship was 11.5 years. On average these women had initiated 2.1 prior separations, and half had experienced some form of abuse in a previous romantic relationship.

Measures

Interview Ratings of Attachment

Attachment ratings were derived from the time 1 interview. This semi-structured interview included information about the women's relationship history, but focused primarily on the course of the recent abusive relationship, the nature and duration of the abuse, and the power dynamic between the couple. Based on these interviews, subjects were rated (on 9-point scales) on the degree to which they corresponded to a prototype for each attachment pattern according to Bartholomew's four-category model (Bartholomew 1990; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991): *secure* (low anxiety and low avoidance), *fearful* (high anxiety and high avoidance), *preoccupied* (high anxiety and low avoidance), and *dismissing* (low anxiety and high avoidance).

Each interview was rated by one previously trained coder (myself). A reliability check was done by a second, previously trained, independent coder on 22 of the taped interviews. Correlations between the two coders for the four patterns were secure = .63, fearful = .82, preoccupied = .85, and dismissing = .85.

Relationship Variables

In the time 1 questionnaire, subjects were asked a number of demographic questions including the length of the relationship and the number of prior separations from the recent relationship. To control for relationship length, the number of separations was divided by relationship length.

Measures concerning the nature of the abuse (physical abuse, psychological abuse, and intermittency of abuse) were also collected at time 1 when the abusive relationship was recent and reports were not as vulnerable to memory distortion.

The Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS; Straus, 1979). The CTS contains three subscales: reasoning (3 items) which examines problem solving strategies, verbal aggression (7 items) which assesses verbal and nonverbal means of threatening or hurting the partner, and violence (10 items) pertaining to the use of physical aggression. For the purposes of this

study, only the violence subscale was computed. Potential conflict behaviours are listed and respondents are asked how often they and their partners have used these behaviours during the past year, ranging from a = never, to e = 6-10 times, to g = more than 21 times. Thus a score for both receipt of abuse and infliction of abuse is calculated. In the violence subscale, items range in severity from "Threw, smashed, hit, or kicked something" to "Beat up the other one" and finally, "Used a gun or a knife". Items were summed and weighted in accordance with the frequencies for each item indicated by the respondents. For the 6 point scale, weightings were 0 = never, 1 = once, 2 = twice, 4 = 3 to 5 times, 8 = 6 to 10 times, 15 = 11 to 20 times, and 25 = more than 21 times. Straus (1979) reports an alpha for the violence subscale of .88.

The Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI; Tolman, 1989). This scale provides an extensive assessment of non-physical abuse. It is comprised of 58 items (rated from 1 = never to 5 = very frequently) divided into two subscales: emotional/verbal abuse and dominance/isolation. The emotional/verbal items include withholding emotional resources ("My partner withheld affection from me"), verbal attacks ("My partner put down my physical appearance"), and degrading behaviour toward women ("My partner acted like I was his personal servant"). Dominance/isolation items indicate rigid adherence to traditional sex roles ("My partner became upset if dinner, housework, or laundry was not done when he thought it should be"), demands for subservience ("My partner demanded obedience to his whims"), and isolation from resources ("My partner refused to let me work outside of the home"). Cronbach's alphas for the two subscales in the present sample were: dominance/isolation = .82, and emotional /verbal = .93.

Intermittency of abuse (Dutton & Painter, in press). Intermittency was measured by having participants rate on a scale of -5 "very negative" to +5 "very positive" their partner's behaviour before, during and after each of three abusive incidents (the first, worst, and last). An intermittency score for each incident was calculated by subtracting the value of the partner's treatment after the incident from the value for the partner's treatment

during the incident. A mean was then calculated for the three incidents to give a total intermittency score. Thus high scores on the intermittency scale indicate the combined occurrence of both very positive and very negative partner behaviours, indicating a pattern of inconsistent treatment. The alpha coefficient for the three incidents in the present sample was .76.

Psychological Adjustment Variables

Measures concerning psychological adjustment variables were collected at time 2 in order to see how these women were coping, six months after the immediate trauma had subsided.

Rosenburg Self-esteem Inventory (Rosenburg, 1965). The Rosenburg is a 10 item measure of global self-esteem. Respondents are asked to rate the degree to which a list of statements are "like me" or not, from 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree . Items include both positive ("On the whole, I am satisfied with myself") and negative ("All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure") self-statements (reversed scored; coefficient alpha in the present sample was .85).

The Traumatic Symptoms Checklist. (TSC-33; Briere & Runtz, 1989). The TSC is a 33 item instrument designed to determine the extent and pattern of post traumatic impact. It contains five subscales: dissociation, anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, and post-sexual abuse trauma-hypothesized (including those symptoms thought to be characteristic of sexual abuse experiences, but also occurring as a result of other types of trauma). Subjects are asked to indicate how much discomfort each item has caused them during the last two months, from 1 = not at all to 5 = extremely. Sample items include spacing out, anxiety attacks, blaming yourself for things, insomnia, and feelings of being caught or trapped. This scale has been shown to discriminate female survivors of childhood sexual abuse from non-victimized women. In this study, I will be using the total scale only. Cronbach's alpha for the total scale in this sample was .91.

Relative life satisfaction (Dutton & Painter, in press). Subjects are asked how they feel about seven life situations (life in general, relationship with their children, economic situation, self-esteem, social life, work life, and the future) now as compared to six months ago. Responses are assessed on a 9-point scale from 1 = much less happy now, to 9 = much happier now, and summed to create an overall rating of relative life satisfaction. The alpha coefficient in this sample was .80.

Overall adjustment. The three psychological adjustment variables (self-esteem, trauma symptoms, and relative life satisfaction) were moderately correlated with one another (correlations ranging from .56 to .63). Therefore, to examine overall psychological health I computed a mean rating of the three psychological adjustment variables. The trauma symptom scale was reverse scored before the mean was calculated, since less trauma, rather than more, is indicative of greater psychological health.

Separation Variables

Separation variables were collected from the questionnaire data at time 2 in order to assess these women's feelings and behaviours concerning the separation six months after the event.

Continuing Emotional Involvement Scale (Dutton & Painter, in press). The CEI scale is a 20 item measure composed of a bereavement aspect of separation adapted from Kitson (1982) and an idealization component (NiCarthy, 1982). The Kitson scale contains such items as "I frequently find myself wondering what he is doing" and "I spend a lot of time still thinking about him". The NiCarthy scale adds an element of idealized obsession with the partner containing such items as "No one could ever understand him the way I do", "I love him so much I can't stand the thought of him being with anyone else", and "Without him I have nothing to live for". Subjects are asked to respond to these statements as 1 = not at all my feelings, to 5 = very much my feelings. High scores on this measure indicate a continuing obsession with the partner, and have been positively associated with

the intermittency of abuse in relationships (Dutton & Painter, in press). Cronbach's alpha for the entire scale in this sample was .93.

