Exploring women's experiences of abuse and communication within intimate heterosexual relationships in a low-income semi-rural community

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ABSTRACT

This study is a qualitative exploration of women's experiences of abuse and communication within intimate relationships. How women remain in abusive relationship is explained by how they construct and give meaning to the relationship. Strategies for surviving and resisting the abuse, women's perceptions of the abuse; as well as how they construct communication in the relationship, are discussed. Interviews were conducted with 15 women, who volunteered to participate in this study and self-identified as being involved with a physically abusive partner. All the participants were from a particular low-income, semi-rural community in South Africa. Narrative analysis, with particular emphasis on language and discourse, was conducted on unstructured interviews regarding women's relationships with their partners. Interview topics included daily problems, the presence of drugs or alcohol, communication between partners, and their experiences and responses to violence. Women described the different types of abuse they experienced; how they made sense of it; and their attempts to prevent the abuse from occurring. Women also constructed themselves and their partners within particular gender identities and cultural frameworks. The socio-cultural context provided a filter through which women understood their experiences of abuse. Dominant male and female norms were both adopted and resisted by participants, and expressed when women spoke of their interaction and communication with their partners.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Woman abuse occurs in all levels of society and has many forms. The focus of this study is on woman abuse within a particular context. Until recently, the issue of woman abuse has been shrouded in secrecy. Evidence of this can be seen in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* which, although it began in 1939, mentions family violence for the first time in 1969 (Viljoen, 1987). Salazar and Cook (2002) reviewed psychological research on violence against women from 1990 to 1999. More specifically, they wanted to know the extent to which psychological research examined the social, cultural and institutional patterns that condone violence against women. They found that research tends to view domestic violence as an intra-personal problem, looking at individual characteristics, and focusing interventions at an individual level. There has been a tendency to ignore the broader context in which woman abuse occurs. Thus, in the past, psychology has contributed to the social system that allows violence against women to continue.

Research has been done to identify: the prevalence of woman abuse in South Africa; how women cope in abusive relationships; how they explain the violence; why they stay in these relationships; how abuse affects them as individuals and how society contributes to the problem of women abuse (Martin & Jacobs, 2003; Mwamwenda, 1999; Cardarelli, 1997). There is, however, a need for research that explores communication patterns occurring between intimate partners in a physically abusive relationship and the effect woman abuse may have on communication.

The focus of this study is to explore woman abuse within a low-income, semi-rural context. Firstly, emphasis is placed on women's experiences of the abusive intimate relationship, addressing the various ways in which woman abuse is manifested, such as verbal abuse, physical abuse or sexual abuse. This also looks at how women make sense of the abuse so as to avoid cognitive dissonance. Secondly, the role of communication in the intimate relationship investigated. The questions that were asked regarding communication were: what level of communication occurs in intimate relationships in this community? (Does communication bring about a resolution of problems? Is communication confined to discussing daily activities, or does it involve emotional sharing?) Do women feel the communication in their relationship is affected by the abuse? Do women have an unmet expectation that their partners will talk with them? Does the talking about difficulties increase or reduce the risk of woman abuse? Thus, communication in abusive intimate relationships is an area that is explored in this study.

In recent years there has been increased emphasis on empowering women. The government has devoted time and resources to bring about all forms of equality. Evidence of this can be seen in the Family Violence Act of 1993 and the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (Martin & Jacobs, 2003). However, for real change to occur there needs to be acknowledgment and understanding of the extent to which women's development and autonomy is hampered by intimate relationships in a patriarchal society. Some of these challenges to women's equality include: physical and emotional abuse, limited independence, financial restrictions, and being overburdened with family responsibilities. Literature regarding how these stressors impact intimate relationships and communication among South African couples is scant, thus there is a need for local South African studies. The relationship between life stress and woman abuse is moderated by life experiences and current resources. Factors such as poverty,

unemployment or spousal separation threaten male traditional role performance and can increase the risk of physical abuse (Kesner & McKenry, 1998).

There is a need for research in South Africa on women's experiences of abuse within their intimate relationships, as well as how they construct communication within this framework. However, delineating and defining the term "woman abuse" is an essential part of research. The term "domestic violence" ignores the importance of gender in abuse. Men are normally the perpetrators of intimate partner abuse (Boonzaier, 2001). Feminists use the term "woman abuse" to describe and acknowledge the gendered nature of violence. The definition of woman abuse used in this study is "a form of trauma, contextualized within an intimate relationship, which includes emotional, verbal, physical, sexual, and economic abuse" (Keen & Silove, 1999) (as cited in Jacobs & Suleman, 1999, p. 2). These categories: emotional, verbal, physical, sexual and economic abuse, are explored in more detail below. This will be followed by an examination of the prevalence and incidence of woman abuse in South Africa.

DEFINING WOMAN ABUSE

Defining woman abuse is vital to understanding the phenomenon. Kasturirangan, Krishnan and Riger (2004) report that not defining concepts in woman abuse can lead to misinterpretation, and numerous abused women slip through the criminal justice system as a result of poor definition.

The Domestic Violence Act 11 of 1998 provides a thorough description of what constitutes domestic violence. It is "any controlling or abusive behaviour that harms the health, safety or well being of the [individual] or any child in the care of the [individual]" (Martin & Jacobs, 2003, p. VI). This is further defined to include physical abuse or threat of physical abuse;

sexual abuse or threat of sexual abuse; emotional, verbal and psychological abuse; economic abuse; intimidation; harassment; stalking; damage to or destruction of property; or entry into the applicant's residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence.

Some definitions of abuse frame it specifically in terms of gender. For example, Lempert (1996, p. 271) defines abuse as the "repeated use of physical, emotional and psychological force by a man against his intimate partner". Woman abuse is broader that physical violence. Physical, sexual, verbal and emotional abuse are considered to be equally harmful to women (Jacobs & Suleman, 1999). For this research, woman abuse is understood to comprise of 3 forms/types: Physical; verbal, emotional and psychological; and sexual abuse. These groups are defined separately, but within an abusive relationship, overlap between these types of abuse is the norm rather than an exception.

Physical abuse

There are many definitions of what constitutes physical abuse. Keen (as cited in Jacobs & Suleman, 1999) defines it as a type of trauma found in an intimate relationship that includes physical and sexual abuse. The perpetrator is normally the male partner, and the woman perceives the behaviour as destructive and harmful to herself. Some examples of physical violence include hitting, slapping, choking, kicking, stabbing, and beating a woman with an object.

Verbal, emotional and psychological abuse

The emotional pain and manipulation that occurs in an abusive relationship is often more devastating and long-lasting than physical violence (Lempert, 1996). Women often state it is the emotional abuse rather than the physical abuse that causes them more distress and sometimes causes them to leave the relationship (Mullender, 1996). Moreover, Jacobson,

Gottman, Gortner, Berns and Shortt (1996) found that marital satisfaction is negatively correlated to a greater degree with emotional abuse, rather than physical abuse. Aspects of emotional and psychological abuse include isolation, coercion, harassment, abuse of trust, threats of harm or death, and emotional withholding.

Most emotional and psychological abuse is carried out verbally through degrading talk and swearing or shouting obscenities. However, symbolic acts of violence, such as damage to property, withholding money or not paying household necessities, are non-verbal forms of emotional and psychological abuse which may be equally harmful. Verbal abuse is linked with emotional abuse because the insults, criticisms, ridiculing and degrading comments cause pain and suffering to the person on the receiving end (Martin & Jacobs, 2003). Some examples of emotional abuse are: intense jealousy and possessiveness, threats of abuse, and threats of divorce (Meeta, 1999).

Sexual abuse

Martin and Jacobs (2003) define sexual abuse as "any contact which abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates sexual integrity" (p. VI). Sexual abuse within an intimate relationship is complex. It occurs when women are forced to have sex with their partners against their will. The complication is that, to many people sex within a marriage or intimate partnership is perceived as a man's right rather than a request. Feminists regard sexual abuse to be one form of male domination over women. Patriarchal discourses allow men to have many sexual partners, as well as demand sex at any time from their partner. This results in women feeling ashamed and isolated, unable to share their burden of rape.

Woman abuse has been shown to consist of physical, verbal, emotional, psychological and

sexual forms of abuse. In order to understand the extent to which woman abuse in intimate relationships is a problem in South Africa and why it remains largely hidden, statistics regarding the prevalence of woman abuse in South Africa is necessary.

PREVALENCE AND INCIDENCE OF WOMAN ABUSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Establishing the prevalence of woman abuse in South Africa is challenging for several reasons. Firstly, underreporting of abuse is understood to hamper reliable statistics. This underreporting may be due to fear, shame, and economic dependence on an abuser (POWA, 2007). Furthermore, the oppressive system of apartheid created a distrustful relationship between the police and minority groups, which may still affect people's willingness to report crimes to the police. As a result the number of reported cases of woman abuse not being representative of the true number of women being abused. In 1994, 74% of police stations in South Africa were found in business districts and white suburbs (Vetten, 2005). The lack of access, transport and financial resources also prevents reporting of abuse. Regardless of the dark figure surrounding woman abuse, one is aware that abuse within an intimate relationship is very common. POWA (2007) estimates that only half of all domestic violence cases are reported to the police. It is estimated that one in every four women in South Africa have had a violent experience at the hands of their partner (Martin & Jacobs, 2003).

The legal procedure regarding domestic violence does not necessary promote reporting either. A woman who is experiencing domestic violence needs to appear before the court twice in order to obtain a protection order (South African Law Commission, 1999). She then has to pay a sheriff's fee to have it delivered to the accused. Furthermore, if a woman has a protection order and relocates, that protection order no longer applies and she would need to get a new one. Given the context of poverty and the economic abuse common in abusive

relationships, this system further oppresses women and hampers their attempts to obtain help. If a woman decides to press charges after a violent episode, the maximum penalty for violating a protection order is 12 months. Since many women are dependent on their partners for money, housing and other resources, this course of action is not frequently taken (South African Law Commission, 1999). Thus, there are many obstacles that women must overcome to obtain help for domestic violence (Vetten, 2005). It appears that the structure of the policing system and society at large does not aid abused women. Feminist research emphasizes the social structures in place that promote women's oppression in its various forms and aims to identify how these institutions are working to prevent change. The goal of such research is to understand and eradicate woman abuse.

Feminist research is essential in societies where the victims of abuse are considered to be overreacting, and the statistics of abuse are viewed with scepticism (Bledsoe, 2000; Jenkins, 2000). This lack of understanding and support for women in abusive relationships is partly what contributes to the ongoing existence of domestic violence. Woman abuse is seldom a once-off episode; it often occurs on a regular basis and escalates in severity (Bledsoe, 2000). However, women's rights groups are becoming commonplace, fighting for the empowerment of women and for equality in the home (Mashishi, 2000). As public awareness about woman abuse increases, power shifts occur within the intimate relationship and the violence can be confronted (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2003). Change can be brought about through research that gives women a voice. Emphasis is given to women's stories of abuse; not because they are to blame for the abuse, but because society often supports men's perspectives of the relationship, and these beliefs need to be challenged.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Chapter two includes a review of literature regarding the theoretical frameworks in which woman abuse is understood. We look at the abusive intimate relationship, specifically the women involved; the phases it goes through; and the influence of gendered power dynamics. In chapter three, all methodological issues are addressed, and an explanation of the qualitative, postmodern feminist approach is given. Chapters four and five are chapters in which the analysis is presented. Chapter four looks at narratives of abuse. It explores how women define woman abuse in their own lives, and the role of the broader community in maintaining it. Chapter five presents women's narratives of communication. This chapter addresses how participants construct communication, and their experiences of it. We also look at how woman abuse is understood to impact communication within their relationship. Chapter six concludes the thesis by looking at the issue of gendered power dynamics and the influence of social context on experience.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING WOMAN ABUSE

Violence in intimate relationships is a complex phenomenon, which is related to issues of patriarchy, cultural norms, and human rights. On an interpersonal level, woman abuse impacts relationships and affects how intimate partners relate to one another. The family has always been considered to be safe and private, yet this is where violence against women often occurs (Yllö & Bograd, 1990).

In this chapter, the theoretical frameworks used to understand woman abuse are explained, followed by a review of literature regarding the women who are involved in these relationships. Previous studies looking at communication styles, effective and poor communication behaviours, intimacy and conflict between partners will be examined. Finally, issues that relate specifically to the South African context, such as the impact of apartheid and the overwhelming presence of poverty, will also be discussed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS ON INTIMATE PARTNER ABUSE

There are various frameworks through which one can understand woman abuse. These perspectives influence how one defines woman abuse, what the cause of it is and how it should be overcome. Viljoen (1987) identified 3 frameworks, namely intra-individual, social-psychological and social-cultural. In 1998, O' Neill extended these frameworks and identified 4 prevalent discourses with regard to the understanding of woman abuse. These are: psycho-pathology; expressive tension; instrumental power; social system; and learned behaviour. In the discussion to follow, psycho-pathological, the learned behaviours, and social systems

frameworks will be explored.

Psycho-pathology

This group of perspectives posits that woman abuse is caused primarily by individual, psychological factors. The perpetrator may be considered abnormal in some way; mental disturbances, sadism, alcohol or drug abuse are given as reasons for the violent behaviour. General stress theory, for example, states that an individual under stress and lacking personal resources or coping strategies to deal with that stress is more prone to violent behaviour (Finn, 1985). Violence is seen to be an abnormality or to have a pathological cause, such as abnormal personality traits, alcoholism, or biological faults.

The family systems approach argues that a dysfunctional or pathological relationship results in violence. Alcoholism, for example, is blamed for making a man temporarily abnormal while he is intoxicated. From the pathological perspective, men are often seen as victims of something that is beyond their control, thus reducing their responsibility (O'Neill, 1998). There are deficits that men suffer from that are given as explanations for violent behaviour, such as the inability to verbally discuss issues. Ronan, Dreer, Dollard and Ronan (2004) found that there are changes in communication skills used by violent couples across neutral, low- and high conflict situations. They state it is possible that, while men are able to express themselves in relaxed situations, they are unable to do so in emotionally charged situations. This lack of social skill is described by Holtzworth-Munroe (1992) as a means of making the man the victim and diverting attention from the problem of woman abuse. Further studies have indicated that it is both men and women in abusive relationships who struggle with communication and problem-solving strategies (Fincham, 2003). They both tend to show negative reciprocity and avoidant behaviour. However, not much is known about the general

level and specific patterns of social skill of individuals in a relationship where the man is violent toward the woman partner.

O' Neill (1998) distinguishes between expressive and instrumental violence. As an expressive form, men are driven by impulsive forces, and violence dissipates any stress or tension the perpetrator feels. The frustration-aggression hypothesis is one explanation for this form of violence. Aggression is seen as a natural and biological response to frustration and inner tension. The family context increases the likelihood of conflicting interests and frustrations, thus there is an increase in violence.

Expressive violence explains behaviour in terms of the environment and external stressors. Low socioeconomic status has been given as a reason for domestic violence. People with lower income have fewer life-chances and resources, thus frustrations are higher. They are argued to be predisposed to greater marital conflict and violence (O'Neill, 1998). The thinking behind this is that if one reduces poverty, violence-provoking stress would diminish. Feminist theory rejects this approach because the issue of gendered power and male oppression does not disappear with the reduction in poverty. Thus, this approach ignores the fundamental issues of woman abuse.

A connection between attachment theory and physical abuse has also been identified in research (Henderson, Bartholomew, Trinke & Kwong, 2005). Kesner and McKenry (1998) state that "the bond that a child initially develops with his or her parent or caregiver is predictive of how successful the individual is in developing close personal relationships in adulthood" (p. 418). Attachments to significant others are formed in childhood and fulfil a need for survival. Thus, the violence in an intimate relationship is understood to be a man's reaction to perceived loss of attachment of his partner. Intimacy needs are unmet but the

motivation or skills to express those needs are lacking, thus violence is a form of protest behaviour, arising from a frustrated need (Dutton, 1995). It is argued that anger is a way to let the partner know that attachment needs are not being met (Kesner & McKenry, 1998). Violent men have been found to be more rejection-sensitive and more likely to perceive rejection from ambiguous scenarios than non-violent men. It is possible that abusers are torn between a need for love or support and a fear that it will not be met or that their partner will abandon them. As a result, they become demanding and aggressive when their needs are not met. On the whole, this perspective argues that pathological attachment patterns, which have been formed in childhood and continue on into adulthood, are the cause of men's violence in their intimate relationships. However, there is a danger of this theory supporting the perpetrator as the victim, and that the violent reaction is understood as an acceptable one.

Women are also scrutinized for their role in the abusive behaviour (Mullender, 1996). It is claimed that certain women "look" for violent relationships by being too independent of men, being overbearing, or undermining their partner's authority (O'Neill, 1998). Identifying characteristics that are unique to women in abusive relationships is common in psycho-pathological theories. For example, it has been argued that abused women have a tendency to use emotion-focused strategies instead of problem-focused strategies in their relationships. This negatively impacts the relationship and can lead to depression and low self-esteem (Clements, Sabourin & Spiby, 2004). The approach contends that women tend to give solutions that are beyond their control when faced with a problem, that they use fewer problem-solving skills, and more avoidant, passive and dependent coping skills than non-battered women. The belief is that women bring the abuse upon themselves. In contradiction to this, studies have shown that battered women do not have unique characteristics that predispose them to violence (Mashishi, 2000). Yllö and Bograd (1990) claim that most

psycho-pathological theories ignore the question of power in violent intimate relationships and do not consider that pathologies might be a consequence rather than a cause of the abuse. On the whole, the approach has also been critiqued for being unable to address why women partners become the targets of men with particular pathological deficits.

Violence as learned behaviour

According to Learning Theory, behaviour is learned through observation, and trial-and-error reinforcement. Thus a violent reaction that is observed, and has been rewarded, will become a likely response to stress and conflict (O'Neill, 1998). The emphasis of this perspective is the interaction in the intimate relationship, and how learned behaviour and social deficits work together to produce a violent relationship.

Studies that focus on the generational cycle of domestic violence also use this theoretical orientation (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). This theory basically states that a boy who grows up seeing his father abuse his mother is more likely to do the same when he grows up than another child who was not exposed to woman abuse. Evidence supporting this is found by Bledsoe (2000) who stated that boys who witness domestic violence as children are more at risk for becoming abusers, learning not to respect women, and using violence as a way to deal with anger and frustration in a relationship. Bennett (1995) states that the approval of situational violence is often learned within the family of origin. Furthermore, a study by Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) revealed that 23% of abusive men had seen abuse in their childhood home, and had experienced frequent physical punishment. Smith, Rosen, Middleton, Busch, Lundeberg and Carlton (2000) challenge this theory by saying that there is so much belief in the intergenerational transmission of abuse; one tends to forget most adults who grow up in violent homes do not become violent adults. They go on to say that gender is

an important factor – males who observe abuse are more likely to become perpetrators than women, and women are more likely to become victims.

The feminist socio-political perspective challenges psycho-pathological and learned behaviour frameworks and views woman abuse as an attempt by men to control women's behaviour, and to create and maintain male dominance. Violence comes as a result of patriarchal institutions, sexist norms and the historical legacy of male dominance (Yllö & Bograd, 1999), as the discussion below will show.

Socio-cultural perspective

O' Neill (1998) describes norms as "learned, culturally relative standards of acceptable behaviour within a whole way of life" (p. 9). Woman abuse is an example of a social practice and beliefs within society as a whole. Feminist theory dominates the contributions to understanding the social and cultural realms of gender-based violence. Because violence against women is generally deemed acceptable in patriarchal societies, woman abuse could be understood as an extension of the normative social system.

Although there is a multiplicity of approaches within this perspective, social-cultural theories generally look at how societal structures, norms and values operate to explain domestic violence. They consider both macro-societal and micro-individual factors when looking at violence in intimate relationships (Viljoen, 1987). The patriarchal society is an example of a macro-societal factor that supports the oppression of women. Boonzaier (2005) refers to the stereotypical constructions of gender that place men in a position of authority. Masculine stereotypes empower men, constructing them as strong and capable, while feminine stereotypes make women appear vulnerable and powerless. Physical abuse is the most

obvious form of women's oppression by men. For example, abuse is seen as an instrumental compensation for emasculation and feelings of powerlessness. Feminists reject the notion that there is a purely psychological and individual cause for violence against women. This is because they believe that the domination of women is a cultural prescription and violence is used to achieve that goal. The whole system of male dominance needs to be acknowledged if one is to understand violence against women (Mullender, 1996). The social system also contributes to woman abuse by the ways in which women and men are socialized into particular gender roles. Each gender is expected to behave in a particular manner. Males are encouraged to be competitive, tough, individualistic and aggressive. They are taught to objectify others and control their emotions (O'Neill, 1998). Sex-role socialisation leads to expectation and conflict within an intimate relationship because men are expected to dominate their partners, and women are expected to remain submissive and to support their partners at all times.

Feminist theory links with the socio-cultural perspective in that it addresses the socio-cultural context in which woman abuse occurs and the associated issues, such as culture, race, religion and class. It provides a more holistic picture to explain the occurrence of woman abuse. There are societal factors that keep women in physically violent relationships, (POWA, 2007). The subordinate status of women in patriarchal societies makes them vulnerable to being viewed as objects of violence (Mashishi, 2000). In a culture that values female subordination and privacy within the family, the women who do leave their partners are disadvantaged (Boonzaier, 2005). Kasturirangan et al. (2004) indicate that feminist theory looks at culture in relation to the concepts of oppression and power. For example, community beliefs and norms allow woman abuse to continue by ostracizing women who decide to end the relationship. The cultural reaction to domestic abuse often determines its prevalence. If there is no outright

opposition, people may believe that society condones abuse against women (Pandit, 2002). Very often social institutions, such as religious bodies, do in fact condone violence against women by encouraging women to stay with abusive partners and by encouraging men to maintain dominance in their relationships.

However, there is a change in the economic climate, where women are being rewarded for the work they do, and are earning higher salaries than before (McCarthy, 2006). Employment makes women feel responsible and independent. Since masculinity is linked to the ability to provide financially for one's family, it is possible that men feel their authority is undermined by their lack of income. In reaction to this change in roles, men feel emasculated and threatened, and they attempt to thwart their partners' development through aggression (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). This is referred to as instrumental violence. Babcock, Waltz, Jacobson and Gottman (1993) found that there are higher rates of physical abuse in relationships that are female-dominant. This is possibly related to a man's reaction to the power-discrepancies in the intimate relationships. Employment, education and financial resources are symbolic in intimate relationships because they represent power. They are the ways in which men differentiate themselves from women (Kaukinen, 2004). Zepezauer (2000) speaks of the declining status of men; and feelings of powerlessness have been given as a reason for abuse in intimate relationships (Boonzaier, 2005). It may be argued that underlying men's bravado and controlling behaviour is a sense of vulnerability and fear. They may be concerned with what others will think of them as men if they cannot control their partners (Wood & Jewkes, 1998). However, this requires a more complex analysis.

Instrumental violence is a means to an end. The goal goes beyond the immediate release of inner tension (O'Neill, 1998). Violence can be used for punishment, conflict resolution, to

assert dominance, enhance one's self-concept, or to get one's own way. This perspective views perpetrators to be rational and purposeful in their violent behaviour – they use force to have their needs met. Instrumental violence supports the idea that power inequality in a relationship could result in woman abuse.

Exchange theory builds on the instrumental violence perspective by exploring the rational cost-benefit analysis of interaction (O' Neill, 1998). Behaviour is guided by the pursuit of reward and the avoidance of punishment. Abusive behaviour often results in immediate rewards despite the long-term consequences, such as the break down of the relationship. Violence serves a purpose, namely to gain power over another individual. A woman is less likely to challenge her partner if she fears a violent reaction, thus he maintains power in their relationship.

The theoretical frameworks used for addressing intimate partner abuse are: psycho-pathological theories, learned behaviour, and the normative social system. Psycho-pathological theories look at the problems within the abuser or victim which result in abusive behaviour. Factors such as alcoholism, poor childhood attachment, and social skill deficits are examples of the psycho-pathological framework. This framework is often rejected because it does not acknowledge the abuser's responsibility for the abuse and does not take into account the broader contextual factors. The learned behaviour framework challenges this passive understanding of abusive men by stating physical abuse is functional in nature. It results in an achieved goal, and is often learned in the family of origin. This framework also ignores the societal influences that condone woman abuse. The socio-cultural perspective states that woman abuse stems from a way of thinking that places women as inferior to men. This perception pervades society and is manifested in woman abuse and oppression. These are the

filters one uses when looking at woman abuse.

FEMINIST THEORIES OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Feminist research is based on feminist epistemological critiques of knowledge. Epistemologies are the ways in which one defines knowledge and examines how it is made known to others (Sylvester, 1994). Much of the feminist research examines what it is that society takes for granted, specifically in terms of the roles and identities of women. There are three major positions, namely feminist empiricists, radical or standpoint feminists, and postmodern feminists. I will discuss each position before elaborating on my choice of feminist position for this study. Many feminists combine elements from all the positions. This is possible because all believe that women are subordinate in one way or another, and that the status quo should change.

Feminist empiricists

Feminist empiricists believe that the sexist biases found in research are as a result of scientific methods which devalue women's experience (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). Scientific research that is objective ignores the presence of gender bias. Feminist empiricists support positivism and encourage scientists to correct their methods in a way that does not prejudice women. Yllö and Bograd (1990) state that 'objectivity' is a justification for basic research, and it does not acknowledge its impact on society. The feminist empiricists can be linked to the liberal or humanist feminists, who focus on equal rights for men and women. The latter approach emphasizes individual rights but ignores the bigger social and economic changes necessary for ending woman oppression (Sylvester, 1994). The world of equal rights remains a man's world, where masculine characteristics are considered superior and sought after by women (Stone, 2007). According to this approach, for women to be free they need to conform to a

masculine approach, thus devaluing women's experience. There are differences between men and women, and the liberal epistemological approach does not acknowledge this (Hackett & Haslanger, 2006). Similarly, the empiricists are criticised for not questioning the logic and values of science, and only looking at scientific practice and how it excludes women. It also does not question social norms and notions of gender. Thus, this approach is not transformatory as it tries to accommodate traditional science and its assumptions (Stone, 2007).

Radical or Standpoint feminists

This position states that research should begin from a women's perspective in order to bring understanding and correct the gender bias (Sylvester, 1994). Oppression is described as the devaluation and repression of women and their experiences at the hands of men in a patriarchal culture which condones violence (Young, 2006). Sandra Harding is one of the founders of feminist epistemology and has contributed greatly to the standpoint theory. Women's experiences are assumed to be unique, and scientific research should reflect this by doing gender-specific research (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). The underlying assumption for this statement is that those who are oppressed carry the least biased or distorted standpoint (Stone, 2007). This approach makes one aware that women are agents of knowledge and theory, and that patriarchy should be fought by women in unison. Women as a group are considered subjugated by men, therefore they need to define oppression and to create emancipatory strategies together (Stone, 2007). Harding (2004) states that feminism should not be restricted to only social or political issues, but that every aspect of the natural and social orders must be addressed, including the standards one uses to assess knowledge, objectivity and rationality.

The difficulty with this position is that of essentialism. Not all women are oppressed by all men to equal degrees. There is also disagreement as to how patriarchy ought to be overcome. Some believe femininity should be rejected as it is designed to serve men. Others think femininity shows a contrast to men, and that women's 'ways of being' should be fostered (Stone, 2007). In fact, some have criticized this approach for rejecting women who engage in more masculine activities, claiming they contribute to the problem of women's oppression (Young, 2006). Thus, even within the group of "women", there are differences (Boonzaier & Shefer, 2006). It is questionable whether all women experience oppression and whether it is all to the same degree. While there are many similarities in experience and behaviour, 'women' is not a homogenous group.

Postmodern feminism

Postmodernism reflects a general scepticism about the social formation of subjects, self, gender and social relations (Sylvester, 1994). It criticizes the institution of philosophy, the grand theories of the enlightenment period, and rejects absolute truth, but considers knowledge to be socially constructed and linked to power (Fraser & Nicholson, 2006). By deconstructing categories which are taken for granted, it is possible to see how these categories or labels came about and how they do or do not reflect the social world.

The postmodern approach acknowledges the interpretation of experiences to be one of many, and dependent on context. There is space for multiplicity and variability in individuals experiences (Boonzaier, 2001). However, it is argued that postmodernism reduces conventions and subjects to nothing because of the belief that experience is never truly present but always constructed (Sylvester, 1994).

There are many overlapping forms of oppression and partial experiences, and postmodern feminists explore these multiple standpoints (Stone, 2007). Postmodern feminists believe that everyone's perception is valid and insightful, but also distorted to some degree. It finds modern explanations of phenomena to be too intolerant of ambivalences, and questions the tendency to ignore diversity in favour of a grand narrative (Sylvester, 1994). For example, the notion of the family being a safe place for its members is investigated to expose the inconsistencies and hostilities within the family setting. Rejecting the traditional view that the self is consistent and stable, postmodernism redefines identity as being contradictory and complex (Boonzaier, 2001). This position is willing to expose the hidden areas of gender, discovering the strengths and limitations of the 'female identity' (Sylvester, 1994).

