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FEMININE ROLE ORIENTATION AND  
LOCUS OF CONTROL IN  
BATTERED WOMEN

by

Nancy C. Zielke

A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of the Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Education  
Department of Counseling and Personnel

Western Michigan University  
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FEMININE ROLE ORIENTATION AND  
LOCUS OF CONTROL IN  
BATTERED WOMEN

Nancy C. Zielke, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1984

The purpose of this study was to examine locus of control and feminine role orientation in battered women. It was hypothesized that battered women would have a more "external" locus of control than women who have not been in a battering relationship. It was also hypothesized that battered women would describe themselves as having more characteristics that are traditionally associated as "feminine" in nature and fewer characteristics that are considered "masculine" in nature than women who have not been in a battering relationship. Finally, it was hypothesized that there would be a relationship between locus of control and self-perceived feminine role orientation in the sample studied.

The sample consisted of 42 females who had sought services from two different shelters for battered women in Michigan. The comparison group consisted of 54 females who were enrolled at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. Inclusion in the comparison group was determined by the self-reported absence of ever having been involved in a battering relationship. All subjects responded to a brief demographic questionnaire, the Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control Scale, and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory.

Results indicated that battered women who seek assistance from shelters are more likely to believe that the rewards they receive in life are determined by external forces, such as luck, fate, or powerful others, than women who have never been in an abusive relationship. The data further

supported the hypotheses that battered women describe themselves as having more characteristics viewed as "feminine" and fewer of the characteristics viewed as "masculine" than women who report they have never been in a battering relationship. The battered women sample displayed a positive and significant relationship between locus of control and self-perceived feminine role orientation.

The results provided empirical support for Ball and Wyman (1977) and Walker (1979), who hypothesized that battered women are victims of over-socialization into the stereotypic feminine role. Having learned all their lives to be passive, dependent, yielding, and submissive, battered women have little experience in being responsible for themselves or in believing they have much control over their lives.

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Nancy C. Zielke

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Millions of women are severely beaten and many die as a result of violence within their primary relationship. This is not a current phenomenon. Wife abuse can be traced from ancient times. During the earliest hunting and gathering era, the division of labor was based upon need and biological factors. The male's greater strength gave him a position of authority and dominance (Lesse, 1979). As society moved from the agricultural era through the industrial revolution, males continued to dominate females while "male roles" were viewed as having even greater importance than in the past. Kessler (1976), in an anthropological view of women, concluded that although there is considerable variety in the status and role of women in various societies, it is universally true that women have always occupied a secondary status.

Further evidence of male dominance and authorization to control and punish women can be found in Christian Literature.

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman, being deceived, was in transgression. (I Tim. 2:11-14)

The Christian Bible also states, "...how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" (Job 25:4). In another passage there is a law regarding the disposal of a wife unable to prove her virginity:

Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: ...so shalt thou put evil away from among you. (Deuteronomy 22:21)

The Christian religion is not the only belief system with this attitude toward women. In the Koran, which is the sacred text of Islam, it states, "Men are superior to women on account of the qualities in which God has given them pre-eminence" (Deckard, 1975, p. 6). And in the morning prayer of the Orthodox Jew there is this:

Blessed art Thou, oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a gentile. Blessed are Thou, oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a slave. Blessed art Thou, oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, that I was not born a woman. (Bem, 1976, p. 180)

While the churches supported the subordination of women in marriage and the husband's control over her, the law legitimized the use of violence in marriage. Throughout Europe in the Middle Ages, women could be flogged, exiled or even killed if they committed adultery or other "lesser" offenses (Dobash & Dobash, 1977). Under English Common Law, this was written:

...the wife came under the control of her husband and he had the legal right to use force against her in order to insure that she fulfill her wifely obligations, which included the consummation of the marriage, cohabitation, maintenance of conjugal rights, sexual fidelity, and general obedience and respect for his wishes. (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 60)

It was considered a natural part of the husband's responsibilities to chastise his wife if he thought it necessary.

The English common laws were adopted and incorporated into the legal system of the American colonies. In 1824 the Supreme Court of Mississippi upheld the right of a husband to chastise his wife, specifically declaring that he should be free to do so "without subjecting himself to vexatious prosecutions of assault and battering" (Fleming, 1979, p. 154). In

1864, a North Carolina court ruled that the state should not interfere in cases of domestic chastisement, but should leave the parties to themselves, to make up, unless there were permanent injury or an excess of violence (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Not until 1871 was wife abuse declared illegal and that was only in two states, Alabama and Massachusetts (Schechter, 1982).

As can be seen, legal, moral, and societal sanctioning of wife abuse is evident throughout history. While it is no longer legal to beat women, current research indicated that the physical abuse of women is still widespread in American society (Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1979). Walker estimated that as many as 50 per cent of all women will be victims of battering at some time in their lives. Many contemporary researchers and writers (Gelles, 1974; Martin, 1976; Steinmetz & Straus, 1974; Walker, 1979) agree that contrary to popular belief, women remain in abusive relationships because of complex psychological and sociological reasons rather than because they like being battered.

As the problems of battered women began to come to the public's attention, much was done to help remove some of the external barriers trapping women in violent relationships. Shelters for battered women exist throughout the country, laws are being changed and enforced, police and the public are being educated, and agencies are offering help economically; yet many women still feel unable to leave battering situations. While crisis intervention on a short-term basis is crucial and primary in helping with immediate needs in such situations, more emphasis is needed on long-term help if change is to be lasting (Follingstad, 1980; Goodstein & Page, 1981).

One way to bring about long-term help is to unravel the complex psychological issues involved operant in battered women (Walker, 1979). Yet,



not much has been done to investigate the clinical and psychological characteristics of the battered woman (Hilberman, 1980). In 1981, Goodstein and Page could not find one controlled study in the area of battered women. They called for national attention to this subject and stressed the need for controlled research as the way to understand the problem, and help find strategies for treatment.

While some may argue that studying the psychological characteristics of the victim inadvertently blames the victim (Stark, Flintcraft, & Frazier, 1979), the fact remains that some women are able to avoid battering and some are not, some are able to resist it and leave immediately, some stay in the battering relationship for years, and some never leave. By studying the psychological characteristics, a better understanding of why this happens and tactics for more lasting interventions can be developed.

One factor mentioned by many of the current writers in this area is that battered women have been over-socialized into a stereotypic feminine role (Ball & Wyman, 1977; Gelles, 1974; Hilberman, 1980; Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979). It was hypothesized that early in the lives of young girls they are taught by parents and society that to be female is to be passive, submissive and dependent. Women learn that their personal worth depends more on beauty and appeal to males than on anything else (Brownmiller, 1984). The contention of current writers is that women who are battered have learned to be more docile, submissive, humble, non-assertive, dependent, and conforming than women who are not battered. In addition, they are less able to make independent decisions, feel competent, and are not capable of taking some control over their life situation.

Related to this area of sex-role socialization and the sense of control

over one's life situation is the belief about the cause of what happens in one's life. If individuals believe that they personally control the reinforcements they receive in life and that reinforcement is contingent upon their behavior, they are said to have an "internal" locus of control (Rotter, 1954, 1966). In contrast, people who believe that the reinforcements they receive in life are the result of fate, luck, or powerful others, or in some way beyond their control they are said to have an "external" locus of control. If women believe they have no control over reinforcements in their lives and that something outside of themselves is controlling these reinforcements, this could help explain why women who are battered stay in violent relationships (Walker, 1979). Although research has not been done to determine whether battered women can be classified as "externalizers", it could help give further direction for treatment strategies for battered women (Walker, 1979).

