

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this research was to explore women's experiences of rage towards their intimate partners. From 37 interviews of incarcerated women who experienced rage towards an intimate partner came intense and unsettling portrayals of experiences that embody rage. Numerous shared meanings were captured and described.

Due to the nature of qualitative inquiry, those interviewed informed my understanding of what constitutes an experience of rage. Since rage is a subjective determination, a description was given to participants to serve as a reference point (see Appendix A). The baseline criteria that screened for the phenomenon of rage were, "A feeling that exceeds healthy anger. It overpowers normal brain functioning because it loses the rational component found within healthy anger. A person full of rage feels out of control and seeks to hurt another in a physical way." To distinguish from other relationships where rage may have been experienced, each participant was specifically asked if she felt this way towards an intimate partner (past or present). This served as the foundation to these interviews.

### *How Women Distinguished Feeling Rage from Anger*

Upon introducing this study to incarcerated women, responses reflected an eagerness to share their stories of rage, experiences that left lasting impressions. Although women quickly identified with the feeling of rage, it seemed that it was a subject that was not frequently nor directly addressed. For example, after interviewing Pricilla she stated:

**Pricilla:** No one's ever talk to me about rage—it's always "anger management," but I knew what I felt was more than that. I didn't sign up for anger management because I needed something more.

### *Outward Change—Actions and Physical Appearances*

The word “rage” suggests intensity, alive with emotion that is presumably negative. Each of the 37 women interviewed were able to readily provide distinguishing characteristics of their experience of rage towards an intimate partner. The overwhelming theme from their experience of rage towards an intimate partner is captured in feeling “out of control,” where a power stronger than their mind takes over. Consequences are unable to register with any rational part of the brain. For many, once an episode of rage is triggered, women feel at the mercy of something greater than their control. This is contrasted with common experiences of anger, which is described as a basic emotion that can be managed. Nearly three quarters of the participants, 26 women, differentiated rage as an internal force wanting them to attack another person. Some women offered basic distinctions:

**Annabeth:** Anger is when you are mad. Rage is when you can’t control your anger and you try to hurt somebody.

**Honey:** Rage is unstoppable. Anger is a feeling you can get over. With rage, I can kill someone. Not everyone gets rage... I’m meaner, I have a look of hate, my ears get hot and my eyes get red...When you snap, you can’t stop it. It’s bad and you have to stop yourself. When I am getting into an argument, I need someone to stop me because I will knock them out. And I snap at the person helping also.

**Feliz Ada:** With anger, in the moment you get a thought. With rage, the physical part takes over in me.

**Pricilla:** With anger, you get angry for a moment and get over it. With rage, I took a butcher knife and stabbed him (boyfriend) because he laughed at me. I wanted to hurt him. Rage stays longer. I want to get you. He laughed at me. I wanted to poke him in his

upper chest and he moved. I got his hand instead of his chest.

Some women provided descriptions of physical signals that indicate rage would follow, which they report is to let people know what is soon to come. Two women gave examples:

**Dee Dee:** Anger, I can control. I can say “back off.” With rage, there is no telling—I know I am going to hurt you! I shake. I cry because there is no other outlet. I get hot and sweaty, clench my fists...I take my glasses off and tell people, “I’m having a bi-polar moment.” It’s my trigger to warn people before I explode... In rage, I’m intense....I’m afraid of myself—I’m going to kill you because you did something to me... I just get relief after rage.

**Bonita:** I get red, shake and cry. My legs shake, I’m pacing, I get red. I look for something to hit, and it’s a warning to people. I look for an object to destroy. My hands shake, I cry.

Four women likened their experience of rage as feeling evil or demonic, suggesting a supernatural dreadful presence that overrides their normal behavior. Both Pricilla and Honey offered examples:

**Pricilla:** In rage, I throw things at him out of rage. It’s more than anger. It felt like an evil spirit was in me.

**Honey:** My hands shake, my jaw clenches together. It’s like the devil is crawling up my back. It’s a horrible experience. I hate when I feel like that.

### *Internal Change—Physiological and Cognitive*

Based on the descriptions given of internal changes during an experience of rage, distinct themes were revealed. Only one woman, Fran, reported not recognizing any changes in her body during rage except feeling tense:

**Fran:** My body doesn't change during rage... When I had the knife, I felt tense, my muscles were contracting. It happened so fast and it was over. When it was over, the cops were there.

The most common internal change described is an increased heart rate. Over half of the participants, 20 women, described feeling their hearts race and pound. For example:

**Perline:** I get hot. My heart races. I feel nauseous. I tremble. I breathe fast and pant.

**Gail:** I get hot and my heart pounds. My blood pressure goes up. When he (husband) went out, I got my anxiety up and felt it all in my stomach. My heart rate went up, I couldn't eat. When I knew that I was gonna beat him, I had trouble breathing. When he came in, I didn't have any problems with my vision. It wasn't blurry. Then I would explode when he didn't talk to me.

Another repeated characteristic involved women "blacking out" during periods of rage with their partners. Often, actual events are not recalled until something from the aftermath will trigger them back into the present. Again, more than half of the participants, 19 women, reported having periods of rage when they blank out. Some women shared their experience:

**Mary:** I was trembling. Red spots came into my eyes. I wasn't in my own body. I'd get the red spots, then I couldn't see anything. I'd get the red spots before the blank out. Time was missing. I didn't know how and when I got to this point. Yes [I felt out of control]. It was like watching someone else and when I came back, I didn't remember blanking. I drift off. I never want to build up rage [again]. I remember being in the hallways with the knife. He went for my hand, then I saw red. The police were there. Everything is blurred. Maybe I saw blood or just red.

**Lyn Bebe:** I felt out of control with my ex. I went into rage and hated him. He hit me

with a golf club—he said that I blanked out on him and said I picked something up on him. We were in an argument and he said I pushed him and that I hit him first, but I don't remember. I got so angry and got raged and blanked out. I remember fighting him, but he said I went crazy. That's because he put his hands on me—it's a trigger from being molested.

**Feliz Ada:** I blank out. When I start, I taste blood. I'm focused on what I'm going after. My taste buds change.

**Yolanda:** With rage, I can't sleep. It keeps me up at night...I was just out of control. I was a loose firecracker. I did not sleep at all this time. Everything faded out when I had rage. I lost control. I was in a tunnel. I couldn't breathe. Anger was a big ball inside of me. I was going to blow up. I was rocking back and forth. I felt like there was acid inside of me—my stomach was on fire. I was crying, my hearing shut off, I thought I was gonna have a nervous breakdown.

A third of the participants, 13 women, also reported having blurred vision as an additional characteristic to their rage. Of those women who described this attribute, only five did not describe blanking out during their episode of rage.

**Ellie May:** I felt large [during rage]. My mind wasn't there. My thoughts stopped. I did not blank out. My heart races, I'm trembling, I feel hot, I cry, I have blurred vision. I feel strong. I had a headache afterwards. My fists were clenched.

**Valerie:** The last time I felt rage, I cried. I was tense, I started to shake and sweat, my heart was racing, I get migraines. When I get mad I get migraines. My vision gets blurry and I see spots and stars. I couldn't control myself. It wasn't me. If I was in my right mind, I wouldn't have done it, but I remember everything.

More than a third of the participants, 15 women, had described feeling noticeably more powerful during periods of rage towards their partners. This was often described as feeling “stronger,” “bigger,” or simply “more powerful.” For example:

**Honey:** I feel bigger and more powerful. I don’t like feeling like that. It scares me.

**Isabelle:** I don’t feel human. I get stronger and more powerful. I am afraid when I have rage because I don’t know what I am going to do.

**Olivia** I feel a power going through my body. I feel more powerful. My heart rate went up. I went crazy for a minute. He hit me in my sleep. I woke up in a rage. My head got hot. My body got hot.

There were some exceptions, however, to feeling powerful during rage. Four women shared a different experience, and described feeling weak either during or after periods of rage. For example, Tonya and Ursala both explain:

**Tonya:** During rage of that incident, in the final stages, my heart rate goes up, I’m trembling and scared, I have tunnel vision, I see only that person and everything fades into the background, I cry, punch things, punched him. I felt numb and weak. It took a little while to get my memory together. When I was fighting with him I lost track of time. I couldn’t recount the events. I blanked out.

**Ursala:** [When I experience rage] I feel stronger. I first want to kill him, and then I feel weak.

Additional attributes that accompanied some of the women’s experiences of rage included having headaches or migraines, as reflected throughout previous quotes, and a lack of concern for consequences, which was described by six women. For example, Jackie stated:

**Jackie:** It was scary. I was nervous and had knotting up in my stomach. I was pacing and

got high. My anger turned to rage and I was ready to do something. I cry and I'm scared of myself. It doesn't seem like I'm doing enough. I couldn't get my anger out with just my fists—I was looking for objects, preferably a hammer, anything powerful. I do think about consequences when I'm angry, but not while I'm in rage.

### *Describing the Emotional Process*

When women were asked to describe their rage, the words most commonly used to describe their experience were “snap” or “explode.” Those expressions capture being pushed to the limits of control over one's emotions and actions. It punctuates the emotional experience leading up to an uncontrollable event. For instance:

**Ellen:** I have all different feelings. I first feel frustration and a lot of feelings. I talk too much to myself. I would rather not share [feelings] because I am upset. I let those feelings build and build then I would be really angry, and it keeps coming back. Problems keep building and building and then I snap. It feels good to snap. I would not like to snap, though, because of the consequences of snapping. When I'm ready to snap, I'm just exploding and know that there will be consequences. Sometimes I blank out.

**Lyn Bebe:** There is a fine line between when anger builds and then when it bursts. I cry before I feel rage. I can't take it any more. It just comes out.

**Patrice:** Sometimes my anger builds and then I snap. Sometimes I just react and explode. Usually I'll just ignore something until finally I can't take it anymore.

**Tonya:** With me, rage builds, then explodes. I can be angry at someone for a long time, but once they hit me, I explode. Someone putting their hands on me is a trigger for rage.

