

Women Leaving Violent Men:
Crossroads of Emotion, Cognition and Action

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To my daughter Iris

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Abstract

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This thesis addresses battered women's leaving processes. Leaving is conceptualised in a wider sense, i.e. as disentanglement from violent relationships beyond the physical break-up. The *general aim* of the thesis is to study how *emotion* and *cognition* are shaped around the *act* of leaving. Feminist theory on violence against women and the sociology of emotions are the main theoretical frameworks used to enhance understanding of women's exiting from violence. The thesis is built on two sets of qualitative interview material with women who have left abusive heterosexual relationships. The material consists of a total of 49 interviews.

In Paper I, **Why Does She Leave? The Leaving Process(es) of Battered Women**, three overlapping leaving processes are described: Breaking Up, Becoming Free and Understanding. Breaking Up covers action, i.e. the physical breakup. Becoming Free covers emotion and involves release from the strong emotional bond that battered women may develop to their batterers. Understanding covers cognition and is a process that entails women defining the relationships they have lived in as abusive and themselves as victimised.

In Paper II, **A Fool to Keep Staying" – Battered Women Labelling Themselves "Stupid" as an Expression of Gendered Shame**, the informants labelling themselves "stupid" is investigated. Feeling stupid for staying in the abusive relationship and "allowing" oneself to be mistreated are the main themes. It is proposed that feeling—and labelling oneself –stupid is an expression of gendered shame and reflects unfinished Understanding processes.

In Paper III, **Leaving Jekyll and Hyde – Emotion Work in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence**, battered women's emotion work is investigated. The results suggest a process in which victims initially conceptualised abusers as good, but subjection to violence led to a cognitive-emotive dissonance responded to by emotion work. Over time,

conceptualisations of abusers shifted from good to bad and efforts were made to change emotions from warm to cold.

In Paper IV, **Jekyll and Hyde or “Who is this Guy?” – Battered Women’s Interpretations of their Abusive Partners as a Mirror of Opposite Discourses**, the informants’ interpretations of their abusers as “Jekyll and Hyde” are analysed against the background of two opposite discourses: the pathology/deviance discourse and the feminist/normality discourse. Complex mixes and combinations of understandings were found in the informants’ interpretations which were, however, dominated by the pathology/deviance discourse. During analysis of the material, a third image emerged, beyond Jekyll and Hyde, i.e. the abusers as “hurt boys”; it was argued this image might prolong the Becoming Free process and serve as a direct impediment to leaving.

The results of the thesis indicate that emotion and cognition are interconnected and in process around the act of leaving.

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List of papers

I: Why Does She Leave? The Leaving Process(es) of Battered Women.
Published in Health Care for Women International (29) p. 200-226.

II: “A Fool to Keep Staying” – Battered Women Labelling Themselves “Stupid” as an Expression of Gendered Shame. Accepted for publication in Violence Against Women.

III: Leaving Jekyll and Hyde – Emotion Work in the Context of Intimate Partner Violence. Submitted manuscript.

IV: Jekyll and Hyde or “Who is this Guy?” – Battered Women’s Interpretations of their Abusive Partners as a Mirror of Opposite Discourses. Submitted manuscript.

Chapter I: Violence Against Women

This thesis, consisting of six chapters and four papers, is based on in-depth interviews with Swedish women who have left violent men. The general aim of the thesis is to study how *emotion* and *cognition* are shaped around the *act* of leaving. In this introductory first chapter, I will broadly portray how the social problem of men's violence against women (VAW) has been addressed, especially within feminist theoretical frameworks. First, some definitions of VAW in general and woman battering in particular will be presented, followed by an introduction to feminist theory on VAW, concentrating on the specific analysis of male-to-female intimate partner violence that has evolved within this framework.

Defining the problem

The social phenomenon under investigation in this thesis is VAW in general, and woman-battering in particular. What is, then, VAW? One commonly used and broadly acknowledged definition is found in the United Nations' *Declaration on the elimination of violence against women* (1993), according to which:

(...) the term "violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. (UN, 1993, A/RES/48/104)

Furthermore, it is stated that:

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;

(b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;

(c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. (UN, 1993, A/RES/48/104)

The term is thus broad, encompassing many forms of violence occurring in several different settings. The specific kind of violence that is the subject of this thesis is woman battering, i.e. male-to-female violence taking place within intimate heterosexual relationships, a phenomenon described and defined as follows by the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW:

Woman-battering or domestic assault is the most common form of domestic violence, characterized by the use of physical or psychological force, or the threat of such force, by the dominant domestic partner, whilst recognizing the overwhelming probability that this partner is male, for the purpose of intimidating, manipulating or coercing the subordinate partner. (UN, 1996, E/CN.4/1996/53)

Taking a closer look at this definition, five specific features can be discerned. The first and most obvious is that it addresses the use or threat of *force*, be it psychological or physical. The second is that it mentions *dominance*, more specifically of one dominant domestic partner. This dominance, arguably, may rest on other factors than the use of force, such as higher economic – or other – status. The third feature of the definition is that it makes explicit that this dominant partner is, most often, *male*. A fourth is that it refers to an intent, or at least a *purpose*, of the violence while a fifth feature, finally, is that this purpose is spelled out as *intimidation*. This is also the definition I use and adhere to in this thesis.

Another widely used description of male-to-female intimate partner abuse is the *power and control wheel*, developed within the so-called Duluth Model from Minnesota. In this metaphorical illustration, physical and sexual abuse are portrayed as only the outer part of the wheel, while the spokes upholding it are manifold and include economic and emotional abuse (see next page).

The emphasis on aspects other than physical abuse is central in many descriptive definitions of woman abuse, including the 1996 UN report cited earlier:

Physical violence is not, however, the sole weapon of the batterer. Like the act of torture, batterers often use a debilitating combination of physical and psychological violence in a process of domination and exertion of control, meant to destabilize, victimize and render the woman powerless. (UN, 1996, E/CN.4/1996/53)

Figure 1. The Duluth model power and control wheel



Source: www.duluth-model.org

There is an ongoing discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of a broad definition of intimate partner violence that includes many different aspects of abuse, such as manipulation, isolation, verbal insults and different kinds of intimidation. Highlighting the multifaceted nature of violence and respecting the experiences of battered women who identify the emotional or psychological parts of the abuse as the most hurtful are two arguments for such a broad definition (Kelly, 1988; Kirkwood, 1993). However, two prominent feminist researchers, sociologists Russell P. Dobash and Rebecca Emerson Dobash (2004), propose that “violence” as a concept should be restricted to physical transgressions. For the well-known pattern of behaviours displayed by abusers (described above as the spokes of the power and control wheel) they instead suggest the term “constellation of abuse”, in order to be able to methodologically separate single acts of aggression or conflict from systematic

abuse. This approach seems valid in regard to the difficult task of investigating violence and abuse using survey methodology, which is the context of their suggestion. The challenge, then, is to separate patterns of abusive behaviours (including or excluding physical violence) from violent or aggressive acts that are not part of such a pattern, for example self-defence or an abused woman's retaliation.

In my opinion, the broader definition of abuse is most suitable to the subject of this thesis. The papers presented touch on breaking bonds of love, dependency and internalisation, on how the informants label themselves in relation to experiencing abuse, how they handle emotion work and how they explain and interpret their abusers' behaviours. A narrow or segmented description of violence would have limited the analysis and impoverished the presentation.

Terminology; what it hides and what it shows

Several different terms used to cover the subject of this thesis have already been used in this text, bringing up the relevant discussion concerning terminology. When women active in the "second wave" of feminism (during the 60s and 70s) brought forward men's VAW in intimate relationships as a problem they sought to create terminology describing this phenomenon. *Domestic violence* was one of the first terms suggested, aiming at showing that the "sacred sanctuary of the home" was an arena for oppression of and violence against women. Criticism of the concept was, however, soon forthcoming from within the same feminist community (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). The content of this criticism was (and is) that the term refers to place rather than person. It mentions the arena of the violence, but not who perpetrates it to whom. That the term "domestic violence" is also used to indicate other kinds of abuse within the home, such as child and elder abuse, contributes to making it unclear and unspecific. However, despite these often-repeated criticisms (Ellsberg, 2000; Hoff, 1990; Marcus, 1994), the concept remains in use and is often found as a keyword in pertinent academic publications.

Another "early" term, used mainly in the beginnings of social enquiry into the newly "discovered" problem, was *spouse abuse*. The concept aimed at emphasising person more than place as well as the institution within which violence occurred, i.e. marriage. Again, feminist criticism of the concept targeted its gender neutrality, pointing out that it did not indicate which spouse abused the other (Schechter, 1982). The use of the term *wife abuse*

can be seen as a response of a kind to this criticism; here, the gender of the person abused within marriage is spelled out. However, attention has been called to this term leaving out women involved in co-habiting or dating relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Ellsberg, 2000), resulting in proposal of the terms *woman abuse* and *woman battering*. The concept of *the battered woman* deserves mention. This was the title of an early and, at the time, very influential work by psychologist Lenore Walker (1979), and the term has, as described by epidemiologist Mary Carol Ellsberg (2000), “been widely used in the United States and Europe to describe women who experience a pattern of systematic domination and physical assault by their male partner” (p. 3). The use of the definite article in “the battered woman” has, however, been questioned, pointing to its uni-dimensionality that leaves no room for diversity, concerning different kinds of women or different kinds of experiences.

Regarding the latter, awareness of abuse within same-sex relationships began to grow in the 1980s (Lobel, 1986; Renzetti, 1992), leading to a critique of the demand to denote the perpetrator as male and the victim as female on the basis that this excludes victims within lesbian and gay relationships. Subsequently, alternative and more inclusive terminology has evolved, i.e. *violent relationship* and *intimate partner violence*. The problem with the former, according to critics, is that it locates the problem with the relationship rather than the perpetrator, regardless of gender (Kirkwood, 1993). The latter is less problematic; however there is an ongoing discussion on whether it is preferable to use a gender-neutral and thus more inclusive term, or one that makes evident “the overwhelming probability” (United Nations, 1996) that the perpetrator is, indeed, male.

Finally, there is the term *family violence*, which has also been used to cover male-to-female intimate partner violence. Criticized for being both misleading and gender-oblivious, this concept is also used to depict other kinds of violence within the family, in which it resembles the concept domestic violence and thus has the same disadvantages (Ellsberg, 2000; Hoff, 1990; Pringle; 1995).

In this thesis, several of the terms presented above will be used, on different grounds and with different intent. *Domestic violence* will, due to its widespread usage, also be found in this work, commonly when referring to the research field. *Woman abuse* and *woman-battering* will be used interchangeably, and even the debated label “*battered woman*” will be found, a fact I reflect upon below. Both the terms *violent relationship* and *intimate partner violence* will be used, but I prefer to equip them with the prefix “male-to-female”. I will, however, avoid *spouse abuse*, *wife abuse* or *family violence* since I wholly agree with the criticism directed at these terms.

A battered woman?

My use of the term “battered woman” in the singular, even preceded by the definite article at times, mirrors my background. The fact that I have used the term more frequently in the first papers and less frequently in the later papers reflects development. My background is in the battered women’s movement, where I obtained my first training. At that time and in that situation, we discussed “a/the battered woman”, referring, as Ellsberg describes above, to women who had experienced a pattern of abuse that had affected them emotionally. “A battered woman” was thus not only a descriptive, but also an analytical, label; it implied not only the occurrence, but also certain consequences of, violence. Many, and justified, criticisms may, however, be directed at the use of “a battered woman” as an analytical description. Referring to women, who have at some time experienced intimate partner violence, with the monolithic term “battered woman” not only reduces all women to one, it also reduces them to their experiences of abuse (Kirkwood, 1993). These experiences may differ, though there are commonalities. Furthermore, the term has been used in an overly psychological manner: “a battered woman syndrome” has been proposed (Walker, 1979; 1984). I would remind the reader that being a woman, battered or not, is not a personality trait; it is a social position. Moreover, the use of the word “woman” has been questioned. White middle-class feminists have been challenged over this category having been used to mirror their specific experiences, making them appear universal (Mohanty, 1991). As should be evident from my changing from the singular to the plural, I have been influenced by these criticisms.

Feminist theory on violence against women

Feminists from different schools of thought have given different amounts of space to VAW in their analyses and have also explained it differently. According to Walby (1990), liberal feminists have made the implicit assumption that VAW is a rather rare phenomenon, and see its remedy in more efficient intervention to support victims. Furthermore, according to Walby, Marxist and socialist feminist analyses have devoted scant attention to VAW, which has been considered to be an outcome of exploitative class relations when indeed discussed at all. The assumption is that frustrated working class men take out their anger on the women they live

with, an assumption contradicted by the fact that intimate partner violence is represented across the socioeconomic scale, claims Walby. Radical feminists, on the other hand, have put VAW in the centre of the analysis. At the core of the oppression of women, claim radical feminists like Brownmiller (1976), Dworkin (1987) and MacKinnon (1979), lies men's violence. Thus feminists of different kinds have approached VAW differently.

However, over time, a specific school of feminist thought on VAW has evolved. Below, I will try to pin down some characteristic features of this school of thought, i.e. VAW regarded as a *pervasive social phenomenon*, a *continuum*, a *violation of bodily integrity* and a kind of "*structured oppression*". These features overlap and touch on different levels of analysis; a brief summary may, however, serve as an introduction.

VAW as a pervasive social phenomenon

In the 1970s, men's VAW was an "undiscovered" – or naturalised – phenomenon. It was the women's movement that put the problem on the map and demanded that it should be addressed within the research community. When this happened, the frequency of what had previously been regarded as an exception in the relationships between women and men stunned researchers, making the need for new frameworks and concepts obvious. Consequently, many of the early contributions in the field were focused on naming and describing women's experiences and VAW as a social phenomenon (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Hanmer & Maynard, 1987; Russel, 1982; Stanko, 1985).

The classical example is sociologist Liz Kelly's study *Surviving sexual violence* (1988), in which sixty women were interviewed. Half of the participants were known to have been the victims of some sort of male violence while the other half constituted a control group of informants who had denied, before joining the study, that they had been subjected to violence. However, another picture emerged through the interviews: all but one of the participants in the study had indeed experienced some kind of male violence. The fact that these experiences had not been conceptualised as violence was connected to narrow and male-identified definitions of violence, according to Kelly.

Hence, since the onset of feminist studies in the field, researchers have endeavoured to depict the many different forms, the widespread existence and the common occurrence of men's violence against women. From classical works such as *Violence against women: A case against the patriarchy* by Dobash and Dobash (1979), to recent prevalence and crime victimisation studies (Heiskanen & Piispa, 1998; Lundgren, et al., 2002; Statistics

Canada, 1993), this has been a crucial task, the outcomes of which have challenged previous notions of VAW as a limited problem affecting only a few.

The severe consequences of VAW for (female) individuals as well as society as a whole have also been emphasised by feminist researchers. For example, women who are victimised by their intimate male partners may face not “only” the psychological consequences of victimisation, but also impaired mobility and physical health negatively affecting their capacity to work (Moe & Bell, 2004). Furthermore, economic setbacks of many kinds often follow in the wake of (leaving) violence (Davis, 1999). Thus, it is argued, men’s violence maintains women’s subordinate financial position, and an unjust society (Parrot & Cummings, 2006).

VAW as a continuum

The concept of a “continuum of violence” was developed by Kelly (1988) to include and examine the connections between “the myriad forms of sexism women encounter every day through to the all too frequent murder of women and girls by men” (p. 97). Kelly underlines that the concept of a continuum, as she uses it, does not imply a scale of “seriousness” ranging from “less” to “more”. In her opinion, all forms of VAW are serious and the concept aims instead to point out the interconnectedness of “harmless” intrusions into women’s personal spheres, such as wolf whistles, and the more physically severe forms of violence that are criminalised. In women’s lived experiences, claims Kelly, these personal intrusions are connected. “Less serious” events, (such as being exposed to flashing) are thus a reminder of more severe things that might happen (such as being raped). The awareness of this possibility affects women’s lives and is, at the same time, a reason that severely unsettling experiences may be labelled “less serious” (i.e. in comparison to what *could* happen).

The concept of the continuum of violence has been used in two different ways in Swedish VAW research, writes Steen (2003). One echoes Kelly’s understanding, according to which the continuum is primarily interpreted as the interconnectedness of types of VAW. Another way of using the concept is to picture a continuum ranging from acts of violence considered “trivial” to criminalised acts of physical and sexual abuse. In both cases the concept aims at connecting different forms of VAW.

This context evokes comment on a term not previously introduced in this thesis: *sexualised violence*, an umbrella term covering different forms of VAW and male domination,

including woman battering, rape, sexual abuse of children, sexual harassment and sometimes pornography (Kelly, 1988). Although battering, for example, is not necessarily sexual violence, denoting this violence as sexualised aims at situating it within gendered relationships in which women are sexualised. Similarly, the central supposition behind the term *gender-based violence* is that gendered power underlies and interconnects all the different forms of VAW (Ellsberg, 2000).