#### Statement of the Problem

Based on a review of the theoretical literature, which gives ideas and suggestions as to the psychological make-up of battered women, the problems for analyses are: (1) to determine if battered women are more external in their belief in the nature of reinforcements than women who are not in a battering relationship; (2) to determine if battered women describe themselves as having more characteristics that are traditionally associated as "feminine" in nature than women who are not in battering relationships; (3) to determine if battered women describe themselves as having less of the characteristics traditionally associated as "masculine" in nature than women who have not been in battering relationships; and (4) to determine if there is

a relationship between locus of control and self-perceived feminine role orientation in battered women.

### Limitations of the Study

A number of factors limit the power of this study concerning battered women and their psychological make-up. Instrumentation, more specifically the use of questionnaires, presents problems. It has been suggested (Kerlinger, 1973) that the same question frequently has different meaning for different people. The questionnaire measuring sex-role characteristics presents sixty words which could well be defined differently by those responding to it. Most likely, interpretation on both scales differed from subject to subject.

Another limitation of the study involved surveying only battered women who seek the services of a shelter. While the results are only applicable to abused women who utilized shelters, there is not reason to believe that any difference exists between battered women who do go to shelters and battered women who do not.

Problems also exist in the selection of the comparison group. Inclusion in this group depended on answering a question truthfully as to whether the respondent has ever been involved in a battering relationship. While privacy in responding to the questionnaire was provided, the sensitivity of the question may have posed a problem for some.

### Summary

In summary, although wives have been battered throughout history, it has only been within the last twenty years attention has been focused on the

severity of the problem. While sociological literature has expanded understanding of the phenomena, there is an absence of psychological research on battered women that could help describe potential problems and direct approaches for permanent change. Specifically, this investigation concentrated on battered women in order to better understand certain psychological characteristics that differentiate them from women who have not been in a battering relationship.

### Review of Related Literature

The review of the literature will be organized in the following manner: part one contains a review of the research concerning explanations as to why battered women remain in abusive relationships; part two, a review of the literature on learned helplessness and locus of control; and part three, an overview of the literature on female sex-role socialization.

#### Violence Against Women: Why Battered Women Stay

It is estimated that the battering of women occurs in 33 to 50 percent of the homes in the United States, and that millions of women are severely injured and many die as a result of violence within their primary relationship (Martin, 1976; Schechter, 1982; Walker, 1979). Historically, women have been viewed as property of their husbands and men were given religious, legal, and social rights to control and beat their wives if they deemed it necessary (Schechter, 1982). Thus, cultural and social sanctioning of wife abuse has played a major part in keeping women in violent, unsafe homes.

The question of why women stay in a battering relationship involves

many complex factors. Until the mid 1970's when the women's movement began exploring the situation and issues of battered women, traditional psychology offered various explanations as to why women did not leave a violent home.

One traditional explanation given in the past by psychiatrists and psychologists stemmed from the psychoanalytic views of feminine masochism.

This view can be summarized as follows:

The specific satisfactions sought and found in female sex life and motherhood are of a masochistic nature. The content of the early sexual wishes and fantasies concerning the father is the desire to be mutilated, that is, castrated by him. Menstruation has the hidden connotation of a masochistic experience. What the woman secretly desires in intercourse is rape and violence, or in the mental sphere, humiliation. The process of childbirth gives her an unconscious masochistic satisfaction, as is also the case with the maternal relation to the child. Furthermore, as far as men indulge in masochistic fantasies or performances, these represent an expression of their desire to play the female role. (Horney, 1935/1967, p. 215)

Horney (1935/1967) questioned Freud's theorizing on the masochistic character of women by arguing:

Let us ask again: What are the data? [concerning female masochism] As far as I can see, only the fact that there may exist in small children early sadistic fantasies....There is no evidence for the ubiquity of these early sadistic fantasies, and I wonder, for instance, whether little American Indian girls, or little Trobriand girls have them. (p. 217)

Horney concluded by stating:

The problem of feminine masochism cannot be related to factors inherent in the anatomical-physiological-psychic characteristics of women alone, but must be considered as importantly conditioned by the culture-complex or social organization in which masochistic woman has developed. The precise weight of these two groups of factors cannot be assessed until we have the results of anthropological investigations using valid psychoanalytical criteria in several culture areas significantly different from ours. It is clear, however, that the importance of anatomical-psychological-psychic factors has been greatly overestimated by some

writers on this subject. (pp. 232-233)

Yet, other female psychoanalysts supported the Freudian view of female masochism. Deutsch assumed that it was genetic factors of a biological nature that accounted for the masochistic nature of females (Horney, 1935/1967). She further affirmed that masochism is the most elemental power in a female's mental life, and that woman's existence is dominated by a "masochistic triad: castration-rape-parturition" (Deutsch, 1930). Another female psychoanalyst who followed Freud's theorizing about female masochism was Lampl DeGoot (1933). She considered passivity, defined as the turning inward of aggressive impulses, a basic feminine attribute.

Operating from a belief in the masochistic nature of the female character, Snell, Rosenwald, and Robey (1964) concluded that spouse abuse was an isolated problem in disturbed couples in which violence was seen as fulfilling masochistic needs of the wife and even as necessary for the wife's equilibrium.

Faulk (1977), a psychiatrist, described twenty-three men remanded in custody for seriously assaulting their wives. He categorized five types of marital relationships. Some of the categories seemed to suggest that the men were being held accountable for their behavior. Yet, a description of the most common type, called the dependent-passive husband, was:

In this type of relationship the husband characteristically gave a good deal of concern and time to trying to please and pacify his wife, who often tended to be querulous and demanding. The offense was an explosion which occurred after a period of trying behavior by the victim. There was often a precipitating act by the victim. (p. 121)

Once again the victim is blamed for her aggressor's behavior. By this description, the husband does not have control over his behavior and cannot

resist provocation. Faulk, in essence, sympathized with the assaultive males and focused blame on the battered women for causing their attacks.

Goode (1971) attempted to explain violence within relationships by using a theoretical framework for exploration of the social-structural and interpersonal-process variables. He proposed that learning violence and the appropriate use of force occurs as a result of early learning experiences within the family. The male child learns from his parents that the male is stronger and that the mother is frightened when the father is angry. The female child learns the limits of female power and the need to respect and fear male force. Further writing by Goode indicated that force is basic to the social system and can be acquired to some extent, by any member of the group in exchange for meeting needs of others.

Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967) offered the theory of the subculture of violence as a possible explanation for spouse abuse. It is their contention that violence is the result of subcultural patterns that exist in certain groups within society and that violent responses are seen as normative in such groups. Violence, therefore, is not viewed as deviant but rather a response to subcultural values, attitudes and rituals.

Follingstad (1980), in her review of the literature, summarized three main reasons given to explain why women remain in abusive relationships: (1) the battered woman does not really want to escape the abusive relationship, rather she provokes the abuse for masochistic reasons; (2) the battered woman's personality structure contributes to the abusiveness by her passive-aggressive nature, extreme dependency, sense of helplessness, and hysterical need for attention; and (3) the battered woman uses the therapy situation to gain attention and sympathy for the stress she experiences

because she actually has no intention of changing the situation. Follingstad offered an alternative explanation as to why women do not leave a violent relationship. She stated that the personality profile of the battered woman may be a result of having lived in an abusive relationship over time and that the woman's behavior is shaped into a passive, dependent style with passive-aggressive expressions of anger.

