

EXPLORATION OF FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ABUSE IN  
BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN

BY

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## DECLARATION

I declare that exploration of factors contributing to abuse in black South African women is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

Signature (Miss L.Mabena)

.....

DATE

## ABSTRACT

Despite the growing recognition of the prevalence of woman abuse in our country, it is challenging to know that there is an increasing number of women reporting abuse, and of those who died at the hands of their abusers. The present study adopts a qualitative approach to analysing emerging themes relating to the to the experiences of five black South African women who were abused by their partners. The study deals with definitions of abuse and identifies social and cultural factors contributing to woman abuse in the local context. Implications for therapeutic intervention are discussed.

Key words: Abuse, battery, Ecosystemic perspective, Feminist perspective, black African women, culture, belief system, factors, norms, Lobola/bogadi, patriarchy, socialisation, violence.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

The 20-year history of research on violence in the family has contributed to an increasing awareness of the scope and significance of this problem (Jasinski & Williams, 1998). The challenge, however is that wife abuse occurs within the private domain and tends to be underreported in comparison with any other form of violence.

Yllo (1999) noted cultural expectation about intimacy and power as well as the unequal structural position of different racial/ethnic groups as affecting the patterns, causes, and effects of violence. Yllo (1999) continues to broaden the understanding of violence as not limited to a dyadic problem in intimate violence, but as located in a broader social and cultural context that shapes expectations about intimacy and also erects significant barriers for those attempting to escape abuse. The role of culture in women abuse is particularly important in the present study because of its impact on role expectation in African families.

Hegarty, Shechan and Schonffeld (1999) point out that partner abuse or

violence against women does not deny that men are also victims. However, domestic violence against women may be a different form of abuse from that of men abuse because it converges with broader social patterns of discrimination in society. This chapter deals with definitions of abuse, the incidence of partner abuse, and some reasons for abuse.

## 1.2. DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

The terms abuse, battery, and violence are used interchangeably in different studies. According to Brown (1994), all these concepts (abuse, battery and violence) involve harming/injuring another person by using physical aggression or the threat of physical aggression to intimidate, subjugate, and control another human being (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999; Jacobson, Gottman, & Short, 1995; Kaufman, 1992).

Brown (1994) asserts that part of the problem is in the definition of abuse, and the meaning thereof causes complications, because what one person may perceive as harm another does not. Hence Brown (1994) delineates different kinds of violence and abuse as individual (such as rape, homicide and battering) and systemic (corporate, nationalism, capitalism, sexism, racism, homophobia).

The term *violence* denotes any act of power that causes people pain or

harm or violates them in some other way (Campbell, 1998). Sev'er (1997) added to the definition of violence by including factors such as class bias, poverty, and racism. This means that violence appears to involve elements of power and control. Finally, Cahn and Lloyd (1996) believe that a definition of violence should include the ability to impose one's will (that is, wants, needs, or desires) on another person.

*Battery* is defined as a certain form of assault where the same person continuously assaults the same victim. The victim often cannot escape being hurt because of family ties to the attacker (Cahn & Lloyd, 1996). A battered woman according to Weiner (1994), is a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behaviour by a man, in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights.

In contrast to battery, one of the defining attributes of *abuse* is that it is a continuous abusive interaction process that takes place over time between partners (Campbell, 1998). Therefore Campbell (1998) defines women abuse as the repeated acts a husband directs toward his wife which are intended, or perceived as being intended, to psychologically or physically harm his wife.

The United Nations declaration of the elimination of all forms violence against women defines violence or abuse as: "*any act of gender-based*

*violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women-including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or in private life"* (Soul City, 1999).

For feminists, researchers, authors, and educators, defining abuse is of utmost importance (Dutton & van Ginkel, 1997; Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993; Sev'er, 1997), because common understanding is established. A number of scholars prefer to define abuse as the conglomeration of physical, sexual, psychological and economic control and subjugation of women (DeKeseredy & MacLean, 1990; Jones, 1994).

According to United Nations (Soul City, 1999), the categories of abuse are not mutually exclusive. Many occur in combination with one another. The following United Nations' definitions attempt to capture the complexity of wife abuse. By stressing that abuse includes a range of harmful activities, this indicates that the consequences of abuse are more complex than simple physical injury.

*Emotional abuse* is considered to be any act associated with psychological, spiritual and other forms of abuse that impacts on an individual's sense of integrity, freedom of expression and wellbeing (Loring, 1994). Emotional abuse includes acts such as withholding affection by a person in an intimate relationship, verbal attacks,



constant belittling, controlling behaviour (such as not allowing the woman to leave the house), insulting behaviour, calling someone crazy, stupid or possessed, as well as threats to the recipient, her children, pets or belongings, and so on.

Ho and Venus (1995) describe emotional abuse as involving diverse behaviours that terrorise or undermine the victim's sense of personal identity, security or self worth. According to Kelly (1997) emotional abuse includes "belittling", "put downs" and any comments that tend to emotionally diminish and keep the woman in compliance with her partner's wishes.

*Psychological abuse* is recognised by Follingstad and DeHart (2000) as occurring in relationships where there is no report of physical abuse. The dynamics may actually diverge from those of physical abuse. Physically abused women know that physical acts have been used to harm. Victims of only psychological abuse may have more difficulty identifying that abuse is occurring (Loring, 1994), and may therefore be less adept at defending against and recovering from psychological attacks that are not easily labelled as abusive.

*Physical abuse* is any deliberate physical assault on an individual's body that harms the recipient in any way. It may, or may not involve visible signs of injury. This may include kicking, hitting, slapping,

choking, burning, stabbing and shooting the victim. Hegarty et al. (1999) suggest that any definition of physical abuse needs to take into account the varying types, severity, frequency, and meaning of the abuse. They also view it as a complex pattern of behaviours that includes emotional and sexual abuse, in addition to physical acts of violence. Undoubtedly physical abuse is most visible in physical injuries such as cuts, bruises, lacerations, rips, tears, and broken bones. In its extreme form, women lose their lives (Sev'er, 1997).

*Economic abuse* includes any coercive act or limitation placed on an individual that has adverse economic implications on the woman and/or her dependants. This includes not allowing a woman to work, forcing her to hand over all or part of her earnings, or drawing from her personal or shared bank account without her knowledge or consent.

Today, economic abuse is not widely acknowledged and its definitions are narrow (Scutt, 1997). Yet the realities of economic violence against women include not allowing a woman a fair share of money in the household, whether business assets, family funds or housekeeping money, and demanding food and clothing or unrealistic amounts of money.

*Sexual abuse* is considered any unwanted physical invasion of an individual's body that is sexual in nature. Sexual abuse ranges from



touching and kissing, through to forced oral sex, rape and being forced to perform prostitution and bestial acts.

Mahoney and Williams (1998) describe sexual abuse as taking place in many forms, commonly called " wife rape". The dynamics of sexual assault involve trying to humiliate, asserting power and control, fulfilling sexual fantasies, directing arguments on sexual issues and demanding that the wife should perform deviant, unusual or painful sexual acts.

It is important to note that any form of abuse, whether emotional or physical, always results into harmful effects to the one being abused.

Kirkwood (1993) has confirmed that abuse, whether physical, psychological, economic and sexual coercion or verbal attacks, has an impact at an emotional level which women have described as deeply injurious.

According to Campbell (1998), the experiences of abuse are also affected by the culture in which we live and the demands made on women through prescribed roles and behaviour. Campbell (1998) acknowledges that the phenomenon of abuse is extremely complex. What happens to women is not linear and is full of contradictions. A woman's responses to the abuse, the feelings towards her partner, and her feelings about the self are never constant. An abused woman lives in two separate

realities, which are bound together by her shame. One reality encompasses the good aspects of the relationship and the other the abusive aspects.

### 1.3. INCIDENCE OF PARTNER ABUSE

Statistics in the area of women abuse are notoriously difficult to establish, largely because of underreporting (Volgeman & Eagle, 1991). This is due to several factors: the acceptance of abuse as normative by individuals and authorities, lack of confidence in the police, the shame women experience in describing assaults particularly of a sexual nature, economic dependency on abusers, fear of future reprisals and the difficulty in obtaining convictions (Bollen, Artz, Vetten & Louw, 1999). Even though abuse is underreported, Harway and O'Neil (1999) believe that three to four million women are victimised by violence each year and that some people fail to appreciate the seriousness of this problem.

According to Motingwe and Gilchrist (1996) women abuse is very topical and widespread in South Africa, yet there is little data on its incidence. In South Africa, the difficulty in obtaining accurate statistics was exacerbated by apartheid and the fragmentation that goes with bureaucracy (Volgeman & Eagle, 1991). For example, homeland statistics were recorded separately from those in the rest of the country.

Hence, the difficulty and lack of insight into patterns of escalation of abuse in South African families.

Reports from Motingwe and Gilchrist (1996) show that spouse abuse is currently widespread in South Africa, occurring across all socio-economic and racial groups. The visibility of the problem is usually controlled by both victims and abusers, who go to great lengths to hide it, both physically and psychologically. The not so visible effects of humiliation and degradation also take their toll in South Africa. Because of the cultural diversity in South Africa, there is no one database for the entire country (Jewkes, Kekana, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 1999).

Research on violence against women has estimated that one out of four, to six women in South Africa is in abusive relationships and of the abused women, one woman is killed by a partner every six days (Vetten, 1998). Report findings of the Tshwaranang update (1999) indicate that in 95% of domestic violence cases, women are victims, and 90% of women experienced physical and emotional abuse whereas 71% experienced sexual abuse.

A survey by the National Trauma Research Programme (NTRP) of the SA Medical Research Council reports that abuse and violence is the leading cause of injury mortality in South Africa (Trauma Review, 1998).

Furthermore, 84% of South African women are reported to be abused and have suffered significant levels of anxiety, depression and insomnia (Trauma Review, 1998).

Conway (1997) noted the United Nations' efforts to eliminate violence against women but sadly acknowledges that this type of abuse may still not be taken as seriously as it ought to be. He fears that there is a real rise in the rates despite the recent awareness about the issue.

#### 1.4. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ABUSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Volgeman and Eagle (1991) point out that in the South African context, abuse is widely tolerated. It has come to be perceived almost as normative and to a large extent accepted rather than challenged. Hence many women perceive it as normal or acceptable and continue to stay in abusive relationships.

Conway (1997) places wife abuse within the more general crisis of the family. Straus (1991) believes that the family is a situation in which the use of violence is both likely to exist and to be accepted. Data from around the world suggest that women face the greatest risk of abuse in their homes in comparison to anywhere else (Campbell, 1998; Conway,



1997; Flowers, 2000; Jasinski & Williams, 1998). The potential for abuse, according to Straus (1991), is higher within families because of involuntary membership. This opposes the view of the family as a haven of love and support. According to Ramphele (1989), the family is still the major sphere in which the domination of men is secured at the expense of women.

The many factors that lead to patterns of abuse in different families cannot be generalised to all families. Not all families share the same definition of what constitutes abuse. Sev'er (1997) offers a variety of reasons for acceptance of abuse. First, she suggests that family activities are private and this insulates the violence that occurs there from social control. Furthermore, gendered conflict between spouses is all too frequently resolved using violence to maintain order.

Marano (1993) acknowledges that abuse of women by their partners has long been behind closed doors, that is, it thrives on privacy and isolation as well as on patriarchal attitudes, rigid gender arrangements, acceptance of aggression in other contexts, and economic hardship. However, it is increasingly less tolerated today.

In the South African context, cultural practices generally hold that the man is the head of the house and has greatest control and decision-making powers (Twaranang Update, 1999). Therefore, culture plays a

crucial role in maintaining male dominance (patriarchy). It serves to reinforce notions of female inferiority and male superiority and sanctions and reinforces violence against women.

In the black community, there is still the common custom of lobola exchange during marriages. The process is negotiated by men around the women's value as assets to the family and may have proprietary implications for how a husband perceives or treats his wife (Ramphela, 1989). This is also emphasised when the question, *who gives this woman?* is asked during the marriage ceremony. Hence, women are regarded as properties for exchange (Tswaranang Update, 1999). In a practical sense, the exchange has the effect of transferring guardianship or authority over the woman from her family to her husband.

Volgeman and Eagle (1991) emphasise gender, race, and class as some of the factors that contribute to the abuse of women in the South African context. Thus, frustration engendered in the public domain is expressed more safely in the private domain with women the most accessible target against which to direct this frustration. Power imbalance, according to Volgeman and Eagle (1991), is inherent within patriarchal relations and is reflected in family relations also. The South African political economy frustrates the working class, particularly black men, who daily experience themselves as oppressed and impotent, and are likely to express their frustration through domination in



another domain over women (Volgeman & Eagle, 1991). Campbell (1998) recognises the difficulty of working-class township fathers who experience a contradictory position in relation to women as opposed to their status in the work place. That is, the traditional role of father as the ultimate authority in the family contradicts their position in the work place and childhood socialisation within the patriarchal social order.

Historically, through socialisation, women's expectations of marriage, based on romantic love, were never reconciled with traditional male values based on legal and material reality (Ho & Venus, 1995). Therefore, the socialisation process located women as male's responsibility and property rather than as equal partners. This socialisation, according to Campbell (1998), is saturated with the old-fashioned values of a man as commanding unquestioning obedience from his family and as a proud, fearless respected force within the wider community. Again Follingstad and DeHart (2000) view the pattern of behaviour that constitutes abuse as reinforced by constructs such as maintaining and enforcement of rigid sex-role expectation.

When viewed from a feminist perspective, policies and practices prevailing in most areas of the western world operate to create social systems, which discriminate against woman (Stoppard, 2000). This form of discrimination is not limited to the situation in which someone

behaves in a sexist way toward a woman (for example, an employer refusing to hire a woman based on her sex), but also continues to be practised at home through ascribed roles which legitimise control by husbands over wives.

The term "systemic discrimination " refers to the pervasive effects of a system of social and economic conditions in which women face less favourable and more restrictive life options than men do (Stoppard, 2000). Women's life circumstances and options are shaped and channelled by political, economic and social conditions in the country where she lives. One consequence of systemic discrimination against women as described by Stoppard (2000) is that many women lead their lives in conformity with prevailing cultural beliefs about what are appropriate life activities for women, while avoiding activities considered culturally inappropriate. Women who attempt to pursue non-traditional lifestyles (for members of their gender) are likely to face impediments which some may find too daunting or difficult to overcome (Stoppard, 2000).

For the reasons discussed here, the present study will deal with feminist and ecosystemic theoretical stances on women abuse, as well as the role of culture in women abuse in South Africa.

## 1.5. PROBLEM DEFINITION

As Marano (1993) put it: the traditional ethical view on abuse is that women are seen as victims, vulnerable and dependent. In many instances, women are blamed for staying in abusive relationships. The present study therefore attempts to highlight some factors that make most women stay in these relationships. Historically, intimate violence and abuse in the family was not considered a serious problem and was judged as a private matter (Sev'er, 1997). In addition, abuse was seen as an aberration that affected only seriously pathological families (Stoppard, 2000). To date there is still controversy and difficulty in dialoguing around the causes, maintenance and factors involved in abuse (Avis, 1994; Dutton & van Ginkel, 1997; Gelles & Loseke, 1993; Harway & O'Neil, 1999). Part of the problem has been that many believe that abuse exists only in certain nations, race, class or ethnic groups (Bollen et al., 1999). Contrary to this idea, the United Nations has referred to abuse as a global epidemic that knows no geographic, cultural or linguistic boundaries and that it affects all women without regard to their level of income (Bollen et al., 1999).

There is also limited theory and research to inform debates on abuse constructively and that theory is limited by a specific discipline. Within the academic discipline, Harway and O'Neil (1999) suggest that there is

a great difficulty in dialoguing on this topic. In some situations, researchers, clinicians, and theoreticians have been divided along sex lines. For example most female researchers see the problem of abuse as related to gender (Bollen et al., 1999; Campbell, 1998; Finn, 1996; Stoppard, 2000) and that domestic violence is a leading cause of female injury in almost every country in the world.

It is beyond the scope of this present study to explore all the multiple factors contributing to women abuse, hence the study will only highlight factors that emerged from the participants in the study and (for practical reasons see chapter 3 and 6) will be limited to women and not their partners.

## 1.6. MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Despite much documentation and media attention, systematic research concerning the abuse of black women in South Africa is still limited. Most of the research which is undertaken on violence against women in South Africa has been relatively small scale, localised or has focused on particular sub-groups (Jewkes et al., 1999). The present study will be able to contribute to the existing South African body of knowledge on abuse amongst black women.



Family violence has been occurring more frequently in South Africa over the past years. This is shown by a marked increase in regular media coverage of wife abuse (for example, *Salut* August 2000; *Sowetan Sunday World*, 04 March 2001). Further, a recent newsletter of the South African Institute for Traumatic Stress has shown that one in three women in South Africa's three major cities (Cape Town, Durban, Gauteng) experiences emotional and/or emotional abuse. In a study of 1394 men working in the Cape Town municipalities, approximately 44% admitted to abusing their female partners (South African institute for Traumatic Stress Newsletter, 2001 March).

#### 1.7. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The study aims at understanding the patterns that are involved in an abusive relationship in black South African families, and to explore factors that inhibit a woman from leaving such a relationship. Previous studies have predominantly documented statistics rather than the feelings and experiences of the women involved (Jasinski & Williams, 1998).

The study will also add knowledge to the existing research done in the past on women abuse. Therefore, the study aims at enabling the women

involved in the study to give a voice to their experiences of being abused.

West (1998) has indicated a void in the literature because many researchers assumed that the dynamics of abuse were similar regardless of race or ethnicity. In this way, factors contributing to abuse in black African women was generalised from those other nations and countries, if not ignored. The essential aim of this study on abuse against African women was to confront and condemn the attitudes of denial and neglect that have allowed this problem to exist and to grow. Additionally, in identifying those factors that contribute to abuse, the researcher hopes that the findings could prompt the development of mechanisms and remedies/models of intervention by health workers, educators and policy formulators.

## 1.8. OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter two is a literature review that looks at the previous studies done on the issue of women abuse in general. It further looks at factors contributing to abuse as hypothesized by Harway and O'Neil (1999) and the patterns of abuse that are formed during the process. The chapter also reviews two theoretical approaches (feminist and ecosystemic perspectives) to abuse and how abuse is understood through these



perspectives.

Chapter three provides justification of the use of a qualitative research method for the present study, in particular using semi-structured interviews as a tool for collecting data. The chapter will also deal with the epistemological and phenomenological approach that will be followed in the study. Finally, it suggests the method of analysing collected data.

Chapter four concentrates mainly on collected data and the participants involved in the study. Further, data collected is analysed. Themes that emerge are identified and later grouped as factors contributing to abuse from the participants' perspectives.

Chapter five focuses on the discussion of results and the interpretation of the data collected from the participants. Findings will be linked with literature and related to the South African context. The researcher looks at how participants view themselves and their partners and the impact of culture on their relationships.

Chapter six deals with conclusions and recommendations for future research and therapy in relation to the findings of the present study. The findings are again briefly linked to the past theoretical perspectives on abuse. Finally, the chapter notes the strengths and limitations

identified in the study.

## 1.9. CONCLUSION

This chapter provides an overview of the topic of woman abuse, attempts to bring to the fore the significance of the study and outlines the general procedure that will be followed. This chapter has attempted to look at the definition of different forms of abuse. It has attempted to highlight the meaning of abuse, battery and violence because the terms will be used throughout the present study. The theoretical foundation for the present study follows in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

The increased number of conferences, symposia, research projects, and academic attention to woman abuse (Abrahams, Jewkes & Laubsher, 1999), indicates the seriousness of the escalating problem of family violence in South African society.

The fourth world conference on women in Beijing (1995) has led to the realisation that most women all over the world suffer from some kind of discrimination and abuse. The recognition of abuse of women was also reflected by President Mbeki, (Jewkes et.al., 1999) who spoke of the "twilight world of continuous sexual and physical abuse of women and children, which is found in our towns and cities". In so doing, he reflects an increasing recognition in the ranks of the government and many quarters of civil society that battery, rape and other manifestations of women abuse and violence are very common in our country.

The diversity of culture, race, class and regional differences (Volgeman & Eagle, 1991), pose difficulty in offering a universal explanation of violence against women in the South African context. Hence understanding spousal abuse requires an understanding of the cultural context within which battering occurs.

The present chapter will explore the literature relating to factors contributing to abuse with focus on two main theories (that is, feminist and ecosystemic theory). Further, the chapter reviews patterns involved in abusive relationships.

## **2.2. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ABUSE OF WOMEN**

Harway and O'Neil (1999) identify four major factors, or content areas that may hypothetically explain men's violence against women. These factors include (1) macro societal factors, (2) gender role socialization factors, (3) relationship factors and (4) biological factors

### **2.2.1. MACRO SOCIETAL FACTORS**

Macro societal factors are concerned with patriarchal and institutional structures that cause oppression of and violence against women. The macro societal factors include not only the history of violence against

women, but also recent changes in gender roles that may activate men's fear of power loss. According to Marin and Russo (1999), the major question here is, "How does the larger society contribute to men's violence against women?"

Macro societal factors recognise that society is a reflection of culture, a concept that encompasses every aspect of societal functioning including material artefacts, language, beliefs, values, norms, skills and habits as well as customs, laws and institutions. These factors continue to maintain the status quo of women as weak and subservient, and men as powerful and controlling (Harway & O'Neil, 1999). For example, 1769 male employees of the South African National Defence Force from all race groups were asked how much they agreed with a list of 19 statements about women (Salut, 2000).

They reported the following:

- 24.7% of men believe men are better than women are.
- 36.8% of men believe that men should be in charge of women.
- 27.1% of men would hate to have a female boss.
- 41.1% of men believe that wives should do what their husbands tell them to do.
- 46.5% of men believe that it is natural for men to have control over women.



- 54.4% of men believe that men are naturally more violent than women.
- 41.1% of men believe that what men do in their own homes is nobody else's business.
- 39.8% of men believe that a man must do whatever he needs to do to ensure that his wife behaves properly ( Salut, 2000).

The above findings confirm what has long been said about the treatment of women in our society.

Russell (1995) points out that beliefs regarding the self and relationships are central to the way in which intimate relationships are structured. The beliefs of abusive men, therefore, provide the support and direction for their abusive behaviours. Furthermore, the Milan approach postulates that mind is social and reflects social phenomena (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 1997), and that all behavioural problems are seen as inherent to patterns of social interaction. Erasmus (1988) clarifies this view by stating that patterns of social interaction are not direct reflections of an objective social reality, but are cognitive constructions, meanings, beliefs, and attributions about social realities.

According to Harway and O'Neil (1999), traditional patriarchal values in cultures have become reflected in organizational and institutional structures, such as the family. Hence, the unequal power relations



assert and allow control over the weaker party. Most men in their homes might also apply this as the tool for solving problems.

#### 2.2.2. GENDER ROLE SOCIALIZATION FACTORS

The second major group of factors discussed by Harway and O' Neil (1999), are gender role socialization factors. These factors are defined as men's sexist attitudes, emotions, and behaviours learned over the lifespan that cause violence against women. This factor emphasises how men's socialisation experiences led to gender role conflict, misogynistic attitudes, and negative emotions towards women. According to O' Neil and Nadeau (1999), many parents support the masculine mystique and socialize boys into sexist values. Consequently, boys experience great pressure to demonstrate their masculinity in their early years.

Gender role socialisation provides for the transmission of the cultural values of patriarchy, including male entitlement, privilege and domination (Marin & Russo, 1999). Women are the ones who usually carry the burden of fulfilling socialised subjugating roles. The masculine gender role, which is not tied to a specific role context (for example, home or workplace), includes agentic qualities of leadership, power and control (Jasinski & Williams, 1998).

Gender role socialization must also be considered in the context of socialization into the larger culture, because other cultural values may have facilitating or inhibiting effects on gender role dynamics. According to liberal feminism (Saulnier, 1996), battering results from a variety of problems, including the ways that women and men are socialised, with women socialised to be passive and men to be aggressive. Furthermore women and men learn that their respective sex roles are limited, and sometimes the limitations are rigid with men being required to provide economically but constrained from expressing fears and inadequacies (Saulnier, 1996).

Sociologists, Parsons and Bales (Weiner, 1994), regard society as characterised by consensus and argue that the different roles ascribed to men and women may be viewed as functional and necessary in maintaining social order. The belief that prescribed roles are necessary to maintain the smooth functioning of society is still influential in our society. For example, Campbell (1998, p. 70) discusses the experiences of township women in Natal, by making the following observation: "Some women are beaten by men, and while obviously no woman likes to be beaten, many accept violence as an unavoidable part of women's lot". In many cases, dependent women also view abusive behaviour as legitimate. This belief tends to be a norm and contributes to the continuation of abuse of women. The women who do not believe in traditional sex roles or do not comply and perform as expected, may be

at risk of abuse by a man who believes strongly in such roles (Weiner, 1994).

Gender role is essentially a construction of a description of family relations (Russell, 1995). Although the family must accommodate its cultural environment, its members also actively screen, interpret, and modify cultural standards that fit with the family's unique identity and this shape their rules for relating (Bagarozzi & Anderson, 1999). The family's relationship rules and role expectations are further defined by the unique qualities, traits, and abilities (and disabilities) of its individual members (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). Therefore, the context influences the strategies the family develops to manage its daily tasks, regulates the emotional environment, establishes the identity of each member and the family as a whole, and regulates the boundaries between individual members and subsystem, and between the family and the outside world (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1995).

Differential parental behaviour and expectations play a crucial role for men and women even later in life (Weiner, 1994). Campbell (1990) suggested that expectations are sufficiently strong to override existing structural inconsistencies in families, as seen in the following example from her research on township families:

*In female households patriarchal ideals often dominate. In a community, the ideology of a dominant male still holds great weight; a woman might not be accorded the respect and authority that a male would receive in this role. It seems as if many women take the role of household head if they are forced to do so, but as soon as a suitable man is available to fill this role, they stand back and graciously allow him to take over (Campbell, 1990, p. 17).*

O'Neil and Nadeau (1999), believe that few empirical studies have directly assessed how gender role factors contribute to men's battering. The few and inconclusive studies completed have related men's violence against women to traditional gender expectations (Crossman, Stith, & Bender, 1990; Hinch, 1991; Finn, 1996).

### 2.2.3. RELATIONAL AND INTERACTIONAL FACTORS

The third type is called relational and interactional factors that are defined by Harway and O'Neil (1999) as the ongoing interpersonal and verbal interactions between partners, which may cause men's violence against women. This factor emphasises the verbal and emotional communication patterns and experiences between partners that may cause violence against women. It may also include early experiences in



the partner's family of origin where violence was observed or experienced.

Anderson and Schlossberg (1999) believe that there is greater likelihood of individuals who were exposed to violence at an early age to perpetuate this pattern into their adult relationships. This is supported by the fact that, in most cases, the batterers were likely to become caught up in their parents' marital conflicts and to be enlisted by one parent or the other as an ally or a mediator. In contrast, those who did not become batterers as adults were likely to remain disengaged from the family conflict (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1995).

In social interaction, continuous choices are made about how to act, what to say, and so on (Russell, 1995). According to Russell (1995), beliefs provide the complex precodings of behavioural choices. Therefore, abusive men frequently lack awareness of behavioural choices they make and of the influence of their beliefs on these choices. Donald (1995), believe that women learn to be compliant with men's expectations and males learn to control women. This imbalance occasionally gets out of control. Both women and men suffer personally from this, with women often physically enduring the problem.

#### 2.2.4. BIOLOGICAL FACTORS

The biological factors are defined by Harway and O'Neil (1999), as the hormonal and neuroanatomical dimensions of men that cause violence against women. The biological factors include all men's physiological process (such as genetic, endocrine, neurotransmitter and brain dysfunction) that may contribute to men's violence against women.

For Freud, violence and aggression are biologically innate in the human psyche as a means to assume power and control (Sugarman, 1989). However, the need for power and control is not limited to males only but also applies to females. Hence, Adams (1992) concluded that there is no difference in aggression between males and females. He suggested that when a person is offended (whether male or female), aggression and anger often follow and that there are many other factors involved that contribute to abuse.

The biological linear determinism of Freud can be contrasted with the circular biological structure determinism of Maturana (Efran, Lukens & Lukens, 1990). He views humans as structurally closed to information (instructive interaction), and only being able to hear and see according to the determinism of their structures. Efrans et al., (1990) believe that every structured system exists in a medium; it is the structure not the medium that determines how a system will respond to a given



perturbation. Therefore the behaviour of couples in a relationship is determined by their structures and the coupling involved.

