Zeev Winstok

Partner Violence

A New Paradigm for Understanding Conflict Escalation

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To my beloved Ellina, for her invaluable
contribution to the writing of this book,
but mainly for making my life complete
and being my source of strength and support.

Preface

Most of the knowledge on partner violence has been accumulated through intensive research over the past four decades. Some of the studies examined the origins of the violent behaviors, and others examined their outcomes. Questions regarding the development of partner conflicts that escalate to violence, such as how partner conflicts begin, evolve, and end have received no empirical examination or supported answers. Answering such questions is critical for understanding and effective coping with what, in recent decades, has become one of the most difficult social problems in many cultures and societies. Recently, it has become clearer to theoreticians, researchers, and practitioners that more such effort is required to promote knowledge in the field. The purpose of this book is to contribute to the development and advancement of this perspective. In the upcoming chapters, I focus on the escalatory partner conflict while relying on existing knowledge, case studies, and accumulated practical experience. Past and present core issues are reviewed, discussed, and criticized and are sometimes rephrased and developed into a comprehensive, integrative approach.

The book begins by examining the role of gender in the problem of partner violence. This has been a longstanding, highly controversial core issue. As such, it provides the opportunity to review and examine various typical perspectives on partner violence, as a theoretical starting point for addressing more advanced issues discussed later in the book. The second chapter addresses the association between dominance and control and partner violence. This is a natural extension of the subject addressed in Chap. 1, leading to a deeper discussion on the role of gender in partner violence. It also serves as the basis for further discussion of issues that are not necessarily gender related. The discussion on dominance and control points to violence as an illegitimate means of forcing one person's will on another. Inherent in this perspective is the assumption explored in the third chapter—that using violence is a rational choice. This view is largely consistent with numerous general behavioral theories, the most prominent of which are the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1973). Such theories are reviewed in the fourth chapter and their suitability and applicability to the field of partner violence

research are examined, presenting a series of factors that predict violence with different probabilities. Nevertheless, despite the importance of these theories for understanding partner violence, they do not presume to describe or explain the process leading up to this behavior. The fifth chapter makes a preliminary attempt to describe, explain, and expand this process using the social information processing model of Dodge and colleagues (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1980).

The theoretical and empirical infrastructure laid in the book's first five chapters serves to develop the framework toward an understanding of the dynamics of partner conflicts, especially conflicts that escalate to violence. Escalation is at the heart of the approach laid out in the second part of this book. This term describes a tendency to increasing severity of aggressive behaviors. The sixth chapter discusses the escalation of partner conflicts across relationship periods, and the seventh chapter examines escalation within a conflict. Chapter 8 proposes an approach by which the theoretical framework of conflict dynamics can be implemented in the study of partner violence. Chapter 9 reverts to the issue discussed at the beginning—gender differences in partner violence, this time using the dynamic approach developed throughout the second part of the book. The tenth and final chapter endeavors to conceptualize the ideas developed throughout the previous chapters, proposing a new paradigm, which has the potential to promote our understanding of the problem of partner violence.

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About the Author

Zeev Winstok, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Social Welfare & Health Sciences and a Research Fellow at the Center for the Study of Society, at the University of Haifa, Israel. His research focuses on a wide range of family violence, including partner violence, children's exposure to interparental violence, and parents' use of violence against their children. During the past decade, Professor Winstok won prestigious research grants, including a grant for a longitudinal study of the escalation of conflicts to violence among partners from the Israel Scientific Foundation, published dozens of articles in refereed journals in his field, such as *Interpersonal Violence*, *Violence Against Women*, and *Aggressive Behavior* and presented his work at numerous international conferences in his field.

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Chapter 1
Gender Differences in Aggressive Tendencies

Scholars of partner violence hold polarized and contradicting views on the role of gender. Some argue that in intimate relationships, it is largely the man who displays violent behavior against his female partner, and therefore, gender is a key factor in understanding partner violence. Others do not regard gender as such, claiming that violence is used significantly, albeit unequally, by both genders in intimate relationships. These opposing views affect the questions that are being asked and how the answers are sought. The controversy surrounding the significance of gender in the study of partner violence is elementary and warrants attention in the very first chapter of this book.

My initial steps in the study of partner violence were pretty much consistent with the widespread approach of those who argue that both genders play a significant role in violence in intimate relationships. At that time, I actively promoted this idea, being convinced that it was true. As the years go by, I am still convinced that partner violence lacks a substantial gender difference; however, I can appreciate other perspectives better now and can see their origins and meaning. In this chapter, I describe and discuss the controversy as I related to it in two periods of my work.

Period One

Conversations with a childhood friend of mine would often reach a point where he would ask me:

"What are you researching now?"

I would present the research question at hand and he would go on asking:

"So, what did you find?"

I would then describe my research findings, just to hear him say:

"C'mon, you didn't need to bother conducting a research about that. You could've just asked me. It would have saved you time and energy…"

This pattern changed when I started studying differences between men and women's tendencies toward partner violence. When I told my friend that I had found that men

and women behave violently with almost the same frequency and severity and for the same reasons, he responded with disbelief, and said:

"That's nonsense, it can't be true."

Even when I mentioned that my findings were not unusual and were supported by the reports of other scholars, he was not convinced. I asked him to explain his reluctance to accept these findings and he clarified as follows:

"Violence is part of men's nature, not women's. They are the reckless drivers, the ones who fight over parking spaces; prisons are filled with male criminals. Men rape women and not vice versa. If women were violent, at least some would be arrested and jailed and we would know about it. The press would be quick to publish these stories. But all the news stories about family violence are about violent men. Men are violent from a young age. Parents teach their sons to fight and to achieve as much as they can, while teaching their daughters to compromise, share and concede. Moreover, what would happen to a guy who was punched or slapped by a woman? Nothing! Violence should have consequences. If there aren't any, then it isn't violence. How did you reach your conclusions? Whom did you ask?"

When I explained that I had asked both men and women about the violence they used against their partners and their partners' violence against them, he exclaimed:

"I find it hard to believe that men who beat their wives admitted to it. Even harder to believe is that men would complain about being beaten up by their wives. C'mon, what does this say about them? … And you shouldn't believe the women who say they beat their husbands, either. They're making it all up. How can they be violent? What exactly can they do? So all you are left with are women who claim to be beaten by their husbands. Go figure if this is true at all. And in any case, I can't understand why someone would want to share these things with strangers."

My childhood friend was willing to adjust his position a little when I cited the words of Karl, a battered husband, interviewed in the work of Migliaccio (2002), who studied women's violence against their partners:

"I remember one night when she got really out of control. I had accidentally left the toilet seat up before going to bed. Well, when she went in to use the bathroom, she fell into the toilet. She started yelling and screaming and stomping around the apartment. Then she came into the bedroom. I was pretending to be asleep, but I could see her shadow. She had something in her hands, raised above her head. I figured it was a wooden spoon or a rolling pin or something like that because she had hit me with those before. So I waited until she came around to my side of the bed, and then rolled over to the other side. When I turned back over, I saw that she had stuck two of the biggest steak knives into the bed up to the handles, exactly where I had been lying. I grabbed my pants, ran out of the apartment, and jumped into the car. She followed me, screaming, and jumped on the hood. I reversed the car and she fell off. Then I drove away. Later, when I called her, I told her, "If I have to live like this, I would rather die" (Karl)".

Straus (2008a) listed a series of established, although irrelevant, empirical facts that may contribute to the misguided public perception (including that of my childhood friend) that it is mostly men who are violent toward their female partners: high representation of the male gender in the findings of formal and informal studies and

statistical publications on crime and delinquency unrelated to partner violence; high representation of the female gender in media coverage of battered wives; law enforcement (arrests, prosecution, convictions, and penalization) aimed, to a large extent, if not in all cases, at men; violence prevention and intervention programs for men; protection programs for women; and gender stereotypes. Clearly, these facts are insufficient to substantiate the statement that men, rather than women, use violence in intimate relationships. Moreover, the accumulating research knowledge addressing partner violence, to which Straus is a major contributor, contradicts this argument.

Empirical Evidence for Gender Differences in Aggressive Tendencies in the Broader Social Context

The childhood friend quoted at the beginning of this chapter made a general argument to establish his claim that men, rather than women, use violence in intimate relationships:

"Violence is part of men's nature, not women's."

It appears that this argument that was examined by many studies over time has an allegedly empirical support and is, therefore, to a large extent, indisputably accepted. More often than not, as with my childhood friend, this general argument serves to establish specific claims regarding gender differences in aggressive tendencies, such as those evident in intimate relationships. Hence, prior to discussing the specific evidence that accumulated in the body of knowledge focused on the dyadic context, some attention should be paid to the theoretical and methodological basis, and the empirical evidence for gender differences in the broader social contexts. This involves taking a big step back.

The general literature on gender differences in aggressive tendencies is based mainly on Sexual Selection Theory (Archer, 1996; Daly & Wilson, 1988) and Social Role Theory (Bettencourt & Kernahan, 1997; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1986). The sexual selection theory considers human evolution to be the cause of gender differences. According to this theory, along the history of evolution, men focused on reproductive competition, for which social status has high significance. Women, on the other hand, focused on pregnancy, childbirth, and childrearing, for which security and safety were of crucial importance. Social role theory, on the other hand, considers historical role division, not evolution, to be the major cause of gender differences. Roles created expectations as to characteristic distinctive behavior patterns for each gender. These patterns were generationally transmitted through socialization processes. These as well as other theories accepted, unchallenged, the widespread notion that men are more prone to violence than women. Based on this perception, theories attempted to explain why men are violent and why women are not. These questions led to studies looking for violence-encouraging factors in men and violence-inhibiting factors in women. Questions as to the violence-encouraging factors in women were considered to be

of secondary importance or redundant, as they do not reflect the common views of the general public.

Gender differences in aggressive tendencies need to be examined in similar conditions. If these conditions are not similar, or are unclear and ambiguous, the results of the comparison must be doubted. This is because with the lack of similar conditions, one cannot determine whether the results of the comparison derive from gender or from other factors. The broader the context of the comparison, the more complicated it is to ensure similar conditions, because more factors may influence the tendency under scrutiny.

An example for comparison between men and women's aggressive tendencies in the broader social context may be found in the works of John Archer, who published an influential article in 2004 on gender differences in aggression (Archer, 2004). In this work, Archer analyzed findings obtained over 30 years of research in the field. Like many other scholars, Archer relied on the abovementioned social role and sexual selection theories. It is important to note his basic assumptions when analyzing accumulated empirical evidence as described in his introduction:

"…in many studies sex of the opponent was not differentiated. Most real-world studies do not specify sex of the opponent."

"Because most aggression questionnaires show the pattern typical of same-sex aggression, it is likely that, unless people are asked about opposite-sex opponents or partners, they will answer with the same sex in mind" (Archer, 2004, p. 297).

Archer argues that in most studies on aggression, researchers did not define the opponent's gender. An example can be found in the "Aggressive Questionnaire" developed by Buss and Perry (1992). This questionnaire was used in numerous studies, some of which were included in Archer's analysis. They attempted to measure verbal and physical aggression, hostility, and anger using 29 statements. Study participants were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement characterized them on a five-level scale, ranging from 1: "extremely uncharacteristic of me" to 5: "extremely characteristic of me." The following statement is an example of one of several used to measure physical aggression:

"Given enough provocation, I may hit another person."

It was left for the respondent to decide by whom, how, and to what degree the provocation would be. Archer assumed that when the gender of the opponent is undefined, men think of a male opponent and women think of a female opponent. This assumption, which was not empirically examined, is crucial, as it may have implications for the common opinion that men are more prone to violence than women. This issue will be further discussed.

In 2006, my colleagues Guy Enosh and Shlomo Hareli and I were looking for a method that would enable us to test the validity of Archer's assumption (Winstok, Enosh, & Hareli, 2011), that when the opponent's gender is not specified, men and women think only of an opponent of their own gender. This method would have to ask research participants to think of an opponent in a violent incident, without giving any clues as to the opponent's identity or gender. Due to the fact that, in many cases, violence is a response to provocation (Winstok, 2008; Winstok & Eisikovits,

2008), we finally decided to ask participants to imagine in detail a situation in which they are attacked and then ask them about their opponent's identity and gender. We sampled 159 students from the University of Haifa: 36.5% men and 63.5% women, whose average age was 28.7 years (SD = 1.26). The men's responses indicated that 60.3% imagined a male stranger, and 27.6% imagined several male strangers. The women's responses indicated that 87.1% imagined the opponent as a male stranger and 5.1% imagined several male strangers. In other words, the vast majority of men (87.9%) and especially of women participants (92.2%) imagined the opponent to be male. This finding is inconsistent with Archer's assumption.

We conducted this study with the sole intention of examining Archer's working statement and the validity of his conclusions. It was not intended to determine which gender was attributed to opponents when unspecified by the researchers. Therefore, it would be just as wrong to exchange Archer's basic assumption with any other. Our study calls for a simple and straightforward conclusion that the research design must specify the opponent's gender rather than leaving this component open to interpretation. However, as people's imagination is based on their perception of reality, I do believe that our findings are realistic. For instance, when prompted to think of a table, most people will imagine a square, wooden table with four legs. Few, if any, would think of an oval, marble table with one central leg. Hence, if people perceive men to be more prone to aggression than women, their imaginary violent opponent will most likely be a man.

Archer reached the following conclusion:

"Overall, sex differences were highest for physical aggression, smaller but still in the male direction for verbal aggression…" (Archer, 2004, p. 308).

This conclusion stipulates that men are more prone to violence than women. The difference is evident in verbal aggression as well, but it is most evident in physical aggression.

Why did Archer need to assume that the measurements on which his analysis was based represented same-gender conflicts (men vs. men and women vs. women)? It was previously stated that gender differences in aggressive tendency must be examined in similar or at least clear and unequivocal conditions. As a rule, men have a physical advantage over women. Therefore, there is no power balance between genders, breaching the requirement for identical or at least similar conditions. Had Archer assumed that his data come from situations without a power balance, a comparison could not have been made; that is, one could not have determined whether it was gender or power balance that were associated with the aggressive tendency. On the other hand, a physical power balance probably exists in same-gender conflicts. Assuming that the measurements on which the analysis is based come from same-gender conflicts meets the conditions required for a comparison between men and women. Therefore, one who rejects Archer's assumption should also reject his conclusion.

The assumption that one can learn about the gender basis of the general tendency to violence without identifying a specific situational context might prove to be wrong. Violence, much like any behavior, is situational. Certain situational conditions may inhibit expressions of violence, whereas others may encourage them. Any attempt to

define general tendencies that are not context-dependent and apply to any trait and not only to aggression should be double-checked, rejected, or regarded as suspicious.

Empirical Evidence for Gender Differences in Aggressive Tendencies in the Dyadic Context

Taking a step forward, let us focus on the empirical evidence regarding the differences in aggressive tendencies within the couple. The research in this area is led by two groups with opposing outlooks. One is dubbed "feminist scholars," who view the problem as asymmetric in terms of gender: they maintain that intimate violence is perpetrated by the man against his female partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In this case, using the term "asymmetry" reflects the notion that a significant difference exists between men's tendency toward violence against their female partners and women's tendency toward violence against their male partners. The second group is referred to as "family violence scholars," who view the problem of partner violence as gender symmetric: the violence is perpetrated by both men and women (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006). They use the term "symmetry" to convey the idea that a significant (not necessarily equal) proportion of both genders use violence in their intimate relationships. In other words, for feminist scholars, gender is a primary significant factor in predicting partner violence, whereas for family violence scholars, gender is secondary and marginal.

It is not surprising that these two noncorresponding views created a debate among practitioners and specifically, the scientific community. It should be noted that this is not an ideological dispute in the sense that one group represents feminism and the other antifeminism. I am convinced that both sides have scholars who seek equality and reject any form of violence. The difference between them is in the theoretical frameworks guiding their work. Feminist scholars examine intimate violence as an opportunity to explore women's situation in a male-dominated society. They view gender as a prime cause of the problem. Family violence scholars view partner relationships as an opportunity to study violent behavior. They view gender as one possible cause of violence. Nevertheless, this controversy, and especially its solution, may have repercussions on the perceived status of men and women in society and on their relationship.

The common feminist argument is that the existing social structure places men in the center, with the privilege and expectation to dominate and control all aspects of life. Women, on the other hand, are marginalized and expected to accept male domination and obey its dictates. Feminist researchers argue that in this social context, intimate violence is inevitable. Furthermore, they maintain that in this unequal social structure, it would be wrong to use the same standards to evaluate the behavior of the dominating and dominated parties. Almost any male behavior, especially evident violence against women, is part of a continuous effort to create, maintain, and sustain male dominance, whereas any allegedly hurtful female behavior is an

attempt to deal with their inferior and vulnerable situation. According to this perspective, gender equality is a prerequisite for the elimination of violence against women, especially violence in intimate relationships. Family violence scholars do not oppose the observation that societies, including the western one, lack gender equality. Moreover, they do not reject the assumption that dominance and control are associated with violence. Their controversial argument is that not only the reasons for and outcomes of the violent behavior of men should be examined but also those of women, reaching conclusions regarding the role of gender in partner violence based on findings rather than presumptions.

The debate on gender symmetry focuses on two issues: the reciprocity and etiology of violence. Reciprocity refers to the occurrence of violent behavior against the intimate partner in men and women. Etiology addresses the factors motivating men and women to use violence against their partners. A common notion is that gender symmetry can be established only if no significant gender differences are evident in the causes and uses of violent behavior against intimate partners. Scholars rejecting the idea of gender symmetry believe that partner violence is primarily directed by the man attempting to control his female partner and force her into submission. They view the violence of women against their male partners as self-defense or a justifiable response to an extreme pattern of domination and degradation. On the other hand, scholars who support the idea of gender symmetry maintain that women attack their partners at a similar rate to men and that both men and women have an array of motives for violence. The only fact on which both approaches agree is that the rates of injury caused by male violence are higher than those caused by female violence (Jose & O'leary, 2008).

The cumulative empirical evidence, mostly presented by family violence scholars, supports gender symmetry of violence in intimate relationships. Family violence surveys in the USA (the first was conducted in 1975 and the second in 1985) (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus et al., 2006) and other studies (e.g., Anderson, 2002; Kessler, Molnar, Feurer, & Appelbaum, 2001; McCarroll, Ursano, Fan, & Newby, 2004; Williams & Frieze, 2005) demonstrated that approximately half the cases of partner violence were mutual, and the rest divided equally between men and women. Findings indicate gender symmetry also in the etiological aspect. For instance, dominance by one partner (either man or woman) increases the probability of violence (Kim & Clifton, 2003; Straus, 2008a, 2008b; Sugihara & Warner, 2002). Moreover, it appears that only a small percentage of partner violence cases involve male dominance and female degradation (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Kantor & Straus, 1990; Straus, 1991). The assumption that female violence is associated with self-defense was found to be true only in a small number of incidents (Carrado et al., 1996; Cascardi & Vivian, 1995; Dekeseredy, Saunders, Schwartz, & Shahid, 1997; Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 2000; Felson & Messner, 1998; Pearson, 1997).

The study of same-sex couples' violence provides an opportunity to examine the feminist scholars' argument that men, rather than women, are the main cause of the problem. This perspective indicates that removing the man from the equation could produce violence-free relationships. Studies of partner violence among lesbian couples did not support this argument. For instance, a study of violence among

same-sex couples (Bologna, Waterman, & Dawson, 1987) showed that violence rates among women were not only high (56%) but were higher than violence rates among men (25%). A study of women in lesbian relationships, who had previously experienced heterosexual relationships (Lie et al., 1991), indicated that violence rates in their lesbian relationships (45% physical violence, 64% verbal violence) were higher than in their heterosexual relationships (34% physical violence, 55.1% verbal violence). It follows that partner violence exists in relationships from which men are absent, which undermines the argument that men, and not women, are the main cause of the problem.

The cumulative empirical knowledge consistently supports the idea of gender symmetry, from both the reciprocal and etiological aspects. However, it is important to reemphasize that although both genders exhibit similar rates of violence in their intimate relationships, most studies show that women suffer more injuries than men. In some studies, the injury rates are large and in others, the injury rates are small. An example of large gender differences can be found in the second survey on family violence in the general population in the USA performed in 1985. This survey (Stets & Straus, 1990) showed that 3% of women and 0.4% of men required medical attention as a result of a violent incident with their partner. Simpson and Christensen (2005), who studied this issue using a service population sample, found larger rates of injury but smaller gender differences: 11.7% of women reported being injured in a conflict with their partner; 17.9% of women reported that their partner was injured in a conflict with them; 18.3% of men reported that their partner was injured in a conflict with them; and 15.4% of men reported being injured in a conflict with their partner. Despite the differences in injury rates between studies, it is widely accepted that in intimate conflicts, women suffer more injuries than men. This broad acceptance is often used to dispute the fact of gender symmetry in etiological and reciprocal aspects.

A recent work by Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, and Saltzman (2007) emphasizes how important it is to acknowledge the symmetrical (etiology and reciprocity) and asymmetrical (injury) aspects of the problem. It was based on data from a longitudinal national study of adolescent health in 2001. They analyzed the reports of 11,370 young adults aged 18–28 on violence and injury in 18,761 heterosexual relationships. Violence occurred in 24% of the relationships; in almost half the cases (49.7%), the violence was bilateral. In 70% of the unilateral violence cases, the women were those who used violence against their partners. However, men were more likely to injure their partners than women. The most interesting finding of this study was that mutual violence was associated with injury to a greater extent than unilateral violence, whether perpetrated by a man or a woman. Namely, the chances of injury were higher when both partners were violent than when only one partner was violent. This finding is consistent with Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward, and Tritt (2004), who analyzed 85 studies to identify the most significant risk factors for physical aggression and victimization among intimate partners. They found that women's violence against their partners was the strongest risk factor for their victimization.

Attempts to Resolve the Controversy on Gender Symmetry in Partner Violence

The criteria for gender symmetry in partner violence are vague and have received no direct attention. It is likely that some of the controversy derives from this ambiguity. Any attempt to resolve it must start by clarifying the term.

What is gender symmetry in partner violence? Should the phenomenon be regarded as symmetrical only in the case of absolute equality (50:50) in its reciprocity of use and etiology? How should populations in which 55% of incidents involve violence by men and the other 45% by women be addressed? These rates indicate that gender has an effect, but on this basis, can it be stated that partner violence is asymmetrical and that men constitute most of the problem? Should this notion be accepted, then if the findings were reversed, that is, if 55% of violent incidents were found to involve women, and the remaining 45% to involve men, partner violence would still be considered asymmetrical, but with women constituting most of the problem. I doubt that many scholars will accept this idea. What is the value range that defines symmetry? What is the lowest point above which it can be said that male or female is the aggressive gender in partner violence, and below which it is clear that its contribution to the violence is negligible? Is it one percent? Five? Ten? Or more? At present, the term "symmetry" is used in its broadest sense to indicate that significant portions (socially and statistically) of both genders use violence.

"Gender symmetry" is described and presented as dichotomous: symmetry either does or does not exist. It is black or white and has neither gray areas nor any flexibility of interpretation. It is possible that this conceptualization, more than anything, contributed to the polarization of approach: people either support or reject gender symmetry as if no other options are available. Such terminology directs the discussion to the question: "Are women part of the problem?" This requires a positive or negative answer. It is possible that the position of feminist scholars who reject gender symmetry stems from the rigid terminology, the appearances it creates, as if there is no difference between men and women in the dyadic context, and from its irresponsible implementation in other contexts. A different, more sensitive and flexible terminology may be required to describe the gender aspect of partner violence, such as "gender effect on various aspects of partner violence." This terminology would enable a discussion regarding the question: "What is the contribution of gender to the problem?" Possible answers to this question are positioned along a continuum of various levels of gender involvement in the problem. Such terminology may tone down the controversy surrounding the role of gender in the problem and promote the efforts made to cope effectively with partner violence.

Johnson, a feminist scholar from Penn State University, published what is widely considered as one of the most significant attempts to bridge the gender symmetry debate. He identified four types of partner violence (Johnson, 2006):

(1) intimate terrorism—one partner is violent and controlling, the other is not; (2) violent resistance—one partner is violent but not controlling, the other is both violent and controlling; (3) situational couple violence—one partner is violent but not controlling, the other is neither violent nor controlling; and (4) mutual violent control—both partners are violent and controlling. Johnson maintained that in heterosexual relationships, men exhibit intimate terrorism, whereas women display violent resistance. These types of violence (intimate terrorism and violent resistance) are found mainly in service population samples obtained from social services, police, and other agencies. The other two types (situational couple violence and mutual violent control) are found in similar proportions in both men and women, that is, they are gender symmetric and are obtained mainly from general population samples. Put simply, Johnson suggests that the truth about gender symmetry depends on what, how, and whom you ask.

Johnson's approach reminds me of the opening session of my courses on social problems, in which I start with a game. A student volunteers to leave the classroom for a minute, returning to find out a word known only to me and his fellow students, using 21 yes or no questions. The last time I initiated this game, the students picked the word "stone." When the volunteer returned, he went from one student to another, asking the questions. First, he asked if it was an animal, and then, if it was a plant. The third question revealed that it was an inanimate object. This went on until the volunteer discovered the selected word. I then suggested that we play again. Once the volunteering student had left the classroom, I changed the rules. This time, the class would not jointly select a word, but each student would be free to choose one as long as it was consistent with the answers already given. The volunteer returned, and not knowing that the rules had changed, turned to a student and asked if it was an inanimate object. The student, who we later found out, had thought of the word "dog," said no. The second student approached by the volunteer then had to come up with an animate or vegetative object and thought of "monkey." He was asked whether it was a plant, to which he replied "no." The third student had to choose something that was animate but not a plant. He picked the word "sheep." The more questions that were asked about size and shape, etc., the longer it took to produce an answer, because the number of limitations for selecting the word increased. The game ended when the volunteer asked if it was a frog, and the answer was in the affirmative.

In the first round, the volunteer was looking for a single word with a fixed meaning throughout the game. In the second round, the volunteer's questions and the students' answers played a vital role in the evolution of the word that was finally obtained. Naturally, it would be wrong to conclude that social problems are invented by people, but the point is that they are not isolated from the perceptions of those who define them. The questions being asked play a crucial part in the construction of reality, although they do not create it but rather formulate awareness of it. This is what Johnson's arguments imply, in my opinion. Whereas a study on partner violence conducted in the general population would support the hypothesis of gender symmetry, an identical study conducted in a shelter for battered

women would reject it. From the narrow perspective of this debate, Johnson's arguments not only support gender symmetry but also provide impetus for the opposite standpoint.

Why Are the Facts Pertaining to Partner Violence Prevented from Penetrating and Influencing Public Awareness and How Does This Happen?

An examination of research findings on the gender aspects of partner violence leads many scholars, specifically of family violence, to the conclusion that gender plays a minor, secondary role in the problem: both men and women use violence in their intimate relationships and for the same reasons. Despite the empirical evidence, it is widely accepted that in intimate relationships, the violence is perpetrated by men against their female partners. Why and how can it be that the facts do not penetrate public awareness?

Family violence scholars are of the opinion that researchers committed to the feminist agenda are just as familiar with the facts as other scholars of partner violence, yet some persist in concealing and denying gender symmetry. What reasons could motivate feminist scholars to do this? It is possible that they believe that, in so doing, they are protecting the achievements of the women's movements over the recent decades. They fear that any acknowledgment of gender symmetry might be interpreted as proof that it is inherently wrong to promote the status of women based on the idea that women are victims of male dominance. The implications may be harmful to women's status, pushing it back several decades. I witnessed the following illustrative incident. In the mid-1980s, I lived in Ramat Gan in central Israel. In the apartment adjacent to mine lived a couple in their late fifties. The walls between our apartments were not at all thin, but when they had a fight, which happened quite often, I could hear them yelling. It usually happened when the man came home after he had been drinking. One day, it sounded to me as if the vociferous fight was becoming physical. I assumed that the man was beating the woman, so I called the police. The policemen who arrived at the scene entered the neighbors' apartment and left pretty quickly. They stood in the stairway while reporting back to the station via a police radio. They mentioned that the incident involved a couple who were hitting each other, but who had calmed down after being given a warning, and that no further intervention was necessary at that point. The voice on the police radio asked:

"Is the woman in danger?"

One of the officers replied:

"It's not a woman. It's a mammoth. You should've seen what she did to him."

Had the police officers arrived at the scene and found an injured woman, devoid of any signs of aggression, they would probably have dealt rigorously with the man. But the officers did not find a helpless woman and concluded that the husband and wife were equally matched, and therefore no further police intervention was necessary. Hence, the assumption that acknowledging gender symmetry could have

practical implications is not unfounded. The police force in the above example demonstrated that if you hit someone who hits you, you are off the hook.

Family violence scholars also maintain that a strong bond and close relationship exist between some feminist scholars and women's organizations, which cause them to protect these organizations' interests. Women's organizations, much like any others, strive to promote their causes by increasing and broadening their grasp and scope of influence in society. Women's organizations used the gender inequality argument to gain power, establish themselves, and develop roots in various sectors of society. One of the examples they used for this purpose was gender asymmetry in intimate violence. These organizations are a dominant element in various domains including academia. The acknowledgement of gender symmetry could be perceived by these organizations and by their patronage, for example some feminist scholars, as pulling the carpet from under their feet.

The means used by feminist scholars to conceal and deny gender symmetry are simple, effective, acceptable, and most of all, legitimate in all realms of science. The most common way is to delegitimize research: one or more research components are rendered scientifically inappropriate, whether the theoretical framework and its operation, the sampling, measurement, data collection method, data analysis, or the interpretation of findings and their theoretical and practical implications. A summary of such claims can be found in a work by Belknap and Melton (2005), entitled "Are heterosexual men also victims of intimate partner abuse?" A similarly common means, although less legitimate, is the restricted or conditional allocation of resources that are necessary for scholars and their research, such as a workplace, promotion, cooperation, and grants. More aggressive means can be humiliation, bans, threats of termination and actual lay-offs, and professional and personal delegitimizing of the scholar. The most aggressive means are threats of physical harm. Murray Straus, a researcher at the University of New Hampshire, has been a leading scholar of family violence for several decades, whose works, personality, students and colleagues have been under attack. He is only one of many examples (Straus, 2008b). Numerous family violence scholars have suffered at one point or another for refusing to stay in line with the feminist perspective on partner violence.

My arguments thus far may give the impression that the feminist perspective is wrong, unacceptable, and dangerous, and that those who adhere to it relentlessly and illegitimately operate against divergent opinions. This is not the case. Feminist scholars and activists hold a variety of opinions and practices in general, and on partner violence in particular, most of which are valid and just (Dekeseredy, 2011). Many of them promote their ideas within the acceptable boundaries of scientific and social activism. Their efforts have laid the foundation for the work of scholars and practitioners of various perspectives and disciplines. Historically, they were not only the first to promote acknowledgement of the problem but also the first to provide the knowledge and tools to address it. Any criticism made here is raised by some family violence scholars and is mostly only directed against those who, using faulty practices that are contradictory to the feminist perspective, attempt to deny, disregard, and conceal basic facts about partner violence.

How the Controversy on Gender Symmetry in Partner Violence Is Reflected in the Discourse of Researchers from Both Sides of the Controversy

The controversy is clearly evident in an article by Richard Felson (2006), a well-known sociologist who is strongly critical of gender-based approaches to partner violence and in a response to this article, by Walter Dekeseredy (2007), one of the prominent feminist scholars. Felson writes as follows:

"Most sociologists who study violence against women study it separately from violence against men, and they interpret it as a form of sexism. They argue that misogynist men assault women in order to maintain their dominance. They believe that misogynist societies tolerate violence against women, leading offenders to think they can get away with it. They get away with it because victims usually do not report the incidents to the police; when they do, they get blamed, and the offender gets off. The result is an epidemic of violence against women, most of it hidden. This approach, which I call a "gender perspective," is conventional wisdom among sociologists and much of the general public."

Felson offers an alternative, violence-centered approach. He writes:

…"We should rely on theories of violence and crime, not theories of sexism, to explain violence against women…From this point of view, sexism plays at most a trivial role in rape and in physical assault on wives. Typically, men who commit these crimes commit other crimes as well, and their backgrounds and attitudes toward women are similar to those of other criminals. They are versatile "bad guys"—selfish, not sexist. When they assault women, they do so "behind closed doors" because we stigmatize the behavior—a man should not hit a woman. Traditional values inhibit violence against women rather than encouraging it."

Felson attempts to convince the reader that violence against women is a crime like any other and should be addressed as such. He maintains that society is not sexist in the context of violence against women, and that any attempt to link social and individual sexism to violence is wrong. In other words, Felson rejects the feminist perspective.

Dekeseredy responds to Felson's claims as follows:

"Richard Felson's article provides a simplistic understanding of feminist scholarship in the area of violence against women…. Although some feminist sociologists claim that patriarchy is the direct source of male-to-female victimization, the bulk of recent feminist literature on the abuse of women does not view it as the only determinant… Felson attempts to support a factoid that never seems to go away and is often used for destructive political purposes: women are as violent as men in intimate relationships. A careful review of the sociological literature shows that when researchers move beyond using crude counts of behavior and examine the contexts, meanings, and motives of women's violence, a different picture emerges… For example, in a study of violence during dating among Canadian college students, Katharine Kelly, Daniel Saunders, Martin Schwartz, Shahid Alvi, and I found that a substantial number of

women reported that their violence was in self-defense…This is not to say that all women's violence is a response to male attacks or a fear of being assaulted…"

This dialogue between the two scholars is one example of many for the transformation of the professional controversy into an interpersonal conflict mixed with accusations and hostility. Felson continued to write in his article:

"…assertions about the effect of sexism should be based on scientific evidence, not political compromise."

And Dekeseredy responded:

"Felson's essay is just as political as feminist scholarship or any other way of interpreting social problems—it focuses attention on certain aspects of the social world while attempting to divert attention from others."

Johnson (2006), already mentioned above, was even more blatantly articulate about the political affiliation of scholars arguing for gender symmetry. He made the following comment:

"The alleged gender symmetry of intimate partner violence, even in its situational couple violence form is a myth created in the service of political ends that include attacks on the funding of shelters and batterer intervention programs (Dragiewicz & Lindgren, 2009)."

Therefore, it can be generalized that a significant group of feminist scholars view the link between politics and research as unbreakable, and in this reality, feel free to emphasize their association with the feminist agenda. They even regard the seemingly apolitical position of family violence scholars as double standard and a sham, because they do not believe that research can be devoid of politics. They are aware that the arguments made by family violence scholars bear political consequences that might hinder attempts to strengthen the status of women. Moreover, according to Johnson, these consequences are consistent with the aspirations of conservative organizations that oppose gender equality. There is but a step from this point to tagging family violence scholars as antifeminist. Many family violence scholars perceive such classification, even if only hinted at, as an intentional, severe, and unjust insult, as many of them regard themselves as feminists. As scholars, they strive for nonpolitical research. In arguing gender symmetry, they believe that they portray a realistic situation, serving the interests of the general public, including those of women.

Tagging family violence scholars as antifeminist (by feminist scholars) does not mean that the former are victimized by the latter. Scholars on both fronts contribute to shifting the focus from theoretical and methodological questions to interests (especially those motivating the other party). As a result, the question "what is the gender basis of the problem of partner violence?" made way for the question "who does the other party in the controversy serve, and for what purpose?" Shifting the discourse from the professional to the interpersonal infused the controversy with hostility. This turned the disagreement into an escalating conflict between feminist scholars and family violence scholars, with each camp turning a blind eye to the other, mainly working to defeat the other party's truth. Paradoxically, those most identified with professional insights for coping with conflicts, escalation and partner violence, cannot implement this in their own professional environment.

How the Controversy on Gender Symmetry in Partner Violence Is Reflected in the Perceptions of Social Agents

At the beginning of 2009, I researched how partner violence is perceived by social agents such as the welfare services and the police (Winstok, 2012). I assumed that the factors predicting social involvement in partner violence would reflect the way this problem is perceived. Specifically, I wished to find out if the aggressor's gender and severity of violence were predictors of how the problem is perceived and of social agents' willingness to become involved. To examine the research question, I used data from the first and only partner violence survey conducted in Israel in 2000 (Eisikovits, Fishman, & Mesh, 2000).

The survey was commissioned by the Ministry of Welfare in Israel as part of an attempt to update its policy. Interestingly, although this was the survey's goal, it was called "violence against women" and not "partner violence." The researchers, acknowledging the validity and significance of gender symmetry for the understanding of and intervention in partner violence in general and specifically against women, designed the study without assuming asymmetry. They sampled a large, representative group of women from the general population. They asked the participants in the study about their violence against their partner and the partner's violence against them as well as the involvement of informal social agents such as friends and relatives and of formal social agents such as welfare, health, and law enforcement professionals.

An analysis of the data indicated that the severity of men's violence was the only predicting factor of formal social agents' involvement. The more severe the violence, the higher was the probability of involvement. The severity of the women's violence was irrelevant in this context. That is, the women's violence severity was not associated with the involvement of formal social agents. This finding clearly represents an asymmetrical approach to partner violence. On the other hand, when I examined the involvement of informal social agents (i.e., family, friends, and neighbors) I found that the severity of both the man's and the woman's violence predicted involvement. The greater the severity of the man's or woman's violence, the higher was the probability that these elements would become involved. This finding represents a symmetrical approach.

Findings indicate a significant difference in the approach of formal and informal agents toward partner violence. Among family, friends, and neighbors, the conflict itself might be perceived to be the problem. The violence is but an indication of the severity of the conflict and is expected to stop as soon as the conflict is resolved. However, welfare, health, law, and enforcement professionals view the risks inherent in physical aggression as the problem, such as injury and mental health issues. Violence is regarded as the cause of these risks. Formal agents seem to perceive the provision of protection and safety as their main commitment, and therefore their involvement is based on risk assessment. They view violence by men as the only risk factor and intervene only in these cases as opposed to violence by women, which is either invisible, or not perceived as a risk, and warrants no intervention.

As a social worker, I take a special interest in the approach that guides social workers who deal with partner violence. Their approach to various aspects of the problem, including gender, is evident in an Internet discussion group active under the auspices of Israel's Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Services. On July 16, 2009, I posted the following message:

"I would like to find out about the approach of social work in Israel to the violence of women against their male partners (documented and especially undocumented)."

I was asked by some participants to clarify, so I added the following:

"My question is: How do social workers in this discussion group perceive and address the problem of partner violence when the violence is perpetrated by women against their male partners (treatment for both the battered man and the battering woman)? I would like to know the difference between responses that stem from formal and informal positions. It would greatly help if I could understand the matter comparatively: What are the differences between the social workers' coping with male against female violence and with female against male violence… This is what I meant."

I received mixed responses. Some were ambivalent and hesitant, showing willingness for partial, but reserved, acknowledgement of the existence of female violence against men, and of it not being properly addressed. The following response by a social worker brings one example:

"I try to constantly check myself and not stick to a specific theory, approach or perception—I try but do not always succeed, because the preconceptions are there…"

Another example from the discussion group was posted by a parole officer:

"As a parole officer for adults, I have been encountering an increasing number of cases where women are referred to our service for diagnosis and treatment due to offences of violence against their male partners. Indeed, these are often complex couple dynamics where the husband is not faultless either and is also violent in his own way."

Other responses were somewhat more determined, expressing reservations about the question that places men's and women's violence in the same boat and implying gender symmetry in partner violence. The following response by an administrator of a shelter for battered women is illustrative:

"For years, certain scholars have been trying to prove gender symmetry in violence. I believe that this is precisely the professionals' problem, looking under the spotlight rather than in the vast darkness surrounding it. Look at what is happening in the world… Of course, you have every right to continue with the theories you like and to establish additional theories on top of them. My personal experience (and as a feminist, the personal is political) of working with thousands of women from varied cultures and ethnicities living in Israel, with women whom I met at numerous international conferences, points at the approach that I represent here. It is men who batter their pregnant wives causing the birth of crippled and deformed children, or simply murdering them in their mothers' wombs…"

The tension and hostility surrounding the position that I am presenting erupted with full force when I was invited to lecture at the annual conference for social workers treating family violence in December, 2009, in Ramat Efal in central Israel. In the weeks leading up to the lecture, profuse criticism was expressed toward me, my positions, and the organizers who had invited me to the conference. It is important to note that some people disagreed with the criticism. I felt that, for the first time in Israel, the cat was out of the bag. Despite my own and the conference organizers' apprehensions, the presentation went relatively well.

It is my opinion, based on conversations with social workers treating partner violence, that in Israel, much like in other parts of the Western world, feminist thinking is predominant in intervention. Men's violence against women is the major, if not the only, problem focused on and addressed by practitioners. Even if the practitioners acknowledge female partner violence, they regard it as marginal and inherently different from male partner violence. Practice, guided by feminist thinking, leads many professionals to assume the following: (1) in partner violence, the woman is the victim and (2) the main goal of intervention in partner violence is to stop the man from perpetrating any kind of mild or severe violence against the woman. These assumptions dictate several widely accepted intervention principles: (1) the treatment must serve primarily what is perceived to be the woman's needs and wishes; (2) the treatment must change the man's behavior. The response to the man's perceived needs is secondary and marginal in the process; and (3) the woman's treatment is best provided by a woman and not a man. The first and second principles make the woman the client of the treatment (even if the man is being treated), and the man is an object for change and a means to improving the woman's quality of life. The third principle emphasizes the importance of gender not only in the formation of the problem but also in coping with it as well.

The Mechanism That Creates and Maintains the Asymmetric View of Partner Violence

Concealing and denying the idea of gender symmetry might explain why the supporting empirical facts do not penetrate the public awareness. Nevertheless, it still remains to be seen which mechanism creates, enables, and maintains the wrong social perception that in partner violence, men are violent and women are not. For example, when witnessing women deliberately attacking men, people's accumulated gender experience and knowledge may render them blind to the fact that this is violence. Let me demonstrate by describing a social gathering where the participants only saw what they were used to seeing and not what was actually happening.