Roy (1977) postulated that in the majority of marriages the partners are on the same level psychologically and emotionally and that people pick their mates as a response to their own neurotic needs (unrecognized). It is her position that violent relationships can be characterized as follows: there is a kind of sex role division, the woman is overly submissive, the man is attacking, overly demanding and sadistic.

Experimental psychology has explained spouse abuse by drawing from the frustration-aggression hypothesis which assumes there is a predictable, innate connection between frustration and aggression (Stahly, 1977). According to Stahly, the frustration-aggression hypothesis predicts violence occurs in the relationship when situation and interpersonal variables increase the perpetrators' state of frustration. No explanation is given for the fact that the victim is usually the female and the aggressor is usually the male.

Social learning theory hypothesized violent behavior as a learned response (Bandura & Ross, 1961). According to this theory violence is learned through reinforcement and occurs when in a given situation, the appropriate stimulus is present. Thus, violence would take place in a relationship where abusive behavior was positively reinforced. The assumption here is that women reinforce violent behavior which, again, inadvertently blames the victim.



Walker (1979), a leading feminist researcher in the area of battered women, has this to say about "blaming the victim" theories:

Blaming women for causing men to batter them has resulted in the shame, embarrassment, denial, and further loss of self-esteem. The batterer feels justified in his violent behavior because society says it is really the woman's fault, not his. It perpetuates his notion that he should beat her because she did something to make him angry. What gets lost in this victim precipitation ideology is the fact that such violence is not acceptable behavior....The violence will only cease when every person, man or woman, stops defensively rationalizing and begins to understand just how such acts come about in our culture and why they continue. (p. 15)

Walker theorized that women are battered because society is sexist and patriarchal and that as a result of sex-role stereotyping women become victimized by men. Further, she stated that feelings of powerlessness by both men and women add to the cause of violent behavior. Although men may feel powerless, it is the very fact of being a married woman that creates a situation of powerlessness. Because women are socialized to be passive, dependent, and submissive, and to believe that they have no control over the circumstances in their lives, they are being trained to become victims. Having learned their role and proper behavior, a woman begins marriage (relationship) with a psychological disadvantage. According to Walker, if violence occurs, the woman has little psychological strength of belief in her competence to leave and exist on her own.

Ball and Wyman (1977) proposed that the battered woman's dilemma has its origins in the passivity and dependency which defines the traditional feminine role. They contended that the battered woman has learned all her life to be dependent on others to meet her basic needs, that to be humble, ingratiating, non-assertive, quiet, and selfless is how a woman should act and feel. She is not taught to be independent nor is she taught to make decisions

or take responsibility for herself. When faced with a situation of enduring abuse or making it on her own, because of her training and socialization, she really has not choice. They concluded that the battered woman has no sense of control over her life or what happens in it, and therefore no expectation of success if she were to try and take control and make changes.

Martin (1976) also cited sex-role socialization as a major reason for women being battered. While men are taught to be forceful and aggressive, women are taught to be submissive and dependent. Martin added another dimension to the sex-role conditioning issue. She pointed out that according to Western culture, a woman's primary source of identity and satisfaction comes from her marriage. If a woman accepts this premise, she will often take responsibility for a bad marriage. Therefore, if the marriage includes abuse she feels ashamed and at fault for what is going wrong. This idea is supported by others in this society, Martin found. This conclusion serves as further reinforcement for the victim to blame herself for the battering.

Schechter (1982) emphasized the need to trace the historical context within which battering has developed. She also focused on women's status in a capitalist society and the factors that reinforce male domination and violence toward women. Sexist socialization, as Schechter termed it, teach women that men are to judge female worth and that women are to wait, passively, to be chosen by a man. Because women are socialized to seek protection and affirmation from men, it is easy to understand that when they are battered, they feel as if they have failed. Schechter (1982) stated, "They see the personal failure rather than the unequal power dynamics that allow battering to happen" (p. 231).

In summary, much has been written in an attempt to explain why

women are battered. Over time, theories have ranged from blaming the woman for the abuse she received, to focusing on the historical patterns and socialization process that teaches women to become victims. What is evident is the lack of controlled studies to support these views.

### Learned Helplessness Theory and Locus of Control

The theory of "learned helplessness", which is concerned with early response reinforcement and subsequent passive behavior, has been advanced to help explain why battered women stay in abusive relationships (Walker, 1979). Seligman, an experimental psychologist, along with other researchers (Overmier & Seligman, 1967; Seligman & Maier, 1971), administered electrical shocks at random and varied intervals to dogs in cages. It did not matter what the dogs did, their response could not control the shock. At first the dogs tried many actions to escape the shock, but learned quickly that the aversive stimuli was outside of their control and became quite passive. When attempts were made to teach the dogs to cross to the other side of the cage in order to avoid the shock, the dogs still did not respond. Even when the door of the cage was left open and the dogs were shown the way to escape, they remained passively in the cage (Overmier, 1968). Not until the dogs were repeatedly dragged to the exit did they learn they could escape the shock on their own. According to Seligman (1975), the effects of the learned helplessness took longer to overcome when such treatment is received early in the dog's life. Researchers have demonstrated that this theory does apply to human beings as well (Gatchel & Proctor, 1976; Hiroto, 1974; Seligman & Miller, 1973; Thornton & Jacobs, 1971).

If an individual experiences situations which cannot be controlled,

then motivation to try to respond to such events when they are repeated will be hampered. Even if the individual later can make proper responses which do control the events, the individual will have difficulty believing that the responses are under his/her control (Walker, 1979). All of this results in what seems to be a disturbance in the person's physical and emotional well-being, with depression and anxiety characterizing the person's behavior (Seligman, 1973; Walker, 1979).

There are three parts to the Learned Helplessness Theory: information about what should or will happen; cognitive representation about what will happen (learning, belief, expectation, perception); and behavior toward what does happen (Walker, 1977). The problems arise at the second part which involves expectations and learning. If a person believes that she/he does not have control over response-outcome variables, it does not matter if the belief is accurate, the person responds with the learned helplessness response (Seligman, 1973; Walker, 1977). Thus, the nature of controllability is not as important as the perception.

Learned helplessness theory may be important in understanding why a battered woman does not leave an abusive relationship (Walker, 1979). The battered woman believes that she is helpless and things are out of her control. This perception becomes her reality regardless of the accuracy. Her behavior is determined by her perception of the situation and her belief about what she can do. She operates from a position of helplessness, which may or may not actually exist (Walker, 1977).

Conceptually similar to the learned helplessness theory is the construct of "locus of control" (Rotter, 1954, 1966). This construct was developed to provide another alternative theory to explain variations in

human behavior and is grounded theoretically in social learning theory (Rotter, 1954, 1960). Lefcourt (1976) summarized social learning theory as "...a person's actions are predicted on the basis of his values, his expectations and the situations in which he finds himself" (p. 26).

Internal-external locus of control is concerned with the degree to which a person perceives that reinforcements are contingent on his/her actions. Rotter (1966) stated that:

The effect of a reinforcement following some behavior on the part of a human subject, in other words, is not a simple stamping-in process but depends upon whether or not the person perceives a causal relationship between his own behavior and the reward. A perception of causal relationship need not be all or none but can vary in degree. (p. 1)

Rotter defined internal locus of control or "internalizers" as individuals who believe that their own responses largely determine the amount and nature of the rewards they receive. In contrast, external locus of control or "externalizers" believe that the rewards they receive are determined by external forces such as fate, luck, chance, powerful others, or in some way outside themselves and beyond their control.