Continuing emotional involvement was also examined with two additional questions. Participants were asked to rate on a five point scale the degree to which they felt they were moving emotionally closer to their partner or emotionally further away (1 = moving closer, to 5 = moving away). A second question asked participants the degree to which they endorsed the following statement: "I still love my partner and I want to get back together" (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree).

Reconciliation (Dutton & Painter, in press). Subjects who were not currently living with their partner (all but 4 subjects) were asked to report what they felt was the likelihood of getting back together with their partner within the next six months (1 = very unlikely, 10 = very likely). Participants were also asked how often they had tried to get back together with their partner (1 = never, to 4 = frequently).

Contact (Dutton & Painter, in press). Subjects were asked if they had contact with their partner within the last six months (0 = no, 1 = yes), and the reasons for the contact (children, business, social, or other). The reasons for contact were included in order to indicate whether the contact was unavoidable, such as business or custody issues concerning children, or social, which may be a more accurate indicator of lack of separation resolution. Hence contact was recoded as 0 = no social contact, or 1 = social contact,. Finally, subjects were asked if they were sexually involved with their partner (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Secondary Analyses Measures

Counselling support. (Dutton & Painter, in press). I examined the counselling support that these women received during the six month period with a 14 item measure from time 2 asking participants if they had sought help for a family or personal problem from a number of sources in the past six months (Dutton & Painter, in press). The items I specifically examined were those eight pertaining to some form of counselling or

intervention (for example, psychologist or psychiatrist, marriage or family counsellor, women's support group or crisis line). The total number of counselling sources sought comprised the counselling variable. Participants were also asked to rate how effective they found that support from 1 = made it worse, to 5 = very effective. The mean of the endorsed items was calculated to make up the effectiveness variable.

Economic support (Dutton & Painter, in press). In the time 2 questionnaire package participants were asked a number of questions concerning their economic situation. Three of these were examined in this study: Whether or not they were employed (1 = not employed, 2 = part-time employment, 3 = full-time employment), their income level now (Total income per year), and whether they had ever contemplated returning to the relationship because of economic factors (0 = no, 1 = yes).

Data Analysis

With Bartholomew's attachment coding system, continuous ratings for each of the four attachment patterns are available, as well as categories. Rather than using the attachment categories to conduct group analyses, I used the continuous data to calculate correlations for several reasons. First, it was unknown what the distribution across attachment categories would be in this sample. Theoretically, there was no reason to believe that there would be an even distribution among the four attachment categories. In fact, I had hypothesized that positive self-dimension patterns would be under-represented. Continuous ratings allowed me to examine associations with all attachment patterns in a predominantly insecure sample. For example, the mean security rating in this group of abused women was 2.98 on a 9 point scale. Categorically, only 5 of 63 participants were classified as predominantly secure (i. e., given a rating of 5 or greater), clearly an insufficient number for group analyses. Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, and Bartholomew (in press), in a study examining continuous attachment ratings of abusive men, found that security was negatively correlated with anger, jealousy, trauma symptoms, and borderline personality organization. These results are noteworthy when one considers that this sample

was predominantly insecure. Had categorical attachment patterns been used, this variation would have been lost.

In this study, the two samples of participants - those that came from the transition house and spouses of abusive husbands in treatment, and those that responded to the newspaper advertisement - were considered as one group and the analyses were conducted on the entire group. However, since the two groups do originate from different sources, and may not be directly comparable, I also ran the same analyses looking at the two groups separately. Results for the transition house sample, the advertisement sample, and the combined sample were generally consistent. The main findings for the combined sample will be presented here, and the tables will refer to this combined sample. I will present the results of the two group breakdown (the transition house sample and the advertisement sample) where they add to or diverge from the results of the combined sample.

Results

The Samples

Table 1 shows the means of the relationship variables in the two samples of women: those from transition houses and spouses of abusive husbands in treatment (transition house sample) and women who responded to the advertisement (advertisement sample). T-tests revealed that the transition house sample and the advertisement sample differed on four of the seven relationship variables. Transition house women had significantly higher scores on both inflicting and receiving physical abuse. On an eight point scale from less frequent to more frequent, women's mean reports of their partners' physical abuse was 5.42 for the transition house sample, compared to .12 for the advertisement sample ($p < .001$). Women's mean self-reported physical abusiveness towards their partners was .77 for the transition house sample, and .07 for the advertisement sample ($p < .01$). The transition house women also reported receiving greater psychological abuse than the advertisement sample. On the emotional/verbal subscale of the Tolman the transition house mean was 95.39, and the mean for the

advertisement sample was 68.83 ($p < .001$). Results were similar for the dominance and isolation subscale. The transition house sample reported a mean level of 78.63 whereas the advertisement sample reported a mean level of 41.96 ($p < .001$).

Table 2 shows the means of the separation resolution variables in the two samples of women. These two groups of women did not differ on any of the psychological adjustment variables (self-esteem, trauma symptoms, relative life satisfaction, and overall adjustment), nor on any of the separation variables (emotional involvement, reconciliation, and partner contact).

Attachment Ratings

As expected, attachment patterns associated with a positive self-model showed low mean values (2.98 for the secure, and 2.41 for the dismissing), and attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model had higher mean values (4.21 for fearful, and 4.81 for preoccupied).

Whereas one would expect to see proportions of 50%- 60% secure subjects in a non-clinical sample and smaller proportions in the insecure groups, in this sample, attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model (fearful and preoccupied) were over-represented while attachment patterns associated with a positive self-model (secure and dismissing) were under-represented. In the transition house sample ($n = 40$), women who were both physically and emotionally abused, 12 women were rated as predominantly fearful (30%), 23 as preoccupied (58%), 3 as secure (8%), and 2 as dismissing (5%). In the advertisement sample ($n = 23$), women who were not physically abused, the pattern was similar, with 11 women rated as generally fearful (49%), 9 preoccupied (39%), 2 secure (9%), and 1 dismissing (4%). Thus for the total sample of 63 women, 87% had a predominant attachment pattern with a negative self-model, and only 13% were rated as having a predominant attachment pattern with a positive self-model.

Attachment Ratings and Relationship Variables

Also interesting in comparing these two samples were the correlations of the abused women's and their partners' levels of abuse. In non-clinical samples, these are normally highly correlated, for both psychological and physical abuse (e.g., Gelles, 1987; O'Hearn & Davis, 1993). Here, in the transition house sample, they were not (r = .16, ns). In the advertisement sample, however, partners' levels of abusiveness were correlated (r = .52, p < .01), approaching levels we might expect to see in a non-clinical sample.