A couple of friends invited my wife and me, together with two other couples, to watch a movie at their house. All I remember from the movie is that in one of the scenes, a couple returns home from a party. The woman angrily accuses the man of flirting with another woman. The man, surprised, denies the accusation. The woman

approaches him, slaps his face hard, goes into the bedroom, and slams the door behind her. When the movie was over, I asked if anybody noticed the violence used by the woman against her partner. One man nodded affirmatively. Two others, a man and a woman, remembered only that the woman in the movie was angry and may have pushed the man. Two other women could recall the slap once my wife reminded them where and how it happened. Even when they recalled the event, they would not admit that the woman's behavior toward the man was "fully fledged" violence. The third man smiled reservedly and said that in his experience, "one should not get involved with such things." I asked the party what their position would have been if the roles had been reversed: if the man would have suspected the woman of flirting and would have slapped her in the face. There was unanimous agreement that men who behave in such a way should be severely punished. One of the arguments was that male partner violence can have more severe consequences for the female partner than female partner violence can have for the male partner, and therefore, men ought to restrain themselves. Another argument was that men, as compared to women, have simpler and more readily available alternatives to violence, such as leaving. I wanted to continue the discussion, but my wife gave me a look, and I realized that it was time to change the subject. Toward the end of the evening, the man who had preferred to keep silent came over and told me that he had seen the woman in the movie slap the man's face, and that he thought that there was no difference between a man's and a woman's slap.

Regarding several, mainly sensitive issues, some people are unable to discern the details of their immediate reality, especially when incongruent with their own world view. Others may see, but refuse to understand and accept, and others who detect and accept these details have difficulty internalizing and making educated use of the knowledge. How does this selective vision develop?

During the time that my family and I were living in New Hampshire, my then 8-year-old daughter used to watch "iCarly," a popular comedy TV series for children of her age, which was aired on Nickelodeon. The show follows the lives of three friends: Carly, Sam, and Freddy, who put together an Internet show. Carly's older brother, Spencer, also appears in the series. If I were to tell you that in one episode, Freddy (a boy) repeatedly hits Sam (a girl) on her head, and she falls down to the floor, you would feel quite uncomfortable. If I was to tell you also, that in the same episode, on two different occasions, Spencer, the adult in the group, touches a woman he meets, forces her against the wall, and kisses her strongly on her mouth, against her will, you would be shocked. You would rightfully maintain that this is sexual and physical violence, which is unsuitable for viewing by children. I am assuming that the show's producers would think so as well, because there are no scenes in which boys harm girls. However, not only are there scenes in which girls harm boys, but also these incidents receive loud laughs and applause from the studio audience. In the episode that I was watching with my daughter, Sam landed an umbrella on Freddy's head twice, and each time, he fell to the floor. Spencer invited a woman for dinner at his house, and she forced herself on him and kissed him on the mouth against his will. In another scene, in the same episode, when they met at her grandfather's wake, she repeated this behavior in front of everybody. The show's producers and its audience appear to consider these situations not as violent, but as amusing. Violence against

men seems to be perceived as comedy, whereas violence against women is perceived as tragedy. Most of us would agree that "violence is not a laughing matter" and that "if it is funny, it cannot be violence." It is owing to such views instilled in us from an early age that we are blind to about a half of the cases of violence in the population.

The perception that violence against women is tragedy, whereas violence against men is comedy can be found in adult TV shows as well. For example, in 2005, the BBC aired a TV series called "Bring Your Husband to Heel," in which dog trainer, Annie Clayton, instructed women on how to deal with their male partners using dog training techniques. In the first part of each episode, the participating women were training dogs under Annie Clayton's guidance, and in the second part, their experience was practiced on their husbands without them knowing. Annie Clayton's motto is: "Men and dogs are both creatures of habit, are happy when fed and will drink anything." When the show was criticized, the BBC spokesmen claimed that it was merely entertainment. Would a show entitled "Bring Your Wife to Heel" be as entertaining?

At times, I can also remain undistracted by facts. When I was 22, I started earning money, rented an apartment, and felt as though the world was my oyster. I met a girl and we started dating. After a brief period, the relationship felt wrong for me, and I wanted us to break up. She did not take it well. She told me that she now realized what I was "made of," that I never had serious intentions and that I was just using her for my "filthy needs." I felt guilty, so I said nothing and did not get up to leave. I just sat there, quietly submitting to her reprimand. When she started crying, I could not take it anymore and said I was sorry for causing her any pain. She stopped crying, raised her head, gave me a threatening look and screamed:

"Sorry? I'll show you who's sorry…"

She reached for the table next to the couch where we were sitting, grabbed a pair of scissors and stabbed the tip into my thigh. I pulled the scissors out of my leg, stood up, and left without a word as if nothing had happened. Walking to the door, I remember trying not to limp. Ten years went by before I realized that I had been the victim of severe physical violence. But even today, and although many years have passed, although I realize it, I do not feel it. I perceive myself to be the bad guy in the story and feel profoundly guilty. I feel guilty not only for hurting her but also for making her hurt me. That was why I tried not to limp when I left her place. I did not want to add insult to injury.

Period Two

From a Controversy Over Facts to a Paradigmatic Cleavage

Up to this point, I have presented the controversy over the significance of gender in the etiology of partner violence, and its bilateral use, in keeping with the family violence scholars' perspective. My depiction aimed at pushing the controversy toward resolution through acknowledging that family scholars are right and feminist scholars are wrong. My view that, in this context, gender is of marginal importance

has not changed, but my attitude has. My need to resolve the controversy turned into an attempt to make use of it to understand and address partner violence, especially to remove difficulties, to make the opposing parties' positions more flexible, and to enable the development of new ideas.

Despite over 40 years of wide-scope, in-depth research, the controversy over the significance of gender in partner violence remains and is growing. How come empirical facts accumulated over the years could not resolve the controversy? This question became of more and more concern for me until mid-August 2009, when, during my return to Israel from the USA, I realized that I may have been relying on mistaken presumptions, and I may have been asking the wrong questions. Until this point, I presumed that science provided the necessary basis required to resolve scientific questions, and that the role played by gender in partner violence was a scientific question. Accordingly, I concluded that science can answer the question and resolve the controversy either way. I believed that it was impossible for gender to play both a significant and a marginal role in partner violence in the same reality. I was not naïve and I never perceived science to be omnipotent or scientists as motivated solely by rational considerations. But I did and do think that science is the most effective means of creating knowledge and understanding reality, and there is ample proof of that around us.

On that long flight from the USA to Israel, I started thinking that there may be other reasons why the controversy could not be resolved, besides the limitations of science. In the period before the flight, I used to ask myself how the controversy could be resolved. In the period after landing, I began asking why the controversy could not be resolved. This is an essential difference, much like between asking where two parallel lines intersect, and asking why two parallel lines never do. I imagine that those who seek the intersection by marching endlessly along the parallels believe that if they will only persevere, it is just a matter of time until they find it. This is how I see the parties in the controversy: 40 years of marching left the differences unmitigated, and they still believe that they will find a meeting point. I do not see it happening: the controversy is better pronounced unresolvable, and what is left is for us to try and understand why. The point when I understood this was a founding moment in my work, and I substituted "controversy" for the term "Paradigmatic Cleavage" (Winstok, 2011).

How I look at "paradigm" is greatly influenced by the work of Thomas Kuhn, a science historian and philosopher (Kuhn, 1962). The term "paradigm" is used to address a broad spectrum of components that guide scholarly thinking on a given existing phenomenon. The paradigm dictates how a scholar should perceive the reality in which the phenomena of interest occur and provides guidelines for identifying, studying, and understanding them, and how to coexist with and respond to them. Simply put, the paradigm engulfs all aspects of a scholar's scientific activity and as such, constitutes an entire culture.

A paradigmatic cleavage, unlike controversy over facts, does not necessarily require recognition or resolution. Terminology, principles, and facts are created and exist within a given paradigm. Outside of this paradigm, or within a different one, the same terminology, principles, and facts can be perceived and interpreted quite

differently. Hence, true or false are limited to a specific paradigm. This is evident in the controversy over the role of gender in partner violence. The controversy stems from different paradigmatic perspectives that compete over the identification, classification, and understanding of partner violence. As such, it cannot be mediated, settled, or resolved. However, the parties' perspectives can be examined and comprehended based on the paradigms that guide them. If, indeed, a paradigmatic cleavage is present, then any attempt to resolve the controversy based on facts is doomed to failure. Moreover, such attempts create false awareness that it is only a matter of time until a theory or method is found that will mediate or decide between contradicting arguments. Such false awareness that results from the lack of under-standing that a paradigmatic cleavage is at hand, widens and perpetuates the contro-versy over facts, and even worse, sets it on a path of escalation.

Key Concerns of the Paradigms That Guide the Conflicting Parties

Which paradigms underlie the controversy? The answer to this question is not simple or clear-cut, because the controversy is not between two homogenous groups. Feminist scholars tend to adhere roughly to a paradigm focused on inequality and social justice as evident through gender. It is more difficult to describe the paradigmatic orientation of family violence scholars, perhaps because it is less defined. They are sometimes characterized by their objection to some of the core assumptions of feminist scholars.

One way to overcome the impediments to defining the underlying paradigms is to identify the key concerns that guide the conflicting parties' thinking regarding the core issues that call for attention; the social phenomena exemplifying these issues; and how these are to be perceived, attributed meanings, experienced, and coped with. The initial expressions of these concerns can be recognized in the different terms used by feminist and family violence scholars to describe the phenomenon they address. Feminist scholars use "domestic violence," "violence against women," and "women abuse" interchangeably. Family violence scholars use "family violence," "partner vio-lence," or "violence in intimate relationships." These differences indicate the differing outlooks. Feminist scholars seem to focus on social categories and structures, whereas family violence scholars focus on the content of these social constructs.

The paradigm that guides feminist scholars focuses attention on the unjust inequality between men and women. These scholars work toward establishing this stipulation, presenting it and promoting it as a social problem in need of interven-tion and change. The study of violence against women is an opportunity to establish and demonstrate the unjust inequality between men and women in a primal social context. Most of the feminist scholars do not use the term "intimate relationships" because they see an inherent discrepancy between gender inequality and intimacy. As long as one gender is discriminated against, the relationships between men and women cannot be intimate.

Feminist scholars did not choose to research relationships that should be intimate to establish and demonstrate inequality by chance. Violence is a harmful and rejected behavior that relies on a power imbalance between the harming and the harmed parties. As such, more than any other behavior, violence manifests inequality. It is especially abhorrent in a relationship that should be, or is allegedly, intimate. It is widely accepted that intimate relationships are the most significant social context in a person's life. They are expected to provide a protective environment in which individuals can thrive and realize their potential more than in any other surroundings. Claiming gender inequality in this environment can prove that the problem penetrates and threatens the deepest fabric of society. Moreover, the home is children's first socialization agent. Exposing them to violence against women in the family perpetuates the problem for generations to come. All this considered, violence against women at home demonstrates the problem of gender inequality and discrimination at its utmost severity and makes redundant the need to establish and demonstrate the problem in other social contexts. Any attempt to repudiate the basic assumptions associated with violence against women at home may be viewed by some feminist activists as a threat to the numerous important achievements reached through endless efforts and sacrifices over the years.

It looks as though feminist scholars of violence against women are primarily gender researchers. Gender inequality, power imbalance, dominance, control, and violence are different conceptualizations of the same phenomenon and are, therefore, already inseparable by definition. Much like weight and mass when describing a substance, both reflect its volume. In simple words, male dominance and violence against women are different terms reflecting the same thing: gender inequality. Subject to the above discussion, the paradigm guiding feminist scholars can be named *A Paradigm of Gender*.

Family violence researchers are guided by a different approach. Based on their outlook they developed the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), an instrument used to measure partner violence. The authors (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugerman, 1996) wrote:

"The theoretical basis of the CTS is conflict theory (Adams, 1965; Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959; Scanzoni, 1972; Simmel, 1955; Straus, 1979). This theory assumes that conflict is an inevitable part of all human association, whereas violence as a tactic to deal with conflict is not" (Straus et al., 1996).

This clarification by the developers of the instrument implies *A Paradigm of Conflict in Interpersonal Relationships*. Family violence scholars view interpersonal conflict as sustaining and motivating relationships. They see no problem with conflict as long as it is carried out by legitimate means. It is choosing and using violence that is regarded as the problem requiring intervention and change. This paradigm neither does consider gender inequality, power imbalance, dominance, and control as the issue nor does it regard these terms as different phrasing of the same matter. The paradigm takes these factors at face value, seeking to examine their contribution, as well as that of others, to the problem of partner violence. Moreover, these factors are not considered to have a special status in the problem or to contradict intimate relationships. These factors, as well as others, can define and shape

relationships. According to this paradigm, there is no reason to presume that gender is of prime importance in the existence of partner violence. Therefore, unlike for feminist scholars, for family violence scholars, gender is a variable that warrants an examination of its part in the problem. Accordingly, they examine the behavior of both partners in a relationship.

Anomaly in the Paradigm of Gender: The Historic Aspect

It was already suggested that it is no coincidence that feminist scholars choose to research violence in relationships that ought to be intimate to establish and demonstrate gender inequality. The interest of family violence scholars in partner violence is no fluke either. Until the 1970s, most of the researchers in the area worked within the gender paradigm. Looking back, it is evident that around that time, changes in women's status in Western society became increasingly visible. During that period, facts began to emerge that seemingly did not coincide with the conceptual framework of the gender paradigm (paradigmatic anomaly): women, as well as men, are violent toward their partner (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus et al., 2006). It cannot be determined whether the two are associated. Some would argue that the publication of so-called facts contradicting the conceptual framework of the paradigm of gender at that time was driven by conservative elements who felt threatened by the changes occurring in the gender power balance. Others may claim that these changes minimized the importance of gender in the problem. Others still might suggest that many scholars avoided any action that may hinder the efforts made by the feminist movement to advance the status of women in society. Once these efforts achieved their goals and the trend seemed irreversible, some of these scholars felt free to research and publish findings that no longer adhere to the feminist ideology. It should not be ruled out that the two trends were not related, either. In any case, this relation is irrelevant, whether it existed or not.

Evidence of gender symmetry (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Straus et al., 2006) constituted a major paradigmatic anomaly. As a rule, researchers observe scientific propriety and resolve anomalies within the paradigm to which they adhere. Accordingly, some scholars criticized and rejected the so-called new facts. Others attempted to adjust the facts to the paradigm, within reason, and others still tried to adjust the paradigm to the facts within bounds. Some believed that the new facts could not be straightforwardly understood within the existing paradigm. They regarded these facts as the end of the paradigm in the context of partner violence (they did not dispute its viability in other contexts) and sought an alternative paradigm that would be consistent with the new facts accumulated in the field of research. The latter group is referred to as family violence scholars.

Unlike feminist scholars, whose paradigm directed them to study violence against women at home, the study of partner violence by family violence scholars directed them to abandon one paradigm for another. Simply put, the paradigm chose the problem for feminist scholars, whereas for family violence scholars, the problem chose, or

is still looking for, the paradigm. This may also be the reason for the paradigmatic vagueness in the work of family violence scholars. This may also be the reason why they are unjustly suspected of belonging to an antifeminist movement.

The Study of Violence as a Means to Elaborate on Core Issues in People's Lives

For scholars from both paradigms, violence is but a means to delve into the more basic core issues in individuals' lives. For feminist scholars, it is an opportunity to learn about the status of women in a society run primarily by men. For family violence scholars, it is an opportunity to learn about dealing with conflict in intimate relationships.

A considerable group of family violence scholars believes that violence against women is a particular case (unique or not) of partner violence. They find it hard to understand why feminist scholars reject their inclusive rather than exclusive approach, which enables feminist perceptions such as power and control to predict or explain violence as well. They have difficulty understanding why feminist scholars can make theoretical arguments on the one hand and then object to them being empirically tested on the other. A noteworthy group of feminist scholars finds it difficult to understand why family violence scholars refuse to acknowledge the importance of the broader social context and its imminent implications for the narrower couple context in which violence against women rears its ugly head. Both parties believe their stance to be the correct one. They are blind to the possibility that they are right only as far as their guiding paradigm is concerned. This short-sightedness leads both groups to the conclusion that the other party's position is irrational, hostile and led by narrow, irrelevant, and invalid interests.

Ontological Gaps Between Paradigms

At this point, it is becoming clearer that fundamental differences exist between the paradigms on critical questions such as the ontological "what is the social reality discussed?" This question is at the core of the cleavage between feminist and family violence scholars. Yet, it is not clearly evident in the discourse surrounding the controversy. It is possible that avoiding a discussion on this issue gives the wrong impression as if the controversy surrounds one and the same reality. This is clearly evident in the jargon used by feminist and family violence scholars. The two groups use the same terminology but ascribe it different meanings and concepts in many cases as shown in the definitions below.

As already mentioned, family violence scholars Straus et al. (1996) define partner violence based on conflict theories (Adams, 1965; Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959; Scanzoni, 1972; Simmel, 1955; Straus, 1979). These theories state that

although conflicts are inevitable in human relationships, violence is a nonlegitimate, and certainly unnecessary, means of coping with and resolving conflict. Under this theoretical framework, Straus and colleagues focused on tactics used to settle interpersonal conflicts in intimate relationships. They define physical aggression as follows:

"…an act carried out with the intention of or perceived intention of causing physical pain or injury to another person."

Based on this definition, they developed a measurement instrument they called CTS. This instrument was widely used by numerous scholars, becoming the most common means of measuring partner violence. Its first version (CTS-1) was presented in 1979 (Straus, 1979) and an advanced version (CTS-2) was presented in 1996. The developers of the instrument were seeking to use it to explore men's violence against their wives as well as women's violence against their husbands. This approach played a key role in the controversy on the significance of gender in partner violence.

Unlike Straus and colleagues, who define partner violence, feminist scholars DeKeseredy and MacLeod (1997) propose a definition that addresses the abuse of women in intimate relationships:

"Woman abuse is the misuse of power by a husband, intimate partner (whether male or female), ex-husband, or ex-partner against a woman, resulting in a loss of dignity, control, and safety as well as a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by the woman who is the direct victim of ongoing or repeated physical, psychological, economic, sexual, verbal, and/or spiritual abuse. Woman abuse also includes persistent threats or forcing women to witness violence against their children, other relatives, friends, pets, and/or cherished possessions by their husbands, partners, ex-husbands, or ex-partners" (DeKeseredy & MacLeod, 1997, p. 5).

This definition used the term "abuse" that includes various forms of injury. As violence is clearly a form of injury, the definition can be examined in this narrower sense as well. DeKeseredy and MacLeod first address the meaning of abuse, which, according to their definition, is the misuse of power, but they do not define misuse or who determines it. They avoid using the term "illegal use of power." Possibly "illegal," nonlegitimate, or unacceptable do not exhaust the options they include in their definition. In addition, the term "misuse" implies that there is "good use" of power, which is excluded from this definition. For example, according to this definition, illegal use of violence for self-protection will not be considered misuse of power. Then the question of who is the aggressor and who is the victim is addressed. The husbands, partners, ex-husbands, or ex-partners are marked as possible abusers. In gender terms, this means that the abuser can be either a man or a woman who has or previously had an intimate relationship with the victim. However, only women can be possible victims of abuse according to this definition. Hence, the definition refers only to heterosexual or lesbian relationships. DeKeseredy and MacLeod further define the possible outcomes of abuse. The list includes a loss of dignity, control, and safety as well as a feeling of powerlessness and entrapment experienced by the woman. It is noteworthy that the emphasis on outcomes has a psychological orientation. The researchers apparently assume that addressing

psychological outcomes does not exclude but necessarily includes physical ones. To sum up, the scholars address possible expressions of abuse: they provide a list of actions that may cause the outcomes previously presented. The list includes ongoing or repeated physical, psychological, economic, sexual, verbal, and/or spiritual abuse, and persistent threats or forcing women to witness violence against their children, other relatives, friends, pets, and/or cherished possessions. Unlike the first part of the definition, which gives a conceptual framework for the meaning of violence and the identity of the aggressor and victim, the second part of the definition addresses abuse outcomes and forms and provides only a list rather than criteria. Without such criteria, it is difficult to evaluate the list.

Naturally, violence is a key notion in both paradigms. Each paradigm offers a different definition of the term. The major difference between them is in their answer to the question of who is the violent party and of which behaviors are considered as violence. Compared to those of family violence scholars, feminist scholars' definitions tend to maximize by considering more hurtful behaviors as violence, and to minimize by stating that in most cases, men hurt women. These differences do not necessarily indicate that each paradigm addresses a different reality. Moreover, some would argue that the differences stem from differing sensitivities to various aspects of the same reality. This can be supported by the simple fact that both parties in the controversy condemn and denounce violence. The similarities in attitude toward numerous aspects of violence lead one to believe that the two parties are dealing with the same reality. A deeper examination may lead to the conclusion that the focus of their rejection of violence is inherently different.

According to the paradigm of gender, violence against women is a means of creating, promoting, and sustaining male dominance and control and hence must be eradicated, by force, if necessary. Using force as a means to obtain control can be differentiated from using force as a means to remove control. DeKeseredy and MacLeod demonstrate this in their definition when they write: "Woman abuse is the *misuse of power …*" (DeKeseredy & MacLeod, 1997, p. 5). According to the paradigm of conflict in intimate relationships, violence is an unnecessary tactic. This perspective is evident in Straus and colleagues' article presenting the CTS-2: "Violence as a tactic to deal with conflict is not [an inevitable part of human association]" (Straus et al., 1996). Family violence scholars view partner violence not only as unnecessary behavior but also as ineffective, nonlegitimate, and mostly illegal behavior, which is employed to resolve conflicts between partners and needs to be eradicated; any deliberate aggression against one's partner, however justifiable, is violence. Feminist scholars apparently judge hurting one's partner based on one's motivations and accordingly, determine whether or not this hurting constitutes violence. Violence is but one example attesting to the different realities referred to by each paradigm.

Another highly significant ontological aspect in the formation of the cleavage, which also indicates the limitations of the conceptual frameworks on which the two paradigms are based, is their point of reference. The paradigm that guides feminist scholars is focused mainly on victimization (the results of the potential or actual aggressive act). These scholars believe that focusing on victimization does

not obscure the aggressive act but rather points it out and emphasizes it. Their focus is evident in the definition of the problem of partner violence by DeKeseredy and MacLeod (1997) presented in full above, which referred to women abused by their partners. The paradigm that guides family violence scholars is focused mainly on aggression (the act itself). These scholars believe that aggression is at the heart of the problem as it is the only cause of victimization. Their focus is evident in the definition of the problem, which was also presented in full above, and referred to partner violence. Both sides in the controversy acknowledge the link between aggression and victimization, and hence feel free to choose to deal with one, believing that, in so doing, they are also dealing with the other.

Feminist scholars' choice to focus on victimization was a natural direct extension of their aversion to the costs that women must pay throughout their lives in various social contexts, not necessarily only in their family life. In this reality, the identity of the aggressor could change from one time and place to another, but the woman always remained the object of aggression (subject of victimization). Moreover, focusing on victimization emphasized the injustice to women and laid the responsibility and guilt on those who act aggressively against them. It is possible that these scholars avoided focusing on aggression because it could encourage justification of the aggressive act, reducing the responsibility and guilt of the aggressor and shifting it to the victim. The feminist scholars would not place tools in the hands of those who might wish to blame the victim. This general approach was also evident in the narrower context of domestic violence. Family violence scholars took a different approach. From the outset, they limited their focus to partner violence. The accumulating empirical evidence in their studies demonstrated that women also act aggressively against men, leading to a nongender approach to aggression and victimization in partner violence. Their choice to focus on the aggressor probably stemmed from acknowledging that victimization is a result of aggression. Hence, it is the study of aggressors that is a priority and is required to develop knowledge that would promote a better understanding and coping with partner violence.

The common working assumption of scholars from both paradigms is that victim and aggressor are two aspects of the same phenomenon and addressing one is necessarily addressing the other. Feminist scholars took this assumption one step further and determined that aggressor and victim are parallel opposites: aggression more or less equals the opposite of victimization. Family violence scholars agree that a link exists between aggressor and victim, but they would probably reject the feminist scholars' argument that these are parallel opposites. The partial covert agreement between the parties contributed to a false awareness that they speak of the same thing more or less either by focusing on the victim or by focusing on the aggressor. The parties' presumptions neither were fully revealed, discussed, or undermined nor were they identified as significant to the creation, preservation, and expansion of the controversy.

To understand how the parties contributed to the creation, maintenance, and deepening of the cleavage, it should be mentioned once again that there is broad agreement that the results of partner violence are more severe for women than for men (Archer, 2000; Kimmel, 2002). Most family violence scholars do not view this

information as a relevant factor in challenging their approach to the role of gender in partner violence because they focus their attention on aggression. They do not consider victimization to be a straightforward derivative of aggression but rather an issue that warrants independent empirical testing. Feminist scholars who focus on the results (potential or actual) of the aggressive act view aggression and victimization as parallel opposites; hence, from their perspective, gender symmetry in aggression necessitates gender symmetry in victimization and gender asymmetry in victimization necessitates the same in aggression. Put simply, the argument presented by family violence scholars that gender symmetry exists in partner aggression sounds bogus because it appears to be an attempt to maintain that gender symmetry exists in partner victimization.

Another point to notice is that the terms "asymmetry" and "symmetry" are used to imply the role of gender in partner violence and to suggest differences in approach to the study of gender. Asymmetry derives from focusing on gender differences and their identification, whereas symmetry derives from focusing on gender similarities and their identification.

Epistemological and Methodological Gaps Between Paradigms

The consequential differences between the paradigms do not amount only to the perceived social reality scrutinized (ontology) but also continue in the epistemological question of how this reality can be acknowledged. Feminist and family violence scholars' perception and conceptualization of context encapsulates and demonstrates the ontological and epistemological gap and further attests to the paradigmatic cleavage.

It is widely accepted that it is somewhat difficult, if not impossible, to identify and understand single acts of isolated behaviors out of context. This is especially true for partner violence. Both feminist and family violence scholars share this view but differ regarding its implementation, although they are not always aware of this. This is evident in feminist scholars' criticism of the partner violence measurement instrument (CTS), which is a direct product of family violence scholars' guiding framework.

Feminist scholars often object to using CTS to measure partner violence on the grounds that it measures behaviors out of context, as the phenomenon cannot be determined or understood without context (e.g., Belknap, 2001; DeKeseredy, 1995; Kurz, 1993; Schwartz, 1987). Others in favor of the instrument (mainly family violence scholars) consider this lack of context to be an advantage, as the instrument does not impose a specific context on the researchers and gives them the freedom to choose and add a context measurement to the behavior measurement, which was also recommended by the CTS authors (Straus et al., 1996).

At first, it looks as if the controversy between the scholars surrounds methodology: "Should the context be included in the behavioral measurement, or are the two to be separated?" This methodological issue can serve to highlight the

epistemological perception of the paradigms (for methodology stems from epistemology). It seems that feminist scholars argue that context is crucial for both identifying and understanding partner violence, whereas family violence scholars claim that context is crucial only for understanding the problem (and not for its identification). Hence, it would appear that the disagreement revolves around the question as to whether a context is necessary for identifying partner violence. Feminist scholars would argue that not any deliberate hurtful action is violent. Intentional hurtful actions taken in self-defense are nonviolent and therefore are intrinsically different from those used to maintain or improve the power balance between intimate partners, which are violent. Feminist scholars take a step forward and argue that due to men's unjust gender power advantage over women in society, every offensive action by men must be regarded as violence, whereas every offensive action by women must be considered as self-defense. Feminist scholars take these views to be facts and believe that any research must start with their acceptance. Unlike feminist scholars, family violence scholars do not accept the gender-based perspective as an indisputable fact but rather as one of many legitimate assumptions that require empirical scrutiny, support, or rejection.

"In which population can the discussed reality be identified" is an ontological question with methodological implications. Here, too, gaps can be identified between the paradigms. Johnson (2010) argued that gender symmetry is found in general populations for two reasons already mentioned: the biased measurement method of CTS and other instruments with a similar approach; and the avoidance of providing reliable reports by couples with asymmetrical violence. Therefore, Johnson suggests that to identify and recognize gender asymmetry, social service populations are at least to be approached. He also implies that the value of research based on samples of the general population is doubtful. From these arguments, it can be determined that epistemologically, feminist scholars believe that the reality under study is reflected genuinely in service populations (provided by police, courts, hospitals, and shelters); on the other hand, family violence scholars think that service populations provide a partial and biased picture of the phenomenon and that only general population samples allow for a reliable social picture of its complexity.

Paradigm-Guided Value Judgment

Social paradigms such as those guiding researchers in the field of partner violence provide a critical description of existing reality. This is evident in their perception of the desired reality and the gaps between this and the existing one. It is possible that these perceptions stem from value judgment, as much as, if not even more than, from scientific considerations. Hence, any examination of paradigms must address the value judgment on which they are based.

The story of Robin Hood may illustrate the difference in value judgments as guided by each paradigm: How Robin Hood is judged for taking from the rich and

giving to the poor depends on one's perception of reality. In a reality that strives for and puts on a pedestal an egalitarian distribution of wealth, it will not be possible to make a value judgment based only on the fact that someone took something without permission. The economic power balance between those involved would be essential information required for one to make a moral judgment. If the economic status of someone who takes something is lower than that of the one from whom it is taken, then this is not regarded as theft but merely a fair redistribution of wealth. In such a reality, Robin Hood's actions would be justified and those from whom he took would be condemned. Their economic advantage in itself testifies that they are the real thieves. In a reality perceived this way, there is no differentiation between action and circumstances. Alternatively, in a reality in which taking without permission is an offence, regardless of economic differences between those involved, Robin Hood would be condemned. The economic power balance between those involved can affect only the intensity of the condemnation but not the nature of the value judgment. In this perceived reality, actions and circumstances are differentiated. The value judgment of Robin Hood's actions is mentioned as an analogy for the perception and subsequent value judgment of hurtful actions between partners within the discussed paradigms. The reality that supports Robin Hood's actions is parallel to that of the feminist scholars, and the reality that disapproves of his actions is parallel to that of family violence scholars.

Final Comments

Once I realized that there is no controversy over facts but rather a paradigmatic cleavage, I figured that at this point, I need to have a flexible approach to the problem of partner violence and acknowledge that no single objective truth exists: first and foremost, consider that the results of violence are more severe for women than for men; then to accept that the controversy is paradigmatic at large; study how each paradigm constructs, examines, and acts upon reality; identify the strengths and weaknesses of each paradigm in dealing with various aspects of partner violence; double-check the positions and data of both sides in the controversy; adjust the intervention to the problem at hand and avoid adjusting the problem to the paradigm; realize that each paradigm has its limitations and attempt to develop more effective alternatives; be at peace with the cleavage rather than escalate controversies; and continue developing the body of knowledge.

I began this book by discussing the relationship between gender and partner violence because this is a core issue that provides a good starting point to become acquainted with the field of research. A more important reason is because the theoretical framework of conflicts, escalation, and partner violence that I have developed and would like to present further is based on observation and analysis of couple interactions. The interactional approach implies mutuality in the formation of the problem and requires a preliminary discussion.

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Chapter 2
Dominance and Control

It is widely accepted among feminist and family violence scholars that motivation for dominance and control is a major factor in understanding partner violence and that both are linked and mutually enhancing. This, however, is as far as mutual agreement goes. For feminist scholars, scrutinizing dominance and control is a natural means for cracking the gender component in partner violence. They do not consider motivation to be an individual characteristic but rather as derived from social structure. Motivation for dominance and control is awarded through complex social processes to men more than to women, and it may also manifest itself in intimate relationships through violence. The work of Hamburger and Guse (2002) is an example of this perspective. They examined dozens of articles to determine that men, unlike women, use violence to obtain dominance and control. Family violence scholars acknowledge the significance of this motivation and its association with violence but reject the suggestion that the phenomenon has a solid gender basis. The work of Straus (2008) is an example of this perspective; he criticizes the arguments brought by Hamburger and Guse and maintains that none of the articles that they quote provide solid empirical support for these arguments. Straus cites other articles showing that dominance and control correlate with violence for both genders (Kim & Clifton, 2003; Medeiros & Straus, 2006b; So-Kum Tang, 1999; Stets & Pirog-Good, 1990; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006; Sugihara & Warner, 2002).

This chapter addresses motivation and control in partner violence for five major reasons: (1) it is a natural follow-up to the discussion on gender significance in partner violence in the previous chapter; (2) it helps to clarify the nature of partner violence; (3) in many theories, it is a key factor in the frequency and severity of partner violence; (4) it broadens the scope of reference to partner violence from overt (behavior) to covert (motivation) aspects, and (5) it may serve as a stepping stone toward more complex theoretical approaches to partner violence.

Motivation for dominance and control is a combination of three concepts. Motivation represents a need or desire, causing one to act for its achievement or realization. This concept is used to explain why one would do something. The other two concepts are interrelated. When one member of the couple, man or woman,

takes or accepts control over the other partner, he/she becomes the dominant partner. Control is the execution of this power. When the concepts are combined, a new meaning is produced that has greater effect than the sum of their independent effects. This complex combination represents one partner's need or desire to force his/her will on the other partner and to dictate to him/her what to think and/or feel and/or how to behave. Many would suggest that coercion is an integral component of dominance and control and that it is necessarily belligerent. Many would also agree that violence is a specific form or case of belligerence. Hence, it is inevitable to state that motivation for dominance and control is motivation for violence, and that violence is a coercion of will. Addressing partner violence, in these terms, disregards many other possibilities, in which violence is used not to force one's will but, for example as a form of dysfunctional communication, an expression of frustration, or in self-defense. Describing violence as the result of motivation for dominance and control is not sufficiently exhaustive of the variety of situations in which the problem of partner violence is evident.

Motivation for Dominance and Control, and Physical Violence

Johnson (2006), who was mentioned in the first chapter, was not the first to address motivation for dominance and control and violent behavior, but he pushed the field forward by developing and presenting a typology based on these aspects. Johnson's work put an end to the simplistic approach that "violence is violence," by showing that this is a multidimensional and complex phenomenon in partner relationships. He distinguished between types of couples based on two characteristics: motivation for control and physical violence. He presented the concept "motivation for control" as follows:

"The types of domestic violence (situational couple violence, intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and mutual violent control) are defined conceptually in terms of the control motives of the violent member(s) of the couple, motives that are identified operationally by patterns of controlling behavior that indicate an attempt to exercise general control over one's partner."

In this quotation, Johnson does not clarify the concept but only explains how it can be identified. Somewhere else, he writes:

"I hypothesized that there were two qualitatively different forms and/or patterns of intimate partner violence—one that was part of a general strategy of power and control (intimate terrorism), the other involving violence that was not part of a general pattern of control, probably a product of the escalation of couple conflict into violence (situational couple violence)."

This quotation brings Johnson's hypothesis about the existence of two partner violence patterns. One was part of a general strategy of power and control (which he called "intimate terrorism") and another was violence that was not part of a general strategy (which he called "situational couple violence"). He argued that the second pattern was most likely a result of partner conflicts that escalated to violence. Despite

Table 2.1 Possible combinations of control motivation and violent behavior

Partner 1	Partner 2			
	(1) Not controlling and not violent	(2) Controlling and not violent	(3) Not controlling and violent	(4) Controlling and violent
(1) Not controlling and not violent	Irrelevant for lack of violence			
(2) Controlling and not violent	Irrelevant for lack of violence	Irrelevant for lack of violence		
(3) Not controlling and violent	**Situational violence**	Relevant undefined	**Situational violence**	
(4) Controlling and violent	**Intimate terrorism**	Relevant undefined	**Violent resistance**	**Mutual violent control**

these clarifications, "motivation for control," according to Johnson, remains a vague concept. The measurement that Johnson used to represent the concept may clarify his meaning. He used, among others, measurements developed by Pence and Paymar (1993), which included threats, emotional abuse, financial control, sexual control, isolation, deprivation of privileges, and use of children as a means of control.

Johnson's writings indicate that he differentiated between two violent etiologies: violence among those with motivation for general control, which is inherent in, stems from and serves the motivation, and violence among those who lack motivation for general control, who use it to settle specific confrontations. This distinction is not completely clear and apparently indicates that violence is more ingrained in the former than in the latter. Johnson presented four types of men or women based on their general control pattern and their physical violence: not controlling and not violent, controlling but not violent, not controlling but violent, and controlling and violent. Based on these types, Johnson identified and profiled four types of violent intimate relationships: "intimate terrorism"—when one partner is violent and controlling, and the other is not; "violent resistance"—when one partner is violent but not controlling, and the other is both violent and controlling; "situational violence"—when one partner is violent but not controlling, and the other is neither violent nor controlling; and "mutual violent control"—when both partners are violent and controlling.

A simple calculation reveals that Johnson addressed only four out of ten possible combinations. Table 2.1 presents the ten possibilities. Evidently, three of the combinations have no physical violence, so it is possible that Johnson deliberately ignored them as irrelevant for his typology. Two other combinations do include violence and can be relevant, but for some reason, were not addressed in Johnson's work: one combination is when a controlling nonviolent person has a noncontrolling yet violent partner, and the other is when a nonviolent controlling person has a controlling

and violent partner. It is possible that Johnson considered these combinations as rare or nonexistent. For a full understanding of Johnson's suggestions, they warrant exploration in real-life examples and implementation.

The Case of Alon and Noya

I met Alon and Noya while participating in a study on partner violence. Over a period of 2 years, I met with and interviewed the couple several times. These interviews were an opportunity for me to study one of the more common patterns in partner violence (Johnson, 2006).

Alon was in his 40s and this was his second marriage. He had a 4-year-old from his previous marriage to Shiri and 1-year-old twins from his marriage to Noya. Alon told me that he was born premature. He was small and sickly and his mother was afraid to pick him up:

"She was afraid I would break. Hard to believe, huh? Today, 40 years later, I could break anything… if I wanted to."

Alon was the eldest son. His father was a real-estate agent and his mother worked as a dental assistant and a clerk for many years. His younger siblings were Boaz and Maya. He told me:

"I was the eldest, and I set the rules, not only at home, but also in the neighborhood and at school. Everybody did as I said; they looked up to me."

At 13, right after his Bar-Mitzvah, his parents enrolled him in a military boarding school.

"It wasn't that great and after one year, I quit. Too much pressure, they keep telling you what to do, how and when to do it; it wasn't for me. I am nobody's fool. And there were no girls there. What sort of a thing is that? Growing up with no girls is like… I don't know… It wasn't right for me. In the neighborhood, nobody dared to defy me and all the girls… seriously, **all the girls** wanted me. I remember my first time with a chick… I don't really remember the rest of them."

He met his first wife after he was released from military service. Her father was an engineer and her mother an educational consultant.

"She was OK, at first, at least, but she was suffocating me. 'Where have you been? What did you do?' I got rid of her. Who needs it? I think, in the end, she had someone and she thought that she would be better off with a divorce. She would be able to manipulate me, on the one hand, because she has my kid, and she could manipulate that nobody who fell in love with her, on the other."

One year after his divorce, Alon remarried, and with the help of his parents, became a partner in the garage where he had worked since finishing the army.

"Money is not very good, but one can get by. Shiri [his ex-wife] thinks I am making millions at the garage… you'd think. But I am content, I have no-one breathing down my neck, I can do as I please."

He met his second wife, Noya, when she came to the garage.

"As soon as I laid eyes on her, I knew she was going to be my next thing. She played hard to get… virginal… But I know she was hot for me from the first moment…"

They met that same week and started dating.

"I needed a clerk and Noya had the qualifications, but I thought that bringing her in to the business could mean real trouble… she would have had total control over me… now that we've been living together for several years, I can tell you that Noya is the kind of woman that needs a lot of taking care of, and it is not so simple."

Noya came to Alon's garage on one of the worst days of her life. Yair, her boyfriend of the past 6 months, had left her the previous morning, just a week before her 29th birthday. She believed that Yair was The One, but somehow, things had gone wrong. There was a fight, and he picked up his stuff, told her it was over and left the house. She did not respond, played it cool. This was not the first time it had happened. On previous occasions, he had come back after a few hours. This time, he did not. In the evening, she started calling friends to try to find out where he was and what was going on but to no avail. Yair disappeared. The next day, following a night of waiting by the phone, Noya decided that she was going to his parents' in Haifa. But the car would not start, which was how she ended up in Alon's garage:

"When I saw Alon for the first time, I felt… How can I describe it? He had the look of a lost little boy… and it felt good to be single. Very quickly, we became a couple and we had a great time. We had trouble with his wife and Yair also showed up one day, but that is history."

Noya was the third out of four daughters. Her father had a fabric shop. Her mother divided her time between the home and the family business. When Noya was 3 years old, her father left her mother for 2 years.

"It was a rough time. Mom was depressed, because we had nothing. He simply broke off any contact. But then he came back and it all changed. Suddenly, we had plenty of money. Mom got pregnant and my little sister was born."

Noya met her first boyfriend at 13. He was 4 years older.

"He was a man and I was a girl. It was almost illegal. When my parents found out, they freaked. So it was over. Since then, I had six or seven relationships. Each was truly significant. When I love someone, it's very strong. I give of myself completely."

Noya's parents accepted Alon with mixed feelings. On the one hand, he appeared to be a good and diligent man, who would take care of Noya. On the other hand, they were disturbed by his obligations and the child from a previous marriage.

"When I brought Alon home for the first time, there was some tension in the air. But finally, Dad accepted him. He said: 'Look, I have four daughters; the first two are married and gave me three granddaughters. From you, I expect a grandson. If you bring me a grandson…' The funny thing is that eventually, we had twin girls. The wedding was a huge affair. Six hundred people showed up… Our parents took care of everything."

The twins were born 18 months after the wedding.

"The pregnancy was hard. Especially as Alon wasn't there to help. He would come back home very late… demand food, demand sex and go to sleep. What's that supposed to be? Am I carrying my own private babies? If I asked him where he'd been, he'd get angry. If I didn't ask, he'd also get angry. After the girls were born, it was never quite the same…"

When I met with Alon and Noya, they had been married for two and a half years. Their relationship typically consisted of daily friction that often escalated to yelling, insults, and violent threats from both. Noya told me that the lowest point in their relationship was when they went to a wedding of friends in an orchard near the small town of Binyamina in Israel.

