

**Factors Affecting a Woman's Decision to Leave
an Abusive Relationship:
The Theory of Planned Behaviour**

by

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Abstract

The present study tested the applicability of Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behaviour (TPB), an extension of Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA), for the first time, in the context of abused women's decision to leave their abusive relationships. The TPB, as a means of predicting women's decision to leave their abusive partners' was drawn from Strube's (1988, 1991) proposed decision-making model based on the principle that the decision-making process is a rational, deliberative process, and regardless of outcome, was a result of a logical assessment of the available data. As a means of predicting those behaviours not under volitional control, Ajzen's (1985) TPB incorporated a measure of perceived behavioural control. Data were collected in two phases, ranging from 6 months to 1 year apart.

It was hypothesized that, to the extent that an abused woman held positive attitudes, subjective norms conducive to leaving, and perceived control over leaving, she would form an intention to leave and thus, increase the likelihood of actually leaving her partner. Furthermore, it was expected that perceptions of control would predict leaving behaviour over and above attitude and subjective norm. In addition, severity and frequency of abuse were assessed, as were demographic variables.

The TPB failed to account significantly for variability in either intentions or leaving behaviour. All of the variance was attributed to those variables associated with the theory of reasoned action, with social influence emerging as the strongest predictor of a woman's intentions. The poor performance of this model is attributed to measurement

problems with aspects of attitude and perceived control, as well as a lack of power due to the small sample size. The insufficiency of perceived control to predict behaviour also suggests that, on the surface at least, other factors may be at work in this context. Implications of these results, and recommendations such as, the importance of obtaining representative samples, the inclusion of self-esteem and emotions as predictor variables in this model, a reevaluation of the target behaviour as nonvolitional, and longitudinal studies spanning a longer time period for future research within the context of decision-making are discussed.

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Introduction

Although woman abuse has been a major social problem for years, only recently has North American society been willing to acknowledge it openly and deal with it. Straddling ethnic, socio-economic, and age barriers, violence by men against women has been and remains a major source of fear, injury, and at times, even death, for women in Canada (Goodman, Koss, Fitzgerald, Russo, & Keita, 1993). Over the last 20 years the literature has been flooded with a host of presumed causes, predictors, and theories of wife assault (e.g., Bookwala, Frieze, Smith, & Ryan, 1992; Dutton, 1992; Dutton, 1994; Geller, 1992; Gelles, 1976; Goodman, et al., 1993; Hilberman, 1980; Hilberman & Munson, 1977; Rollins & Bahr, 1976; Schutte, Bouleige, & Malouff, 1986; Stone, 1984; Strube & Barbour, 1983, 1984; Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981). In 1985 alone, three new journals were created to accommodate this area of knowledge (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). It is this growing, sometimes confusing, state of the literature however, that this study endeavoured to address by examining the predictors of a woman's decision to remain in or leave an abusive relationship.

Prevalence

Because of the private nature of wife assault, estimates of its incidence vary greatly. Women are often reluctant to report violent episodes with their partners. Consequently, the true magnitude of this problem is believed to be greatly underestimated (Dutton, 1994; Strube, 1988; Statistics Canada, 1994). Based on recent findings from Statistics

Canada (1994), it is estimated that, on average, 29% of Canadian women who have ever been married or lived in a common-law relationship have been assaulted by their male partners. The proportion of ever-married Canadian women, who have experienced wife assault, ranges from 17% in Newfoundland to 25% in Quebec and Prince Edward Island, and up to 36% and 34% in British Columbia and Alberta, respectively. There is no difference in rates of assault between the urban centres and rural areas of Canada, and Statistics Canada (1994) found no differences in the rates of abuse across educational levels. However, there was some variance in rates of abuse across income levels, with individuals at lower income levels reporting more abuse.

These figures are particularly grim, given that the statistics presented above are likely to be underestimates of the phenomenon. Part of the difficulty in pinning down the numbers revolves around the fact that, as mentioned earlier, for one reason or another, a large percentage of women do not report abuse. In fact, it is estimated that only about 15% of violent acts perpetrated against women are ever reported (Leonard, Bromet, Parkinson, Day, & Ryan, 1985). In addressing the real magnitude of this problem, Cadsky and Crawford (1988) argue that the rates of abuse are much higher, and that closer to one half of all Canadian women are assaulted by their male partners.

While many women will experience only one episode of violence, it can occur at any time during the relationship (Statistics Canada, 1994). Over 16% of ever-married women report that the violence started before they were married. Twenty percent of battered women reported violent

episodes during pregnancy (Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Statistics Canada, 1994).

Consequences

In many cases the assaults are severe enough to require medical attention. It is estimated that at least 21% of all women using emergency medical services are there as a result of partner violence and that at least one half of all injuries reported by women are the result of partner abuse (Browne, 1993; Statistics Canada, 1994). Browne (1993) reports that at least one half of all women over the age of 30 who sought treatment in emergency rooms for sexual assault were assaulted by their own partners. Further, in a study on the impact of shelters for battered women on subsequent violence, Berk, Newton, and Berk (1986) state that nearly one third of all homicides involving female victims are committed by their husbands and boyfriends. According to police statistics, 23% of women killed by their partners were separated from them at the time of the incident.

In addition to documenting the high incidence of assault requiring medical services, Browne (1993), Berk et al. (1986), and Statistics Canada (1994) also describe the psychological sequelae of violence. Statistics Canada (1994) found that battered women use a variety of methods to cope with abusive partners. The survey uncovered high rates of alcohol and drug use among victims of wife assault with approximately one-quarter of women who have ever been involved in a physically abusive relationship reportedly using medication to help them cope. The Addiction Research Foundation (1996) cites figures derived from the National Alcohol and Other Drugs Survey (1989) stating that, overall, 72% of Canadian women

use alcohol. According to Statistics Canada, however, 12% of these women were using alcohol as a means of coping with an abusive relationship. Another Canadian study by Ratner (1993; cited in Addictions Research Foundation, 1996) found that 16% of abused women were alcohol dependent, a figure estimated to be eight times greater than women who were not suffering abuse from their partners. Further, of the 39% of Canadian women (Addictions Research Foundation, 1995) who report multiple drug use, 9% were using the drugs as coping mechanism to deal with abuse (Statistics Canada, 1994). In addition, 41% of the women who have sustained bodily injuries requiring medical attention, and 31% of the women who reported significant levels of emotional abuse were inclined to use both drugs and alcohol.

Thus, the effects of abuse go beyond any one abusive episode. The range of after-effects can include symptoms such as chronic fatigue, intense startle reactions, lowered self-esteem, disturbed sleep and eating patterns, and nightmares (Hilberman & Munson, 1978). The high rates of drug, alcohol, and medication use previously documented, are often viewed as attempts to deal with the presence of posttraumatic stress disorder induced by the abuse (Browne, 1993; Dutton, 1992).

In victims of ongoing abuse, long-term manifestations of "emotional numbing, extreme passivity, and helplessness" can be found (Browne, 1993). As a result, when violence escalates, any action to leave the situation can appear to be too dangerous to pursue. As is typical with all types of trauma, there exists a very real fear of a force that is seemingly out of control, and, as is common to all victims of interpersonal violence, women abused by male partners learn to weigh the perceived alternatives

against their "perception of the assailant's ability to control or to harm" (Browne, 1993). Complicating a woman's appraisal of the situation, is the fact that her attacker is someone she may still love and on whom she depends for her survival.

These facts, alone, are alarming in their implications. However, the fact that many women choose to remain with their abusive partners, often risking serious injury or death, is itself a disturbing reality (Dutton, 1994; Pfouts, 1978; Strube, 1988). Their seeming passivity toward taking steps to leave the relationships, even though there are no visible impediments to their doing so, is a source of cynicism and frustration among outside observers as well as professionals who have an interest in their welfare (Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Dutton, 1994; Gelles, 1976; Pfouts, 1978). What is overlooked by observers to this apparently irrational behaviour is the complex subjective meaning of wife assault and the impact of subtle situational forces on women's behaviour. Issues such as the nature of commitment and external constraints, all combine to limit a woman's ability to make the difficult decision to leave (Dutton, 1994; Gelles, 1976; Pagelow, 1981).

Past Research on Terminating Abusive Relationships

Information on the factors influencing a woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship were obtained, not only from studies designed to investigate this process directly, but, also from research examining other aspects of this phenomenon. Studies by Berk et al., (1986), Hilberman and Munson (1978), Pfouts (1978), Stone (1984), and Snyder and Fruchtmann (1981), limited themselves to determining the status of women seeking shelter or intervention from social service agencies, without investigating

systematically the antecedents to their decisions. The relevance of these studies lies partly in the documentation of prevalence rates for women returning to previously abusive relationships, as well as illustrating the magnitude of this phenomenon.

Other research embodies efforts aimed at investigating directly the factors influencing the decision to terminate an abusive relationship. Such studies have produced useful insights into antecedents of the decision process, but are few in number. They include studies by Gelles (1976), Strube and Barbour (1983, 1984), and Strube (1988). Again, the primary purpose of these studies was to examine outcomes for those women seeking intervention following violent episodes and not necessarily the antecedents to their decisions. An example of this approach was conducted by Stone (1984), in an extensive survey study that obtained estimates of the number of women likely to return to their assailants. This was achieved by interviewing 124 women receiving services at a shelter for battered women (62% of these women reported having being beaten). Follow-up of these participants between one to three months after leaving the shelter, indicated that 41.9% of the women had returned to their violent partners.

Hilberman and Munson (1978) interviewed 60 victims of abuse who had been referred for psychiatric evaluation. At the time of referral, 76% of the women still resided with their assailants. This number dropped to 53% by the end of their treatment. There were, however, no follow-up data. For that reason, it is unknown how many women returned to their partners after leaving treatment. It is important to note that research by Snyder and Fruchtman (1981) indicated that many women who initially

report they are not returning to the relationship end up doing so. Therefore, Hilberman and Munson's return rate may be underestimated.

Berk et al. (1986) interviewed 155 battered women in the process of studying the impact of shelters for battered women on subsequent violence. They found that 76% of the women were living with their assailants when the study was initiated. Figures for post-shelter return rates were not available as a follow-up was not conducted.

Snyder and Fruchtman (1981) interviewed 119 women on entry at a shelter for battered women in Detroit. At the time of these interviews, 13% intended to return. At discharge 34% indicated that they intend to return. However, at follow-up, six months later, fully 60% had returned.

Pfouts (1978) analyzed 35 families that had come to the attention of local service agencies due to suspected child abuse or neglect. Pfouts found wife abuse in 27 of the cases and 78% of these abused women were still living with their partners at the time of this study.

The following four studies by Gelles (1976), Strube and Barbour (1983, 1984), and Strube (1988), were designed to examine directly the factors influencing an abused woman's decision to leave her partner. The first study of this approach was conducted by Gelles (1976). Data were collected using in depth interviews with 41 family members of women who had been assaulted by their partners. This sample included women who had sought out interventions such as divorce, separation, shelters, and police assistance, as well as women who did not seek help. This study identified four major factors which influenced the decisions of these women. The less severe and less frequent the violence, the more likely a woman was to stay with her assailant. Second, the more a woman was

abused as a child, the more likely she was to remain. Third, the fewer resources, and the less power she perceived herself to have, the more likely she was to stay with a violent partner. Finally, those who left were more likely to be employed and to have fewer children than those who stayed.

Early studies by Strube and Barbour (1983, 1984) examined factors that had been proposed in previous research. Their 1983 study, using both objective and subjective measures, confirmed the role of eight variables relevant to the decision making process. In that study, the women were interviewed during intake at a counseling unit. Objective measures included the presence of employment outside the home, and length of relationship. Subjective measures included the women's self generated reasons for staying. A follow-up was conducted one year to eighteen months later to determine the relationship status. Overall, 38% of the women who completed the study remained with their partners. It was determined that women who had left were more likely to be employed, to have been involved in a shorter term relationship, to be nonwhite, and to have attempted a variety of different coping strategies to alleviate the abuse than those women who remained. In addition, women who remained were more likely to have indicated, in the initial stages of the study, that they were remaining with their partner because of love, economic hardship, the belief that their partners would change, or because they had nowhere else to go.

Strube and Barbour's (1984) study attempted to replicate the results of the first study, and to examine additional factors previously hypothesized to influence the complex decision making process. Results

indicated that economic and psychological dependence were significantly and independently related to the decision to leave an abusive relationship. Independent predictors of the decision to leave, in order of importance, were: employment status, length of relationship, economic hardship, love, ethnicity (Caucasian women were more likely to stay), and the lack of alternative living arrangements. Also of interest are the factors that did not discriminate the women who stayed from the women who left. These factors were: marital status, the number of children, the presence of child abuse, alcohol as a precipitating factor of abuse, and the presence of social support.

Strube's (1988) review of empirical evidence found a variety of factors believed to influence battered women's decisions to leave an abusive relationship. They include employment outside the home, the length of the relationship, the presence of child abuse (present only in Strube 1983) and the number of previous separations. In this study, Strube also proposed four interrelated models that show promise for aiding in the understanding of the decision making process: psychological entrapment, learned helplessness, cost/benefit analysis, and the theory of reasoned action.

Limitations and Summary

Both Stone (1984) and Strube (1988) cited three major criticisms of past research. First, the selective nature of the samples used severely limited their representativeness. It is not known whether a difference exists between women who seek alternatives to abusive relationships and those who do not, either in basic sociodemographics or in the way they arrive at such a decision. There may exist another population of women

who have been overlooked because they have not yet entered the "system". Difficulty obtaining a representative sample is thought to relate, in part, to shame stemming from self-blame often experienced by victims of woman abuse, as well as the fear of being found out by violent or controlling partners, consequently, it is a problem area in research into woman abuse. Selection bias has also been a difficult problem to overcome in this context because women who do not seek help are difficult to contact. It is likely that these women want to deal with the problem themselves while maintaining their privacy, thus, leaving them less accessible to researchers. Moreover, there have been no successful studies of the population of women who have dropped out of research and treatment programs. This is likely due, in part, to unsuccessful attempts to contact them. Second, it has become apparent that the antecedents of the decision to leave can only be identified using longitudinal research designs rather than the largely snapshot studies reviewed thus far. Finally, the over reliance on self-report measures introduces the potential for bias in the studies that rely solely on such measures.

Some consistency has emerged from these studies, however. Insights compiled by Strube (1988) reveal that, as mentioned above, many women are reluctant to seek outside help, and often do so only after life-threatening episodes of abuse. Women who remain in abusive relationships are less likely to report abuse of their children, and have themselves suffered less severe abuse than women who leave (Gelles, 1976; Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981). Factors found to influence the decision to remain in the relationship include longer term relationships, inability

to find alternative housing, unemployment, economic dependence, promises from partners that they would change, and level of commitment to their relationship (Kalmuss & Strauss, 1982; Strube & Barbour, 1983, 1984). Snyder and Fruchtmann (1981) and Gelles (1976) found that those women who left their relationship not only experienced greater frequency and severity of abuse, but also shared nonviolent pasts. Overall, of the number of women who seek interventions, approximately one half remain in the relationship, making it very clear that powerful forces are at work to keep them there. An understanding of this phenomenon has yet to be reached, and this wide range of findings serves only to underscore the need for further research into the antecedents of a woman's decision to remain in or to leave an abusive relationship (Pfouts, 1978; Strube, 1988).

Proposed Theoretical Perspective

Strube's (1988) review of the empirical evidence and overview of theoretical issues surrounding this problem highlights the need for further research. As mentioned above, Strube (1988) suggested four models that could potentially serve as a framework from which to study the precipitating factors of the decision to remain in or to leave an abusive relationship. One theory in particular, holds promise toward understanding the complex stages of this process, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975).

According to this theory, behaviour is a function of the intention (BI) to perform the target behaviour (Be) (e.g., leaving the relationship). Intention (BI) is determined by two major components: (1) the attitude toward the behaviour (A_{beh}) and (2) subjective norm (SN). There is a general agreement among investigators that attitudes are largely

determined by "beliefs" about an act or behavioural outcome (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Beliefs are formed when we attribute certain characteristics, or qualities to the behaviour or outcome. Automatically, and simultaneously, we develop an attitude toward the outcome. Thus, we either "like" (or have favourable attitudes) an outcome which we believe has positive characteristics, or conversely, we "dislike" (or have unfavourable attitudes) an outcome we believe has negative characteristics. Attitude is defined by the underlying beliefs that an act is instrumental for obtaining a particular outcome, multiplied by the evaluation of that outcome or attitude toward it (e.g., the importance or utility of that outcome). Therefore, to the extent that the actor believes that the target behaviour will result in the desired outcome and that the evaluation of that outcome is positive, the attitude toward the target behavior will also be positive. The second component, subjective norm (SN), consists of the perceptions of what specific and significant referent individuals or groups think the actor should do regarding the target behaviour, that is, their normative beliefs, multiplied by the actor's motivation to comply with that particular individual's views. To the extent that the actor believes that significant others think he/she should perform the behaviour, and the actor is motivated to comply with those views, behavioural intentions will be positive toward the target behaviour.

