CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, an overview of grounded theory guided by symbolic interaction and feminist standpoint theory is presented. A discussion of how the integration of both theoretical perspectives guiding this study is also provided. Research methods based on the integration of both methodological perspectives are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ensuring rigor and ethical considerations.

Philosophical Features of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a research approach for the collection and analysis of qualitative data to develop substantive or formal theory, and thus a means of explaining social process (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986). The approach was originally developed by two sociologists Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, from different, but complementary backgrounds during the 1960s. Glaser's rigorous quantitative training contributed the epistemological assumptions, logic, and systematic approach of grounded theory methods (Charmaz, 2001). Strauss adopted both a pragmatist philosophical tradition and symbolic interactionism as theoretical perspectives underpinning grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2001).

Symbolic interactionism is one of the interpretive perspectives for the study of individual interaction "in search of portraying and understanding the process of meaning making" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 123). The Chicago school of interactionism , its

foundations laid in early 1900s by George Herbert Mead, was further elaborated by Hertbert Blumer as an alternative approach for the study of human behavior with the claim that meaning could only be established through interaction with others (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Kendall, 1999). According to Blumer (1969), three basic assumptions underpin symbolic interactionism. First, people act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have to them. Second, the meaning is derived from the social interaction between and among individuals. Third, these meanings are established and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the situation.

Underlying those assumptions is the presupposition that the world exists separate and apart from the individual, but can be interpreted through the use of symbols (language) in the process of interaction. People then act on the basis of the meaning that is derived from symbolic interaction and through an interpretive process. There is freedom of choice in human behavior, but that choice is constrained by societal and cultural norms. People have the cognitive capacity for abstract and reflective thinking that enables them to develop the symbolic (language or gestures) for the creation and communication of meanings that produces a common response in interaction with others. This kind of thinking allows people to form new meanings and new ways to respond to others and thus actively shape their own future through the process of interpreting meaning (Benzies & Allen, 2001).

Consistent with the basic assumptions, Benzies and Allen (2001) pointed out that truth is tentative and never absolute because meaning changes depending on the context for the individual; it can be understood through individual interpretation of reality in a social context. In addition, Chenitz and Swanson (1986) described how

symbolic interactionism has implications for researchers. In order to understand the reality, the researcher must analyze it in terms of the participants' actions and interactions and must be able to actively interact with the persons being researched and see things from their point of view, and in their natural context.

Therefore, by adopting the symbolic interactionist perspective, grounded theory provides a way to study human behavior and interaction in which researchers need to be actively engaged in the world of the study. The engagement assists researchers understand the processes of individual interaction with others from their own perspective rather than from that of the researcher. Grounded theory also provides a theoretical perspective for studying how individuals interpret objects and other people in their lives and how this process of interpretation leads to behavior in specific situations (Benzies & Allen, 2001; Chenitz & Swanson, 1986).

Methodological Features of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is an approach for generating theory that is grounded in and systematically derived from data, with an emphasis on the constant comparative method, concurrent data collection and analysis. The aim is to develop a substantive theory or formal theory that describes, explains, interprets, and predicts the phenomenon of interest (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Methodology as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978, 1992) was employed to guide this study. The main methodological features of grounded theory are discussed below.

First, in grounded theory, the researcher seeks to understand the actions of the individual or collective actors under study and to account for change over time. That is, the phenomena of interest are actions or processes. The theory is grounded in the data

and not predetermined by any theoretical perspective. Grounded theory methodology requires an 'emic' or insider approach when collecting and analyzing data. This entails having empathetic understanding of the insider's point of view, exploring and uncovering the meanings they give to their ideas, feelings, experiences and perceptions, rather than imposing an 'etic' or researcher perspectives (Stern, 1994).

Second, the goal for the grounded theory research is to discover the core variable as how people in substantive area resolve their main concern from their point of view (Glaser, 1998). Thus, the research problem and question in grounded theory should not be chosen before getting to the field. The researcher should not enter the field with any preconceived notions about what constitutes the problem. That problem will emerge in the study process of theoretical sampling, open coding and constant comparative analysis in response to early interviews and observations (Glaser, 1992). However, even though a researcher tries to approach the study "with as few predetermined ideas as possible" (Glaser, 1978, p. 3), she/he cannot unlearn what is already known. In fact, a researcher has already identified what she/he thinks the problem is and begins the study from that perspective (Schreiber, 2001). Therefore, in this study, even though the researcher identified a research question prior to entering the field, she tries to keep the research question broad in order to allow the main concern of the abused women regarding their disclosing experiences emerge after the researcher enters the field.

Third, with regard to the role of literature, Glaser (1978) claims that a researcher should not conduct a literature review in substantive area and related area where the research is to be done prior to entering the field because it could lead to preconceived ideas and constrain the generation of categories. Literature review should

be based on the general problem area and reading very wide to sensitize the researcher to a wide range of possibilities. More focused literature review should only be carried out after analysis in association with the emerging theory (Glaser, 1992). Indeed, Glaser (1998) suggests that prior literature review may be required for a dissertation. In order to prevent the preconceiving effects of the literature search, a researcher should use the literature as additional data to constantly compare for its fit with emerging concepts and theory.

Fourth, grounded theory is the process of induction, deduction. Induction is viewed as a key process, with a researcher moving from the data to empirical generalization or emergent theory. As the data are analyzed and coded, ideas, concepts, and categories are emerged. Then, deduction is used to derive from emergent codes conceptual guides as where to go next for which comparative group, in order to seek more data and ongoing comparison of incidents in old and new data to generate theory (Glaser, 1978, 1992). Glaser (1992) emphasizes that a grounded theory is not verified; rather, it is modified to accommodate new data by integrating them into the existing theory. Theory verification and testing should be left to other studies that require a different methodology.

Fifth, in grounded theory everything is data. Data can be obtained from interviews, observations, reports, manuals, files, diaries, or magazine or newspapers articles (Glaser, 1998; Schreiber, 2001). However, which data will be used and how much of it collected cannot be stated in advanced (Glaser, 1998). The process of data collection is controlled by theoretical sampling according to the emerging theory. The general procedure of theoretical sampling is to elicit codes from raw data from the start of data collection through constant comparative analysis as the data pour in (Glaser,

1992). That is, the grounded theories are built on a variety of data sources, but the choice of data is determined and directed by the emerging theory (Schreiber, 2001).