"We left home quite late because the babysitter didn't get there on time, which Alon considered to be my fault. You see, from his point of view, everything to do with the girls is my domain. So if the sitter is late, I'm to blame. He didn't say it, but I could tell that this was what he was thinking. I saw it in his eyes and heard it in his breathing. It bugged me that we were finally going out alone without the girls, and we could have had so much fun, but he chose to be miserable. The problem is that when he is miserable, everybody else has to be miserable, too. I decided that I was going to have fun. When we set off, I wanted some air, so I opened my window. I knew that he wouldn't like it, and he didn't say a word, but closed the window immediately. So I lit a cigarette and he had no choice but to open the window, because he hates the smell of cigarettes. But he opened the window all the way down, so that my hair would be a mess. I kept quiet and continued smoking. When he saw that I wasn't putting out my cigarette, he took out a heavy metal CD and cranked up the volume. The singer sounded as if he was having his tooth pulled out without an anesthetic. I said nothing, but put out the cigarette and closed the window, and he turned off the CD. We kept going, without saying anything. When we came closer to Binyamina, Alon broke the silence. He asked me: 'Say, where exactly is the wedding?' I said I didn't know. So he said: 'Take out the invitation. It must have the details on it.' I told him that I hadn't brought it with me. He stopped the car at the side of the road, stepped out, came to my side of the car, opened the door, grabbed me by the hair and pulled me out screaming: 'What do you want from me?' Then he let go of me and I fell down. I looked up and said quietly, 'I want you out of my life. I don't want you anymore… you are a poor and miserable person.' He gave me a funny look, turned around and started walking away on foot. I stayed there on the ground next to the car. You know what I did first? I looked inside the car to see if the keys were in the ignition. I stood up, walked around the car, and sat in the driver's seat. The lights were on and I could see him moving forward at the side of the road. The anger and tension I felt inside died down. I thought, 'How awful, why are we doing this to each other? What is our problem?' I started the car and began moving slowly toward him. When I came closer, he looked back, saw me and started running. I accelerated and suddenly, he disappeared. He must have thought that I was trying to run him over. He jumped to the side of the road and fell into a ditch. Eventually, we ended up at the hospital in Hadera where they put a cast on his leg."

From the interviews with Alon and Noya, I learned that both were motivated to control each other, and both resisted each other's attempts at control. Their "window battle" indicates this clearly. On the overt level, Alon and Noya were competing over who would make the decisions, whether Noya would decide that the window should be open, or whether Alon would decide that it should be closed. They both based their actions on their knowledge of what would "set off" and manipulate the other. When Noya opened the window, she knew that Alon would not like it, that the cigarette smoke would bother him and would force him to open

the window. Alon did not want the window open, but neither did he want Noya to be smoking in the car, so he created a problem for Noya, by playing loud music to annoy her. In return for her closing the window and putting out the cigarette, he was willing to turn off the music. Interestingly enough, this whole control struggle took place without a word being uttered. This indicates how well the partners knew each other, that they were completely unwilling to communicate, and were impatient with each other. This could also indicate desperation and hopelessness. On the covert level, this occurrence could stem from something much deeper in their relationship. When Noya opened the window, she was signaling to Alon that he was suffocating her. This message became clearer when Noya was on the ground near the car. She told Alon: "I want you out of my life." The event can be scrutinized further, but it is used here to test Johnson's ideas.

Had Johnson regarded Alon as controlling and violent and Noya as controlling and nonviolent, he would have found it difficult to identify their pattern as a couple as there is no such type identified in his work. Had he regarded Noya as noncontrolling but as responding to Alon's violence and control, he would have identified the pattern as Intimate Terrorism. Another way for Johnson to address the couple's pattern could be to identify both Alon and Noya as violent and controlling (as Noya deliberately opened a window and lit a cigarette), in which case, the pattern would be Mutual Violence and Control. Less likely, yet still possible, is the option of Situational Violence. The problem in defining the pattern arises from the question of what is control/dominance, and to a lesser extent, what is violence. Clearly, Alon behaved violently but was Noya being violent in forcing an open window and cigarette smoke on Alon?

The Case of Pnina and Moshe

Pnina told me that when she married Moshe, she had no illusions that he was the man of her dreams. He was not particularly handsome or smart, but he was the only one ever to propose and could take her away from her parents' place and the neighborhood where she had been living for 20 years. He could offer her a new life. When he proposed, he promised to make her happy, and she believed him and accepted immediately. Twelve years had passed and he was still promising to make her happy and she still believed that he would. Pnina's parents immigrated to Israel after the establishment of the State and settled in a small southern town. Her father worked at a food factory and her mother stayed at home. Pnina was the second of five children. Pnina told me in an interview:

"The strongest memory I have of my parents' home is the tense silence. Dad would come home from work, always nervous, and Mom would run around him as if trying to calm him down, and would signal to us that we need to keep silent. When Dad would go to the synagogue for the evening prayers, we could start talking again, but quietly. Mom used to say: 'We can't upset your father; he has enough of it as it is.' Besides the nervous silence, I remember the boredom; nothing ever happened. We were not allowed to go outside. We would sit and wait. I don't know

what for. When Dad left, we'd wait for him to come back, and when he came back, we'd wait for him to leave. That is how we passed the time."

Pnina's parents did not think school or a social life was important, and she had no friends. Her mother said: "Girls should have a good husband. Anything else is nonsense." One day, her father came home with Moshe. Two months later, they were married. Moshe was 5 years older than Pnina. He lived in a nearby neighborhood in the house that had belonged to his parents when they were still alive. He had no profession. All that her father told her after Moshe's first visit to their home was that he was a good man and could be trusted. After that night, it all happened very fast: a few phone calls, dates at the café, the restaurant, and the movies. It was a wonderful time. For the first time in her life, Pnina felt that she meant something to someone and that she had something to look forward to. The feeling of dejection faded away. Even her father smiled at her sometimes. Pnina told me:

"Many people came to the wedding. I didn't know most of them. Everybody was smiling, nicely dressed. There was plenty of food and music. It was like a dream. I often find myself daydreaming about my wedding. Each time it looks a bit different, depending on my mood. After the wedding ceremony, Dad came up to me and said: 'Now you're a married woman, don't bring shame on me.' That night, when we came to Moshe's house, my heart was pounding. My dad's words kept ringing in my head. 'Don't bring shame on me… Don't bring shame on me…' Twelve years have gone by. Am I very happy? I can't say that I am, but I'm not so unhappy, either."

Moshe was an only child. His father worked at the local council and his mother at the regional school. His parents wanted him to be a doctor, but all he ever wanted to be was a football player. Moshe told me:

"When I was playing football, I felt that this was my destiny, that no-one could stop me. I was the best player in the neighborhood. Everybody said: 'He will be a star when he grows up.' But all the big plans were ruined when I broke my leg. Then and there, my life ended."

When Moshe was released from the army, he started working at the council as a driver, but after his father died, he quit the job. He spent days on end sitting in coffee shops with his friends. Moshe's mother died 2 years later. When I interviewed him, he said:

"I met Pnina's father at the synagogue during the worst time of my life. I felt all alone in the world. I had friends, I would go out, meeting girls here and there, but it wasn't quite what I really wanted. I felt that I had to do something meaningful with myself. That's when I met Pnina's father. He got me the job at the factory, and took me in to his home. Gave me his daughter; what more could I ask for? Pnina is the best thing that ever happened to me. I know that sometimes I mess it up, but all in all, I am happy."

Pretty soon, Moshe decided that Pnina would be "the mother of his children:"

"She was simply but nicely dressed. She didn't look at me and I tried not to make her nervous. Pnina is not the kind of girl you find in the street. I saw right away that she was made of the right stuff."

The day after Moshe and Pnina first met, he told her father that he wanted to date her and that he had serious intentions. All that Moshe could remember from that

conversation was that Pnina's father was serious, did not say much, and just said: "Don't bring shame on her." Moshe did not want Pnina's father to pay for the wedding. He took the money that his parents had saved, loaned some more money, and arranged the whole wedding on his own:

"No-one will ever forget this wedding… the food, the music… the best that you can get."

Moshe had a little too much to drink and by the end of the evening, he could barely stand on his feet. His friends took him and his wife home:

"When we came home, I was totally wasted. On the one hand, I wanted to be a man, on the other, I wanted to know how much money we got from the wedding and if it would cover the loans. But what actually happened was that I was dead beat. Pnina is a good wife. And I think I am the best thing that happened to her. I know we have our ups and downs, but who doesn't?"

Pnina was interviewed following a stay at a shelter for battered women. She ended up there after several cases in which Moshe hurt her using severe physical violence. In one instance, he caused a cut above her eye that required stitches. On another occasion, he punctured her eardrum. She told me in the interview:

"People think that women run away from their husbands only in extreme cases. It's possible, but I didn't run away. I heard about the shelter and decided to take a time out. In the days before I came to the shelter, he hadn't been beating me up. I just got tired of it all. Moshe is a very difficult person. When he doesn't like something, he talks with his hands. He is always sure that he is right and he has to have the final say in everything. My parents always took his side. After Moshe hurt my eyebrow, my mom said to me: 'You're the one bringing trouble upon yourself. Start behaving like a wife and you will have a good life. You know your father never raised his hand at me. You know why? Because he had no reason to. You give Moshe all the reasons in the world to beat you… Why do you do that?' Moshe bit me that time because I was talking to the greengrocer. He said I behaved promiscuously and it brought shame on all the family. These words were really painful… My husband thinks I'm promiscuous."

Unlike the case of Alon and Noya, Pnina and Moshe's relationship is easy to profile using Johnson's typology. Moshe is controlling and violent, whereas Pnina is neither. Much like her mother, Pnina is completely submissive to her husband's authority. It may be assumed that Johnson would have defined this case as Intimate Terrorism. If Pnina would ever rebel against Moshe's violence and domination, it would be worth considering redefining their case as Violent Resistance.

Johnson's Theoretical Framework, Its Contribution and Limitations

Johnson's work (Johnson, 2006) marks a shift in approach to partner violence. First, as mentioned, it presents a complex, multidimensional perspective on partner violence. In addition, it supports a change of focus from the individual's behavior

in society to the behavior of both partners, enhancing recognition of the importance of the relationship context for understanding the problem. In view of the significance of Johnson's work, it should be criticized and used as a vantage point toward a more progressive approach.

Johnson's idea of control refers to one's general motivation to manipulate one's partner's behaviors in accordance with one's needs, desires and goals. At first, this seems to be an acceptable approach, but a deeper examination reveals its vagueness. It is unclear which factors affect it or are affected by it, what its boundaries and content are, and whether and how it is distinct from other (nongeneral) control motivations. The measurements employed to represent the general control pattern indicate that Johnson regarded nonphysical violence, such as threats, as an indication of the existence of a general control pattern. On the other hand, physical violence was not described in Johnson's writings as an unequivocal indication of such a pattern. Simply put, Johnson did not consider threats to be violence but rather a general control pattern, and he does not regard battering to indicate a general control pattern but violence. Those who consider threats to be a form of violence would consider the general control pattern and the physical violence to be overlapping, rather than separate concepts, at least to some extent. This approach is not characteristic only of Johnson (see also Alexander, 1993; Marshall, 1996; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Straus and Gozjolko (2009) suggest that the literature on the etiology of partner violence often assumes that psychological aggression is a fundamental component of control. This is a questionable approach because it relies on measuring one thing (psychological aggression) to identify and address another (control). Even worse, this could mean measuring one thing while presenting it as another altogether. As for Johnson, threats indicate a general control pattern, which means that this pattern and nonphysical violence are one and the same. The association between threats and battering among intimate partners has been extensively documented (Winstok & Eisikovits, 2008). It is not an association between control and violence, but rather an association between different forms of violence (Winstok & Perkis, 2009).

Another limitation of Johnson's classifications has to do with their determinism. How many times, and for what length of time, must a partner exhibit violent behavior to be classified as violent? Can this classification be changed following a period of refraining from violence and if so, how long should this period be? Similar questions can be asked also regarding general control patterns. This limitation, in addition to those previously mentioned, indicates that Johnson's arguments are insufficiently developed. It is possible that he did not set out to present a theoretical framework for the study of partner violence in the first place but rather to establish his suggestions regarding the ongoing controversy on gender symmetry. It is also possible that Johnson wished to fine-tune the sensitivity to the various contexts in which violence can be found and to mediate between the two sides of the controversy over gender symmetry. Yet, most refer to his work as an integrative approach or theory rather than an illustration of recommended principles for the study of partner violence.

Final Comments

The term "motivation for dominance and control" often raises negative connotations and rejection. Why is this motivation condemnable? Is it because of its perceived gender basis among feminist scholars, who assume that men rather than women possess this tendency? Would it still be perceived as a negative motivation had it been only a women's tendency, or if it had been distributed equally between the genders? One should not rule out that motivation for dominance and control is an objectionable notion because it is believed to include a coercive aspect, necessarily perceived as illegitimate. This may or may not be the case, but it is more important to ask whether any form of forcefulness is wrong. Relationships in which one partner has a tendency for dominance and control, but does not forces his/her will using illegitimate forceful means, and the other partner accepts (even if unwillingly) and acquiesces to this dominance, are not uncommon. It is less common to find relationships in which none of the partners are dominant or controlling. It seems that if expressions of dominance and control were perceived as having no gender basis, not necessarily forceful and if so, using legitimate force, they would draw little attention in partner violence research.

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Chapter 3
Partner Violence as a Rational Choice

In the previous chapter, it was suggested that studying the association between motivation for dominance and control and partner violence stems from the notion that violence is a non-legitimate means of coercion. This implies that the decision to use violence is a rational choice. It is argued in this chapter that violence can be considered rational if it meets the following preconditions: the violence is possible and has the potential to accomplish the goal, the cost of violence is lower than the cost of other possible actions, and is also lower than the value of the goal. Tedeschi and Felson (1994) demonstrated the rationality in this context as follows: if an observer considered the same alternatives, had the same values, and estimated the same probabilities and costs as the decision-maker, the observer would make the same decision. Clearly, however, the rationality of a decision must be addressed from the decision-maker's own viewpoint, as it results from individual life experiences that form unique perceptions and meanings.

One may criticize the suggestion that violence is a rational choice, on the grounds that it is a tautological argument, which explains everything and predicts nothing. This suggestion cannot be contradicted, and therefore cannot be subject to scientific examination and can be regarded as a mere belief. Is viewing the violence as an irrational choice the only alternative, at least in some cases? This can be examined by identifying and studying seemingly irrational behaviors. Is the case of a person who assumingly loses control and stabs his/her partner an example of irrational choice of action? To find the answer to this question, one must first identify the goal behind the stabbing. A reasonable assumption would be that one who stabs his/her partner wishes to severely injure, and maybe even kill him/her. If that is the case, then the chosen action was rational, because it fulfills the preconditions listed at the onset of this chapter. Some might say that murder is an irrational goal, but let me emphasize that this is not a discussion about the rationality of goals. Goals cannot be evaluated in such terms. They can be judged in normative terms. Here, the term "rationality" addresses only the actions (taken to achieve goals). The loss of control is deliberately mentioned at this point and must be further explained to develop the notion of violence as a rational choice.

Loss of self-control is a claim usually made in retrospect, in an attempt to justify—or rather provide an excuse for—a non-normative behavior, with the purpose of minimizing responsibility, and accordingly, reducing its social and personal cost. However, this is not to say that loss of self-control does not exist. People sometimes do lose control. But what does this mean? Over time, I have come to perceive loss of self-control to be an inappropriate term to describe the mechanism that encourages and directs an individual to take extreme actions that are deemed necessary but are not part of their ordinary behavior. This mechanism strips the individuals of their personality, which is temporarily replaced with a different personality enabling them to act in a way that they would usually avoid. Namely, this mechanism generates a temporary personality metamorphosis, making the required, extraordinary behavior possible. For example, take an ordinary civilian, who, in an uncontrolled moment, murders the driver of a car blocking the driveway. This civilian's everyday personality would be incapable of such behavior, but a temporary metamorphosis enables the performance of a heinous crime. Or take a soldier who, in a moment of courage, storms and kills an enemy. This behavior is a result of the same mechanism as in the previous example. Both examples concern extreme actions taken when in a special state of mind. Most people in an everyday state of mind would be unable to carry out such actions. The difference between the examples lies in how they are typically evaluated and judged. In the first example, one may claim loss of self-control but probably not in the second. This does not mean to say that glorious and atrocious actions are the same, but that in both examples, people deviate from their normative boundaries: the soldier excels and the civilian stoops to the lowest level.

As mentioned, violence against one's partner to achieve a normative or non-normative goal is a rational choice, which stems from a complex emotive-cognitive decision-making process. This rationality is similarly evident in any context, for any purpose, whether it leads to selecting a socially accepted or rejected behavior. Rationality directs the process so that the selected action is perceived to have the best cost/benefit ratio.

Choosing an Action to Achieve a Specific Purpose

The idea that violence is a rational behavior might be considered utterly improbable by numerous people who avoid using violence to achieve goals in general and in intimate relationships in particular. Any behavior, either acceptable or objectionable, stems from a rational choice process, which will be demonstrated first for acceptable behaviors and then for partner violence.

At the end of the penultimate meeting in each of the courses I teach, I spend some time explaining and giving examples to help the students prepare for their final assignment. When this assignment is a test, I present its structure and contents by giving some examples of the questions that they will be required to answer. I usually have the test draft with me. One day, at the end of such a meeting with

students of social deviance, I was in a hurry to get to a faculty council meeting and left the test draft at the podium. Later, when I returned to my office, I was met by a delegation of three students holding a sealed envelope containing the test form. They explained that as soon as I had left the class, they found the form on the teacher's podium. After a short discussion, it was put in a sealed envelope and the three students were assigned the task to ensure that it was given to me without being compromised by any of the students. I thanked them for what they had done.

Following this incident, I used the final meeting with the students to study people's motivating or inhibiting considerations in choosing normative or deviant behaviors. I asked the students why they had avoided using the test draft that I had left exposed on the podium and had decided to return it to me. I thought that one of the students was being somewhat sarcastic when she said:

"You would probably be glad to know that there are some guys in this class who don't need to know the questions in advance to make it on the test."

Another student said that succeeding in the test in such a way would be humiliating and worthless. But most of the students disagreed. One student said:

"I believe that the fact we avoided taking advantage of the situation had to do with the presence of others in the classroom. It would be embarrassing to go through your papers in plain view."

Another student offered a different explanation:

"It would be enough for one of those present to feel uncomfortable with what was happening, and to come to you with the information before or after the actual test, for it to have grave consequences for us. And even if that would not have happened, you would have realized from the results of the test that something out of the ordinary had happened. Either way, we would have been at a loss. The decision to return the draft was the most reasonable in this situation."

Another student exclaimed:

"Even if I had found the draft and no-one knew or found out about it, and even if I knew this was my only way of getting a high score, and even if failing the course would have meant I could not complete my studies, I would not have done it. I couldn't do such a thing."

Others said that succeeding in the test was not as important as avoiding getting themselves "dirty." Some added that if they were going to get dirty, it would have to be for something much more worthwhile. Following this discussion, the students analyzed the situation and identified eight possible scenarios made up of these options: use/not use the test draft, return/not return the test draft to the teacher, and be/not be suspected of cheating. The number of possible scenarios can be reduced if some logical assumptions are made: if the test draft is not used, it should probably be returned; if the test draft is used, it should probably not be returned; and if the test draft is returned, the teacher would probably not suspect that it had been used. Based on these assumptions, the following three plausible scenarios remain: use the draft without being caught, use the draft and get caught, and not use the draft and return it. Table 3.1 sums up the costs and benefits of each scenario as presented by the students.

Table 3.1 Analysis of plausible scenarios

Use the test draft		Return the test draft
In case of detection *Probability: High*	In case of no detection *Probability: Low*	without using it
Damage to self- and social image	Damage to self- and social image	Improved self- and social image
Little investment in preparing for the test	Little investment in preparing for the test	Appreciation by the teacher
Fail the course	High test score	Considerable investment in preparing for the test
Disciplinary action that could lead to suspension		Test scores reflect preparation and ability
Public condemnation		

The table reflects the students' belief that it is highly probable that a deception would be detected. It also shows that in such a case, the students would have to pay dearly: their self- and social image would be damaged; they would fail the course, be suspended and publically denounced. This scenario bears only one insignificant benefit: little preparation for the test. According to the students, it is highly unlikely that a deception would not be detected. In this case, the cost is relatively low, and amounts to damaged self- and social image. The benefits are quite high: little preparation for the test would still result in high scores. The students must make a decision in a situation of high uncertainty: they cannot tell whether they would be caught if they choose to cheat. A risk assessment is required. Based on experience and reason, there is high risk of detection, bearing high costs and little benefit. So eventually, they choose the third scenario: they can have strong control of its outcomes, and hence be highly certain that it will develop as expected. The students preferred little benefit over high cost.

The analysis of possible scenarios and the choice made by the students reveal that cost operates as an inhibitor: willingness to perform a certain action decreases, the greater the probability of high cost. Benefit, on the other hand, operates as an accelerator: willingness to perform a certain action increases, the greater the probability of significant benefit. The action that is eventually chosen is the one bearing the highest ratio of profit and loss potential.

The above-mentioned case analysis aimed to demonstrate which components regulate the process of choosing an action to attain a specific goal. It shows that the process is regulated by rational considerations. It remains to be seen whether the principles guiding the selection process are applicable to all behaviors, goals, and contexts, including partner violence.

The argument that the use of violence to achieve goals is a rational choice has received much attention. For example, Campbell (2005, 2006) considered violence as a preferred strategy when the value of benefit multiplied by the probability of obtaining it exceeds the value of cost multiplied by the probability of incurring it. Her calculation emphasizes the importance of probability evaluations in cost–benefit calculations, in the case of violence as well. Yet, this phrasing presents cost and benefit as having equal status, which is not necessarily the case. Individuals are,

apparently, more sensitive to loss than to benefit, and hence prefer to perform actions that entail minimal expected loss, even if the benefit is inconsiderable (Winstok, 2007). In uncertain conditions, when a probability assessment is called for, people would prefer the option in which, in case of an error, they would bear the smallest cost (Haselton & Nettle, 2006).

However, it may be argued that violence is a behavior often accompanied by strong emotion and that the present approach disregards the role that emotion could play in the process. It is a common notion that emotions drive people to irrational behavior, and that suppressing emotions is a precondition for making a rational choice. If we are to establish the argument of rationality in the selection of violent behavior to achieve goals, we must ask how emotions and rationality coincide.

The Role of Emotions

It is incorrect to assume that emotions drive people to behave irrationally, and that if one wants to make a rational decision, emotions must be set aside. Not only are rational choices not devoid of emotions but they also play a vital role in the process of choosing an action to attain a certain goal—from focusing attention on details most relevant in a situation, to choosing the most suitable behavior to achieve the goals called for in that situation (see, for example: Campos, Mumme, Kermoian, & Campos, 1994; Damasio, 1994; Gross & John, 2003; Lazarus, 1991).

Two emotions that received special attention in the study of violence are anger and fear, which were found to be highly relevant to the development of conflict (Campbell, 2006). Fear is future oriented and emerges when a negative event is perceived as possible or imminent. On the other hand, anger is past oriented and emerges when a negative event has already occurred (Weiner, 1995; Winstok, 2007). Despite the significant differences between the two emotions, they can be experienced simultaneously. For example, a woman who thinks that her husband may cheat on her someday might experience fear and anger simultaneously. Her fear is focused on the expected betrayal ("I am afraid that my husband will cheat on me"). Her anger is focused on her present experience ("the prospect that my husband would cheat on me makes me angry"). Another difference between anger and fear is how these emotions stimulate and regulate behavior. Anger is associated with the tendency to fight, whereas fear is associated with the tendency to flight (Berkowitz, 1993). Studies have shown that anger boosts the frequency and severity of aggression (Potegal & Archer, 2004), whereas fear inhibits them (Campbell, 1999).

As in many other fields, men and women differ in the case of emotional experience (Wintre, Polivy, & Murray, 1990). Women tend to experience emotions more intensely than men (Diener, Sandvik, & Larsen, 1985; Fujita, Diener, & Sandvik, 1991) and this includes negative emotions (Stapley & Haviland, 1989; Tangney, 1990). Campbell (1999) suggested that fear is the mechanism that considers costs. When men and women face the same risks, women would experience fear with greater intensity than men. It has been maintained, in addition, that anger is experienced more strongly by

women (Biaggio, 1989; Brody, Lovas, & Hay, 1995; Fehr, Baldwin, Collins, Patterson, & Benditt, 1999; Kring & Gordon, 1998; Strachan & Dutton, 1992). However, gender differences in the experience of anger are less evident than in experiences of fear (Winstok, 2007).

Partner Violence as a Rational Choice

To demonstrate the argument that choosing violence against one's partner to achieve a normative or non-normative goal is a rational choice in the context of partner conflicts, let me quote three excerpts from an interview with Dror. This is one in a series of interviews conducted with men in violent relationships with their female partners. These interviews were used to study men's perspectives on the escalation of partner conflicts to violence (Winstok, Eisikovits, & Gelles, 2002). At the time of the interview, Dror was 38, had been married for 17 years to Yael, also 38, and was the father of 14-year-old son, Oz and 8-year-old daughter, Noa. Following a severe incident in which Dror beat up his wife, he was referred to a local center for the treatment and prevention of family violence.

Dror: Before I tell you what happened between me and Yael that night 3 months ago, you must understand that I love Yael and that I can't make it through even a week without her.

Interviewer: What do you mean when you say "can't make it?"

Dror: Look, I have known Yael since I was 14; she is the first and only girlfriend I ever had. Come October we will have been together for 24 years. That's almost a quarter of a century and we are still young… life would be unbearable without her… look, before she became pregnant with the little one, she took the big one and moved to her parents'. Three days later, I wanted to hang myself. Finally, Yael realized how much I loved her and she came back home. Her parents stopped bugging us ever since. They don't embrace us, but they accept us.

Dror: The day things got out of hand [Yael was injured and required medical attention] was exactly 20 years since I asked Yael to marry me. Would you like to hear how I proposed?

Interviewer: Yes.

Dror: I took a taxi to her house and took her to the beach. Our best friends were waiting there, dressed as waiters; there was a table, food and music I had arranged in advance. It was very touching. We sat down, I took out a ring and asked her to marry me… she almost fainted. Really, how can you forget this… it was amazing… we celebrated this event every year. Sometimes, we even took a bottle of wine and drove to the beach. Twenty years after that, she forgets… I think she wanted me to think she forgot… women remember everything. Even more so when it is something as important as a marriage proposal.

	By forgetting, she wanted to show me that our relationship is not important to her. That I don't matter to her… Anyway, this hurt and I wanted to hurt her back. We sat watching TV and I was planning what to do in my head.
Interviewer:	What sort of things went through your head?
Dror:	I tried to think what I could do to hurt her without losing her…
Interviewer:	What do you mean when you talk about hurting her?
Dror:	Cause her physical and emotional pain…
Interviewer:	And what do you mean when you say "without losing her?"
Dror:	I'm afraid that I might kill her or injure her and then I would go to prison or she would just leave me. That's why I almost never hit her.
Interviewer:	So what options ran through your head?
Dror:	For example, to tell her that I met someone. But she would never have forgiven me for this. I wanted to hurt her the way she hurt me. To remind her that she loved me…
Interviewer:	So what did you do?
Dror:	I pretended that I had forgotten, too.
Interviewer:	What exactly happened?
Dror:	She was sitting next to me. Suddenly, she stood up, and passing between me and the living room coffee table, she stepped on my foot. Instinctively, I pushed her and she fell on the table. She broke it and cut her hand. She was really bleeding. She screamed, and the kids woke up. I tried to bandage her hand, but she refused. She went into the bathroom with the kids and closed the door. I tried to explain that I hadn't meant to hurt her. I tried to convince her to come out, to let me tend to the wound, but she kept screaming. Finally, I called her parents and they came and took her to the hospital and the kids to their place. That was it. I didn't mean to hurt her like that.
Interviewer:	Had violence occurred between you before this?
Dror:	It had happened, but nothing serious… sometimes, when we would fight, she or I, or both of us, we could push a bit… maybe hit a little, but no more… and it's not that bad. Sometimes it can even help. It's like a wakeup call.
Interviewer:	You say that sometimes you would push her or hit her?
Dror:	She did that too. When she was in labor with the little one, she slapped me in the delivery room in front of the nurses. A real slap! It knocked me to the ground. I think you are getting the wrong impression of me.
Interviewer:	What would you have me think?
Dror:	That the relationship with Yael means a lot to me and that I am willing to do a lot to keep it. When she hurts me, I get mad but I don't hit her. I am afraid to beat her. This can have… It can be a disaster. But when I get frustrated that all my attempts to reach her fail and I explode with anger from the inside, then I can hit her, but not so

	hard as to cause damage. I think it is the same thing with her as well. I don't want you to think that I am a violent man. Yael doesn't think so. What happened that night was an accident, nothing more.
Interviewer:	What happened after your wife's parents took her and the kids?
Dror:	They all put pressure on her to file a complaint against me with the police.
Interviewer:	Who's all?
Dror:	Her parents especially, but also the doctors and nurses at the hospital and the social worker they got her. So she filed a complaint. She regretted it afterwards. We came here for treatment so as not to get in too much trouble. I promise you that no matter what Yael would do, I would never hit her. It's simply not worth it.

The interview with Dror is not exceptional and is representative of many couples' use of violence. This typical case can be used to examine the following series of questions, the answers to which may support or reject the suggestion that violence is a rational choice:

- Was violence a viable option for Dror to use to achieve his goals?
- Did Dror consider several behaviors prior to taking action?
- Did Dror weigh up his actions in terms of cost and benefit?
- Did Dror use violence only when he estimated that the benefit could be high and the cost could be low?
- Did Dror avoid using violence when he estimated the benefit would be low and the cost would be high?
- What was the emotional experience accompanying the decision not to use violence?
- What was the emotional experience accompanying the decision to use violence?
- In the interview with Dror, is there any sign of the possibility that his violence results from an irrational decision-making process?

The answer to the question of whether violence was a conceivable option for Dror to achieve his goals is affirmative. He specifically mentioned this several times. He talked about it when he described his inner dialogue in response to the pain he experienced. "I tried to think what I could do to hurt her without losing her…" Later, he explained that he meant to cause physical and emotional pain. He also mentioned that "I can hit her, but not so hard…" Dror's willingness to use violence is not just an unrealized option. He admitted using violence at times: "Sometimes, when we would fight, she or I, or both of us, we could push a bit… maybe hit a little, but no more…" The answer to the question of whether Dror considered several behaviors prior to taking action is also affirmative. He mentioned that prior to the serious event when his wife eventually needed medical attention, he "tried to think what [he] could do" [to hurt her]. One option he considered and rejected was to "tell her [he] met someone." It is possible that he rejected the use of violence as well. He claimed that after he considered possible actions, he decided to

respond in the same way: "I pretended as if I had forgotten too" [referring to their anniversary].

Did Dror weigh up his actions in terms of cost and benefit? The answer is yes. Several statements from his interview reveal that cost–benefit considerations guided his decision-making process: "I tried to think what I could do to hurt her without losing her…"; "[if I beat her] I'm afraid that I might kill her or injure her and then I would go to prison or she would just leave me." "[I could] tell her that I met someone. But she would never have forgiven me for this." Did Dror only use violence when he estimated that the benefit would be high and the cost would be low? It appears so. He said: "… push a bit… maybe hit a little, but no more… and it's not that bad. Sometimes, it can even help. It's like a wakeup call." Did Dror avoid using violence when he estimated that the benefit would be low and the cost would be high? The answer is also yes. He said: "…I might kill her or injure her and that way, I will go to prison or she would just leave me. That's why I almost never hit her."

What was the emotional experience accompanying Dror's decision not to use violence? Fear seems to be the dominant emotion in inhibiting his aggression. He said: "I fear that…. That's why I almost never hit…" "I am afraid to beat her… It can be a disaster." What was the emotional experience accompanying the decision to use violence? Dror mentioned anger as an emotion that encouraged his aggression: "When I get frustrated that all my attempts to reach her fail and I explode with anger from the inside then I can hit her, but not so hard as to cause damage…"

In the interview, Dror hints at a process in which, trying to achieve his goals, he takes moderate action at first, and only when he fails to achieve the desired goal, turns to more severe actions. This escalatory pattern is the most common in interpersonal conflicts. What is the benefit of this pattern of escalation? Would not it be more effective to take severe action right at the onset of the conflict, as this would have a better chance than moderate action to win the conflict? Evidently, the pattern of escalation is the most economical for achieving conflict goals. One of the costs of violence is the condemnation it entails. If violence is used without prior attempts at achieving the goal using normative or non-normative yet moderate means, this cost can be even higher. There would be more consideration for the aggressor if moderate attempts were made before resorting to violence. At the same time, the victim may receive less sympathy for refusing to accommodate the aggressor when the latter was using moderate means. That is, the extent of condemnation for the aggressor is affected by the attempts made prior to using violence and by the extent of the victim's resistance to these attempts.

The escalatory pattern not only contributes to reducing the cost of attempts to achieve conflict goals, but also might raise the goal's value. The more the actions taken to achieve a goal result in failure, the more the goal's value can increase. First, because goals that are not easily achieved are perceived as having higher value than those that are. Second, the total value of a goal can include its benefit as well as the investment made toward its achievement. Hence, the more one has invested in achieving a goal, the higher its value. Relinquishing a goal that has not been achieved not only means forfeiting its benefit, but also losing the investment made in trying to achieve it as well.

Are there any hints in the interview with Dror of the possibility that the violence results from an irrational decision-making process? The answer lies in the following key sentence in Dror's own words: "When I get frustrated that all my attempts to reach her fail and I explode with anger from the inside, then I can hit her, but not so hard as to cause damage…" Taken as a description of Dror's experience of the event, and not as an excuse for his behavior, this can be understood as if 'loss of control' plays a significant part in Dror's rational decision-making process. His loss of control is the means for him to leap beyond his normative boundaries. This transgression is highly controlled. First, it happens only when "all … attempts … fail." Second, it is limited: "I can hit her, but not so hard as to cause damage." Evidently, Dror's 'loss of control' is highly controllable.

Metamorphosis on the Edge of the Abyss

When I was about 12, a new sewer infrastructure was being laid near my home. A wide, deep trench was dug up at the bottom of the hill where my friends and I used to play. One afternoon, we wanted to get to the other side of the trench. We stood on its bank and wondered if we should jump over it and quickly get to the other side, or go around it, which would take us about 5 or 10 min. We stood there, silent. I was stupid enough to be the first to say that I thought jumping was a bad idea. One of my friends said, defiantly: "Are you scared?" And before I had a chance to say a word, he took a few steps back, stopped for a moment, then ran forward and jumped. He made it successfully to the other side of the trench. I wanted to jump too, because I did not want to look like a coward. Like him, I took a few steps back and stopped. I remember that in the second prior to the jump, I tried to overcome my natural resistance to taking the risk and jumping. When I lingered too long and my other friends started making comments, I took a deep breath, shouted: "Geronimo!" and took a running jump. This jump cost me several stitches and I was grounded for a whole week. I will use this story to demonstrate the need to shed one's original identity, which finds it difficult to perform the action perceived as necessary and to assume an alternative temporary identity that enables this performance. By shouting "Geronimo," I was able to shed my usual personality, my cautious self, which avoids taking risks, and to assume a different, temporary, risk-taking personality that would perform the jump. The difference between the two personalities is mainly in their manner of experiencing and weighing up a situation. My usual, cautious personality perceived the jump as a worthless behavior, whereas my risk-taking personality viewed the jump as beneficial.

Several years ago, my wife was entitled to a small tax refund. She followed instructions, completed the application forms and submitted them to the tax authorities. Several months passed and the clerk who handled the application contacted and informed my wife that the application could not be handled, because her husband (that's me) had an active tax file in another town. The clerk explained that a long list of procedures needed to be performed before my wife's application could be

considered. So we made phone calls and appealed, arranged meetings, met with and talked to various clerks in different cities, wrote letters… and each time we solved one problem, another arose. After little more than 3 years, when we thought that all obstacles had been overcome, we found out that the original application forms submitted to the tax authorities had been lost. We could either give up, or take a deep breath and continue to demand our due. One day, we took a day off work and paid a visit to the tax authority offices in our home town. We were directed to one room after another, and then back to the room where we started. One of the people there who saw us fussing about muttered: "No-one will take notice of you until you overturn a table." At this point, we were worn out and my wife suggested that we go home. I insisted on persevering. I entered the room where we had started the morning, and were welcomed by the clerk's comment: "You again?" She reluctantly listened to our story for a second time and then said that we had to go to a different town to perform a series of necessary procedures and then "we'll see." Up to this moment, I had been extremely civil, but with anger and frustration building up, I restrained myself no longer. I changed to a loud, insistent tone and said: "Your attitude is outrageous and we are not leaving here until we get what is our due." I did not overturn the table but was very determined and clear. To our surprise, the clerk called her manager immediately, demanding his presence. He burst into the room within seconds, as if entering a boxing ring. I described the long list of ill-treatment we had experienced so far in trying to obtain my wife's tax return and stated that we were not willing to take it anymore. He promptly invited us to his office, checked the paperwork, punched his keyboard, looked at his computer screen and exclaimed: "The money will be in your bank account within a week." I asked: "Do you have to yell to be listened to in this place?" and he nodded his head glumly. Two weeks later, the due amount was deposited in our bank account. This story is another example of needing to shed one's original identity, which finds it difficult to perform a seemingly necessary action, and to assume a temporary, alternative identity to enable performance of that action.

The common denominator in both stories is that certain behaviors require special mental preparation. When I was preparing to jump, the mental preparation appeared more deliberately initiated than when I was attempting to obtain that tax return. But I doubt that this is not a retrospective construction of events. It is possible that I want to remember myself in the jump story as overcoming my fear, and the tax return story as anger and frustration overcoming me. It is possible that I am proud of the first case and uphold it, whereas I am not proud of the second case and reject it. But in both cases, the metamorphosis mechanism allowed me to perform the required behavior. Dror describes a similar process with an interesting twist on "losing control." He says: "I can hit her, but not so hard as to cause damage." What can we take this to mean? Can we conclude that people 'lose control' within self-set boundaries? Just as Dror chose to stop at a certain point, so did I, despite my special mental state at the tax authorities' office, and decided to go no further than raising my voice. For example, I would not have overturned a table. Likewise, I would not have jumped if the trench had been any wider. The ability to control the loss of control seriously contradicts the suggestion of irrationality.

In interviews with men and women cohabiting in violence, I encountered many references to loss of control: "I felt as though I was going to explode," "I blew a fuse," "when it hits me, there is nothing in the world that can stop it." References to control were made alongside references to loss of control: "I never lose control in front of the children;" "even my madness has boundaries;" "I might be crazy but I'm not stupid;" "if I try hard enough, I can stop myself." These interviews taught me that we are not dealing with loss of control, but rather with a temporary, voluntary forfeit of control. A car can be used as a metaphor to explain my point. It has a gas pedal for acceleration and a brake pedal for deceleration. When the driver shifts his foot from the deceleration to the acceleration pedal, does the car lose its brakes and spin out of control? Naturally, the answer is no. Similarly, in a conflict when someone chooses to 'let go of their brakes and hit the gas pedal', they do not lose control. They just choose to accelerate the deterioration of the conflict. The brakes are still there, functional, and ready for use.

Between Deterrence and Rationality in Partner Violence

In 1901, a French delegation of scholars headed by Jacques de Morgan discovered a diorite plaque, 2.2 m (7.2 feet) tall with 282 inscribed laws set by Hammurabi, King of Babylon (1792–1750 BC). The Hammurabi law described offences and penalties and was placed in the temple of the Babylonian god Marduk, to deter people from perpetrating these offences (Johns, 2000). The plaque indicates the long-standing concept that cost and benefit considerations play a role in people's readiness to offend: the higher the cost of a crime, the lower the willingness to engage in it. In other words, offending is based on rationality. Today, after thousands of years, this notion still remains valid and is relevant for partner violence as well. The study of deterrence not only indicates the rationality of partner violence but also provides an opportunity to reveal the nature of this rationality through the causes, forms, and outcomes of deterrence.

The study of deterrence in partner violence is mainly focused on men using violence against their female partners. It is maintained that men would avoid violent behavior if they perceive its cost as severe and certain (Williams, 2005). In this context, the first line of deterrence is based on women's willingness and readiness to act against their violent partners and includes seeking the support of informal and formal agents, and/or leaving the violent partner. All three "open the door" of the dyad: in the first two, the opening door allows informal and formal outsiders in, and the last lets an insider, the woman, out. Apparently, those who are violent view the closed door as a shield, and opening it threatens them. Straus titled one of his books "Behind Closed Doors" (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006 [1980]) acknowledging the closed door's central role in encouraging and perpetuating the use of aggression. This acknowledgment encapsulated the understanding that partner violence results from rational cost/benefit calculations.

To examine the role of the door in one's aggressive tendency toward the partner, I conducted a study of a sample of 218 men (Winstok, in press). It examined the association between men's evaluation of their partner's willingness to breach the dyadic boundaries in response to aggression, and their evaluation of their own tendency to use aggression against their partner. Findings indicated that the men tended to restrain aggression if they evaluated that in response, their partners would involve informal and formal agents, or would even leave them. Based on these findings, it can be hypothesized that such actions by women threaten, deter, and restrain men's aggressive tendencies.

Final Comments

As long as partner violence meets the requirements for it to be worthwhile, it will persist. If it is to subside, its appeal must be reduced. For many, an increase in the cost of using violence can achieve this goal. This, however, is not the only possible course of action. To find other ways to cope with rational violence, the conditions for perpetrators to perceive goals achieved by violence as worthless should be identified, studied, and implemented in treatment.

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Chapter 4
Partner Violence as Planned Behavior

The discussion in Chap. 2 on motivation for dominance and control led to an examination of violence as rational behavior in Chap. 3. Let us now broaden our perspective and address the factors that play a role in the choice to use partner violence.

The Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010), which was later expanded and renamed The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), is relevant for the study of partner violence. This is a general behavior theory, which does not focus on specific behaviors or contexts, and its underlying principle is that when a potential for a certain behavior (for example, hurting one's partner) exists, and the appropriate conditions for this potential to materialize exist, there is a good chance that the behavior will be used. Both versions of the theory have been implemented throughout the years in numerous areas of research. The theory can be applied to partner violence because of its generality, its empirical base and relative simplicity.

