

The Violence of the Night: The Perception of Trauma in a Song

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ABSTRACT: *The purpose of this study was to explore by means of Q methodology the possibility that music can serve as a vehicle to understand women's experiences of relationship violence, trauma and the symptoms of related posttraumatic stress. Q sorts prepared by 16 respondents regarding themes in Natalie Merchant's 1995 song I May Know the Word reveal two distinct factor viewpoints. Participants who define the "violence of the night" factor interpret it literally as portraying sexual assault, battery, and rape, while participants who define the other factor view the song as involving an abstract internal struggle or conflict. This Q set cannot be used as a diagnostic tool for relationship violence without additional research to determine whether factor loadings are influenced significantly as a result of empathic association rather than personal experience with violent relationships. However, results in this study illustrate a marked tendency among these respondents for those who report abuse histories to identify with the literal interpretation of the "violence of the night" factor.*

Introduction

The conflict between knowing and not knowing, speech and silence, remembering and forgetting, is the central dialectic of psychological trauma. (Herman 1997b).

Violence against women is a pervasive reality. At some point in their lives, women have almost a one-in-two chance of being sexually assaulted (Wolfe, Wolfe and Best 1988), raped (Russell 1984) or battered (Abbott et al. 1995; Hamberger, Saunders and Hovey 1992). Sexual assault, rape and battering produce psychological trauma (Burgess and Holmstrom 1974; Dutton 1992; Herman 1997a) and often result in chronic and complex symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Nearly half of a study sample of women from a battered women's shelter met the criteria for PTSD (West et al. 1990). In another study, three-fourths of the women participating in the DSM IV field trial for PTSD who were subjected to sexual and physical abuse met the criteria for both PTSD and complex PTSD (Roth et al. 1997).

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The purpose of this study was to explore the possibility that music can serve as a vehicle to further understand women's experiences of relationship violence, trauma and the symptoms of related posttraumatic stress. The song *I May Know the Word* by Natalie Merchant (1995) was chosen for its potential in representing the dialectic of trauma — “the conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud” (Herman 1997a, 1). The lyrics begin:

I may know the word
but not say it
I may know the truth
but not face it ... (Merchant 1995).

The song contains themes of indifference, distress and confusion that could be interpreted as corresponding to the effects of trauma, but there is no specific reference to violence against women. This indeterminacy was deemed essential, because more specific lyrics would have yielded responses only about the particular experience described in the song.

Relationship Violence and the Effects of Traumatic Experience

Only about 20 percent of the violence directed toward women is perpetrated by strangers (Bachman and Saltzman 1995). Overwhelmingly, women's victimizers are individuals they know. Thirty percent of perpetrators are intimates (current or past husbands or boyfriends). Ten percent of perpetrators are relatives, the remaining 40 percent are acquaintances (Bachman & Saltzman 1995). When violation occurs in the context of an interpersonal relationship, the effect on the victim is particularly traumatic (Dutton 1992; Herman 1997a; van der Kolk McFarlane and Weisaeth 1996). Family members, lovers or friends who are supposedly “the sources of safety and nurturance become simultaneously the sources of danger” (van der Kolk 1989, 392).

This juxtaposition of trust and violation, or “dissociated coercion” (Maxwell 1996) exists when “the perpetrator approaches the victim from a trust-based perspective, professing to offer love, comfort or reassurance while simultaneously violating the victim by breaking that trust with assault, violence and rape” (Maxwell 1998, 160). That this type of coercion often begins in a covert and insidious manner rather than a clearly recognizable way (as an attack by a stranger would be) heightens the sense of disbelief that a trusted individual could be a perpetrator of violence. Because the victim does not recognize the perpetrator as a threat, she does not employ self-protective measures. When violence occurs, it does not make sense — friends do not rape you, lovers do not beat you.

In an attempt to close this disjunction, knowledge of the violence may be minimized, suppressed or dissociated — separated or detached from conscious memory. This process operates on both psychological and

physiological levels. "Amnesia, dissociation and hyperamnesia [are] the hallmark responses to trauma" (van der Kolk and Fisler 1993, 417).