VAW as a violation of bodily integrity

Feminist researchers view VAW as a violation of women's bodily integrity. Physical violence against women by men – within and outside intimate relationships – is seen as one end of a continuum of such violations. In feminist analyses, bodily integrity is connected to power:

Power carries for dominant groups the right to initiate and refrain from intimate physical contact. In ethnic relations power is reflected in the tendency for whites to refrain from intimate contact, although this tendency is overridden when white men want sex with Black women. Physical differences which are defined negatively in other contexts here become 'erotic' and 'sexy'. In gender relations power is reflected in men's intrusive touching of women and their prerogative of initiating social and sexual encounters. (Kelly, 1988, p. 26)

Furthermore, feminist researchers point out that women are positioned as physically vulnerable, or *rapable* in Catherine MacKinnon's (1989) terminology, a position that is social, not biological. This position is upheld through violations of bodily integrity, be they minor or major, that thus not only mirror power relationships but also generate power. Creating fear is one way in which power is generated through bodily violations. Fear is about adaptation, writes political scientist Maria Wendt Höjer (2002) about women surveilling their behaviours and the "signals" they emit in an attempt to avoid intrusions. Fear of violence thus both limits women's lives and is part of their subordination. This is further, according to Wendt Höjer, a *democratic* problem; fear of violence and lack of physical integrity serves as obstacles to claiming full citizenship.

VAW as "structured oppression"

Central in the feminist understanding of men's VAW is the notion that this violence both creates and maintains men's power over women, on an individual as well as a societal level

(Eliasson, 1997; Hearn, 1998; Kelly & Radford, 1996; Walby, 1990). In sociologist Jeff Hearn's (1998) phrasing, this means that feminist researchers interpret VAW as "structured oppression" (p. 31). Although few feminists would claim that the oppression of women rests solely on the threat of force, violence is regarded as an important ingredient of this oppression, both on its own and as an upholder of unequal distribution of property, material resources, educational opportunities, family decision-making, etc. (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Parrot & Cummings, 2006).

Within non-feminist frameworks, male violence is often interpreted as a less frequent phenomenon and an outcome of some other primary factor, i.e. individual pathology or the social system of class. Feminist VAW researchers, however, tend to put violence itself in the analytical focus. Walby (1990), for example, states that "male violence has all the characteristics one would expect of a social structure" (p. 129). Hearn (1998), similarly, claims that VAW "is not simply a subset of some other social division" (p. 207), but has its own autonomy.

Although VAW may thus be considered to be a social structure in its own right, it is invariably connected to the larger social system of patriarchy. Walby (1990) defines patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (p. 20). What, then, is the relationship between patriarchy and VAW? Walby's own answer is that male violence is one of the sub-structures of this larger structure, and proposes five other sub-structures: paid employment, household production, culture, sexuality and the state. Similarly, Hearn (1988) maintains that there are several social structures upholding patriarchy, but assigns, as I read him, a critical role to violence in sustaining the system of patriarchy as a whole.

Conversely, Messerschmidt (1993), in his analysis of crime, rejects the concept of patriarchy as an overarching theoretical model for analysing gendered oppression; instead, he proposes a model based on structured action. However, when he comes to the crime of woman battering, he finds it difficult to explain this phenomenon without denoting it as patriarchal (p.143).¹

¹ On men and masculinity in relation to patriarchy and VAW, see Connell, 1987; 1995; Hearn, 1998; Messerschmidt, 1993; Pringle, 1995.

Male-to-female intimate partner violence

Although feminist thought consists of many disciplines and perspectives, a distinct body of analysis concerning woman battering can be identified as feminist. Specifically, feminist analysis has, as its central core, the premise that woman battering is an expression and a mechanism of the institutional oppression of women. According to this approach, women are systematically and structurally controlled by men within a culture that is designed to meet the needs of and benefit men. Thus, the meaning of male violence against women, including woman battering, cannot be addressed through the perspectives of individual victimization or relationship dynamics. (Kirkwood, 1993, p. 21).

A specific analysis of woman battering has been developed within the feminist school of thought on VAW, as described by Kirkwood above. Intimate partner violence is regarded as one among other forms of VAW; however, with some specific traits. Historically, according to Dobash and Dobash (1979), marriage has been a core patriarchal institution which supports male privilege. Violence, they claim, has been a means for men to guarantee this outcome, and although patriarchy has changed its shape over time, marriage is one of the institutions that has preserved many of its features. Similarly, radical feminists like Brownmiller (1976) have described the marriage contract as a “license to rape”, on the grounds that rape within marriage was previously a non-existing entity; by entering marriage women were regarded as having consented to sex at any time. Traditionally, then, marriage has given men access to women’s work, care, love and bodies. Although this may seem distant from equality-oriented – and often common-law – modern Swedish marriages, these writers claim that the historical roots are not without importance; men still gain more than women from marriage. Moreover, women are often in a weaker economic position than their husbands/partners in the relationship as well as on the job market. Thus, women are positioned more vulnerably than men within heterosexual close relationships, feminist researchers emphasise, and it is within this framework that men’s violence against their intimate partners takes place.

As evident from the “power and control wheel” mentioned above, feminist researchers have described a pattern of abuse, including isolation, verbal harassment, threats/intimidation and physical and sexual violence (Kirkwood, 1993; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Strauchler, et al., 2004). In accordance with the overarching assumption that men’s violence supports their dominant position within the family, feminists have conceptualised men’s abusive behaviours as controlling strategies aimed at securing this dominance (Eliasson, 1997; Kirkwood, 1993; Lundgren, 1991; 2004, Yoshihama, 2005).

Thus, overt physical violence is only one of these means and some researchers (e.g. Kelly, 1988) propose that it is more likely that it will be used when male dominance is (perceived to be) threatened. That physical and sexual assaults are preceded and accompanied by psychological violations has been described by several feminist researchers; this is presumed to play a major role in how men gain power over the women they abuse (Graham, Rawling & Rigsby, 1994; Kirkwood, 1993; Lundgren, 1991; 2004).

Below, I will highlight the psychological features of intimate partner violence as presented by Kirkwood (1993), both in order to acquaint the reader with this important part of feminist analysis and to present my own understanding of intimate partner violence to which psychological abuse is crucial. When I write woman abuse, woman battering, or intimate partner violence I am *always* referring to psychological abuse interconnected with physical abuse.

Kirkwood (1993) described six kinds of emotional abuse. I will present her categories, adding examples of my own:

- *Degradation.* To be degraded is to be given the message that one is of lesser worth. Violent men may degrade their female partners in several ways: by belittling their abilities and intelligence, calling them stupid, ignorant, worthless or incompetent. Men's verbal abuse often targets areas in which women are vulnerable due to social conditioning; thus, women may be told that they are inadequate mothers or that they are ugly, sexually unattractive or whores. More personal "weak points" and sensitive personal history may also be targeted. Degradation is not necessarily verbal; being persuaded or forced to perform sexual acts one finds revolting or to simply follow one's partner's "orders" may breed a deep sense of degradation. Kirkwood writes that degradation has a devastating effect on women's sense of self-worth.
- *Fear.* Being subjected to physical violence breeds anxiety and fear. Victimized women often try to anticipate violent attacks, and employ a wide range of strategies to try to avoid them. Living in a state of vigilance, with fear and a sense of lost personal safety, takes its psychological toll, and periods when it seems unlikely that violence will occur may be experienced as a great relief. However, the unpredictability and insecurity of the whole living situation is psychologically shattering. The fear of being physically hurt, or if there are children, that they will be targeted, is a tangible part of being subjected to abuse.

- *Objectification.* Objectification entails abusers treating their partners as objects rather than as human beings. Objectification is close to degradation, since it is degrading to be treated as an object. The sexual objectification of women, general in society, has been described by radical feminists as a core component of patriarchy (e.g. Barry, 1979). Violent men may objectify their partners, sexually or in other ways. In Kirkwood's interviews as well as in mine, some women recount that their partners wanted – or coerced – them to change their outward appearance to coincide with the abusers' ideals. Central in objectification, writes Kirkwood, is the “denial of personal individuality”, which carries the message that one is less of a person and more of an object upon which others can inscribe their desires. Severe possessiveness, expressed through men's jealousy and curtailing of women's social contacts, also implies that one is ownable, i.e. an object.
- *Deprivation.* Men's violence results in the deprivation of women's basic human needs, writes Kirkwood. Through being subjected to control and violence, women may be deprived of resources that are important for their health, economical status and psychological wellbeing. Sick leave due to injuries, unwanted pregnancies and disturbances at work are aspects of abuse that may result in economic deprivation. Furthermore, violent men may limit their partner's social contacts through emotional blackmail or coercion, leading to social deprivation. Social deprivation breeds a sense of loneliness and, importantly, also results in abused women lacking outsiders' perspectives on their situation. Here, Kirkwood touches on a phenomenon often described as kind of psychological abuse in its own right, i. e. *isolation* (e.g. Lundgren, 1991; 2004). Economic and social deprivation locks women into their relationships, states Kirkwood, by weakening both their material and personal resources.
- *Overburden of responsibility.* Partnership ideally entails sharing; in abusive relationships, as well as in other heterosexual relationships, women may, however, find that responsibility for joint concerns falls more heavily on them. When women are left alone with caring for the children and the home and for making ends meet, the resulting overburdening can be labelled abusive, claims Kirkwood. Having to care for sick children when one is incapacitated by sickness (and one's partner is not) is one

example of such abuse. According to Kirkwood, the overburden of responsibility is an exploitation of women, based on socially conditioned roles.

- *Distortion of subjective reality.* Kirkwood describes this kind of emotional abuse as “the constant shedding of doubt on women’s perceptions by their abusers and forceful and continual presentation of conflicting ones” (p. 56). By repeatedly being doubted by their abusers and having their subjective reality questioned, women may start to question their own perceptions or, at worst, alter them. Distortion of subjective reality bears major resemblance to what Lundgren (1991; 2004) calls internalisation of violence and what NiCarthy (1986) calls “crazy-making”. I will pass on a striking example from a woman who was staying at a women’s refuge where I worked. Maria (as I will call her) told me about a long “night of horror” that started with her husband asking her what colour their living room wall was. When Maria replied that it was white, her husband objected and claimed that it was black. Maria asserted her “opinion”, but her husband refuted it aggressively and proceeded to beat her until she “acknowledged” that the wall was black. Maria described this situation as pivotal: she felt that if she were to deny her perception she would go crazy. And when she finally saw no other alternative than to give in to her husband, she felt that she lost a piece of herself. She also described actually mixing up the adjectives white and black after this event, which she ascribed to a combination of Swedish not being her first language and profound confusion following this traumatic experience.

These features of intimate partner violence have led some researchers to describe woman abuse in terms of *torture* (Graham, Rawling & Rigsby, 1994; Herman, 1992; Lundgren 1991: 2004). Similarly to torture victims, it is argued, abused women are exposed to isolation, deprivation, unpredictability, physical violence and, at times, emotional warmth, in a combination that wears them down. Marcus (1994), however, proposes that woman battering, and VAW in general, is better described in terms of *terrorism*. Terrorism is, like torture, unpredictable and frightening and also entails psychological warfare. However, describing VAW in terms of terrorism is less psychological than other descriptions, states Marcus, and is an analogy that makes us ask other questions. We do not ask why victims of terrorist attacks do not flee; we demand that the attacks be stopped. Consequently, argues Marcus, we should not ask why women do not leave their abusers; we should demand that the attacks on them be stopped.

Regardless of whether it is called torture or terrorism, intimate partner violence entails violations beyond the merely physical, which feminist researchers have illustrated and focused on in their analyses. Although I am convinced that these descriptions and analyses are important, I nevertheless want to emphasise that abusive relationships may differ despite the well-known commonalities. Based on data from a large Finnish survey on VAW, Piispa (2002) convincingly showed that there are “important distinctions between the types of violence, characteristics of the victims and perpetrators, and the cultural contexts in which violence occurs” (p. 873). There are differences in the patterns of power and abuse, writes Piispa, and a monolithic description may hinder recognition. Piispa’s and my study are in no way comparable, being of different kinds and based on distinct methodologies; however, I did also find diverse descriptions of violent relationships in my material. Some informants described an escalation of abuse during the course of the relationship and being especially targeted when they had decided to leave. Others did not describe this course of events: one informant recounted that her partner had ceased being physically violent while they were together and that the separation had been fairly harmonious. Similarly, some informants may describe painful experiences of sexual abuse, whereas others may describe their ex-partners as sexually disinterested or the sexual part of the relationship as good. These descriptions are both varied and multifaceted, indicating complexity. Thus, although a general pattern of abuse may be described, individual experiences may differ.

Finally, some words to position this thesis and myself in relation to the contents of this chapter. This thesis is feminist, which means that I share the conviction that men’s VAW both creates and maintains men’s power over women, on an individual as well as a societal level. I adopt a mainly structural understanding of men’s violence that emphasises the material, but I do not wish to dismiss the discursive. This position does, however, not imply that I view the actions (or emotions or cognitions) of living women, men and children as mere mirrors of societal structures; it is rather to be understood as my concurring with Hearn (1998) when he states that: “Women and men may make history but not in conditions of their own choosing”(p.33).

Chapter II: Previous Research and Aim

In this in chapter I endeavour to position my study in relation to previous research and to present its aim(s). The current scientific field of VAW is vast and under continuous expansion; since this thesis also touches on other – even vaster – fields, selectivity is a necessity. In my selection I have been guided by the principle of proximity: I have chosen to present research that is “close” to mine in some way, regarding perspective and object of study. Proximity should, however, also be understood as indicating geographical closeness; although I will not present anything resembling a satisfactory representation of Nordic VAW research, I do think that research emanating from the Nordic countries is especially relevant in relation to this thesis, due to the shared context.

Literature review

If my arithmetic is correct, this is the 12th Swedish thesis empirically investigating male-to-female intimate partner violence. The first was psychiatrist Bo Bergman’s *Battered Wives: Why Are They Beaten and Why Do They Stay?* (1987). Forty-nine battered women taking part in a treatment program at Huddinge University Hospital were studied by Bergman, using a combination of methods such as register data, personality tests and structured interviews. Following Gayford (1979, in *ibid*), Bergman found that the participants fell into three groups of “wives”, i.e. “inadequate”, “provocative” and “highly competent”. The fact that these women had been subjected to violence was related to their characteristics according to this classification and the abusers were mainly kept out of the analysis. Bergman’s work led to a debacle and a discussion extending far outside academia. Academic feminists, and many others, reacted strongly to Bergman’s presentation and when he publicly defended his thesis, sociologist Eva Lundgren presented an *ex auditorio* opposition, a very rare academic event. The criticism directed at Bergman’s research was mainly 1) that intimate male-to-female partner violence was implicitly considered to be caused by *women*, not men; 2) that somatic and psychiatric symptoms were interpreted as being innate to the women rather than as consequences of abuse and 3) that the classification of the participants was sexist and biased (Hydén, 1995a; 1995b; Lundgren, 1990; 1993; 1995; Mellberg, 2004).

Five years later and in a different academic and political climate the thesis *Woman Battering as Marital Act: The Construction of a Violent Marriage* (1992), by social work researcher Margareta Hydén, was published. In Hydén's qualitative study, 40 men and women in 20 (heterosexual) couples were interviewed, both separately and jointly. Hydén situated her analysis of woman battering within the institution of marriage, and positioned herself against parts of both individual psychology and feminism as theoretical perspectives.

Several of the following theses were produced within the medical field and mainly focused on the prevalence of abuse. Prevalence during pregnancy has been of especial concern and is covered in *Woman Abuse During Pregnancy: A Prevalence Study of Psychological and Physical Abuse Among Swedish Women* by sociologist Lena Widding Hedin (1999), *Men's Violence against Women – a Challenge in Antenatal Care* by midwifery researcher Kristina Stenson (2004) and *Partner Violence During Pregnancy: Psychosocial Factors and Child Outcomes in Nicaragua* by epidemiologist Eliette Valladares Cardoza (2005). The rates of reported intimate partner violence in the Swedish-based studies varied between 2.8% (Stenson) and 27.5% (Hedin), probably due to differences in operationalisation: the lower figure refers to physical violence only, while the higher figure also refers to psychological and sexual violence. Abuse during pregnancy was also a central subject in midwifery researcher Kerstin Edin's (2006) thesis *Perspectives on Intimate Partner Violence, Focusing on the Period of Pregnancy*, which highlighted professionals' attitudes to intimate partner violence.

In physician Katarina Swahnberg's (2003) thesis *Prevalence of Gender Violence: Studies of Four Kinds of Abuse in Five Nordic Countries*, experiences of abuse among women attending gynaecological clinics were surveyed. More general population samples formed the empirical basis of two epidemiological theses: Gunilla Krantz' (2000) *Living Conditions and Women's Health: The Influence of Psychosocial Factors on Common Physical and Mental Symptoms in Swedish Women* and Charlotta Samelius' (2007) *Abused Women: Health, Somatization and Posttraumatic Stress*. Women's general exposure to violence, including interpersonal violence, was investigated in these three studies: lifetime prevalence rates ranged between 19.4% and 66% for physical abuse, between 9.2% and 33% for sexual abuse and between 18.2% and 37% for sexual violence. In Krantz' study, 15.6% reported abuse in adulthood. Finally (within the medical field), epidemiologist Mary Caroll Ellsberg (2000) contributed another "Nicaraguan" study: *Candies in Hell: Research and Action on Domestic Violence in Nicaragua*.