Hurt Potential and Availability of Conditions for Its Materialization

The common principle that "once violent, always violent" means that if violent behavior was used in the past, and if the causes of the past violence remain unchanged, it can be assumed that the violent behavior is likely to continue in the future (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 2000; Feld & Straus, 1990). In most cases, the combination of causes that bring about partner violence is not completely known or clear. Therefore, evaluations of the probability of the occurrence of future violence are based, at least in part, on behavioral history. Predictions based solely on behavioral history are prone to false-negative and false-positive errors, at least in cases in which the unknown causes of past violent behavior have changed. One critical example is that this approach will always fail to predict the first time that violence is used. This and other limitations drove me to search for a safer alternative for predicting partner violence, which would, at least, reduce the chances for a false-negative error. I was looking for a major measurable factor that would reflect the potential for violence
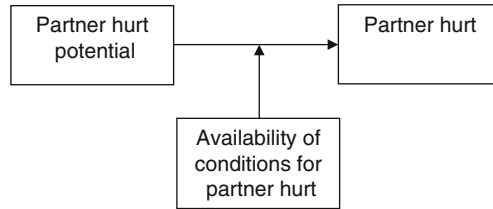
Fig. 4.1 Partner hurt prediction model

comprehensively, without relying completely on past behaviors. I assumed that for the partner to be hurt, the potential for hurt is needed as well as appropriate conditions for this potential to materialize. In this context, partner hurt potential represents the extent of readiness to use violence. The potential is high in the presence of high readiness to use violence. Availability of conditions that enable one to hurt one's partner stands for the extent to which it is possible and desirable to hurt the partner. Availability is high when situational conditions call for one partner to hurt another (for example, when the potential perpetrator's partner wishes to leave him/her) and enable it (for example, when the potential perpetrator and victim are alone together and no one else is there to intervene). Availability is low when a partner is prevented from hurting the other (for instance, when the potential perpetrator is incarcerated).

An interviewee in a research I conducted told me the following story that gives a good example of the meaning of hurt potential and conditions for its materialization:

"Friends of ours invited some couples to celebrate New Year's Eve. I asked my mother-in-law to come over to babysit our daughter, and we went. I may have had a little too much to drink. I'm not sure. Anyway, at one point, we started discussing sex and one of the women said that all men have experienced impotence at least once in their lives. The men in the group said that this was not always true and that she was just saying it. Without thinking, I said: 'I can attest from experience that it is true'. One of my husband's friends said to him: 'Danny, are you having problems? Need some help?' Danny just smiled and didn't say anything. I knew I should not have said that and that he would not forget it. He would settle the score with me when we were alone. He can be very violent, but only at home when we are alone and no-one is watching. When we came back home, I asked his mother to stay the night. She agreed, and asked no questions. I know I married an aggressive person… but usually, he never even thinks of hurting me, because he has no reason to."

The woman's slip of the tongue could be perceived by her partner as an insult calling for a violent response (a precondition for realizing the potential). She describes hurt as follows: "He can be very violent… I know I married an aggressive person…" and the conditions for the materialization of the potential are described as follows: "He would settle the score with me when we were alone. He can be very violent, but only at home when we are alone and no-one is watching."

Figure 4.1 provides a graphic description of partner hurt factors. The path that leads from the "partner hurt potential" box to the "partner hurt" box depicts the

Table 4.1 Predicting the occurrence and severity of partner hurt

| Hurt potential | Availability of hurt-enabling conditions | |
	Low	High
Low	Low occurrence and severity	High occurrence, low severity
High	Low occurrence, high severity	High occurrence and severity

argument that partner hurt potential increases the probability of hurting one's partner. Nevertheless, actual hurt of the partner depends on the path leading from the "availability of conditions for partner hurt" box. The model represents the perception that given the appropriate conditions, the potential for violence is materialized. Without hurt potential, even if the conditions that enable it exist, no partner violence will occur. If hurt potential exists, but conditions do not allow it, partner violence will not occur there either. Only when both factors exist will partner violence ensue.

In keeping with my in-depth-interview-based work with my colleagues, Professors Eisikovits and Gelles (Winstok, Eisikovits, & Gelles, 2002), it can be assumed that the hurt potential can have implications for the severity of hurt, and the availability of conditions for hurt may have implications for occurrence of hurt. These factors can be expressed on different levels. For demonstration purposes, the factors will be presented dichotomously (on two levels): high and low potential for partner hurt; high and low availability of conditions enabling partner hurt. Table 4.1 presents the potential consequences of the two levels of violence factors (high/low) for the occurrence and severity of partner hurt.

Theory of Planned Behavior and Its Application in the Study of Partner Violence

The above-mentioned concept is consistent with Ajzen's Planned Behavior Theory (1991). According to this theory, behavior is the manifest, observable response in a given situation with respect to a given target. Intention plays a key role in the definition of behavior from this perspective. The general definition of behavior according to Ajzen can be applied also to partner violence. This is evident in the definition of violence by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz (2006 [1980]). They argued that violence is an intentional behavior, or an action perceived as being intentionally performed to inflict physical pain or injury on another person. Although the Theory of Planned Behavior is highly relevant to the study of partner violence, it was almost never fully or expressly implemented in research. I found only two formal implementations of the theory: one in a study by Tolman, Edleson, and Fendrich (1996) and another in a study by Kernsmith (2005), who also argued that many intervention programs in partner violence are based on the Theory of Planned Behavior. Some empirical references were made to parts of the theory in the study of partner violence but without it being mentioned explicitly.

The Theory of Planned Behavior regards "behavioral intention" to be an immediate precursor of a specific action taken. However, the theory also suggests that the relationship between behavioral intention and the action taken depends on "actual behavioral control," which includes skills, resources, and other preconditions required for the action to be performed. In their absence, the intention will remain unrealized. This means the theory is consistent with the notion that behavior is a materialized potential. In the context of partner violence, behavioral intention could represent partner hurt potential, and actual behavioral control could represent the availability of conditions that enable partner hurt.

The behavioral intention can be described and conceptualized by the sum total of its components, although this would unlikely be an exhaustive description. The theory includes several interrelated components, which propel the behavioral intention: (1) attitude toward a behavior (positive or negative) that stems from a subjective evaluation of the expected results of an action (behavioral beliefs); (2) subjective norms—the social pressure to take or refrain from an action, which stems from perceived judgment of the action by significant others (normative beliefs); and (3) perceived behavioral control derived from the belief regarding the existence of factors that assist or hinder taking an action (control beliefs). Behavioral control is featured twice in the theory; first as a subjective factor influencing behavioral intention and then as an objective factor, a precondition for the materialization of behavioral intention. When the action is taken with appropriate judgment of reality, there will be no significant discrepancy between the two. It should be noted that ultimately, these are motivational factors well suited to the ideas discussed in Chap. 2. In addition, it should be noted that in the study of motivation, there is a common differentiation between internal and external motivation. This distinction is clearly evident in the Theory of Planned Behavior: the first factor in behavioral intention represents internal motivation, whereas the second factor represents external motivation.

In the context of partner violence, the hurt potential (behavioral intention) will increase:

- The more that one believes that hurting the partner can be effective for the achievement of goals, regarding it as a positive action (or not regarding it as a negative one).
- The more that one believes that significant others, such as relatives, neighbors, and friends, support hurting the partner (or do not object to it). Hence, if any social pressure is experienced, it is to perform such actions.
- The more that one believes that the power of those who help to hurt the partner exceeds that of those who impede the hurt, hence believing in one's high capability to perform such an action.

Hurt potential derives from the components described above but exceeds the sum total of its components. It represents readiness to hurt one's partner.

The Theory of Planned Behavior states that an action taken is an observed, exhibited response to a given situation that aims to achieve a given goal. The theory also asserts that behavioral intention is the most immediate factor preceding an action taken.
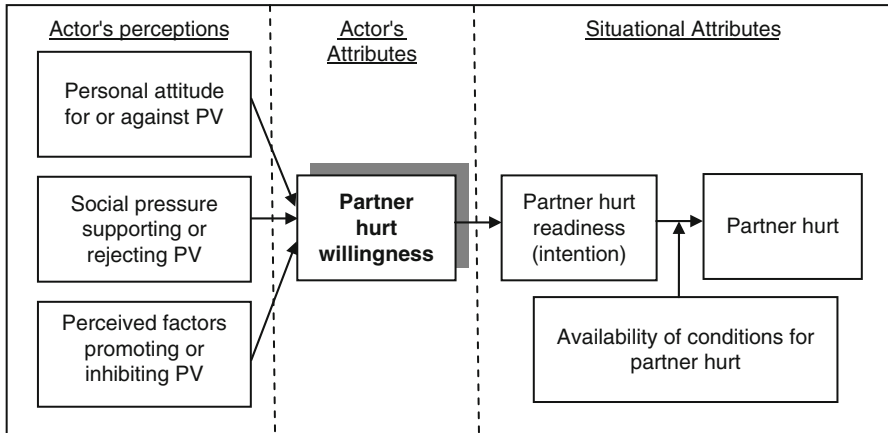
Fig. 4.2 Application of planned behavior theory to partner violence

It follows that the major difference between behavior and behavioral intention is in their exhibition and observability. Unlike actual behavior, behavioral intention is covert. But similarly, both are situational, responsive, and goal-oriented. If an intention is responsive, it forms only following a certain occurrence and ends once it is implemented by a behavior. Based on the above interviewee report, her partner's intention to hurt her arose only after she made a comment that embarrassed him. Prior to this, her partner had no intention of hurting her, and the intention would materialize only if the hurt was actualized, which is when the intention would cease to exist. Therefore, as with behavior, behavioral intention depends on the situation and is not a hurt potential but rather a situational product.

Hurt potential is not situational; it exists even when there is no reason for its materialization. Therefore, a different trait should be defined, which is not situational and is independent of motivation but is an existing trait that triggers readiness in the case of relevant motivation. The woman, whose story was brought to demonstrate partner hurt potential, said of her partner: "He can be very violent." This statement addresses his general tendency to hurt her, his hurt potential. This potential is present even when the motive for its materialization is not. This tendency is not directly specified in the planned behavior theory. According to the theory, the perpetrator's perceptions, including the personal attitude for or against the behavior, experienced social pressure supporting or rejecting it, and perceived factors that promote or impede the behavior, directly affect behavioral intention (readiness), which is one of the situational attributes. It is proposed to update the theory's application to partner violence by adding the general tendency "partner hurt willingness" as a personality trait (attribute) mediating between the components of perceived partner hurt readiness. Figure 4.2 presents the updated theoretical model.

This model presents four steps in the materialization of an action. The first is associated with action-supporting perceptions (actor's perceptions). The second is associated with the general willingness to perform an action. The third is associated

with actual readiness to perform the action and the fourth with the performance of an action. The above-mentioned interviewee said: "I know I married an aggressive person… but usually he never even thinks of hurting me, because he has no reason to." Her statement makes the distinction between readiness and willingness. Willingness is hypothetical, in essence, because unlike readiness, it is independent of a situational motive for violence. The willingness factor was implemented in my studies on partner conflicts that escalate to violence (e.g., Winstok, 2010; Winstok & Enosh, 2007; Winstok & Straus, 2012). In these studies, I asked the participants to evaluate how they might respond if their partner hurt them. As a rule, I asked them to estimate their response to several forms of violence, including verbal violence (how they would respond if their partner hurt them verbally, for example, by shouting at them, cursing, or insulting them); mild physical violence (how they would respond if their partner mildly hurt them physically, for example by pulling, pushing, or restricting their movement); and severe physical violence (punching and kicking). Research participants assessed their responses to the various forms of aggression using a 5-point scale of increasing aggressive response: (1) I would respond nonaggressively, (2) I would respond less aggressively, (3) I would respond with the same level of aggression, (4) I would respond somewhat more aggressively, and (5) I would respond much more aggressively. Chapter 9 provides a detailed description of such a study.

Final Comments

The argument at the beginning of this chapter is that for the partner to be hurt, hurt potential is needed as well as appropriate conditions for this potential to materialize. This argument mainly enables the prediction of partner violence but does not explain how the interaction between potential and conditions generates this behavior. It is widely accepted that behavior results from complex cognitive processes. The Theory of Planned Behavior, as applied herewith to partner violence, does not specify or describe the process leading to the behavior. It only presents the factors preceding an unknown process, which, in certain probabilities, can lead to partner violence. Therefore, this theory is but one step on the way to a thorough in-depth understanding of partner violence.

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Chapter 5
The Process Leading to Partner Violence

The Theory of Planned Behavior presented and discussed in the previous chapter demonstrates that partner hurt potential and appropriate conditions for its materialization promote violence. Yet, this theory fails to answer how this potential materializes, namely, to describe the process leading to violence. The following chapter attempts to propose a theory for this process.

Partner conflicts may arise when one partner experiences a discrepancy between his or her view of desirability and availability, and perceives the other partner as responsible for this gap (Winstok & Perkis, 2009). However, not every such gap would necessarily create a conflict. At times, such gaps might facilitate a reconsideration of expectations, which in turn, narrows the gap and renders the conflict unnecessary. A conflict might evolve when a discrepancy appears to require intervention and correction. When conflicts do arise, they can be resolved by normative means and can also remain unresolved. Not all conflicts must be settled. Numerous couples have normative, satisfying relationships even without complete agreement. Yet, not all conflicts are conducted or straightened out peacefully. Sometimes, one or both partners try to force their position on the other through non-legitimate means.

The abovementioned experienced discrepancy could serve as the onset of a possible conflict that might lead to partner violence. Focus on this process could explain how partner conflicts arise, evolve and end—with or without violence. This approach places emphasis on the situational context of actions taken in conflict, including violent behaviors. It does not maintain that violence results solely from a situation, but that understanding the situation is highly relevant for understanding the violence. Although the significance of the process through which violence arises has been recognized, and the theoretical and empirical status of the process is established in other fields dealing with human aggression (for example: Potegal & Knutson, 1994) it has received little attention in the study of partner violence. One of the main reasons for this could be the association of violence with the discrepancy between what is desirable and what is available. Such discrepancy could be interpreted as putting the blame and responsibility for the aggression on the victim, whose conduct supposedly created a gap in the aggressor's expectations,

allegedly inviting a violent response. Simply put, this association could be wrongly interpreted, as if implying that the victim "got what he/she deserved."

One of the prominent models that can assist in understanding how conflicts arise, evolve and terminate was proposed by Dodge and colleagues (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1980). Named the Social Information Processing Model, it was based on the assumption that people's behavior is crucially influenced by how they perceive and experience, and ascribe meaning to their surroundings, as well as their goals and their ability to manipulate the situation. This model was applied to and supported by research on violence among children. Although the model received little attention in the study of partner violence, it can be highly relevant.

Crick and Dodge proposed a model suggesting that each person has a database of social knowledge and information accumulated over the years (latent mental structure) such as schemata and scripts (Shank & Abelson, 1977) and working models of relationships (Bowlby, 1969). This record influences each phase of information processing. They considered violence to be a non-adaptive behavior, and therefore saw it as resulting from a disruption in one or more of the information processing phases. Their model describes the structures and sequences leading people to produce awareness (process) and behavior (output) based on stimuli (input). Input stimuli that can be interpreted as a discrepancy between what is desirable and what is available mark the beginning of a social information processing loop that results in behavior. One event can consist of numerous such loops. The model determines that the loops have a uniform structure, which includes the same stages, yet the content addressed by each stage changes. The model served mainly to study and explain violence among children and youth, but could also contribute to the research and understanding of partner violence.

Mental Representation of the Situation

The first two information processing stages create a mental representation of a person's social situation with which he/she needs to cope. In the first phase, Encoding of Cues, people focus and selectively receive clues that indicate the situation. Simply put, it is a process of collecting information. Information sources can be external (what is happening around me) and internal (how I feel about it). In the second phase, Interpretation of Cues, the collected and assimilated information is interpreted. During interpretation, relevant knowledge is retrieved from memory (the database) for guidance as to how to interpret and understand the social situation. Studies, mainly of children, show that these stages carry the potential for violent behavior. Those who use violence, as compared to those who do not, invest less time and effort in collecting situational cues, and assign higher value to internal rather than external cues while interpreting a situation. Their attention is more focused on aggressive than on nonaggressive cues. They rely more than others on cues that appear at the end of a social interaction and less on those at its beginning (Dodge & Newman, 1981; Dodge & Tomlin, 1987; Gouze, 1987; Strassberg & Dodge, 1987).

When beginning a lecture on the first phase of the social information processing model, I usually stand in front of the podium to allow my students to see me head to toe. A minute or two later, I go behind the podium, which hides my lower body. I then ask the students if, without guessing, they can remember the color of my shoes. No student, as yet, has known the color for certain. Sometimes, when it is clear that my shoes have gone unnoticed, my teaching assistant comes in and sits down. It is not surprising that most of the students stare at her shoes as she walks in. At this point, I explain the demonstration: the color of shoes, including my own, was irrelevant information at the beginning of the lecture. The fact is that none of the students could remember it. When the teaching assistant entered the class, shoe color was the center of attention, making this a highly relevant issue. Accordingly, everyone, without exception, noticed the color of her shoes. This exercise demonstrates the first stage of social information processing, during which people focus their attention on details they perceive as relevant to the situation at hand, and ignore other details they deem unimportant at that time. No-one noticed the color of my shoes when this was an insignificant issue. When it became of value for handling the situation, everyone paid attention to it.

Once, following such a demonstration, a female student half-jokingly remarked:

"Even if shoe color had not been the issue under discussion, and your assistant had walked into class late, most of the female students would have noticed the design and color of her shoes. It so happens that women are interested in shoes."

This comment hints at gender differences in attention to specifics in social situations. It could also indicate that data collection derives from a complex combination of personality traits and social situation.

The identification of a discrepancy between a desirable and an available situation can mark the beginning of conflict (Winstok, 2008). In essence, a conflict is an emergency that calls for a quick, decisive response. The need for a prompt response on the one hand, and the need for an effective one on the other, can be contradictive. For a response to handle the dangers of a conflict most effectively, it must stem from a thorough understanding of the situation. Yet, such understanding requires time and effort, which might cause a delayed response, which in turn, might cause further deterioration in the situation at hand. Experience shows that in emergencies, the importance of a swift response outweighs all other considerations, including effectiveness. Therefore, the data collection phase must be brief, and is achieved by paying attention only to details deemed relevant. Past experiences in similar situations replace or compensate for the limited attention and situational data taken into consideration. Emotions are a central component of decision making, ensuring the process takes place as described (e.g., Campos, Mumme, Kermoian, & Campos, 1994; Damasio, 1994; Gross & John, 2003; Lazarus, 1991). They help to focus attention on details, such as what the opponent is saying, his/her tone of voice, what his/her facial expression and body gestures convey, what means of defense and offence are available and the possible escape routes. Anger might focus attention on the details most relevant in the case of a fight, whereas fear might focus attention on the details more relevant to flight (Berkowitz, 1993; Campbell, 1999; Potegal & Archer, 2004;

Winstok, 2007a). Emotions speed up the information collection process, because they switch it on to automatic, or semi-automatic, pilot mode. It is important to emphasize that this phase is focused on data collection, and does not deal with interpretation. However, this distinction between data collection and interpretation is rather simplistic because not only does data collection affect situational interpretation, interpretation also impacts which data are collected, and together, they form the mental representation of the situation.

A woman I treated in a mental health center described an event in which she confronted her partner due to his infidelity. When I asked her whether he admitted to having an intimate relationship with another woman, she answered in the negative. When I asked what made her think he was being unfaithful, she said:

"I called him up on his lunch break and his phone was unavailable."

When I proceeded to ask whether there were additional signs of unfaithfulness, she said no, and added:

"That was enough for me."

Another man whom I treated at the same center described the beginning of a conflict with his partner:

"When I came home, one look was enough to see that she had been doing nothing the whole day long. The house was a mess. She looked at me and immediately ran to the bathroom and locked the door. I asked her, what's up with you, and she said that she didn't want to get beaten up. On what grounds did she decide I was going to beat her up? This got me even more worked up."

Common to these two cases is the factual base used by the clients. In the first example, a conversation that had not taken place was enough for the woman to establish a suspected betrayal. In the second example, one look around the room was sufficient for the man to determine that his partner was neglecting her duties. His words implied that one look was also enough for his partner to realize that he was going to physically hurt her. This interpretation cannot establish whether the clients' perception of the situation was realistic or not, but it can demonstrate the narrow factual basis that underlies their perspective. It can be assumed that the first phase of the social information process might influence the enhancement or inhibition of violence. The probability that violence will be used would increase, the narrower the focus of attention on the situation is and the less time is allocated to its cues (Dodge & Newman, 1981; Gouze, 1987).

The mental representation of the social situation stems from the interpretation given to the pieces of information sampled from the situation. As much as information collection is not an "objective" procedure, neither is interpretation (Weiner & Graham, 1984). Subjectivity stems also from the circular relationship between the two phases. From the first example, we can assume that the man's lack of availability on the phone during lunch break led the woman to conclude that he was being unfaithful. In other words, the "facts" guided her "interpretation." Her attention to his telephone availability might also be associated with her perception that he was cheating. In other words, the "interpretation" led to the choice of "facts" on which to focus. It is more likely that both phases feed each other. These suggestions regarding the mental representation of the situation lead the discussion about social

information processing to one of the basic concepts stemming from the model: "hostile attribution of intent" at times also referred to as "hostile attribution bias" (Orobio de Castro, Veerman, Koops, Bosch, & Monshouwer, 2002). The difference between the terms is that while the first is not judging the attribution as realistic or not, the second assumes that the attribution is biased (unrealistic).

To explain the idea of hostile attribution of intent during my lectures, I ask the students to imagine specific situations, which I describe in great detail, in which someone hurts them. I leave the intention of the one who hurt them unspecified and vague. I then ask: Did that person hurt you on purpose? Different people give different answers, despite being presented with the same details. I frequently use the following example:

"Imagine you enter a café, sit down and wait for the waiter. The café is full of customers and the waiter is very busy. Once in a while, you raise your hand to signal to the waiter that you would like to order. The waiter does not respond to your signals and continues serving other customers. You notice that the waiter is now serving customers who came in after you. When he walks past you again, you not only raise your hand, but you also talk to him, explaining that you have been waiting patiently for a very long time. He approaches your table and asks, in an apparently impatient tone, what you would like to order, and you order a cup of coffee. The minutes go by but no coffee arrives. You turn to the waiter again, asking for your order. He explains that he is not the one making the coffee and asks you to be patient. Some more minutes pass and you remind the waiter again. The waiter, with apparent reluctance, goes to check on your order and a minute later, returns with your coffee. He puts the cup on the table and some drops of coffee splash, staining your shirt. He doesn't even apologize, and goes off to serve other customers."

Following this description, my question to the students is, were the waiter's actions, which resulted in the coffee splashing and the shirt being stained, performed with hostile intent, or was this an innocent work accident? The class is usually divided into three fairly equal groups. One group believes that there was no hostile intention in the waiter's behavior. Another believes that there was hostile intent, and the third group is unsure. As mentioned, the same information was available to all of the students, yet their interpretation was not uniform.

Here is another example that I often use:

"Imagine that you are going to buy a weekend newspaper at the kiosk. You pick up a copy and hand a 20 dollar bill to the cashier, a male in his twenties. He puts the bill in the cash register, and gives you change from five dollars. You politely tell him that you gave him a 20. He tells you that you are mistaken, and proceeds to serve other customers."

At this point, I ask the students to evaluate whether they think he did this on purpose. Once again, there is no unanimity among the students, although the same details were provided to all. Sometimes, I change the story slightly, and describe the cashier as a female. It is interesting to note the decrease in the number of students who are certain that it is a scam.

I brought two different examples to elucidate the meaning of hostile attribution of intent, because I wish to demonstrate another principle. It so happens that there

is great consistency in the students' responses to the two examples. Most of those who state that there is hostile intent in the first example, find such intent also in the second example. How can this consistency be explained, and from where is it derived? Both examples share a vagueness regarding the intentions behind the behavior of the person who harmed them. The fact that the responses are consistent demonstrates that each student has a preferred approach to handling vague situations. Hence, it can be assumed that hostile attribution of intent is not only a feature of a specific situation, but also, and maybe chiefly, an approach to interpreting social situations. How can the consistency of attributing hostile intent be explained? Naturally, it can be described as a personality trait. Another possibility is that some people interpret the intentions of others based on their own goals and coping capabilities. Those who seek to avoid conflicts, or who have limited ability to handle confrontations, might tend to refrain from attributing hostile intent, thus avoiding the need for confrontation. Therefore, it is possible that weak motivation for conflict prevents hostile attribution of intent. On the other hand, strong motivation promotes hostile attribution of intent.

The term hostile attribution of intent is usually used in retrospect, because it interprets an event that already happened (as opposed to prospective use, which addresses an event that might happen). As a retrospective term in the context of intimate relationships, it deals with the question: "Did the partner who hurt you do it on purpose?" In a prospective hostile attribution, the question would be: "Is it your partner's intention to hurt you?" Both uses of the term share an evaluation of attribution of intent. The main difference is in the timing of the harm. Retrospective hostile attribution of intent addresses a given situation, because the harm has already been done. In prospective hostile attribution of intent, harm is a potential that may materialize. Therefore, with the retrospective hostile attribution of intent, the intent is unknown, but the severity of the harm is a given. With the prospective attribution of hostile intent, both the intent and the severity of the harm are unknown. The approach presented here views intention as the focus of the retrospective term, and the severity of the expected harm, namely, dangerousness, as the focus of the prospective term. The association between retrospective and prospective attribution of hostile intent requires theoretical and empirical examination. Yet, it can be assumed that both deal with certainty. Hostile attribution of intent deals with the certainty of intent, and dangerousness attribution deals with the certainty of harm. The retrospective hostile attribution of intent has received wide attention in the body of knowledge on violence, but not in the intimate context. The prospective attribution of hostile intent is a new proposition that has received no attention at all.

The following story demonstrates retrospective hostile attribution of intent. It was told to me by Sharon, a friend with whom I attended graduate school:

"We agreed to celebrate Passover at Gil's parents [Sharon's partner] one year and at my parents' the next. This year, it was my parents' turn. He would not admit it, but I know that he does not like my parents and doesn't hide this from them. When we get together with my parents, he is grumpy, makes an angry face, and sits down on the side, not talking to them; very unfriendly. I don't like it at all that he is like that with my family. Before Passover eve, I asked him to make an effort for me this

year and be nice to my family. He looked at me, smiled and promised to be nice. I hoped that he really meant it. It is very important to me to show my parents, especially my mother, how successful I am, in life, with my family, school and work… On the way to my parents', he was in a good mood and I had the feeling that maybe this time, it would be OK. Before we got there, I reminded him and asked him again to be nice to my family. I was quite stressed about it. But when we came in, he didn't turn away when my mom kissed him and even kissed her back. After that, he looked at me with an amused smile… Up to dinner time, everything was OK. The trouble began when my mom served gefilte-fish. He hates it. I told my mom in advance not to serve it to him, as he doesn't like this stuff. But you can't refuse food at my mom's. She insisted that he at least try one bite and put a big piece on his plate. This is when the trouble started. I could see he was not pleased at all. I touched his knee and then whispered in his ear: 'Just act as if you are trying it. You don't have to finish it, just don't insult her'. He whispered back: 'I am not touching this disgusting stuff'. I signaled him with my knee that I am really asking him not to make me ashamed of him. The moment I looked away, he flung the plate off the table. The plate smashed on the floor and chunks of fish stuck to my dress. It was clear to me that he did this on purpose. I was thinking that all that matters now is to let this go and continue with the dinner as if nothing had happened. But inside, I was exploding. I smiled and told everybody it was my fault and that I inadvertently dropped the plate. He looked at me in silence. I think he realized he was going to pay dearly for it… All evening, it was eating me up inside, but I didn't show it. On the way back home, I couldn't say a word, I was so angry, and I was afraid that if we started fighting, he would cause an accident, so I waited till we got home. I wasn't going to say nothing about it… He had to suffer like I did. Suddenly, in the middle of the silence, he started laughing and said: 'Sharon, wow, neat trick…' 'What trick?' I asked. 'Throwing the fish plate off the table like that…' I was astounded. He must think he married a dummy… It is my fault; I showed him he could do whatever he wants. I swore, then and there, that it was the last time he would do this to me."

I would like to use Sharon's story to focus on her assessment that Gil flung the gefilte-fish plate off the holiday table on purpose. This is a vague incident, in which the situational cues are insufficient to establish unequivocal intent. It is a case of double doubt: It is unclear whether Gil threw the plate, and even if he did, it is uncertain that the act was intentional. Sharon's interpretation of the situation is that not only did he do it; he also did it on purpose. Thus, Sharon's interpretation can be regarded as a retrospective hostile attribution of intent ("did the partner who hurt you do it on purpose?"). What were the situational cues that led Sharon to this conclusion? Her conclusion appears to be based on two "facts:" Gil does not like Sharon's parents, and Gil refuses to eat the gefilte-fish. These facts coincide with her interpretation of the situation, but are insufficient to determine that Gil threw the plate off the table on purpose. What, then, did convince Sharon that Gil did it on purpose? This is a difficult question to answer, based on the information at hand. It is possible that for Sharon, this is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Such prophecy underlies prospective hostile attribution of intent ("does your partner intend to hurt you?")

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Hanny, demonstrating a typical form of prospective attribution of hostile intent. When the interview was taken, Hanny was 29, married for the second time. She had no children. Her first marriage to Giora had ended on account of his infidelity and violence. A year following their divorce, she met Shalom, to whom she had been married for 6 months. Hanny described:

"I brought all the fears Giora instilled in me into my relationship with Shalom. At first, I was tremendously sensitive to each little thing Shalom did… I'd watch how he walked, looked at me, talked, what he was saying. I'd check his pockets, the last calls he made on the phone, to whom he was speaking, when and for how long. Then I'd sit down and analyze every little detail. I believed that he loved me and that I needn't worry, but it was stronger than me. I was waiting for him to hurt me severely at any moment. I didn't explain, and he didn't understand, and this created a lot of tension and conflicts between us. I was so afraid of getting hurt that I couldn't tell him I loved him. I was afraid that this would give him the confidence he needed to hurt me. It drove me crazy that he was willing to live with a woman who wouldn't tell him she loved him. What did this say about him? Anyhow, I didn't tell him about my fears. Once, I wanted to see what he thought about this, so I pretended to be talking about a friend, who was afraid that her husband would hurt her. I was surprised to see him take interest. He asked if her fears were justified and I said that I didn't know. Finally, he said that if the fears were unjustified, then the girl is paranoid and he feels sorry for the guy. His response made me even more nervous."

The common denominator between Sharon and Hanny's stories is that in both cases, they attributed hostile intentions to their partners. The difference was that Sharon found hostility in an event that happened (retrospective attribution), whereas Hanny attributed it to events that had not yet happened (prospective attribution). To be precise, prospective hostile attribution of intent can be found in Sharon's story as well. It might also be a key factor in her retrospective hostile attribution of intent. Sharon's past experience with her partner and Hanny's past experience with her former partner play a key role in their evaluation of and behavior in their present relationships with their partners. Evidently, retrospective and prospective attribution of hostile intent feed each other, and their presence in intimate relationships is a key component in the development of conflicts that escalate to violence.

These examples also demonstrate that people tend to stick to their hostile attribution of intent, and any additional information that comes in after an attribution was made would serve to substantiate rather than refute it. Once Sharon determined that Gil flung the plate on purpose, she would not reexamine her opinion and would interpret any piece of new information in a manner that would support it. When Gil's response implied that he had not thrown the plate off the table, Sharon would not consider this option and even took it as an insult. This is not to say that hostile attribution of intent in general, and that made by Sharon and Hanny in particular, are wrong; it just helps us understand how these attributions are made and their implications for social information processing.

After presenting the case of the "waiter who sprays coffee" and the "cashier who swindles with change," I ask my students: "If this was a real situation, what would

you have done?" The rate of those who say they would react strongly is higher among those who attribute hostile intent than among those who do not. This distribution indicates that hostile attribution of intent has implications. This tendency can also be identified in the situations described by Sharon and Hanny. Sharon, having determined that Gil is guilty, said: "He looked at me in silence. I think he realized he was going to pay dearly for it…" Hanny's behavior was based on the assumption that Shalom was dangerous. She was so caught up in this perspective that she refrained from expressing her feelings for him: "I was so afraid of getting hurt that I couldn't tell him I loved him."

Hostile attribution of intent by one partner can generate such attribution in the other partner as well. This is a vicious cycle that perpetuates hostility and promotes aggression. Hanny hints at it when she talks about the effect of her suspicions on her relationship with Shalom: "This created a lot of tension and conflicts between us." More specific examples of this cycle can be found in interviews used in a study that examined the male point of view on how partner conflicts escalate to violence (Winstok, Eisikovits, & Gelles, 2002).

Experienced Intensity of Intentional Attack

Hostile attribution of intent contains cognitive (wrongful, unjust harm) and emotional (offence, humiliation, fear and/or anger) components that are interrelated and together, generate the experience of victimization or provocation. The difference between the two is associated with the focus of the experience. In provocation, the focus of experience is the action of the aggressor, and in victimization, the focus is on the results of the action. The intensity of the experience is tremendously important. The more intense the experience of hurt, the higher is the motivation to respond hurtfully and immediately. This perspective is consistent with numerous theories, such as General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992), Reactance Theory (Brehm & Brehm, 1981), Defiance Theory (Sherman, 1993), and especially Control Balance Theory (Tittle, 1995, 2004).

The control balance (Tittle, 1995, 2004) is the ratio between people's perception of their levels of control over others and their perception of others' control over them. According to this theory, events or others' behaviors can evoke negative feelings such as humiliation or anger, and the intensity of these emotions depends on one's control balance. The intensity of the hurtful experience (situational provocation) will be high for those whose control ratio is imbalanced. Faced with a given harm, those with control surplus (their control over others is higher than others' control over them) and those with control deficit (the control of others over them is higher than their control over others) will be more sensitive to being hurt than those with control balance (their control over others is similar to others' control over them), and will experience hurt with higher intensity. Hence, it might be stated in the dyadic context that people with control surplus will perceive even the slightest deviation from the expected behavior in their partner as an attempted provocation.

Those with control deficit would see such actions as a continued attempt to deprive them. Those with control balance are more resistant and less sensitive to their partner's deviation from their expectations, and accordingly, their experiences are less intense. According to the control ratio theory, the more intense the hurtful experience, the higher is the motivation for deviation. Hence, it can be stated in the dyadic context that the more intensely one experiences being hurt by a partner, the higher one's motivation to respond with violence. These statements are based on the perception that aggression stems from experienced victimization.

When I started studying partner violence, I expected to be able to identify the aggressor and the victim easily. I was surprised to find that these definitions are often blurred, and this is an understatement. Men and women who used violence against their partners often perceived themselves to be the victims, and not the aggressors. When I present this thesis in my lectures on partner violence, I am often asked how an aggressor can claim to be the victim. Sometimes, in response, I bring the following excerpt from an interview with Asaf, who was 25 at the time:

"When we got married, we were young and penniless. We had no money and no profession. But I thought we were in love, and that this was the most important thing. We decided that our only chance to get ahead in life was for me to go to work while she went to school. I found a job in construction and later at the port, and she began studying for her SATs and the university admission exams. My salary was not enough so I took another shift at work. It was just about enough to keep our heads above water. A year passed. We even managed to save some money. She was very successful and was accepted to Industrial Management studies. We decided that we should use the money we saved to buy her a car. We reckoned that we needed to make it as easy as possible for her so that she could finish school successfully, find a good job, so that when we had more money, I could work less and maybe even go to school… we started this routine: she studied, I worked. It was fine, better than fine; there were no tensions, at least, I thought everything was OK… Sometimes, we would hang out with my buddies from the port… everything seemed right. One week after she graduated—one week! I came home and saw she was very nervous. She was standing in the living room looking at the floor as if she had lost something. I asked her: 'Is something the matter?' 'Look…' she said. 'I don't know, I need some time to think…' 'Think what? What about?' I asked. 'I don't know' she answered. 'I'm a bit confused.' I felt my heart sinking… she said she needed to get out of the house, get some air, and that we would talk when she got back. She went out. An hour passed, two hours. I called her parents. Her father answered. I told him what happened. He was quite alarmed and he told me to ask her when she got back if she had someone else. This freaked me out even more, but I still couldn't believe this could be. She came home at midnight. I asked her: 'What's going on?' and she said: 'We'll talk in the morning'. I was too stressed and couldn't wait for the morning. I asked her if she had someone else and held my breath. She was mumbling. Finally, she said it didn't matter because what matters was that she couldn't do this anymore and wanted a divorce. I stood there dumbfounded and she went into the shower. I sat in the living-room and started crying. First time I ever cried like that. Suddenly, I realized she was taking a shower. She always showers in the morning,

how come she's taking a shower now? She only showers at night after we do it. You see? My body started quivering when I started thinking that she was washing off her lover. I burst into the shower, slapped her as hard as I could, grabbed her by the hair, pulled her and threw her out. Just like that, naked… I had no problem. At that moment, I could have killed her. I'm telling you, I gave her everything, everything, you see? Slut, she left me with nothing. With my sweat, she got an education, started a new life, even paid for a lawyer to help her file a complaint against me for violence. What I did to her that night is nothing compared to what she did to me. Today, she's married, pregnant and I'm six feet under. Take a steamroller and go over me a thousand times, and it wouldn't even compare to what she did to me. Never mind, what goes around comes around."

Asaf's monologue gives an extreme example of the notion that in many cases, men and women who use violence against their partners view themselves as victims rather than aggressors. This argument often makes those who hear it disagree. Once Asaf's monologue is presented, rejection of the argument significantly decreases. Nevertheless, as much as it is important for me to respond and remove objections to this idea, it is similarly important to put it into proportion. It is easy to identify with Asaf, especially when one has only his version. But one must not forget that according to this same version, it is Asaf who stormed into the bathroom, beat his wife, grabbed her by the hair, dragged her and threw her out into the street naked. I do not have the woman's version, but sometimes, I try to create some balance in my lectures. I make up her side of the story, in a way that does not contradict Asaf's version, but to put it into perspective. Here it is:

"When I married Asaf, I believed that our love could conquer anything. But it didn't. Love faded away very fast and there was almost nothing left. I lived in a desert. For Asaf, if there was food in the fridge and sex at the weekend, then everything was alright. I was terrified. Was this how my life was going to be from now on? Can't I want more than this? For Asaf, I became an investment. He invested his sweat in me, and in return, I had to succeed in school and procure a good future for the family. I hated school, I didn't want it, but he wouldn't listen. Every day that went by, every tuition installment, was catch 22. I felt so guilty for not loving him, for him loving me, guilty for his efforts to put me through school, guilty for hating my studies… every day was a punishment for me. It was impossible to talk with him. When I almost finished my degree, I met someone. Suddenly, I felt I could have a life, maybe a good life. When I graduated, I felt that this was it; I couldn't take it anymore. That night, when I left for a couple of hours, I decided that was it. I wanted a divorce and I wanted to head for a new start. I came back home, and I told him I could not do this anymore. Half an hour later, I was lying hurt and naked in the street."

Often the term "partners" is accompanied by the term "intimate." The juxtaposition is made mainly to broaden and deepen the meaning of the term beyond the formal dimension. It emphasizes that between the parties comprising the couple, in addition to the physical closeness, there is also a mutual commitment and a deep emotional investment. Asaf's harsh response, as described in his monologue, was provoked not only by the lost financial input, but also by the lost emotional investment. Even if, on

that same night, when his wife expressed her wish to separate, she would have offered him great financial compensation, by far exceeding his investment in her studies, it would probably not have softened the blow. It might even have made it worse. Many would agree that an investment in intimate relationships is one of the most important and significant investments an adult makes. In the intimate framework of the couple, more than any other setup, people want to feel safe, secure, and open up to their partners. In such cases, intimacy is not only a testament to the relationship between the partners, but also between a person and him/herself. Within the protected relationship situation, people meet themselves on the deepest level. Therefore, any harm to such a relationship is experienced much more strongly than harm in any other context. This is also what makes violence in intimate relationships such a unique and painful experience. It is expected that intimate relationships would be free of any evil and aggression, as these shake the very ground on which intimacy is established.

If the emotional investment is such a major factor in the experience of harm, then it can also be assumed that those who invested most in this area would experience harm at higher levels, and perhaps also react more strongly to injury. Based, in part, on evolution theories, it is sometimes suggested that women invest more in intimate relationships than men. If that is the case, then they would be expected to be more sensitive to hurt than men. The literature on this issue is scarce and insufficient to make an unequivocal assessment. I dealt with this subject indirectly in two studies (Winstok, 2007a; Winstok & Straus, 2012), which examined gender differences in response to hurt. I compared the responses of men and women to verbal and physical attacks by their partners and by others (in one study, "others" were men and women at the workplace, and in the second study, they were male and female strangers). These studies found that: (1) Women's response to being hurt by their partner was more severe than men's response to hurt by their partner; (2) Women's response to being hurt by their partner was more severe than their response to hurt by other men; (3) Men's response to being hurt by their partner was more moderate than their response to hurt by other women. These findings show a difference between men's and women's responses. But associating the gender differences in response to aggression with gender differences in sensitivity to the partner is only one of many possible interpretations. Another interpretation could be that these are differences in the considerations leading to a response. This will be discussed further in Chap. 9.

Goal Selection

The third phase in social information processing follows the first two, which create a mental representation of the situation at hand. The third phase is called "Clarification of Goals." In this phase goals emerge and are chosen. Crick and Dodge (1994) defined goals as focused arousal states that function as orientations toward producing (or wanting to produce) particular outcomes. Goals for social situations may

include internal as well as external states or outcomes. For which goals can violence be used? Felson and Messner (2000) argued that people use violence for a variety of reasons: to achieve retribution or justice when they have a grievance (e.g. Baumgartner, 1988; Black, 1983), to promote their self-image or to defend that image when it is under attack (e.g., Felson, 1978; Luckenbill, 1977; Toch, 1969), or to influence or control the behavior of others (e.g., Goode, 1971; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Stets & Burke, 1996; Tedeschi & Felson, 1994). A particular violent interaction often involves multiple motives. For example, an incident may begin when one person attempts to control another's behavior, and may escalate when self-images are threatened (Tedeschi and Felson, 1994).

Asaf's story details how he burst into the shower, beat his wife, grabbed her by the hair, and dragged her out into the street naked, because she had hurt him. Apparently, he sought an outlet for the negative feelings he was harboring because he was hurting; feelings that he would not or could not contain. He was so hurt because he believed that, for years, he had opened his heart to his wife and let her inside. Apparently, he used violence as if to weed her out and maybe find relief. But there may be another explanation. Violence can also be used for "doing justice." Here is an example that I found in one of the interviews:

"He hurt me where it hurts the most. It is painful not just because he hurt me, but also because he doesn't care that he made me feel so much pain. It just cannot be that I am suffering while he is up and about all happy and cheerful. For this, he deserves to suffer."

