Interactional Patterns of Expressed Hopes Between Victims and Offenders, Following Offender Detainment for Domestic Violence

A Dissertation

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following offender detainment for felony level violence. This study used a grounded theory, qualitative approach to address three specific research aims: 1) to document the interactional patterns through which hopes are exchanged between victims and offenders; 2) to identify the role these interactional patterns play in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact; and 3) to examine how the hopes exchanged between partners evolve over the duration of the offender’s detainment.

Audio-recorded telephone conversations of 17 couples were analyzed (40 - 140 minutes of conversational data for each couple), using a lexical definition of hope as the starting point. The hopes between victims and offenders were documented and sequenced with the overarching goal of identifying the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between victims and offenders. Several consistent interactional patterns emerged, including partners’ need for reassurance, resistance to responsibility or blame, appeals for sympathy or support, and navigation of the threat of relationship dissolution. Particularly noteworthy was offenders’ dynamic responses to the victim’s desire to end the relationship which included: 1) challenging the victim; 2) pursuing the relationship or
hedging resistance, 3) appealing for sympathy and help, or 4) eventually mirroring or accepting the victim’s desire to end the relationship.

These interactional patterns served to cultivate conflict, maintain communication, and eventually recover the violent relationship following threats of dissolution. Once relationship recovery occurred, hope of ending the relationship was unlikely to be expressed again for the remainder of the couple’s conversations. Relational conflict concerning the urgent need for partner change, truth, and personal exoneration from blame, however, was never fully resolved and persisted for the duration of the couple’s communication. Identification of the interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, that unfolded following the offender’s detainment for felony level violence, provides critical insight into the emotional experiences and the intimacy dynamics of violent partnerships.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this study is to examine how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following offender detainment for felony level violence. This chapter begins with an introduction to the background and significance of this research aim. This is followed by an identification of the study’s specific research questions, and an overview of the research methods and design. Finally, a description of each dissertation chapter is provided.

Background and Significance

Domestic violence affects an estimated 25% of U.S. women (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) and accounts for a multitude of physical and emotional complications (Bhargava et al., 2011; Bonomi et al., 2009; Bonomi, Anderson, Rivara, & Thompson, 2007; Campbell et al., 2003; Cokkinides, Coker, Sanderson, Addy, & Bethea, 1999; Kernic, Wolf, & Holt, 2000; McFarlane, Parker, Soeken, & Bullock, 1992). Victims often endure abuse over a period of years (Thompson et al., 2006) and typically make multiple attempts to leave an abusive relationship (Koepsell, Kernic, & Holt, 2006).

Historically, the psychological and feminist approaches have predominantly been used to understand violent relationships (Bartholomew & Allison, 2006). The psychological approach explores individual factors that contribute to the perpetration or
victimization of partner violence (Else, Wonderlich, Beatty, Christie, & Staton, 1993; Russell, Lipov, Phillips, & White, 1989), while the feminist perspective examines the influence of societal patriarchal norms that become internalized (Yllo & Bograd, 1988). More recent literature, however, has adopted an interactional approach, which takes into account the relational dynamics between victims and offenders (Allison, Bartholomew, Mayseless, & Dutton, 2008; Bond, & Bond, 2004; Bonomi, Gangamma, Locke, Katafiasz, & Martin, 2011; Henderson, Bartholomew, Trinke, & Kwong, 2005; Nemeth, Bonomi, Lee, & Ludwin, 2012).

The interactional approach expands existing literature on partner violence by exploring the interpersonal processes surrounding partner violence (Bartholomew & Allison, 2006, Winstok, 2007). This approach has specifically highlighted the formation of strong emotional bonds between victims and their offenders (Dutton & Painter, 1981), victims’ and offenders’ difficulty balancing relational intimacy and autonomy (Bartle & Rosen, 1994), and attempts to regulate intimacy-related anxiety within violent relationships (Allison, Bartholomew, Mayseless, & Dutton, 2008).

Interactional literature has also highlighted the presence of coercion (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Stark, 2007) and power imbalances within violent relationships (Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson, & Gottman, 1993; Coleman & Straus, 1986). Pence and colleagues (1993) specifically suggest that violence is used as one of several tactics aimed at gaining greater power or control over victims within intimate relationships. Other techniques include the use of intimidation, isolation, minimizations, coercion, and economic or emotional abuse (Pence, Paymar, Ritmeester, & Shepard, 1993). Elevated
levels of relational conflict and negative interactions are also characteristic of violent relationships (Feldman & Ridley, 2000) along with a prevalence of demand-withdraw interactional patterns (Berns, Jacobson, & Gottman 1999), in which one partner makes demands for change or greater intimacy and the other partner responds with disengagement or distancing (Christensen & Heavey, 1990).

This study advances existing interactional research to partner violence by examining how interactional processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following the offender’s detainment for felony level violence. Few studies have examined hope in violent partnerships, but the presence of hoplessness among victims has been noted (Clements, Sabourin, & Spiby, 2004). Scher and Resick (2005) specifically found an association between hoplessness and victim’s self-reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression—two of the most prevalent mental health problems associated with domestic violence. Victims have also reported that hoplessness served as an internal barrier to help-seeking behaviors (Beaulaurier, Seff, Newman, & Dunlop, 2005) while personal experiences of hope and faith helped them survive and eventually end the violent relationship (Davis, 2002).

This study adds to literature on hope in violent relationships by exploring the interpersonal processes through which hope is communicated and constructed between victims and offenders immediately following a violent event. This entails a dyadic, micro-level analysis of how hopes unfold in real time using “live” interactions between domestic violence offenders and their victims. To date, only a few studies have utilized
real-time conversational data between couples—in the absence of a study interviewer—to gain further understanding of partner violence (Bonomi et al., 2011; Nemeth et al., 2012).

Furthermore, no study has yet explored the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between partners, during the especially fragile time immediately following a violent event. The identification of how hopes are exchanged and cultivated by victims and offenders provides critical insight into the emotional experiences and intimacy dynamics that occur within violent relationship, following offender detainment.

**Research Questions**

With the purpose of examining how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following partner detainment, three specific research questions were identified:

- What are the interactional patterns through which hopes are exchanged between victims and offenders?
- What role do these interactional patterns play in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact?
- How do the hopes exchanged between partners evolve over the duration of the offender’s detainment?

**Research Design and Methods**

This research was intended to build upon a preliminary phenomenological study (Carotta, Lee, Bonomi, Sweeney, Schiavone & Blatnik, n.d.) that identified the hopes
communicated between domestic violence victims and offenders. Audio-recorded telephone conversations were obtained from 17 heterosexual couples, during the male offender’s detention for felony-level domestic violence at a Washington State detention facility (Bonomi et al., 2011). The preliminary study identified several consistent hopes expressed by both victims and offenders—defined as “*a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen*” or a “*want (for) something to happen or be the case***” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010). The expressed hopes served as the unit of analysis for the current study, with the overarching goal of delineating the interpersonal processes that unfold following a violent event. Using a novel qualitative methodology, the hopes expressed between victims and offenders were sequenced and organized into spreadsheets in preparation for micro-level analysis. A grounded theory analysis then occurred to identify the interactional patterns with which hopes were exchanged following the offender’s detainment.

Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory through an iterative data collection and analysis process (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to this approach, theory is derived inductively from the data, and as such, is said to be “grounded” in the data. Rather than beginning with a set of hypotheses and searching for empirical support to prove or disprove these hypotheses, grounded theory allows for concepts of significance and research questions to be discovered in the data, eventually resulting in the emergence of theoretical abstractions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).
The inductive nature of grounded theory as a general methodology is in alignment with the proposed research questions. To date, no study has yet explored the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between partners, during the especially fragile time immediately following a violent event. As such, the intended further study of expressed hopes necessitates a discovery of rather than test of existing hypotheses. This is in accordance with the grounded theory’s objective of generating an explanatory theory of interpersonal or social processes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Starks & Trinidad, 2007). For these reasons, the study proceeded with a grounded theory approach to examine how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfolded following partner detainment for felony level violence.

**Description of Dissertation Chapters**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the study’s purpose and research questions. This is followed by a summary of the study’s background, significance, research design, and methods. The second chapter serves as a review of relevant literature pertaining to the persistence of violent relationships, theoretical conceptualizations of hope during periods of personal adversity, and hope in violent relationships. The third chapter describes this study’s specific research methods including analysis procedures and validity checks. The fourth chapter details the findings of this study as they pertain to each of the three research questions. Finally, the fifth chapter provides a discussion of the findings, limitations, and implications for future research. For a list of key terms used in this dissertation, please see Table 1.
Chapter 2: Background & Significance

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the background and significance of this study’s research objective. To date, few studies have taken a dyadic, interactional approach to studying domestic violence (Allison et al., 2008; Bond, & Bond, 2004; Bonomi et al., 2011; Henderson et al., 2005; Nemeth et al., 2012) or examined the hopes expressed in these relationships (Clements, Sabourin, & Spiby, 2004; Davis, 2002; Marden & Rice, 1995). The following chapter is a review of existing literature that relates to the persistence of violent relationships, theoretical conceptualizations of hope during periods of personal adversity, and the presence of hope in violent partnerships.