Hiroto (1974) investigated failure to escape, which is the defining characteristic of learned helplessness, with perceived and instructed locus of control subjects in a learned helplessness paradigm. He subjected three groups of people to the absence or presence of loud noises. Group one could not escape hearing the loud noise, group two heard the noise but could turn it off by pressing a button, group three heard no noise.

In the second part of the experiment, Hiroto gave the subjects a finger shuttlebox. By moving one's fingers across the shuttlebox, the subjects could turn off the loud noise. Those in group two who had previously learned to silence the noise by pushing a button, as well as those in group three who

had not heard the noise, easily learned to move their fingers across the box to control the noise. However, the subjects in group one, whose attempts to turn off the noise were unsuccessful, merely sat with their hands in the shuttlebox, passively hearing the loud noise. They were helpless to control the situation.

Hiroto concluded, "...that a single process could underlie learned helplessness, externality, and the perceptual set of chance-the expectancy that responding and reinforcement are independent" (p. 192). He also found that externals were more susceptible to learned helplessness than internals.

The relationship between learned helplessness and locus of control was also investigated by Albert and Geller (1978). They hypothesized that learned helplessness in humans would be mediated by locus of control. They conducted two experiments to test their hypothesis and found it supported by both. Specifically, they found that individuals perceiving an external locus of control were prone to learned helplessness while those perceiving an internal locus of control did not learn helplessness.

The results of Albert Geller's study lends support to theorizing by Wortman and Brehm (1975). They theorized that individuals who expect to have control over a situation will react differently to uncontrollability than individuals who do not expect to have control over the same situation. They suggested that those who expect to have control will increase their efforts to control a situation when faced with uncontrollability while those who do not expect to have control will give up when faced with the same situation. Albert and Geller (1978) suggested that the subjects in their experiment with internal locus of control entered with the expectation that they were going to be able to employ some control over the tasks given to them, while those

with external locus of control had the expectation that they would probably not be able to exert control over the tasks given. These expectations, they concluded, supported Wortman and Brehm's (1975) theory. Other researchers have reported findings consistent with Wortman and Brehm (Roth & Bootzin, 1974; Roth & Kubal, 1975).

In summary, the theory of learned helplessness has been used to help understand the dilemma of battered women. A relationship between learned helplessness and locus of control has been established through research. Recent writers (Davidson, 1978; Walker, 1979) have indicated that research into locus of control in battered women may further shed light on the psychology of battered women and their experiences.

#### Female Sex-Role Socialization

"Anatomy is destiny," Freud wrote about women, explaining that women are innately inferior because of their anatomy (Freud, 1969). He theorized that normal women are passive, masochistic, and narcissistic. Woman's innate inferiority is based on the fact that she lacks a penis. In the process of growing up, according to Freud, little girls develop penis envy. Freud (1969) stated:

The feminine situation is only established...if the wish for a penis is replaced by one for a baby... Her happiness is great if later on this wish for a baby finds its fulfillment in reality, and especially so if the baby is a little boy who brings the longed for penis with him. (p. 24)

Freud postulated that once the girl represses her own impulses toward activity and becomes passive she has achieved normal femininity. A woman is neurotic if she wants to take part in the world outside of her home in pursuit of an intellectual profession. In Freudian theory, a woman's

inferiority results from the psychological reaction to her anatomy based on her realization that she is "maimed" because she lacks a penis.

Over the past thirty years researchers have taken issue with Freud's assumptions about women and have written much in opposition to his ideas.

Although researchers use sex (male and female) and gender (masculine and feminine) interchangeably, it is important to distinguish between the two. Sex is determined at birth and is distinguished by physical anatomical characteristics. Gender and gender role, as described by Chafetz (1974), is different. Chafetz described gender role as "...a cluster of socially and culturally defined expectations that individuals in a given situation are expected to fulfill" (p. 3). It was Chafetz' contention that through research it would become clearer as to what was innate and what was learned through socialization.

From the day a new born baby girl is brought home from the hospital with a pink bracelet she is treated differently than if she had on a blue bracelet. From the toys she is given to the behaviors expected, there exists one set of rules for boys and one set of rules for girls (Deckard, 1975). In Deckard's review of the literature she found numerous studies that indicated from birth through early childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, females' behaviors in general are shaped to be dependent, passive, kind, cooperative, timid, to feel less important and less capable than boys, and to base their value on their appearance.

The female learns what is expected and accepted behavior for her; appropriate behavior is rewarded while inappropriate behavior is often punished. The crucial question is whether the behavior taught to females and reinforced by society is healthy. In a landmark study by Broverman,



Broverman, Clarkston, Rosenkantz, and Vogel (1970) seventy-nine clinically trained psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers were asked to describe the mature healthy female, male, and adult. The results indicated that the clinicians held different ideals for a healthy adult male and a healthy adult female. However, the ideal for the healthy, fully functioning adult was similar to that of the healthy male, but different from the healthy female, who was described as follows:

very emotional, feelings are easily hurt, difficult time making decisions, very dependent, more submissive, less competitive, less adventurous, more easily excitable in minor crises, easily influenced, less objective, more conceited about their appearance. (pp. 1-7)

The authors of the study stated that the description of the healthy female seemed to be a very unusual way of describing any mature, healthy individual. Women seemed to be placed in a double jeopardy by the fact that a different set of standards exist for women than for healthy adults and healthy males. If they adopt behaviors that are seen as feminine and desirable for women they do not come close to the standards that exist for healthy adults. Yet, if they adopt behaviors that are healthy for adults they risk various punishments for exhibiting unfeminine behavior.

It has been suggested by some researchers (Hyde & Rosenberg, 1976) that by following the typical female course of role development the potential for psychological disturbance is increased. Since women are taught that, for example, achievement was desirable but unfeminine, or that motherhood was expected but not valued, or that competition builds confidence but is unladylike, that ambivalence could become the essence of the female personality.

During the past twenty years there has been much social change.

Some women have taken the risk and adopted those characteristics attributed to the healthy adult. Women have been actively seeking positions in what has been traditionally considered "a man's world." Some argue that androgyny (endorsement of both masculine and feminine attributes) should be encouraged as the ideal (Bem, 1974; Spence & Helmreich, 1978, 1979). Bem argued that sex role differentiation has outlived its usefulness, and that it only prevents men and women from developing as fully functioning human beings. Accordingly, the androgynous individual can be sensitive to the changing constraints of a situation and respond in whatever way seems most effective, regardless of what is appropriate behavior for one sex or another. This adaptability for androgynous individuals was found to be in sharp contrast to the sex-typed individuals who were found to display behavioral deficits of some sort in certain situations (Bem, 1975).

Spence and Helmreich (1978) assessed the way college students describe themselves in terms of characteristics seen as part of feminine and masculine stereotypes. From their research, they concluded that androgynous individuals, highly masculine and highly feminine, are likely to view themselves more positively than sex-typed individuals.

These researchers have found that people free from the extreme caricatures of sex-typed behavior are able to adapt and respond more effectively as well as view themselves more positively than people who conform rigidly to sex appropriate behavior. Yet much of the traditional feminine sex-role expectations are still present in this society. The question raised by researchers in the area of battered women is whether or not this traditional feminine sex-role socialization has influenced battered women more than women who have not been in a battering relationship.

### Summary

In summary, while some have attempted to simplify the reasons women stay in abusive relationships, contemporary writers (Ball & Wyman, 1977; Hilberman, 1980; Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979) agree that women remain because of many psychological and sociological reasons. Researchers agree that the typical battered woman fits the profile of what women are socialized to be in Western society (Hilberman, 1980; Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979). While the implication is that battered women remain in abusive situations because they are victims of over-socialization into feminine roles, research has yet to test this hypothesis.