The associations between attachment ratings and relationship variables for the combined sample are shown in Table 3. The hypothesis that security would be related to less physical and psychological abuse and lower intermittency scores was only supported for one variable. Security was negatively related to the dominance/isolation subscale of the Tolman (r = -.22, p < .05). An unhypothesized and counter-intuitive finding was the relationship between security and *longer* relationship length in the combined group (r =.43, p <.001), a relationship that also held in the two group breakdown.

The specific hypotheses for the insecure patterns, however, received more support. As hypothesized, preoccupation was related to shorter relationship length (r = -.49, p < .001) and more frequent separations from the current relationship (r = .32, p <. 01). Also as hypothesized, fearfulness was related to longer relationship length (r = .22, p < .05), and a trend indicated fearfulness to be related to fewer previous separations (r = -.17, p< .10). The expected relationship between preoccupation and intermittency of abuse was not supported.

Though I had not associations with dismissingness, trends did emerge in the transition house sample that were consistent with hypotheses about the positive self and negative other model. Dismissingness was negatively related to relationship length (r = -.25, p< .10), to emotional and verbal abuse (r = -.22, p< .10), and to dominance and isolation (r = -.23, p< .10).

These analyses also indicated that preoccupation and fearfulness may be associated with differing levels of physical abuse. Table 3 shows that in the combined group there was a trend showing fearfulness to be positively related to the receipt of physical abuse ($r = .20$, $p < .10$). This finding emerged again in the transition house group where fearfulness was related to the receipt of physical abuse ($r = .31$, $p < .05$) and preoccupation was negatively related to the receipt of physical abuse ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$).

Attachment Ratings and Separation Resolution

Table 4 shows the associations of attachment ratings and separation resolution for the combined sample. The hypothesis that greater security would be related to more adaptive separation resolution had very limited support. In looking at the psychological adjustment variables, attachment security was not significantly related to higher self-esteem, higher relative life satisfaction, nor overall adjustment. However, security was related to lower trauma symptoms ($r = -.25$, $p < .05$). These findings were also consistent in the two group breakdown, and in the transition house sample, security was also related to greater relative satisfaction ($r = .28$, $p < .05$).

Nor were the hypotheses concerning security and separation variables supported. In the combined sample there was just one trend indicating that security was negatively related to attempting to reconcile ($r = -.20$, $p < .10$). This trend held in the advertisement sample also ($r = -.31$, $p < .10$).

Though I had hypothesized that a negative self-model, in general, and preoccupation, in particular, would prove an impediment to adaptive separation resolution, I had not made specific hypotheses about preoccupation and the psychological adjustment variables. Interestingly, preoccupation was more strongly associated with adjustment variables than with separation variables. In the combined sample, preoccupation was negatively associated with self-esteem ($r = -.27$, $p < .05$), positively associated with trauma symptoms ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), and negatively associated with overall adjustment ($r = -.24$,

$p < .05$). A similar pattern of results did not emerge for fearfulness in the combined sample, nor the two group breakdown.

My specific hypotheses concerning the insecure patterns focused on the separation variables. I had expected preoccupation to be associated with greater emotional involvement, more desire for reconciliation and more partner contact, and for fearfulness to be negatively associated with these variables. These hypotheses were only partially supported. There was limited support for the notion that preoccupation would be related to greater emotional involvement. In the combined sample, trends indicated that preoccupation was positively associated with the continuing emotional involvement scale ($r = .19$, $p < .10$), still loving their partner and wanting to get back together with him ($r = .21$, $p < .10$), and attempting to reconcile ($r = .19$, $p < .10$). A similar pattern emerged in the advertisement sample. There was a trend in the expected direction for preoccupation on the continuing emotional involvement scale ($r = .31$, $p < .10$), and significant relationships between preoccupation and still loving their partner ($r = .47$, $p < .05$), and attempting to reconcile ($r = .54$, $p < .01$). In the transition house sample there was a trend for preoccupation being related to feeling emotionally closer to their partners ($r = -.25$, $p < .10$).

Though there were few relationships with separation resolution and the fearful pattern in the combined sample, more relationships emerged when the two samples were separated. In the combined sample, the only finding to emerge was that fearfulness was negatively associated with social partner contact ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$). In the transition house sample, however, there was a trend indicating fearfulness to be related to feeling more emotionally distant from their partners ($r = .24$, $p < .10$). Fearfulness was also negatively related to social partner contact ($r = -.34$, $p < .05$). In the advertisement sample, fearfulness was negatively associated to the continuing involvement scale ($r = -.37$, $p < .05$), and a trend showed fearfulness to be associated with less likelihood of reconciliation ($r = -.35$, $p < .10$).

Again, unhypothesized findings emerged for the dismissing pattern that are consistent with the avoidance and low involvement of the negative other model. In the combined sample, dismissingness was negatively associated with attempting to reconcile ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$), and a trend showed a negative relationship with dismissingness and still loving the partner and wanting to get back together ($r = -.20$, $p < .10$).

Secondary Analyses

Physical and Psychological Abuse

It could be argued that the relationships between different insecure attachment patterns and separation resolution variables could be due to the quality of the abusive relationships that these women had left. For example, the results suggest that fearfulness may be associated with greater physical abuse, and preoccupation may be associated with less abuse (at least for the transition house sample). Perhaps preoccupation is related to poorer separation resolution because these relationships were simply not as severe, therefore giving these women more hope for the future, and more reason to want to try again. To test this hypothesis, all the analyses were run again, controlling for both physical and psychological abuse.

Table 5 shows the associations between attachment patterns and separation resolution, controlling for abuse. As can be seen from this table, all the previous relationships have held and, in some cases, new relationships have surfaced. The previous results showed limited support for security being related to a more adaptive separation resolution profile. This finding was consistent though somewhat stronger when abuse was partialled out. In the psychological adjustment variables, security was still negatively related to trauma symptoms ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$), and the remaining psychological variables showed trends in the expected direction. In the separation variables, one former trend became significant and one new relationship emerged. Security was now significantly negatively related to attempts to reconcile ($r = -.24$, $p < .05$), and security was also negatively related to still loving the partner and wanting to get back together ($r = -.36$,

$p < .01$). In all but one of the remaining separation variables, there were trends in the expected direction linking security to less emotional involvement with partners.

Looking at the insecure patterns with the psychological adjustment variables, preoccupation was still negatively associated with self-esteem ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), positively related with trauma symptoms ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), and negatively related to overall adjustment ($r = -.21$, $p < .05$). With the separation variables, however, a stronger and more consistent pattern came forth, showing preoccupation to be related to greater involvement, both emotionally and actually, with abusive partners. Preoccupation was positively related to the continuing emotional involvement scale ($r =. 27$, $p < .05$), negatively related to feeling emotionally distant from their partners ($r = \cdot .27$, $p < .05$), and positively related to still loving their partners and wanting to get back together with them ($r = .42$, $p < .001$). Preoccupation was also positively related to attempts at reconciliation ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), more social contact ($r = .26$, $p < .05$), and more sexual contact ($r = .39$, $p < .001$). Fearfulness showed relationships in the opposite direction. Fearfulness was positively associated with feeling emotionally distant from partners ($r = .26$, $p < .05$), and negatively related to social contact ($r = -.32$, $p < .01$). All but two of the remaining separation variables showed trends in the expected direction.