Marin and Russo (1999) view biological factors as products of heredity interacting with environment. However, aggressive behaviour is not only caused directly by genetic or biological factors, but these factors can also indirectly influence or modify aggressive behaviour (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994).

Another support for biological causes for aggression comes from research that suggests that the amygdala and the hormone testosterone influence aggression (Bjorkqvist, Nygren, Bjorklund, Bjorkquist, 1994). In addition, testosterone heightens and maintains levels of aggression in men (Booth & Osgood, 1993). Hence, most men who do not have a social conscience can easily resort to violence if conflict is encountered because of their biological make-up. Again research on the relationship between testosterone levels and violence, for example, is extremely controversial. Some research suggests that if the effects of testosterone are compared with those of a placebo, the placebo has a greater effect than the testosterone itself (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994).

Some writers like Jasinski and Williams (1998) suggest a link between blood sugar level and neuro-chemical imbalance that leads to depression, rage and other emotional disturbances. The emphasis on

neurobiology was also highlighted in research conducted by Lindman, von der Pahlen, Ost and Eriksson (1992), whereby a serum analysis of ethanol, testosterone, cortisol, and glucose was done on sixteen men arrested by police after spousal assault incidences. They found elevated levels of ethanol and glucose, low serum testosterone, and high cortisol levels in the arrested men, compared with their sober state later.

Elliot (cited in Campbell, 1998) acknowledged that neuropsychological causes of wife assault are often overlooked. The point is that organic deficits can affect cognition, perceptions, emotions and behaviours. Hence, Elliot (in Campbell, 1998) relates these factors to the occurrence of intimate violence. He also identified other important potential organic causes of violence, including temporal lobe epilepsy and head injuries. In addition, persistent criminal aggressive behaviour, including borderline syndromes, schizophrenia, antisocial personality disorders, and brain defects, might be the causes of intimate violence (Jasisnski & Williams, 1998). Regarding genetic, endocrine, neurotransmitter, and brain dysfunction theories, Harway and O'Neil (1999) concluded that there is little support for a purely genetic basis for violent behaviour. Genetic constitution is subsequently not considered to play a significant role in men's violence toward women. Testosterone is apparently related to aggression in some manner for both men and women. In addition, multiple androgens appear to be involved for women who commit violent acts.

Clearly, biological influences may be strongly implicated in any act of violence, but there is very little indication that genes or hormones that are functioning in normal ranges have any significant differential effect that might explain men's battery of women. Therefore, the notion that testosterone and other hormones explain men's violence toward women, is not supported. However, the data suggest that abnormal brain functioning is often a factor in batterers as well (Harway & O'Neil, 1999).

Feminist theory challenges this determinist, biological perspective by exposing the degree to which the abuse is constructed within and serves to maintain a patriarchal social order (Saulnier, 1996).

### 2.3. PATTERNS OF ABUSE

Despite the existence of wife abuse in all societies, it is assumed that proscriptions and prohibitions about wife abuse exist naturally, and that most normally socialized men therefore experience guilt and remorse if they hurt or injure their wives (Dutton & van Ginkel, 1997). Dutton and van Ginkel (1997) call this 'self punishment', referring to normally learned constraints based on anticipated negative effects of behaviour. In order to neutralise self-punishment, some men learn to blame the woman for the assault, minimizing the effects of the assault

or externalising the cause of the assault on to alcohol or some other agents (Dutton & van Ginkel, 1997). Men who have 'abuse prone' personalities are more likely to adopt beliefs from the ambient culture to justify their abusiveness.

According to Dutton and van Ginkel (1997), the central features of an 'abuse prone' personality are identity diffusion, primitive defences against anxiety and cyclical dysphoria. The primitive defences include 'splitting' or the failure to integrate good and bad aspects of the intimate other. Moreover, projection of unacceptable impulses onto the other, mostly of a sexual and angry nature, makes the intimate other appear to be libidinous and aggressive. Dutton and van Ginkel (1997) found that this personality syndrome was significantly correlated with anger, jealousy and the frequency and severity of both physical and verbal abuse, and that such a personality syndrome is a chronic form of interaction in various relationships. They contend these personalities seek aspects of the ambient culture to justify features of itself. Hence, the primitive defence of 'Splitting', for example, is reinforced by the culturally transmitted belief that Madonna's and whores (Dutton & van Ginkel, 1997) populate the world. Another aspect of the personality, cyclical dysphoria is blamed on some aspect of the woman's behaviour and fortified by the cultural assumption that the woman is responsible for the man's mood.



Therefore, if the aforementioned patterns are correct, then according to Dutton and van Ginkel (1997), a measurable personality dimension of identity and primitive defences should be positively correlated with traditional sex role beliefs and with negative beliefs about women in a variety of cultures.

LaViolette and Barnett (2000) have noted the persistence and the cyclical nature of patterns of marital violence, and have attempted to explain the sequence of behaviours typical in battering relationships using Walker's cycle of violence theory. This theory developed from empirical data indicating that wife abuse follows a predictable three-phase cycle.

The cycle commences with a build up phase marked by increasing tension and minor abusive incidents. This phase may be triggered either by interpersonal factors such as unresolved conflicts within the marital relationship, or perhaps by intrapersonal factors such as work-related stress in the perpetrator. In the early stage, the victim usually attempts to placate the batterer in order to prevent more severe abuse (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000).

In the stand-over phase, the perpetrator relies on superior physical strength to frighten and attempt to control the victim. This phase



generally climaxes in a violent assault upon the partner, after which the conflict is temporarily 'resolved' (Strahan, 1995).

As the batterer enters the next stage, remorse is expressed for the injuries caused, and attempts are made to make amends by various pursuit techniques: flowers, chocolates and promises. Sometimes the batterer becomes fearful of police or legal action.

The relationship then enters a 'honeymoon phase', characterised by a high degree of intimacy and denial of previous difficulties. The batterer's behaviour in this final stage is important as it reinforces the partner's hopes for reform, and influences the victim to remain in the relationship. The cessation of evidence of abuse in the last phase is seen as a reinforcer (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000). At this time, a battered woman receives discernible validation of her identity as the good wife and of her importance to her partner. She (the abused woman) recovers from her battle scars. She recognizes and remembers that abuse is not the only significant aspect of her relationship. She recognizes that she loves him too (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000), that she cares about how he feels, his health, his survival if she leaves, his reputation, and about his life in general. Again, she feels concerned about his relationship with children and with friends and family. In fact, if she has already left him, she may return because of love, but then it happens again (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000).

It appears that both partners may have learned their behaviour from their families of origin (Caesar & Hamberger, 1993). The couple may believe it is the normal or usual way couples react, or they may feel trapped in a 'hopeless' situation without knowing how to break the cycle. For example, the abused woman may act helplessly and give out signals of vulnerability (Geffner, Mantooth, Franks, & Rao., 1989). The man in turn takes out his frustrations on her with abuse and intimidation. Neither sees how he or she may be influencing the other, and the behaviour continues.

The importance of the cycle and mutual interaction of abuse, over and above individual characteristics or personality, is supported by Geffner et al. (1989). Their research findings seem to indicate that these men and women have certain characteristics in common. These characteristics are low self-esteem, stereotyped views of sex-roles (patriarchal family structure, male power), lack of emotional expressiveness, social isolation, employment problems, moodiness, alcohol use, hostility and abuse in the family of origin.

Therefore according to LaViollette and Barnett (2000), treatment should attempt to change the relationship and the patterns of interacting, in addition to the various behaviours and attitudes of those involved.

## 2.4. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ABUSE

Conway (1997) suggests that no single theoretical perspective is wholly adequate to the task of providing a complete explanation of male violence against women in the family. Theory in this area is still primitive and specific theories on violence against women are in the early stages of development (Harway & O'Neil, 1999). In addition, their analyses are limited by a specific discipline's theoretical approach. Furthermore, theories of violence are developed in reaction to the dominant paradigms of the time. In the present study, the researcher has considered two main perspectives, the ecosystemic and feminist approaches. Each of these theoretical approaches seems to capture certain essential trends (such as culture, family and social structures) and attempt to explain different aspects of abuse of women by their partners.

### 2.4.1. ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

As the term *ecosystemic* implies, this approach presupposes a way of looking at human functioning where the focus is on a system, and where ecological and cybernetic principles provide the point of departure (Moore, 1997).

Cybernetics (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) refers to the principles that regulate the dissemination of information or messages. The first form of cybernetics is known as first order cybernetics, which emphasises the observation of patterns and different ways in which events, experiences or phenomena are organised (Fourie, 1996). The assumption is that the observer can take up a position outside the observed system. The influence of cybernetics is clearly apparent in the ecosystemic approach because it stresses relations and connections, and highlights the study of interactional, recursive patterns between and within systems (Johnson, 1993).

The proponents of cybernetics of cybernetics, known as the second order cybernetics (Moore, 1997), point out that the observations in first order cybernetics are not objective, but are coloured by the observer's behaviour and how he or she observes. Cybernetics of cybernetics is therefore a move from cybernetics of an observed system to that of an observing system (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Meyer et.al., 1997).

Constructivists in ecosystem approach believe that people create their 'realities' through the meanings they link to what they observe (Meyer et.al., 1997). From a constructivist point of view, there can be no question of one correct, objective truth or reality. What a person observe does not, therefore have an independent, objective meaning, but takes on the meaning that the observer attributes to it. Bateson (in Becvar &



Becvar, 1996) concern is that there is no fixed objective reality and that we cannot claim final knowledge of anything, but will rather always be exposed to an infinite number of alternatives. This means a particular behaviour may be interpreted in many different ways and no one interpretation is necessarily more correct than any other.

The observer, who acts in accordance with his or her reality and looks for corroboration of that reality (Meyer et al., 1997), creates reality. There need not necessarily be consensus about the realities that develop among members of the system. When there is consensus about an observation, Maturana (in Meyer et al., 1997) maintains that this occurs because a *consensual domain* in language has come into being among observers.

The ecosystemic approach also recognises the important role played by the language a person uses when assigning meaning. In fact, this approach holds that meaning exists solely in verbal or non-verbal language, which the person reveals to himself or herself through internal dialogue, or to others through external dialogue (Efran & Lukens, 1988; Fourie, 1996). Following this, Bateson (in Becvar & Becvar, 1996) acknowledges language as a vehicle through which all meaning is created. According to Bateson, language stresses only one side of any interaction and it is through language that we transform reality in order to construct explanations. According to Moore (1997),



the arbitrary nature of language is a subjective description of a reality that can never be objectively known. Language is a social construction, which offers us meaning. Any understanding or co-constructed meanings that we do come to, (Moore, 1997) are 'arbitrary punctuations' and 'partial arcs' of a complete recursive whole.

The reality which is co-constructed in a system cannot be just anything. It has to fit with the ideas which the participants have about themselves, about each other, about the problem and about the world in general (Moore, 1997). The combination of diverse viewpoints or realities provides depth, relevance, and greater understanding. Some of the basic tenets of systemic theory that relate to women abuse, will be discussed here.

#### 2.4.1.1. Contextual factors related to partner abuse

The concept *context* refers to that which enables us to achieve a holistic understanding. As Bateson put it: (Becvar & Becvar, 1996 p. 72),"Context is linked to another undefined notion called meaning. Without context, words and actions have no meaning at all". Ecosystem perspectives view violence as one of many possible responses perceived to be appropriate within a particular interactional context (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). The context defines how we are to relate to one another. Thus, a change in context usually means a change in the rules of the

relationship. This is supported by the basic premise of Watzlawick's theory of communication (Becvar & Becvar, 1996) that a phenomenon cannot be understood completely without examination of the context in which it occurs and is embedded.

Therefore, a person's behaviour is consistent with, but not determined by, its context (Moore, 1997). On the level of the family, the context for individual behaviour is the organised perception of the family in an individual's mind. This emphasises the notion that behaviour is dependent upon the meaning of events rather than upon events themselves (Meyer et al., 1997). Following the above, if an action is interpreted as successful in a certain situation, it is likely to be repeated in similar circumstances, thus forming a pattern (Sugarman, 1989).

System theories also emphasise an interpersonal perspective that focuses upon the social and relational contexts and the unique patterns of interaction that recur within relationships (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). This means that abuse is viewed as a system product rather than as the result of individual pathology. Therefore a systemic perspective is relational and the focus is on the context, without which behaviour cannot be fully understood.

#### 2.4.1.2. Interaction patterns associated with abuse

According to a systemic perspective relationships are characterised by redundant patterns of interaction (Moore, 1997), and it is this interaction that provides the context of a relationship. Thus, two individuals relating together are not independent of each other; they mutually influence one another. The family members, through a process of communicative interaction, will then construct a social reality to describe that pattern, and this cognitive map will then guide future interaction patterns.

Systems theorists assess relationships and label family members according to their characteristic patterns of interaction, rather than assessing individuals and assigning to them labels such as abusive, dominant, submissive, and aggressive (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). The pattern is based on relationship styles, that is one of dominance and submission (complementary), similar kinds of behaviour (symmetrical), and mutual responsibility (parallel). For example, some spouses are described as battered because their submissive behaviour frustrates the dominant spouse and results in an escalation of the partner's growing anger (Loring, 1994).

Systemic therapy therefore depicts family violence as an interactive process between partners locked in a pattern of mutual behaviour and

responses. This means that relationship styles are either complementary, symmetrical or parallel, viewing both partners as responsible for the abusive interactions.

According to systemic therapists, the initial battering incident is rooted in a pattern learned in the past (Lawson, 1989). Thereafter the abusive behaviour is maintained and made predictable by a system of developing family rules. The pattern develops and continues because it serves a function, such as maintaining the system (Lawson, 1989).

A battering response becomes part of the family's established interactional pattern because it may have served an initial purpose (for example, tension reduction) and because of the tendency of a system to maintain pattern stability (Jasinski & Williams, 1998).

The escalatory nature of the abusing cycle is maintained by mutual reactions between spouses in that submissiveness by one spouse promotes further assertiveness in another. Hence battering attempts to placate and thus please the abusive spouse but also promotes greater escalation and oscillation of violence (Lawson, 1989).

Central to ecosystemic theory is the notion of feedback processes (Weiner, 1994). The circular nature of feedback loops is evident in the idea that information about the system comes back into the system, in



the form of positive and negative feedback (Moore, 1997). For example, the successful use of violence or developing a self-concept of being "tough" results in an increasing spiral of violence. A negative feedback process results in the stabilisation or diminution of violence or brings no change. When feedback gives rise to changes in the system, it is known as positive feedback (Moore, 1997).

The term perturbation is used to refer to the fluctuations in a system. Perturbation therefore represents a thorough disturbance, and in the ecosystemic approach, it is associated with the disturbances or agitation of the interaction patterns within and between systems.

In a case of abuse, the family system experiences a powerful perturbation. Following this, the way in which the family members interact (which may include emotional, cognitive, and behavioural elements), may present an entirely new equilibrium (Moore, 1997).

#### 2.4.1.3. Communication in the family

Communication and information processing are at the core of systems thinking. In terms of the systemic approach, all behaviour is therefore seen as communication or information, and information flow is seen as the basic process of social systems such as family (Becvar & Becvar,



1996). Hence, overt verbal hostility and passive aggression are seen as precursors to battering (O'Leary, Malone & Tyree, 1994).

Communication in abusive families is often thought of as unclear, inconsistent, high on "shoulds" and "oughts", highly critical of other family members and transmits little information (Geffner et al., 1989). When both husband and wife are deficient in communication ability, and the husband is in a less powerful position, there is greater risk of battering (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). The more one partner communicates fear, guilt, weaknesses and helplessness, the worse the situation becomes.

One of the principles of communication in ecosystemic thinking is that all behaviour in the context of others has a message value (Becvar & Becvar, 1996, p 35). As Watzlawick outlined, "Even sitting silently and not moving, conveys a message to an observer" (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Systems theories hold that both husbands and wives in violent marriages enact fewer positive behaviours (approval, accepting responsibility, smiling and paraphrasing) and greater levels of disagreement, criticism, and put downs than do partners in non-violent marriages (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). Such partners according to Anderson and Schlossberg (1999), are more likely to exhibit rigid patterns of interaction in which hostile, angry behaviours by one

partner would trigger hostile responses by the other spouse (Jacobson, Gottman, & Short., 1994).

Anderson and Schlossberg (1999) emphasised that poor communication and poor problem solving skills may contribute to a in escalation of verbal conflict and physical aggression. According to Anderson and Schlossberg (1999), wives in such relationships are more likely to 'fight back,' given the less severe nature of the marital problems and the generally lower level of physical danger, hence the escalation of abuse.

#### 2.4.1.4. The handling of conflict

From an ecosystemic framework, there would be no attempt to suggest universally valid causes or explanation of conflict, aggression, and abuse within and between systems. The meaning of abuse and the handling of conflict could only be explored within a given context (Moore, 1997).

In the family, for example, it would have to be established who behaves abusively towards whom; how this behaviour is displayed and in what circumstances; what the effect is on other members of the family; and what meaning is assigned to abuse in the family, so that the 'story of abuse ' can be explored in the system, and alternative realities

generated or discovered in which destructive behaviour does not have to play a role (Meyer et.al., 1997).

The systems perspective is inconsistent with the fact that conflict is inevitable in any intimate relationship. According to Anderson and Schlossberg (1999), it is not the presence of conflict that distinguishes the battering relationship from other relationships. It is also the myriad of tasks that must be managed (parenting, work, household, and financial) and the differences in spousal expectations that provide many opportunities for misunderstandings, disagreements, and conflicts to occur.

The critical factor is how conflict is negotiated within the relationship (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). Couples differ in the degree to which their strategies are effective or ineffective in managing conflict (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1995). Positive strategies promote mutual understanding, resolve differences, and foster intimacy. Destructive strategies are orientated toward "winning at all costs" or exerting non-legitimate control over another therefore result in aggression (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1995).

The systems perspective assumes that partners in a battering relationship lack the necessary skills for constructively handling the conflict (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). This combined with contextual

factors such as family-of-origin experiences, attitudes towards violence as acceptable and substance abuse increases the risk of battering. Therefore, violence escalates as a result of failed attempts to resolve conflicts through less negative strategies (Harway & O'Neil, 1999).

This theory offers some explanation for woman abuse but there are some limitations that will be dealt with after the feminist perspective has been discussed.

#### 2.4.2. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Feminism is composed of two main schools of thought. That is, the socialist and the radical. Radical feminists are united by the idea that the struggle for women's liberation is primarily against men, genders issues and patriarchy. The proponents of feminism also argue that a patriarchal social structure necessarily leads to the subordination of women, and therefore contributes to a historical pattern of systematic violence towards women (Sanchez-Hucles & Dutton, 1999).

Socialist feminists see feminism as the human face of socialism, and are convinced that it is crucial to understand the relationship between economic forces and injustice to women (Saulnier, 1996). The socialist feminists' and liberal feminists' view of family violence are closely related to radical feminists, in that they share an emphasis on socio-



economic structures, which entrench male domination by virtue of their control of professional, educational and financial resources.

Although feminist thought embraces many disciplines and perspectives, a distinct body of analysis concerning woman abuse can be identified as feminist. Specifically, feminist analysis has, as its central core, the premise that women abuse is an expression and a mechanism of the institutional oppression of women (Kirkwood, 1993). According to this approach, women are systematically and structurally controlled by men within a culture that is designed to benefit and meet the needs of men (Conway, 1997). Thus, the meaning of male violence against women, including women abuse and battering, cannot be addressed through the perspectives of individualisation or relationship dynamics. The extent and rigidity of social structures, which underlie battering, have been identified through two main approaches: that which focuses on women's position within the family, and that which investigates violence against women in general (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999).

Important aspects of feminist thinking that are relevant to the problem of women abuse, are discussed in the following section.

#### 2.4.2.1. The role of the family.

The family is perceived to be the primary arena in which women suffer because of their sex. The argument is that the benefits of the traditional family are reaped primarily by men and children (Sugarman, 1989). Whilst remaining a powerful metaphor for the ideals of intimacy, commitment, nurturance and collectivity, these benefits actually depend on the oppression of women within the family.

Different theories such as functionalism (Meyer et al., 1997) views certain societal structures (such as the family) as important because they serve essential functions, be they biological, psychological, individual or social functions. Kirkwood (1993) describes the nuclear family as being one structure, which was created to serve these essential functions. However, feminists argue that, rather than existing because it serves an essential function, the nuclear family may be maintained and enforced by a system of patriarchy, which serves to grant men greater power over women (Conway, 1997). Therefore, the family acts as a mirror of the outside (patriarchal) world. This system of control designates the fact that roles, purposes, activities and labour are defined sexually. Patriarchy expresses the notion that the biological distinction of male and female can be used to distinguish social functions and individual power (Davey, 1994). Feminists argue that such a division is not inherently functional, rather it serves the purpose

of keeping women economically dependent on men and in a lower position of economic power than men. In this way it has, in fact, secured the existence of the family (Kirkwood, 1993).

LaViolette and Barnett (2000) believe that old stereotypes of socialisation are intact, although times have changed. They view families, especially mothers and fathers, as still struggling with the obligations and restrictions of their sex role. Although both parents may share the breadwinner role somewhat, they do not equally share the nurturing and domestic duties. Therefore conflict arises not only from daily hassles and workloads, but also from power struggles and the challenge of changing sex role expectations (Levant, 1995). Hence, marital harmony is difficult when one lives in a democratic country and in an autocratic home.

Sugarman (1989) suggests that the inequalities of sex roles in the family cause conflict within the family, that the family structure is further threatened by the external struggle of an expanding capitalist economy and the often contradictory pressures to sustain patriarchal privileges. For this reason, the violent family provides the feminists with a point of departure to see how the family is created or reproduced in the final instance, when one member tries to escape playing the family game.

#### 2.4.2.2. Socio-cultural and gender roles

The feminist position goes beyond the marital dyad in taking into account and defining environmental influences that affect the individual (Sugarman, 1989). It examines the conditions in society in general that have led to the maintenance of stereotyped behaviour within the family, not just internal relationships.

Feminists see wife abuse as a logical expression of an oppressive social system. Sev'er (1997) believes that violence and the threat of violence are gendered social acts that establish and maintain the control of men over women (as well as over other men). They believe that support for these acts is built into culture and socialization in many, if not most societies (Lempert, 1996).

According to Weiner (1994), wife abuse should be regarded as sociological or social-psychological, because the roots of wife abuse are located at the roots of the patriarchal structure of society, in which unequal gender relations exist. Weiner (1994) also believes that the patriarchal structure is supported and maintained by ideology that includes religion, legal systems, and the socialization process that prepares men and women for their position in marriage. Cultural factors are defined as the traditions, norms, philosophies, values, expectations, and behaviours that characterise racial and ethnic groups. These



cultural factors relate to a group versus an individual orientation, religious values, gender role expectations, tensions and strains, cultural stereotypes, and practices in which violence is denied, minimised, or tolerated in ethnic minority communities (Sanchez-Hucles & Dutton, 1999).

Rwezaura (1996) emphasises that the concept of gender itself is socially constructed, and abuse or any violations, are usually connected with local customs or culture and the prevailing social belief systems of the community. She continues to note that women are discriminated against at early stages in their lives.

One of the cultural practices that lower the social status of the girl-child in the family is the custom that daughters are expected to be married into other families, and parents rely on male children and their offspring for material support, particularly during their old age (Rwezaura, 1996). There is therefore a great demand for male progeny in these societies. Such demands in turn account for the existence of social practices, such as polygamy and widow inheritance that are primarily (but not exclusively) designed to maximise the opportunity for men to have sons (Rwezaura, 1996).

According to Rwezaura (1996), the practice of son-preference is usually a system of a deeper form of discrimination that is perpetuated against

the girl-child. Such discrimination is rooted in patrilineal cultures that depend on sons for the transmission of family property and family name. Lineage continuity and succession on death of the parent are some of the reasons why families greatly desire to have male children. In a study of 898 villages around the world, Donald (1995) found that males were usually given priority over females in the family food distribution system.

These cultural beliefs and practices are also responsible for the denial of inheritance rights to women in most societies. In addition, in cultures where the woman's family (on the daughters' marriage) pays a large dowry, the potential economic burden on her family has a dampening effect on the enthusiasm of families to have female children. As might be expected, in order for such cultures to survive and reproduce themselves, children are socialised from an early age to adapt to their socially determined positions. Whereas boys, for example, are taught to be aggressive and dominant, girls are socialised to be submissive and to accept without question their inferior position in society as a natural order of things. Within the home, a girl-child will be required to assist her mother in gendered household tasks, while boys will be free, much like their fathers, to engage in play or to do their school homework, thus improving on their formal education prospects (Rwezaura, 1996).

#### 2.4.2.3. Patriarchy and the economic position of a woman in society

Patriarchy is defined by both radical and social feminists as a sexual system of power in which the male possesses superior power and privilege (Davey, 1994). Patriarchy plays an important role in capitalist, economic and social processes that support a societal and family structure (Sev'er, 1997).

Feminist resource theory is concerned with economic discrimination against women in society (Weiner, 1994). Proponents of this theory argue that the more economically independent a battered woman is, the more likely it is that she will be able to leave the abusive relationship (Weiner, 1994).

Abbott and Wallace (1991) associate power in a marriage with the contribution of money to the household and with controlling finances within it. However, according to Abbott and Wallace (1991), the ideology has the power either to mitigate or to exacerbate structural inequality. An ideology that stresses the sharing of resources serves to conceal the structurally weak position of those who do not earn (Finn, 1996). An ideology of separateness in financial matters strengthens the position of those who earn, by comparing them with those who do not. The continuing influence of patriarchy is underlined by the fact that it

seems much more acceptable for women than men to be economically powerless (Sev'er, 1997), whenever the sharing of resources conceals possible male powerlessness.

According to Abbott and Wallace (1991), households where there was no joint account, and where the husband controlled finances, were characterised by high levels of male dominance in decision-making and greater marital unhappiness, especially wife abuse. Therefore, according to LaViolette and Barnett (2000), women often put up with men's violence because they see no acceptable alternative because of economic dependence on their husbands. Erez and Belknap (1998) conclude that the women who decide to return to their abusive relationship perceive their alternatives within the marriage more rewarding and less costly than their alternatives outside the marriage.

However, Conway (1997) believes that most battered women tend to come from poor, economically stressed families, and the men who batter them, tend to be poorly paid and only irregularly employed. Sanchez-Hucles and Dutton (1999) assume that violence (like other deviant behaviour) is unevenly distributed in the social structure, and is more frequent in the lower socio-economic strata. It is further postulated that the people living at this end of the socio-economic scale suffer more frustrations and that they frequently respond to these frustrations with violence. Even when battered women are employed, their abusers have



a negative impact on their performance. In a survey of working women (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000), battering resulted in absenteeism from work in more than half of the women, lateness or leaving early in nearly two thirds, job loss in about one forth, and job harassment in more than half.. According to the women's reports, abusers also prohibited or discouraged them from working, from attending school and from actually obtaining a job (Dutton et al., 1997).

#### 2.4.2.4. The role of religion

Feminists believe that religion also plays a role in maintaining and keeping most religious women in abusive relationships. For example, Brown (1994) emphasised that violence against women is more possible in situations where the church's teaching and practice legitimise the inferior status of women in comparison to men. Brown (1994) views the issue of abuse as initiated and supported by religious beliefs. According to Brown (1994), the survivors of abuse are victims who question: "What did I do to deserve this? I must be bad and wicked, for God to punish me so." Some women remain in an abusive relationship – torn, broken and self-hate. Further Fiorenza and Copeland (1994) believes that some pastors, church ministers and clergy tend to disbelieve or blame the abused women who come to them for help, because the sanctity of marriage and family is more valuable to them than the sanctity of life. Therefore more often they would probably send women back into

abusive situations with exhortations of obedience. Therefore, the basic Christian belief and principles regarding sin and guilt, sexuality, authority issues, suffering and forgiveness create blocks to successful healing and ending the cycle of abuse.

Fiorenza and Copeland (1994) pointed out four essential traditional theological discourses, which are major roadblocks in the way of abused women who seek to change their situations:

*First* there are the kyriarchal discourses of subordination that demand submission and obedience not only from freeborn women, wives and children, but also from servants, slaves and barbarians – both women and men. These discourses prohibit divorce and encourage Christian doctrine of male headship and patriarchal authority, which legitimises the exclusion of women from ordained ministries. This therefore makes it impossible to resist abuse by marital and ecclesiastical ‘heads of households’, by natural or spiritual ‘fathers’

*Secondly*, Fiorenza and Copeland (1994) refer to the book of second letter of Paul (Corinthians). The book refers to the image of marriage between Christ and the church and associates it with the deception of Eve (II Corinth. 11.2-3). Accordingly, Fiorenza and Copeland (1994) believes that this verse prescribes the silence of women and prohibits

women's authority over men by claiming that not Adam but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor (I Tim. 2.11-15).