*Emotional process of rage.* As women recounted their experience of rage towards their intimate partner, a shared emotional process began to unfold. Nearly two-thirds of the

participants, 22 women, described experiencing two distinct emotional processes prior to the emotional explosion of rage. Often these processes occurred so quickly that many women were unaware of the distinct emotional experiences.

The first emotion leading up to rage was a form of fear, usually from feeling threatened. Next, women repeatedly described crying just prior to exploding. When questioned about the tears, most women clarified that they are not tears of sadness, but rather from feeling overwhelmed emotionally. Finally, after this emotional point is reached, rage detonates. Some women reported:

**Bonita:** I get in a rage when I can't express what my feelings are. I feel all blocked up inside. I feel fear first, because I'm afraid of them attacking me first. Then I cry—that's when I know it's getting bad and I'm ready to blow. Then I go into rage.

**Cassandra:** Anger is when you get mad, bothered with someone. Rage is out of control. I first feel very scared, fear, then I cry, and then I have rage. Intense fear, too. I cried. I bust car windows.

**Dee Dee:** In rage, there's a moment of feeling threatened, either with myself or for others. I then cry—anger has nowhere to go. Then I feel rage.

**Penny:** At first I'm scared. Something is triggered. I blank out and I act out. I first feel fear, I cry and then rage.

**Ellie May:** Anger I can handle, rage I cannot [handle]. I first feel fear, then I start crying, then I become enraged...I am isolated at first, then I explode.

Another woman, Yolanda, had clear insight into her emotional experiences. She described two different initial emotions, feeling hurt and feeling fear, which both potentially leads her through the emotional process of rage:

**Yolanda:** I have two separate rage processes. The first type, I feel hurt first, then I cry, then I go into rage. The other type is I feel fear first, then I cry and then feel rage.

Although most women had described the emotional process of rage beginning with feeling fear, followed by crying, and ending in rage, other women described their experience of rage with the same emotions, but in a different order. For example:

**Pricilla:** When I expressed rage toward my husband, I felt fear while I did it. Afterwards I cried. He is not a violent man. He is just verbally abusive. He said I had a split personality. He used to say to me, “Which one are you today, meaning a split personality, Pricilla or Pricilly”....I would throw things at him out of rage more than anger.

**Valerie:** I feel fear first, then rage. I cry afterwards from feelings of being overwhelmed.

**Nancy:** My anger builds. Feelings of fear and rage are mixed together...Then I'll cry.

#### *Do Past Experiences Cultivate Current Rage?*

The women who had participated in this study had described many traumatic childhood memories. It was quite common for women to become emotional during the interviews when they recounted painful memories, despite the lapse of sometimes 20 or 30 years, and for some, more. Many women were unable to isolate one specific memory as being the most prominent memory linked to rage. Often there were two or three events that they could not rank, as each experience felt equally painful.

#### *Childhood Memories Connected to Rage—Abuse and Abandonment*

Almost 90% of those interviewed described at least one vivid memory from childhood that still caused them to feel rage. From the 33 women who were able to identify such experiences, all but two descriptions were related to experiencing various forms of abuse and/or experiencing abandonment and loss. In regard to memories of childhood abuse that were linked

to feeling rage, three categories of abuse were evident: physical abuse, sexual abuse, and observing domestic violence.

*Physical abuse.* Nearly a third of the participants, 13 women, identified physical abuse that caused them to feel rage from childhood or adolescence. For example, some women described:

**Donna:** When I was young, my dad would fistfight my mom, fighting in the bedroom. I would run to him and he would throw me against the brick wall and my mom took me out of the house or I would go in my bedroom and scream.

**Feliz Ada:** My father was two times violent towards me and verbally abusive. He hurt my feelings. Even talking about him makes me angry. I have rage towards my father—we don't click because we are alike. I love him but he doesn't love me. I have been trying to get him to love me for so long. I am tired. He hurt me. He didn't do anything for my kids. He never bought anything for my kids and he knows he is all I got. My mom died. She jumped in front of my dad in protection to stop someone from stabbing him.

**Anita:** My mom was abused by her mom and her boyfriends. She abused me.

**Peggy:** [The first time I remember feeling rage] I was 15-years-old and he was much older. He beat me from 7th Street to 8th Street. I was on the ground and he busted my lip. I went to my girlfriend's house. He said, "Tell her to come out" and beat me more. He took me to the hospital and said not to tell the hospital it was him. I had a broken rib. I still care about him. When he wanted for me to go back with him, I looked at the picture when he beat me up to remind me of what he did. After the hospital, he took me home and he made love to me. One week later, I saw the same look on his face, like he was going to hit me—I had fear and rage.

*Sexual abuse.* An additional third of women, 12 participants, described memories of sexual abuse and rape that they linked to feelings of rage. Some examples are:

**Bonita:** My boyfriend triggers somebody from the past—my brother. He raped me when I was 7-years-old. I felt rage.

**Ellie May:** First time I felt rage I was 11—I was molested at 11. [I] think about it a lot.

**Honey:** I never saw rage at home, but they never expressed love. I was given to my dad in America at age 3. My mom stayed in another country [Cuba]. My father severely molested me sexually, but did not beat me. My kids' father would abuse me.

I trust no one and that's bad. I am so angry. I am in so many programs here at prison...I picked up expressing rage from my kids' father. We would beat each other up. I got a knife to protect myself. I was with my husband from 14 to 21-years-old.

**Pricilla:** One of my mom's boyfriends did [use violence]. He also sexually molested me when I was 12-years-old. I never told my mom. He threatened me with a gun. I didn't want him to kill my mom and siblings. My mom still doesn't know. He did not molest the other kids. I'd get home first. I had to suck his penis. I still didn't tell my mom. I ran away when I was 13. She was a good mom and the boyfriend was still bothering me when no one was in the house. I was traumatized.

*Observing domestic violence.* Three women recalled painful memories from observing domestic violence between their parents that caused feelings of rage. Olivia recalls:

**Olivia:** My father would beat mom up so my aunt stabbed him. The first time I felt rage was when I saw a man hit my mom. I was 10 or 11-years-old. We, me and my siblings, all beat him up and we won.

Tonya explains:

**Tonya:** Just from my father putting his hands on my mom, it makes me feel rage. I was never physically or sexually abused growing up.

*Abandonment and loss.* Memories of abandonment and loss plague nearly another third of the participants, as 11 additional women described memories that triggered rage. Onessa described how her rage spawned over 14 years, leading her to take action:

**Onessa:** The first time I felt rage was when my brother got killed by a gang. I was 6-years-old. I wanted revenge. I killed my brother's killer...when it happened, I was angry. At 13-years-old, I was scared and so hurt. I carried a grudge for six years. The killer had no remorse. At 13-years-old I decided to get him. I was 20 [when I finally did]. I got my dad's gun. I stalked what route he took. He was coming down the street and I shot him and I had on a mask. Then I ran. I had a bike. I went home and cried, "What did I just do? I've got to go." I left my two kids with my mom. I ran. I became homeless for two years. I had no job. I was afraid the police were looking for me. I stayed away. I did it out of love for my brother who was 14-years-old.

Dee Dee and Peggy also shared:

**Dee Dee:** First time I felt rage I was 8-years-old. I am adopted so I got teased by kids. I beat the kids up....I was adopted and abandonment gives me rage. I was adopted four-days-old. I am angry at my mom for giving me up.

**Peggy:** The first time I felt rage my mom had left me with my grandfather for eight years. She did drugs. When my mom came to see me, I didn't want to see her. She only came by about six times. My foster father always helped me and took care of me until he went to prison on drug charges. I am in family therapy with my mom. She has my kids.

Ellen describes experiencing both abandonment and sexual abuse, which makes her feel rage:

**Ellen:** I was put into foster care. I went to see my mom in a crazy hospital somewhere. I was about 8-years-old. My mom and dad were not in my life. I was alone. I had run away from the foster home. In foster care, I raged more. In the foster home, I got raped. I have family members raising my 14 kids. It would have been better to be with them. I am angry with everybody.

### *People Who Have Been Influential in Expressing Rage*

Almost 85% of the participants, 31 women, who were interviewed, discussed some reference point or person they perceive as influential in how they currently express rage. The majority, 27 women, identified some early caretakers as linked to how they manage their rage as adults. Although there were a few women who were raised by extended family or foster care, the majority of women cited either their fathers or mothers as directly impacting their expressions of rage today as adults.

*The impact made by fathers.* Ten women discussed the influence of their fathers' rage on the molding and shaping of their own rage. Some examples include:

**Ellie May:** Growing up, my father taught me to express rage. He had a hot temper. I look like him when I feel rage. He was a crazy person. He would get red-faced.

**Cassandra:** Definitely my real father influenced me to express rage....I had alcoholic parents. My father hit my mom, and blood was everywhere. Friends used to say "he was on the war-path." I did not know what they meant then. Now I know it meant rage. I look like him in rage.

**Valerie:** My dad taught me to express rage. He was violent towards my mom, me, my dog, and my brother. I used to get so upset when he'd come home and just kick and beat the dog for no reason. He's just a dog—he doesn't know anything!

**Donna:** I express rage from my father. I got scared when you asked the question about my dad. I am petrified to think about my dad, but he is my best friend. I call him every night. I would hear his keys in the door and I would run into my room and he would hit me. If he had a bad day, he would start swinging. People say I look like my dad when I am angry. He takes anti-depressants and says, “fuck” or “it sucks” in regard to a bad workday. I was on the phone with my dad and told him about the petrifiedness I was feeling—I’m holding those feelings in. He [father] said that he will give me something to be petrified about.

There were three additional women, however, who denied having anyone influence them in their own expression of rage. Yet, as conversations ensued, stories of these women witnessing their father’s rage were described. It seems curious that some of these women have not linked the modeling of rage during their childhood with any of their own current expressions. For instance, Bonita briefly described the behavior of her father:

**Bonita:** No one taught me to express rage....My father had a bad temper. He smacked my mom. He hit me when I got older.