Lastly, grounded theory focuses on the process of simultaneously collecting and analyzing data to generate theory. As initial data are collected and analyzed, theoretical sampling is used to decide what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop the emerging theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). That is, theoretical sampling helps a researcher to fill out the emerging categories, to discover variation within them, and to define gaps between categories. Theoretical sampling relies on the constant comparative method. Through using comparative methods, a researcher can define the properties of the categories and specify the conditions under which they are linked to other categories. In this way, the categories are raised to be concepts in the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2001). There are four stages in the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), including "comparing incidents applicable to each category, integrating categories and their properties, delimiting the theory, and writing the theory" (p. 105).

Coding is the defining aspect of analysis within the grounded theory method. Through conceptual coding the researcher transforms raw data into theory (Schreiber, 2001). According to Glaser (1978), the coding process is divided into two phases, the substantive coding (open coding and selective coding) and the theoretical coding. In the process of open coding, a researcher initially analyzes the data line by line, in order to explore all possible aspects of ideas in the data, and then to develop descriptive codes as labels for the meaning of the ideas. The initial codes are then grouped and conceptualized into more abstract level of codes, and linked by relationships that emerge from the codes. When core category is discovered, selective coding begins, and

exploring of the ideas occurs primarily around the core category. Theoretical coding will be employed to "conceptualize how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory" (Glaser, 1978, p. 55). To assist the researcher in theoretical coding, Glaser (1978) has proposed coding families as sets of lens or perspectives through which a researcher might view the data, explore various conceptualizations, and discover the dimension of the study (Schreiber, 2001). This also helps a researcher to see directions for further theoretical sampling (Jeon, 2004).

Accordingly, memo writing is the ongoing process of making notes of ideas and questions that occur to a researcher during the process of data collection and analysis. A researcher uses memos for making explicit the researcher's pre-existing assumption, recording methodological decisions regarding the conduct of the study, and analyzing the data (Glaser, 1978; Schreiber, 2001).

Philosophical Features of Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminist standpoint theory derives from the Marxist approach for analysis of the conditions of the working class (Code, 1993) and has been developed by feminist scholars in various disciplines. As derived from Marxism, standpoint theory begins with the idea that the subordinate groups, as less powerful members in society, experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression. By living in both the dominant culture and their own culture, members of subordinate groups can develop "double vision," and then a more comprehensive understanding of social reality. As a result, they have the potential for a more complete and less distorted view of social reality (Campbell & Wasco, 2000; Swigonski, 1994). Drawing upon a Marxist analysis of class oppression, however, feminist scholars extend the position that the capitalist

economic system oppresses women as a group; yet under the sexual division of labor located in capitalist patriarchy, women have been systematically exploited, oppressed, excluded, devalued, and dominated (Code, 1993; O' Brien Hallstein, 2000). Women's position and vision, then, are distinctively different and less distorted than those of men, whose vision is always partial, perverse, and interested in preserving their position in patriarchal society. Therefore, feminist standpoint theories advocate that research and knowledge production must begin from women's lives because women's vision is less partial and distorted than research and knowledge that emerged primarily from men in the dominant races, classes, and cultures (Harding, 1991; O' Brien Hallstein, 2000).

Feminist standpoint theory, which tries to construct knowledge from the perspective of women's lives, currently begins theorizing standpoints based on the foundational belief that knowledge always arises in social locations and is structured by power relations (O' Brien Hallstein, 2000). As a consequence of being positioned within a patriarchal culture, women share the experience of subordination in relation to men as a group and from this position women can critique the patriarchal institutions and ideological systems that support those structures (Harding, 1991). In other words, as Romeo and Stewart (cited in McCorkel & Myers, 2003, p. 202) suggest, "women's stories can not be fully comprehended without first considering the specific power structure (economic, political, and social) in which there are constructed and told." According to this underlying tenet , feminist researchers must specify the location and contexts in which their knowledge is produced to allow audiences/ readers to ascertain which social locations produce the most objective and least distorted knowledge claims (McCorkel & Myers, 2003).

Methodological Features of Feminist Standpoint Theory

Harding (1995) suggests three distinguishing features as criteria for the best feminist research that make feminist distinctive from conventional research. First, feminist research focuses on and analyses gender issues critically by asking how gender difference accounts for women's oppression and how gender beliefs provide lenses through which researchers view the world. Second, in contrast to conventional research based primarily on the lives of men in the dominant race, class, and culture, feminist standpoint theory advocates the use of women's experiences to generate research problems, hypotheses and concepts that guide research. Women's perspectives on their own experiences also serve as a resource for designing the research project and constructing knowledge that is not *on* women but rather *for* women. Lastly, feminist inquiry requires a reflexivity practice in which a researcher is placed on the same critical plane as the researched through an explicit situating of a researcher in the research. In doing so, a researcher should examine and explain how their social location such as gender, race, class, age, education, and culture influence the research strategies and results. This helps researchers to not only be aware of the impact of their social location on knowledge production but also to ensure that research does not oppress the participants.

Therefore, Harding (2004) points out that "standpoint theory" differs from "perspectivalism" seen in non-feminist research in the way that the former focuses its explanations on the practices of power, the ways the dominant social institutions and their ideologies create and maintain oppressive social relation, whereas the latter tries to explain the lives of marginalized groups. Thus, the standpoint approach provides a distinctive insight about how a hierarchical social structure works. However, O'Brien

Hallstein (2000) asserts that a standpoint is more than just individual knowledge that comes naturally; rather, it is achieved through struggle and social mediation – the interaction and dialogue with others. Feminist researchers, then, are responsible for developing participants' critical view of the daily realities surrounding research issues by asking questions that help members of oppressed groups develop critical consciousness to achieve a shared standpoint. This is the contribution that a feminist standpoint theory has made in raising women's group consciousnesses. Through the political struggles that a feminist standpoint researcher takes to arrive at useful research for women, an oppressed group should come to understand that each member is oppressed because she is a member of that group – poor, Color, or lesbian – not because she individually deserves to be oppressed, and also has to see how to end their culturally-distinctive forms of oppression (Harding). In brief, feminist standpoint theorists are interested in not just explaining the everyday lived experiences of oppressed groups, but also empowering women through consciousness raising, as well as changing socio-cultural conditions that are oppressive to women.