The difference between achieving relief and doing justice may be small, and the two could even be the same (Winstok, 2007b). In both cases, violence conveys an attempt to settle or balance a score. In the first case, by relieving personal suffering, and in the second, by causing and increasing someone else's suffering. In both cases, violence is a means of dealing with present and past negative experiences, not a direct means of influencing the future.

Another possibility where violence is clearly future-oriented is when it is used by one partner to "discipline" the other (Winstok, 2007b). The following excerpt is an example:

"Each time she took the car, something happened. Once, she bumped into a lamppost and broke a light. Another time, she left the lights on and ruined the battery. Twice, I had to go rescue the car because she ran out of gas. Until one day, I had enough and I slapped her. Ever since then, touch wood, there have been no more problems with the car."

Another example of violence used for disciplining:

"I explained a thousand times that I need him to help me prepare the kids for school in the morning. But he'd go on sleeping until they left the house… One day, when I realized that talking was no good, I started kicking him every morning. It took him three days to get it. Ever since then, he gets up without kicking and helps out…"

The following excerpt is the most explicit example I could find:

"I am not crying over spilled milk. If it's spilled, it's spilled. I'm just thinking what I need to do so that it does not happen again, and it does not have to be by

force. If I can use nice words, I'm all for that. But if there's no choice, then there's no choice. I am willing to get screwed only once."

In the first example, a man wanted to deter his wife from causing further damage to the car. In the second example, the woman wanted to make her husband start helping her prepare the children for school. The third example is unique in that it does not describe a specific goal, but a conceptual framework, which views the gap between what is desired and available ("spilled milk") as an opportunity for change ("so that it does not happen again") rather than as injury ("I am not crying over…"). This case is devoid of any considerations of relief or justice and is aimed solely at discipline.

The use of violence to settle a score with the partner and the use of violence for discipline are not mutually exclusive (Tedeschi and Felson, 1994; Winstok, 2007b). In most cases, both goals are served. The difference between the cases is in which of the two is the more important; a fact that can change according to circumstances. Moreover, violence used to settle a score can result in discipline, and vice versa. In Sharon's story about the Passover eve dinner mentioned above, I focused on her interpretation that Gil, her partner, deliberately knocked the dinner plate off the table. In this story, both goals (i.e., to settle a score and to discipline) can exist simultaneously. In one instance, Sharon said: "I wasn't going to say nothing about it… he had to suffer like I did." In another instance, she said: "It is my fault; I taught him he could do whatever he wants. I swore, then and there, that it was the last time he would do this to me." The first excerpt shows that Sharon decided to settle the score with Gil. She wanted to hurt him the way he had hurt her. The second excerpt also shows that Sharon wanted to discipline Gil, so that this would be the last time that something like this would happen. The events of the rest of the night, when they came home, clearly show that Sharon had a double agenda:

"When we came home, he asked me: 'What's come over you?' This was too much. I looked at him and said: 'Over me? How dare you? What do you take me for, a moron? You dropped the plate on purpose.' So he turned away and went into the bedroom. I followed him and said I didn't want him in my bedroom. He didn't argue. Quite indifferently, he took a pillow and a blanket and went to the living room. I wanted him to suffer, to explode like I was exploding inside, but I didn't know how to do it. I tried to think of something that was important to him, that I could destroy and he would be hurt, and perhaps it would also teach him to respect my requests. But nothing powerful came up. I was lying in bed, angry about how helpless I was. I got up, went out to him in the living room and told him I thought he was a horrible person and went back to the bedroom. After that, I lay in bed and started running scripts in my head in which I was abusing him, and that's how I fell asleep."

The second part of the story is consistent with the first. It clearly shows that Sharon had a double goal, both to settle the score and to discipline Gil.

When one partner identifies a discrepancy between what is available and what is desirable, and blames the other partner's conduct for this discrepancy, an opportunity for a conflict arises. It is important to ask whether the discrepancy is

experienced as a deliberate injury, and of what intensity, because the answer to this question determines how the conflict will develop, although it is not the only precondition for its development. Apparently, the more an injury is experienced as intense and deliberate, the higher the weight of score-settling than that of disciplining. Two distinct courses are identified in information processing: one stems from hostile attribution of intent and leads to score settling and the other stems from the realization that an opportunity for conflict exists and leads to an attempt at discipline.

Many would rightfully argue that behind these "exercises in discipline" are hidden motivations to control the partner. Evidence can be found often in the words of the violence victims, for example, in the following excerpt from an interview with a man:

"She [his partner] is bossy; she wants everything to be done her way. Her way is the only way things can be done."

Similarly, in the following excerpt from an interview with a woman:

"Problems start when I don't play according to his [her partner's] tune. When I do as he wants, everything's alright…"

It is important to acknowledge that goals are formed not only as a result of the perceived situation, but also from personality traits. One example is the tendency for dominance and control discussed in Chap. 2. Dominance is manifested in given situations but is not created in them; it precedes and antecedes them. This tendency can be addressed as a factor influencing chosen goals in given situations. Another example is the tendency to avoid confrontation. This does not mean avoiding violence at all cost. It only means that a conflict is experienced as an undesirable event that one should avoid, as in the following examples:

"I can't stand fighting with him. He can go over and over it again for hours, and I am not cut out for that, so I ask him—let's leave it at that."

"When I see that she wants to pick a fight, I leave the house and then come back after an hour or two."

"He started shouting at me in front of the children. I grabbed his hand and pulled him into the bedroom. I told him, I don't want to fight with you, and definitely not in front of the children. But if you insist, I can promise you that it will cost you dearly. So settle down."

Mental Representation of an Action

Following the reception and interpretation of situational cues, and the setting of goals, there are two additional phases to the process: the fourth phase is response access and construction, and the fifth is response decision. These phases aim at the creation of a mental representation of the most suitable action option that would achieve the goal that was set in the previous phase. It was already argued in Chap. 3 that selecting an action, including a violent action, is a rational process that meets the following preconditions: violence is possible and can potentially achieve the goal,

the cost associated with the use of violence is lower than the cost of other optional actions, and the cost associated with violence is lower than the value of the goal.

There is great similarity between the two phases aimed at producing a mental representation of an action, and the two first phases of data processing, encoding and interpreting the cues, aimed at producing a mental representation of a situation. The possible bias factors in the first part of information processing are relevant for the second part as well. For example, a sense of urgency can cause a hasty and superficial consideration of possible actions, and negative emotions can focus attention on a narrow, specific scope of actions. The difference between the phases generating situational perception and those generating action is in their time-orientation. The first two phases are oriented mainly to what happened already, and the two phases discussed here are oriented mainly to what has yet to happen. The past and present oriented phases are interconnected by the goals discussed above.

Studies of children provide a strong support for a link between the types of responses they generate to particular situations and the behavior that they exhibit in those situations. Aggressive children access a fewer number of responses to social situations than do their peers (e.g., Asarnow & Callan, 1985; Dodge, Pettit, McClaskey, & Brown, 1986; Slaby & Guerra, 1988). They also access responses that are more aggressive than those accessed by peers for provocation, group entry, object acquisition, and friendship initiation situations (Asarnow & Callan, 1985; Dodge et al., 1986; Pettit, Dodge, & Brown, 1988; Quiggle, Garber, Panak, & Dodge, 1992).

In the second part of Sharon's story, we have a glimpse into the phases constructing the mental representation of action. Sharon told me:

"I tried to think of something that was important to him, that I could destroy and he would be hurt, and perhaps it would also teach him to respect my requests. But nothing powerful came up. I was lying in bed, angry about how helpless I was. I got up, went out to him in the living room and told him I thought he was a horrible person and went back to the bedroom. After that, I lay in bed and started running scripts in my head in which I was abusing him and that's how I fell asleep."

Apparently, Sharon's main goal was to get even with Gil for his behavior at Passover eve dinner. She wanted to hurt him as he had hurt her ("I wanted him to suffer, to explode like I was exploding inside"). She says that she examined her options ("I tried to think of something that was important to him, which I could destroy and he would be hurt"), but she could not find an appropriate response ("But nothing powerful came up"). This opened two courses of action for Sharon: no response or a response with limited effectiveness in achieving her goal. Finally, Sharon chose limited action over no action: she told Gil that he was a horrible person. In this case, the score with Gil was reduced but was not settled. This case indicates that a goal exists before an action is selected, that actions are weighed up against other actions and the desired goal, and that avoiding an action is taken into consideration much like any other action. It is also possible that at least, in Sharon's case, avoiding an action is a reference point against which other actions are evaluated. Sharon's words indicate also that in itself, considering possible actions to achieve a goal can increase, as well as moderate, expressions of hostility. She could

not find an appropriate response in her action arsenal, which added to the intensity of her hurtful experience ("I was lying in bed angry about how helpless I was") and perhaps contributed to her aggressive response, because after that, she got up and told Gil that he was a horrible person. This action did not produce sufficient relief, but her pain may have been somewhat alleviated by her "imaginary revenge" ("I lay in bed and started running scripts in my head in which I was abusing him, and that's how I fell asleep").

In 2003, I participated in a forum in which interviews with partners living with violence were presented and analyzed. In one of the meetings, interviews with two partners were presented. The man, Efi, was 51 and his wife, Dalit, was 45. They had been married for 15 years and had an 11-year-old son, Eyal. Their relationship was plagued with frequent conflicts that often escalated to verbal and physical violence by both partners.

Efi:	"I told her that Eyal was becoming very wild because we give him everything unconditionally. She thought I was blaming her and started attacking right away. I thought, here we go. She would yell, I would yell, she would insult me, I would insult her and this is how it would go on until she went too far and got a slap. Then she would not talk to me, she'd be angry with me, I don't know for how long. I realized this and also that it wasn't worth it."
Interviewer:	"Not worth what?"
Efi:	"Showing her that there was no use in her attacking me."
Interviewer:	"So what did you do?"
Efi:	"Nothing, I let it go and said that I thought we were both responsible for the situation and instead of looking for someone to blame, we should be thinking about solutions."

This excerpt from Efi's interview gives us a glimpse into the process of choosing a response. Efi was simulating complete moves and was examining the extent to which they took him closer to his goals. In this case, he concluded that aggressive moves could not produce the desired results. They might even lead to undesirable outcomes. His words indicate that based on this assessment, he chose not to handle the situation using force, but would rather resort to dialogue. The fact that he was considering aggression could mean that he was weighing actions meant to settle the score or to discipline Dalit. It is possible that his understanding that these actions would not achieve their goal made Efi shift and modify his goals. The choice of the dialogue option indicates this. The new goal was, apparently, to prevent confrontation. Efi's words support the arguments made in Sharon's case. They also clearly demonstrate the inner imaginary conflict that could take place in preparation for the real conflict with the partner. Efi's words also indicate that in this pretend-conflict, goals can be evaluated and updated accordingly.

Efi described another case that shows that he did not always choose dialogue:

Efi:	"When my sister gave birth to a boy, she [his wife] went and bought him some rubbish for the circumcision. Believe me, it was a disgrace.

	It was eating me from the inside that this is where she chose to save our money. I wasn't going to let this one go."
Interviewer:	"What was special about this case that you could not let it go?"
Efi:	"Humiliation in the house is one thing. Humiliation in public is something else. This kind of thing I am not willing to take. I knew she was not going to exchange the gift if I was kind. If I explained that the gift was inappropriate, she would start arguing and would come up with a thousand excuses. I would get mad, she would get mad. The argument would move on to other things and would end in tears and the problem that started it in the first place would not be resolved. To cut a long story short, I realized that I had to do something quick and drastic. I went out to the balcony, put the outfit on the barbeque grille and burnt it. She came after me and asked, what was burning on the grille? I told her it was some rag I found in the kitchen. She went in without saying a word."

Unlike in the previous case, Efi did not choose dialogue here. Despite the difference, Efi's tendency to simulate situations as a basis for considering goals and actions is clearly evident in this case also. Dalit supports this observation in the next excerpt:

Dalit:	"Efi likes to fight. He is willing to fight over everything: who has the remote, who takes out the trash, what day the housekeeper should be here. He fights with everyone, not just me. He fights with the building council over the color the mail boxes should be painted. I don't mind that he wants to fight. I hate how he does it. For him, each fight is a military operation. He planned his fight with the building council member out loud: I will say this and he will say that so I will do this to him… The fact that his fights are planned and calculated drives me crazy. Sometimes, I can see in his gestures that he is planning a fight. With me, it is all spontaneous and he knows it. I get hurt, get angry and start threatening, and sometimes, if I lose control, I can even hit him. When he hits me, it is intentional. This makes his violence even worse, because it is planned."

Dalit's account supports the idea that Efi acts like a strategist. But her story, and even Efi's story, demonstrates that the purpose of the simulation is not only to test the effectiveness of actions in achieving a goal, but also to prepare for the action by practicing it in the imagination. When Efi prepares for the confrontation with the building council representative, this practice can be important for the advance assessment of the action, and also for the quality of its implementation later on. Dalit differs from Efi in this part of the process. She says, and Efi's account supports this, that she responds "spontaneously," not purposefully. Efi and Dalit are two opposites in these phases of the information processing, marking the scope of these phases' dynamics. Their scope ranges from planned and calculated to emotional and automatic. Partner violence can be a product of this part of the process, whether it is planned and calculated, or not.

Performance and Evaluation

Enactment is the sixth step in the process, in which the action, previously selected, is performed. This is a unique step in the process, because it marks the transition from the internal reflective level to an external interactive level. This phase aims at performing the action in a manner that is in keeping with the planning. Once the action is enacted, reality changes. This is not the same reality that motivated the action anymore. It is now a modified reality, challenged by the enacted action. Thus, to evaluate the new situation created and to act accordingly, a new cycle of information processing is required. The new cycle could focus mainly on assessing whether the goal sought was actually achieved. If it was, the whole process is validated in the eyes of the enactor, that is, it proves to him/her that the situational perception was realistic, that the goal that was set was a worthy one, and that the tactic used to achieve it was effective. How would the enactor interpret a case in which the goal was not achieved? Would the failure be attributed to an unrealistic situational perception, a selection of an inappropriate goal or unsuitable action, or perhaps a faulty performance? In case of failure, these determinations have implications for the enactor's further handling of the situation. We cannot assume that all these questions are necessarily considered. There are those who, faced with failure to achieve their goals, reevaluate the entire situation. Others attribute the failure only to the performance of an action. Accordingly, they would repeat this action again and again, perhaps even with more intensity.

The use of violence is common in very young children (Tremblay, 2000), indicating that violent action is relatively simple because one needs only a basic level of skill for its performance (Winstok, 2007a). Nevertheless, sometimes the violence used does not go according to plan. The following excerpts demonstrate such cases:

"I wanted to humiliate her, but the words didn't come out of my mouth, so I decided to leave the house for a couple of hours, but I couldn't find the car keys."

"I flung the cell phone at him, and it broke the lamp. To this day, the lamp stands broken in the living room."

"I pushed her, just to show her I wasn't kidding, and she slipped, banging her head on the doorknob. She was lying on the floor, not moving. I panicked. At that moment, I swore I would never hit her again."

"I slapped him and blood started gushing from his nose like water from a tap. I didn't think a slap could cause such damage."

The interviews that I studied show that even when violence is used according to plan, it does not necessarily achieve its goal. Here are two examples:

"After each strike, he asked me if I'd had enough or should he continue… He struck me harder still. I swore that I would not give in. If I had to suffer, so should he."

"I thought that if I slapped him, he would wake up and realize his mistake. Instead, he grabbed me by the neck, pinned me to the wall and told me that this was the last time I would raise my hand. I hadn't believed for a second that he could do such a thing."

It can be learned from interviews with victims of violence that one thing that can be achieved through violent means is immediate, blind compliance (Eisikovits, Goldblatt, & Winstok, 1999):

"Once she took the beating, she became a disciplined child, just how I liked her. After a month or two, little by little, the girl gained confidence and started to play a different tune, so to speak…"

"I realized that when he starts talking with his hands, I shouldn't argue… I should do as he says… He is such an idiot, he doesn't get it that I only do as he wants because I'm scared that he'll hurt me."

The interviews with men and women who were perpetrators or victims of partner violence demonstrate that violence is often part of a behavioral move rather than a single action. The move is based on a series of behaviors resulting from several cycles of information processing, as described above (each behavior of the move is the result of an information processing cycle). The most common move begins with not necessarily forcible actions that soon become aggressive and increase in severity (Winstok, 2008). There are many examples, and the next one is very clear:

"With him, it always starts with cursing, moves on to threats, and if I don't do as he pleases, then he can start beating me. At first not so hard, as if to show me he is not playing with me, and if I still don't do as he wants, he can start hitting hard. He won't stop until he gets what he wants."

What is this behavioral move? What is it that drives it? And why is it so common? It is a violent escalatory pattern. Similarly to violent behavior, it is rational as well and will be thoroughly discussed in Chap. 7.

An Etiology of Violence

The body of knowledge on violence is based on two underlying theories that seek to explain the origins of aggressive behavior. The Frustration-Aggression Theory that was developed by Dollard (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939) and later revised by Berkowitz (1978), and the Social Learning Theory that was developed by Bandura (1973). Dollard and his colleagues argued that frustration leads to violence. Bandura suggested that violence, like many other behaviors, was socially learned. Although at first, the two theories were viewed as competing and contradictory, nowadays, they are considered complementary explanations of violent behavior. The two theories served numerous violence-representing models, including the social information processing model. As such, the model differentiates between two types of aggression. One is based on the Frustration-Aggression theory: Reactive Aggression. The other is based on the Social Learning theory: Proactive Aggression. The difference between the two is in the etiology of the aggressive behavior rather than in its manifestation. Figure 5.1 presents the social information processing.

In the etiology of reactive aggression, the partner's behavior is perceived as intentional injury or as having that potential, and is experienced intensely. The dominant emotion is anger, driving a response whose main goal is to get even with the
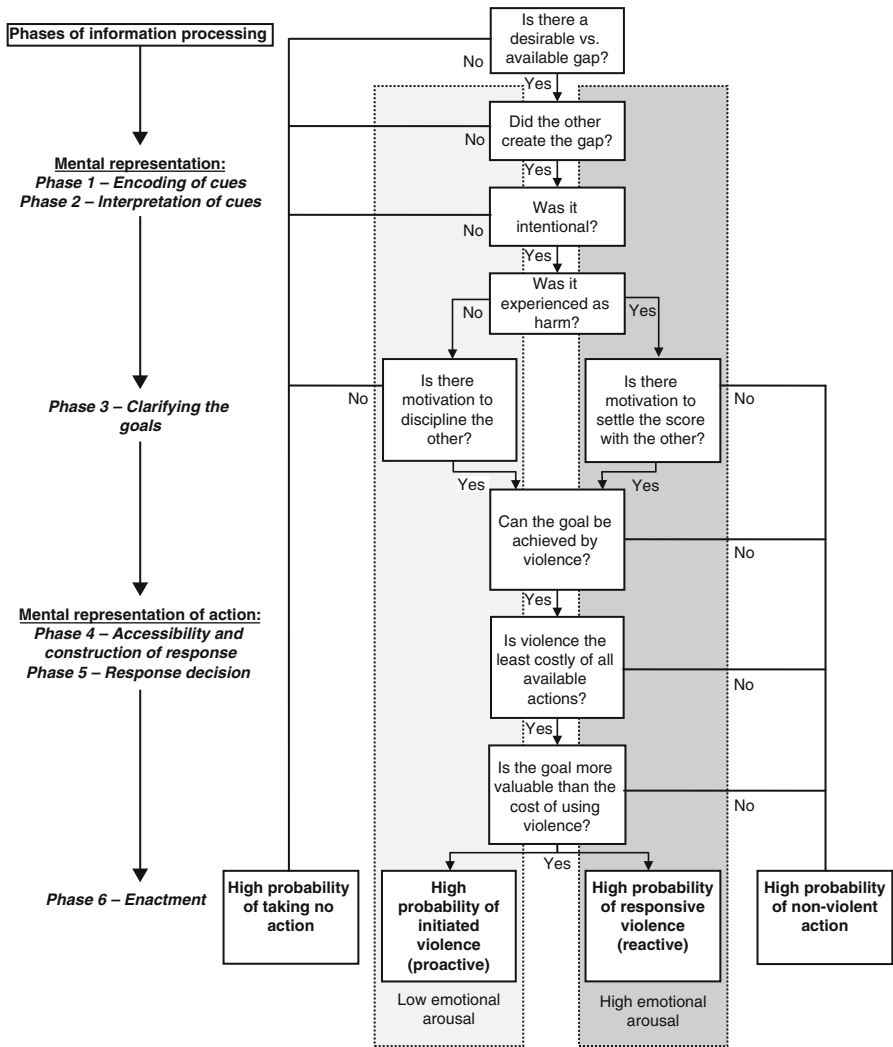
Phases of information processing

Is there a desirable vs. available gap?

No

Yes

Did the other create the gap?

No

Yes

Mental representation:
Phase 1 – Encoding of cues
Phase 2 – Interpretation of cues

Was it intentional?

No

Yes

Was it experienced as harm?

No

Yes

Phase 3 – Clarifying the goals

No

Is there motivation to discipline the other?

Is there motivation to settle the score with the other?

No

Yes

Yes

Can the goal be achieved by violence?

No

Yes

Mental representation of action:
Phase 4 – Accessibility and construction of response
Phase 5 – Response decision

Is violence the least costly of all available actions?

No

Yes

Is the goal more valuable than the cost of using violence?

No

Yes

Phase 6 – Enactment

High probability of taking no action

High probability of initiated violence (proactive)

Low emotional arousal

High probability of responsive violence (reactive)

High emotional arousal

High probability of non-violent action

Fig. 5.1 Social information processing flowchart

offending partner. When violence is used, it is chosen almost automatically. In the etiology of proactive aggression, the situation is perceived as an opportunity to force a behavior or a position on one's partner. Even if injury was caused, it is not experienced with high intensity, and emotions such as anger are not as dominant and are not the driving force behind the process. The process is driven by the perspective that goals can be achieved by force. The reactive etiology appears to be consistent with the Frustration-Aggression Theory, whereas the proactive etiology is consistent with the Social Learning Theory.

Proactive and reactive violence have been studied especially among children and youth. Research found that although these are two distinct behaviors (Day, Bream, & Pal, 1992; Poulin & Boivin, 2000), they are positively correlated (Camodeca, Goosens, Meerum Terwogt, & Schuengel, 2002; Hubbard et al., 2002; Poulin & Boivin, 2000). One explanation for the correlation between the behaviors was that study participants find it difficult to differentiate between them (Poulin & Boivin, 2000). Another explanation was that sometimes, one form of aggression might seem as another (Dodge, 1991). Merk et al. (2005) gave several explanations for the correlation between the proactive and reactive types of violence. They suggested that reactive aggression is more primal and basic than the proactive one. By using it, children learn that violence can produce desirable results. This discovery might encourage them to adopt and use also proactive aggression, incorporating both into their future conflicts. They also argued that the correlation between the two etiologies is related also to exposure to factors that promote both.

The apparent correlation between the proactive and reactive etiologies is essential to understanding social information processing. Yet, the explanations that were suggested are partial and insufficient. I propose that the correlation between these etiologies among children (Winstok, 2009) as well as among adults in intimate relationships (Winstok, 2008) is related to conflict dynamics. The first stages of a conflict might evolve on a proactive path leading to violence. Failure to achieve the desired goal by taking the proactive path might lead to frustration. Frustration enhances the effect of the reactive path, to the point at which it overtakes the process. Hence, both paths can be evident in a single conflict. This means that in a given conflict, the proactive path precedes the reactive path. Although this can be a common dynamic, conflicts also exist in which the reactive path turns proactive. The following example demonstrates both cases.

Avi was 33 years old and was dependent on a disability pension, most of which he spent on drugs and alcohol. Two years earlier, he had been involved in an accident and since then, had claimed to be unable to work. Gili, who would not disclose her age but said that she was several years older than Avi, was unemployed, but worked odd jobs unofficially, mainly cleaning and applying temporary tattoos. Sometimes she used drugs, but insisted that she was not addicted. When she was younger, she had worked in a massage parlor. The couple lived in the center of Israel; they were unmarried and had two children, ages six and four. I was familiar with the family from my work at a local welfare agency. Their respective families supported them, especially in taking care of the children.

In the afternoon of Yom-Kippur eve, Gili came back home from the dentist. Avi just woke up.

Avi: "I asked Gili to fix me something to eat because I had a terrible headache. But as always, she can't talk nicely."

Gili: "I was very annoyed by his demand. I told him I was just at the dentist's and I want to go to rest. He could take care of himself for a couple of hours. It wouldn't have hurt him."

Avi: "I really forgot that she went to the dentist that morning."

Gili: "After I reminded him that I had dental treatment, he was only interested in how much it cost, not in what the dentist did to me. He said to me: 'I hope you didn't pay him; we don't have enough for that now.'"

Avi: "It's true, we are very tight at the moment. The last thing we can afford is that kind of expense right now."

Gili: "I told him: 'sure I paid him, what, do you think he [the dentist] is a sucker? That he works for free?' So he started cursing me."

Avi: "I wanted to know how much she paid him. Apparently, she gave him 450 Shekels in cash. That's all the money we had. Why, why did she do it? What if she left without paying, what would have happened? I asked her: 'How are we going to get through the holiday without money?'"

Gili: "He asked me: 'How are we going to buy groceries?' I said to him: 'We are fasting today, it's Yom-Kippur, we don't need groceries.' He jumped out of bed, went to the kids and asked them to go to the grocer's to get cigarettes. When the kids left, he came to the kitchen and then the fight started."

Avi: "When she told me she decided that we are fasting today, I got it. I understood that she paid the dentist to make me fast. She can't tell me whether to fast or not. I don't fast. I asked her: 'How much money do we have left?' She said: 'There is nothing left.' I told her: 'Go to your mother and get a couple of hundred shekels for groceries.' So she starts to argue."

Gili: "He started screaming, you created the problem, so you solve it. I told him I would not do it."

Avi: "I stood there and thought what to do. I was hungry and pissed. I didn't want to make things too complicated. I opened the kitchen cabinet and took a dish and smashed it on the floor."

Gili: "He took one dish after another and smashed them on the floor. I realized that he wouldn't stop until he got his way. So we stood there like two idiots. I was looking at him, he was looking at me and smashing the dishes. Slowly, he started throwing the dishes my way. I didn't move."

Avi: "With every dish that was broken, and I was willing to break them all, I got even angrier. I knew that if that wouldn't help, I would have to take care of her, too."

Gili: "I knew he was adamant and nothing was going to help and it would come to violence. I tried to think what to do to stop it. Finally, I told him that if he didn't stop, I was calling his mom. I took the phone and then he freaked out completely."

Avi: "Until the moment she wanted to involve my parents, I was relatively calm and I stopped myself, but when she mentioned my mom, I didn't hold back, I grabbed the phone with one hand and I slapped her with the other. She started screaming like a butchered animal."

Gili: "When Avi hit me, I started screaming for help. I knew the neighbors would come and break it up. He went and took our big son to spend the holiday with his parents."

The progress of this event between Avi and Gili demonstrates the phases of information processing and their great complexity, their often changing content that

paves the way for the development of the process, and the blurred boundaries between them. At the beginning of the event, Avi displayed a more proactive than reactive path of behavior, but later on, as a result of the conflict's development, the reactive path became increasingly dominant. With Gili, the process seems to be reversed: at the onset of the conflict, her behavior tended to be on a more reactive path, whereas towards the end, she made quite an effort to take an increasingly proactive path. For both partners, the paths were not clear or straightforward at any given stage. This case also demonstrates the association between the escalatory dynamics of an event and the changing paths. Perhaps most importantly, this case demonstrates that a conflict between partners is an encounter between two processes of information processing. Avi's process was tied to Gili's. Observing one partner's process provides a limited picture; therefore, it is worth attempting to develop the examination of information processing in interactive terms from the perspective of the dyadic relationship.

Despite the increasing understanding that the social information processing is crucial to understanding interpersonal violence, it received little attention among researchers in the field of partner violence. A few studies made limited use of this theoretical framework, whether directly or indirectly, and were meant mainly to differentiate between the various types of perpetrators. These studies demonstrate the potential importance of such research. Three such studies will be described below. The first two address social information processing indirectly, and the third stems directly from this theoretical framework.

Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994) found that types of violent men can be described and classified using three categories: (1) Severity and incidence of a man's violence against his partner; (2) Scope of violence—whether it is manifest only in his relationship with his partner or used also against others outside of the family; and (3) Psycho-pathological symptoms or personality disturbances displayed by the battering man. They identified three types based on these dimensions. Family-Only Violent men used mild violence against their partner, were not as violent outside of the family and their personality did not imply dangerousness. They had a low tendency for impulsive behavior. Men of the second type, Dysphoric or Borderline Disorder, used moderate to severe violence against their partner. They used little violence outside the home and tended to display borderline symptoms, such as abandonment and rejection anxiety, had unstable intimate relationships moving from idealization of the partner to dehumanization, ups and downs in self-image, sharp mood swings, intense anger without the ability to restrain it, feelings of emptiness, paranoid and suicidal thoughts, and a tendency for self-harm and impulsiveness. Men of the third type, Generally Violent and Antisocial, also used moderate to severe violence against their partner, but unlike the previous type, were highly violent outside the family. This type tended to display signs of antisocial personality disorder (such as criminal activity, problems with the law, alcohol and drug abuse). This type, too, had a high tendency for impulsiveness. Later on, Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, and Stuart (2000) examined this typology and identified a fourth type, Low-Level Antisocial, who displayed a mild profile of violence against their partner, against others outside of the family and

anti-social symptoms. This study was, to a large extent, focused on impulsivity, 'acting without or before thinking,' as a personality trait that differentiates between men who use violence against their partner. Following the work of Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994), Tweed and Dutton (1998) distinguished between two types of men who use violence against their partner: Type 1 was classified as "impulsive," with attributes consistent with the reactive violence etiology of the social information process, and Type 2 was classified as "instrumental," demonstrating proactive etiology attributes. Gottman et al. (1995) found that in the course of a conflict, the heart rate of men classified as Type 1 increased, while that of Type 2 decreased. Heart rate in this context is an indication of an emotional state which is consistent with the social information processing typology of aggression.

Chase, O'Leary, and Heyman (2001) directly addressed the proactive and reactive types of perpetrators as proposed by Dodge (Crick & Dodge, 1994, 1996; Dodge, 1980). They defined reactive violence as a response to a perceived threat or frustration, having strong emotional orientation, with minimal investment of thought. They defined proactive violence as planned, systematic and target-oriented behavior, accompanied by low levels of emotional arousal. In an interpersonal encounter of 10 minutes, the men classified as proactive were more dominant and less angry than those classified as reactive. They were more anti-social, aggressive-sadistic, and less dependent; some even displayed psychopathic characteristics. The findings indicated that the reactive perpetration is more common than the proactive one. Almost two-thirds of research participants were classified as reactive and a little over one third as proactive.

Final Comments

The social information processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge, 1980, 1986) presented in this chapter indirectly addresses covert aspects of hostile interactions. The process starts with an action taken against a person and ends with this person's response to that action. The model is highly regarded by numerous scholars because it maps covert components that help to examine how conflicts arise, develop and terminate. I consider the interactional characteristics of the model to be of great importance. In any case, alongside the esteem, there is also criticism of the model's contribution to the understanding of human aggression. The main criticism is that it does not sufficiently present or describe the factors that regulate the process, but rather refers to them under a general title of 'latent mental structure.' Some theoretical expansions are associated with the latent mental structure that guides the process, such as hostile attribution of intent that is mainly associated with a reactive path, and attitudes, which are mainly associated with a proactive path, but are insufficiently developed. Integrating relevant theories into the social information processing model is the next step called for in the development of the model. An example can be the integration of the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), which was presented in Chap. 4.

Another significant limitation identifiable in the social information processing model lies in the unit of analysis or observation on which the model focuses. The process described by the model breaks the violent incident into its smallest components, the single isolated behaviors or actions. This approach may miss the general picture, because the incident is a complex interactional event (two sides are in conflict), and not an individual occurrence. The incident consists of complete behavioral moves (several behaviors by each side that are interlinked with each other and with each behavior taken by the other side) and not of single isolated behaviors. It is possible that an analysis of the single occurrence level is limited because it also misses out on the development of events and incidents along the couple's life together. These issues will be addressed in the following chapters.

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Chapter 6
Partner Conflict Dynamics Throughout Relationship Periods

The first five chapters of this book focused mainly on individual violent behavior. The main question addressed the factors motivating or inhibiting various degrees of severity and/or incidence of partner violence. Studying one incident of violent behavior rather than a series of incidents resembles an attempt to understand a branch (interaction between partners), a tree (an incident), and a forest (a series of incidents) by looking merely at the leaves. At this point in the book, attention will shift from individual incidents of violent behavior (leaves) to the dynamics of broader contexts in which they occur (branches, trees, and forests). The term "escalation" is at the core of the discussion on conflict dynamics. Most often, in the context of partner conflicts, escalation describes a trend of increasing aggression severity. The term can describe escalation of aggressive acts within a specific conflict, or escalation of aggression across relationship periods (from one incident to the next). The present chapter addresses the escalation of partner conflicts throughout a relationship.

Theoretically, there can be three possibilities of conflict dynamics throughout a relationship. One possibility is that the highest level of aggression severity reached in conflicts between the partners remains stable across specific periods. Over the years, the maximum severity of aggression is the same: for example, every conflict culminates in yelling and cursing. In this case, there is neither escalation nor de-escalation in aggression across relationship periods. It is also theoretically possible that the topmost aggression severity might increase from period to period. For example, in one period, the aggression might peak with yelling and cursing; in the second period, conflicts might reach mild physical aggression; and from the third period on, physical aggression might become increasingly severe. In this case, an escalation trend is evident across time. A third theoretical possibility is that from one period to another, the peak of aggression severity might diminish. For instance, at one period, conflicts might reach severe physical violence; at another period, they might reach only mild physical violence; later, the couple might use yelling and cursing to the point that conflicts are resolved without explicit aggression. In such a case, the trend is de-escalation (reversed escalation). In the three options described

(stable, escalating, and de-escalating), the trend is clear and steady across time. But mixed trends are also a possibility, with periods of increasing severity and then stability followed by decreasing severity, to name but one. But is there a typical aggression trend throughout the periods of a relationship and if so, what is it?

It is commonly argued that once partner violence erupts, it continues until the end of the relationship (by separation or death) and increases over time (in frequency, intensity, and form), especially when the violence is against women (Gilts-Sims, 1983; Pagelow, 1981; Walker, 1979). This perspective and its explanation can be found in a book by Eisikovits and Buchbinder (2000), in which they argue that over time, circumstantial partner violence turns into a violent lifestyle: individuals who act violently eventually become violent individuals. Although these arguments sound plausible, they are not supported by research findings (Stets & Straus, 1990). If this is the case, why are these perceptions so widespread, especially when the violence is directed against women? First, in a small portion of cases, violence does increase over time. Second, realizing that violence is transmitted within and between generations has led to the perception of violence as a disease. From this point on, it was ostensibly reasonable to present violence as contagious, malignant, or addictive. The presentation of partner violence as an illness or an addiction might have stemmed from the desire to deter individuals from violence against their partners, or from the attempt to promote the status of violence on the public agenda as a social problem requiring urgent intervention. A third reason for this erroneous perception of partner violence derives from the notion that in a given conflict, violence is the outcome of escalation. This has led many to believe that from one conflict to the next, escalation itself escalates. Despite evidence showing that most cases of partner violence subside over time (Fritz & O'Leary, 2004; Feld & Straus, 1989, 1990; O'Leary & Woodin, 2005; O'Leary et al., 1989), such statements as "once a batterer, always a batterer" and "violence increases over time" are still frequent and widespread.

Association Between Periods in the Relationship and Partner Violence

Relationships are customarily divided into three development periods: dating, cohabitation, and marriage. The nature of each relationship period is significantly different from the others because each involves its unique requirements, capabilities, and challenges for the couple. It can be expected, therefore, that the nature of conflicts will also be different. An examination of differences in expressions of violence across relationship periods is important because it allows the identification of elements concerning the nature of the relationship, which may promote or inhibit partner violence.

Violence, like other deviant behaviors, is age related. Increasing evidence indicates that from adolescence onward, the use of interpersonal violence tends to decrease in various life contexts (Tremblay, 2000). Chronological age is an

approximate representation of biological, psychological, and social development. The individual's development in these areas apparently has a moderating effect on violence rates in numerous contexts. The various periods of relationships are culture and age dependent. In Western societies, dating is typical to adolescence. Cohabitation follows dating and is typical of young adults. However, one must bear in mind that dating, and especially cohabitation, is not acceptable or permitted in some Western and other societies and cultures. Marriage concludes the sequence and is typical of adults. An approach that ignores and does not acknowledge the unique characteristics of each period in a relationship may lead to a limited and biased perspective, missing out on an opportunity to broaden our understanding of the association between relationships and partner violence.

Studies that examine differences in expressions of violence across various periods in a couple's life are rare. One study by Stets and Straus (1990) demonstrated that the lowest violence rates were found among couples who were married and living together. Higher violence rates were found among dating partners who were not cohabiting. The highest violence rates were found among partners who were cohabiting but were not married to each other. Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, and Silva (1998), who studied the difference in violence rates among young adults in New Zealand, found physical violence in approximately half the unmarried cohabiting couples and approximately a quarter of the dating (noncohabiting) couples. Brown and Bulanda (2008) also studied partner aggression among young adults and demonstrated that unmarried women cohabiting with their partners reported the highest rates. Married women reported lower rates of violence and dating women (noncohabiting) reported the lowest. These authors also found that married and unmarried men cohabiting with their female partners reported higher violence rates than dating (noncohabiting) men did. Scholars in the field tend to estimate that the probability of partner violence during cohabitation is higher than during marriage (Brownridge & Halli, 2002; Frias & Angel, 2005; Stets, 1991; Stets & Straus, 1990) and possibly also than during dating (Brown & Bulanda, 2008; Magdol et al., 1998). Such estimations rely mainly on an analysis of the unique characteristics of each relationship period and not on solid empirical evidence, because, as mentioned, research is limited and findings are inconclusive.

In each period in the relationship, there can be factors that increase and decrease the probability of partner violence. When dating, the probability of violence might be high due to the transient nature of the relationship and the limited capability of inexperienced partners to deal with conflict. On the other hand, the probability may be more moderate because encounters in this period are less frequent and are shorter than in other periods. During marriage, when encounters are more frequent and lengthy, the probability of violence can be more moderate because the relationship is relatively more stable and certain, and the partners have probably improved their ability to handle conflicts. It can be expected that the enhancing factors for violence during dating (inexperience and fragile relationship) and marriage (frequent and lengthy encounters) will reach their peak during the middle period—cohabitation—increasing the risk of partner violence during this period.

In 2007, when I was involved in a project that dealt with coping with violence in middle schools, the school counselor referred a 13-year-old boy to me, named Itay. He was having social and academic problems at school, which the counselor believed to be the cause of his involvement in several violent incidents. I met also with Itay's parents, Rafi and Einat. Some of the content that arose in an interview with Rafi can exemplify the differences between different relationship periods and how they can promote or inhibit violence, and excerpts from these interviews are brought below. Rafi, a real estate agent, is 41, and Einat, a beautician, is 40. The couple has been married for 14 years and in addition to Itay, they have two more children: a son, Nadav (10) and a daughter, Keren (6).

Rafi:	I had often seen Einat. She was working at a hair salon not far from the realtor's agency where I was working. The first time we really talked was at the café at the center. I was sitting at a table with some friends and she came in with her friends and they sat at the table next to us. We suggested pulling the tables together and they agreed. That is how we met. I liked Einat and we started dating.
Interviewer:	How do you remember your relationship at that period?
Rafi:	Like a rollercoaster. Lots of ups and downs. It wasn't easy and we fought quite a lot. No matter what we fought about, she had an opinion about everything and her opinion was always the opposite of mine. I'd say black, she'd say white. I'd say right, she'd say left. We argued over everything and she would never give up. I think that in the first year we were dating, before we got married, we broke up and got back together a hundred times… Today, I think we had these fights because we were young and foolish. Everything was a matter of life and death. Today, I think it's stupid, but back then, it was very important…
Interviewer:	What did you used to fight about?
Rafi:	Anything… let me give you an example. I remember once when we were walking down the street and a woman was walking her dog. Einat bent down and started petting the dog and it licked her. I pulled her away because I found it disgusting. After that, we had a fight…
Interviewer:	Give me another example.
Rafi:	I tell you, over everything… here's something that always ended with a bad fight: she would ask me, Rafi, how many kids do you want us to have? Whatever I answered, she didn't like it.
Interviewer:	What is a bad fight?
Rafi:	She would be pissed off, I would be pissed off; we would say stuff we shouldn't have said… you know…
Interviewer:	When you were still dating, did the fights between you ever become physical?
Rafi:	Sometimes, but nothing real. Sometimes, when she didn't like something, she would, like, use her hands. When she went too far, I would also. But usually, I would just grab her hands from behind and would let go only when she'd calm down.

Interviewer:	Why do you think you had so many fights?
Rafi:	We were young and stupid… we didn't really have anything serious to worry about and we wanted the excitement, so we turned our lives into a soap opera.
Interviewer:	But despite the fights and the violence, you stayed together.
Rafi:	Yes, that shows you that it wasn't really serious. If it had been serious, I don't think we would have moved in together and we definitely wouldn't have gotten married.
Interviewer:	Before you got married you lived together?
Rafi:	Yes, for 6 months.
Interviewer:	And what was that period like?
Rafi:	Army training. It was an awful period.
Interviewer:	In what way was that an awful time?
Rafi:	Living together is a greater commitment than just dating, but it is not a commitment like marriage. Marriage is a commitment that you don't break easily, especially when children and property are involved. When we moved in together, we didn't have a date for the wedding. I think that made Einat very nervous.
Interviewer:	Were there any fights during this time?
Rafi:	You bet there were fights. The biggest fights we had were during that period.
Interviewer:	What sort of fights?
Rafi:	About commitment.
Interviewer:	Was it worse than the fights you had before moving in together?
Rafi:	Yes and no. There were fewer fights, but they lasted longer because they were about serious stuff.
Interviewer:	Do you remember what you fought about?
Rafi:	Yes, Einat wanted me to commit faster than I was ready. She wanted both of us to sign the lease for the apartment. She wanted us to have a joint bank account. She wanted us to set a wedding date. Each of those things led to a huge fight and to crying.
Interviewer:	What is a huge fight?
Rafi:	She would cry and shout and threaten to leave, and wouldn't talk to me for a few days…
Interviewer:	Was there any violence?
Rafi:	Yes, and it was even worse because there was nowhere to run to.
Interviewer:	Despite the fights, you stayed together?
Rafi:	Yes, because these fights were not hostile. Looking back on it today, I think that period was very difficult for Einat. She felt that she was giving more than me and in some ways that was true. She often said to me that by moving in with me without the marriage, she was making a commitment to me that I wasn't making to her.
Interviewer:	So you finally did commit to her?
Rafi:	Well, what can you do?
Interviewer:	Did your life change after the wedding?