*The impact made by mothers.* Eight women identified their mothers as the primary source from which rage was learned. For example, Ursala describes how she remembers her mother behaving:

**Ursala:** I learned to express rage from my mom. She was a screaming, violent person.

Anita recognized an intergenerational pattern of rage:

**Anita:** I got it [rage] from my mother. She was pretty, but when she’d get angry, her face would get all balled up. That’s when I knew she was mad. I felt worried because I wanted

to know what was wrong with her. Even though she abused me, I still love her. My sister is also rageful. I think my mom taught me to express rage. My mom was taught rage by her mom. I try to act differently towards my kids. My kids visit me here.

Fran recognized the rage both her parents had, but identifies with her mother when she expresses rage:

**Fran:** [I learned to express rage] from my mom and dad. They fought and drank. I am married 17 years in September. I most resemble my mom in her face when in rage. I thought I would be different than my mother, but she had a lot of pressures on her. My mom yelled, and I do too. Now when my kids will say, “Go fuck yourself,” I can’t get mad because I know that they’ve heard me say it. It would have made things easier if my husband would just take the kids out. But he didn’t—they were just pushed aside.

Similar to the three women who denied their fathers’ influence in expressing rage while describing rage-filled examples involving them, two additional women also denied being influenced to express rage, but described mothers that may have contributed. For example:

**Wanda:** No one had taught me to express rage. My mom has a bad temper. When I’m in rage, I’m like my mom. I get mad really quickly like her. She has a short fuse and so do I.

**Perline:** No one taught me to express rage. I didn’t grow up in a violent home. Both my mom and baby sitter had hot tempers, but they didn’t model rage. I think the lack of nurturing from my mom has something to do with it. I wasn’t taught the proper way to handle anger because my mom wasn’t around.

*Additional influential sources for rage.* Seven women speculated other sources that may have contributed to them feeling rage, ranging from other family members, to adoption, to death. Some examples include:

**Feliz Ada:** Having rage is hereditary and it's an expectation in my family. Everyone in my family fights. My father is highly respected, so people don't mess with me. When I would tell my father people are bothering me, he would encourage me to fight, to defend myself.

**Yolanda:** I was adopted. I hated my adopted parents. I did everything horrible to them because they took me from my mom. They were rageful.

**Christine:** I don't know [where I learned to express rage]. My mom and dad never cursed. My anger started when my dad died, and when my mom got a new man. I was angry.

#### *Things that Can Cause Women to Feel Rage as an Adult*

When women were asked about reasons that would or have led them to feel rage, responses were generally provided quickly, with little hesitation. It seems that there are certain situations that may instinctively evoke feelings of rage. It was interesting to listen to the different circumstance that reflected women feeling justified in their rage, as well as the circumstances that did not.

#### *Protection of Self and Loved Ones*

Among the 37 participants, nearly two thirds of the women discussed experiencing rage that is a result of either self-defense or for the protection of loved ones, particularly children and parents. From the 22 women who described such reasons, however, there was some variation; some participants described past incidents when rage erupted due to the reasons provided, and others described rage they anticipated experiencing if such circumstances would occur. Among the 22 participants mentioned, 11 had discussed both scenarios of self-defense and protection of loved ones as eliciting rage. For example:

**Christine:** When I'm angry, I know when to stop. But, if something happened, like when he [husband] was attacking my 4-year-old daughter on the couch—he said he thought it was me—I got in a rage and choked him. I could feel the rage then. He beat me up...In the beginning when I first got angry, then the anger changed into rage, and I was afraid of him if I would go out, like for personal errands or food shopping, I got in too deep and was afraid to go out. My daughter was 4-years-old and he punched her in the face. I was neglecting myself and my newborn and I feared him. My rage came in when I started thinking if he might hurt me. He put a gun to my head. I knew if he dropped the gun I'd injure him. He dropped the gun and I shot him. I grazed his leg and he ran out. It was a suicidal event.

**Peggy:** I would feel rage if somebody hurts one of my kids, or if my husband cheats on me. Or to protect my dad—for protection of those I love. That's how I felt with the lady I attacked—she was the girlfriend of my dad. There was a bottle that she threw at my dad. It missed him, but it almost hit him. I surprised myself. I was sitting down and all of a sudden I got up, walked towards her, I grabbed her and started hitting her...I remember thinking, "I'm going to fuck that bitch up!"

**Olivia:** I have felt rage in self-defense and protecting my children.

**Tonya:** I have four boys. I would be in a rage if someone hurt one of my children. I would also feel rage if someone is trying to harm me. I can be angry at someone for a long time, but once they hit me, I explode. Someone putting their hands on me is a trigger for rage. Just from my father putting his hands on my mom, it makes me feel rage. I don't have the same level of rage inside, only when I can't defend myself. I go to anger management. For the last 13 months, [I have] no anger.

Five other women cited feeling rage specifically from just feeling the need to protect loved ones who are in danger, without discussing rage from self-defense. Some examples include:

**Donna:** There's a point if a person keeps coming at me. This girl came to my house screaming and yelling at my mom. I pushed her down the step and I kept swinging and I'm on top of her. It took three men to get me off. I blacked out and could not get off her myself. When the three men got her off me, I was breathing heavy. She was disrespecting my mom. I did it in defense of my mom.

**Ursala:** I would experience rage out of protection for my kids.

**Ellen:** I attempted murder. His [husband] sister took my son at 3-weeks-old. I called the cops and I said my sister-in-law stole my child. I was really upset, but knew that my son's father would take care of my son and not hurt him. Later, at a party, my sister-in-law tried to snatch my other daughter and I used a knife on her. I had had it with her and wasn't about to let her take my other child. She pressed charges. I blanked out. When my sister-in-law took my daughter, my new boyfriend said, "Don't." I knew that I could not fight her without getting in trouble because she was still a minor—she was only 16-years-old. But I didn't care. I got her and cut her vein. She went to the hospital. I remember that I saw blood, but I don't remember stabbing her. I called the cops and left the scene with my boyfriend and jumped into another car and saw the crime and the cops. I got in trouble one month later. When I saw her at trial and saw her arm and it was bad. I blanked out. I didn't remember stabbing her as much as I did. I have anger issues. I take medicine.

Unlike the previous participants who identified rage when protecting loved one, four additional women cited reasons for just self-defense as the sole or primary reason that rage would take over. Some examples include:

**Honey:** Tears come first, but it's nothing to do with sadness. It's anger. It's just a release. I am trying to stop someone from hurting me. I try to stop myself, but sometimes I can't. I have come close to killing someone.

**Sarah:** I feel rage from abuse, when someone's hitting me. During the abuse I get real weak and worn out. He nit-picks, pick and pick. I curse. He used to hit me. He'd use guns to scare me.

Nancy, however, discussed feeling rage when she feels unable to protect her own belongings, as opposed to her own life. For example:

**Nancy:** My rage really comes out when someone steals from me. My teeth grit and the whole thing. I thought about that since we talked.

### *Emotional Pain and Abuse*

Nearly half of the women, 18 participants, specifically discussed types of emotional pain and/or abuse that occur within their intimate relationships that precedes rage. Many women had recounted multiple forms of abuse within their relationships that would trigger them into rage. The most common illustrations included scenarios of emotional pain that involved forms of verbal and emotional abuse. Some examples include:

**Brenda:** All the mental abuse [from husband] is what caused my rage. At first I wouldn't tell him how I really felt because I was afraid. After six years of marriage I told him that I didn't love him anymore. I started to make more money than him. He would play mind games on me. The marriage just got worse... It's that person that constantly keeps doing

it [mental abuse] that is where the focus of rage is—being ignored and doing things to me; driving me to a point where I will cuss you out, treat you nastily—I don't like to be at that point. That's when I say, "fuck it," and get mad.

**Fran:** I have been angry most my life. I had three children and never felt like I was good enough. My husband felt like my fourth child. I started drinking, doing drugs, went to bars, then I would stay at someone's house. [When I got into rage] he [husband] provoked me with verbal abuse. I started going out more and he didn't like it. He was constantly nagging at me. Then I exploded. I couldn't take it anymore...He hurts me when he calls me a whore. I don't know why he controls me like that. Plain hate drove me to it...I wanted to take a knife in his gut. I was down. I did that too much. He wanted my life and now it will cost me more. He is going to wait for the house. He turned me into this. I have court next Friday.

**Kelly:** [I feel rage when] I'm being taken advantage of, not appreciated, or if someone is trying to belittle me. If he [partner] drank, he would mess with me. He would verbally assault me. I would hit him with something. It wears you down.

**Pricilla:** I felt fear while I did it [attacked partner]. Afterwards I cried. He is not a violent man. He is just verbally abusive....He called me a "fuckin' junkie." It made me feel rage. He also called me "a piece of dirt" and "garbage."

Some other relational examples women described involved experiences related to sexual or physical abuse, such as:

**Wanda:** When my boyfriend yells at me, gets smart with me [I feel rage]. Most of my rage is toward my boyfriend when he hits me.

**Isabelle:** Sexual things would happen when I was married. It reminded me of my father.

I have rage toward my mom also.

*Painful Memories Triggered*

More than half the participants discussed painful memories from their past that occur when feelings of rage are triggered in the present. Among the 21 women who identified such memories, 15 women specifically thought of distressing memories involving their parents or caretakers; six women recalled memories dealing with their mothers, and nine women recalled memories dealing with their father figures. Some examples of women recalling memories of their mothers include:

**Anita:** When I'm mad at a man I think of the time my mom abused me. When she abused me I felt bad. I want to fight when I'm mad. When I was stabbing him [ex-boyfriend] I was really angry at my mom because she was standing there and not jumping in to help me. The rage I feel about other people is really rage towards my mom. I've been abused all my life.

**Perline:** [During moments of rage] I think of my mom. They were the same feelings when I was betrayed by my husband. I told her [mom] she did not protect me when I was young. You expect someone to be there.