In an effort to understand these relationships more fully, I also ran correlations examining abuse variables with separation variables. Research has suggested that more severe and more frequent abuse both strengthens (Dutton & Painter, in press) and constrains (Gelles, 1987, Strube, 1988) emotional involvement with abusive partners. The results did not show strong support for either argument. Physical abuse was positively related to thinking that reconciliation was likely ($r = .22$, $p < .05$), and a trend linked intermittency of abuse with this same separation variable ($r = .19$, $p < .10$). In the opposite direction, the verbal/emotional subscale of the Tolman was negatively related to greater social contact with partners ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$), and positively related to wanting more emotional distance ($r = .20$, $p < .05$). A trend also linked the verbal/ emotional subscale of

the Tolman negatively with still loving the partner and wanting to get back together with him ($r = -.18$, $p < .10$).

Counselling Support

All but 5 women reported some form of counselling in the intervening 6 months between time 1 and time 2. Contrary to predictions, there were no significant correlations with preoccupation or fearfulness and the amount of counselling sought. However, as predicted, preoccupation was negatively associated with perceived effectiveness ($r = -.28$, $p < .05$).

Table 6 provides the frequencies of different types of counselling help sought, and the percentage of women who found these various resources effective. The most common types of help sought were women's support groups or crisis lines (53%) and psychologists and psychiatrists (48%). The most effective sources of counselling help seemed to come from religious sources, such as a minister, priest or rabbi (57% of the women who sought this help found it at least slightly effective), marriage or family counsellors (50% found it at least slightly effective), and psychologists and psychiatrists (46% found it at least slightly effective). Interestingly, and discouragingly, the least effective item was battered women's shelters (0% found this effective) and women's support groups and crisis lines (only 5% of the women found this effective).

To examine the question of whether the associations I found between the fearful and preoccupied patterns separation resolution (specifically that preoccupation appears to be related to poorer psychological adjustment) could be explained by the counselling support received, I looked at the relationship between attachment ratings and separation resolution variables, while controlling for the degree of counselling sought and its perceived effectiveness. Table 7 illustrates these results. All the previous relationships between preoccupation and the psychological adjustment variables still held when controlling for the degree of counselling sought and the perceived effectiveness. Preoccupation was still negatively related to self-esteem ($r = -.30$, $p < .05$), positively related to trauma symptoms

(r = .24, p < .05), and negatively related to overall adjustment (r = -.28, p < .05). In the separation resolution variables, previous trends became significant relationships and new relationships emerged. Preoccupation was positively related to continuing emotional involvement (r = .30, p < .05), to still loving the partner and wanting to get back together with him (r = .34, p < .01), greater social contact (r = .30, p < .05), and greater sexual contact (r = .34, p < .01). There was also a trend linking preoccupation with thinking that reconciliation was likely (r = .23, p < . 10). Fearfulness was still negatively associated with social contact with partner (r = -.30, p < .05), and was now also positively associated with feeling more emotional distance from partner (r = .36, p < . 01), and negatively related to thinking that reunion was likely (r = -.32, p < .05).

Economic Support

As expected, economic variables were related to attachment security and women's separation resolution. The associations between economic variables (employment, income, and needing to return because of money) and attachment ratings are illustrated in Table 8. As expected, security was positively related to income level (r = .26, p < .05), and negatively related to needing to return because of money (r = -.31, p < .01). There was also a trend in the expected direction linking security and employment (r = .14, p < .10).

Economic variables also showed consistent relationships with separation resolution. Not surprisingly, in general, economic solvency was related to more adaptive separation resolution. Results are illustrated in Table 9. As expected, employment was positively related to self-esteem (r = .28, p < .01), satisfaction (r = .30, p < .01), and overall adjustment (r = .31, p < .01), and negatively related to trauma symptoms (r = - .27, p < .01). Also as expected, needing to return because of money was negatively related to self-esteem (r = -.32, p < .01), satisfaction (r = -.30, p <.01), and overall adjustment (r = -.34, p < .01), and positively related to trauma symptoms (r =. 25, p < .05). Interestingly, there were no significant relationships between psychological variables and income.

In examining the separation variables, employment and needing to return because of money showed few significant relationships. Employment was negatively related to sexual contact ($r = -.22$, $p < .05$). Needing to return because of money was positively related to the continuing emotional involvement scale ($r = .21$, $p < .05$). Here, the income variable appeared to be the stronger correlate of the separation variables. Income was negatively related to reconciliation - both likelihood of reconciliation ($r = -.20$ $p < .05$) and attempts at reconciliation ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$). Income was also negatively related to social contact ($r = -.25$, $p < .05$). One inconsistent finding was income's positive association with still loving the partner and wanting to get back together with him ($r = .25$, $p < .05$).

A similar question arises here as did with the help seeking variables. Since limitations in economic resources seem to be associated with less adaptive separation resolution, can the relationships we found between attachment ratings and separation resolution variables be explained by economic factors alone? To test this argument, the original hypotheses were analyzed again, controlling for economic factors. Though the association between preoccupation and continuing emotional involvement was no longer significant, and two formerly significant relationships turned into trends (security with lower trauma, and preoccupation with greater trauma), new relationships in the expected direction came to the fore. Preoccupation was now significantly related to still loving the partner and wanting to get back together ($r = .23$, $p < .05$), and positively related to sexual contact ($r = .26$, $p < .05$). Generally the pattern of results was consistent when economic factors were partialled out, indicating that psychological factors and economic factors appear to play independent roles in women's separation resolution from abusive relationships.

Discussion

Overview of the Results

This study examined attachment patterns of women in abusive relationships from three perspectives: Firstly, at the descriptive level, I assessed the relative proportions of the

four attachment patterns based on the self and other dimensions. Next, outcome variables were assessed in terms of security and separation resolution. Finally, specific predictions were made for the insecure patterns.

Attachment Pattern Proportions

The hypothesis that attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model (fearful and preoccupied) would be over-represented, and attachment patterns associated with a positive self-model (secure and dismissing) would be under-represented was supported. Eighty-seven percent of the women in this sample had a predominant attachment pattern with a negative self-model, a much higher proportion than one would expect to see in a non-clinical sample.