In summary, the theory of reasoned action states that the two components A_{beh} and SN together, combine to influence intention which in turn determines behaviour. This relationship is expressed in the following formula:

$$Be \approx BI = \sum w_1 A_{beh} + \sum w_2 SN$$

In this formula, w_1 and w_2 are empirically determined regression weights representing the relative influence of attitude and subjective norm toward predicting the behaviour (Strube, 1988).

This model has been successfully applied to many diverse issues, (Sheppard, Hartwick, & Warshaw, 1988) such as family planning (Vinokur-Kaplan, 1978), adolescent alcohol use (Schlegel, Crawford, & Sanborn, 1977), and in the prediction of smoking behaviours (Beck & Davis, 1980). The TRA has, however, failed to capture all the factors necessary to predict behaviour adequately under certain circumstances. This failure to predict behaviour adequately is particularly true when the issue of perceived behavioural control has not been considered. The development and testing of this model was, up until 1985, limited to the assumption that the behaviours under examination were under full volitional control. Since then, behaviours under volitional control in this model have been contrasted with behaviours perceived to be impeded by factors not under volitional control (Netemeyer & Burton, 1990). There is a wide range of factors that can interfere with an individual's control over his/her intended behaviour. These factors can include internal constraints, such as possession of the necessary knowledge and skills required to perform the behaviour, or external constraints, such as the opportunity or a dependence on the cooperation of others to carry out the behaviour. Thus, the need to consider perceived control when predicting behaviour that is not deemed to be completely under the actor's volitional control was recognized, and in 1985 Ajzen included perceived behavioural control as an optional antecedent to behavioural intention.

This new extension, labeled the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), was formulated to include perceived behavioural control. This new component was believed to influence both behavioural intentions and behaviour independently of the attitude and subjective norm components (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen & Madden, 1986). Perceived behavioural control can have a direct influence on behaviour or influence it indirectly through behavioural intentions. Persons who believe they have little or no control over performing a target behaviour because of a lack of resources, will not have strong intentions to carry out the behaviour, even if their attitudes and subjective norms are favourable (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). Bandura, Adams, Hardy, and Howells (1980; cited in Madden et al. 1992) found that behaviour was influenced directly by perceived behavioural control in individuals who reported a high degree of confidence in their own abilities to perform a particular behaviour. Thus, when perceived control over the target behaviour reflects the individual's actual control over the behaviour, it can be expected to have a direct effect on behaviour.

The theory of planned behaviour has been tested often and found to be effective in predicting a wide variety of behaviours. Studies predicting such diverse behaviours as voting (Netemeyer & Burton, 1990), engaging in testicular self-examination (Brubaker & Fowler, 1990), participation in cancer screening behaviour (Devellis, Blalock, & Sandler, 1990), problem drinking (Schlegel, D'Avernas, Zanna, DeCourville, & Manske, 1992), engaging in regular exercise (Terry & O'Leary, 1995), and weight loss (Schifter & Ajzen, 1985), more accurately predicted these behaviours using the TPB.

The application of the theory of planned behaviour as a model for predicting the decision to leave an abusive relationship was first proposed by Strube (1988). According to Strube, the TPB is particularly suitable for this application. First, it has been shown to be both a methodologically and conceptually sound model (Sheppard et al., 1988), and second, it encompasses three different cognitive component processes (i.e., (1) attitudinal, (2) subjective norms, and (3) perceived control), effectively allowing relationship decisions to be analyzed in the context of three different cognitive components.

The suitability of this model in the context of abused women's decision processes is enhanced by the inclusion of the measurement of both internal and external control that women possess, as it effectively measures the resources a woman perceives are available to her. Studies show that, for many women, the leaving process is best characterized as a series of steps that involve leaving and returning to their partners several times, each time, testing their internal and external resources until they are confident that they can care for themselves and their family on their own (Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Walker, 1979). The pattern of leaving and returning many times before finally terminating the relationship is supported indirectly by studies which found that, compared to women who leave their partners, women who remain have experienced fewer separations (Snyder & Fruchtmann, 1981; Snyder & Scheer, 1981).

The assumption that the decision to stay or leave is based on a rational, deliberative process is central to the application of this model. The perspective that this process is a logical, deliberative process differentiates this model from previously held assumptions, as it

represents a departure from prevailing attitudes that overwhelmingly view decisions to remain in abusive relationships as pathological (Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Gelles, 1976; Pfouts, 1978). Thus, the suitability of this decision making model within the context of abused women is very much enhanced. Moreover, the TPB offers a model of the decision process itself, providing insight into several of the factors behind a woman's decision to leave. It should also be mentioned that this was a first attempt to apply the theory of reasoned action or the theory of planned behaviour to this particular decision making process.

In a departure from past methods, this study attempted to address two widely criticized limitations of past studies on the decision processes in abusive relationships. First, critics of previous research have noted the selective nature of samples (e.g., recruiting only women who have sought interventions from shelters and agencies); a practice that has, in the past, drawn into question the representativeness of their findings. Therefore, this study endeavoured to recruit a sample not only from a local agency, but from the community as well. Second, rather than examine this issue at one point in time, this study utilized a longitudinal design, gathering data at time one and, working within academic time constraints, gathering data again, six months later, at time two. As previously mentioned, past research (Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Walker, 1979) had found that, on average, most women in abusive relationships leave their partner up to five times before terminating the relationship permanently. This process is characterized as a progression of steps culminating finally, in the termination of the relationship. Thus, it is acknowledged that, ideally, a longitudinal design spanning a period of one to two years would more

accurately capture the decision process. It was believed, however, that the six month time span proposed in this study was long enough to gain some insight into this decision process.

Hypothesis

Based on the theory of reasoned action, it was expected that a woman's intentions to leave an abusive relationship would be significantly influenced by her attitudes toward this behaviour, as well as her perception of the extent of pressure from significant persons in her life to do so. Second, it was expected that the strength of a woman's intentions to leave would significantly predict her actual behaviour. Finally, based on the assumption that the actual behaviour in this study (leaving an abusive relationship) is unlikely to be under complete volitional control, it was proposed that, after controlling for the effects of the theory of reasoned action, the inclusion of perceived control would add significantly to the prediction of both intentions and actual behaviour. Thus, the more positive the participant's attitudes, perceived norms and perceived control over leaving the relationship, the greater would be the intention to leave and therefore, the likelihood of actually performing the leaving behaviour.

To test this model, a longitudinal study was designed in which women in abusive relationships were recruited via newspaper advertisements, cable television community bulletin boards, community radio bulletins, an internet bulletin board, and advertisements placed in community centres and the university, as well as word of mouth. Other recruitment efforts targeted shelters, and organizations that counseled abused women, including lawyers who agreed to distribute questionnaires

to interested clients. Measures of attitudes, norms, intentions and perceived control were obtained at Phase 1 of the data collection, while actual behaviour was assessed at Phase 2 which took place six months to one year later.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of 70 women who identified themselves as having been in a psychologically or physically abusive relationship. For the most part, women identified themselves as abused, and as such, did not have to meet any specific criteria to qualify to participate. Frequently, women suffering strictly psychological abuse were uncertain if what they were experiencing could be considered abusive or not. Those women were encouraged to read and answer the following questions found on a recruitment information sheet. "Does your partner....criticize you? Insult you? Push, hit, or threaten to hit you? Keep tabs on you, everywhere you go? Force you to do sexual things that you do not want to do? Make decisions without asking what you want?" For these women, it was reasonable to assume that answering yes to any of the questions indicated that, by definition, the woman was indeed being subjected to some level of abuse.

On several occasions these same women informed the researcher that they had suspected they were being abused and that their fears were confirmed when they completed the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory. These women indicated that they "saw themselves" when completing the items on this psychological abuse scale. Given the number of times the researcher encountered this response from the participants suggests that the women who were experiencing psychological abuse were often aware that at some level their relationship with their

partner was problematic, but did not have the information necessary to identify themselves as abused.

Because this study was designed to examine the decision to leave from a prospective rather than retrospective approach, recruitment efforts focused primarily on women from the community who were currently in an abusive relationship. Also included in the recruitment process however, were women in shelters. The inclusion of women, who by all appearances had left their relationship, was supported by research indicating that 42% to 60% of women who visit shelters viewed their stay at the shelter as a temporary means of coping with an abusive episode, ultimately returning to their partners upon leaving the shelter (Berk, et al., 1986; Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Snyder & Fruchtman, 1981; Snyder & Sheer, 1981; Stone, 1984; Walker, 1979).

Sixty-two women responded to the measures designed to gather information on relationship status. Of these women, eleven responded that they were currently in an abusive relationship and fifty one women responded that they had already left the relationship. The status of the remaining eight is unknown. This will be addressed later. Twenty-two (31.4%) women were recruited from shelters for abused women. Four participants returned questionnaires in which subjective norm and Intention were left unanswered. This rendered these questionnaires unusable as these two key variables were missing. Thus, these participants were dropped from the study.

Measures

All measures and materials used in this study are presented in Appendix A. Measures specific to this study were constructed using

guidelines developed by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) and Ajzen (1985). They include measures of the participant's intentions regarding the target behaviour, the target behaviour, attitude toward the target behaviour, perceptions of what significant others in the participant's lives think they should do regarding the target behaviour, and Ajzen and Madden's (1986) measure of perceived control, measuring the degree of control the participant perceives she has over performing the target behaviour. Demographic information on the participant and a limited amount of information about the participant's partner were obtained. Two scales measuring physical abuse (Marshall, 1992) and psychological abuse (Tolman, 1989) were also administered.

Behavioural Intentions

The behavioural intention variable, an indication of how motivated the participant was to actually leave the relationship, was assessed by averaging responses to the following four statements: (1) I intend to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months, (2) I will try to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months, (3) I have decided to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months, (4) I am determined to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months. All four statements were rated on the following five point scale: (1) definitely not, (2) probably not, (3) not sure, (4) probably yes, (5) definitely yes. Thus, the possible range of scores was 1 - 5, with high scores representing greater intentions to leave the relationship. Internal consistency analyses conducted on these components yielded a Cronbach's Alpha value of .97.

Target Behaviour - Leaving the Relationship

The actual behaviour was collected 6 months to one year after phase I during a brief telephone interview with those participants who had previously consented to this follow-up interview. The behaviour variable was measured by responding either "YES" or "NO" to the question: "Are you (still) living with (or involved in a relationship) with your abusive partner?" Further questions examined the factors that shaped and influenced their decision. Among other questions, women still in the relationship were asked, "Is the abuse continuing?" and if so, "Is there any change in the level of severity?". Women who had left the relationship were asked if they were still involved, or attempting to reconcile with their partner. Finally, women still with their partners and those who had left were asked what their intentions were at this point.

Attitude

In this study, the "attitude" construct was comprised of responses from measures which included issues that participants would have to consider when making their decision to stay-in/leave the relationship. To achieve this, participants were first asked to generate seven items they believed to have influenced their decision to stay-in/leave their relationship. Second, for each of the self-generated responses, participants were asked four questions evaluating first, the desirable and undesirable aspects of this item if they stayed, followed by the desirable and undesirable aspects of the same item if they were to leave, on a seven-point likelihood scale. Desirable and undesirable aspects of the item if they both stayed and left, were evaluated using the following questions:

(1) If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better

some how, etc.) and, (2) If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse some how, etc.), and for the desirable and undesirable aspects of the same item if they left, they responded to the following questions: (3) If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better some how, etc.) and, (4) If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse some how. For each question, participants responded on a seven point scale indicating the likelihood of each item, with values ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely). Finally, participants' ranked the self-generated items in importance from one to seven.

Many participants were unable to generate seven items they would need to consider when making the decision to stay-in/leave the relationship as requested. In fact, of the 70 women who completed the questionnaire, 41 were able to generate all seven items required to complete this measure; six generated six items; ten generated five items; twelve generated four items and one participant was able to generate only three items. Therefore, because many participants generated fewer than the required seven items, the participant's own mean was generated and then substituted for the missing data on all responses of desirable or undesirable aspects of either staying-in/leaving their relationship.

The final attitude variable, derived from the above responses, was examined at three different levels, thus, three different aspects of "attitude toward staying in/leaving the relationship were computed as follows. Four measures representing the desirable aspects of staying, the undesirable aspects of staying, the desirable aspects of leaving, and the undesirable aspects of leaving, were computed. This was achieved by

weighting each of the four responses on the above four aspects of each item according to the ranking attributed to each item by the participant, one being the most important. To ascribe the highest scores to the items ranked highest, the values of the ranks (i.e., 1-7) were reversed. The four aspects of each self-generated item were subsequently calculated by multiplying each item's likelihood value by the reverse of the rank applied to that item such that responses to the highest ranked item were multiplied by seven, those to the second highest were multiplied by six, and so on.

Thus, the measure indicating the participant's attitude toward the desirable aspects of staying in the relationship across all seven ranked items was obtained by summing these products. Similarly, the products obtained from the alternative question addressing the undesirable aspects of staying were then summed across all seven items. The same process was conducted separately for the items addressing the desirable and undesirable aspects of leaving. This process yielded four values, two of which represented the desirability and undesirability of the alternative, leaving the relationship.

To calculate an overall attitude measure reflecting how the participants felt, on balance, about staying in the relationship, the summed value for the desirable aspects of staying was subtracted from the summed value for the undesirable aspects of staying. Likewise, to obtain a measure of the attitude toward the alternative, leaving the relationship, the summed value for the undesirable aspects of leaving, was subtracted from the summed value for the desirable aspects of leaving.

Thus, negative scores on attitude toward staying were indicative of a positive attitude toward staying and positive scores were indicative of a negative attitude toward staying. For attitude toward leaving, positive scores were indicative of a positive attitude toward leaving and negative scores were indicative of a negative attitude toward leaving.

To eliminate negative numbers, two new attitude variables were computed by adding 1000 to both the attitude toward staying and the attitude toward leaving and then dividing this number by 100. High scores on the new variable representing attitude toward staying were then indicative of a negative attitude toward staying (bad idea to stay) and high scores on the new variable representing the attitude toward leaving were indicative of a positive attitude toward leaving (good idea to leave).

Finally, a composite measure of attitude toward leaving was computed by adding the variable representing attitude toward staying and the variable representing attitude toward leaving. This resulted in a measure such that the higher the score, the more positive the attitude toward leaving, consistent with the notion of leaving as a positive or desirable outcome. All the participant's self-generated factors for staying in or leaving the relationship, as compiled from this measure, are presented in Appendix B.

Subjective Norm

This variable consisted of the respondent's perceptions of what specific, significant referent individuals or groups think the actor should do regarding the target behaviour (i.e., their normative beliefs), multiplied by the actor's motivation to comply with that particular individual's

views. This variable was measured using a standard format consisting of two steps.

First, participants were asked to consider a list of people in their lives whose opinions might be important to them and to rate how strongly these people would feel about the participant leaving the relationship. Examples of questions which comprised the first step of subjective norm include: My parents think I should leave, and My sisters/brothers think I should leave. Other persons deemed to be important included "other family members", "close friends", "in-laws", "the church", "coworkers" and a space was provided for the participant to add an important "other" who was not included in the list. Participants were asked to respond to each referent using the following scale: 0 (does not apply to me) to 1 (definitely no) 2 (probably no) 3 (not sure) 4 (probably yes) and 5 (definitely yes).

Second, the participants considered the referents listed in the first step and rated them in response to the question: "how likely are you to do what they want when it comes to deciding whether or not to leave the abusive relationship?". Again, the participants were given the option to include any important "other" not specified on the questionnaire. The ratings consisted of a seven point scale ranging from 1 (extremely unlikely) to 7 (extremely likely).

Scores on each item of step one were multiplied by scores on the associated item from step two. For example, the score from the first question "My parents think I should leave" was multiplied by the score from step two "I want to do what my parent think I should do". The scores obtained for each of the significant "others" were then summed to

yield a final score for behavioural intention, reflecting the degree of influence these referents have in the woman's decision making process. To the extent that the participant believed that significant others thought she should leave the relationship, and she was motivated to comply with those views, behavioural intentions would be positive toward leaving. Thus, higher scores indicate a greater degree of perceived influence on the participant to leave the relationship.

Perceived Control

The perceived control variable measured the degree of control which the participant perceived she had over performing the target behaviour (e.g., leaving the relationship). This variable was measured using the sum of responses to four statements. (1) If I wanted to, I could easily leave my abusive partner. This item was rated on the following five point scale: 1 (strongly disagree) 2 (somewhat disagree) 3 (neither agree nor disagree) 4 (somewhat agree) and 5 (strongly agree). (2) How much control do you have over whether or not you leave the abusive relationship? This item was rated on the following five point scale: 1 (complete control) 2 (quite a bit of control) 3 (some control) 4 (very little control) 5 (no control). (3) For me to leave my abusive partner would be... This item was rated on the following five point scale 1 (very easy) 2 (somewhat easy) 3 (neither difficult nor easy) 4 (somewhat difficult) and 5 (very difficult). (4) It is mostly up to me whether I leave my abusive partner, or whether I stay with him. This item was rated on the following five point scale: 1 (strongly disagree) 2 (somewhat disagree) 3 (neither agree nor disagree) 4 (somewhat agree) and 5 (strongly agree). After reversing items 2 and 3, higher summed scores indicate higher perceived control over leaving the

relationship. Internal consistency analyses conducted on these four components yielded Cronbach's Alpha values of .65.

Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (SVAWS)

The 46-item SVAWS (Marshall, 1992) was administered to evaluate the degree of physical abuse experienced by each participant. This scale consisted of nine different dimensions, each representative of the nature or degree of physical violence. Internal consistency analyses conducted by Marshall (1992) on these factors yielded Cronbach's Alpha values from .92 for symbolic violence to .96 for moderate threats, and mild, moderate and serious violence. Marshall's (1992) reliability analyses therefore, indicate a high degree of consistency within the dimensions.

In the current study, participants scored each item on a five point scale to indicate the frequency with which they had experienced each behaviour. These items were scored on the following scale (1) never, (2) 1 to 2 times, (3) 3 to 6 times, (4) 6 to 12 times, and (5) greater than 12 times. The 46 items were grouped into nine separate categories consisting of the following severity levels: category (1) minor violence (e.g., scratched you, twisted your arm), category (2) serious violence (e.g., punched or choked you), category (3) threats of serious violence (e.g., threatened you with a weapon; threatened to kill you), category (4) sexually violent acts (e.g., physically forced you to have sex), category (5) symbolic violence (e.g., hit or kicked a wall, door or furniture), category (6) threats of moderate violence (e.g., destroyed something you care about), category (7) threats of mild violence (e.g., shook a fist at you; acted like a bully toward you), category (8) moderate violence (e.g., slapped you with the palm of his

hand), category (9) mild violence (e.g., shook or roughly handled you). A complete list of items broken down by category can be found in Appendix C.

Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI)

The Tolman (1989) PMWI consists of a 56 item checklist divided into subscales representative of two different dimensions of psychological abuse. During the development stage, the PMWI was administered to men who batter and to unrelated battered women at intake in a domestic violence program. Thus, it was possible to conduct separate factor analyses on both the men's, as well as the women's reports. From this analyses, it was found that most items on both the men's and women's loaded similarly for the two dimensions (Tolman, 1989). For the purposes of this study, the women's factor structure was used.

The first dimension represents a dominance-isolation subscale composed of 32 items consistent with behaviours resulting in the isolation of a woman from resources, demands on her for subservience, and the rigid observance of traditional sex roles. Examples of items comprising this dimension include: (43) did not allow her to leave the house, and (42) restricted telephone use, and (44) did not allow her to work. The second dimension represents an emotional-verbal subscale composed of 26 items encompassing behaviours such as: verbal attacks, behaviours that demean women, and the withholding of emotional resources. Examples of items comprising this dimension include: (4) acted insensitive to her feelings, (16) gave her the silent treatment, and (2) insulted her in front of others. A complete list of items broken down by category can be found in Appendix D.

Procedure

Phase 1

Participants were recruited through newspaper classified advertisements, local radio station community-event broadcasts, women's crisis shelters, counseling agencies, lawyers specializing in family law, family physicians, and by means of advertisements placed in grocery stores, libraries, community centres, on-line electronic bulletin boards, and on campus, including announcements made in several classes at Brock University throughout the school year. Participants who learned of the study through bulletins or advertisements were asked to contact the researcher at Brock University. The laboratory number provided on the bulletins was staffed by the researcher or an assistant during advertised hours.

Agencies and shelters in the Niagara Peninsula and surrounding area offering services to women recovering from, or in, abusive relationships were contacted, and access to their client group sessions was obtained. After access was granted, a time was arranged for the researcher to visit the shelter. Typically, the best time to meet with these prospective participants was during the shelter's weekly "house meetings". At these meetings, the study was explained to potential participants, and they were informed that they could obtain a copy of the results of the study by indicating their interest on a separate form (see Appendix A). Following the recruitment process, a private room was made available to administer the questionnaire.

Each participant received a questionnaire package containing the 14 page questionnaire booklet, a consent form for Phase 2, and a form to be

used if the participant wished to receive the results of the study (see Appendix A). At this time, after reading the instructions, the participants completed the questionnaires individually. However, the researcher remained in the room, at a discreet distance, or in the general vicinity, to address any questions the respondent may have; maintaining the participant's privacy at all times. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately afterwards.

For those participants who contacted the researcher at the laboratory, questionnaire packages were either mailed to interested women, or they made appointments to pick up a questionnaire package at the university office. These participants completed the questionnaires independently and returned them through the mail in a postage-paid envelope. For these participants, anyone needing assistance or clarification was instructed to contact the researchers at phone numbers included in the questionnaire package. These numbers were utilized on several occasions, the questions most frequently pertaining to issues of clarification.

Phase 2

During Phase 1 data collection, participants who consented to be contacted at Phase 2, indicated their consent by signing a consent form, as well as giving detailed instructions about how to contact them safely six months to one year later. Included in these instructions was an alternate number, such as that of a close friend or relative, at which to contact them should they no longer be at the number given. The telephone interviews took less than five minutes to complete. Participants were thanked for their help, and contact numbers for the organizations from which they

could receive help were given to those women who indicated that they needed some assistance.

Results

Characteristics of the Sample

Participants. The Phase 1 sample consisted of 70 women who were currently in an abusive relationship or who had been in the recent past. Participants ranged in age from 20 to 64 years ($M = 35.7$; $SD = 10.12$). In response to a question about current marital status, twenty of the women (28.6%) had never married; sixteen (22.9%) were separated; nine (12.9%) were divorced; eleven (15.7%) were married, and twelve (17.1%) were partners in a common-law relationship. Only one woman was widowed and one woman indicated that she was separated, but planning to return.

Children. In response to the question: How many children do you have?, sixteen women (22.9%) responded that they had no children; forty-one women, or, just over half of the total sample (58.6%) had either one or two children; nine women (12.9%) had three; two women (2.9%) had four; one woman (1.4%) had five, and one woman (1.4%) had six.

Relationship status. Two separate questions regarding the status of the participant's relationship with their abusive partners were asked. In response to the question: If with same abusive partner, how long have you been in this relationship?, fifty-one women (72.9%) indicated that they had left their partner, and nineteen (27.1%) of the women indicated that they had been with their abusive partner from one month to more than six years.

In response to the second question: If you have left this (abusive) partner, how long have you been out of this relationship?, eleven (15.7%) responded that they were still with this partner; nineteen (27.1%)

responded that they had left the abusive partner less than one month ago; nine (12.9%) had left anywhere from one to six months earlier; twelve (17.1%) had left from between six months to one year earlier, and eighteen (25.7%) had been away from the abusive partner from between one to six years. One woman (1.4%) failed to respond to this question.

In response to the question "If with same abusive partner, how long have you been in this relationship?", fifty one (72.9%) women indicated they had left their abusive partner, yet in response to the question, "If you have left this abusive partner, how long have you been out of this relationship?", eleven (15.7%) responded that they were still in the relationship. Providing the fifty one (72.9%) women who indicated they had left the relationship were responding correctly, then nineteen (27.9%) should have responded that they were still in the abusive relationship. After eliminating the one woman who failed to respond to this question, this inconsistency leaves seven women unaccounted for.

Given the inconsistencies found between these two measures, it appears that either the women interpreted them differently, or the questions did not sufficiently account for all possible situations. This underscores the difficulty of capturing all aspects of the complex and fluid relationship termination process.

Education. In response to the question regarding the highest level of education completed, thirty five women (49.9%) indicated they had some high school education. The following is a breakdown of this distribution; one woman (1.4%) completed grade nine; eight women (11.4%) completed grade ten; five (7.1%) completed grade eleven; seventeen (24.3%) completed grade twelve, and four (5.7%) completed

grade thirteen. The second largest group consisted of thirty-two (45.7%) women with post secondary education. Five (7.1%) of the women had reported having some college education; eleven (15.7%) completed their college program; fourteen (20%) had some university, and two (2.9%) indicated they had completed their university degree program. Two women were enrolled in technical/trade programs and another reported grade seven as her highest level of education. This last group of women comprised 4.3% of the total sample.

Income. For thirty-one women (44.2%), the primary source of income was social assistance in the form of either, welfare, mother's allowance or disability. Twenty-five of the women (38.7%) were employed, and two (2.9%) were collecting unemployment benefits. Only 4 women (5.7%) were receiving alimony or child support. Eight women (11.4%) reported receiving income from various other sources such as real-estate commissions, family and friends, pensions, student loans, with two women in this group reporting income from their partner's unspecified criminal activity.

Forty-eight of the women (68.5%) lived on less than \$19,000 annually. The second largest group, comprised of thirteen women (18.6%), received an income ranging from \$20,000 to \$34,000. Five women (7.2%) reported an income greater than \$40,000. Four women (5.7%) did not respond to this question.

Overview of Analyses

This longitudinal study consisted of two data collection phases. In Phase I, data on measures up to and including the participant's intentions to stay in or leave the relationship were collected. Because measures were

designed to capture leaving behaviour, further references to the measures indicate women's attitude, subjective norms, perceived control, and intentions toward leaving the relationship only. Phase 2 took place from between six months to one year from the date that Phase I data were collected.

Phase I Preliminary Analyses

Pearson correlations computed for the Phase I variables of the TPB are presented in Table 1. All component measures of attitude are included in this table. These measures include the following: (1) a composite measure of attitude, reflecting the balance between attitude toward staying and attitude toward leaving, (2) attitude toward staying, and (3) attitude toward leaving. From Table 1 it can be seen that, as expected, the composite attitude predictor was significantly, positively correlated with the attitude components calculated from this measure.

Table 1. Zero-order Correlations among Phase I Measures of the Theory of Planned Behaviour

Predictors	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Composite Attitude Toward Leaving	-					
2. Attitude Toward Staying	0.896**	-				
3. Attitude Toward Leaving	0.887**	0.592**	-			
4. Subjective Norm For Leaving	-0.048	-0.003	-0.084	-		
5. Perceived Control Over Leaving	0.099	0.045	0.132	0.000	-	
6. Intention To Leave	0.213†	0.245*	0.133	0.233*	0.132	-

Note. N = 70, † = $p < .10$, * = $p < .05$, ** = $p < .0001$, two-tailed

The relationship between composite attitude toward leaving and intentions approached, but did not reach significance, indicating the presence of a weak trend toward increasingly positive attitudes toward leaving associated with increased intentions to leave. Of the composite attitude components, a small, significant, linear relationship was found between attitude toward staying and intentions, such that, increasingly negative attitudes toward staying in the relationship were positively associated with greater intentions to leave. The relationship between attitude toward leaving and Intention was non-significant.

Among the other Phase I predictor variables, a small, significant relationship existed between only subjective norm and intention to leave. This relationship indicated a weak association such that higher levels of social pressure on the participant to leave the relationship were associated with increased intentions to do so. The relationship between perceived control and intention was non-significant.

Regression analysis predicting Intention from Composite measure of Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Control

Results from the hierarchical multiple regression analyses in which intention to leave the relationship was regressed on the composite measure of attitude and subjective norm in the first step, and perceived control in the second step, are reported in Table 2. This model reached significance ($F(3, 66) = 2.98, p = .04$), with attitude, subjective norm and perceived control, accounting for 12% of the variability in intention to leave. Attitude and subjective norm significantly accounted for 10.7% of the variability in intentions. Of these two predictors, only subjective norm was significant ($t_{67} = 2.15, p = .04$), accounting for 6.2 % of the variability in intentions. The composite measure of attitude approached significance ($t_{67} = 1.84, p = .07$). Consistent with the theory of planned behaviour, perceived control was entered alone on step 2. However, as indicated in Table 2, this predictor variable failed to account for variability in intention over and above that accounted for by attitude and subjective norm.

Table 2. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Intention from the Composite measure of Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Control for Phase I

Predictors	Beta	R ² Change	F Value	df	p
<u>Step 1</u>					
Composite Attitude Toward Leaving	.213 †				
Subjective Norm For Leaving	.249 *	.107	4.03	2, 67	.0222
<u>Step 2</u>					
Perceived Control Over Leaving	.110	.012	0.91	1, 66	.3438

Note. N = 70, † p < .10, * p < .05,

Given that the TPB is a sound and well tested model, it was believed that problems with the measure of attitude may have, in part, contributed to the failure of this model to significantly account for variability in intention to leave. This conclusion was based not only on the poor performance of this predictor in this context, but on past research in which attitude has consistently, significantly predicted intentions. It was determined that the marginal performance of the composite attitude predictor warranted a closer investigation of other possibilities among the component aspects of attitude.

The underlying strategy for this investigation was supported by the correlations between measures of attitude and intention presented in Table 1. From Table 1 it can be seen that the positive relationship between the composite measures of attitude and intention only approached significance. Further examination of Table 1 indicated that, among the components of attitude, only the relationship between attitude toward staying and intention was significant. This relationship established that at least one aspect of the attitude measure had significant predictive capacity in this context. Therefore, based on this relationship, it was decided to retest the model using only this significant aspect of attitude. Thus, in this model, Intention was regressed on a set composed of the component attitude toward staying and subjective norm. Perceived control was again, entered on step three.

Multiple Regression analysis predicting Intention from Attitude Toward Staying, Subjective Norm, and Perceived Control

Results from the hierarchical multiple regression analyses in which intention to leave the relationship was regressed on the partial attitude measure, attitude toward staying, and subjective norm in the first step, and perceived control in the second step, are reported in Table 3.

Overall, this model reached significance ($F(3, 66) = 3.34, p = .02$), with attitude toward staying, subjective norm and perceived control accounting for 13.2 % of variability in intention to leave. Attitude toward leaving and subjective norm, entered on step 1 of the regression analysis, significantly accounted for 11.7% of the variability in intention. Both predictors were significant, with attitude toward staying accounting for 5.7% of the variability in intention ($t_{66} = 2.09, p = .04$), and subjective norm accounting for 5.7% of the variability in intention ($t_{66} = 2.09, p = .04$). Perceived control failed to account for variability in intention to leave, over and above attitude toward staying and subjective norm.

Table 3. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Intention from Attitude toward Staying, Subjective Norm and Perceived Control for Phase I

Predictors	Beta	R^2 Change	F Value	df	p
<u>Step 1</u>					
Attitude toward Staying	.240 *				
Subjective Norm For Leaving	.239 *	.117	4.45	3, 66	.0153
<u>Step 2</u>					
Perceived Control Over Leaving	.121	.014	1.10	1, 65	.2960

Note. N = 70, * $p < .05$

Contrary to expectations, perceived control, entered alone on step 2 of the regression analysis was nonsignificant. This lack of significance was unexpected, given that the actual behaviour was considered to be of a non-volitional nature. This fact, along with past performance for this predictor in a wide range of applications, indicated that a closer investigation of the measure of perceived control and its application in this context was warranted. Examination of internal consistency analyses conducted on the four components of perceived control revealed a relatively low level of reliability among the components ($\alpha = .65$). These findings suggested that problems with the composite measure of this variable may, in fact, be responsible for the lack of significance.

Examination of the correlations between intention, the composite measure of perceived control and the four components, as presented in Table 4, indicated that the relationships were all non significant. Thus, no further analyses of these measures using the Phase I sample were conducted.

Table 4. Correlations between Intention and components of the Perceived Control Construct

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Perceived Control Over Leaving	-					
2. Perceived Control 1	0.770 ***	-				
3. Perceived Control 2	0.722 ***	0.448 ***	-			
4. Perceived Control 3	0.659 ***	0.441 ***	0.238 *	-		
5. Perceived Control 4	0.653 ***	0.199	0.367 **	0.254 *	-	
6. Intention to Leave	0.132	0.117	0.108	0.068	0.074	-

Note. N = 70, * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .0001$

Phase 2

Characteristics of Phase 2 Sample

At Phase 2, attempts were made to contact fifty-eight women (82.9% of the total sample) who had previously consented to participate in a brief telephone interview to determine their relationship status at Phase 2. Of these fifty-eight women, for unspecified reasons, two withdrew their consent when contacted. Therefore, fifty-six women (80% of the total sample) were willing to participate in Phase 2. Of these fifty-six women, nineteen had either moved from the contact number and the researcher was unable to trace them through their alternate contact number, or were unavailable for various other reasons. Thus, thirty-seven women (52.9% of the total sample, $N = 70$) provided follow-up data at Phase 2.

Demographic characteristics of Phase 2 sample compared with characteristics of the Phase 1 (only) sample indicated no significant differences on all variables except age ($t_{68} = -2.13, p = .04$). Results of t-test on this variable indicated that the women in Phase 2 sample were significantly older ($M = 38.03, SD = 10.63$) than those women in the Phase 1 only sample ($M = 33.00, SD = 8.94$). For purposes of comparison, demographic characteristics for both Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2 are presented in table format in Table 5.

Relationship Status. Twenty six, or 70.3% of Phase 2 respondents were no longer with their abusive partner; eleven women (29.7%) remained with their partner. Thus, the ratio of women remaining in their relationship, to those who had left, remained the same as that of phase I.

Counselling. Fourteen (37.8%) of the Phase 2 participants were currently in counselling, whereas, twenty-three (62.2%) of the participants were not. Of those women who were currently in counselling, it was not known if their partners were receiving counselling as well. Of the Phase 2 participants, eleven (29.7%) have never received counseling at any time in the past, and twenty-six (70.3%) reported receiving counselling at some point during their relationship. There were no significant differences between Phase 1 and Phase 2 participants for both, those women who were currently in counselling $\chi^2(1, N = 70) = .417, p = .59$, and those women who had previously received counselling $\chi^2(1, N = 70) = 1.22, p = .27$.