The Philosophical Features of the Integration of Grounded Theory and Feminist Standpoint Theory

Feminism is not a research method but it is a perspective that can be applied to a traditional disciplinary method (Reinharz, 1992) The integration of grounded theory and feminist theory can be done without violation of the assumptions underpinning each approach (Keddy, Sims, & Stern, 1996; Wuest, 1995). In addition, the integration of feminist theory and grounded theory is widely employed to study women in various circumstances (e.g., Ford-Gilboe, Wuest, & Merritt-Gray, 2005; Kushner & Harrison,

2002; Kushner & Morrow, 2003; Noone, 2003; Sripichyakan, 1999; Thampanichawat, 1999; Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

Symbolic interactionism, the theoretical base for grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), focuses on the meanings derived from the social interaction. These meaning are created and modified through an interpretive process used by person in dealing with the situation. Thus, in order to understand the reality, the focus of research is to understand the meaning of situation from the perspective of the individual and social groups (Benzies & Allen, 2001). When it is applied, feminist theory will add other perspectives that symbolic interactionism may not alone consider. Feminist standpoint theory, which advocates the construction of knowledge from the perspective of women's lives, has a basic tenet that knowledge always arises in social locations and is structured by power relation (O' Brien Hallstein, 2000). Women, as members of the subordinate groups, experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression; therefore, their voice is believed to be less partial and distorted than knowledge emerged from men in the dominant groups. In this study, an integration of grounded theory and feminist standpoint theory will used to guide this study. By adopting the symbolic interactionist perspective, grounded theory provides a way to study wife abuse disclosure among Northeastern Thai women to understand the process of disclosure from abused women's perspective. When grounded theory is informed by feminist standpoint perspective, the researcher becomes more responsive to examine and explain how the power differentials within society as well as broader social-cultural contexts and gender influence the disclosure process of Thai abused women.

The Methodological Features of the Integration of Grounded Theory and

Feminist Standpoint Theory

The methodological features of the integration of grounded theory and feminist standpoint theory are developed for guiding this study. They are discussed below.

First, grounded theory tries to understand the action in the phenomenon of interest from the point of view of the participants involved in order to discover and develop theory that account for the pattern of behavior which relevant and problematic for the participants (Glaser, 1998). Feminist methodological stance is focused on uncovering the social relations which deny the lived realities of oppressed groups, particularly women. Women's experience is a legitimate sources of knowledge that less distorted than men (Harding, 1991). This study, therefore, focuses on understanding the disclosure process among Thai abused women based on women's perspectives in the context of gender values, and other related values in the socio-cultural Thai contexts.

Second, theoretical sensitivity will be gained from a preliminary review of the literature in the area of wife abuse and disclosure concept. However, when a feminist standpoint perspective is merged with a grounded theory approach, theoretical sensitivity is influenced by feminist though. The researcher is more responsive to the ways that such issues as gender, culture, age, or class are revealed in the data and influence the variation in emerging theory concepts. Thus, in this study, the researcher will take gender values into consideration to have insight, understand and give meaning to the data.

Third, grounded theory is an inductive method used to develop a substantive theory in which the researcher derives her analytic categories directly from data. Feminist research, however, uses a variety of research method to understand women's

lives, including inductive and deductive methods. Thus, there is no contradiction regarding the inductive nature of grounded theory.

Fourth, data in grounded theory can be obtained from a variety of data sources. In this study, the source of data will primarily gather from abused women, who are considered the experts on the phenomenon under study, by using an in-depth interview with broad interview guidelines. Theoretical sampling then is used to guide sources of data as well as where and how to obtain data about women's experiences until the theoretical saturation is reached.

Fifth, theoretical sampling in grounded theory was expected to use through selecting the next participants and modifying the questions asked in subsequent interviews, based on the emerging idea or categories. Feminist standpoint theory demands attentiveness to women's voice and stories and also focuses consciousness-raising on the ways gender and other socio-cultural values create and maintain oppressive to women. In this study, therefore, the first interviews would invite abused women to talk about their disclosure in their own ways, while modified questions were asked in subsequent interviews according to the emerging information. To raise participant's consciousness to their conditions, however, the researcher asked reflexive questions related to gender and other socio-cultural issues that influence their disclosing the abuse. This led the participants to recognize of social and system constrains and to develop the courage to confront and solve the problem effectively. In doing so, the reciprocal and mutual relationship between the researcher and the participants was required.

Lastly, when feminist perspective is merged to grounded theory approach, the reflexive practice and reciprocal relationship between the researcher and participant

were considered. Reflexivity attempts to place the researcher on the same critical plane as the participants through an explicit situating of the researcher in the research (Harding, 1995). In this study, therefore, the researcher acknowledged and reflected how prior knowledge and experience of the phenomenon under study, and cultural experiences of race, age, ethnicity, gender, and economic status have affected the theory development in this study.

In conclusion, a feminist standpoint perspective is complementary to grounded theory methodology to generate substantive theory. Although symbolic interactionism is an approach focused on the meaning of events to people in everyday life, it has been critiqued for its limitations, especially a lack of attention to how meaning is not always transparent to agents, and can obscure the relations of power that inhibit marginal groups to voice their reality and a neglect of the relations of socio-cultural and gender issues on interactive processes (Kushner & Morrow, 2003). When grounded theory study is informed by feminist standpoint theory, the researcher attends to tenets of feminist research, including respect for participants, avoidance of oppression, usefulness of findings, and reflexivity. In addition, in this study, a feminist standpoint theory perspective extends to grounded theory as the researcher is more responsive to examine and explain how the power differentials within society as well as broader social- cultural contexts and gender influence the disclosure process of Thai abused women rather than to explain the behavior and beliefs of abuse disclosure among Thai women. A feminist standpoint perspective will help Thai abused women not only to reflect their distorted views of their disclosure experience as produced by patriarchal society, but also will facilitate women's group consciousness to enable women to consider how to end their oppressed situation.

Methods and Procedures of the Study

This research study aimed to use feminist grounded theory to understand the disclosure process of Thai abused women. Grounded theory as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Glaser (1978) was employed to guide this research project. A grounded theory approach is most appropriate for this study due to the need for in-depth information from Thai abused women surrounding their abuse disclosure, together with the process nature of the research problem and question. A feminist perspective was employed along with a grounded theory approach, in recognition that wife abuse is an oppressive condition mostly influenced by the larger social context.