Proffit (2000) describes how postmodern feminism seeks to challenge and reform dominant norms, such as the belief women are to blame for men's violence. The aim is to remedy the marginalization and oppression of women's lives (Boonzaier, 2001). However, just asserting difference is not enough to undo previous thinking patterns. By providing alternative meanings, social change can come about (Sylvester, 1994).

Another feature of postmodern feminism is the acknowledgment of power relations and politics within society and their impact on gender (Stone, 2007). The meaning one attaches to experience is shaped by social institutions and power. These relations of power often determine how women react to violence. For example, when a woman believes her husband must be the head of the house and obeyed at all times, she is more likely to accept the violence. Rejecting that particular viewpoint requires a woman to stand up against the abuse and to have sense of autonomy (Boonzaier, 2001).

These feminist theories are the lens through which one can explore gender-based violence. However, regardless of one's perspective, there are factors which mediate the presence of abuse in intimate relationship. One such factor, alcohol abuse, plays an important role in the extent and attribution of woman abuse.

THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL

There is much conflicting research regarding alcohol and abuse. Although intoxication is not a prerequisite for abuse, it appears that the seriousness of an attack is worsened by the presence of alcohol (POWA, 2007). Alcohol dependence or abuse often contributes to overall family difficulties, and it is repeatedly connected to intimate partner violence (Leonard & Roberts, 1998; Flanzer, 2000; Padayachee, Office, Durban Institute of Technology, Singh, Programme group police practice, & Technikon SA, 2003). Alcohol abuse and woman abuse is a controversial topic because some women believe the alcohol causes their partners to beat them. By placing the blame for the violent attack at an external source, such as alcohol abuse, women believe that if the drinking stops, so would the violence (Cardarelli, 1997). This can be a coping strategy where women believe they are betrayed by the effects of alcohol rather than by their partners.

There are two contradictory perspectives regarding alcohol abuse and violent behaviour. The first is that alcohol is often used by men as an excuse to be violent without taking any responsibility for their actions (Bennett, 2000). This perspective implies that the abuser would be violent without consuming alcohol, but the alcohol provides a facilitator and a rationalisation for violent behaviour. Padayachee and colleagues (2003) found that people's reactions to alcohol vary from culture to culture. Consequently, aggression and violence after

alcohol consumption is understood to be socially learned rather than an involuntary response. It is possible that violent behaviour may be learned from the family of origin, or other sources. The belief in the aggression-producing power of alcohol is suggested to increase violent behaviour. Bennett (1995) mentions that there is little evidence that decreasing or abstaining from alcohol will reduce violent episodes within an intimate relationship. However, a study by Leonard and Roberts (1998) found that the placebo condition (where men were given what they thought was alcohol but actually was not) did not produce behavioural changes in the men, but the actual administration of alcohol produced aggressive and hostile behaviour.

The second perspective acknowledges the drug effects of alcohol. It is a cognitive disrupter and reduces inhibitions (Bennet, 1995; Flanzer, 2000). Alcohol causes a distortion of thinking, and it is argued that abusers misinterpret their partners' behaviour and thus become violent. It impacts interpretive and decision-making processes (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). Batterers typically misinterpret their partners' actions as abandoning, challenging or engulfing; alcohol seems to worsen these tendencies. Research has shown that partners who have been drinking are more likely to consider ambiguous statements in a negative, hostile manner (Holly, 2001; Padayachee et al., 2003). Intoxication exposes one's underlying anger and potentially results in intimidation or violent behaviour. Alcohol reduces the individual's ability to perceive, integrate and process information adequately. Thus, it appears while alcohol has physical properties which increases the risk of a violent outburst, the phenomenon of woman abuse cannot be understood only in terms of alcohol usage. Focusing on the alcohol distracts from the true problem of woman abuse, namely that of a societal system that perceives women as replaceable and inferior to men.

However, to better understand the role alcohol plays in woman abuse within this particular socio-cultural setting, one needs to look to the historical development of the community. In Colonial times, wine farms were run by slaves, and although slavery was abolished in 1834 other forms of control were exerted over the farm labourers (London, 1999a). One of these methods was the 'dop system' which is the payment of wages with alcohol. The allowance of alcohol as wages differed on each farm, up to a maximum of a bottle and a half per day (London, 2000). Thus, the origins of such high alcoholism in these semi-rural, low-income communities extend back to colonial times when farm labourers worked for alcohol and tobacco.

The result of such conditioning, and because many farms still clandestinely use the "dop system", the extent of alcoholism and alcohol-related health problems and injuries is extremely high in this community (London, 1999b). Drinking has a role in this community's history; their social context; and their interpersonal relationships.

Much has been done in an attempt to correct the damage inflicted by apartheid and the 'dop system'. Several laws have been put in place to prevent farmers from paying labourers with alcohol. Examples of these are: the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995 and the Extension of Security of Tenure Act 63 of 1997, both which protects workers and gives them rights. Also, DOPSTOP, a NGO designed to reduce alcohol abuse and foetal alcohol syndrome, educates individuals about the impact of alcohol (Te Water, London, Pitt, & Mahomed, 1998; Marais, 2004). Thus, there is a trend within these communities to drink excessively, and although steps have been taken to reduce the impact of the "dop system", one can still see the harm it has caused. For example, alcohol is associated with relaxation and freedom from responsibility, which may link it to woman abuse.

A pattern of behaviour tends to occur where men are only abusive when under the influence of alcohol. However, there is research to indicate the abusive relationship does not remain static; it evolves over a period of time (Lempert, 1996). Relationships that start off romantic and loving may become unstable or violent. Thus, there are various phases that can be seen in an abusive relationship.

PHASES OF THE ABUSIVE INTIMATE RELATIONSHIP

An abusive relationship generally develops over time. The initial stages tend to involve symbolic abuse, rather than physical violence. This usually consists of dialogue that is degrading and hurtful, and manipulation by men to get the partners to submit. Women actively change their behaviour to please their partners in response to the name-calling and emotional abuse. The feelings of failure and shame cause women to support the public notion that all is well in the relationship (Lempert, 1996). As the violence becomes more prevalent, women strive to maintain invisibility. It is a face-saving strategy where women veil the image of them as the victim and their partner's image as a perpetrator.

An abusive relationship has been argued to typically follow a cyclical pattern. There is a build up of tension, followed by a violent episode, ending with feelings of remorse and love. Drinking, arguments, feelings of jealousy, and tension are examples of the prelude to a violent episode (Painter, & Dutton, 1985). Immediately after an incident, women may have an emotional collapse, which manifests as inactivity, depression, helplessness or self-blame. This leaves women vulnerable, thus when their partners are loving and remorseful, there is a tendency for women to remain in the relationship.

Presser (2003) looked at remorse and neutralization among violent male offenders. Remorse is defined as a sense of having wronged another, and is usually expressed as an apology. The purpose of an apology is to acknowledge one did something wrong, and to validate the wronged person's experience. An apology reassures the victim and provides the hope that the incident will not happen again. Abusers tend to deny responsibility for violence and to minimise its seriousness. If they do apologise, it is not valued by the victim because firstly, the apology can be used as a way of resolving a dispute as quickly as possible and secondly, because the abuser's behaviour does not necessarily change after an apology is offered.

Physical violence becomes more prevalent as the relationship progresses and the cycle of abuse changes so that the remorse phase diminishes. Thus, instead of love feelings and happiness following an abusive episode, this third phase becomes characterized only by the absence of violence. Instead of the "honeymoon" feelings, the period following abuse is rather emotionally neutral. In this way, violent behaviour becomes accepted as a normal part of life (Stamp & Sabourin, 1995).

Physical abuse is often coupled with other forms of abuse, compounding the effect on the relationship. Jacobson and colleagues (1996) found that the level of physical abuse did not influence whether a woman stayed in a relationship or not. It was the level of emotional abuse that influenced the decision to stay or go. Continued conflict between intimate partners is associated with depression, alcoholism and poor health. It also has an effect on the family – poor parenting and poor adjustment of children (Fincham, 2003). The source of conflict varies, but couples commonly complain about their partners' behaviour, dividing work around the house, infidelity, problem drinking, and money management. Yet despite the problems within the abusive relationship, many women decide to not leave their partners.

The nature of the relationship may contribute to why women choose to stay. A common reaction to women in physically abusive relationships is, "why don't you just leave?" But this is not a simple task. Women attribute their partners' violent behaviour to either an attempt to control or as a loss of control (Stamp & Sabourin, 1995). They give situational or topical causes for the abusive behaviour, such as alcohol consumption, the family of origin, jealousy or child-rearing. This enables them to keep a positive perception of their partner and dissociate this image from the abusive one. Furthermore, traumatic bonding can influence women's decision to remain in the relationship. Traumatic bonding is the emotional connection between intimate partners that comes from inconsistent abuse and power imbalances in the relationship. The woman identifies with, and is dependent on, the abuser. This enhances her self-esteem, but because she is abused and disempowered, she also experiences impaired self-esteem. This uncertainty and instability strengthens the bonds of loyalty to the abuser and hinders escape from the relationship (Henderson et al. 2005; Van Schalkwyk, 2006).

On the other hand, women's decisions to stay in abusive relationships cannot be divorced from the broader social contexts in which they are embedded. Confronting and dealing with domestic violence is no easy task. Women in rural areas often have limited access to facilities for treatment, and health care workers do not have the necessary knowledge to assist these women. A lack of social support networks and limited financial independence make leaving an abusive relationship more difficult for a great majority of women (Cardarelli, 1997). In South Africa, and Cape Town in particular, a lack of alternative housing options for abused women and a general shortage of housing, makes leaving even more difficult.

Not all women in abusive relationships want to leave their partners (Yassour Borochowitz, & Eisikovits, 2002). There are positive emotions in these relationships and love is often given as a reason for why couples stay together despite the violence. Violence in an intimate relationship is only one aspect of a complex interaction with one's partner. Other interactions may include care and mutual support. Thus, counting the acts of violence is not necessarily a clear indicator of how happy or unhappy a couple is (Lempert, 1996). While love and violence are seen by many as antithetical experiences, some couples consider the violence to be a means of maintaining love and distance in their relationship. Violent episodes force the couple to deal with the build-up of pressures, misunderstandings and frustrations. Other couples completely split violence and love, seeing the abuse as temporary and love as long-standing. Either way, for a couple in a violent relationship to stay together, they must develop a joint marital narrative (Hydén, 1994) that they agree on how to define the violence and its connection to love (Yassour Borochowitz & Eisikovits, 2002).

It can happen that there is a cession of domestic violence in a relationship. This is often brought about as a result of external intervention, such as court-ordered rehabilitation, spending time in jail, or an ultimatum by a female partner. However, even when the violence decreases, the emotional abuse does not necessarily decrease. It is possible that after a certain amount of physical abuse, violence is no longer necessary to maintain control of the partner (Jacobson et al., 1996). Petrik, Olson and Subotnik (1994) found that it is more difficult to help men reduce the non-physical abuse, such as degrading language and manipulation, than the physical abuse in treatment centres. Abusers in treatment tend to perceive themselves as powerless and have a very low tolerance for being controlled (Stamp & Sabourin, 1995). Treatment is based on the belief that unless men let go of their need to control and have power, balance cannot be restored to the relationship.

COMMUNICATION AND INTIMACY

Intimate relationships involve intense emotions and it is inevitable that tensions arise. In relationships where there is a need for dominance of one partner, resolving conflict may lead to violent behaviour (Cardarelli, 1997). Communication patterns that are associated with violent behaviour in intimate relationships include: verbal aggressiveness, hostile affect, lack of argumentative skills, negative reciprocity of responses, and aggressive compliance gaining (Olson, 2002). Research comparing violent and nonviolent couples handling conflict indicated that both partners of a violent relationship use ineffective communication skills in conflict (Ronan et al., 2004). Women in violent intimate relationships tend to show greater escalation of offensive behaviour and more negative behaviour in the conflict than other women, but greater de-escalation of offensive behaviour after the violence. This possibly reinforces the violent behaviour because the violence brings desired results for abusers (Margolin, John & Gleberman, 1988). Violent men tend to show more emotional reactions (such as anger, hostility, anxiety and depression, to conflict and tension) than non-violent men. They also show more negative behaviours (gestures, commands) and reactions (patronizing, sarcasm, and silence) than non-violent men (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1992). It is thought that men resort to violence when they do not have regular open channels of verbal communication with their partners. However, communication barriers are often put up after a violent episode or out of resentment, thus the violence does not aid communication but rather hampers it (The Population Council, 2005).

A theory regarding domestic violence and intimacy has been put forward by Holtzworth-Munroe, Smutzler and Stuart (1998). They believe that violent men have ambivalent feelings about closeness or intimacy – they dread loneliness but fear closeness, consistent with the idea

of insecure attachments. Violent men have greater concern about wife rejection than nonviolent men. Intimacy needs are unmet, but the motivation and skills to assert those needs do not exist. Thus, they use violence to control their partner, to protest against abandonment, and to keep her from leaving (Dutton, 1995).

Ronan and colleagues (2004) discuss a social skill deficit model for understanding domestic violence. It is speculated that violent partners lack problem solving and communication skills, and thus struggle to acknowledge or express feelings other than anger (Margolin et al., 1988). Violence, therefore, is a means of expression and an attempt to deal with the tensions in the relationship. Couples in physically abusive relationships display specific interaction styles, namely high levels of anger, contempt, hostility, and resistance to compromise. These difficulties result in an inability to handle conflict effectively. While this theory may be true for some relationships, it does not answer the question why some men are able to handle conflict without violence in other areas of their life, and not with their partner.

Conflict in abusive relationships is often one-sided (Olson, 2002). Women keep silent out of fear; they do not react to hurtful words; they avoid confrontation as much as possible. Some studies have indicated that in an attempt to avoid further abuse, women simply agree with their partners about everything. This indicates a lack of honest, free-flowing communication. In relationships where male control is salient, men are able to speak freely and without thought of consequences, yet their partners have to consider the effect their words will have before they speak. This is an area where further exploration is necessary because it is not known if this type of unequal communication occurs only in relationships characterized by physical abuse, or if it is present in non-violent relationships too. Also, it is not known if women always keep their opinions to themselves, or whether challenging their partners'

opinion always warrants an attack. It is clear there are many unanswered questions in terms of exploring communication patterns in both violent and non-violent relationships.

Ptacet (1997) considers battering to be a "brutal form of communication" (p.105). There is a message in the violence. The physical attack may be used as punishment, in which case the message might be "you were wrong". The violence may be motivated by the desire to dominate or coerce ("you will do it my way", or "I will do what I want"). The reason for the violence may differ, but the women involved can experience a loss of self-esteem, confidence and autonomy; and an increase in self-blame and depression as a result (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka, & Schrieber, 1999).

The cycle of violence can also be understood as a type of communication pattern in an abusive relationship (Cardarelli, 1997). Tension and anger result in overt aggression and violence. The trigger may be an external event or just the way the batterer feels (internal state). Contrition and remorse often follow violent attacks, promoting love-feelings and a sense of intimacy (Dutton, 1995). In this phase, there is still pressure on the woman to forgive and forget, and to carry on as if nothing had happened. Any resistance from the female partner is met with hostility and an accusation that she does not want to make the relationship work. Boonzaier and de la Rey (2003) found that "women either adopt or resist feminine constructions of the 'good woman or wife'" (p.1013). Thus, there is an expectation for a woman to make the relationship work, and to sacrifice in order to achieve this goal.

Men's violence in the relationship has also been understood to be an expression or communication of love and caring (Jewkes et al., 1999). When women believe their partners struggle to verbalise their feelings, they accept that the violence is a warped way of showing

affection or being protective. This is especially true when the abusive partner is so loving and remorseful after the violent episode.

Violent behaviour is damaging to the individuals and the intimate relationship, but sometimes it serves a purpose in the relationship. The abuse opens dialogue about the quality of the relationship; it brings about self-examination; it restores communication that is disrupted by daily life (Yassour Borochowitz & Eisikovits, 2002). It has been stated that some couples consider the violence to be a means of maintaining love and distance in their relationship. Violent episodes force the couple to deal with the build-up of pressures, misunderstandings and frustrations. The couple makes an effort to communicate, to not to take the relationship for granted, and feel more loving towards each other.

In a study by Jewkes and colleagues (1999), intimacy in a relationship was broken down into identifiable actions. Physical affection, verbal appreciation, respect, gifts and open talking about family problems were considered to be indicators of a loving relationship. Things that detracted from the relationship were the lack of help around the house, and being humiliated in front of others. People who feel their partners understand them tend to have a positive perception of the relationship (Weger, 2005). Furthermore, self-definition is influenced by information received by one's partner, and there is an expectation that partners will accept and understand each other. In an abusive relationship, this expected acceptance is often lacking, and results in decreased relationship satisfaction.

A study on conversations between satisfied couples found several common categories of conversation (Alberts, Yoshimura, Rabby & Loschiavo, 2005). These are self-report, observation, back-channel, other-report, TV talk, partner's experiences, miscellaneous,

household task talk, humour, plans, positivity, and conflict. They also found that communication patterns change as a relationship develops. The early stages are defined by politeness and positive self-representation, while the later phases include a wider variety of interactions, self-disclosure and assertive behaviour. The majority of conversation was found to be narcissistic or self-report, suggesting that conversation between intimate couples is not always purposeful but provides an audience to one's thoughts and experiences.

Berns, Jacobson and Gottman (1999) looked at the demand-withdraw interaction between couples. They found that battered women are no more demanding than non-battered women, but battering men are more demanding than non-battering men. Also, both partners in a violent relationship respond to their partner's demands by withdrawing (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1998). Thus a speculated pattern occurs where men put a lot of pressure on their partners to change, yet they withdraw or thwart women's efforts to change them. Women also demand change, but could not withdraw completely out of fear for a violent reaction. This demand-withdraw interaction has been shown to impact negatively on intimacy, stability and happiness in relationships (Weger, 2005).

The impact of infidelity

Infidelity impacts intimacy and communication in a negative way: it destroys trust and relationship satisfaction. Men objectify women by being unfaithful to them (Boonzaier, 2005). Sexual entitlement is a value held by many men in patriarchal societies. They feel it is their right to have as many partners as they want, and to demand sex from current partners whenever they want (Jewkes et al., 1999). Women are positioned to fight over their partners' affections, and also to have no other sexual partners. This is a particular problem in South Africa where HIV/AIDS is so rife. When woman abuse is added to infidelity, women are

often unable to confront their partners without being attacked or belittled (Jacobs, 2003). Violence in the home is often perpetuated by infidelity or the suspicion of it. It appears that when men are unfaithful, they are often more violent towards their partners. There is also an increase in physical abuse when the man suspects his partner of infidelity (Wood & Jewkes, 1998).

Sex within the intimate relationship can also be affected by abuse. Painter and Dutton (1985) describe a pattern of intimacy and violence. Men frequently want sex after being violent, and women may fear that refusal will lead to accusations of infidelity and jealousy, thus leading to further violence. Battered women often report the sexual relationship as stressful, while their partners do not (Finn, 1985). Feminists regard infidelity and sexual abuse as a result of patriarchal discourse. Men are constructed as needing sexual satisfaction, and women are placed as the solution. Thus, women are objectified and made to feel inferior by how men construct them.

WOMEN IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

It is sometimes thought that only specific types of women end up in abusive relationships. While there are factors that place women at risk for abuse, such as the woman's personal income, marital conflict or violence in the family of origin, it has been shown that factors such as socioeconomic status, demographic details and occupation are not always related with domestic abuse (Mashishi, 2000; The Population Council, 2005). Lempert (1996) states that although women in abusive relationships are active participants, they are not co-acting equals. They construct their relationship and have a sense of self. They develop techniques that enable them to cope with the violence and the contradictions in their relationship. This section looks at why women tend to stay in abusive relationships, and the coping skills they employ

to make sense of the violence.

Approximately half the women who leave their abusive partners and seek help at shelters return; these women are often blamed for the victimisation because they go back to their abusive partners (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991; Nabi & Horner, 2001; Strube, 1988). The reasons why women stay in abusive relationships can be divided into social and psychological reasons. Social reasons for staying include a lack of social support and resources needed for leaving an abusive relationship. Many women are not able to provide for themselves and their children without their partners' financial support, thus economic dependence or a lack of a safe refuge force women to stay. Women may also fear secondary victimisation by friends and the criminal justice system (Frojo, 2006). Women may consider the loss of friendship and community life as a result of leaving their partners too much of a sacrifice, and would rather stay in the relationship (POWA, 2007).

Psychological reasons for deciding to stay in the relationship are numerous. Shame, fear of being beaten again or killed, embarrassment, fear of being alone, or ignorance are some of the reasons for a lack of disclosure (POWA, 2007). Other reasons for staying include love, poor self-esteem, respect for one's partner, or satisfaction with sex (Clements et al., 2004; Mwamwenda, 1999). Further complicating the decision to leave is that the more committed a woman is to the relationship, the harder it is for her to psychologically justify that leaving is the best decision (Strube, 1988). She may feel she has invested too much into the relationship to quit, or she may feel responsible for making the relationship work. Consequently, coping or surviving the relationship appears to be the best option.

Finn (1985) describes four aspects of coping. The first aspect of coping is the access to social

support. This refers to having friends to rely on when making decisions and struggling with personal issues. A second aspect is reframing - this is the ability to redefine the stressful event in a way that makes it manageable and less traumatic. Spiritual and church support aids coping by giving hope to women and encouraging them in their relationship. The final aspect of coping is passive appraisal. This is the ability to accept problematic issues and minimize one's reactivity. Finn's (1985) study also indicated that battered women and abusive men find daily occurrences more stressful than non-abusive couples. They struggle to cope and to resolve problems constructively as a couple.

Herbert and colleagues (1991) conducted a study on how women cope in abusive relationships and why they stay. Findings indicated that certain cognitive strategies were employed that enabled these women to see the relationship in a positive light. Downward comparison occurs when a woman looks at other relationships worse than her own in order to make her feel her relationship is not so bad. Women who do not question the sincerity of their partners loving behaviour also view their violent intimate relationship more positively than those who see loving acts as post-abuse reparation. Women who attribute the violence to external, unstable causes, such as alcohol use or high levels of stress, are more likely to remain in the relationship (Van Schalkwyk, 2006). These attributions allow women to hope for a change in their relationship, and absolve the abuser from responsibility.

The strategies for coping with an abusive relationship are determined by the meanings the woman attaches to the violence and the resources she believes she has. Lempert (1996) discusses two strategies women use to contain the violence within their relationships, namely problem-solving and self-preservation. Problem-solving strategies are generally aimed at controlling the risks of violence and reducing the potential damage. Rationalisation is one

technique used to manage the violence. A woman may find reasons to explain the violence, such as intoxication or work stress. Another technique is to minimise the significance of the violence. By convincing themselves that the abuse was not a big problem because there was no hospitalisation, or that it was an accident, women are able to solve the problem of how the abuse affects them. Self-blame is another technique which involves finding fault in one' self for a partner's anger and aggression.

The second strategy is self-preservation. These techniques tend to be passive attempts to solve problems; a form of survival rather than a loss of self. For example, a woman may restrain herself from saying anything in an argument to prevent abuse. Fantasies of murder or suicide are forms of self-preservation. While they are described as 'passive' techniques, they empower women because they provide a sense of control and autonomy without endangering them in any way (Lempert, 1996).

Staying in an abusive relationship often has negative consequences for the women. The abuse inflicted by their partners has an impact on their mental health, often manifesting in depression, frustration and lowered self worth. Women also report suicide ideation, especially when they feel their partners will never change (Jacobs & Suleman, 1999). They have a diminished ability to trust men, and often express a lack of desire for a future intimate relationship. Despite the emotional, psychological, and physical harm as a result of woman abuse, some women are able to challenge patriarchal discourses and oppression in their relationships.

RESISTING THE VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION

Women do not always simply accept the perception society has of them as submissive,

feeling-focused or powerless (Worrell, 1993). Men oppress women in the interpersonal and the personal sphere, and in each of these areas women can show resistance (Meeta, 1999). In the interpersonal sphere, men restrict their partners' mobility, and demand that they ask permission to do anything. This keeps them isolated from friends or family. Women show resistance here by stealing money, sneaking out of the house when he leaves, or by phoning friends from a pay phone. In the personal sphere, men may force women to have children, work from home, and never to disagree. Resistance in this case is often seen by refusing to make food; being passive; or refusing to sleep with their partners; and using contraceptives without their partners' knowledge (Van Schalkwyk, 2006). As they reject the traditional gender roles in the home, women find they gain power in the relationship. Equality in an intimate relationship is associated with lower rates of physical abuse (Kaukinen, 2004).

People who feel the extent of woman abuse is exaggerated or who try to undermine feminist arguments often mention that there are as many cases of women beating their partners (Hester et al., 1996; Viljoen, 1987; Zepezauer, 2000). Much research however, has shown that husbands cause more injury than wives (POWA, 2007) and the extent of abuse against male partners is unknown. Ronan and colleagues (2004) found that the behaviour of physically violent wives is dependent on the behaviour of their husbands, implying that violence by women is normally in defence to an attack by their partners. Since oppression often manifests as domestic violence, attempts to resist the violence may be overt, in the form of physically fighting back. In other words, resistance is typically an immediate, survival-based strategy rather than an attempt to challenge social structures (Meeta, 1999). The function of violence differs from men to women. On the one hand, men use violence to control, subjugate or intimidate; violence is instrumental so they can get their way. On the other hand, women have been argued to use violence in self-defence, as retaliation or as a means of self expression

(Jacobson, Gottman, Waltz, Rushe & Babcock, 1994).

As shown above, relationships do not occur outside of a social context. Societal norms and perceptions impact on what occurs within the relationship. South Africa provides a very specific context, which condones the domination of men and woman abuse to a certain extent.

SOUTH AFRICA – A CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

South Africa is unique in its widespread poverty and state incapacity (Bowman, 2003). Laws are not always adequately enforced due to a lack of resources, and psychological services and shelters are expensive and out of reach for many people, especially those with financial constraints (Bowman, 2003). Other unique aspects of South Africa are its progressive constitution coupled with the paradox of the unspoken acceptance of violence and traditional concepts of marriage and marital roles. It is also a multicultural society.

Research into domestic violence in South Africa began in the mid-1990s. South Africa's constitution is firmly against all forms of discrimination, including gender discrimination (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Unfortunately legislation is difficult to enforce when the violence is not reported, minimized or even condoned by the community and society at large. The laws aimed at reducing violence in homes and schools are in place, yet violence still seems to be accepted by the general public (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). There are numerous cases of women who have reported being physically attacked by their intimate partners, only to face humiliation, and a lack of interest and protection by the police and criminal justice system (Martin & Jacobs, 2003). Pandit (2002) states that these laws need to be upheld if women are to be protected.

Viljoen (1987) reported that many people in South Africa distinguish between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" violence within the family. Some regard slapping and pushing to be normal and acceptable, yet punching or using a hard object would be considered wrongful. This attitude indicates violence against women is thought to be the correct response under certain conditions. There is often no intense reaction to violent behaviour. Wood and Jewkes (1998) conducted a study in the community of Khayelitsha, Cape Town, and found that although domestic violence is unpleasant and undesirable, it is considered normal. This attitude includes violence in the community as well as violence in the home (Mashishi, 2000; Wood & Jewkes, 1998). Viljoen (1987) speaks of structural violence – a cultural norm that views violence as a viable solution to any problem.

An underlying problem of domestic violence in South Africa is the patriarchal system that colludes and allows such behaviour to occur. The man is seen to hold all power in the family and may "use violence to settle any argument, overcome any resistance, or correct any behaviour which he considers deviant" (Pretorius, 1987, p. 421). This is especially prevalent in rural communities where many women are often not allowed to have a difference in opinion or to explore certain issues, such as finance, sexuality or career development (Bowman, 2003; Haddad, 2006). A woman's status and identity is often defined by her husband. Many men in rural areas are exposed to factors, such as poverty and unemployment, which contribute to the need to control and be seen as masculine (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Boonzaier and de la Rey (2003) discuss how cultural constrictions also contribute to the man's power in a relationship. Women are seen as submissive and incomplete without a man, thus excusing any violent behaviour that may occur.

A study on men's relationships with, and abuse of, women in Cape Town found that conflict and violence is often considered by men to be a result of a woman's nagging, women's attempts to control or undermine men's authority, or suspected infidelity (Abrahams, Jewkes & Laubsher, 1999). This study was conducted primarily with coloured men who do manual labour. The men who reported being abusive towards their partners were generally younger, less well educated, used drugs or alcohol, and had a tendency to use violence to solve problems at work or in the neighbourhood.