Means, standard deviations and results of t-tests comparing the predictor variables examined in this study for Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2 samples are presented in Table 6. Overall, results of comparisons from Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2, indicate that the Phase 2 subsample did not differ significantly from the Phase 1 sample.

Table 5. Comparison of Demographic Characteristics for Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2 Sample

Demographic Characteristics	<u>Phase 1 (only)</u> N=33		<u>Phase 2</u> N=37	
	<i>f</i>	% of Phase 1 sample	<i>f</i>	% of Phase 2 sample
<u>Marital Status</u>				
single	10	30.3	10	27.0
separated/divorce	9	27.2	16	43.2
married/common-law	13	39.1	10	27.0
other	1	3.0	1	2.7
<u>Children</u>				
no children	8	24.2	8	21.6
one or two children	19	57.5	22	59.5
three or four children	6	18.1	5	13.5
five or six children	0	00.0	2	5.4
<u>Education</u>				
grade nine or ten	8	24.2	8	21.6
completed high school	14	42.4	12	32.4
some college	2	6.1	3	8.1
completed college	7	21.2	4	10.8
some university	4	12.1	10	27.0
completed university	1	3.0	1	2.7
<u>Annual Income</u>				
under \$15000	17	58.6	23	62.2
\$15-19000	5	17.2	5	8.1
\$20-29000	6	18.2	5	13.5
\$30-44000	1	3.0	4	10.8
\$45000 or more	0	0.0	2	5.4
<u>Partner's Income</u>				
under \$15000	12	42.9	13	39.4
\$15-19000	5	17.2	5	8.1
\$20-29000	0	0.0	5	13.5
\$30-44000	8	24.2	5	13.5
\$45000 or more	6	21.4	9	27.3

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations, and Results of t-tests for Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2 participants on Predictor Variables Examined in this Study

	<u>Phase 1 (only)</u>		<u>Phase 2</u>		
	N = 33		N = 37		
	M	SD	M	SD	<i>t</i>
<hr/>					
<u>Predictors</u>					
Composite Attitude Toward Leaving	19.68	1.38	19.89	1.05	-0.71
Subjective Norm For Leaving	11.93	6.35	11.13	5.42	0.57
Perceived Control Over Leaving	11.64	3.36	12.62	3.37	-1.22
<u>Criterion variable</u>					
Intention To Leave	4.23	1.22	4.35	1.01	-0.44

Preliminary Analyses for Phase 2

Zero-order correlations were computed among the variables of the TPB for Phase 2 and results are presented in Table 7. From Table 7 it can be seen that there was a significant linear relationship between subjective norm for leaving and intention to leave ($r = .36, p < .05$), indicating that higher levels of social influence on the participant to leave the relationship were associated with increased intentions to do so. The relationship between intentions and actual leaving behaviour (measured by relationship status at Phase 2) were also significant ($r = .56, p < .001$).

Further, results indicate that relationships between the composite measure of attitude toward leaving and intention to leave ($r = .30, p < .10$), and composite attitude toward leaving and actual leaving behaviour ($r = .27, p < .10$) were only marginally significant. All other remaining relationships among Phase 2 predictor variables were non-significant.

Table 7. Zero-order Correlations among Predictor Variables for Phase 2

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Intention to Leave	-				
2. Composite Attitude Toward Leaving	0.30 †	-			
3. Subjective Norm For Leaving	0.36 *	0.20	-		
4. Perceived Control Over Leaving	0.08	-0.07	-0.01	-	
5. Leaving Behaviour	0.56 ***	0.27 †	0.12	0.26	-

Note. N = 37, † $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$ - two-tailed

Overview of Phase 2 Analyses predicting Behaviour

Phase 2 examined the criterion variable measuring actual leaving behaviour via hierarchical regression analyses. The primary purpose of Phase 2 analyses, was to predict participant's actual leaving behaviour. Specifically, do the participant's intentions predict leaving behaviour, and does perceived behavioural control predict actual leaving behaviour, over and above intention to leave. Second, does perceived control predict intention to leave, over and above attitude toward leaving and subjective norm for leaving.

To examine the relationships between behaviour, intention to leave and the above predictor variables, two regression analyses were conducted. In the first analyses, to determine the relationship between intention to leave, Perceived behavioural control over leaving, and actual leaving behaviour, the predictor variable intention was entered on step one, followed by perceived control entered on step two. In the second analyses, to determine if perceived control predicted intention to leave, the composite measure of attitude, and subjective norm were entered as a set on step one, followed by Perceived behavioural control on step two.

Surprisingly, given the relationships between the motivational aspects of intention to leave and the volitional aspects of Perceived behavioural control over leaving, there is little empirical support for interaction effects between these two predictors (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Ajzen & Madden, 1985; Beck & Ajzen, 1991; Schifter & Azjen, 1985). For this reason, interaction terms were excluded from these analyses.

Regression analysis predicting Leaving Behaviour from Intention and Perceived Control

Results from the hierarchical regression analyses in which leaving behaviour was regressed on intention on the first step, and Perceived control on the second step, are reported in Table 8. Overall, this model reached significance ($F(2,34) = 9.44$, $p = .0005$), with intention to leave and perceived control accounting for 36% of the variability in leaving behaviour. Of these two predictors, only intention to leave was significant ($t_{34} = 3.90$, $p = .0004$), accounting for 31% of the variability in behaviour. Consistent with the TPB, perceived behavioural control was entered alone on step two. However, as indicated in Table 8, this predictor failed to account for variability in leaving behaviour over and above that accounted for by intention.

Table 8. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Behaviour from Intention and Perceived Behavioural Control for Phase 2

Predictors	Beta	R^2 Change	F Value	df	p
<u>Step 1</u>					
Intention To Leave	.537 ***	.309	15.67	1, 35	.0004
<u>Step 2</u>					
Perceived Control Over Leaving	-.219	.047	2.52	1, 34	.1212
<u>Note.</u> N = 37, *** p < .001					

Regression analysis predicting Intention from Composite measure of Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Control

Results from the hierarchical regression analyses in which intention to leave the relationship was regressed on attitude and subjective norm entered on the first step, and perceived control entered on the second step, are reported in Table 9¹. Overall, this model approached significance ($F(3, 33) = 2.68, p = .06$), marginally accounting for 20% of the variability in intention to leave. The predictors attitude, and subjective norm, entered as a set on step one, significantly accounted for 18.5% of the variability in intention. Further, examination of t values indicated that, of these two predictors, subjective norm only marginally accounted for this variability ($t_{34} = 1.96, p = .06$). Perceived control, entered on step two, failed to significantly account for variability in intention to leave, over and above that accounted for by step one.

¹ Consistent with Phase 1 analyses, intention to leave was regressed on attitude toward staying, a predictor representing a partial measure of the composite attitude variable. In this model, attitude toward staying and subjective norm were entered on step one. Perceived control was entered on step two. Unlike Phase 1, Phase 2 results indicated that attitude toward staying accounted for no significant variability in intention to leave.

Table 9. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Intention to Leave from Composite measure of Attitude, Subjective Norm and Perceived Control for Phase 2 Participants

Predictors	Beta	R^2 Change	F Value	df	p
<u>Step 1</u>					
Composite Attitude toward Leaving	.246				
Subjective Norm For Leaving	.313 †	.185	3.85	2, 34	.031
<u>Step 2</u>					
Perceived Control Over Leaving	.104	.011	2.68	1, 33	.509

Note. N = 37, † p < .10

In summary, the analyses do not lend support to the applicability of the TPB in the context of abused women and their decision process. As mentioned earlier, it is generally acknowledged, that, for many abused women, leaving an abusive partner can be difficult and sometimes dangerous. These impediments to leaving are due, in large part, to circumstances beyond their control. Based on these obstacles, the actual leaving behaviour for abused women is viewed as nonvolitional. Thus, the addition of a measure of perceived behavioral control was expected to have a significant effect on the predictive capacity of the model.

The regression coefficient for perceived control in Phase 1, however, was not significant. When predicting intentions to leave at Phase 1, it is important to note that intention may, or may not have played a mediating role in the relation between perceived control and behaviour, and thus, the failure of perceived control to predict variance in intentions at Phase 1 may have indicated a direct, rather than an indirect link to behaviour. The existence of a direct link between perceived control and behaviour, remained to be established in Phase 2.

At Phase 2, the regression coefficient for perceived control was again, nonsignificant. The failure of this predictor to significantly predict variance in behaviour in Phase 2 suggests that the participants perceived the behaviour in question to be within their control, and therefore, volitional. Consistent with the model, Phase 2 analyses found that intention was strongly predictive of behaviour, thus, a central relationship in this model was supported. Overall, results of Phase 2 analyses indicated that the predictors, attitude towardstaying, subjective norm and

intentions, those predictors associated with the TRA alone, were sufficient in the prediction of leaving behaviour in this context.

Further analyses of a more exploratory nature were conducted as a means of investigating potential differences among groups (i.e., Phase 1 (only), Phase 2 participants who stayed with their abusive partner, Phase 2 participants who left their partner) on level of abuse. Because these analyses were primarily exploratory, specific hypotheses were not made regarding these relationships. Data on the nature, severity and frequency of violence were collected at Phase 1. Measures were obtained using the Severity of Violence Against Women scale (SVAWS) (Marshall, 1992), and the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) (Tolman, 1989).

Scales measuring level of abuse. As noted earlier, internal consistency analyses carried out by Marshall (1992) on the nine different dimensions of the Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (SVAWS) ranged from .92 to .96, indicating a high degree of consistency within the dimensions. Reliability analyses carried out on the data from this study found a similar degree of consistency within the dimensions (see Table 10).

Tolman's (1989) Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (PMWI) consisted of the two dimensions, representing (1) acts of domination and those behaviours meant to isolate the participant, and (2) behaviours intended to inflict emotional as well as verbal abuse. Reliability coefficients, reported by Tolman (1989) on these two dimensions were .95 for Dominance-isolation and .93 for Emotional-verbal, also indicating a high level of internal consistency among the

items within each dimension. Internal consistency analyses conducted on the data from the present study were comparable to those found by Tolman (1989).

As mentioned earlier, values for both the physical and psychological abuse scales ranged from one to five. A value of one indicated that the participant had never experienced that type of abuse from her partner, a value of two indicated that this type of abuse had occurred from one to two times, a value of three indicated that this type of abuse had occurred from three to six times, a value of four indicated that this type of abuse had occurred from six to twelve times, and a value of five indicated that this type of abuse had occurred twelve or more times during the relationship. Thus, a mean of 2.14, for example, would indicate that, during the woman's relationship, this type of abuse had occurred, on average, slightly greater than two times. The results of descriptive analyses on both the SVAWS and the PMWI for the present study are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Scale Reliabilities, Means, Standard Deviations, and Range on each Subscale of the SVAWS and PMWI on Abuse Scales for Entire Sample

Subscale	Cronbach's Alpha	M	SD	Range	Number of Items
<u>Physical Abuse Scale</u>					
Minor Violence	.85	1.82	1.01	1-5	5
Serious Violence	.93	1.65	0.91	1-4.5	9
Threats of Serious Violence	.88	2.14	1.04	1-5	7
Sexual Violence	.90	1.92	1.08	1-5	6
Symbolic Violence	.81	2.78	1.17	1-5	4
Moderate Violence	.87	2.16	1.32	1-5	3
Threats of Moderate Violence	.84	2.67	1.26	1-5	4
Mild Violence	.90	2.92	1.32	1-5	4
Threats of Mild Violence	.88	3.72	1.20	1-5	4
<u>Psychological Violence</u>					
Dominance-isolation	.91	3.06	0.83	1.4-4.7	26
Emotional-verbal	.92	4.29	0.77	2.1-5	3.2

To determine whether those women who participated in Phase 1 (only), differed in degree and frequency of abuse from women who participated in Phase 2, independent t-tests were conducted on the nine subscales of the physical violence measure (SVAWS); (1) Mild, (2) Minor, (3) Moderate, (4) Serious, (5) Sexual, (6) Symbolic, (7) Threat of Mild, (8) Threat of Moderate, and (9) Threat of Serious Violence, as well as, two subscales of the psychological violence inventory (PMWI), (1) Dominance-isolation, and (2) Emotional-verbal. Results are presented in Table 11. As can be seen in Table 11, results of independent t-tests on the eleven violence subscales for Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2 were non-significant, indicating that, in regard to degree of abuse, women who participated in Phase 2 did not differ significantly from those who participated in Phase 1 (only). Thus, these two samples were similar in regard to levels of abuse experienced by these women.

Table 11. Means, Standard Deviations, and Results of t-tests for Phase 1 (only) and Phase 2 participants on dimensions of the SVAWS and PMWI

	<u>Phase 1 (only)</u> N = 33		<u>Phase 2</u> N = 37		
	M	SD	M	SD	t
<u>SVAWS</u>					
Mild Violence	3.08	1.33	2.74	1.31	1.07
Minor Violence	1.90	1.18	1.72	0.84	0.72
Moderate Violence	2.34	1.37	1.99	1.31	1.10
Serious Violence	1.75	1.03	1.54	0.78	0.93
Sexual Violence	1.98	1.13	1.84	1.03	0.54
Symbolic Violence	3.00	1.21	2.57	1.11	1.56
Threat of Mild Violence	3.67	1.35	3.66	1.02	0.04
Threat of Moderate Violence	2.68	1.41	2.61	1.15	0.22
Threat of Serious Violence	2.26	1.25	2.03	0.80	0.91
<u>PMWI</u>					
Dominance-isolation	3.36	1.00	3.18	0.76	0.84
Emotional-verbal	4.02	0.80	4.21	0.71	-1.02

Phase 2 consisted of, (1) women who had left their abusive partner, and (2) women who had stayed with their partner. Group differences on violence between these two Phase 2 groups as well as the Phase 1 (only) group were investigated by means of a one-way analysis of variance using both the SVAWS and PMWI subscales. Results of these analysis are presented in Table 12.

From Table 12 it can be seen that, with the exception of the emotional-verbal subscale, the three groups did not differ significantly from one another in terms of abuse. With regard to the Emotional-verbal subscale, a multiple comparison test in the form of a Least Significant Difference (LSD) was employed to determine which of the three groups differed significantly. This analysis indicated that, women in Phase 1 (only) differed significantly from the group of women in Phase 2 who had left their partner, with higher mean scores on Emotional-verbal forms of abuse for the group of women who had left. Also, the Phase 2 women who stayed, differed significantly from the group of women who had left, with higher mean scores on Emotional-verbal forms of abuse for the group who had left. No other dimensions differed significantly by group.

Table 12. Means and Results of One-way ANOVAs conducted on Violence Scales by Group Membership (i.e., Phase 1 (only), Phase 2 women who left their abusive partners, and Phase 2 women who stayed with their partners)

		Phase 2		F	p
	Phase 1 (only)	Stayed with Partner	Left Partner		
<u>SVAWS</u>					
Mild Violence	3.08	2.93	2.66	.728	.486
Minor Violence	1.90	1.90	1.65	.500	.609
Moderate Violence	2.34	2.03	1.97	.601	.551
Serious Violence	1.75	1.93	1.38	.343	.560
Sexual Violence	1.98	1.76	1.88	.347	.558
Symbolic Violence	3.00	2.68	2.52	.625	.432
Threat of Mild Violence	3.67	3.42	3.76	.382	.539
Threat of Moderate Violence	2.68	2.66	2.59	.003	.959
Threat of Serious Violence	2.26	2.25	1.93	.001	.976
<u>PMWI</u>					
Dominance-Isolation	3.36	3.03	3.25	.608	.547
Emotional-Verbal	4.02	3.71	4.42	4.331	.017

Note. Group size: Phase 1 (only), N = 33

Phase 2 - Stayed with partner, N = 11

- Left partner, N = 26

Further analyses were conducted to determine if differences exist between the Phase 2 women who had stayed with their abusive partners, and the Phase 2 women who had left on predictor variables assessed in this study. Thus, means, standard deviations, and results of independent t-tests are presented in Table 13. In support of previous analyses, results of Table 13 found that mean scores on intentions to leave the relationship were significantly different for those women who had left and those who had remained. Therefore, mean scores indicate that women who had actually left their partners, had significantly stronger intentions to leave. Mean scores on both, composite attitude toward leaving, and attitude toward staying were marginally, significantly different between those women who had left and those who had remained. These marginally significant relationships indicated a trend toward a more positive, overall attitude toward leaving, and more specifically, a more negative attitude toward staying for those women who left the relationship. No significant differences were found on other predictor variables.