Closer to this thesis, when it comes to discipline and subject, is Hans Ekbrand's (2006) work *Separations and Men's Violence against Women*.² Based on 365 questionnaires, Ekbrand found that men's use of physical, psychological and sexual violence often escalated prior to separation. Furthermore, the participants reported the same extent of psychological violence after separation as before, while physical and sexual violence decreased. Although exposure to violence has been interpreted as a reason for women to leave intimate relationships, Ekbrand proposed that violence can also serve as an obstacle to leaving.

Some theses within the wider VAW field deserve mention. In 1997 two publications with young people's experiences and interpretations of violence as the focal point appeared: sociologist Katarina Weinehall's thesis *Growing Up in the Proximity of Violence: Teenagers' Stories about Violence in the Home* and sociologist Stina Jeffner's thesis "*Like, you know – rape*": *On the importance of Gender and Heterosexuality to Young People's Perception of Rape. When the Unreal Becomes a Reality: Mothers' Situation When Their Children are Sexually Abused by Fathers* by sociologist Nea Mellberg and *The Politics of Fear: Violence and Sexuality in the Swedish Democracy* by political scientist Maria Wendt Höjer were published in 2002. Sociologist Maria Eriksson's *In the Shadow of Daddy: The Family Law and The Handling of Fathers' Violence* and sociologist Åsa Eldén's *Life-and-Death Honour: Violent Stories about Reputation, Virginity and Honour* appeared in 2003.

Some comments are due regarding the production of theses on VAW, especially within the social sciences. Which scientific interests and perspectives does this production mirror? The discussion regarding Bo Bergman's thesis resulted in nothing less than a paradigmatic shift. After 1987 it was no longer possible to voice such openly sexist descriptions of battered women within the research community. Today, feminist interpretations of violence are dominant within the social sciences. However, this does not imply the absence of theoretical controversy (Steen, 2003). Furthermore, several of the relevant publications have touched on an apparent paradox: men's use of violence in a gender-egalitarian welfare state that officially condemns it; these authors have focused on norms on different levels, official handling of VAW and institutional practices.

Methodologically, VAW theses within the social sciences are predominantly qualitative, based on in-depth interviews, and the informants are primarily victimised women, mothers of victimised children and children of victimised women, who may also be victimised. A thesis presenting the narratives of women who were sexually abused during childhood is forthcoming (Carlsson, 2009). Couples, i.e. both women and men, have also been

² Swedish names of theses are translated. For full references, see the reference list.

interviewed but no thesis solely based on interviews with violent men has been produced, although constructions of masculinity have gained increased theoretical interest.³ Analytically, intersections of gender, age and ethnicity have received some attention, but much still remains to be done regarding intersections of gender and other forms of identities and structural inequalities.⁴

In addition to these theses, several other researchers' work deserves mention. Sociologist Eva Lundgren's (1985; 1990; 1991; 1993; 1994; 1995; 2004) work, especially, has had a significant impact on Nordic VAW research. Dostoyevsky expressed his and other Russian writers' relationships to Gogol in the famous quote "We have all come out from under Gogol's 'Overcoat'"; similarly, all Swedish feminist VAW researchers have come out from under Lundgren's overcoat, and are indebted to her. Lundgren's theoretical model of the process of normalising violence (1991; 2004) has been very influential in Nordic violence research and intervention, since it contains elements recognisable to both support providers, and victims (Jeffner, 1994). Criticism (sometimes harsh, e.g. Hallberg & Hermansson, 2005) has, however, also been directed at Lundgren, and the lively discussion between Hydén and Lundgren forms part of the framework of Paper I (for this discussion, see Haavind, 1994; Hydén, 1995b, Lundgren 1996; Lundgren & Mellberg, 1993).

Lundgren also contributed to the first Swedish national prevalence study on VAW (Lundgren, Heimer, Westerstrand & Kalliokoski, 2000; 2002). In this population-based study, questionnaires were sent out to 10 000 women, of whom 70% replied. Results indicated that 54% of women aged over 16 had experienced some form of male violence. Exposure to threats and physical violence from current male partners was reported by 11% of the participants, while 35% reported exposure by ex-partners. This national prevalence study had two similar forerunners: one Finnish (Heiskanen & Piispa, 1998) and one Canadian (Statistics Canada, 1993) study.

The 1998 government proposition called *Protection of Women's Integrity*⁵ (Proposition 1997/98:55) was a milestone in the evolvment of public awareness and institutional responses to violence against women in Sweden. The proposition, and the public

³ In Norway, however, Marianne Brandsæter (2001) interviewed men convicted of sexually abusing their daughters.

⁴ On the importance of such analyses, see Crenshaw, 1994; Horvath & Kelly, 2007.

⁵ The Swedish word "kvinnofrid", given in English in the legal context as "women's integrity" and in other contexts as "women's peace", is complex and not easily translated. The term "frid" can mean peace, but another word is used to denote the opposite of war. In addition to integrity, "frid" includes elements of serenity, peace of mind and, indeed, of sanctuary, refuge or safe passage. The ancient term "kvinnofrid" was used in medieval Swedish law and was thus, no doubt deliberately, brought to life again in this quite recent legislation.

investigation preceding it (SOU 1995:60), had an explicit “women’s perspective” and resulted in several reforms (Nordborg & Niemi-Kiäsiläinen, 2001). Information campaigns and several publications followed (Danilda & Leander, 2000; Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid, 2001a; 2001b; 2002a; 2002b; 2002c; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c; Nordborg, 2000; Regeringskansliet, 2001; Högskoleverket, 2004; SOU 2004:121). Attention was also devoted to the handling of VAW by a number of authorities, public institutions and NGO:s (Bender & Holmberg, 2001; Holmberg & Bender, 1998; Holmberg & Bender, 2003; Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid, 2001a). Moreover, proposals for intervention and treatment were put forward (Eliasson & Wallberg, 2002; Kvinnofrid, 2001; Operation Kvinnofrid, 1999; Regeringskansliet, 2000; Rikskvinnocentrum, 2003).

Increased attention to VAW and intimate partner violence has eventually led to a focus on marginalised groups considered to be extra vulnerable, i.e. : women with alcohol/substance abuse or disabilities of different kinds (Finndahl, 2001; Holmberg, Smirthwaite & Nilsson, 2005; Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid, 2001b; 2003a; Socialstyrelsen, 2005, Torgny, 2008; Utredningsinstitutet Handu, 2007), legal and illegal immigrant women (de los Reyes, 2003; Eldén, 2003; Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid 2003b; Danish Research Centre on Gender Equality, 2005; Wikan, 2004) women with protected personal data (Weinehall, Jonsson, Eliasson & Olausson, 2007), older women (Kristensen & Risbeck, 2004; Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid, 2002a), women subjected to mortal violence (Rying, 2001), lesbian women and gay men (Holmberg & Stjernqvist, 2005; Nationellt råd för kvinnofrid, 2003c).

The situation for children growing up with domestic violence has also been described, and researchers in this field have underlined the observation that men’s violence is also often fathers’ violence (Eriksson, 2002; 2003; 2007; Eriksson, Hester, Keskinen & Pringle, 2005; Eriksson, Cater, Dahlkild-Öhman & Näsman, 2008; Metell, Eriksson, Isdal, Lyckner & Råkil, 2001; Weinehall, 1997). It has been found that not only humans, but animals as well, may be harmed by domestic violence (Holmberg, 2003). Another area of research interest has been the role of and the experiences gained in the women’s refuge movement (Eduards, 1997; 2002; Jeffner, 1994; McMillan, 2002).

Against the background of the expanding research field, several research overviews and reports depicting current knowledge have been presented (Adler, 1992; Eliasson, 1997; Eliasson & Ellgrim, 2006; Eriksson, Nenola & Nielsen, 2002; Mellberg, 2004; Nordiska Ministerrådet, 2005; Steen, 2003). Furthermore, The National Centre for Knowledge on Men’s Violence against Women (previously the National Centre for Battered

and Raped Women) has presented various publications (Andréason, Stenson, Björk & Heimer, 2006; del Castillo, Heimer, Kalliokoski & Stenson, 2004; Heimer & Posse 2003; Heimer & Sandberg, 2008; Stenson, Claesson & Heimer, 2006).

Finally, little has been published in Sweden with an explicit focus on women leaving violent men (Hydén, 2000; 2001; Holmberg & Enander, 2004; Enander & Holmberg, 2007), although the issue is touched on in various ways in some of the research presented above. The international field is larger and will be discussed below.

A process perspective on violence – staying and leaving

In Paper I, I present an overview of qualitative research on battered women's leaving processes, some of which will be recapitulated (and updated) here. My intent is also to present the *process perspective* I have adopted on violence and leaving violence.

The conceptualisation of a process, or processes, has been used for explaining both women's remaining in and exiting abusive relationships. Starting with remaining, or "why battered women stay", feminist researchers have portrayed a process of entrapment and entanglement (Landenburger, 1989; Rosen & Stith, 1997; Moe, 2007; Smith, Tessaro & Earp, 1995; Smith et al., 2002). Kirkwood (1993), for example, spoke of women being caught in a web of emotional abuse, a description greatly resembling the "traumatic bond" described in Paper I. Upholding this web, claimed Kirkwood, was a spiral of power and control that women, via a process, spiralled into.

Furthermore, the normalising of violence, as depicted by Lundgren (1991; 2004), is a process, in which the abuser uses different controlling strategies, such as isolating his partner and exposing her to "alternating violence and warmth". Similar to well-known tactics of torture, according to Lundgren, this leads to the victim – who finds relief and comfort in warmth after violence – losing her perspective on the overall situation. Gradually, and via a process, the boundaries between good and bad and between love and violence become blurred; the abusive man's hold on the woman is thus increased.

However, most feminists claim that such processes must be understood against the background of different *obstacles* to leaving (e.g. Anderson, 2007, Barnett, 2000; Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998). As described by Ekbrand, violence may be an obstacle in itself, not only a reason to leave (see also Panchanadeswaran & McCloskey, 2007). Other obstacles are socioeconomic. Lack of economic independence and money of one's own may be a painful reality even in "gender-egalitarian" Sweden, as may problems with finding housing. For

women who are also mothers, divorce and/or separation entails organisation of custody or contact with a potentially angry abusive man (Eriksson, 2003; Hester & Radford, 1996). Furthermore, when women face inadequate institutional responses, leaving is obviously not regarded as a viable option (Barnett, 2000; 2001). Also, battered women love their partners no less than other women do, and may want help to end the violence, not the relationship (Bochorowitz & Eisikovits, 2002; Piispa, 2002) – even if this may not be possible.

After this introduction, it is time to shift focus from staying to leaving. The process of leaving has been described as gradual disentanglement, occurring over time and in no straightforward manner (Kirkwood, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Rosen & Stith, 1997). Researchers that apply a process perspective on leaving often regard temporary break-ups as an important part of this process (e.g. Merrit-Gray & Wuest, 1995). During such break-ups, it is claimed, women may take stock of their inner and outer resources in preparation to making a final exit. In Kirkwood's (1993) model of a web, women oscillated in and out of the spiral of power and control, before finally spiralling out of the web, and out of the relationship.

Several researchers have described leaving as a process occurring in different stages or phases (Burke, Gielen, McDonnell, O'Campo and Maman, 2001; Cluss, et al., 2006; Khaw & Hardesty, 2007; Landenburger, 1989; Merrit-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moss, Pitula, Campbell & Halstead, 1997; Pilkington, 2000; Wuest & Merrit-Gray, 1999). However, the beginning and endpoint of this process and the number of defined stages vary considerably. The final exit has been described to be caused, or at least preceded, by:

1. A deterioration in the relationship and/or an increase in level of violence (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Goetting, 1999; Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001; Kurz, 1996; Patzel, 2001).
2. Fear for the safety of children, others or self (Davis, 2002; Goetting, 1999; Kurz, 1996; Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001; Moss et. al., 1997; NiCarthy, 1987; Patzel, 2001; Ulrich, 1991).
3. Increased personal strength and agency in victimized women (Goetting, 1999; Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001; Merrit-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moss, et al., 1997; Patzel, 2001; Ulrich, 1991).

4. A cognitive shift in which an abused woman starts to view the relationships as abusive (Burke et al., 2001; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Goetting, 1999; Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Moss et al., 1997; Patzel, 2001; Rosen & Stith, 1997; Ulrich, 1991).

The attentive reader will note that the largest number of references is found under point 4. The *act* of leaving has thus been connected to *cognition* in much of previous research. In a presentation of their results, Rosen and Stith (1997) used several of the concepts recurring in studies on leaving processes:

Disentanglement processes tended to move the women toward self-agency and empowerment. The process usually began with *seeds of doubt* and included various *turning points*, *reappraisals*, *objective reflections*, and *self-reclaiming* actions that were interrelated and part of a healthy cycle of building readiness to leave the relationship. It culminated for many of the women in what we labelled a *paradigmatic shift in perspective* about themselves and their relationships. (...) Paradigmatic shifts were usually accompanied by a *last straw event*, which provided the final impetus to leave the relationship. (Rosen & Stith, 1997).

Taking a closer look at these concepts, we can see that several touch on *cognition* (reappraisals, objective reflections, paradigmatic shifts in perspective) and that some touch on *action* (self-reclaiming actions, last-straw event as final impetus to leave), but few, if any, touch on emotion.

If we turn to point 3 above, *action* returns in the form of agency, put forward by some researchers as an important component of leaving. Moss et al. (1997), for example, reported that the participants in their study described “gaining a voice” and “getting stronger, taking control and fighting back” (p. 440) shortly before leaving. Bordering on this is resistance, which is the focal point of Swedish researcher Margareta Hydén’s (2001) analysis of leaving. However, some studies (also) describe the opposite: women speaking of “a feeling of powerlessness and inability to endure the violence” preceding the break-up (Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001, p 46. See also Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; NiCarthy, 1987; Landenburger, 1989).

Thus we have finally reached *emotion*, touched on in different ways in the literature. While women’s emotional attachment to their abusers has been referred to as a reason to stay (Baker, 1997; Barnett; 2001; Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998), some emotions in particular have been connected to leaving. If we return to Kirkwood’s “web”, we find that she

described women's final spiralling out of this web, and out of the relationship, as propelled by *anger* and *fear*. Similarly, Landenburger (1989) claimed that women utilise their anger to move themselves out of their entrapment, and fearing for safety – mainly of the children – is found to be an impetus to leave in several studies as is evident in point 2, above. Furthermore, *losing hope* has been regarded by some researchers as central to leaving (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hydén, 1994, 1995a; Landenburger, 1989). NiCarthy (1987) wrote about “tipping the scales of hope and fear”:

The reason for leaving can be summarized this way: increased fear following an intolerable escalation of abuse or heightened awareness of its danger; loss of hope that the partner would change; increased hope for a good life without the partner. (...) Although they didn't necessarily state it that way, many left when there was a shift in the balance of fear or hope. (p.315)

Losing hope may lead to another emotion described in the context of leaving: *despair* (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; NiCarthy, 1987).

Recurrent in the literature is further the description of a *turning point* in the process of leaving (Haj-Yahia & Eldar-Avidan, 2001; Kearney, 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Patzel, 2001; Rosen & Stith, 1997); however, this turning point has diverse definitions. While some writers define it as a shift in perceptions, others identify it as the decision to leave/divorce, and yet others indicate the factual break-up. Thus the turning point is sometimes conceived of as a *cognitive* event and sometimes refers to the *act* of leaving. *Emotional* aspects of the turning point are, however, also included in these descriptions.

Are breaking up and leaving, then, the same thing? Some leaving process studies go beyond the point of women's exiting, and include one or several post-separation phases (Burke, et al., 2001; Landenburger, 1989; Moss, et al., 1997; Wuest & Merrit-Gray, 1999). In my opinion, leaving should be understood in a wider sense, covering being out of violence not only *physically* (which, by the way, is not guaranteed by leaving; e.g. Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000), but also *emotionally* and *mentally*. At this point, I turn to sociologists Liz Kelly (1988) and Nea Mellberg (2004). In what Kelly described as a *process of redefinition*, women labelled their experiences of violations of bodily integrity in terms of abuse; experiences that, albeit described as frightening, disgusting or threatening, had previously been conceptualised by the women as “really nothing” since “it could have been worse”. Reconceptualising one's experiences as part of the process of redefinition opened up for another understanding of them.

Bordering on this is Mellberg's (2004) analysis of the *validation process* of experiences of abuse, a concept she borrows from Leira (1990, in Mellberg, 2004) and develops further. In Mellberg's interview study of mothers' situation when their children are abused by fathers, she described some mothers having experienced a rather immediate *shift of reality* when they realised that their daughters had been sexually abused. Following this shift of reality, they reinterpreted several events and experiences, both previous and current. Other mothers had *oscillated between two realities* for some time before eventually believing that their daughters must indeed have been subjected to sexual abuse. Finally, some mothers in Mellberg's study lived *in two realities simultaneously*; they had realised that an older daughter had been subjected to sexual abuse, but were ambivalent concerning whether younger siblings had also been targeted. The mothers in Mellberg's study seem to have put together a jigsaw puzzle that did, or did not, validate the occurrence of abuse. Mellberg emphasises that validation processes are counteracted by different kinds of *invalidations*. It is not the case, claims Mellberg, that these mothers and other women are "blind" to violence in a society that "sees". Instead, they see what it is possible for them to see within the discursive frames of the society that they, and we all, live in.⁶

Moreover, Mellberg emphasises that what these mothers could or could not see was dependent on whether they were *in our out of the relationship* with the father/husband. Similarly, I would propose that what women subjected to intimate partner violence can or cannot see is dependent on whether they are in out of the relationship with the perpetrator.