**Ursala:** [When I feel rage towards my partner] I sometimes think of my mom. My mom left me with the uncle and she went gambling. I was scared of him. He said he would cut me if I told my mom. My brother found him doing it to me [rape] and told my mom. She put him in jail. The abuser drank and I don't trust anyone around my daughter.

Some examples of women recalling painful memories of their father figures during rage include:

**Gia Simone:** I love my father, but he doesn't love me and doesn't talk to me. When I am in a relationship and get hurt, I go after him [boyfriend] and it reminds me of my father.

**Honey:** I was using drugs at 12-years-old. I was sexually abused by my father. I tried to kill him. He scared me. He said he would slice my throat and her's [mom] if I told my mom he was abusing me. I had a lot of fear. When I'm with my partner, I see my father's face, but the rage is directed toward my partner. I keep it up and argue. I am here and we are not together now, but he still tries to run my life. He reminded me of the threats, the same as my dad. I said to him before, "You remind me of my father." [When I'm attacking him] I wanted to kill him just like my dad. When I looked at my husband, I think about my father.

**Donna:** When my boyfriends would act like my father it triggers rage.

More than a quarter of the participants, 10 women, discussed having specific memories related to past sexual abuse while feeling rage in present relationships. Some of the childhood perpetrators ranged from father figures, to other family members, to boyfriends, to strangers. Examples of this include:

**Bonita:** My boyfriend triggers somebody from the past—my brother. He raped me when I was 7. The smell of alcohol on my partner's breath triggers rage. I re-live the rape moment. If my partner has alcohol on his breath and comes toward me, it's my brother. If a man comes towards me sober, it's my father.

**Patrice:** My stepfather would sneak in my room when I was 10-years-old. I was living with my stepfather. They (mom and stepfather) were split up. At 13 or 14 he would touch me down there. He took me upstairs and raped me...He tried to touch my friends...He told my mom he raped me after my sister died, but he didn't tell her the real story. My mom doesn't know. I feel that she should...When I have rage towards a partner, I think of him.

**Lyn Bebe:** I have rage towards my intimate partner. I was angry but could not do anything about it... Because I'm a woman, I feel like I'm a second-class citizen. I was raped. They held a gun to my head. If I would see them today, I would feel rage toward them. Rape affected my whole life. This is the first I've talked about it. I am 49-years-old. If I had told my mom, I was afraid that she would have blamed me. I was put in a home because of truancy when I was a kid. When I was there, there was a girl that had a skin condition and was dark and crusty. I was made to scrub her skin until it bled. I think about that even now. That makes me feel rage. Worse things happened in Westin Hills. A deputy did oral sex on me. I was told to do what I was told to do. That makes me feel rage.

#### *Rage Expressed Towards Intimate Partners*

Expressions of rage varied in actions taken, ranging from moderate to severe. Among the 37 participants who self-identified as having rage towards an intimate partner, four women disclosed having killed their partners as a result of their rage. The other participants described inflicting a wide range of injuries. Some of these incidents were reported to the police, and others were not. Although this prison was a medium-security prison for women, those who had been arrested for homicide were waiting to be sentenced.

#### *Means of Expressing Rage*

When each of the 37 women had described their acts of rage expressed towards their intimate partners, five predominant forms of rage were acted out. Sometimes women described multiple methods for expressing rage in the same incident. The most common acts of rage included: hand-to-hand combat fighting, using knives, using an object to hit one's partner, using a gun, and various acts of destruction. Table 4.1 depicts these acts of rage:

Table 4.1 Acts of Rage

<i>Hand-to-Hand Combat</i>	<i>Involving Knives</i>	<i>Various Objects</i>	<i>Involving Guns</i>	<i>Acts of Destruction</i>	Total
13	9	9	2	4	37

*Hand-to-hand combat fighting.* The most common means of rage, described by 13 women, was expressed through a physical altercation, where the women had described physically striking or kicking their partners. Some examples that women offered included:

**Donna:** I remember at my graduation that my boyfriend wouldn't allow me to dance with anyone. I couldn't be in the bathroom for five minutes. His father and my father came out when they heard us fighting out back. My boyfriend even drove me to school and he got jealous if I talked to my cousins. Because of my dad, I was scared. The neighborhood heard us yelling. It was so loud—my body was enraged, and I acted out with rage and his father separated us. I went inside, acted out rage. He choked me on many occasions. First, I started swinging at him. I kicked him in the face.

**Valerie:** I get mad enough to hit him, kick him down the stairs. It's something I need to work on. I kicked my boyfriend down 13 steps. [As he was going down the stairs] I was crying. I wanted to say, "I'm sorry."

**Ellie May:** It was Christmas time and I was 17-years-old. I met my first boyfriend. I was pregnant. We had an argument. He got drunk. We were cleaning. He knocked at the door. I was six months pregnant. He was beating me up, so I slammed the door on his foot. He came in and chased me around the table. I covered myself. He kicked and kicked me. I screamed for my dad and brother. My boyfriend was drinking and my dad hit him. I wanted him to hurt him. My brother held him and I hit him in rage. Then I lost the baby...I wanted to kill him!

Among these 13 described altercations, three women had told of biting their partners. Examples of this include:

**Brenda:** He wouldn't open the door, so I pushed the door open, he had the washer machine and metal cabinet over the door so I couldn't get in. He came down the steps with a tire iron. I told him I was not in the mood to fight and told him to leave. He took the tire iron to hit my feet. I was not in the mood to fight. I asked him if that made him feel like a man by hitting me, so we started fighting. I ran outside. I bit his finger almost off. Blood was all over my shirt. The police came. My head started burning because he hit me in the back of the head with the tire iron. I went to the hospital. Something about him locking me out of the house—my house—that I felt like killing him. I was full of rage.

**Sarah:** He (husband) had hit me in the face. His thumb went into my mouth. I bit it off. Then he stopped. I felt he got what he deserved.

**Honey:** I would want to work it out but the rage got so bad one time, I bit him and spit the flesh back at him....He taught me how to fight. I would run after him. I would go in the car and smash my car into his car. He would call me on the phone. He was late. He was cursing and said, "I will kick your ass."

*Using knives.* The next most common form of expressing rage was using knives. Nine women had described incidents of when they had tried to stab their partners. Some examples when women used knives include:

**Onessa:** I'll attack him first if he gets on my nerves. I'll smack him first. I keep a gun and a knife. I used it [knife] on him during rage. I was going out to get high and my husband stopped me. I got angry and lashed out on him with a knife. I called the police

and told them that he had the knife, when I really did. The cops chased him and beat him up. He was thrown in jail because he had a bench warrant. I felt bad about lying. I had to bail him out.

**Mary:** I don't remember picking up the knife. I remember being in the hallways with the knife. He went for my hand, then I saw red. The police were there. Everything is blurred. Maybe I saw blood or just red...A stab to the shoulder and he was dead, the cops said. I am standing at murder in the first degree. Pennsylvania does not carry self-defense. In Court, I got involuntary manslaughter. They had wanted to use Battered Women's Syndrome, but the judge increased it to first-degree murder. I'm 47-years-old. There's no difference for me. Involuntary manslaughter is 40 years. First-degree is life. Either way I'm never getting out of here.

**Penny:** I was driving in the car with my husband. He said to stay home. I was in the car. I stabbed him in the shoulder while driving and it was bleeding. I don't remember what happened for about 15 minutes.

*Using various objects.* The third category, using various objects to hurt one's partner, was equal to the amount of women who used knives on their partners. Nine additional women used various objects to hurt their partners during rage. Some examples offered include:

**Ellen:** I was beaten by my first husband. I was scared and hurt. When he left, I kicked him down three flights of steps. I was in a rage. I hit him in the head with a bat...I wanted to kill him. I wasn't caring. I wanted him to feel my fear.

**Gail:** When he would be out for three days and wouldn't come home, I would get full of rage just waiting for him to return. I kept thinking that I was gonna kill him when he finally came back. That's when I'd start drinking. I would flip out. I would punch him

when he would come home. When he'd finally come home, he'd ignore me. That got me so mad! I finally became so enraged that I hit him with a bat. He hit me back with the bat and beat my ass.

**Bonita:** I threw the ashtray at him. Then we got into a fistfight. I wanted to see blood. I wanted to play in his blood.

**Nancy:** It was the kids' father. I was at church too long. He got mad, pushed my face. I picked up the iron and hit him and cut him with it. I was pregnant and he spit on me and hit me in my bed.

*Using guns.* The fourth category included two women who had described using a gun on their partners during rage. Both Christine and Dee Dee explained:

**Christine:** I did not feel anything at the time. I remember thinking to myself that if he puts the gun down, I was gonna shoot him. I knew it was gonna either be him or me that died. And it wasn't going to be me. I wasn't scared. When I got the gun he ran up the stairs and I shot him in his leg.

**Dee Dee:** I shot him [husband]. He did not listen to a word I said...I thought, you brought in on yourself! [He died]

*Acts of destruction.* Finally, there were four women whose act of rage towards their partners did not fit into any of the categories previously described. Their experience of rage involved some type of destruction, either to a car or to oneself, or both. For example:

**Patrice:** I had wanted to borrow the car and my husband did something to the brakes. He locked the car up. I took his crutches and smashed the windows. My mom smacked me for doing it...[At the time I thought] just hit him. I wanted to slap him. I felt relief when I attacked him.

**Cassandra:** We were in the car. I wanted him to drive me to get drugs. I said, “I will put my head through the windshield if you don’t take me.” He said, “Go ahead.” I did and cracked it. He smacked me in my mouth. He split my lip wide open. Blood was everywhere. I got a bat in the backseat. I smashed the whole car...[As I was smashing the windows] I felt happy, scared, and hurt. I wanted to kill him in that moment. I ran into the alley after smashing the car. He beat me up.