It is widely known that domestic violence is not specific to any particular race group or socio-economic status (POWA, 2007). However, there are several factors which increase the risk of violence against women by intimate partners. Poverty is one such factor - women in lower socio-economic conditions do report more violence than wealthy women (Cardarelli, 1997). The overuse of alcohol also tends to exacerbate violent behaviour. Overcrowded households and the presence of children are additional stressors to intimate relationships (Rabie, 1987). Rural households typically hold larger amounts of people than urban households. Unfortunately, these factors are often present in many low-income, marginalized communities of the Western Cape.

South Africa has a blend of urban and rural dwellers. This present study focuses on a low-income, semi-rural farming community. The differences between rural and urban demographics point to the need for research specifically focused on low-income rural communities. It is often thought that rural communities provide more social support and networking that the urban environment. However, it is possible that women in rural settings often feel they have to choose between staying in an abusive relationship and being ostracized by the community (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Furthermore, rural communities also typically

have fewer infrastructures and thus a consequent lack of social resources. Context and social environment play an important role in determining meaning, thus culture-specific research on domestic violence in intimate relationships is useful (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003).

CONTEXT OF ABUSE – A SEME-RURAL COMMUNITY

The people who are participating in this study live in a semi-rural community. It has been decided to exclude the name of the community for confidentiality purposes. However, it is possible to provide a bit of context. This semi-rural community is a farming community, and housing is often provided by the farm owners for those who work on the farm. Thus, people tend to live on or close to the farms where they work.

Semi-rural, low-income communities are prone to certain psychosocial problems, which include alcohol abuse, domestic violence and early motherhood (London, 1999c). These communities generally hold very traditional constructions of gender and family structure, as well as specific lifestyle patterns. This particular community is no exception – the 'dop system' has ingrained itself into the culture and the way many members of the community live, having very negative consequences such as poor health, loss of finances and foetal alcohol syndrome (Te Water et al., 1998). The 'dop system' refers to the payment of wages in the form of alcohol. Prior to 1961, farm labourers in South Africa were given alcohol as a benefit of employment. Workers were made to be dependent on the farm owners for both housing and alcohol, in an attempt to keep them compliant. In 1961 the Liquor Act (1928) outlawed payment with alcohol as part of wages, and the dop system officially became illegal but has left a long-lasting legacy in many farming communities.

Studies documenting the common types of injuries acquired by people on farms in the

Western Cape indicate that almost half of documented injuries are not work-related, but are violent acts, and that in most male-on-female violence, the perpetrator is the intimate partner (Donson & Marais, 2004; Marais, 2004). Also, two-thirds of injuries that require hospital care are alcohol-related and 70% of interpersonal violence is alcohol-related, indicating that alcohol is often present in these communities. The overall context sketched above will provide the lenses through which women's experiences of abuse will be examined.

This chapter has addressed the issue of woman abuse; how it is defined and the theoretical frameworks through which it is observed. The abusive intimate relationship has been explored, as well as the role of alcohol abuse and gendered power dynamics. Furthermore, literature is reviewed on the women in these relationships - their coping skills, reasons for staying, and acts of resistance to woman abuse. A socio-cultural context is provided when looking at woman abuse in South Africa in general, and semi-rural, low-income communities more specifically. The review of literature reveals the need for context-specific research into the experiences of women living with an abusive partner. This study looks at women's experiences of abuse, as well as how this abuse impacts on communication within the intimate relationship. Issues of power and societal pressures are also addressed. Chapter three details the research methodology and methods used in this research study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

This chapter provides the rationale for the choice of a qualitative framework adopted in the study. The chapter addresses what is meant by qualitative research, feminist research and narrative research, and how these are used in this study to obtain meaningful findings. The sample is described, as are the procedures followed in obtaining participants and conducting interviews. Finally, the ethical issues, which arise when working on a sensitive topic such as woman abuse, are addressed.

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The theoretical foundations for qualitative research were laid as early as the 19th century with Max Weber who argued that social science needed to study meaningful social action (Babbie, 2005). It was thought that research ought to investigate the personal reasons or motives that shape an individual's internal feelings and guide decisions to act in a certain way, rather than just measuring these actions. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research (based in a positivist epistemology), and these two methods of inquiry are often contrasted against each other. Positivist research typically uses laboratory experiments and standardised tests to create statistics which are generalisable to entire populations of people (Boonzaier, 2001). Researchers assume that everyone shares the same meaning system and experience the world in similar ways. A completely different way of thinking is seen in the interpretive paradigm, from which qualitative research stems. Interpretive research regards scientific objectivity as not being the best manner in which to study certain behaviour. The researcher is considered to play a pivotal role in the collection of data because of his or her influence on it. Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that it notes that human action acquires meaning

as it is interpreted. It is considered less intrusive because a relationship is built with the participant, and openness and equality is encouraged (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Furthermore, Hollway and Jefferson (2000) state that qualitative researchers deal with ambiguous representations of the truth because we do not have direct access to it. Thus, one's subjective reality is important to the qualitative researcher. The goal of such research is to understand one's meanings, values, interpretive schemes and rules of living. This context-specific nature of qualitative research challenges the positivist belief in an absolute truth.

The role of the researcher becomes important in qualitative research because interpretations are constructed by the researcher (Boonzaier, 2001). Scientific objectivity is replaced by the acknowledgment of the central position that the researcher holds in the research process. We all have values, experiences and assumptions which influence how we perceive others. In qualitative research it is essential to become aware of these filters we use in daily life. This process of self-examination is called reflexivity (Banister et al. 1994). It involves critically looking at our own motives and responses in the research process and being aware of how these impact the participants' representations of reality and how we have constructed and interpretation of that reality.

FEMINIST RESEARCH

Qualitative and feminist research are very similar in terms of their broader goals, such as the focus on political dimensions of research and the acknowledgment of power. As shown in chapter 2, there is no unitary feminist theory. While many feminists have a common goal to remove woman abuse and oppression, there are many differences between the different perspectives. A postmodern feminist theoretical framework has been chosen for this study.

Postmodernism claims that there are multiple interpretations of situations and that we hold a subjective interpretation. This position benefits feminism because there is such diversity within the field of feminism. It recognizes the diversity of women's experience and accepts that there does not need to be a single solution or explanation (Fraser & Nicholson, 2006). This is because the frameworks one has influences how one understands the research findings (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2003).

Postmodern feminism pays attention to power patterns in a patriarchal society; how these are visible in various societal structures and cultural norms; and how they work to keep women in a position of submission to men (Parker, 2005). It acknowledges that knowledge is different for society's dominant members than oppressed members. Consequently, like qualitative research, a postmodern feminist perspective looks at the socio-political framework as well as the individual problem of domestic violence (Hester et al., 1996; Van Schalkwyk, 2006).

Hester and colleagues (1996, p. 9) say "central to feminism is the task of understanding how within patriarchal societies women's oppression is experienced by women who may be simultaneously privileged and/or oppressed by the power structures of race, class, sexuality, age and/or disability". This is a very elaborate and encompassing explanation of feminism; however it does show that the foundation of feminism is eliminating oppression. Stone (2007, p.192) comments "All feminists believe that women are subordinated and that this can and should be changed. But different feminists believe this under different interpretations". Thus, it is important to remember that despite differences within feminism, the underlying aim of a feminist approach is to eliminate the negative effects of gender on women's lives (Proffit, 2000).

The concept of gender is fundamental to feminist thought. Postmodern feminists do not regard the differences between men and women as natural. Like race and nationality, gender is also assumed to be socially constructed (Haslanger, 2006). Mackinnon (2006) states that gender is a matter of dominance, not difference, because men and women are equally different but not equally powerful. Therefore, there is a distinction between sex (which is understood to be biological) and gender. Gender refers to the social expectations about appropriate behaviour for men and women. For example, society encourages male aggression, but stifles female aggression, thus specifying how each gender should behave (Stone, 2007). Girls and boys are reared differently according to traditional gender roles and expectations. Since gender is socially constructed, it is possible to change, and this is what feminists wish to achieve.

Biological sex differences are often cited as a reason for violence against women. Violent behaviour is assumed to be intrinsic to men because masculinity has traditionally been associated with assertiveness, sexual gratification and dominance, while femininity has been associated with passivity, dependence, and irrationality. Postmodern feminists challenge this by their view that it is the patriarchal order, not biological traits, that promote domestic violence and the oppression of women (Roopnarain, 1999).

Feminism and woman abuse

The postmodern feminist theory informs research regarding physical violence in intimate relationships because issues of power and control are relevant to these relationships. Olson (2002) found that in intimate relationships that have a power imbalance, those with little power are at greater risk of being physically abused. Gender and power are related – violence against one's partner is not a random act but a form of control over women (Yllö & Bograd, 1999). Domestic violence prevents women from participating as equal and productive

partners in society; feminist research has a commitment to improve women's lives and to place participant's viewpoints in the foreground (Bowman, 2003; Watts, 2006).

Part of reducing woman abuse and oppression is achieved by addressing the issue of power in intimate relationships. Power is defined by Dunbar and Burgoon (2005) as the "capacity to produce intended effects, and in particular, the ability to influence the behaviour of another person" (p. 208). Sagrestano, Heavey and Christensen (1999) divide power into three categories. In the first category, power is assessed through decision-making. The person who has the final say in decision-making is typically the one with the most power. Secondly, how one behaves while interacting with one's partner gives a good indication of power status. The final power category is the perception of potential influence. This refers to the individual who believes they can control certain outcomes, and be successful in their attempts to influence another person.

Power operates in all relationships, whether it is understood to be held by one person or equally shared between partners. It determines how partners relate to one another and how a decision is made, and is influenced by perceptions of power and attempts to gain control (Frieze & McHugh, 1992). Power is central to postmodern feminist theory. This is because feminist theory specifically acknowledges the presence of power in intimate heterosexual relationships.

The dyadic power theory states that it is the perception of power that leads an individual to attempt to exert control in the relationship. When the attempts are successful, the individual does dominate and hold more power (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). Thus, external power bases may be equal, but the perceived power is not. As the imbalance develops, the weaker person

can become more negative in their self-appraisal and increasingly incapable of existing independently. The result is a greater dependence on the person in the high power position (Painter & Dutton, 1985).

In abusive relationships, violence is used as a power strategy. It is an important factor in decision-making and relationship satisfaction (Fraize & McHugh, 1992). Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) found that when men feel they have less power in the relationship, they are more likely to be violent than men who have high levels of perceived power. In other words, when a man feels he holds the power in an intimate relationship, there is no need to be violent in order to assert that power.

Women in abusive relationships are often portrayed as helpless and passive, but it is believed that they do attempt to influence their partners in various ways. However, not only is there an external power struggle that occurs between husband and wife, and between the women and societal expectations, there is also an internal power struggle. This internal struggle occurs within the woman as she strives for control over the abusive situation and the strength to leave her husband, but she is faced with what she perceives as weakness – not having the resources to leave him or the power to stop him being abusive (Kacen, 2002). Unfortunately, her internal struggle often weakens the external one against her partner. She may feel more and more unable to resist him. Coupled with a lack of community support, women feel isolated and trapped within the abusive relationship.

Women who earn greater salaries than their partners tend to have more power in the relationship but are at risk for increased victimisation at home (McCloskey, 1996). The reason for this is that in a patriarchal society, a man's role is to provide financially. If this is not

achieved, he may feel threatened or emasculated, and respond in a hostile manner. He feels his status diminishes, and this causes tension which may lead to abuse. McCloskey (1996) found that it is the income disparity, rather than the overall poverty that contributes to domestic violence.

Gendered power dynamics influence every relationship, however not all intimate relationships exploit women. Power shifts between partners and can be dispersed rather than unilateral (Fraser, 2003). Feminism, in particular, looks at how women can change the power dynamics in their relationships by acknowledging the mistreatment and developing independence in their lives. However, the reality is that this is not an easy task, especially for women coming from a place of powerlessness and dependence on an abusive partner.

Men's domination is most clearly illustrated in the context of the family (Dobash & Dobash, 1990). Often, violence is used to win arguments, silence partners, to express dissatisfaction, deter future behaviour, and to demonstrate power. Feminism plays an important role in exposing domestic violence as another form of men's display of power over their female partners. Power and authority are based on force or the threat of force, thus violence is an integral aspect of male domination (Proffit, 2007).

Some feminist approaches have been criticized for not acknowledging the intersection of gender with other social identities. The sole focus on gender often leads to the exclusion of race or ethnicity, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic class (Kasturirangan et al., 2004). Another criticism held against feminist theory is that there is no unity within the framework. As was stated previously, although there is diversity within feminism, the desire to end women's subordination and reject traditions which limit women is felt by all feminists

(Sylvester, 1994; Stone, 2007). A further concern is that feminist philosophy has ceased to look critically at the existence of woman oppression but assume it exists (Stone, 2007). In response to this, there is ample evidence of woman oppression in society. Abuse in the home, discrimination in the work place, and rape are just some examples of how women are hampered from living autonomous lives. Several studies have shown how communities condone domestic violence, male domination and the objectification of women (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Martin & Jacobs, 2003; Pretorius, 1987). Feminism strives for gender equality, and researching fields where this is lacking, such as abuse in intimate relationships, helps to achieve this goal.

In this research study, the postmodern feminist approach will be followed because interpretations are based on specific cultures, discourses and socio-historical contexts. Postmodernism also links with the narrative approach in that they both question the assumption that participants and researchers share research goals (Sylvester, 1994). Acknowledging that the participant may have her own agendas and frameworks might substantially aid the research process. Postmodernist feminism acknowledges that findings are based on one's interpretation of text, rather than the uncovering of universal truths (Banister et al., 1994).

Regarding research, postmodern feminism does not consider positivism to be evil; it is simply not consistent with feminist methods (Sylvester, 1994). Power and politics can be addressed by including women in the research process, and being aware of the processes which occur. For this particular study, postmodern feminism is useful because I am looking at the meaning women attach to their intimate relationships, without having any preconceptions about what these meanings might entail. Thus, by accepting the distinctiveness of each woman's story,

and by examining their beliefs and assumptions regarding their relationship and how they communicate, it is possible to better understand the meanings they attach to their experiences.

NARRATIVE RESEARCH

Narrative research stems from a large range of theoretical forms. While this allows for diversity and flexibility in the research process, it also makes defining narrative research difficult (Daiute, 2004). Narrative research is more than simply a way of analyzing data – it is a way of understanding research and could be understood as a methodology in its own right. Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber (1998, p. 2) define it as "any study that uses or analyses narrative materials". In this section, I will outline the complexities of this definition by discussing narrative research and the assumptions which uphold it as a theoretical perspective. Following this, I will provide an overview of several different forms of narrative analysis. This involves defining what is meant by the term "narrative" and the how it impacts analysis. Next, I will discuss the benefits of using narrative analysis in research, and its limitations in the field of psychology. The last stage is to describe the analysis I used in my research of domestic violence in intimate relationships.

Defining narratives and narrative analysis

Reissman (1993) explains that most of the talk in an interview is not narrative, but question and answer, or other forms of discourse. Thus, one needs to find the narrative within the interview. This leads us to ask, "What defines a narrative?" On the one hand, there is the very broad, all-encompassing notion of narrative, such as Barthes (1987, as cited in Chandler, Lalonde, & Teucher, 2004) who defines a narrative as "universal, international, trans-historical and trans-cultural: it is simply there, like life itself". On the other hand, a narrower definition, such as defining a narrative as a story about a specific event (Reissman, 1993),

may be clearer.

Lightfoot's (2004) definition looks at the role of language, naming, and narrative in defining who one is and how one changes. Some researchers place the criteria of being a narrative as having a beginning, middle and end (Sarbin, 2004). However, endings determine the beginnings and middles of a narrative because it is only when the story has ended that it is possible to discern the meaning and significance of what happened (Freeman, 2004). This idea of a narrative tends to exclude current events, and stories that are not neat and ordered. It is important to note that life is always in the process of a narrative; researchers never have the full picture. Freeman (2004) describes a narrative as an individual's "interpretive rendition of the past from the standpoint of the present" (p. 69).

Not all narratives follow the typical storyline - beginning, middle and end. Reissman (1993) argues that some stories are habitual; they happen so frequently that there is no peak. Other narratives are hypothetical, describing what the narrator wished had happened, or what did not happen. Other stories are topic-centred, linked together by theme and not containing much detail. Some issues are difficult to speak about, and may resist exposure (Reissman, 1993). An example of this is a traumatic event. The typical response to trauma is to banish it from awareness. Herman (1992, as cited in Reissman, 1993) describes how women who are abused struggle to name their experience. If it is spoken about, the traumatic experience does not progress in typical story-telling fashion, but is fragmented, and does not reveal the narrator's feelings or interpretations. Narratives always follow some kind of sequence and some kind of plot to hold the story together.

With this background, one can move onto what narrative analysis entails. Narrative analysis is

an interpretive method of analyzing data. These studies tend to have smaller sample sizes, but the amount of data collected is large. No two interviews are the same, and the uniqueness provides very rich data.

The goals of narrative analysis are two-fold – to understand how people make sense of their experiences; and to see how the symbolic activities of narrating, such as imagining or performing, support or limit development (Dauite & Lightfoot, 2004). There are many different ways to achieve these goals. A unique feature of narrative analysis is that it tends to not have an a priori hypothesis. While there is a research question or direction, what happens within an interview (and during the research process) may be spontaneous and unpredicted. Hypotheses and theories are generated while reading and analyzing, not beforehand. The analysis is interpretive and partial. Findings will always have some ambiguity, and be open to reworking (Lieblich et al., 1998).

The actual process of analyzing narratives takes many forms. There is no standard set of procedures, only guidelines in how to conduct analysis. Narrative analysis is a tool for probing events, and for making connections. It promotes human agency and imagination. It is appropriate for research in which the participants are seen as active agents in the making of their own stories (Reissman, 1993). In this regard it is consistent with feminist research.

Narrative analysis relies on the themes drawn from the narrative material to explain what happens in people's lives. It is commonly used by feminists and critical psychologists to explore the interplay of dominant and cultural forces and individual experiences. When analyzing narratives, there is a focus on the content, the social context, and the broader ideological context (Stanley & Billig, 2004). Narrative analysis studies the stories individuals

tell, and we gain insight into his or her construction of personal identity. However, we are also able to learn of the narrator's cultural and social world. Lieblich and colleagues (1998, p.7) argue that people "construct their identities and self-narratives from building blocks available in their common culture, above and beyond the individual experience". While each narrative is idiosyncratic and unique, participants often draw on cultural narratives. These are the assumptions in society that are not questioned, but taken for granted and are made apparent while analyzing the stories (Parker, 2005).

Analysis involves the participant's notion of social context and experience, and relating it to others in a way that makes sense. Connecting story to context can happen on 3 levels – personal, interpersonal and societal level of analysis. At a personal level, the experience of the individual is highlighted; at an interpersonal level, one looks at how the story is told, who is included and what the purpose of telling the story is; at the societal level, focus is on the moral perspective, the impact of societal norms on experience, and how the participant adheres to or resists these norms (Smith, 2000).

Narrative research and its underlying assumptions

Despite the diversity in narrative research, there are a few foundations which are fundamental to this theoretical orientation. They are: a postmodernist perspective; the role of meaning; acknowledging the social and cultural aspect of narratives; discovering individual identity; and the interaction between researcher and participant.

The first assumption of narrative analysis emerges out of the postmodern assumption that is that there is no single, absolute truth of human reality. We do not assume to study the truth of what is said, but rather the meaning of what is said and what that implies about the individual

(Parker, 2005). It follows that narrative research is about interpreting somebody's story in a way that is both meaningful and relevant, rather than looking for an empirical or external truth (Freeman, 2004).

There is also no single, correct interpretation of text (Lieblich et al., 1998). It is possible to explore possible meanings that the participants may find unrecognizable, or may refuse to accept (Freeman, 2004). Narrative research does not require replication as proof of reliability and validity but researchers are responsible for providing a systematic and coherent rationale for their methods and interpretations.

The second assumption of narrative analysis is that of meaning. An individual's current experiences influence how he or she perceives the past. Certain incidents alter perceptions of the past, and this is vital to recognise when analyzing narratives (Parker, 2005). For example, if an abused woman's husband stops being violent and abusive, this may cause her to view the past in a positive light (things weren't really so bad). She may be unable to recall wanting to ever leave her husband now that the relationship has improved. People sometimes change their narratives when confronted with an unwanted response from a listener (Gergen, 2004). Hollway and Jefferson (2000) discuss the "defended self" which refers to the particular positions individuals take in discourse to protect the vulnerable aspects of self. Therefore it is important to realise every event that is related is understood in relation to other events, and they are always told from the perspective of the participant (Parker, 2005; Smith, 2000).

Not only does the personal impact narratives; there are also social and cultural factors to consider. People use narratives to impose an individual and a cultural meaning on experience (Lee, Rosenfeld, Mendenhall, Rivers & Tynes, 2004). Narratives contain shared knowledge

and beliefs in human societies, and are the basis of cultural learning (Nelson, 2004). While narratives are inherently unique and individual, they are also tools for teaching and exploring cultural values. Lee and colleagues (2004) looked at the narrative socialization in children. Children are socialized both by their opportunities to tell stories, and by listening to stories told by adults. The stories people tell carry social norms. This process of socialization is not restricted to children. Throughout life, the telling of and listening to stories shapes identity.

There is pressure to conform to normative ideals when people tell their stories, and this is often visible in how they portray themselves. Carney (2004) discusses how trauma survivors are pressurised into telling "survivor narratives" describing how they have overcome and moved on since their experience. There is little room for counter stories, which are fragmented and contain unresolved emotion. Narrative research seeks to explore both these 'traditional' as well as the counter stories and to expose how dominant discourse can be oppressive. Daiute and Freeman (2004, p. 87) state: "Power relations are those social forces that shape, require, model, and guide narrators to present themselves according to certain normative ideals". Narratives do not necessarily maintain and uphold the status quo; they also challenge and change it. In a story, the narrator is faced with a difficulty – to present herself in a way that conforms to cultural ideals, or to talk of the forbidden or repressed. In this sense, narrating is a form of social positioning. One of the great values of narrative research is that by looking at narratives, one is able to gain insight into societal forces and culturally dominant and subversive stories.

Identity in narrative research is linked to human development. Experiences occur that cause one's identity - one's notion of self - to be re-assessed. How that event is interpreted informs how the self is reconstructed. Freeman (2004) calls it "rewriting the self" and it is a

developmental process of refiguring the past and one's definition of self, in a manner that goes beyond what previously existed. By studying people's narratives regarding this process, one can learn a great deal about identity and human development.

Identity is a fluid concept that changes in response to one's experiences (Lieblich et al., 1998). By interviewing a person, their identity is captured in a particular moment. The interpretation of narratives and the way they are interpreted may make identity seem static, but it is important to remember it is constantly in flux. Individuals tend to not have pre-established identities, but are agents in constructing their own lives (Bamberg, 2004).

The final assumption of narrative research is in line with its qualitative nature. Research is not objective but involves interaction. The interview consists of two people, and thus data collected will be affected by the interaction between them. The repeated reading of the narratives helps to gain understanding about the dynamics of knowledge production in the interview (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Lieblich and colleagues (1998) provide a theoretical perspective on narrative research. They looked at the place of a narrative in Psychology, and found that the stories people tell provide connectivity and continuity in their lives. Narratives allow researchers to explore and understand the inner worlds of individuals, since we do not have direct access to this. "Stories imitate life and present an inner reality to the outside world", but at the same time, they shape the individual's image of self and reality (Lieblich et al., 1998, p.7). People discover themselves and make themselves known to others by the stories they tell. This is also a postmodern perspective, as stories do not represent the facts accurately. They are constructed around specific events or facts, but carry the individual interpretation and experience. This

theoretical perspective is the one underlying the present study.

The limitations of narrative analysis

People engage in narrative research because they wish to examine phenomena, issues and people's lives holistically. This desire stems from dissatisfaction with the reductionist approaches to research that have been typical in Psychology. Reductionist approaches view diversity and variety as obstacles to the truth, while narrative approaches use these as tools to gain insight into people's lives. Another reason for engaging in narrative analysis is to examine the social histories that influence identity and development. Narrative analysis allows researchers to generate unique insights about intersecting storylines and ways of referencing the self and others (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004).

However, Reissman (1993) discusses some limitations of representation. Representations are always partial and incomplete because we do not and cannot have direct access to the primary experience. The analysis of a narrative is both an expansion and a reduction because only certain features are selected (by the narrator and by the analyst) and interpretive elements are added. Another limitation is that language is often inadequate to portray the experience properly, as in the case of narratives of trauma, for example. This influences interpretation because we must not only look at the said, but also at what is not said or what is only hinted at.

One critique of narrative analysis as a method of research is that it is focused too much on poetic interpretation than on explanation and scientific writing (Freeman, 2004). Gergen (2004) states that it is wrong to assume that a narrative is necessarily linear or comprehensive, or that it is wholly truthful. Stories are not truths but renditions of events, influenced by

cultural standards, and designed to give meaning to the past. Dissatisfaction with narrative analysis arises when people are not prepared to accept such ambiguity (Lieblich et al., 1998).

Narrative analysis in this study

The first step of narrative analysis is finding a model or approach. Lieblich and colleagues (1998) designed a two-by-two model that divides narrative analysis into holistic and categorical approaches. The holistic approach views one's story as a whole and sections of the text are interpreted in relation to other parts of the text as well as the individual's context. Parker (2005) states that every narrative is a cultural narrative that individuals draw on in their personal stories. Dominant narratives might include stories about men who are always in charge and are never challenged by the women in their lives. Such narratives support the status quo and oppress other alternative perspectives (Och & Capps, 1996). Smith (2003) states that to be denied the opportunity to express agency is oppression and causes suffering. This is why it is vital that women have the opportunity to tell their story; that they are allowed their own perspective; and that they give meaning to their experiences as a woman. It is a combination of stories and impressions that form an interpretation of what the participant is saying. For example, a holistic approach is necessary to understand how a participant once viewed her husband as bad, and now sees him as good. Smith (2003) states that narratives are subject to change as new information becomes available, and that is why looking at the story as a whole is so important. The unfolding process is made clear with a holistic approach.

The reason for employing a holistic approach is because each story is understood to be unique and the development of the narrative is also understood to impact the findings. I wanted to do each participant's story justice, and by looking at the narratives as a whole, it was possible for their stories to be told. Participants spoke of the development of their relationship, and the

holistic-content approach allowed this to be explored. Gergen (2004) states that the narrative structure is of central importance, and should not be lost in the process of analysis. A categorical approach was, however, also necessary because the research has a particular focus. I was interested to see what the points of similarity and difference were in women's experiences of abuse, and what themes appeared in the participants' narratives. There needed to be an emphasis on what was being said by these women; the actual content. A categorical-content approach made it possible to do this.

The categorical approach was also used because it emphasises what is said rather than the structure of the story (Lieblich et al., 1998). The story is dissected, and sections belonging to a specific category are collected from several texts (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). By narrowing the participant's focus to their violent intimate relationships, themes and concepts become apparent. Some of these themes were found across participants, and some form of categorical analysis was necessary to add depth to these findings. Parker (2005) states that by connecting individual stories one is able to bring about an understanding. Thus, the benefit of this approach is that one can create a picture of the content and the context within a particular culture, by finding common themes between participants (Lieblich et al., 1998).

The procedure that is followed in a holistic-content perspective is firstly to read the transcriptions several times until a pattern or theme emerges. Then, by writing a general impression of the narrative, one is able to identify unusual features, possible contradictions and the various stories that are told within one narrative. The third step is to decide on the specific themes identified, and follow them throughout the story, noting, for example when they are mentioned and if the theme changes at all over time (Lieblich et al., 1998). Themes can be explicitly stated or found in illustrations within the narrative (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

Dramatic quotes often suggest important themes.

Within a single interview, there are many stories told by the participant. There are stories of money troubles, family burdens, children, and religion to name a few. In this research I focused on the participant's stories of abuse, and of the patterns of communication in their relationships. Participants often make use of imagery in their stories to describe their experience. This may include symbols, images or metaphors. Stories tend to have been rehearsed (told to other people in different occasions) and are often told in a different manner to the rest of the narrative. They are often told smoothly, with appropriate background information and are carefully structured (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). There are many purposes of story-telling, such as to produce or reproduce social knowledge. Stories are products of social interaction. Esterberg (2002, p192) says "the story you tell and the way you tell it depends, in part, on your audience". I was particularly attentive to these issues (i.e. rehearsed stories, audience) when analyzing women's narratives.

While conducting the interviews, numerous women expressed gratitude for allowing them to talk about their experiences. Participant five said "yes, I cannot actually share with people. Miss, it is surely the Lord's will that you came out here". Similarly, participant six says "I feel so glad and happy that I can talk to you. Understand? I can empty out my heart. Just to make place for the weekend". These examples proved to me the value of listening to qualitative research because it allowed these women to tell their stories from their perspective, something which they had been denied. Narrative analysis allows the researcher to present their experiences and gain understanding from them.