Another variable mentioned as a factor in the dilemma of battered women is that of feelings of control. Battered women have been portrayed as victims of learned helplessness (Walker, 1979). The helplessness-prone individual has been found to be largely controlled externally, over sheltered and dominated, made to feel dependent and is submissive (Thornton, 1982). If battered women believe that control of what happens to them exists in ways outside themselves and beyond their control, verification of this could offer further insight into treatment variables. Studying the psychological characteristics is not intended to blame the victim. Rather, the intention is to identify variables and their relationship which may be contributing to the helplessness women experience when trying to leave a violent relationship.

## CHAPTER II

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Presented in this chapter are a description of the sample population, the procedures used in the selection of the subjects and comparison group with a description of data collection, instrumentation used in this study, the hypotheses, and the techniques used for analysis of data.

#### Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of all women who seek assistance from some type of shelter for battered women. For purposes of this study, "battered woman" was operationally defined as:

A woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behavior by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights. Battered women include wives or women in any form of intimate relationship with men. (Walker, 1979, p. xv)

In order to acquire a sample from this population, questionnaires were sent to two shelters for battered women in the State of Michigan.

Forty-five (45) women who sought assistance from a shelter in the month of July and the first week of August, 1984, comprised the sample for this study. Three questionnaires were not completed properly and could not be used. Thus, the usable sample consisted of 42 women between the ages of 17 and 52 who matched the definition of a battered woman. Education levels were as follows: 16 had less than a high school education, 15 had graduated from high school, and 11 had attended college for differing lengths of time.

### Sampling Procedure

It is impossible to gather data from the entire population of battered women because of the stigma, fear, and danger involved. Because of this, a sample was gathered from women who sought services from shelters for battered women in the State of Michigan. Gaining access to the population of women utilizing shelters is often difficult. For safety reasons many shelters do not publish their location while others, for the protection of their clients, are hesitant to allow information to be gathered. A major consideration for choosing these two shelters in this study was that both were willing to have their clients take part in the research. One shelter is located in Pontiac, a metropolitan area on the east side of Michigan, and is one of the largest shelters in the state. The other shelter is located in Coldwater, a small rural area located on the west side of the state. In contrast to the Pontiac shelter, the shelter in Coldwater is one of the smallest in Michigan.

The questionnaires were delivered to the shelters and instructions were given as to how they should be administered. Over a five week period, all English-speaking women seeking services from the shelters and fitting the definition of battered woman, were asked to fill out the survey. The counselors at each shelter explained that it was part of a research project and asked the women to fill out the questionnaires in their presence. The women were informed by the counselors that their anonymity was assured and their responses would be kept confidential. The Informed Consent form asked only for their initials and no identifying marks were made on the questionnaires. If the women felt that by responding they would place themselves in danger, they were excused from answering the survey. The

completed forms were placed in an envelope, and at the end of the five weeks were returned.

#### Selection of Comparison Group

A comparison group was used to help determine if any differences exist between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship. The major criterion for inclusion in the comparison group was the absence of being involved in a battering relationship. This was determined by subjects' response to a question on the demographic questionnaire which asked if they had ever been involved in an abusive relationship. Their answer was taken at face value. Because of the stigma and embarrassment that often revolves around being categorized as a "battered woman," the social desirability factor may have influenced responses to the question. However, there is no reason to believe that it did. The subjects were selected from the population of women enrolled at Kalamazoo Valley Community College. A junior college population was selected for the comparison group because it offered a group similar in age and somewhat similar in education to the battered women sample. All women were between the ages of 17 and 46, and were taking classes either part-time or full-time at the college.

A counselor at the school was contacted, and this person, in turn, supplied a list of teachers who could be contacted. Each teacher was contacted in the order provided until admission to a class was given. Questionnaires were administered to the women in the class and the process was repeated until 60 women had filled out the forms. Five classes in all were entered and 63 questionnaires were filled out. Nine (9) could not be

used because the respondents answered that they were presently, or had in the past, been involved in a battering relationship. The final group consisted of 54 women who reported they had not been in an abusive relationship at any time in their lives.

### Instruments

The materials filled out by each subject included an Informed Consent Form, a brief Demographic Questionnaire, the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale), and the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI).

#### The Demographic Questionnaire

This form was different for the two groups. Age and occupation were asked of all subjects, while participants in the battered women's group were also asked educational level. A copy of this form is located in Appendix A. Those in the comparison group were questioned about life-style, as well as if they had ever or were, currently, living in a battering relationship. A copy of this form is located in Appendix B.

#### Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (I-E Scale)

The Internal-External Locus of Control Scale was developed by Rotter (1966) to assess a person's belief in the nature of control reinforcement. A copy of the questionnaire is located in Appendix C. Social learning theory provided the theoretical framework for the instrument (Rotter, 1966). Social Learning Theory is concerned with an individual's belief about the reinforcement personally received in life and whether it is contingent upon his/her own behavior. Rotter (1966) states this

idea clearly:

A generalized attitude, belief, or expectancy regarding the nature of the casual relationship between one's own behavior and its consequences might affect a variety of behavioral choices in a broad band of life situations. Such generalized expectancies in combination with specific expectancies act to determine choice behavior along with the value of potential reinforcement. These generalized expectancies will result in characteristic differences in behavior in a situation culturally categorized as chance determined versus skill determined, and they may act to produce individual differences within a specific condition. (p. 2)

The I-E Scale contains 29 items, six are filler items. The 23 scale items consist of two alternatives (A & B), and subjects are forced to choose the one which reflects their beliefs. One choice expresses a belief in internal control of reinforcement and the other expresses a belief in external control of reinforcement. Filler items are to mask the overt intention of the scale and the order of presentation is varied. The score is the absolute number of external choices selected.

Internal consistency reported by Rotter (1966) using split half reliability was .65, using the Spearman-Brown method the correlation was .79, and using the Kuder-Richardson method, the correlation ranged from .69 to .76. Rotter concluded that item analysis and factor analysis show reasonably high internal consistency for an additive scale.

Test-retest reliability for a one-month period ranged from .60 to .83, and for a two-month period the reliability was somewhat less, .49 to .61. Rotter reasoned that the test-retest reliability is satisfactory and that the scale correlates well with other methods of assessing the same variable such as a Likert scale, interview assessment, and ratings from a story completion technique.

Evidence of construct validity was extensive. Seeman (1963) tested



reformatory inmates and their ability to remember various kinds of information which they were exposed to in incidental order. He found a significant correlation between internality-externality and the amount of information remembered about how the reformatory was run and long-range economic facts which might affect the individuals after they left the reformatory. Gore and Rotter (1963) investigated the willingness of Negro students at a southern Negro college to get involved in civil rights activities during their vacation. Students who were willing to take an active part (e.g. march on the state capital, join a freedom riders' group) were significantly more internal than those who would not take an active role (e.g. only willing to attend a rally, would not participate, would not fill out the form). Gore and Rotter concluded that the willingness of some to take part in active attempts to change things, and others not to, was related to their own generalized expectancy that their behavior could effect a change.

Some studies of the relationship of internal-external control to smoking offered further support of construct validity. Straits and Sechrest (1963) discovered that non-smokers were significantly more internal than smokers. James, Woodruff, and Werner (1965) replicated that finding. Other studies (Lefcourt, 1976; Phares, 1976; Rotter, 1975) offered further support of strong construct validity. Correlation with social desirability was moderate (Rotter, 1966).