Research Setting

This study focused on the population in the northeast of Thailand (called Isan in Thai), where most people are Buddhist, Thai, speak a variety of Thai and Lao dialects, and adhere to more traditional and conservative beliefs than do people in the central region, which is the most urbanized area in Thailand. Participants were selected from Thai women residing in Khon Kaen province and other nearby provinces. Khon Kaen province was selected for the data collection because it is the center of health care service, education, and economics in the northeast region of Thailand. The researcher's experience as a professional nurse and a faculty member in the Faculty of Nursing, Khon Kaen University, and the researcher's knowledge of individuals and agencies in this area facilitated participant recruitment for the study. This familiarity is very important, given the sensitive nature of wife abuse.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used at the beginning of the study to recruit women most likely to reflect their experiences related to abuse disclosure (Jeon, 2004; Morse & Richards, 2002). The initial participants were women who: (a) were twenty to sixty years old and northeastern Thai women; (b) were either being or used to be physically, psycho-emotionally, or sexually abused by their husbands or ex-husbands; (c) intentionally or unintentionally disclosed their abusive experience to professionals such as health care providers, social workers, and policemen and/or non-professionals such as friends, family members, and colleagues; (d) speak and understand Thai or Lao dialects; and (e) were willing to participate in the study. Women who had severe physical or mental problems or women whose participation would lead them to the possibility of danger were excluded. These exclusion criteria were initially screened during the recruitment procedure and were confirmed at each interview session. As the data collection and analysis progressed, theoretical sampling was used to purposively select further participants based on the emerging ideas or categories from the data already collected and analyzed. The specific characteristics of these participants could yield more information of the categories and their properties (Glaser, 1998).

Determination an adequate participants in grounded theory is related to the theoretical saturation and completeness that occur when substantive theory generating is complete and additional interviews contribute no new categories or properties or relationships among categories (Glaser, 1998, p. 158). While there are no subject tests to determine in advanced how many people will be required to fully understand the phenomenon of interest, qualitative researchers have suggest that 12 to 20 participants are likely to provide an adequate sample (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) In this study, 16

women participated.

Recruitment of Participants

After ethical approve was obtained, staff at the one-stop crisis center (OSCC) at Khon Kaen hospital and women's shelter were contacted and asked to assist in recruiting women who sough medical services and social services. Furthermore, the researcher's family members, friends, and colleagues, and the early participants were asked to help recruit women who had not disclosed the abuse to professionals. Information letters describing the study and telephone numbers for women to call (see Appendix D) were distributed to women through those people that the researcher contacted for help with the recruitment. They briefly informed abused women about the study and invited only those women who showed explicit interest in participating in this study. Those who expressed interest were asked for permission to give their contact information to the researcher. The researcher then contacted these potential participants directly.

Among the 16 participants, most of the participants (n=14) were recruited through contact with the researcher's family members, friends, and colleagues. One woman was recruited from the women's shelter and another was referred to the researcher by the early participant. No women who contacted the OSCC were interested in participating in this study possibly because they were in the crisis situation and not ready to talk to the researcher.

Women who were interested in participating were contacted by the researcher through a telephone call. During the initial contact, the researcher described the purpose of the study, the nature, risks, and benefits of the study and gave them the

opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns they had. The ability to withdraw from the study at anytime was emphasized at this time and throughout the study. Each woman was informed that she would receive three hundred Baht upon completion of the study as an incentive for participation. The researcher emphasized that the primary focus of the study was upon women's experiences of disclosing wife abuse to others. Issue of confidentiality and anonymity were also fully discussed. Women were told that the interviews would be audio-tape recorded with their permission and then transcribed at a later time by the researcher. They were told that the interview would take approximately 60 to 90 minutes using semi-structured questions.

Once the women agreed to participate in the study, time and location of the interviews were discussed and chosen collaboratively with each woman to assure a private place and sufficient time for the interview. The interview schedule then was set. At the beginning of the first interview, each woman was requested to give oral consent to participate in the study. This method of consent was appropriate because it was felt that the participants might be reluctant to sign a consent form due to the sensitive nature of wife abuse. The researcher read the information letter (see Appendix D) for each woman before her oral consent was tape-recorded and the information letter was given to her. None of the women had any questions or expressed any concern about giving oral consent.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was implemented with five abused women during research proposal development to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon. When the interview guide was developed, another pilot study was implemented with two women

who met the eligibility criteria. The aim of the second pilot was to assess the appropriateness of the interview guide. During the pilot study, the interview guide was modified a little. Two women became the participants of this study.

Research Instruments

The researcher was the major research instrument of this study. The researcher's socio-cultural background was provided to the reader to reflect the position upon this research. An interview guide, a demographic data form, and field notes were used for collecting data.

The Researcher as a Research Instrument

The researcher played the major role in the process of inquiry, not only in the interpretation of data and the presentation of research results, but also in the development of the research question; therefore, the researcher's voice was apparent in this research. My voice was informed by my personal background as a single, thirty-nine year-old, Chinese-Thai, middle class, well-educated woman. Although I am situated in the same Thai culture as my participants, my social location as a professional nurse and a faculty member in the faculty of nursing in a university considerably influenced my view of the world.

My interest in conducting this study derived from my personal and professional experiences working with nursing students in the antenatal care clinic in Northeast Thailand during 2002-2003. I sometimes witnessed abused women who came to a hospital receiving medical care for their injuries. I observed that, in many cases, these women were more likely to conceal their abuse experience from others. Very few

women willingly disclosed their abusive relationships; of these cases, it was extreme cases who could no longer tolerate the situation. Because I do not have direct experience with wife abuse in my family and among my relatives, friends, or colleagues, I began to question what made abused women tolerate their situation in silence. Also, I began to wonder if these women did not talk about abuse to others, how they could get support from helping professionals. Subsequently, a study in my doctoral program strengthened my enthusiasm for finding the answers that would help nurses and other professionals gain understanding on abuse disclosure among Thai women.

For enhancing knowledge and skills in doing a feminist grounded theory, I have prepared myself in several ways: (a) taking two courses of qualitative method at the Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University and the Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta, Canada; (b) participating in a two weeks workshop on the grounded theory method; (c) participating in workshops regarding wife abuse; (d) reading and discussing regarding feminist research and grounded theory method with supervisors in Thailand and Canada; and (e) conducting the pilot study on wife abuse disclosure by using qualitative approach.

I have described my voice and experience to acknowledge their potential influence on my work as a researcher in this study. That is, I recognized that my socio-cultural background that informs my perspectives must be made public to reflect my position upon this study. Moreover, I recognized the value of maintaining a reflexive practice throughout the study, in order to distinguish my voice from participants in the research and to faithfully present women's voices.

Interview Guide

The interview guide (see Appendix A) used in this study consisted of a series of broad and open-ended questions that served as a guide to the interview process. The interviews were semi-structured to provide a framework for focusing the topics of conversation, while still providing participants with the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own words, to freely expand on their answers, and to explore related areas. The interview guide was developed from the research question, literature review and the suggestions from experts in women's health and grounded theory (see Appendix C). It contained questions asking women about the experiences of abuse disclosure.