Security and Separation Resolution

In general, there was only weak support for the hypotheses that security would be associated with less abuse, greater overall adjustment, and more adaptive separation resolution. Security was negatively related to the dominance and isolation subscale of Tolman's psychological abuse measure, negatively related to trauma symptoms, and a trend indicated that security was related to fewer attempts to reconcile. Though continuous measures provide some variability that would not be apparent using categorical variables, the low mean ratings and restricted range of the security ratings may explain in part why stronger relationships did not emerge here. Interestingly, when the effects of physical and psychological abuse were partialled out, there was stronger support for the hypotheses relating security to greater overall adjustment and more adaptive separation resolution. The relationship between security and lower trauma still held, and with all other psychological adjustment variables there were trends in the expected direction. Security was also negatively related to two of the separation variables, and all but one of the remaining variables in this group showed trends in the expected direction.

Insecure Attachment Patterns

Though I had made no specific predictions for the dismissing pattern due to low mean ratings and restricted range, a few relationships did emerge. In the original analyses dismissingness was negatively related to attempts to reconcile. This relationship held when abuse was partialled out and one new relationship emerged; dismissingness was negatively related to still loving the partner and wanting to get back together with him. Though these results are consistent with the dismissing prototype's positive self-model and negative other model, only three out of a possible 22 relationships (less than 14%) were significant. Therefore, one must be cautious about over-interpretation. This research suggests that dismissing individuals may be especially unlikely to initially find themselves in abusive relationships, but further research is necessary before we can make specific conclusions regarding which attachment pattern may be at the lowest risk for returning to abusive partners.

Somewhat stronger support exists for the hypotheses concerning the insecure patterns associated with a negative self-model. In general I had expected that preoccupation would be related to greater difficulty separating from abusive partners, and these predictions received some support. Though preoccupation was not related to greater intermittency of abuse, preoccupation was related to shorter relationship length and more frequent previous separations. Also as expected, fearfulness was associated with longer relationship length, and a trend linked fearfulness with fewer previous separations.

Though not specifically hypothesized, there was also evidence that preoccupation was related to less adaptive psychological adjustment. Preoccupation was related to lower self-esteem, more trauma, and overall poorer adjustment -- profiles that did not emerge for the dismissing or fearful patterns. Further, preoccupation continued to be associated with a poorer psychological profile when the effects of abuse were partialled out.

Though the relationships were not as strong, the hypothesis that preoccupation would be related to less adaptive separation also received some support. Trends indicated

that preoccupation was related to continuing emotional involvement with partners, still loving the partner and wanting to get back together with him, and more attempts to reconcile. Again, when the effects of abuse were partialled out, these trends became significant and more relationships emerged. In the secondary analyses, preoccupation was related to six of the seven separation variables, and the remaining variable showed a trend in the expected direction. Fearfulness was significantly related to two of the seven separation variables, and three more variables showed trends supporting the hypothesis that fearfulness would be related to less involvement with partners.

The association of preoccupation with poor separation resolution also held when examining the help seeking variables. Though there were no differences among attachment patterns in the amount of counselling sought, preoccupation was negatively related to perceived effectiveness.

Overall, there was general support for the hypothesis that preoccupation would be related to less adaptive separation resolution. Shorter relationships coupled with frequent leave takings and reconciliations seems to trap these women in an ambivalent struggle of leaving and returning several times throughout the course of the relationship history. The profile thus depicted is of a woman who may be able to physically leave the relationship but cannot do so emotionally as is illustrated in this interview excerpt. " I want to leave my husband so badly, but I don't *want* to want to leave" (Subject No. 058).

The results suggest that the combination of a negative self-model and a positive view of others, even when that other is your oppressor, may place preoccupied women at particular risk for returning to abusive partners. In listening to the audio tapes of these women one can hear a theme of brutal self-deprecation and a fantasy world idealization of their partners as is heard in the following passage from a women with a high preoccupied rating. "Anybody that would have me, I would take them, and I wouldn't let them go...I looked to him as being this figure who would help me, fix me, make everything OK" (Subject No. 038). Later in the interview, when talking about an abusive episode, this

same subject reported, "And that time I laid charges...He was arrested and spent the night in jail. I thought that through all of this, this was my way to get him back again, and this would stop him from abusing me and we would live happily ever after" (Subject No. 038).

Unhypothesized Findings and Secondary Analyses

Though I had predicted an over-representation of fearful and preoccupied attachment patterns, and an under-representation of secure and dismissing attachment patterns, I did not anticipate the disproportionately larger numbers of preoccupied women compared to fearful. The first and most obvious explanation for this is the problem of self selection. It is highly consistent with the approach orientation of the prototypical preoccupied individual to want to be interviewed, to want to talk about their problems, even to be overly disclosing to a relative stranger. It is also prototypically fearful to do the opposite. Thus, it is not surprising that in this sample we see more preoccupied women than fearful. A second, and less obvious, explanation may be that fearful women do not leave abusive relationships as often as preoccupied women do. The finding that fearfulness is associated with longer relationship length suggests that these women may have a more difficult time leaving initially. However, once they do leave, it is possible that they may not have the kind of disposition that draws them back in. The preoccupied individual, on the other hand, could perhaps be more adept at getting out (as the findings linking preoccupation to more frequent previous separations and shorter relationship length would suggest) and, unfortunately, getting back in. This may explain, in part, why in this sample of women who have recently left an abusive relationship we do not see as many fearful women.

A further question arising from these analyses was why the hypothesized results were stronger when the effects of abuse were partialled out. One explanation focuses on the role that psychological and physical abuse may play in the separation resolution of abused women. Several studies have indicated that the more severe and more frequent the abuse the more likely a woman is to leave the relationship (Gelles, 1987, Strube, 1988).

Yet other research (Dutton & Painter, in press) suggests that the more severe and the more intermittent the abuse the more strongly the oppressed person attaches to her oppressor. Though these results seem to be somewhat inconsistent, it is clear that abuse itself is not an irrelevant variable in questions concerning psychological adjustment and separation. The results from this sample do not provide evidence for either position. There were no consistent findings linking abuse to more or less emotional involvement to partners. However, the relationship between abuse and emotional involvement is an important question for future research. For example, had I found more conclusive evidence that increased levels of abuse were related to stronger emotional involvement, this may have offered a possible explanation why the links between preoccupation and more adaptive separation resolution were stronger when abuse was partialled out. According to Dutton and associates (in press), higher levels of abuse should be related to greater emotional involvement. And I predicted that preoccupation would be associated with greater emotional involvement. In my sample, however, fearfulness was related to higher levels of abuse, rather than preoccupation. In fact, preoccupation was associated with lower levels of abuse. Hence, the associations between attachment patterns and abuse work in the opposite direction from what we would expect about the attachment patterns and subsequent separation resolution. Perhaps the effect of abuse, to some extent, cancels out the effect of attachment patterns on separation resolution, and these associations show up again when abuse is held constant.