SAMPLE

This study was conducted with 15 women from a low-income, semi-rural community in the Western Cape. Qualitative research is more in-depth and focused on "fuller" data than other types of research, thus a smaller sample size is required (Parker, 2005). There were several reasons for choosing to only talk with women about their experiences. There is a paucity of research regarding communication in violent intimate relationships from the woman's perspective in South Africa, thus this presented an opportunity to focus on the women's perspectives only. The researcher is also a woman, and it is felt that more of a connection could be made with other women when discussing the highly sensitive topic of domestic violence.

Given the power dynamics in a violent intimate relationship, interviewing couples was not a viable option for this study as it is unlikely that the women would speak freely in the conversation. Previous studies show that domestic violence is often accompanied by other forms of domination and control, therefore having the male partner in the interview might compromise communication. If the woman did speak her mind with her partner present, she may be in danger of a physical attack. Therefore there was also an opportunity to give women a chance to express themselves, and make sense of their experiences in a safe environment, aims which are consistent with feminist research.

In this study, 15 women who self-identified as having been physically abused by an intimate partner during a survey on intimate relationships, were interviewed about their experiences. The participants ranged between 30 and 55 years old. The length of relationship varied between six and 40 years, and all participants had children. They are Afrikaans, coloured women living in a semi-rural community in the Western Cape. The majority did not work, and with the exception of two, all the participants were married. All the women were currently in

a relationship with a man who was or is physically abusive. Of those currently experiencing abuse, all showed indecision about staying in the relationship. Participant 15 was the only woman who had decided to permanently leave her husband and had applied for government housing, and will leave him as soon as it comes through. For a fuller description of the participants, refer to Appendix A.

PROCEDURE

This study formed part of a larger project investigating intimate heterosexual relationships in a particular community. For the larger project, a survey on intimate relationships was conducted on 93, randomly selected couples in the community. Those who participated in the survey were asked whether they were interested in partaking in further research on intimate relationships. I identified participants for my study in the following ways: Using the surveys, I identified the female participants who had acknowledged the presence of physical abuse in their relationship. At this stage of the research, I was only planning to explore physical violence in intimate relationships because it is the most obvious form of abuse. However as the interviews proceeded, I decided to extend my focus to include all forms of abuse, namely physical, sexual, emotional and economic abuse. It became clear that there are few distinctions between the types of abuse in these relationships. In other words, women often experience all forms of abuse, and by focusing on only one aspect I was not doing the women's stories justice.

Of the 93 women, 55 stated they had been physically abused by their partners at some stage in their relationship. After identifying potential participants, it was necessary to check whether they had given permission to be involved in further research. This narrowed down the list of potential participants from approximately 55 to 30 women. I proceeded to contact women by

phoning them or going to their homes to explain the research, gain consent and to set up appointment times. Since my sample consisted of 15 women, selection was based on accessibility. For example, some of the women work until late evening, and it was easier to make contact with women who worked evening shifts, or those who did not have jobs and were free in the morning and afternoon. Also, some participants had no contact details and I was not able to find exactly where they lived, so accessing these women was difficult. Everybody I contacted expressed a willingness to participate in the research. Two pilot interviews were conducted; one with a woman within the community who had not experienced domestic abuse, and one with a woman who had been experiencing it. This latter interview was not included in the final sample. These preliminary interviews enabled me to have more insight into the research participants and the particular contexts of their lives. All the interviews were conducted in Afrikaans.

The pilot interviews were very informative because I became aware of the importance of establishing proper rapport with my participants as well as the complexities surrounding language and power. For example, in the second pilot, the participant repeatedly referred to her husband who *"suiped"* (a derogatory way of saying he drinks frequently and in large quantities). When I used this term, she immediately started defending her husband's behaviour. This pointedly showed the difference between us – although I am also a woman, I was an outsider to this community, and my use of the term was possibly perceived as an unjustified attack on her husband.

The actual interviews took place between June and September 2007. Of the 15 interviews, two were held in the participant's homes, and 13 in my car. The reason for this was that the participants often had family members and children in their homes, and this might have

compromised both open communication and confidentiality. The interviews were approximately one hour. At the start of each interview, I introduced myself and explained what the interview would be about, why such research was being conducted, and then we worked through the consent form together (see Appendix B). I addressed any questions or concerns the women had and, after signing the consent form, began with the interview.

An interview guideline was created (see Appendix C) although the interview was unstructured. I had a list of questions to ask in case the interview was not flowing, but did not follow the question list formally. Flexibility within the interview is central to a qualitative approach aiming to elicit narratives. One difficulty that arose was that some participants did not seem used to expressing emotions regarding their partners, so it was sometimes necessary to explain terminology and ideas. For example, in an interview with participant eight the following occurred:

I: How did you feel after he hurt you?

P: Very sore. There were stitches inside (her cheek) and a splint in my eye. Ooh it was sore.

I: And your heart? How did your heart feel?

P: My heart was very confused... I was actually so with him.

The primary focus of the interview was women's stories about their partners in relation to domestic abuse. Thus, the first question was "Can you tell me about your relationship with your partner?" I found that this enabled women to talk about the issue most relevant to them at this point in time. Other themes included the experience of abuse, the role of alcohol and drugs in their lives, how women felt about the communication in their relationships, what women wished was different in their relationships with their partners, their children, and their views on staying in the relationship.

I found this open, participant-led method of interviewing to be very insightful because the interviews often progressed in a way I had not expected. Rapport was established quickly, and it seemed that the women were sharing their lives, rather than just answering questions. If I had used a structured format in the interviews, much information and knowledge would have been lost.

All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis (for a list of transcription conventions, see Appendix D). Permission to record the interviews was obtained before the interviews began, but it was only in some instances that the presence of the tape recorder was noticed. To indicate the end of the interview and the start of the debriefing, I switched off the tape recorder. During this time, women generally expressed their gratitude to me for listening to them. This was very humbling because I was aware of how much I have taken my social support network for granted. The participants often had nobody else to talk to, and I was glad that our interview had meant something for them also.

Data was analysed using narrative analysis. Narrative analysis was chosen because of its adherence to the text. My preconceived ideas about woman abuse and the farming culture in the Western Cape were challenged as I engaged with the text and attempted to understand the participants' views. I was originally only going to use a thematic or categorical approach for analysis. However, I began to see that by not showing the whole picture – the social context, the intimate relationship as presented by the participants – the value of qualitative research was lost a little. The first chapter of analysis explores the participants' narratives of abuse, and pays attention to the language women use in describing their experiences. Consequently, analysis was also done at an interpretive level because it includes how women accept or reject

dominant discourses in their narratives. The second chapter of analysis looks women's constructions of communication patterns in their relationships. It addresses how women understand and make meaning of the communication in their relationships. The explanations women give for why communication occurs the way it does, and how alcohol and abuse influence their interactions are also explored. Following a postmodern approach, these interpretations are one of many possible interpretations (Boonzaier, 2001). The narrative analysis gives a voice to the participants, and I use their words, but the analysis is a combined product co-constructed between the researcher and the researched.

THE REFLEXIVE RESEARCHER

Tang (2002, p703) states "Interviewer and interviewee's perceptions of social, cultural and personal differences have an impact on the power relationship in the interview, which is not simply an issue of quality of the interview but the dynamics between the interview pair". There are power dynamics in all interviews, and woman to woman research is no different. Race and culture also influence how an interview unfolds. Points of difference, whether the points of difference are socioeconomic status or the interview goals, are often barriers to understanding (Banister et al., 1994).

The interpretation of a narrative always involves subjectivity (Watts, 2006). Researchers should reflect on, re-examine, and analyse personal points of view and feelings as part of the process of the study of others (Parker, 2005). My interpretation may differ from another's, as it is based on my own assumptions and biases. While I try to be as open-minded and non-judgemental as possible, there are areas where I differed from my participants; there was knowledge they had that I did not have access to (Firth, 1998).

Interviewing these women really challenged my frame of reference in numerous ways. I was surprised to hear that some violent men respect the police protection orders their partners obtained. I thought angry, or aggressive and drunk men would not heed it. Thus, this was an example of how my thinking regarding abusive men is challenged. Tang (2002) states that race and class influence the interview, and can act as barriers to understanding. I found I needed to be aware of how my perceiving abusive men as "all bad" hampered our interviews. Once able to really listen to what the participants said, I found that the intimate relationship is so complex, with both partners interacting to make it what it is.

Qualitative narrative research addressed the differences and similarities between the researcher and the researched. In many regards, I had very little in common with these women. As a single, white, English speaking female student, I interviewed married coloured women, the majority of whom had not finished school and were working and who primarily spoke Afrikaans. Participant 12 mentioned this bridge of difference with her statement "Miss, the white people do not know how he carries on". There were cultural differences between the participants and myself, placing me as an outsider in many ways. It was so comforting to me when in one interview, after I apologised for not being able to articulate my question properly in Afrikaans, participant four responded "No, I am stressing just as much". In research, the interviewer is often placed in a position of power and superiority, this incident seemed to just neutralise those dynamics slightly (Banister et al., 1994). The woman was able to connect with me about feeling anxious during the interview by expressing her own anxiety about being interviewed.

Another point of similarity was our womanhood. Watts (2006) states that gender influences rapport – participants who are women tend to assume that women researchers are on their

side. One participant said "you are also a woman", implying that I should have the same understanding of being a wife and mother. These examples showed me how interactive qualitative research can be. Participant six said "It is very difficult, but I do not think you will want such a life where your mother and father (fight) the whole day, every weekend". She positioned herself as a mother and me as a child, and frequently warned me about marrying a man like her husband.

In summary, the relationship between the researcher and the participant is a complex one. Not only are there points of similarity and difference, but also differing perspectives and assumptions. Furthermore, the research involved talking about women's experiences of abuse, which may have caused emotional distress for the participants. For this reason, ethical issues were addressed prior to interviewing.

ETHICAL ISSUES

Studying physical abuse in an intimate relationship is a highly sensitive topic. The possible ramifications include, among others, a violent attack at the hands of the male partner, or the break up of a relationship. Talking to the participants about these things might be upsetting for them, cause them emotional pain or confusion. It is for this reason that research ethics are considered very seriously, because in our desire to learn more about these women's experiences, we do not want to jeopardize their safety.

Ensuring safety for the participants and the researcher is of paramount importance. Because there were people living in close proximity, household duties to be performed, children and family members within hearing distance, the interviews were only held in the home when the participant was alone. The car provided an ideal location because we were able to drive to a

quiet area, where women could talk freely. This ensured that confidentiality was upheld during the interview.

The issue of safety also refers to the participants' emotional safety. All women were given contact details of the researcher, counselling services, and a social worker, as well as information regarding women's shelters, should the women want to talk more or take steps to end their relationships. Women were told that they could stop the interviews at any time. Some women were obviously distressed when talking about their experiences, and during these times I asked whether they wanted to continue the interview or take a break. Women in this study expressed intense emotions regarding the abuse they endured and their lack of options. In order to ensure that women were not harmed by the interview procedure, interviews were always followed by a period of debriefing. In this period, the participants were asked how they are feeling, and if there is anything they would like to talk about. All women responded by saying they felt better for having a chance to talk, or they feel motivated to carry on with the relationship again[1].

Prior to the interview informed consent was negotiated with each participant, and permission for tape recording was obtained. This involved outlining the research study, why it was being done, the types of questions covered in the interview and what will be done with the interview material. The option to stop the interview or pause the tape recording at any time was provided. If the participant had no questions or objections to the research, she signed the form and then the interview commenced.

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[1]Participant 1 spoke of how she sometimes felt suicidal because of her husband's abusive behaviour. After the interview, debriefing occurred. I also contacted the woman subsequent to the interview and offered her access to mental health services at no cost to her.

Confidentiality was upheld by removing identifying details from the research report. Interview transcripts were coded to ensure that the participant's names are not made known to others. The names and contact details of the participants were kept in a file that can only be accessed by the researcher. To further protect the identities of the research participants, the name of the community in which they reside is not mentioned.

CHAPTER 4

NARRATIVES OF ABUSE

This chapter is an analysis of narratives of women abuse as presented by the participants in this study. Narrative analysis has no formal structure, but is guided by practical models. One looks at the relationship between the order of events as they occur and the order in which the narrator tells them (Lieblich et al., 1998). Another level of analysis is the textual coherence and structure of a narrative. This refers to the linguistic and narrative strategies used to construct a story (Chandler et al., 2004). Finally, narrative analysis explores the purpose of a narrative. This level considers the problem-solving strategies, and how the wider contexts of a story are influenced by, and influence, society and culture (Smith, 2003). In this analysis, there is emphasis on both content, textual coherence, and plot lines of women's stories.

The first section of this chapter looks at how women in abusive relationships name their experiences of abuse. This is followed by a description of the various types of abuse, and an analysis of how women experience the abuse. Women's construction of alcohol and abuse is the next section. Finally, we explore the acts of resistance and coping which women in this study engaged in, looking at the social and cultural context of the semi-rural, low-income community.

TYPES OF ABUSE

The demarcation of woman abuse is necessary in research because it enables study and understanding to occur. For this study, woman abuse is divided into physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse (Abrahams et al., 1999; Meeta, 1999). However, these boundaries between categories of abuse become blurred as one hears the narratives of woman

abuse. For example, women are beaten by their partners, but they are also belittled and kept in isolation from friends. In addition, many women did not have access to financial resources needed to maintain the home. Thus, physical abuse never occurs in isolation, but there is often evidence of other forms of abuse.

Through narrating their experiences, women reveal their perception of the abuse, and how they define it. The first section, naming the violence, looks at the survival strategies women engage in, and how by keeping silent or not naming the abuse, women remain oppressed in their relationships. The participants' narratives of abuse have been analysed, and the findings presented below.

Naming the violence

All the participants in this study provided examples of how their partners abused them verbally, physically, emotionally and economically. However, the majority did not label this behaviour abuse. Sullivan (1997) suggested that it is the exposure to social and legal services for abused women that often results in the naming of their experience as abuse, rather than the confiding in friends, family and religious institutions. It is possible that many women in this context remain immersed in the abuse because they do not have access to social services, or they are not aware of resources available to them. In a study by Profitt (2000), she found women could not articulate how they understood their experience of violation. They described the abuse as being part of the fabric of life, giving the impression they were immersed in oppression. Richie and Kanuha's study (1997) on battered women of colour in the United States indicated that there is a belief in communities of colour that domestic violence is not as serious as the other problems they face, such as poverty, racism and crime. A similar finding is seen in this study as women accepted violence as something that just happens on the

weekends or when a partner is drunk, rather than an act of oppression.

Keeping the abuse hidden and unnamed is part of what Ferraro (1997) calls survival strategies. Women in abusive relationships tend to accommodate the violence at first, and make sense of it internally (self-blame) before looking outward toward their partners. In this sample some of the women, who do not name their partner's behaviour as abusive, minimise the extent of the violence. Watts (2006) found that women often resisted naming certain behaviour as abusive. Although women in this study describe the behaviour as unwanted, it appears that naming it does no good because there is no observable solution. Therefore they choose to see the abuse as normal or natural, rather than explore what the abuse means. Participant three denies there was any "abuse" in her relationship; however she relates the following story "he once... bumped me. But it was an accident. It was raining; the power was out by us. And then he expected me to put the electricity on at the box outside. And the more I told him no I am not going to do it, you must do it. Then he bumped me, by accident, against my eye". The story reads as an incident of abuse, but she goes through great pains to ensure that her husband is not viewed as a violent man. Even her choice of words, "he bumped me", suggests something not serious, however she recalls having a blue eye from that incident. Her insistence that it was an accident suggests that it was not as innocent as that. We spoke about fear of her partner, she says "if he is a little drunk, then I think he could take a sharp thing or something, and then accidentally hit when I do not expect it or something. I am a little careful". The participant seems to be reluctant to admit that she is scared her husband will stab her with a knife or sharp instrument, a horrific thought, yet she explains the behaviour as being out of his control because he is drunk and that he would never do it on purpose. All these things work to minimise her husband's abusiveness, and maintains her image of him as a good husband.

Participant two also minimises her husband's degree of violence when she reconstructs the violence from being beaten to been given a little tap. She says "he beat me a lot. Not actually beat, just like a slap. Not even a hard slap. Kick.". Similarly, participant four explains how her husband never used guns or sharp objects when he beat her as if this would make his behaviour seem less barbaric and abusive. The above examples indicate how women construct the abuse in a manner that allows them to perceive their husbands in a somewhat positive light. Meeta (1999) found that naming an experience is very important because it helps an individual define her experience, and this often results in a particular course of action. Although to the reader these may be examples of domestic violence, women do not directly interpret them as such.

Many women may lack the vocabulary to describe the oppression, but they do feel the injustice of being abused and silenced in their relationship. It is often expressed through euphemisms, which allow the participant to hint at abuse and hardship in the relationship without having to actually name the experience. It may feel safer for them to do this. Proffit (2000) found that naming abuse often causes the individual to reassess the relationship and the experiences of violation. Participant 10 says "That time when he had... his problems, then he never spoke with me, but now he talks. He talks now that he does not have a problem". By calling his excessive drinking and subsequent violence towards her a "problem" the abuse remains unnamed. Even when she refers to his abuse, she calls them "fights", a neutral term which also does not acknowledge her husband's role in the violence (Bennett, 2000). However, because her husband has changed, and is no longer abusive, it is possible she does not want to recall the past events.

Most women identify abuse as being more than just physical. It can also be sexual, verbal, emotional and economic (Abrahams et al., 1999; Meeta, 1999). Whether the injustice is being silenced, or being beaten, or being controlled financially, or having to simply accept their partner's infidelity, the participants are aware that what is happening to them is wrong. The way in which women expressed this wrongfulness differs: Participant five says "It is just not right"; Participant eight "It is just wrong"; Participant nine also states "For me, that is not the way it should be". These are just a few examples of how women react to being controlled and physically abused, or having to obey their partners against their wishes. Many participants felt there was something wrong in what their husbands were doing, and how they were expected to accept all his behaviour, but did not always have the vocabulary to express it.

Physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, and economic abuse are defined in the following section. Also, women's narratives of these experiences are analysed in order to come to a deeper understanding of how abuse impacts women.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse refers to the attack of an abuser on another's body. Vetten (1999, as cited in Boonzaier, 2001, p. 62) defines physical abuse as "any deliberate physical assault on an individual's body that harms the recipient in any way". All these participants identified being physically assaulted by their partners at some point in their relationship. Of the 15 women, 10 are currently experiencing physical abuse. They report being pushed around, slapped, hit, kicked, stabbed and beaten with objects. The range of physical abuse differs among participants and, as previously stated, some of women downplay the abuse they experience or do not explicitly name it. Participant four says "he always just hit me. You see, he never really used firearms when he fought with me and so on, not sharp weapons". It is possible that

this participant knows of other women who have experienced more severe physical abuse, and thus when she compares herself to them she feels her experience was not so bad. Women who remain in abusive relationships tend to use cognitive strategies that enable them to see the relationship in a positive light (Herbert et al., 1991). Lempert (1996) found women veil their image of being a victim and their partner's image of being an abuser in an attempt to make the abuse invisible and less traumatic. Therefore, it is also possible that by downplaying the violence, she is able to maintain the relationship without feeling like a victim.

Some women describe their experience of being assaulted by their partners in graphic detail, while others preferred to refer to the violence in vague terms, such as "fought" and "went crazy". Participant 11 relates the following incident: "(her husband says) you are going to see what I'm going to do with you today. Today I am going to take your eye out – you are going to lose an eye today /.../ He had already finished beating me, I am full of blood, I am naked – I just have my bra and skirt on. But further I am naked, naked. He says put your head down on my lap. I beg for the last time, but then I put my head on his lap. And uh, as he brings the knife closer to my eye, the Lord intervened".

Participant 11 says that her husband had already finished beating her; she had endured the "normal" episode of abuse when he coldly informed her he would gouge out her eye. She describes her appearance, and her repetition of "I am naked, naked" implies the trauma of the abusive incident. Her body belongs to him; she has been stripped of both her clothes and dignity, and now her husband threatens to remove her eye. The power dynamics of the relationship are seen in her statement "I beg for the last time". She pleads with him to spare her eye, and it is his prerogative whether he responds to her pleas. When he does not respond, she lays her head on his lap for him to deform her. One sees a relationship where the husband

is perceived as holding complete power and she is constructed as the obedient, submissive wife, even when it means losing an eye.

Given their past experience of being abused, the threat of violence is very anxiety-provoking for these women. They described feeling fearful, panicky and shaky when anticipating their partners' return home. Participant 11 says "and while he is out... I am afraid the whole time because when he fights, he is violent. With the small body that I have, and those big hands, I am like a doll in his hands". She contrasts her body, small and powerless, against his big hands. Her imagery "like a doll in his hands" shows how this participant feels like she is not a real person when her husband beats her. By her feeling that her body does not belong to her, the reader can see the objectification of her body by her partner.

Women report the unpredictable nature of physical abuse, and their inability to prevent or handle the abuse, as being very difficult (Lempert, 1996; Petrik et al., 1994). Participant one reports feeling scared because her husband does not care what he has in his hand when he is violent, he will beat her with an axe, his fist, or a bottle. She is never sure what will happen when he is upset. Her fear of her partner impacts on her interactions with him because she is wary and careful to not provoke him in any way. Although the actual violent incident is unpredictable, there are times when abuse is expected. For example, participant one's husband is always violent when she talks to other men; and participant five's boyfriend beats her when she does not want to visit him. Because abuse is almost never a one-off event, women learn to recognise these warning signs and be wary of their partners. Thus, there is an acceptance within these women and the community that physical abuse is an inevitable and expected event within intimate relationships when certain "boundaries" are crossed. These invisible boundaries are learned through violent experiences, and in this manner men are able to control

and isolate women.

The following extract indicates how physical abuse not only occurs on a regular basis, but also escalates over time in a relationship. Participant five relates the following "The time I got to know him, he was not like this. Because I said to myself, from the first time you beat me, you just carried on. You got it right to continuously beat me". Many women experienced their relationship as starting out good, but their partners became violent and abusive. This decline in the relationship quality over time is consistent with research on abusive relationships (Painter, & Dutton, 1985; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995). While some of the participants expressed uncertainty about being in the relationship, or the desire to leave, all of the women were currently staying with their partners and in the relationship.

Physical abuse is the most common form of abuse reported by women, and we have looked at the extent to which it occurs in relationships. As previously stated, physical abuse frequently overlaps with other forms of abuse, namely sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuse.

Sexual abuse

Martin and Jacobs (2003) define sexual abuse as "any contact which abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates sexual integrity" (p. VI). It includes intimidation, sexual violence and pressure. Sexual abuse was mentioned by only a few of the participants; four women described their partners as forcing them into sex. Participant five says "In the evenings I have to go there to sleep with him, and it is not right. In the week then he does not have time, just weekends. Um, then I tell him I am not going to sleep with him. No, then he comes and pulls me there, then he says you just sleep here and don't argue". Other women spoke of not wanting to have sex with their partners and being accused of infidelity or being

assaulted because of their refusal. Viljoen (1987) states that abusive men use sex as a means to degrade and dominate within the intimate relationship. Thus, sexual abuse can occur as forced sex, or manipulation into sex.

Participant eight relates the following "if he wants to have me, then he just has me... and my relationship with him... and my relationship with him... he just forces me... he forces me to do a thing. I don't know. If I am in bed, he forces me. Especially if he is now drunk, then he is so wild. And I flee, but after a while I just give in. So... I give in so that he can carry on with his thing". She describes her husband as using force in every aspect of their relationship, but particularly with regards to sex. The language she uses ("he just has me") indicates her husband's power over the whole of her, not only her body. Sex is constructed as his thing. This is an example of the objectification of women as she is positioned as passive, involved in sex because sex is his right and her duty as his wife. Her resistance seems futile and she resorts to passivity, a survival strategy, so that her husband can "do his thing" with her. Participant four's husband responds violently when she refuses sex because of his infidelity. If she says she is unhappy with his affairs, he assaults her. Boonzaier (2005) notes the link between infidelity, woman abuse and male domination. Men tend to use force to ensure that their partners do not question or resist their sexual behaviour.

With regards to sex, some participants mention they refuse their partner's sexual advances. This could be seen as an act of resistance or a rejection of traditional feminine expectations. However, if a woman is disinclined to have sex, her partner generally assumes she is having an affair. Participant 15 says "there are times that he wants to go to sleep, but he is drunk /.../ there is that feeling that comes back again, I do not want to feel this way. That, that disgust... that is how I feel now". It appears that her disinterest in him sexually is related to his

behaviour while intoxicated. Similarly, the physical abuse participant four has had to endure causes her to not desire her partner anymore. The impact of physical, verbal or emotional abuse on a woman can reduce her ability to trust her partner and her desire for intimacy (Jacobs & Suleman, 1999).

Women express humiliation and shame at their partner's sexual conduct, both within and outside of the relationship. Participant six explains that her husband often touches other women when they come to visit or if he meets them outside. She says "and if that person comes and tells me about it in the morning, I am completely ashamed /.../ I feel so bad if people tell me that because I know we are husband and wife. We make love, we have a relationship, us. Understand? Husband and wife are like this, why does he want to do that with another woman if he has a wife? Then it means nothing. Not worth the effort". This participant questions herself and their relationship in this statement; why does he want another woman when he has me? Andrews and Brewin (1990) found that women in abusive relationships frequently blame themselves and find fault for their partner's behaviour within themselves. This participant is humiliated that women are not safe around her husband, and shamed that he wants other women when she is his wife. Participant four and 11 express similar shame and emotional pain at their partners' infidelity. Discussions about sex often bring to light men and women's expectations of sex. As participant six indicates, if her husband is having sex outside of the marriage their marriage means nothing. Her expectations of marriage include fidelity and having a relationship. She describes her partner as not sharing these marital expectations because he has sex with other women. Sex inside and outside the intimate relationship, and the emotional impact this has on women. Sexual abuse is broader than forced sex; it considers sex as a tool for gaining power, as well as expectations of sex and gender roles.

Verbal abuse

Verbal abuse includes verbal attacks, accusations of infidelity, threats of abuse, put-downs, and threats of divorce or abandonment (Meeta, 1999). It is often combined with other forms of abuse (Browne, 1997). For example, the men in this sample would first belittle their wives and then beat them, or talk in a derogatory manner about their sexual behaviour. Men's verbal abuse of women often includes constructions of women as bad wives, whores and unfaithful women. For example, participant six asked her husband if she could visit her family over the weekend; his response was "you must just take your things and fuck off, and stay there. Get yourself a husband and sleep with that man".

The effect of such verbal abuse is to degrade and lower women's self-esteem, and to undermine her confidence in their relationship (Boonzaier, 2001). Participant eight tells of how her husband degrades her by telling her he does not like her at all and wants another wife. Participant 13 says "He has times, when he gets so angry he will say get the fuck out of my house /.../ I have to hear everything. Now how do I feel? Where do I go if you throw me out? I cannot go and stay by my mother; I saw chance for a husband". The swearing, humiliation and threatening comments work to keep women in a place of subservience, fear and ashamed of their relationship.

Men often shout about the state of the home and food, and in doing so criticize their partner's ability to perform household tasks. Participant nine's husband always shouts about food not being ready on time, and participant 13's husband complains about the quality of her cooking. Since this community places value on women as home-makers, such complaints and criticisms are particularly hurtful to these women. Verbal abuse overlaps with emotional

abuse to a large degree. This is due to the humiliation and degradation women experience because of the force of their partners' words.

Emotional abuse

Many women experience abuse that falls outside of physical, sexual and verbal abuse (Coker, Smith, McKeown & King, 2000). For example, Browne (1997) states that emotional abuse can take many forms, such as intrusion, when men allow their partners no privacy; isolation; possessiveness; jealousy; and outbursts of anger. Jacobs and Suleman (1999) define emotional abuse as isolation, coercion, harassment, abuse of trust, threats and emotional withholding. Participants in this study acknowledge that they are frequently fearful of their partners, feel out of control and yet trapped in the relationship. Participant nine says her partner no longer beats her, but he lifts his hands as if he is going to, and she becomes afraid of him. Participant five feels trapped in her relationship because her boyfriend says he will never let her leave with their children. Thus, abuse can occur that breaks down one's freedom of expression, autonomy, and sense of well-being (Boonzaier, 2001). Women report that the emotional pain of abuse is often more devastating than physical abuse because it does not heal (Lempert, 1996). Emotional abuse is also linked to other forms of abuse in that being assaulted by one's partner has both a physical and emotional impact on a woman.