Demographic Data Form

Demographic data form included the information about age, ethnicity, religion, educational background, currently employment, marital status, household income, and number and age of children, as well as abuse information (see Appendix B).

Tape Recorder and MP3 Voice Recorder

Tape and MP3 voice recorders were used to help the researcher engage in lengthy in-depth interviews with the participants without distraction. It effectively captured long verbatim quotations and maintained the natural flow. All participants allowed the researcher to audio-tape during interviewing.

Data Collection Procedures

Prior to the interview, the researcher made general conversation with the women to establish rapport and trust for gaining access to the participants. Then, an in-depth interview, the main method of data collecting, was conducted. The demographic data were obtained through interview. Throughout the interview, a non-hierarchical relationship was promoted and maintained. Field notes were written after each interview. Theoretical sampling was used through considering the question asked in subsequent interviews and also the next participants. Each of these strategies will be explained in further detail.

Gaining Access to the Participants

Since the recruitment procedure, rapport and trust were established to facilitate the disclosure of information from abused women. Therefore, during the initial contact by telephone, women were told that the researcher was a doctoral student at Chiang Mai University and that the study was being conducted for a dissertation. The researcher emphasized to the women that she was interested in hearing what was most important to them in relating to their experiences rather than having them respond to a set of structured questions.

The researcher conducted all interviews to enhance familiarity with the data that helped the researcher accurately reflect the participants' stories. Around ten to fifteen minutes before the interview the researcher and the women had a cup of juice and snack. The researcher also made general conversation with the topics related to their life, such as their work or their daily life, to establish rapport and to help make the participants feel more comfortable. The researcher also shared stories in return with the

women. The explanation that there was no right or wrong answers was confirmed before starting the first question to encourage the women to freely express their experiences.

In- depth Interviews

The main method of data gathering in this study was in-depth interviews with broad interview questions, as the researcher knew enough about the research topic to frame the needed discussion in advance (Morse & Richards, 2002). Additionally, as abuse disclosure is a sensitive issue, an interview guide of key questions offered women in this study a safer and more comfortable atmosphere to tell their story with detailed answers. This was also to ensure avoidance of oppression of the research process to women, which is the focus of feminist methodology (Wuest, Merritt-Gray, & Ford-Gilboe, 2004). The first interview was initiated with each participant with a broad opening question such as "Please tell me about yourself and your life now", followed by an open invitation to "Tell me about your life while you were in the abusive relationship", in order to establish rapport and trust before going on to ask about the experience of disclosure. The purpose of an opening question was to invite abused women to tell their story in their own words and at their own pace. Focused questions in the interview guide such as "When and how did your disclosure happen?" were raised in order to elicit further detailed information. When appropriate, probing techniques were also used to encourage elaboration and clarification by participants, with these questions or statements "… and then?; "Tell me more about that", and "Why?; How come?" (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973 cited in Chenitz & Swanson, 1986, p. 74) To avoid interrupting the participant's flow of thought, however, questions were

asked when the women finished speaking. Each participant had an opportunity to verify the interview summary at the end of each session or the beginning of the next interview.

Subsequent interviews were conducted to add, clarify, and elaborate what was said in the first interview and to respond to findings from the ongoing data analysis. Consistent with theoretical sampling, the questions asked in subsequent interviews were modified throughout the study according to emerging information. During each interview, consciousness-raising was developed through reciprocally critical analysis conversation. The researcher helped the women develop a critical view on their conditions by asking reflexive questions such as "What suggestions to other abused women about disclosing wife abuse do you wish to make?" Demographic data were obtained through interviews and if the data was not completed during the interviews, the researcher asked the participants about general personal data at the end of the interview.

Women were given the option of identifying a safe and convenient location to meet with the researcher. Five women were interviewed at their workplace while three were interviewed in their home. Three of them were interviewed at the home of the researcher's friends. For the remaining participants, interviews were held at a private room in a library or shelter, or the researcher's office, and a private location in a gas station. Interviews were scheduled at a time convenient for each woman. Ten women were interviewed twice and four women were interviewed once. Only two women were interviewed three times. The total number of interviews was 30 sessions; each interview ranged in length from one to two hours with an average time of 84 minutes. The total time spent in interviewing was 42 hours. The length of each participant

interview ranged from 60 to 270 minutes (1-3 times) with an average duration of 157 minutes. The length of each participant interview varied according to each participant and the situation of each interview. Some interviews were short because the participants were less articulate about their experiences.

Interviews were tape-recorded with participants' permission and were conducted by the researcher in Thai or Lao dialects depending on each participant. All interviews were transcribed verbatim into Thai language with all identifying information removed. The researcher carefully read each transcription as she listened to the taped interview. Nonverbal expressions such as tone of voice, silence, crying, or pauses were added as the researcher listened to the tapes in order to facilitate the extraction of authentic meaning (Wuest, 1995).

Field Notes

Field notes were used throughout data collection to record what occurred during the interviews based upon watching and listening with little interpretation. Certain aspects of the interview setting reminded the researcher of the events, actions, and interactions, and triggered thinking process. For instance, one participant chose the location and time of interview at her office during the evening when no colleagues were around because her concerns of confidentiality. In addition, during the interview, she showed her feelings of distress when discussing about her mother's reaction to her abuse disclosure. The field notes were written as soon as possible after each interview to minimize the potential of memory loss. The field notes were reviewed and used to supplement audio-tape transcription to enhance the understanding of each participant's explanations.

The Research Relationship

A feminist perspective promotes a non-hierarchical relationship between researcher and participants throughout the research process (Campbell & Wasco, 2000). Therefore, rapport and trust were established since the recruitment procedure and maintained until the end of the study. Each woman was provided with an opportunity to tell her story by beginning the interview with an open question about her experience in the area of interest (Wuest, 1995). Warm and attentive listening was used to gain rapport and trust with the participants; phrases such as "tell me more", "I want to hear your whole story", or "I have all the time to hear you" were used to encourage the participants to tell their stories.

Additional strategies to promote rapport and trust and to address their feelings included sharing the researcher's personal experience and emotion with participants. As requested, for example, the researcher shared her beliefs regarding the use of Buddhist doctrine in coping with a crisis situation. In addition, some participants were provided with support and information. One woman who was explicitly interested in obtaining counseling was provided with telephone numbers and information of services available. This mutual exchange would facilitate disclosure of information, which might enhance the quality of data in this study.