Hence, the cultural pattern of making the victims of abuse feel guilty and responsible for their victimisation has religious roots (Fiorenza & Copeland, 1994). She emphasises that such theological discourses of victimisation have either stressed women's sinfulness and culpability or their failure to measure up to the feminine ideal of 'faith, love and holiness with modesty'. In both cases, the victimised and not the victimiser are held responsible.

*Thirdly*, Fiorenza and Copeland (1994) refer to the book of Phillipians 2.verse 8, which commands 'obedience to death' as strongly followed by those suffering from abuse. She views the Christian principles of trusting God, the Father, and belief in redemption through the suffering and death of Christ as the heart of the Christian faith. By ritualising the suffering and death of Jesus, and by calling the powerless in society to imitate his perfect obedience and self sacrifice, Christian ministry does not interrupt but continues to foster the cycle of violence engendered by kyriarchal as well as by cultural and political discourses (Fiorenza & Copeland, 1994).

*Fourthly*, Fiorenza and Copeland argues that when Christian values (such as love and forgiveness) are preached to women and subordinated

men, they re-enforce and sustain relations of domination and accept domestic and sexual violence. Hence, according to Fiorenza and Copeland (1994), scriptural texts and Christian ethics often maintain the cycle of violence by preventing resistance to it. For instance, battered wives who believe that divorce is against God's will, cannot but remain in a violent marriage relationship for "better and for worse".

## 2.5.ADVANTAGES AND LIMITATIONS OF THEORIES ON ABUSE

The systems approach to understanding battering has been severely criticized, particularly by feminist writers who charge that it obscures the seriousness of the abuse suffered by women (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). By assuming a non-linear, or non-blaming stance toward all members of the system, the batterer is absolved of full responsibility and the wife is viewed as "co-responsible for the battering (O'Neil & Harway, 1999)". In addition, feminist writers point out that gender roles are central to the functioning of the family and are inseparable from the broader social, political, and cultural contexts (Gelles, 1993).

Family system theories are believed to have failed to attend to the power and status differentials that exist between men and women, both within



broader culture and within the family system. Finn (1996) believes that ecosystemic thinking and postmodernism circulates with most ease and authority in academic spheres and is well representative of and among men, taking its bearings exclusively from the authority of men. According to Finn (1996), systems thinking and postmodernism do not take gender into account, that is, sexual difference and the difference it makes, neither in its use of language nor in its problematic: the history, culture, man, and civilisation that it presumes to be constitutive of the (post) modern world.

These criticisms have made important contributions to the understanding of battering as discussed by Anderson and Schlossberg (1999). For instance, most family theorists and therapists now hold the view that men must be held fully responsible for their violent behaviours (Sprenkle, 1994). In addition, most family therapists now advocate gender-specific treatment for male batterers and their partners (Gelles & Maynard, 1995; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992).

Anderson and Schlossberg (1999) pointed out that one of the strengths of the ecosystemic approach is that the blaming/nonblaming distinction is inconsistent with the systems perspective, which is more concerned with "how persons are involved in battering relationship" than with "who is to blame". The systems perspective does not absolve batterers of responsibility for their violence nor does it blame the victim (Sprenkle,

1994). However, it does take into account the complex set of influences that define each interpersonal encounter and holds each partner responsible for any actions that contribute to abusive interaction.

Since system theory rejects the idea of unilateral control, its proponents have been severely criticised for failing to acknowledge the realities of the power relationships that characterise patriarchal society (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Power is considered *legitimate* when the authority of a partner over a given sphere is negotiated within the relationship and agreed upon by both parties. It is considered *nonlegitimate* when it involves efforts to control the other partner or aspects of the relationship without the authority to do so having been agreed upon by both partners. From systems perspectives, power is not a property of a person nor is it an inevitable by-product of a particular social or cultural context (Anderson & Sabatelli, 1995). Rather, power is determined by a variety of contextual variables (for example, societal norms, public policy, availability of economic resources, family-of-origin experiences, and outcome of the couple's previous interactions). These factors explain the individual batterer's violent actions and the partner's response. Both participants are viewed as exerting interpersonal power (influencing or attempting to influence the other) and both are, at the same time, influenced by external forces over which they have limited or no control (Dell, 1989). As Dell (1989) noted, this is perhaps both the strength and limitation of system perspectives. They provide us with an

important conceptual tool, but they provide no help in defining the causes of oppression, status inequality, gender discrimination, or family violence.

In the South African context, academic and theoretical perspective on violence and abuse of women tend to rely on contemporary feminist analysis (Volgeman & Eagle, 1991; Simpson, 1992; Vetten, 1996; Tswaranang Update, 1998). The adoption of the slogan "the personal is political" was incorporated into feminism (Finn, 1996) because radical feminists argued that individual women's experiences of injustice and the miseries that women think of as a personal problems are actually political issues, grounded in sexist power imbalances (Saulnier, 1996).

One major critique of the feminists is that they think of battering or abuse in terms of men battering women and the failure to acknowledge that women can also internalise violence as a means of solving problems (Saulnier, 1996). Socialist feminism has also been criticised for failing to address racism. Saulnier (1996, p.55) insisted that it ignores the fact that the psychology and economics of black women and men are "qualitatively and culturally different from those of whites". Because the history of sexual inequality is quite different for blacks and whites, its current manifestation differs, as should the strategies for change (Saulnier, 1996). For example, when Richie (1996) interviewed a group of black and white abused women, she found out that black women



used repeated reference to their race/ethnicity as a way to establish a frame of reference about community norms, family values, and their experiences in the social world.

Stoppard (2000) believes that the most notable flaws of radical feminism are its color-blindness, class blindness, and heterosexism (Saulnier, 1996). The declaration that we will always take the side of women against their oppressors ignores the reality of women's sometimes oppositional interest (Joseph, 1996). Many women do not define their best interests solely or primarily along sex or gender lines.

Regardless of the above criticisms, feminists continue with their standpoint that in all forms of violence between intimates, men are most likely to be perpetrators and women are most likely to be the targets (Marin & Russo, 1999). Furthermore, they believe that the socio-cultural context shapes, fosters, and encourages the use of violence to maintain inequitable power relationships in the workplace, home, and in the community (O'Neil & Harway, 1999).

Feminists writing and theorising have qualitatively changed the way researchers and scientists conceptualize and study the many forms of male violence against women (Marin & Russo, 1999). Early researchers have criticised feminists for emphasizing the social construction of male violence, and not the biology or pathology of the individual (Dutton &



van Ginkel, 1997). Radical feminists suggest that men become oppressors not by virtue of biology, but by rationalizing supremacy on the basis of biological difference (Saulnier, 1996).

An essential contribution of feminist analyses has been the development of more complex and sophisticated conceptualisation of multiple forms of violence (Koss, Russo, & Goodman, 1995). In addition to partner violence, these forms include rape, sexual abuse, torture, and sexual harassment (Marin & Russo, 1999).

Feminists have made violence and abuse of women a central issue in the women's movement around the world. They have organized shelters, developed public education programs, advocated new laws, and policies, promoted change in the criminal justice and health care systems, and fostered the development of a new knowledge base that reflects the realities of diverse women's lives (Edwards, 1991; Koss, Russo & Goodman, 1995; Marin & Russo, 1999).

## 2.6. CONCLUSION

This chapter explores literature on dynamic factors and patterns of abuse and the implications of theories on these factors. The forms and patterns of abuse are not the same for all families experiencing abuse.

The cycle of violence associated with the battered woman syndrome may be typical only of the more severe form of intimate violence.

The major assumption held in common by ecosystemic theorists concern the primary importance of the cognitive construction of reality, reality construction as a process, the idea that social system evolve, and the circular epistemology (Becvar & Becvar, 1996). Systems theories do not address the linear notion of cause and effect. Thus, they are more concerned with "how" persons are involved in a battering relationship, rather than with "who is to blame." A systems perspective does not absolve the abusers of responsibility for their violence nor does it blame the victim (Sprenkle, 1994). However, it does take account the complex set of influences that define each interpersonal encounter and holds each partner responsible for any actions that contribute to abusive interactions.

Feminist theories point out that gender roles are central to the functioning of the family and are inseparable from the broader social, political, and cultural contexts. Issues that feminists attribute to the abuse of women include among others economic dependency, patriarchal, social and religious practices. As a result an abused woman finds little institutional support for leaving an abusive relationship. The next chapter describes the research process and the methods used in the present study.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Moon, Dillon and Sprenkle (1991, p. 188), methodology is the nitty gritty pragmatics of research - exactly how one goes about a particular investigation or refers to the rules of doing. This chapter therefore addresses the rules followed in the study, which includes research design and method of study.

#### 3.2. METHOD AND DESIGN

Two major approaches to psychological research, quantitative and qualitative, were identified as a result of the nineteenth-century debates about the source of 'truth' (Grbich, 1999). According to Grbich (1999), quantitative researchers presume that there is a singular material 'reality' that exists independently 'out there'. 'Truth' can be found by applying the proposition that measurable influences (independent variables) affect measurable outcomes (dependent variables) in a cause-effect manner. These variables can be expressed numerically and processed by statistical analysis to determine relationships between

phenomena (Grbich, 1999). Most qualitative researchers believe that 'truth' lies in gaining an understanding of the actions, beliefs and values of others, from within the participant's frame of reference. This frame of reference is believed to be socially and historically constructed, and to be delimited by the researcher's views, context and time. Other qualitative researchers see truth lying in the reality constructed by the interaction of the researcher and the researched. Keeney and Morris (cited in Moore, 1997) rejected the assumption of one correct, objective reality and accepted instead that a multitude of realities exists side by side. This means that research is not an attempt to reveal the truth about a reality or to determine whether a particular representation of the reality is true or correct. It is an exploration of different realities.

The quantitative view was particularly dominant during the twentieth-century, but currently both quantitative and qualitative methods are dominant and viewed as complementary and synergistic (Moon et al., 1990), as both offer valuable research perspectives. They are reciprocally related in the sense that when one is being considered thematically, the other is instrumentally present in a more hidden way. If one asks a quantitative question, then one should employ a quantitative procedure (Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner & McCormack-Steinmetz, 1991) and if the question is qualitative then a qualitative procedure should be used. While quantification is concerned with prediction, control, measurement and frequency of variables, qualitative



research tends not to isolate variables, preferring instead to look for patterns. The emphasis is on the patterns, which are made by variables rather than the individual variable itself (Lodge-Peters, 1988). In other words, the researcher aggregates rather than disaggregates data.

It was decided to adopt a qualitative approach for the present study because qualitative research attends to experience as a whole, not as separate variables, since the aim of qualitative research is to understand experience as unified (Ely et al., 1991). The aim of the present study is to explore factors contributing to patterns of abuse, which 'fit' within the qualitative domain. The study meets Karlsson's (1993) three basic criteria that make a study qualitative:

- The data is qualitative, in other words it consists of transcribed interviews.
- Analysis of the data is qualitative and interpretive.
- The results are presented in qualitative way (not in a statistical manner).

In keeping with qualitative research, the qualitative researcher attempts to approach the data without a priori assumptions, but instead searches for underlying laws or principles that seem to explain (not predict) human behaviours and actions (Osborne, 1994). The qualitative

approach aims at "viewing the meaning of experience and behaviour in context" and in its full complexity (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, p.99). Therefore the qualitative approach examines descriptions of experiences and behaviour in context, and then interprets the meaning of these experiences and behaviour without trying to control the variables involved. The qualitative approach emphasises discovery, description and meaning (Karlsson, 1992; Osborne, 1994).

Cresswell (1994) describes five assumptions of qualitative research. The first assumption is that the focus of research is on the process and not on the outcome or product. Secondly, the interest is placed on meaning, that is, how people make sense of their lives and experiences, and how they structure their worlds. Thirdly, the mode of inquiry may involve fieldwork, depending on the nature of the study whereby the researcher physically goes to people, settings, sites or institutions to observe and record the behaviour. Fourthly, the process, meaning, and understanding are gained through words and pictures. Lastly, the inquiry is done in such a way that a researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses and theories from details, thus making the inquiry inductive. The above assumptions underpin the epistemological framework followed in the present study.

### 3.2.1. EPISTEMOLOGY

The ecosystemic model stresses relations and connections and highlights the study of interactional, recursive patterns between and within systems (Moore, 1997). That is, the researcher who studies the patterns of an abusive relationship, will keep in mind that the focus is not simply on the ideas the woman has about her partner but on the interactional patterns between them and other family members. The researcher is not regarded as an observer, but as a participant in the interaction processes within the system that is being investigated (Moore, 1997). The research process is therefore seen as the dialectic between experiencing and explanation or description, where one feeds back recursively into the other (Johnson, 1993). Although the researcher can make a particular punctuation, and focus on, say, the abuse of women, he/she keeps in mind that other punctuations, which could include larger or smaller systems, are also possible. The researcher is therefore interested in the interactions between and within systems - in the patterns that connect - and not separate entities (Moore, 1997). In line with the above, the goal of qualitative research methods is a deeper understanding of the human behaviour rather than a search for the absolute truth (Kirschenbaum & Henderson, 1990). One can thus never expect to find an absolute truth emerge from a description, as each story is only but a story about a story which emphasises the fact that, that which is observed changes through the

act of being observed (Moore, 1997). What the participants observe does not, therefore, have an independent, objective meaning, but takes on the meaning that the observer attributes to it. That is, both participant and researcher are expected to change through the act of narrating and experiencing the told stories (Moore, 1997).

### 3.2.2. PHENOMENOLOGY

Franz Brentano (cited in Viljoen, 1997) held that psychology should be defined as the study of psychological process, which originates with the human will. In view of the fact that the will, or "intentionality" cannot be studied by means of an experimental methodology, Brentano (Viljoen, 1997) adopted the descriptive qualitative method to the study of psychological phenomena. He is the founder of the phenomenological approach in psychology. This approach uses description as a means of trying to understand psychological phenomena rather than trying to find causal links between them in order to explain them. Following this, Osborne (1994) found that most qualitative methods had a phenomenological component. The phenomenological approach, as it is relevant to the present study, relies more on conscious expression of subjective experience than on what is generally known about the phenomenon under study. It attempts to explore conscious experience or accounts given by participants and places value on a person's subjective account of his/her experience (Osborne, 1994).



Mental acts in phenomenology are characterized by intentionality (Karlsson, 1993). Moustakas (1994) refers to intentionality as consciousness of the internal experience of being conscious of something. Therefore, the acts of consciousness are intentionally related. Intentionality (Grbich, 1999) encompasses the means by which an established world of objects or established way of seeing is brought into being. For example, most women do not realise that they are in abusive relationships until they see educational programs on television or radio, attend support groups or any women's movement. Intentionality also refers to the way the researcher uses these established objects and ways of seeing to judge and analyse experiences (Grbich, 1999).

Coupled with intentionality is 'meaning'. Whatever a person holds in conscious awareness has meaning to her/him (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative inquiry is also concerned with meaning that influences the patterns of behaviour and action. For example, some abused women believe that being beaten is an indication of love. On the other hand, some men believe that culturally they are allowed to beat their wives and treat them as children. Therefore the meaning a person attaches to a phenomenon or an experience is determined by the person, and not by the phenomenon or experience itself (Moore, 1997). For example, the participants and not what is generally known to constitute abuse determine the meaning or experience of abuse. As Karlsson (1992, p.

418) puts it, "the intentional character of consciousness is precisely this bestowing of meaning upon the object by a constant stream of conscious intentional acts". This means that consciousness attempts to integrate all that is perceived and experienced, in order to make sense of it. From this process consciousness "bestows meaning" upon that which is perceived and experienced (Karlsson, 1992). Therefore according to the phenomenological approach, it is futile to speculate about "noumena" (objects as they actually are, independent of sensations and knowledge and experiences). Scientific study, especially of human kind, should focus on phenomena (on people's experiences and knowledge) as this is the only reality which people know (Meyer et al., 1997). The impetus for the development of phenomenological ideas was a concern that the foundations of knowledge should be placed upon reality as it could be consciously experienced (Grbich, 1999).

In relation to the phenomenological approach, the present study will represent the participants' perceptions and experiences of abuse, and includes the following:

- Perceptions of abuse or events outside the person, and meanings attached to them; and
- Inner experiences and meanings that relate to the person herself.

### 3.3. THE PARTICIPANTS

#### 3.3.1. SAMPLING PROCESS

According to the qualitative approach, the selection of subjects is made to enhance generalisation to theory rather than to populations (Moon et al., 1990), and there is a tendency to look intensively at a few cases rather than broadly at many cases. The sampling process the researcher employed in the present study involved a non-probability sampling with homogeneous subgroup, which is African abused women. The study could not accommodate more participants because of its limited nature. Further, the researcher was unable to include white women in the study because of her lack of fluency in Afrikaans language (see chapter 6 on limitation of the study).

The most basic criterion for the choice of subjects (Van Zuuren, Wertz, & Mook, 1987) is whether a potential subject already has or can develop some significant relationship with the phenomenon under study. The general principle determining the proper number of subjects in qualitative research which defies standardisation (Ely, Friedman, Garner & McCormack-Steinmetz, 1991), is that the data collection continues until the various aspects of the phenomenon have emerged and the variations of the phenomenon critical for achieving the desired

level of generality have been mapped. In terms of Grbich (1999), when the categories are saturated, that is, when new instances of the phenomenon do not lead to new abstractions and the analysis achieves a stable articulation of the phenomenon's constituents and variations, then the researcher stops recruiting new subjects.

### 3.3.2. SAMPLE

Six participants who came for therapy and reported abuse were asked to participate in the study. One woman could not continue because the husband complained that she was embarrassing him in front of young girls (referring to the researcher and the social worker who referred the participant). All the women had been married for three years and more, and had begun going out with their husbands in their late teens. Below are certain criteria followed when recruiting the participants.

#### 3.3.2.1. Criteria for the selection of participants

The participants were selected on the following inclusion criteria:

- The participants should be between 18 and 60 years of age.



- They should have experienced one or more kinds of abuse for example physical, emotional, psychological, sexual and economic, as described in chapter 1.
- They should have been married for at least a year.
- They should be willing to participate in the study and share their experiences.
- They should be able to express themselves verbally.
- They should not be mentally retarded, psychotic, or suffering from any neurological disorders.
- The respondents should be fluent in one of the following languages: Isi-Zulu, Isi-Xhosa, Northern and Southern Sotho, Isi-swati, Isi-Ndebele or English, as the researcher is fluent in those languages.

In relation to the above, the present study involves five black women, who have been married for a year or more. They are between the ages of 18 years and 60 years and have at least passed grade 8. The respondents came for therapy at 1-Military Hospital and reported incidences of abuse. Three of the five women were staying with their husbands at the time of the interview. One woman's husband was jailed for a month for beating and trying to shoot her. Another participants' husband was deployed in Mpumalanga and did not keep in touch with the participant for about five months. Details of the participants are fully discussed in chapter 4.

The characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1.Characteristics of the women who participated in the study

| Participants Age | Language          | level of education                                  | Occupation                             |
|------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| 35 years         | Isi-Zulu          | Grade 12  | Temporary position at a bank           |
| 29 years         | Isi-Zulu          | Grade 12<br>Military<br>Certificate                 | Military Police<br>Captain             |
| 27years          | Isi Zulu          | Grade 12  | Housewife                              |
| 32 years         | Isi- xhosa        | Grade 12<br>Certificate<br>in<br>food<br>management | Assistant chef in a<br>shopping centre |
| 28 years         | Southern<br>Sotho | Grade 12  | Housewife Temporary<br>domestic worker |

### 3.4. DATA COLLECTION

#### 3.4.1 THE INTERVIEW

The aim of conducting interviews is to gain information on the perspectives, understandings and meanings constructed by people regarding the events and experiences of their lives (Grbich, 1999). According to Grbich (1999), an interview is the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals. The process of gaining information through interviews contains an underlying assumption (Grbich, 1999) that interviewer and interviewee actually

understand one another. That is, the signs and symbols used are meaningful to both, and both share the visual images evoked and the interpretations applied. This broad assumption leads to the following suggestions by Grbich (1999) that it is important for both the researcher and the researched to share a common language, culture, and other perspectives. According to Grbich (1999), an interview is the appropriate research tool when:

- direct face-to-face contact with persons is imperative
- immediate responses are desirable; and
- a relatively small sample is used.

The advantages of an interview over other research tools are the flexibility to deviate from the set pattern of questions if the need arises (Ely et al., 1991) and the ability to probe areas of interest or vagueness instead of relying on routine responses. In addition, the interview provides greater communication between the interviewer and the respondent and permits immediate checking on information more than other tools of collecting data (Jasinski & Williams, 1998).

Qualitative research methods usually employ in-depth interviews, which can be directed toward understanding informants' perspectives on their lives, experiences, or situations as expressed in their own words (Taylor

& Bogdan, 1984). The importance thereof is getting to know people well enough to understand what they mean and creating an atmosphere in which they are likely to talk freely.

The researcher in the present study started with what Dick (2000) advocates as a convergent interviewing technique for collecting data. This type of diagnostic interviewing begins with a non-directive request for the informant to tell the researcher about the experience, perception, and so on. The researcher encourages the person to keep talking for about 45 minutes without asking specific questions. In later interviews, more specific probing questions are asked. In this regard, the interviews become semi-structured in that the researcher knows in advance what specific aspects of the topic should be covered. Semi-structured interviews, according to Huysamen (1994), offer a versatile way of collecting data. They may be used with all age groups.

The heart of the interview was loosely structured around obtaining detailed information on the following topics in no particular order:

- Biographical information and history of the participants.
- Descriptions of the abuse experienced
- The impact of these experiences and how they deal with the situation
- Factors contributing to the pattern of abuse.



When doing interviews, Glaser (2000) warns against tape-recording, as it is time consuming to listen to and to transcribe tape recordings. However, Dick (2000) cautions that rapport with informants may develop more rapidly and effectively if notes are not taken during the interviews, and that interviews should rather be recorded. Therefore, the interviews were recorded using an audiocassette and were transcribed for further analysis. An advantage of a tape recorder is that it allows the interviewer to capture so much more than when relying on memory. Also there is the disruption caused by note taking. Although the data was obtained from verbal interchanges, the researcher noted the subject's non-verbal communication with a view to writing a more complete analysis afterwards.

Permission was obtained from South African National Defence Force to conduct the present study with its employees and their significant others. Consent was obtained from the participants before proceeding with the interview and permission to use an audiocassette was also obtained (See appendix I). This was followed by the assurance that the interviews would be confidential and serve only the purpose of the study. The motives and intentions of the study were clearly explained. The participants were given a choice of participating or not, without any obligations.

### 3.5. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is an ongoing process in qualitative research (Ely, Anzyl, Friedman, Garner & McCormack-Stemetz, 1991). Data collection and analysis go hand in hand. The aim of an ongoing analysis is to critique the data as it is obtained, to identify gaps in information, and to start using various concepts to see whether they shed light on the issues being identified in relation to the research topic. In short, to analyse is to find some way or ways to tease out what is considered essential meaning in the raw data.

Researchers keep track of emerging themes, read through their transcripts and develop concepts and propositions to begin to make sense of their data (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). As their study progresses, they begin to focus their research interests, ask directive questions, check out informants' stories and follow up on leads and hunches. Stories are listened to closely, together with explanations, attitudes and descriptions of the different participants (Papp & Imber-Black, 1996).

Ely et al. (1991) describe certain distinct phases in data analysis. The first is an ongoing discovery phase of identifying themes and developing concepts and propositions. The second phase, which typically occurs after the data has been collected, entails coding the data and refining

one's understanding of the subject matter. In the final phase, the researcher attempts to discount his/her findings, that is, to understand the data in the context in which they were collected. The process described above is one through which order, structure and meaning are imposed on collected data (Grbich, 1999).

According to Ely et al., (1991), the researcher gradually make sense out of what he/she is studying by combining insight, intuition and psychological knowledge with an intimate familiarity with the data. Therefore the researcher must recognise patterns that emerge from the data. The data is examined in many ways to identify themes. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggest the following steps in identifying emerging themes, which were used by the researcher for analysis in the present study:

### 3 5.1. Read and re-read data

This involves collecting all field notes, transcripts, documents, and other materials, reading carefully and re-reading them. By the time the researcher is ready to engage in intensive analysis, the researcher should know the data inside out (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

### 3.5.2. Keep track of themes, hunches, interpretations and ideas

This involves recording any important idea that comes to the researcher as she/he reads through and thinks about the data. The researcher may consult notes and comments made during observation.

### 3.5.3. Look for emerging themes

The researcher looks for emerging themes and patterns through conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, meanings, feelings, or folk sayings and proverbs.

### 3.5.4. Construct typologies

The researcher here creates her/his own classification scheme. For example, in the present study, one kind of typology relates to how respondents view marriage and family.

### 3.5.5. Develop concepts and theoretical propositions

The researcher moves from description to interpretation and theory. In qualitative research, concepts are sensitising instruments (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). Developing concepts is an intuitive process. It can be learned, but not taught. The researcher firstly looks for words and



phrases in the informants' own vocabularies that capture the meaning of what they say or do. Concepts from informants are referred to as *concrete concepts*. The concrete concept is derived indigenously from the culture studied; it takes its meaning solely from that culture and not from the researcher's definition of it. Secondly, the researcher identifies different themes that emerge from the participants. Further, the researcher looks for underlying similarities between them. As Rubin and Rubin (1995) state, a goal of data analysis is to find themes that both explain the study and fit together in a way that the reader can understand.

#### 3.5.6. Coding

Coding is a process designed to fracture the data then group them conceptually, generalising concepts that emerge from data and fit within it (Grbich, 1999). In qualitative research, coding is a systematic way of developing and refining interpretations of the data. The coding process involves bringing together and analysing all the data bearing on themes, ideas, concepts, interpretations and propositions (Ely et al., 1991). That is, initially vague ideas and hunches are refined, expanded, discarded or fully developed during this stage of analysis. The idea is to allow categories to emerge from the data, rather than impose already constructed ones upon the data.

Once the researcher is convinced that there is nothing more to be found in the data, the data will be amalgamate or subdivide the themes, typologies, propositions, and concepts that have been identified, and the final interpretation and writing up stages can begin.

### 3.6. CONCLUSION

The chapter outlines the research methodology and design used in the present study. The importance of epistemology and phenomenology is highlighted. The next chapter deals with results and more information on the participants.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH INTERVIEWS

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher will present the analysis of the research interviews. To start with, concise background information on each participant will be given, followed by the themes that have emerged on analysis of the text of the participant's interview. In this chapter each participant's information is discussed in terms of demographic characteristics, family background, marital history, and the pattern of abuse. Subsequently all the themes from different participants will be grouped into categories of themes in the next chapter. The term participant will be used in the place of real names.

##### 4.1.1. PARTICIPANT 1

###### 4.1.1.1. Demographic characteristics

Participant 1 is thirty-five years old. She passed grade 12 and thereafter worked as a bank teller. Her husband had to leave the country for exile,

and she resigned to join him. Since their return, she has survived on temporary jobs. Her husband is a major at military command.

#### 4.1.1.2. Family background

The participant views her father and husband's behaviour as more or less the same. Although she never witnessed her father beating her mother, she recalls her father's belittling remarks towards her mother. This led to the separate living arrangements made by the parents (that is her mother stays in Gauteng and the father in Limpopo).

According to participant 1, her husband is from a disorganised family where divorce and infidelity is prevalent. The father and brothers are said to have several children outside marriage.

#### 4.1.1.3. Marital history

The participant had a relationship with her husband from an early age and got married when she was 20 years old. They have been married for fourteen years. They have three children ranging in age from five to fifteen years.



#### 4.1.1.4. Pattern of abuse

The participant reported that the abuse she experienced started at home where her father used to beat her for having her own opinions. The abuse continued even when she was married to her husband. This in turn made her feel that she 'deserves' to be beaten or that there is something wrong with her. Apart from beatings, the participant experienced psychological and verbal abuse in form of sexual degradation, insults, derogatory remarks and humiliation. She is still living with her husband. According to the participant, the husband has stopped abusing her physically, but he still abuses her emotionally, psychologically, and sexually. That is, he still has extramarital affairs and brags about them. He abuses alcohol and frequently arrives home late.