The Persistence of Violent Relationships

For many victims of domestic violence, the experience of abuse lasts for years (Thompson et al., 2006) and causes a multitude of physical and emotional complications (Bhargava et al., 2011; Bonomi et al., 2009; Bonomi et al., 2007; Campbell et al., 2003; Cokkinides et al., 1999). Studies have attempted to explain how and why violent relationships are sustained and several theories have been put forward. These include the association between violence and emotional insecurity (Allison et al., 2008; Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bond & Bond, 2004; Henderson et al., 2005), difficulty balancing connectedness and autonomy among partners (Bartle & Rosen, 1994), and strong
romantic attachment bonds emerging from power imbalances coupled with intermittent periods of abuse followed by stable periods (Dutton & Painter, 1981). Other studies have examined variables that serve as obstacles for departing from violent relationships, such as a victim’s financial dependence on her abusive partner (Gelles, 1976; Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Strube & Barbour, 1983) and poor access to social support services (Koepsell et al., 2006). Victims’ decisions to stay or leave have also been examined in relation to their level of investment or commitment in the relationship and their perceived cost and benefit to departing (Drigotas & Rusbult, 1992; Edwards, Gidycz, & Murphy 2011; Rhatigan and Axsom, 2006)

Perhaps the most well-known theory, however, is Walker’s (1979) description of the cyclical pattern through which violence occurs in intimate relationships. Walker (1979) specifically identified three stages of the abuse experience: 1) mounting tension in the relationship; 2) an acute violent event to release the tension; and 3) affection, extreme kindness, or promises of change following the violence, including feelings of hope.

In addition to the “hope” that may be experienced in the periods of affection, kindness and promises of change within Walker’s cycle, the intermittent nature of the abuse experience can contribute to the formation of strong emotional bonds between victims and their offenders that serve to keep the relationship intact (Dutton & Painter, 1981). At the same time, according to Bartle and Rosen (1994), victims of domestic violence and offenders still have difficulty balancing relational intimacy and autonomy. The inability to balance relational intimacy and autonomy (Bowen, 1978), is suggested to contribute not only to offenders’ use of violence to regulate intimacy
levels, but also to the persistence of the relationship once violence occurs (Bartle & Rosen, 1994).

Violence is also used by offenders to maintain power or control over their partners; the chronic threat of violence in these relationships serves to keep the offender in the position of having the “upper hand.” Even when physical violence is not used, other aspects of intimidation, isolation, minimizations, coercion, and economic or emotional abuse serve to maintain the power differential in favor of the offender (Pence et al., 1993). Dutton and Goodman (2005) specifically identified four pathways offenders use to ‘set the stage’ for this coercive control. These include: 1) “creating the expectancy for negative consequences, 2) creating or exploiting the partner’s vulnerabilities, 3) wearing down the partner’s resistance, and 4) facilitating attachment” (Dutton & Goodman, 2005, p. 748).

According to Walker (1979), the repeated exposure to trauma leads victims to develop a sense of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) or a feeling/belief of personal powerlessness in influencing positive future outcomes. The diminished belief in one’s own ability to stop the abuse leads to a reduction in the victim’s active efforts to affect change, increased vulnerability towards depression and anxiety, and contributes to the continuation of the violent relationship (Walker, 1979).

Although subsequent literature has challenged aspects of Walker’s theory (1984), noting that victims typically make multiple attempts to stop the violence or leave an abusive relationship (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Goodman, Dutton, Weinfurt, & Cook, 2003; Koepsell et al., 2006), the presence of depression and anxiety among victims has
been strongly supported (Bonomi et al., 2009; Hegarty, Gunn, Chondros, & Small, 2004). Abramson and colleagues (1989) reframed the theory of learned helplessness and depression (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978) by identifying two components of a generalized expectation of hopelessness that contribute to a specific subtype of depression: 1) a high likelihood of significant adverse future outcomes and 2) the perceived helplessness in eliciting more favorable outcomes. In applying the hopelessness theory (Abramson, Metalsky, & Alloy, 1989) to intimate partner violence, Clements and colleagues (2004) found that among victims currently seeking shelter services, those who reported higher anticipated control over the future occurrence of violence (i.e., they felt they could influence outcomes) indicated less hopelessness and depression than women who anticipated little personal control over future violence.

**Hope during Periods of Personal Adversity**

In a comprehensive literature review of the construct of “hope,” Schrank and colleagues (2008) identified 49 definitions and 32 measurement tools. Prominent theories of hope are often classified into two categories: emotion-based models and cognitive-based models (Lopez, Snyder, & Pedrotti, 2003; Martin & Stermac, 2010; Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 2005). Emotion-based models describe hope as a coping strategy in stressful situations and as an affective state that motivates individuals toward specific goals. Cognitive-based models conceptualize hope in terms of goal-related expectations, thoughts, and beliefs. Both cognitive and emotion-based models of hope provide implications for when hope is most likely to occur, factors that may influence
hope in times of stress, and how the presence of hope may impact an individual’s perception of negative events or personal adaptive outcomes. The following is review of relevant literature:

According to Averill and colleagues’ (1990) social constructivist conceptualization, hope is most likely to be experienced when an individual feels some locus of control over a stressful situation. Additionally, the attainment of a specific outcome must be highly desirable to the individual, seem reasonably possible, and considered socially acceptable. Stotland’s (1969) cognitive-focused conceptualization of hope further argues that individuals who suffer adverse mental health outcomes, including anxiety, are those who believe that they are unlikely to attain or achieve highly desired goals and outcomes.

Hopeful thinking may also influence how individuals appraise and cope with encounters of adversity or obstacles to goal attainment (Snyder, 1994). Adopting a cognitive-based, but emotion-integrative model, Snyder and colleagues (1991b) define hope as “a positive motivational state that is based on interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal directed energy), and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)” (p. 287). Pathway thinking refers to a person’s perception that they are capable of formulating pathways for achieving their goals. Agency thinking refers to an individual’s perceived ability to utilize identified pathways until goal obtainment is achieved (Snyder, 2000).

According to Snyder and colleagues (1991a), in times of interpersonal adversity, an individual’s level of hope is a product of his or her previous successes and failures in
goal attainment, and the associated positive or negative affect. For low hope individuals, the negative emotions that accompany previous unsuccessful goal attainment inhibit future hopeful thinking by ‘cycling back’ to further reduce the perception of one’s ability to generate and follow pathways to future goal attainment (Snyder, Cheavens, & Michael, 2005; Snyder, Irving, & Anderson, 1991). Individuals with higher levels of hope are, alternatively, more likely to view obstacles to goal attainment as challenges rather than setbacks or personal failures (Snyder, 1994; Snyder et al., 1991a). Individuals with higher levels of hope are also suggested to have greater flexibility in their use of diverse coping strategies, and a greater tendency to generate alternative pathways to goal attainment than individuals with lower levels of hope (Snyder, 1994; Snyder 2000).

Avoidant coping strategies of wishful thinking, self-blame, self-isolation, denial, and distancing (Holahan, Moos, & Schaefer, 1996) are associated with more maladaptive outcomes that include depression, emotional distress and psychological disturbances (Billings & Moos, 1981; Horwitz, Hill, & King, 2011; Pineles, Mostoufi, Ready, Street, Griffin, & Resick, 2011; Shapiro, Kaplow, Amaya-Jackson, & Dodge, 2012; Smith, Patterson & Grant, 1990). Approach coping strategies, on the other hand, include problem-focused strategies, positive reappraisal, and the seeking of social support (Holahan, Moos, & Schaefer, 1996). Empirically, these strategies are shown to correlate
with more positive adaptations to stress, resulting in fewer psychological symptoms (Chao, 2011; Shiota & Levenson, 2012).

Although research has indicated positive coping skills and more positive outcomes for individuals with high level of hopes, questions have also been raised about the possibility that unrealistic or “false” hopes can contribute to maladaptive outcomes. Breznitz (1986) specifically asserts that the two distinct ways of coping: 1) denial- avoiding all aspects of a negative experience and 2) hoping- focusing on the positive aspects of a challenging situation, may not be mutually exclusive during periods of personal adversity. Instead, the manner in which hope and denial are used in combination with one another can influence a person’s positive or negative adaptation to stressful circumstances. Hope that is accompanied with denial, in an effort to focus on the positive and ignore the negative aspects of a stressful situation, may provide temporary relief. Due to its delusional nature, however, hope that is accompanied by denial is constantly challenged by the still existing negative dimensions of the adverse situation and thus is difficult to sustain (Breznitz, 1986). Alternatively, hope that is employed without denial is more realistic in nature. This type of coping involves an individual acknowledging both positive and negative aspects of a challenging situation, but making an effort to focus more cognitive attention on the positive dimensions. Breznitz (1986) refers to this as ‘mature hoping’ and contends that only this type of hope, in times of personal adversity, can elicit positive outcomes.