Trauma and the shattered system of self-protection

Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning ... [Traumatic events] generally involve threats to life or bodily integrity, or a close personal encounter with violence and death. They confront human beings with the extremities of helplessness and terror, and evoke the responses of catastrophe. (Herman 1997a, 33).

Ordinarily, in response to a perceived threat, an individual's self-protective "fight or flight" response arouses the central nervous system, resulting in a state of alert. The individual's attention is focused on the immediate situation, and perceptions are altered allowing her to disregard hunger, pain, or fatigue. Threat also evokes intense fear and anger. These changes mobilize the individual for action — fight or flight. If circumstances preclude fighting or fleeing, or if the victim does not recognize the perpetrator as a threat until it is too late to react (as in the context of a relationship), this normal system of self-protection is shattered and replaced by a traumatic reaction. The usually integrated functions of physiological arousal, emotion, cognition and memory are severed from one another. "The traumatized person may experience intense emotion but without clear memory of the event, or may remember everything in detail but without emotion. She may find herself in a constant state of vigilance and irritability without knowing why" (Herman 1997a, 34).

The biological and psychological effects of trauma on the victim are profound. These effects can be described "posttraumatic stress disorder is characterized by the reexperiencing of an extremely traumatic event accompanied by symptoms of increased arousal and by avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma" (DSM-IV 1994, 393). Hyperarousal, intrusion and constriction are the three primary manifestations of posttraumatic stress disorder (Herman 1997a).

Hyperarousal

The overwhelming nature of traumatic events results in physiological hyperarousal, causing long-term alterations in endocrine, autonomic, and central nervous system functions (van der Kolk and Fisler 1993; van der Kolk, McFarlane and Weisaeth 1996). The traumatized person maintains a permanent physiological state of arousal, constantly alert for the return of danger. Hyperarousal interferes with normal memory processing. The events of the trauma are stored in traumatic memory, which is separate from the memory of ordinary events. Recent neurobiological studies have supported Janet's thesis (1889) that traumatic memories are encoded and stored outside of conscious memory. For example, a positron emission tomography (PET) study measuring regional cerebral blood flow in the brains of traumatized people demonstrated differences in brain region activation between the

controls and the subjects (Rauch et. al. 1996). In trauma victims, brain regions involved with language and communication were inactivated while areas associated with sensory and visual imagery were activated. These neurobiological findings are mirrored by the clinical awareness that traumatic memories are encoded as vivid sensations and images rather than in a verbal or narrative form (Herman 1997a). The memory of the traumatic event is dissociated or state-dependent. Thus, the traumatized person is only aware of the full force of the memory during “renewed situations of terror ... similar to the one in which the memory was stored” (van der Kolk 1989, 395-396).

Intrusion

Usually only fragments of the traumatic memory enter into normal consciousness in the form of intrusive symptoms (Kardiner 1947). Intrusive symptoms involve the repeated reliving of the trauma as nightmares or flashbacks, emotional states, physical symptoms and reenactments (van der Kolk 1989). “When events trigger memories of the earlier [trauma], they [occur] ... without much conscious awareness between current trigger and past trauma” (van der Kolk & Fislser 1993, 417). The trauma is relived in dreams, actions or intrusive memories with the same level of emotional intensity as when it first occurred, which, in turn, prompts extensive avoidance (Herman 1997a).

Constriction

While intrusion involves reenactment of the trauma, symptoms of numbing or constriction reflect protective alterations of consciousness at the moment of trauma. Common responses to inescapable danger are: 1) loss of sensation or partial anesthesia, 2) a state of detached calm, 3) a sense of being in slow motion 4) a sense of being disconnected from one’s own body and observing from an outside point or 5) feeling as if the events are merely a bad dream. “Perceptual changes combine with a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity” (Herman 1997a, 43). This is similar to the response of animals exposed to inescapable shock or animals that are responding to conditioned fear stimuli. A study by Pitman et al. (1990) suggests that a traumatized person’s own stress-induced endogenous opioids (self-produced anesthetics) may be involved in this numbing response. At the time of trauma, an altered state of consciousness serves as protection against unbearable pain. Once the danger is past, however, the traumatic experience remains “walled off from ordinary consciousness, [preventing] the integration necessary for healing” (Herman 1997a, 45). The process of “walling off,” or dissociating traumatic memories from conscious memory, is heightened when a relationship exists between perpetrator and victim. Pelcovitz et al. (1997) found that approximately half the victims of late onset interpersonal abuse (after age 13) reported amnesia or dissociation. Four out of five victims of early onset interpersonal abuse (age 13 or younger) reported amnesia or dissociation.