#### 4.1.1.5. Participant's view of herself

##### Traumatic attachment

According to the participant, her bond with her husband is traumatic in that he controls everything in her life. The husband used violence as one way to create and sustain a power advantage to bind the wife to him. He accomplished this by exerting complete control of the participant's use of her time, her social contacts, and her capacity to view herself as a worthwhile person. The following statements highlight

the above observation; " *If I came home slightly late from work, he would beat me up. He did not want me to have friends*". She therefore felt trapped and isolated, with no outside contacts.

### Entrapment

At first, she tried to report the abuse to the parents, and to her surprise, they did not support her. She reported incidences of abuse to her father but he would call the husband for a meeting and did not include his daughter in the meetings. Later she would be informed that everything was fine; she just had to pack her bags and go back to the husband. The lack of confidence in authorities weakened her support system. She thought reporting incidents of abuse to authorities was a waste of time because they would just say, "go back to your husband or just let him go unpunished". The situation where she could not turn to anyone except herself made her feel trapped in her marriage. Another factor is that she feels that she is staying in her marriage for the sake of the children.

### Social environment

The family background of the partner as described by the participant, was abusive too. Therefore, what she experienced with her partner was nothing new, since her father was also abusive to the mother and her. This was also the case with the husband. His father could not take care of them and had illegitimate children with different mothers. In her

description of her community, she assumed "*Everybody gets beaten up, and everybody is accepting it; if you complain they would say its part of life and part of marriage*". These issues made her believe that what she is experiencing is normal and that she cannot challenge it, since the families and the communities are doing nothing about it.

### Self-concept and self-esteem

The self-concept in this study refers to the 'picture', which a person has of herself and the value she attaches to herself. Thus when the participant expressed the feeling of being ugly and useless, she devalued her self-concept. The participant's perceptions of the self therefore affect her potential ability to deal with her situation. Accordingly, she is stuck in an abusive marriage because she believes what the husband told her, that she is ugly and unable to express herself. Moreover, she believes that no one will ever love her. She gained weight, not only as a strategy to be in control but to also to make herself unlovable. "*I eventually believed that he did me a favour by getting married to me, I am this ugly and useless person.*" The participant was made to believe that no one would love her, and that she should be grateful to the husband who did her a favour by marrying her. Her harsh self-blame echoes the husband's demeaning comments and becomes an internalised shaming mechanism, diminishing her self-esteem and eroding her sense of self.

The self-denial of the participant compromises her self-esteem. When the husband became verbally and physically abusive to the participant in front of their children, her importance and dignity were diminished. His belittling comments in front of the children not only humiliated her but also exposed her as an unfit mother. Boasting about sexual conquests and making cruel comparisons about his girlfriends affected her self-esteem. Therefore, unfulfilled needs for self-esteem gave rise to feelings of inferiority, weakness, and helplessness. This is also shown by the fact that her fourteen-year-old son realised that there was an unhealthy relationship between his parents before his mother did. It seems as if she has lost her personal strength and independence, because she relies on either the husband or the children to make decisions for her.

#### 4.1.1.6. Participant's view of her partner

##### Accusations and infidelity

*" My father used to beat me when I voiced my opinion and when I reported it to my mother, she would say I am beaten because I always answer back".* Blaming the 'victim' who is a woman seems to be easier than when it is a man. It seems as if the participant's mother instills in the form of cultural belief or myths, that a woman should not argue or have her own opinions. This implies that if you have opinions of your own, you expose yourself to abuse and this belief exonerates the abuser



and reinforces his behaviour. Hence, the abuse escalates. Not only did she experience blame from her family of origin but also from her husband.

The participant felt that her husband expressed suspicions that made him monitor her every movement, yet simultaneously bragged about his own infidelity and accused the wife of infidelity. Apparently the husband showed his distrust even before their marriage. For example, he would get angry when the mother sent the participant to the shop. The anger did not stop during courtship but continued throughout their marriage.

#### Communication

The communication within this family was characterised by intimidation on one hand and control on another. For example the participant said the following: *'He would not come home for two to three days and if I ask him where have you been, then I get beaten up'*. This was their everyday communication style. Negotiations are infrequent; communication consists only of commands and attempts to obtain power from one person and submission from the other person. Sexual intercourse was one of the tools the husband used to communicate power. According to the participant, he would brag about being involved with beautiful women and that the only thing that made him to stay in their marriage was sex. In other instances he would beat her and thereafter force himself on her.

#### 4.1.1.7. Reaction to abuse

##### Survive or surrender

According to the participant, she did not only keep quiet but also accepted her situation because of family norms and a lack of confidence in the police. Therefore, for her to survive meant that she should surrender, accept her situation and be silent. This was in accordance with the family's social norms, because according to the participant, nothing has changed. When she reported her husband to her family, she was either forced to keep quiet or not drawn in when their problems were discussed. This led to uncertainty as to whether she was actually abused or whether it is an acceptable way of life, because everyone around her appears to accept the husband's behaviour.

##### Uncertainty

The participant appears to be indecisive as to what to do next in terms of her marriage. The older child has encouraged her to break up with the husband. At the same time, she thinks that the younger daughter would not understand and blame her for divorcing the father. This made her uncertain of what to do next. She confirmed that by saying the following: *"My first son would suggest that I must divorce his father and that he does not care whether we stay on the streets as long as he is far from his father"*. The situation puts her in a dilemma, as she said, because she does not know whom to please. As she tries to consider

other peoples' feelings first, she then forgets about herself and is rendered vulnerable to abuse. She is therefore unable to make decisions, gives up her choice of a life, and does what her mother did for them, which is staying in an abusive marriage.

#### Being rendered voiceless

The participant was rendered voiceless from an early age. This is shown by the fact that her father used to beat her if she questioned his opinion. For example, "*my father would beat me up because I answered back. So when my husband started beating me up, I thought there was something wrong with me and when I told my mother, she would say it is because I always answer back*". The participant therefore learnt that the only way that she could survive the beatings was to remain silent. The silence not only made her survive the beatings but also created a false peace at home and gave temporary control to the husband.

#### Control vs. loss of control

Gaining weight was one way the participant could take control of her life. By putting on weight she gained control over her life and deliberately ignored her husband's needs, because her body was initially one of the reasons why her husband was attracted to her. Her sense of loss of control emanates from the fact that she does not have the tools to have control over the type of relationship she has with the husband. She has also tried to involve other family members in resolving her

problems. At first, before her marriage, she consulted her sister. As time went by, she tried to consult with her father. She was never in control of her relationship. It was controlled by her father, who also invalidated her presence by just simply calling the husband and then sending her back to the husband without involving her in the negotiations. Another time she was temporarily in control was when the husband was sober. During these times, she was able to voice her needs without the interruption of anger and beatings from the husband. It was temporary in that it only lasted while he was sober and the husband took over again when he was drunk later.

#### 4.1.1.8. Summary and interpretation of abuse

As the participant's story illustrates, she was not interested in using outside intervention, because at some level she believes that it is an acceptable way of life (that is since most of her family members are in abusive relationships) and on another level she has a lack of confidence in institutions that should be able to help.

Blaming the participant for answering back to the husband, as it is cultural practice in African women when accused by their husbands, shows that the participant and many black women have little say in what happens in their lives. The loss of confidence in her parents, society and institutions makes her feel abused and trapped because the



response to her requests for help often make her the victim of circumstances. The husband's behaviour is not only abusive to his wife, but also shows that he objectifies women and sees them as sexual objects. Through his flirting, he has managed to expose his wife to various risks to her person and her health.

#### 4.1.2. PARTICIPANT 2

##### 4.1.2.1. Demographic characteristics

Participant 2 was born in South Africa, but taken to Lusaka from an early age of nine years, because her parents did not want the children to notice that they were divorcing at that time. She then came back to South Africa when she was twenty-one years old. She is now twenty-eight years old and working for the military police while the husband works at an air force base.

##### 4.1.2.2. Family background

She is from a family of seven siblings. She is her father's first child, and she has two sisters and a brother. Three older siblings have a different father. Her father passed away in 1981, and her mother married again. As she was in exile most of her life, she does not know much about her family.

Family adaptability refers to the ability of the family to balance stability and change. Therefore, due to the lack of a core family background, it is difficult for the participant to adjust to changes that are taking place in her own family. Therefore, adapting from bush to a communal family life was difficult for the participant.

#### 4.1.2.3. Marital history

This participant married when she was 24 years old and has been married for three and a half years. They met in 1991 and got married in 1994. They have a seven-year-old son.

#### 4.1.2.4 Pattern of abuse

She describes her experiences of abuse as subtle at first. She initially misread her husband's abusive behaviour as love, and his jealousy as caring. She later realised that he was abusive and that he was getting worse by the day. This marked the beginning of an unhappy phase of her life. According to the participant, her abuse included being hit with a fist, kicked, strangled, burnt, and threatened with a knife and being shot at. This was also reported to the police with the result that the husband was imprisoned for a month and given a suspended sentence because he was declared not fit to stand trial. She then filed for divorce and separated from the husband, as she perceived her husband's

behaviour getting worse and feared for femicide. Subsequently the husband continued to stalk her and tried to kill her in front of their seven-year-old son.

#### 4.1.2.5. Participant's view of herself

##### Adaptation

The participant grew up alone in exile. As a result she became a very independent person and lacked a family value system. Her husband became a threat to her freedom. For example, "*I was very independent, so I do not want a person like my husband right now to take over or start ruling me. He wanted to dominate me and I am not used to that*". This echoed her need to be independent from her abusive husband.

##### Ambivalent relationship

"*I was well taken care of by my husband, but then I just could not take the abuse...*" she said. The participant felt trapped at first because she felt loved by the husband because he provided for her financially. At the same time she endured the pain of being in an abusive relationship. "*He would hit me and then want to make love to me*". His actions demonstrated love and hate at the same time. His valences shifted from being a cruel person who beats and kicks her and then wanting to make love and making sure that he provides for her basic needs.

The participant asserts that at some stage she was ambivalent about her feelings when the husband did not return home for three days. On one hand she was happy when the husband was not around, because that was the only time she could have peace of mind. On the other hand, his unfaithfulness subjected her to sexually transmitted diseases. This created a condition where, if they remained married, they would have to think how to survive in that ambivalent relationship.

### Communication

The participant felt that she had no say in the relationship. The best way of communicating for them was through 'fights' and commands. Then if commands were not taken seriously, beatings and scorn followed. According to the participant, she found herself unable to either comment in any situation or escapes the situation. The only language the husband understood was if she communicated through her brother and the legal system. This meant that their communication was through an outside source (that is a male figure).

### A power struggle relationship

*"He came immediately to the college when he could not reach me on a public phone. He wanted to dominate me. He wants to be my boss and I must just be submissive to him. He wanted to terminate my course".*

These statements express her feelings of being controlled by the husband. For example, he preferred to telephone her on the public



telephone rather than on her cell-phone, to monitor her movements. Therefore, their relationship was based on a power struggle, in which one wants to be superior to the other. This can be seen by her indication that she feels that he (the husband) wants to dominate her and she cannot accept that. The husband's behaviour of making sure that the wife does not interact with other people and rushing to college the minute he has an indication that she is not there shows that he demands complete loyalty and faithfulness. The husband cannot achieve such loyalty unless he uses force, so that the wife feels that she is controlled, and hence abused. At the same time, the presence of sexually transmitted diseases shows that the enforced faithfulness is not really maintained by both parties. This also brings about the issue of trust and commitment to the marriage. At some level he perceives her beauty as a form of power over him. This is seen when he kicks her in the face with his boots and he later, according to the participant, said: *Go and look at a mirror, because all along you thought you are beautiful.* This effort to make her ugly was an attempt to gain total power and control over her, because he hoped that if she was bruised and disfigured then no one would love her and she would have to stay with him.

#### 4.1.2.6. Participant's view of her partner

##### Role expectation and the meaning of marriage

It seems that at first the couple had played reciprocal roles. The participant viewed her husband's role as a parental role of being seen as a provider, while the participant played a role of being a housewife. In support of this view, the participant expressed the following, *"I was well taken care of by my husband, even though I was not working, and he was extremely, eh... I do not want to say that he was possessive but very protective of me"*. She continued to declare, *" I was not working, but I did not have a problem about money"*. During the early phases of their relationship when he was providing for them financially, his role was perceived as superior and the participant was perceived as a subordinate. According to the participant, the husband communicated control and dominance (by means of acts of verbal aggression). The statement *" He did not want people around me, as he felt I belong to him alone, he wants to be the boss and I must just be under him"*, clearly demonstrates her feeling of being dominated by the husband. If she showed insubordination then beatings would follow. The pattern of their relationship was one of dominance and submission. She felt that her husband used sex to dominate and enforce loyalty upon her. For example *" After he had hit me, he would also want to make love and at that stage you can imagine, I just don't want anything to do with him and he would force himself on me'*.

She believed that the only time she could divorce the husband was as soon as she found work. Therefore, having money and being able to provide served as the husband's means of expressing dominance.

#### Overprotectiveness and jealousy

According to the participant, the husband isolated her from other people. At first, she was happy because she saw it as confirmation that the husband loved her. She assumed that was a sign showing that the husband was not looking at anyone else except her. When the questions were posed about their relationship prior the marriage, she said: *".... He was very protective and sort of jealous of me. He didn't want people around me as he felt I belonged to him alone"*. At first, this meant to her that he loved her and he was protective of her, but later she construed his action as jealousy. The realisation, according to the participant was brought about by the fact that he would ask question like "who was here drinking tea with you?" and suspect that she was sleeping with someone else besides him.

#### 4.1.2.7. Reaction to abuse

##### Cultural Beliefs

The participant believes that their relationship was not an abusive one, until he wanted to kill her. At first, it was normal for the husband to discipline her, according to cultural beliefs. She feels that she also

tolerated his behaviour because he was a provider and her basic needs were fulfilled. It seems that she had a fear of going back to her parents' house, because it made her feel as if she had failed in her marriage.

### Survival

It seems that the participant's way of survival is through resorting to outside help. She laid several charges of assault, and later withdrew them, because the husband promised to grant and sign the divorce papers if she dropped the charges. Although she endured the effects of abuse, she continued to live in fear of commitment. According to the participant, "*all men are the same*", and she admits that she is battling with sustaining relationships. Therefore, her way of survival is based on the feeling that the incidences she experiences might happen again. She has increased her ability to avoid what she perceived as oppressive relationships. This was her language of survival.

### Uncertainty

There was a point where she felt uncertain whether she loved the husband or not. At first, she viewed her husband's protectiveness and obsession as love, while later she views his behaviour as abusive. At this stage, although she filed for divorce she does not consider men as capable of love. The contributory factors to her uncertainty about love not only emanate from the husband's behaviour, but also from the fact that her own father abandoned her and later she realised that he was



having extramarital affairs. Hence, she fears that every male she relates to must have a hidden agenda and therefore she is unable to sustain relationships.

#### 4.1.2.8. Summary and interpretation of abuse

The participant perceives any aspect of her husband's behaviour that communicates dominance and control as a limitation to her independence. Furthermore, the limits set by family norms are not consistent with her upbringing as she spent most of her time in exile. The husband's expectations are often construed as controlling and superimposing, putting a strain on the harmony of the relationship. The participant seems to have a problem in adapting to role change and changes in a family set-up, resulting in the feeling of being dominated by the husband.

The early signs that her husband was a good provider seemed to fulfil marital requirements. The husband's insecurities caused by her having friends and colleagues around her, indicated strong obsession, a need for possession, and fear of losing her. The husband also feared that the friends could influence her and therefore attempted to isolate her from interacting with other people. The husband's possessive and obsessive behaviour later contributed to abuse. For example, after the husband hit her or forcibly made love to her, he would conclude that their

differences had been attended to and all was well and normal. In addition, she was unable to leave her abusive husband because of her economic dependence on him.

#### 4.1.3. PARTICIPANT 3

##### 4.1.3.1. Demographic characteristics

This participant was born and raised in Durban. After her marriage, she then moved with her husband to Gauteng. She is 29 years of age. She passed grade 12 and has never worked or continued with her studies.

##### 4.1.3.2. Family background

She is from a family of ten children and she is the first child. Her siblings include a sister and eight brothers, ranging from 23 to 9 years. Her father was a pastor and her mother is a housewife. The parents had to raise ten children on the money they collected from church tithes.

##### Socioeconomic status

The socio-economic status of the respondent was ascertained by examining factors like her education and occupational status, and her parents' education and occupational status. For example, the respondent did not go further than grade 11 and did not have any skills

training or try to further her studies. Both parents are unemployed. The father depends on tithes and donations from the church, with nine school going children to support. Therefore, this situation places her in the lower economic status.

#### 4.1.3.4. Marital history

She got married to her husband in 1998, and they now have a two and a half-year-old son. Although the husband was from Gauteng, she had known her husband from their village in Kwazulu-Natal. After a year, he decided to pay lobola and they got married according to traditional custom. The same year the husband was transferred back to Gauteng and they decided to come back together. They settled in the back yard of the home of her husband's cousin.

#### Attachment

The participant shows a great deal of attachment to her husband. This is seen by her unilateral effort to connect with her husband who failed to be responsive, although the social worker tried to intervene. The failure by the husband to respond was exacerbated by the fact that the husband, upon his transfer, decided to remarry and abandoned the wife. The attachment was also reinforced by the religious belief-system she grew up with at home. For her to go back home and prove her parents right that she would have doubts because she married an

atheist was worse than staying in an unhealthy relationship. This led to lack of family support and isolation.

#### 4.1.3.5. Pattern of abuse

Soon after their arrival at Gauteng, fights, scorn, pushes, shoves, and accusations started. As time went by it escalated. The beatings were exchanged with being away from home. According to the participant, her husband stayed away from home for days, but reported at work. As she was not employed, her predicament involved not only the beatings and verbal abuse, but also deprivation of food and numerous hospitalisations involving diseases like tuberculosis and bruises on her body.

#### 4.1.3.6. Participant's view of herself

##### Pressure to marry/Reasons for marrying

*'At first, the relationship and the journey to Gauteng were like a dream come true, more like a Cinderella story'*, she said. When asked what she meant by that, she saw her marriage and move as a release from financial difficulty they experienced in the family. The participant was clearly married for reasons other than love. Therefore, for her, marriage was seen as a vehicle that helped her to escape poverty. She thought that her husband, just like her father, would continue to support her.



This in turn created dependency, which resulted in a lack of confidence in her abilities to care for and support herself. This dependence was not obvious when she was still staying with her parents, but it existed at the emotional level and continued to affect the way she related to others, particularly her husband. The lack of confidence in her ability also contributed to the fact that she could not continue with her education and chose to look for a husband instead of work or further her studies. The ideology that she should be taken care of was emphasised in the following statement: "*He no longer cares about me or his child. He is supposed take care of my baby and me, but he is busy with older women*". Therefore, the pressure to marry indicated a way of escaping from home. Going to church just to please the parents was an act that she would not have to perform in Gauteng. In addition to the escape from financial problems at home, peer and societal pressure contributed to the pressure to marry. The fulfilment she gets is that she therefore fits in with the expected norms of that community and has admission into their value system.

#### Self-concept

*"I felt like nothing, and wish I was dead"*. This account shows that the participant's self-concept has diminished. She feels that she exists only if she is still loved by the husband or rather still provided for by the husband. This is also indicated by the fact that the participant tried to commit suicide three times, showing that she is prepared to sacrifice

herself and her life for the relationship without any reciprocity from the husband. She therefore feels deserted by the husband because this time he did not come back as he always does. This feeling of abandonment led to low self-esteem, because even when he flirts with other women, she usually wins in the end because he comes back home to her. Her self-esteem is eroded further now that he has not come back home when he flirts with this 'particular woman', and has even tied the knot with her. Her view is that the flirting and the beatings do not constitute abuse as long as the husband comes back home. For example, "*I don't think that because he is flirting around with other women then I should stop loving him...No!*".

She suppresses her needs and feelings about the husband's behaviour from her conscious awareness because they would conflict with her concept of a 'good wife.' This leads to distorted ways of solving problems, for example suicide. Her concept of a good wife is therefore not congruent with her needs and feelings

#### Cultural / societal factors

The participant reported abuse of an emotional and financial nature, but she could not try to disengage from her husband because the society she grew up in regards marriage as an important step to take in the confirmation of being a woman. There is also a stigma attached to those women who are older and not married. The fact that the husband

had several affairs she knew about and his transfer to another base at his own request shows that the participant is trapped in an unhealthy relationship and has done nothing about the situation. This entrapment might also be due to the fact that in her society, more respect is given to married women than divorced and unmarried women (Richie, 1996).

#### Promotion of helplessness

She presents herself as debilitated and she always believes that her situation is hopeless, hence the attempts to commit suicide. She feels impoverished because the husband has the control of their finances, as he is the only one working. She also feels helpless. All her efforts to save her marriage were ineffective, because no matter what she does to please the husband, everything remains the same. That is, he comes and goes as he pleases, and he even got married without her knowledge.

#### Isolation vs. support

On arrival in Gauteng, she knew no one except her husband. He did not let her interact with neighbours, because he thought they would turn her to an urban girl. They had a choice to stay in one of the military houses but he chose to stay at in his cousin's. She therefore felt isolated with no support from his cousins or her family members who were far from where she lives. She felt isolated from her friends and relatives, both geographically and emotionally. In this way, he weakened her support system, and by doing so produced a more malleable wife. There

was nothing to keep her busy, that is, any work or studies or interaction with other people, except her child who is still too young to understand what is going on. The only support she gets is in hospital; hence she makes sure that she gets attention by attempting to commit suicide, in this way, having a chance to interact with other people.

#### 4.1.3.7. Participant's view of her partner

##### Husband's occupational and employment status

Just like other respondents, her husband works for the military, and at some stage, she describes his actions as militant in nature. This is an indication that the husband has difficulty separating his role as a husband and a military person. He views his relationship with his wife as the same as other relationships he has with colleagues and friends. Therefore he can come and go as he pleases without feeling responsible for his actions. These endanger their marriage, as the expectations and needs are dissimilar.

#### 4.1.3.8. Reaction to abuse

##### Physical symptoms

The only way she could react to her husband's behaviour was through physical symptoms. She has been admitted to a psychiatric ward for depression and attempted suicide several times. The fact that she has



not succeeded shows that her suicidal attempts are just a cry for help if not for attention. At the time of the interview, she was admitted for attempted suicide and tuberculosis screening. The result revealed that she might be infected with HI virus. When asked to comment on the results of the test, she said she does not believe she is infected, and the results are not true. Therefore, she was not only in denial about her marriage but also her sickness. The denial led her to ignore her health and give priority to her marriage.

### Beliefs

Beliefs regarding the self and relationships are central to the way in which she structured her intimate relationship. Her reaction to her husband's affairs shows that she believes that as long as the husband comes back home then she can stay in that marriage. Subject 3 copes with her abusive husband by identifying herself with him. Identification with the abuser follows a need to become one with the abuser because she wants to share some of his power.

#### 4.1.3.9. Summary and interpretation of abuse

The participant feels isolated from family, friends, and community members. This in turn increases her dependency on the husband and therefore he becomes the primary focus of her thoughts and perceptions. Consequently, she tends to deny her own perception of

reality, and identifies with her husband because she recognises that he has the power of life and death over her, hence the suicidal tendencies. She has become more involved in her husband's needs than her own needs. In the end, it is the will of her husband that prevails in their relationship (having infidelities and so on). She started to get worried and then interpreted his behaviour as abusive when she heard that her husband was married to another woman and was not coming back to her.

The participant had moved from the area where she grew up to a different province, where she knew almost no one except her husband. There was also isolation from known institutions such as church, family (parents) and friends, which left her without a support base. Her call for attention and recognition was characterised by suicidal attempts and hospitalisation.

Her family's financial situation also added pressure to be married and to establish financial security in her marriage. The husband, who exerted emotional and physical abuse, hiding behind culture or using it as an excuse to support his abusive behaviour, misused this dependency.

#### 4.1.4. PARTICIPANT 4

##### 4.1.4.1. Demographic characteristics

Subject 4 was born in Grahamstown. She is a thirty-two year old woman, married, and has two daughters, aged six, and three. After she graduated from high school, she continued with her food management diploma part time.

##### 4.1.4.2. Family background

A single parent (the mother) raised the participant with her two sisters and her brother. The mother struggled to raise them because she was a farm worker. They never knew their father.

##### 4.1.4.3. Marital history

The participant met her husband when she was still in high school. The courtship lasted while he was in exile. On return from exile he divorced his former wife and married the participant. They have been married for six years. Together they have a three-year-old daughter. The husband has two other sons; one from the former wife and the other is an illegitimate child.

#### 4.1.4.4. Pattern of abuse

According to the participant, the shift in the nature of their relationship was gradual. That is, at first she was just a friend helping him to escape from the country and later it became a sexual relationship. The husband was often away and she was unable to settle down with him. She therefore felt abandoned and lonely. When the husband had a stroke (cardio-vascular accident), he was forced to spend more time at home. This in turn gave the participant a chance to know her husband better. According to the participant, the husband abused her emotionally, sexually and financially. Sometimes he would aggressively push her and threaten to kill her.

#### 4.1.4.5. Participant's view of herself

##### Intimacy vs. isolation

The participant and her husband do not have an intimate relationship because they hardly spend time together. They spent a very short time together before he went to exile. When he returned, they got married and had to stay with the husband's extended family and therefore hardly had time alone. They decided to move to Pretoria and again he took long journeys trying to establish his career, because he needed to do military courses in order to be promoted. Therefore, they not only grew apart but the participant also felt isolated. This in turn



contributed to emotional neglect, which she experienced as abuse. She also felt that the husband wanted her to be isolated by choosing the friends and the type of clothes that she should wear. His power over her was shown when he literally went to her new place of work and negotiated for her dismissal so that she could stay home and yet he hardly spends time with her at home.

### Role expectations

She feels uncertain about her role as a wife and as a partner. This causes her to pressurise her husband for answers about his behaviour, especially the fact that he does not want to sleep with her. He communicates with her through anger and subtle aggression, especially when she questions his lack of intimacy. The cycle continued for three years and among his excuses for not having sex with her was work, then the child and now his sickness.

Immediately after her marriage, the participant expressed her role confusion by referring to her husband as more like a father. For example the statement ' *he was like a father to me and very helpful to my family* ', emphasises the confused expectations of the husband. It might be that the husband did what was expected of him in his role as a father to her. He therefore started enforcing submission through choice of work, friends, and type of clothes to wear.

### Belief system

The participant believes that she was bound to follow family norms (that her husband's behaviour was the result of ancestral punishment and that they should slaughter a cow) especially when she was in Cape Town. She verbalises that she would not have decided to separate from her husband if she were still with his parents. This shows that the presence of the parents influenced the decisions she makes and their belief system. She felt pressurised by the parents and the parents' in-law to stay married and has shifted the blame from the husband's behaviour to an ancestral issue.

### Feeling of non-existence

*"I am tired of living under his shadow"*. She feels he obscures her person; hence she has a feeling of not existing in his eyes. This in turn has an impact on her self-esteem. She questions whether there was something wrong with her when her husband stopped intimate relations with her. This leads to her perception that her feelings, ideas and desires do not matter or do not exist and her partner does not respect those feelings. Factors like his age (he is 12 years older than she is), his status at work, and his achievements, contribute to the idea that the husband is better and she is worthless and does not contribute anything to his life. When he left for exile, she was involved in helping him to escape; therefore by marrying her it was as if he was paying back for what she did for him and not because he loved her.

#### 4.1.4.6. Participant's view of her partner

##### Aggression

The participant feels that her husband is very aggressive to her. This is also shown by the fact that the participant used the word ' anger ' throughout the entire interview. The anger and verbal aggression are his only way of communication. For example ' *when I ask him why he is no longer intimate with me, he gets angry and pushes me away* '. The aggression is shown again when he threatens to kill her.

##### Involvement and decision-making

*"I just got a letter from the lawyers that needs my signature because my husband sold our flat, where we are staying now, without informing or discussing with me first. We just talk around having a big house then the next thing I am hearing from the lawyers is that he is intending buying a certain house. He was always up-front with what to do next"*. Selling the house and their car without consulting her shows that the participant's ability to make choices, to solve problems and to make decisions is not recognised and is undermined by the partner. The non-involvement in decision- making made her feel isolated and not part of the marriage. She feels that she is not needed both as a person and as a wife. In addition, the participant found out that the husband has another illegitimate son after a long time, and everyone knew except her. Both his parents and the husband did not inform her. She felt betrayed and

felt like an outsider. Her trust and confidence in his family was violated the minute she learnt of the deceit and the secret that was kept for seven years of their marriage.