Research suggests that the coping strategy of positive reappraisal, which entails the search for a silver lining or placing emphasis on the positive, can promote positive
adaptation (Shiota & Levenson, 2012). Conversely, coping strategies of avoidance, denial, and wishful thinking, which involve hoping the negative situation will simply go away, are associated with more maladaptive outcomes (Billings & Moos, 1981; Horwitz, et al., 2011; Pineles et al., 2011; Shapiro et al., 2012; Smith et al., 1990). The topic of “false” hope, however remains largely unstudied, and future empirical research addressing the possibility that hope may be maladaptive under certain circumstances is needed (Rand & Cheavens, 2009).

**Hope in Violent Partnerships**

Few studies have examined hope in violent partnerships but the presence of hoplessness and depression has been empirically noted. As already highlighted, Clements and colleagues (2004) applied the hopelessness theory (Abramson et al., 1989) to partner violence and found that among victims currently seeking shelter services, those who reported higher anticipated control over the future occurrence of violence (i.e., those that felt they could influence outcomes), indicated higher self-esteem and less hopelessness or dysphoria than women who anticipated little personal control over future violence. More recent literature has also found a shared association between hoplessness and self-reported symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression- two of the most prevalent mental health problems associated with domestic violence (Scher & Resick, 2005). Self-reports from older victims, who have endured prolonged experience of abuse, have also identified hoplessness as an internal barrier to help-seeking behaviors (Beaulaurier et al., 2005). Victims, however, have also
indicated that personal experiences of hope and faith helped them survive and eventually end the violent relationship (Davis, 2002).

Dutton (1993) conceptualized hope as one of several intervening factors (p. 1231) that impact a woman’s behavioral and psychological responses to domestic violence. According to Dutton (1993), a victim’s hope/belief that the violence will cease is cultivated by 1) the offender’s promises of change during periods of contrition, and 2) victim’s positive image of the offender prior to the experience of abuse.

Marden and Rice (1995) additionally proposed that hope may serve as a coping mechanism for victims’ experiences of cognitive dissonance—the psychological term for holding conflicting cognitions—that increases during the tension building and violent phase of abuse. Using victims’ personal accounts, Marden and Rice (1995) documented the role of hope for victims over time and across different phases of the abuse experience (Walker, 1979). Specifically, in the tension building phase (Walker, 1979), victims retrospectively discussed hope serving as “something to cling to,” or cope with, as the offender’s violent tendencies resurfaced (Marden & Rice, 1995, p. 75). Upon the eruption of a severe violent event, generalized feelings of hopelessness or an adherence to false, unrealistic hopes were recalled. Lastly, in the phase of extreme kindness and contrition on behalf of the offender (Walker, 1979), victims reported that hope served to foster the belief that their partner would change, to endure or survive the violent relationship, or to remain in denial regarding the reality of the abuse (Marden & Rice, 1995).
Although hope, to my knowledge, has not been specifically explored among perpetrators of domestic violence, offenders’ use of violence is suggested to stem from the hope of gaining greater power or control over their partners (Dutton & Goodman, 2005; Pence et al., 1993). Offenders have also commonly expressed a desire to minimize the severity of intimate partner violence (Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2005) and reduce personal responsibility for specific violent events (Cantos, Neidig, & O’Leary, 1993). These minimizations, coupled with pleas for victims to provide help and sympathy during the period of detainment, have been identified as critical pathways through which victim recantation occurs (Bonomi et al., 2011).

Carotta et al. (n.d.) extended literature on hope in violent couples by documenting the hopes expressed between victims and offenders immediately following the offender’s detainment. Analysis of audio-recorded conversations between victims and offenders indicated that partners consistently expressed several universal hopes during the offender’s detainment. The most consistent hope was the desire for love to be known and reciprocated. These hopes were complicated, however, by real or imagined threats to the fidelity of their relationship and concerns about the ability to overcome relational conflict. In addressing these concerns, partners expressed hope for explanations of truth about controversial behavior, changes in future behavior, and personal exoneration from blame. Emotionally-charged discussions regarding relationship turmoil, occasionally entailed victims and offenders expressing a desire to end the relationship. Vacillations in the desire to continue the relationship, however, were temporal in nature, with couples commonly returning to expressions of love and hope for the offender’s release.
An aspect of hope in violent partnerships that has not been explored to date, however, is the interpersonal processes through which hope is communicated and constructed between victims and offenders immediately following a violent event. This study will build upon the preliminary findings of Carotta et al. (n.d.) by examining the audio-recorded telephone conversations between victims and offenders and identifying the interactional patterns through which each hope is expressed between partners. The primary aim is to document the interpersonal processes through which hope is exchanged by partners, immediately following the incarceration of one member for a violent offense.

To date, only a few studies have utilized real-time conversational data between couples—in the absence of a study interviewer—to gain further understanding of partner violence. These studies include a specific examination of the processes associated with victim recantation (Bonomi et al., 2011) and triggers of violence (Nemeth et al., 2012). No study has yet explored the interpersonal processes of expressed hopes between partners during the especially fragile time immediately following a violent event. The identification of how hopes are exchanged and cultivated by victims and offenders will provide critical insight into the emotional experiences and intimacy dynamics that contribute to the recovery or dissolution of violent partnerships, following partner detainment for severe violence. This study will also advance existing literature with the development of a novel, qualitative methodology for micro-level analysis of interactional patterns within intimate relationships.
Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a summary of literature pertaining to the persistence of violent partnerships, theoretical conceptualizations of hope during periods of personal adversity, and the presence of hope in violent relationships. Existing literature has specifically highlighted the importance of examining interactional processes within violent relationships, the presence of hopelessness and depression among victims of abuse, and the role hope may play in eliciting positive adaptive outcomes during periods of adversity. The present study adds to existing literature by exploring the interactional patterns through which hopes are expressed between victims and offenders immediately following the offender’s detainment for a severe violent event. A specific goal of this analysis is to identify the role these interactional patterns play in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact. No study, to date, has examined the interactional processes through which hopes are expressed immediately following the offender’s detainment. As a result, this study contributes to the interactional approach to partner violence and provides critical insight into the intimacy dynamics that unfold in real time following the offender’s detainment for felony level violence.
Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following the offender’s detention for felony level violence. Three research questions were identified: 1) What are the interactional patterns through which hopes are exchanged between victims and offenders? 2) What role do these interactional patterns play in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact? 3) How do the hopes exchanged between partners evolve over the duration of the offender’s detention? To address these questions, a grounded theory analysis of audio-recorded telephone conversations between victims and offenders was completed. The following chapter describes the study’s sample, preliminary study, analysis procedures, and validity checks.

Sample

Audio-recorded telephone conversations were obtained from 17 heterosexual couples, during the male partners’ detention for felony-level domestic violence at a Washington State detention facility (Bonomi et al., 2011). Four or more conversations were available between each victim and offender with a mean of approximately eight conversations per couple. Within this sample, pending criminal charges included assault, kidnapping, unlawful imprisonment, strangulation, or violation of no-contact orders, and
all victims within the sample made recantation efforts. The sample size was sufficient to achieve data saturation, where no new patterns were identified (Giacomini & Cook, 2000).

Tapes between offenders and their victim were provided to the study team for analysis by a Washington State detention facility and the prosecuting attorney’s office (Bonomi et al., 2011). The detention facility records all calls made by detainees; this practice was upheld in a Washington State Supreme Court decision (State v. Modica: 164 Wash.2d. 186 P. 3d 1062, Wash. July 10, 2008, NO. 79767-6). All callers and recipients are made aware of this practice through an automated message at the start of each call. Recipients are then required to confirm their acceptance or refusal of the call. Calls made from the detention facility are subject to public disclosure laws. As such, subjects were not required to give informed consent. All study procedures were approved by The Ohio State University’s Institutional Review Board.

**Preliminary Study**

A preliminary analysis of the hopes communicated within these 17 couples occurred as follows (Carotta et al., n.d.): Consistent with a phenomenological approach to the qualitative data analysis—where initial parameters are established a priori around the particular “phenomenon” of interest—we began with the lexical definition of hope: “a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen” or a “want (for) something to happen or be the case” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010). Using the lexical definition of hope, as a basis for preliminary analysis, the study’s co-investigator (ML)
and I iteratively listened to audio-taped conversations, recorded hopes expressed by victims and offenders, and wrote narrative summaries for each couple from January 2012-March 2012. The narrative summaries reflected themes consistent with the lexical definition of hope and nuances we observed in the lexical definition. Bi-monthly meetings and de-identified electronic correspondences occurred during this time to discuss observations, themes, and directions for further inquiry. From March 2012-April 2012, I examined the narrative summaries and collection of expressed hopes. Based on this in-depth examination, a coding scheme was devised, which comprised fifteen categories of hope and supporting exemplars (Carotta et al., n.d.).

After a list of agreed-upon categories was developed, to ensure systematic observation and continuity of interpretations, I led the team of coders (CC, ML, JS, SB) in double-coding the first two conversations for each of the 17 couples, which included listening and coding approximately 20-30 minutes of conversation for each couple. The team of coders met weekly as a group for 10 weeks, from April 2012-June 2012, to discuss and refine emergent categories, including making revisions to the coding scheme when necessary. Oversight was provided in the initial three meetings by Dr. Amy Bonomi, the project’s principal investigator. After double-coding each couple’s first two conversations, with discrepancies resolved and categories clarified, each of the coders coded the remaining conversations of 4 to 6 couples independently; for a total of 40-140 minutes of conversation for each couple. After this comprehensive coding process, a summative table was generated to denote the occurrence of hope categories.
expressed across the couples’ conversations by each partner, with supporting quotes from victims and offenders (Carotta et al., n.d.).