Accessing traumatic memory

How do victims access traumatic memories, if they are walled off from conscious memory, encoded as visual and sensory images rather than words and stored in a form that is only accessible during similar experiences of terror? This question is critical, because the integration of traumatic memory into conscious narrative memory is an essential aspect of healing (Dutton 1992; Herman 1997a; Janet 1889; Kardiner and Spiegel 1947; van der Kolk, McFarlane and Weisaeth 1996).

This study was conceived as a way to begin exploring the possibility that music might provide a link. Osborne (1981, 136) found “that imagery may be the dominant mode of response to music.” This is consistent with earlier findings on the correlation between aesthetic participation and imagery arousal (Leonard & Lindauer 1973). Perhaps music might produce very different imagery depending upon the listener’s history of relationship violence. The researcher also hypothesized that women and men might have different responses because women who have been abused by male partners form the vast majority (91-95 percent) of victims of relationship violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1994). Do women who have experienced relationship violence, and its resultant traumatic effects, attribute meaning to the song that is consistent with the symptoms of trauma? And finally, can music assist in uncovering women’s experiences of dissociated coercion that is often inaccessible through conscious memory? The ability of Q methodology to elucidate subjective perception is well suited to this exploration (Brown 1980; McKeown and Thomas 1988; Stephenson 1953).

I May Know the Word, written by Natalie Merchant, was selected to examine relationship violence, because the song includes references to themes that could be interpreted as corresponding to the effects of trauma: the dialectic of intrusion and constriction, of knowing and not knowing, of numbing or indifference. As noted in the previous sections, these themes are the hallmarks of traumatic response. In the author’s extensive qualitative interviews with survivors (unpublished interview notes 1996-1999), these themes come up again and again. The sense of dissociative self-protection, described as indifference, is one theme. Knowing/not knowing, believing/not believing that such violence could occur in the context of an intimate relationship with one’s lover, and remembering/not remembering are constant themes. The hyperarousal and fear of night, the description of walls — these themes show up repeatedly in the descriptions of survivors. However, the song, *I May Know the Word*, does not make specific reference to violence or coercion, and, like all music and prose, can be interpreted a variety of ways. While it uses some of the same language that survivors use to describe their experiences, it does not attribute any specific cause to the indifference, the sense of grayness, the inability to speak. Q methodology allows each individual respondent’s subjective perspective or viewpoint to be

gathered on a particular topic through the process of rank ordering, or Q sorting, the statements.

Methods

The 16 participants (primarily public administration graduate students) were asked to listen to the song three times. They were provided with a written copy of the lyrics. (See Appendix A.) A concourse of 72 statements was generated from their reactions to what they perceived to be its main themes. These verbatim responses were numbered and typed on slips of paper to form the Q set. (See Appendix B.)

The Q sort was performed by the same 16 participants working independently to prioritize the statements in a quasi-normal distribution along a scale ranging from +5 to -5. The conditions of instruction were:

“Your task is to rank-order the seventy-two identified themes from those you agree are important themes (+5) down to those you disagree are important themes, or which you regard as less important themes (-5). There is obviously no single right way to rank these themes. Themes that some people consider important may be considered relatively unimportant by others.”

In order to reveal similarities and differences among the participants, the Q sorts were intercorrelated (resulting in a 16x16 correlation matrix) and factor analyzed using a manual centroid rotation with the PQmethod 2.04 (Schmolck 1997; adapted from Atkinson 1992).

All respondents indicated gender; the majority chose to identify themselves by name. Some respondents provided written comments on the response sheets, and, in some cases follow-up interviews facilitated factor interpretation.

Results and Discussion

A factor is defined by individual respondents choosing to prioritize certain statements in a manner similar to other individuals. Individual factor loadings indicate which factor each respondent resembles, with the highest loading individuals defining a factor by virtue of their strong association with that sorting pattern. If similarities did not exist which allowed them to be grouped, the Q sort prepared by each individual would comprise a separate unique factor. Here the statistical analysis determined that although 16 separate sets of rankings were produced, they could be organized into two basic patterns or factors. As Table 1 shows, both factors are well defined and statistically significant ($p < 0.01$).