**Jackie:** I was trying to leave for work. I knew that I was either going to kill him or he would kill me. I told him to stay out of the house and I would go to work. He followed me and got me in a bar and got me with a bottle. I wound up getting 15 stitches in my head. So I set a car on fire with him in it. I lit a rag and threw it in the car. I also tried to put rat poison in the sugar. He just got really sick. He didn’t die.

**Yolanda:** I did everything for my boyfriend while he was in jail. I took care of his house and bills. When he got out, he didn’t want to be with me. I felt rejected. Then I got mad. He threw me down the steps at one other time. I could not believe it. He hurt me then I went on a self-destruction binge. I didn’t hit my partner, though. I thought about what he said. He locked his house, changed the locks. That’s when I went on drugs. I was raged. I got six felony charges after I left his house in four weeks. The rage I felt towards him I took out on other people.

### *Motivations for Rage*

After listening to the 37 women discuss their experiences of rage towards their intimate partners, it became apparent that not all acts of rage stemmed from the same motives. These participants fell into two separate categories for what motivated their experience of rage towards their partners. The first group of participants had described their acts of rage as a form of self-

defense, while the second group of women identified themselves as the initiator of violence when they experienced rage.

*Acting in self-defense.* Almost half of the participants, 17 women, had described their rage as provoked, as they responded in self-defense to their partners. Many of these women described the interactions they had with their partners prior to their rage. For example, Christine described the general pattern in her relationship with her boyfriend that caused rage:

**Christine:** I always hit him in self-defense. As soon as I'd see him, I'd know—I'd feel fear. At a split second after anger from verbal abuse, you can decide if he hits me I'll hit him back and I'll go with him in rage. My rage parallels his rage. Everyday he (boyfriend) was using drugs. Two days he'd come home angry and he'd take it out on me.

Other women also described their experiences of self-defense that caused their rage. Some examples include:

**Ellen:** Yes, I felt fear first. I thought I was gonna die. I blanked out because I was scared for my life and that he was raged. I knew my boyfriend and he always acted like he cared, but I never saw him act that way before...I then felt rage. He had put the gun away, so I knew the children were safe. I wanted to kill him. I just flipped once he put the gun away. I was crying and beating him with a lamp. He left....He came back 30 minutes later. I was stunned and the kids were running around scared. I got up, I paced. I called the kids' father and he said he'd come over. He took them out of the house because of the gun. Forty-five minutes passed, and my boyfriend was outside of my house. I never wanted him [boyfriend] to go to jail, but I called the cops and they took him. He left and came back in the middle of the night. I said, "You can't be here." I dropped the report and I

changed the gun story so he wouldn't have to go to jail. I let it go. I dropped the charges... I always hit him in self-defense, never first.

**Honey:** I grabbed a butcher knife and duck taped it around my hand, because he used to always take the knife away from me. This way he couldn't. I knew that if he would hit me, we would both die that day. He broke my door down. My hand was behind my back with the knife. He was cursing at me, "Bitch!" My father called me that—it was a trigger. He knew I had something behind my back and kept asking me what I had. I told him not to worry about it. I said, "Come on, hit me, because you and me are going to die today." He saw the knife. He said, "Calm down, you are going crazy." And he left when he saw the knife. He would not get near me. He said, "Damn it, I can't believe that I did this to you! I'm leaving." Since that day he left, I went to Costa Rica. I was pregnant. I said to him, "You can have everything." He gave me a plane ticket to Costa Rica. He knew I needed to get out of here and be with my family.

**Mary:** He was going to jail for 20 years and I got him out of jail. The first night home, he started up again...He bent my arm up my back and I had bandages on—I was burned. I did not have a place to live, from a fan that caught on fire. It's funny how when I woke up he wasn't there. Some people have suggested that he set it on fire, but the report said it was electrical. I've skin grafts from it....He had broke my hand in three places before. He broke my arm. I still stayed....When I sleep, he would choke me until I passed out. He came over with knives at night...He said he was going to throw me down the stairs. He would put knives in the bedroom. That night he grabbed it from me. I knew if he got his hands on me, he was going to throw me down the stairs. He had already threatened me that he was going to....I don't remember picking up the knife. I remember being in the

hallways with the knife. He went for my hand, and then I saw red. The police were there. Everything is blurred. Maybe I saw blood or just red... I only ever hit my partner in self-defense.

**Olivia:** He hit me in my sleep. We were wrestling in bed until I got out of bed and grabbed the knife and cut his penis. I told him to stop because he wouldn't like the other side of me. I took his penis and balls and cut them off with a knife and the penis was cut off. It was just dangling there in my hand. As I cut him, the cops were at the door. I was in a rage and didn't care...I've never attacked him first.

**Nancy:** I've never attacked my boyfriend first. If he hit me first, I'd hit him back, but not first.

**Tonya:** Last year we had a fight, first fight ever. He choked me. I could not breathe. I thought he was going to kill me. I was angry. I did one punch, in the face, and I ran. I later found him on the floor upstairs. At first I thought he was passed out drunk. When I saw his hands were looking like he had a stroke I called the ambulance. He had gone into a coma and went brain dead. He died...I have only ever hit him in self-defense.

**Brenda:** We were arguing over a \$50 bill. I didn't have any change. My husband wanted lunch money. He was asleep in the bed, so I left a note for him—that there was no change. He started to hit me with a shovel. He threw me against the wall, pushing me against the wall. When he went upstairs, I remember him trying to lock the door. Next thing I remember, I had two butcher knives in my hand. I didn't remember anything. I kicked the door off the hinges. I was going to do to him what he did to me. When he fell asleep, I got all the cleaning stuff from under the sink to throw on him. He woke up and

so I hid the solutions. I then put a rope around his hands and neck and started choking him so he would know what it was like.

*Initiating the violence.* Unlike the women whose rage was provoked in self-defense, slightly more than half of participants, 20 women, had described rage-filled experiences when they initiated violence with their partners. These women provided various reasons for what caused their violent acts of rage. Lyn Bebe, for example, described her incident of rage where she attacked her partner, though her memory is diminished:

**Lyn Bebe:** In the most recent incident, I started hitting him and he was holding my hands to make me stop. I don't remember it, but I'm sure I was angry. The door was off the hinges. He said I got angry and started hitting him. He grabbed my arms and I jerked away and went into the hinges. I got nerve damage. He said I went crazy and he never saw me like that before. I felt sore.

Similar to Lyn Bebe's account, other women describe their experiences:

**Peggy:** I was on the ground and he busted my lip. I went to my girlfriend's house. He said, "Tell her to come out," and he beat me more. He took me to the hospital and said not to tell the hospital it was him. I had a broken rib. I still care about him. When he wanted me to go back with, I looked at the picture when he beat me up to remind me of what he did. After the hospital, he took me home and he made love to me. One week later, I saw the same look on his face, like he was going to hit me. I had fear and rage...I went behind him. The knife went to his shoulder. I tried to go for the heart and got the shoulder instead. He pushed me and left. I got a knife and went to my Sister's. My sister said, "I'll talk to the cops. Don't worry. You have pictures from the hospital when he beat

you up.” I wanted to kill him before he got me. At the time, I felt good about the stabbing.

**Rhonda:** I attacked him first. I used boiling water. He was arguing. I threw the water on him. I cut his clothes. I thought I would like to bash his head in with a hammer. I got locked up before I killed him. He was cheating on me. He was a sneak. I got a baseball bat and hit him on the head and I broke the bat in two...I have initiated attacks against him first. My tolerance level is low. Anything I could pick up or punch him with I'd use to inflict pain.

**Annabeth:** I have attacked my partner first. When we're arguing and I don't want to hear anymore. I just get all hyped up and hit him first.

**Yolanda:** I have attacked my partner first—if I think he's cheating on me. I've used both my fists and a weapon.

Some women who described initiating violence towards their partners, however, also discussed first perceiving their partner intending to hurt them. For example:

**Valerie:** My boyfriend doesn't put his hands on me until I hurt him enough first. I do it because I'm afraid he's going to hit me first. I think of my dad when my boyfriend comes towards me because I think he's gonna hit me, so I hit him first...I have attacked him first during a verbal argument. I scratched him and he still has scars.

**Dee Dee:** I have attacked partners first when I see they are coming towards me. I've also attacked them without them coming towards me...I'll use whatever's available to use, like my fists or weapons.

**Bonita:** I attack him first if he comes over to me and I think he is going to attack me. I've attacked other partners in the past first – because they didn't want to argue with me, so I

had to provoke them.

### *Thoughts and Feelings after Experience of Rage*

Among the 37 participants, 90% recalled their thoughts and feelings after their experience of rage towards their intimate partner. From these 33 women, there were four primary emotional reactions that followed their episode of rage: regret, ambivalence, satisfaction, and disappointment. These reactions are depicted in Table 4.2:

Table 4.2

Reactions Following Rage towards Intimate Partner

<i>Regret</i>	<i>Ambivalence</i>	<i>Satisfaction</i>	<i>Disappointment</i>	<i>No Response</i>	<i>Total</i>
13	11	6	3	4	37

*Feelings related to regret.* More than a third of the women discussed having negative thoughts and feelings following their episode of rage. Some common emotions these 13 women described included feeling “bad,” “guilty,” and “remorse.” Both Penny and Valerie describe the guilt they felt following their rage:

**Penny:** [After stabbing him] I cried and I felt guilty. I was mad with myself for not being in control.

**Valerie:** [As he is going down the steps] I was crying. I wanted to say, “I’m sorry.” I felt bad about myself. He didn’t mean to kick me, but I rolled over and he felt so bad when he kick me ‘cuz I was five months pregnant.

Both Mary and Tonya’s rage had actually killed their partners. They described their thoughts and feelings following their rage:

**Mary:** I do, yes [feel rage]. God has forgiven me. My life was taken away from me again. I first lost it because I stayed with him in an abusive relationship for 10 years. Now

I'm in here (prison) for who knows how long. In spite of him being dead, I have feelings for him and I had feelings for his family.... I didn't feel good after the stabbing. I tried to stop his bleeding. Then they took me away. The officer said, "I don't know where you are going." I am angry about the punishment, which is life or 40 years...I would do anything to bring him back...Why did God let it happen? If I could think, evil took over.