Many participants mentioned that their partners frequently spoke about them to family members and friends. This betrayal of trust is experienced as humiliating and degrading for women as they often hear via other community members what their partners talk about. Participant five's partner jokes to friends about their sexual relationship; participant six explains how people tell her how much her husband likes to portray her in a negative light to others. Participant one says "he always goes to his sister /.../ and then he always makes me

out to be the one in the wrong and so on. It hurts me so much, sometimes, the things that he says because I know he is wrong and I am right". She is ashamed because he portrays her as a bad wife to his family, and as a result she shies away from his family. In this way, the betrayal of trust is one form of emotional abuse which can lead to isolation.

Isolation is another form of emotional abuse experienced by women. Women report being forbidden to go out with friends, speak to other men, or even have people visit the house. Participant five states "And then maybe if friends chat with me, then he pulls me away there and tells me no, those people are not your type. You must just stay with me and do not argue. Stay with him now, I must just stay with him... that is all our relationship is about". Her partner is controlling to the point of deciding who is or is not her "type". She perceives the relationship to be constricting and that her role is to just stay at her partner's side. This perception of the woman's role is prevalent on a societal level, where women are often expected to keep close to their partners. Women are perceived to be the property of their partners (Abrahams et al., 1999).

Participant eight's husband views her as his possession and she reacts to his controlling behaviour in the following extract. "What are you going to do there? (Mimics his voice). I say, I am just going to sit here alone. Alone, alone, there in the corner. There is not even a friend that I can talk to". She is forced into isolation by her partner. The repetition of the words "alone, alone" emphasizes the isolation she feels. Participant 12 mentions that her husband is supported by the community, so when she got an interdict against him, people pressurised her to withdraw it. This community pressure hampers women from leaving the abusive relationship because they fear the subsequent rejection from their community. Other participants say that they do not speak to friends about their relationship because they will be

accused of causing the abuse, or being in the wrong. Thus, both men and members of the community work to keep women isolated from support and silent about the abuse.

Several participants spoke of how their partners attempted to manipulate them. This can be seen when participant 13's husband ignores her when he is angry and leaves the house in the morning without saying a word to her. She describes his behaviour as "He goes like a pig out the door". She experiences his disregard for her as hurtful, and considers him to have bad manners when she compares him to a pig. Many participants spoke of being kicked out of the house by their partners, and having nowhere to go. This manipulation causes women to not fight back because they are made aware of how they rely the resources provided by their partners. Women experience distress in these times, such as participant 11 and 12 who were left outside in the rain with all their children when their husbands kicked them out of the home. They talk of the stress and anxiety that comes when their partners have anger outbursts or become jealous.

In sum, emotional abuse is experienced by all women in these relationships, and can be seen specifically in their partners' disrespectful talking to others, enforcing isolation, and manipulation or coercion.

Economic abuse

Women in this sample repeatedly stated that they have desired to leave the relationship, or have left temporarily, but ultimately remain because they are economically dependent on their partners for their own and their children's survival. For example, participant eight stated that if there were no children to support she would have left her husband a long time ago. Participant 15 is waiting for a government house and then she plans to leave her husband. Other

participants stated that they had nowhere to go and no means to support their children, thus the only option is to stay in the relationship. This finding has been found in numerous studies regarding woman abuse (Adato, Carter & May, 2006; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Logan, Walker, Cole, Ratliff, & Leukefeld, 2003; Matthews & Abrahams, 2001; McCloskey, 1996; Mwamwenda, 1999; Singh, 2003; Van Schalkwyk, 2006). Economic abuse in this study is defined by Vetten (1999, as cited in Boonzaier, 2001, p. 70) as "any coercive act or limitation placed on an individual that has adverse economic implications on the woman and/or her dependents". Martin and Jacobs (2003) provide examples such as not paying household necessities, giving away property, or withholding money.

The participants in this study come from a low-income community, and economic resources are often insufficient. Participant six says "I am not going to divorce my husband because he is good for me. It is just the way he mistreats me". His "being good" for her refers to his financial provision. She claims to have a "luxury life" and that in a divorce she would be the one to lose out. Economic control is pivotal in their relationship because it forces her to minimise the abuse so that the staying is constructed as a reasonable option (Meeta, 1999).

Members of this community often help each other financially, and it is acceptable to ask one's neighbour for food or necessities on occasion. However, abusers thwart this "help each other out" principle by forbidding their partners to give to others. Participant six says "If someone asks for a packet, a bit of sugar, then I have to – I want to help you but I am scared. Because if I give it to you, then he will see that I give it and as soon as you are out that door he will begin again with his nonsense". This isolates her further from possible support systems which mean her neighbours are unlikely to reciprocate when she may need assistance.

Women become trapped by their partners in the relationship because men frequently hold economic power. Protection orders offer women a chance at protection or escape from the abuse, however many participants did not use their protection orders against their partner during a violent episode because they were afraid that if the men go to jail there would be no one to provide financially for the family. Participant one had to withdraw her court case because if her husband was in jail the farmer would make her leave their house. Participant four says "Yes, I got an interdict against him. But I almost never used it because I was scared he would go to jail again, and who would work for my children? So, I never used it against him, but I did go and fetch the thing". Economic security is more of a priority for these women than their own physical protection, and they are forced to decide between the two options. In this way disempowerment is apparent because the context in which they live (on the farm with the farm owner) hampers their ability to seek protection from the abuse.

Participant 12 is tearful as she weighs up her options, "I thought I should rather just leave... but I don't know where. There is no place for me and my children /.../ There is not even money for clothes or food... Then every time I have to ask this neighbour next to me, for something for my children and I (crying). Miss, and he does not want me to go and work on the farm /.../ He says that he took me as a wife who stays by the house. Who has to clean the house and do the washing and everything". This woman raises several distressing issues that are also found in other stories. Her husband's provision of the house makes staying in the relationship worthwhile. But his economic control, excessive drinking and withholding of money causes her heartache. Many women were given insufficient money to buy food for the family, and were verbally abused or beaten if they did not provide meals. If women are unable to provide, they are accused of not handling the money properly or wasting. Some women had to beg others for food, or face abuse at home. Thus, economic abuse is often coupled with

other forms of abuse.

From the above extract, it is clear that economic abuse occurs when abusers prevent their partners from earning their own income, thus making them more dependent and trapped in the relationship (Boonzaier, 2001). By forbidding women to work, and then using the house as a bargaining tool, abusers enforce their rules onto the relationship. For example, participant six is forbidden to have friends over because it is her husband's house. Similarly, participant 13 says "He has times, when he is so angry then he says fuck out of my house /.../ Where do I go to if you chase me out? I cannot go to my mother". Beyond the verbal abuse, and emotional degradation this participant experiences, she also describes her economic dependence on her partner and how he uses her dependence to assert power.

Economic abuse is frequently linked to physical abuse. Communication regarding money often results in violence. Although some of the participants worked, their partners responded aggressively when they were asked to contribute to the household expenses. Personal economic empowerment resulted in men withdrawing financial support from the family. This finding is supported by other studies (Boonzaier, 2005; Kaukinen, 2004; Simpson & Kraak, 1998). Participant 15 expresses frustration that her husband regards his income as "his" but expects her salary to provide for the household. Participant five's partner beats her if she asks for financial assistance for their children. Even though she carries the bulk of the financial responsibility, he uses violence to ensure that she does not ask for help. Participant one's opening statement is "there is always fighting in the relationship and the fighting is usually about money, because he always wants money for... because he uses it for drugs and so on, it is what makes me very unhappy". For this participant, the drugs and his violent demand of money for drugs is the source of her unhappiness. De Olarte and Llosa (1999) reveal how the

lack of economic resources coupled with alcohol or drug dependence is an aggravating factor for abuse.

Women who had some form of economic independence could demonstrate resistance towards their partner's controlling behaviour. Participant 15 says "sometimes I say just take your money. I don't work for stones. Take your money. I don't care". Participant 10's relationship with her husband has completely changed since he stopped working due to illness and she became the breadwinner. She describes with delight how he is no longer violent and when she comes from work he has made supper and gone grocery shopping. She explains "He used to work on the farm (for the house). But now... it is him who works for me! (laughs). Yes, he now works for me!" It is possible that once her husband was no longer in a position of economic control he could no longer use finances as a site of domination. Through her economic independence, she has gained power in the relationship, and there appears to be a shift in roles. Her husband "works for" her by going shopping and making food. These are traditional feminine behaviours which he has taken over since she became the breadwinner. This supports the feminist goal that shifts in power are possible and equality is achievable within an intimate relationship.

However, economic independence can be dangerous in an abusive relationship. Abusive men value keeping their partners close to them and under their control, thus having a job threatens this. Participant five's partner beats her so extensively over weekends that she often cannot go to work on Mondays. "Monday I cannot even go to work because my eye is beaten closed. It is not nice to stand in front of the white people... with such a blue face". She was ashamed to face co-workers and the boss with her bruised face. The specific reference to the "white people" is significant. There is little research into how woman abuse is complicated by racism

and racial barriers. Richie and Kanuha (1997) found women of colour do not report domestic violence because they fear the stereotype placed on them by others. Similarly, this participant does not to be represented as a woman beaten by her husband, when she stands in front of her white boss.

It has been shown that economic control is perceived as one of the major contributors to why women remain in abusive relationships. Women who have no source of income rely on their partners for their own and their children's survival, thus making them vulnerable to economic abuse. There are various ways in which economic abuse is manifested in an intimate relationship, and women often expressed frustration at having to accept unjust situations because they need their partner's income. The presence of alcohol and drugs impacts the relationship as men often become more demanding of their partners and less willing to contribute financially to the household. However, some women show resistance to their partner's economic control and abuse.

This section has looked at woman abuse as a whole, as well as the different types of abuse. Physical abuse is the most commonly reported because the damage is visible. However verbal, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse in the participants' intimate relationships have been shown to be equally prevalent and damaging. Women often experience intense emotions and reactions to this abuse, although they are not always able to verbalise or show it.

REACTION TO THE ABUSE

Women spoke of the impact their partners' abusive behaviour on them. Some of the reactions manifest physically, such as high blood pressure, and hair loss. Other reactions occur psychologically. Participant 11 recalls feeling as if she was going crazy because she kept

forgetting things, and participant 15 experiences depression. Both participant two and 12 struggle with sleep patterns. Fincham (2003) found that women in abusive relationships frequently struggle with depression, dysphoria, and a change in eating patterns, alcoholism and poor health.

When speaking about the abuse, women express some intense emotional reactions towards their partner because of the abuse. Some women describe wanting to kill their husbands, and others relate incidents where they actually fought back. Participant one says "My relationship is not on a good level with him and it makes me unhappy. It drives me to think of murder and so now sometimes I want to kill him. I want to put something in his food to kill him because it makes me unhappy. But then I think again, what will become of my children? And what will happen to me?"

Participant one is not alone in admitting a desire to kill her husband in order to end the abuse and hurt. Participant 12's husband started drinking the night before the interview after a period of sobriety. He kicked her out the house for the entire night, after beating her. She relates the following: "last night when he came to me, I became worried /.../ I looked at the knife... it seemed best for me to take the knife and stab him... But then I thought again and let my hand drop. Because if I kill that man, where would my children go while I sit in jail". She comes close to stabbing her husband, because of fear and realisation that his drinking means a whole bout of violence and financial hardship. Clements and colleagues (2004) found that one's perceived control over future abuse is a deciding factor in depression. This participant thought the best thing would be to take control and stab her husband. But thinking of the consequences prevented her following through with it. While women may act submissively towards their partners and hide all emotions as a protective measure, it is seen that they do

experience a reaction to the abuse.

Three women spoke of reacting to their partner's abuse physically, by fighting back. Participant eight threw hot oil on her husband because he trapped her in the kitchen during one of his drunken rages. Participant two stabbed her husband with a bottle, and participant six burnt her husband. This supports findings that when women "abuse" men, it is usually a protective measure because there is no option of escape or viable options (Jacobs & Suleman, 1999; Petrik et al., 1994). All these women expressed regret and feelings of guilt for hurting their partners regardless of the abuse they have endured. Taking on blame for the relationship is a common behaviour pattern among abused women (Nabi & Horner, 2001). It is possible that woman abuse impacts self-esteem to the extent that women consider taking their own lives. Participant one told of her desire to commit suicide. She says "I feel I just want to throw myself under a car or something (teary). Just felt that I do not want to live anymore because why must I work through such things..." What stops her is the thought of her children living without her. Thus, the continual abuse of these women has severe consequences on their emotions, desire for life and their relationships.[2]

ALCOHOL AND ABUSE

All the participants in this study constructed alcohol as being the cause of their partner's abusive behaviour. The literature on alcohol and abuse (see Chapter Two) reveals that there are contradictory perspectives regarding the role of alcohol in abuse. Bennet (1995) states that there are three ways in which substance abuse influences domestic violence. It disinhibits normal sanctions against violence, thus being intoxicated results in men behaving in a way they would not normally condone. Secondly, substance abuse produces changes in thinking.

[2] This woman's thoughts of suicide were acknowledged, and spoken about in the debriefing session. She was also referred to a mental health service for counselling, and given information regarding shelters for abused women.

In this way, alcohol is a cognitive disrupter that may cause abusers to be more critical or negative in assessing a social situation. Finally, alcohol and other substances increase the likelihood of an aggressive response, thus increasing the risk of abuse. In contrast, Holly (2001) found that the attitudes and beliefs that it is acceptable to control one's partner is a more important and clear predictor of domestic violence than alcohol, age or class. This section looks at South Africa's particular history regarding the use of alcohol among farm labourers, and the context in which the participants live. Furthermore, women's narratives on alcohol and abuse reveal how gender is constructed within these relationships. Finally we explore the culture of drinking and abuse which permeates many low-income, semi-rural communities.

Prior to 1961, farm labourers in South Africa were given alcohol as a benefit of employment. This was named the 'dop system', and workers were made to be dependent on the farm owners for both housing and alcohol, in an attempt to keep them compliant. In 1961 the Liquor Act (1928) outlawed payment with alcohol as part of wages, and the 'dop system' officially became illegal. However, Te Water et al. (1998) conducted a farm survey in the Stellenbosch area and found that almost 10% of farms still use the 'dop system'. The system is still supported today when farm owners give wine to the workers in addition to their pay. Alternatively, labourers are given the opportunity to take money instead of alcohol. Furthermore, the remnants of the 'dop system' can currently be seen when farm owners offer wine to workers on credit, and deduct the owed amount from their weekly wages. London (1999a) found that on farms which stopped endorsing the system without implementing a rehabilitation program, workers tended to use their salaries for alcohol, thus furthering the problem of poverty (London, 2000). Participant one says "Then I say that I don't have money. But then he goes, and borrows money just to get the stuff (drugs)". However in this sample of

women, there is evidence that some farm owners are actively trying to reduce the level of alcoholism among workers. Participant six explained how the farm owner helped her get her husband to a rehabilitation centre, and kept his job for when he returned to the farm. Unfortunately, this intervention was not permanent as her husband started drinking again after three months.

The 'dop system' has created a norm of alcohol abuse in farming communities. London (2000) refers to an "alcohol culture" and states that the average alcohol consumption on weekends on farms in the Western Cape is 750ml of wine per person. Women in this study all talk about their own or their partner's drinking habits and it appears that drinking is part of their daily lives. Women in this study describe weekends as extended drinking periods. Participant 13 states "But sometimes weekends are a bitter experience. Especially when there is money. Like this weekend, they are getting paid". When there is accessibility to alcohol, drinking can occur on a more daily basis. The market for alcohol and drugs is such that shebeens (a place where alcohol can be bought and drunk) and liquor stores are numerous in these communities.

In the context of farm workers, women who find themselves in violent relationships are disempowered in a number of ways. Women themselves are often not employed on the farm but live on the farm by virtue of the fact that their husbands are employed there. As a result, women have to rely on their violent partners for a source of accommodation (and for economic resources), which makes leaving the abusive relationship more difficult. Feminists regard woman abuse as an example of social practice within society as a whole. Because violence is generally deemed acceptable in society, woman abuse could be understood as an extension of the normative social system. Holly (2001) states that woman abuse routinely

occurs in a culture that sends the message men are in control of women, and where value is placed on men's ability to dominate their wives.

Gender construction

Gender is constructed in a specific way within this community. Boonzaier (2005) refers to the stereotypical constructions of gender that place men in a position of authority. Masculine stereotypes empower men, making them strong and capable, while feminine stereotypes make women appear vulnerable and powerless. Women complain that husbands repeatedly position alcohol and friends as being more important than them or the family. Participant eight says "He just buys things for himself. Beer before me." This is significant because for this participant, her position as his wife is not a respected position. The whole system of male dominance needs to be acknowledged if one is to understand violence against women (Mullender, 1996). Feminists would regard this as an example of the belief that women in patriarchal societies are considered inferior to men, and not worthy of equal treatment (Mackinnon, 2006; Mwamwenda, 1999). Participant four says "When he is drunk, then he comes in the house to sleep and then I am not allowed to talk. And then he gets so angry, and then he fights with me... in front of the children. And then he had affairs – call it loose women that he slept with. And now I was not happy about that. If I spoke about it, then fight." Although she constructs her husband's behaviour as being a result of his drinking, his violent reaction to her challenge implies a deep-seated perception of women as possessions or commodities.

Some women actively resisted traditional forms of gender construction. Women who had some form of economic independence demonstrated a resistance towards their partners' controlling behaviour. Participant 15 is able to reject her partner's attempts to curtail her

freedom because she has money of her own. Many abused women are not in this position, and rely completely on their partner's financial support.

A culture of drinking and abuse

Women reported the weekends as particularly stressful because the majority of abuse occurred then. Typically, men would be unresponsive throughout the week and then be verbally and physically abusive when they were intoxicated on the weekends. Lawrence's (1984) study on marital violence in Mitchell's Plain (another low-income, urban area in the Western Cape) revealed similar findings. Beatings occurred at least once a week and predominantly over weekends. Participant one described how her husband would be displeased about something during the week, but that he would always suppress it until the weekend, and then physically attack her while venting his anger.

Why do women construct a link between violence and alcohol? Participant 11 recalls "and that night, when he was drunk with the wine, and he hits and he scolds /.../ Now he says to me 'you see this bottle, when I have finished drinking this bottle, and its finished and empty, then I am going to break this bottle on your head. And as it breaks, then I am going to stab you full of holes'". Making external attributions for the abuse in their relationship is a common coping strategy for abused women (POWA, 2007). It enables them to still perceive their partners as good and loving. This serves to keep women in the relationship because they believe their partners are not wholly responsible for their actions.

Constructing the alcohol as the 'cause' of their partners' behaviour serves a very particular function. The cause of the violence is understood to be external to the individual – thus the man is constructed as not inherently violent. Further to this, women are also able to invest in

constructing their partners with a dual identity – both good and bad. Men are constructed as bad/violent when under the influence of alcohol or drugs and good/non-violent when sober. This is most visible when women speak of their partners' behaviour over the weekend.

For example, participant nine found weekends especially difficult because she considered her husband, and their relationship, to be wonderful during the week. She tells of what a pleasure it is to be married to him during the week, but when the weekend comes there is alcohol involved and this means fighting. She juxtaposes this "good" husband she experiences during the week against the "bad" husband, who emerges over the weekend. Boonzaier (2001) explains that this splitting of good and bad behaviour in one's abusive partner enables women to cope with the violence in the relationship. The perception that men's abuse in the relationship does not occur continuously but is rather an exception to their normal behaviour is in line with Eisikovits and Buchbinder's (1999) findings too. They claim that violence is perceived by abused women as being out of character and does not define men. In this way, it becomes tolerable and socially acceptable to live with a man who 'sometimes' becomes violent, but who, for the most part, is 'actually' a 'good person'. Women describe the abusive intimate relationship as positive and loving outside of the abuse (Painter & Dutton, 1985). In this way, women are able to see a violent episode as not the norm.

Women describe a complete change in their partners' behaviour during the weekend. Participant six says "Ooh, weekends he is almost like a monster /.../ when I get home, he sits there, ready and waiting for me". By specifying her husband is almost a monster on the weekends, the participant implies that during the week he is the opposite. Also, she uses the word "almost", as if she did not want to completely portray her husband as bad or monster-like, similar to what has been found by Boonzaier (2001). Furthermore, his actions are

described as predatory "He sits and waits for me". The construction of the link between violence and alcohol also makes women's positions as victims of such violence, more socially acceptable. It becomes understandable to the 'outsider' why women stay in such abusive relationships because their partners are also 'good' men. In this way women are able to shift the discourse away from being one of blame placed on the woman who stays with her partner. They construct a more socially accepted discourse of a relationship that has some problems (like all others) but does not necessarily warrant ending. Issues of leaving abusive relationships are further compounded by the disempowered and impoverished positions in which women find themselves.

For the most part, participants describe the weekend's activities vaguely, but one gets the impression weekends are dreaded by these women because of alcohol abuse. Participant 13 describes weekends as a "bitter experience; participant six says "It is weekend again. We (her and her children) will have to make plans; just want to get away"; participant 8 says "I do not even want weekends. I wish that weekends could just be Mondays. Because then it is this (violence) again". Similarly, participant four chooses to stay with other family on the weekend so she is not at home to be beaten when he comes back from the shebeen.

It is important to distinguish between the link between abuse, weekends and intoxication. Women refer to the weekends being particularly bad for them. However, by talking about what actually occurs over the weekends it becomes clear that it is their partners' intoxication and subsequent violence which is traumatic, not simply the weekend times. In this community the weekend is so frequently associated with drinking and abuse, the three become synonymous to the participants. This was made clear by participants 11 and 12. Participant 11 explains that her partner used to always get drunk on the weekend but when they moved to a

farm where the liquor store was nearby, her husband became intoxicated and abusive every evening. Since their partners had started drinking every day and the fear of violence over weekends became a constant fear for them.

The belief that alcohol is the cause of domestic abuse is strengthened by the male partner's behaviour. There are many instances of men drinking and being abusive, and then abstaining from alcohol for a certain time period and then starting both the drinking and the violence again. Many studies, such as those done by Padayachee and colleagues (2003), indicate that abused women believe alcohol is the cause of all problems because they portray their partners as perfect until they are intoxicated. For example, participant 13 says "every thing is fine for a long time. Just like that, something happens suddenly and things are bad. One time good, another time bad". Participant six's husband was sober for three months, and began after a night out with his friends; Participant 11's husband stopped drinking for a year and was not abusive in that time, started again for a while, and has now been sober for two years; Participant 12's husband had been sober for a couple of months, but had started drinking again the night before our interview. Participant four states that in previous years, her husband did not drink or abuse her for the entire year, but on days like Christmas and Easter, he got drunk and became a completely different person. Later in the interview, she repeats "He leaves (the alcohol) for a while, and then in between he decides he is going to start drinking again". Thus, a cyclical pattern of behaviour seems to occur where men abstain from alcohol and are not physically abusive, however they start drinking and this followed by abuse towards their wives.

The contrast between drunken behaviour and sober behaviour is clearly established in the following examples. Participant eight describes "Ooh, he was so horrible to me. He fought, he

gave me, I spent three months in the hospital /.../ Now that he doesn't drink, it looks it seems that things have gotten better... ". Participant 11 found that when her husband was sober, he did not allow bad language to be spoken in the house. But when he was intoxicated, those ruled did not apply and he swore and was very derogatory towards his wife. In this, one can see that the rules of the home no longer apply when the husband is intoxicated. Thus, if abuse is frowned upon in the home, being under the influence of alcohol vetoes that value.

Only participants eight and 13 acknowledged violence and abuse also occurs when their partners had not been drinking. Firstly, participant 8 states "I told him, you cannot carry on this way. You are not even drinking! Then you can drink rather than lifting your hands to me. And be relaxed...". Thus, it becomes clear that while her husband becomes extremely violent when he is intoxicated, the abuse does not disappear when he is sober. She expresses outrage that he should behave violently while sober because that is not the norm. It is possible that she is confronted with the challenging idea that alcohol may not be the sole reason for her partner's abuse.

Women construct sobriety as improving the quality of their relationships. Participant two repeatedly states how since they stopped drinking there is money for food, they talk and laugh more, and their children are happy. Participant 10 says "in those days he fought so much and went mad. Then I would have to run. But now I can say thank you (to God) that he is no longer that person". Participant 14 also views the sober life in a positive manner, saying "It is peaceful for me, we are free from (the alcohol) and I will never walk that road again. Because when I wake up in the morning, I stand up with a happy heart. You are healthy, and things are working well in your house. There is no trouble in your house. But if you are drunk, then there are all these problems in your house".

In summary, the link between intoxication and domestic violence is complex and not well-understood. However, for women in this community the connection is expressed as follows – their partners are violent when drunk, bearable (either pleasant or withdrawn) when sober, and wonderful when abstaining from alcohol. I have exposed the extent to which "drunken abuse" is deemed acceptable within this community. Every participant (with the exception of one) had experienced violence and had placed the cause as being alcohol. Thus, as feminism suggests, there needs to be a shift in consciousness for women to realise that the abuse is embedded in patriarchal relations of gendered power. However in attempting to understand women's narratives it is clear that constructing the alcohol as the 'cause' of their partners' behaviour, serves very particular functions. It gives them hope that one day their partners will stop drinking and become "good" again. It enables them to love their partners despite the abuse because they are not seen as responsible for their actions while intoxicated. It also allows abused women to remain in the relationship because they, and society, believe the men are essentially good men. The role of social context also influences women's decision to remain in the relationship. This is because impoverished conditions and disempowerment hamper attempts to leave the abusive relationship.

ACTS OF RESISTANCE AND COPING IN THE RELATIONSHIP

Feminists acknowledge that power is not equally distributed in an abusive relationship, and this frequently limits the options women have in responding to their partner's abuse. Keeping silent, walking away, and being compliant are some examples of how women cope in abusive relationships. This section looks at the strategies women employ to survive the abuse and remain in the relationship. Women may not be equals in abusive intimate relationships, but there are occasions when they assert themselves. These are termed acts of resistance, and refer

to the ways in which women in this study resisted the traditional roles placed on them by the community. Fighting back and leaving the relationship are the two acts of resistance explored in this chapter. Finally, social and legal intervention featured throughout the women's narratives of violence. Police, family and friends, and religion are the three domains which either empowered or disempowered women in confronting the abuse.

Avoidance strategies

Although women remain in these relationships, they employ coping mechanisms to handle the abuse. The avoidance strategies are generally aimed at controlling the risks of abuse, and minimising the potential damage (Lempert, 1996). Some women found that keeping silent during their partner's tirade helped to reduce the risk or extent of violence, others walked away from the situation until their partners had become sober or calmed down. Participants also mention complying to their partner's demands because to do anything else would escalate the abuse.

Keeping silent

To a large degree, coping in an abusive relationship means that women have to resist challenging their partners in any way. Participants repeatedly spoke of having to keep silent when their partners were angry in order to prevent escalation from a verbal attack to a physical one. This lesson is learned from previous experiences as participant 13 explains "I have to talk back. And he does not want that! If I talk back or just say something back then he often gives me one hell of a beating. I decided the other day that it is better if I just keep my mouth shut. Because if I keep quiet, it seems that he will also keep quiet and not answer". Although it goes against her nature, this participant decides that it is safer for her to not talk back to her partner. Participant eight talks about "surviving" her husband's rages. The word

survival is symbolic here because she is referring to physical survival as well as the self-control needed to not react to his abuse. Her silence and submission ensures her survival, yet the reader experiences her frustration at having to remain silent when she is being blamed and punished for something that is not her fault.

Women often take on the responsibility for preventing an abusive episode. Lempert (1994) also found that women are active participants in the interactions with their partners, although they may not have equal opportunity. Participant 13 realises that if she speaks, the violence escalates. Similarly, participant six says "As he suppresses it, I also suppress it because we can't talk to each other about it (the abuse). That is why I always feel, I feel so happy that I can talk to you. Understand? I can empty my heart. Just to make place for this weekend". The emotional strain of silence is seen in this participant's words. They do not talk about the abuse, and to her the unsaid words, and the memories of abuse, remain in her. They accumulate, and she refers to it as a "bitter, sour growth" her heart. This self-control they exercise is often to their own detriment as she also mentions that if she does not stay in control of her feelings, she often faints.

Sharing feelings and views may anger one's partners and lead to abuse. The result is that women either do not talk to their partners, or if they do, it is with trepidation and careful consideration of what they say. Participant 11 says "I have to be very careful about how I talk to him and what I say to him. He is a very fragile, sensitive person. Yes, men are so, you can tell them – they can tell you anything and it doesn't matter if you get angry or if you don't like it, but just say something to them". Having experienced her partner's aggressive reaction to being criticised or spoken to inappropriately, she learns that it is better to watch what she says and how she says it. It is interesting how she portrays her husband as being "fragile" and

"sensitive" after having described his brutal beatings. By constructing her husband in un-masculine terms, as being weak and fragile, and by constructing herself as the strong one in the relationship, she allows herself to feel responsible for her husband and his behaviour. This works to keep her in control of her own emotions at all times, and remaining in the relationship.