Finally, though this study focused primarily on psychological variables that leave women at higher risk for returning to an abusive relationship, this is not to suggest that environmental factors such as economic stability and the availability of social support networks are unimportant variables for women facing the decision of returning. Though economic factors were not the primary focus of this study, clearly they played an important role in women's psychological adjustment and ability to deal with the recent separation. Both employment and needing to return because of money were related, in the

hypothesized direction, to all of the psychological adjustment variables and one of the separation variables. Income was related to four of the seven separation variables, and one of the remaining three was a trend, linking economic dependency to greater emotional involvement and contact with partners. In short, and not surprisingly, economic solvency was related to a more adaptive overall psychological adjustment and separation resolution.

Does attachment then become a superfluous construct for examining women's success at emotional separation from abusive partners? Unfortunately this sample size was not large enough to conduct a regression analyses which would allow us to look at the independent contributions of attachment, counselling support, and economic support. However, the partial correlations provide evidence that attachment variables make contributions to the variability we are seeing in separation resolution independent of external variables. When counselling support was held constant, the associations between the insecure attachment patterns and separation resolution became stronger. In the psychological adjustment variables, preoccupation continued to be associated with lower self-esteem, greater trauma, and lower overall adjustment. Looking at the separation variables, preoccupation was associated, in the hypothesized direction, with four of the seven separation variables, and one of the remaining three was a trend in the expected direction. Further, fearfulness which had formerly been associated with only one of the separation variables was now significantly related to three of these variables, and one new trend emerged, again in the hypothesized direction. Though the partial correlations with economic variables displayed less compelling results, the picture remained generally consistent with the previous analyses. Thus, although external variables and individual difference variables may overlap to some extent, attachment appears to contribute to our understanding of women who may be at higher risk for returning to abusive partners independent of external variables.

Attachment and the Integration of External and Psychological Variables

By looking at these external variables from an attachment perspective, it is possible to see how psychological factors function within the limitations of the external environment. Crittenden and Ainsworth (1989) suggest that attachment theory is a profitable way to study maltreated children because it allows an integration of interpersonal and environmental events which influence the development of attachment.

> The advantage of combining these perspectives in the context of a focus on attachment is that risk status can be considered to vary across both families and time depending upon individuals' past experiences, current contextual factors, and developmental processes as well as random (or unexpected) events, without collapsing the model into an overly simplistic everything-is-interconnected approach (p.434).

In the case of abused women, the attachment construct allows us to paint a psychological portrait of the women who remain in, leave, and return to abusive relationships. But the theory does not posit that individuals necessarily follow a set path with models fixed from childhood experiences. Rather Bowlby's theory allows for influences from the environment, in particular the abusive partner, which serve to guide and shape internal working models. It could well be that these models are formed as a consequence of adult attachment relationships that may have little to do with childhood experiences. In a retrospective study such as this, it is impossible to determine whether a woman with an insecure attachment pattern finds herself in an abusive relationship because it is consistent with her negative self-model, or if her model changes as a result of having been with an abusive partner. Most likely, both past and current experiences serve to create, shape, and maintain attachment representations. For example, I would expect that those with a strong positive self-model would be unlikely to stay in or return to an abusive relationship. The more positive the model, the greater the likelihood of that individual leaving the relationship at the first indication of abuse. Correspondingly, the less positive

the model, the more difficult the leaving will be. However, once the relationship has become abusive, the victim is likely to become more insecure over time, regardless of her initial attachment pattern:

> Over the process of time...it happens slowly. There is the honeymoon stage and then he slowly knocks the energy, the self-esteem, the self-worth. And so pretty soon I'm on the floor dying, and so its really hard to see that there is a way out... I was knocked so far down that the 'ways out' closed down (Subject No. 049).

For many subjects this increasing insecurity seemed to slowly build around them like a psychological cage that ensured their entrapment. One subject expressed this feeling in a graphic metaphor of an imprisoned wild animal:

> You've seen on TV. they have lions in cages and people poke at them. And the lion roars but they're still in those cages. They can't get out. I felt like that. I felt like I was on display and I was totally closed in...I felt like I'd be put on the stand and I'd have to prove that I didn't deserve it (Subject No. 037).

Limitations

Though this study potentially offers information about what kinds of women may be at higher risk for returning to an abusive relationship, certain caveats must be considered. A significant limitation of this study is the small sample size and subsequent loss of power, particularly when looking at the two samples separately. A large number of correlations were run without using a statistical correction such as a Bonferoni test. With the small sample size and resulting low power a statistical adjustment such as the Bonferoni would have set an unrealistically high significance level that would have made this study pointless. However, in examining the percentage of significant results, 24 out of 116 tests (20%) supported the hypotheses, more than one would expect by chance alone. If one includes trends, the percentage of results supporting the hypotheses becomes 38%.

Another common problem of research in this area, and this study was no exception, is the selective nature of the sample. Since attaining a sample of abused women does not lend itself to a random sampling procedure, the representativeness of the sample is unknown. This limitation has been somewhat circumvented by recruiting from a variety of sources (advertisements, shelters, and intervention programmes). Still it is unknown whether this sample of women, who have sought aid in some fashion, differ from those who may never be studied because they never enter the "system", and hence never come to researchers' attention.

A third limitation is one which is common to many research projects working with secondary data. Since this study was adapted from a larger project with different research questions in mind at its conception, the design and measures used were not always ideal. In particular, the interview was not designed specifically as an attachment interview. Though reliability still reached acceptable levels, coders were sometimes called upon to fill in the blanks when specific questions were not asked, thus possibly compromising validity. In addition, the separation variables that were available sometimes consisted of only one item which may have compromised their reliability. Results may also have been complicated by the timing of the interview, as it occurred at the peak of a major life transition. Having recently left a long term abusive relationship, these women appeared less secure than they might have at another time because the effects of the recent trauma were still uppermost. Conversely, women may have appeared more secure because of a new found, but perhaps short lived, resolve. Transition has also been theorized to be a time when internal working models are particularly susceptible to change (Main, Kaplan , & Cassidy, 1985; Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994) and thus potentially a less than ideal time for measuring attachment systems.

A fourth limitation is the modest duration of this longitudinal study. Though we can make predictions about those individuals who may be at higher risk for returning to their assaulters, we do not have the data to confirm these predictions beyond the six month

follow-up. Similarly, Painter (1985) comments that abused women are typically categorized according to their decision to leave or stay, though the decision process itself is fluid and dynamic. It is unknown whether the decision to leave, or once having left, returning to an abuser may be stable or change over time. This very instability may be an important outcome variable worth assessing. In this study only four women returned to their partners at the six month follow-up: two with predominantly preoccupied profiles, and two with predominantly fearful profiles. Subsequent research could look at the question of not only how these decisions to leave or stay have fluctuated over time, but also how those decisions have impacted on the attachment profiles that we see years after the initial separation.