Several hopes—again, defined as “a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen” or a “want (for) something to happen or be the case” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010)—were expressed consistently by both victims and offenders throughout the couples’ conversations (Figure 1). These included the hope that their love is known and reciprocated, hope for truth, change, and exoneration from blame, hope of ending the relationship, and hope for sympathy, help, or the offender’s release from detainment (Carotta et al., n.d.).

Figure 1. Expressed Hopes between Victims and Offenders Following a Violent Event

The expressed hopes identified in the preliminary phenomenological study served as the unit of analysis for the current study, with the overarching goal of delineating the
interpersonal processes that unfold following the offender’s detainment for a severe violent event. From April 2012-June 2012, the sequence with which the identified hopes were exchanged between victims and offenders was documented. From September 2012-November 2012, this sequencing was finalized and the data were organized into spreadsheets in preparation for micro-level analysis (Table 2). A grounded theory approach was then adopted to explore the interactional patterns with which the identified hopes were exchanged between victims and offenders immediately following the offender’s detainment for felony level violence.

Grounded theory is a general methodology for developing theory through an iterative data collection and analysis process (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). According to this approach, theory is derived inductively from the data, and as such, is said to be “grounded” in the data. Rather than beginning with a set of hypotheses and searching for empirical support to prove or disprove these hypotheses, grounded theory allows for concepts of significance and research questions to be discovered in the data, eventually resulting in the emergence of theoretical abstractions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The inductive nature of grounded theory as a general methodology is in alignment with the proposed research questions. To date, no study has yet explored the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between partners, during the especially fragile time immediately following a violent event. As such, the intended further study of expressed hopes necessitated a discovery of rather than test of existing hypotheses.
Analysis Procedures

Early analyses began by examining the sequence of hopes for two or three couples, as organized by conversation, in an open, generative manner, to identify potential interactional patterns (Charmaz, 2006). This included incident-to-incident (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) comparison of specific hopes expressed between partners where each occurrence of a specific hope was compared to previous occurrences. For example, every time an offender expressed *hope for the victim to change*, the incident was compared to previous expressions to begin to conceptualize the interactional patterns surrounding the offender’s expressed *hope for partner change*. Emergent interactional patterns were then examined in the conversations of additional couples within the sample, to determine their frequency, duration, and congruence with the existing conceptualizations of interactional patterns (Charmaz, 2006). The aim of this expanded comparison was to identify common interactional patterns that occurred among couples.

To aide in the identification of common interactional patterns, an occurrence table was also generated to denote how many couples utilized each identified interactional pattern and how frequently (Table 3). While the goal of qualitative analysis is not to quantify events or themes, the occurrence table helped provide an initial representation of how commonly various patterns were occurring among couples.

Once consistent patterns were identified, attention was then given to the contextual factors surrounding each interactional pattern of expressed hopes. This included asking when and why specific hopes were expressed, examining partner
reactions to specific interactional patterns, and exploring relational or conversational outcomes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The purpose of this phase of the analysis was to delineate the properties and dimensions of each interactional pattern and to examine the relationship between interactional patterns. Once the properties, dimensions, and the relationship among interactional pattern were delineated, interactional patterns were then organized into a theoretical framework concerning the role each interactional pattern played in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact.

As a key tenant of grounded theory, constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was ongoing throughout this analysis: conceptualizations of interactional patterns and theoretical abstractions were constantly compared across conversations and couples (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Regular memo writing was also completed, beginning with the initial, open coding process and continuing for the duration of analysis, in order to document and facilitate the constant comparison process. Corbin and Strauss (2008) define memos as “a specialized type of written records—those that contain the products of our analyses” (p. 117). For this study, early memos served to capture initial conceptualizations of interactional patterns and to document how each incident of expressed hopes deviated or adhered to other incidences. Coherence solidified the identification of common patterns while deviations highlighted the need for further analysis. Memo writing during the expanded coding across couples facilitated the expansion, refinement, and theoretical integration of consistent interactional patterns. This involved documenting the contextual factors surrounding each interactional pattern and the relationship among patterns. To further aid in saturation and ensure credibility, a
return to the couples’ audio-recorded conversations also occurred as interactional patterns emerged and theoretical integration took place. Particular attention was given to variations that arose with specific consideration offered for how these variations added greater depth and insight into emergent interactional patterns, served to generate additional lines of inquiry, or to facilitate the refinement of interactional patterns and theoretical integration (Charmaz, 2006). The analysis continued with the constant comparative process guiding the direction of the analysis, until theoretical saturation was reached, denoted by the in-depth development of each interactional pattern’s properties, dimensions, and relation to other patterns, along with the emergence of no additional relevant interactional patterns (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

**Validity Checks**

Several aspects of this study’s procedures for analyzing the couples’ interactional patterns strengthened the credibility of the substantive theory that developed. First, starting the analysis with open, generative coding of the sequence through which hopes were expressed between victims and offenders ensured that interactional patterns emerged from the data rather than being imposed. Second, the ongoing practice of writing and reviewing memos further ensured that analysis and data collection were an iterative process, through which theory development was constantly compared and subsequently grounded in the data. Finally, the practice of examining the relationship between interactional patterns facilitated theoretical integration and ensured that the findings moved beyond description to the achievement of a substantive theory regarding
how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following offender detainment. Additional validity checks also included bi-weekly meetings among members of the research team to discuss nuances within emergent patterns, additional lines of inquiry, and ensure continuity of theoretical abstractions. Consultations were also provided bi-weekly by Dr. Amy Bonomi, who has expertise in qualitative research methods and the dynamics of violent relationships. These meetings were particularly aimed at facilitating theoretical integration and organizing theoretical abstraction into a coherent framework.

Chapter Summary

This study uses a grounded theory qualitative approach to examine how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following partner detainment for felony level violence. Using a lexical definition of hope as the starting point, audio-recorded telephone conversations of 17 couples were analyzed (40-140 minutes of conversational data for each couple). The hopes between victims and offenders were documented and sequenced with the overarching goal of identifying the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between partners. A grounded theory analysis then occurred to identify the interactional processes through which partners exchanged hopes following a severe violent event and the role these hopes played in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact.
The primary aim of this study was to examine how interpersonal processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following partner detainment for felony level violence. This involved three research questions: 1) What are the interactional patterns through which hopes are exchanged between victims and offenders? 2) What role do these interactional patterns play in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact? 3) How do the hopes exchanged between partners evolve over the duration of the offender’s detainment? The following chapter will discuss the findings as they pertain to each of these research questions.

Research Question 1: *What are the interactional patterns through which hopes are exchanged between victims and offenders?*

Several consistent hopes were expressed by victims and offenders. These included hopes related to: 1) loving and being loved; 2) a desire for truth, change, and exoneration from blame; 3) temporal requests to end the relationship; and 4) appeals for sympathy, help, and the offender’s release from detention. As victims and offenders exchanged these hopes, several interactional patterns emerged. These interactional patterns included victims and offenders: 1) requiring reassurance, 2) resisting
responsibility or blame, 3) appealing for sympathy or support, and 4) navigating threats of relationship dissolution.

**Requiring Reassurance.** The most consistently expressed hope for both victims and offenders was the desire for their partner to know that they still cared, despite the violent episode and the physical separation posed by the offender’s incarceration. Victims’ and offenders’ expressions of love and desire to remain together were accompanied not only by hope that their partner felt the same, but also by fear or anxiety that they may not.

Victims’ concerns for the reciprocation of love most often emerged after the offender expressed hope that his love was known or hope of staying together. Victims expressed fear that the offender’s hope of being together and expressions of love were simply “jail talk,” driven only by the offender’s desire for the victim to recant her story in court. Victims additionally voiced difficulty reconciling the offender’s expressions of love with his recent violent behaviors. For example (Couple 14):

V: Why did you do that to me?

O: ‘Cause I’m stupid, cause I was drunk, and cause I was upset, angry about a lot of things. You know, and there’s no excuse for what I did. I’m sorry baby.

V: Why don’t you love me?

O: I do love you, booboo. You don’t believe that?

V: I don’t know why you would ever do that to me.

O: Kay, I’m gonna go. Ok, booboo?

V: No, no, no, no. Please don’t go, baby. I’m sorry.
Victims’ need for reassurance also entailed concern that the offender would be upset or blamed her for his detainment. One victim stated, “The truth is you don’t forgive me …You don’t forgive me and you don’t love me, because it’s not love to not forgive someone” (Victim 2). For some victims this fear was exacerbated by subtle references to a cultural norm of not involving the police in domestic affairs. Some offenders overtly expressed this sentiment. For example (Couple 12):

O: You’re not helping me at all. I just, I’m going to get by this and we are just not going to be together anymore. I can’t be with a woman who is going to put me in jail. I can’t have that risk.

V: This is the first time I’ve ever called the cops on you.