One investigator (Joe, 1971) of the I-E Scale concluded that the scale was valid but it does not measure one pure factor of locus of control. Another question that has been raised about this scale concerns the multidimensionality of the scale. Mirels (1970), however, reviewed the literature concerning multidimensionality and decided that the utility of

separating the scale into separate factors has yet to be determined. Although new I-E Scales have been developed, the Rotter Scale remains the instrument of choice for most research on adults (Strictland & Haley, 1980).

### Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI)

Developed by Bem (1974), the Bem Sex-Role Inventory treats masculinity and femininity as two independent dimensions. By doing this, it is possible to characterize an individual as feminine, masculine, or androgynous. Androgyny is defined by Bem as the function of the difference between endorsement of feminine and masculine characteristics.

The BSRI contains sixty personality characteristics. A copy of this instrument is located in Appendix D. Twenty items are stereotypically feminine and make up the femininity scale, 20 items are stereotypically masculine and compose the masculinity scale, and the remaining 20 items are neutral. A break down of the scale items is located in Appendix E. The neutral items are defined as neither masculine nor feminine, but both (Bem, 1974). The BSRI is basically a self-administering inventory and the items were selected as masculine or feminine on the basis of cultural definitions of sex-typed social desirability and not on the basis of differential endorsement by males and females.

Scoring for the BSRI is based on a 7-point scale which asks the person to indicate how well the 60 characteristics describe him/herself. The scale ranges from 1 ("Never or almost never true") to 7 ("Always or almost always true"). Each person can receive three major scores based on his/her response: a Masculinity Score, a Femininity Score, and an Androgyny Score. The Masculinity and Femininity scores represent the extent to which

someone endorses masculine and feminine characteristics as describing him/herself. The Androgyny Score reflects the degree of masculinity and femininity a person includes in describing him/herself.

The BSRI normative data (Bem, 1981) are based on 340 female and 476 male Stanford University graduates in 1978, and 279 females and 444 male Stanford University undergraduates in 1973. Reliability results ranged from .75 to .78 on the Femininity Scale, and from .86 to .87 on the Masculinity Scale. Difference score reliability on the Androgyny Scale ranged from .78 to .84. Test-retest reliability measured from .76 to .94. Bem (1981) sites numerous studies (Allgeier, 1975; Falbo, 1977; Lippa, 1977; Wiggins & Holzmuller, 1978) which supports the validity of the BSRI.

Questions have been raised concerning the validity of the measure of androgyny (Kelly & Worrell, 1977; Locksley & Colten, 1979). Others have criticized the BSRI claiming that it is atheoretical and that the Femininity and the Masculinity scales are not unidimensional (Pedhazur & Tetenbaum, 1979), as well as questioning the feasibility of basing the measurement of individual differences in femininity and masculinity on broadly based cultural stereotypes about women and men (Locksley & Colten, 1979). In two separate factor analysis studies, Gaudreau (1977) and Gruber and Powers (1982) concluded that the BSRI accurately represents masculine and feminine dimensions. While most of the criticism revolves around the androgyny dimension, there appears to be support and validation of the BSRI as an instrument that accurately measure traits attributable to either males or females.

## Statistical Hypotheses

Four research hypotheses were formulated to test the questions raised in the review of the literature. The hypotheses are stated in research form here.

### Hypothesis One

There will be a significant difference in mean scores on the I-E Locus of Control Scale between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship.

### Hypothesis Two

There will be a significant difference in mean scores on the Feminine Scale of the BSRI between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship.

### Hypothesis Three

There will be a significant difference in means scores on the Masculine Scale of the BSRI between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship.

### Hypothesis Four

There will be a relationship between locus of control as measured by the I-E Scale and self-reported feminine characteristics measured by the BSRI in battered women.

### Statistical Analysis

Variables used in this study represent data accumulated from the mean scores on the I-E Scale and mean scores on the Masculine and Feminine scales of the BSRI for both the battered women's group and for the comparison group of women who have not been in a battering relationship.

Each of the first three hypotheses was tested through the use of a one-way analysis of variance. Hypothesis one was tested by an analysis of variance of the Locus of Control mean scores for the two groups. Hypothesis two was tested using the analysis of variance of the mean score of the Feminine Scale of the BSRI for each group. Hypothesis three was tested by using the analysis of variance of the mean scores on the Masculinity Scale of the BSRI for each group. Hypothesis four was tested by a Pearson Product  $r$  correlation comparing mean scores on the Locus of Control for battered women and the mean of the Feminine Scores on the BSRI of the battered women's group. A probability of  $p = <.05$  for committing a Type I error was used. The statistical package for the Social Sciences Version M was used in the computer analysis of the results.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This research study examined locus of control and self-perceived feminine role orientation and their relationship in battered women. In Chapter III the analysis of data, and a discussion of the results are presented.

#### Description of Sample and Comparison Groups

Initially, 45 battered women filled out the questionnaires. Three of the packets were not completed properly, thus, results are based on 42 battered women responding to the questionnaires. The data from the Demographic Questionnaire on battered women are displayed in Table 1.

For the comparison group, women who reported that they had never been in a battering relationship, 63 women initially responded to the questionnaires. Of those, nine had been or were currently involved with an abusive mate, bringing the total for the comparison group to 54. The data from the Demographic Questionnaires of the comparison group are displayed in Table 2.

Table 1  
Demographic Data on the Battered Women's Group (N=42)

Variable	<u>N</u>
Age: Mean = 27.4	
Occupation:	
Professional	0
Clerical/Labor/Clerk	7
Homemaker	21
Student	2
Part-time employment	0
Multiple roles	1
Missing	11
Education:	
Less than High School	16
High School Graduate	15
Some College	11
4-year College Degree	0

Table 2  
Demographic Data on the Comparison Group (N=54)

Variable	<u>N</u>
Age: Mean = 25.3	
Occupation:	
Professional	10
Clerical/Labor/Clerk	22
Homemaker	2
Student	17
Part-time employment	1
Multiple roles	3
Missing	0
Life-Style:	
Never Married	31
Married	15
Separated	0
Divorced	3
Widowed	0
Living with Significant Person	5
Missing	1

Inspection of Tables 1 and 2 indicate that there was only approximately two years difference in the mean age between the group of battered women and the comparison group. There was considerable difference however, with regard to occupational alignment, which is to be expected with a college population. Twenty-one (21) battered women reported "homemaker" as their occupation compared to only two in the comparison group. Seventeen (17) in the comparison group indicated "student" as their occupation while only two in the battered women's group claimed it as their occupation. Less than half of the battered women's group (16) indicated that



they had not graduated from high school while all in the comparison group were enrolled in the junior college. While there is not much difference between mean ages of the two groups there is considerable difference with regard to occupation and a moderate degree of difference in educational level.