Future Directions

It should be noted that this study captures but one short time frame - looking at abused women after having just left an abusive relationship, and a follow-up six months later. The study does not address which attachment patterns may be at higher risk for becoming involved with abusive partners to begin with, nor which attachment patterns may be associated with leaving the abusive relationship at the earliest indication of abuse. The low frequencies of secure and dismissing individuals found in this study would suggest that attachment patterns associated with a positive self-model may be the least likely to become involved in or stay in abusive relationships, but this study cannot assess that question directly.

Further, this study only addresses the relative success of leaving abusive partners in the short term. As to which pattern may be more adaptive in the longer term is another question for future research. Research has indicated that there is a positive linear relationship between the number of times a person has tried to quit smoking and their eventual victory (Schachter, 1982). The same principal may be operating here. Maybe the preoccupied individual's ability to leave and return several times throughout the relationship may be the very factor that eventually precipitates her success.

Future research needs also to look at both partners in the abusive relationship. What makes individuals with similar attachment representations become either victims or perpetrators of violence? How do attachment representations function differently for the abuser and the abused? And how do the attachment patterns of each individual affect the dynamic interaction of the two players? Researchers have suggested that an individual with an insecure attachment pattern will more readily exhibit violence in relationship with a corresponding partner having a "complementary triggering pattern" (Mayseless, 1991, p.24). For example, the explosive episodes exhibited by a fearful man when he feels threatened that his partner is drawing away from him may well be exacerbated by a fearful partner who reacts to his over-control by increasing withdrawal. Similarly, this same pattern might be tempered by a relatively secure partner who can see the terror behind his anger and who does what she can to make him feel safer.

As well as looking at the attachment patterns of both partners in the abusive relationship, questions concerning the family history of these individuals need to be addressed in order to more fully understand to what extent these maladaptive patterns change over the life span. There is evidence that those in abusive relationships are more likely to have had a history of child abuse themselves (Gelles, 1972; Hilberman & Munson 1978; Strauss, 1979). However, many individuals from punitive backgrounds do not end up in abusive relationships (Fleming, 1979). These examples of discontinuity of abuse suggest that the internal working model has changed, perhaps as a result of a mediating attachment relationship (Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1988). The theory that insecure attachment representations may be changed by the positive influence of a secure relationship, as Bowlby and others have suggested (Bowlby, 1973, 1982; Egeland, Jacobvitz, & Sroufe, 1988; Houck & King, 1989; Hunter & Kilstrom, 1979), has potential utility in guiding future clinical intervention and treatment.

Summary and Conclusions

Initial investigations looking at abusive men from an attachment perspective indicate that the two attachment patterns associated with a negative self-model (preoccupied and fearful) show strong correlations with partners' reports of psychological abuse, and a slightly weaker relationship with physical abuse (Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski, & Bartholomew, in press). Dutton et al. explain these findings from an attachment perspective, suggesting that assaultive men's violent episodes are a protest behaviour precipitated by threat, or the perceived threat, of abandonment by the attachment figure. The attachment system is thus activated in order to regain the attachment figure.

It is noteworthy that the negative self-model also predominates in the victims of abuse. However, though we see an over-representation of preoccupied and fearful attachment patterns in this sample of abused women, the reasons for their inclusion are quite different. Here, the negative self-model of the preoccupied and fearful patterns serves to exacerbate the conditions necessary for traumatic bonding to operate. The power relationship can easily become pathologically unbalanced when the abused woman feels that she is unworthy of her assaulter, and her assaulter (who also holds a negative view of himself) seizes this advantage to live out the illusion of his own power. Intermittency of abuse is likely to have a stronger impact still on a women who holds not only a negative model of herself, but a positive model of others. Not only is this kind of woman more likely to believe that the violence is justifiable, but she is also more likely to trustingly respond to the "contrition phase" (Walker, 1979) that occurs after the violent episodes. This theme of self blame is clearly evidenced in the following quotation:

> I wasn't afraid of him at that point. I was still convinced it was me, and if I only hadn't done this, or hadn't done that, or if didn't do it again, everything would be fine. I think that's the myth that kept me going (Subject No. 002).

I have now listened to 63 two hour audio tapes of women's stories of not only being physically beaten, but being psychologically degraded and demoralized, while simultaneously being cut off from the very sources that could disconfirm their growing feelings of worthlessness. It now seems more clear how a woman's negative self-model is perpetuated and maintained in this kind of relationship to the point where leaving hardly seems a viable alternative. This process of near impossible disengagement was most beautifully described by one participant in her recounting of a recurrent dream.

> [I'm] taking off from [the street] in an open convertible and I'm 10 feet in the air just driving along and then [my partner] comes and takes my steering wheel and throws it out and takes my rear view mirrors and throws them out so the car is debilitated...The car doesn't work anymore so I have to stop and I can't go anywhere. It was another feeling of him stopping me, of him preventing me from doing things. I had this strong feeling of I had to fit in with his mold. To get his rewards I had to fit in with his mold. The rewards were the guidance...the security...the authority, the feeling of someone looking after me, of not having to look after my life because he looked after it (Subject No. 058).

And yet this is a sample of 63 women who *left* an abusive relationship. Six months later, fifty-nine of those women had managed to remain out of those abusive relationships. Despite their feelings of low self-worth, degradation, and entrapment, most of these women managed to get out and stay out. Finally being able to see the abusive situation in its stark reality seems to be the key turning point for many of these women, as is illustrated so succinctly in the following quotation: "For him, I've always been his port in the storm. For me, he's always been the storm" (Subject No. 003).

When women spoke about finally breaking loose from their assailants, the common themes that moved throughout these interviews were those of freedom and a newly discovered self-identity, evidenced in the following excerpts:

> That part of me that I've really liked and I've always hoped would be there was there. I can't believe that it's me, but I'm so pleased that it is me (Subject No. 058).
>
> Now I've totally changed. I've changed my attitude about life...I'm doing my own things that come free. I don't want to wash nobody's socks...That freedom...You can't believe! It's like somebody opened the cage and I flew (Subject No. 053)

I first began this project with the question of what keeps a women in an abusive relationship. In conducting this research, my perspective and my question have now changed. Now I ask myself how, and from where, do these women find the inner resources and fortitude to ever get out.