Table 13. Means, Standard Deviations, and Results of t-tests for Phase 2 Women who had Remained with Their Abusive Partners and Those Women who had Left on Predictor Variables Assessed in this Study

	<u>Stayed in Relationship</u> N = 11		<u>Left Relationship</u> N = 26		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Intention to Leave	3.50	1.15	4.71	0.70	-3.26 **
Composite Attitude Toward Leaving	19.45	1.07	20.08	0.99	-1.70 †
Attitude Toward Staying	9.79	0.58	10.20	0.67	-1.78 †
Subjective Norm Over Leaving	10.17	4.49	11.53	5.80	-0.69
Perceived Control Over Leaving	11.27	2.87	13.19	3.45	-1.62

Note. † $p < .10$, ** $p < .01$

Further independent t-tests were performed to investigate potential differences on descriptive variables between the Phase 2 women who had stayed with their abusive partners, and the Phase 2 women who had left. Means, standard deviations and results of t-tests are presented in Table 14. Results presented in Table 14 indicate that the number of separations each group had experienced differed significantly, with those women who had left their partners experiencing, on average, significantly more separations than those women who had stayed. A significant difference was also found between these two groups of women on the length of time they had been together with their partners. Table 14 indicates that those women who had stayed with their partners at Phase 2, had, on average, been with their partners longer than those women who had left. In general, these results were consistent with previous research (Gelles, 1976). No significant differences were found on other variables.

Table 14. Means, Standard Deviations, and Results of t-tests for Phase 2
 Women who had Remained with their Abusive Partners with those
 Women who Left on Descriptive Variables

	<u>Stayed in Relationship</u> N = 11		<u>Left Relationship</u> N = 26		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Participant's Age	38.81	10.92	37.69	10.71	0.29
Annual Income	1.82	1.47	2.57	2.42	-0.96
Number of Children	2.10	1.37	1.50	1.40	1.18
Number of Children Living with Participant	0.91	1.14	0.96	0.96	-0.14
Highest Level of Education	6.00	2.57	5.92	2.53	0.08
Number of Separations	1.00	1.16	2.96	3.84	-2.22 *
Partner's Annual Income	4.73	3.23	3.90	2.96	0.73
Length of time with Partner	3.55	3.50	1.08	2.40	2.13 *

Note. * $p < .05$

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to test the predictive capacity of the TPB (Ajzen, 1985; Ajzen & Madden, 1986) within the context of abused women's decision-making about leaving their relationships. As previously mentioned, an understanding of the processes underlying the decision to remain in or to leave an abusive relationship would serve a practical and necessary purpose toward understanding the often puzzling decision to risk repeated abuse by remaining with an abusive partner. Further, it would be useful for professionals working in the field to be able to distinguish between those women who are unable or unwilling to terminate these often high risk relationships and those women who are.

To achieve this, the TPB, drawn from Strube's (1988, 1991) proposed theoretical framework was utilized. Strube's (1988, 1991) model incorporates three models based on the theories of (1) psychological entrapment (2) learned helplessness, and (3) exchange theory within the overall organizing framework of the TPB. Implicit in all four of these theories is the belief that any decision to remain in or to leave an abusive relationship is logical in that it follows predictable decision rules. Even though the outcome may appear irrational, the decision process itself, according to Strube, is not "inherently pathological". Therefore, this study represented not only a first attempt to test the TPB within this context, it was the first step toward testing Strube's (1988) framework.

To this end, the measures based on the principles set forth by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) and Ajzen and Madden (1986) were developed. The

attitude measurement was borrowed from Vinokur-Kaplan's (1978) study testing the predictive capacity of TPB within the context of couples' decisions to have another child. As such, the operationalization of attitudinal influences was congruent with attitude measurement, as outlined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The most important feature of this measure was that it allowed the participants to self-generate the "issues" influencing their individual decision process rather than responding to traditional closed-ended measures. The result of this method yielded a great deal of information about the factors driving a woman's decision to remain with or to leave an abusive, sometimes dangerous partner. From this, emerged a compilation of issues; some of which were common to many, and others that were unique to only a few.

The primary goal of this study was to predict leaving behaviour in women with abusive partners. As such, it was hypothesized that, to the extent that the participant held positive attitudes, subjective norms and perceived control about leaving the relationship the greater would be the intention to leave, and thus, the likelihood of actually leaving. In addition, it was expected that perceived control would play a significant role, over and above that of attitude and subjective norm in predicting both a woman's intention about leaving her relationship, as well as her subsequent behaviour. The measure of perceived control was based on the rationale that, in the context of woman abuse, the act of deciding to leave and performing the actual leaving behaviour would be subject to volitional control factors (Strube, 1988, 1991). Finally, further analyses of a more exploratory nature, were conducted to examine the role that frequency and severity of abuse played in the decision to leave. This

analysis was ancillary to that of this study's primary goal, and as such, there were no specific hypotheses. Given the conflicting evidence found in the literature regarding severity of abuse and a woman's decision to remain with an abusive partner (Gelles, 1976; Pagelow, 1981), the goal was to gain an understanding of the forces at work with this sample of abused women.

In general, the results of this study provided only partial support for the decision-making model tested. This lack of significance can be attributed to a number of factors; some due to limitations inherent in the model itself, others unique to abused women and their particular situation, as well as to, methodological problems specific to this study such as problems related to obtaining data from this type of sample. Components associated with the TRA did reach significance in certain instances. In fact strong support was found for the TRA in predicting a woman's intentions regarding her relationship in Phase 1 and Phase 2 analyses.

Phase 1 tested the model's capacity to predict a woman's intentions regarding her relationship using hierarchical regression analyses. When intention was regressed on the three main components, attitude, subjective norm and perceived control in Phase 1, results revealed that aspects of attitude and subjective norm significantly predicted variability in intention. From these analyses, attitude toward staying and subjective norm emerged as significant predictors of intention to leave the relationship. Contrary to expectations, however, perceived control contributed no significant variability to intention to leave.

Phase 2 analyses examined both intention and behaviour via further hierarchical regression analyses. Overall, in Phase 2 analyses, perceived control failed to account significantly for variability in intentions to leave, or to establish a direct significant relationship with behaviour. Consistent with the model, however, intentions to leave accounted for significant variability in behaviour. Thus, an important relationship, central to both the TRA and the TPB was established. Given the lack of significance on perceived control, the findings did not support the TPB.

The overall lack of significance for perceived control is surprising, given the findings in the literature supporting the lack of control experienced by women in abusive relationships (Dutton, 1994; Ferraro, 1979; Kirkwood, 1993; Strube, 1988, 1991). Moreover, these results belie the fact that many of the respondents in this study reported an array of issues representing both internal, as well as, external constraints on their behaviour. Evidence for this was apparent from the questionnaire responses on the attitudinal beliefs measure. The following items, given as factors that influenced the participant's decisions, were drawn from this measure.

Financial problems were overwhelmingly cited by this sample as a consideration when making the decision to leave. In general, it is reasonable to assume, that, financial security would result in more life options, and with these options, would come the ability to enjoy a greater command over one's life. Fifty-nine women, however, responded that their poor financial situation was an impediment to leaving their abusive

partner. The majority of these concerns centered around not being able to support their children.

Further constraints were evident among the twelve women who believed that distribution of their marital and personal property would unfairly favour their partner. These women believed they would lose not only the possessions they had acquired during the relationship, but their personal property as well. Nine of these women worried that to lose their share of the marital property would impact negatively on their ability to care for their children, preventing them from maintaining their current standard of living for their children, as well as in the future. Ten women believed they would lose custody of their children to their partner.

Women without children also expressed financial concerns when making this decision. Fourteen single women reported having nowhere to go if they left, and no friends or family to help support them until they could establish themselves.

Twenty-two women feared continued abuse if they were to leave their partners. The fear for their safety should they leave, echoed throughout the women's responses. Statements such as, "He will find me wherever I go", and "I am afraid he will harm my family" underscored the gravity of this decision. One woman believed her partner would pay to have her killed. This woman was certain this would happen because he had, in the past, made an unsuccessful attempt to do so. Eleven women feared reprisals from angry in-laws or their partner's friends. Nine women were afraid to leave because their partners threatened them with bodily harm should they try to leave their home.

When considering issues related to lack of control, another interpretation for the poor performance of perceived control could be attributed to inaccuracies in the actual as opposed to the perceived degree of control the women believed they had over leaving their partners. The question of actual control is of particular concern in this context, as beliefs about control can be based on the participant's own unsuccessful past efforts to leave the relationship, or on information from friends or family members. Because some abused women may have little experience with an independent lifestyle, they may rely on either their own misperceptions of what their "actual" control really is, or on information from other people in their lives. Much of the information they obtain about living independently may be from others who do not support them in leaving their partner, and thus biased.

The capacity for perceived control to predict behaviour is contingent on the condition that perceived behavioural control reflects the woman's "actual" control. If this condition is not met, the measure of perceived control will not account for variability in behaviour beyond that accounted for by attitude and subjective norm. Given that subjective norm consistently predicted intentions in Phase 1 and Phase 2, indicated that these participants were influenced by other persons in their lives, and were thus, susceptible to misinformation from others.

Several explanations related to methodological problems can be offered for the general lack of significance for this model. One problem already referred to in this study, and one likely to have played a considerable role in the lack of significance, was the small sample size. The resulting lack of power affected all aspects of the analyses to some

degree. At the outset of this study, difficulty making contact with abused women willing to participate, resulted in the smaller sample than was originally intended. Power analysis performed at the preliminary stage of this study indicated a sample of $N=100$ would be required to obtain a medium-size effect. This sample consisted of 70 women, considerably less than the intended goal of 100. This problem was further compounded in Phase 2 of the study where the number of women willing and available to participate dropped to only thirty-seven. High attrition rates at follow-up are a problem for research in this area, as attempts to contact women are, for a variety of reasons, often unsuccessful.

The small sample was, in part, a result of the inability for many abused women to move freely, or make choices for themselves (Strube, 1988). An overriding problem for many women with abusive partners, was the risk to their personal safety if they were known to be participating in a study of this nature. This risk was highlighted during phase 2, when women being contacted by telephone for a follow-up interview were subsequently interrogated about these phone calls made to their homes by the researcher. This information was made known to the researcher on four separate occasions, when, after several tries, the participant was finally contacted. Furthermore, the need on behalf of some partners, to control any interactions their wives may be having, prompted three suspicious partners to obtain the researcher's telephone number from their caller ID display, and contact the researcher in an attempt to investigate the calls made to their home.

Because many women feared for their safety if their partner discovered their participation in this study, each respondent had

developed a strategy for contacting them at Phase 2. Thus, all attempts to contact them were carried out according to instructions given to the researcher by the respondent at Phase 1. During follow-up, however, a degree of flexibility had to be maintained to deal with unexpected circumstances, such as the partner answering the phone. Despite telephoning the participant during a time of day the partner was not expected to be home, on seven different occasions, the partner answered the telephone. On five of these occasions, there was suspicion evident in their tone of inquiry as they pressed the researcher for more information. When this occurred, the partner was told that the purpose of the call was to contact the "woman of the house" for the purpose of a survey. This response appeared to satisfy the partners in all cases. As a result of this risk to the participant, those women who had remained with their partners, were often unavailable at Phase 2.

As well, the nature of the target behaviour alone, often meant that those women who left their partner would be difficult to track. For most women, terminating the relationship often meant leaving the home they shared with the abuser. Therefore, by design, this study had a built in attrition rate, a situation that was meant to be offset by obtaining backup contact numbers from each participant earlier in the study. Two participants who appeared to be untraceable, contacted the researcher to reestablish contact with the study after leaving their partner. Unfortunately, the number for nineteen of the fifty-six women who consented to participate in Phase 2, proved unreliable, and as a result, they were unavailable to participate.

The possibility that the questionnaire responses were vulnerable to potential biases became evident during data collection, when, regardless of their circumstances, the overwhelming majority of participants indicated that they intended to leave their relationship. The resulting lack of variability on this predictor was a signal that something extraneous may be affecting their answers.

After studying both the anecdotal and questionnaire responses, this tendency to report, overwhelmingly, that they intended to leave their abusive partners, could be interpreted as a result of (1) the abused woman's unique circumstances (2) the perceived social stigma associated with staying with the partner, and (3) ambivalence experienced by the women themselves, about staying with their abusive partners. From both the respondents contacted in shelters, as well as the community, a prevailing sense of shame accompanying the indignities of the abuse, was often conveyed to the researcher. Of those participants who were candid with the researcher, revelations that they intended to return to their abusive partner were usually prefaced with "I know this sounds crazy, but.....". This information was usually followed by admissions that they felt somewhat embarrassed about their intentions to return to their partners or even that they still cared about them and missed being away from them.

Those women contacted in shelters often expressed their gratitude to the shelter staff. Many of these women had developed close, sometimes dependent relationships with shelter personnel and other shelter residents. These relationships prompted some women to feel as if they would be "letting staff down" if they were to return to their partners. It is

even conceivable that, given the sense of shame that accompanied many of their personal stories, some women believed they would be letting themselves down if they returned to their abusers. For these women, the desire to comply with what they perceived was expected of them may have translated into a sense of duty to at least give the appearance that they planned to leave the relationship. In hindsight, it is also likely that, of the women contacted in shelters, many would answer that they definitely intended to leave their partners simply because they were already in the shelter. Women in the community, puzzled by their own uncertainty about why, in spite of the abuse, they did not leave their abusers, may have responded similarly. It is not clear if the women understood that questions regarding their intentions were, for those women who had already made that determination, in regard to the present. However, for those women who were uncertain about their intentions at the time of completing the questionnaire, the questions for this construct were worded so as to elicit their "best guess" as to what they would do in the coming six months. The significance of this predictor in this context was surprising, given the likelihood that any response on this measure could be subject to change given the uncertainty of the participant's lives.

Knowing that there was a potential for some women to be less than candid about their intentions to return to their partners, information volunteered by the participant during the introduction to the study was now subject to conjecture by the researcher. Rather than limit the introduction process to questions about the survey itself, the introduction format was reworked to include questions aimed at encouraging the participant to talk more about

herself. During the introductory interviews, women were assured that there were no right or wrong responses to the questions and care was taken to eliminate any threatening language; the study for example, was now referred to as a survey, presumably, a word with less evaluative connotations. In general, this approach was an effort to put the women at ease, impress upon them the importance of being completely candid when responding to the questions, and, to provide the researcher with another opportunity to reassure the women that their answers would remain completely confidential. This additional information, taken in the form of notes by the researcher during this interview, later emerged as a valuable source of background information when interpreting the open-ended attitude measure.

The necessity of obtaining data in the above manner, however, may have resulted in a trade-off of sorts. In the interest of obtaining accurate data, the informal, more conversational tone to the introduction now involved a considerable degree of interaction. With this increased interaction, there was a risk that the participants' sense of anonymity would be diminished somewhat, particularly if, during the course of the introduction, they began to view the researcher as a person to whom they wished to present themselves in a positive manner. Thus, the presence of a social desirability bias may have influenced the responses.

Moreover, many women wanted to talk about their experiences and it was often necessary to clarify that the researcher would not be counseling them. Thus, for some women, it was necessary for the researcher to remain alert to the direction or tone of the conversation. On the occasions where this expectation was encountered, the interviewer

encouraged the participants to utilize the questionnaire as a means of meeting that need. Overall, on several occasions, the researcher sensed a need to establish a relationship on the part of respondents, beyond that which would normally have been expected.

In spite of efforts to recruit a community sample, difficulty recruiting participants who were still with their abusive partner, resulted in a sample recruited largely from shelters, a limitation of past studies that this survey had hoped to address. The lack of variability in intention was likely more of a problem than it might otherwise have been had community recruitment efforts been more successful. Had this been achieved, not only would a more representative sample have been obtained, but the absence of a community sample represented a loss because, to date, there is no information on differences that may exist between women who have accessed the system and those women who have not. The possibility of significant differences between these two populations is yet to be determined.

Another limitation of this study was due to problems inherent in the self-report means of data collection. Early in phase I, two problems associated with the closed-ended, paper/pencil data gathering method were suspected on the attitude measure. Initially, the attitude measure was chosen and carefully adapted to this study to help avoid the methodological problems associated with a forced choice format, typical of self-report instruments. It was expected that the open-ended responses of the attitude measure would not only generate a wider range of factors that a woman would consider in the decision-making process, but could also elicit more subjective responses. As a mitigating strategy, wherever close-

ended, forced choice responses were used, efforts were made to include a greater selection of potential responses than would typically be included. All participants were encouraged to write any observations, anecdotal responses, or comments that they felt would enhance their responses.

There was, however, potentially a problem with the operationalization of the attitude construct itself. The marginally significant performance of attitude in predicting intention was contrary to expectations, despite evidence showing that attitude is generally a much stronger predictor than subjective norm (Godin & Sheppard, 1986; Godin, Valois, Sheppard & Desharnais, 1987; Riddle, 1980). As mentioned previously, the attitude measure was modeled after Vinokur-Kaplan's (1978) study of family planning attitudes, intentions and behaviour. Many women however, experienced difficulty with the questions for this measure, some giving up after finding that it involved some degree of complexity. This, it turned out, was a problem for the large number of women who were tested in shelters. Shelters are typically busy residences, housing many women and children who are often coping with the aftermath of traumatic experiences. For some women, this busy environment, combined with the transitional nature of their lives appeared to be problematic and, as a result, some women found it difficult to remain motivated through to the end of the questionnaire. For others, despite their wish to take part in the study, their desire to avoid traumatic or painful memories clearly played a role. For those women who answered all, or portions of this measure, there was a concern as to whether they had interpreted it correctly, and indeed, when they requested help, a check of the questionnaires occasionally revealed a need to offer

assistance. In these cases, what was gained in accuracy, was offset by a loss of anonymity.