Table 1: Factor Matrix Indicating Factor Loadings

Factor loadings in bold are significant, ($p < 0.01$); decimals to two places omitted.

<i>Respondent</i>	<i>Factor A</i>	<i>Factor B</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Traumatic Experience</i>
R1 — (both A & B)	31	41	female	not known
R2 — factor A	56	22	female	yes
R3 — (neither A nor B)	17	-2	female	not known
R4 — factor A	65	16	female	yes
R5 — factor B	-3	85	male	no
R6 — factor A	80	-16	female	yes
R7 — factor A	69	-9	female	yes
R8 — factor A	71	30	female	not known
R9 — factor B	6	70	male	no
R10 — factor B	-12	63	male	no
R11 — factor B	7	62	female	no
R12 — (both A & B)	38	68	male	not known
R13 — factor A	53	-8	female	not known
R14 — factor B	-9	66	male	no
R15 — factor B	14	77	female	no
R16 — factor A	77	0	male	no, but partner is survivor of long-term battering relationship

The factors were explored, as were the characteristics of the participants. Respondents on factor A (R2, R4, R6, R7, R8, R13, R16) rank-ordered the seventy-two themes similarly to one another but in a manner different from those individuals on factor B (R5, R9, R10, R11, R14, R15). Two individuals (R1, R12) had mixed viewpoints, and had significant loadings in both groups; these individuals viewed the themes in a way similar to factor A and also to some extent to factor B, or *vice versa*. Only one individual (R3) was not significantly associated with either factor.

The process of Q sorting reflects the individual's natural thought processes regarding a particular subject. In this study the factors represent two different ways of interpreting the song. While factor B viewed the song as a theoretical dilemma, factor A interpreted it as a literal description of relationship violence, battering, and rape (the "violence of the night" factor). This is notable since the song mentions nothing specific about violence. Additionally, there is a marked correspondence between the hallmark symptoms of trauma and the words used by factor A to describe the song. Certainly there could be additional interpretations, and hence, additional factors; R3 is indicative of this in that her responses do not load significantly

on either of the two factors. These two factors, however, can be presented with confidence.

Factor A: Violence of the night — Sexual assault, battery, rape

In examining the data, two very distinct and somewhat gendered factors emerge. Factor A, which is defined primarily by women (six women and one man), interprets the lyrics in a specific and literal manner. To these individuals the song is about the powerlessness of sexual assault, the terror and fear of rape; it is about the despair, denial, and disconnection arising from hopelessness; it is about the indifference (or psychic numbing) that comes from the trauma of sexual violation. All defining members of this factor (with the exception of one, who did not indicate causality) attribute the feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness to sexual assault.

The statements that most clearly describe the song for factor A are ranked +5:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Statement</i>
11	It's about the feelings of hopelessness — indifference is a reaction to the powerlessness she feels.
40	Night time — the time of assault — the time of battering — the time of rape.
4	Female fearing the night due to being subjected to sexual acts by someone who she fears and has no feelings for.
2	A girl unable to say "No" to an act which happens at night (maybe molestation) and that is beyond her control.
17	The indifference is a reaction to her hopelessness. Sadness.

Similarly, the statements ranked +4 by Factor A focus on hopelessness and the despair, denial, and disassociation emanating from hopelessness:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Statement</i>
65	Very depressing song, mood image all very dark. Feeling of despair and hopelessness.
13	What is it that keeps her from enjoying fruit, words, truth, when she has the opportunity? I can only guess a deep sense of hopelessness.
22	The self-silencing of women
37	It seems that darkness represents denial. She may know these things deep inside but doesn't want to admit to it for some reason.
1	This song is the words of someone very depressed and fearful of allowing herself to feel emotions. The "demons" of her past are repressing her. The fear is immobilizing her.
30	I am disconnected from my own experience — by shutting down what I know everything is dulled out — gray.