**Tonya:** I am more angry with myself than angry with him. I should have left him before. Then none of this would have happened. It was because he started to drink again. In two months he changed. I often feel I am in a nightmare and can't believe this all happened. I was saving money to leave, but did not do it quick enough...Afterwards, initially I was still angry and then calmed down. If he had come after me again, I was going to hit him again. When I found him laying for six hours I called the paramedics, then I felt bad when I found out it was from me. I then felt guilty...I wish he was still alive. I feel like I turned into someone else. It is not me. I had to defend myself. He hit the carpet, rug burns on his back, bruises on his body.

*Feeling ambivalent.* More than a quarter of the participants, 11 women, had described ambivalent thoughts and feelings following their experience of rage. This ambivalence seems to reflect the complexity of both positive and negative reactions that often accompanies rage.

Hanna Beth and Rhonda, for example, describe the process they each had gone through following an experience of rage:

**Hanna Beth:** Afterwards I felt sad and guilty. I felt good and bad about myself afterwards. I felt good because I got the anger out of me; my stress was relieved. I felt bad because I wrecked my house.

**Rhonda:** [After I hit him with the club] I felt he got what he deserved. I still hated him. But I lost respect for myself. I felt bad.

Some other women describe how time will change their emotions and perspectives:

**Ellen:** Fighting with him, I feel justice was done. But after a while, I don't feel good and I'll make up. I can't keep going through with this. The old situation doesn't work okay. It is not all right and doing this isn't worth it. You can get a gun anytime, so I am scared he might get a gun another time. He was talking to me and he said nothing.

**Honey:** Afterwards, I feel relief. I feel good about myself. It is a relief. Two days later, I feel bad. I want to sit down and talk. Then I'll go get high and that makes me feel better.

**Ellie May:** When I hit him, I felt good. Later I felt bad, then guilty. I felt bad for him afterwards.

**Peggy:** At the time [of the stabbing] I felt good. Afterwards I felt bad. I felt guilty.

Sarah described how her rage served to have her partner to stop hitting her and her mixed emotions about it:

**Sarah:** [After I bit his thumb off] he stopped hitting me. I felt real bad and then I felt guilty. I still love him! When he isn't on drugs he is good to me.

*Feeling satisfied.* Unlike the women who described feeling badly following their experience of rage, six women had described feeling satisfied and justified in their actions.

Christine and Olivia, for example, discussed feeling that their partners got what they deserved:

**Christine:** [When I shot the gun at him] I said to myself, "That son of a bitch, I'm gonna kill him!" I ran after him and got the gun. I felt good. Man, I finally got him. I thought that he got what he deserved.

**Olivia:** Afterwards I felt good....He did not press charges for cutting his penis when the

cops came. He knew that he was wrong for what he did. I saw him a few times after that.

He now stays away. So, justice was served. I have someone I love and we get along good.

Dee Dee described feeling similarly after she killed her partner:

**Dee Dee:** After I killed him, I felt relief.

*Disappointment.* There were three women, however, who stood out from the rest of the participants. These women had described feeling disappointed or let down for not being able to do more damage towards their partners. There was a shared feeling of wanting more to be done, as if their intentions were incomplete. For example:

**Bonita:** [After fighting my partner] I wanted to see more blood. I wasn't satisfied. I didn't feel guilty afterwards. [I remember I felt] stupid afterwards. I remember him getting the best of me, so I ripped up his clothes...I never got calm. I was on edge. I was never comfortable. It was a trust issue. When someone cheats on you, you, you never trust again.

**Donna:** I feel immature and take care of rage in a different way now. Then I thought, I should have been more severe in beating up the person. I feel let down. Physically I am feeling worn-out after a fight. It is still itching in my brain. I am still thinking. I want to finish more fighting. After fighting, I sit down and breathe or talk to God. Prayer helps very much.

**Feliz Ada:** After I hit him, I wanted more. He kept saying stuff. Everywhere he went he threatened to kill me and uses my son against me. Knowing the consequences made me stop and I didn't want to go to prison for the rest of my life if I killed him and not see my son.

### *Perceptions of How Race, Class, and Gender Impact Feeling Rage*

According to the Bureau of Justice (1994), women who were incarcerated in State prisons in 1991 were 46% Black, 36.2% Caucasian, 14.2% Hispanic, with the remaining 3.6% accounting for other ethnicities. The majority of women had reported some high school education (45.8%). Only 5.9% of women had reported being married and not separated, though most women, 45.1%, had reported never being married. The remaining women reported being widowed, divorced, or separated. The National Women's Law Center (1994) had reported that incarcerated women are overwhelmingly poor with 74% being unemployed prior to incarceration.

Participants were asked how they perceived the contextual factors of race, culture/ethnicity, class, and gender, as contributing to any feelings of rage. It seemed interesting that responses pertaining to women's social location often failed to reflect larger macro issues; comments revealed little insight into understanding how issues of marginalization have contributed to their experiences of rage. For most, questions surrounding contextual factors were not pondered long, if at all, even with further probing during the interviews. Answers were not pensively detailed or lengthy, unlike other areas discussed within the interviews. This may reflect a lack of familiarity in both consideration and discussion among peers and professionals.

### *Perceptions towards Race and Ethnicity*

Among the 37 interviews, nearly 90% had briefly revealed their perceptions towards the interaction of race and/or ethnicity with rage. From these 33 women, 25 were convinced that race and/or culture were unrelated to any rage they have felt. Anita and Lyn Bebe, two African American women, for example, describe themselves as immune to the effects of racism within society:

**Anita:** I'm not affected by culture. There's no difference. People are racists, but it doesn't bother me. Some people just don't get over it and they just show their ignorance.

**Lyn Bebe:** [Race] has nothing to do with it. People are people. I don't worry about what people think. I haven't experienced any [racism].

Kelly, another African American woman, believed that because she had a college degree, she had escaped feeling any rage resulting from racism:

**Kelly:** I don't think any racism has contributed to feelings of rage...I have a college degree. I have no pressure regarding money.

Patrice shared similar perceptions to Kelly regarding not experiencing any effects from her ethnicity:

**Patrice:** I'm Hispanic, Irish and German. I learned to speak Spanish from a relative. But ethnicity or race doesn't matter—it's just how you are [if you have rage]. No, I haven't [experienced any prejudice]... Not having money really didn't add to rage, either.

Other women had also briefly denied any connection to their race and/or ethnicity with their feelings of rage, such as:

**Gia Simone:** Being Spanish I don't think contributes to my rage.

**Gail:** I don't think it [race or culture] has influenced me. I'm Irish, German and Italian.

**Donna:** It [my race and ethnicity] hasn't...my dad is Cherokee and Irish. Skin color is not a problem.

**Jackie:** [Being African American] doesn't have anything to do with it [rage].

**Hanna Beth:** My ethnicity is Irish, Russian, and German. I don't think any of these have contributed to rage or from being a woman.

This was starkly contrasted from the eight women who had commented on some realization to having harder life obstacles based upon their race and/or ethnicity, and linked it to feelings of rage. For example, Ellie May discussed family rules based on ethnic influences that shaped her rage:

**Ellie May:** Being in an Italian family I was taught, “Don’t show anyone how you really feel.” I kept it in, until I reached a boiling point.

Dee Dee discussed prejudice she’s felt from her ethnicity and how she deals with it:

**Dee Dee:** There’s prejudice—I’m Jewish, but I just don’t tolerate it. It hurts me...[but] it hasn’t contributed to feeling rage.

Tonya and Onessa briefly discuss the combination of being both black and poor, and how it has affected their lives:

**Tonya:** Both economics and being a black woman have contributed to rage. There’s no men to love. We settle for less.

**Onessa:** Both having no money and being black has contributed to feeling rage. Being without a job—it’s hard to get jobs once you’re a criminal. Not having enough money makes me feel rage.

Only one woman, Feliz Ada, discussed religion, yet her comment suggests an intersection between race and religion:

**Feliz Ada:** Not being black, but being Muslim, contributes to rage. I get raged when people hurt me regarding my religion. They wanted to take off my Kimar.

### *Perceptions towards Class and Finances*

Approximately a quarter of the participants had denied their class and financial circumstances linked to any feelings of rage. From these nine women, comments were brief and

often combined with other contextual factors that were not perceived as linked to rage. Nancy, for example, was incarcerated for stealing money. The rage she described, however, pertained solely for her inability to be hired, but not in connection to possible racism of being an African American woman:

**Nancy:** I don't think it [racism] has added to rage. For my job, I live three blocks away from WaWa (a mini-mart) and they won't hire me. I'm in a rage. I'm a Domestic Engineer and getting a G.E.D. and also landscaping. I can do a lot of things! ... [I'm here for] \$3,500 stolen checks. I had a really good job at G.C.S. Co. There are 40 branches nationwide. I used the money for drugs. I was the only black person there. My son was across the street in daycare.

Similarly, Feliz Ada, an African American woman, did not connect any rage to her financial background, or any other contextual factors:

**Feliz Ada:** Not being black, lack of money, [nor] or being a woman, contributes to rage. Another woman, Christine, also did not believe her rage was related to her financial background. What seems interesting, however, is that although Christine had discussed her rage earlier in the interview, she denied having any feelings of anger. For her, it seems rage and anger are unrelated experiences:

**Christine:** There's no difference [regarding financial background and social class] with feeling rage. I have no problem earning money. I am not angry....Anger is anger.

In contrast to these nine women, an additional 13 participants had recognized and discussed how their lack of finances has led to feelings of rage. Some of these women had discussed the consequences they experienced as a result of not having enough money to make ends meet. Some women explain:

**Anita:** By not having nowhere to go—I had to move to a different house. I was on welfare. I couldn't hold an apartment. I was dragging my daughter to different places, which caused them, DHS, (Dept. of Human Services) to take my daughter away. That made me angry. I will start saving money to get my daughter back. Having harder life obstacles has affected my anger.