O: The second. This is the second time you’ve told them some shit about me and they put me in jail for it. Two times. I’ve never been to jail over nobody. Nobody has ever called the cops on me and put me in jail, besides a white girl TWICE. That’s just stuff a white girl does. They like to do that type of shit.

Although offenders also expressed a need for reassurance, even after the victim expressed hope that her love was known, offenders’ concerns for reciprocation of love most commonly emerged following the victim’s desire for partner change, honesty, or exoneration from blame. For example (Couple 14):

O: Do you love me? How come you don’t tell me you love me?

V: Yes I do.
O: You never say it to me though.

Central to offenders’ hope/fear regarding the reciprocation of love was the concern that the victim would abandon her commitment to the relationship or make efforts to extend his detention. Another offender stated, “I love you, [victim’s name] and I know I’ll be better after all this and I just hope that you can, you know, just still, just still love me” (Offender 2).

Partners’ responses to expressed fear or desire for reciprocation were varied. Some victims and offenders showed a greater tendency to respond with affection or reassurance (i.e. the hope that love is known or the hope of staying together) while others expressed discontent (i.e. the hope of not being blamed, the hope for partner change, the hope of ending the relationship, or the hope for truth about controversial behavior). Of note, similar response tendencies emerged among partners within individual couples. Victims and offenders with greater tendencies to offer affection or reassurance had partners who did the same, while those who frequently expressed discontent had partners who responded with dissatisfaction as well.

**Resisting Responsibility or Blame.** Victims’ and offenders’ desire for love and hope of continuing the relationship were further complicated by real or imagined threats to the fidelity of their relationship and concerns about the ability to overcome relational conflict, including the violent event. When addressing these concerns, partners mutually expressed hope for explanations of truth about controversial behavior, a change in future behavior, and personal exoneration from blame. Throughout the couples’ conversations,
one partner’s hope for the other to change, hope for truth, and hope of not being blamed were most often met with the responding partner’s mutual resistance, rather than affection. This resistance entailed partners making reciprocal requests for change, honesty, and exoneration from blame, or expressing hope of ending the relationship. Both offenders and victims specifically showed a strong tendency to resist their partner’s hope of not being blamed for the violent event or relational conflict. Mutual partner resistance is demonstrated in the following conversation (Couple 10):

O: I just wished you’d took me home.

V: Why would I take you home if you were swerving the car ... I didn’t want you in the car with me.

O: No, but why did you have to drive me to the cops.

V: You could have left. (O tries to interject). You don’t leave me alone. You don’t understand that.

O: B, b, b, but I didn’t do anything.

V: Yah, you did.

O: I was just sitting in the car waiting to go home.

V: No. It’s not my fault, [offender’s name].

O: I know it’s not. I just wish-

V: I didn’t do anything wrong.

O: I just wish it didn’t happen.

V: The cops were there because of what you did. I didn’t lie to them ... I didn’t
put you there. You put yourself there.

In addition to showing resistance to their partner’s hope of not being blamed, victims also evidenced a strong resistance to the offender’s request for her to change. Offenders’ requests for partner change included: hope that the victim would refrain from listening to the opinions of others, speak more kindly, refrain from arguing, refrain from raising her voice, or generally behave differently as a mother or wife.

Appealing for Sympathy & Support. As couples continued to engage in conversation during the offender’s detainment, partners also expressed hope for sympathy and support regarding the hardships they each were personally experiencing. Offenders expressed hope for their partner to understand how much they were suffering in jail, while victims expressed hope for the offender to understand the extent of their injuries and the financial or parenting stresses they were facing.

In response to a victim’s appeal for sympathy, offenders commonly made reciprocal or competing requests for sympathy. For example, after one victim confessed that she was considering committing suicide, the offender later replied (Offender 4):

You don’t understand. I am facing real prison time, real prison time. I don’t even wanna talk about it, ok. It’s gonna make me puke. It’s gonna make me start puking, ok? Alright? You think life is rough? And you think you want to kill yourself. You don’t even know what it’s like to want to kill yourself ... I think about inhaling all of it every night.
Competing for sympathy was part of a broader response pattern in which a partner’s request for sympathy or support was met with emphasis being placed on the responding partner’s own individual needs. This included emphasizing one’s own need for partner change and truthfulness about past behavior, support during the period of detainment, or personal exoneration from blame. This was in contrast to more sympathetic or supportive responses, such as hope that love was known, hope of being together in the future, or hope of providing support and assistance.

Although, victims competed for sympathy and emphasized their own needs on occasions, they showed a greater tendency to respond with more supportive or sympathetic responses, such as hope that love was known or hope that the offender knew of her efforts to help. For example (Couple 10):

O: (CRYING TONE) It’s just you know what I’m going through right now.

V: I do and I’ll try to help as much as I can.

O: I-I love you.

V: Promise, I think you’ll be fine.

O: Tell [son’s name] I said hi.

V: I will, don’t worry about s-stuff so much.

O: Ok.

V: I think you’ll be alright … I love you.
Navigating the Threat of Relationship Dissolution. Emotionally-charged discussions regarding real or imagined threats to the fidelity of their relationship, and concerns about the ability to overcome relational conflict, including the violent event, occasionally erupted with some victims or offenders expressing a desire to end the relationship. Although both victims and offenders periodically expressed this desire, victims were most likely to initiate the hope of ending the relationship. Victims’ desires to end the relationship typically occurred: 1) shortly after the offender’s detainment as a reaction to the violent event; or 2) later in the couple’s conversations triggered by increased arguing and relational conflict. Victims’ hopes of ending the relationship that occurred within the first or second conversation were often triggered by the violent event itself, and were paired with the victim’s hope of understanding the violent event, a desire for the offender to know the extent of her injuries, or hope of bettering her life for herself or for her children. For example (Couple 7):

O: Hello.

V: What do you want?

O: Can we straighten this out?

V: No. You should see my fuckin’ face …You broke my fuckin’ cheek man. You should see my face; I can’t even go to work …Wait till you see the fuckin’ pictures of what you did to me …They think my cheek is broken.

(Later conversation)

V: (SCREAMING) You fucked up, big time.

O: (QUIET TONE OF VOICE) Yeah, I guess.
V: Yeah, you did. ‘Cause you lost me forever. Forever. And you lost your son, forever. You should see my fucking face.

Victims’ expressed desires to end the relationship that occurred several conversations into their partner’s detainment were often triggered by emotionally-charged conversations regarding persistent relational conflict. In these circumstances, the victim’s desire to end the relationship was accompanied by the desire for the offender to change, a concern for the offender’s honesty regarding past controversial behavior, or hope of not being blamed for relational conflict. For example (Couple 8):

O: I don’t want to spend the whole time arguing!

V: But you couldn’t wait till I get home to take care of the dogs and some other things! NO! You have to call as I’m walking down the street. Your timing is messed up! You don’t think. You don’t ever put yourself in my shoes. EVER! I’m tired of it. I’m tired of having to spell it out for you. I’m tired of you being a grown man and not thinking ‘shit, if I can fuck her and act like she is my wife around other guys, then I can do it when I’m around my fucking friends.

(After more arguing)

O: Stop! Answer my question, please. What, what’s going to happen with us?

V: [offender’s name], last Christmas I was alone.

O: (Interrupts) Answer my question, I’m asking a simple question.

V: ALONE! Did you call me?
O: You can’t answer my question, can you?

V: No, I know what’s going to happen with us. We’re done!

O: Huh?

V: I don’t want to be with you.

O: Do what?

V: We are done. I do not want to be with you. You treat me like shit.

Offenders’ responses to the victim’s desire to end the relationship were often dynamic in nature, evolving throughout the course of the couple’s conversations. Offenders’ dynamic responses included: 1) challenging the victim by resisting responsibility for the relationship turmoil or violent event; 2) pursuing the relationship or hedging previous resistance; 3) appealing for sympathy and the victim’s help; or 4) mirroring or accepting the victim’s desire to end the relationship.

**Summary.** In summary, several interactional patterns occurred following the offender’s detainment. These included victims and offenders requiring reassurance, resisting responsibility or blame, appealing for sympathy or support, and navigating threats of relationship dissolution. Victims’ and offenders’ resistance of responsibility or blame were often met with equal resistance on behalf of their responding partner. Appeals for sympathy, however, were met with more varied responses. Offenders specifically showed a tendency to compete for sympathy by emphasizing their own needs, while victims were more likely to respond with affection and support. Although
victims were most inclined to provide support or assistance during the period of
detainment, they were also more likely to initiate the hope of ending the relationship
following a severe violent event. Offenders’ response to the threat of relationship
dissolution were dynamic in nature, including: 1) challenging the victim by resisting
responsibility for the relationship turmoil or violent event; 2) pursuing the relationship or
hedging previous resistance; 3) appealing for sympathy and the victim’s help; or 4)
mirroring or accepting the victim’s desire to end the relationship. Each of these
responses and the role they played in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in
contact is explained in the following section.