Rafi:	Yes, there was less drama.
Interviewer:	What do you think was the reason for the change?
Rafi:	Look, when we were kids, we could fight, break up, and get back together… there was no commitment. It was a game. It was like playing with Monopoly money. Today, we are talking real money. When you are fighting, you can't just get up and leave, but you also need to go to bed with the person you are fighting with and you need to wake up with her in the morning. You think twice before you pick a fight. So you fight only over the truly important stuff.
Interviewer:	If the case you described with the dog would have happened today, what would you do?
Rafi:	It does happen. She loves dogs and she would love us to have a dog. I can't stand the smell and the dirt. We had many fights about that, as well, but finally, she accepted it. For me, the least I can do is to keep still when she sees a dog in the street. You see, that is the difference… When we were kids, it was all or nothing. As we grow up, we learn that life is not black and white, and sometimes, it's better to compromise.
Interviewer:	And do you ever fight today?
Rafi:	Of course. All couples fight and we are no exception.
Interviewer:	What do you fight about these days?
Rafi:	We can fight over nonsense nowadays too but it is a rarity and if it happens, it has finished before it starts.
Interviewer:	After the wedding, did you have serious fights?
Rafi:	Yes, we did.
Interviewer:	What about?
Rafi:	Children, parents, work, expenses…
Interviewer:	Could these fights turn violent?
Rafi:	It's all a long time ago… One time, when her mother passed away and her father asked us to pay for the funeral. He insisted that we got her mother a plot that would also have room for him, and Einat agreed. We did not have the money for it. When I said I didn't agree, Einat went crazy. She threw the phone at me. A second time, when they wanted to keep our first son at preschool for an extra year instead of letting him start first grade. I blamed her, she blamed me and it ended with her kicking me hard. Several years have gone by since then, and it doesn't look as though things like that will happen again.
Interviewer:	What makes you think that it won't happen again?
Rafi:	Look, we have been together for quite a while; there were ups and downs. We went through some very tough times together 2 years ago when Einat got sick, they found a lump, you know, and it was terrible. In those situations, you begin to understand what really matters. Suddenly, all the fights seem petty and unnecessary.

Rafi describes his dating period with Einat as fragile and unstable, characterized by frequent conflicts, separations and getting back together ("Lots of ups and downs. It was not easy and we fought quite a lot."…"I think that in the first year we were dating, before we got married, we broke up and got back together a hundred times…"). It is indicated that the couple's temporary separations gave them the necessary time-outs to relieve stress, recuperate, and reacknowledge that their relationship was more important than their issues. Rafi also implies that the conflicts might have been an opportunity to exercise, exhibit, and position the power balance between the partners, rather than attempts to resolve disagreements ("no matter what we fought about, she had an opinion about everything and her opinion was always the opposite of mine"). Looking back, he also thinks that their young age and inexperience and their need to produce and increase excitement contributed to the dynamics of their conflict at the time ("We were young and foolish. Everything was a matter of life and death…" "We didn't really have anything serious to worry about and we wanted the excitement, so we turned our lives into a soap opera.") Rafi acknowledges mutual violence in this period ("Sometimes, when she didn't like something she would, like, use her hands. When she went too far, I would also. But usually, I would just grab her hands from behind and would let go only when she'd calm down"). However, he tends to diminish its severity ("Sometimes, but nothing real"). He finds proof for this in the fact that their relationship progressed from dating to cohabitation ("If it was serious, I don't think we would have moved in together and we definitely wouldn't have gotten married").

Rafi describes the following period of cohabitation as the most difficult ("The biggest fights we had were during that period."), first because the conflicts lasted longer than during dating, and second, because the issues were more significant ("There were fewer fights, but they lasted a long time because they were about serious stuff"). Rafi associates the difficulty in making a commitment with moving in together ("living together is a serious commitment."). It is indicated that the commitment demonstrated by Einat toward Rafi was stronger than the commitment that he displayed toward her ("When we moved in together, we did not have a date for the wedding. I think that made Einat very nervous" "… She wanted me to commit faster than I was ready"). Unlike the dating violence, Rafi did not dismiss the violence during cohabitation ("yes [there was violence] and it was even worse because there was nowhere to run to"). He settles the contradiction between the violence and the decision to move forward and get married by making a distinction between conflicts motivated by good intentions and those motivated by bad intentions. He says: "these fights were not hostile." He neutralizes the negative meaning of the violence characterizing cohabitation by attributing positive intentions. His description of this period clearly indicates the gap between Rafi's and Einat's perceptions of cohabitation. It would seem that Einat perceived cohabitation as preparation for married life, whereas Rafi perceived it as an extension of dating ("She felt she was giving more than me and in some ways, that was true. She told me many times that by moving in with me without the marriage, she made a commitment to me without me making a commitment to her"). This violated the balance between the partners and threatened Einat, which is evident not only in the violence but also in other expressions of stress exhibited by her ("She would cry and shout and threaten to leave, and wouldn't talk

to me for a few days…"). It is possible that, for Rafi, a deal in which he does not fully commit to Einat while she is being violent, seems fair. Moreover, her behavior demonstrates the extent to which she wishes to tie her fate to his. It is also possible that violence seems to Rafi to be an expression of care or even of love. Maybe this is what Rafi meant when he said "these fights were not hostile."

Rafi describes life after the wedding as a relatively quiet time ("less drama"): "when we were kids, we could fight, break up, and get back together… there was no commitment. It was a game. Today… When you are fighting, you can't just get up and leave… You think twice before you pick a fight. As we grow up, we learn that life is not black and white, and sometimes it's better to compromise." Yet, during this period, they continue to fight, although the fighting is about less trivial matters ("We can fight over nonsense nowadays too but it is a rarity and if it happens, it has finished before it starts"… "If you fight, it's only about the important stuff…") He also mentions the "real" issues: "children, parents, work, expenses…" He describes violence in detail and despite its rarity, it seems severe: "She threw the phone at me"… "kicking me hard." Toward the end of the excerpt, Rafi proclaims that the violent events in his and Einat's relationship will not happen again, and explains: "Look, we have been together for quite a while, there were ups and downs. We went through some very tough times together 2 years ago, when Einat got sick, they found a lump, you know, and it was terrible. In those situations, you begin to understand what really matters. Suddenly, all the fights seem petty and unnecessary." This indicates that the relationship periods are not uniform in themselves. This is especially true in marriage, which often lasts for many years.

Rafi and Einat's case is an example of many cases in which violence subsides over time. A cross study by Straus, Gelles, and Steimetz (1980), examining four age groups (18–30, 31–50, 51–65, 65, and up) in the general population found that with the increase in the age of the partners, the violence between them decreases. Short and mid-range longitudinal studies (3–10 years) (Fritz & O'Leary, 2004; Feld & Straus, 1989, 1990; O'Leary et al., 1989) as well as studies that analyzed life paths (O'Leary & Woodin, 2005) identified similar trends: over time, there was significant decrease in the incidence of partner violence. These studies contradict the perception that partner violence persists and even escalates over time.

The Association Between Relationship Length and Partner Violence

I had numerous opportunities to interview intimate partners separately. At a certain point in the interviews, I would ask the interviewee to describe in detail at least two specific conflicts: the most severe conflict with their partner and the last conflict they had. When examining the parties' versions of the conflicts, in some cases, I found significant differences in the detailing of the events. I noticed that the gaps between versions were bigger among younger couples and those who had frequent conflicts. I assumed that gaps in the perception of significant events in the couple's

lives together might be a factor that increases conflicts and aggression. At the beginning of the couple's relationship, it is natural that they would have limited knowledge of how the other thinks, interprets, and perceives significant occurrences in their lives. This limitation may bring about perception gaps, but in time, the partners in many couples get to know each other better and the perception gaps are narrowed down. Therefore, gaps in conflict perception can indicate intimate understanding and familiarity. Interviews with intimate partners showed me that one can easily identify perception gaps judging by two aspects: the parties' perceptions of the reasons for their conflict (for example, the man's and the woman's control needs) and their perception of the subjects of their fights (for example, finances, house chores, role division, child rearing, partner loyalty, sex, and relationship with the extended family). Considerable gaps in partners' perspectives of the reasons for and subjects of the conflicts indicate a failure to understand core issues in the couple's joint lives. I hypothesized that the larger the gaps, the more the probability of friction, conflict, and escalation to violence will increase.

My impression that event perception gaps are greater among young couples and those with frequent conflicts has driven me to conduct a study of the correlation between duration of cohabitation, conflict perception gaps, and frequency of aggression among partners (Winstok, 2006). Expressions of aggression addressed in this study were verbal for two major reasons: because they are more widespread than physical expressions of aggression and because verbal aggression is a powerful predictor of physical violence (Winstok & Perkis, 2009). I conducted a study based on a probability sample of 452 heterosexual couples. As hypothesized, a correlation was found between the gaps in perceived reason for conflict and the gaps between the subjects of conflict. The greater the gap in one aspect, the greater was the gap in the other. I have also found a correlation between these gaps and the occurrence of verbal aggression. The higher the perception gap, the more frequent was the verbal aggression. However, the association between the gaps in the perceived reasons for conflict and the occurrence of verbal aggression was stronger than the association between gaps in perceived subjects of conflict and the occurrence of verbal aggression. Two additional findings were even more important. First, the longer the relationship, the smaller are the gaps between the partners regarding the perceived subjects of conflict. Second, the longer the relationship, the less frequent is the aggression. This may indicate that the longer the couple's relationship, the more they can see it eye to eye and this amounts to less friction, conflict, and less aggression.

The article "Escalation and desistance of wife assault in marriage" by Feld and Straus (1989, 1990) provides a theoretical framework for understanding the development of partner conflict patterns over time. The authors present four possible reasons for increasing violence (escalation) over time: (1) neutralization of conventions against violence (for example "I slapped her… a slap is no big deal, it doesn't do much harm"); (2) stability of violence-promoting factors (for example "talking didn't help and does not help… beating does"); (3) positive results of violence (for example "only when I hit her does she do what I ask"); and (4) response to the involvement of social agents—formal and informal, such as police and friends (for example

"the police came and intervened… it only made me even more angry"). Feld and Straus also indicated four parallel reasons for decreasing violence (de-escalation): (1) continued social pressure to stop the violence (for example "now, after the police visited, everybody knows about our problem and I must be holier than the Pope"); (2) decrease in motivation to engage in violence (for example "ever since we had the baby, things changed… I am more prudent…"); (3) negative results of violence (for example "after I hit her, our relationship deteriorated"); and (4) deterrence against engaging in violence (for example "the police officer said that if I beat her up, I would find myself in prison"). In their study, Feld and Straus attempted to determine whether partner violence resembles other types of social deviance. The authors took a perspective of criminal career on violence (Blumstein et al., 1988; Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1986). Their findings support the hypothesis of escalation, namely that mild deviance (mild violence) by both partners predicts severe deviance (severe violence) in the future. The findings also support the assumption that a high rate of individuals cease to be deviant (violent). Although the study focused on the violence of men against women, the theoretical framework presented by the authors can be relevant also to women's violence against men.

The theoretical framework used by Feld and Straus indicates several factors that are important but by no means exhaustive, which may affect the occurrence and severity of violence over time. Its main significance is in providing evidence that is supported by later studies that no single typical pattern of partner violence over time exists. Violence between intimate partners can become more moderate, can subside, can continue at a steady severity level and, at times, can escalate. However, accumulating evidence indicates that in most cases, in the short term, violence can escalate, and in the long term, it can cease. It is clear that changes in violence patterns over time (severity and frequency) are not random. Conflicts that escalate to violence in which the aggressor draws "positive" results that exceed negative ones may encourage the said party to continue using this tactic. Negative outcomes may encourage the aggressor to increase the severity of violence or stop using it and look for alternative tactics (Winstok, 2007, 2008).

Figure 6.1 describes the information processing that leads to conclusions regarding the effectiveness of using violence in coping with conflicts and reaching goals. This process is based on the assumption that accumulating experience has consequences for the willingness to use violence in a given conflict and that the results of using violence in that conflict add up to previously accumulated experience. Put simply, each conflict affects and is affected by the accumulated experience. As such, the conclusion of each conflict adds to the infrastructure that would regulate the next.

The process described in Fig. 6.1 consists of four steps. In the first step, the use of violence is considered to be based on a cost–benefit ratio evaluation. Such evaluations are based on past experiences in similar conflicts. If the evaluation supports the use of violence, that is, the benefit of its use would exceed its cost, then in the second step, which is the action phase of the process, violence will be used. If the cost–benefit evaluation does not support the use of violence, then the conflict would develop or conclude without violence. The third step is only applicable if there was
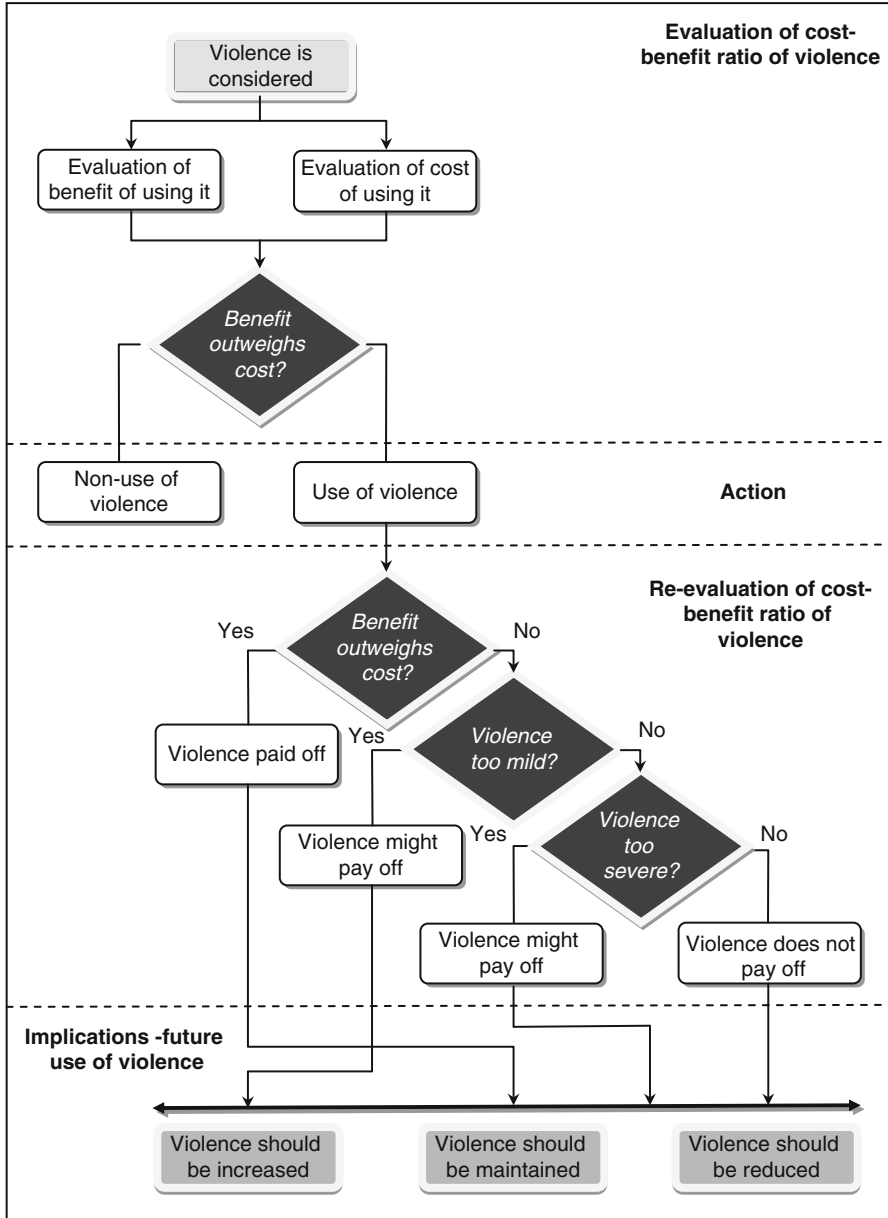
Fig. 6.1 Effectiveness of violence use in coping with conflicts and achieving conflict goals

violence in the second step. In this step, the choice that was made is evaluated for the present ongoing conflict. This evaluation would affect the future use of violence in the fourth and last step of the process. The first question in the third step is whether

the use of violence produced more benefit than cost. If yes, then the aggressor may conclude that the violence, as used, "paid off." This conclusion would support the perspectives that led to violence in the first place and in the fourth step can turn into a general principle that promotes continued use of violence in future conflicts. If the cost of using violence did not exceed its benefit, then the second question is asked: Was the violence too mild? If the answer is yes, it would be concluded that violence could be beneficial if it were more severe. Such a conclusion would partially support the perspective that led to the use of violence in the first place. It would mean that the severity of violence should be increased in future conflicts. Alternatively, if the answer to the question is no, the third question would be whether the violence was too severe. A positive answer to this question would be that violence did not achieve its goals because it was too severe. This would lead to the conclusion that violence might pay off if it was milder, which would partially support the perceptions that lead to violence in the first place. The ramifications of this perception are that violence should be more moderate in future conflicts. A positive answer to the third question would mean that the cost of violence exceeded its benefit for reasons unrelated to the severity of violence. In such a case, it would be concluded that violence does not pay off. This conclusion would, at least partially, undermine the perceptions that led to the use of violence in the first place. The implication of this would be that violence is to be milder or cease altogether in future conflicts.

All the steps of the evaluation performed following the use of violence can be considered not only immediately after the violence or after the conflict ends but also in the days following the end of the conflict. These reevaluations can change previous conclusions and understandings. For example, in a conflict in which one party used violence to force its will on the other, the immediate result could be compliance. In this phase, the aggressor could evaluate violence as more beneficial than costly, which would encourage further use of violence to cope with conflicts. But later on, once the violent conflict ends, the assessments could change if the attack becomes publicly known and entails sanctions against the aggressor. At this point, the aggressor might change the cost–benefit evaluation of violence. Instead of being viewed as a worthwhile tactic for coping with conflicts, it might be viewed as a nonbeneficial tactic that is not worth employing. Late sanctions are only one example of many factors that might influence the cost of violence use, and accordingly, its use in the future.

The flowchart presented in Fig. 6.1 is based on the notion that the choice to use violence against one's partner is a rational one. Hence, all the factors that affect violence use are presented by one construct expressing the ratio between the costs and the benefits of aggression. Based on this conceptual framework, changes in the severity of violence between partners across the various periods in their relationship stem from changes in their perception of the cost–benefit ratio of violence. This approach is simple to theorize and implement. Nonetheless, by simplifying the process, the causes for the cost–benefit ratio are disregarded. Changes in the perception of cost–benefit ratio do not occur in a vacuum. They are the result of other changes in the lives of the couple in the personal, interpersonal, and social contexts that should be continuously studied.

Final Comments

A discussion of the link between relationship periods and partner violence puts conflicts at the center of the problem. Conflict opportunities on the one hand and the perception of violence as an effective or noneffective means of dealing with conflict on the other, shape the problem to a large extent. This perception is part of the realization that violence is part of a conflict, which is part of a relationship between two individuals, who are part of a specific sociocultural environment. This holistic approach is vital for an in-depth understanding of the problem. Further to this perception, the next appropriate step would be to direct efforts to the study of the immediate context of violence—the escalatory conflict.

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Chapter 7
Partner Conflict Dynamics

Escalation is still at the heart of the issue, as in the previous chapter, but here it is associated with the dynamics in a single specific conflict rather than a myriad of conflicts ranging across various periods in a relationship. Escalation of actions in a conflict is the sequence of behaviors that gradually leads to increasing violence: a verbal exchange that deteriorates to verbal aggression, followed by implicit or explicit threats of physical aggression, which continues into mild and then severe physical violence (Winstok, 2007, 2008, 2011; Winstok & Perkis, 2009).

It is widely agreed that the escalatory dynamics of conflict is a key factor in understanding partner violence. Many researchers have attributed their findings to this dynamic. Nevertheless, despite acknowledging its importance, the dynamic of partner conflicts that escalate to violence has received little theoretical and empirical attention. It is surprising that such a broadly-agreed-upon key factor was insufficiently studied. I would speculate that many believe that scrutinizing partner conflict escalation would pry open a Pandora's Box, tearing apart what little agreement remains regarding accountability and guilt in partner violence, as discussed in the first chapter.

Pandora's Box

It is widely agreed that accountability and blame are with the aggressor. The perpetrator is the one who causes hurt, who is responsible and guilty and who should make amends (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 2000). No form of accountability or blame is to be associated with the victim, as this would add insult to injury. In the first chapter, when this argument was presented as a consensus that is accepted unequivocally by all parties in the gender symmetry controversy, it was also contended that this perception depends on our ability to determine the identity of the aggressor and the victim. If the boundaries between perpetrator and victim are blurred, it would be difficult to assign blame and accountability. This would lead to one of the two

outcomes—either both parties would be exempt, or both would be found guilty and accountable. Such a situation is viewed as implausible, unjust and therefore intolerable. This issue and how it can be addressed can be clarified using the following example of a session I conducted in 2001 with family social work students, who were close to finishing their graduate studies and earning their Master's degree.

In this session, I first presented an approach to identifying precursory signs of an upcoming violent outburst between partners. I then demonstrated how this approach can assist women in coping with their violent partner. I was under the impression that this approach may help battered women to defend themselves effectively, if they have chosen to stay with their partner despite the violence. One social worker asked:

"And what would you say is effective defense?"

I gave an example:

"If she is unable to manipulate her partner's aggressive outburst, then maybe she can escape to where he can't hurt her, for example, lock herself in a room at home and call for help, or run to the nearest neighbors' house."

Some students responded sharply:

"Why should she run? She'd done nothing wrong!"

I found it difficult to listen to these protests, especially coming from students who were about to become a significant driving force in coping with partner violence. I asked them:

"What would you suggest? Should she pay with her life for being in the right? Or is it better for her to be smart?"

One of the students exclaimed:

"What you're suggesting is no way to live… being constantly on guard… She doesn't deserve that and it is impossible to live like that."

When I thought back on this session, I realized that I needed to make two preliminary distinctions to minimize resistance to the approach I had presented: one being the difference between caution and attention, and the other between guilt and causality.

The student who said "What you're suggesting is no way to live… being constantly on guard…" made me realize how important it was to distinguish between caution and attention. The following case may clarify this. When I worked at a family violence research lab at UNH, I used to take daily 10-minutes walks from home to the office. Being from Israel, the New-Hampshire winter was quite harsh on me. The roads are frozen and covered in snow and one can easily slip and get hurt. And so I did. The injury was painful and it took me several days to recover. During the following weeks, each time I went out the door to the icy road, my wife would warn me to "be careful…" and each time, I would feel stressed again. I was wary of each step I took and the walk to the lab was no longer a pleasure. One day, as I was leaving, my wife did not say "be careful…" but for some reason she said "pay attention to the state of the road." This phrasing miraculously lowered my anxiety levels. In retrospect, I understand that there is a difference between the qualities of carefulness and attention, in terms of taking the situational conditions into consideration and choosing the appropriate conduct. This difference has implications for the lives

of individuals. A call for caution focuses awareness on risk. More severely, one who was cautioned but was not careful and was subsequently hurt is inevitably guilty of any sustained injury. On the other hand, attention focuses awareness on chances, is less constraining, and provides freedom of choice and a sense of control, thus being reassuring rather than blameful. This distinction may be dismissed on the grounds that it is but a semantic difference, or it can be taken as a valuable and effective approach to improving one's quality of life. When I was talking to the abovementioned-students about battered women's options, I had no intention of wishing upon these women a life of constant caution. I meant that they need to be aware of the fact that they are living with a man who might hurt them in certain situations.

The distinction between causality and guilt is important for other reasons as well. Let me explain. In my childhood neighborhood in Haifa, Israel, Abu-Latif's shoe repair workshop was located next to my home. Abu-Latif had a big dog, which spent most of the day lying at the doorstep. The dog made a habit of barking at passers-by and would chase them if they panicked and ran away. I was scared of the dog and although this was the shortest way home, I would take alternative routes. One day, I saw that the dog was taking a nap and this seemed to be a good opportunity to avoid taking the long way home. I felt that I could pass safely by the dog. But as I went by, it woke up and started barking. I panicked, broke into a run, and eventually fell down and scraped my hands and knees. As I went down, the dog lost interest and went back to its favorite spot at the doorstep. Did my behavior here contribute to my injury? The answer is yes! Does this necessarily make me guilty and accountable for it? The answer is no! Let me clarify my question. Because I could avoid the encounter with the dog, or overcome my fear of its barks, or escape falling when I ran, am I to blame and be held accountable for my injury? I suppose most people, but not all, would say no. They would probably blame Abu-Latif, although his part in the situational causality is smaller than mine. He should be held accountable, guilty, and condemnable, as he is the dog's owner who puts it on the sidewalk outside the shop, while aware of the dog's aggressive behavior toward passers-by. Once a distinction is made between causality and guilt, it is possible to perform a nonjudgmental examination of the circumstances of the injury. These circumstances are important because awareness of them might save lives.

Many practitioners in the field of partner violence regard the analysis of causality as harboring great danger for victims of violence, because they associate causality with guilt and accountability (Jenkins, 1990; Stith & McCollum 2011). This association is artificial, unnatural, and unnecessary, and must be severed if we are to move forward. In a reality where such association exists, the dynamics of an escalatory conflict is extremely menacing. Dynamics of partner conflict is a direct result of a series of interactions between the partners. It takes a short step from here to maintain that violence in escalatory conflicts is a result of actions and reactions by both parties. Hence, an examination of these interactions, that is, causal analysis, may lead to the blurring of the distinction between victim and aggressor. For those who associate causality with guilt and accountability, this blur is problematic because they need the clear distinction to allocate guilt and accountability. This, in my view, is why no real attempts are made by scholars from both paradigms

(as described in Chap. 1) to study escalatory dynamics. Their moral stance against violence goes beyond their obligation to examine and propose approaches for effective coping with the problem.

I dedicate most of my research efforts to identifying, conceptualizing, and factor analyzing the escalatory dynamics of partner conflicts. Early in my academic career, I used mainly qualitative research methods. The interview pool at my disposal at that time was created during a project on men's violence against their female partners. Accordingly, among the interviewed couples, men had a greater tendency than women to use violence. At the time, I was inclined to view the bulk of the problem as men's violence against women. Later on, I began to encounter cases in which both partners used aggression or even when only the women used aggression toward their male partners. This made me update my approach to the gender basis of partner violence, realizing that despite its importance, gender is not the dominant factor in this problem. The interview pool to which I had access at the beginning of my career served mainly to define the dynamics of the escalatory conflict between intimate partners as described below.

The Structure of the Escalatory Conflict

What little research has been conducted on partner conflict escalation is mostly based on qualitative studies (retrospective exploration of semistructured interviews). Although relatively to quantitative research, these studies provide rich, in-depth information, the generalizability of its findings is quite limited. More often than not, qualitative studies teach us a lot about a few people, whereas quantitative studies teach us a little about many (Polit & Beck, 2010). Qualitative research methods are regarded by many as an effective means for establishing theory and quantitative research as an effective means for studying these theories. At first, I based my research mainly on qualitative methods to study partner conflicts that escalate to violence. Later on I shifted to using quantitative methodology in my research.

Before I started exploring the typical structure of partners' escalatory conflicts, as evident from in-depth interviews, I was under the impression that it is generally a simple linear process. The interviews that I studied taught me that this was not the case. The escalatory conflict was typically constructed of three phases and was not linear. At first, the partners would have a conflict over specific life issues/events. In the second phase, they would fight over how the conflict between them was being conducted. The third and final phase would be characterized by attempts to end the conflict (Winstok, 2008). The following excerpts, the first from an interview with a man and the second with a woman, chiefly demonstrate the transition from conflict over specific life issues (phase 1) to how the conflict is conducted (phase 2).

Man: "You should have seen how she handled household matters, she really didn't care… very bad… we had a lot of fights over this… Let me give you an example. She forgot to pay the electricity bill and we were cut off. After that, I wouldn't let her pay… I figured, we can live in the dark

for a while and that will teach her. But she turned this into an embarrassing situation for me… She went and told everybody that I was abusing her… and it became much worse. She can't solve problems, she can only make them."

Woman: "He brought his friends home. They sat and watched TV and ate and drank. I told him 'I'm not gonna tidy up your mess.' So he said, 'don't tidy up' and turned his back on me. I said to him, 'how can you go to sleep and leave me with your mess and on top of it turn your back on me?' So he said, 'I've had it. I'm tired of listening to you,' and went to sleep."

The descriptions of the first phase of the conflict in both cases are very similar. Both conflicts arose over role division and the partners' responsibilities (specific life events/issues). The man maintained that his partner was not fulfilling her duties in taking care of the house and demanded that she pay the electricity bills on time. The woman claimed that her partner was not fulfilling his duty to tidy up after himself and his friends and demanded that he do this. Later on, however, the focus of the conflict shifts from specific events to how the conflict is conducted and reflects the nature of the relationship between the partners. In both excerpts the partner's irresponsiveness and its meaning is clearly exhibited. The man contended against his partner that she breached the boundaries of their intimate relationship by involving external elements in their problem. The woman was arguing that her partner not only refused a dialogue with her to attempt to resolve their conflict, but he had also had enough of her. It is probable that when the partners moved on from conflicting over an issue to conflicting over how the conflict was conducted, the disagreement that sparked the conflict from the outset was pushed aside and maybe even temporarily forgotten. Moreover and more importantly, the above-mentioned man and woman understood their partner's behavior, at that point, to reflect his/her attitude toward them and the relationship as a whole. In many cases, it appears as though the first phase of the conflict was only an opportunity to examine the relationship and served as a stepping stone for an attempt at change. It follows that the shift from a conflict focusing on specific life issues to the way it is conducted does not necessarily have destructive potential and may have constructive potential also.

An examination of the interviews indicates that men's mode of action was different from women's. Most men interviewed who initiated conflicts tended to use disciplining tactics, whereas the women interviewed who initiated conflicts tended to use wear-out tactics. The man cited above tried to teach his partner a lesson. He maintained that if they lived in the dark for a while, she would learn. The woman cited above was wearing her partner down (from his viewpoint as presented by her). She said that he told her that he had had enough and could not listen to her anymore.

The two excerpts above demonstrated mainly the transition from the first to the second part of the conflict. The two citations below, one by a man and one by a woman, demonstrate the shift from the second phase focused on the conflict to the third phase focused on its termination.

Man: "Sometimes, I let it pass but at other times, I can't take it anymore. Being good to her doesn't work. If you treat her nicely, you lose… give her one finger and she wants the whole hand…I try to be patient, but nothing helps… I know it's wrong to use my hands, but believe me, there's no other option. When I hit her, it ends. If it was up to her, I would be a doormat. Yes, a doormat…"

Woman: "I see how normal couples are. It's not like that with us, I told you, right? I have been living with him long enough to know who he is. With him, it doesn't matter how the fight started, I end up getting beaten no matter what I do. I don't argue with him anymore. I agree to whatever he says. What's in it for me? What is certain is that he will not change."

Most interviewees tended to describe the first part of the conflict (the shift from fighting over life issues to fighting over how the conflict is conducted) in great detail, whereas the second part of the conflict (the shift from fighting over how the conflict is conducted to the need to end it) was described in a more general manner. This can be explained by the changing focus of the conflict. The first part is about specific time and place, whereas the second part is not specific and follows well-known scripts for escalation, which are commonly repeated in many conflicts. The man quoted above said, "Being good to her doesn't work." This sometimes guides him to take the "wrong" path. The woman in the last quote was a little more specific. She said that "with him, it doesn't matter how the fight started," reemphasizing that at this point in the conflict, the initial focus was less important for the couple.

As mentioned, the final phase of the conflict centers on the need to end it. The man cited above violently subdues his partner to end the conflict. The woman cited above succumbs to her partner's dictates to end the conflict to avoid him being violent. This move is typical of most conflicts between the couples interviewed: the violence expected from or used by one partner made the other yield and terminated the conflict. Typically, those who acted aggressively interpreted their ending of the conflict as a success. On the other side, their partners mostly interpreted this as failure in resolving the problem that sparked the conflict or as indication of their weakness. It is reasonable to assume that these contradicting perceptions formed the basis for future conflicts.

Each phase in conflicts that escalate to violence is perceived by the partners as an attempt to repair a failure. The first phase is an attempt to repair a specific malfunction in the couple's day-to-day reality. In escalatory conflicts, failing at this attempt is often viewed as an indication of a deeper, more significant problem in the relationship that needs to be addressed and mended. Accordingly, the conflict expands and its focus shifts from the specific problem that triggered it to a broader problem that threatens the relationship. This is a critical phase in the conflict, as failure to cope with it would greatly increase the probability of violence. The reason for this is that in this phase, violence can be evaluated as worthwhile: the benefit of using it (e.g., repairing the relationship) is relatively higher than its cost (e.g., social condemnation). Using violence at this point can create a new problem, however,

spinning the conflict out of control, with potentially devastating results. This is the third phase in the conflict, focusing on the need to put an end to it and to minimize its harmful outcomes. Similarly to the second phase, here too, the probability of violence increases but for different reasons: in the second phase, if violence is used, it is to deal with the problem in the relationship, but if used in the third phase, it is to deal with the dangers of the deteriorating conflict. The structure of the escalatory conflict expresses the shifting perspectives of the partners and accordingly affects their actions toward each other.

Biased Study of Violent Behaviors to Explore Escalation Patterns

In addition to the qualitative studies used to develop an understanding of escalatory dynamics, attempts have also been made, based on theoretical frameworks of escalation, to conceptualize, interpret, and explain the findings of quantitative research regarding the occurrence, severity, and correlations of various forms of violence. Naturally, the consistency of findings on violent behaviors with theories of escalatory dynamics is insufficient to support these theories. Yet, despite the limitations of such deduction, this approach is worth considering in light of the difficulties inherent in the study of escalation. These will be further described in detail.

In an article published in 2009 in the Interpersonal Violence journal, Allen and Swan (2009) presented a study of partner violence dealing with gender symmetry and sexist attitudes. They had examined partner violence from an interactional perspective (action by one party and the other party's response) to understand the escalatory dynamics and gender differences within them. I will present the article below and criticize its approach and then offer an alternative guideline to the study of escalatory dynamics.

The database on which the article was based consisted of 182 students, mostly Hispanic (92 men and 90 women), who reported violence in their intimate relationships. The researchers established the database using CTS items measuring moderate violence (four items of physical violence: arm twisting, pushing, forcefully grasping, and slapping; one item of psychological violence: yelling; and one item of sexual violence: insisting on having oral or anal sex, without the use of physical violence). The study participants were asked to report, for each item, how many times they had acted in this way toward their partner, and how many times their partner had acted in this way toward them in the past 12 months. Based on these items, the researchers calculated two scores for each participant that represented the frequency of their mild violence towards their partner (aggression) and the frequency of their victimization by their partner's violence (victimization). As their study also addressed sexist attitudes, it included ASI-based measurements as well (Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, by Glick & Fiske, 1996), but these are of lesser consequence for the present discussion.

In their introduction to the article, the authors write:

"Many of the studies reporting comparable rates of violence perpetration by men and women do not examine contextual factors, such as who initiated the violence, who was injured, whether the violence was in self-defense, and the psychological impact of victimization (Dobash & Dobash, 2004; Saunders, 2002)…However, when contextual factors are examined, a complex picture of gender dynamics in IPV begins to emerge…"

The authors' address of the gender dynamics of the conflict was expressed in their differentiation between the violence of the partner "who initiated" it and "the violence in self-defense." They further examined two alternative models, separately, for each gender: one model in which the responding partner's aggression predicts the other partner's aggression and another model in which the responding partner's aggression is predicted by the other partner's aggression. Simply put, in the first model, the research participant started the violence; hence he/she was the aggressor, while the partner who was then violent in self-defense was the victim. In the second model, the roles are reversed: the research participant was the victim and the partner was the aggressor. In this study, using an acceptable research method, the scholars found that women's use of mild violence exceeds that of men. Further on, using an unacceptable research method, they claimed that for both genders, the models that best fit the data where those in which men were the aggressors (the men initiated the violence) and women were the victims (used aggression in self-defense). The scholars realized that the methodology they used to examine the models was not acceptable. At the beginning of their article, they mention this in a rather unclear manner:

"The comparison of these two models will allow an examination of directionality (with the caveat that the data is cross-sectional)."

At the end of the article, having presented their interpretation, the authors were clearer about it:

"Of course, because the models presented here are cross-sectional, causality is unknown. Longitudinal models are required to provide a true test of whether men's violence tends to precede women's or vice versa."

"…because causality cannot be known from a cross-sectional design, the models suggesting that women's violence occurs in reaction to male violence against them, whereas men tend to initiate violence, need to be examined longitudinally."

In other words, the authors clearly state at the end of the article that in order to examine causality, longitudinal data are required; the models explored causal correlations; the data on which these models were based are cross-sectional; hence, no causality can be inferred. In the introduction to the article, the authors should have presented the fact that there is an unbridgeable gap between the theoretical hypotheses of their models and the data used to support them. However, this is not the only problem with this study. The theoretical and operational framework is wrong, providing an opportunity for a deeper look into the theoretical and empirical aspects of escalatory dynamics.

Throughout the article, it is explicitly and implicitly assumed, in the theoretical framework as well as in the interpretation of the results, that by measuring the

frequency of mild aggression, over a period of one year, by both intimate partners, including physical, psychological, and sexual violence, it is possible to identify who initiated and who responded to the violence. This approach necessarily consists of several assumptions that the initiator of violence never does so in self-defense and the one who responds by violence always acts in self-defense; the one who uses violence first is the aggressor and the one who responds is the victim; an aggressor is always an aggressor and a victim is always a victim; any violence is the same, whether in the form of yelling, pushing, or slapping. These assumptions were not described in the article, were not tested throughout the research, have no empirical basis and are clearly implausible. It is noticeable that the weight of these implicit assumptions in the findings of the study discussed exceeds the weight of the limitations imposed by using a cross-sectional database.

To exemplify the implausibility of the implicit assumptions on which the authors based their work, let me present two incidents of partner violence between Aharon and Dalit that happened in one year.

Incident 1

Aharon (coming back from work):	Dalit, I'm hungry, what's for dinner?
Dalit:	I didn't prepare anything today. Take yesterday's leftovers from the fridge.
Aharon (gets angry and raises his voice):	So what have you been doing all day while I was working?
Dalit (angrily yelling back):	Don't raise your voice at me!
Aharon (yelling even louder):	You are behaving like your mother, who treats your father like a dog!
Dalit (approaches Aharon and slaps his face):	Don't you speak about my parents like that.

Aharon pushes Dalit away. She bumps into a chair and falls on the floor. She gets up and leaves the house.

Case Summary

Aharon yells at Dalit.
Dalit yells at Aharon.
Aharon continues yelling at Dalit and insults her.
Dalit slaps Aharon's face.
Aharon pushes Dalit.

Incident 2

Dalit and Aharon return home from the supermarket and are arranging the groceries in the kitchen.

Dalit (after a long silence):   I saw how you looked at the cashier in the supermarket.
Aharon: (silent).
Dalit (raising her voice):   You disgust me.
Aharon (raising his voice):   Shut your mouth or I will do it for you.
Dalit (yelling):   I'm not scared of you, you idiot. You're going to pay dearly for this.

   Aharon takes an apple out of a bag and throws it in Dalit's direction. In response, Dalit throws the keys at him. Aharon moves to another room.

Case Summary

Dalit yells at Aharon and insults him.
Aharon yells at Dalit and threatens to hurt her.
Dalit yells at Aharon, insults him and threatens him.
Aharon throws an object at Dalit.
Dalit throws an object at Aharon.

   Although these are two different incidents in which the couple's actions escalated, in the abovementioned study, the partners would be assigned a general score. Counting each action (even those not sampled by the scholars in the study) would produce the following results for the year in which both incidents took place: Aharon yelled at Dalit three times, insulted her once, threatened to hurt her once, and physically hurt her twice—a total of seven acts of violence. Dalit yelled at Aharon three times, insulted him once, threatened to hurt him once and physically hurt him twice—a total of seven acts of violence, as with Aharon.

   Both Dalit and Aharon's scored seven on the aggressor and victim scale. Based on these scores, can it be established who initiated and who responded to the violence? The answer is no, and this makes it impossible to refer to the rest of the research hypotheses of the study discussed above. Yet, let us attempt to examine these assumptions. Can we state that the person who initiates the violence never does so in self-defense and that the one responding with violence always acts in self-defense? The answer to this is also no, and experience shows us that this is not always the case. At times, initiators of an aggressive action act prior to an offense, in order to avoid it. Cases such as these undermine the basis of the first part of the statement. Its second part is undermined also by cases in which individuals hurt those who hurt them in revenge and not in self-defense. Is the initiator of aggression an aggressor and is the one who responds the victim? Is an aggressor always an

aggressor, and a victim always a victim? The answer to both questions is negative. In the two incidents described above, both Aharon and Dalit responded to the actions of the other, and both probably had the experience of being victimized. Is violence the same whether it is yelling, pushing or slapping? Opinions may differ in this case due to varying value judgments. However, from a research point of view, avoiding a differentiation between forms of violence diminishes our ability to characterize the phenomenon. In the first case, Dalit hurt Aharon physically after he hurt her verbally. Was her physical attack legitimate, and of the same or lesser value, just because he had hurt her verbally first? In the second incident, Aharon hurt Dalit physically after she had hurt him verbally. Was his physical attack legitimate, and of the same or lesser value, just because she had hurt him verbally first? My answer is negative.