As I read Kelly and Mellberg, naming and validating experiences of abuse includes a *cognitive* shift that (by, somewhat paradoxically, locating the responsibility for violence elsewhere) opens up for greater personal *agency* and an increased possibility to lay painful *emotions* aside. Processes such as these should, in my opinion, also be included when we discuss leaving violence.

⁶ Compare also with Eriksson (2002) and Kelly and Radford (1996), who emphasises that societal institutions may take active part in denial of violence and invalidation of women's lived experiences.

Aim of the thesis

We have seen above that emotion, cognition and action are examined in the leaving process literature, although not always explicitly framed in these terms. While the *act* of leaving has been the main point of interest, *cognitive* changes have been portrayed as vital steps to leaving. With some exceptions, *emotions* have not been given equal prominence. In this thesis the tables are turned; while emotion, cognition and action are all studied, the analytical emphasis is on emotion (see Chapter III).

The *general aim* of this thesis is to study how *emotion* and *cognition* are shaped around the *act* of leaving. More specific research questions are:

- Which *emotions* and *emotional processes* are involved when women leave violent men?
- Which *cognitive processes* are involved?
- What precedes and influences the *act* of leaving?
- How are women's conceptualisations and labelling – of themselves, of their abusers and of their experiences of abuse – connected to leaving?

Chapter III: Material and Method

In this chapter, I will describe how I have approached the field and what methods I have applied in doing so. The method one applies it to be related to the research questions to be answered. However, as is often the case within qualitative research, new research questions have surfaced throughout my project, and theoretical perspectives have been added that was not part of the original design. It is actually first in the very end of my project that it has protruded more clearly (to me, at least) “what it is all about”. Thus, while the presentation below may look orderly enough, this reflexive, creative and messy business is an important part of the final result that I do not want to gloss over.

Background of the research project

In 2001, I was contacted by sociologist Carin Holmberg, PhD, who asked me to take part in a research project called “Why does she leave? A study on the social psychology of the abuse victim”. The aim was to describe “what compels an abused woman to finally leave her abuser”. The original design of this project included an interest in the role of women’s refuge staff and volunteers as “significant others” for battered women in transition and the theoretical framework to be used was symbolic interactionism. As often is the case with research, the project however developed into new directions, as we found that the informants, though recruited through women’s refuges, sometimes had been in very brief contact with refuge workers. Thus their role as significant others were not always there to be examined. With my inclusion in the study as joint researcher – with Dr. Holmberg as supervisor – the collaboration between us resulted further in an altered theoretical approach. Coming from different fields, i.e. sociology and social work, we approached the same phenomena somewhat differently, and found this to inspire many discussions on how the material should be interpreted. Thus the end product (i.e. Holmberg & Enander, 2004) is very much a result of our conflated thoughts and interpretations. This study serves as a background to my research project, and the book it resulted in is synthesised in Paper I.

While working with this study, several themes emerged during the analysis which we could not include in the book, and which I became interested in investigating further. These concerned mainly how the informants talked about themselves and about their abusers. When talking about themselves, one salient theme was that the informants described

themselves as being “stupid”; mostly mentioned in relation to not leaving. And when talking about their abusers they recurrently described them as “Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde”. Regarding these descriptions, I had much the same questions. Were these labellings specific only to the informants in this study? Or would these themes recur when interviewing other women with experience of (leaving) abuse? If so, what did such labellings indicate? How could they be interpreted? And how were they connected to leaving? These were some of the questions I set out to investigate in the interviews I subsequently conducted.

Material

The thesis is built on two sets of qualitative interview material with women who have left abusive heterosexual relationships. The first set of material consists of interviews with 10 women (Group I) during a three-year period and two group interviews with refuge staff and volunteers. These interviews were conducted by Dr. Carin Holmberg, in collaboration with research assistant Christine Bender during the group interviews. The women were interviewed three times; the first two times face-to face and the third time over the telephone. Three informants declined further participation after the first interview, while one was not able to locate for the closing telephone interview, amounting to 23 completed interviews. These informants were located through women’s refuges throughout Sweden, although the extent of contact each informant had had with the refuge varied. The informants ranged in age from 24 to 57 years, with different levels of education. Eight were ethnically Swedish, while two had immigrant background. The time elapsed from the point of final separation varied, from quiet recently (with the first interview conducted at the women’s refuge) to 20 years ago. Complementary to the individual interviews were two group interviews with refuge staff and volunteers, which focused on the leaving process as perceived by them.

The second set of material consists of face-to-face interviews (conducted by myself) with 12 women (Group II). Each woman was interviewed twice, generally within a period of one to three weeks, except in three cases where the time elapsed between the first and second interview could be counted in months. All informants participated at both interview occasions, which means that 24 interviews were conducted. The informants were recruited through public notice boards at shops, cafés, libraries, primary health care centres, schools and university departments in Göteborg. There were two main criteria for participation: that the informants had left their abusers at least a year prior to participation,

and had not been in contact with any woman's refuge. In the case of one informant it turned however out that she had interpreted 10 months as a year, and a few informants mentioned calling a women's refuge at some time. Confidentiality and secure treatment of data were granted to all informants described above.

Some differences between the two informant groups deserve attention; the most important are shelter contact and length of study period. In Group I, women with shelter contact were interviewed three times during three years, at one-year intervals, to enable an analysis of whether conceptualisations of the reasons for leaving were constant or changed. To further investigate some questions evoked by and themes discovered in these interviews, new informants were recruited and interviewed. A longitudinal approach did not seem warranted then, but only women without shelter contact were recruited to this second informant group, in order to broaden the material.

Informants in Group I had thus been aided by shelters and had presumably discussed their experiences with shelter staff and volunteers. Contrarily, Group II informants had rarely shared their experiences – or discussed them – this way; one informant stated that participating in the study entailed telling anyone in detail about her experiences of abuse for the first time ever. However, while some informants in Group I had had very brief contact with the shelter, some informants in Group II had actively participated in support groups in which discourses on violence were similar to those found in shelter settings. Similarities and differences regarding earlier disclosure and discussion of violence therefore exist both between and within the informant groups.

Furthermore, the two groups differ somewhat when it comes to class and urbanity/rurality. The class profile in Group I is more diverse, while informants in Group II have a narrower middle/upper middle class profile; all but one had some university-level education, five had graduated and one had moved on to postgraduate studies. Furthermore, Group II is more urban since these interviews were conducted in the same large city. Another difference between the two groups is the interval between break-up and participation in the study. While all informants were interviewed post-separation, informants in Group I could have left quite recently. In the case of Group II, however, one of the participation criteria was that informants should have left the abusers at least one year prior to participation. This criterion was ethically motivated since informants without shelter contact were sought. It was considered crucial that they not be actively involved in abusive relationships or in acute crisis, in order to avoid endangering or unsettling women who might have no other supportive contacts.

Taken together the material consists of 49 interviews (including the two group interviews), tape recorded and written out verbatim. There are however similarities as well as differences between the two sets of material described above, and also to the extent to which each set has been used in shaping the analysis and outlining the articles. As mentioned, Paper I is based on a previous study built on the first set of material. The focus of attention was here primarily women's break-ups from abusive relationships. The material provided was however rich and covered many areas of the informants experiences of and reflections on abuse. Some discerned themes within this material, or questions evoked by it, were further investigated in the interviews that constitute the second set of material. This second set of material has then been used as the primary basis for analysis in paper II while in Paper III and IV both materials were analysed jointly.

Methodology

Working with interviews conducted by another researcher is a task that entails certain challenges that I have reflected upon extensively in Holmberg & Enander (2004). Here I will instead treat some of the methodological and ethical considerations taken when conducting interviews on my own.

First some more words on my choice of recruitment method and the criteria for participation I selected. My method of recruitment was, as mentioned, through public notice boards. I announced that I sought women who had left physically and/or psychologically abusive relationships at least one year prior to participation and who had not had any refuge contact. Women interested in participation were asked to contact me through e-mail. Choosing this mode of communication for first contact had a very practical reason: I was sharing room with other colleagues (male and female), and was afraid that potential informants, if asked to contact me through the telephone, might not reach me directly and/or get a sense of gate-keeping. But without doubt the choice of e-mail for first communication, and my recruitment method on the whole, has affected the selection of informants, who are all white, predominantly ethnically Swedish, middle class and with university experience. We are talking about social workers, medical and philosophical doctors, business consultants, university students and artists of different kinds. And this should naturally be borne in mind when looking at my results.

To find informants is at times described as one of the most difficult and cumbersome task for the researcher. With a sense of ambivalence to the fact, I can however

conclude that this has been the least of difficulties during my doctoral studies.⁷ As soon as I had put up the first (of three) round of notices, the e-mails started coming in, and my difficulties have rather laid in keeping informants in waiting from dropping out while I worked actively with other informants. I have in all been in contact with 20 women, of whom 12 became informants. Among the women who did not become informants some turned out not to meet the criteria for participation or were undecided about participating and mainly wanted to know more about the study. Others initially said yes to participating but did not respond when offered time for an interview. And finally one woman was declined participation because the amount of required informants had been met.

The reason I sought women who had left their abusive partners at least a year ago was mainly ethical: I wanted to try, as far as possible, to avoid involving women who were in acute crisis and who might chose participating in the hope of receiving practical and/or psychological help. From a purely methodological point of view one could argue that I might as well – and perhaps with advantage – interview women still living in the abusive relationship since my focus of attention is not at all solely on the process of leaving. But taking also my second limitation of no refuge contact into account, it seemed even more warranted on ethical grounds to include only to women who had left the abusive relationship behind a fair amount of time ago. I did not want to risk to in any sense of the word endanger women who might have no other supportive contacts.

The motive for recruiting informants without refuge experience was twofold: ethical, which I will get back to, and methodological; since the first set of material was based on interviews with women with refuge experience, this was a way to broaden my material. Many studies on woman abuse have been based on interviews with women with refuge experience, and at times I have heard questions raised, on the base of this limitation, about the solidity of the knowledge base of research on abused women. Opinions have been expressed that the knowledge on woman abuse is valid only for women who are “severely abused” or “seek help” or are “affected by refuge ideology”. Speaking only for myself, I am not sure that there are fundamental differences between the experiences made by women who are found at refuges and women who are not, but rather ground perhaps, for making the description of woman abuse and the experiences that go with it wider and more complex on the whole. But

⁷ The ambivalence has to do with the easiness of finding informants. Although I of course in a sense “know” that it is a quite common female experience to be battered and also that it is quite probable that only a minority of battered women seek refuge help, these facts still got under my skin, as one says, in another way when mail after mail came in. And when I, an ex-refuge worker, sat face to face with women that had not turned to the refuge for help in times of desperation and need.

that is another discussion, and my choice to recruit women without refuge experience should also be seen as a way to take the questions raised about “refuge samples” into serious consideration.

But this choice had also an ethical (and practical) dimension. My interviews have mainly been performed in Göteborg, where I previously have worked in two different women’s refuges. Recruiting women without refuge experience was therefore also a way to guarantee that none of the informants might have met me in my previous role; something that would have been very unwise, I think, for many reasons – the most obvious being the differences between, and the risk of mixing up, counselling and research. I have of course come in to personal contact only with a minority of women who have sought help at refuges in Göteborg. But I also pondered over whether there might be risk that just by being a “refuge person”, (other) women who had had refuge contact might feel inhibited to express negative views on the refuge experience or critique directed toward staff and volunteers.

However, recruiting women who had not sought refuge help made one means regarding ethics seem further warranted: to establish back-up help and counselling for informants who might need it. As described above, the criterion that the informants should have left their abusers at least a year ago was chosen in order to try to prevent that they should be in the middle of a crisis situation. I was however aware of three important facts: that this could not be guaranteed, that there was a possibility that some informants had never ever sought outer support, and that the research interview might evoke painful memories and feelings. With this in mind I contacted a couple of women’s refuges and a group counselling project for battered women, informed them about my project and confirmed that I could refer informants who wished so to them.

All women were informed of this opportunity and were offered to contact me between or after the interview occasions for further information if needed. Some informants said that they already had, or had had, professional help of some kind to work through their experiences, or that they knew where they would find external support if needed. Others said they would contact me for information of where they could find support, if they would find need of it after participation. None however did.

Interviewing

I prepared the interviews by (again) reading through the interviews that constitute the first set of material described above. I located themes and areas of interests and tried to formulate interview questions that could shed light on these in the interviews I had before me. Since these areas of interest were rather well defined and precise, I wondered whether one interview which each informant would suffice, or if two would be required. This question was not settled when I started out interviewing. After shaping a first (seen in hindsight too structured) semi-structured interview guide, I made a pilot interview with an acquaintance of mine (who had left an abusive relationship). The main purpose of the pilot interview was to try out the interview guide. The pilot interview turned out well, and would if used, have provided rich material for analysis. This made me confident to proceed with interviewing the first three informants with only a slightly modified interview guide. But these first three interviews did not, I found, turn out as well as the pilot interview. The problem was not that I did not gain interesting material: it was more a clash, as I perceived it, between my own precise research interests, and the informants need to “tell their story”, from the “beginning” and more freely. And I concluded that the reason that this problem had not emerged in relation to the pilot interview was most probably that the “informant” and I already knew each other somewhat; and she had at one time already “told me her story”. So after having conducted the first three interviews, I decided to make a halt and reconsider my interview methodology. In doing this I was greatly helped by feedback from colleagues during a research seminar and by my supervisor who strengthened me in that I, who during my whole professional life had talked to battered women, did not need to make things more difficult than necessary because it now was research.

This led me to decide to make two interviews with every informant, the first almost completely unstructured and open-ended in the sense that I simply did what always have done professionally: asked women to tell me of their experiences of abuse, or tell their story about themselves, about the man, about love (if there was any) and about pain – although keeping in mind that I was no longer a counsellor. This turned out very well, and I found that many of the questions that I had tried to frame by my earlier, now almost totally discarded interview guide, were touched upon spontaneously by the informant herself, or were, if posed by me, much more naturally integrated in our conversation. And it also made it easier for me to further investigate my special areas of interest in the second interview when

the informant and I had “established rapport” as one says, and when questions posed and answered were adjacent and related to the previous interview.

So I proceeded according to this model with the following informants, and worked in the following way: Immediately after the first interview occasion I wrote some short memory notes on how I had perceived the informant, myself in interaction with her, and the interview as a whole. Before the second interview occasion I listened through the interview once or twice, and wrote a rather extensive summary of it by hand. With this summary in hand I formulated questions for the next interview. Some questions were solely related to some individual aspect of what the informant told me in the previous interview, some questions I posed to all the informants more or less in the same way, and these were questions that one could recognise from my initial interview guide. And finally some questions lay in between this, being personalised but investing a more general issue. The interval between first and second interview was as mentioned generally one to three weeks, and during the most intensive times of interviewing I conducted two interviews a week, lasting between 45 minutes to almost two hours. The exclusion to this mode of working were in the case of the three informants that I had interviewed first; in these cases I re-contacted them for a second interview at a later stage, leading to a longer time elapse between first and second interview; the longest counting 10 months.

Challenges

After settling in on the working mode described above, I found that the interviewing, despite the difficult subject, proceeded with a kind of ease, that I do know how to explain than with other that I have a certain familiarity with the situation. This does however not mean that there were not difficulties. And here some words about what I mentioned briefly above – keeping in mind that one is not a counsellor. That may be even more difficult of course, when one actually has been a counsellor to battered women. But I think that this fact on the contrary has made me acutely aware of the risk of performing counselling instead of research, and very intent on not overstepping boundaries. Even if I do not adhere to a (nowadays rather old-fashioned) ideal of the researcher as being neutral or a view on informants stories as being a mere raw material to extract, I do think there is something to be said for keeping clear roles and not become too personal, protective or supportive. This is however many times easier in theory than in practice. There were times when informants blamed themselves mercilessly, or

after pronouncing something perhaps “forgotten” and/or “unmentionable” became like frozen by (what I perceived as) a mixture of horror, surprise and anxiety. And at these moments I felt very strongly that I could not leave the informant alone with this. So at these times I did give information, support, tried to relieve guilt etc, dependent on what I felt the situation required. Even if it meant that I became “therapeutic” anything else would have felt unethical, or simply – cruel.⁸ But this of course made the line between research and counselling become thinner, requiring a careful balancing. Interestingly enough I did not find that this balancing became easier with more experience of interviewing: on the contrary it became harder and more precarious interview by interview. Instead my successively improved interview skills seemed to lead to deeper and deeper interviews, making the balancing act both more warranted and more difficult.

And speaking of difficulties: Sweden is a small country, and there is not a multitude of books on women abuse widespread. This fact posed a methodological challenge in itself. During the interviews it could happen that an informant said: “I’ve read your book, and...”. How to deal with this kind of situation? And possible “contamination” of the data, by informants being influenced of our/my view already? Hide it from the scientific community and pretend like nothing? Not rather honourable. No, I prefer exposing and discussing it.