**Research Question 2: What role do these interactional patterns play in victims’ and
offenders’ willingness to remain in contact?**

The interactional patterns that emerged between victims and offenders served to
cultivate conflict, maintain communication, and eventually recover the relationship after
threats of dissolution. The following is an explanation of the role each interactional
pattern played in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact (Figure 2).
Cultivating Conflict. Offenders’ immediate responses to the victim’s desire to end the relationship commonly entailed challenging the victim by resisting responsibility for the relationship turmoil or the violent event. This involved the offender expressing the hope of not being blamed or hope for the victim to change. One offender argued (Offender 15):

The motherfucker I’ve been trying to make something work with, the motherfucker I got shit with is leavin’ because they don’t want to act right. They
don’t want to be the bitch. They don’t want to be the woman. They don’t want to get a job. They don’t want to sit at home like a woman. They want to be in the streets. That’s what I’m saying. They won’t get a job. They don’t want to do right though. So it’s keeping me down.

Offenders also commonly responded by pursuing the relationship or hedging their previous resistance. This involved offenders expressing hope that his love was known or hope of continuing the relationship. Offenders’ complex responses of challenging the victim and then hedging this resistance with affection typically created more dissonance within the relationship, as victims resisted the offender’s hope for her to change or his hope of not being blamed. The following is an example of how an offender’s response of challenging the victim and then hedging this resistance cultivated additional conflict within the relationship (Couple 16):

O: Right, you don’t want me.

V: Well, you’re right because we, we … there’s no love.

O: Yeah there is none because you tried to kill me and I guess I tried to kill you. You told me to get the fuck out the car, and snatched the keys, and locked the doors. I don’t understand that.

V: I’m just gonna move on with my life.

(A few moments later)

O: You know I love you still. You know I love you, but there is too much craziness…
V: Because, you wouldn’t let me go home!

O: Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit … Don’t start no shit. Don’t start lyin’ on the phone.

**Maintaining Communication.** If conflict continued and the victim’s desire to end the relationship persisted, offenders began to alter their responses to include hope for the victim’s sympathy or help. Offenders evidenced growing concern that the victim’s desire to end the relationship would impact her willingness to help or lengthen his detention. Offenders’ appeal for sympathy and support included making direct requests for the victim to recant, to contact lawyers, to drop no-contact orders, to obtain bail funds, to contact his workplace, to look after his possessions, or to send money and letters to the detention facility.

While offenders’ hopes for partner change and exoneration from blame were commonly met with the victim’s resistance, offenders’ hope for help or sympathy were more likely to be met with more sympathetic responses. Victims were often specifically willing to offer support or offer sympathy independent of their expressed desire to end the relationship. As a result, offenders’ appeals for sympathy and help served to maintain communication even when the victim’s hope of continuing the relationship had not yet been established or the hope of ending the relationship had been expressed. For example (Couple 7):

O: They’re not gonna let me out. I’m gonna lose. Please stop it. Just tell them you don’t – ya know, it wasn’t deliberate and you wanna stop the thing.

Please, start – do it today. Before it gets anywhere. I’m gonna be fucked for
life, man. I won’t ever – if I get fired, I won’t get the license back.

V: (ANGRY TONE OF VOICE) And so what? Then, then you’re gonna leave [son’s name] and I alone? And just go on your way.

O: No. No.

V: No, no. I’m serious.

(Later in the conversation)

V: (ANGRY TONE OF VOICE) Give – just release your shit to me and I’ll go to them and I’ll talk to them.

O: Alright.

V: But I’m telling you, [offender’s name]. I want you to go on about your business.

Victims’ efforts to provide assistance commonly included providing emotional support, monetary assistance, looking after the offender’s possessions, obtaining information regarding the offender’s pending charges, or taking direct legal actions to aid in the offender’s release.

**Prompting Relationship Recovery.** If offenders’ efforts to challenge the victim, pursue/hedge, and appeal for sympathy or help were unsuccessful in restoring the victim’s desire to continue the relationship, it was not uncommon for the offender to eventually mirror or accept the victim’s desire to end the relationship. In fact, offenders’ hope of ending the relationship most commonly occurred only after the victim expressed
the desire to end the relationship. These expressed desires were often paired with the offender’s hope for partner change or exoneration from blame. For example (Couple 12):

V: You don’t threaten me like that. I take it seriously when you threaten me like that.

O: I don’t care if you take it seriously. When I tell you to do something you need to listen to me, and if you don’t want to listen to me you are going to pay the consequences.

V: Well and that’s, and that’s why we can’t be together.

O: Okay than we don’t need to be together. If you can’t listen to me then we don’t need to be together.

V: What?

O: If you can’t listen to me then we don’t need to be together.

This offender then abruptly hung up on the victim. The act of hanging up on the victim served as an additional, non-verbal mirroring of the victim’s desire to discontinue the relationship.

Notably, offenders’ mirroring or acceptance of the victim’s desire to end the relationship was often met with additional conflict, as victims repeated their desire to end the relationship, hope for the offender to change, or hope of not being blamed for relationship turmoil. However, shortly after this initial resistance to blame, victims commonly began to pursue the relationship once again by expressing hope that their love was known, hope of staying together, or hope for the offender to feel the same, but fear that he may not. The following example illustrates how one offender’s mirroring of the
victim’s desire to end the relationship contributed to relationship recovery. Recovery was marked by victims and offenders once again expressing hope that love was known, hope of continuing the relationship, or hope for the reciprocation of these desires (Couple 16):

V: I will give all your stuff to him. So you know you are completely out of my life and when the baby is born, I want a blood test.

O: Yeah cause you’re crazy.

V: No, you are fuckin’ crazy!!

O: No, I’m not going for it. I told you I wasn’t goin’ for it then and I’m not going for none of that bullshit. You can’t tell me that you love me ten minutes, then ten minutes later tell me you don’t love me. I’m not with that.

So that’s why you got your ass whooped in the street. Bye! (Offender abruptly hangs up)

(Next call)

V: Hello.

O: Hello, what’s up, Baby? Hey look. I know you hate me right now. I know you hate me.

V: You still love me?

O: Huh?

V: You love me?

O: Yeah. How you know?

V: But you think I’m crazy. You want to be done with me and everything?
O: Man, you’re crazy. You know you’re crazy but you still love me too though.

V: And you’re crazy too!

O: Right but…

V: We both fuckin crazy.

O: Yeah, but now you know not to be tellin’ me “No. Get out the car, we’re done.” I’m not doing that. There’s no divorce. You already know that.

You’re my wife and I told everybody who you is. You’re not doin’ that.

We’re not doin’ that.

Summary. In summary, the interactional patterns that emerged following the offender’s detainment served to cultivate conflict, maintain communication, and eventually recover the violent relationship following threats of dissolution. Particularly influential were victims’ and offenders’ mutual resistance to responsibility for relationship turmoil, victims’ willingness to provide support independent of their desire to continue the relationship, and offenders’ dynamic response patterns following the threat of relationship dissolution, which included mirroring or accepting the victim’s desire to end the relationship.
Research Question 3: How do the hopes exchanged between partners evolve over the duration of the offender's detainment?

Offenders’ dynamic response patterns of challenging the victim, pursuing/hedging, appealing for sympathy and help, or mirroring/accepting the victim’s desire to end the relationship, commonly prompted victims to once again express hope of continuing the relationship or hope that love was known. Offenders’ appeals for sympathy and help served to maintain communication and provide the opportunity for the relationship recovery to occur. Once relationship recovery took place (denoted by victims and offenders once again expressing hope that love was known, hope of continuing the relationship, or hope for the reciprocation of these desires), the hope of ending the relationship was not likely to be expressed again in the couple’s remaining conversations. Strong adherence to the relationship was poignantly evidenced by one victim who stated: “If you truly ever loved me, and if you still love me ... when all of this is said and done, then you look for me, and I will be here.” She later expressed (Victim 2):

I’ve always had feelings for you. It’s just that I had to mentally tell my brain that it was through. And I’m unable to do that now, because I’ve been through all these things with you ....You’re my friend. You’re my lover. You’re everything. And it’s like no matter what’s happened, I’ve tried to tell myself it’s over, but I just can’t do it. Every time I turn around ... I don’t know what’s wrong with me. I feel like somebody cast a spell on me or something ... I used to be able to just walk away, but I can’t.
The offender later responded with mutual affection and hope (Offender 2):

I love you, ok. I just want you to know that, alright? Don’t think anything else. I love you more than all of this. And you know whatever happens, this is just one part of our lives, and we have, we have something that is everlasting, and this isn’t the whole of it ... I want to get past this part to where we can enjoy things, so this is not how I see you, and this is not how you see me. So, I mean, you have forgiven me and you know that means a lot to me.

Although victims’ and offenders’ hope of ending the relationship declined as partners continued to engage in conversation with one another, conflict stemming from the mutual hopes of not being blamed, hope for change, and hope for partner honesty was never fully resolved. These hopes persisted for the duration of the couple’s conversations. Discussions, however, were unlikely to erupt in victims or offenders again expressing hope of ending the relationship once recovery had occurred.