Participant one wants to talk to her husband about spending more time together and building on their relationship but has this internal dilemma. She says "sometimes then I want to say it and sometimes I rather keep it to myself /.../ because it is so difficult, I don't know what his reaction will be. What should I expect from him and so on". She lives in terms of her husband – thinks about his reaction, his thoughts, and his potential anger before talking about her needs. In effect, she is placed in an inferior position to her partner, and keeps herself there because it is safer than risking abuse. Keeping silent is one of several coping strategies women in this sample identify. Although this strategy does not always prevent abuse, many women find the "abusive episode" is often shortened when they do not respond or react to their partner's abuse.

Walking away

Due to women's lack of power and fear of abuse, resistance in abusive relationships does not always involve direct confrontation (Meeta, 1999). Women in this study mentioned walking or running away from the partners as an indirect way in which to avert an attack. This tactic was dependent on one's surroundings, as participants who had no family nearby or who were isolated on the farm were not able to elude their partners. Also, walking away from one's partner does not necessarily remove the threat of violence. Participant six says "walking away does not help for me. I have often walked out of his way /.../ when I came back, it is just the

same there".

However, walking away from certain situations is the best option for some participants. Participant four learned that being around when his friends came over was dangerous as he became jealous and violent. Participant eight describes the following occurrence "If me and you, we argue. Then he comes from there and he hits me. He does not ask what is going on here, he comes and hits me even though it has nothing to do with me. So that's it. If I see that he is coming, then I rather just leave things". In many cultures, men are taught to control their wives and "keep them in line". It is possible that this is the case in this extract, as the participant decides it is better to just walk away than be abused by her husband.

For participant 11, her husband places the responsibility for being safe in her hands when he tells her to rather run away when he is drunk and violent. She says "he tells me when he is sober, he says that when he fights with me, then he does not see me. Or he sees me to be his first child's mother who made him so angry. That's how he sees me. Then he cannot stop, then it is better that I flee... because he cannot stop. He can also not hear when I scream". Here, one can see some of the explanations of abuse that men construct. He constructs the violence as being beyond his control and is unable to hear her or stop himself. In doing so, participant 11's husband does not take responsibility for his actions, but forces her to stay in control and alert. Thus to him, if he hurts her it is not his fault because he warned her to run away. This participant uses her partner's explanation to reinforce her belief that he is actually a good man who would never hurt her if he was in control of himself.

Walking away from the conflict situation does require women to think of the consequences of staying, and to constantly be aware of their partner's aggression levels. Several participants

state that although walking away is difficult because they also want to fight back, or have their say, it is the safest option for them in a conflict situation.

Compliance

The final avoidance strategy women in this sample employ is compliance. Compliance to one's abusive partner is often an act of survival for these women. Lempert (1994) states that a common reaction in an abusive situation is for women to try to appease and please their partners. Knowing that overt resistance often leads to violence and abuse, women resort to submitting and being obedient when their partners are demanding. Participants detail how they give into their partners demands simply because it is better than the alternative of a fight. Compliance is a conscious decision made to dissolve an argument, as described by participant one and participant 11. Other participants are less content about having to comply. Participant 12 is tearful as she says "And then I have to just give the money to him because he is drunk on Friday evenings. There is not even money for clothes or food". Participant four mentions "then he talks and often he becomes angry. Then I just have to take the blame and say I am sorry. I was wrong there. Then after that, things come right again".

Compliance is not necessarily voluntary and men use violence to force women into submission, as participant eight describes "I never smoked, but we used to drink together. And that made it that we were – that he was like that. Or if I don't drink, then he hits me. I must drink, so...". Her partner expects her to obey him, and she has found first hand that to resist him results in violence. Thus, compliance is often forced upon women as a means of survival.

In summary, there are several strategies women engage in to avoid spousal abuse, namely

keeping silent, walking away and complying with their partner's wishes. These strategies are also about ways of communication in the relationship. They may reduce the frequency of abuse, yet they result in women suppressing their own thoughts and desires, placing themselves as subservient to their partners. On the other hand, some women resist this attitude and confront or challenge their partner's dominance. This can be seen as acts of resistance.

Acts of resistance

Coping is only one aspect of the relationship; participants also mention acts of resistance. These are actions in which they take charge of their situation in an attempt to bring balance to the relationship. These acts included fighting back or challenging one's partner, and leaving the relationship. There are many examples of how women resist their partners' dominating behaviour and abuse. Accounts of resistance varied a great deal between participants. Frieze and McHugh (1992) state that women are often portrayed as helpless or passive, but in their study it was clear that women do actively attempt to influence their partners and change the relationship. They call it "pockets of resistance". Women reported resisting their partners using physical force, by taking some other form of action, by verbally challenging their partners, or leaving the relationship.

Fighting back

Physical resistance is used, both as a means of self-defence and as a means of resisting their partner. There is a view that because women are also violent in intimate relationships, they need to share the blame with regards to abuse. However, as these extracts indicate, women's violence occurs in response to their partners' aggression and as a means for protecting the self. The function of violence differs from men to women. Jacobson and colleagues (1994) state that men use violence to control, subjugate and intimidate. It is instrumental in nature

(Frieze & McHugh, 1992). For women, violence is a form of self-defence and used out of fear. Resistance is typically survival-based, rather than an attempt to change the dynamics of the relationship (Meeta, 1999; O' Neill, 1998). Participant eight recalls "He came home very drunk from work, and shouted, shouted, shouted, shouted, he didn't even see where I was! But the more he shouts, the more he comes towards me; there is not another way out. He comes to the stove, and I shoot the pan of fish to his head". Her fear of being attacked is legitimate, and her reaction was one of self-defence. She also constructs her partner as being out of control, thus she has no other alternative but to throw the pan at him.

Other participants also mention being violent towards their partners as a result of their previous experiences of domestic violence. Participant two says "he once stabbed me with a broken bottle. Just a small one, two stitches. And from then on I thought when I was sober then he could really hurt me... I will hurt him first. And I just watch for those hands, those hands that hit like that". Her wording "those hands", as opposed to "his hands" can be interpreted as her way of dissociating the violence from her partner; a splitting of the good and bad (Boonzaier, 2001). This is supplemented by the downplaying or minimising of her husbands' violence. She regards the single stabbing incident as an indication that her husband was not very violent. However, her resistance is interesting because it takes a proactive form. Rather than wait for her partner to hurt her again, she will hurt him first. Her violence towards him is not an instinctual fearful reaction, but a decision to take control of the situation. However, when she does recall an incident where she stabbed him, she expresses much regret and anguish about it.

This regret about hurting one's partner is common among participants who used physical resistance. Participant six admits to burning her husband on one occasion because he had hurt

her so much and that she felt so guilty about doing it. She also says "People blame me. I hurt him, and I regret it quite a bit. But as the wine begins, he shouts and there is no one else there". She is isolated and, as is consistent with literature, community members often place blame on women for any violence in the home regardless of the male partner's role.

Taking action within the relationship refers to the ways, other than physical resistance, in which women resist being dominated by their partners. Resistance is about opposing dominant practices and can be seen in daily activities (Proffit, 2000). For example, by not getting permission from her husband first to do something, participant four is able to maintain some of her autonomy in the relationship, despite the risk of abuse. She says "very often then I do something, uh, then I know he will not like it, but then it is right for me... and then I do it first and afterwards I tell him".

Other examples of taking action are seen amongst the women in this sample. Participant five refuses to stop her contraception despite her boyfriend's demands for a baby. Participant 15 actively protects her son by refusing to let her husband talk to him while intoxicated. Participant 13 responds to her husband's kicking her out the house by saying "Then I say kick me out. I will go to the law with you". Thus, acts of resistance are not confined to physically fighting back in the relationship.

Verbal resistance is relatively common among women, and is very situation specific. Participant five confronts her husband about using her just for sex; participant six challenges her husband when he threatens to divorce her. Participant eight responds to her husband's threats with humour: "He came one day and said he is going to take another wife. I said I will thank God (laughs).Then I said to him I will thank God if he took another wife". Many

women reported refusing to just agree to what their partner's say regardless of the consequences. It appears the participants have learned how to lessen the abuse (using avoidance strategies and considering the consequences) but also acknowledge that those strategies are stifling. Acts of resistance enable women to gain power and autonomy in the relationship. Although incidents differ in each relationship, there is a sense that these women find ways to challenge their partners' abusive behaviour using their words.

Leaving the relationship

Leaving the relationship can be seen as an act of resistance. Jacobson and colleagues (1996) state that relationships with violence are more likely to end than relationships in which there is no violence. Also, women are always the ones to end the relationship. All the women were currently in the abusive relationship, although approximately half of them reported the desire to leave the relationship, or were conflicted about whether to remain in the relationship at the time of the interview. Lempert (1996) states that strategies for coping with or leaving an abusive relationship are frequently determined by the meanings women attach to the violence, and the resources they believe they have. For example if a woman feels she can rely on family members for shelter, she is more likely to leave the relationship. If she considers her partner's abuse to be a result of her own "bad" behaviour, she is more likely to remain.

It is common for women to leave their partners for a period of time, especially when the abuse is severe. It appears a woman may use this as a tool to show her partner how much she is needed and how much work she does in the home and relationship. One participant packs her suitcase and leaves it at the door after a violent episode. When her husband sees it, he is immediately apologetic for beating her. One can see the power play in the relationship. Women are not passive recipients of abuse; they participate in the relationship and have

methods for attaining a desired response from their partners.

The other reason that women leave temporarily is to test their partners - to see whether they will change if they are threatened with being alone. Participant four tells of how she left her husband to see whether he would look after the children and stop drinking if she was not there. He changed his behaviour and she returned home saying "So I mean, I had to do something, first go away in order to make him the man that I wanted. And for him to become a better person". She views leaving the relationship as temporary and as a testing-period as opposed to a decision to end the relationship. His behaviour-change reinforces the belief that leaving the relationship is an effective way of ending woman abuse.

Participant four gains power by leaving her husband because he has stopped drinking. Other participants, such as participants five and 15, do not benefit from leaving the relationship in that their partners do not stop drinking and these women return to the same situation. Men may reassert their authority by fetching the women, or by forcing them to return by beating them until they comply. Ferraro (1997) states that an attempt to leave one's partner often brings on more extreme abuse. Participant five did leave her boyfriend but he beat her so badly she returned.

Women frequently express indecision about whether to remain in or leave the relationship. Participant one explains that it is a difficult thing to divorce her husband because they have been together for 19 years, and to readjust is too much effort. Having children also complicates the matter because women have more responsibility. Her decision is "from my side, I will try to help so that he does not use those things (drugs) anymore. And I will long for, maybe always, for someone who will also help me and stand by me and tell me what to

do". Her desire to help her partner reveals how she takes on a traditionally feminine role of nurturing, yet there is no one to look after her. The need for assistance in ending the relationship is common amongst abused women given the breakdown of their self-esteem during the abusive relationship.

Indecision can be seen among other participants as they weigh up the decision to remain or leave the relationship. Women mention having invested a great deal into the relationship, and being unwilling to give it up after 10 or 19 years together. Participant 6 wants to leave her husband and be in control of her own life. She says "On the one hand I want to leave my husband, but then I think, wait, I will stay, you will look after me". Given the scarcity of resources in this community, economic security is a big factor in keeping women in abusive relationships. Participant 15 describes how she left her husband once but returned home to look after him when he became ill. Her attempt at autonomy is thwarted by his illness and she returns home, having failed to leave her partner, and once more trapped in the relationship. She indicates this feeling of being trapped with her words "But I don't know where it will end". Feeling responsible for one's partner also complicates the decision to leave the relationship. This sense of responsibility is in line with traditional gender constructions which make it a woman's role to ensure the success of a marriage.

Although the process of leaving one's partner is complicated and sometimes uncertain, leaving one's partner is not always a final decision, but a tool women employ to gain agency or power within the intimate relationship. Some women portray themselves as desperate to leave the relationship permanently, but given the economic disempowerment and the community support, they consider leaving to not be a viable option. Thus, leaving the abusive relationship is so complex for several reasons. The relationship often has value or good

aspects, which women do not want to leave. This can be friends, closely situated family, love within the relationship or economic security. Leaving is further complicated by beliefs women hold about their role in the relationships. Women remain because they feel it is their duty to care for their partners.

Social and legal intervention

Acts of resistance are seen in relationships in several ways; we have looked at physical resistance, covert forms of resistance, and leaving the relationship. There are also social and legal interventions that either help or hinder women to end woman abuse. The people involved in these interventions include the police and protection orders, friends and family, and religious leaders and members of the church. We discuss how women understand society's, and their community's impact on the abusive relationship is in terms of condoning woman abuse or encouraging women to leave the relationship.

Police and protection orders

Women report attaining police protection orders (previously known as interdicts) and finding them to be useful in temporarily ending physical abuse. While only a few women claim that their husbands permanently stopped their violent behaviour as a result of the protection order, these women are confident that their partners will respect the protection order. For example, participant one explains that her husband is still verbally abusive and aggressive, but he knows he is not allowed to hit her. The majority of women's experience is that the protection order works temporarily but it is only a matter of time before their partners are violent again. Scott and Wolfe (2000) found that punishment by the legal system is not a strong deterrent to woman abuse. It occurs relatively frequently that men stop being violent immediately after receiving the interdict or being in jail, but soon begin again.

Participant five states "The interdict came and I had to give it to him... And not long afterwards, after he finished reading the interdict, he tore the thing up... Tore the thing up and then I never made the effort to go in again and get another one because he already saw the interdict. Then he calmed down nicely, until he began to do the same thing again. To beat me...". The shocking fact is that this woman had to give the protection order to her husband herself, thus greatly increasing her risk of abuse. Furthermore, she does not carry the official, authoritative status police have, so her husband feels comfortable to tear up the protection order. Tearing it up is an example of symbolic violence towards women. The message is that of dominance – he will not respect her attempt at taking control and gaining power in the situation. His subsequent violence is evidence that protection orders are not taken seriously. Delivery of protection orders is done by the Sheriff of the Court but the woman has to first pay the sheriff before it will be delivered (South African Law Commission, 1999). It seems that in this case she gave him her copy of the order – which he tore up. That is why she says she didn't go and get another one.

Another difficulty with the use of protection orders is that women seldom follow up after obtaining the interdict. Women, such as participant eight, are pressurized by doctors, social workers, and community members to obtain a protection order, but are reluctant to use it. Participant four said she never used the interdict because she relied on her husband for housing and financial care. Participant six felt her husband did not deserve jail because the abuse was not so serious, thus she did not use the protection order when he was abusive. Participant four says "I got an interdict against him. But I almost never used it because I was scared that he would go to jail again and then who would work for my children?" Thus, the social context of poverty and economic disempowerment create a trap where women do not

feel able to follow through with criminal charges. They consider the consequences of using the protection order against their partners, which include homelessness, a lack of financial support, and the break up of the family, to be worse than the abuse.

Police presence appears to be regarded as being more useful than a protection order. Participants mention that the arrival of policemen always calms their partners. Participant six tells of an incident where she called the police to take her abusive husband for the evening so she could rest. She did not want to get a protection order or send him to jail for a long period of time. Participant eight says "I keep phoning the police. If he pushes me or hits me, I walk and phone". Her story is about how police have an authority over her husband that she does not have, and by phoning them, she is able to escape abuse. In some regards, it is a success story. Although the abuse still occurs, she has found a resource to help her. Police intervention is a form of coping, or a survival strategy, rather than a permanent solution. This finding is supported in a study by Matthews and Abrahams (2001) in which women find police intervention to be unhelpful and ineffective in preventing domestic violence. However in their study, police are perceived as being unfriendly and unhelpful, but in this study women consider police to be responsive and willing to intervene. It is possible that over time police are being better trained and informed about how to adequately respond to domestic violence.

Leigh (2000) speaks of the Deterrence of Violence Theory. Once the offender is punished by being arrested and put in jail, threats of future punishment are more credible and there is a reduction in violent behaviour. The theory assumes that domestic violence is modifiable behaviour and can be controlled. Experiments have shown arrest to be a better deterrent than counselling and stay-away orders. The advantage of having police involvement is that they represent the law and are authority figures, thus the husband is more likely to stop being

abusive. Actual arrest helps because it makes the perpetrator aware of the seriousness of domestic violence and humiliates him (Leigh, 2000). It is also possible that police protection orders and subsequent arrest can infuriate husbands, resulting in further abuse. Thus, the role of police and the protection order is complex – they work to reduce woman abuse but this may be only on a temporary level.

Friends and family

Participants in this study created the impression that community members are intimately involved in each other's lives and rely on one another for survival. With regards to abusive relationships, it appears that family members and friends collude with abusive partners to keep women in the relationship. A study conducted by Sullivan (1997) showed that the community often encourages reconciliation because they believe the cultural norms. In some instances, the pressure to keep women in abusive relationships is very direct. For example, Participant six was on her way to file for a divorce when her son stopped her. His reasoning was that she would not get the best deal if she left because she would have nowhere to go, and some other woman would take her place so she would not be able to return. Her son's concern is for his mother's welfare, but his involvement resulted in her stopping the divorce procedure. She mentions that she frequently regrets this decision, but is not prepared to give up her "luxury life". It is therefore about competition of resources and competition for men between women which prevents her from leaving the relationship.

Participant 15 reacts to the pressure of remaining in the relationship in the following extract. She says "I feel hurt, and I mean he involves me in his scandal. I told my mom this, really. Then my mom said, ag my child. Just stay on your knees. I said yes mommy, a person can stay on your knees but there comes a time when you have to draw the line. I said I cannot be

so unhappy in life". Her mother's advice is to keep praying and be submissive in the relationship. One sees the religious and societal norms in her words. There is a belief that regards the maintenance and success of the intimate relationship to be the women's responsibility. Participant 15 rejects this philosophy by "drawing the line". Proffit (2000) states that by challenging previously held beliefs and by questioning aspects of their lives, many abused women reassess their situation and make a change. Participant 15 is no longer willing to be unhappy, and pressurized into remaining. This shift in perspective creates an alternative sense of self.

Family involvement is sometimes less direct, as can be seen with participant one. She left her husband, and he never made an effort to come and mediate with her. It was his family (his sister and brother in law) who begged her to come home and restore the relationship. Participant eight frequently runs to her brother in law during an attack, and he talks to her husband to calm him down. They do not tell these women to stay, but their encouragement to persevere and their involvement implies that leaving is not a good idea. Marriage and family are considered both sanctified and unbreakable (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2003; Bowman, 2003; Viljoen, 1987). The pressure women experience from the family reinforces the idea that the marriage should last forever. The result is that abused women become isolated, because they feel unable to confide in family members, or look to them for support.

To some participants, friends are a wonderful source of support because they listen and support the abused women. However, this social support women experience reinforces the norm that women should stay in the relationship, regardless of what is happening. Although friends may help to encourage an abused woman to remain in the relationship, the silencing of questions and fears makes women more isolated and vulnerable. Community members also

play a social role in isolating women and condoning woman abuse. Participant eight recalls how neighbours were angry with her for phoning the police. Participant 12 says "they do not stand up for me. They do not come and ask what is going on. Nothing... But they all know how rude that man is". Why is there no societal reaction to woman abuse? It seems that woman abuse is deemed a normal, almost acceptable part of life. The community as a whole chooses to ignore the issues of woman abuse and to resist police intervention.

Some community members are callous about the abuse, but remain uninvolved. Participant six explains that her husband is always drunk and abusive on the weekend. When she comes home from work, people stop her and laugh, "They say ooh, there is a surprise waiting for you at home. Then I feel stressed again". Other participants become isolated from people because of how people in the community gossip. By having nobody to trust, women try to hide the abuse and not share their fears, injuries or problems with anyone. This further isolates women and keeps the abuse invisible (Lempert, 1996). Talking to anyone results in the entire community knowing and may actually lead to further abuse, as it did with participant 11 and 12, when their partners find out what has been said.

The role of family and friends can also be a positive one, where they offer support to the women and a place of protection during abusive episodes. Many participants reported spending weekends with family members in order to avoid violence. Women, such as participant three and participant 14, whose parents and siblings had passed away feel the lack of support and mention that the only option is to persevere through the abuse. Participant 11 says "But I could go nowhere. I could not leave him... I did not have parents that I could go to. So I had to just... I had to just stand by my husband". The symbolism of "standing by my husband" is interesting because in many patriarchal societies women are considered inferior

and dependent on their partners. This participant has to support and obey her partner. She has no other option, so she will take her designated place beside her husband. However, many women relied on family members during the weekends for a place to stay, and were consoled by friends when their husbands had been violent and abusive.

Religion

Religious values are often given as a reason for why women do not leave their partners despite the abuse in the relationship. However, religion is also found to be a source of comfort and strength to many women who are struggling in their relationship (Finn, 1985). Furthermore, church members play a big role in that they encourage women to persevere; they are a source of support; and they work through relational problems with the couple. Thus, religion is a complex factor in women's experience of abuse.

Women who reported being religious emphasized being a "good Christian"; keeping one's marital vows and sacrificing in the relationship as part of one's religious duty. For example, although participant four wanted to leave her husband, she had to "take the right steps" and stay in the relationship. Participant 11 says, "And because I am a believer... and married, I had to rethink all these things. I could no longer think of myself /.../ Faith is – because you forget about yourself. You have to think of others". Her belief is to put her husband first, even if it caused her to remain subjugated in the relationship. Selflessness is about religious values but also about enforcing patriarchal values. Women are portrayed as selfless, nurturing and submissive, and in this way religious and patriarchal norms work together to ensure women's subjugation.

These values seem to be held by the Christian community at large because participants

reported being encouraged by other believers to remain in the relationship. Painter and Dutton (1985) found that religious leaders and social services tend to provide counselling that is focused on women's responsibility to adjust to the abusive home situation, rather than assisting her to leave that situation. Participant one has a Christian friend who always motivates her and enables her to carry on; participant four says "there were lots of people who prayed for our relationship, especially with all that happened between us". Thus, even knowing the extent of domestic violence and infidelity in the relationship, this couple was pressurized to make the relationship work. When participant six phoned the police and had her husband put in jail for the evening. Her priest's response to that was negative, saying she did not do the right thing.

Perseverance in the relationship is strongly associated with religion. Women value the commitment of marriage and refuse to give up on the relationship (Herbert et al., 1991). Participant six says "God has a plan with everything. I say the Lord calms the storm. So, it is almost, it is a storm. I say God makes him calm at the right time. So I just hold on, I just hold on". She likens her relationship with her husband to a storm; turbulent, dangerous, and out of control. She has no power over her relationship, but trusts God to improve it. Her story is in-the-making – she believes the outcome will be positive and her husband will stop being abusive. It is a story with an expected happy outcome, even if that outcome is not currently visible, which is why this participant talks about holding on. Other participants also compare the abusive relationship to a test, a storm, or a cross, and see it as something that needs to be overcome or carried through until the end. This mentality enables women to keep working at the relationship, and not to give up. When times are particularly difficult, participant nine says "And I pray. Pray there in the room, I ask God to help me. I know he can carry me through this. I have faith". While faith and belief in God provides women with hope for the future and

their relationship, it also puts a great deal of pressure on them to persevere and not be downhearted by the abuse. In this way, it may thwart any thinking that challenges this view, and does not offer the chance of getting out of the relationship.

On the other hand, the Christian community does offer a major supportive role to abused women. Isolation is often a problem among abused women in that they are ashamed to disclose violence or fear rejection by others. Participant seven explains how the church members sit with her and her husband when there are problems so that they can talk them through. This means there is a freedom to speak freely, and a lack of judgment. Men, who usually do not talk about issues, are forced to communicate and share in these sessions. It appears that women feel that they do not need to fear their partner's rages because there are other's involved. Participant nine says "It helped because there you have to speak. You cannot hide things. You have to speak the truth. And they help you. They say what is right or what is wrong /.../ But it is nice that a person can talk with them. And there are brothers who talk with the husband. The sisters talk with me, and there is, you cannot not talk. No, there are words that come out. There are words".

In the above extract, participant nine reveals that having the church members present ensures that the truth is spoken and that communication does occur. Her emphasis on "there are words" suggests that it is a positive experience, something that may not necessarily always happen between the couple. These people also reaffirm the religious values by telling the participant what is right and wrong, and how she should behave. Women internalise these values, and use them as a personal resource to cope in the relationship. For example participant 11 says "If I want to change him I cannot be ugly in reaction to him. Because the word of the Lord says do not meet anger with anger, but with goodness". This participant sees

it as her responsibility to change her husband, and this informs her behaviour towards him.

Woman abuse is a complex topic; we have delineated the term and shown how physical, sexual, verbal, emotional and economic abuse are constructed and experienced as damaging by the women in this study. Furthermore, we looked at the role of alcohol in abuse, and how women construct alcohol as the cause of their problems because it serves to protect their image of their partner as a "good" man. Coping strategies women employ include avoidance strategies and acts of resistance. Avoidance strategies generally oppress women, in that they feel forbidden to express themselves or live freely. Acts of resistance allow women to show their frustration at being oppressed by their partners, but may result in them being abused. The numerous external influences, such as police services, family, friends and religion, which impact women's experiences of abuse were addressed. It has been shown that some of these influences are positive, and serve a protective or supportive function; other influences result in increased isolation and oppression. Chapter five explores narratives of communication, where women describe how they interact and communicate with their partners and how woman abuse impacts on that.

CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVES OF COMMUNICATION

Communication is of pivotal importance for intimate relationships. It is through communication that the relationship is enacted; that images of self and other are expressed; and that patterns, routines and rituals are created (Heaven, Smith, Prabhakar, Abraham, & Mete, 2006). Conflict interchange, which may be characteristic of abusive relationships, is more personally involving and emotionally intensive than other forms of communication, thus it elicits strong emotions and the potential for escalation (Gaelict, Boenhausen, & Wyer, 1985). In exploring women's narratives, the complexity of communication became apparent. This chapter looks at the connection between woman abuse and communication, and how violence is seen as a form of communication by these women. Furthermore, analysis has show that gendered power dynamics are made visible through talk. We investigate what communication means for the women in this study, and their experiences of it. Finally, we delve into the destructive and constructive styles of communication occurring in the abusive intimate relationship.

Within a relationship, partners may engage in both constructive and destructive communication patterns (Cummings, Faircloth, Mitchell, Cummings, & Schermerhorn, 2008). Destructive verbal communication is that which escalates conflict and undermines the relationship, Constructive communication refers to the verbal interaction occurring between intimate partners which impacts positively on the relationship. Mutual validation, giving support and direct negotiation are some examples of constructive communication For example, participant 15 tells her husband she is unhappy in the relationship and he responds

by accusing her of infidelity. She engages a positive communication tool by focusing on the problem, while he uses hostility and aggression in response.

Gottman and Krokoff (1989) state that conflict is healthy and necessary for the longevity of an intimate relationship. It is possible for a couple to work their way through a conflict situation without derogating each other or causing a break down in interaction. Part of this involves effective listening; this involves hearing what is said, interpreting it accurately and responding appropriately (Brunner, 2008). However, conflict employing destructive mechanisms, such as defensiveness, stubbornness and withdrawal, may cause disruptions in the relationship over time. Context also plays an important role in communication (Alberts et al., 2005). Fincham (2003) states that the level of marital conflict varies according to contextual factors. For example, the more stress there is in a relationship (financial, drug-related, work etc) the higher the risk for conflict, and violence.

VIOLENCE AND COMMUNICATION

In an attempt to understand woman abuse, there has been a great deal of research on how violence impacts interaction in intimate relationships (Andrews & Brewin, 1990; Gottman & Krokof, 1989; Heavey, Christensen & Malamuth, 1995; Jacobson et al., 1994; Ronan et al., 2004). Physical abuse can be seen as both instrumental and a form of non-verbal communication. It is used to silence women, to win arguments, to show disapproval or dissatisfaction, to motivate change in one's partner, or to express dominance (Dobash & Dobash, 1990; Pretorius, 1989). O'Niell (1998) examined the instrumental nature of abuse. He found that interaction is guided by the pursuit of reward and the avoidance of punishment. If violence enables a man to get his way, he is more likely to use it, portraying perpetrators of violence to be rational and purposeful in their behaviour. This understanding of violent men

as rational and their violence as purposeful is consistent with a feminist understanding of violence as an enforcement of traditional masculinity.

Yassour-Borochowitz and Eisikovits (2002) state that domestic abuse may open dialogue between partners about the quality of their relationship. It brings about self-examination and restores communication that is disrupted by daily life. Following a violent episode, the couple makes an effort to communicate more. In this way, violence is used to reconfirm their intimacy and commitment. However, this view on violence and communication ignores the gendered power struggles and the impact of abuse on the victim. It also does not acknowledge that couples may not actually discuss issues after the abuse (something that is seen repeatedly among the participants in this study).