Even if in the study described above, the data collection would have been performed in two waves (longitudinal study), the authors' conclusions could not have been inferred. If the researchers are interested in the question of who was the first to act violently, a longitudinal research design is unnecessary. A measurement instrument is required that is designed to provide an answer to that question. For example, one may ask: over the past 12 months, in how many conflicts were you the first to attack your partner verbally (yelled, cursed, insulted, humiliated, or threatened); in how many conflicts was your partner the first to attack you verbally? The same wording can be adapted for various forms of psychological, physical, and sexual violence. If the researchers are interested in differentiating between violence used in self-defense and violence used for other purposes, they should ask this directly and explicitly. For example, one may ask: Over the past 12 months, in how many cases did you hurt your partner verbally because you wanted to stop him/her from hurting you? These questions should be phrased so as to differentiate between various forms of hurt or injury.

It can be summarized that the major finding of the study mentioned above—that men were the aggressors (the initiators of violence) and women were the victims (acting violently in self-defense)—is not an established finding. On the other hand, another contradictory finding was that women exhibited more violence than men. This finding does appear to be theoretically, methodologically, and empirically valid and is consistent with the considerable knowledge accumulated in the field of partner violence. The researchers settled this contradiction with the following argument:

"As women are often at a physical disadvantage in confrontations with males, the doubled rate of perpetration seen in women may indicate that more violence is needed to repel an attack."

Yet, this interpretation does not coincide with their findings: 55% of women reported using violence toward their partners, whereas 47% reported being victimized by their partner's violence. The numbers reported by men were significantly lower. But it is sufficient to look at the numbers reported by women to determine that at least 8% of them were being violent toward a nonviolent partner.

The study described above indicates an increasing interest in studying escalatory dynamics. At the same time, it demonstrates what may happen if the "Pandora's box" of escalatory dynamics is opened with unbefitting instruments.

The Study of Violent Behaviors to Explore Escalation Patterns

Quantitative research based on single isolated actions can serve only to reject arguments pertaining to escalatory dynamics. Such research cannot support these arguments. However, as I have already suggested, despite the limitations of inference based on the study of single isolated acts, this approach is useful in light of the difficulties inherent in the study of escalation.

The data of the first national survey of violence against women in Israel (Eisikovits, Winstok, & Fishman, 2004) gave me an opportunity to conduct an indirect examination of the aforementioned typical structure of escalatory conflicts. This cross-sectional survey examined a probability sample of the general population, men and women who reported their own and their partners' frequency of violent behaviors to varying degrees of severity over a period of 12 months. The theoretical framework, the hypotheses, and findings of this study are presented below (Winstok & Perkis, 2009). It is important to note that this study is based on cross-sectional (rather than longitudinal) data, which limits its ability to establish causality. Despite this limitation, studies of this kind promote the understanding that escalation is a key concept in partner violence research, encouraging its development and the implementation of its findings.

As mentioned, the typical escalatory partner conflict is constructed in three phases. The first is an attempt to repair a specific malfunction in the couple's day-to-day life. In many cases, this phase is characterized by attempts of at least one of the partners to dominate the thoughts, emotions, and behavior of the other, usually by normative means. The more these attempts fail to produce the desired results, the need to control the partner increases and the capability of self-control and restraint decreases, until it is realized that the desired goal cannot be achieved by normative means. This acknowledgement leads to the second phase in the expanding conflict, in which the focus shifts from a specific everyday difficulty to a broader problem threatening the relationship. At this point, the capability for self-control and restraint may reach a low level, which may promote the use of non-normative means. The following two excerpts of a man and a woman demonstrate that failed attempts at attaining control over one's partner apparently undermine the capability for self-control and restraint.

Man: "I try and try again, but at a certain point, I feel I can't take it anymore… I can't deal with the situation any longer… and I explode… In moments like this, nothing can calm me down. It doesn't matter what she would say or do. I act automatically and destroy whatever is near me. And I can't control it. After I settle down, I can't believe that was me."

Woman: "You should see him, what happens to him when he doesn't get what he wants. He becomes really frightening. His face is all twisted. He is in a frenzy… at moments like this, nothing can stop him and he could kill me. Even if I talk to him, beg of him, it doesn't help… there's no-one home. The man becomes insane."

From this point on, violence can escalate until the third phase of the conflict in which one or both of the partners realize that it is spinning out of control with

potentially harmful outcomes, and therefore it should end, even if this involves the use of more force or succumbing to the partner's demands.

Although the link between one's need to control his/her partner and the capability for self-control and restraint is vital for the understanding of violence, it has received little direct empirical attention. However, the research that does exist in this field supports the suggestion that the two forms of control are negatively associated (Stets, 1994, 1995) and that both affect the use of violence. Studies showed that violence can be a result of low self-control and restraint capability (e.g., Chase, O'Leary, & Heyman, 2001; Holtzworth-Munroe, Meehan, Herron, Rehman, & Stuart, 2000; Sellers, 1999; Stuart & Holtzworth-Munroe, 2005; Tweed & Dutton, 1998) as well as a means of achieving some desired goals (e.g., Browne, 1987; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Dutton, 1988; Johnson, 2001; Felson & Messner, 2000). As the need to control the partner increases and the capability for self-control and restraint decreases, violence erupts and becomes increasingly severe. The use of violence at one level of severity (e.g., verbal aggression), increases the probability that another level of violence, of higher severity, will be used as well (e.g., threatening with physical violence). The second severity level (but not the first) increases the probability that a higher, third level of violence severity will be used (e.g., physical violence). That is to say, a valid pattern of violence escalation stipulates that verbal aggression affects physical aggression with the mediation of threats by physical aggression.

The above-mentioned theoretical framework and research (Winstok & Perkis, 2009) assumed that the escalatory dynamics of partner conflicts can be revealed in the relationship between forms of control (control over the partner and self-control) and forms of violence (verbal violence, threats of physical violence, and physical violence) in the following manner:

- The higher the need to control the partner, the lower the capability for self-control and restraint.
- The lower the capability for self-control and restraint, the higher the probability of using verbal violence.
- The more verbal violence is used, the higher the probability of using threats.
- The more threats are used, the higher the probability of using physical violence.

A model based on these hypotheses was tested using data from the first national survey of violence against women in Israel. The findings of the model described in Fig. 7.1 are graphically simple so that the thicker the line describing the relationship between variables, the stronger the relationship. The fit indices between the data and the model were good. This means that the data are consistent with the model. The relationship indices between model variables indicate three escalation patterns. The main pattern is of the escalatory path identified in many in-depth interviews in which mild manifestations of control may develop into moderate violence, which in turn may evolve into severe violence. The findings of the analysis also indicate that two additional secondary escalation paths exist alongside the main path. In one of the two, self-control plays no part. In the other, neither self-control nor verbal violence plays a part. It looks as though the two secondary paths are more instrumental (or less expressive) than the main path. On the main escalatory path, the weakest relationship is between verbal violence and threats of physical violence.
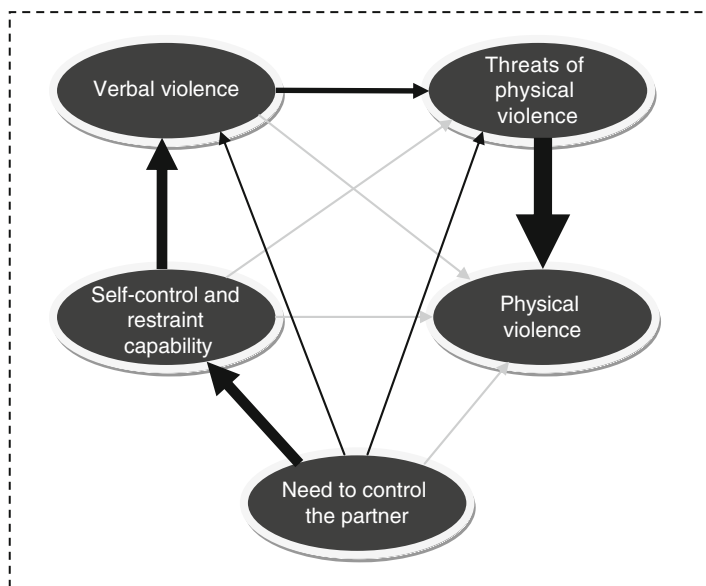
Fig. 7.1 Escalatory dynamics of partner conflicts

This could indicate that the move from verbal violence to threats of physical violence is not a trivial matter: People are aware of the fact that this move constitutes the crossing of a red line. It is also evident that in this escalatory path, the association between threats of physical violence and physical violence per se is the strongest. This may indicate that crossing red lines accelerates deterioration.

Conflict Escalation

In most cases, addressing escalatory dynamics in general and specifically those in partner conflicts is limited to its behavioral manifestations. Despite the importance of this aspect, it does not offer a comprehensive description of escalatory dynamics in conflicts. To obtain such a description, additional, less explicit aspects need also to be identified and addressed. The following quote clearly and typically demonstrates the additional aspects that surfaced in interviews that I conducted. The following excerpt is from an in-depth interview with Itay, a 48-year-old man, who has been married to 41-year-old Sarit for 19 years. The couple has four sons; the oldest is 17 and the youngest 9. Itay is describing the last conflict between himself and Sarit:

"It was quite a hectic month. We were renovating the house. Towards the end, when all that was left was the cleaning up, my back went out. I could barely move. Just like that. I went to bed and asked Sarit nicely to get me something for the pain.

She checked and said there were no pills left. I asked her to go to the neighbor, the pharmacy, wherever, just to get me those pills. But my suffering didn't bother her. She told me I was behaving like a child and that nothing would happen if I wait till later when she would go get something for the pain. Up to that point, I had spoken nicely and quietly to her. But her disregard of my pain… I shouted at her: 'Go now, do you understand? Now get me something for the pain.' She did not answer. This blew my mind completely, her indifference and ignoring me. Only when I threw the night lamp and it smashed into the wall did she come into the room. She asked me if I'd gone crazy. So I told her everything I thought about her and that if she wasn't going to get the pills now, despite my back ache, I would get up and trash the house. It wasn't just about the pills anymore, it was also about the way she treated me. Do you think this helped? Absolutely not, she turned around and left the room. So just like that, with all the pain, I stood up and showed her what it means to disrespect me. At first I hit her, like that, to show her that it doesn't pay to mess with me. You think it helped? Not at all. She continued to ignore me. So I unleashed all my anger at her."

Itay's report clearly indicates that the conflict between the two of them started when he demanded that Sarit find him pain killers for his back ache. In light of her continuing refusal to respond to his request, and the meaning he gave this refusal ("her disregard of my pain… her indifference and ignoring me…"), Itay expanded or shifted the focus of the conflict ("It wasn't just about the pills anymore, it was also about the way she treated me") and when the updated demand for attention received no response, Itay turned to physical violence. The dynamics of Itay's demands in his conflict with Sarit is typical of escalatory conflicts. Moreover, a causal relationship is clearly evident between his demands and his behavior. He started out normatively, attempting to get Sarit to comply with his first request ("…I spoke nicely and quietly…"). When this means failed, he gradually crossed the normative lines: from talking he moved to shouting, then to damaging property, and finally to physical violence.

As suggested in the previous chapter, partner conflicts may break out when one partner experiences a negative gap between what he/she considers desirable and available, blaming the responsibility for this gap on the other partner's behavior. This is the starting point of the process described in Fig. 7.2, of one partner's behavior in conflict. It begins with making a demand, which may often change throughout the conflict. The partner making the demand may act normatively or nonnormatively to obtain the other partner's compliance. The flowchart distinguishes between two dynamic components of the process: the demands and the actions taken to achieve them. The external loop marked with the thick broken line represents the dynamics of the demands. The internal loop marked with a thick unbroken line represents the action dynamics. Although the two loops are distinct from each other, they are strongly related.

Throughout the conflict, the demands made by one partner may be fixed. That is, the partner digs in and acts to obtain these demands. Alternatively, the demands may change during the conflict in light of the other partner's refusal to comply. It is possible that the partner making the demands will reduce or even give them up. It is also
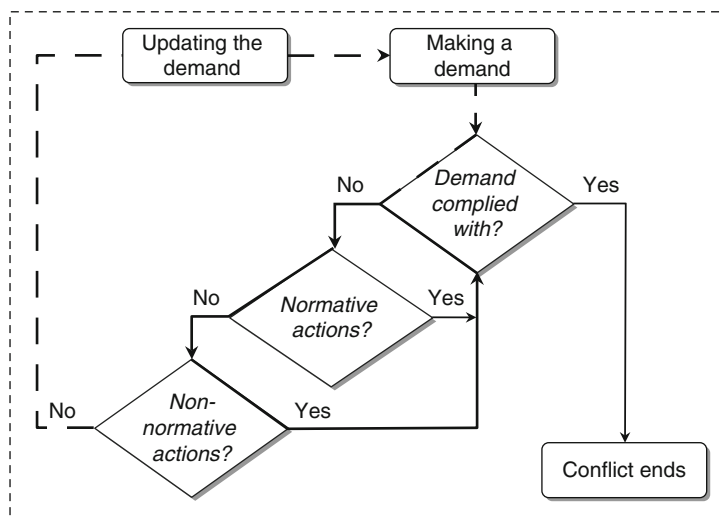
Fig. 7.2 Between the beginning and end of a conflict

possible that the partner making the demands will expand them. This conflict dynamics can be represented by three theoretical demand patterns:

- Those whose demands are reduced as the conflict progresses or are even removed from the couple's agenda. With this type, if there is any conflict escalation at all, the violence can be of mild severity.
- Those whose demands are maintained and insisted upon, without reducing or expanding them throughout the conflict. The violence of this type can be of high severity.
- Those whose demands expanded or shifted as long as the other partner refuses to comply. As in the previous type, the violence can be of high severity.

Throughout a conflict, the actions taken by the demanding partner may be normative, such as verbal requests, and may be nonnormative, such as violence. The escalation of actions taken during the conflict may be manifested in two phases: transition from attempting to obtain compliance through normative actions to attempting to obtain compliance through nonnormative actions and then once nonnormative actions are taken, their severity may increase. This conflict dynamics can be represented by three theoretical behavioral patterns:

- Those who respond to their partner's actions with de-escalation (reverse escalation). They attempt to act in a manner that will wind down their partner's actions, break the deterioration of the conflict, put it back on a normative track, and maybe even end it.
- Those who respond to their partner's actions in a balancing fashion (an eye for an eye). They attempt to act in a manner that will hurt their partner with the same severity as their partner hurts them. Game theory, which analyzes conflicts and cooperation between decision makers with different agendas, has paid much
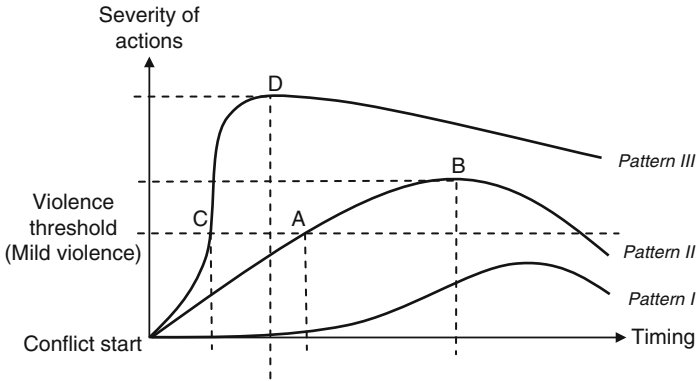
Fig. 7.3 Example of characterizing and comparing escalation patterns

attention to the balancing pattern of behavior that it named tit-for-tat. The game theory identified this pattern as rational and effective (Axelrod, 1980, 1987).

- Those who respond to their partner's actions in an escalatory manner. They take increasingly severe actions relative to both their partner's and their own previous actions.

The lowest probability of escalation is when the demanding partner is willing to withdraw his/her demands. The probability of escalation increases when the demanding partner entrenches into the demands with which the other partner refuses to comply. The probability of escalation is highest when the demanding partner expands the demands and the other partner consistently refuses to yield or even makes demands of his/her own.

Conflict escalation to violence and the escalation of violence in a conflict are general patterns that can have different variations. The variations can be described by three major characteristics:

- The time lapse between the moment of the first demand made by one partner in the conflict (the beginning of the conflict) and the first manifestation of violence.
- The time lapse between the first and the most severe manifestations of violence in the conflict.
- The maximum severity level of violence reached in the conflict.

We may assume that these characteristics are entwined and together express the risk inherent in the conflict: the faster the deterioration to violence and from moderate to severe violence, and the more severe the violence reached in a conflict, the higher the probability of severe injury. The fast deterioration of a conflict indicates swift or automatic information processing, which harbors the risk of violence as discussed in Chap. 5 on social information processing. When the process is fast, the resources invested in coping with the problem are limited. Figure 7.3 demonstrates three forms of escalation, characterized by two points of reference in the process. The first point addresses the first moment that violence is used in the conflict, and

the second addresses the moment it reaches its peak of severity. Escalation Pattern I includes no manifestations of violence at all. At the peak of conflict, there is no violence. Escalation Patterns II and III include violence, but in Pattern II, the partner takes longer to use the first act of violence to reach the peak of violence severity, and the peak of severity is relatively mild. Pattern III has the highest potential to cause injury and is therefore also the most dangerous of the patterns presented.

The first part of the chapter was an attempt to present what and how we know about the process of escalation. I then sought to provide an answer to the following questions: What is the escalatory process of partner conflicts? What is it made of and how does it reveal itself? Accordingly, the demands and behaviors that constitute the escalatory dynamic were presented and discussed, and a distinction between various expressions (types) of these components was made. Now that the appearance of escalatory dynamics was clarified, it is time to delve deeper into questions such as what it is that sustains escalatory dynamics, why it is that violence is not present from the start of a conflict, why it is that the escalatory dynamic has a specific gradual structure and why it is so common. The following, final part of this chapter will attempt to answer these questions by presenting two mechanisms that form and sustain the escalatory dynamic. One mechanism is based on the cost–benefit ratio, which will be briefly discussed, as it was already described in detail throughout the book, especially in Chap. 3, on violence as a rational behavior. The second mechanism is based on sensitivity-to-harm ratio, which was mentioned as "doing justice" in Chap. 5 on social information processing, yet was insufficiently developed. This mechanism will be presented in detail below.

The Cost–Benefit Ratio Mechanism of Escalation

It was argued in Chap. 3 that violence can be considered rational if it meets the following preconditions: the violence is possible and has the potential to accomplish a desired goal, the cost of violence is lower than the cost of other possible actions, and is also lower than the value of the goal. The cost–benefit ratio is relevant not only for understanding the use of violence but also specifically, and more importantly, for understanding the escalatory dynamic leading to violence, which becomes increasingly severe until it stops.

As mentioned, the dynamics of demands and the actions taken to attain them are entwined. Escalation to and of violence makes it possible to work toward a goal (fixed or expanding) while controlling the costs associated with the attempts of achieving them. In this dynamics, the first instance of violence appears after normative means where employed to achieve a desired goal. At first, mild violence, whose perceived cost is much lower than the goal's value, is used. It is then gradually increased. The gradual increase in severity of violence continues as long as the other partner does not comply or provide access to the desired goal, and as long as the value of the demanded goal is higher than the cost of the violence used to achieve it. The process ends when the demands are fulfilled or are no longer worth pursuing.

Hence, escalation to and of violence is a tactic that ensures minimum investment in achieving a goal, whether it is eventually achieved or not. Escalatory dynamics deteriorates the conflict because it increases the severity of violence, but at the same time, it also puts on the breaks, as it ensures that the violence ceases when it becomes of no value. Thus, escalation (behavioral pattern) to and of violence (action) is the result of cost and benefit considerations and as such it is a rational choice.

The cost–benefit ratio escalatory mechanism described above chiefly addressed one part, the aggressor's motivation to act in an escalatory fashion toward the partner. This motivation in the aggressor may set off the second part of the mechanism. In this part, the aggressor's motivation to escalate forces the partner to adopt, either willingly or otherwise, the rational model set forth by the aggressor, thus fueling the escalatory course. To clarify this point, let us take a step back. In Chap. 3, in an attempt to establish the argument that violence is a rational behavior, I presented the theory of deterrence, as applied to partner violence. The principles of this long-standing theory are an integral part of the second aspect of the cost–benefit ratio-based escalatory mechanism. Deterrence exists in the face of a severe, certain, immediate threat, which is yet to materialize. As the threat (the potential harm) materializes, it is no longer a threat, and deterrence loses its power. Escalatory dynamics meets all the requirements for deterrence without exhausting the threat. By using mild violence that becomes increasingly severe, the aggressor demonstrates the possibility of imminent severe danger to the victim. Thus, the aggressor ensures that the victim complies long before the threat is fully executed.

The cost–benefit ratio-based escalatory mechanism includes two interrelated parts. Their interrelatedness stems from the fact that escalatory dynamics is interactional, that is, both partners form the dynamics. However, their contribution to the dynamics is not equal but rather complementary (from a perspective of causality, not of responsibility and blame). The first part of the mechanism focuses on the aggressor's attempt to minimize costs by gradually increasing his/her controlled aggression. The second part of the mechanism is focused on the victim's responses to these actions, in an attempt to minimize the costs of resisting the aggressor's demands. Let us now move on to describe the second escalatory mechanism, which is based on the sensitivity-to-harm ratio and is more prominently interactional.

The Sensitivity-to-Harm Ratio Mechanism of Escalation

It is clear why conflicts with partners who respond to their partner's actions in an escalatory manner (take increasingly severe actions relative to both their partner's and their own previous actions) deteriorate to violence. But it could be expected that when both partners are balancing (act in a manner that will hurt their partner with the same severity as their partner hurts them—an eye for an eye), the severity of their actions will be fixed and such conflicts will not escalate. The more I looked into this, the more I found that the conflicts of balancing types may deteriorate as

well. This supposedly contradicts the balance principle. The following quote drew my attention to this paradox.

Interviewee: Because neither of us can hold our horses, we fight a lot and often, the situation gets ugly.
Interviewer: What do you mean when you say that neither of you can hold your horses?
Interviewee: If he hurts me, I must get back at him with the same currency. It's the same with him as well.
Interviewer: What is the same currency?
Interviewee: I mean that I must make him suffer in the same way that he makes me suffer. It has been like that with us ever since we met. So what happens eventually, even if it starts out as a joke, every fight becomes a world war.

A study published in the prestigious Science Magazine, entitled "Two Eyes for an Eye: the Neuroscience of Force Escalation" (Shergill, Bays, Frith, & Wolpert, 2003), may help in understanding the paradox of a balancing pattern and escalation and by so, revealing the second mechanism that generates the escalatory dynamic. The authors argue that conflicts in which the parties respond in a balancing fashion (tit for tat) escalate because each party feels that the other has hurt them with greater intensity. They suggest that this experience is real and that escalation is a natural by-product of neural processes. First, the researchers exerted force on the left index finger of one research participant. Second, this participant was requested to use the right index finger to exert the same amount of force on the left index finger of a second participant. Third, the second participant was asked to use the right index finger to exert the same amount of force on the first participant's left index finger. The first step was a one-time occurrence but the second and third steps were repeated four times in which the participants took turns exerting force on each other's index fingers. Six pairs took part in the experiment. Each party was not aware of the instructions given to the other party in each pair. The force exerted in each step was measured. The measurements demonstrated that the force exerted by each party throughout the steps of the experiment by all the participants became increasingly strong, although the instructions specifically requested that the same amount of force be used as that exerted in the initial step. This experiment demonstrates that when force is used according to the tit for tat principle, it escalates. The findings of the experiment support the suggestion that people are more sensitive to the force exerted on them by others than to the force they exert upon others. If we replace the term 'force' with 'injury,' this would read: people are more sensitive to the injury exerted on them by others than to the injury they exert upon others. In light of this sensitivity gap in interpersonal conflicts, the injured party wishing to retaliate with an equally severe injury (balancing) may generate a more serious injury. This sensitivity gap works the same way on the second party and will cause him/her to retaliate with a more serious injury, even when attempting an equally severe (balancing) response. In this fashion, the actions and injuries escalate.

The claim that the battering party evaluates his/her act as less severe than that experienced by the battered party is an attempt to explain the paradox by which conflicts escalate among those who respond to their partners' actions in a balancing manner. But this principle is not necessarily applicable only in such cases. The same principle can be applied to all types, including those who respond to their partners' actions with de-escalation. Therefore, it can be assumed that a gap of sensitivity to harm is a catalyst of escalation that operates among all types.

The conclusions stemming from the above-mentioned experiment must be made while acknowledging the differences between the various contexts. For example, the actions taken in the experiment were predefined and prearranged and the criteria for severity of injury (the force that was used) were known, clear, quantifiable and objective. The actions taken by partners in their conflicts are not defined and arranged in advance. The severity of an injury may have several criteria which may change from conflict to conflict and from person to person. This means that the criteria of injury between intimate partners are not known, difficult to quantify, and not objective.

Injury evaluations have implications for the relative severity of partners' actions during a conflict, and accordingly, for conflict dynamics. This makes the criteria for these evaluations worth considering. How do individuals evaluate the severity of an aggressive action? Knowledge in this area is limited and is insufficient to produce an exhaustive answer. Yet, here are some examples of such criteria: the intensity of the hurtful action (force and duration—"he grabbed my hair and was pulling and shoving me for several minutes…"); the potential injury inherent in the action ("she could have pulled my eye out…"); the recovery process required ("it took weeks before the blue marks were gone…"); and the potential force invested in the injury ("she pushed me with all her might…"). It is plausible that the person evaluating the injury is using more than one criterion in the process, and it is also possible that these criteria are different from those used by the same person when evaluating the injury that one has caused to one's partner.

An additional criterion that recurred in many interviews may have a crucial effect on evaluating the degree of an injury's justifiability. Hurt that is perceived as unfair will be evaluated as more severe than an identical hurt (in terms of form, intensity, and duration) that is perceived as fair. It can be assumed that those who hurt their partners believe, at least at the moment of perpetration, that their action is justifiable. Had they not believed that in the situation they are in it is right to hurt their partners, they would not have chosen to take such action against them. In retrospect, after the conflict is over, some offenders may modify their perspective and instead of justifying their action ("she got what she deserved"), they may make excuses for it ("I shouldn't have hit her but I couldn't control myself") (Eisikovits, Goldblatt, & Winstok, 1999). Whereas the offender perceives the offense as justified at the time of offending, the offended will probably not take it as such. Such perception gaps between the partners regarding the actions taken during their conflict may promote escalation. The following excerpt, taken from a couple session, with me, in a therapeutic setting, is a good example of the issue of justification and its contribution to the escalatory dynamics (as part of the sensitivity-to-harm ratio mechanism). Anelle is 32 and has been married to Sami, who is 35, for 8 years. The couple has two

daughters, aged 4 and 6. The relationship between the couple is characterized by frequent conflicts that sometimes escalate to mutual violence.

Anelle (to me):	After he took a shower and got into bed like a king, I went in to take a shower. What do I see? Once again, as always, his clothes and all the towels are soaking wet on the floor, and the bath tub? Full of scum, bottles of shampoo and conditioner tossed around with no caps on… (To Sami) Didn't I tell you a thousand times to clean up after you take a shower? (To me with tears in her eyes) I'm sick and tired of being his maid… So this time, I decided that I am not letting it go. I picked up the wet towels and clothes, went into the bedroom and put them on top of him.
Sami (to Anelle):	Put them? You threw them on top of me. You wet my side of the bed.
Anelle (to Sami):	Didn't I ask you a thousand times to clean up after you take a shower?
Sami:	You did, so what? I clean up after you too… What about all the hairs you leave in the bathroom?
Anelle:	And this time, did you clean up after yourself, not after me? You didn't!
Sami:	True, I didn't. Is that a reason to wet our bed? You were totally out of line!
Anelle:	I was out of line? You were out of line! What am I supposed to do? Clean up and shut up?
Sami:	No-one makes you clean up after me. As far as I am concerned, you may not clean up after yourself either. I won't make such a big deal out of it. Admit it… admit that this time, you went way overboard. (To me) isn't it an exaggerated reaction?
Anelle (to me):	He's trying to manipulate things. He was out of line to not clean up, and he was out of line to curse me.
Sami (to Anelle):	Do you even hear yourself? What was I supposed to do when you flung the wet stuff at me… was I supposed to bless you? And how did all this end? Tell him what else you did!
Anelle (to me):	I threw the alarm clock at him after he cursed me… maybe I shouldn't have done it, but it made me mad: the shower, the cursing… had he cleaned up after himself, like he should have, none of this would have happened.

This excerpt describes a conflict that has escalated. Sami did not bother to clean up after himself in the shower. Anelle took this behavior as an expression of Sami's ongoing hurtful attitude toward her. In response, she picked up all the wet clothes and towels that Sami had left in the shower, entered the bedroom, and threw or placed them on him, wetting both him and his side of the bed. Sami responded to Anelle's action by cursing. Anelle responded to the cursing by throwing the alarm

clock in Sami's direction. In their discussion of the incident, both Anelle and Sami examined the extent to which their own and their partners' actions were justifiable. Generally speaking, both tended to view the actions of the other partner as unjust, unnecessary, and hurtful provocations and perceived their own reactions to be proportionate, reasonable, justifiable, and appropriate.

The initial action in this incident was Sami's: he did not clean the bathroom after taking a shower. He did not justify this behavior but conceptualized it in a way that belittles its severity. First, he argued that Anelle also left the bathroom dirty ("I clean up after you too… What about all the hairs you leave in the bathroom?") Then he said that he would not consider it an offense if she left the bathroom as it is ("As far as I am concerned, you may not clean up after yourself either. I will not make such a big deal out of it."). Unlike Sami, Anelle takes offense from his behavior and regards it a part of an ongoing hurtful pattern ("Once again, as always… I'm sick and tired of being his maid… So this time I decided I am not letting it go."). In other words, both partners agree on the facts but assign different severity to them. Sami (the offender) takes them lightly, but Anelle (the offended) does not. In accordance with his approach, Sami expects his partner to respond less severely than Anelle's actual reaction. These perception gaps between the partners in respect to a given behavior promote perception differences regarding the appropriate responses for such behavior.

During the time lapse between Sami's action and Anelle's response, she views herself as the victim and Sami as the aggressor. Sami is unaware of the developing situation and views the partners as neither. The second action in the incident is performed by Anelle. It is important to notice that whereas there was agreement about the facts of the first action, there is less agreement about the facts of the second action. Anelle said: "I picked up the wet towels and clothes and went into the bedroom and put them on top of him." Sami correct her: "Put them? You threw them on top of me. You wet my side of the bed." Anelle perceives herself as the victim of Sami's continuous offenses and views her response as justifiable or at least proportionate. Sami, who probably understands the issue only at the time of Anelle's response, thinks that her response is disproportionate. He says: "You were totally out of line!" Anelle responds: "I was out of line? You were out of line!" In the time lapse between Anelle's response and Sami's first action, and Sami's response and her first action, Sami understands the situation for the first time and perceives himself as the victim. He feels victimized because, as already mentioned, he views Anelle's action as unfair.

Sami makes the third move in the incident: he curses Anelle. At this point, let us see how the partners evaluate Sami's response. Sami compares his action to Anelle's and evaluates it as fair. Anelle reaches the opposite conclusion. As far as she is concerned, Sami added insult to injury: not only did he not clean up the bathroom after taking a shower but also he did not understand and accept her response and cursed her instead. The rest of the incident continues to deteriorate according to the same principles identified and described above. Generally speaking, both Anelle and Sami perceive their actions as balancing, and their partner's actions as destabilizing.

As the partner's action breaks the balance, they are required to perform another action to restore the balance. In this situation, escalation is inevitable.

How can the gap between Anelle and Sami's balance calculations be explained? Anelle's response to the mess that Sami left in the bathroom considered not only this last incident, but also all the other incidents in which Sami was inconsiderate and made a mess in the bathroom without cleaning up afterward. Sami's calculation was different. He evaluated Anelle's response only in relation to the last incident in which he messed up the bathroom. These different calculation methods were repeated further when Anelle's response to Sami's cursing took into consideration not only the cursing but also the last incident of bathroom mess as well as the previous incidents. Anelle calculated her offense toward Sami relative to a compound of all his previous offenses against her. Sami calculated the severity of Anelle's offense against him only in relation to his last offense against her. This is a significant source of discrepancy in the partners' evaluations of the severity of their actions. This is why both Sami and Anelle thought that they were acting justifiably whereas the other was exaggerating. The other actions/reactions in the described conflict also follow these principles, which can be summed up as follows: The experience of victimization is cumulative and includes all the relevant injuries. This experience disables or reduces one partner's capability to acknowledge the cumulative injury inflicted on the other partner (Eisikovits, Winstok, & Gelles, 2002; Winstok, Eisikovits, & Gelles, 2002). Furthermore, this idea indicates that both partners in violent relationships are victims, rendering the distinction between victim and perpetrator irrelevant, at least when this mechanism is active.

Final Comments

Addressing the two mechanisms that support escalation as etiological can also help with incorporating these arguments into the body of knowledge on violence. The minimal investment mechanism (cost–benefit ratio) is consistent with the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1973) and its ramifications on the study of violence such as the proactive aggression path in the social information processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994). The sensitivity gap mechanism (sensitivity-to-harm ratio) is consistent with the Frustration–Aggression Theory (Berkowitz, 1978, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939) and its ramifications on the study of violence such as the reactive aggression path in the social information processing model. This incorporation can expand the theoretical basis for the study of escalation and violence. An example is the combination of hostile attribution with the sensitivity gap mechanism, each being an extension of the other. A precondition for any progress in the understanding of escalatory dynamics is the development of an observation unit that can grasp and quantify it as a representative measurement. In simple language, it requires an instrument to measure partner conflict dynamics, including conflicts that escalate to violence and violent conflicts in which violence escalates.

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Chapter 8
Observation Units of Partner Violence

The previous chapter provided the theoretical basis for partner conflict dynamics, specifically in conflicts that escalate to violence and in conflicts in which violence escalates. The chapter concluded with the argument that an operational approach to the measurement and representation of partner violence is needed to promote our knowledge and understanding of the field. The present chapter presents an approach, general guidelines, and principles which are nonexhaustive and are but one step toward the implementation of the interactional observation unit in research.

Hurt Potential and Hurt Orientation

In essence, partner violence is the behavior of at least one partner aimed at hurting the other. This means that to determine that a specific behavior is violent one should examine its hurt potential and its intentionality. These are the two preconditions for determining that a specific behavior constitutes violence.

Hurt potential is one precondition for defining violence (Winstok, 2007). If there is no hurt potential, there is no violence. The severity of violence is determined based on the evaluation of the hurt potential, which essentially expresses the potential damage that the hurtful action may cause. Evaluating the severity of the injury can be based on multiple interrelated parameters, such as the pain involved as well as the time and resources needed by the average person to recover. Injuries that cause bearable pain and that involve quick recuperation with no need for medical attention are commonly defined as mild or moderate. Severe injury incurs greater pain and requires intensive medical care and greater recuperation time.

Hurt potential in the context discussed is a series of probabilities for injury to varying degrees of severity. For example, it is often thought that a shove is not only of low probability for severe physical injury but also of low probability of no physical injury and is likely to result in a moderate physical injury. It can also be argued that a punch or a kick has higher probability of causing severe physical injury than a shove. This is probably why, in lists of hurtful behaviors, a shove is usually considered more moderate than a punch or a kick. Yet, the likelihood of injury in this context is not explicit or specific but is used as a general rule of thumb in assigning approximate levels of severity to violent behaviors. But even when probabilities are the means of a rough classification of the severity of violent behaviors, can we ignore intervening factors that can affect the potential hurt severity, such as the force exerted by the perpetrator and the resilience of the victim? For example, how can one quantify the physical violence of a partner who is much stronger, as strong as, or much weaker than the other partner? An even more complex question is how can one quantify verbal/emotional/psychological hurt potential? Is the partners' vulnerability to such behaviors to be taken into consideration? Additional complications arise considering that hurt can have both physical and psychological implications. How can these be combined to rate the severity of behaviors? It so happens that to avoid this complexity, scholars tend to ignore such questions, rating the potential severity of injury inherent in violent behavior based on conventions that are not necessarily empirically established.

Some scholars, who are sensitive to the effect of intervening factors on hurt severity, take gender as a contributor to severity. They assume that a violent action by a man toward his female partner is more severe than the violent action of a woman toward her male partner. This calculation could be wrong, however. It can be assumed that at least in some cases, the partners are aware of their physical power differences and act accordingly. At least some of the men will moderate their violent actions and at least some of the women will intensify theirs. The above short discussion of hurt potential reveals one major weakness of the widespread definition of violence and its implementation in research and practice.

According to the common definition, the hurt potential is but one relatively overt precondition to violence. As already mentioned, the second precondition is intentionality. When no hurt occurs, it does not constitute violence, and in the absence of intention, violence is nonexistent. Individuals might often become unintentionally physically and emotionally/psychologically hurt and according to the definition, this does not constitute violence. There are numerous possible examples: painful medical treatment or even a failed medical procedure, a low or failing grade in an exam, lack of promotion in the workplace or termination of employment, and so on. A hurt will be considered violence if it was intentional and deliberate on the part of the actor. As intention is covert, how can we tell? When men or women curse, insult, humiliate, push, pull hair, slap, punch, or kick their partner, it can be quite safely determined that the hurt was intended. But it is difficult to determine their intended severity of the action, how they weighed up the action, and whether they took into consideration the probability of hurt based on the power balance between the partners and the type of action.

The Derivatives of the Definition of Violence and Their Limitations

The common definition of violence leads to observations based on one single and out-of-context behavior. Making observations based on this definition also requires making many assumptions. Additional limitations are that advanced interpretations and differentiations are built on the definition of violence, most importantly the differentiations between aggressor and victim. The definition of violence indicates that the aggressor is the one who deliberately hurts the partner, and the victim is the one deliberately hurt by the partner. The definition is indifferent to the reasons leading up to the act of violence and its goals.

I collaborated in a study that examined how partners perceive the violence between them (Eisikovits, Goldblatt, & Winstok, 1999). Many of the interviewees created arguments pertaining to one or two of the main components of the common definition of violence, namely injury and intent. This was to manipulate the responsibility and blame associated with the violent behavior and its implications for the social responses to that behavior. In some cases, the research participants argued that the injury was extremely mild. In other cases, they claimed that the injury was not intentional. Some cases combined both arguments. But even when intentionally hurtful behavior was acknowledged, the tendency to reject responsibility and blame was still identified. In such cases, it was argued that the intentionally hurtful behavior is not to be considered as violence if the offender was not an aggressor or if the offended was not a victim. Such cases emphasize that examining behavior in terms of intentional injury to identify violence produces inadequate results; the causality sequence and the conduct of the offender and offended during the incident should also be examined. Such arguments demonstrate that there are additional stipulations to violence that exceed the common definition (intentional injury). I contributed to further research that supported this necessity (Eisikovits, Winstok, & Gelles, 2002; Winstok, Eisikovits, & Gelles, 2002). One man gave a clear example in one of the interviews, saying: "I am not a violent person. Apart from this one incident [when he beat his wife] I never hit her… she would often try to push me to the brink… she succeeded only once." In this quote, the man confirms that he acted with the intention to hurt but rejects his role as aggressor and his partner's as victim.

When conducting my first studies, I held the widespread view that "violence is violence" and it is our job to study how partners confirm, reject, excuse, or justify such behavior (Eisikovits et al., 1999). In my later research, I realized that we, the scholars, and our research participants, do not share a common, agreed perspective of partner violence. As researchers, our viewpoint is external and is characteristic of viewers who are not actively involved in the violent incident. It is a static point of view, reducing the phenomenon to one single, isolated act, independent of its causes and implications, independent of the roles of the partners before, during and after the conflict, independent of the personal and interpersonal context, and even of the broader social situation. Our research participants contradicted this perspective by presenting internal, manifold, and broader viewpoints of partner violence,

especially regarding its complexity and dynamic nature, embodying the perspective of those who are actively involved in the violent incident.

I had the opportunity to hold a series of sessions with adolescents at the ages of 12–16 within the framework of a project for coping with school violence, conducted in 2007. During these meetings, we discussed the students' exposure to and involvement in violent incidents between students of one and both genders. This was an opportunity not only to assist in coping with violence in schools but also to learn about partner violence during dating. One of the sessions addressed boys' and girls' methods of initiating a dating relationship. The students mentioned that when a boy likes a girl, is attracted to her and would like to have an intimate relationship with her, he can approach her and make a direct intimate proposition. If she accepts, then "everyone is happy," but if she turns him down, then "it is a huge embarrassment." The session participants explained that such rejection is usually a difficult, humiliating, and intimidating experience, and therefore, many are deterred from initiating in this way. Many boys and girls avoid a direct, clear, and unequivocal approach and prefer other, more indirect methods of "checking" the other party's willingness to start a relationship with them. These methods often employ violence, which can be interpreted as expressions of either hostility or affection. For example, the boy can playfully grab the girl's hand while pinning her against a wall. If the girl chooses a hostile, nonreceptive response, the boy will interpret this as evidence that she is not interested in a relationship with him and in most cases will retreat. If the girl chooses to respond playfully or display vague affection and receptiveness, the boy can interpret this as an invitation. A negative response on behalf of the girl will not be experienced as rejection by the boy because he did not express his interest clearly. A positive, tolerant response by the girl can encourage the boy to continue approaching her, maybe with less aggression next time. The students considered this behavior to be an acceptable and reasonable method of dating initiation. Translated from Hebrew, they call it "pretend violence". It is a widespread behavior which many people, and not only adolescents, do not regard as violent behavior (Playful Violence) (Denzin, 1984). Such behaviors are especially frequent among youth and in my experience, and according to my observations, may include holding/grasping/pinning down, pushing, and shoving by boys, and pushing, pinching, hair pulling, and mild blows by girls. These are intentional forms of hurting the other. The inflicting party acts on purpose, knowingly causing pain. Playful violence can have nonphysical expressions such as "friendly" usage of blatant, insulting, and humiliating language. Similar patterns of playful violence can also be identified among adults: it is common to hear men and women in social gatherings making comments about their partners. I remember once hearing a woman tell a party crowd, with her partner standing next to her: "He thinks we have a little elf at home who tidies up the mess he makes." The woman's partner, smiling, embraced her tightly against his body until she complained that she could not breathe. He proceeded to tell the crowd, "She is an expert at burning food and wrecking cars." In response, she pinched his shoulder. The party crowd seemed amused, and I was probably the only one present who considered these behaviors to be violent. The above examples indicate that intentional infliction is insufficient to establish violence. In the above playful

violence examples, both the adolescents and the adults intended to hurt, but the goal was not to express hostility. It was to communicate sensitive issues and convey delicate messages, without taking risks.