### Control

*'You never asked me if you could get that'*, the husband said after he found out that she bought something for herself. She then followed with the statement *' I noticed that he wants to be in control of everything including my own money'*. This shows that she feels that he views himself as having the power to guide and direct her choices or financial affairs. She also feels that her behaviour is manipulated by the use of punishment to try to control or influence her decisions and change her behaviour. Examples of manipulation with punishment are the refusal to have sex with her, accusations of having affairs when she goes to church, and aggression because she refuses to return to Cape Town with him. The fact that he did not involve her in any decisions he took emphasises his need to be in total control of everything (for example, to control her money, when to buy a house, selling the car and that she should not work).

#### 4.1.4.7. Reaction to abuse

The participant reacted to abuse by involving family members from both sides. She later realised that the blame was shifted on to her and the



fact that a cow was not slaughtered for ancestors to welcome her in the family. She later affiliated with the church and attended counselling with the pastor. After several negotiations with his commander and social workers, she felt that her husband would never change, and decided to file for divorce without her parents' involvement and knowledge.

#### 4.1.4.8. Summary and interpretation of abuse

The participant assisted the husband in escaping to exile and therefore feels that the marriage may have been compensation for her assistance rather than based on love.

The participant indicates that she looked up to her husband as a father as he was helpful to her family and supportive to her. This immediately expresses role confusion where he seems to occupy the role of the father rather than husband.

The husband's view that work is more important than family has caused disharmony and instability in the relationship. Furthermore it has decreased the time spent together, jeopardising intimacy in their relationship. The husband's way of choosing friends and clothing for her is an indication that he is insecure, distrustful and has low self-esteem.

The age difference seems to have allowed him to play a commanding role, as she would not be part of the decisions taken at home. The medical condition of the husband brought them together at home, a situation that was not usual. She felt his controlling behaviour was getting out of hand when he refused to let her go to church and refused to have sex with her. The decisions to even think of divorce or separation from the husband would not have been possible if she were still nearer to her parents. Respect for parents is a cultural practice and divorce would have gone against her parents' wishes (and therefore indicate disrespect).

#### 4.1.5. PARTICIPANT 5

##### 4.1.5.1. Demographic characteristics

The participant is a 26-year-old female, born and raised in Soshanguve, near Pretoria. According to the participant, after completing grade 12 she wanted to go back to study and obtain a qualification but she was unable to do so because of her husband's behaviour and financial constraints. She survives on temporary jobs and domestic work.

#### 4.1.5.2. Family background

The participant is the sixth child in a family of nine (three sisters and four brothers and their parents). The father used to work as a labourer and the mother as a domestic worker. Her father died when she was ten years old. One brother was murdered violently with a screwdriver, and a sister was killed in a motor vehicle accident. She viewed her father as violent and reported physical abuse from her father. According to the participant, her father beat them to enforce discipline, but later her brothers learn to fight back and that is when the father stopped beating them. At present her mother has sugar diabetes.

She is from a family that strongly believes in cultural practices such as ancestors and traditional healers. The family structure consists of clear boundaries between parents and children and specific roles are ascribed according to gender (for example, females helping with household chores and males helping the father).

#### 4.1.5.2. Marital history

She got married in 1997 and they have a seven-year-old daughter. The husband works at an air force base and has worked there for more than seven years. The husband was born in Mafikeng in the North West province.

#### 4.1.5.3. Pattern of abuse

Initially, the couple stayed with the participants' parents. At first she regarded the marital relationship as perfect and did not notice any signs of abuse from the husband, until they moved out of her parents' house. She presents her relationship with the husband as abusive because he is irresponsible and he uses her as a scapegoat to stay away from work. As a result they are always in debt and she is sometimes scared that the people he owes money to will try to kill him. Although she claims that she fights back for herself, she is often in and out of hospital for depression. Hence, the husband uses her sickness as an excuse to stay away from work.

#### 4.1.5.4. Participant's view of herself

##### Co-Dependency

Co-dependency usually focuses on relationships that are sustained by one member's tendency to mould herself around the projections of the other. The participant's co-dependency is seen in her tendency to play an active role in controlling her husband's behaviour by allowing him to take advantage of her sickness as an excuse for his continual absenteeism. She feels a constant need to protect the husband from his drinking problem and absenteeism although they fight regularly. This is illustrated by the following: “ *He absconds at work, he tells them that I*



*am seriously ill...what is funny is that he never shows up at hospital even a single day*". In addition, she does not only protect the husband from authorities at work but also from her parents when they ask about the bruises on her face. When she was asked why she lies for him, she said, *"I cannot afford to let him loose his job"*. This emphasises a need to be needed. When her husband uses her as an excuse she feels needed in the relationship and that provides her with a sense of security.

#### Aggression and rebellious behaviour

The participant has learnt to be rebellious and aggressive towards people who, according to her, take her for granted. For example when asked what makes her fight back, she said that if she does not fight back, her husband would take her for granted. Another example is that her father used to hit her and her siblings, but he later stopped because according to the participant they learnt to fight back. Dominance and control is therefore defined by the ability to fight back. She shows the need to dominate by voicing that if she were stronger than her husband, she would have stopped his abuse long time ago.

#### Feelings of helplessness

*"I mean I used to be ambitious and motivated to do things. Right now I feel tired and lazy to do things. I am also helpless at some stage"*. Her feelings of helplessness are also communicated through her depression. The participant believes that she should fight for herself to get what she

needs. However, the situation at home and the loss of family members make her feel hopeless. She also emphasises the feelings of helplessness by saying that she is scared that one day she will run short of reasons to protect him from not going to work.

### Belief System

The participant felt trapped in a situation whereby family members interpret her depression and the problems experienced at home as witchcraft. This creates a situation where she knows that if she can take some action (for example go to school, work, and so on), her situation will be better. At the same time, if she believes that she is bewitched, she cannot do anything about the situation but has to rely on witchdoctors or Sangomas. She experiences a contradiction in her belief system between the beliefs held at home and an alternative belief system that she has learnt at school or from western knowledge.

#### 4.1.5.5. Participant's view of her partner

##### A need for independence

The participant is aware of her need to continue with her studies, but she is unable to because the husband does not approve of her furthering her studies. She therefore views her husband as controlling her independence. She believes that if she becomes educated, she will be able to be independent. Since she is not skilled, she therefore relies

on her husband for financial support. In turn she feels guilty and tries to do temporary jobs without his approval, in an attempt to be independent. The husband's refusal to allow her to work and his insecurity is further illustrated by the participant's statements such as "*he said he is able to financially support our child and me, so he does not think it is necessary for me to work. In addition he thinks that I will have relationship at work with other men. Basically he does not trust me.*"

#### 4.1.5.6. Reaction to abuse

##### Escalation of violence

*"I have learned to fight back, no matter how strong the person looks physically"* The statement shows that the participant has learnt to fight back from experiences with her family. As she mentioned before, her father used to beat them and fighting back is the only way she knows of protecting herself. The participant in fighting with the husband also uses this strategy of fighting back. In addition, the participant also lost her family members in violent ways. For example, the father was killed with an axe and the brother with a screwdriver. This shows that in the society where she lives, violence is a way of life.

##### Defences

Her behaviour change (that is, depressive symptoms) is ascribed to witchcraft and therefore she was sent to a Sangoma. This behaviour

change denies her any opportunity of looking for any other factor in the relationship that could possibly contribute to this change. She blocks some of the incidences she experiences when fighting with the husband, saying for example *"I remember vaguely, but I think I was fighting with my husband. The next thing I remember is that I was with a sangoma "*. She blames her lack of healing on the fact that the husband does not come to therapy. This justifies her willingness to escape from being responsible for her actions. As a result of being unable to control her situation, she developed major depression.

#### 4.1.5.7. Summary and interpretation of abuse

From the text interview, the participant feels that she remains in her abusive relationship because of the following:

- Inadequate academic qualifications and educational exposure.
- The limitations set by the value system and cultural beliefs.
- She knows no other forms of resolving problems in her relationship other than resorting to physical violence and hitting back.



## 4.2. CONCLUSION

The above emerging themes describe factors that contribute to women's vulnerability to physical, emotional, financial, psychological and sexual abuse. In the next chapter, the researcher will attempt to categorise the themes by looking at their variation and similarities.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, themes from individual participants were identified. In this chapter, factors contributing to abuse that are common to most participants are grouped together as convergent factors. Factors that differ among participants are grouped as divergent factors. It is beyond the scope of the study to discuss all the factors contributing to abuse of women extensively. The researcher will attempt to discuss only those that have emerged from the participants in the present study and compare the factors to findings of other studies. These factors are discussed below.

## 5.2. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO ABUSE

### 5.2.1. CONVERGENT FACTORS

#### 5.2.1.1. Demographics

##### Age

All the women in the study started the courtship with their partners at an early age (under the age of 20 years) while they were still in high school and their husbands were already working. This shows the inequality of the relationship from the beginning. Therefore the roles were already defined during courtship and this makes it more difficult to change at a later stage. No women in the study recognised any sign of abuse at the time of dating prior to their marriage. A study by Bollen et al. (1999) shows that the majority of abused South African women (68%) experience serious incidents of abuse between the ages of 20 and 39. The type of abuse most commonly occurring (80%) in this age category was emotional/physical (Bollen et al.,1999). According to Flowers (2000), three out of every four victims of intimate violence are between the ages of 20 and 39. This correlates with the ages of the participants in the study as fully discussed in chapter 3 (that is the youngest woman is 26 years and the oldest is 39 years).

The participants in the study reported abuse from their partners early in their marriage. This means that if all the participants married in their early twenties, therefore their partners were also relatively young when they started abusing the participants. As with all forms of violence and violent behaviour, battering is more likely to be committed by men less than 30 years of age (Brisson, 1981; Fagan & Browne, 1994; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Harway & O'Neil, 1999; Roberts, 1987).

#### Education and employment

Three of the five women completed grade 12 and did not continue with their studies. One woman (participant 2) continued to study at a military college and another (participant 4) studied food management. Participant 2 was working in the police service. Participants 1 and 4 did unskilled work, and participant 3 and 5 were unemployed. Given the data on employment and occupation of the participants, these results fit the trend identified in the literature. For example, Mills (1998) found that 58% of her sample stayed with their assailants because they felt they could not support themselves and their children. Therefore when women have outside employment, education, or the possibility of housing, childcare, transportation, and social support, they are more likely to seek help than remain in an abusive relationship (Mills, 1998).

All of the women's partners were employed in the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) at the time of the interviews. A survey



done by Brig.General Motumi in the SANDF (Salut, 2000) showed that 13,9% to 21,1% of the male participants in the study did not believe that choking their wives, breaking their bones, stabbing them with a knife, biting, kicking, punching and threatening to kill their wives, was abusive. In addition, 7,4% to 15,9% did not believe that any of these behaviours were violent. Flowers (2000) indicated that wife abuse in the armed forces appears to be an even more serious problem than in the general population. The rate of domestic violence in the military has been estimated at five times that of civilian domestic violence (Flowers, 2000). Further, research has suggested that the military service routinely fails to adequately punish servicemen convicted of spouse abuse, as was the case with participant 2.

However, other studies show that unemployed men have higher rates of battering than employed men (Gelles & Straus, 1988; Harway & O'Neil, 1999; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980). The fact that employed men in the present study perpetrated the abuse, may be related to the fact that they were employed by the military service where the rate of abuse of women is high.

#### 5.2.1.2. Definitions of abuse

The definition of abuse is broad and includes a wide range of acts and experiences based on different understandings of abuse held by

individuals of varied backgrounds (for example social environment, ethnicity, and so on). The definition of abuse can be regarded as a reflection of a particular moral stance, for it reflects the value of both acknowledging situatedness (women's experiences of abuse) and seeking commonality with what society regards as abuse. Therefore, the researcher will define abuse based on the participants' experiences and their understanding of abuse. The findings of the study reveal that the women suffered from different kinds of abuse, including physical, emotional, sexual, and psychological and economical/financial abuse.

*Physical abuse* can take many forms, including a shove, occasional slap and punch, general body beatings, burning the partner and use of a gun and/or knife. It may also include chasing a partner around the house and pinning the partner down until she says or does what is wanted (as seen with participant 2). Common manifestations of physical abuse are cuts, bruises/abrasions, black eyes, broken bones, sprained backs, dislocated jaws and sometimes death (Mills, 1998). Physical abuse is characterised by fear, oppression, and control (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000).

*Emotional abuse* may start as physical abuse, but it usually includes nasty comments such as 'you are ugly! You are not good in bed! Other women are better looking than you are! you are nothing!', as was the case with participant 1. According to Mills (1998), feelings produced by

emotional abuse include depression, anxiety, shame, and powerlessness (as seen particularly with participants 1, 3 and 5). Therefore, a woman who is emotionally abused may feel unattractive, worthless, and unable to survive on her own. This in turn makes a woman suffer psychologically. Emotional abuse can result in feelings of low self-esteem, anxiety, depression and sometimes suicide (Campbell, 1998).

Many experts believe *psychological abuse* as more devastating and extensive than physical abuse (Flowers, 2000). It is defined as behaviour sufficiently threatening to a woman that she believes her capacity to work, interact with the family or society, or to enjoy good physical and mental health, has been or might be endangered (this was seen with participant 3)

*Sexual abuse* as discussed by women in the study, can involve a husband forcing himself on women after beating them, as was the case for participants 1 and 2. Some women also see sexual activity as a duty to satisfy their partners' desires, even if they do not find it pleasurable. Many women who are sexually abused feel disrespected, demeaned and violated. Sexual abuse is experienced by many abused women (Campbell, 1998) but may not be easily disclosed because of intense feelings of embarrassment and shame. According to Campbell (1998), abused women report being raped by their partners, asked to perform sex acts against their will, and physically harmed while engaging in sex.

They may be treated as sexual objects, forced to view pornography, and in some situations, forced to have sex with others. Their abusers may be sexually promiscuous, placing the woman at risk for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV infection, as experienced by participants 1 and 3.

*Economic/financial abuse* occurs when one party feels that she is completely dependent on another party's resources and therefore must comply with whatever is requested. For example, participant 3 was forced to beg the husband for basic items such as food and the child's clothing. Another form of economic abuse is when a man believes that he has the upper hand in signing contracts, loans and making major decisions on assets, and also prevents the woman from working, as seen in subjects 4 and 5. In this way abusive men may limit a woman's access to family money and resources, and control ownership of the home and transportation, (Campbell, 1998), as with participant 4. Today, economic abuse is not widely acknowledged, yet still affects many women (Sev'er, 1997). Ultimately, abusive behaviour becomes regarded as abusive when the woman it affects defines it as abuse, no matter what form the behaviour takes.



### 5.2.1.3 Culture and its impact on women

Culture refers to a people's way of life. That is the fabric of ideas, beliefs, skill, tools, aesthetic objects, methods of thinking, of eating and of talking as well as customs and institutions into which each member of the society is born (Lebaka-Ketshabile, 1999). From this definition culture is indeed broad and deep and encompasses all that a human being is. It does not only focus on the individual, but also on those things and activities that link the individual with others and the surroundings in which one exists. Since most people identify themselves as belonging to each other through culture, they resist being stripped of this identity.

Although culture is an important tool for survival, it may be used negatively to shatter the determination and strength of many women. For example, participant 4 acknowledged that she wanted to get out of her abusive relationship but she could not because she was made to believe that she has cultural responsibilities (for example, slaughtering a cow for ancestors) to fulfill, otherwise she and her family (including the next generation) would be followed by a curse and punishment from ancestors. This cultural belief absolves her husband from taking responsibility for his actions and therefore allows him to claim that ancestors are responsible for his actions. Therefore, he did not try to change his abusive behaviour. Another example is participant 3, who

because of the prescriptions of her religion, had to stay in her relationship yet the husband was known to have been married to another woman.

Maimela (1996) asserts that too often culture has been used and is used by African males in the family context, to try to safeguard and perpetuate their dominant positions at the expense of females. As it was discussed in chapter 4, most of the partners of the participants were well protected by cultural practices. For example, the reporting system of participant 1, made it possible for her husband not to account for his abusive behaviour. Every time he beat this wife and she ran to her family, her father sent her back to her husband and did not even try to hear her side of her story. Religion in addition to culture may also influence the organisation of traditional gender roles in families, and family integrity may be valued more than the cost of enduring abuse, clearly seen with participants 3 and 4. Culture has pervasive effects, in terms of family functioning, socialisation practices and roles, as will be discussed in the sections that follow.

#### Family norms and socialisation

Although the subjects all come from different family backgrounds (norms, up bringing, and socialization), the family context played a role in all cases. In the subjects where findings indicated divergence, all subjects showed that the parental or family norms were carried over

from their parental home and expected that these norms would form the basis of a well-grounded family or marriage.

Chinkanda (1992, p. 75) adds the following on marriage and the position of the black women:

“Women are socialised into succumbing to sexual, physical and mental abuse without complaining. Running away from an abusive relationship is seen as a sign of weakness, not only in the bride but also in her family of origin. Her parents and siblings will take it upon themselves to return her to the abusive husband because her running away reflects negatively on her mother. The general practice is that on the day of the wedding a group of elderly women who are close to the family sit with the bride and admonish her, advising her not to return to her home when things go sour”.

The findings of the present study support Sev'er's (1997) belief that violence and the threat of violence are gendered social acts that establish and maintain the control of men over women. In addition, support for these acts is built into culture and socialisation in many if not most societies (Lempert, 1996). Weiner (1994) says wife abuse should be regarded as sociological or socio-psychological, because the roots of wife abuse are located at the roots of the patriarchal structure of society, in

which unequal gender relations exist in South Africa. He also believes that the patriarchal nature of our society is supported and maintained by ideological mechanisms that include religion, the legal system, and socialisation processes that prepare men and women for their position in marriage (as discussed in chapter 2). According to Conway (1997), males are socialised to be more prepared to use violence to defend and assert their power, authority, and position. Therefore males are socialised to have a limited emotional repertory, and they are therefore quicker to see violence as an effective means of resolving conflicts. Rwezaura (1996) emphasises gender as socially constructed and supports the idea that abuse is usually connected with local customs and the prevailing belief system of the community. He further notes that women are discriminated against at an early age. According to Victory (1993) and Vetten (1996), languages are used to emphasise socialisation in South African context. Names like sissies, moffies, girls or women are used to label men who show signs of feminine qualities and in fact, those men who are not aggressive. Therefore, women are socialised to be weak and men aggressive, and hence they tend to react in this way in relationships.

### Upbringing

In African families, the patriarchal nature of society has produced boys that grow into men who own women as property and virtually dominate them, as with participants 1 and 3. Within the South African context,



Chinkada (1992) indicated that before they are married, black women fall under the authority of their fathers or male guardians and later that of their husbands when they get married. Black women therefore have very little say in what happens in their lives. In this way upbringing not only contributes to ignorance, but also creates dependency of women on their fathers, uncles and husbands, which was particularly evident with participant 3.

#### Values and belief system

The customary values that have been accepted and practised for generations have merged with other cultures and customs. In the process, the interpretation of these values changes and therefore "abuse" rears its head (as experienced by participant 5). According to Marin and Russo (1999), some males are taught to expect entitlement and privilege, together with respect and subservience that go along with those characteristics. Batterers already have been found to point to "*unwifely behaviour*" as a defence for their violent acts (Adams, 1988; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Finn, 1996; Ptacek, 1988). For example in traditionally African society, when a woman talks back to the husband or threatens to leave him because he is abusive, it is said that she behaves in an *unwifely* way (particularly participants 1 and 4). Some attribution to this notion may relate to a woman who does not perform domestic duties, like cleaning the house, cooking for the husband and children and so on.

Even among college students, women who are viewed as provoking their batterers are perceived less sympathetically and as more unwifely than women who are perceived as not provoking their batterers (Pierce & Harris, 1993). These expectations may lead to patriarchal scripts for interaction that, when violated, lead to the emotion of anger, and if inhibiting factors are not present, that anger may lead to violence.

According to Harway and O'Neil (1999), traditional patriarchal values in cultures have become reflected in organisational and institutional structures, such as the family. Focusing on women's behaviour rather than male patriarchal values and beliefs puts the male perspective at the centre of the analysis and perpetuates the status quo.

Beliefs regarding social interaction between men and women are embedded in the social fabric (Russell, 1995). These beliefs are frequently accepted without conscious awareness or examination. Abusive men expect subservience and servility from their female partners and may do so without awareness of the belief system that underlies the expectations as discussed in chapter 2.

#### Role expectations and role confusion

In the context of cultural tradition, the partners' expectation of marriage is that their roles are defined as mother and father and that the father's role or actions are never questioned, as seen with participants 2, 3, and

4. Furthermore Chinkanda (1992) asserts that South African black women are perceived as the weaker sex and in some cases are relegated to the same status as children. According to Chinkanda (1992), South African black women are vulnerable to abuse to a greater extent than their white counterparts. Black women are particularly disadvantaged in that they are regarded as minors according to traditional custom. In the past this was reinforced by certain laws passed in parliament such as influx control laws, which promoted dependency of black women on their husbands or any male relative.

Roles that partners play in the family are not fused to complement one another but often function in a vertical fashion (father's role above, mother's role below). Harway and O'Neil (1999) hypothesize that recent societal changes regarding expectations and realities in women's lives have produced men's fears about loss of their dominant roles and position in the family and have resulted in increased violence toward women. Hypothetically, women's changing roles are constructed as a cause for violence and may cause and provide legitimization for male abuse against women and weaker inhibitions against such abuse.

Some of the abused women stay in abusive relationships in an attempt to please their families and remain in their culturally prescribed roles. These roles are rewarded intermittently by traditional relationships with

men, praise from their families, admiration from their peers, and social status as a "happy family".

#### 5.2.1.4. Aggression

Aggression is used for such acts that involve attack, hostility, etc. It is assumed to be motivated by any of the following: fear of frustration, a desire to produce fear or flight in others, or a tendency to push forward one's own ideas or interests (LaViolette & Barnett, 2000). For example, participant 4 described several incidences of aggression displayed by her husband.

According to O'Neil and Nadeau (1999), many parents support the masculine mystique and socialize boys into sexist values. Consequently, boys experience great pressure to demonstrate their masculinity. From a young age, most boys are encouraged to pursue competitive sports that include aggression such as football, boxing, cricket and martial arts, while girls' activities of playing with dolls and caring for them is carried through into their later daily life as women. Hence, expressing aggression becomes part of the men's way of life. Maccoby and Jacklin's (in Kantor & Jasinski, 1998) comprehensive review of gender differences in children found few gender differences other than more aggression among boys than girls. When there is violence within the family, young boys may learn this method of settling differences, displaying power, or



gaining control over others (Campbell, 1998). LaViolette and Barnett (2000) believe that most men use aggression to suppress responses from their partners and this affects the woman's ability to leave abusive relationships. Once aggression becomes a habit, it becomes the learned way of solving problems and is applied frequently. The young apply it later in their marital life, resulting in cycle of abuse in the family.

#### 5.2.1.5. Control

From socialisation and customary orientation, males seem to assume that they are in charge of security and control of their female counterparts. The exposure to higher institutions of learning and information by females compromises the element of male control over the female. Some evidence suggests that the way the family unit is organised (for example, male dominated vs. egalitarian) plays an important role in family functioning (Coleman & Straus, 1986; Jasinski & Williams, 1998; Straus et al., 1980). For example, the results from previous research suggest that wife beating is more common in households where power is concentrated in the hands of the husband or male partner (Coleman & Straus, 1990; Levinson, 1989; Straus et al., 1980; Yllo & Straus, 1990).

At the societal level, cultural norms supporting unequal family power structures or traditional gender roles may help explain some variations in rates of spousal violence (Jasinski & Williams, 1998). For example,

males are socialised to use violence to maintain control. Aggression can also emerge from frustration over an inability to control the female partner (Fagan & Browne, 1994) and contribute to abuse.

Prince and Arias (1994) provide further elaboration of the dynamics of power and control. They assessed the relationship between control and self-esteem among abusive and non-abusive men and found two relationship patterns. In the first pattern, men had high self-esteem but a poor sense of control over their lives and used violence with the intention of gaining control. In the second pattern, men had low self-esteem and felt powerless but became violent in response to frustration. The researchers concluded that when different dimensions of control are examined, that is, interpersonal control on the one hand and the control over life events on the other hand, the latter is a more significant predictor of wife assault. This finding is also important because it helps explain the importance of socio-economic factors such as unemployment as a contributing factor to intimate violence.

## 5.2.2. DIVERGENT FACTORS

### 5.2.2.1. Legal system

#### Prosecutory problems

The legal system affects all women, but in the present study, only one woman (participant 2) made a case against her husband. According to Olckers (1994), the department of justice in South Africa evaluates the work of its prosecutors in terms of caseload statistics. Accordingly, as the result of the immediate disposal policy, therefore, cases involving domestic dispute are easily disposed of. In South Africa, some research suggests that police officers may openly discourage women from filing formal charges against a violent spouse (George, Winfield & Blazer, 1992).

Legal outcomes in court cases of partner violence are highly dependent on the attitudes of individual judges rather than on firm legal standards (Ford et al., 1995). Olckers (1994) continues to emphasise that there are no appropriate sentencing possibilities as a fine often gets paid out of household money and an offender might be the only breadwinner, rendering imprisonment an additional hardship for the complainant. These factors, together with the paternalistic attitude of prosecutors that proceeding with the case is not in the best interests of the complainant,

has led to the low percentage of battery cases coming before courts as experienced by participant 2.

#### 5.2.2.2. Financial dependence

##### Employment

Davey (1994) asserts that sexual division of labour, the hierarchical division of male and female roles, and the ordering of these roles in marriage and the family are systems of control, which keep patriarchy intact. Therefore, women may be prevented from getting a job or securing a higher -paying job. Maintaining economic power over women is another form of abuse that binds women in violent relationship (Sev'er, 1997).

Sev'er (1997) contends that the government has failed to ensure that welfare, social security, job opportunity and income support for women are set at proper levels. The family acts as a mirror of the outside (patriarchal) world (Jones, 1994). Therefore, the patriarchal system designates that roles, purposes, activities and labour are defined sexually. Kirkwood (1993) further argues that this division is not inherently functional; rather it serves the purpose of keeping women economically dependent on men and in a lower position of economic power than men. In this way it did, in fact, secure the existence of the family.



In African cultures, women are sometimes not involved in decisions that involve purchasing major assets. This leads to disempowerment of the female and the inability to participate in decisions involving purchases and other important matters. In addition, dependency impedes the female from constructively engaging in any discussion involving her emotions or future plans. It further encourages ill judgement of proper reasons to be married or to enter into a marriage, that is, females then marry for security and other reasons rather than love.

### Contracts

Contracts and contractual obligations (Minors and Majors): The marital powers of women were in many ways similar to the status of a minor. The female was deemed incapable of contracting while males were afforded contractual obligations as majors. For example, there were two incidences where participant 4's husband came in with contracts already signed without her concern or her signature attached to it, but it was binding for both of them as a couple.

Financial institutions and other institutions previously did not recognize or honour contracts with females, married or otherwise, without male consent. These can be misdirected or mismanaged by males leading to the abuse of females (as described by participants 3 and 4). The recent provisions of the South African Constitution that guarantee equity of all persons has highlighted the notion of abuse and brought it into the open

(Act 108 Of 1996). Avenues to lodge complaints in this regard have been allowed for females to lay their grievances. However, male dominance and abuse received legal protection as well as customary/traditional or cultural protection prior to ratification of the New Constitution, as experienced by participants 2 and 4.

Today, most women have independent access to credit (Scutt, 1997). However, women remain vulnerable to pressure, coercion and direct violence where property and money are an issue in marriage or in de facto relationships (as experienced by participant 4). According to Scutt (1997), it is dangerous for women to enter loan agreements without recognising the legality created by signing a contract.

Accordingly some women are coerced unconsciously to enter transactions whether individually or as guarantors or co-borrowers with a husband or male friend (Scutt, 1997). Because in the past few women owned property, therefore some may continue to believe their signatures mean nothing and women can be exploited by financial institutions. Women often do not have information or knowledge of financial matters.

#### 5.2.2.3. Socio-economic status

During courtship, it is apparent that in all the participants, socio-economic factors are important because of the females' economic

dependence. In most cases the female is dependent on the male, who then uses this as a loophole to financially manipulate and control the female.