How I dealt with the situation can be described as “recognition, but not examination”. Meaning in practice that if an informant said she had read our book, I said “aha” and took notice of it, but did not expand upon the subject. Of course one could also have asked whether the informant recognised her own experiences, or if and how they differed, etc. But then I really think the propositions made in the book would have limited and biased the informant’s own telling to a problematic degree, which I am not sure that simply having read the book did. Of course it had an impact on the situation on the whole, if an informant had read a book and sat with one of its writers before her. But this impact was at times more of the kind of lending me “respectability” or “seriousness”, since the informant might perhaps only vaguely remember that she sometime had read something that was written

⁸ Similarly, Oakley, in her classical and much discussed article *Interviewing women: a contradiction in terms* (1981) argued that “use of prescribed interviewing practice is morally defensive” and exposed “general and irreconcilable contradictions at the heart of textbook paradigm” (p.41). The latter by contrasting textbook advice to answer questions from informants in an avoiding way with the type of questions the mothers she interviewed posed to her: ‘How do you cook an egg for a baby?’; ‘Is it right that the baby doesn’t come out of the same hole you pass water out of?’. Answers to informants questions recommended were: ‘I guess I haven’t thought enough about it to give a good answer right now’ or simply shaking ones head and saying ‘That’s a hard one!’ and continue the interview (Goode and Hatt, 1952, in Oakley 1981). Oakley found these suggestions, and the research ideal behind them, highly incompatible with her own research experience.

by us, and even less I'm afraid to say, of its content. More problematic was of course the kind of situation where the informant had read our work thoroughly (and in the case of one informant, twice) and said she "recognised herself completely". Then one might rightfully ask if she had told me exactly the same story and made the same interpretations of her situation if she had not read our book. Probably not. But on the other hand, the story I "gained" would still be "affected" by things as the moment of time, the setting, other books the informants had read, statements from friends, by media etc. And my position is that it still would be *her* story, only with slightly different ways of telling it. Something that was strengthened by the fact that someone who had stated that she had "recognised herself completely" at the same time could describe a course of events very different to the ones we had pictured and analysed, and could make interpretations that were quite opposite to the ones we had suggested.

Analysing

I find describing the analytical process a difficult task, and one I tend to leave to the bitter end; true also of this work. What does one *do* really, when analysing? Evidently, this question had been easier to answer if I had followed some well-known method, with clear and detailed steps prescribed. This is however not the case; the analysis has been a profoundly intuitive process. How does one communicate such a process? And how trustworthy are the knowledge claims made based on it?

That my analysis has been intuitive does not imply that I have lacked direction or ideas about what is significant. In the analysis (as well as in the overall design of the study) I have been guided by my interest in what the theories I use and my empirical material have got to "say" to each other. This has been two-directional. I will give two examples; when I initially approached the question of "why battered women leave", I wanted to ask the *material* what it had to say about the ongoing theoretical debate on the existence and significance of women's resistance. Later, I wanted to ask the *theories* what they had to say about women calling themselves "stupid". Or rather, I wanted to find theories that could tell me something about this in a language that made sense to me. Thus my way of approaching the analysis has been abductive.

Further, my attention had been directed to *what* the informants have described rather than *how* they have described it. That is my analysis had been directed at the content of narratives rather than their structure. My analysis has also been guided by the hermeneutical

tradition of interpretation, in which “parts” are related to the “whole” and vice versa in a reflexive process (Kvale, 1996).

What have I actually then *done* when analysing? I have listened and read the interviews, again and again, underlined, found recurring themes, and exception to these, and contrasted them with each other. I have read, books and articles, and I have been thinking – a lot – and when returning to the material I have at times experienced what Repstad (1999) calls “a leap in the analysis” (and at other times, of course, I have found myself to be none the wiser). This simple account is the most honest I can give; and from that it is up to the reader to decide on the trustworthiness of my results.

Chapter IV: Summary of Results

In this chapter, a summary of the Papers, and thus of the results of the thesis will be presented. The complete Papers are found after Chapter VI.

Paper I

In this article, the authors present the main findings from a qualitative study of processes undergone by women who have left abusive male partners. Three overlapping leaving processes were described: Breaking Up, Becoming Free and Understanding. Breaking Up covers action, i.e. the physical breakup, and the turning point by which it is preceded or with which it coincides is analysed. Becoming Free covers emotion and involves release from the strong emotional bond that women may develop to their abusers. Understanding covers cognition and is a process in which a victimised woman perceives and interprets what she has been subjected to as violence and herself as a battered woman.

In the Breaking Up process two turning points were identified: *when it's a matter of life and death* and *when someone else is at risk*. Central to and connecting both of these turning points is that they result in that victimized women give up in some sense; which may be hope of the relationship.

Starting before leaving, Becoming Free was described as an emotional process that may go on for several years thereafter, proceeding in four stages: "I love him", "I hate him", "I feel sorry for him" and "I don't feel anything".

The process of *Understanding* was described as entailing women defining themselves as victimised. In contrast to previous research, this process was found to predominantly occur *after* the woman has left the abuser and we proposed that women do not leave because they realise they are abused but instead realise they are abused because they have left.

Two more features of this study deserve mention. First that the concept of a traumatic bond, consisting of entwined ties, served as a starting point for analysis. Leaving – in its widest sense – was seen as disentanglement from this bond. The study showed how the majority of the emotional ties are broken during the described processes; *love*, *hate*, *compassion* and *hope* break during the *Becoming Free* process, while *guilt* breaks during the *Understanding* process. *Fear*, however, seemed to remain. When and where the so-called

composite ties, *the desire to understand*, *dependency* and *internalisation*, break is, however, a question open to further study.

Further, the existence and significance of battered women's resistance was investigated. On the basis of our findings, we concluded that battered women's resistance should be included in descriptions of violent relationship dynamics, but does not lead to leaving. In this context, we proposed a new theoretical concept, meta-adaptation, to cover resistance within the violent relationship.

Paper II

In this qualitative study with women who have left abusive heterosexual relationships, the informants labelling themselves "stupid" was investigated. "Stupidity" was found to be a recurrent theme in the material; i.e. informants recurrently spoke of feeling stupid and/or described themselves in those terms. Several different meanings ascribed to "stupidity" were found, with feeling stupid for "allowing" oneself to be mistreated and for staying in the abusive relationship as main themes. Four frames for interpreting the findings were presented:

- *Abusive relationship dynamics.* Batterers' verbal insults of their partners' intelligence and abilities is a well-documented part of psychological abuse and it was proposed that victimised women may feel stupid due to internalisation of such abuse and of negative attitudes to battered women.
- *Gendered shame.* Self-appraisals in terms of being stupid have in previous literature been connected to shame. Further, abuse, subordination and stigmatisation have been described as shame-inducing. Women in violent heterosexual relationships are subjected to gendered violence, and their shame – in this case their sense of being stupid – was interpreted as gendered shame.
- *The Nordic Context.* The Nordic countries are distinguished by strong ideologies concerning gender equality, and in Sweden there is a widespread consensus that a victimised woman should "leave at the first slap". The advocated solution to the man being violent is thus that the woman should leave. This invites the interpretation, by victims and others, that not leaving equals having accepted living with violence; which

was proposed to make victimised women prone to feel stupid for not having left their abusers immediately.

- (*Leaving*) *process perspective*. Women negative self-labelling in terms of being stupid was interpreted as a reflection of processes of violence, in which women internalise their abusers derogative view on them. Further, with reference to the study presented in Paper I it was suggested that two leaving processes were related to such self-appraisals: Becoming Free and Understanding. The Becoming Free process may influence what women label as stupid: staying or leaving. The Understanding process may, however, rule out labelling one self stupid; and it was suggested that formerly battered women's negative labelling of themselves and their actions as "stupid" mirrored unfinished Understanding processes.

Paper III

The aim of this study was to investigate battered women's emotion work in the context of male-to-female intimate partner violence, and more specifically, in the context of leaving this violence. The results suggested a process in which victims initially conceptualised abusers as good, but subjection to violence led to a cognitive-emotive dissonance that was responded to by emotion work. Over time, conceptualisations of abusers shifted from good to bad and efforts were made to change emotions from warm to cold.

Two kinds of emotion work were illustrated: emotion work toward Jekyll and emotion work toward Hyde. In the first case, informants tried to align their feelings with conceptualisations of their abusers as basically good and worth living with; in the second case the tables were turned and informants struggled to not feel "good" feelings for partners/ex-partners that they had decided were basically bad and not worth living with. With reference to Paper I, it was proposed that whether women will counteract dissonance by emotion work toward Jekyll or toward Hyde may be determined by what stage of the Becoming Free process women are in. Further, with reference to Paper II, it was suggested that victimised women who have reconceptualised their abusers as Hyde rather than Jekyll, but who not yet undergone the more profound Understanding process, would be prone to feel "stupid".

Paper IV

In this study the informants' interpretations of their abusers as "Jekyll and Hyde" were analysed against the background of two opposite discourses: the pathology/deviance discourse and the feminist/normality discourse.

Complex combinations of understandings were found in the informants' interpretations, which were, however, dominated by conceptualisations traceable to the pathology/deviance discourse. In line with these the informants interpreted their abusers as insecure, weak, scared and psychologically damaged by troubled childhoods or psychiatric disorders. Such interpretations were though often mixed with conceptualisations traceable to the feminist/normality discourse; several informants described their ex-partners' behaviours in terms of power and control, reminiscent of feminist understandings. However, it was only rarely that these conceptualisations were connected to the concept of a patriarchal society, a very vital underpinning of feminist understandings.

During analysis of the material a third image emerged, beyond Jekyll and Hyde, i.e. the abusers as "hurt boys". Apart from transcending Jekyll and Hyde, "the little boy", or the scared and hurt child, was perceived by the informants as more genuine, reflecting the inner man, than any of these conceptualisations. Through the image of the hurt boy, the abusers' seemingly enigmatic behaviour was explained; they were relieved of responsibility and blame, and basically of agency as well. Apart from being clearly referable to the pathology/deviance discourse, it was argued this image might prolong the Becoming Free process and serve as a direct impediment to leaving, while one does not easily abandon a "hurt child".

Chapter V: Emotion, Cognition and Action

In Paper I, three leaving processes – Breaking Up, Becoming Free and Understanding – are presented as followed in the abstract:

Breaking Up covers *action*, i.e. the physical breakup, and the turning point by which it is preceded or with which it coincides is analysed. Becoming Free covers *emotion* and involves release from the strong emotional bond to the batterer, a process that entails four stages. Understanding covers *cognition* and is a process in which the woman perceives and interprets what she has been subjected to as violence and herself as a battered woman.

Emphasis is added above on the words *action*, *emotion* and *cognition*: a framing of these processes made in some retrospect. In the original study (Holmberg & Enander, 2004) this classical triptych is not spelled out quite as clearly. This mirrors a development of some empirical-theoretical themes towards a more, overarching theoretical frame.

The aim of this thesis is to study how *emotion* and *cognition* are shaped around the *act* of leaving. In Paper I, the *act* of leaving is connected to certain turning points, but these are in turn described and analysed in relation to an *emotional* process. Leaving is furthermore interpreted in a wider sense, incorporating not only the physical break-up, but the *cognitive* process in its wake. In paper II, *cognitive* phenomena of conceptualisations or self-appraisals are focused. But these are also entwined with feelings; i.e. *emotion*, and self-labelling; which touches both on cognition and *action*. But, more importantly, the predominant *cognitive* phenomenon of conceptualising oneself as “stupid”, which is the subject of this paper, is analysed as an expression of a certain *emotion*: shame. The attentive reader may ask: “Why? Where does that come from?”. I will try to answer, and simultaneously picture why emotion, foremost, have come to play such an important part of my understanding.

While working with this paper (II), ‘why’ was the question I asked myself. Why do the women consider themselves to be stupid? Why, when they could frame themselves and their experiences in so many more and so much more forgiving terms? Theories known to me, of processes of violence and leaving violence, supplied me with some answer, but did not seem enough fulfilling. Putting the informants self-appraisals into a local Nordic context gave yet a part of the puzzle, it seemed, but not enough of the whole picture. Still brooding on this, I took a course on microsociology. There I stumbled on that feelings and self-appraisals of being stupid, within the sociology of emotions were considered to be

“shame markers”. And furthermore, that shame was connected to social inequality and power. For me it suddenly all “clicked”: processes of violence and leaving violence, emotions and power, and the Nordic context protruded as interrelated, with the women’s painful feelings of being stupid at the nexus.

This led to an interest in the sociology of emotions, a field previously unknown to me, with an eye to how emotions and cognitions are connected and related to social structure and to discourse. Thus in Paper III and IV, I take a look of the same phenomena – “Jekyll and Hyde” as a recurrent description given by the informants of their abusers – but from very different angles. In Paper III I study *emotion* and *emotion* work, but related to conceptualisations, i.e. *cognitions*. In Paper IV, finally, I make an effort to connect these cognitions to *discourse*.

The order in the headline of this chapter gives an important clue to this part of my framework: first, and with emphasis, comes *emotion*, second and with less emphasis comes *cognition* and last comes *action*. Further, the sociology of emotions is, primarily, the lens through which not only emotion, but also cognition and action will be regarded.

The sociology of emotions

Emotion has recently gained increased interests within sociology. Sociologist Judith Howard (1991/2006) describes how social psychology during the twentieth century circled round “the three poles of behavior, cognition and affect” (p.1) with emphasis on behaviour, cognition and emotion in turn. Thus when in the late 1970s sociological works with a focus on emotion appeared (e.g. Hochschild, 1975: 1979; Kemper, 1978; Scheff, 1979; Shott, 1979) they broke with an existing cognitive trend. However, these writers were not without forerunners. Cooley, Mead and Goffman are often described as the forefathers of the sociology of emotions (Dahlgren & Starrin, 2004; Kemper; 1990; Turner & Stets, 2005; 2006). (Interestingly, they are also given as the forefathers of cognitive sociology, see Callero, 1991/2006; Stryker, 1991/2006).

Emotion sociologists are joined together by one important assumption: that emotions are an important micro-macro link and thus enter into the very core of class, race and gender relationships (Dahlgren & Starrin, 2004; Kemper; 1990; Turner & Stets, 2005; 2006). There are, however, several different approaches to these micro-macro links. Turned and Stets (2005) count eight modes of theorising on emotions within sociology:

dramaturgical and cultural (e.g. Goffman 1959; 1967; Hochschild 1979; 1983/2003), ritual (e.g. Collins, 1987; 2004), symbolic interactionist (e.g. Cooley, 1902/2005; Shott, 1979), symbolic interactionist with psychoanalytical elements (e.g. Scheff, 1990;1997), exchange (e.g. Lawler, 2001), structural (e.g. Kemper, 1978, 1990) and evolutionary (e.g. Turner, 2000). Of these approaches, the dramaturgical and cultural are closest to the heart of this thesis.

Hochschild (1983/2003) illustrates different approaches to emotions in a way that may be easier to grasp. She pictures models of emotion along a continuum, with organismic models at one end of the continuum and social constructionist models at the other end. Between these lies the interactional model of emotion. The two dominant models are the organismic and the interactional, writes Hochschild, and describes the most vital difference between them as follows:

In the organismic model, social factors merely “trigger” biological reactions and help steer the expression of these reactions into customary channels. In the interactional model, social factors enter *into the very formulation* of emotions, through codification, management and expression. (p. 217)

One ontological struggle, then, regards the relationship between emotions and the body. While organismic theorists, like Darwin (1879) pose that the source of emotions are the body, social constructionist consider the body irrelevant in this respect. Interactionist theorist, however, cover a middle-ground; the body is involved, but in what way is defined by culture.

What is then, an emotion, and how are emotion, cognition and action connected? Hochschild gives the following answer:

Emotion, I suggest, is a biologically given sense, and our most important one. Like other senses – hearing, touch and smell – it is a means by which we know about our relation to the world and is therefore crucial for the survival of human beings in group life. Emotions is unique among the senses, however, because it is related not only toward an orientation to *action* but also to an orientation toward *cognition*. (p.229)

The orientation to action is, according to Hochschild, a core component of emotion. Emotion *is* actually, she claims, “our experience of the body ready for an imaginatory act” (p.230).

That emotions entail an orientation to action is also emphasised by psychologist Nico Frijda (2002), who pose a strong relation between emotion and action. Emotions are motivational states, claims Frijda, that “impel the person to undertake actions of a certain type, with a certain aim” (p. 11). Anger, for example, is related to aggression. Both Hochschild and Frijda

emphasise however that the connection between emotion and action is not a causal, nor a simple one. Culture is present also here. As expressed by Frijda (2002): “A major determinant of whether emotions actually instigate action, and the scope of that action, comes from ideological support for the emotions and the actions” (p. 28). Thus, while emotions can be described as entailing a readiness to act in line with the particular “content” of a feeling (e.g. strike out when angry), the factual outcome of an emotion experienced is by no means given.