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Table 1

Comparison of Transition House Sample and Advertisement Sample on Relationship Variables

Relationship Variables	Transition House Sample Means	Advertisement Sample Means	T value
Relationship Length (mos.)	110.90 (17.10)	112.63 (19.82)	-.07
Previous Separations	.05 (.01)	.03 (.01)	1.61
Physical Abuse (CTS)			
Receipt of abuse	5.42 (.64)	.11 (.04)	8.32 ***
Infliction of abuse	.77 (.26)	.07 (.04)	2.63 **
Psychological Abuse (PMWI)			
Emotional/verbal	95.39 (2.23)	68.83 (4.06)	5.73 ***
Dominance/isolation	78.63 (3.65)	41.96 (5.63)	5.47 ***
Intermittency	2.91 (.42)	2.36 (.57)	.77

Note. Transition house sample (n = 44-50); Advertisement sample (n = 22-24)

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Standard deviations in parentheses

Table 2

Comparison of Transition House Sample and Advertisement Sample on Separation Resolution Variables

Relationship Variables	Transition House Sample Means	Advertisement Sample Means	T value
Psychological Adjustment Variables			
Self-esteem	28.91 (.65)	28.77 (1.10)	.11
Trauma symptoms	1.98 (.08)	1.94 (.12)	.33
Relative life satisfaction	7.42 (.18)	7.18 (.30)	.69
Overall adjustment	13.12 (.28)	13.01 (.44)	.21
Separation Variables			
Emotional Involvement			
CEI scale	.98 (.11)	.97 (.18)	.07
Emotional distance	4.37 (.15)	4.45 (.20)	-.33
Still love	1.35 (.12)	1.48 (.21)	-.52
Reconciliation			
Likelihood	1.75 (.34)	1.36 (.24)	.92
Attempts	1.37 (.12)	1.36 (.17)	.01
Contact			
Social	.17 (.06)	.27 (.10)	-.90
Sexual	.18 (.06)	.18 (.08)	.00

Note. Transition house sample (n = 44-50); Advertisement sample (n = 22-24)

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Standard deviations in parentheses

Table 3

Associations Between Attachment Ratings and Relationship Variables

Relationship Variables	Attachment Patterns			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Relationship Length	.43 ***	.22 *	-.49 ***	.08
Previous Separations	-.08	-.17 +	.32 **	-.16
Physical Abuse (CTS)				
Receipt of abuse	-.07	.20 +	-.10	.05
Infliction of abuse	-.03	.06	.11	-.02
Psychological Abuse				
Emotional/Verbal	-.13	.02	.12	-.14
Dominance/Isolation	-.22 *	.00	.12	-.03
Intermittency of Abuse	-.01	-.05	.02	.07

Note. Sample sizes vary from 57 to 63

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4

Associations Between Attachment Ratings and Separation Resolution Variables

Separation Resolution	Attachment Patterns			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Psychological Variables				
Self-esteem	.13	.08	-.27 *	.06
Trauma symptoms	-.25 *	-.09	.23 *	.08
Relative life satisfaction	.15	-.02	-.07	.07
Overall adjustment	.16	.07	-.24 *	.06
Separation Variables				
Emotional Involvement				
CEI scale	-.09	-.10	.19 +	-.14
Emotional distance	.03	.14	-.11	.00
Still love	-.13	-.05	.21 +	-.20 +
Reconciliation				
Likelihood	-.10	-.04	.01	.06
Attempts	-.20 +	.11	.19 +	-.24 *
Partner Contact				
Social	.16	-.24 *	.12	.03
Sexual	-.05	-.05	.16	-.15

Note. Sample sizes vary from 53 to 59

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 5

Associations Between Attachment Ratings and Separation Resolution Variables, Controlling for Physical and Psychological Abuse

Separation Resolution	Attachment Patterns			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Psychological Variables				
Self-esteem	.12 +	.06	-.23 *	.02
Trauma symptoms	-.24 *	-.07	.19 *	.13 +
Relative life satisfaction	.17 +	-.04	-.04	.04
Overall adjustment	.15 +	.04	-.21 *	.01
Separation Variables				
Emotional Involvement				
CEI scale	-.16 +	-.13 +	.27 *	-.09
Emotional distance	.13 +	.26 *	-.27 *	-.02
Still love	-.36 **	-.12	.42 **	-.20 *
Reconciliation				
Likelihood	-.17 +	-.09	.06	.03
Attempts	-.24 *	.14 +	.19 *	-.27 *
Partner Contact				
Social	.10	-.32 **	.26 *	.02
Sexual	-.14 +	-.17 +	.39 **	-.15 +

Note. Sample size varies from 46 to 54

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 6

Descriptive Table of Counselling Support Sought and Perceived Effectiveness

Help Seeking Variable	Percent who sought this help	Percent who found it at least slightly effective
Minister, priest, rabbi	19%	57%
Psychologist or psychiatrist	48%	46%
Marriage or family counsellor	25%	50%
Alcohol or drug abuse treatment services	12%	11%
Women's support group, crisis line	53%	5%
Battered women's shelter	16%	0%
Community mental health shelter	12%	22%
Other social service or counselling agency	21%	31%

Note. n = 68

Table 7

Associations Between Attachment Ratings and Separation Resolution Variables, Controlling for Counselling Support and Perceived Effectiveness

Separation Resolution	Attachment Patterns			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Psychological Variables				
Self-esteem	.10	.16	-.30 *	.04
Trauma symptoms	-.23 +	-.14	-.24 *	.08
Relative life satisfaction	.21 +	-.06	-.09	.17
Overall adjustment	.14	.13	-.28 *	.05
Separation Variables				
Emotional Involvement				
CEI scale	-.08	-.15	.30 *	-.23 +
Emotional distance	-.01	.36 **	-.17	-.16
Still love	-.19	-.13	-.34 *	-.25 +
Reconciliation				
Likelihood	-.16	-.32 *	.23 +	.24 +
Attempts	-.17	.16	.08	-.24 +
Partner Contact				
Social	.00	-.30 *	.30 *	.16
Sexual	-.07	-.21 +	.34 **	-.13

Note. Sample size varies from 40 to 47

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 8

Associations Between Attachment Ratings and Economic Variables

Economic Variables	Attachment Patterns			
	Secure	Fearful	Preoccupied	Dismissing
Employment	.14 +	-.12	-.02	.05
Income	.26 *	-.21 +	.00	.14
Needing to return b/c of $	-.31 **	.14	.15	-.15

Note. Sample sizes vary from 50 to 59

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 9

Associations Between Economic Variables and Separation Resolution

Separation Resolution	Economic Variables		
	Employment	Income	$ Return
Psychological Variables			
Self-esteem	.28 **	.14	-.32 **
Trauma symptoms	-.27 **	-.09	.25 *
Relative life satisfaction	.30 **	.11	-.30 **
Overall adjustment	.31 **	.14	-.34 **
Separation Variables			
Emotional Involvement			
CEI scale	-.13	.12	.21 *
Emotional distance	.10	-.14	.06
Still love	-.02	.25 *	.01
Reconciliation			
Likelihood	-.13	-.20 *	.11
Attempts	-.11	-.26 *	.12
Partner Contact			
Social	-.15	-.25 *	-.02
Sexual	-.22 *	.08	.04

Note. Sample sizes vary from 57 to 68

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$