**Isabelle:** [I feel rage] because I don't have enough money to take care of my kids. I can't see too well and I can't drive and can't work. Therefore, I have less money. It makes me really mad that I don't have enough.

**Pricilla:** I had two jobs and my boyfriend broke my car. He was home for a month. I was angry because I wasn't appreciated....When I got out of [drug] treatment, I didn't even have food stamps. I still had to go see my probation officer. I got my son every other weekend. I had to pay \$450.00 a month for rent, pay for gas and electric. I was not appreciated. I had no medical insurance three months after out of treatment. I got two jobs through treatment and I had no insurance. When I was out of treatment, they cut off my medical insurance. Because of treatment, due to no insurance, I became incarcerated. It could have been avoided!

Jackie relayed an incident that happened to her during the terrorists' attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001. She described the confusion and chaos of that day and how it affected her life:

**Jackie:** I was working on September 11<sup>th</sup>. I could not get to work because of everything that happened that day. Everyone told me not to leave for work and to stay home because that's what they [the news] were saying to do. I think it was unprofessional that they fire me because I didn't come in. It's hard for a criminal to get a job. After that, there were no more jobs so I wound up having to do tricks [prostitute]. I never tricked before. I've gone

to school—I went to cosmetology school. March 24<sup>th</sup> would have been 4 years for me clean, but my case in here is “intent to deliver” [drugs]....Not having enough money makes me mad. I’m on drugs too because I don’t know where else to turn.

Valerie describes how she feels towards the inmates who have teased her for appearing to have more economically than many of the women on her unit:

**Valerie:** I’m not rich. The girls here on the block call me “front lawn girl” just because I live in the Northeast (Philadelphia) and have a lawn in front of my house. It makes me feel rage because they don’t know how much we struggle. We hardly make it. I was on welfare to survive and they call me that. I hate that!

#### *Perceptions towards Gender*

Approximately a quarter of the women did not perceive their gender being linked with their rage. Of those nine women, many had not distinguished the role of gender, but had discussed it among other contextual factors, none of which were linked to rage. Due to the brevity of responses, it appeared that little prior consideration had taken place to expound upon such responses: For example, some women stated:

**Sarah:** Cultural influences don’t matter [in having rage, nor] or being a woman.

**Annabeth:** No, being black or a woman hasn’t contributed [to rage].

**Bonita:** Being a woman hasn’t contributed to me feeling rage.

**Olivia:** No, being a woman hasn’t contributed [to rage]—thank God I’m a woman! Being Black or without money doesn’t add to my rage, either.

However, another quarter of the participants, 10 women, had discussed how they perceive their gender to impact their rage. Many of these participants seem to have reflected on

this contextual factor more than some others. Some women described how being a woman has affected the way that they manage their anger and rage:

**Brenda:** If I was a man, I wouldn't hit a woman. Women are supposed to be "seen and not heard." That rule has affected me a little, but at a certain point, it didn't do any good. I would try to hold it in. I tell my daughter not to hold things in but to talk about it. I had to learn the wrong way.

**Ellen:** I was reading a book about a woman in rage killing her husband. The wife gets a penalty, but the man got nothing. We [women] aren't supposed to be angry. That's a double standard. More for the women than the men. Men can beat us and don't have programs for women abuse...my boyfriend abused me. The laws in New Jersey, it takes an hour for a cop to get there for the violence the first time the boyfriend put his hands on me.

**Honey:** I think men have more privileges than women do. That makes me mad.

**Rhonda:** I wish I was a man. They have it easier. They use and abuse and don't have to answer to it. I was the woman being abused.

Conversely, Gail discusses how society's social mores concerning women and violence has impacted her:

**Gail:** Society has led me to see that a woman shouldn't be hitting—but women provoke men to hit them sometimes. Society gives a false impression that women aren't violent, but they are.

Some women discussed how the combination of being both poor and female has contributed to feelings of rage. For instance:

**Gia Simone:** Not having enough money contributes to rage—just because you don't have

enough. Also being a woman—I wish I were a boy because men take advantage of woman as in rape and molestation. I would hustle to make money [by] selling drugs. I would dress like a boy to keep them off me.

**Yolanda:** Lack of money contributes to feelings of rage. If I had money, I could get out of jail. Also, men always want to do stuff to women and you can't beat them off. They take advantage of you. I think because he's a man, he thinks he can do that [rape].

**Bonita:** Being Irish and German contribute to rage. Irish have a temper. Because my lack of money, I also feel rage—because I messed up my life, and when I go for a job, they will look at my past. They have control over me. It's not fair that my past should be held against me.

#### *How Women's Rage relates to the Criminal Justice System*

Considering the tremendous increase of women in prison, it is important to understand motivations associated with the crimes that are committed. Since the most common reason for women to be incarcerated is drug convictions (Forer, 1994), the complexities of substance abuse need to be further understood for more effective interventions. As the 1980s' national "War on Drugs" correctional policy shifted from treatment to punishment, less attention has been given to contextual factors that may have a hand in women becoming incarcerated.

#### *Illegal Actions Taken to Compensate for Not Having Enough Money*

Half of the 37 women interviewed described being arrested for crimes they committed to compensate for not having enough money, either for themselves or their children. Most of these crimes were motivated out of desperation, for some, it meant survival. There was awareness of limited options. For many, it seemed that their actions reflected trying to survive by choosing the lesser of the available evils. Nine women described being arrested for theft. For example:

**Donna:** I needed things for school. My mom said, "If I have the money for shirts, then

I'll give it to you." My mom has the money but she didn't give it to me. Burglary and possession were my charges on the second time back. The courts bailed me out; I was on the run. I am getting sentenced for the burglary. I have asked for probation, but I would rather stay here (prison).

**Annabeth:** My original charge is that I stole money. I've been in jail two times for robbery. I take what I can't get.

**Gail:** This is not the first time I'm here. I'm here this time for robbery and home invasion. I robbed a house for drugs. I never get money from my mother, or do a trick for money. It was the wrong house. It was the Captain of Narcotics' house.

Six women were arrested for selling drugs. Some described this as a means of supporting their children. For example, Ellen explained:

**Ellen:** I sold drugs because I must give the kids what they need....A job wasn't enough. I sold drugs to get more.

Jackie, who has been mentioned previously, was fired from her job due to the trauma of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, and not going to work. This event caused her to relapse and begin using drugs again. She was arrested on drug-charges:

**Jackie:** My case in here is "intent to deliver" [drugs]...I would make stuff and sell it. I would make fake drugs and sell it in bags—like I would crush vitamin B and put it into bags. Even though I'm an addict, I still thought it might slow down some of the traffic in the drug neighborhood—they should thank me.

Four other women were arrested for prostituting because they needed money. Wanda describes the rage she feels about having to prostitute:

**Wanda:** My original charge is for prostitution and obstructing traffic walking around.

Rage both led me here [prison] and to do it [prostitute]. I needed money for me and my kids. I felt rage when I had to do it [prostitute].

Rhonda and Cassandra both link past abuse to their current arrests of prostitution:

**Rhonda:** Before going to a foster home, there wasn't any money. Once I got in foster care, I learned how to manipulate people for money. My foster brother molested me—then I learned to manipulate him and thought that's what love was. I later used my body to make money [prostitution]. I'm here for a misdemeanor—prostitution charge.

**Cassandra:** I asked him [abuser] to do it [sexually molest her at 11-years-old] because he would give me money I could use for drugs. I'm here now for prostitution. When I prostitute, I try to punish myself. I think I deserve it. He is dead now. I feel anger towards my mom. She drank after my dad died. I was always in a bar. My mom was 39 and turned to the bottle.

### *The Role of Drugs—A Coping Strategy for Feelings of Rage*

Since the sample of women were drawn from a substance abuse treatment unit, it was not surprising that participants were highly inclined to discuss their past or current drug addictions. Daily attendance to support groups is required, both in collective unit meetings, as well as in small support groups. Discussing the triggers to their addictions is part of their recovery process. From the 37 women interviewed, only one woman denied being an addict, but discussed her codependency with addicted boyfriends. Two other women did not disclose what brought them into a prison treatment unit.

Almost 85% of those interviewed, 31 women, had gained insight into their cycle of addiction and discussed a link between their substance abuse and feelings of rage. Nearly all were able to discuss the function that drugs served in their lives. Some used drugs before feeling

rage, some used drugs afterwards, and others used drugs both prior and following an experience of rage. Four women discussed using drugs to prevent or avoid the feeling of rage that they were fighting against. Some examples include:

**Mary:** I definitely use drugs to escape feelings of rage. I go get high before I'll feel rage to escape it.

**Patrice:** I gotta be really, really mad to go off and kill someone physically. When I live with Gram, I have to deal with her. It's not my own home...I use drugs beforehand to prevent feelings of rage.

The most common drug pattern, described by 14 women, was using drugs to escape the feeling of rage after rage took over. Drugs were often used to help women calm down after they were feeling out of control. Some women explained:

**Ursala:** I always go out and use [drugs] because of my anger and rage. That's why I'm here [prison]...I use drugs after I feel rage—afterwards I'll get high. It helps calm me down.

**Gail:** When he [husband] would be out for three days and wouldn't come home—I'd get full of rage just waiting for him to return. I kept thinking that I was gonna kill him when he finally came back. That's when I'd start drinking...I would often use Xanax to calm myself down...Whenever I'd get angry, I'd leave and I would come to Philly and get high. Every single time I've ever come to Philly I always get in trouble. My drug of choice is pills first. I could go into my mom's drawer and get Xanax. I would use Xanax for a day or two to calm me down, but then when I would come down I would feel 10 times worse. When I'm on heroin, for a couple hours everything feels fine.