Another communication model used to understand physical abuse is described by Ronan and colleagues (2004) as the *social skills deficit model.* The premise is that violent partners lack social skills, such as communication and problem-solving skills, thus in a conflict situation, they use violence as an expression and as a means to deal with tensions in the relationship. Holtzworth-Munroe (1992) also found women to believe that men have no other way of communicating or asserting themselves, except through violence. Her interpretation is that this belief positions men as victims and ignores the consequences of their violence. This belief can be seen by the following participant's statement "In the past, he was, how can I say... I have to actually say he was psychologically unwell because his child's mother had an accident. And then the people accused him and all these things. And maybe it was because of that, and then he also lost his son, who was murdered. Now I don't know – a person must always have someone or something to take it out on, to take it out". Participant four seems to suggest that her husband needed to beat her in order to express his frustrations because he

could not talk about the hardships in his life. She portrays herself as the strong one in the relationship, who sacrifices her body so he can work through his feelings. Despite mentioning that her husband was accused of killing his previous wife, participant four is able to construct her husband in a positive light, and excuses the violence, by positioning him as the victim of his unexpressed emotions and trauma.

There is evidence that abusive men struggle in expressing emotion. Several studies indicate that violent men report more sadness, fear, anger, and feel attacked more often than nonviolent men. Margolin and colleagues (1988) for example, found that violent men struggle to acknowledge and report feelings, and other research states that violent men have a social skills deficit, making them unable to communicate effectively (Holtzworth-Munroe, 1992). On the other hand, a study by Ronan and colleagues (2004) indicated that both partners in an abusive relationship show ineffective communication styles. In comparison to verbally aggressive and withdrawing couples, physically aggressive couples have a high hostile affect and men show more verbal and nonverbal signs of irritation in arguments. Consequently, it is possible that faulty or destructive communication does not lie solely with men in a relationship, although feminists regard the social skills deficit model as a justification for a culture of accepting woman abuse.

GENDERED POWER, ABUSE AND COMMUNICATION

Feminists regard all intimate heterosexual relationships to be heavily influenced by gendered power dynamics. Violence is not considered to be a violent act, but form of control over women (Yllö & Bograd, 1990). Men are perceived to be the dominant sex in a patriarchal society, and women are regarded as inferior and powerless. Powerless people are not respected; Hackett and Haslanger (2006) state "to treat people with respect is to be prepared

to listen to what they have to say, or to do what they request because they have the same authority, expertise, or influence" (p.11). The lack of equality, and subsequent lack of respect, is repeatedly seen in abusive intimate relationships. Kaukinen (2004) found that equality in a relationship is associated with lower rates of domestic violence and higher relationship satisfaction. Thus, violence and other forms of abuse may be instrumental in nature, and are used by men as a tool to gain dominance in the intimate relationship and as an enforcement of traditional gender roles.

In communication, power is often manifested when one person ignores the other. Weger (2005) states that withdrawal implies that one's partner's concerns are not valid, and that there is a lack of understanding of partner's needs and goals. Berns and colleagues (1999) regard intimacy in a relationship to be a commodity that represents power. The individual who reduces the level of intimacy through withdrawal is the dominant one, which in the case of this study, is often the abusive man. This pattern of withdrawal was evident in women's accounts of their relationships too. Participant one, four, and 15 are just some examples of how women ask or beg their partners to stop drinking, yet their requests are repeatedly ignored. Women describe feeling powerless; one participant asks "what must I do?" Being dependent on her partner, she feels unable to take a stand against the drinking and abuse; her only visible option is to accept his behaviour, and hope he decides to change.

To a large degree, the dominant position in a relationship is held by the individual who believes they hold the power (Dunbar & Burgoon, 2005). They define power as the "capacity to produce intended effects, and in particular, the ability to influence the behavior of another person" (p. 208). Dominance is made visible when one's assertion of control is met by the submission of another. This is typical behavior within an abusive relationship. However, it

has been suggested that abusive men tend to perceive themselves as lacking power in the relationship (Babcock et al., 1993; Boonzaier, 2005). In this regard, abuse is a symbolic reassertion of the masculine identity, and a means to deal with the powerlessness and emasculation men feel (Simpson & Kraak, 1998). Sagrestano et al. (1999) state that the person seeking change in a relationship (women) has less power than the person being asked to change (men). This is because he can decide whether to change or not. In this sample, findings appeared to contrast this understanding. Women described their partners as demanding obedience and subservience, which is considered to be a sign of lack of power in the relationship. However, due to the threat of violence, women tended to comply and men had their demands met. Thus, violence is a tool to enforce change and gain power in the relationship.

All the participants described how their partners "just wanted to be right" in an argument, or when they were intoxicated, regardless of the issue being discussed. This can be explained in terms of interaction styles and societal or gender norms. However, this behaviour can also be explained in terms of power and control. Given that power is part of any intimate relationship, and that violence and abuse in an intimate relationship are often related to power dynamics, the influence of power on communication needs to be discussed (Cardarelli, 1997). Participant one says "It actually hurts me a lot, the things that he says sometimes, because I know he is the one in the wrong and I know I am right. Then he does not want to know that, he just wants to know that he is right and that I am the one in the wrong". She portrays herself as being unable to defend her position because her husband wants to win and be in control. Although her husband is not physically abusive in this particular story, he is able to dominate and overpower using words alone. This power struggle seems to cause her anguish possibly because it denies her agency. Similarly, Petrik and colleagues (1994) found that women in

abusive relationships feel powerless, but have more of a tolerance for being controlled than women in non-abusive relationships.

Women who remain in the relationship and want to make it work appear more vulnerable to their partners' demands of absolute power. Participant 13 tells of how she is regularly locked out of her home for several days and how her husband beats her if she tries to return. She deals with this by staying outside until her husband lets her back in. The participant states that she will not leave him because she "saw chance for a husband" and has committed to the relationship. Participants allow their partners to have the power in the relationship, and now define themselves within the boundaries which their partners set. Henderson and colleagues (2005) argued that a phenomenon called "traumatic bonding" occurs in abusive relationships. Traumatic bonding is the emotional connection between intimate partners that comes from inconsistent abuse and power imbalances in the relationship. The woman identifies her abuser to be looking after her and providing for her, thus enhancing self-esteem, but also experiences impaired self-esteem because of the violence, criticism and disempowerment. This strengthens the bonds of loyalty to the abuser and hinders escape from the relationship (Henderson et al. 2005; Van Schalkwyk, 2006). Power imbalances and inconsistency of abuse strengthen the emotional bonds women have to their partners. This translates into obedient, subservient behaviour when the abusive partner speaks.

This phenomenon can again be seen by participant four who no longer goes out with friends because her husband is jealous. She says "he kept on nagging about it, and I... and then I decided that I would not go anymore. To make him happy, I have to work on the problem". This participant acknowledges that she lives within her husband's boundaries because that is what makes him happy. She internalises the traditional feminine role of submission to her

partner, but also realises that her husband's violence is a nonverbal message that he is displeased, thus obedience may be enacted as a coping strategy. Similarly, participant seven does not work outside the home because that is the position her husband chose her for her when they married. Participant 14 learned that by getting out of her husband's way when he is angry, she can avert a violent episode, and she employed that tactic regularly for the sake of safety. Thus, these examples indicate that in many instances, women in abusive relationships concede power because to fight for power often results in violence. This adoption of the submissive role may be an adaptive coping strategy which women employ to deal with a traumatic situation from which they cannot necessarily escape.

Other participants who also remain in the intimate relationship, however, choose not to surrender their will to their partners. These relationships seem to be characterised by frequent power struggles, as defined by Sagrestano and colleagues (1999) who found the person who makes the decision and has the final say is typically the individual with the most power in the relationship. Thus, when participant 13 swears back at her husband whenever he swears at her, there is a challenge for who will have the final say. She says "In the morning when we wake up, I tell him how wrong he was and all that /.../ then he says no, but I swore back at him. I have to, cannot keep quiet when you swear and carry on like that". Participant 15 refuses to speak to her husband when he is drunk, thus taking a stand against his behaviour. Her husband's response to that is to say "you must stop playing boss the whole time". Her partner resists her attempts to upstage him, or take power. It appears men regard the challenging of social norms to be personally threatening to their construction of masculinity. In contrast to the adoption of submissive roles as seen above, there is also evidence of women challenging traditionally feminine roles and taking a stand against their partners' abuse.

Gendered power dynamics are present in all intimate relationships. Patterns of demand and withdrawal, coupled with poor communication styles often make these power struggles visible. Women engage in coping strategies, either adopting a submissive role, or challenging the traditional roles, in reaction to the abuse. Below is an analysis of how participants define communication, their experiences of communication as well as their understanding and expectation of communication within the abusive relationship.

DEFINITIONS OF COMMUNICATION

Alberts and colleagues (2005) studied conversation between couples and identified several categories of conversational behaviour. These include: self-report, observation, back-channel, other-report, TV talk, partner's experiences, household task talk, humour, plans, narratives, positivity, and conflict. Conversation is one of the verbal aspects of communication. Several women in this current study described what they thought defined good communication. In general, communication is perceived to be talking about one's problems and advice-giving, such as described by the following woman.

I: "What do you think defines good communication in a relationship?

P: Um, to understand each other better and listen to each other. I mean to listen what is my problem and then he always has advice for me. And then I have to listen to what is his problem and then I must always have advice for him. And we can maybe find a solution together and say come let's work on that, this is what you have to do and so on". Other women included notions such as getting along well, loving each other, and talking regularly as aspects of communication.

Four women spoke of how they desired communication with their partners could be. Participant one says "I mean if he does not smoke buttons (drugs) anymore and so on, then we

will have more time to, more time to spend together. We can talk more about things and then I will have the freedom, if something hurt me, then I know I can go and talk to him. I don't have to be scared; I can talk about these things. If someone hurts me or maybe I have a problem then I know I don't have to go to other people but I know I can go to him. He can maybe give me advice and so on. But at the moment, I have to sometimes hold it back or maybe deal with it myself because I cannot share it with him".

She blames drugs for her husband's lack of involvement in the relationship, and in doing so she is able to imagine him as a good, attentive husband outside of his drug-usage. In describing her idealised communication with her husband, she actually describes how they do interact with each other. Firstly, there is a lack of conversation and quality time. Her repeated use of the term "more" indicates that she feels she does not have enough time with her husband. Secondly, there is also a lack of open communication. She expresses not having the freedom to talk about issues or problems she may be facing.

Her statement "I don't have to be scared" is significant because she is currently fearful of her husband and his reaction to her sharing her problems with him. Her words are phrased in a wishful manner, and this leads one to believe there is a desire for increased emotional intimacy with her husband. Studies have shown that women tend to be dissatisfied in the intimate relationship more frequently than men because they feel their emotional needs are not being met (Rhoades & Stocker, 2006). Christensen and Heavey (1990) relate similar findings to sex role socialization. They say women are trained to be affiliative and expressive, and that a woman's identity is developed within the context of the relationship. For participant one, after describing her idealised relationship, she brings herself back to the reality of their relationship. She is isolated emotionally from her husband in that she cannot share her

problems or thoughts with him because she is scared of his reaction, which may be violent or derogatory. While she mentions being able to talk to somebody else when she is experiencing difficulty, her final statement is one of isolation; forced to hold her thoughts to herself or deal with her problems on her own.

The juxtaposition between idealised communication and the reality was stated by several women. Participant six role-plays a scenario where she asked her husband if she could visit her family for a weekend. "When I finished talking to him, I asked him so nicely. Yes, take your things and stay there because you will not come back with all your fucking things. I do not like such noise. Look, if the man said to me, ok fine, you can go but, and when will you be back? I will come back on Sunday, how late? Ok, such and such. Ok, fine. But he would never put it like that. He will shout, he is mean and humiliates me".

She contrasts his actual reaction, which is abusive and humiliating for her, to an idealised means of communication. She envisions her husband as being interested in what she says and engaging in constructive communication as opposed to degrading her. She also positions herself as being the one who communicates well and speaks to her husband respectfully, and positions him as being unreasonable and unable to talk about an issue. This finding is supported by Carli (1990) who states that women are not given the opportunity to express themselves as forcefully and directly as men are.

Communication is comprised of numerous aspects, such as verbal or non-verbal, positive or negative, direct or indirect and many more. We have looked at how the participants define their own communication with their partners, and how the communication that occurs in their relationship does not necessarily meet women's idealized expectations. The next section

examines the experiences of women regarding communication in their relationships. It shows what intimate partners talk about and how decisions are made within the relationship. There will be an exploration of different styles of communication spoken of in the interviews. There are constructive and destructive styles, the latter being comprised of hostility, negative emotionality, demand-withdrawal interaction, and blame. Constructive styles of communication include mutual validation and support-giving, and conflict resolution. We also look at the role of external support in producing constructive communication between intimate partners.

EXPERIENCES OF COMMUNICATION

While talking about their relationships with their intimate partners, women in this study gave numerous examples of what causes conflict, their daily conversations and how decisions are made within the relationship. Albert and colleagues' (2005) study on couples' conversations showed that communication patterns change as a relationship changes. The dating period is characterised by politeness and positive self-representation. Later phases include a variety of interactions, such as self-disclosure and assertive behaviour.

In this sample, the couples had been together for an average of 20 years. The following issues were regarded as sources of conflict in the relationship: partner's drug or alcohol abuse, violence in the relationship, infidelity, partner's jealousy, money, and family. Partner's lack of appreciation is also a source of conflict for some women, as seen by participant 15, who says "He does not appreciate me. I feel as if – I have already told him, you do not appreciate me /../ I am not appreciated. I do all these things for you, but I am never appreciated". She feels he takes her work in the home, and for him, for granted. It is interesting how she constructs her behaviour in relation to her partner. She cleans the home, makes the food, and looks after her

ailing husband, because he is her husband. Yet despite all these actions, which the participant regards as sacrifices, her husband does not appreciate her. Her wording "he does not appreciate me" is significant because she does not distinguish between the work she does, and herself as a person. Her husband's lack of appreciation is perceived as a disregard for this participant as a person.

These issues of conflict are not confined to this community alone. Waller (2008) identified the following tensions among couples: economic and housing difficulties, childcare or family, personal problems such as drugs or violence, communication issues, and fidelity. Similarly, Berns and colleagues (1999) found couples in violent relationships conflicted over communication, money, children, violence and alcohol abuse.

Communication problems in the relationship refer to the lack of open and honest interaction between partners (Waller, 2008). Many women in this sample did not feel they could talk freely with their partners. There are numerous reasons for the lack of open communication, which include fear of a partner's reaction, fear of being emotionally vulnerable, and the lack of opportunity to talk about important issues. Feminist research suggests that this stifling of talk is partly due to the community's support of traditional gender norms (Worrel, 1993). It is assumed men take the position as leader and authority figure within the home, and anything their partners say is considered to be challenging or threatening to that role.

Women experience their words to be of little value to their partners. Many participants mentioned that their partners do not acknowledge requests, demands or points of view. Participant eight's statement "Just like any man... almost nothing goes, nothing goes to his head" is indicative of a perception about men. It is socially sanctioned that men do not listen

to what women are saying, and this can only frustrate open communication in the relationship. Participant five says the following "He listens to what I say, but, uh, it is just… yes, I listen to you now, but now I will do the same thing again and again." She understands that her requests and conversation has no impact on her husband's actions. She constructs herself as powerless to change him in any way. This reflects a common feeling among participants, that they talk but what they say has no impact on their partner's behaviour. Similarly, participant 12 states "you just want me to say yes to everything that you say". There is a lack of respect regarding women in this community as men find it acceptable to disregard what women say. Some women engage with the norm that men have control over what is said, saying that he is the husband and is to be obeyed. However, many women, for example participant three and participant 12, experience frustration at having to stifle their thoughts and opinions.

In summary, women in this study experience communication with their partners as being unsatisfactory. They experience their words to be of little value to the decisions made in the home, and feel unable to express themselves freely in conflict. How men and women communicate in a conflict situation determines the outcome of the conflict, and participants described how conflict situations are played out. This allows for insight into some of the destructive styles of communication intimate couples engage in.

DESTRUCTIVE STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

Destructive verbal communication is that which escalates conflict and undermines the relationship. There is much research on destructive communication styles. Heaven and colleagues (2006) define defensiveness as the avoiding of blame or responsibility; cross-complaining refers when one responds to another's complaint with a complaint of their own. Negative reciprocity is a communication strategy that matches aversive behaviour with

similar aversive behaviour (Olson, 2002). Further examples of destructive communication styles include criticisms, complaints, verbal hostility, stonewalling, mutual avoidance of issues, and couples who do not listen to each other (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Heaven et al, 2006; Cummings et al., 2008). Demand and withdrawal has been identified as a very common interaction among distressed couples which will be discussed in this section (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Gaelict and colleagues (1985) found that individuals perceive hostile or negative affect more accurately than positive affect. Thus, negative affect is more likely to be reciprocated than feelings of love, leading to escalation of conflict. The process of conflict and resolution is also complex. In their stories, participants describe several conflict scenarios and it is apparent that couples engage in a variety of communication styles at any one time.

Blame – Who is at fault?

Rhoades and Stocker (2006) identify blame and accusations to be part of the hostile behaviour which occurs between partners. Abusive men in particular, tend to blame their partners for the violence and problems in the relationship (Dobash & Dobash, 1998; Stamp & Sabourin, 1995). Essentially, blame is the lack of taking responsibility for one's actions and placing it on another individual. Participant 14 regards this process as being positive and a part of working out problems. When there is a problem her and her husband talk and decide who was to blame, and then life carries on. However, for some participants, blame is forced on them by their partners. Participant four says "then he talks and very often he becomes angry. Then I have to take the blame and say that I am sorry. I was wrong there. Then, afterwards, things come right again. We say we are over the problem". Due to her husband's violence, she is forced to accept blame where she is not responsible. This results in a de-escalation of conflict, but her statement "we say we are over the problem" is interesting. If the problem were dealt with, one would say the problem is over. However, because participant four accepts blame

when she feels that is not actually the case, the crisis passes and the problem is not dealt with. This lack of open communication thwarts relationship development and satisfaction (Cummings et al., 2008). Thus, men's violence and anger are tools that enable them to avoid responsibility and maintain status as being in charge. In accordance with feminist literature, participant four remains subjugated in the relationship because she is not given the opportunity to speak freely or defend herself (Sylvester, 1994). Ptacek (1997) states that physical abuse is only one example of the oppression and controlling of women in society today. It is apparent that blaming women for violence is another example of this oppression.

Gender norms and sex-role socialisation are made visible in the narratives about blame and communication. Participant 11 says "But normally I have to tell him what happened the previous evening. And uh, then he will try to push the blame onto me, understand? /.../ I knew that he, that it would not help to talk to him uh... I am the one in the wrong in his eyes, and uh it just won't help". Her husband blames her for his violent behaviour, and she accepts it because resisting him is futile. The imagery she invokes is that of blame being pushed onto her, like it is a physical thing that her husband will not sit with. There is also a sense of passivity; as if anything she does escalates the violence. Her inability to express her thoughts, needs and feelings is due to her husband's inhibiting behaviour (Young, 2006). O'Neill (1998) explains how sex-role socialisation leads to expectation and conflict when men expect their wives to submit and make the relationship work, and enforce this expectation through violent behaviour. Participant 11 identifies with the traditional roles of femininity. Consequently, by having self-control and silencing her own voice she fulfills her believed duty as a woman as well maintaining a positive home atmosphere. A similar finding was discussed by Eisikovits and Buchbinder (1999), who looked at how battered women utilise self-control in their relationships.

Women in this study understand that, if they do not adhere to the social rule of submission, they have themselves to blame for any abuse or unhappiness in the relationship. Retaliating or standing up to one's partner immediately makes a woman partly responsible for the violence which occurs. Participant 13 says "I do not keep quiet. I shout right back and so the thing does not come right. Other women just keep quiet and then the husband stops now. But me... I cannot keep quiet. I am too stubborn. I do not want to keep quiet. I talk back, he swears at me then I shout back, that is how it is". She repeatedly states it is her inability to keep quiet in an argument that results in the escalation of conflict and, ultimately, abuse. Her tone is that of frustration because she tries to be a good wife and not "provoke" her husband by talking, yet she feels unable to not stop herself. Notice how she takes the responsibility on herself to end the conflict and handle her anger, and does not question why her husband does not show self-control. She also compares herself to other women in the community – those who fulfill the traditional feminine role and are subservient to their husbands; those who are able to please their partners and prevent conflict. Implicit in this statement is her sense of failure as a good wife. Since self-blame is a common feature among abused women, any suggestion that they could be to blame for the unhappiness in the relationship is often accepted and internalised. This is followed by behavioural changes, such as relinquishing autonomy, in an attempt to restore harmony in the relationship (Ferraro, 1997).

Women reveal more than just styles of communication in their narratives; gender norms and societal expectations regarding the roles of men and women in intimate relationships are also made known through their talk about communication. All destructive communications styles, such as blame-shifting and negative reciprocity, thwart conflict resolution and relationship satisfaction. However demand-withdraw interaction, in particular, is strongly associated with

abusive relationships.

Demand–withdraw interaction

There are many studies which look specifically at demand-withdraw style of communication. Also known as pursuer-distancer and rejection-intrusion interaction, it appears to be the most common destructive communication pattern among intimate partners and is associated with reduced relationship satisfaction (Smith, Heaven and Ciarrochi, 2008). One partner typically attempts a discussion by criticising, complaining or suggesting change, while the other attempts to end or avoid the discussion.

The demand-withdraw style of communication is seen across participants. Participant six describes the following: "When he shouts, finished shouting, I leave him. I cannot talk with him because he is drunk. Good, we leave him for the whole weekend. He shouts throughout the entire weekend. Monday evenings then he is sober again, then I want to talk to him. Then he does not feel like talking to me because... there is no wine, alcohol in him. He cannot talk back. So, if I speak to him, we lie in the bed, and then, then I am talking to a tree stump or a rock. And then he does not feel like me. And then I pull him, ask him, can you not talk to me tonight? I feel that I want to talk about what happened on the weekend. I tell him, if you have a problem, tell me what the problem is. And, ag, leave me now, I don't feel like you. Then I must just leave it".

In the above extract, participant six's husband takes a demanding role when he is intoxicated. He shouts, criticises and complains. Fincham (2003) identified demanding behaviour to include criticisms and complaints about one's partner, emotional requests, and expecting submission. Women are often unable to respond to their partners' accusations or demands

because they fear abuse or because they feel their partners do not listen when intoxicated. Participant six acknowledges that she cannot press him too much to talk to her because of his reaction; participant 11 and participant 14 mention a similar caution when talking to their husbands. Participant 11 says "I must also not dig too much there now. So I will just leave him". Aldrich and Tenenbaum (2006) found women to be more emotionally expressive, and more likely to express frustration, than men. This tendency for women to express themselves appears to be hindered by the presence of abuse in the relationship.

Roles appear to change when her partner is sober. Participant six wants to talk about the weekend, her partner's drinking and abusive behaviour, and he withdraws from the interaction. Withdrawal behaviour can include stonewalling, avoiding the situation, defensiveness and passivity (Berns et al., 1999; Fincham, 2003). In this scenario, participant six's husband does not respond. She likens him to an inanimate object because he is so passive. When he tells her to be quiet, she asks what the problem is, and demands further information. Thus, a pattern develops where demanding elicits withdrawing, causing more demands (Berns et al., 1999; Heaven et al., 2006).

Feminist research addresses the issue of women's oppression, as seen in the above extract when participant six is prevented from talking freely with her husband, whether he is drunk or sober. Hackett and Haslanger (2006) explain how oppressed women do not have the power to make choices, state their wishes, or take control of their lives. Men have a more privileged role status than women in this community and in the relationship, making it possible for them to govern communication.

Women construct a link between abuse and communication, specifically how they talk about

their feelings or how they respond to their partner's accusations. Participant 11 recalls how she had to look at her husband when he spoke to her; turning away would imply she was guilty of his accusations, and he would beat her. Since unresponsiveness may also result in abuse, women's attempts to withdraw are thwarted (Berns et al., 1993). Participant one says "Sometimes I feel, um, quite angry and for a long time I do not want to talk to him. Just, ja, but now I feel its not right to be like that and so on. And I am always the one who goes back to talk to him again". Through withdrawal she attempts to obtain autonomy and power in the relationship. However, she also identifies with a traditional feminine role because she feels it is her responsibility to maintain the relationship despite her desire to withdraw. There appears to be an inner conflict, where women withdraw but also feel obligated to fulfill their duty as good wives. Participant one positions herself as being a good wife, but also mentions the other side of her, which wants to withdraw and is not in line with this traditional role.

Research indicates that women typically fulfill the demanding role, while men tend to withdraw (Heavey et al., 1995; Holtzworth-Munroe, 1998; Weger, 2005). Participant five describes her husband's withdrawal after abuse. "When he has finished beating me, then he does not talk to me. For a week, then he does not talk". She describes herself passively, mentioning only her partner's behaviour. One gets the sense that she does not see herself as having any power and is completely dependent on his mood to define their relationship. His withdrawal from her post-abuse affirms his power in the relationship.

It is often the threat of violence that causes women to remain silent during an argument. They attempt to avoid an escalation into violence by trying to not antagonise their partner in any way. Berns and colleagues (1999) found that battered women are no more demanding than non-battered women, but battering men are more demanding than non-battering men. Women

who are in abusive relationships tend towards passivity as a survival function, as was found among many women in this current study (Clements et al., 2004).

Other studies have challenged the notion of the woman-demand and husband-withdraw dichotomy. For example, Christensen and Heavey (1990) found both men and women are likely to be demanding when discussing a change they wanted, and likely to withdraw when discussing a change their partner wanted. Thus, both partners in a violent relationship show demanding and withdrawing, and both are poor communicators (Babcock et al., 1993; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1998). In this study, there is evidence of both male and female demand, and male and female withdrawal. Participant 15 describes the communication in her relationship, where she wants to communicate with her husband when he is sober, but he stonewalls and refuses to talk. On the other hand, when he is intoxicated, her husband shouts and wants to talk about issues. She is adamant that she will not talk to him when he is drunk because he never remembers anything they say, and he always wants to be right. This forms a pattern of communication that creates tension and frustration in the relationship, and also makes conflict resolution impossible.

Societal and gender norms also need to be acknowledged when looking at demand-withdraw interaction because of their impact on communication and expectations. Sex-role socialization theory states that each gender has specific societal norms for how they are to behave. Boys are taught to dominate and be competitive and individualistic, and girls are taught to be quiet, submissive and useful. O'Neill (1998) explains how sex-role socialisation leads to expectation and conflict when men expect their wives to submit and make the relationship work, and enforce this expectation through violent behaviour. Sex-role socialization results in men being strong and independent, and likely to fear intrusion or engulfment in a relationship.

Conversely, women are taught to be affiliative and expressive, therefore may fear rejection and abandonment. Women tend to be more emotionally expressive than men (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). Socialization creates conflict as women want greater intimacy and men want autonomy. Stone (2007) states that societal expectations about appropriate gender behaviour manifest when society encourages male aggression and stoic behaviour, but stifles aggression and autonomy in women.

This section addressed the demand-withdraw interaction found among participants in this study. It is a destructive style of communication that is utilised by both men and women. However, because men are perceived to be dominating and independent by society, male aggression and demanding behaviour are more expected within the relationship. The influence of physical abuse may also cause women to be more submissive rather than demanding. However, the demand-withdraw interaction is not necessary a one-way street. Women describe themselves and their partners as fulfilling both demanding and withdrawing roles. It is good to note that not all communication styles seen amongst the participants are destructive and damaging to a relationship. The following section looks at the constructive communication styles spoken about by the participants.

CONSTRUCTIVE STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

Constructive communication refers to the verbal interaction occurring between intimate partners that impact positively on the relationship. Mutual validation, giving support and direct negotiation are some examples of constructive communication (Christensen & Heavey, 1990; Vatne & Hoem, 2008). Conflict occurs in every intimate relationship, but it need not be damaging to the people involved. Cummings and colleagues (2008) mention "it is not whether couples fight but how they fight that is most pertinent to the well-being of both adults and

children" (p. 193). They consider constructive behaviours to be support of one's partner (shown through compliments or reassurance), problem-solving strategies, positive emotionality, and conflict resolution. The acceptance of responsibility also aids conflict resolution.

Constructive communication, also known as facilitative behaviour, occurs when partners discuss issues, express their feelings in a positive way and work towards a resolution (Heaven et al., 2006; Leonard & Roberts, 1998; Smith et al., 2008). Scott and Wolfe (2000) examined a rehabilitation program for abusive men and the various communication skills taught in order to reduce both conflict and abuse. These were: conflict management, conflict resolution, an awareness of warning signs of anger, listening, and interventions to prevent the escalation of anger. Thus, constructive communication skills help partners to discuss negative emotions without abuse.