The relation between emotion and cognition is even more intricate. Hochschild (1983/2003) regards emotion as a signal that informs us of our position in the world and in relation to other people. But she emphasises that this signal is not a simple representation of an “objective” reality: any apprehension of a situation, emotional or not, is based on prior expectations – i.e. cognitions – that are socially shaped. Also, when we identify and label our emotions, this entails different ways of perceiving, claims Hochschild:

We can feel angry, disappointed, and frustrated, all with reference to the same event. This does not mean that we are momentarily possessed of a certain mixture of physiological states or expressions. It means, instead, that from moment to moment we are focusing on different features of the situation. *Compound emotions are serial perceptions.* (p.234)

Not only emotion sociologists like Hochschild, Katz (1990) and Scheff (1990) forward that emotion and cognition are deeply entwined. Cultural psychologist Carl Rathner, for example, states that: “Emotions are feelings that accompany thinking. They are the feeling side of thoughts; thought-filled feelings; thoughtful feelings. Emotions never exist alone, apart from thoughts” (Rathner, 2000, p.6). Some cognitive sociologists likewise emphasise thought, but the thought side of emotion and how emotional management is achieved by cognitive means (e.g. Rosenberg, 1991/2006).

Emotion sociologists not only oppose a strong separation between emotion and cognition, but also the tendency to regard emotion as less rational than cognition (Turner & Stets, 2005). If emotion aids us in locating where we stand in relation to other people, of positioning Self in relation to Other, as Hochschild claims, it is a necessary and very vital tool for a functional existence. That emotions are less objective than thoughts, or “objective thinking” less passionate than other thinking, is also refuted by Rathner (2006) (whom however does not question the norm of objectivity itself).

The sociology of emotions and cognitive sociology share several similar features: as juxtapositions to purely biological perspectives, and with an emphasis on social

structure. Emotion sociologists pose that collective norms and interpersonal interaction are part of shaping emotion, and cognitive sociologists pose that the same is valid for cognition (Cerulo, 2002). Put together they propose that what we feel and how we come to express what we feel is a profoundly social matter, as is what we see and how we come to regard what we see. We neither feel, nor think, as mere individuals.

Emotion work, feeling rules, and cognitive norms

In Paper III, the analysis is informed by Hochschild's (1983/2003) writing on *emotion work* and *feeling rules*. The concept of emotion work Hochschild uses to cover the different ways in which we try to *manage* our feelings: when we *try* not to be sad on a happy occasion or *try* to show sincere grief at a funeral. Hochschild envisages two kinds of emotion work: surface acting and deep acting. In surface acting we merely play the expected part; i. e. we aim to display a certain feeling we find required without actually feeling it, as when we feign interest or display unfelt cordiality. Deep acting, however, requires more; in deep acting we aim not only at the emotional display we consider to be "right", we try to align our feelings with this "right". Thus, the purpose of deep acting is to make feigning unnecessary; as a result of deep acting, feigned interest may become real and unfelt cordiality become heartfelt. Hochschild describes two means of deep acting: "directly exhorting feeling" and "making indirect use of a trained imagination" (p. 38), that are further described in Paper III. While Hochschild thus talks of *emotion* management, cognitive sociologist Morris Rosenberg (1991/2006) describes how such management is actually achieved with *cognitive* means. What Hochschild calls directly exhorting feeling, Rosenberg would call "direct control of mental content" in the specific form of "thought displacement". It is through different modes of selective attention, perspectival selectivity and selective interpretation that we manage our emotions, claims Rosenberg, and thus points to how very complex the emotion-cognition relationship is.

Further, Hochschild pictures social systems as entailing *feeling rules* that govern who owes what feelings to whom. Feeling rules are shared within social groups; we can aim at breaking or surpassing them, but they are generally "known" and internally acknowledged. Yet they are under constant negotiation which opens up for change as well as uncertainty. We may also, simultaneously, be aware and operate with contrasting feeling rules: if one for example is the member of a sub-cultural group, feeling rules within this group may be in opposition to feeling rules within the majority society. Which feeling that is "right" may then depend on where identification lies strongest. Similarly, Zerubavel (1997), a cognitive

sociologist, talk of *cognitive norms* (i.e. thinking rules) that shape and limit our thinking in line with cultural demands. Parallel to Hochschild he talks of social groups as different “thought communities”, and of cognitive subcultures that break with expected ways of perceiving the world. Thus, according to these theorists, rules and norms shape and govern our feelings and are important micro-macro links.

Emotions, violence and power

What is, then, the relation between emotions and violence? In previous research the relation between the emotion of anger and men’s violent behaviours has been a core interest (for a review, see Holzworth-Munroe & Clements, 2007). Behind much of this research lies however a “push-button” model of emotions, which is far from the view on emotions that I take. Unfortunately, I find this to be partly true also of emotion sociologists Thomas Scheffs and Suzanne Retzingers’ (1991) work *Emotions and violence*, which has a conflict perspective and lacks any thorough gender analysis. Closer to this thesis is the work of Danish cultural anthropologist Bo Wagner Sørensen (1994; 2001) on emotions and violence in Greenland. Sorensen takes an analytical stance that is close to the interactional model of emotion, however with an emphasis on social construction. Far from any push-button analysis, Wagner Sørensen’s interest is in how discourses on masculinity, ethnicity and nationalism shape how the relation between emotions and men’s violence is perceived within the Greenlandish society. In his fine grained cultural analysis, Wagner Sørensen shows how local discourses portray violent Greenlandish men as victims (of colonial oppression) rather than perpetrators. Gendered power, claims Wagner Sørensen, is not made visible in these discourses.

Turning from men and discourses to women, several emotions are mentioned in the literature in connection to intimate partner violence and victimisation: love (Bochorowitz, & Eisikovits, 2002), fear (Kirkwood, 1993; Lanmers, Richie and Robertson, 2005), anger (Kirkwood, 1993; Lanmers, Richie and Robertson, 2005), guilt (Lanmers, Richie and Robertson, 2005; Street & Arias, 2001) and above all – shame (Buchbinder & Eisikovits, 2003; Ellsberg, 2000; Krane, 1996; Piispa, 2002, Street & Arias, 2001; Zink, Regan, Jacobson & Pabst, 2003). Below I will make a theoretical excursion into power and into shame. My effort is to tie together feminist analyses of violence and sociological analysis of emotions. I will start this excursion with dwelling on what power is, and present my own

position regarding the issue. After some reflections on the relationship between power and emotion, I will then turn to shame. My exploration of shame fills a twofold purpose: to expand and deepen the discussion in Paper II and to serve as a “case study” or example of some core discussions within the sociology of emotions regarding the *nature*, *location*, and *social function* of emotion; core discussions that are found also in relation to other emotions. These core discussions have, further, parallels in cognitive sociology; but then of course with focus on cognition.

What is power?

We speak and write about power, in innumerable situations, and we usually know, or think we know, perfectly well what we mean. In daily life and in scholarly works, we discuss its location and its extent, who has more and who has less, how to gain, resist, seize, harness, secure, tame, share, spread, distribute, equalize or maximize it, how to render it more effective and how to limit or avoid its effects. And yet, among those who have reflected on the matter, there is no agreement about how to define it, how to conceive it, how to study it, and if it can be measured, how to measure it. There are endless debates about such questions, which show no sign of imminent resolution, and there is not even agreement about whether all this disagreement matters.
(Lukes, 1974/2005, p. 61).

As mentioned, power is a central concept in the feminist understanding of men’s violence against women. Power is however a contested concept (Lukes, 1974/2005). Different conceptualisations of power have been described as (showing) four different faces, elegantly summarised by Digeser:

Under the first face of power the central question is: “Who, if anyone, is exercising power?” Under the second face, “What issues have been mobilized of the agenda and by whom?” Under the radical conception, “Whose objective interests are being harmed?” Under the fourth face of power the critical issue is, “What kind of subject is being produced?” (Digeser, 1992, p. 980).

The first face of power is represented by Dahl (1957), the second by Bachrach and Baratz (1962; 1963), the radical and third by Lukes (1974/2005) and the fourth by Foucault (1978; 1980; 1981). The first and second faces of power deal mostly with political power. More relevant here are the third and fourth faces of power represented by Lukes and Foucault.

As a social scientist today, one cannot mention power without mentioning Foucault. Foucault has been said to revolutionize the way we encompass and understand

power and its workings. “Foucaultian” power is “everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (Foucault, 1978, p. 92), the latter leading to that power “also comes from below; that is, there is no binary an all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix” (ibid, p. 94). Power is not external to social (and other) relations, claims Foucault; rather it lies immanent in these. And above all, it is productive; “it traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” (Foucault, 1980, p. 119). Power and knowledge are to Foucault intrinsically intertwined, with “truth regimes” shaping our perceptions of the world and of our place in it. And resistance lies *within* power, is not its opposite or negation: “Where there is power there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1981, p. 95). With concept such as pastoral power and governmentality Foucault (1991) has further translated “good intentions” into “disciplination”.

Lukes (1974/2005), although paying credit to that Foucault “beamed floods of light” (p.61) on questions such as how less visible forms of power can produce compliance and docility, criticizes the foucaultian framework for making dominance impossible to single out, resistance compromised and accountability difficult to ascribe. I will line this out in more detail.

As mentioned, Foucault describes power as being “everywhere”, it is “coextensive with the social body; there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network” (Foucault 1980, p. 142). “According to this rhetoric”, states Lukes (1974/2005) “there can be no liberation from power, either within a given context or across contexts; and there is no way of judging between ways of life, since each imposes its own regime of truth” (p. 91). And since resistance lies within power, this makes the whole idea of resistance corrupt, being only a part of power itself. When furthermore social initiatives and humanitarianism can be viewed as just another form of (pastoral) power devices, the whole idea of social equality, and struggle for it, falls.

The point Lukes wants to make is that even if Foucault has convincingly shown how power is interwoven into the subject, still “criteria will be needed to decide where this power amounts to domination and, in general, to distinguish between dominating and non-dominating power and dependency” (p. 97). This of course poses a whole range of new difficulties. What are those criteria going to be? Who is to decide what is domination and not? If – to take a controversial example from the relevant field of research – a battered woman says it’s OK that her husband uses violence against her in certain situations, should we

acknowledge this as valid, or claim that it is against her objective interests? (Radical feminists would claim the latter, others not). And again: If a woman who is an active S/M practitioner claims that it is OK that her husband uses violence against her in certain situations, should we acknowledge *this* as valid, or claim that it is against her objective interests? (And again radical feminists would claim the latter, others not). Lukes' own definition of domination is as follows: "Domination occurs where the power of some affects the interests of others by restricting their capacities for truly human functioning" (p.118). This hardly escapes the difficulties mentioned above: there is no way to define peoples "interests" or "true human functioning" without being normative. Lukes is not blind to this:

But, of course, the question of where people's interests lie, or what is basic or central to their lives and what is superficial, is inherently controversial. Any answer to it must involve taking sides in current moral, political, and indeed, philosophical controversies. It follows that, for this reason, comparisons of power, involving such assessment of its impact on agent's interests, can never avoid value judgement. (Lukes, 1974/2005, p. 81)

In my own understanding of power, I draw heavily on Lukes, for whom power "is a *dispositional* concept, comprising a conjunction of conditional or hypothetical statements specifying what would occur under a range of circumstances if and when the power is exercised. Thus power refers to an ability or capacity of an agent or agents, which they may or may not exercise" (p. 63). The latter is crucial: it signifies that we are not solely talking of "having" power but that the factual *exercise* of this power is central: "power is a potentiality, not an actuality – indeed a potentiality that may never be actualized" (p. 69). However Lukes warn against the "exercise fallacy" (equating power with "winning" or having success in decision-making) as well as the "vehicle fallacy" (equating having the means of power with being powerful): "the exercise of power can give evidence of its possession, and counting power resources can be a clue to its distribution, but power is a capacity, and not the exercise or vehicle of that capacity" (p.70).

If I translate this to the analysis of men's violence against women it would – as I understand it – mean that men, due to their position in society and in heterosexual relationships, have the capacity to exercise the very overt form of power that violence can be interpreted as. Whether "they", or rather the individual man, chooses to do so, is another matter.

How is this particular capacity to be understood? Feminist researchers connects it to men's traditional "ownership" of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Parrot & Cummings, 2006), legislation (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; MacKinnon, 1987; 2005), sexual exploitation

(Barry, 1979), cultural prescriptions (Heise, Ellsberg & Goettemoeller, 1999; Parrot & Cummings, 2006), hegemonic masculinity (Pringle, 1995) normative heterosexuality (Hearn, 1992;1998), all together leading men, as a group, to have a dominant position, and women, as a group, to have a subordinated position. But what is the connection between power and violence? If men have dispositional power over women, and violence it to be interpreted in the light of that, how is that interpretation to be made? My own point of departure is as follows:

Violence – if physical – feels on the body. It hurts, leaves marks, evokes fear and/or anger and results in submissiveness and/or resistance. Its existence is utterly material and physical, but its consequences may be immaterial and reach far outside the body. It – or the mere threat if it – may *uphold* power, or *create* power, or *be* power – or all of this simultaneously.⁹

Power and emotion are linked in a number of ways. Hochschild (1983/2003) expresses the link between status and treatment of feeling as follows: “High-status people tend to enjoy the privilege of having their feelings noticed and considered important. The lower one’s status, the more one’s feelings are not noticed or treated as inconsequential.” For women, Hochschild here pictures a vicious circle: an expressed emotion is more often considered irrational or irrelevant, which may lead to a louder expression of what it is that is felt. This however, may seem “out of proportion” and line with underlying conception that women are “emotional” and in support of the initial presupposition that the feeling may be disregarded. This line of reasoning has echoes in sociologist Jack Barbalet’s (2001) (ungendered) analysis of political power. It is, states Barbalet “an enduring feature of political life that those who exercise power experience their enthusiasms as reasonable, but the enthusiasms of those who challenge them as unreasonable and emotional” (p. 15).

That inequalities of class and gender are reproduced by socialisation of emotions has also been forwarded (Hochschild, 1983/2003; Scheff, 2002). According to Hochschild gender power is further reproduced in the ways we manage emotions, which are – in the workplace as well as the home – gendered. Often through display of motherly or sexually accessible roles, the art of being a woman, claims Hochschild, is to make others feel better.

Interestingly, Lukes also makes connections between emotions and power, through Spinoza who distinguishes between different ways of holding someone in ones power. One of these is to hold someone in ones power through mental bonds, which however

⁹ And the same, I think, is valid for “unphysical”, that is psychological, violence which is less material but not less potent.

is only successful “while the fear and hope remains” (Spinoza, p.158, in Lukes, 1974/2005, p.86). This bears a striking resemblance to the analysis made in Paper I.

However, sociological analyses of emotion and power have put one emotion above others: shame. Sociologist Norbert Elias (1994), for example, gives shame a prominent position in his description of the *civilizing process*. Shame disciplines and creates social distinctions, claims Elias, and is more insidious and more effective than external restrictions. In my exploration of shame, below, I examine the relationship between shame and power, and treat theories that examine shame, and above all, shame as producing, resulting from – or even *being* – power. However power is not, as described above, a univocal concept and neither is shame. Gilbert (1998) writes that shame has been treated within a number of disciplines and frameworks, and with focus on different components and mechanisms of this emotion. To try to cover the subject of shame would thus be an admirable task in itself: one can easily be swamped by an abundance of literature. But this is not my task here or elsewhere. My interest is in the *social* and *sociological* function of shame – and in relation to power and gender. My theoretical framework is here mainly sociological – and especially the sociology of emotions – but I have also been somewhat philosophically inspired. I will start out with touching on some of the prevailing definitions of shame in this literature.

What is shame?

Shame, guilt, embarrassment and pride have been called the *self-conscious emotions* (Tagney & Fischer, 1995) and of these, shame is the most examined within the field of sociology. Early on was sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1902/2005) who in his presentation of the “looking-glass self” writes: “A self-idea of this sort seems to have three principal elements: the imagination of our appearance to the other person; the imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification” (p.184). Mortification can be substituted with shame, considered, (as by Scheff (1990), see below) to be a shame variant. Shame is acknowledged as a self-feeling, but a social one: “There is no sense of ‘I’, as in pride or shame, without its correlative sense of you, or he (sic) or they” (p.182). The more contemporary sociologist Thomas Scheff (1990), who is inspired by and draws upon Cooley in his analysis, summarises Cooley’s analysis of the social self as follows: “(1a) In adults, social monitoring of self is virtually continuous, even in solitude. (We are, as he put it, ‘living in the minds of others without knowing it’ [208].) (1b) Social

monitoring always has an evaluative component and gives rise, therefore, to either pride or shame” (p.82). (And from this Scheff develops (a 1c-) proposition of his own, to which I will return later.)

Drawing on Cooley as well as Darwin and Mac Dougall, Scheff’s own framing of the concept positions shame – and pride – in the context of “self’s perception of the evaluation of self by other(s)” (Scheff, 1990, p. 71). And many definitions in the literature I draw on are similar. So does Jack Barbalet, another sociologist, (2001) state that: “Shame operates in terms of a supposition of another’s regard for self, or taking on the view of another” (p.103). And his namesake and colleague Jack Katz (1990) “agrees”: “What brings shame is taking towards oneself what one presumes is the view that others would have, were they to look” (p.149), refines: “It is part of the unique complexity of shame that the exposure it implies is to an audience but that audience is in the first instance oneself” (p.148) and elaborates: “As long as it persists, shame carries the sense that there is revealed an undeniable truth about the self” (p.150). This truth is a truth about ones inferiority or lesser worth, a point stressed by philosopher Sandra Bartky (1990): “Shame can be characterised in a preliminary way as a species of psychic distress occasioned by a self or a state of the self apprehended as inferior, defective, or in some way diminished” (p.85) and sociologist Sighard Neckel (1991): “Im Schamgefühl vergegenwärtig sich eine Person, in einer Verfassung zu sein, die sich selbst defizitär, als mangelhaft und auch als entwürdigten befindet” (p.16) [Being in shame, a person is imagining that s/he is in a state of deficiency, insufficient and also diminished] (my translation).