Fear, terror, despair and hopelessness are immobilizing. "Indifference" is a greying-out of these overwhelming emotions, a silencing of the demons. But the dissociative, numbing response to fear, despair, and hopelessness does not arise from an abstract internal struggle or choice — the demons of the night are real. Night is the time of immobilizing fear; night is the time of assault, battering and rape. There is an implied sense of relationship between the perpetrator and the victim in this fear of the night, and "night" is not merely an abstraction. One of the respondents writes:

The lyrics reflect a sense of foreboding about the meaning of nighttime. I take nighttime both literally as the time between twilight and morning and figuratively as a place where the world beyond the walls is shut out. Nighttime is a place of terror — "begging," "on my knees," "groping in the dark" — it is the time and place of demons.

The individuals who comprised factor A were predominantly women. Four of the six women had experienced relationship violence, two of them on a long-term basis (over ten years). The other two made references to having been victims of relationship violence, but did not make any conclusive statements (they are designated "not known" in Table 1). The one man defining the factor is the partner of a survivor of a past long-term battering relationship. He talked extensively about the effects that this has had on his life and his perceptions of relationship violence.

Factor B: The conflict between engagement and withdrawal

Factor B, on the other hand, has a very different understanding of what the song is about. In contrast to factor A, factor B is defined primarily by men (4 men and 2 women; none of whom indicated a history of victimization). The area of strongest disagreement between the two factors is the ranking of statements 2, 4 and 40. This group of three statements will be referred to as the "violence of the night" array. While factor A ranked these themes as +5 (most agree), factor B ranked these same themes as -5 (most disagree). The statements are as follows:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Statement</i>
2	A girl unable to say "No" to an act which happens at night (maybe molestation) and that is beyond her control.
4	Female fearing the night due to being subjected to sexual acts by someone who she fears and has no feelings for.
40	Night time — the time of assault — the time of battering — the time of rape.

For factor B, indifference does not stem from the numbing effects of immobilizing terror, but rather from a more abstract, internal struggle between engagement and withdrawal.

The following five statements are the +5 themes for factor B:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Statement</i>
41	It seems as if she is speaking about the emotional walls that she has created, to detach herself from the rest of the world. She has kept herself from caring, (perhaps so she won't be hurt), but doesn't want it to stay that way.
31	It seems as if someone knows what to do . . . but cannot.
6	Song to combat or fight against indifference.
21	Indecision.
47	Indifference to people and to the truth that is known.

Where factor A interprets the song as literally about the effects of violation and assault, factor B views the song from the more removed vantage place of an outside commentator. Factor B uses such expressions as “*It seems as if she ... [emphasis added];*” “*It seems as if someone ... [emphasis added].*” The individual depicted in the song is conflicted over what to do; the song expresses a struggle between engagement and withdrawal. It presents a dilemma that calls for decision-making, yet this individual is stuck, which leads to feelings of hopelessness and powerlessness. Here the sense of indifference is pained and aware, not the shutting-down in reaction to hopelessness and powerlessness as in factor A.

The themes ranking as +4 reinforce the interpretation of indifference as a reaction to feelings of powerlessness in the struggle to resolve a difficult situation. The individual portrayed in the song knows the truth, but is conflicted in her effort to resolve the dilemma:

<i>Number</i>	<i>Statement</i>
49	Asking for proof that this is not right, wanting someone to give her a way out of the indifference that she's chosen.
28	Coldness and indifference that she recognizes but hasn't been able to defeat — very much wants to.
60	Struggling to find the right answer/or thing to do in a difficult situation.
18	An aware, and pained indifference.
11	It's about the feelings of hopelessness — indifference is a reaction to the powerlessness she feels.
62	Knowing what is right and wrong but torn between them.

Factor B views the song as a portrayal of an intellectual or ethical struggle — the individual in the song is a “stuck thinker.” It is a struggle reminiscent of Hamlet, a soliloquy. Persons representing factor B point out that, in fact, the song does not say anything about assault. This view is expressed by one of the respondents, who comments:

The -5/-4 statements [according to my ranking] may or may not derive from Natalie Merchant's experiences, but are more likely ideological projections onto the song by [respondents]. These themes [of assault and violation] are not manifest in the lyrics themselves.