Those women who were recruited from the community, and therefore completed the questionnaires independently, were able to phone the researcher for instructions on this measure while maintaining their anonymity. For many women however, contacting the researcher was not an option as tight control by the abuser over their partner's activities, especially their telephone activity is a common aspect of abusive relationships.

It is believed that this process and the subsequent failure of the composite attitude variable to contribute unique variability over and above subjective norm reflected the difficulty participants experienced while trying to interpret this measure. This also drew attention to the fact that the operationalization of a predictor variable must be adapted specifically for the unique population and set of circumstances for each study; ultimately, what worked well for Vinokur-Kaplan (1978) was less suitable in this context. With this in mind, the data were reexamined, and rather than utilizing one overall measure of attitude, aspects of this composite predictor variable were examined and used as predictors. Given the wide ranging levels of ability, and the less than ideal circumstances with which some participants must cope, future measures that are more easily understood and require less effort, would likely increase the response rate, result in less missing data and thus, greater validity.

Another methodological problem unique to this context, was the length of time between Phase 1 and Phase 2. It is important to note that,

because of academic time constraints, all questions measuring the Phase 1 predictor variables, were in reference to a six month time frame. Initially, it was expected that this period of time would be adequate to capture the process through to the woman's actual leaving (if, in fact, this occurred). However, because of the lengthy recruitment process, the study was actually conducted over a period of one year, rather than within the original intended six month time frame. This extended data collection phase could have been advantageous, as it inadvertently allowed more time for the participants to act on their behavioural intentions, thus increasing the chances of capturing the process. The lack of significant results, however, raise the question as to whether this longitudinal study was conducted over a time frame sufficiently long enough to capture not only the decision itself (as measured by intentions), but the actual follow-up behaviour as well.

Although perceived control failed to predict both intentions and behaviour, it was expected that this variable would have been especially sensitive to time, as it was affected by many factors, both internal and external to the participant. Internal factors such as the possession of necessary skills for employment, or the knowledge associated with the confidence that the participant can meet the needs of the family on her own were believed to have potentially played a role. External factors out of the participant's control may also have played an important role. Practical matters such as the cooperation of others to move furniture, provide emotional support, or loan money to feed, clothe and shelter the family until finances can be arranged, can potentially affect the perceived

ease or difficulty with which the woman can carry out the actual behaviour.

The reality is that, some women leave an abusive partner immediately after the first episode of abuse, while others intend to leave, but do not actually leave for many years. For those women who have not yet decided, the hope that their partners will change given enough time or that "things will get better", a greater period of time would be required to capture the process (Ferraro, 1979). Many women, experiencing less severe forms of abuse may express a desire to leave, but, may choose to wait for the optimal time. The optimal time can involve obtaining employment, completing a training program, waiting for the children to complete school or mature, find a suitable home, or as in some cases, when there have been threats of harm from her partner, finding a safe time to leave. Some women will stay with the abuser for years for fear of being stalked and harmed even more seriously than the abuse experienced thus far in the relationship. Situations such as these can delay a woman's plans to leave for an indefinite period of time. To complicate things even further, according to Kirkwood (1993), the leaving process is not always easy to track, as many relationships are not really terminated, but are characterized by an uneven, back and forth process that itself can carry on over a period of years. Given this, it is reasonable to assume that the potentially long term leaving process may not be fully captured within this study's six month to one year time frame.

The need to develop a strategy to escape safely with children and possessions indicates the logic necessary in decisions of this nature. In fact, the TPB is based on the presumption that every decision is a logical,

rational process. In contrast to the prevailing perceptions of women in abusive relationships, Hoff's (1990; as cited in Campbell et al., 1994) study of nine abused women over an extended period of time, found that the women were "knowledgeable" people capable of developing strategies necessary for survival in abusive relationships until they could leave.

Clearly, attitudes, subjective norms and intentions, played a significant role in the decision process for abused women. Thus, the TRA alone was sufficient to predict leaving behaviour. The fact that perceived behavioural control was consistently nonsignificant, however, introduces the possibility that leaving behaviour is not nonvolitional, and that it may be volitional. The perspective that an abused woman is trapped, or captive, because of forces beyond her control, has traditionally been offered as an explanation as to why a woman would stay with an abusive partner. This is reinforced in the media by describing abused women as "trapped" in their relationships.

Despite the long held belief that women are in abusive relationships because they are trapped, it may be necessary to reconsider their motivations. Perhaps, what is viewed by professionals and outsiders as intolerable, is in fact, viewed as tolerable by some women, and the decision to remain with this partner seen as a rational decision given their circumstances and needs. It is possible that these women value their relationship, are not ready to give up on their investment, and believe that it is worth maintaining at all costs. This perspective would no doubt, be difficult for an observer to accept. An understanding of a woman's decision to remain with an abusive partner requires that observers

suspend their own notions of what is intolerable, and consider instead, each individual woman's perspective.

An insightful proposal by Kirkwood (1993), suggests that research into the question, Why do women stay?, should instead, ask the question, "What are the complexities that make it so hard for women to leave?". Identifying these complexities was the secondary goal of this study, and the underlying reason for the use of a self-generated response to the attitude measure. From these responses, emerged a wide range of issues faced by the women in this study, some were shared by many while others were unique to only a few. The range of factors, however, (listed in Appendix B) clearly illustrated the complexity of the issues women must deal with when making the decision to leave.

For many women, recognizing that they were being abused was the first step toward acknowledging their need for safety. The insidious nature of abuse and the well documented effects (Dutton, 1994; Walker, 1983; 1979) it can have on a woman's self-worth were apparent from both interviews and questionnaire responses. Episodes of abuse in an otherwise normal life often cause women to doubt that what they are experiencing is, in fact, abuse, or that they are not in some way, responsible for what is happening to them. These complexities are best expressed in the following excerpts from the participants themselves. Pseudonyms have been used to maintain their anonymity.

Monika

Monika, an abused wife and mother of one 12 year old daughter wrote about awakening to the fact that she was abused and the affect this had on her.

It has taken me a long time to think of my relationship as abusive. Even now, I am guilt-ridden. You could make a list: my husband - went to work, came home every day, played with our child, bought me presents. He didn't drink or gamble or run-around. So what is my big problem?

Mainly my husband being so self-centered that I became a non-person and lost all self-worth. I wanted to have some kind of life before there was no time left. Everything and everyone in our house was under his control. Everything had to go his way. He never hit me, but his silent disapproval ruled everything. It makes me extremely uncomfortable to think about it.

Monika left her husband a year before she wrote this. He still tries to control her....."My husband has told anyone who will listen that I am an unfit mother and that I am crazy and that I am having affairs". When filling out the abuse scale, Monika indicated that for the 11 years of her marriage he constantly threatened to separate her from her daughter. She still lives in fear and feels that in this sense, her ex-partner still controls her.... "I left, but it has been extremely difficult because of the connection through our daughter. At times, I feel he still controls me from a distance".

Ellen

I knew my relationship wasn't right. It was all one sided for the love part. He was, and still is very abusive both verbally, emotionally and physically. I didn't realize I was in an abusive relationship until I seen the ads on the TV and then one day in the Dr.'s office I seen a flyer, "Are you in an abusive relationship?" It took me months to leave because of being afraid and because I had so much influence from people around me. I was trying to please everyone else and not thinking about me or my children. I've been away 6 months now and things haven't changed a bit. He follows me everywhere, he phones constantly, he's threatened my life and then said he loved me. It's taken me awhile, but I'm starting to realize that I deserve better and I deserve to be happy. My kids were around fighting and arguing every day which I now see is not good. I thought all this was normal and I made my bed I had to lay in it. I don't have to much support, everyone took sides (mostly his) but I have to keep thinking about me not what everyone else thinks. One day I'll be happy. I hope in some small way this will help you.

Logic is sometimes lost in the complexity of the issues women must consider. An apparently logical decision process can become a complex tangle of contradictions. Living on welfare six months after leaving her partner, 25 year old Kim recounted the facts and feelings she had to consider while trying to decide whether or not to leave her physically abusive partner.

Kim

I stayed with him for so long because I didn't want to be alone.

I stayed because I didn't think I could support myself.

I stayed because I had no where to go.

I finally left because I knew he wouldn't change.

I finally left because I was scared for my life.

I stayed for so long because I was scared to leave.

I stayed for so long because I loved him.

During the introductory interview, one woman stated that she was still seeing her partner. During the discussion, she shared her feelings about this. This information was interpreted as an explanation of sorts, about why she continued to see her abusive partner despite the fact that she was seeking shelter from him, and obviously seeking safety from his violence. The sense of defeat that was present in this woman's statements, echoed the despair voiced by a great many women during these interviews.

Gloria

I worry that his children will be safe if I leave. I'm not sure I can do this alone, you know, work and care for my children. Maybe he's right, and it is all my fault because I'm so selfish. I guess I need to change. I'm afraid he'll be happy with someone else. If that happens, then I'll know I've failed.

When considering the forms of abuse, one would expect that, because of the potential for greater harm, physical abuse would play a greater role in a woman's decision to leave her relationship. In this study,

however, psychological abuse played a greater role among those women who had left their partners. This finding is not surprising when the many different, and insidious forms of emotional abuse are taken into consideration. According to Kirkwood (1993), emotional abuse can include malicious acts such as, committing degrading acts against the woman, working to distort the woman's perception of reality, objectifying her, and isolating the woman from family, friends, or all other outside contacts. Kirkwood (1993) describes emotional abuse as "a deeper and more central form of abuse" than physical abuse. Given the deceptively insidious nature of emotional abuse, it is, therefore, not surprising that emotional abuse played a significant role in the decision process for women in this study.

The TRA inherently lends itself to five specific points of clinical intervention; issues surrounding beliefs about the consequences of staying in/leaving the relationship as well as the accuracy of the evaluations of those consequences, both measured by attitude; the social influences in a woman's life, and whether or not her level of motivation to comply with these influences is unrealistically high, as well as the accuracy of her perceptions of control, which again, may or may not be accurate. Strong implications for clinical intervention in the area of a woman's social influences were found in this study.

Across many different behavioural domains there are persons who are less inclined to act in accordance with the opinions of others. It is more likely however, that within the context of abused women, the overriding effects of abuse have played a bigger role in a woman's susceptibility to outside influence. According to Kirkwood (1993), many

abused women experience some degree of isolation and deprivation, resulting in a social life dominated by her partner, with outside interactions that are inordinately impoverished. Women often gain support and insight into the impact that abuse has had on them only after persons close to them help them become aware. According to Ajzen and Madden (1986), beliefs about the ability to perform a behaviour are often influenced by persons in an individual's life. When control and isolation are an aspect of a woman's abusive relationship, contact with a restricted number of outside influences only compounds this effect. Faced with very limited options and resources with which to carry out any changes, whether her immediate associates encourage her to leave or admonish her to for wishing to do so, will likely shape her intentions and subsequent behaviour.

At this point, clinical intervention aimed at addressing the impoverishment of social contacts, should focus on enabling the woman to join support groups of other women in similar situations. Contacts made at group meetings often provide a new background with which the woman can view past events in her life. Counseling to bolster a woman's self-esteem, including guidance for the woman to evaluate more accurately her abilities and identify strengths needed to live independently of the abusive partner, if in fact that is desired, should be provided.

Because the application of this decision making model is new to the area of abused women, there is much to be addressed in future research. Efforts to address limitations or pitfalls of past research were not always successful in this study, but do serve to underscore the need for further

research to build a methodology suitable for research with abused women as well as the unique circumstances surrounding them.

In the future, the need to recruit a more representative sample is paramount. As previously mentioned, this was considered an important aspect of this study, however, problems making contact with women in the community who were still in abusive relationships resulted in a less than ideal sample. A representative sample comprised of women both in, as well as, those not yet in the system, is deemed a necessary feature of any future research. A sample of this nature would yield a wealth of information into what drives abused women's decisions.

Further, to capture this decision process from intentions to outcome, future research of a longitudinal nature would benefit from an extended time frame spanning at least two years. The extended time frame would increase the likelihood of capturing the "leaving" process for a greater number of abused women. Given the complexity of the issues, in hindsight, it is not unreasonable to expect that the leaving process could be put in motion and not be resolved for many years.

Because the application of TPB in the context of abused women is new, it is likely that some aspects of the decision process unique to this area have been overlooked. Several studies (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Netemeyer, Burton & Scott, 1991; Terry & O'Leary, 1995; Van Ryn, et al., 1996) suggest that the predictive capacity for decision making models to account for complex behaviours with the potential for many obstacles, may be enhanced by the addition of other predictors.

One aspect of the decision process, that, so far, has been overlooked in this context, is the powerful influence that emotions may have had in

determining behaviour for these women. Contrary to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory that attitude is the result of a purely cognitive process, Zajonc (1980) suggests that affect is separate from cognition, and as such, may contribute directly to the evaluation of an attitude object without impacting on one's beliefs or cognitions. That is to say, that, for the women in this study, the process of considering the decision to stay or leave may have elicited strong emotions without necessarily changing their beliefs about the outcome or consequences of their decision.

Research by Ableson, Kinder, Peters & Fiske (1982) also supported Zajonc's (1980) view that emotions are important determinants in the evaluation of an act or behaviour. From their study investigating voter's evaluations of presidential candidates, they found that emotions associated with political candidates were in fact, the single most important component influencing voter's evaluations about these candidates over and above their beliefs about them. Findings by other researchers (Ajzen & Timko, 1985, Fisher, 1984, Tyler & Rasinski, 1984; as cited in Zanna & Rempel, 1988) also support Zajonc's (1980) and Ableson et al's (1982) theory that emotions can have not only a strong effect on evaluations of an act or behaviour, but an effect independent of cognitive beliefs as well.

These investigations into emotion and behaviour suggest that by incorporating a measure of emotion into the definition and assessment of attitudes in the theory of reasoned action, the predictive capacity of this model may have been improved. Eagly & Chaiken (1993) propose a conceptual framework for the utilization of emotions within this context. In describing the relationship between affect and attitude, they propose that rather than being completely independent of cognitive aspects of

attitude, affective reactions are instead linked to attitude through a network-like association. In the context of this study, this theory would mean that the participant's feelings about leaving would feedback to them, providing them with information about their emotional reaction to leaving their relationship, this in turn, would contribute to their evaluation of leaving along with their beliefs about leaving. Given that emotions have been found to play an important role in determining behaviour and more specifically, may have contributed significantly to the performance of attitude in the prediction of leaving behaviour in this study, the addition of a measure of emotion to the theory of planned behaviour in future research is recommended.

Another aspect of the decision process that warrants consideration is the role that guilt or pity has on women with abusive partners. Ferraro (1979) characterizes many women as clinging to the image of a "perfect wife and mother". They view themselves as "altruistic and forgiving martyrs", an image, that for many is too powerful to let go. A result of this, is that some women feel varying degrees of guilt or pity for their partners, a perspective, depending on the degree of guilt, that reflects the sense of responsibility some women feel for the abuse. It is suggested that the degree to which a woman feels either guilt or pity for her partner influences her decision to stay. The relationship, therefore, between guilt and behaviour would likely be a direct one, such that, the stronger the guilt, the greater likelihood of remaining with an abusive partner. Lower levels of guilt however, would likely affect behaviour indirectly, through intentions.

Included in the wide range of reactions found among abused women, a typical aftereffect of abuse is a sense of helplessness and powerlessness often described as a loss of self (Dutton, 1994). It is likely that aspects of this reaction could be captured by the addition of a measure of self-efficacy to the TPB. Ajzen (1987; cited in Terry & O'Leary, 1995) compares these antecedents by characterizing the role of perceived control to be that of evaluating the presence of external constraints, and self-efficacy as an assessment of the presence of internal constraints. For example, a person with a sense of low self-efficacy may perceive few external barriers to performing a particular behaviour, but, may lack the necessary confidence to actually perform the behaviour. Further, as proposed by Ajzen & Madden (1986), if a person perceives that they possess little control over performing a behaviour, they will also lack the motivation to try.

Accordingly, Bandura's (1982) social cognitive theory of behaviour change proposes that people will avoid activities that they perceive to be beyond their capability to perform, and will undertake those activities they judge to be within their capability. These judgments, regardless of their accuracy, will determine the degree of effort a person will expend in the pursuit of a particular goal. If, for instance, they doubt their ability to perform the behaviour, they will slacken their efforts or give up altogether. Those persons who possess a strong sense of efficacy, will direct their energies toward the task regardless of the perceived degree of difficulty. Given these relationships, it is likely that high measures of self-efficacy would affect behaviour directly, and conversely, lower measures of self-efficacy would affect behaviour indirectly through intentions.

A measure of the relation between a woman's degree of self-efficacy and subsequent behaviour could shed light as to why some women leave after one episode of abuse and others may never leave. Moreover, the TPB provides the ideal framework from within which to measure the effects of self-efficacy. Future research with this model would benefit from an exploration into the predictive capacity of these factors on a woman's decision-making process.