Although violence occurs amongst women in all social strata, rates of severe partner violence are lowest for upper-income white women (28 per 1,000, compared with 144 per 1,000 for lower-income black women (Hampton & Gelles, 1994). Women with unemployed husbands are at the highest risk for partner violence (Hampton & Gelles, 1994). This may be because the marital power discrepancy in couples is lowest for upper-income white women, thus putting them at the lowest risk for partner violence, although differential reporting is also an issue. Nonetheless, the fact is that the female group with the greatest income and education also experiences the lowest rates of violence, therefore a full understanding of the relationship between changing roles of women and partner violence will require taking account both facilitating and inhibiting factors associated with ethnicity and class and education.

Insofar as the greater economic independence of women's changing roles enables them to leave violent situations, any portrait of the relationship between women's roles and violence that is based on the women who remain in such relationships will be incomplete. The dynamics of violence and the psychological characteristics of women in violent relationships may be very different in a population of battered women

who have the economic resources to leave violent relationships, but nonetheless have stayed in them, compared with women who do not have the economic resources to leave such relationships. Finally, interpreting any relationship between women's role and their experience of violence must take into account the changing population base of violent families.

#### 5.2.2.4. Reaction to abuse

The different responses to abuse by all the women in the study contributed to the maintenance of the cycle of abuse, and therefore their reactions served as contributory factors to perpetuating the abuse. The distinguishing factor between the women in this study was the means and ways they chose to try to accomplish this. For example, participant 1 tried to control her situation by gaining weight. She was caught up in a dilemma where she was blamed for being opinionated and argumentative and the husband was exonerated from his behaviour. Later she learnt to be quiet, but the abuse did not stop.

Participant 2 filed for divorce and had her husband arrested. Unfortunately, the husband was released on the grounds that he was emotionally disturbed and was not fit to stand trial.



Participant 3 attempted suicide several times to get the attention of the husband and to try to win him back from another woman, but failed. Her ties to the husband are quite intense: she has no other social support, creating absolute dependence on the only person who cares for her as well as abuses her. The family she has left behind is in favour of "preserving" her marriage at all costs and her lack of educational background stems from the cultural norms that a woman should be taken care of by the man.

Participant 4 tried to involve her church, family members and in-laws, and his superiors at work. There was no change at all, as the husband continued to abuse her economically, emotionally, psychologically and sexually. The turning point for her was when he sold their car and the flat without her knowledge. She later decided to file for divorce, but the husband won all their possessions, including their three-year-old child.

Participant 5 fought for herself when the husband started to beat her, a pattern of behaviour that she learned from home. Despite the fighting back attitude, the beatings did not stop and instead, she was admitted several times to hospital for not coping with her situation at home and was diagnosed with major depression.

### 5. 3. CONCLUSION

There are many factors contributing to abuse, and although there are individual differences, there are many factors common to the women in the present study. What is most common is that in poor black African communities, abused women in contemporary society are increasingly restricted by their gender roles, stigmatized by their racial/ethnic and class position, and constrained by cultural customs as well as the competing forces of tremendous unmet needs and very limited resources. This predicament leaves them facing complicated ethical, moral, and practical dilemmas. The women feel pushed and pulled by their basic survival needs, their expectations of themselves and others' requirements of them. In the end, despite their various attempts to conform to the standard gender roles, despite their efforts to follow the cultural mores of their racial/ethnic community, and despite their interest in obeying the social rules, women like these in the study are structurally and situationally unable to meet competing and sometimes contradictory demands of contemporary social life. The next chapter deals with conclusions and recommendations that are derived from the present study.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1. INTRODUCTION

From the findings discussed in the previous chapter, it is apparent that there are multiple factors contributing to abuse in African woman. Characteristics of the individual, family, social situation, community, and society are related to which men are violent and under what conditions. For example Gelles (1997) found that individual and emotional characteristics, psychological characteristics, and community factors, such as cultural attitudes regarding violence, are moderated and influenced by individual family situations. In addition, power and control are common features of nearly all forms of family and intimate violence.

In this concluding chapter, the researcher will briefly describe different theoretical explanations of abuse, and concentrate on two of them, that is systems theory and feminism. The strengths and limitations of the study will be evaluated. Recommendations for future research and therapy will be noted.

## 6.2. FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO WOMEN ABUSE

Humans are biological and social beings. Just as our biological make-up contributes to our behaviour, so does our social being. According to Lazarus (1991a), biological factors (including genes, hormones, and other biological differences), cognitive and environmental factors (socialisation, norm, culture, etc.) interact to yield certain behaviours. For example, Lazarus (1991a, 1991b) suggests that whether anger becomes the emotional response of an aroused person in a particular situation, depends on the person's cognitive appraisal of the meaning of the situation. He proposed that anger results when a person perceives a threat to his or her ego identity or basic values, which leads to an appraisal of a personal slight or insult. Anger becomes linked to ideas of retaliation and vengeance because they offer ways to repair a damaged ego. Insofar as cultural norms lead males to expect entitlement and privilege, anger may result when those expectations are violated (Marin & Russo, 1999). Therefore, Marin and Russo (1999) hypothesized that male violence toward women is an expression of frustration in other domains (such as work situation) redirected toward a target that has been legitimised by patriarchal values.

Most women stay in abusive relationships in order to conform to norms and cultural beliefs, and if they try to leave, they remain with a stigma.



As Kelly (1997, p. 25) rightfully said, " When there is abuse in a family, we are taught to question what women have done to provoke and to end the abuse, and not to question what the man has done". For example, participant 5 hit back at her father and husband, and she was questioned. The focus was on the violation of norms, and that a woman is not supposed to behave this way. According to Ofei-Aboagye (1997), cultural heritage may have underscored the inequality of women, and that inequality is an integral part of culture. In her study on Ghanaian women, she discovered that most women stay in abusive relationship because of wanting to do what is right by their culture and thereby not contradicting tradition in any way. The present study has shown that forces like culture, socialisation and education plays an important role in an abusive relationship and the resulting human behaviour.

#### 6.2.1. CULTURE AND AFRICAN WOMEN

The women in the study recognize African traditions and values that are the roots of African culture. These include the notion of unity among human beings, nature, and spiritual world. In African culture, individuals are viewed as an integral part of the larger African society and are collectively responsible for one another. Central to this view is the belief that the individual cannot and does not exist alone (Maimela, 1996). Thus, the social context in which many African women exist supports social connectedness as opposed to autonomy and

individuation. Consequently, it is difficult for an abused woman to leave an abusive partner when it is perceived as a norm in a particular society to be beaten by your husband (as indicated by participant 1). Leaving the husband necessitates the undoing and restructuring of material, physical and social relations (Angless & Maconachie, 1996). It also requires the relinquishing of hope. According to Angless and Maconachie (1996), many of the abused women internalised the norm that as women they are responsible for the success and failure of their relationship, and at some stage(s) they interpreted the abuse as their fault or believed the abuser's assertion of their blame. This is consistent with cultural practices.

As Schneider (2000, p. 232) asserts,

"battering and women abuse is the inevitable product of a culture that raises young girls to stand by their man no matter what, to put men first, and to make the magic of love, the most important thing. Given a culture that still emphasizes marriage as far more important for women than for men, that places primary responsibility on women to keep the family together, that blames mothers for any problem in the family, it is a miracle that women ever leave abusive and controlling relationships when the risk to their lives and their children's lives may be so great. Moreover, when women stay in abusive relationships, as our culture has told them to do, we render invisible their heroic efforts to keep

themselves and their children alive. Until we acknowledge and seek to change this broader cultural complicity, and frame legal and social remedies for abuse within the problem of gender socialisation and appropriate gender roles, little will change".

#### 6.2.2. LOBOLA

It should be indicated that the subjects researched were all married. Their status is complicated by the practice of the payment of "lobola" or "bogadi" which seems to be the binding factor of spouses in marriage. Lobola is customary to all African people. Marriage amongst black African women is not characterised by the marriage of two people but the marriage of two families and it is therefore difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship. The custom of lobola means that a marriage is an agreement between two families (not two individuals) or even two clans or tribes, depending on the social status of the focal persons (Chinkanda, 1992).

The institution of marriage and *lobola* has to follow customary norms and rules that ensure that the marriage "works" because if it does not, reporting that fact would normally be deemed undesirable. A fact in passing is that elderly women generally sit around on the day of the wedding to admonish the bride, advising her not to return to her home when things go sour. Should the bride go contrary to that and run away

from her marriage, it would reflect negatively on her mother and family (Chinkanda, 1992).

Lobola plays an important role in decisions on whether or not a woman will remain in an abusive relationship. Some women will remain in an abusive relationship because they have nowhere else to go. Others will remain because "assaults occurring early in a relationship, while appearing to be anomalous and therefore not sufficient to warrant leaving, therefore contribute to the victims bonding to the aggressor" (Dutton, 1989, p 193). Therefore the institution of lobola needs to be revisited and a proper link established to equally benefit both parties (wife and husband) in a marriage.

### 6.2.3. EDUCATION

Most black African women are still relegated to inferior positions because of their lack of education or sophistication. Until recently, custom frowned upon a woman who was better educated than her husband. Most black fathers, according to Chinkanda (1992), would discourage or refuse to send their daughters on to high school with the argument that they would soon get married and that the father would not benefit from the daughter's education. Although there are some changes in current society, this is still practised in some rural areas. This creates a cycle of dependency of women on their fathers, brothers,



uncles, and husbands. Dependency is characterised by isolation, lack of information on treatment and existing organisations relating to women abuse, dependent children and most importantly financial dependency.

Education and awareness is the key to changing the attitudes and practice concerning women abuse. Education has to be streamlined to accommodate the normative and customary standards and practices such that it is used to better understand different customs, communities, and societies.

Education should not impact negatively on the expression of anyone's norms and standard to avoid abuse either by educated men, women, fathers and families.

### 6.3. THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Early explanatory theories about the abuse of women prove to be evolving. For example, in the past psychological approaches were mostly concerned about the presence of psychopathology in an individual, with abused women being described as masochistic, paranoid or depressed (for example Dutton, 1988; Gelles, 1983; Hamberger & Hastings, 1986; Roy, 1977; Scott, 1988) and abusers being viewed as suffering from poor impulse control, alcohol addiction and poor childhood history

(Deschner, 1984; Roy, 1977). These approaches fail to recognise the importance of the symbiotic interaction between spouses in abusive families. Furthermore, they portray abused women as being driven by internal forces such as ill health, and men as being driven by external factors such as alcohol. This gives an indication that abused women are helpless to change their situation. If you are paranoid, you are not aware of your illness, and as a result you are unable to change it. However, the present study has revealed that all the women were aware of the abuse taking place in their lives and wanted to get out of the abusive relationship.

Sociological approaches, by contrast (for examples Gelles, 1979; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980), shift their focus from individual to social-structural factors that contribute to abuse. Abuse was seen as stemming from stressful conditions such as unemployment, poverty, and discrimination and was considered to be differentially distributed among social classes (Blumberg, Swartz & Roper, 1996). Sociological theory fails to take into account the reality that the majority of men living under economic constraints do not abuse women. It is true that social factors may indirectly/directly contribute to abuse especially when there is unequal distribution of resources, gender inequality and class discrimination. However, it is important to also recognise the family and the negative cultural practices that contribute to the perception of women as inferior. As seen in the present study, the

negative impact of culture contributed to the abuse of women and was a major factor or reason that they remained in those abusive relationships, as discussed in chapter 4.

Social learning perspective focuses on the social and cultural environment for an explanation of human behaviour. It points to social conditions as the root cause of family violence (Bowker, 1983; Gondolf, 1988; Smith, 1989). Arguing from this perspective, Pence (1985) holds that low self-esteem is a result of abuse, contrary to the previously held perspective, that women's low self-esteem is a cause of the abuse experienced. A variation on this perspective emphasizes the socialisation process and cultural influences (Watts & Courtois, 1981). It assumes that men are socialised to violence (Scher & Stevens, 1987) through the heroes and role models provided for boys that are also spurs to aggressive behaviour (Gerzone, 1982). Furthermore, because men are socialised not to cry or show their emotions, they are less able to work through painful feelings and more likely to use anger as their primary means of emotional expression (O'Neil, 1981). Since not all men exposed to such cultural influences become violent, however this perspectives fails to explain how these influences make some men more likely to become violent than others. In relation to the present study, the women who were affected by socialisation were particularly participants 1 and 3.

In the nineties, biologists proved that men, because of their genetic structure and hormonal make up, are more aggressive than females (Bjorkqvist et al., 1994; Dabbs & Morris, 1990). Greene (1999) concluded that biological factors only partially contribute to women abuse. Her conclusions are that firstly there is modest support for the heritability of criminal behaviour. Secondly, that testosterone is apparently related to aggression and thirdly that frontal lobe function appears to modulate violent and aggressive behaviour. This is an indication that if it is true that genes and hormones cause abuse and violence, therefore it is hopeless to intervene and change the situation in families and societies, except through medical intervention.

Recently, Silverstein (1999) suggested that evolutionary theory is relevant to the origins of complex human behaviours and understanding men's violence. She believes that both biological and ecological factors contribute to women abuse and that there is a complex interaction between these factors. Silverstein (1999) argued that the level of male dominance within a given culture affected the rates of violence expressed at a relationship level. In addition, she noted that environmental factors external to society (for example, war or economic depression) could exacerbate the frequency with which men managed their anxiety through battering women. It is the researcher's opinion that Silverstein's (1999) theory stems strongly from both feminist and systemic perspectives, in that it concerned itself with principles such as



ecology and social strata. Silverstein (1999) further advocated a careful examination of both macrosocietal factors (that is level of male dominance) and the microcontext (that is, a couple's cycle of emotional interactions) within which male violence against women occurs.

### 6.3.1. ECOSYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

The systems theory approach provides similar explanations (see for example, Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). From the system perspective, contextual factors representing social, cultural, extended family, and individual levels are thought to be moderated by the patterns and dynamics that operate within the family system (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). The family may be viewed as a system of interacting individuals and relationship that exist between members. The family is part of larger systems or suprasystems, and it encompasses individuals and multiple interdependent relationships or subsystems (for example, marital or sibling subsystems). In this way, individuals and internal subsystems are locked together by the complex interdependency of mutual needs, communication patterns, commitments, and loyalties (Becvar & Becvar, 1996; Cahn & Lloyd, 1996). As such the family is more than the sum of its parts, and any action by one person or subsystem is thought to affect all other members of the system. In addition, families rely on each other to balance the tasks of maintaining

the family structure (status quo) while adapting to internal (developmental) and external (societal) changes.

Ecosystemic approach does not totally ignore contributory factors to abuse. For example, socio-economic factors, alcohol or drug abuse, stress, social isolation, societal norms, one's family of origin experiences, or marital conflict are not thought to cause battering (Anderson & Schlossberg, 1999). Rather, they enhance the likelihood that men will use violence and that the family will organize around the battering as a strategy for relating to significant others (as seen with participants 2,3 and 4).

Postmodernist social constructionists believe that reality is constructed through the use of language and is largely a function of the situation in which people live (Bitter & Corey, 2001). A problem exists when people agree that there is a problem that needs to be addressed. For example, a woman is abused when she has internalized a definition of self as abused. Once a definition of self is internalised, it is hard to recognise behaviours that are counter to the definition.

In post-modern thinking, language and the use of language in stories create meaning. There may be as many stories of meaning as there are people to tell the stories, and each of these stories is true for the person telling it (Bitter & Corey, 2001). Further, every person involved in a

situation has a perspective on the 'reality' of that situation. Meaning that if a woman sees herself as abused, it might be possible that the husband or other people have a different perspective on the situation.

Anderson and Goolishian (1992) believe that human life is constructed in personal and family narratives that maintain both process and meaning in people's lives. These narratives are constructed in social interaction over time. The sociocultural systems in which people live are the product of social interaction, not the other way around (Bitter & Corey, 2001). Therefore, when a family experiences abuse, it is often 'stuck' in a dialogic system that has a unique language, meaning and process related to the identified problem. Hence in therapy, the therapist takes a not knowing stance and use curiosity to create a new story. Therapy is another conversational system that becomes therapeutic through its problem organising, and problem dissolving nature (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). The intent of conversation is not to confront or challenge the narrative of the clients but to facilitate the telling and retelling of the story until opportunities for new meaning and new stories develop: "Telling one's story is a representation of experience; it is constructing history in the present" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992, p 27).

White (1992) believes a dominant culture is designed to perpetuate viewpoints, processes, and stories that serve those who benefit from

that culture but that may work against the freedom and functionality of the individual and the family. Families therefore, incorporate the dominant cultural narratives about what a family should be, and to the extent that problems can be met and handled within a narrative structure (that is by increasing communication between family members). When the dominant story loses its power to meet the needs and demands of the family life, then the family has a problem. For example, the saying *monna ke selepe o lala a adimelwe* (meaning a wife is not supposed to ask the whereabouts of her husband, because he is supposed to get as many women as possible and men have a controlling/dominant role over the family) was a dominant story for the family of participant 3. The problem started when the husband stayed away from home for some time.

According to Bitter and Corey (2001), societal narratives in most countries perpetuate a strong preference for men, often discriminate against diversity, and may be designed to discriminate against women, lesbian and gays from being full members of a given community. For this reason, many women accept their inequality with men (Bitter & Corey, 2001). Epston and White (1992) emphasise that problems and problem-saturated stories have real impact on people and dominate living in extremely negative ways (for example anger, abuse and violence and so on). Ecosystemically, therefore, abuse occurs in a social context in which a number of factors are in operation. These include the



definition of context as abusive, the expectations and attributions of everybody present in the situation, and the interpersonal and intrapsychic factors of each individual involved.

The ecosystemic approach does not see an individual (husband or wife) as a bad person in the family. Rather than blaming either an individual or a family, the entire family has the opportunity to examine the interactional patterns that characterise the unit and to participate in finding solution. In relation to the present study, systems could be useful when dealing with individual families differently. For example, it can be applied to the families of participants 1, 3 and 5, because of the involvement and the role played by extended family members.

The family systems approaches work very well if one is dealing with the whole family because systemic therapy has a little concern with the individual, as long as the whole family functions better. This view holds that power in therapy lies in the system, but fails to consider the behaviours and preferences of the people who are the component parts of the system and therefore the system has no greater power than those parts. It could be difficult to use this approach if for example abused women seek acknowledgement for what their husbands have done, because it take a neutral stance. The systemic perspective therefore fails to protect the victim from further abuse. It does not distinguish between

blaming her and helping her change her responses to the partner's violence.

Systemic therapy fails to consider individual's roles and the willingness for each member to play his/her assigned role in a family. For example, in African culture, a man is supposed to protect and support the woman and not injure or abuse her. Feminist theory insists that systems theory is incomplete if it fails to address the issue of patriarchy (Conway, 1997).

### 6.3.2. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

Feminist perspectives define battering and abuse within the larger framework of gender subordination. Domestic violence is linked to women's inferior position within the family, discrimination within the workplace, wage inequity, lack of educational opportunities, the absence of social supports for mothering, and the lack of child care (Schneider, 2000).

The feminists' theoretical work on abuse traditionally stresses male domination within the marital relationship and concepts of male ownership of women in marriage as the basis for women abuse. Feminist theory posits that abuse exists within a gendered society dominated by male power. At every level of social analysis, feminists

regard power and control as issues of gender, whether the analysis is of intrafamily relationship or social policies and laws. Feminist theory has at its core a basic belief that men (that is, those in power), subordinate women and that all forms of oppression need to end. Feminist theory holds that understanding the ways women experience life is central to understanding all human relationships (Cahn & Lloyd, 1996; Corey, 2001; Osmond & Thorne, 1993; Schneider, 2000). They see women abuse as linked to women's inferior position within the family, discrimination within the workplace, wage inequity, lack of educational opportunities, and the absence of social support. Therefore, women abuse cannot be accurately viewed as a set of isolated events but must be placed in an entire social context.

Central themes of the feminist approach to woman abuse include:

- The assumption of the centrality, normality, and value of women's experiences while not excluding the experiences of men.
- Gender as an organising concept that recognizes social construction, that differences between females and males are exaggerated, and that these differences are used to perpetuate gender power inequities
- The importance of considering the social, cultural, and historical contexts in any relationship analysis
- A shared belief that there is no single notion of what constitutes a family, and a commitment to social change.

Beyond these central themes, feminist theorists differ significantly in their thinking. Cultural feminists believe oppression stems from society's devaluation of women's strength. They emphasize the differences between women and men and believe the solution lies in feminization of the culture so that society becomes more nurturing, cooperative, and relational.

Liberal feminist theory (unlike systems theory that concentrates on a family as a whole) focuses on helping individual woman overcome the limits and constraints of their socialisation patterns. Therefore, they believe in empowerment of individual women with dignity, self-fulfilment, and equality. In relation to participants 1 and 3, whose self-esteem and self-concept have been despoiled by the experiences of abuse, using the feminist approach might be beneficial.

#### 6.3.2.1. Feminists and the legal system

Feminist legal arguments about gender violence have developed from feminist insights about the way heterosexual intimate violence is part of a larger system of coercive control and subordination. This system is based on structural gender inequality and has political roots (Schneider, 2000). The source of insight about the connection between lived personal experience and structural power relations is the notion that "the personal is political". In the context of intimate violence, the



impulse behind feminist legal arguments is to redefine the relationship between the personal and the political, to definitely link violence and gender.

Although there have been dramatic strides in the way the law on intimate violence has incorporated these insights, in the process of lawmaking, feminist ideas about the relationship between violence and gender have been simultaneously transformed, depoliticised, subverted, and contained: the broader link between violence and gender inequality that animated them has, to a large degree, been lost, or at least undermined.

Feminist therapists do not take a neutral stance. They advocate for definite change in the social structure, especially in the area of equality, power in relationships, the right to self-determination, freedom to pursue a career outside the home, and the right to education. This might be a problem with women who choose that their primary focus is their children and home (as seen with participants 1 and 3) and do not want to get professionally involved outside home. They might feel that feminists are imposing on them. It may also be a problem for women who are financially and emotionally dependent on their husbands and do not want to change this aspect of their relationship. Moreover, there are those women who accept the hierarchy in their family (as with participant 5).

The larger macrosocietal institutions (such as patriarchy, nationality, institutional sexism, and other stereotypes) contribute to men's abusive behaviour with women. Men also enjoy the benefit of support from the legal systems and other institutions as well as socialisation of male and female (for example, participant 2 and 4 who were unsuccessful with their legal cases and the success of popular cases of O.J Simpson and Louis Althusser).

A facet of feminist therapy that can be both a strength and a limitation is the focus on looking at environmental factors that contribute to the abuse of women. Moving away from exploring the intrapsychic domain as the source of a woman's problems does a great deal to illuminate a woman's perspective. Instead of being blamed for the abuse, the woman is able to come to an understanding of external realities that are indeed oppressive. This might help the woman to be aware of her situation. The theories discussed above are relevant to the present study in that they relate to different factors that have emerged in the study, such as culture, family norms, belief system and so on.

#### 6.4. STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

If an African woman or man is an employee of a company headed by an African manager or is a member of a sport team headed by an African coach, his or her reasons for taking off from duty to attend a cultural function are better understood than if a manager or coach is from a different nationality or cultural group that has different cultural values and norms. For this reason, the value of the present study lies in the following:

- The researcher and the subjects understood and understand each other's language, values, beliefs and culture, which makes comprehension and understanding easy to attain.
- Communication was a zone of comfort, where participant's views and feelings were properly communicated to the researcher. In addition, the interviews were voluntary and conducted in a language best understood by the participants and the researcher.
- The subjects also highlighted to the researcher the need to express abuse in terms of their value system and culture.
- No previous study has addressed this important issue in this way.
- A qualitative approach is more meaningful than questionnaires because of the depth of data obtained.

- The study highlights issues that may not be apparent to the majority of psychologists because of their western background.
- All the women were willing to participate in the study because the research process was particularly important and relevant to them and they were able to disengage and had emotional separation from their abusers.
- All the respondents were able to speak Zulu fluently and were able to express themselves in English. The interviews were conducted in both Zulu and English. The researcher and participants were fluent in both languages and that outweighs the disadvantage of working through a translator.

## 6.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

### Representativeness, Gender, Race

The sample in the present study is clearly not representative of all African women. This means that the findings cannot be generalised to the population of black women or even those residing around Gauteng. The findings may represent a certain percentage or only the particular women interviewed in the study. Again, partners were not included.

At the institution where the sample was chosen, white women could not participate in the study because they preferred to use their mother



tongue, Afrikaans. The researcher's lack of fluency in Afrikaans led to exclusion of this group and was therefore an additional limitation of this study.

### Validity

A further limitation of the study was related to the overall question of validity that surrounds qualitative research. The self-reporting methods of data collection and the language used are subject to interpretation errors and unconscious distortions of what is reported. The study may also be limited by the semi-structured nature of the interview schedule. However, it has been generally accepted that because of the shame in African society associated with being abused, distortions that *minimize* the abuse are more common than those that *exaggerate* the extent of abuse in intimate relationship. Again, due to the limited nature of the present study, the participants' partners were not included, which made it difficult to fully understand the participants' relationships.

These limitations, while no doubt significant, are balanced by the rich multitextured data that emerged from the interviews. More importantly, the approach adopted served the overall purpose of the study, which was to explore factors contributing to the maintenance of abuse among black African women.

## 6.6. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Future research

Inclusion of all family members (that is, husbands and children) is indicated in order to fully understand the behaviour patterns in the family of the abused woman. Marital abuse and violence affect the family as a whole and the family exists within a larger society. It is therefore also essential to focus attention on how society contributes to perpetuating maintenance of abusive behaviour in families.

More studies are needed that include the adequate assessment and documentation of the interaction of biological, social and structural factors that may contribute to abuse and the response to treatment. If all the dimensions of the phenomenon can be studied comprehensively, and in an integrated manner, an effective model of intervention can be formulated.

Interventions that exist for women who are victims of male violence, (such as shelters, support groups, legal centres for victims of abuse, hot lines, and so on) traditionally have been initiated by women. If more men could participate in such organisation, there could be a greater understanding of what abused women experience and more awareness could be created within families and societies.

The researcher or institution that offers help about abuse has to have a comprehensive understanding of different cultural norms, values and social background of the people involved to be of any value. Finally, researchers and other care providers must be prepared to deal with a variety of women (for example, rural women, disabled women, lesbian, and sex workers), both perpetrators and victims, and to appreciate the diversity of responses (as well as the diversity of women themselves).

### Therapy

The researcher in the present study does not suggest any particular approach or school of thought as more useful than another, but recommend that therapists should draw from different therapeutic endeavours and choose what seems appropriate for a particular family. It is important for the therapist to recognise diversity and therefore shape therapy to fit the client's world. This includes taking into consideration the social and cultural context of clients and the way the contexts affected women personally and professionally. For example, some customary rules do not allow a woman to speak in the presence of her husband. Therefore, a therapist who is doing couple therapy and is not aware of these rules might experience resistance or feel stuck and incompetent.

Therapists should focus on characteristics of optimism and assess the situation, regardless of whether they use one approach or a

combination. It is important to draw on the woman's knowledge of what is right and what is wrong with her life and listen without judging.

Treatment should include all family members, and take into cognisance the roles prescribed within the family. For example in African society, there is a certain hierarchical way of reporting problems for women. That is, a woman starts by informing parents and parents' inlaws, who then involve uncles and other extended family members. The process can have a range of impacts on a family and diminish the possibility for change. In addition, when a woman/couple comes to the therapy, it is likely that the story has been told and re-told for some time, and it may be reshaped into a different story.

Most African men are emotionally reserved and they do not easily express what they usually feel. It might be difficult for the therapist to get to know the other side of the story. Therefore taking a one-down position and letting the husband (if it is couple therapy) occupy a one-up position might facilitate the process of therapy.

Assessing and addressing issues of dominance and control in the marriage may be an important avenue for changing patterns of abuse.

It is important to encourage abused women who come to therapy to be involved with support groups that are existing in that area, for most



abused women learn best from other women who have also experienced abuse.

Finally, in the words of Mills (1998) " No intervention that takes power away from the survivor can possibly foster her recovery, no matter how much it appears to be in her immediate best interest". Good therapists are those who validate experiences of their clients and help them take control of their lives rather than trying to control them.

## 6.7. CONCLUSION

It could be said that this study, through qualitative research, has explored a group of black women's experiences of abuse and factors contributing to abuse. The findings highlight both diverse and shared factors affecting African women. As it is seen, most African women seldom seek outside help because of many reasons stated in the study. Emphasis has to be put on education and awareness in order to change the current situation.

By furnishing the accounts of the five women who participated in the study, the researcher hopes that the information provided will make a small contribution to the body of research on abused women. In particular, it is hoped that the study contributes to a greater

understanding of what makes most women stay/leave an abusive relationship.