Another respondent mirrors this perspective:

I just feel that it is about an emotional struggle ... I definitely did not get a feeling that it was a depressed or suicidal song (or drugs, rape, etc.). Night is more a metaphor for darkness (ignorance, denial?) than an actual reference to time.

However, a respondent from factor A disagrees:

To me, the song was about abuse, depression and hopelessness ... This song was not about personal values, drug addiction or a fight about indifference.

What are we to make of these two divergent views? It is clear that they both exist, and that there is disagreement, as well as some areas of consensus, among the two groups. What can be gleaned from this study, beyond an illustration that different people can perceive the same phenomenon from very different vantagepoints? It is striking that respondents who typify factor A interpret the song as referring to literal events. For the song's lyrics are indeterminate — nothing is mentioned about assault, battery or rape. It is also striking that the descriptive phraseology of the song corresponds so closely to elements of the physiological and psychological responses to the trauma of assault, battery and rape. As outlined in the literature review, traumatic memories are encoded as sensations and images, rather than verbal narratives — a series of fragmented impressions like an impressionistic or abstract painting, covering up the stark horror of realism. "I may know the word but not say it; I may know the truth but not face it" (Merchant 1995) is suggestive of the dialectic of intrusion and constriction, of "knowing and not knowing."

Through the practice of dissociation, voluntary thought suppression, minimization, and, sometimes, outright denial, [the person] learns to alter an unbearable reality. Ordinary psychological language does not have a name for this complex array of mental maneuvers, at once conscious and unconscious. Perhaps the best name for it is doublethink, in Orwell's definition: "Doublethink" means the power of holding two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, and accepting both of them (Herman 1997a, 87).

This is similar to the comments of one of the study's factor A respondents:

The song reflects the author's awareness that something bad is going on at night, but it doesn't fit with the world she believes exists when she is living her life during the day. Knowing that this was written by a woman makes me think the song is an attempt to get at the question of what does it mean if your lover is raping you and what you believed would be intimacy is taking on qualities of oppressive violence. The response to this incongruity is "greyness" — knowing and not knowing — and repeating.

This “greyness” is another effect of constriction. Prevented from flight or fight, the numbing effects of constriction produce, “paradoxically, a state of detached calm ... a feeling of indifference, emotional detachment, and profound passivity” (Herman 1997a, 42-43). Respondents on factor A paired “the violence of the night” array with statements that attributed the feeling of indifference to powerlessness and hopelessness. The woman in the song is “immobilized by fear;” she is “disconnected from [her] own experience — by shutting down what [she] know[s], everything is dulled out — grey.” She is despairing, without hope. She is denying what she knows deep inside; she has silenced herself. She is in a very different place from the woman portrayed by factor B.

The conceptualization of the woman from the standpoint of factor B attributes her hopelessness and powerlessness to being stuck in an “internal conflict” (respondent’s note) and indecision. To cite the factor B respondent who described the “violence of the night” statements as themes that “are not manifest in the lyrics themselves:”

I was struck by the conflict in the song — of knowing the word but not saying it, of knowing the truth but not facing it, of hearing a sound but “turning my head.” My highest scores therefor went to statements which acknowledged that conflict — of not being able to resolve a dilemma, of an aware indifference, of longing, of wanting to defeat indifference but being unable to, to keeping herself from caring but not wanting to stay that way, etc.

For this respondent, the “violence of the night” array falls into the “most disagree” category, as it does for the other respondents who collectively comprise factor B. For factor A, though, the conflict is really external rather than internal. It is not a conflict with self; it is a conflict that is present in the violence of the night.

While this study suggests that music can be a vehicle to explore women’s experiences of dissociated coercion — the juxtaposition of trust and violation in the context of a relationship — and the effects of trauma on the survivors of such relationships, several serious considerations and limitations exist. First, of course, is that this study can only illustrate interesting connections, not establish causality. In addition, while several women who had experienced relationship violence fell into factor A, so did the man whose partner had been victimized by relationship violence. Perhaps whether an individual views the song in a manner similar to factor A is dependent on the *awareness* of relationship violence and trauma, as distinct from having experienced it. It would be interesting to see if therapists who worked with individuals with traumatic experiences also fell into factor A simply by association, or because they had personal histories of abuse.