Besides establishing rapport and trust, the researcher realized that there might be, in practice, an imbalanced power between the researcher and the participants because of her privilege as a middle class woman, a doctoral student, a nurse, and a university instructor. To enhance the participants' sense of power, the researcher recognized and respected the women through telling them that they were the experts who had knowledge about abuse and the researcher was only the person who wanted to

learn, listen, and understand their experiences. Therefore, the participants were accepted as teachers of the researcher. This helped to give the participants' a sense of power because in Thai culture teachers are the most respected persons after parents. This strategy was effective as one participant reflected her sense of power with this statement *"I've got a degree in this issue (wife abuse). I mean I have much experience about it. I'd like to share my knowledge and my experience. You (the researcher) are not married yet. You have no family, so you might be inexperienced about it."*

In addition, recalling painful life experiences such as being abused or disclosing abuse experiences may initiate emotional expression and/or distress. The participants were informed that they were free to tell only selected parts of their stories and did not have to answer every question. The silent, pausing and waiting for the participant's response or sound such as "ummm…," "hmmm…," conveyed to the participant that her experience has been heard.

Theoretical Sampling

As the data collection and analysis progresses, theoretical sampling was used through considering who needed to be talked to next or perhaps new types of questions that needed to be asked based on the emerging ideas or categories to test, redefine, elaborate, and then saturate (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). That is, the researcher can use the elicited codes from interviews to direct further sampling as well as make a judgment about the characteristics of the participant who best provide the needed data to refine emerging categories. The researcher can return to the same participants to ask different questions in order to gain further information and to achieve depth in the developing categories (Charmaz, 2000).

In this study, the researcher initially interviewed three women who had disclosed their abuse experience. The second interviews were conducted using modified interview questions with the first three participants in order to add and clarify what was said in the first interview. Based on the emerging ideas or codes from the first three participants' interview, the researcher sought a diverse sample to achieve full range and variation in categories. For example, when some code categories emerged from the data about how women disclosed their abuse experience, the researcher sought comparative data, through theoretical sampling, in women who disclosed their abuse experiences to non-professionals such as friends or family members and women who disclosed to professionals to see if their experiences were similar or different. This helped the researcher redefine and elicit properties of the category. Data saturation was considered and theoretical sampling was ceased at the sixteenth participant when additional interviews contributed no new information (Glaser, 1998, p. 158).

Data Analysis Procedures

Descriptive statistics were used to provide a summary of the personal information of the participants. Data analysis procedures described by Glaser (1978, 1992) and Glaser and Strauss (1967) were used in this study. The procedures include coding, constant comparison, theoretical memoing, and theoretical sensitivity. In grounded theory, data analysis proceeded simultaneously with data collection for the purpose of generating concepts, hypotheses and their integration, which result in the generating of theory (Glaser, 1992). In this study, audiotapes were transcribed verbatim in the Thai language for maintaining the subtlety and meaning of the Thai abused women's narrative as accurately as possible. The analysis was conducted from the Thai

transcribes and only quotations present in the findings were translated into English and checked by an English-writing expert for syntactical accuracy. The process of data collection and analysis took approximately 1 year and seven months.

Coding

There are two types of coding in grounded theory: substantive coding (open and selective coding) and theoretical coding (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Data analysis began with open coding. The researcher initially fractured data line by line, in order to examine all possible aspects of ideas in the data, and to develop descriptive codes as labels for the meanings of the ideas. The researcher compared incidents to incidents to identify similarities and differences and created code categories as similarities in data emerged. As the analysis proceeded to a more abstract level, the researcher generated code categories related to other codes. The researcher sought to identify a core category or concept that accounted for the processes. Once she identified the core category or concept, further coding was selective or focused for the core concept.

Following analysis of eight participants' interviews, an emerging pattern became apparent in that a concept of disclosure was not discrete from a concept of concealment. In addition, through a feminist lens, there was an understanding with these abused women that why they kept their traumatic experiences for a long period of time. Some of them even distorted their stories or lied instead of blamed their husbands' abusive behaviors. It is important to acknowledge the women's abilities to survive social blaming through the strategy of concealing the abuse. When the abuse deteriorated, disclosing was then employed to obtained assistance. Therefore, the

researcher chose the core category to describe the process of disclosing the abuse as "moving from concealment to disclosure" under an obligation of survival. Once the initial core category emerged, the researcher returned to re-coded the prior interview transcripts using the selected core category as a guide. Further, selective or focused coding was used for further data analysis by delimiting coding to only those concepts that related to the core category in sufficiently significant ways to be used in a parsimonious theory (Glaser, 1978). The core category became a guide for further data collection and theoretical sampling, as the researcher looked for the conditions and consequences that relate to the core process. The researcher used theoretical sampling to add interview data from particular abused women experiences to check and fill out the core category and its properties. However, moving to selective coding was not entirely a linear process (Charmaz, 2001). If some data did not fit with the selected code during selective coding, the researcher then returned to the initial coding to examine how new codes fit in the emerging theory.

Finally, theoretical coding, the last coding process, was employed to conceptualize how the substantive codes related to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory (Glaser, 1978). During theoretical coding, the researcher recorded memos and drew diagrams that represented the linkages. The researcher formulated the hypotheses and tested them through further data collection and analysis (Schreiber, 2001). Finally, the core process in this study was named as "moving to disclosure for survival".

Constant Comparison

Constant comparison is employed in grounded theory data analysis as a tool to enhance the researcher's abilities to conceptualize and form emergent concepts or categories and their properties (Glaser, 2002). With a participant who experienced both physical and sexual abuse, the researcher constantly compared the data described about two incidents. This comparative analysis enabled the researcher to ask questions like: "Did the women describe the physical abuse disclosure and sexual abuse disclosure similarly or differently from each other? and "How did these differences and/or similarities affect the consequences of disclosure?" The researcher also compared the data from one abused woman with the data from another abused woman and asked question like, "Did a woman who had higher education describe the experience of abuse disclosure differently from another woman who had a lower education background?" These questions of comparison facilitated an in depth understanding of key code categories that in turn illuminated and/or clarified the relationship between various code categories in the emergent theory.