In conclusion, the researcher hopes that the findings will prompt African men in future to look into the concept of human rights and equality and treat women as humanly as possible. As long as some women are suppressed and abused, there is no hope of succeeding in eliminating the cycle of abuse and educating younger generations into more tolerant modes of interaction.

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# APPENDIX I

## CONSENT FORM

I, (Full name and Surname).....hereby confirm and understand that Ms L.Mabena is doing her Master's research project on factors contributing to abuse in black South African women. I am also willing to participate voluntarily in the study without any remuneration, and that I can withdraw at any time from the study. I also agree that an audiotape can be used during the interview and that confidentiality will be maintained and that any publication will respect my anonymity if I so choose.

Signature of the participant .....Date.....

Signature of the researcher.....Date.....



## APPENDIX II

### TELEPHONE LIST

#### 1. Violence against women

- Shelters and victim support centres      Tel(011)3557726
- Campaigns      Tel(011)3551806
- Trauma centres      Tel(011)3551841
- Counselling services      Tel(011)3551820
- Sexual harassment      Tel(011)3550480

#### 2. Programmes for perpetrators of violence against women and children      Tel (011)355 7856

3 Women's human rights      Tel (011) 355 7726

4 The Girl-child      Tel (011) 355 7726

#### 5. National network on violence against women

Tel: (012) 348 1233/2

Fax (012) 348 1235

#### 5 People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)

Tel (011) 642 4345/6

Fax 484 3195

#### 6 South African Women's Empowerment Foundation

Tel (012) 361 7313

Fax 361 0126

7. Tswaranang Legal Advocacy Centre to End Violence Against  
Women

Tel (011) 403 8230/4267

Fax 403 4275

8. Women's Health projects

Tel (011)489 9917

Fax (011) 489 9922

9. Women and Education

Tel: (011) 355 0000

Fax (011) 333 5548

## APPENDIX III

A POEM SENT IN BY ONE OF THE PARTICIPANT, ENTITLED

### *I GOT FLOWERS TODAY*

I got flowers today,  
It wasn't my birthday or other special day  
We had our first argument last night, and he said  
a lot of cruel things that really hurt me.  
I know he is sorry and didn't mean things he said.  
Because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today.  
It wasn't our anniversary or any other special day.  
Last night he threw me into a wall and  
started choking me, It seemed like a nightmare.  
I couldn't believe it was real.  
I woke up this morning sore and bruised all over  
I knew he must be sorry,  
because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today,  
And it wasn't Mothers day or any other special day.  
Last night, he beat me up again and it was much  
worse than the other times.  
If I leave him, what will I do? How will I take care  
Of my children? What about money?  
I am afraid of him and scared to leave.  
But I know he must be sorry,  
because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today.  
Today was a very special day.  
It was the day of my funeral  
Last night he finally killed me.  
He beat me to death.  
If only I had gathered enough courage  
and strength to leave him.  
I would not have got flowers today.

## APPENDIX IV

### INTERVIEWS

- R - RESEARCHER
- P - PARTICIPANT

### PARTICIPANT 1

R: When we first met you told me about the abuse you have endured, would you like to elaborate on that?

P 1: Yes, in my marriage I have experience physically, emotionally and financially abuse.

R: Tell me more about your experiences?

P 1: My husband, use to beat me up. I remember one day I went to the shop and he came back to the house and I was not there, then he started to use vulgar language that was followed by the beatings. There are also several incidences whereby I would come back slightly late from work, say I was at the station five o'clock and the train comes at twenty pass five, he would beat



me up. In his case, he would vanish for some days, two to three days and if I ask where he had been, I then get the beatings. Sometimes after coming back from wherever he was, he will force to have sex with me and again if I refuse then the beatings. It was an ongoing process and my daily bread.

R: How long has this been going on?

P 1: The whole thing started after my first child, 1985 until recently were he is no longer beating me, but I still experience emotional abuse. I do not think he will ever stop.

R: Were there any signs in his behaviour that shows that he is an abusive person before your marriage?

P 1: Coming to think of it there was signs, but I did not take things seriously then. If I recall one event where he would come at my place and if he did not find me, he would be very angry. Later he would ask for explanation, and when I tell him that my mother sent me to the shop, instead of understanding, he will get angrier.

R: How would you describe his anger?

P 1: His anger was always uncontrollable. I used to complain to my sister about his anger and the fact that I need to still respect my parents when they sent me, but he would not understand.

R: What about beatings, did he ever beat you before?

P 1: No, he did not. If he did, then I would know that he is not good for me.

R: What makes you to stay in this relationship?

P 1: At first when my husband started beating me I was confused, you see, my father used to beat me too. We used to have duties and were supposed to wake up early in the morning and clean the house before going to school. Sometimes it would be difficult to wake up even when the alarm rings. He would call my name and if I do not wake up, he would beat me hard. It was his belief that as a first child I should an example and a role model to other children. If I voice out that I do not like the way he is treating us as his children, he will beat me again. Therefore, when my husband started beating me up I thought, there was something wrong with me. I used to tell my mother what was happening, and she would advice me not to answer back to my husband. She would say, " I know you my child, you like to talk back, so you should not talk back to your

husband ". I would therefore think that I am on the wrong. I would also relate to the fact that my father was beating me alone and not other children, because they said I have a big mouth and answered back. Therefore, I learnt from then that it is wrong to stand up for me. I was made to believe that there is something wrong that I am doing that provokes people that make them angry. In addition, where I grew up, every now and then you would hear stories about your neighbour beating the wife and nothing was done about it. Therefore, this was the kind of lifestyle that my community and I were exposed to. It was an accepted way of life, and if I try to pack my back and go home, they would say what are you doing? Do not you know that it is part of life and that is how marriage is.

R: So do you think society plays a role in families?

P 1: Think so, especially when a society you grew up into sees abuse as normal because. For example, I mean you go to authorities to ask for help when he beats me, and they would just say to my husband- you must stop beating your wife, and they would not anything more or penalise him. Even my father would not try to discipline my husband. What he used to do was to call my husband aside without inviting me. Later then I would be called, and my father would say that he has spoken

to my husband and he said he is sorry, and that I should pack my bags and go back to my husband. I was never recognised or called to those small meetings to say my side of a story.

R: So your father knew about everything you have experienced?

P 1: Yes, my father knew about everything that was happening because when he beats me, I use to run back home. It was only when my son was five years old and I was shocked when my father for the first time said to me you are not going back to that husband of yours. I therefore stayed at home for months, but my husband kept on coming to see us, making an excuse about seeing his child. Later he came where I was working and apologised, almost everyday of the week. I was then tempted to go back to him.

R: You mentioned earlier on about your husband being emotionally abusive, would you elaborate on that?

P 1: This is the most painful abuse and difficult to explain, and at the end I felt useless and ugly. My husband makes me believe that he is doing me a favour by marries or staying married to me. He would have extramarital affairs without hiding them from me. If I confront him about the affairs he would say to me



“ these are the questions that makes me angry, so get out of my face “. He would continue to emphasise the fact that he is doing me a favour. He would boast about dating beautiful ladies. If I query about him still staying with me, he would just say to me that the only thing I am good at is sex. He told me so many times that I started to see myself through his eyes. I eventually believed that I am ugly, useless and no one will ever love me. What he did to me left me with no confidence, even when we were interacting with other people, I would think that everybody is aware that I am useless. When we had conversation with other people, he would talk on my behalf. Sometimes I would have guts and ask him why does he always respond on my behalf, he would then say that my English is very terrible and that I am stupid. Eventually his words will ring into my ears every time I want to express myself. It was worse when I was conversing with him, I would totally forget what I want to say then I will end up not trying to stand up for myself. I would start suppressing everything in my mind, and convince myself that it is better if I do not say anything or try to challenge him. I used to live in fear. What really keeps me going was my children, and reading empowerment books.

R: Tell me how did you survive all this years?

P 1: It was quite difficult, at times I thought of taking my life. But then I would think I would not have guts to commit suicide, and thought of leaving my children makes me to have second thoughts.

R: How were your children affected, did they witness some of the incidences?

P 1: My children were aware of everything that my husband was doing to me, because he does not hide most of the time, he insults me in front of them. He calls me big names in front of them. He can say anything he wants to say without regret and if he forgets something, he comes back and say it in front of the children. Sometimes he would drop me at church, and later pick me up. He would then start becoming resentful and say that I had sex with the priest. He would say you are 'isifebe' (meaning a whore), and you are stupid. Anyway he would act as if I'm his child. He wants me to jump around every time he is around. He always talks to me and not with me. When he is drunk he is worse, he would force me to listen to his unending 'shebeen' stories about people who were drunk and their behaviour when they are drunk. What I usually do is to pretend that I am listening; otherwise I will be in trouble. His weakness though was when he was sober, because he was not

as aggressive as when he is drunk. Therefore I would suggest something and he would just say yes, but when he comes back later being drunk he would start fighting and relate to what I said earlier on. He would continue to say that he is the only one who gives instructions and I do not have to give my opinion. Most of the time the children will be there and I would send them to their room.

R: Following what you said about your husband's affairs and that he was boasting about them, were you not affected with sexual and other related diseases?

P 1: I had contracted diseases repeatedly before. I would consult the doctor and he would call him for treatment too. The sad thing he would not refrain from his ways and we would keep on going back for treatment. It makes me angry because at this moment I am not sure that if I go for the HIV test, how will the results be. The last time I slept with another man except my husband is when I was seventeen years old. Coming to think that I might be infected makes me angry because I am not a promiscuous person, and I don't deserve it. It really makes me angry. I think I allowed him to do this to me. I allowed him to infect me with sexually transmitted diseases. You know the up and down to the doctor was also affecting me emotionally.

Nowadays I insist that we use a condom, but at times, he comes home being drunk and try to force him on me without using a condom. Then we will star fighting again in front of the children. My first son would suggests that I must divorce his father and that he does not care whether we live on the street as long as he is far away from his father. Then I will be in a dilemma because my daughter is still young and do not understand what is happening and she is very close to her father. If the father comes late or he goes on a course, she always asks about him.

R: How would you relate your experiences with your family or his family.

P 1: This is quiet a difficult question for me. My husband's family is complicated. Two of his brothers are not married. The other brother was married twice and divorced, but he has illegitimate children from different mothers. The sister is married to an older man, and she also has children from different fathers. Actually, there are four of them in his mother, but they having different fathers, with two from another, which I only discovered now. Relating to your question, I don't know really that my family or his family contributed to these experiences. Coming back to my family, I have notice that my sisters,



maternal and paternal aunts, including my mother have stayed in abusive relationships. One of aunt remained in her abusive marriage until death. My other aunt is in a situation like mine, the husband is having extramarital affairs, and he is having children outside his marriage, but she is still stuck with him. I never saw my father beating my mother, but I have seen him insulting her several times. He would usually shout at her and say that he regrets getting married to a Xhosa woman-meaning my mother, and that he misses his childhood township-Bushbuckridge. He said all this things until one day he decided to move back to Bushbuckridge. Now my parents are staying separately, my mother in Tembisa and my father in Bush. When I look at it now I think my parents stayed together because we were still young. Now that we have grown up and no longer staying at home, they have decided to go their separate ways. Just like me, I am still tolerating my husband because of my children. Moreover I think as soon as my children grow older, it means I must also move out of my husband's life.

R: Were you ever affected in such a way that you seek medical attention?

P 1: I think at some stage I was very much depressed, although I never consult with a doctor about it, I used to take a lot of

tablets, especially pain killers. After taking painkillers, I would then sleep and get some peace of mind. I always do that in the morning when there is no one at home. This will give me time to sleep until eleven in the morning, and then I will wake up and clean up the house. No one knew about it and when my husband comes back from work, everything would be in order. It was my little secret, which did not last long because I was isolated from neighbours and friends. I think people were looking at me and saw this useless woman who hardly goes out of her home. Anyway I feel useless myself and I am angry that I cannot help myself. I would always promise myself that I would do something about my problems but I never did. I am always sad because I feel useless. Sometimes my anger is shifted to my children. I realise that I often shout at them for no apparent reason. I would realise that I am wrong to shout at my children and I would start drinking alcohol. Thank God that I did not have money to buy more alcohol and that is the reason I could not consume too much. Now I hardly touch alcohol, only when there is party or a function. I actually stay away from alcohol when I am sad.

R: Did you ever work before?

P 1: Yes, I was working in a bank as a teller. I lost that job because of my husband. It's a long story and a sad one. All I can say now is that my husband did not want me to work or have friends.

R: What about him, does he have friends?

P 1: This is a sad thing to say. My husband does not really have friends. The only people he called friends are the ones that he goes with to a bar to drink alcohol. They never visit him at home. Therefore, he does not really have friends' -only acquaintances. I think that made him angry to realise that I have friends. I remember that he would fight seriously fight with me if I go to a friend. The issue would be talked about for two to three weeks before it could be resolved. I would therefore stop visiting friends just to make peace.

R: How is the relationship between your husband and his family members?

P 1: I do not think I know much about their relationship. All I know is that his father died long time ago. His father was an alcoholic. He died of some liver diseases from drinking too much alcohol. Apparently after he was diagnosed, he was told

to taking alcohol, but he could not stop. My sister-in-law told me that his father has another child out of wedlock. She further said everyone in that house was dominant and that each member stands for himself or herself. She once told me that she found satisfaction in involving herself with multiple partners.

R: If you recall back, is there anything in your life that you feel you are in control of without the interference of your husband?

P 1: I think what I had successfully done to my self was to gain more weight. You know why I did that? It is because my weight is the only thing that I can control and he cannot no matter what. I figured out that he likes my body. I use to go the gym and my body was well toned and trimmed, so gaining weight was the only way to spite him. I used to eat anything just to get comfort from food. I think it was part of depression. My aim was to make him lose control over me. The only time I would see him smile is when I go to the gym, to the extent that he would accompany me to the gym. He would be besides me, making jokes and showing the other side that I hardly know. Recently I realised I have picked up too much weight and the only person I am hurting is myself and not my husband. So I am trying to slim again. If I could take my photos and show



you, you would be amazed and think it is my younger sister in the photo.

R: Does he comment on your weight?

P 1: No he does not say anything.

PARTICIPANT 2

R: Would you like to tell me what led to your husband's imprisonment?

P 2: Well he was an abusive person and I thought for sometime that as time goes on he will change but it came to a point that I couldn't take it any longer. I had to take further action and I reported the matter to the police and he was taken to prison. I did lay charges I think twice and I dropped them again and as time goes on I did realize that he would never change and ultimately I would die because he was very, very abusive and I decided to lay charges and he was imprisoned.

R: Would you like to elaborate on what do you mean by *he was abusive you*?

P 2: Okay I mean he was physically abusive- hitting me with his fist and kicking me. Another way he was abusing me in a sense that I had no say in the relationship. His word was final so according to me that was also part of being abuse and I just was there without any input or suggestions in the relationship. As a result of that I lost my friends. I didn't have a life of my

own. I felt totally dependent on him and that in a way he was also abusive to me.

R: How did you survive all these years?

P 2: I could say that at times I used to tell myself that eventually I would be self sufficient and independent. Therefore move out because I felt I was not working at the time and I was totally dependent on him. Staying with him for some time, I had the feeling that never minds he is not working anymore because of his imprisonment; I have to move out. I don't care, this is not good, and it's not working. I even proposed to him about the divorce at first and he was so arrogant. He did not want to take any of my suggestions because I had reasons. He did not want to discuss anything with me so this was hurting and I told him that eventually one day I would move out of this relationship. So I think what kept me from going that time was the fact that to me I felt I belonged here. There was nowhere I can go; I don't have friends or family. I just didn't have a life back then because I was not working so I just felt trapped up until I got a job and I told him he could go to hell.

R: How long were you married to him?

P 2: Three and a half years.

R: In that three and a half years can you think of a year or months where you could say you were happy in your marriage?

P 2: Well, yes there were times when I was happy because you see apart from him being abusive he was a good person at the same time because in general terms, people would just say all a woman wants is support, financially, in terms of having enough food in the house, enough money to do clothing and all that. I didn't have a problem. I was well taken care of by my husband; I mean even though I was not working, I didn't have a problem about basic needs. I didn't feel that much of this being a problem to me but then I just couldn't take the abusiveness. It would happen from time to time. Although it wasn't a daily thing, but when he starts it seem as if he beat me everyday and the good times are easily outweighed by those abusive days.

R: Did you see signs before marriage when you were still dating that he is abusive?

P 2: Actually no, but the only thing that was prominent was that he was extremely, I don't want to call it obsessed but he was very



protective of me and he was sort of jealous. He didn't want people around me as he felt I belonged to him alone. So well that wasn't a sign to me at that stage as it made me proud that he was not looking anywhere else except me. I didn't have any signs before marriage.

R: How long were you dating before marriage?

P 2: We met in 1991; I think it was three years because we finally got married in 1994.

R: Tell me about your family and what kind of relationship you had with your family members?

P 2: I think the crucial years of my life were not spent with my family so I couldn't have experienced any abuse. Mostly I was alone in exile, where I spent most of my time and I was young plus or minus nine years of age. So I cannot remember anything. From the age of about nine up until I was twenty-one (21) I was in exile. The only family members who were with me were my siblings but they were placed in different schools. So I just lived a very independent life.

R: What about your parents, did you go with them?

P 2: No actually it was just my brothers and sisters so we were in different schools when we were in primary at the boarding school, so in effect we were taken care of by a master or the matron.

R: Did that not embitter you?

P 2: Well not really, because you know, spending my whole time in exile I think I learnt a lot during that time because, well, I just adjusted without any problem and I didn't feel that I'm missing something because I was not alone. I was with other children as well; according to us we were all living a normal life. So that in a way helped me a lot because I think I grew and developed a on my own. I think my was independence and stubbornness made me vulnerable to his (husband) abuse, because I didn't want a person like my husband right now to take or to start ruling me. He wanted to dominate me and I was not used to that.

R: How often was he physically abusive to you?

P 2: It was continuous in a month, maybe about four or five times but then it would later stop four about three months. Then it would take place again for a week and another interval for

about two or three days. It was very fluctuating but it was several times a month in a year. The thing is at that time I was not working, and I used to do spring cleaning in the house. Sometimes I would get tired and he would not understand when he comes back home and finds the house is not clean. He would ask me whose cigarette ashes are these, but they are his and were from the previous evening. Then he would not understand such things and continue to ask why there were two cups and ask me who was drinking tea with me and stuff like that. He would just start creating a problem out of nowhere and suggests that somebody was in the house during his absence. Some other times when we start conversing, he would say that I want to take over. I want to control him and then he did not like that. So I always had to just sit and listen to him whatever he said, and even agree with him. I was using Depo-Provera for prevention, according to the doctors, it causes irregular menstruation, and at that stage I would not feel like making love to him so I would dogged him. He didn't understand that even I had extra-marital affairs. It would be a continuous thing. He would say "who is this person coming to my house and making love to you, because you don't want to do it with me". Sometimes I attend parties with him, he would be jealousy if his friends or other people are looking at me. He would say to some of them; " why are you looking at my wife,

and are you having an affair with her?" Then we would usually start again fighting and the whole party would be sour. He would then hit me and would want to make love to me. You could imagine at that stage I don't want anything to do with him and he would force it on me.

R: How did the abuse started?

P 2: Initially it started with a few slaps to handling me very roughly, beating me with fists, and pushing me to the wall. It was gradual then intensified with time later.

R: How did it feel to be in that relationship?

P 2: At times I felt alone, because no matter how much I try to communicate with him, we could not agree on some of the things. His word was always final and my suggestions and opinions were thought of as useless so I just felt I was not part of the relationship. He wants to be the boss and I must just be under him.

R: You mentioned that you felt alone, what did you mean by that?

P 2: Well physically and psychologically, because he used to go away sometimes but it wouldn't be for longer than three days.



He would always bring a big explanation or otherwise bring a friend to make an excuse for him that they were together at whatever party. To be honest his absence was sometimes welcomed for that was the only time I was happy to have some peace of mind. However at the same time I would feel sad thinking that he might be having affairs.

R: Was there any indication that he is unfaithful?

P 2: At some point I got tired of consulting to the doctors. You know when you have sexually transmitted diseases, usually the doctors at the clinic would need both partners to receive treatment, and then he would refuse directly. He would say that I am the one responsible and there is no way he could be the one who is the cause of the disease. So I used to live with those fears and when I tried to talk about it, it would be a problem so at the same time I used to tell myself that one-day I would be out of this situation.

R: How were your relationship and his relationship with his family?

P 2: I don't know them that much but during consultation with a few psychiatrists they did mention that he came from a home

where he was also abused and experienced very rough things in his life especially during his training in Angola where he lost friends in combat and all that so that's all I know, I don't know whether you know?

R: So you never saw his family?

P 2: Well I met his family, but he was only staying with his mother. His brothers, sisters, and uncle also were staying in separate homes.

R: What about your parents?

P 2: My father passed away sometime during the late 80's. Thereafter my mother married again but ended up getting divorced and then got married for a second time, however all those details I did not know them then, only now after I came back from exile. After I came back to the country, I didn't spend time with my father until he passed away. What I remember about him though is that he loved us very much and used to spoil us. All the other things about him I only learnt about later, for instance that he was having extra-marital affairs and hence the divorce with my mother.

R: As you mentioned that your mother divorced twice, was that part of the reason you stay in your relationship to avoid walking in the same footsteps as your mother?

P 2: I think for me it was denial than anything else, not believing or realizing that you are in an abusive relationship. Some people think it is normal for your husband to hit or 'discipline' you, but I never liked it. Another factor is that you cannot become fully independent while you are dependent on your husband to provide for you. I did not have any place to go and the fear of going back to your parents and becoming a burden to them, was not an option. Therefore in the end you tolerate everything as long as you are getting the basic needs. I myself was stuck in that situation and later I realise that I could take care of myself. It took some time for me to realise that, but after my realisation I started looking for a job and I left him.

R: How did the realisation come about?

P 2: I think the most horrendous experience I had was the one where he actually wanted to kill me and that made me realized that I do not deserve this. All the other events were also bad but I kept on thinking he would change or would stop but that day I couldn't take it any longer. I think if I continued to allow

him to control me or stayed with him, he would have definitely killed me. He tried one evening to kill me and it was when I escaped that I managed to come out of it. Fortunately that time he did not have a gun but did have a hammer and a big knife and he told me he was going to kill me that night. He asked funny questions like: - ' what time I wanted to die and that I must pray for the last time because he was going to kill me '. At some point, while we were sitting in the bedroom, he lit the duvet cover and he instructed me not to move when the fire was coming closer. I actually started burning before he decided to take the duvet cover outside. That event made me realize that I must leave this situation and that was the last chance, but I gave him another chance. That was my mistake because then I got lucky and had a job; I should have left him then. I remember while I was doing my bridging course at PD School he didn't like the idea that I was doing the course far away from him. It was not even that far because I could go home every weekend. He was not happy because there was no one to do his washing and cooking, and wanted me to become pregnant so that he would ground me and to make me stay with him. I was against that idea so it carried on. One day he decided he was going to fetch me and it was not yet a weekend. He wanted to cancel my course so that I could go back to be a housewife.



The authorities at PD School refused and said that I couldn't just withdraw from the course. If there were serious reasons, yes there would release me, but that one was not valid enough for them. As the week approached the weekend, I became very frustrated because I did not want to go back home. I had a cell-phone but he did not want to telephone me on it. He used to telephone at school on a public telephone. It happened one day that we went out with some girls to the Army College just opposite to PD School. We went to the General who was doing a senior staff course to ask for help with something. That was when my husband telephones and I was not in the unit. He immediately came to Pretoria and took me home. Then he started hitting me and I later told my family about his harassing ways because he used to threaten that he would kill me, kill himself and the child. My brother decided to take me home. That was the only time he was met with 'the master' to discuss his problem. That day he vowed that he would never mention that he would kill me so I went back home with him. I think it was a week after the meeting that he started hitting me for the whole night again and searched my bag and purse. He wanted something to give him a reason for hitting me but could not find anything. He started checking my numbers on the telephone. He took money that was in my purse along with my diary and phone book and went through it while using all my

cell phones minutes phoning people and asking them who they were and what relationship they had with me.

I think he planned this all along, because immediately he brought the hammer and knife, saying that today he was going to kill me. I made a mistake by trying to run away for he hit me like a stranger or like I was some robber or whatever. He was wearing takkies at first and he felt he was not hitting me hard enough, and then he changed to his boots. He then threw me on the floor to kick me on the head with his boots. It was then that I realized this guy meant business and he was going to kill me. At some point, my forehead was so big and swollen and I was bleeding. He said I must go and look at a mirror, because all along I thought I was beautiful. When I looked at the mirror I was terrible, I could barely see and had to open my eyes with my hands to see myself. My face, eyes and nose were red and swollen. In my mind, I was thinking how I was going to escape. I then asked for water where he took me by the hand to the kitchen and then took me back to the room and we sat down. He started asking me questions about the numbers in the telephone and I explained them to him. He would then telephone all the numbers but because it was late some of the people were asleep. He accused me of telling the people to switch their phones off so that he could not find them. He

carried on hitting me with his fist and later tried to strangle me. He said I should pray for the last time because he was going to kill me. Then he asked what time I wanted to die. The time I think was about 01h00 a.m. I said I want to die at 04h00 in the morning. He said I was crazy and he cannot wait that much long. He suggested 01h30 or 02h00 in the morning. I thought of another trick and I asked for food and that I would make some for him and he agreed. I started frying some eggs while preparing bread and juice. While he was in the bedroom, I thought this is my last chance. I opened the tap and at the same time, I opened the door for I didn't want him to hear anything. I then locked him in and that is how I managed to escape and ran away.

R: Where was your son, did he see what was happening?

P 2: That specific day he heard the screaming and scuffling and when he woke up he started crying. My husband told him there was nothing wrong and he must go back to sleep. I don't know whether he slept or just kept quiet in bed, but he stayed in his room.

R: Your son told me about incident when the Police came into your house and the shooting that took place, would you like to elaborate on that issue?

P 2: Ok that was a different incident from the one I just told you. I was just separated from my husband. He started to stalk me. Somehow, he knew every movement I made. I then filed for divorce; at the same time I open a case for him and ask for an interdict. All I wanted from him was that he should leave me alone. I did not want to involve the legal system, but I had no choice or other alternative. Whatever he did for whatever reason to me was not justifiable. We discussed this at some point because I knew I was not going to solve anything by taking him to prison. All I wanted was for him to leave me alone. He did not want to sign the divorce papers, but he promised to grant me the divorce if I dropped the charges. I then dropped the charges and thought it was over but it wasn't because there was the other incident again.

R: Do you want to elaborate on the incident?

P 2: It was going through the divorce then he realized I meant business and he started going to a psychologist and doctors looking for help. I don't know what kind because he had a



psychotic problem. I spoke to his doctors and told them that I wanted nothing to do with him. He did not want to accept that I am divorcing him, but I carried on anyway. When the divorce papers were finalised, I was escorted by a social worker to him to hand over the divorce. I think that made him very crazy. In turn, he followed me around. He knew where I was staying. One night at about 03h00 in the morning he broke in through the kitchen window while I was sleeping. I think he also knew I had a gun, because he also had one when he entered. Instinctively I woke up and saw him standing in front of me. As I went for my gun under the pillow, he already had his gun. So we fought. He wanted to grab the one that I had. As we were struggling, my son got both the guns. There was also a woman who was staying with me who had problems with her husband. When she heard me screaming, she came into the bedroom and she tried to intervene but it took some time because she tried to go out to call the police. Then my husband held us hostage while saying funny things and insulting us. He wanted to know why I had a gun and I said it was for protection. He said I wanted to kill him with it because I knew he was going to come after me. I don't know how but at some point I managed to jump through the window. He shot at me but I managed to escape. He then shot at the woman. Fortunately, this lady was also strong because then they fought during the shooting, as

she was only shot in the fingers. He thought that he shot me already because he was trying to shoot the lady. He was trying to all of us. He ran to hide himself in the ceiling. He ended up shooting himself thinking we were all dead.

R: Where did he shoot himself?

P 2: In the forehead.

R: So he survived that?

P 2: Yes, he survived. When I first heard that he shot himself I was happy but when I heard he survived I was very disappointed.

R: Does that bother you that he is still alive?

P 2: Well no because he is no longer bothering me, because after that day he was imprisoned for a month. What he does now is unnecessary telephones me, and tries to make a conversation. We attended the court case almost a year ago. The only thing he was given was a suspended sentence because I think there these doctors' reports saying he was not fit to stand trial. I also realized that I couldn't deprive him of his son. If they have to see each other then I had to communicate with him to make

arrangements. I told him he could only phone me when he wants to talk to the child. Sometimes though he sends funny messages and tries to prolong the conversation unnecessarily, but he no longer threatens me. He would tell me that he loves me, he misses me, and he wants me. I told him that I would never go back to him.