### Hypothesis One

The null hypothesis of no significant difference in mean scores on the I-E Locus of Control Scale between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship was tested using a one-way ANOVA. The analysis of variance was computed with mean scores on the Rotter I-E Scale for both groups. The data are summarized in Tables 3 and 4. As evidenced in Tables 3 and 4, the null hypothesis of no difference between means was rejected, and the research hypothesis was accepted. Thus, a significant difference does exist in mean scores on the I-E Scale between battered women and non-battered women.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Battered Women's Group and Comparison Group

Group	<u>N</u>	Mean	Standard deviation
Battered Women	42	11.476	3.569
Comparison group	54	8.907	3.535

Table 4  
 An Analysis of Variance of Mean Scores on the I-E Scale  
 Comparing Battered Women and Non-Battered Women

Source	DF	Mean squares	<u>F</u> -ratio	<u>F</u> -Prob.
Between groups	1	155.893	12.366	.0007*
Within groups	94	12.606		
Total	95			

\*Sig.  $p = <.05$

#### Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis of no significant difference in mean scores on the Feminine Scale of the BSRI between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship was tested using a one-way analysis of variance. The two groups were compared using the mean scores on the Femininity Scale of the BSRI. The data for analysis are summarized in Tables 5 and 6. As evidenced in the tables, there was a significant difference in mean scores between the two groups. The null hypothesis of no significant difference between means was rejected, and the research hypothesis was accepted.

Table 5  
Means and Standard Deviations for the Group of Battered  
Women and the Comparison Group

Group	<u>N</u>	Mean	Standard deviation
Battered Women	42	5.267	.613
Comparison group	54	4.990	.583

Table 6  
An Analysis of Variance of Mean Scores on the BSRI-Femininity  
Scale Comparing Battered Women and Non-Battered Women

Source	DF	Mean squares	<u>F</u> -ratio	<u>F</u> -Prob.
Between groups	1	1.814	5.008	.026*
Within groups	94	.356		
Total	95			

\*Sig.  $p = <.05$

### Hypothesis Three

The null hypothesis of no significant difference in mean scores on the Masculine Scale of the BSRI between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship was tested using a one-way ANOVA. The analysis of variance was computed with mean scores on the BSRI-Masculinity

Scale for both groups. The data are summarized in Tables 7 and 8. As evidenced in Tables 7 and 8 the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected, and the research hypothesis was accepted. Thus, a significant difference in mean scores on the Masculinity Scale of the BSRI between the two groups does exist.

Table 7  
Means and Standard Deviations for the Battered Women's Group and the Comparison Group

Group	<u>N</u>	Mean	Standard deviation
Battered Women	42	4.064	.975
Comparison group	54	4.526	.659

Table 8  
An Analysis of Variance of Mean Scores on the BSRI-Masculinity Scale Comparing Battered Women and Non-Battered Women

Source	DF	Mean squares	<u>F</u> -ratio	<u>F</u> -Prob.
Between groups	1	5.041	7.636	.006*
Within groups	94	.660		
Total	95			

\*Sig.  $p = <.05$

#### Hypothesis Four

The null hypothesis of no relationship between locus of control as measured by the I-E Scale, and self-reported feminine characteristics as measured by the BSRI, in battered women was tested using the Pearson Product-Moment correlation coefficient.

The correlation was computed between mean scores on the I-E Scale and mean scores on the BSRI-Femininity Scale for the group of battered women. The resulting correlation was  $r = +.292$ ,  $p = <.05$ , which resulted in rejection of the null hypothesis. A significant correlation indicated that a linear relationship does exist between these two variables for the group of battered women.

#### Discussion

Rejection of null Hypothesis One suggests that a significant difference exists between mean scores on the I-E Scale between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship. Interpretation of these results suggest that battered women are significantly more external in their beliefs about control of reinforcements. These results confirm Walker's (1979) hypothesis delineating a connection between victims of learned helplessness (battered women) and external locus of control. Battered women may be described as "externalizers" based on data produced by this study.

Null Hypothesis Two was rejected because a significant difference was found between mean scores on the Feminine Scale of the BSRI for the two groups. Battered women reported themselves as having more traditionally feminine characteristics than did women who had not been battered. This

conclusion supports numerous writers who have indicated that battered women may very well be victims of over-socialization into a stereotypical feminine role (Ball & Wayman, 1977; Hilberman, 1980; Martin, 1976).

The rejection of null Hypothesis Three occurred because a significant difference resulted in mean scores on the Masculine Scale of the BSRI for the two groups. Battered women saw themselves as having less of the attributes traditionally associated with masculinity than did those who had never been in a battering relationship. The lower score on the Masculine Scale for battered women further supports the idea that they have been over-socialized into the feminine role because exhibiting masculine characteristics oppose the traditional female image (Bem, 1981).

Null Hypothesis Four was rejected because a significant relationship was found between locus of control and sex-role stereotyping in battered women. The directionality of the relationship indicated that the more external the group's belief in control of reinforcements, the higher their mean score on the Feminine Scale. Caution must be exercised when interpreting the strength of this relationship. When  $r = +.292$ , the value is not sufficient to interpret a strong relationship.

In summary, examination of the data indicate battered women are more likely than women who have not been battered to believe that the rewards they receive in life are determined by external forces such as fate, luck, chance, or powerful others. The data further supports the idea that battered women exhibit more of the characteristics which are traditionally feminine and fewer characteristics that are traditionally seen as masculine than women who have not been battered. This traditional sex-typed profile is indicative of individuals who are motivated to keep their behavior consistent

with an idealized image of femininity. Bem (1981) states that sex-typed individuals accomplish this goal by choosing behaviors and characteristics that strengthen the traditional feminine image and by avoiding behaviors that oppose the traditional feminine image.

## CHAPTER IV

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

The present study was undertaken to investigate locus of control and self-perceived feminine role orientation in battered women. Following a review of the literature it was hypothesized that battered women would be more external in locus of control and would describe themselves as having more characteristics traditionally defined as feminine and less characteristics traditionally defined as masculine than women in general.

The Bem Sex-role Inventory (BSRI), a self-administering, 60 item questionnaire, was chosen with scores from the masculine and feminine scales employed to determine self-perceived feminine role orientation. The Rotter Internal-External Scale (I-E Scale), a 29 item forced-choice questionnaire, was used to measure locus of control with both instruments administered to the two groups.

The battered women's group consisted of 42 females who sought services from two shelters for battered women in Michigan. The control group consisted of 54 women enrolled at a junior college, who had reported on a demographic questionnaire that they had never been involved in a battering relationship. Results of both instruments were used to test the following null hypotheses:

$H_1$ : There will be no difference in mean scores on the I-E Scale between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship.



H<sub>2</sub>: There will be no difference in mean scores on the Feminine Scale of the BSRI between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship.

H<sub>3</sub>: There will be no difference in mean scores on the Masculine Scale of the BSRI between battered women and women who have not been in a battering relationship.

H<sub>4</sub>: There will be no relationship between locus of control as measured by the I-E Scale and self-reported feminine characteristics as measured by the BSRI in battered women.

Each of the first three hypotheses was tested through the use of a one-way analysis of variance. The statistical analysis used to test Hypothesis 4 consisted of a Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient comparing the mean score on the I-E Scale and the mean score on the BSRI for the group of battered women. All four null hypotheses were rejected. The results suggest that battered women are significantly more external in locus of control than women in general. The evidence also suggests that battered women perceive themselves as having more characteristics that are traditionally feminine in nature and fewer characteristics that are considered masculine in nature than women in general. The final conclusion drawn is that a significant and positive relationship exists between locus of control and self-perceived feminine role orientation in battered women. However, the magnitude of the relationship,  $r = +.292$ , is not sufficient for dramatic interpretations.