While coding and analyzing the data, the researcher initially sought the underlying pattern by comparing incident to incident. The identified pattern was named by the generated concept or category (Glaser, 1978, 2002). For example, the researcher learned that all abused women anticipated the negative responses of others to their disclosure. Despite this uniformity, the women described different conditions or ways of managing their anticipated fear of negative outcomes of abuse disclosure. Some women told another woman who had a similar experience while others told only the person whom they trusted. Both the uniformity and the conditions become categories or concepts as well as hunches for further analytic verification and data collection.

As coding and comparing data progresses, the researcher then compared the identified concepts or categories to more incidents from the previously identified information and the additional information. This comparison is "for the purpose of theoretical elaboration, saturation, and verification of the concepts, densification of the concepts by developing their properties, and the generation of further concepts" (Glaser, 1978, p. 50). Finally, the researcher compared concept to concept to facilitate the emergence of hypotheses between the concepts or categories, the integrated hypotheses, and the emergent substantive theory.

Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is the ability of the researcher to achieve theoretical insight into the phenomenon under study, to think inductively, and to move from particular data to a more abstract level to develop theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Schreiber, 2001). The researcher maintained theoretical sensitivity in every step of the research process to reduce biases that could occur. During the initial coding, a set of standard questions were frequently used in order to maintain theoretical sensitivity (see coding). These specific questions were: (a) What is this data a study of? (b) What category does this incident indicate? and (c) What is actually happening in the data? (Glaser, 1978, p. 57) These questions allowed the researcher to look at the data critically and analytically. Theoretical sensitivity was gained through reading widely the related and unrelated literature on a problem area which helped to expand the researcher's ideas about the phenomenon under study. The researcher explicated her background knowledge and personal experience (see the researcher as research instrument) with the specific intention of bringing it in to the analysis to see if the data

were supportive or not (Schreiber, 2001). In addition, a feminist perspective provided the source of theoretical sensitivity and also guided the researcher's analytical ideas that enabled her to examine the influence of the larger political, social, and economic environment on the experiences of abused women. That is, the feminist standpoint theory sensitized the researcher to examine the ways that women's experiences were socially structured in the Thai culture. The researcher examined and acknowledged the ways that gender, culture, class, age, and sexual orientation were revealed in the data and influenced the variation in emerging theoretical concepts (Wuest, Merritt-Gray, & Ford-Gilboe, 2004).

Theoretical Memoing and Diagramming

Memoing is "the theoretical writing up of ideas regarding codes and their relationship, as they strike the researcher while coding" (Glaser, 1978, p. 82). As each interview was being transcribed and coded, the researcher wrote memos of thoughts and striking ideas regarding codes, concepts, categories, and hypothetical relationships that were emerging (Morse & Field, 1995). The researcher's memos on how her perceptions of the abused women and their stories were influenced by the interactions with the women, and prior knowledge and experience of the phenomenon of the study, and cultural experiences kept the researcher aware of her part in constructing the data. The researcher wrote memos on how categories of data fit with other categories and to describe how emergent concepts fit with other concepts from the data or from existing theory. The researcher also wrote memos on thoughts about what being discovered in the data and what was experienced in clinical practice. As concepts emerged from the

data the researcher wrote memos about connections seen with the literature being reading.

Figure 1 is an example of the theoretical memo written on March 22, 2007; it demonstrated the researcher's thoughts and ideas when she returned to the initial open coding and diagram of six participants' interviews. The researcher observed an emergent pattern which indicated that the women tended to disclose or conceal the abuse in order to survive in certain situations. The researcher then wrote down the initial a core category as "disclosure to survive" in the memo.
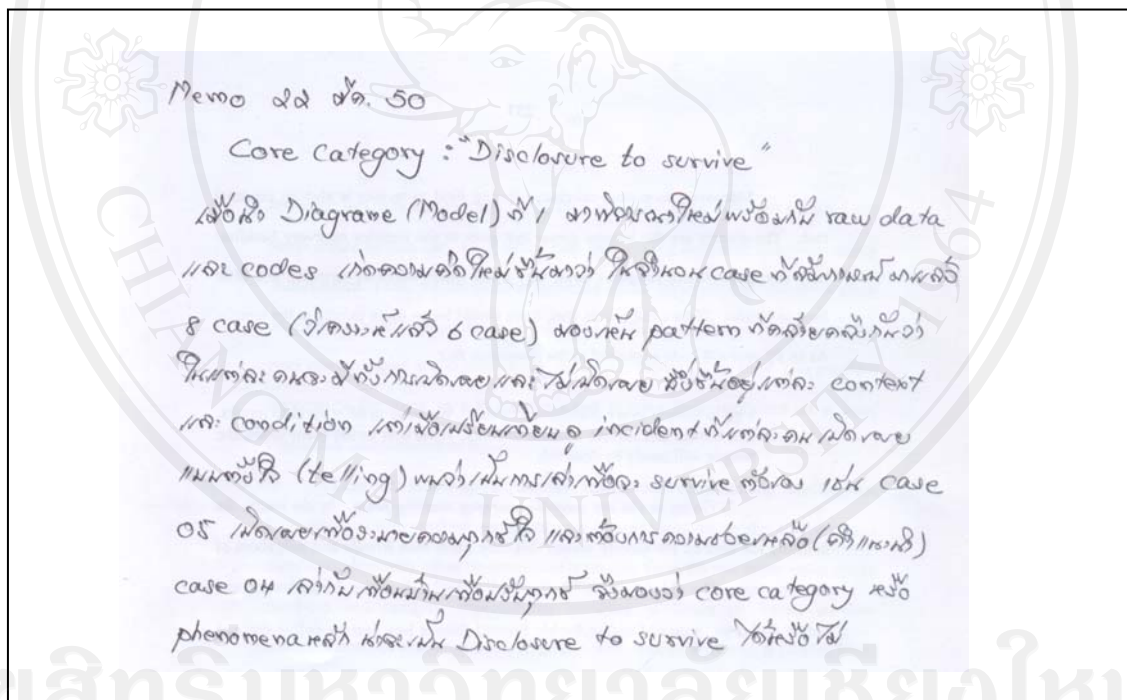

Figure 1: The Example of Theoretical Memo Writing

In this study, diagramming was used to help the researcher reflected on and understand the relationships between and among emerging categories. In the beginning, diagramming was drawn tentatively and might not account for key pieces of data.

However, it highlighted areas where more data were needed. "By drawing and re-drawing diagrams, the researcher could stand back and conceptualized the full theory, which could then be checked against data" (Schreiber, 2001, p. 73).