R: How old is your husband?

P 2: He is about five to six years older than I.

R: Where is he working?

P 2: At a construction at Danolta base, the air force in Pretoria.

R: So he is also in the military?

P 2: Yes.

R: How do you relate to other men?

P 2: I think I have a serious problem when it comes to men, although I did come to an understanding that I cannot judge all men according to this one's behaviour. However I have seen

that all men are the same and that's what makes it very difficult for me sustain relationships. Men are just individuals who want to possess or who want to take over your freedom and that is what I am battling with now. I cannot agree with anything of theirs and as such, I have had problems with relationships. Each time I think that this man wants to dominate me by taking my freedom then I move on. Now I do not even have a steady relationship.

R: Is it about you or about them because it can be an attitude that you have formed already?

P 2: Maybe I think it is an attitude I have towards men, because I don't value men any more. All the people around me have similar problems. My sister for instance is in a very messy relationship. The husband might not be abusive physically but he is not providing for the family. He is just useless and is a husband by name only. He is not doing anything but he has children. I realised all men are the same it is just that they present themselves differently but underneath they are all the same. For that reason, I do not see myself getting married or having a boyfriend because I will always have a problem with them, always.



R: How many are you at home?

P 2: We are seven.

Re: Are you the first child?

P 2: In a way yes, I am the first child to my' father, but the fourth to my mother and the other three children after me. I only learnt about this after I came back from exile. I knew we are seven (three girls and four boys) although I didn't know we have different fathers in the same family.

R: Where were you staying with your husband?

P 2: In Maryvallen, which is in Nigel.

PARTICIPANT 3

R: Tell me about your relationship with your husband.

P 3: Well my husband has been away for some time now. He was deployed to Ermelo in 1999 and since then, he does not keep in touch. Our communication is very bad, actually he hardly communicates with our child and me. The only time I talk to him is when the social worker telephones him, and sometimes they hide him at work.

R: How was your relationship before the deployment?

P 3: We had our ups and downs just like any couple, but the main thing is that we were able to stay together. We got married in 1997 in Durban. He was working in Durban then. I remember it was more like a dream come true for me...eh! More like Cinderella story (sighing) but now...(keeping quiet, eyes full of tears) , things have changed.

R: What do you mean by that?

P 3: When we first met, everything was going fine. He would take me out to movies. He would introduce me to his friends. I

would go to his work and sometimes sleep in the quarters with him. You know we were happy then and very much in love. No one knew our relationship at home, because my parents are very conservative. When I announced that he wanted to pay *lobola*, my parents were shocked and reluctant to accept him because of the church rules. Later they accepted that I am grown up and the realisation of the seriousness of our relationship. They said if I was happy then they were happy too and gave their blessing.

R: Would you tell me about the church rules you have mentioned earlier?

P 3: Oh well, my father is a Pastor in a Christian church and we are not allowed to get married to someone outside our church but they made an exception with him. Moreover as the first-born and the Pastor's child I had to follow the rules strictly. So my husband is regarded as an atheist because he does not attend any church. Anyway after a while my parents realised that he was serious about me and that he was a responsible person, they decided to accept his marriage proposal. We got married then a year later, thereafter we moved to Vereeniging . At first the relationship and the journey to Gauteng were like a dream come true, more like a Cinderella story. I remember that I knew

no one except him and his cousins where we were staying. I was totally cut out from my family and friends. As you know they say *induku enhle igawulwa ezizweni* (Meaning a beautiful lady marry in far places and not locally).

R: What about now, do you have friends and people that you interact with?

P 3: I have a superficial relationship with his cousins, but recently things have turned sour because my husband has been away for some time now and I do not have money to pay the rent.

R: What about involvement in church or community?

P 3: I am not involved in any organisation. My husband did not want me to get involved. He said I would be more like a township girl, but that does not bother me because I don't want friends. To be honest I was kind of relieved when I was here away from my parents, because it was not our choice to go to church, we were just pleasing our parents.

R: Do you have a need to have friends now that your husband is away?



P 3: All I need now is for my husband to come back home and things to go back the same way they were before.

R: How were things before?

P 3: When I met my husband for the first time it was at my friends' wedding. He then asked if we could meet again. He was a perfect gentleman, eating out together, going to the movies. He then proposed a year later because I was pregnant. He was a father figure and a very nice person to me. I thought when I got married, everything will be fine, because it was not nice at home. My father is a Pastor and my mother is not working, usually helps my father in church. We are nine children at home and I am the first-born, the other eight are still at school. So my Father is having a tough time in terms of maintaining all these children.

R: So by getting married, you thought you are reducing your fathers' burden and running away from your family's financial problems?

P 3: Well in a way...yes I realise that especially now that I have been seeing social workers and Psychologists. But before I did not think of it that way.

R: How did you view your marriage?

P 3: I considered myself very lucky for getting married because in our culture when a woman reaches a certain age, she needs to get married otherwise they laugh or pressurise her to do so. As for what is happening with me and my husband, I do not think any woman would like to go through what I am experiencing now. I would like to have my own house, my own car and a lovely relationship with my husband raising our child in a conducive environment. Now he no longer cares about his child or me.

R: Would you say you got married because of pressure.

P 3: Not really ...eh.. I Love my husband very much, and even today, I don't think just because he is flirting around with other women, then I should stop loving him...no, I should not. At this moment, he is supposed to be taking care of my baby and I, but he is busy with older women.

R: Do you think he is having extramarital affairs?

P 3: Well I have heard that he is involved and living with an older woman in Ermelo and that he secretly got married to that

woman, that is why he does not come home. I believe that old woman has bewitched him, once the *Muti* has worn off, he will come back tome.

R: So you believe that your husband has abandoned you because he was forced to do so by some woman who bewitched him?

P 3: Oh yes... otherwise how can you explain his behaviour? Surely he would not do what he is doing if he was not bewitched.

R: Is it for the first time he behaves like he is bewitched?

P 3: He used to beat me and at some stage, I was admitted in hospital for bruises and injuries. What I like is that he will always come back and apologise, he will also buy me clothes, and we would eat out. Sometimes he would not come home after beating me for two to three days, but then he will always come back ... always.

R: What really makes you happy? Is it the fact that he always comes back to you?

P 3: I value my marriage a lot. You know when you get married the older woman usually sit down with you and tell you that no

matter what happens in your marriage as a woman you must never go back to your family or tell them what is happening in your marriage. You only hope that it is only a stage and one-day he will change. So when he keeps on coming back, it shows that he respect our marriage.

P 3: As I said before, I think he is bewitched, because they are jealousy of me.

R: Would you then regard your husband as abusive?

P 3: The fact that he beats me and that he stopped coming back home, I regard that as abusive. I feel that he broke our vows. When we got married, we promised each other that we will stick with one another no matter what. I guess he has forgotten about that, and I strongly believe that they have bewitched him.

R: Who are *they*?

P 3: All these women who are involved with him. They are tempting him, otherwise my husband is good to me.



R: Is it not for the first time that he becomes involved with another woman?

P 3: When we arrived in Johannesburg, our baby was still young, so he visited his friends most of the weekends. When I complained, he would say that I give more attention to the baby. I then started to feel guilty. One day our baby got sick and there was no one at home. I then decided to go over to his friends. When I arrived there, I found him with another woman. I was so devastated and could not say a word. I felt like nothing, and I wish I were dead. I tried to commit suicide by trying to throw myself onto a moving car. The next thing I found myself in a hospital. He then admitted that he was having affairs and that he is going through some rough times he will never do it again. After few weeks, again he started going back to his friends' house. I knew that he has not stopped. When I confronted him, that is when he started the beatings. Five months after the incident, he just stops sleeping with me. He would make excuses that I am not good enough in bed and it was becoming more difficult daily, with more of his excuses. But like I said he will always come back home, this time he is really bewitched because the woman he is staying with is not only older than him, she has been married several times before and her children are from different fathers. She

always gets involved with married men and stays with them using *muti* and taking their money. Now he is supporting other men's children and not his own child. Everyone in that area knows about the woman and his friends are shocked because of the way he is behaving, it is not like him.

R: Does he communicate with you and maybe discuss with you about the future of your marriage?

P 3: The only time I communicate with him is when the social worker telephones him or his Colonel. Besides that he does not keep in touch nor try to come back home. I have heard that he is married to that woman now without asking divorce from me, how possible is it? I don't know.

R: What now?

P 3: I tried to commit suicide for the third time because I do not see any reason for me to live. (Start crying). I think he is very abusive to me because firstly he was hardly home although he was around Gauteng. He forgets that he has a son. He does not maintain him at all. We were lucky because we still belong to his medical aid and are able to consult and are covered for hospital bills.

PARTICIPANT 4

R: Tell me about your experiences.

P 4: Firstly I really do not think that I need to continue with couple therapy because I want to divorce my husband. I was trapped for quiet some time in this marriage, but now I have decided that I must divorce. It is not because of his sickness that I decided to divorce him, but I needed to separate from him long time ago. I thought he would get better so that I will tell him the news but it seems that it will not happen now.

R: What led to this decision?

P 4: We got married in 1994, and we have a 3-year-old daughter, born in 1997. Our relationship started long time ago in 1980. Then the same year my husband went to exile and came back in 1994. He is much older than I am. I am 32 years old and he is 44 years old, a gap of 12 years. But that is not a problem, the fact is that its been three years that my husband does not want to sleep with me.

R: What do you mean by not *sleeping with you*?

P 4: I mean we have not had sex for three years. Moreover, I am not sure what is the problem with my husband. I asked him several times, what is the problem but instead I get insults from him. For example when I try to touch him he will say in a rough voice " don't touch me, don't touch me and what are you trying to do". I would feel so embarrassed and feel guilty as if I have done something wrong. Now our baby is 3 years old but he still uses her to avoid us being together or to have sex. He would take our child from her bedroom and put her in-between us in bed. The aim is to avoid sleeping with me.

R: What do you think makes him avoid you?

P 4: I have asked myself that question but until today, I do not have the answer.

R: Is it the reason you want to divorce him?

P 4: Not at all., the problem is that I am tired of living under his shadow. Right now, I am working at checkers of which our contracts are to be renewed every year. Therefore, I am not paid like permanent staff. I struggle a lot with money. At the same time, he is not supportive enough. I really do not feel like I am his wife. He does everything on his own. He does not



include or involve me in any major decision he makes. For example I just got a letter from the lawyers that needs my signature because my husband sold our flat where we are staying now without informing me first. We just talk around getting a bigger house, then the next thing I hear from the lawyers again that he is intending to buy a certain house we saw once and has already signed the agreement forms. I think also that I only knew about this because he needs my signature otherwise I would be surprised that one day coming from work seeing people occupying my flat.

R: What do you mean you are living under his shadow?

P 4: I mean it is always about him. For example, it was he going to exile and I was left to wait. Coming to Pretoria, I was the one to resign at my job because I did not find a cross-transfer. Now he feels he cannot have sex, then the advice from his mother is that I should wait. Right now, who is sick? it is him again. Really, I am tired.

R: Would you regard your husband as controlling?

P 4: He was always in control, but it was because he was taking decisions alone. By then, I took it as a surprise and interpreted

it as romantic. Another thing is that he was older and more experienced than I. I was young and did not know many things. That gave him an advantage to make decisions for both of us. What he should realise now is that I have grown up now and I need to be treated like an adult. It was also his idea to come to Pretoria, I was comfortable in Cape Town, now he wants me to go back.

R: Did you try to tell him that you are not comfortable in moving to Pretoria?

P 4: No, not when you just got married and the parents are here to tell you that a woman builds her own house. Then I was eager to please him because I thought he loves me. What I did not realise that he likes to control my life. Anyway, because we did not have our own house, it turns out to be a good idea to be able to have a freedom without interference from his parents.

R: Do you think both your parents played a role in your marriage?

P 4: Oh! Yes they did and the still does, they will always involve themselves. Actually, I was able to come to this decision because our parents are no longer involved in our lives-because of the 'distance;' otherwise, I would be stuck with him. It is not because they would force but that they would indirectly

influence our relationship. Moreover, through respect, you do what they want. Another thing is -my husband is a stubborn man. I do not think he would have listened to them even if they were taking my side. Right now, he was also fighting with everyone at work. They have been trying to place in different sections but he still has a problem with everyone. At some stage, he accused me of being in the side of the social worker and not his. I don't think he is aware that I am his wife and not an enemy. I respect him because he has been through a lot, but I think it is time that he moves on.

R: Did you always follow your husband's demands through respect?

P 4: I used to respect him a lot. He was an excellent husband at first. I did not understand why he changed. Maybe he never changed. It's just that the more I think of him, the more I realise that he was always like this. The fact is, I was never with him and coming to think that all these years I was scarred to be alone and yet I was alone. Home and work were like two different worlds for me. I get support from work, and the thought of going home everyday kills me.

R: Tell me more?

P 4: I mean he was the best husband you could ask for, very romantic and understanding. I remember when my brother was not working, he helped him find a job and suggested that he should stay with us. I don't know my father very well, so he was like a father to me and very helpful to my family. Suddenly now when we fight he mentioned all these things and claimed that if he was not in my life I would not survive. He makes me feel like somebody who is weak and dependent on him. He even said if he did not get married to me, I would be nothing.

R: You mentioned that he was a best husband you could ask for, what led to these changes?

P 4: I guess it is difficult to say because we spent most of our time apart. At first he was in exile, when he came back he worked as an intelligence agent and he travelled a lot that time attending courses relevant to his unit. I am able to see him more often now because he is on sick leave. He had an attack -a stroke, actually this is the second attack. The first was in 1996 and the second in 1998 had heart problems, now treated for the second attack. I know he thinks I want to leave him now because he is sick, but you should see him the way he treats me, he really does not need me in his life.



R: Do you feel guilty that you are leaving him now that he is sick?

P 4: Yes and No, anyway he has not lost his mind, he knows what he is doing. He has shown that he does not need me in his life. I tried to go to social workers at his base, but he ended-up saying we are 'scheming' against him. Then he went to a private psychologist but could not continue because he said she is too young to understand what is happening. Now he is accusing my Pastor that he is involved with me. Yes I decided to go to church and spend most of my time attending church services because it is where I get comfort. The pastor tried to talk to him too, men to men but nothing has changed instead accusations got worse.

R: What role did the church play in your relationship with your husband?

P 4: It is so funny because I did not think that my Pastor would understand and that I would find support from a male person. Yes, the church played a big role especially in saving my marriage because the ideology is different in that divorce is not recognised. At this stage, there is nothing to save right now. I cannot just do things to please my Pastor. I have been delaying the divorce for some time now because they thought they could

talk some sense into him. I think the main problem is that he will never change now. He has been in control for a long time. What I hate most is his anger and his passive aggression.

R: Earlier on you mentioned something like your Pastor being male and you did not expect his support, what do you mean by that?

P 4: The way I see it, all men are the same. Hence, I do not think I am going to get married again, not in this lifetime. Moreover, it is difficult for a man to find fault in another man. They always watch each other's back. I think what convinced my Pastor was that he saw things that were done by my husband. For instance, one day he came to church demanding that I should leave the service. Probably he was following me trying to make sure that I am in church, to his surprise I was there. He then shout at my Pastor and other church members threatening to kill them if he found out that one of them is involved with me. He also said that if I don't go with him, I am going to sleep outside. I was so embarrassed and wished I could find a hole and just slip through it. It was going to be better if m husband was drinking, but he does all these things being sober, which means he really meant to harm and destroy my life.

R: Was he abusive to the child?

P 4: He is always protective of all his children. Our daughter is three years old and I don't think she understands what is going on. Another thing is that I had a child while he was in exile. You know what is worse is that I have been blamed for having that child but as a man he was not blamed for having two children from different mothers and the fact that he did not want me to know. All along I was made to believe that his son was his younger brother. Everybody knew-his parents and siblings but not me.

R: How do you associate what you experience with your husband and the abuse?

P 4: I classify his behaviour as abusive. At a distance, he is a very nice husband, but behind doors, he is an animal. The way he talks to me and the way he behaves he is definitely abusive. Last week I was going down the stairs and apparently I was too slow for his liking, he then push me with his right shoulder and I fell down. Instead of pulling me up, he said I must look where I am going. Luckily, my neighbour was watching, and for the first time, somebody saw him for what he is. There are many things that he does, but no one believes me because he is this

quiet and nice person with everybody except his wife. We have been married for seven years but I don't know how much does my husband earn. As I said before, all the furniture in the house was bought without my involvement and choices. I don't know how he bought the flat we are staying in. As far as he is concerned I am just one of his child.

R: Tell me about your upbringing.

P 4: There is nothing much to tell except from the fact that I never knew my father. I have three siblings, two sisters, and one brother. My mother struggle to raise us. It was difficult for my mother because we were staying in a semi-rural area and it is difficult to find a job there except working in a farm. It was also difficult for us to continue with our studies.

R: What happen to your father?

P 4: I do not know much about him, you know older people do not tell us much and we never bother to ask more about him.

R: Does your mother know that you are planning to divorce your husband?



P 4: No one knows, our parents just know that we have problems. His parents tried to help us by calling a meeting between the two families. His mother was taking sides. She said *a woman build her home*, and forgets that it takes two. Meaning no matter what his son do I just have to stay in this marriage. She also suggested that we should move back to Cape Town. I cannot do that; I will be overwhelmed there. Besides, I cannot deal with his past.

R: What do you mean his past?

P 4: He was married before and has two other children from different mothers, one from the first wife and the other from another woman. The children are now 21 years and nineteen, both boys. Now the mother of the son that was kept a secret died recently and his family expects me to just accept everything and start to mother that child while my own child is staying with my mother.

R: Did you know about his marriage before?

P 4: At first I did not know anything. I was doing my metric when we met. He was running away from the police because of his involvement with politics and I helped him escape to exile. We then lost contact until his return in 1994. Nevertheless, he also

blames his wife that she told the police of his whereabouts, not voluntary of course but she was coerced. He was in a verge of divorce before he left for exile.

R: Do you think asking you to marry him was his way of saying thank you for helping him?

P 4: In a way yes, because after he came back from exile, he introduces me to his parents. He was always up-front with what to do next, without involving me of course in his decisions. At first, it seems so lovely and enjoyable. I interpreted it as love. When he denies letting me partake in many decisions I thought he is so sweet. Six months after we moved to Pretoria, he sold our only car-Toyota corolla, without my knowledge. You should see his aggression when I confronted him. It is then that I notice that it was not love at all. He was controlling my life. When I brought something home, he would say to me " You never asked me if you could get that". It was then that I noticed that he want to be in control of everything including my own money. You know what, for weeks now he kept asking me to go back with him to Cape Town and if I said no he will accuse me of having an affair. All he does now is pestering me to go back, can you see, I do not

have a life of my own. Just because he took medical unfit, he wants me to go back.

R: What have you decided now?

P 4: Early this year I went to his superior to explain the situation. They came to the flat to try to talk to him. His Kennel tried to advice him that he should be able to separate his role He emphasised that he need to change. He is only a major at home, but only at work immediately after they left, he accuses me of having a relationship with them. He said I humiliate him I front of his superiors. Following the incident he started to look at his watch whenever I arrive from work. He calculates the time I am knocking off and the distance I took so he could check whether I came straight home. I am really scared of him, especially now that he took medical unfit. He will be staying home the whole day and one mistake that I make, he will kill me. Therefore I have thought about it carefully, I really need to divorce him.

PARTICIPANT 5

R: You were admitted for depression. Would you like to tell me what was happening?

P 5: Actually I was supposed to be admitted two weeks back as it was recommended by my Psychiatrist, but my husband refused that because he thinks I am here ( 1-military Hospital ) to see men and accuse me of flirting around with other men. He does not think that I am sick , he thinks when you are depressed , you are just manipulating him to come for couple therapy.

R: So it is not the first time being admitted for depression?

P 5: No, I was here last year and almost lost my mind. I feel that I was going to heal completely if my husband was cooperating with the doctors. They have been trying to get him here for family therapy, but he refuses saying he is not a problem, the problem is with me and not him.

R: What do you mean *lost your mind*?

P 5: I was just depressed you know domestic stuff. I do not remember well what happened then, but my doctor said I was



talking alone, singing to people in the ward, walking around and making noise thinking that I am a preacher sent by God.

R: What triggered that behaviour?

P 5: I remember vaguely, but I think we were fighting with my husband. The next thing I remember is that I was with the woman who was a prophet and the Sangoma. I was actually stressed out with what was happening in my life. I used to be a very intelligent person at school. After marriage I just started deteriorating for no apparent reason. People believe that I am bewitched.

R: Do you believe that you are bewitched?

P 5: Hmn.... it is a complicated issue, besides if I am bewitched I would not even notice. What I have noticed though is that a lot has changed in my life. I am no longer the same person as I used to be. I mean I used to be ambitious and motivated to do things. Right now I feel tired and lazy to do things. I am also helpless at some stage.

R: What do you mean your life has changed?

P 5: I have lost some of my family members brutally and that makes me scared that maybe we will all die like that at home, and my husband is another person who goes around borrowing money from people and does not pay them back sometimes, so I am scared they will try to kill him too or kill me and my child.

R: Is he always running out of money?

P 5: Yes all the time, you know why, because he absconds at work and pretends that he is sick. Now that I am admitted in hospital, he told them at work that I am seriously ill and he needed some days to spend time with me in hospital. What is funny is he never showed in hospital not even a single day. Wherever he is, he is drinking himself to death. Now I have to cover for him at work and tell them that he was with me.

R: What makes you lie for him?

P 5: If I do not cover for him, he will be arrested by the military police, and that will cause more problems especially financially. He is the only one working and if he loses his job, we will not survive. I sometimes have piece jobs here and there, but I depend on him financially. We also have a seven years old

daughter who has just started school. So I cannot afford to let him lose his job.

R: Would you blame yourself if he loses his job?

P 5: Only if I do not protect him, but the way he is behaving nowadays, he will have no one to blame but himself.

R: What if you were not admitted in hospital, what would be his excuse for not going to work?

P 5: He always has a way of telling lies.

R: Have you experienced the same thing in your relationship?

P 5: As far as I know, all men are liars and you cannot trust them.

R: How long were you married?

P 5: We got married on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1997, it has been three years now, but we have been in a relationship for quite some time now. At first when we met I thought the relationship would not last, because he was staying in Northwest and I was staying in Soshanguve. We dated for few months then he went back to

the Northwest. I never thought he would come back, but after two years he came back and we continued with the relationship until we got married in 1997. I never thought he would come back for me. The fact that he kept his word and came back for me, makes me feel loved.

R: Would you regard your husband as abusive?

P 5: Recently we quarrel a lot and he has become unreasonable. For instance he would go to a shebeen and come back drunk. He would then start to accuse me of enjoying myself while he is not around. He has a tendency of accusing me of sleeping around with other men, including his friends. He does not trust anyone. He will come with his male friends at home and introduce them to me, when I talk to them back he gets angry and tell me not to laugh with them. He would be extremely jealousy, chase his friends, and start a fight with me.

R: What type of fighting takes place between you?

P 5: We fight physically. If he beats me, I also fight back. If he verbally abuses, I do the same. The only bad thing is that he is a man, and that makes him stronger than me. If I were



stronger than him, I would have made him to stop long time ago.

R: Were you always fighting like this before?

P 5: We generally used to do what he wanted to do and do anything he wants me to do or go to places he wanted to go to. I went along with him because if he did not get his own way, we would quarrel and it was early in our marriage, our child was still young, probably I did not notice that much. Everything he used to say, things like I should not work or further my studies, I used to think it is because of love not control or suspicion and distrust.

R: What brought this realisation that he is abusive to you?

P 5: I started to be aware when we moved to our own house. At first we were living at the backyard of my parents' home. So when we moved to a new house, my friends wanted to come and you know like having a house warming party. He then said he does not want to see my friends because they are a bad influence to me, only my family members are welcomed. I was amazed and shocked because I was not having new friends but people that he knew and interacted with before - my old friends. At first I

justified his behaviour and gave notice to the fact that he is stressing because of moving to a new house, buying furniture and all that. When he continued with emphasis that I should not mingle with my friends, I then realise that he might have trust issues. He used to beat me and I would sit and cry, or I will go to the clinic and would lie to the nurses that I fell on the stairs or hit the wall or something. Nowadays I have learnt to fight back.

R: Can you elaborate on that?

P 5: I mean we beat each other, although he is still stronger than I am, I just fight so that he could not take me for granted.

R: What makes you think that if you do not fight back he will take you for granted?

P 5: I think because that is how we grew up at home. My father used to hit us with his belt or crack our heads against the wall, especially when he was drunk. He was known for throwing things across the room, sometimes at us when one of us made him upset. When my brothers got older, they would fight back at him, and eventually he stopped abusing even us younger

kids. Since then, I have learned to fight back, no matter how strong the person looks physically.

R: How do you relate your childhood incidences with your own marriage?

P 5: The thing is I don't want to end like my mother. You know, for some reasons I do not think she was happy with her marriage. She didn't have any friends or family. My father made sure of that. Anyway she could have never taken care of us alone. For her, I guess staying was the only option she thought she had. There was no such thing as abused woman those days. In a way there more I think about it there more my life resembles that of my mother. Moreover, I think my husband's temper reminds me of my father's. Actually all men are the same.

R: So does your husband do most of the things you mentioned when he is drunk?

P 5: In a way yes, although his drinking problem makes him to avoid his responsibilities as a husband and my father would not stay away from work. My parents used to suspect that he is not responsible enough. For example usually after we have fought with my husband, I would go home and pretend that I

am visiting. Then they would ask me if everything is all right and about the bruises if I have some, but instead I would lie and tell them that everything is fine.

R: Why is it necessary for you to hide his behaviour to them?

P 5: I want to fight my battle. My family has been through a lot of stuff lately. When my sister died, it was a blow to my mother and do not want her to worry about us again. Right now she has sugar diabetes and hypertension, therefore I do not want her to be sick because of me.

R: Do you think you are coping? And why is it you who ends up in hospital treated for depression and not him or both of you?

P 5: I am coping because now I just do what I want to do. Like I said before if he hit me I try to fight back.

R: Would you still regard him as abusive? Or are you abusing each other?

P 5: The fact that I am the one who ends up in hospital with bruises shows that he is still in charge, remember he is a soldier, obviously he is stronger than me. The fact that he does not



want me to continue with my studies and let alone working shows that he is abusive. And I also depend on him for money.

R: Did he give reasons why he does not want you to work or continue with your studies?

P 5: He said he is able to support our child and me financially, so he does not think it is necessary for me to work. In addition he thinks that I will have relationships at work with other men, basically he does not trust me.

R: What makes him to distrust you?

P 5: I never had extramarital affairs or try to make him jealousy. The only thing I usually do is to get piece jobs and work for people, like wash their clothes, clean their houses and ironing. The problem is that he wants me to get his permission to work, and I know once I ask for permission from him, of which he knows he will refuse me anyway, so there is no need. He is just suspicious; he thinks when I go to work or school I am going to see men there.

R: How long is this being going on?

P 5: I guess he was always suspicious and possessive, but I did not interpret it as abusive that time, I thought he is just caring and loving. You know what, he can abuse me the way he wants, but what worries me mostly is his behaviour of absenteeism at work. I am scared that one day we will run short of reasons for him not showing at work.

R: How often does he absent himself from work?

P 5: He absent himself frequently on Mondays and sometimes lies about me being sick and he has to take me to the doctor. Only to find that he is drinking with his friends and at this moment he has exhausted all his leave days and sick leave. I always lie for him because if he loses his job, we will all struggle financially. I am basically doing it for my child.

R: Referring to your family again, could you tell me more about your background at home?

P 5: I am from a family of nine, seven children and parents. I am the sixth child. My father died in 1984, he was murdered with an axe and no one knows who killed him and why. In 1992, my brother was killed also with a screwdriver and my sister died of motor vehicle accident in 1998.

R: How would you describe your family?

P 5: I do not know where to start. As I told you..eh that my father died when I was ten years old, and my mother had to struggle with us making ends meet. In a way as far as I remember he was like any typical man, shouting and beating us when we do wrong things. My mother was a domestic worker and apparently before she was pregnant with me she got a premature baby that did not survive, since then she stopped working and my father had to labour alone until his death. My sister, the second child is a teacher and two of my brothers went up to standard ten. My fourth brother is a mineworker and he is married now. My younger sister is staying at home with my mother and she is still doing standard nine.