Another possible explanation for the man on factor A may be his experience of secondary or vicarious traumatization where a family member, helping professional, or even observer exhibits a traumatic response by

hearing about another person's experiences, particularly over time (Dutton & Rubinstein 1995; Figley 1995). It is not possible to generalize from an "n" of one. However, his high score on factor A provides an additional caution against using participants' responses to music in a *diagnostic* manner.

Conclusions about the use of music interpretations must be considered in light of some of the core components of traumatic response. As cited earlier, 50-80 percent of victims of interpersonal abuse reported amnesia or dissociation (Pelcovitz et. al. 1997) regarding the abuse at some point in their lives. Would individuals who have "set aside" or dissociated their awareness of the details of their abuse because it is too painful to bear come up with a literal interpretation of the song? This question, unanswerable in this study, is a central one, and needs to be addressed.

How can the results of this study be used? The author has utilized the ability of music to "paint a subjective picture" in a variety of ways:

- as a method to increase mediation trainees' sensitivity to and recognition of domestic violence (Maxwell 1999);
- as a therapeutic tool to help victims name and normalize their experiences of dissociated coercion and trauma (author's unpublished case notes 1998-1999);
- as a jumping-off point for women exploring their perceptions of relationship violence (author's unpublished field notes on interpretations of *Red Heaven* 1998); and
- as a method to allow students to explore their own understandings of relationship violence, without being told how they "should" react (author's unpublished class notes 1997-1999).

Conclusions

This study suggests, in a very preliminary fashion, that music may be able to serve as a vehicle through which to better understand the effects of relationship violence and trauma. While one cannot generalize to the broader population based on the results of this study, the factors represent two real and divergent ways of perceiving the same phenomenon.

It is important to note that this study does not speak to whether reactions to music could be used as a diagnostic tool for determining traumatic experience. This study suggests a possible correlation, but cannot, by its design, provide any determinate answer. This is an area for further research. What it does, however, is illustrate a marked tendency of women with abuse histories to identify with the literal "violence of the night" factor.

"Next steps" include further exploration of the correlation between experience and interpretation — to what extent do victims of relationship violence fall on one factor? While this study suggests a relationship, additional work remains to be done. It is only through a combination of efforts — on many different fronts and originating from a diverse group of

perspectives — that we can begin to articulate, address, and combat “the violence of the night.”

Appendix A

I May Know the Word

Merchant, 1995

I may know the word
But not say it
I may know the truth
But not face it
I may hear a sound
a whisper sacred and profound
but turn my head
indifferent

I may know the word
But not say it
I may love the fruit
But not taste it
I may know the way
to comfort and to soothe
a worried face
but fold my hands
indifferent

If I'm on my knees
I'm begging now
If I'm on my knees
Groping in the dark
I'd be praying for deliverance
From the night into the day

But it's all grey here
it's all grey to me

I may know the word
but not say it
this may the time
but I might waste it
this may be the hour
something move me
someone prove me wrong
before night comes
with indifference

if I'm on my knees
I'm begging now
if I'm on my knees
groping in the dark
I'd be praying for deliverance
from the night into the day

but it's all grey here
but it's all grey to me

I recognize the walls inside
I recognize them all
I've paced between them
chasing demons down
until they fall
in fitful sleep
enough to keep their strength
enough to crawl
into my head
with tangled threads
they riddle me to solve