What should happen in the case of adolescent dating for the boy's behavior towards the girl to be regarded as violence? The students with whom I discussed this said that if the boy's intentions had not been good, but hostile, or if the girl had been genuinely hurt, then the boy's behavior could be called violence. This last argument brings the discussion on what is violence to the point of absurdity: for the behavior to be considered violence, must the individual on whom it is inflicted feel pain? Giving an affirmative answer would mean that the blame and responsibility for the violence belong to the victim also, for "choosing" to assume that role. Such arguments that determine violence not only through identifying an intended injury but also by identifying and judging the goals of the offender and the experience of the offended, reveal the problematic nature of the term "violence," especially in regard to intimate relationships.

Despite the limitations (some of which were addressed above) of the definition of violence as an intentional hurtful behavior, it was (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006 [1980]) and still is used by numerous studies to design the individual behavioral observation unit of partner violence.

An Individual Behavioral Observation Unit of Partner Violence

As mentioned in the first chapter, the most common measurement instrument in the study of partner violence is the conflict tactic scale (CTS) (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugerman, 1996). The CTS includes the following physical violence forms, which the research participants are required to address: kicking, beating, punching, slapping, hitting with something, choking, slamming against the wall, grabbing, throwing something at the partner, using a knife or a gun, pushing, shoving, twisting arms, burning, or scalding. The forms of psychological/verbal violence to which the research participants are asked to refer on the CTS are: insulting, swearing, shouting, stomping out of the room, threatening to hit or throw something, destroying something of the partner's belongings, spite the partner, calling names, or accusing. For each form of violence, research participants are asked two questions regarding a specific time period. The first question is about the frequency of their partner's behavior in that way towards them (victimization). For example: how many times over the past year did your partner curse you? The second question addresses the frequency of their own behavior towards their partner (perpetration). For example: how many times over the past year did you curse your partner?

Let us assume that the CTS is used to obtain data about a woman who experienced one violent incident with her partner in the past year, which she describes as follows:

"My partner told me I was stupid [mild verbal aggression]. In response, I cursed him and his mother [severe verbal aggression]. He couldn't take it and pushed me

Table 8.1 CTS-based woman's report

	Times reported as being	
Violent behavior	*Victim*	*Aggressor*
Mild verbal aggression	0	1
Severe verbal aggression	2	0
Mild physical aggression	0	1
Severe physical aggression	1	1

[mild physical aggression], so I said I wished he was dead [severe verbal aggression]; he punched me [severe physical aggression] so in response I kicked him hard [severe physical aggression]." Table 8.1 summarizes the woman's report, had she been asked to fill in a CTS-based questionnaire:

The data in the table are consistent with the definition of violence and the case description. However, in transferring the data to the table, the timing of the actions is lost. The data keeps none of the time sequencing because the definition of violence addresses only a single behavior of an individual, which is isolated from its immediate situational context. That is also the case with the observation unit derived from such a definition. What preceded the violent behavior and what stemmed from it is irrelevant by definition and is lost in the observation. What remains is the occurrence of violent behaviors at various and independent (untimed) levels of severity. Although most of the quantitative research is based on data regarding individual single violent behaviors isolated from the immediate situational context, in many cases, the analyses, the interpretations, and conclusions are performed as if the behaviors are sequenced (the hurtful behaviors of one party are regarded as a defensive response to the violence of the other party). This is similar to looking at a series of photos set in no particular order while trying to make sense of the timeline of the incident that they describe. The work of Allen and Swan (2009) reviewed in the previous chapter is an example of such an inappropriate attempt (Winstok, 2007, 2008).

An Interactional Observation Unit of Partner Violence

The behavioral observation unit is quite limited given that it focuses on the smallest, simplest, and most convenient observable component: the single isolated behavioral act of an individual. As such, its narrow scope of reference is appropriate for examining static, but not dynamic, aspects of partner violence. To overcome the limitations of the behavioral observation unit, an alternative, broader observational unit is needed, which can capture and retain, at least in part, the dynamics characteristic of violent incidents between intimate partners.

An interactional observation unit provides a broader perspective on partner violence than the behavioral unit. The interactional unit observes two actions (one taken by one partner and another taken by the other) of which at least one action was violent. In studies using the individual behavioral unit, the participants were asked about incidents in which they were victims of their partner's violence, and separately and

independently, they were also asked about incidents in which their partners were victims of their violence. With the interactional observation unit, the two questions become one, for example: how many times during the past year did your partner curse you and you cursed back? This question is phrased to indicate that the research participant is responding to the partner's action. The question can be phrased alternatively so that the research participant is the initiator rather than the respondent, for example: how many times during the past year did you curse your partner and he/she cursed you back? The phrasings differ essentially in that the former is a "responsive interaction," because it is presented to the research participant in such a way that indicates that he/she is responding to the partner's behavior. The latter is an "initiated interaction," because it is presented to the research participant in a way that indicates that the partner is responding to the research participant's behavior.

Swann, Pelham, and Roberts (1987) argued that, as a rule, individuals simplify their interactions by forming, arranging, and perceiving them in "discrete causal chunks." These chunks affect individuals' awareness of the effect of their actions upon others, and the effect of others' actions upon themselves. They form "self-causal chunks" when they believe that their behavior has affected others. They form "other-causal chunks" when they believe that others have affected their behavior. It is likely that in partner violence, most individuals feel that they are responding rather than initiating (Winstok, 2008). Hence, it can be assumed that they form "other-causal chunks." This assumption means using responsive interaction has an advantage over initiated interaction, phrasing it as an interactional observation unit of partner violence.

In order to move forward and develop an interactional observation unit of partner violence, it should be determined which behaviors should be included in these interactions and at what level of severity. For demonstration purposes, I will differentiate between four forms of violent behavior based on their severity levels: (1) mild verbal violence is the least severe of the four, (2) severe verbal violence is more severe, (3) even more severe is mild physical violence, and (4) severe physical violence is relatively the most severe of the four. Each of these violent behaviors can be used towards the informer by his/her partner. The informer may respond nonviolently or with one of the four violent behavior levels mentioned above, a total of five possible responses, that is, 20 possible interactions (four possible aggressive partner behaviors multiplied by five possible responses). Each of the 20 possible interactions can be assigned an escalation level, representing the difference between the severity levels of the action and reaction. The difference can be positive when the reaction is more severe than the action or negative when the reaction is less severe than the action. It can be zero when the action and reaction are of the same severity level. If necessary, other types of interactions can be added to those described above—for example, when the partner is acting nonaggressively but the informer responds aggressively.

Table 8.2 is a quantifiable representation of an interactional observation applied to the incident mentioned above. Column A of the table presents the partner's actions and column B presents the informer's reactions to those actions. The two columns cover all the possible interactions, a total of 20. Each pair has a relative severity compared to the other combinations. No violence is scored 0. Mild verbal

Table 8.2 Violence interactions escalation levels

Row	Interaction Partner behavior Severity (Column A)	Informer response Severity (Column B)	Escalation level (Column C)	Interaction occurrence in the given example (Column D)
1	Mild verbal violence (1)	No violence (0)	−1	–
2	Mild verbal violence (1)	Mild verbal violence (1)	0	–
3	Mild verbal violence (1)	Severe verbal violence (2)	1	1
4	Mild verbal violence (1)	Mild physical violence (3)	2	–
5	Mild verbal violence (1)	Severe physical violence (4)	3	–
6	Severe verbal violence (2)	No violence (0)	−2	–
7	Severe verbal violence (2)	Mild verbal violence (1)	−1	–
8	Severe verbal violence (2)	Severe verbal violence (2)	0	–
9	Severe verbal violence (2)	Mild physical violence (3)	1	–
10	Severe verbal violence (2)	Severe physical violence (4)	2	–
11	Mild physical violence (3)	No violence (0)	−3	–
12	Mild physical violence (3)	Mild verbal violence (1)	−2	–
13	Mild physical violence (3)	Severe verbal violence (2)	−1	1
14	Mild physical violence (3)	Mild physical violence (3)	0	–
15	Mild physical violence (3)	Severe physical violence (4)	1	–
16	Severe physical violence (4)	No violence (0)	−4	–
17	Severe physical violence (4)	Mild verbal violence (1)	−3	–
18	Severe physical violence (4)	Severe verbal violence (2)	−2	–
19	Severe physical violence (4)	Mild physical violence (3)	−1	–
20	Severe physical violence (4)	Severe physical violence (4)	0	1

violence is scored 1. Severe verbal violence is scored 2, because it is more severe than mild verbal violence. Mild physical violence is scored 3 and severe physical violence is scored 4. Now that each action/reaction has a relative value, the degree of escalation of each interaction can be calculated. This value is presented in column C of the table and represents the difference between the severity of the informer's response and the severity of the partner's action. For example, when the informer responds to the partner's mild verbal violence with mild verbal violence, the degree of escalation is 0 (see table below, row 2). This value represents no escalation and no de-escalation, but balance (an eye for an eye). When the degree of escalation has a positive value (see, for example, row 3 of the table below) it means that the interaction was escalatory: The informer responded with more severe aggression than that used by the partner. The higher the escalation value is, the more escalatory the interaction. The highest escalation degree is 3 (for example, row 5) when the informer responds with severe physical violence to the partner's mild verbal violence. When the escalation degree value is negative (for example, row 7), it means that the interaction de-escalated: The informer responded with less aggression to the partner's aggressive action. The higher the values of de-escalation are, the more de-escalatory the interaction is. The highest de-escalation level is 4 (row 16), when the informer responds with no violence to the partner's severe physical violence.

Let us now revert to the above example of a woman and her partner who experienced one violent incident over the past year and analyze it based on an interactional observation unit. The following are the actions taken by the woman and her partner, arranged in three interactions:

Interaction 1: "My partner told me I was stupid [mild verbal aggression]. In response, I cursed him and his mother [severe verbal aggression]."
Interaction 2: "He couldn't take it and pushed me [mild physical aggression], so I said I wished he was dead [severe verbal aggression]."
Interaction 3: "He punched me [severe physical aggression] so in response, I kicked him hard [severe physical aggression]."

An analysis using the interactional observation unit is presented in column D. It indicates that in Interaction 1, the woman escalated by one degree; in Interaction 2, the woman de-escalated by one degree and in Interaction 3, she balanced. Naturally, once the data is collected and analyzed, the order of interactions is lost. Yet, the degrees of escalation provide a dynamic perspective on partner violence. It can be learned from the data that the woman's average escalation degree is 0, that is, she has a tendency to balance. Her highest escalation degree is +1, meaning that she has a tendency for moderate escalation. The −1 degree indicates that she is willing to de-escalate as well.

The interactional observation unit has a significant advantage over the behavioral observation unit. It is broader and can thus express the couple's interactional dynamics. Nevertheless, it is not broad enough to provide dynamic indices for the conflict as a whole, for example. It is impractical to represent the complete conflict, as it combines a large varying number of interactions and the amount of possible combinations (moves) is vast. One interaction has 20 possible combinations if based on four action

and five reaction levels. Two interactions based on the same conditions would have 400 possible combinations (20^2). This number is already impractical in terms of empirical study, and by no means does it encompass or represent a complete conflict.

Implementing the Interactional Observation Unit in Research

The above-mentioned interactional observation unit was examined with data collected from 206 heterosexual couples who participated in the second wave (out of three) of a longitudinal study on various aspects of partner conflicts (Winstok, Enosh, & Eisikovits, 2002b). The preconditions for participating in the study were (1) both partners in the couple agreed to take part in the study, (2) the couple was cohabiting for at least 6 months prior to the time of the study, and (3) the couple were not separated or getting a divorce.

Most of the participants were Jewish: 94.8% of the men and 94.3% of the women. The men's average age was 37.39 years (*Std.* = 10.69). The women's average age was 34.75 years (*Std.* = 10.03). The average years of education was 13.75 for men (*Std.* = 2.78) and 14.16 for women (*Std.* = 2.55). The men reported an average 8.96 years of marriage (*Std.* = 9.53), 1.63 children (*Std.* = 1.45) and monthly household income of NIS 7231 (*Std.* = 3378.16). The women reported an average 8.81 years of marriage (*Std.* = 9.64), 1.61 children (*Std.* = 1.39) and monthly household income of NIS 6681 (*Std.* = 3255.28).

Several aggressive interactions were presented to the research participants. Because verbal aggression was widespread in this sample but physical aggression was not, I will address only the five interactions describing increasingly violent responses to partners' verbal aggression in the 6 months preceding the study. The first interaction describes an incident in which the partner verbally attacked the informer who did not respond or respond nonaggressively; in the second, the informer responded with verbal aggression; in the third, the informer made threats of physical attack; in the fourth, the informer responded with mild physical aggression; and in the fifth, with severe physical aggression. For each interaction, the informers were asked to mark one of six options: the partner did not verbally attack them during that period; the partner did verbally attack them but they did not respond as described; they responded as described in a few of the cases; they responded as described in half of the cases; they responded as described in most cases; and in all cases. Table 8.3 summarizes the distribution of the responses of the sampled men and women to the verbal aggression of their partners.

The table reveals the following: 29.4% of men and 27.8% of women reported that their partners never verbally attacked them. This means that more than 70% of informers were verbally attacked by their partners in the 6 months preceding the report. Only 13.3% of men and 9.7% of women reported that in all cases, they responded nonaggressively. This means that 46.3% of men and women responded aggressively to their partners' aggression. Of the men, 56.3% and of the women, 62.9% reported that in some or all cases, they responded with verbal aggression to

Table 8.3 Distribution of response to verbal aggression

In the last six months, when your partner verbally attacked you, how many times did you respond in the following manner?

Occurrence	No violence		Verbal violence		Threat of physical violence		Mild physical violence		Severe physical violence	
	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)	M (%)	F (%)
Never	13.8	19.4	11.5	5.1	60.6	60.5	61.0	58.1	65.1	65.1
In a few cases	14.2	10.2	25.2	19.4	4.1	3.7	5	7.0	1.4	0
In half the cases	18.3	16.7	14.2	16.2	1.4	1.4	0.5	0.9	0	1.4
In most cases	13.3	9.7	11.9	19.0	0.5	0.9	0	0.9	0.5	0
No attack	29.4	27.8	5.0	8.3	0.9	0	0.9	0	0.5	0

There was no response identified for 2.8% of men and 5.6% of women (they reported that none of the possible responses ever took place)

Table 8.4 Comparison of CTS and ITS measurement of verbal aggression

	Men's version		Women's version	
Source	Victim (%)	Perpetrator (%)	Victim (%)	Perpetrator (%)
CTS	**73.4**	**71.6**	**82.9**	**81.1**
ITS	**68.3**	**61.9**	**74.7**	**67.7**
Perpetrators in both forms of measurement	65.1	57.8	72.8	65.0
Non-perpetrators in both forms of measurement	23.4	24.3	15.2	24.3
Overlap	**88.5**	**82.1**	**88.0**	**89.3**
Perpetrators only in CTS	8.3	13.8	12.2	19.9
Perpetrators only in ITS	3.2	4.1	10.8	14.6
Perpetrators in at least one measurement	**76.6**	**75.7**	**84.8**	**83.9**
CTS perpetrators of total number identified in both measurements	95.8	94.6	97.8	96.7
ITS perpetrators of total number identified in both measurements	89.2	81.8	88.1	80.7

their partners' verbal aggression; 6.9% of men and 6.0% of women reported that in some or all cases of their partner's verbal violence they responded with threats of physical attack. Some men reported that they responded with physical violence (mild or severe) to their female partners' verbal aggression; 8.8% of women reported that in at least some cases, they responded to their partners' verbal aggression with mild physical violence. Some women reported that they responded to their partner's verbal aggression with severe physical violence. Generally speaking, in this sample, verbal violence is a common occurrence for both men and women and the common response to it is verbal aggression. Nonetheless, in a small yet significant number, the response to verbal aggression was more severe.

As the broader interactional observation unit incorporates the behavioral unit within it, the former can be reduced to the latter. The interactional observation unit includes both perpetration and victimization, making it possible to produce separate measurements of both, similar to those produced directly by CTS-based behavioral observation units, for example. The reverse process is impossible, of-course, as an interaction cannot be measured using single and isolated acts. The above-mentioned study measured interactions (ITS: interaction tactic scale) as well as single isolated behaviors (using the CTS) for the same time period. These data allowed a comparison of the approaches. The ITS data were first recoded to victimization and perpetration data and then compared to those measured by the CTS.

Table 8.4 indicates that CTS identified more verbal aggression than ITS. According to CTS, 73.4% of men reported that their partner hurt them verbally as compared to 68.3% according to ITS; 71.6% of men reported hurting their partner verbally according to CTS as compared to 61.9% according to ITS. According to CTS, 82.9% of women reported being verbally hurt by their partner as compared to 74.7% in ITS;

Table 8.5 Scoring method for creating the "highest escalation index"

Aggressive action by informer's partner		Most aggressive informer reaction to partner's action		Highest escalation	
Description	Action severity degree	Description	Reaction severity degree	Description	Escalation degree
Verbal aggression	1	Nonaggressive	0	De-escalatory	−1
		Verbal aggression	1	Balancing	0
		Threats of physical aggression	2	Mild escalation	1
		Mild physical aggression	3	Moderate escalation	2
		Severe physical aggression	4	Severe escalation	3

81.1% of women in CTS reported verbally hurting their partner as compared to 67.7% in ITS. The total number of cases in which there was full overlap in the measurement of both instruments, the perpetrator and nonaggressive (rows 3 and 4) identified by both CTS and ITS (row 5) ranged between 82.1 and 89.3% (row 5). These values indicate that there is considerable but not complete overlap. Each instrument identified aggression that was not identified by the other instrument. When the perpetrator is identified by either instrument, the rate of perpetrators and victims increases (row 8) and is larger than that provided by each instrument separately (rows 1 and 2). Assuming that one instrument is enough to determine who the aggressor is (row 8) (or alternatively the complementary rate to 100% of the nonaggressors identified by both instruments in row 4), then the ratio between rates of perpetration identified by each instrument (rows 1 and 2) and the total rate of perpetrators identified by either (row 8) is an acceptable factor of comparison between the instruments. This ratio is higher for CTS (row 9) than for ITS (row 10). The differences between the instruments range from 6.5% (men's version of their victimization) and 16.0% (women's version of their perpetration). These differences are reasonable considering the essence of the instruments and their measurement method. This comparison not only validates the ITS measurement but also shows that the CTS measurement has higher sensitivity to behavioral measurement. Again, it is important to emphasize that interactional information cannot be obtained from the CTS.

The second wave analysis described above is an example of an interactional observation-based measurement. To establish interaction indices and test their consistency, I use all three waves of the study. As already mentioned, an interactional observation unit-based measurement can generate several interaction indices. The index presented below represents the highest degree of escalation identified for each research participant in responding to his/her partner's verbal aggression. It is an important index because it indicates how far the informer's response to aggression can go. The scoring method used to produce the index is presented in Table 8.5.

Two questions arise at this point regarding the stability of the index and the gender differences in it. Table 8.6 presents the averages, standard deviations, and the confidence intervals of the response to verbal aggression tendencies among men

Table 8.6 Descriptive statistic of average highest escalation degree in response to verbal aggression by gender and data collection wave

	Gender	Average	Standard deviation	95% Confidence interval	
				Upper limit	Lower limit
Wave 1	Man	0.400	0.118	0.635	0.165
	Woman	0.369	0.117	0.603	0.135
Wave 2	Man	0.354	0.115	0.583	0.124
	Woman	0.415	0.116	0.647	0.184
Wave 3	Man	0.231	0.100	0.430	0.031
	Woman	0.308	0.095	0.498	0.117

Table 8.7 Correlation matrix of highest escalation level to verbal aggression by gender and wave

		Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3	
		Man	Woman	Man	Woman	Man	Woman
Wave 1	Man		0.262**	0.313** (110)	0.471** (103)	0.206* (106)	0.170 (107)
			(124)	0.472** (102)	0.243* (111)	0.414** (95)	0.359** (98)
	Woman			0.313** (110)	0.236** (122)	0.514** (120)	0.145 (105)
				0.472** (102)	0.471** (103)	0.276** (112)	0.464** (111)
Wave 2	Man				0.243* (111)	0.206* (106)	0.285** (108)
					0.236** (122)	0.414** (95)	0.170 (107)
	Woman					0.514** (120)	0.359** (98)
						0.276** (112)	0.145 (105)
Wave 3	Man						0.464** (111)
							0.285** (108)
	Woman						

$*p<0.05; **p<0.01$

and women across the three data collection waves. The table indicates that there are no significant differences in the values obtained from the first, second, and third waves. Namely, the index in this sample was stable over time. The analysis also indicated that there was no gender effect in this sample, in other words, there was no difference between men and women. It is interesting to note that in this sample, the average index for both genders and three waves is higher than 0 (balance) but lower than 1 (mild escalation). This means that the research participants demonstrated a very mild escalatory tendency.

The final issue we explored at this stage was index consistency. The Pearson's correlation matrix presented in Table 8.7 was performed between the indices

calculated for both genders across the three waves and it may provide some insight into this issue. The correlation between the first and second waves ($r_{men} = 0.31$; $r_{women} = 0.47$) and the second and third ($r_{men} = 0.51$; $r_{women} = 0.28$) were positive, medium, and significant. Lower positive significant correlation levels can be found between the partners (man and woman) within each wave ($r_1 = 0.26$; $r_2 = 0.24$; $r_3 = 0.29$). This analysis indicates that in the tested sample, there is a moderate consistency over time, and a moderate correlation between the partners' response tendencies.

Final Comments

This chapter presented an interactional observation unit capturing, at least in part, the dynamics of violent incidents between partners. This observation unit is not designed to replace the long-standing individual behavioral unit, which is widespread in partner violence research, but to be used alongside it as an additional means of research. I would like to reiterate that the ideas presented in this chapter are only one step in the direction of specific implementations for research of the interactional observation unit. The chapter presents no specific implementations for two reasons. First, this observation unit was not yet sufficiently studied and accordingly has a limited empirical basis. It is only after this observation unit gains enough "research mileage" that such implementations can be presented. Second, the implementation of the interactional observation unit greatly depends on the factors it is to represent. An example is its implementation for the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) discussed in Chap. 4 and illustrated in the next chapter. The ideas in the present chapter require further general adaptation and specific development. The boundaries of the conflict are a prominent example of a core component, which was insufficiently developed in this chapter. Defining the boundaries of a conflict (where it starts and ends) is crucial to the identification of the relevant interactions to be studied. In addition to conflict limits, the various phases of conflict interactions (beginning, middle, and end) should be mapped as well. Simply put, much more investment is needed to design and solidify the interactional observation unit so that the maximum benefit is obtained for the study and understanding of partner violence from various aspects, including situational, individual, interpersonal, and social.

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Chapter 9
Gender Differences in Escalatory Intentions

The first chapter of this book was dedicated to the common outlooks on gender differences in violent behaviors. From that chapter onward, I attempted to convey the importance of and develop the infrastructure for shifting from the study of single isolated behavioral acts to the study of broader dynamic contexts of partner violence, such as the interactions comprising partner conflicts that escalate to violence. In Chap. 8, I presented an approach, guidelines, and principles—however nonexhaustive—for the implementation of the interactional observation unit in research. I argued that like the individual behavioral unit, this unit can be applied to different (not only behavioral) aspects of partner violence. In the present chapter, I would like to present such implementation with the interactional observation unit representing response intentions (for example: How would you respond if your partner acts aggressively toward you?). The response intention was discussed in its behavioral rather than its interactional context in Chap. 4, as a key component of the planned behavior theory (Ajzen, 1991). To come full circle with Chap. 1, I will present here a recent study (Winstok & Straus, 2012), which examined gender differences in response intentions via an interactional implementation.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Our research hypotheses regarding gender differences in escalatory intentions (Winstok & Straus, 2012) were based on the Sexual Selection Theory (Archer, 1996; Daly & Wilson, 1988) and the Social Role Theory (Bettencourt & Kernahan, 1997; Bettencourt & Miller, 1996; Eagly & Steffen, 1986) already mentioned in the first chapter. This theoretical basis is widely used in numerous studies of gender differences in various social contexts. Based on these theories, we assumed that two major needs and their interactions would affect escalatory intentions in social situations: risk reduction and status enhancement. We reckoned that the stronger the need to minimize risks, the more moderate would be the intention to respond to

aggression and this would serve as a brake to the tendency to escalate. On the other hand, we thought that the stronger the need to enhance status, the more escalatory would be the intention to respond to aggression. In addition, it is commonly accepted that both needs have a prominent gender basis and therefore, we expected to find differences between men's and women's escalatory tendencies.

To examine the assumptions, six hypothetical situations were phrased, the difference between them being the identity of the offenders and the severity of their violent actions toward the research participant. For each situation, the participants were to evaluate their estimated response to the violence. The hypothetical situations included one of the following possible attackers: the intimate partner, a male stranger or a female stranger. Their forms of aggression consisted of verbal or physical violence. Accordingly, the research participants were asked the following six questions:

- How would you respond if your partner verbally hurt you (for example, by cursing or insulting)?
- How would you respond if your partner physically hurt you (for example by pushing or slapping)?
- How would you respond if a woman stranger verbally hurt you (for example by cursing or insulting)?
- How would you respond if a woman stranger physically hurt you (for example by pushing or slapping)?
- How would you respond if a man stranger verbally hurt you (for example by cursing or insulting)?
- How would you respond if a man stranger physically hurt you (for example by pushing or slapping)?

The participants marked their response on a five-point scale of increasing aggression severity:

1. I would respond nonaggressively.
2. I would respond aggressively, but not as severely as the aggression used toward me.
3. I would respond with the same degree of aggression.
4. I would respond slightly more aggressively.
5. I would respond much more aggressively.

It must already be clear that the observation unit is interactional and is based on response intentions rather than actual individual behavior. Assuming that physical advantage on the one hand and uncertainty on the other may be perceived as physical injury risk factors, men should be considered more dangerous than women and strangers more dangerous than acquaintances. Hence, it can be suggested that those guided by risk reduction in their conflict management will consider a male stranger to be the most dangerous. Female strangers and partners (of either gender) will be considered less dangerous. However, it is important to note that a male partner will be considered more dangerous to his female partner than a female partner to her male partner. According to the gender theories mentioned, avoiding injury will dominate women's conflict behavior so that it may be assumed that their escalatory tendency toward male strangers will be the smallest. This physical risk analysis

does not provide an answer to the question of against which group the women will tend to escalate the most: female strangers (who are generally weaker than men but are unfamiliar and therefore unpredictable) or their male partners (who are generally stronger than women but are familiar and predictable).

Same-gender involvement in conflicts may enhance status, and avoiding a same-gender conflict may diminish it. On the other hand, involvement in conflicts with the opposite gender might work the other way around. For example, a man who avoids aggressive conflict with another man can be regarded as weak or cowardly. A man who gets involved in aggressive conflict with a woman can be regarded as a bully, which is also an indication of weakness and cowardice. The status of strong individuals can be hampered by their altercations with weaker individuals. According to the theories mentioned above, status enhancement is a dominant motivation in men's conduct; therefore, it can be hypothesized that the escalatory tendency of men toward male strangers will be the highest. Here too, it remains to be seen with whom the men will tend to escalate the least, toward their female partners or female strangers.

To address the questions that remain unanswered, let us take the analysis one step further, from the personal to the interpersonal level. It is suggested that not only the personal needs affect women's and men's conduct in conflicts but also their evaluation of the needs guiding their opponents' conduct. Women in general are aware of men's chivalry code by which they are expected not to hurt women (Felson, 2002; Felson & Feld, 2009). More specifically, a woman's certainty as to a man's commitment to that code is different when it comes to a familiar acquaintance as opposed to a stranger. The familiar man's level of commitment to the chivalry code is more certain than that of a male stranger. Hence, it may be assumed that in conflicts with male strangers, women's considerations for avoiding injury will be more dominant than in their conflicts with their male partners. It can also be suggested that women would assume that female strangers hold a similar set of attitudes to their own, making them less dangerous than male strangers but more dangerous than their male partners. Based on this analysis, it is hypothesized that women's escalatory tendency toward their partners will be the highest. The same principle may work for men as well. They may evaluate that despite their physical advantage, their partners regard them as a smaller threat, if as a threat at all. Therefore, they may evaluate that their female partners' readiness to escalate conflicts with them will be high. Men's chivalry code commitment and their female partners' awareness of it may increase men's vulnerability in partner conflicts. In these conditions, men may wish to act in ways that would minimize friction and accordingly, risk. It can also be expected that they would respond with moderation to their partner's aggression to avoid conflict deterioration that could lead to severe injury. Hence, it is hypothesized that men's tendency to escalate will be the lowest toward their female partners.

The longitudinal study on various aspects of partner conflicts mentioned in the previous chapter (Winstok, Enosh, & Eisikovits, 2002) provided the data also for the present study. The data were collected from 208 heterosexual couples who participated in its third wave (of three in total). The sample characteristics are almost identical to those of the second wave, which was described in the previous chapter.

Findings

Repeated measures analysis was used to test the research hypotheses. The findings of the analysis presented in Table 9.1 reveal that each of the research variables as well as most interactions between them had significant effect on the escalatory intention. This indicates that the gender and varying characteristics of the situations examined, that is, the identity and aggression severity of the aggressor, affected the research participants' level of escalation.

The following illustration presents the average rates of escalation levels for each hypothetical situation examined. First, let me begin with the escalatory intention of men in response to the verbal aggression of various aggressors: the highest escalation level was toward male strangers and lower toward female strangers; the lowest escalation level was toward their female partners. The same rates with larger values were found also for the escalatory intentions of men in response to physical aggression by the various opponent types. As to the escalatory intentions of women in response to verbal aggression, the highest level was toward their male partners, and a little less so, but not significantly, toward female strangers. The lowest escalation intention level was toward male strangers. The same rates with similar values were also found in the women's escalatory intentions in response to physical aggression of various opponents. The most important finding of these comparisons is that relative to the escalation levels of research participants toward strangers, the escalation levels of men toward their partners' aggression was the lowest, and of women, the highest. These findings are consistent with the research hypotheses.

Thus far, we were comparing men and women's levels of escalatory intentions. Now let us compare the escalation level of men toward their partner's aggression to the escalation level of women toward their partner's aggression. Men had a lower escalation level toward both verbal and physical partner aggression than women. Namely, in intimate relationships, women's tendency was more escalatory than men's. This finding has also supported the research hypotheses.

Taking another step forward, let us compare the genders' escalatory tendency toward verbal and physical aggression. Men respond more escalatorily to their female partner's verbal aggression than to its physical form. The opposite is true when the aggressor is a male stranger. Men respond more escalatorily to male

Table 9.1 Test of within and between subjects' effects on escalation level

Effect	F	df	η^2
Gender of respondent	6.884	1,204	0.033**
Identity of aggressor	34.623	2,203	0.254***
Severity of aggression	5.641	1,204	0.027*
Respondent gender × aggressor identity	98.035	2,203	0.491***
Respondent gender × aggression severity	0.010	1,203	0.000
Aggressor identity × aggression severity	32.315	2,203	0.241***
Respondent gender × aggressor identity × aggression severity	29.385	2,203	0.225***

$*p<0.05; **p<0.01; ***p<0.001$
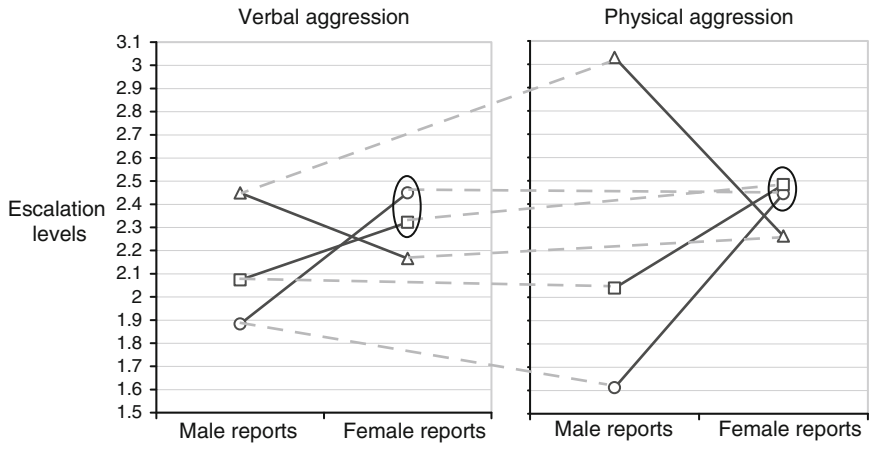
Fig. 9.1 Average rates of escalatory intentions for respondent gender, aggressor identity, and level of aggression

stranger physical aggression than to its verbal form. Women's relative severity of response (level of escalation) is unaffected by the severity of their opponent's aggression. It indicates that the escalatory intentions of men are more affected by the severity of aggression toward them than those of women.

This study provides initial evidence of the lack of gender symmetry in escalatory intentions. In partner conflicts, women tend to escalate more than men. They also tend to escalate more in their intimate relationships than in encounters with strangers—male or female. These findings support the hypotheses on gender differences in striving for risk reduction and status enhancement. These differences are probably the source of the differences in men's and women's escalatory intentions.

The findings described above can be theoretically and methodologically criticized. First, it can be argued theoretically, and perhaps rightfully so, that it is not only the need for risk reduction and status enhancement which regulate gender differences in escalation tendencies but also the dependence on relationships. Women in a predominantly patriarchal society are compelled to seek protection. In this kind of society, their intimate relationships are their last line of defense, which makes them depend much more on the relationship than men. This reliance may be a key factor in their way of coping with their partner's aggression. According to this perspective, women escalate to protect themselves from their partner, whereas men do so to increase their dominance over their partner. Second, methodologically, it can be argued, again perhaps with some degree of justice, that the sample in this study is not representative of all layers in all societies. There may be societies, populations, and samples in which the situation may be quite the opposite (Fig. 9.1).

Final Comments

Over the years, my interest in the study of isolated single behavioral acts has increasingly shifted to the study of escalatory interactions in various contexts, including escalatory intent. The first chapter of this book, which addressed gender differences in aggressive behavior in intimate relationships, presented two contradicting attitudes: one arguing that men are the violent parties in intimate relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1979) and another stating that partner violence is practiced by both genders in similar proportions (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006 [1980]). In this chapter, I present a first study that examines an interactional implementation of gender differences in escalatory intent. The findings of this study indicate that there is no gender symmetry in escalatory intentions, and that in partner relationships, women tend to escalate more than men. Naturally, as this is one initial study of its kind, the findings need to be repeated with different populations before the contribution of gender to escalatory intentions can be determined with high certainty.

Despite the importance of the research findings described above, it is important to emphasize that this research was not only presented to delve deeper into the gender aspects of partner violence but also mainly to demonstrate the ability of the interactional observation unit to broaden and deepen the scope of our knowledge in the field. From this point on, it is necessary to continue developing the interactional observation unit theoretically and methodologically. The studies presented in this chapter and the previous chapters are to be regarded as first steps toward the development of a new area in the body of knowledge on partner violence.

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Chapter 10
Observations About the Third Paradigm

It was argued in the first chapter of this book that the field of partner violence is torn between two paradigms, which I call "paradigm of gender" and "paradigm of inter-personal conflicts." The first chapter reviewed and criticized both paradigms, iden-tifying their discrepancies and parallels, and their implications for understanding and coping with partner violence. In addition, I maintained in this chapter that over the years, my aspiration to resolve the paradigmatic cleavage made way for the desire to study this controversy in depth. Nevertheless, I did not really give up the search for a different way to understand and address the major issues in the field. I believed that a third paradigm was necessary to complement the existing two, especially alongside the paradigm of gender. This book is an attempt to suggest an initial infrastructure for the development and establishment of such a paradigm.

Although I have now finished writing the book, I am still undecided as to how I should call the proposed third paradigm in a manner that would faithfully convey its essence. One option that came to mind is Interactional Paradigm and another is Event Paradigm. Although Interactional Paradigm is more consistent with the onto-logical and epistemological aspects of the approach presented in this book, I prefer the name Event Paradigm. My focus on the interactions that make up an event, and not on the event as a whole, stems from theoretical and methodological limitations, which at this point, I know not how to overcome. I believe these limitations to be temporary and that they will be overcome further down the road. Therefore, my preference for the name Event Paradigm reflects future prospects rather than present availability. The term Event Paradigm expresses the ambition for a thorough under-standing of a complete event that is made up of interactions between individuals. It also hints at my main criticism of the two common paradigms for narrowing down their scope of reference to the individual level of behavior while isolating the behav-ior from the situational context of the conflict that may escalate to violence. Correspondingly, narrowing down the escalatory conflict to its composite interac-tions is an inadequate improvement. Hence, at this point, I would suggest naming the third paradigm Event Paradigm.

The third paradigm is unique in its focus of reference as compared to its two predecessors. The phenomenon to be addressed by the paradigm is the event. The other paradigms are focused on single behavioral acts isolated from their situational context. It should be emphasized that these behaviors may be isolated from the situational context, but that they are not removed from other contexts: the paradigm of gender stipulates that the violent behavior is considered within the gender context, whereas the paradigm of interpersonal conflicts requires that the violence be viewed in whatever context is deemed appropriate. The third paradigm kicks off the study of violent behavior in its immediate situational context, looking into other broader contexts from this outset.

Paradigms interested in single and isolated behaviors are blind to that which preceded the behavior and that which stemmed from it. These paradigms seek answers to questions such as: What are the factors promoting or inhibiting human violent behavior? What are the outcomes of violent behavior on the individual and social level? How are these behaviors perceived? And which responses do they usually receive? The Event Paradigm is less interested in behavior and more in the dynamics of the event. The questions it seeks to answer are significantly different from those mentioned above: How does a partner conflict begin, evolve, and at times escalate to violence? How does violence escalate during a conflict? What are the escalation-promoting factors? And what are the inhibiting factors? Hence, in the Event Paradigm, dynamics are the main factor for the study and understanding of partner violence rather than isolated actions on which the other paradigms focus.

The terminology in the first two paradigms, despite significant differences in perspective, is similar and derives from scrutinizing the violent behavior. Given violent behavior, one person must be the offender and another must be the offended—an aggressor and a victim. The conceptual framework and terminology of the third paradigm is different because it is focused on the behavioral dynamics rather than the violent behavior. This renders superfluous the need to distinguish victim and aggressor and generates a terminology that can represent possible dynamics such as escalating—the partner who deteriorates the conflict to violence or intensifies from mild to severe violence; balancing—the partner who responds with the same intensity, causing no augmentation or reduction of the conflict; and de-escalating—the partner who attempts to stop and reverse the course of an escalatory conflict. This terminology also affects the paradigm-guided value judgment. Once the need to determine the aggressor and victim is dismissed, the road is clear for a causal rather than judgmental examination of the problem's various aspects. Unlike in the first paradigms, the third paradigm has no use for the terms victim and aggressor, significantly undercutting the basis for blame and responsibility and encouraging causal analysis.

The third paradigm requires the closest observation, analysis, and representation of events. The observation of individual behavior used in the first two paradigms is very limited compared to the third because they refer to a compilation of one person's behavioral acts, ignoring their order of appearance and their role. These observations cannot faithfully represent an event. An interpersonal event is so much more than a collection of single behaviors isolated from any situational context. It consists

of a sequence of interactions between two partners, with structure and content, varying over time. There is no doubt that the challenge of third-paradigm-based observations is greater than that posed by the other paradigms.

This book's subtitle is "A new paradigm for understanding conflict escalation." This indicates what is and is not included in the book: it includes theory and research needed for understanding partner violence, yet it excludes the practice (methods of intervention and coping with partner violence) that is derived from them. I have two reasons for this. First—the fledgling empirical knowledge base according to the situational paradigm available. Second—the primarily semantic nature of the distinction between theory and research and practice. A good theory grounded in research is the main ingredient of any effective practice.

The study and understanding of social problems such as partner violence is driven, among other things, by the need to find ways to cope with them. Different paradigms offer different understandings and intervention methods. The paradigm of gender decidedly emphasizes gender equality across all social strata. The paradigm of interpersonal conflicts mainly stresses the need to address aspects other than gender. Despite the differences, the two paradigms have this in common: they view personal, interpersonal, and social factors to varying degrees as the generators of the problem, those that require intervention and change. The event paradigm supports intervention and personal, interpersonal, and social change, but it calls for intervention in the social situations in which the problem takes place as well. Sometimes, it is very difficult to intervene and change individuals. In these cases, it is much simpler and more effective to change the situations in which the problems are generated.

In this short and final chapter, I wish to touch upon the essential suggestions made throughout the pages of this book, especially in its later chapters, to promote the idea of the third paradigm. I can imagine family violence scholars on the one hand, and feminist researchers on the other, arguing that the sum total of the principles presented here are but extensions, updates and rephrasing of those underlying family violence research. This is not my belief; however, even if their claims are correct, it would still be right to say that the third paradigm is a new one, as a paradigm is not only about scientific truths.

In the first chapter, influenced by the works of historian and science philosopher Thomas Kuhn (1962), I used the term "paradigm" to address a broad spectrum of factors guiding the scientific thinking of a phenomenon encountered in reality. I maintained that the paradigm dictates, to those who embrace it, their way of perceiving the reality in which their phenomenon of interest exists. This paradigm provides guidelines for identifying, studying, and understanding the phenomenon; living with it; and responding to it. In simple terms, the paradigm encompasses all the scientific activity of the theoretician and researcher in all its aspects and as such, constitutes a complete culture. Kuhn's work suggests that scientific activity is not necessarily only a search for the truth. Scholars choose a paradigm, commit to it and act within it, which is typical also to other social frameworks. Inside the paradigm, bonds and pledges are formed, which are no less important than the stated purpose of science—to create knowledge and minimize uncertainty—and perhaps even

surpass it. The third paradigm does not exempt from previous paradigmatic commitments but adds to them. It provides new interests and alternative terminologies that do not clash with or challenge the value systems of prevailing paradigms.

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