This evaluation of the self is furthermore *global*, as pointed out by many authors (Bartky, 1990; Lehtinen, 1998; Lewis, 1971; Lewis, 1992; Lynd, 1958), i.e. *the whole self* is implied. Shame thus differs from guilt where only part of the self is responsible for a moral transgression. Further, transgressions evoking shame are not, as in guilt, necessarily of a moral kind: several sources are possible (Bartky, 1990; Lehtinen, 1998; Lewis, 1971; Lynd, 1958; Neckel, 1991).¹⁰

The relationship between Self and Other can be said to be central in all the definitions above and I will return to this in detail later. But first a short excursion to the physical domains of shame.

¹⁰ For an expansion and criticism of the shame-guilt division, see Misheva, 2000.

Physical shame: Shame as biological constitution or embodied social relations?

No matter how sociologically oriented one is, it is difficult to talk of shame without mentioning biology or living bodies. Shame is physical, at least in the sense of embodied experience. Even though it is true, as Katz (1999) states, that:

(...) unlike emotions that primarily take behavioral form such as laughter, anger, and crying shame is especially resistant to the effort to perform an exhaustive analysis in the active form. There is no close analogue applicable to shame for 'he cries about' or 'she laughs with' or 'he rages against'. A person is 'in' shame when he experiences shame" (p.144).

But being "in" shame may be a profoundly physical experience (as most emotions) where one wants to "be swallowed by the ground" or "creep into a hole" and which may make one "flush hotly" or "dread coldly" on account on what (one perceives) has been revealed.¹¹

One of the very earliest shame theorists was Charles Darwin, who in his *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) connects emotions to evolution and biology. According to Darwin animals and humans share the means of emotional expression, and his interest lies in describing these. Human emotions are perceived as something primarily individual, pertaining to persons and their physical bodies and social interaction is treated scantily. As put by Barbalet: "Darwin simply failed to pay attention to the social bases of and consequences of grief in particular and emotions in general, and almost exclusively focussed on the physiological aspects of expression" (Barbalet, 2001, p. 111). Some social theorists, such as Cooley and Scheff, have been drawing on Darwin in their analysis of shame. Scheff (1990), for example, advocates in connection to lining out his "deference-emotion system" that underlying the social dimension, shame has a biological foundation based on a survival value in maintaining intra-human bonds. Others have like Neckel (1991) put social relations first, or like Barbalet (2001) refuted the biological tenets altogether. The differing views can be framed in terms of whether shame *is* body or *becomes* body. The biological perspective on shame forwarded by Darwin, and acknowledged by some social scientists, positions the source of emotions in the body, and rates shame as a primordial, evolutionary based and i.e. inherited emotion while critics emphasise the social, outer-body sources of shame.

¹¹ This is however mainly true of situational shame, and of less relevance when discussing dispositional shame.

But interestingly enough, even Darwin could not avoid the “socialness” of the emotion of shame, as showed by Barbalet:

(But) Darwin, uniquely in the Expression, went on to outline a general account on the social relational context of shame/blushing. (...) Thus in his treatment of shame Darwin showed that self-attention is not simply social self-reflection, but is rather ‘thinking what others think of us.’ Thus the internal emotion shame, as Darwin saw it, is explained by him in an entirely social field: it is the self-perception of another’s apprehension of the subject which is the root of shame (Barbalet, 2001, p. 112).

Turning from social sciences to philosophy, philosopher Ullaliina Lehtinen (1998) takes a social constructionist stance on shame, claiming that “there is no shame without words and other linguistic attributions” (p. 18). In her analysis of Underdog shame, which I will get back to, she emphasisees shame as product of social interaction and turns away from biology as a source of shame, to social stratification. In this she has a friend in Neckel (1991) who claims that: “Scham *ist* Wahrnehmung from Ungleichheit, Beschämung eine Machtausübung, die Ungleichheit reproduziert” (p.21) [Shame *is* appreciation of inequality, shaming an exercise of power reproducing inequality] (my translation). In this view shame is not bodily created expressions of feelings of inferiority, but *inferiority embodied*.

Where is the Shame factory? Inside, outside or between?

Another source of theoretical discussion is the question of where shame is produced and located. As mentioned above, Darwin located emotions in human bodies. In this, states Barbalet (2001) Darwin subscribed to “the essentially modern assumption that an individual’s appearance reveals their standing and character, and their emotional disposition. In this way emotion is regarded as a personal attribute (...)” (p110). In this presumed modern view “emotional experiences might indeed be regarded as fundamentally private, because they pertain to the inner mechanisms of the emoting subject’s own body” (p. 111)

This is also the classical psychoanalytical standpoint, adopted among others by psychologist Helen B. Lewis (1971) who’s writing deeply have influenced Scheff (1990). However, as we have seen, even the evolutionist Darwin interpreted shame in the light of social interaction. And Cooley, in his presentation of the looking-glass self, is soon to introduce the Other:

The comparison with a looking-glass hardly suggest the second element, the imagined judgement, which is quite essential. The thing that moves us to pride and shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind.(Cooley, 1902/2005, p. 184)

The relationship between Self and Other is in fact central in all definitions and analyses of shame I have consulted, regardless of whether they are based on modernist or post-modernist assumptions. But there are differing views about where (what I somewhat lightly I have called) "the Shame factory" has its headquarters: in the Self, in the Other or in between. And again there are those who claim that these domains cannot be separated.

What is reflected in the Cooleyan looking glass is in fact the conceptions of Others, or conceptions of the conceptions of Others, a loop that leads back to the Self. Shame in this place demands at, least initially, an Other or an audience, even if just imagined. It is this realisation that has lead Scheff (1990) to proclaim that "shame is *the* social emotion" (p. 80).

In philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre's conceptualisation of shame, discussed by Neckel (1991) and Bartky (1990), the focus is on this Other:

For the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*, shame requires an audience: shame is "in its primary structure shame *before somebody*": it is "shame of *oneself* before the Other". "Nobody", he says "can be vulgar all alone"! To be ashamed is to be "passing judgement on myself as on an object, for it is, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other." Only insofar as I apprehend myself as the Other's object i.e., through the medium of another consciousness, can I grasp my own object-character. Hence "shame is by nature recognition": Unless I recognize that I *am* as I am seen by the Other, the Other's judgement cannot cast me down. (Bartky 1990, p. 85)

Bartky however disputes this line of thinking on the grounds that Sartre does not analyse mechanisms of identification that make (judgements of) Other and Self blend together:

Once an actual Other has revealed my object-character to me, I can become an object for myself; I can come to see myself as I might be seen by another, caught in the shameful act. Hence I *can* succeed in being vulgar all alone: In such a situation, the Other before whom I am ashamed is only - myself. (Bartky 1990, p. 85)

Translating Bartky's inference into social interactionist parlance, this would read: I and Me never sleep.¹²

¹² I thank Carin Holmberg for this phrasing.

The main representative for the *between* perspective is sociologist Erwin Goffman. His interest lies in analysis of face-to-face social interaction and indicative of his analytical stance is the classical quote: “Not then, men and their moments. Rather, moments and their men” (Goffman, 1967, p. 3). In his analyses of interaction ritual and face-to-face behaviour he focuses on embarrassment, a shame variant, which he claims “clearly shows itself to be located not in the individual but in the social system” (Goffman, 1967, p. 108). Scheff (1990) criticises Goffman’s location of emotions as something between interactants for obliterating “the *within* part of emotions”(p. 75). Instead he proposes – in a meeting between Goffman and clinical psychologist Helen B. Lewis – that shame is a *both* between and within interactants phenomenon. With this Lehtinen would, as I read her, concur. She however regards the “between” and “inside” components of shame as inseparable, since shame and all our conceptualisations of it are simultaneously socially constructed. For Lehtinen “the Shame factory” is no doubt (located in) social interaction.

Where do the definitions, framings, and discussions above lead me? I have already stated that my approach is primarily sociological, and my use of the sociology of emotions denotes that it is shame as emotion (and not primarily cognition or behaviour) that is in focus. Emotions – and perhaps especially shame – can however be conceptualised as entailing both a “feeling-part” and a “thinking-part”, and one or the other might be emphasised. For my research interest it is however enough, I gather, to note that both parts are at hand and I do not find it worthwhile to suggest whether one precedes the other or not.

Furthermore the social, outer body sources of shame are those that are of interest to me, since they are most relevant, I find, for an analysis of shame and power. It is of no interest to me whether shame, or rather the ability to feel shame, is biologically based or not, since my conviction is that whatever may evoke this ability is to be found in social interaction¹³ – and above all in relations of dominance and subordination, which I will turn to below. Thus I think that shame in this sense is aptly described as embodied inferiority.

Finally, regarding the location and production of shame, my standpoint is, not uniquely, that shame is a both “between” and “within” phenomenon. In line with some of the above-mentioned theorists “my” Shame Factory is social interaction. And what is produced there may, I mean, lead to a person being “vulgar all alone”. This is made possible, I think, through one of the Shame Factory’s end products: the merging of Other and self in complex processes of identification and internalisation. But more of this later.

¹³ Neckel puts the same conviction beautifully: “Die Scham verbleibt im Sozialen, der Blick hat seine Träger, die Sichtbarkeit eine Funktion“ [Shame remains in the social realm, every gaze has a sender, and the visibility a function] (my translation).

Social shame...

As mentioned earlier, shame has been called “*the social emotion*” (Scheff 1990, p. 80), par preference. The revelation of the social nature of shame has opened up for several lines of analysis on the relationship between shame and social structure.

Scheff (1990) posits a forceful *deference-emotion system* maintaining social bonds. This system “occurs both *between* and *within* interactants” and normally “functions so efficiently and invisibly that it guarantees the alignment of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of individuals” (p. 76). In this system “mutual conformity and respect lead to pride and fellow feeling, which lead to further conformity, and so on” (Scheff, 1990, p. 76). However, writes Scheff, a real or imagined rejection on one part, can lead to a chain-reaction of shame and anger, with components of “shame-*rage*” or “*humiliated fury*”.

Scheff draws heavily on Lewis, Goffman and Cooley, which at times make it hard to determine what his own contribution consists of. Lewis (1971) maintains that (overt or so-called low-visibility) shame arises when the social bond it threatened, and so, as I read Scheff, conformity is to be explained, with shame pulling us to act according to social expectations so as not to be estranged from fellow human beings. This systematic conformation is made possible by the fact that “adults are virtually always in the state of either pride or shame, usually of a quite unostentatious kind” (Scheff, 1990, p. 82). And this proposition (called one 1c, adjacent to the 1a and 1b propositions of Cooley’s described earlier) of ever-present shame/pride is clearly his own. Barbalet states:

The significance of Scheff’s arguments, first that shame is primary in social organisation as a mechanism for conformity, and second, that it may be experienced below the threshold of awareness, are of enormous importance to an understanding of significance of emotion in society. (Barbalet, 2001, p. 114).

Barbalet (2001) deepens Scheff’s analysis by presenting a “social typology of shame” which focuses on interactional situations and accrediting of status between interactant parties. Four types of shame are described: situational shame, narcissistic shame, aggressive shame and deferential shame. I will not go into detail here, but turn directly to Barbalet’s conclusion:

Each of the four types of shame identified here does not equally lead to social conformity. In particular, narcissistic shame and aggressive shame bear a problematic relationship to social order. The types of conformity these forms of

shame induce are as potentially disruptive of a larger harmony as they are of supporting it. Having said that, however, we can see that predominant forms of shame unequivocally do contribute to social conformity. (Barbalet, 2001, p. 125).

That is shame has, not totally but predominantly, a relationship to conformity, social stratification and social power. Below I will turn to some theorists who treat shame in this context – among them the aforementioned Bartky (1990), Lehtinen (1998) and Neckel (1991), and sociologist Beverly Skeggs (2002). Neckel's focus of attention is on inequality in general, although with an emphasis on class. Class, intersected by gender, is the main interest of Skeggs, while the common focal point of Bartky and Lehtinen is gendered shame. I will also touch lightly on sociologists Norbert Elias and John Scotson (1965/1994), and finally blend in sociologist Erving Goffman's (1963) analysis of stigma.

... and social power

Neckel (1991) starts out with the simple assertion that “nur in asymmetrischen sozialen Beziehungen kann man unterlegen und auch machtlos sein” (p. 153) [only in asymmetric social relations can one be subordinated and powerless] (my translation) and moves on to claim that position and experience, status and emotion are not separable from each other. And in this respect “shame is appreciation of inequality” (p. 21, my translation). This makes, according to Neckel, that a critical analysis of shame is only possible in the context of a critique of relations of dominance/subordination and institutions of power. Status is a central concept in Neckel's analysis, regarded both as a position in the social structure and the recognition of others of that position. Neckel connects status positions of dominance and power to resources of four kinds: money, knowledge, rank and belonging. To be lacking, and to be (made) aware of it, is to be shamed and in shame, with inferiority and shame breeding each other respectively.

Neckel connects his analysis mainly to class, visible among other in the types of resources he mentions as central. Skeggs (2002) shows how other dimensions need to be added when gender is added to class. In her analysis of the subjectivities created by (UK) working-class women, *respectability* is the central concept. With a gross simplification of her fine-grained work, one could say that respectability is what her informants use to try to ward off shame. Female working class respectability means not being too vulgar, too sexual (i.e. what working-class women are often positioned as) or even too feminine – since femininity,

according to Skeggs is (middle)classed. Skeggs also turn to Bartky (1990) who claims that shame is more a property and propensity of women than of men:

Since I have no doubt that men and women have the same fundamental emotional capacities, to say that some pattern of feeling in women, say shame, is gender-related is not to claim that it is gender-specific, i.e. that men are never ashamed; it is only to claim that women are more prone to experience the emotion in question and that the feeling itself has a different meaning in relation to their total psychic meaning and general social location than has a similar emotion when experienced by men (p. 84).

There are, writes Bartky, also other patterns of mood and feeling that follow women more than men (among them, of relevance for my enquiries, is a sense of physical vulnerability and fear of violence), but shame is of particular relevance. For women, shame is, according to Bartky “not so much a particular feeling or emotion (...) as a pervasive affective attunement to the social environment” (p.85). Lehtinen (1998), as we will see, develops Bartky’s line of reasoning in her analysis.

But before moving on to this it is worth mention is that similarities with feminist analyses of shame and power, such as Bartky’s above, and Lehtinen’s, below are not hard to find in mainstream sociological literature. For example I find Elias and Scotson (1965/1994) - in their analysis of the moral processes that create established and outsiders - capturing something highly recognizable in the relation between the sexes:

In English-speaking countries as in all other human societies, most people have at their disposal a range of terms stigmatising other groups and meaningful only in the context of specific established-outsider relationships. “Nigger”, “yid”, “wop”, “dike”, “papist” are examples. Their power to bite depends on the awareness of user and recipient that the humiliation of the latter intended by their use has the backing of a powerful established group, in relation to which that of the recipient is an outsider group with weaker power resources. All these terms symbolise the fact that the member of an outsider group can be shamed because he (sic) does not come up to the norms of the superior group because, in terms of these norms, he is anomic. Nothing is more characteristic of a highly uneven balance of power in cases such as these than the inability of outsider groups to retaliate with an equivalent stigmatising term of the established group. Even if they possess such a term in their communications, with each other (the Jewish term “goy” is an example), they are useless as weapons in a slanging match because an outsider group cannot shame members of an established group: as long as the balance of power between them is very uneven its stigmatising terms do not mean anything to them, they have no sting. (p. xxv)

Elias and Scotson’s description points to why it is never “the same thing” that is directly comparable actions when a man for example directs a four-letter-word alluding to her sex to a

woman as when a woman does “the same thing” to a man. Simply because she has not the power to shame him in a similar way. What Elias and Scotson calls established and outsiders can be translated into aristocrats and underdogs, which leads us to Lehtinen (1998).

Underdog Shame

“Achtung has Beachtung als fundamentalste Voraussetzung” [Attention is the primary requisite for regard] (my translation), writes Neckel (1991, p 219) who sees lack of recognition as upholding the inferior status of some. An echo if this can be found in Lehtinen, for whom reciprocity is a central concept:

My analysis of Underdog shame, I believe, builds heavily on the lack of reciprocity in social interactions between people from different social strata. In analogy to Goffman’s “phantom acceptance” we have also a ‘phantom reciprocity’; the endeavors to respect, understand and ‘see’ the other go mainly in one direction, towards the Standard or Normal or Paradigm people. These people, usually, have neither color, nor sex, nor class, nor sexual orientation or ethnic distinctions, as they, on their part, have never experienced any problems conditioned by any of these kinds of characteristics. Nor have they seen that they themselves, in daily, minute practice of shaming, derogation, or nullification exclude people with these characteristics from “Standard personhood” (Lehtinen, 1998, p. 27).