Trustworthiness of the Study

Lincoln and Guba (1985) introduced the concept of trustworthiness, as the parallel criteria of reliability and validity, for judging qualitative research, this consists of four criteria. "Credibility" was comparable with internal validity; "transferability" was comparable with external validity; "dependability" was comparable with reliability; and "confirmability" was comparable with objectivity or neutrality. These criteria were used to ensure rigor of the study.

Credibility

Credibility is concerned with whether the reconstruction in the research findings represents the constructed realities of participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Peer debriefing and member checking were used to demonstrate credibility.

Peer Debriefing

Initially, the first three interviews were coded and discussed with the dissertation advisory committee. Discussion with the committee helped validate whether the codings were understood the same way and were leading to important insights. Further data analysis was supervised by the committee throughout the process of conducting the research. In addition, two formal peer debriefing sessions were performed in an effort to remain open to multiple interpretations of data and to prevent premature closure of data analysis. During each session, the researcher's

conceptualizations were shared with, and critiqued by the expert on grounded theory and research supervisors with expertise in the grounded theory study, wife abuse, and women's health. Informally, the researcher discussed with classmates in the doctoral program as well as two colleagues with expertise in qualitative research and family violence on emergent concepts, emergent theory, and the core process emerged from the data. Thus, outsider credibility was reassured using these activities. Consensus occurred regarding the emerging categories and core category. However, the diagram of the emerging process was minimized and changed to be simple and understandable for the readers.

Member Checking

Member checking is to see whether the participants recognize the findings of the study to be true to their experiences. The researcher used member validation with abused women to demonstrate insider credibility. The researcher returned to three participants and asked them to respond to the researcher's interpretations and to identify how their experience was reflected in the emerging substantive theory. These participants agreed that the results were consistent with their thoughts about their situations.

Transferability

Transferability refers to the applicability of findings to other situations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To achieve transferability, the researcher provided adequate information for the readers to decide how applicable this study is to other groups. Providing detail about the theoretical framework, the participant and setting

characteristics was a way to help the readers visualize the context from which the theory and its specific categories are developed.

Dependability

Dependability or reliability in quantitative research was achieved when another researcher could clearly follow the "decision trail" used by the researcher in the study (Sandelowski, 1986, p. 33). During the research process, memos were used to make explicit the researcher's pre-existing assumptions, to record methodological decisions regarding the conduct of the study, and to speculate on and analyze the data (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The researcher's memos were provided for the readers to inform them of the process of the substantive theory generated based on the emerging data and to justify accuracy and consistency of the research study.

Confirmability

Confirmability was achieved through ensuring that the emerging categories and properties were drawn from the data in a systemic procedure that could be easily traced and substantiated. In this study, the product of the investigation was maintained to determine the confirmability which included the raw data, memos or field notes, data reduction and analysis products, data reconstruction and synthesis products, and existing relevant literature. In addition, in the chapter of findings the researcher provided numerous quotes from the interviews to support objectivity of emerging categories and properties.

Ethical Considerations

The study was reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Review

Committee, Faculty of Nursing, Chiang Mai University and the Research Ethics Review Committee of Khon Kaen Hospital (see Appendix E). Given the sensitive nature of wife abuse as a perceived personal issue, the researcher ensured free and voluntary participation. Letters of information describing the study were distributed to women by nurses or social workers either in OSCC or in women's shelters and by the researcher's family, friends, and colleagues who knew the participants. They briefly informed abused women about the study and invited only women who seemed interested in telling their story. Those women who showed explicit interest in participating gave permission for nurses or social workers to give the researcher their telephone or address. At the initial contact, the researcher told them the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of the study, risks and benefits of the study and the type of questions that would be discussed. Also, the researcher informed them of the time commitment of two or three interviews that would be 60 to 90 minutes in length. During the initial contacts, two women refused to participate, with one woman changing her decision during initial telephone contact.

Informed consent was reviewed with each participant. Since the issue of wife abuse is sensitive and participants might be reluctant to sign a consent form, participants were requested to give oral consent and this was recorded on tape. Participants were reassured of their privacy in this study. Efforts to maintain confidentiality included removing identifying information from the interviews and assigning the participants a code number, keeping the tapes and transcription in a locked cabinet, and erasing the tapes after the dissertation defense. The participants were informed that copies of the transcripts of their interviews, with all identifying information disguised, would be reviewed by the dissertation supervisors who assist

with the research project.

Besides the privacy of participants, distress or embarrassment are other potential concerns. Emotional distress might arise as the woman told about her experience. If at anytime, the woman became distressed or upset, the interview was stopped, and the researcher addressed the feelings and offered support or referral to relevant services or available community resources. Two participants expressed feelings of distress about their abuse and abuse disclosure during the course of the interview. The interviews were then stopped for awhile and the researcher addressed their intense feelings by touching their hands. Following this, they expressed their desire to continue sharing their experiences. One woman who indicated her thoughts of killing herself during the course of the abusive relationship was assessed about the potentially remaining suicidal thoughts. However, she indicated no suicidal ideation anymore after leaving the abusive relationship. Useful information and a list of appropriate resources (see Appendix F) were provided to all participants but only six women who remained in the abusive relationship received the documents provided. None of the women expressed any concerns or distress as a result of their participation in the study. Rather, the women expressed appreciation for the opportunity to talk about their experiences and the hope that the research would be helpful to others. A few women identified their participation in the research as a way to "give back" or to be helpful to others.

During each interview the researcher helped the abused women develop critical consciousness on the realities regarding wife abuse disclosure by asking reflexive questions. However, the researcher was aware that woman's consciousness about her oppressed conditions should develop from the woman own critical views, not from the

researcher's views. In doing so, the researcher promoted the reciprocal and mutual relationships between the researcher and the participants during interview to ensure that women spoke about their lives from their standpoint.

In addition, each participant was reimbursed with 300 Baht upon the completion of the study as an incentive for participation and to demonstrate that their time and input was considered valuable.

Summary

This study employed the integration of feminist perspective and grounded theory methodology to explicate the process of disclosing about wife abuse among Northeastern Thai women. Sixteen abused women were recruited to participate in this study mainly through the referral from the researcher's family members, friends, and colleagues. In-depth interviews with reflexive discussion and a balanced power relationship, writing field notes, and theoretical sampling were conducted to obtain data. Most of the participants were interviewed twice. The interview sessions ranged in length from one to two hours. Coding, constant comparison, theoretical sensitivity, and theoretical memoing and diagramming were used as data analysis procedures. Feminist perspectives were brought into the process of data interpretation and theory development. The trustworthiness of this study was established based on the four criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. A detailed description of the findings is given in the next chapter.