**Yolanda:** My partner hurt me and then I went on a self-destruction binge. I didn't hit him, though. I thought about what he said to me. He locked his house and changed the locks. That's when I went on drugs. I was raged—I got six felony charges after I left his house in the course of four weeks. The rage I felt towards him I took out on other people. I use drugs to escape feelings of rage, but really to escape feelings in general – anger, hurt, and rage. The drugs I've taken this time added to my rage. I'm scared of myself - I'm out of control.

Ten women discussed using drugs both before and after feeling rage, as two women from the 10 explained:

**Fran:** I use drugs to escape—before and after I feel rage. I use before because I'm feeling scared to death to go home. Getting high gives you the courage—whatever happens, happens. I use drugs after feeling rage when I wanna kill him [husband]. I'll go get high to get relaxed—he ain't worth it!

**Valerie:** I use drugs to escape feelings of rage. My stepfather is mean and doesn't work. I hide in my room and he gives me dirty looks. I have gotten high since I was with my stepfather. I definitely use drugs to escape rage—every time I get mad, I go get high—before, during, and after. It calms me down when I'm mad. I'll start shaking.

Only one woman in recovery explained how she intentionally did not use drugs when she feels rage. Tonya explained:

**Tonya:** I don't use drugs to escape feelings of rage—drugs enhance my feelings of rage, especially alcohol. I'm more ready to fight when I'm under the influence.

### *Aggression Questionnaire Summary*

The *Aggression Questionnaire* (AQ) is a brief instrument used to assess a person's level of anger and aggression. This was administered to 60 women from the OPTIONS unit; many of these women had also completed the Demographic Worksheet the day prior. Because this questionnaire was extended to all volunteers from this unit, findings served to create a general profile of women inmates' levels of anger and aggression. These findings were able to be used as a comparative group, since it was a general representation of the women from the unit, with the group of women who were later selected for in-depth interviews for experiencing rage towards their intimate partners.

Participants were given 34 items and asked to rate themselves, from 1 = "Not at all like me" to 5 = "Completely like me." Within this questionnaire are five subscales that specifically examine: (a) physical aggression, (b) verbal aggression, (c) anger, (d) hostility, and (e) indirect aggression. All scores are reported as T-scores that have been placed on a scale with a mean of 50 and a standard deviation of 10. Scores that range from 45T to 55T are considered average responses. Standardization is based on a sample of 2,138 individuals that range from age 9 to age 88, and norms are presented in three separate age categories (9 to 18, 19 to 39, and 40 to 88). The norms for the scales of Physical Aggression and Aggression are also separated by sex.

The descriptions for each of these scales come from Buss and Warren's (2000) *Aggression Questionnaire* manual. This manual also provides suggested follow-up activities, which are based on the clinical assessment and interpretation of the outcome scores. The AQ has been frequently used in correctional settings, as it helps document the needs for services and clinical intervention. Table 4.3 represents the mean scores and mode for the 60 women who had completed the *Aggression Questionnaire*.

Table 4.3

*Aggression Questionnaire Scores*

Scores	Total AQ (Overall)	Physical Aggression	Verbal Aggression	Anger	Hostility	Indirect Aggression
Mean	64 <i>T</i>	65 <i>T</i>	60 <i>T</i>	59 <i>T</i>	62 <i>T</i>	57 <i>T</i>
Mode	69 <i>T</i>	74 <i>T</i>	57 <i>T</i>	64 <i>T</i>	57 <i>T</i>	60 <i>T</i>

Note. AQ Score ranges are: Very Low :<, =29*T*; Low: 30*T*-39*T*; Low Average: 40*T*- 44*T*; Average: 45*T*-55*T*; High Average: 56*T*-59*T*; High: 60*T*-69*T*; Very High: >, = 70*T*. Higher scores reflect relatively higher inclinations of anger and aggression, and lower scores indicate fewer levels of these attributes.

*AQ Total Score*

The AQ Total Score is derived from answers given to the 34 AQ items. Based on these responses, this score is a composite of the individual’s propensity towards anger and aggression reported by the participant. The AQ total score most closely correlates with the two subscales that measures physical aggression and anger.

*Mean score.* The average overall aggression score for these women was 64*T*. This is considered high. The remaining scales that measure various forms of aggression are congruent with this AQ total score. High overall scores reflect two common patterns: there are intense, but few, episodes of anger and aggression, or there are many episodes of anger and aggression that achieve less intensity.

*Mode.* The most occurring score among the five scales for all the participants was 69*T*. This score is considered high. Similar to the total mean score, this score reflects congruence with the modes for the individual subscales.

*Physical Aggression*

This subscale includes items that focus on the physical force that the inmates would generally take when expressing anger or aggression. High scores on this scale suggest difficulty in maintaining one’s impulses towards physical aggression. Low scores indicate a reluctance to

engage in aggressive behaviors, or a decision not to reveal honest answers when giving responses to these particular responses.

*Mean score.* The average physical aggression score from the women who answered this questionnaire was 65T, which is considered high. This may serve as bravado to appear “tough,” as well as indicate an inability to manage urges of lashing out aggressively. Substance abuse may be an additional problem.

*Mode.* The most occurring score for the physical aggression measurement was 74T, which is considered very high. This suggests that most women are not just pretending to have a “tough” exterior, but they also may have great difficulty controlling their propensity toward violence and aggression. For those who are able to control their impulses, this score suggests an unwillingness to do so.

*Suggested follow-up activities.* Follow-up activities should serve to practice acceptable alternatives to physical aggression, as well as learn to take responsibility for one’s actions. An important element to understand is that those who scored highly on this particular subscale tend to rationalize their acts of aggression, believing that others provoked their actions. These women may also benefit from efforts that help with recognizing and overcoming their vulnerability to shame-related actions.

### *Verbal Aggression*

The items on this subscale examined the women’s tendency to exhibit argumentative and attacking speech. High scores suggest an awareness of feeling frustrated, along with their inclination to verbally fight with others. Low scores reflect women who do not perceive themselves as being argumentative. These women may likely struggle with assertiveness.

*Mean score.* The average score for these women was 60T, which is considered high. This reflects the women's feelings of frustration and stress, which may be directly linked to the circumstances related to incarceration. For those who scored higher than the mean and fall into the category of very high, neurological injury or impairment may be reflected.

*Mode.* The most occurring score among these women was 57T, which is considered a high-average score for verbal aggression. This suggests that the level of frustration these women felt was slightly less than the mean high score. Consequently, these women less frequently verbally attack others when feeling stressed.

*Suggested follow-up activities.* Stress reduction techniques practiced on a daily basis may serve to benefit these women. Opportunities to learn and practice more effective alternatives to conflict may also serve beneficial. Increasing awareness of how toxic verbalizations may negatively affect others could help women gain both insight and empathy.

### *Anger*

This particular subscale measures women's sense of control during anger-related arousal. This AQ score is most helpful for designing an effective repertoire of anger-management strategies. High scores suggest the tendency to experience frustration and annoyance, emotional volatility, and expressive gesturing. Low scores reflect women who do not perceive having a strong physical stimulation as part of their anger.

*Mean score.* The average score for these participants was a score of 59T. This is considered a high-average score. According to this mean, the average woman tends to experience irritability and frustration, which feels out of their control. A prison setting may exacerbate these feelings.

*Mode.* The most occurring score representing these women was 64T. This is considered a high score. These women have a propensity toward releasing their frustration through both emotional and physical expression.

*Suggested follow-up activities.* Helpful exercises for these women may include relaxation training, excitement-reducing tactics, cognitive-behavioral strategies, as well as learning how to identify and resolve the source of their frustration. It should be recognized that for some, anger serves as a survival mechanism, protecting them from overwhelming feelings of shame, loss, desperation, or annihilation. Therefore, underlying issues need to be addressed prior to the success of arousal-reduction techniques to be effective. When women become confident that they have enough tools to effectively express their anger, their general level of anger is usually reduced.

### *Hostility*

This subscale is most closely linked to measuring social maladjustment and severe psychopathology. The items on this scale specifically examine feelings of resentment, social alienation, and paranoia. High scores suggest a strong mistrust of others, as well as difficulty in perceiving the needs of others and empathizing. Low scores reflect women who feel comfortable in their surroundings. Denial may cause a distortion in reality in order to escape criticisms of others, as well as feelings of distrust and bitterness, which may be well justified.

*Mean score.* The average score of hostility for these women was 62T, which is considered high. As a result of this high score, it is common that defensive responses were given to items on the other AQ scales. These women often experience a high amount of angry thoughts while internalizing perceived attacks from others on their well-being. Disorders that reflect a

tendency to internalize may be present, such as chronic depression, dysthymia, and forms of somatization.

*Mode.* The most occurring score among these women was 57T. This is considered a score of high-average. Levels of mistrust are slightly higher than the average person's. Passive-aggressive tendencies or oppositional behaviors may be exhibited.

*Suggested follow-up activities.* Because the mean hostility score was considered high, follow-up activities could prove quite beneficial, as these feelings can seriously impair a person's mental and physical health. Interventions most helpful to these women would include assisting them in critically evaluating their hostile perceptions regarding actions from others. When appropriate, it is suggested that a full psychological evaluation be provided.

#### *Indirect Aggression*

This subscale specifically focuses on anger that is expressed through conflict-avoidant measures. High scores reflect feelings of chronic frustration that go unresolved within a woman's life. Low scores suggest a woman who achieves conflict-resolution through direct confrontation.

*Mean score.* The average score for indirect aggression was 57T, which is considered a high-average score. It would be common for these types of women to be in opposition with their peers. They may also struggle with substance use.

*Mode.* The most occurring score among these women was a score of 60T. This is considered a high score, which is slightly higher than the average score of 57T. These women may be more inclined to be directly oppositional with others, which is reflected in their poor relationships with their peers.

*Suggestions for follow-up activities.* Beneficial activities for these women should include having them evaluate their counterproductive approach to managing conflict and aggression. This would be especially relevant for women who use drugs as a way to cope with conflict. Alternative strategies should be developed and then practiced.