Chapter Summary

This study documented the interactional patterns through which hopes were expressed between victims and offenders during the especially fragile time immediately following a violent event. Partners required reassurance, resisted responsibility or blame, appealed for sympathy or support, and navigated the threat of relationship dissolution. Offenders’ dynamic responses to the victim’s desire to end the relationship were
particularly noteworthy; these included: 1) challenging the victim by resisting responsibility, 2) pursuing the relationship or hedging resistance, 3) appealing for sympathy and help, or 4) mirroring or accepting the victim’s desire to end the relationship. These interactional patterns served to cultivate conflict within the relationship, maintain communication, and eventually recover the relationship after a severe violent event. Following the threat of dissolution, appeals for sympathy were identified as a critical pathway for maintaining communication and allowing the process of relationship recovery to occur. Once relationship recovery occurred, hope of ending the relationship was unlikely to be expressed again for the remainder of the couple’s conversations. Relational conflict concerning the urgent need for partner change, truth, and personal exoneration from blame, however, was never fully resolved and persisted for the duration of the couple’s communication (Figure 3).
Figure 3. Offenders’ Dynamic Responses to Threats of Relationship Dissolution with Illustrative Example

Example (Couple 16):
O: Right, you don’t want me.
V: Well, you’re right because we, we … there’s no love.
O: Yeah, there is none because you tried to kill me and I guess I tried to kill you. You told me to get the fuck out of the car, and snatched the keys, and locked the doors. I don’t understand that.
V: I’m just gonna move on with my life.
O: You know I love you still. You know I love you, but there is too much animosity.
V: Because you wouldn’t let me go home.
O: Bullshit, bullshit, bullshit … Don’t start no shit. Don’t start no fight on the phone.

Example (Couple 16):
V: Good luck with your life.
O: Hey, you got my i.d.? I have all your stuff and I will give it to [you]’s name.
O: Do you have my i.d.? Do you have my i.d.?
V: Yeah
O: My credit cards and everything?
V: I have all that stuff, and I’ll give it to [you]’s name so he can give it to you.
O: Okay. Is [you]’s name home yet? Okay when he gets home tell him to take it to [city]’s name so he can pay my bond and everything. I mean pay the bail bond people.
V: … I will give him all your stuff.

Example (Couple 16):
O: No, I’m not going for it. I told you I wasn’t goin’ for it then and I’m not going for none of that bullshit. You can’t tell me that you love me ten minutes, then ten minutes later tell me you don’t love me. I’m not with that. So that’s why you get your ass whooped in the street. Bye! (Offender abruptly hangs up)

(Question):
V: You love me?
O: Yeah, how you know?
V: But you think I’m crazy. You want to be done with me and everything?
O: Man, you’re crazy. You know you’re crazy but you still love me too though.
V: And you’re crazy too.
O: Right but……
V: We both think it crazy.
O: … There’s no divorce. You already know that. You’re my wife and I told everybody who you are.
Chapter 5: Summary and Discussion

This study documented the interactional patterns through which hopes were exchanged between victims and offenders, identified the role these interactional patterns played in victims’ and offenders’ willingness to remain in contact, and examined how the hopes exchanged between partners evolved over the duration of the offender’s detention. This chapter provides a discussion of how these findings both support and contribute to existing literature on partner violence. This is followed by acknowledgement of the study’s limitations and implications for future research.

Discussion

These findings provide valuable insight into the immediate experience of partners following felony level detainment for domestic violence, and are supported by existing literature. Both victims’ and offenders’ hopes of love being known, and their fears that love is not reciprocated is consistent with literature suggesting that violent partnerships involve high levels of attachment/intimacy-related anxiety, which can include fear of losing a partner, or a desire for reassurance and closeness (Allison et al., 2008; Bond & Bond, 2004; Henderson et al., 2005).

Our findings also indicated that victims’ and offenders’ desires for love to be known and hopes of continuing the relationship were complicated by real or imagined
threats to the fidelity of their relationship and concerns about the ability to overcome relational conflict, including the violent event. In addressing these concerns, victims and offenders expressed hope for partner change, truth, and personal exoneration from blame. Throughout the couples’ conversations, however, victims’ and offenders’ hopes for partner change, truth, and exoneration from blame, were most often met with resistance, rather than affection. Victims’ strong resistance to their partner’s blame and their voiced hope for offender change is consistent with the survivor theory (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988), which emphasizes victims’ active and ongoing efforts to survive or effect change within the abusive relationship. Offenders’ resistance to being blamed is also supported by literature, noting offender’s prevalent use of minimizations (Pence et al., 1993). The *Power and Control Wheel*, developed by Pence and colleagues (1993), suggests that minimizations and violence are two of several tactics aimed at gaining greater power or control over victims within intimate relationships. Other techniques include the use of intimidation, isolation, coercion, and economic or emotional abuse (Pence et al., 1993).

Victims’ and offenders’ resistance to their partner’s hope for change, honesty, and exoneration from blame served to create ongoing conflict within the relationship. Emotionally-charged discussions regarding real or imagined threats to the fidelity of their relationship and concerns about the ability to overcome relational conflict occasionally erupted with some victims or offenders expressing a desire to end the relationship. The desire to end the relationship, however, was often temporal in nature, with couples returning to expressions of love, a desire for sympathy or help, and hope for a reduction in the offender’s detainment. This strong adherence and commitment to the violent
partnership is supportive of Dutton and Painter’s (1981) theory of traumatic bonding; Dutton’s theory postulates that strong interpersonal bonds are formed in violent partnerships through intermittent periods of positive and negative interactions.

Bartle and Rosen (1994) further suggested that interpersonal fusion in violent partnerships—characterized by lack of separateness between partners—may contribute not only to the desire to remain together, but also to the recurring use of violence to manage intimacy within the partnership, when desired levels of closeness are not achieved. Specifically, Bartle and Rosen (1994) described that “When trapped within the cycle of violence, partners intermittently experience both intense closeness and distance, regulating the boundaries in the relationship so that neither partner is threatened by too much closeness or too much distance” (p. 229).

Although the hope of ending the relationship diminished as the couple continued to engage in conversation with one another, the conflict stemming from partners’ mutual hope of not being blamed and hope for partner truth or change was never fully resolved. This is consistent with literature, noting a high prevalence of verbal aggression among partners, negative interactions, and unresolved conflict within violent partnerships (Feldman & Ridely, 2000). Feldman and Ridely (2000) specifically applied a conflict model to violent partnerships and found that offenders in violent relationships reported fewer occurrences of constructive conflict responses such as “mutual discussion, feeling expression, and offering solution/compromises” (p. 567). Feldman and Ridely (2000) also found a greater tendency for partners in violent relationships to feel relatively dissatisfied, withdrawn, or hopeless following relational turmoil.
The findings of the present study indicated that conflict persisted for the duration of the couple’s communications as hopes for partner change and exoneration from blame were met with resistance. Offenders’ hopes for the victim’s help or sympathy, however, were typically met with more sympathetic responses. Victims’ ongoing sympathy for the offender and willingness to provide support is consistent with previous literature, suggesting that offenders’ appeals for sympathy and use of minimizations serve as a pivotal, interpersonal pathway to victim recantation (Bonomi et al., 2011).

**Limitations**

While these findings are supported by existing literature, some limitations should be acknowledged. In setting forth a general definition of the construct of hope in the preliminary study as a “a feeling of expectation and desire for a particular thing to happen” or a “want (for) something to happen or be the case” (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010), it is possible that alternative conceptualizations of hope were expressed, but were restricted from the preliminary raw data collection. For example, the preliminary study identified the content of hopes communicated between victims and offenders, not each partner’s internal hopefulness concerning the possibility of obtaining these specific desires. Furthermore, victims’ and offenders’ own personal conceptualization of hopes, as accessed through interviewing procedures, may differ from the lexical definition put forth. The use of multiple reviewers in the initial phenomenological data collection and analysis, however, is suggested to have allowed preliminary data collection to remain open to such nuances. The couple’s knowledge of the detention
facility’s standard practice of recording telecommunications may have also restricted partner communication and subsequent data collection. However, the extensive documentation of multiple conversations indicated that couples engaged in emotionally charged, in-depth conversations despite knowledge of standard recording practices.

An additional critique of the analysis is the a priori exposure to relevant literature. Glaser (1978) contends that this can inhibit theoretical discovery, which is foundational to a grounded theory approach. Corbin and Strauss (2008), however, acknowledged the unlikelihood of researchers being void of all pre-existing familiarity with literature, and further suggested that Glaser (1978) may have overemphasized this aspect of induction, neglecting to highlight ways in which theoretical sensitization can add depth to inductive inquiry.

In response to this debate, efforts were made to limit biases in the preliminary study and the grounded theory analysis. Beginning the study with the lexical definition of hope, rather than adopting existing theoretical conceptualizations, helped to minimize restraints on the open, generative data collection and analysis process. The study team also double coded and compared the first two conversations of each couple during the preliminary study to ensure consistency, challenge personal assumptions, and discuss nuances within the data. The diligent use of memo writing further served to highlight the analytical influence of a priori knowledge on theory generation and provided the opportunity to minimize its restrictions. For example, memos regarding the comparison of interactional patterns across multiple couples, helped identify theoretical abstractions that were not well supported by the data and identified areas in need of further analysis.
Lastly, while a priori exposure to literature on partner violence and on different theoretical conceptualizations of hope existed and provided rationale for this study, there is no existing literature regarding the interactional patterns of expressed hopes within violent partnerships as this was the first study to examine that process.