In summary, analyses indicate that the model was only partly supported in this context. Overall, this study's findings were severely handicapped by the lack of power, due no doubt, to the small size of the sample, as well as to the fact that a large portion of the sample had already left their relationships. Clearly, more research into this particular decision process is necessary. The question of why some women stay and why some women leave is an important social issue, the answer to which could have effects on a much broader scale. Gender relations, social services and social policy in general would be favourably affected by a greater insight into an understanding of women in abusive relationships. Future generations of men and women, as well as social service agencies, police and others in the helping professions would benefit from an understanding of the issues women must resolve before they can make the decision to pursue better, safer lives for themselves and their children. It is likely, that the true capabilities of this model in this application, have been obscured by the methodological problems encountered. In this regard, the initial application of the TPB to the decision-making process of abused women has served to elucidate many problems that research in this area is likely to encounter.

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Appendix A

Introduction to Research Project
Consent Form - Phase 2
Request for Results
Agency Contact Numbers
Questionnaire - Phase 1
Questionnaire - Phase 2
Research Participation Report

DOES YOUR PARTNER.....

CRITICIZE YOU? INSULT YOU? PUSH, HIT, OR THREATEN TO HIT YOU? KEEP TABS ON EVERYTHING YOU DO? EVERYWHERE YOU GO? FORCE YOU TO DO SEXUAL THINGS THAT YOU DO NOT WANT TO? MAKE DECISIONS WITHOUT ASKING WHAT YOU WANT?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO ANY OF THESE QUESTIONS, YOU MAY BE INVOLVED IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP, AND WE INVITE YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR RESEARCH.

This study is being carried out by Pamela Scott (graduate student) under the supervision of Dr. Nancy DeCourville, in the Psychology Department at Brock University. If you have any questions about the form, or about any aspect of this research, please call Nancy or Pam at Brock University (telephone 688-5550, extension 4084). If there is no answer at this number, call Nancy at 988-6126.

Certain people and organizations have kindly agreed to allow us to distribute this questionnaire, but they are not involved in carrying out the research.

The purpose of this study is to try to better understand what goes into a woman's decision to leave, or stay in, an abusive relationship. By abusive, we mean a relationship in which a woman's partner hurts her in any way - physically, emotionally, psychologically, financially, or sexually.

We believe that it is very important to understand what goes into woman's decisions about these types of relationships. The decisions to stay or leave an abusive relationship is a difficult one, and more often than not, social services personnel, police, family, and friends do not understand everything a woman needs to think about in trying to arrive at the best decision for her. People often have a hard time understanding why someone would stay in an abusive relationship when it seems that the best thing to do would be to leave. It is also hard for people to understand why a woman will leave an abusive relationship and later decide to go back to her partner. We are hoping that the results of this study will give us important information that we can use to try to help people to understand these issues.

There are some things you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate in this research. First, this research has been approved by the Brock University Subcommittee on Research with Human Participants. This committee is responsible for deciding whether or not the research meets the highest ethical standards. Among other things, this means

protecting the identity of people who participate in research and making sure that the research does not cause anyone harm.

Second, the research includes two phases. We hope that you will consider participating in both phases of the research. The first phase involves filling out the questionnaire you will find in this package and returning it to us in the enclosed, self-addressed, stamped envelope. You will notice that your name does not appear on the questionnaire, so no one will be able to connect your answers with you.

The second phase of the research involves a very short telephone interview that will take place six to eight months from now. If you agree to participate in both phases of the research, we will need some information on how to contact you. We understand that this involves some risk, so we have taken steps to protect your identity. You will find a separate sheet of paper asking for your consent to participate in the second phase of the research (See Consent Form - Phase 2, printed on pink paper). If you fill this page out, we will immediately separate it from your questionnaire responses and place it in a locked filing cabinet - *only the researchers will see this information* (Pamela Scott and Nancy DeCourville), and it will be destroyed when the study is finished. If you send us this information, it only means that *right now* you agree that we can contact you for an interview. If you change your mind about the interview, you can simply tell us when we contact you (or contact us at any time). We will not put any pressure on you to continue if you do not want to.

If, after reading this, you are willing to participate in the research, please complete the questionnaire. If you are willing to participate in the second phase of the study, please fill in the consent Form - Phase 2. Place the materials in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope, seal it, and mail it back to us.

Also included in this package is information on when the results of the study (printed on green paper) will be available and how to get a copy.

If you know of someone else who might be interested in being a part of this study, please let them know where you got this information. We need as many complete questionnaires as possible.

For your information, we have provided a list of resources that may be helpful to you, should you wish to talk to someone about your relationship.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR TIME. Pamela Scott, Graduate /Student and Nancy DeCourville, Research Advisor

CONSENT FORM - PHASE 2

TITLE: Factors affecting women's decision about an abusive relationship.

RESEARCHERS: Pamela Scott, Nancy DeCourville, Psychology Dept., Brock University, Telephone: 688-5550 (voice mail is available at this extension, or may leave message at extensions 3542 or 3543, or at 988-6126).

In about 6 to 8 months, we would like to contact you for a very brief (2-3 minutes) interview. We would like to have your permission to conduct this interview and to ask about how you are doing. If this is acceptable to you, please complete this form. Completing this form does not obligate you to do the interview. You can refuse the interview when we contact you without penalty of any kind.

Yes, I agree that you can contact me in the next 6-8 months.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please help us to maintain your confidentiality and safety by tell us how we may contact you.

Contact telephone number: _____

(If this is the telephone number of a family member or a friend, please tell them that we will be calling)

When she calls, researcher should identify herself....

☐ by name (Pam)

☐ by some other name (please specify) _____

When she calls, researcher should ask for _____

If you are not available at this number, may we leave a message (for example: Pam called and asked you to call her at 688-5550).

☐ yes

☐ no

☐ special instructions that will help us to contact you safely: _____

Results of the Study

By the summer of 1997, we should know the results of this study. We would like to make a copy available to you.

Here are some ways of getting a copy of the results. Please check one.

- ☐ Address the enclosed blank envelope to yourself, or to a friend or family member. We will send a summary of the results of the study in this envelope.
- ☐ If you would prefer to pick up the results in person (after August 15, 1997), copies will be made available in the Psychology department lounge, Room B322, MacKenzie-Chown Complex, Brock University. This room is open Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- ☐ Telephone us at 688-5550, extension 4084 after August 15, 1997 and let us know where to send the results.
- ☐ Pick up a copy of the results where you picked up this package, after August 15, 1997.
- ☐ Tell us how you would like to obtain a copy of the results _____

If you are in need of emergency shelter, or you just need someone to talk to about your abusive relationship, the following are contact numbers for agencies and shelters in your area.

St. Catharines-Niagara:

Women's Place (St. Catharines).....	684-8331
Women's Place (Welland).....	788-0113
Women in Crisis -NOVA (Niagara Falls).....	356-5800
Design For A New Tomorrow (St. Catharines).....	684-1223
If busy call:.....	684-0644
Working Against Violence -WAV (Fort Erie).....	871-4042
S.O.S. Femmes.....	1 800 387-8603
Distress Centre (St. Catharines).....	688-3711
Distress Centre (Welland).....	734-1212
Niagara Region Sexual Assault Centre.....	682-4584

Hamilton-Wentworth:

Halton Women's Place.....	878-8555
Hope Haven Homes.....	547-1815
Inasmuch House for Women in Crisis.....	529-8600
Interval House.....	547-8485
	549-8484
Martha House Helpline.....	523-6277
Wife Assault Helpline.....	547-8484
Women's Centre of Hamilton-Wentworth.....	522-0127
(Peer Counseling)	
Telecare.....	522-1477

**FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN'S DECISIONS ABOUT LEAVING OR STAYING IN
AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP**

- Except for the section on personal information, there are *no right or wrong answers* to the questions we ask on this form.
- Please feel free to write any comments you have about the questions or the research anywhere on the form.
- We hope that you will respond to all of the questions, but any information you are willing to give will be helpful to us.
- THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP.

Pamela Scott & Nancy DeCourville

Please keep in mind that your responses will be identified only by CODE NUMBER. The completed questionnaire and documents containing your name will be stored separately and destroyed on completion of the study.

Birth date _____
 day month year

Marital status (check one)

- ☐ single ☐ married ☐ separated
☐ divorced ☐ common law ☐ other _____

How many children do you have? (check one)

- ☐ none ☐ 1 child ☐ 2 children
☐ 3 children ☐ 4 children ☐ 5 children
☐ more than 6 children (please specify) _____

How many children are living with you? (check one)

- ☐ none ☐ 1 child ☐ 2 children
☐ 3 children ☐ 4 children ☐ 5 children
☐ more than 6 children (please specify) _____

Living arrangements (check as many as apply)

- ☐ with same (abusive) partner ☐ with a new partner ☐ with children
☐ with family member ☐ with friend/other roommate ☐ alone

IF WITH SAME (ABUSIVE) PARTNER, how long have you been in this relationship? (check one)

- ☐ less than one month ☐ 1 to 6 months ☐ 6 months to 1 year
☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-4 years ☐ 5-6 years
☐ longer than 6 years (please specify) _____

IF YOU HAVE LEFT THIS (ABUSIVE) PARTNER, how long have you been out of this relationship? (check one)

- ☐ less than one month ☐ 1 to 6 months ☐ 6 months to 1 year
☐ 1-2 years ☐ 3-4 years ☐ 5-6 years
☐ longer than 6 years (please specify) _____

Please check the highest level of education you have achieved

- ☐ grade 9 ☐ grade 10 ☐ grade 11
☐ grade 12 ☐ grade 13
☐ some community college ☐ completed community college
☐ some university ☐ completed university
☐ Other (please specify) _____

What is your main source of income? (check one)

- ☐ salary/wages ☐ unemployment insurance ☐ worker's compensation
☐ welfare ☐ mother's allowance ☐ disability
☐ alimony/child support ☐ other (please specify) _____

What is your annual income? (check one)

111

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> under \$15,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$15,000 to \$19,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 to \$24,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25,000 to \$29,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 to \$34,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$35,000 to \$39,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 to \$44,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$45,000 or more | |

Please tell us about your ABUSIVE partner.

His age _____

Please check his highest level of education

- | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> grade 9 | <input type="radio"/> grade 10 | <input type="radio"/> grade 11 |
| <input type="radio"/> grade 12 | <input type="radio"/> grade 13 | |
| <input type="radio"/> some community college | <input type="radio"/> completed community college | |
| <input type="radio"/> some university | <input type="radio"/> completed university | |
| <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify) _____ | | |

What is his main source of income? (check one)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> salary/wages | <input type="radio"/> unemployment insurance | <input type="radio"/> worker's compensation |
| <input type="radio"/> welfare | <input type="radio"/> mother's allowance | <input type="radio"/> disability |
| <input type="radio"/> alimony/child support | <input type="radio"/> other (please specify) _____ | |

What is his annual income? (check one)

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> under \$15,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$15,000 to \$19,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$20,000 to \$24,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$25,000 to \$29,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$30,000 to \$34,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$35,000 to \$39,000 |
| <input type="radio"/> \$40,000 to \$44,000 | <input type="radio"/> \$45,000 or more | |

Have you ever received counselling related to your partner's abusive behaviour?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

Are you now receiving counselling related to your partner's abusive behaviour?

- ☐ yes ☐ no

Thinking back over the PAST YEAR, please indicate how often your partner acted in each of the ways listed below. Please check the box that comes closest to what you remember.

	never	1 to 2 times	3 to 6 times	6 to 12 times	more than 12 times
1. Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture					
2. Threw, smashed, or broke an object					
3. Drove dangerously with you in the car					
4. Threw an object at you					
5. Shook a finger at you					
6. Made threatening gestures or faces at you					
7. Shook a fist at you					
8. Acted like a bully toward you					
9. Destroyed something belonging to you					
10. Threatened to harm or damage things you care about					
11. Threatened to destroy property					
12. Threatened someone you care about					
13. Threatened to hurt you					
14. Threatened to kill himself					
15. Threatened to kill you					
16. Threatened you with a weapon					
17. Threatened you with a club-like object					
18. Acted like he wanted to kill you					
19. Threatened you with a knife or gun					
20. Held you down, pinning you in place					
21. Pushed or shoved you					
22. Grabbed you suddenly or forcefully					
23. Shook or roughly handled you					
24. Scratched you					
25. Pulled your hair					
26. Twisted your arm					
27. Spanked you					
28. Bit you					
29. Slapped you with the palm of his hand					
30. Slapped you with the back of his hand					
31. Slapped you around your face and head					

	never	1 to 2 times	3 to 6 times	6 to 12 times	more than 12 times
32. Hit you with an object					
33. Punched you					
34. Kicked you					
35. Stomped on you					
36. Choked you					
37. Burned you with something					
38. Used a club-like object on you					
39. Beat you up					
40. Used a knife or gun on you					
41. Demanded sex whether you wanted it or not					
42. Made you have oral sex against your will					
43. Made you have sexual intercourse against your will					
44. Physically forced you to have sex					
45. Made you have anal sex against your will					
46. Used an object on you in a sexual way					

Thinking back over the PAST YEAR, please indicate how often your abusive partner did the following to you. Please check the box that comes closest to what you remember.

	never	1 to 2 times	3 to 6 times	6 to 12 times	more than 12 times
1. Put down my physical appearance					
2. Insulted me or shamed me in front of others.					
3. Treated me like I was stupid.					
4. Was insensitive to my feelings.					
5. Told me I couldn't manage or take care of myself without him.					
6. Put down my care of the children.					
7. Criticized the way I took care of the house.					
8. Said something to spite me.					
9. Brought up something from the past to hurt me.					
10. Called me names.					
11. Swore at me.					
12. Yelled and screamed at me.					
13. Treated me like an inferior.					
14. Sulked or refused to talk about a problem.					

	never	1 to 2 times	3 to 6 times	6 to 12 times	more than 12 times
15. Stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement.					
16. Gave me the silent treatment or acted as if I wasn't there.					
17. Withheld affection from me.					
18. Did not talk to me about his feelings.					
19. Was insensitive about my sexual needs and desires.					
20. Demanded obedience to his whims.					
21. Became upset if household work was not done when he thought it should be done.					
22. Acted like I was his personal servant.					
23. Did not do a fair share of household tasks.					
24. Did not do a fair share of child care.					
25. Ordered me around.					
26. Monitored my time and made me account for where I was.					
27. Was stingy in giving me money.					
28. Acted irresponsibly with our financial resources.					
29. Did not contribute enough to supporting our family.					
30. Used our money or made important financial decisions without talking to me about it.					
31. Kept me from getting medical care that I needed.					
32. Was jealous or suspicious of my friends.					
33. Was jealous of male friends.					
34. Did not want me to go to school or to other self-improvement activities.					
35. Did not want me to socialize with my same sex friends.					
36. Accused me of having an affair with another man/woman.					
37. Demanded that I stay home and take care of the children.					
38. Tried to keep me from seeing or talking to my family.					
39. Interfered in my relationships with other family members.					
40. Tried to keep me from doing things to help myself.					
41. Restricted my use of the car.					
42. Restricted my use of the telephone.					
43. Did not allow me to go out of the house when I wanted to.					
44. Refused to let me work outside the home.					
45. Told me my feelings were irrational or crazy.					

	never	1 to 2 times	3 to 6 times	6 to 12 times	more than 12 times
46. Blamed me for his problems.					
47. Tried to turn our family, friends, and/or children against me.					
48. Blamed me for causing his violent behaviour.					
49. Tried to make me feel like I was crazy.					
50. My partner's moods changed radically from very calm to very angry, or vice versa.					
51. Blamed me when he was upset about something, even when it had nothing to do with me.					
52. Tried to convince my friends, family, or children that I was crazy.					
53. Threatened to hurt himself if I left him.					
54. Threatened to hurt himself if I didn't do what he wanted me to do.					
55. Threatened to have an affair with someone else.					
56. Threatened to leave the relationship.					
57. Threatened to take the children away from me.					
58. Threatened to have me committed to an institution.					

Women have many things to think about when they are trying to decide whether or not to leave an abusive relationship. Because every woman and every relationship is different, what is important to you may be different from what is important to someone else. We would like you to tell us about some of the things that are or would be important to you if you were making the decision to stay in or leave your abusive relationship.

In EACH OF THE TABLES PRESENTED ON THE NEXT 4 PAGES, please write one of the things you would have to think about if you were trying to decide whether or not to leave the relationship. Then, keeping that in mind, answer each of the questions in the table.

For example, in trying to arrive at her decision to stay in the relationship, or leave the relationship a woman might say to herself, "I would have to think about whether or not I could support myself and my children". She might then fill out the chart as follows.

RANK: _____

<i>write in this space</i>	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
I would have to think about whether I could support myself and my children.							
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.) <i>support myself and my children</i>	✓						
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.) <i>support myself and my children</i>						✓	
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.) <i>support myself and my children</i>				✓			
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.) <i>support myself and my children</i>			✓				

On the following pages, we have given you space for 7 of the things you might have to consider. Please try to fill in all 7 tables.

Start by writing one of the things you would have to think about in the top, left corner of the table and respond to each question following by placing a check mark in the box that comes closest to what you think.