Lack of reciprocity and recognition creates, claims Lehtinen, an *unequal social distribution of self-respect*. And it is this unequal social distribution of self-respect, which leads to the pervasive affective attunement described by Bartky. And here Lehtinen lines out two kinds of shame, *the aristocrat’s shame* and *the underdog’s shame*. The former is described as *occasional*, as a temporal *fall* or *lowering*, from what may be moral standards or standards of conduct towards one self and others that may at times be salutary in enabling the “aristocrat” (man, white, heterosexual, able-bodied etc.) to correct his/her behaviour and mature morally and personally. The latter is, however, far from salutary; while a shame-provoking event may be perceived by the aristocrat as occasional and surmountable, it is for the underdog a mere *confirmation* of an already existing “fact”: *her lesser human value*.

Shame and stigma

Combining Lehtinen (1998) with Elias and Scotson (1965/1994), we have aristocrat insiders and underdog outsiders, which leads us to another classical piece of sociology: *Stigma: Notes on a spoiled identity* (Goffman, 1963). In Goffman's parlance, aristocrat insiders are the *normals* and underdog outsiders the *stigmatised*. Lewis (1998) has showed how the concepts of stigma and shame converge: shame has been described as a global sense of personal failure, and stigma as a "spoiled identity" i.e. both concepts imply both deficiency and the whole self being involved. Stigmatisation furthermore often involves the whole person being defined by the stigma. Lewis (1998) writes that a number of common expressions show how the stigma becomes a defining feature of the self (the examples he gives is "the Down's child", "the mentally retarded person" and "the fat lady" p. 128) and how attempts are made to linguistically alter this perception. An example of these kinds of attempts I find in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (2001), which states: "Avoid language that equates persons with their condition" (p. 69). The common practice of equating persons with their conditions, or life-experiences is, states Lewis (1998), shame provoking while diminishing.

But what, then, is a stigma? Goffman (1963) mentions three types of stigma: 1) "abominations of the body" 2) "blemishes of individual character" – examples here are mental disorders, alcoholism, homosexuality and radical political behaviour, and 3) "tribal stigma of race, nation and religion" (p.14). However, it is not these features in any essential sense that is of importance, but how we perceive them and what we ascribe to them – which varies with time and space – and how we relate to them in social interaction: "The term stigma, then, will be used to refer to an attribute that is deeply discrediting, but it should be seen that a language of relationships, not attributes, is really needed" (p. 13).

And the relationship of largest importance is between the normals and the stigmatised. With a touch of irony, Goffman put the normals as "we", and states: "By definition, of course, we believe the person with a stigma is not quite human" (p. 15); "we" see a stigmatised person as lacking, flawed, deviant or blameworthy. And central for the relationship between stigmatised and normals it that "the stigmatized individual tends to hold the same beliefs about identity that we do; this is a pivotal fact" (p. 17). (And here, writes Goffman, "shame becomes a central possibility" (p.18).) On the other hand, stigmatised individuals feel human too, and are often publicly and politically correctly acclaimed to be so. And together these different and paradoxical suppositions open up for a wide variety of

negotiation between the normals and the stigmatised on the subject of the (relative) humanness and/or normality of the latter.

Different stigmas, different faces of oppression

Goffman's characterisations of stigma open interesting venues for analysis of different forms of oppression and marginalisation. Goffman talks of the *discredited* and the *discreditable*: in the first case the stigma is visible or easily discerned by the normals, in the other the stigma is not directly perceivable. These two situations involve different plights, writes Goffman, although it is probable that a stigmatised person have experienced the both. The discredited have no choice but to expose their stigma: being black, female, and physically other-abled, is usually visible to the "normal" eye (which of course has no visual impairment). They can only advocate that they are human despite the obvious flaw. For the discreditable the situation is more dubious: they can choose to conceal their stigma, and pass as normals, although at the price of fear of discovery. Or they can choose to, more or less proudly, proclaim their stigma and claim the right to be regarded as humans despite it. Here we have gays and lesbians who "come out". And then we have of course, the even more dubious situation of uncertainty of whether one is already discredited or "only" discreditable, where we perhaps might find light-skinned black persons, transgendered persons and persons mentally other-abled.

Women who are or have been subjected to male violence in close relationships are in an ambiguous situation. At times, although rare ones, they may clearly be discredited, as when seeking medical help for inflicted injuries. But most of the time they are discreditable – it is up to them to reveal their stigma to "us" normals. And up to us normals whether we fully and without reservation shall include them in the human community.

The name of shame

The analyses of power – in the sense of social stratification, marginalisation and oppression – and shame, in connection to stigmatisation, bear several revelations. One is the importance of pride for political change, which perhaps captures the whole idea of the sociology of emotions: that emotions are related and relatable to social structure and social change. Bearing in mind that shame is what befalls underdogs, it is not difficult to see the need for

“black is beautiful” and pride parades. Pride is the revenge of the underdogs, the outsiders and the stigmatised.

However, pride is ambiguous, when it comes to the situation of my informants: being a woman who has been subjected to violence. One could (and should!) easily claim that that is nothing to be ashamed of. But proud? Here again are differences between kinds of stigmatisation: questioning the norm of heterosexuality one can claim that it is a good (though not necessarily better than heterosexual) thing to be lesbian/gay. But to claim that it is a good thing to have been battered is of course quite another matter. The venues for pride are different, or in worst case lacking.

Another revelation is the centrality of the concept of *internalisation*, which in my mind connects the analyses of several writers, whether they use the concept or not. My first deeper acquaintance with the concept was by sociologist Eva Lundgren’s use of it in her description of the process of normalising violence (1991; 2004). Lundgren (2004) claims a battered woman internalises the violent man’s (rationalisations for his) violence, and “starts to see herself with his eyes” (p. 29). Internalisation in this sense means that “the reality of violence is inside the woman and she identifies with it” (p. 29) Lehtinen, likewise, speaks of internalisation, not of violence, but of *inferiority*. And several of the aforementioned theorists, like Bartky and Neckel, question the idea that the one who is shamed can avoid feeling ashamed. I turn again to a quote from Bartky (1990) given above: “Once an actual Other has revealed my object-character to me, I can become an object for myself; I can come to see myself as I might be seen by another” (p. 85).

Violence, inferiority and shame bear a likeness to each other and are, I mean, connected. And here I would like to return to the limited venues of pride for a woman who has been subjected to violence – or in other words the many opportunities for shame. A woman who lives with a violent man may internalise his derogative view of her and other persuasions he may have and/or express, such as that he will be a destroyed human being if she leaves him. The result of this internalisation would be that she could conclude that a) she is a bad person and b) that it would be irresponsible to leave the man. On the other hand she may also, simultaneously, internalise the derogative view of battered women who “lets” themselves be subjected to violence through not leaving the abuser. Which could lead to the conclusion that c) she is a bad person for not leaving the man. Or in other words: damn if you do, and damn if you don’t. The possibilities of failure, and shame, are ample.

The “damn if you do, and damn if you don’t” situation for battered women is, I claim, underlying the informants negative self-appraisals in terms of being “stupid” which is

investigated in Paper II. There I connect the “damn if you do” to abusive relationships dynamics and the “damn if you don’t” to the gender equality oriented Nordic context. It is also quite possible to connect the “damn if you do” to the image of abusive men as “hurt boys” analysed in Paper IV. As stated there, one does not easily abandon a hurt child; or get away with it without “damnation”. This points to that discourse matters, and that battered women are not only positioned in crossroads of emotion, cognition and action, but also in crossroads of different discourses: nuclear family ideology and gender equality, to name some, and different discourses on violence as discussed in Paper IV. It is easy to point out that battered women, through their victimisation, “fail” to live up to both nuclear family ideology and gender equality. The interconnections between the domain of emotion, cognition and action on one side, and the domain of discourses on the other, are however both many and complex; it is not within the scope of this thesis to picture them all. It is my persuasion, though, that present in these different domains is the age long of conflation of gender and shame. To paraphrase Hamlet: Shame, thy name is woman.

Chapter VI: Conclusions

The *general aim* of the thesis was to study how *emotion* and *cognition* are shaped around the *act* of leaving. Four specific research questions were presented, as follows:

- Which *emotions*, and *emotional processes*, are involved when women leave violent men?

Emotions and emotional processes were addressed in Papers I, II and III. In Paper I, five emotional ties forming parts of a traumatic bond between victimised women and their abusers were described: *love, fear, hate, compassion, guilt* and *hope*. In Paper II *shame* was presented as yet another, very crucial, emotion found to be involved in living with and leaving violence. The emotional process of Becoming Free was illustrated in Paper I, and was found to be a process proceeding in four stages that started before and could end long after the factual break-up. Eventually becoming “free” meant that women had severed the major parts of the emotional ties to their abusers, ultimately feeling emotionally indifferent to them. Women’s emotion work in the process of leaving was studied in Paper III, in which two opposite kinds of emotion work were identified. The informants’ emotion work was closely connected to how they conceptualised their abusers, which leads to the next question.

- Which *cognitive processes* are involved?

Two kinds of cognitive processes have been illustrated in this thesis. In Paper I, the description of the cognitive process of Understanding entailed victimised women identifying the relationships they live/had lived in as abusive and themselves as battered women. In contrast with previous research, this process was found to predominantly occur *after* women had left their abusers. Another cognitive process was described in Paper III, in which women’s conceptualisations of their abusers shifted from only “Jekyll”, i.e. good, to also or predominantly “Hyde”, i.e. bad.

- What precedes and influences the *act* of leaving?

Two turning points which preceded and initiated women’s breaking up were identified: “when it’s a matter of life and death” and “when someone else is at risk”. Another finding was that women are more likely to leave in the latter stages of the Becoming Free process.

- How are women’s conceptualisations and labelling – of themselves, of their abusers and of their experiences of abuse – connected to leaving?

This question was addressed in Papers II, III and IV. In Paper II, women’s self-appraisals in terms of being “stupid” were investigated. It was argued that this labelling mirrored unfinished Understanding processes. In Paper III, attention was turned to women’s conceptualisations of their abusers in relation to cognitive-emotive dissonance and emotion work. It was suggested that women’s shifting conceptualisations of their abusers from Jekyll to Hyde may be connected to the turning point and thus to the factual break-up. In Paper IV, finally, it was argued that women’s conceptualisations of their abusers as “hurt boys” may serve as an obstacle to leaving, factually or emotionally.

How then, are emotion and cognition shaped around the act of leaving? In this thesis, leaving was regarded from a *process perspective* and several and interconnected leaving processes and sub-processes connected to leaving were defined. The emotional process of Becoming Free, in which women’s feelings for their abusers turn from love – via hate and pity – to indifference, continued after the act of leaving. The cognitive process of women’s shifting conceptualisations of their abusers thus runs partly parallel to Becoming Free. I propose that these processes “meet” in the act of leaving. It is, I suggest, when emotive-cognitive dissonance becomes undeniable and Hyde take precedence over Jekyll that the emotional ties of love and hope break. This opens up for leaving. And leaving, in turn, opens up for another cognitive process: Understanding.

Shame has been proposed to be a quintessential emotion, an undercurrent of the general oppression of women and especially present in the wake of abuse. Shame may also serve as example of the *interconnectedness* of emotion and cognition. In Paper II, both were found; informants’ referring to themselves in terms of feeling/being “stupid” was translated into shame, self-appraisal and self-labelling, i.e. simultaneous *emotion* and *cognition*.¹⁴

What we see, then, around the act of leaving are emotion and cognition shaped in crossroads.

Several other *perspectives* have been presented in the thesis. “Jekyll and Hyde”, a theme found in two of the papers (III & IV), may be used to connect these perspectives. Women’s descriptions of their abusers in terms of “Jekyll and Hyde” may be interpreted as part of the *violence process*, in which perpetrators’ strategies of “alternating violence and warmth” (Lundgren, 2004) make victims simultaneously confused, scared and hopeful: i.e.

¹⁴ The interconnectedness this pointed to was later used as a supposition in Paper III; this supposition was thus empirically generated.

these strategies create *emotions*. In Paper III, other elements were added, such as women's shifting conceptualisations of their abusers – from Jekyll to Hyde – i.e. a change of *cognitions*, as well as the accompanying *emotion work*. This emotion work may be understood either as a way to manage the emotions created by the process of violence, or to manage oneself out of violence. Thus “from Jekyll to Hyde” may also be viewed as part of the *leaving process* leading to women taking *action*, and breaking up. In Paper IV, “Jekyll and Hyde” is instead connected to different *discourses* on violence and violent men that constitute the frames available to women trying to understand their experiences of violence, discourses that may shape emotion, cognition and action.

The issue of power is addressed thoroughly in this part of the thesis but less so in the papers. How can the presented results, then, be connected to gendered power? The sociology of emotions teaches us that that power is intrinsic to emotion. Thus I suggest that when women emotionally leave violent men, via the process of Becoming Free and through their emotion work, they make a significant break – on a micro level – with men's power over them. But I would also claim that the predominantly cognitive process of Understanding may be part of challenging men's violence and gendered power in a less personal manner. This process may at least be a first step to political awareness of, and work to change, men's power and men's violence, and is probably a process much supported at women's refuges and by the battered women's movement. In Paper II, it is implied that “understanding” may be a remedy to women's sense of being stupid, and thus one means to combat gendered shame and subordination. However, this is still mainly on the micro level.

In Paper IV, the focus was on discourses of violent men, i.e. more on the macro level. The results of this paper are a call to action. Feminists have a long history of questioning discourses contributing to men's violence being regarded as an outcome of individual pathology rather than as an issue pertaining to gendered power. The conclusion drawn in this paper is, however, that discourses of this type seem to be alive and kicking. Furthermore, feminist discourses may be drawn upon but their very vital – and revolutionary – underpinning, i.e. patriarchy as upholding men's violence, was mainly found to be lacking. Moreover, the results may be interpreted as indicating that women found feminist discourses too narrow to encompass their lived realities and complex emotions. All this is challenging for those who want to contest men's power.

The main limitation of the study is that no women actively involved in abusive relationships were interviewed. If women currently involved with the abusers had been included, it would have been possible to obtain a clearer picture of emotions and cognitions in

process before the factual break-up. Furthermore, the emphasis of the study is on micro processes; it is important to remember that these take place within larger social structures.

I adopt a structural perspective on violence. Feminist researchers with this perspective are often criticised for being overly inclusive in analyses that lack contextualisation (Walby, 1990). In this thesis, I have tried to combat this tendency with recurrent local contextualisation. In Paper I, this contextualisation was epistemological: part of the theoretical framework was a discussion between Nordic researchers on the degree of legitimacy of male violence in the gender equality-oriented Swedish context. In Paper II, I contextualised the informants' tendency to feel and label themselves "stupid" to the gender equality-oriented Nordic context. Gender equality can, dependent on context and perspective, be described in terms of practical politics, discourse, ideology or cultural norm. My interest in this paper was mainly in the latter, i.e. in gender equality as an ideal, a desired way to live and arrange social relations, that may affect victimised women's self-appraisals. Paper III, I now note, escaped an explicit Nordic contextualisation, to which I did, however, return to some extent in Paper IV. In this paper the analysis was influenced by how feminist discourses on violence have developed in Sweden.

The results of this study may be applied in practical work with abused women in a number of ways, which is actually already occurring. The study presented in Paper I has, independently of the authors, been used to develop practical methods for empowering battered women. To my knowledge, three different methods have been developed: 1) group work with battered women who have left violent men, with explicit focus on "reclaiming power", and in which art work has been used as a method for expression and sharing of experiences,¹⁵ 2) drama work, also in group form, concerning the leaving processes presented in the study; this is currently the basis of a book manuscript on working methods with battered women and 3) individual counselling with help-seeking women at a hospital, where the counsellor writes down "love", "hate", "guilt", "hope", "fear" and "compassion" and asks women to rank and reflect on these emotions. This serves simultaneously as a counselling technique and as a tool for the counsellor to assess at what stage women are in the emotional leaving process.¹⁶ Although they have been applied in different contexts, the individuals who have developed these working methods have, interestingly, all been active in the battered women's movement.

¹⁵ The cover picture was painted by one of the group participants of this project.

¹⁶ The following people have developed these methods: 1) special education teacher Nancy Kostet and art therapist Anita Forsell, Sundsvall's women's refuge 2) drama therapist Julia Friis, Katrineholm 3) social worker Mia Törngren, Örebro University Hospital

Thus the framework presented in this study has been perceived as useful by those who have the longest history of working with battered women and working against men's violence.

When it comes to the results of the other papers, they indicate that shame must be added to the lists of emotions used in these models. Combating shame has, in my opinion, a personal as well as a political dimension; a Pride parade for survivors of male violence might be beneficial! Moreover, we must be aware of how we all, as private individuals, professionals and academics, shape discourses on violence against women. These may enable or impede recognition and change on the personal as well as the political levels.

This thesis touches on several different domains: processes of staying and leaving, emotion, cognition and action, gendered power and discourse, the interconnections between which are many and complex, and only some of which have been illustrated. However, as I see it, it is in this landscape full of crossroads that women leave violent men.

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