This study’s careful methodological selection was also strategically aimed at avoiding the common “pitfalls” of grounded theory analysis, which include: 1) imposing early analysis, 2) identifying fragmented rather than integrative concepts, and 3) failing to move beyond description to theoretical abstraction (Elliott & Jordan, 2010). Forcing early analysis (Glaser, 1998) was avoided with the initial use of open coding and the postponement of theoretical integration until concepts firmly emerged from the data (Elliott & Jordan, 2010). As already noted, the constant comparative method and practice of diligent memo writing helped to pinpoint or rectify theoretical gaps and eliminate theoretical assertions that were not well grounded in the data (Chamaz, 2006).

Furthermore, the techniques aimed at theoretical integration helped ensure that the findings moved beyond description to the achievement of a substantive theory regarding the interpersonal processes that unfolded immediately following the offender’s detainment (Chamaz, 2006). Particularly useful for facilitating theoretical integration was the delineation of each interactional pattern’s properties, dimensions, and relationship to other interactional patterns.

It is important to note, however, that these findings pertain only to the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between victims and offenders who engaged in conversations following partner detainment for felony level violence. We cannot speak
to the communication of hopes and interactional patterns following less severe violent events, those that do not result in offender detainment, or for couples that do not re-engage in conversation and victims that do not make recantation efforts.

Implications

The interactional patterns that emerged from conversations between victims and offenders not only support existing literature, but also substantially contribute to existing literature through the development of a substantive theory regarding how interactional processes unfold following partner detainment for felony level violence. Our findings specifically identified the dynamic, interpersonal processes through which communication is maintained between victims and offenders, relationship recovery occurs following threats of dissolution, and relational conflict persists following a severe violent event. These findings provide critical insight into the complex experience of partners immediately following the offender’s detainment for felony level violence. Particularly noteworthy are victims’ and offenders’ need for reassurance, resistance to responsibility or blame, appeals for sympathy or support, and navigation of the threat of relationship dissolution.

Our findings also contribute to existing literature by highlighting the presence of intimacy related anxiety within violent partnerships and identifying the specific content of this insecurity. Offenders’ expressed anxiety concerning the victim’s faithfulness, commitment to their relationship, and willingness to provide support during the period of detainment, which included recantation efforts. Victims alternatively expressed difficulty
reconciling the offender’s violent behavior with his current expressions of love, were concerned that the offender may blame her for his incarceration, and voiced uncertainty regarding the offender’s past or present commitment to the relationship. Victims’ hopes for reconciliation, voiced fears concerning the reciprocation of love, and feelings of guilt surrounding the offender’s detention are suggestive of a heightened state of internal conflict, anxiety, and vulnerability following partner detention. However, victims’ voiced resistance, is also noteworthy and consistently evidenced in the strong hope of not being blamed for the violent event and direct request for the offender to change.

These findings also add to existing literature by identifying both the content and persistence of relational conflict following a severe violent event. The study’s findings specifically expand and complicate Walker’s (1979) conceptualization of the contrition period after an acute violent event, noting that although both victims and offenders expressed affection following the offender’s detainment, resistance and conflict also occurred concerning the mutual hope of not being blamed for relational turmoil and urgent desire for partner change and honesty.

In addition to identifying the content of partner anxiety and turmoil, our findings importantly detailed the interactional processes through which relationship recovery occurred following threats of dissolution. Noteworthy were offenders’ dynamic response patterns to victims’ hopes of ending the relationship, which involved: 1) challenging the victim, 2) pursuing the relationship or hedging resistance, 3) appealing for sympathy and support, or 4) mirroring or accepting victims’ desire to end the relationship. Critical to
relationship recovery were offenders’ appeals for sympathy and support. These served to maintain communication and provided the opportunity for relationship recovery to occur.

Future consideration for how victim advocacy efforts can enhance victim support measures by taking into account the interactional processes through which hopes are communicated between victims and offenders, following the complex emotional experience of partner detainment, is warranted. Johnson and Zlotnick (2009) have specifically emphasized that, “it is imperative that the therapist’s expectations be realistic and consistent with the goals battered women have when seeking shelter” (p. 240). Our findings may help further this objective, by highlighting the complexity of battered women’s goals and identifying how these hopes evolve over the course of the couple’s interactions. Our findings may also enhance support measures by helping victims and offenders locate themselves within the processes that contribute to ongoing conflict, communication, and relationship recovery following offender detainment for a severe violent event. Locating themselves within these processes may highlight how relationship dynamics, within the violent relationship, impede the attainment of personally desired outcomes, foster the formation of other desires, and contribute to personal experiences of hope or hopelessness. This is particularly important given the presence of hopelessness among victims of domestic violence (Clements et al., 2004) and its association with adverse mental health outcomes (Scher & Resick, 2005).

Future research, however, is also needed to examine each partner’s motivation for expressing specific hopes and the emotional impact these interpersonal processes have on victims and offenders. For example, consideration is warranted for how the expressed
hopes between partners may be both a product and a part of the process through which coercion occurs in violent relationships. According to Dutton and Goodman (2005), partners can ‘set the stage’ for coercive control by: “1) creating the expectancy for negative consequences, 2) creating or exploiting the partner’s vulnerabilities, 3) wearing down the partner’s resistance, and 4) facilitating attachment” (p. 748). Our findings indicated that victims’ voiced attachment insecurity and need for reassurance, was exacerbated by the offender’s violent behavior, hope for the victim to change, and the mirroring of victims’ desire to end the relationship. Offenders also made efforts to wear down the victim’s resistance to blame and desire to end the relationship by challenging these requests and resisting responsibility. Offenders, however, also expressed hope that love was known and hope of continuing the relationship. According to Dutton and Painter (1981), these intermittent periods of positive and negative interactions facilitate the formation of strong attachment bonds within violent relationships. Taken together, these findings highlight the need for future research examining how offenders’ dynamic responses may contribute to ongoing coercive control within the relationship and the subsequent hopes expressed between partners.

**Conclusion**

In summary, our findings advance an understanding of the dynamics of violent couples and the complex emotional experience following a severe violent event with a substantive theory on how interactional processes, involving the exchange of hopes between victims and offenders, unfold following partner detainment for felony level
violence. Our findings specifically identify the interpersonal processes through which communication is maintained between victims and offenders, how relationship recovery occurs following threats of dissolution, and how relational conflict persists following a severe violent event.

No study has yet explored the interactional patterns of expressed hopes between partners during the especially fragile time immediately following a violent event. The identification of how hopes are exchanged by victims and offenders provides critical insight into the emotional experiences and the intimacy dynamics following partner detainment for severe violence. These findings can enhance support measures for victims and offenders by taking into account the complexity of battered women’s goals following the offender’s detainment, and providing partners the opportunity to locate themselves within the interpersonal processes that contribute to ongoing conflict, continued communication, and relationship recovery. Locating themselves within these processes may help victims and offenders identify how the interactional dynamics within the relationship impede the attainment of personally desired outcomes, contribute to the formation of new desires, and influence the personal experience of hope or hopelessness. This is particularly important given the presence of hopelessness among victims of domestic violence (Clements et al., 2004) and its association with adverse mental health outcomes (Scher & Resick, 2005). The current study also introduces a novel qualitative methodology for examining relational dynamics during periods of conflict and advances existing work on the transactional patterns through which hope is communicated and constructed in diverse populations.
References


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Bonomi, A. E., Anderson, M. L., Reid, R. J., Rivara, F. P., Carrell, D., & Thompson, R. S. (2009). Medical and psychosocial diagnoses in women with a history of intimate partner violence. *Archives of Internal Medicine, 169*(18), 1692-1697.


Appendix A: Tables
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coercion</td>
<td>The use of threats, force, or expectations of negative outcomes to influence another individual’s thoughts, feelings, or actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant Comparative Method</td>
<td>An iterative data collection and analysis process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>Physical, psychological or sexual harm inflicted by an intimate partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grounded Theory</td>
<td>A general research methodology that uses a constant comparative process to inductively generate theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>A desire for a specific thing to occur (Oxford Dictionaries, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopelessness</td>
<td>A feeling of despair derived from the perceived unlikelihood of a desired outcome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactional Pattern</td>
<td>A repeated exchange of similar communications or reactions between two or more components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Process</td>
<td>A series of relational actions or functions that contribute to a specific outcome</td>
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Table 1. Key Terms
Table 1. Key Terms Continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Offender</td>
<td>Someone who commits a criminal or wrongful act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantive Theory</td>
<td>A theory concerning a specific phenomena of interest</td>
</tr>
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<td>Relational Conflict</td>
<td>Opposition or turmoil within the context of a relationship</td>
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<td>Victim</td>
<td>Someone who is harmed by a criminal, wrongful, or unpleasant action or event</td>
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Table 2. Sample Spreadsheet: Sequence of Expressed Hopes
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<th>Number of Couple Conversations Analyzed</th>
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<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>V &amp; O</td>
<td>V &amp; O</td>
<td>Yes (V Initiated RD)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (V Initiated RD)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>O</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>V &amp; O</td>
<td>V &amp; O</td>
<td>Yes (V Initiated RD)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

NT, no expressed threat of dissolution; RD, relationship dissolution; O, offender; V, victim.