RANK _____

write in this space	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

RANK _____

write in this space	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

RANK _____

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<i>write in this space</i>	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

RANK _____

<i>write in this space</i>	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

<i>write in this space</i>	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

<i>write in this space</i>	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

<i>write in this space</i>	Extremely likely	Quite likely	Slightly likely	Neutral	Slightly unlikely	Quite unlikely	Extremely unlikely
If I stay, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I stay, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be more able to do this (or, this will be easier, or get better somehow, etc.)							
If I leave, I will be less able to do this (or, this will be harder, or get worse somehow, etc.)							

Now, we would like you to go back and look at the "things you'd have to think about in trying to decide whether to leave or stay", and rank them in order of importance. Just above each of the tables, next to the word RANK, write a number from 1 to 8, telling us which is the most important (1), which is next (2), and so on.

Now, we would like you to consider some of the people in your life whose opinions may be important to you and rate how strongly **YOU THINK THEY WOULD FEEL** about your leaving your abusive relationship. Please check the response that comes closest to what you think.

	does not apply to me	definitely yes	probably yes	not sure	probably no	definitely no
My parents think I should leave						
My sisters/brothers think I should leave						
Other family members think I should leave						
My close friends think that I should leave						
My in-laws think that I should leave						
Members of my church think that I should leave						
My coworkers think that I should leave						
(If there is someone else you would like to add to this list, please do so here).think that I should leave.						

Next, we would like you to consider the same people and rate how likely you are to do what they want when it comes to deciding whether or not to leave the abusive relationship. Please check the response that comes closest to what you think.

	extremely likely	quite likely	slightly likely	neither likely nor unlikely	slightly unlikely	quite unlikely	extremely unlikely
I want to do what my parents think I should do.							
I want to do sisters/brothers think I should do.							
I want to do what other family members think I should do.							
I want to do what my close friends think that I should do.							
I want to do what my in-laws think that I should do.							
I want to do what members of my church think that I should do							
I want to do what my coworkers think that I should do							
(If there is someone else you would like to add to this list, please do so here). I want to do what thinks that I should do.							

Now, we would like you to think about how much control you believe you have over whether or not you leave the abusive relationship. Please check the response that comes closest to what you think.

If I wanted to, I could easily leave my abusive partner.	<input type="radio"/> strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> somewhat agree	<input type="radio"/> neither agree nor disagree	<input type="radio"/> somewhat disagree	<input type="radio"/> strongly disagree
How much control do you have over whether or not you leave the abusive relationship?	<input type="radio"/> no control	<input type="radio"/> very little control	<input type="radio"/> some control	<input type="radio"/> quite a bit of control	<input type="radio"/> complete control
For me to leave my abusive partner would be	<input type="radio"/> very difficult	<input type="radio"/> somewhat difficult	<input type="radio"/> neither difficult nor easy	<input type="radio"/> somewhat easy	<input type="radio"/> very easy
It is mostly up to me whether I leave my abusive partner, or whether I stay with him.	<input type="radio"/> strongly agree	<input type="radio"/> somewhat agree	<input type="radio"/> neither agree nor disagree	<input type="radio"/> somewhat disagree	<input type="radio"/> strongly disagree

Please tell us something about your plans regarding the abusive relationship by reading the following statements and checking the response that comes closest to what you think.

	definitely yes	probably yes	not sure	probably not	definitely not
1. I intend to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months.					
2. I will try to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months.					
3. I have decided to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months.					
4. I am determined to leave the abusive relationship within the next six months.					

Phase 2 Follow-up Telephone Interview CODE: _____

Birth Date: day _____ month _____ year _____

Date Phase1 completed: day _____ month _____ year _____

Date Phase2 completed: day _____ month _____ year _____

Were you living/involved with partner at Phase 1? Yes <--circle one--> No

Circle YES or NO (below) if you are still/living with/or involved in a relationship with your abusive partner - and answer questions directly below your response

If YES Date left: _____

If NO

What factors are keeping you there?

- ☐ do not want to break up the family
- ☐ do not want to risk losing the children
- ☐ finances
- ☐ no where to live
- ☐ think partner might change
- ☐ no support from family or friends
- ☐ still have feelings (love) for partner
- ☐ one or both of us are receiving counseling
- ☐ not applicable (N/A)
- ☐ other - please specify on back of questionnaire

Is the abuse continuing?

N/A NO YES

Any change in the level or severity of the abuse?

N/A WORSE SAME BETTER

At this time, what are your intentions regarding this relationship?

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ plan to stay
- ☐ not sure
- ☐ plan to leave in the future

Why did you leave?

- ☐ did not want any more abuse
- ☐ was afraid for my own/children's safety
- ☐ found the financial means to leave
- ☐ found somewhere to live
- ☐ tired of waiting for partner to change
- ☐ family/friends supported my decision
- ☐ no feelings (love) for partner
- ☐ to remove children from his abusive behaviour
- ☐ other - please specify on back of questionnaire

Are you still involved with or attempting to work things out - in order to get back together?

N/A NO YES

Where are you living now?

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ Woman's/homeless shelter
- ☐ relatives/friends
- ☐ alone with children
- ☐ alone without children
- ☐ with a new partner
- ☐ other

At this time, what are your intentions regarding this relationship?

- ☐ N/A
- ☐ plan to return
- ☐ not sure
- ☐ do not plan to return

Total number of separations: _____

RESEARCH PARTICIPATION REPORT

FACTORS AFFECTING A WOMAN'S DECISION TO LEAVE AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP: THE THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR

First, I would like to thank the women who participated in this study. I know that it was not an easy task for everyone. I would also like to thank the organizations that allowed me to contact the women in their agencies, and in some cases, even allowed me to use their facilities to administer the questionnaires.

The purpose of this study was to determine the factors influencing an abused woman's decision to leave an abusive relationship. This study took place in two phases and was conducted over the period of three years as opposed to the two year time span that was originally planned.

In order to examine these factors, a decision-making model based on the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985) was used. In the past, this model has been very successful at predicting a wide variety of different behaviours. Also, because it specifically highlighted several different aspects of the decision-making process where intervention efforts could be focused, it provided a potentially valuable tool for intervention. Other features that made this model particularly suitable were (1) it supported the position of this research project, that is, that a woman's decision to stay in or leave an abusive relationship was ultimately a rational decision, and (2) it provided a look at the wide range of factors that women would be likely to consider when making a decision of this kind.

In order for you to better understand the results of this study, a little background on the development of this theory would be helpful. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed the theory of reasoned action as a means of better understanding the relationship between our attitudes and behaviour. From this theory emerged a model that essentially, represented our decision-making process to perform or not perform certain behaviours. This model stated that first you form an intention to do something, and then you actually do it. That may, at first, seem obvious to you, but that is only one half of the equation, the other unknown part of this process is what factors come before this point to actually influence the formation of your intentions. These factors are the unique issues that this theory tried to address.

When applied to an abused woman's decision process, the theory of reasoned action states that (1) a woman's attitudes or beliefs about leaving,

as well as (2) her perceptions of what other important persons in her life want her to do, precede her intentions. However, the theory of reasoned action was useful only for predicting behaviours that were completely under the individual's control. This meant that when predicting behaviours in which an individual perceived they had little control, such as a woman with limited resources who is trying to leave an abusive partner, the theory of reasoned action was found to be insufficient.

To improve upon this theory, in 1985, a measure of perceived control was added to the model. With this new addition the theory was now called the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985). The addition of this measure improved the capacity of this model to predict behaviours that were not always under complete control. This research project was based on the premise that many women are prevented from leaving their abusive relationship because of factors they perceive are beyond their control. It was therefore expected that this model would more adequately predict the women who would leave their abusive relationship.

If you recall, Phase 1 of the study involved filling out a questionnaire designed to gather information on your attitudes, perceived social pressure, perceived level of control over leaving, and your intentions. In Phase 2, which took place six months to one year later, a short telephone interview took place at which time participants indicated if they had left their abusive relationship or not.

Results:

Results of this study found that, contrary to expectations, level of control over leaving did not play a significant role in the women's decision to leave their relationship, and attitudes about leaving only marginally played a role. It was determined, however, that women's perceptions of what other persons in their lives wanted them to do regarding leaving, combined with their desire to comply with these person's wishes, played a significant role in her decision.

On an individual level, these findings can be interpreted to mean, that, to the degree that you perceive that your friends, family and associates counsel you to stay or leave, and that you are motivated to comply with their wishes, your decision to stay or leave are likely to be influenced in that direction. Interestingly, this finding underscores something we intuitively already know, and that is the importance of support from our friends and family.

Once again, I would like to extend my sincere thanks for your participation.

Appendix B

Reasons for staying in/leaving an
abusive relationship - as compiled from Attitude Measure

Appendix B

Factors Cited as Influencing the Decision to Remain in, or Leave an Abusive Relationship and the frequency of each Item; as Compiled from the Attitude Measure

Number of times
this factor was cited

Factor

Reasons for Staying

- | | |
|----|---|
| 5 | - feel the need for the security of a relationship |
| 5 | - believe that their partners would hurt themselves if they ended the relationship (e.g., suicide, abuse drugs or alcohol) |
| 7 | - worry about losing their current friends and not being able to think of me") |
| 9 | - believe they will not be able to leave safely, (e.g., "I'm afraid of what his family and friends would do to me") |
| 1 | - expected to be abused by her partner (e.g., "I was abused as a child, and grew up expecting to be abused") |
| 10 | - have no family or friends to support them to make this kind of change in their lives |
| 11 | - still love their partner, believe they would miss them if they were separated (e.g., "I want to believe that he loves me") |
| 9 | - afraid they will experience a drop in their standard of living (e.g., "I would not be able to return to school if I leave"; "I am afraid I will not be able to pay my children's tuition) |
| 2 | - prefer to stay married "for better or worse" |
| 54 | - finances (e.g., "I'm afraid that I will not be able to support myself and my family"; "He's also my boss at work, so I'm afraid I'll lose my job") |

- 12 - believe that their partner will change for the better
- 4 - believe that they can change their partner, or somehow make everything "OK", (e.g., "I thought we could talk things out"; "I feel sorry for him because he was abused as a child and I might be able to help him")
- 5 - worried about being able to provide emotional support for their children (e.g., "I am afraid that I will not be a good single parent" ; "I don't know if I can handle my child by myself")
- 30 - worried that they may not be able to forge a new life by themselves, (e.g., "I'm getting too old to start over"; "I've never been independent"; "I'm afraid of the unknown")
- 17 - stayed so that the children would have a two parent family
- 1 - stayed because of religious values
- 11 - worried about how family friends would view them
- 4 - concerned about ever having a good relationship (e.g., "I'll only wind up with another abuser"; "I don't know if I could ever trust another man")
- 7 - worried about getting/losing their fair share of the property and possessions
- 33 - worried about being alone (e.g., "No one will ever want me"; "I will wind up growing old alone"; "Without a man, I'm nothing"; "I can't live without someone to care for [myself and my children]")
- 22 - fear that their partner will find them and stalk them after they leave (phone call, harassment, etc.), (e.g., "...the abuse will never stop"; "He will continue to abuse me when he visits the children")
- 12 - don't want to be the cause of the breakup, (e.g., "I will feel like a failure if I give up and leave him"; "I blame myself if this relationship ends")
- 10 - worried about losing custody of their children

- 1 - questions herself as to whether she could go through with having her partner arrested (believes she would only end up returning to him)
- 14 - have no where to go (no shelter)
- 4 - not prepared to give up sexual intimacy with their partner

Reasons for Leaving

- 3 - he abused the children
- 21 - didn't want the children to witness anymore abuse (e.g., "I wanted to improve the children's quality of life")
- 31 - realized they did not deserve the abuse (e.g., "It suddenly dawned on me that marriage does not need to be like this")
- 17 - wanted to break the cycle of abuse (e.g., "This is my second abusive relationship, and I knew it just had to stop here")
- 1 - no longer loved him
- 6 - partner was having an affair
- 15 - feared for their safety
- 5 - wanted the freedom to see family members and to choose their own friends
- 3 - found a safe place to go to (one of these women reported having nowhere to go, but, left anyway)
- 6 - gave up on relationship because their partners were, crack addicts, criminals, or drug addicts
- 3 - wanted to be alone (e.g., "I just wanted my own life back and to be out from under his control")
- 2 - had a house, a job, or the means to support themselves

Appendix C

Severity of Violence Against Women Scale: Itemized by category

Appendix C

Severity of Violence Against Women Scale (Marshall, 1992)*Minor violence - items #24-28*

- 24. Scratched you
- 25. Pulled your hair
- 26. Twisted your arm
- 27. Spanked you
- 28. Bit you

Serious violence - items #32-40

- 32. Hit you with an object
- 33. Punched you
- 34. Kicked you
- 35. Stomped on you
- 36. Choked you
- 37. Burned you with something
- 38. Used a club-like object on you
- 39. Beat you up
- 40. Used a knife or gun on you

Threat of serious violence - items #13-19

- 13. Threatened to hurt you
- 14. Threatened to kill himself
- 15. Threatened to kill you
- 16. Threatened you with a weapon
- 17. Threatened you with a club-like object
- 18. Acted like he wanted to kill you
- 19. Threatened you with a knife or gun

Sexual violence - items #41-46

- 41. Demanded sex whether you

wanted it or not

- 42. Made you have oral sex against your will
- 43. Made you have sexual intercourse against your will
- 44. Physically forced you to have sex
- 45. Made you have anal sex against your will
- 46. Used an object on you in a sexual way

Symbolic violence - items #1-4

- 1. Hit or kicked a wall, door, or furniture
- 2. Threw, smashed, or broke an object
- 3. Drove dangerously with you in the car
- 4. Threw an object at you

Threat of moderate violence - items #9-12

- 9. Destroyed something belonging to you
- 10. Threatened to harm/damage things you care about
- 11. Threatened to destroy property
- 12. Threatened someone you care about

*Threat of mild violence - items
#5-8*

5. Shook a finger at you
6. Made threatening gestures or faces at you
7. Shook a fist at you
8. Acted like a bully toward you

Moderate violence - items #29-31

29. Slapped you with the palm of his hand
30. Slapped you with the back of his hand
31. Slapped you around your face and head

Mild violence - items #20-23

20. Held you down, pinning you in place
21. Pushed or shoved you
23. Shook or roughly handled you

There is a small room - 1000
1000

- 1. There is a small room - 1000
- 2. There is a small room - 1000
- 3. There is a small room - 1000
- 4. There is a small room - 1000
- 5. There is a small room - 1000

There is a small room - 1000

- 1. There is a small room - 1000
- 2. There is a small room - 1000
- 3. There is a small room - 1000
- 4. There is a small room - 1000
- 5. There is a small room - 1000

There is a small room - 1000

- 1. There is a small room - 1000
- 2. There is a small room - 1000
- 3. There is a small room - 1000
- 4. There is a small room - 1000
- 5. There is a small room - 1000

Appendix D

Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory: Itemized by dimension

Appendix D

Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory (Tolman, 1989)

The following abuse inventory items are grouped according to the dimension of abuse they represent:

Dominance-Isolation

1. Put down my physical appearance
5. Told me I couldn't manage or take care of myself without him
7. Criticized the way I took care of the house
21. Became upset if household work was not done when he thought it should be done
22. Acted like I was his personal servant
25. Ordered me around
26. Monitored my time and made me account for where I was
27. Was stingy in giving me money
28. Acted irresponsibly with our financial resources
30. Used our money or made important financial decisions without talking to me about it
31. Kept me from getting medical care that I needed
32. Was jealous or suspicious of my friends
33. Was jealous of male friends
34. Did not want me to go to school or to other self-improvement activities
35. Did not want me to socialize with my same sex friends

36. Accused me of having an affair with another man/ woman
38. Tried to keep me from seeing or talking to my family
39. Interfered in my relationships with other family members
40. Tried to keep me from doing things to help myself
41. Restricted my use of the car
42. Restricted my use of the telephone
43. Did not allow me to go out of the house when I wanted to
44. Refused to let me work outside of the house when I wanted to
47. Tried to turn our family, friends, and/or children against me
52. Tried to convince my friends, family, or children that I was crazy
55. Threatened to have an affair with someone else

Emotional-Verbal

2. Insulted me or shamed me in front of others
3. Treated me like I was stupid
4. Was insensitive to my feelings

Appendix D

The Development of the English Language

The following table contains the names of the authors of the documents in this appendix.

Documents-Authors	
1	John Doe (1875-1950)
2	John Doe (1875-1950)
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8. Said something to spite me
9. Brought up something from the past to hurt me
10. Called me names
11. Swore at me
12. Yelled and screamed at me
13. Treated me like an inferior
14. Sulked or refused to talk about a problem
15. Stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement
16. Gave me the silent treatment or acted as if I wasn't there
17. Withheld affection from me
18. Did not talk to me about his feelings
19. Was insensitive about my sexual needs and desires
20. Demanded obedience to his whims
45. Told me my feelings were irrational or crazy
46. Blamed me for his problems
48. Blamed me for causing his violent behaviour
49. Tried to make me feel like I was crazy
50. My partner's moods changed radically from very calm to very angry, or vice versa
51. Blamed me when he was upset about something, even when it had nothing to do with me
56. Threatened to leave the relationship

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	the past or from me
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