again and again and again

Appendix B

Q Set

1. This song is the words of someone very depressed and fearful of allowing herself to feel emotions. The “demons” of her past are repressing her. The fear is immobilizing her.
2. A girl unable to say “No” to an act which happens at night (maybe molestation) and that is beyond her control.
3. The grey could be about possibility in a hopeless world and how one can survive in the night but I'm guessing its more about the sadness.
4. Female fearing the night due to being subjected to sexual acts by someone who she fears and has no feelings for.
5. Maybe there is hope in the fact that she keeps trying to solve the demon problem — again and again and again.
6. Song to combat or fight against indifference.
7. Her inability to solve her problems makes me think she sees herself as a victim.
8. Dealing with the death or dying of person or relationship.
9. She is able to chase demons but they continue to plague her and her reaction is that she doesn't /can't resolve the dilemma.
10. Emotionally drained person.
11. It's about the feelings of hopelessness — indifference is a reaction to the powerlessness she feels.
12. Person dealing with depression.
13. What is it that keeps her from enjoying fruit, words, truth, when she has the opportunity? I can only guess a deep sense of hopelessness.
14. Motivate to action but illustrating detachment or non-involvement.
15. The song seems to be about depression.
16. Sounds like 1968-1974-ish music. Singer/songwriter and professor relate to this generation — probably teens and young adults then.
17. The indifference is a reaction to her hopelessness. Sadness.
18. An aware, and pained indifference.
19. Conveys feeling of being confused.
20. A social disability: The fruit of some profound trauma (i.e., dissociation from community network — the network of community).
21. Indecision.
22. The self-silencing of women
23. Conveys feeling of longing/wanting.
24. The invisibility of women, people of color, middle children.
25. One thing that comes to mind is → apathy!
26. Maybe mental illness or depression.
27. A time to reflect on personal values!

28. Coldness and indifference that she recognizes but hasn't been able to defeat — very much wants to.
29. Resolving internal conflict within one's self! (inner peace)
30. I am disconnected from my own experience — by shutting down what I know everything is dulled out — gray.
31. It seems as if someone knows what to do ... but cannot.
32. I can grey things out during the day — indifferent. At night I am tormented by demons — I choose not to recognize what they mean.
33. Probably relating to love, but can apply to many situations . . .
34. I am too fearful to see the truth.
35. The person is blocked from doing the “intellectual” choice or action by the psychological or spiritual self . . . Perhaps from some lesson that hurt and was learned well.
36. I am fearful of the truth — I am fearful to see.
37. It seems that darkness represents denial. She may know these things deep inside but doesn't want to admit to it for some reason.
38. I have “greyed out” my own pain — it is too painful to bear.
39. It may be that a lack of courage or strength is keeping her from facing her personal demons.
40. Night time — the time of assault — the time of battering — the time of rape.
41. It seems as if she is speaking about the emotional walls that she has created, to detach herself from the rest of the world. She has kept herself from caring, (perhaps so she won't be hurt), but doesn't want it to stay that way.
42. Protect her from her inner demons have served only to entrap her with the torture (anguish). She can only weaken her foe but not defeat it.
43. She seems confused — “grey,” like she wants to ask for help but doesn't know how or if she should.
44. She can find what she seeks if she could shed her indifference (which she refers to in the first two stanzas).
45. Her world is not broken into any issue she feels strongly about. It's all “grey”—middle of the road.
46. She needs motivation, goals, and love to break her bonds of depression and return to her normal life.
47. Indifference to people and to the truth that is known.
48. Very depressed and sad contemplating suicide.
49. Asking for proof that this is not right, wanting someone to give her a way out of the indifference that she's chosen.
50. Praying for a better day, as every thing appears to be grey.
51. Drug addiction with a final trip.
52. Very confused and sad about life and things that happen.
53. Struggling with her identity.
54. Sharing feelings about the world, realizing that it really doesn't matter if she says anything because things won't change.

55. Addiction leading to asking for help and struggling once getting the help.
56. Having ambivalent feelings.
57. Denial of surrounding and or circumstance.
58. Reference to finding a peace from the darkness with a comfort from a new daybreak.
59. She knows what she must do to get out of a bad situation but isn't ready to take it.
60. Struggling to find the right answer/or thing to do in a difficult situation.
61. Doesn't want to face a person or situation, most likely a lover.
62. Knowing what is right and wrong but torn between them.
63. Wants to be rescued, but at the same time feels safe in her world. Doesn't want to leave it.
64. Recognizing the obvious but not ready or not sure if it should be accepted.
65. Very depressing song, mood image all very dark. Feeling of despair and hopelessness.
66. There are times that what is obvious is not always clear to others.
67. Sees love as a trap she does not want to get caught in.
68. Too inhibited.
69. She's caught in an emotional "twilight" — black/white light/dark.
70. The song is about barriers we build inside over time that keep us from acting and feeling, living life to its fullest. Sometimes from being hurt, repressed over a long period of time.
71. Someone deals with mental illness. Possible nervous breakdown.
72. Having faith in God to help give her the strength necessary to get through another night of unwanted sex.

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