### Conclusions

Dobash and Dobash (1977) stated that violence against women in the

home has existed for centuries, not as "deviant" or "aberrant," but acceptable and desirable as part of the patriarchal family system. Hilberman (1980) discussed the societal attitudes that normalize the use of violence toward women along with the sex-role conditioning that leaves women vulnerable to the abuse and incapable of independent self-protective action. Ball and Wyman (1977) examined the over-socialization of battered women into a stereotypic feminine role. They concluded that battered women learned all too well to be docile, submissive, dependent, passive, and helpless. Walker (1977, 1979) drew from the theory of learned helplessness to explain why battered women believe they cannot escape the batterer's control, and that their perception does not have to be accurate for the theory to work. Rather, what is important is the woman's belief that she cannot leave. Walker explored the sex-role socialization process and concluded that it can be responsible for inducing a faulty belief system that reinforces women's feelings of helplessness. She also implied that investigation into locus of control may add further insight into the psychology of battered women. Davidson (1978) believed that the battered woman sees herself as "helpless" and "unworthy of the world's cooperation," and that whatever happens is done to her, "...that the locus of control is not within herself" (p. 57).

From interviews with battered women, researchers (Ball & Wyman, 1977; Hilberman & Munson, 1977; Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979) have concluded that over-socialization into the traditional feminine role is a major factor in abused women not being able to leave a battering relationship. Yet, that hypothesis has not been empirically tested. The results of this study support their theorizing. Evidence from this research also indicates that battered

women who seek shelter are more external in locus of control than women in general.

The findings of this study amplify and accentuate the psychological order and role of women in this society. Current writers in the area of the psychology of women have attempted to explain the process. Miller (1976) stated that women's status in this society was one of subordination. Subordination resulted in a relationship of permanent inequality with men. She believed the dominant group (men) inevitably had the influence in deciding a culture's overall outlook. She suggested that men legitimized the unequal relationship and made it a part of what is "normal." The culture explained this inequality in terms of other false premises, such as sexual inferiority. Despite the fact that in recent years, evidence exists to contrary, that women are not innately passive, submissive, and docile; the notions still exist. Further, Miller indicated that women were expected to provide relationships with nurturance, caring, and giving while at the same time remain subservient with permanent unequal social status and power. Women have had to live by trying to please men, and have been taught that they are responsible for their man feeling comfortable. If the man is unhappy or angry, the woman is made to feel that they themselves are at fault. Support for Miller's ideas have been given by Chesler (1972), Chafetz (1974), and Rivers, Barnet and Baruch (1979). They proposed concepts which parallel Miller's contentions. These authors suggested that women have been taught to perceive themselves as powerless and dependent and unable to bring about change on their own.

Rohrbaugh (1979) concluded that femininity carried to extremes is a hazard to a woman. She stated that the dependency and passivity that

epitomize the female stereotype are what makes a woman vulnerable to violence, rape, depression, and a general self-deprecation that causes feelings of worthlessness and hopelessness. And although it is the result of female role and socialization that victimizes women, women are still held responsible. In the situation of battered women, the victim is accused of provoking the violence.

Given the limitations of the sample studied, results of this research indicate that battered women have indeed incorporated the extremes of what the stereotypic feminine role represents. It is also evident that battered women who seek shelter do not believe they are in control of the reinforcements they receive in life, but rather are at the mercy of fate, chance or powerful others. These findings may give direction for development of treatment strategies for helping battered women.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

It has been argued that studying the psychological characteristics of the victim inadvertently blames the victim (Stark, Flintcraft, & Fraziers, 1979). In response to this, Breines and Gordon (1983) countered with the idea that although the line between investigating the circumstances and responses of victims and blaming victims is a delicate one, it is important to undertake if understanding and change is to occur.

One area for future study is to explore the background of battered women and the degree to which sex-appropriate behavior was stressed during their childhood. Associated with this would be an investigation of the parent behaviors related to masculine and feminine sex role orientations. The literature indicates that a large part of the learning of sex role behavior

takes place within the family. It would prove useful to validate this to determine if battered women experience a greater emphasis in their childhood on sex-appropriate behavior than do women in general.

Given the evidence, it seems reasonable to presume that battered women will be ambivalent about the women's movement. Women in the movement are less likely to adhere strictly to the traditional feminine stereotype (Walker, 1977). It would be interesting to measure the attitude of battered women toward women in general and toward feminists. This kind of research could expose the beliefs battered women hold about women and about how women "should" be, which could help in treatment strategies.

Another method to help better understand the battered woman phenomenon is through longitudinal studies. To study battered women from the battered situation, through their attempts to change, with psychological profiles being done over time, could help expose any common personality variables that exist and what kinds of changes occur within the women that are successful in eliminating the violence from their lives.

There is little evidence of controlled studies in the area of battered women because the circumstances often make it impossible. Further studies, however, which explore different variables and characteristics are needed, as well as studies which could help determine whether battered women who seek shelter differ from women who do not seek shelter. Fleming (1979) indicated that low self-esteem may contribute to the battered woman's inability to leave a violent relationship, yet this kind of hypothesizing has yet to be tested. While the ultimate goal for ending abuse of women is to change societal attitudes and beliefs and the power structure that allows the battering to continue, much can be done to help individual women rid

violence from their lives until the larger solution can be accomplished.

Finally, studies need to be carried out to determine if understanding certain psychological characteristics of battered women and making use of this knowledge in therapy situations will have an impact on change. Because the ultimate goal of studying the profile of battered women is to help develop strategies for change, research needs to be done to determine if this is effective.

### Recommendations for Therapy

Walker (1979) writes, "Individual psychotherapy, which is long-term in nature, has the potential to be a most useful therapeutic intervention for battered women" (p. 233). While recent writers seem to be in agreement with Walker, it is also true that psychology has done little in the past to train therapists in the specific counseling needs and dynamics of battered women (Ball & Wyman, 1977). It is also important here to differentiate between crisis intervention and individual long-term therapy. Crisis intervention focuses on a specific critical incident. There is an emphasis on safety and survival which is of an immediate nature. Individual psychotherapy comes into practice once the crisis situation has been dealt with and the immediate needs addressed.

After five years of experience in counseling women, including approximately 150 battered women, personal clinical observations further confirm the hypothesis that battered women have been over-socialized into the feminine role. As a result, they are overly dependent and passive and unable to make decisions easily. Therefore, the therapist must be careful if the woman attempts to shift her dependence from her mate to the therapist.

Rather than making decisions for the woman and directing her course, which reinforces her passivity and dependence, teaching the client how to do what needs to be done and how to make decision can help her redefine her self-image. Dependency and passivity are not the only two issues to be addressed in therapy. There may be a fine line between the traditional feminine characteristics that are contributing to the battered woman's dilemma and those that have the potential to, and even do, provide strength; a line the therapist must be familiar with to be effective.

The issue of control is also important for the therapy process. Based on results from this study and personal clinical observations, it is evident that battered women can be said to be "externalizers." A major goal in therapy should be to increase the woman's feelings of being in control of the reinforcements she receives in life. Goals will involve new learning and differentiating the areas and levels of control that are possible. Studies have indicated (Dua, 1970; Gillis & Jessor, 1970) that therapy can significantly alter locus of control in the direction of internality, which can in turn help counter feelings of powerlessness and helplessness that permeates a battered woman's life.

Finally, there needs to be more research to confirm the results of this study. This research suggests that there is a significant difference in the way battered women who seek shelter perceive themselves and the control they believe they have over reinforcements in their lives from women in general. Replication seems necessary in order to support these conclusions and provide further background for questions raised from the findings of this investigation.

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## APPENDICES

Appendix A

Battered Women

Informed Consent

PLEASE NOTE:

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Appendix B

Comparison Group

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## Appendix C

### Internal-External Locus of Control Scale

Appendix D

Bem Sex-Role Inventory

Appendix E

BSRI Scale Items

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