Mutual validation and support-giving can be seen by participant two who says "often I ask him if he still wants me or if he does not want me, if he still loves me or if he no longer loves me. He says he loves me very much. Then I say, but I love you just as much". Her dichotomy accepting her or rejecting her is striking in that it is repeated several times. She also leaves the decision to her husband, constructing herself as his property. Her statement "if he still wants me" implies that she is passive; her position in the relationship is dependent on his feelings towards her. However, in verbalising her fear that her husband might reject and leave her, there is an opportunity for him to respond positively, which he does by reassuring her. This gives her confidence in his love and her position as his wife, thus affirmation helps to build their love relationship.

Although emotionality is not verbal, Cummings and colleagues (2008) mention positive emotionality as being part of good communication. This can be seen in several participants as they perceive conflict as part of the relationship but not necessarily damaging to it. Participant 14 states repeatedly that her and her partner argue, but these things pass and do not hinder their relationship. Participant four says "if I am wrong then he tells me, you were wrong there, and then I have to understand that I am wrong... And if he is wrong, then he understands he is wrong. Then he says he is sorry and so on". The negotiation and working out of problems is essential to relationship satisfaction and positive communication experiences between partners. While many women find their partners do not accept responsibility for their actions and always demand to be right, some participants explained that their partners do listen to them and are able to sort problems out without a violent outburst.

Conflict resolution is another aspect of constructive communication. This refers to the solving of a particular issue or the diffusion of a conflict situation. Participant nine gives an example of discussing financial problems "I said, look this needs to be done, and this needs to be done. Then he says to me, mammie it is too little again. How are we going to make it now? And I said, look we must just be careful". When the emphasis is on the actual problem, and does not involve derogating one's partner, solving problems in a constructive way is easier. There is an obvious contradiction the above statement that couples calmly discuss issues and the previously mentioned statement that women claim their partners do not listen to what they say. It appears that both constructive and destructive communication occurs in the same relationship; and just as women recall the times when they have begged their partner to change without result, they also recall times when problems have been resolved. Another possibility for this apparent contradiction could be that when it comes to issues of abuse, and gender roles, men are not prepared to change. However, if the problem is exterior to them,

such as how to discipline children, then there is less emotion involved and it is less of a threat to the self, resulting in more constructive techniques being employed. Further studies into how men in intimate relationships regard communication would reveal more findings.

Choosing the right time to address an issue appears to be a vital part of conflict resolution for these women. As mentioned in the previous chapter, talking to one's partner when he is intoxicated or angry often results in violence. Participant four says choosing a time when her husband is calm is better because then they both listen and understand each other. Participant 11 says "when he comes home in the evening I will never be busy. I will come and sit next to my husband because I... want to spend time with him. Then I talk to him, with him, after our coffee. Then I will use the opportunity, then I say um – but if I can see he is very angry, then I won't talk about it". She attempts to create an environment that makes him calm and approachable in order to talk to him and discuss issues. Notice the hesitation before she explains why she puts everything aside when her husband comes home. She says she wants to spend time with him, but her story indicates she is aware and wary of his emotions the entire time. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) discuss the issue of ambiguous representations of the truth. Individuals invest in a particular position of discourse because they are trying to protect the vulnerable aspects of the self. It appears that this participant has positioned herself as the "good wife" who will always serve her husband out of free will. This positioning of herself needs to be maintained so there is less anxiety. Thus, on a deeper level she might realize that being attentive to her husband is more of a coping strategy than a desire of her own; however, to acknowledge that would bring her face to face with how she has been constructing the relationship. This would bring about a shift in perspectives, and she would have to acknowledge her fear of her husband and her feelings about his controlling behaviour.

Numerous women mentioned that privacy is essential for discussing serious issues. Participant eight says that she makes sure there are no children or friends around when they talk seriously, and that nighttime when they are in bed is the only opportunity she has to talk to him. Participant nine says "what we do is I close the bedroom door and then I say, look here man... here is a problem again. And then he will tell me to come and sit and we talk about it. Yes, he understands me quite a bit". She portrays herself as the one to address issues in the relationship. In doing so she positions herself as an active member of the relationship, and her husband is the one to respond. However, her statement "he will tell me to come and sit" implies that her husband still maintains authority in the home by deciding whether they talk about the issue or not.

In contrast, some women identified church members as an external source for assisting in conflict resolution. Participant seven explains that people from the church act as counsellors because they talk to her and her partner separately and then bring them together to reconcile. Participant nine says "No there are words that come out. There are words". Her emphasis on the words that come out is significant because without the presence of others her partner would not express his thoughts. There is some social pressure that the church creates, which appears to facilitate men's communication about their relationships.

Constructive communication styles are present in abusive relationships, indicating that an abusive relationship is not necessarily "all bad". Mutual validation, support-giving, positive emotionality and conflict resolution are all examples of constructive communication. Choosing the right time to talk, whether it is privately or with religious support, also promotes constructive communication.

This chapter has addressed the issue of communication in abusive relationships. Analysis of participants' narratives revealed how gender norms, power dynamics and woman abuse are all understood to impact communication between intimate partners. Women's experiences and understanding of communication with their partner is always constructed within the context of abuse, and the threat of violence. Consequently, woman abuse pervades all aspects of a relationship and an individual. We also explored at the destructive communication styles participants described, namely blame and demand-withdraw interaction. Finally, constructive communication styles were defined, and examples of "good" interactions were given. From this analysis on communication, we have been able to gain insight into how women construct their relationships, specifically how conflict is handled, and how abuse is coped with.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

There is a thread connecting the participant's narratives - it is that of gendered power dynamics. Regardless of whether women told stories of abuse or communication in their relationship, the issues of power and gender roles were made visible. Crossley (2000) regards power to be one of the most central motivations in human life. Similarly, feminists regard male power to be pervasive in society at large as well as within intimate relationships (Boonzaier, 2005). It is manifested in many ways, such as woman abuse, communication within the intimate relationship, and culturally-prescribed gender roles. This chapter concludes the thesis by drawing the various strands of this study together, accentuating the implications of this research and providing suggestions for further research.

GENDERED POWER DYNAMICS

Narrative analysis addressed the stories of woman abuse from the participants' perspectives. Emphasis was also placed on the language that was used in expressing these stories. Language is regarded as important for constructing social reality (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1999). It can be understood on a surface level, looking at the content of words. It can also be understood on a deep level where the interpretation looks at the meanings, emotional and attitudinal implications of what is said. In this study, this deep interpretation revealed how participants understood the abuse they experienced, and how they understood their own and their partners' roles in the relationship.

Gender roles were made explicit within the narratives of abuse. Women obey their partners

because "he is the husband". In this community there appears to be an internalisation of the traditional feminine role, which includes: support and care for one's husband; maintenance of the home and the relationship; subservience and obedience to the partner's wishes. Van Schalkwyk (2006) expounds femininity to include nurturing and selflessness despite the abuse. This gives us an insight into how men are defined within this culture. They are constructed as being strong, independent, and not accountable to their partners. To a large extent masculinity is determined by history, culture and society. Challenges to dominant masculinities often results in abusive behaviour (Morrell & Ouzgane, 2005). Woman abuse in this study was broken into physical, sexual, emotional, verbal and economic abuse. Participants spoke of the abuse as a part of life and constructed their partners as being good husbands outside of the abusive behaviour.

Feminists regard woman abuse as an attempt by men to regain power and fight the feelings of emasculation (Babcock et al., 1993; Sagrestano et al., 1999). However, in this study, men are perceived to hold absolute power in the relationship because of their abusive behaviour.

Gendered power dynamics are inherent to communication because our beliefs and attitudes are expressed through our talk and interaction. We have looked at the types of constructive and destructive communication described as occurring within participants' intimate relationships. Demand and withdraw was identified as a common destructive communication pattern in which one partner demands change, and the other withdraws or becomes defensive (Christensen & Heavey, 1990). While couples who avoid conflict in daily life are at risk longitudinally, abusive couples tend to engage in a pattern of "stale-mate" interaction (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989). Both partners demand when they want change, and both withdraw when the other partner wants change. However, the existence of woman abuse,

specifically physical abuse, influences communication. Participants stated that they could not just speak their minds, but had to think carefully about what to say, assess their partner's mood, and weigh up the possible consequence of abuse.

In this community, it is expected that men do not express themselves easily and that they are violent when experiencing intense emotion. It is expected that men be strong and in charge, not expressive or emotional. The person demanding change is generally the one with less power in the relationship. Women are socialised to be relationship-based, and the traditional feminine identity is one of a house-wife who stays home and attends to all her partner's needs. Women who internalise these gender norms (and there seems to be intense pressure from the community to do so) tend to be more dependent on their partners and also want more from the relationship. This places them at a power disadvantage relative to men (Christensen & Heavey, 1990).

Some participants had engaged in a power struggle with their partners. By not keeping quiet in an argument, or by giving their partners an ultimatum, these women were able to gain power in the relationship. Thus, as perspectives shift and women realise the traditional gender roles are oppressive, there tends to be a reaction and an attempt at autonomy. Autonomy does not necessarily result in a woman ending the relationship; all the women in this study were living with their partners at the time of the interview. Boonzaier (2001) states that power in an intimate relationship is always in flux. This study shows that even once a woman has "won" a power struggle by temporarily leaving her partner, or by not backing down in an argument, there is the chance her partner will attempt to gain control again by being abusive. Thus, power dynamics occur in all relationships, and plays out through the existence of abusive behaviour.

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXT

During the process of narrating their life with their partners, women revealed a great deal about the culture in which they live and the social pressures and expectations which shape their lives. Similar to findings by Richie and Kanuha (1997) these participants did not regard woman abuse to be the most pressing problem in their lives.

Alcohol was regarded to be the biggest struggle in their relationships with their partners. The 'dop' system created a culture where "drunken abuse" is deemed acceptable within this community. Alcohol abuse forms part of their socio-cultural context and impacts on the various other aspects of life, such as intimate relationships and finances. Every participant (with the exception of one) had experienced violence and had placed the cause as being alcohol. Thus, as feminism suggests, there needs to be a shift in consciousness for women to realise that the abuse is embedded in patriarchal relations of gendered power. However in attempting to understand women's narratives it is clear that constructing the alcohol as the 'cause' of their partners' behaviour, serves very particular functions. In the first instance, the cause of the violence is understood to be external to the individual – thus the man is constructed as not inherently violent. Further to this, women are also able to invest in constructing their partners with a dual identity – both good and bad. Men are constructed as bad/violent when under the influence of alcohol or drugs and good/non-violent when sober. Secondly, the construction of the link between violence and alcohol also makes women's positions as victims of such violence, more socially acceptable. It becomes understandable to the 'outsider' why women stay in such abusive relationships because their partners are also 'good' men. In this way women are able to shift the discourse away from being one of blame being placed on the woman who stays with her partner. In this way women construct a more

socially accepted discourse of a relationship that has some problems (like all others) but does not necessarily warrant ending.

Women's narratives of abuse are complicated by the fact that the community does not always regard abuse as a significant social problem. Furthermore, women face a number of additional hardships such as poverty, a lack of social and other resources, and job insecurity. These factors, which could be understood as a web of intersecting forms of oppression, are also central to how women construct the violence in their lives.

Regarding the narratives of abuse, the social institutions and networks either increased or constrained women's options for changing the circumstances in which they lived. Waller's study (2008) on disadvantaged couples found that the explanations for relationship longevity have connections to the culturally shared meanings about relationships. In this study, the cultural emphasis, for women in particular, is placed on making a relationship work, and persevering. This understanding is made clear throughout women's narratives as they explain how the various social networks support reconciliation above dissolution of the intimate relationship.

Family, friends and religion were identified as social networks which help or hinder abused women. All operate (unknowingly) according to specific social rules or norms. Primarily, they entrench the belief that intimate relationships are both private and sacred. The result is that women who reject this norm often face multiple hardships – that of ending a relationship, as well as being ostracized from the community, having nowhere to go and being blamed for not trying to make the relationship work. On the other hand, family and friends also offered social support for women who did not want to, or could not, leave the relationship. Women recall

going to friends and tearfully telling their stories. They are encouraged and motivated to carry on the relationship and to persevere in fulfilling their wifely duties. Women turn to religion and its beliefs for solace and encouragement (Kasturirangan, et al., 2004). In a sense, religion provides a healthy identity for a woman who is faced with identity degradation in her intimate relationship. By believing that she will be rewarded for being subservient and a good wife, she is able to find meaning in her abusive situation. If she can be a good Christian and a good wife to her husband, she is a good person and can use this knowledge to resist her husband's attempts to break down her self-esteem and dominate her. It is possible that without the presence of family, friends and religious affiliations, the effects of abuse on these participants' self-worth could be far worse. Arguably, women might have also decided to leave the relationship sooner if no one was there to enforce these particular social rules. There is still much to be understood regarding the role of religious beliefs and woman abuse. While religion does condone woman abuse by its acceptance of gender roles and social values, it does offer a supportive role to abused women. Thus, the role of religion is complex and is an area for further research.

Women were affected by their social networks as well as the social context. Crenshaw (2006) states that women of colour often have dual points of oppression, namely being women and being coloured. Women in this study experienced economic disempowerment because they did not have access to financial resources and were dependent on their partners for survival. To a large degree women are also dependant on the farmer who owns the land. At times the farmer provides assistance by obtaining treatment for an alcoholic partner but at other times women are reluctant to enforce protection orders against their partners for fear of being asked to leave their homes. Societal constraints made woman vulnerable to abuse by their partners. Police involvement was regarded to be a positive influence on the relationship, however

because police brought the threat of arrest, women felt they could not use police services to end the abuse. In South Africa, there is a lack of support for abused women in terms of shelters, access to legal aid and social workers, and employment opportunities for women to gain financial autonomy. Thus, the economic disempowerment women experience within this low-income semi-rural community greatly reduces the options women have. Adato and colleagues (2006) note that once an individual is in a "poverty trap" the socially-mediated access to earning money is absent. In other words, there is minimum opportunity for women to earn income as they are often in a position where they have no power in decision-making. However, as previously stated, some of the women overcome these oppressions by finding a job, or resisting their partners' attempts to control using money, or relying on neighbours for additional support.

Women in this study worked within this social-cultural context to cope with the abuse. Some women actively rejected the societal prescriptions, others appeared to support the norms but resisted in a less visible manner. Proffit (2000) states that empowerment is achieved when women develop assertiveness and affirmative capacities. It also occurs when women question the sacrifices of personal desires to meet their partners' needs. This study showed how the socio-cultural context ensnares abused women, but they are not without opportunity and they use these occasions to take charge of their situations. That the women made specific reference to these acts of resistance is significant, because it indicates a "fighting spirit" or agency within these women.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY AND POSSIBILITIES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study focuses only on women's experiences of abuse and communication. Over the past several years there has been an increase in the number of studies regarding abusers' constructions of abuse. However, there is not much research into men's experiences of communication. It has been found that abusive men exhibit certain communication styles and ways of thinking (Gottman & Krokoff, 1989; Rhoades & Stocker, 2006; Smith et al., 2008). In-depth qualitative studies looking at how abusive men experience the communication and interaction in their intimate relationships could prove to be beneficial and insightful.

This study is limited in the sense that the narratives of abuse and communication are women's narratives only. It would have been interesting and valuable to have access to their partners' constructions of both abuse and communication with the intimate relationship. Comparing the differences men and women have regarding how they understand and experience abuse and communication would be useful, and an area for further research.

During analysis it became clear that relationships do change over time. As mentioned previously, there are phases of intense abuse, phases of calm, and phases of abstinence from alcohol and abuse. When speaking to women whose partners are not currently abusive, I found myself wondering if this calm is just a phase, or whether the men had changed permanently. Follow-up studies would be an avenue for further research to explore how relationships change over time, and also how women's constructions of the relationship may change accordingly. Although time did not allow it for this particular study further studies of this nature should also endeavour to conduct multiple interviews with women to explore these changes in the relationship.

Alcohol abuse was constructed as being the sole cause for abuse by many participants. This

creates a situation where women are not willing to leave the abusive relationship because there is a hope that their partners will stop drinking. A practical response to this finding is that there is a need for access to alcohol and drug rehabilitation centres and support networks, such as alcoholics anonymous. There is a need for education regarding the effects of alcoholism on the body and on intimate relationships. This could be done formally, through organised ventures in connection with farm owners. Alternatively, awareness regarding alcohol abuse could be achieved through participatory action research which would actually involve community members in finding a solution to the problem of alcohol abuse. The prevalence of alcohol abuse, as well as the economic and social effects of excessive drinking on the family unit, is cause for concern among women in this community.

A study by Logan and colleagues (2003) found that urban and rural women experience woman abuse differently because of the context in which it occurs. Rural women lack resources, and live within a culture which supports male domination; perhaps more so than urban woman. Women in this community are economically disempowered by the farming context, namely the dependence on their partners and the farmers for housing and often not being able to work on the same farms that their partners work. The socio-cultural context influences so much of one's experience, and for these women, it frequently results in them being trapped in the abusive relationship. A small minority of women mentioned that farm owners were actively involved in trying to reduce women abuse by helping them with legal procedures. However, there also seemed to be distrust based upon race and a reluctance to rely fully on the farm owner; as one woman stated "the white people do not know what goes on here". In order to illuminate the racial, gendered and classed dynamics that have started to surface in this study, there is a need for more research into low-income rural communities. Further studies could provide more detail about the context and constructions of abuse by

interviewing religious leaders, social workers, and community leaders may thus broaden our understanding of such communities.

In conclusion, this research has addressed the issue of woman abuse in intimate relationships. Women do not construct themselves as passive, helpless victims, despite the intense relational and socio-cultural hardships with which they are faced. Women name their attempts to resist control, to gain autonomy and independence. Friends, family, religion and police services were identified as being sources of support as well as reinforcing oppression. Gendered power dynamics were shown to influence all aspects of the relationship, including decision-making, and the roles and expectations within the home. Communication was explored to better understand the abusive intimate relationship, and shed light on how power is exercised through talk. Women mention both constructive and destructive styles of communication that occur in the abusive relationship, however they describe their attempts at communication with their partners to be futile for the most part. In general, the intimate relationship is regarded to be both stifling and supportive, and women understand this to be a normal part of life.

In conclusion, this study has contributed to the growing body of literature on woman abuse in South Africa. It has provided insight into women's experiences of both woman abuse and communication within intimate relationships. Awareness of the gender, cultural, and relational struggles occurring within this community brings about further avenues to research and an opportunity to bring about change or empowerment among the women of this community.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Research participants

Appendix B: Consent form

Appendix C: Interview guideline

Appendix D: Transcribing conventions

APPENDIX A

Participant 1

Participant 1 is a 39 year old woman. She has been married for 19 years to a man who has physically, verbally and emotionally abused her since they were married. He has also been using drugs and alcohol since before then. They have 2 children, the youngest of which is 16 and the participant worries that their continual fighting is affecting his grades at school because he always has to intervene in the fights to protect his mother.

Her biggest issue throughout the interview is her husband's continual demand for money so that he can buy drugs. It is the source of most of their conflict, and she feels the drugs are the reason for his violence and their lack of communication. Money is used as a bargaining tool for her freedom – she is only allowed to visit friends if she gives him more money than usual.

She is very unhappy in the relationship at the moment, wanting to leave but realizing it is difficult when they have been together for so long, and there are children involved. She has considered both killing him and committing suicide as options for getting out of the relationship, but resists out of concern for what will happen to her children. When she did leave him in 2005 he only ever contacted her when he was drunk. It was his sister who eventually persuaded her to return home to him.

She identifies herself as the peacemaker in the home. To reduce the negative atmosphere she will apologize for making him angry after a violent episode. She regrets marrying him, but tries to keep a happy home environment for her children. She feels she is working on the

relationship by herself as there are many burdens she carries that he does not share. She feels she cannot share because he is scathing in his replies and often blames her. There is no intimate or emotional communication; they only speak about household issues, and only when he is sober. She expresses a longing that things in the relationship were different. In the beginning they did things together and it was romantic. She wishes he would appreciate her and stop doing drugs so they could talk and she would not have to be afraid of his reaction.

In 2004 she got a interdict against him because she could not take his violence anymore. He was sent to jail, but she dropped the charges because she needed hi to to work so they could live in his house and have enough income to live. The interdict has made him less violent, but he is still very jealous and demands money on a daily basis.

Participant 2

Participant 2 is 33 years old and has been married for a year and a few months. Prior to this, they were together for almost 20 years. She has 2 children, a daughter of 8 and a baby of 1 year. Her daughter lives with her grandmother in town so she can go to school there.

Currently the participant is very happy in her relationship, which underwent a dramatic change when they got married and stopped drinking. She expresses contentment, love and good communication despite their frequent disagreements. She has no desire for her relationship to change in anyway.

The narrative is primarily about their lives when they drank. She speaks with regret, self-blame and shame of how they wasted money and their lives for alcohol. In those days her

husband was very jealous and they fought all the time while drunk. Those days where characterized by miscommunication, begging for food and still spending all their money on alcohol. He attacked her with a broken bottle, and she often feared he would kill her while she slept. When she was drunk however, she felt no fear and she also attacked him with a broken bottle at one stage. She expressed deep shame and regret for that. After she gave him an ultimatum, saying she would leave him if he beat her up again, he stopped being violent. Thus, abuse appeared to be a secondary issue to the drinking. Nowadays, she speaks openly with her husband, although he does not speak so freely to her. She worries that he wants to leave her or will be unfaithful. She is home alone all day; she feels bored and lonely.

Participant 3

Participant 3 is 32 years old and has been married for 8 years. She has 3 children; 2 with her husband and one with another man. She says she is content in her relationship at the moment because there are no major problems. She tries to portray her husband in a positive light, but as she talks about him being intoxicated she indicates that he was difficult. She tells of how he accidentally hit her in the eye when she refused to switch on the electricity on in a storm. She also states she is scared of him when he drinks in case he accidentally hits her again. Furthermore, he used to beat his other girlfriends, chopping off one girl's leg in a drunken rage. She defends him by saying he never remembers what he does when he is drunk.

He has currently stopped drinking after she gave him an ultimatum – her or alcohol. She prides herself on persevering in the relationship and says God makes it possible through the difficult times. During conflict, the person who is in the wrong is expected to apologize, however she often feels she is right and he is wrong but will apologize to keep quiet to avoid a

fight. He often blames her for things that go wrong; she outwardly accepts the blame but secretly she reassures herself that she is right.

She thought of leaving him, but with both parents dead and no income she decided to stay. Once she was angry and left him, but he came to fetch her and she returned home with him. She does not keep company with the members of the community because the women drink and gossip. She looks to the church for support, and says her husband never wants to talk seriously. He always want to have the last say and be the winner. When she is unsure of his reaction, she will rather not confront or talk to him, but will try to diffuse the situation by making a joke.

Participant 4

Participant 4 is a 36 year old woman who has been married for 9 years. She has 2 children, and her husband has 3 children from other women. There is a lot of emphasis on her children in the narrative, specifically regarding how the domestic violence has affected them. Another concern is how her and her husband struggle to decide how to raise them. She want to raise them in a godly way and feels he is not fulfilling a fatherly role because he lets them do whatever they want. She thinks he is not a good role model for the children because of his drinking.

There was a great deal of infidelity, alcohol abuse, and verbal and physical abuse in their relationship until she left him. She wanted to divorce him, but went away for a week to see if he would change. She was tired of trying to make the relationship work and did not want him anymore. He came to fetch her, apologized for his behavior and stopped drinking. She

returned home because she felt it was the right thing to do, and because it was best for her children. However, she shows reservations about his changed behavior because he has stopped drinking on a previous occasion. She says this is the last chance for their relationship. Things are not 100% but she is prepared to work at it because change takes time. She has a positive attitude about the future, and is prepared to work hard.

The violence was always worse over the weekends because he drank over the weekend. She often took her children and slept by her aunt to avoid a violent episode. She has an interdict and often called the police, but is hesitant to use it because she needs his financial support so she does not want to send him to jail. Although she was scared every weekend, she tried to please him and often tried to not get in the way. She would take the blame and apologize for whatever he was angry about. She understands that he cannot verbalize his feelings and used beating her as a way to vent his feelings. However she feels the abuse was undeserved because she was on her place as his wife. She feels it is her duty to create a happy home environment for the children so she put the violent episode behind her and tries to behave normally. Rather than focusing on the abuse, she states he only hit her and at least he did not use weapons.

Faith in God plays an important role in her life. She feels that God has ordained their marriage and she trusts Him that her husband will not start drinking and being abusive again. The church also prays for them and has intervened on a previous occasion. In her commitment to make their marriage work, she has become more confrontational, talking about how things were, and his infidelity. She expects equality and gets angry when he expects her to listen to him but he does not listen to her. She still fears his reaction because previously any confrontation led to physical abuse. She is also willing to compromise more, by not going out

with friends because it makes him jealous and unhappy.

She is happy at the moment, although she mentions that he is irritable and things are not going so well at the moment because there is not enough money and they are in debt. This stresses him a great deal.

Participant 5

Participant 5 is a 30 year old woman who has been in a relationship with her boyfriend for 6 years. She has 2 children – a 4 year old son with this man and a 9 year old daughter with another man. Her first comment was relief that she can talk to someone about her relationship. She is desperate and unhappy, but she cannot share with the people in her community. She feels isolated and has no true friends because they all gossip about her relationship.

Her relationship with her boyfriend can be described as volatile. He uses buttons, pills, tik, dagga and alcohol on a regular basis, and she thinks this is what makes him so aggressive and violent. She often has to take Mondays off work because he is so abusive on the weekends that her face is all bruised and she does not want the white people to see her like that. They do not live together but he calls her whenever he wants to have sex, usually on weekends. If she refuses, he forces her anyway. She feels used, but believes him when he says he loves her. When she tries to discuss their relationship, he becomes aggressive and tells her they do not need to talk. In fact, he forbids her to talk most of the time. When she does get the chance, she feels she can never speak freely because she is scared of being beaten. If she does something he does not like, he will either publically humiliate her or drag her back to his house and beat her.

She thinks he will never stop being violent and does not see a future for their relationship. When she tried to leave he beat her so violently that she decided to stay. He wants to marry her and have another child, but she refuses because she knows the abuse will only get worse. She stays primarily because she does not want to leave her son behind. However her boyfriend is physically and verbally abusive towards his son, especially when he is angry with her. He does not contribute any money to child care or looking after her, and is physically abusive whenever she asks for anything. She finds it very difficult to provide for both her children without his support and really struggles financially. The participant states she does not mind working but feels it is wrong that her boyfriend takes no responsibility or interest in their child.

He is unfaithful, and whenever his other girlfriends come over he violently throws her out of his house to make space for them. She expresses sadness because in the beginning of their relationship he was not violent. Since he has started abusing her he has not stopped. He tore up the interdict she handed him and she has not bothered to get another one because it did not stop him from being violent. She feels hopeless and trapped in her relationship, acknowledging that she should leave, but being unable to do so.

Participant 6

Participant 6 is 42 years old. She has been married for 22 years and has 4 children with her husband. There is a son (23), twins who are 20 years old, and a 19 and 12 year old. She defines her relationship as mainly unhappy because of her husbands constant verbal abuse. He gets angry about everything, shouting insults and swearing at her and the twins at every

opportunity. He seems to enjoy shouting outside their house, which is a source of shame for her. Because the community members know what goes on in her relationship, she remains aloof and does not make friends with anyone. By pretending everything is fine and not showing her feelings, she hopes people will not realize what an unhappy life she leads.

Her husband provides financially for the family and she considers herself to have a luxury life. For this reason she will not divorce him even though she regrets marrying him, and no longer wants to be in the relationship. Weekends are particularly bad because her husband is only abusive when he is drunk and that is on the weekends. He never communicates during the week, but keeps in all his emotion until the weekend and then he shouts about it. By being a good wife and not losing her temper, keeping quiet, by not sleeping around or going to the smokkelhuis, she tries to prevent the verbal abuse. It does not help, and she expresses a wish he would drink so much alcohol he would die.

They never discuss their problems because he always belittles her and blames her, and then tells all his friends about how useless she is. When he is sober, he does not talk or discuss what makes him so angry. He stopped drinking for 3 months, and she describes him as being wonderful at that time. Now she does not see a chance for their relationship to work. She wanted to divorce him. But her son talked her out of it. He felt she was better off with him than alone because her husband provides for her. So she stopped the divorce procedure, but every weekend she wishes she had not done that.

Religion plays a role in her life. She believes her marriage vows were made before God and should not be broken. She also believes that God has a purpose for this abuse, and He will punish her husband at some stage. She will persevere in the relationship until her husband

changes. Thus, the only option she feels she has is to watch what she says to him, and to accept the situation.

Participant 7

Participant 7 is a 40 year old woman who has been married for 12 years and was with her husband for about 7 years before then. They have 3 children, aged 20, 16 and 13. she does not work, and considers herself a housewife, working for her husband by cleaning, washing and cooking. She is proud of the fact that he provides financially for her and the family.

She states that when they were younger her husband was physically and emotionally abusive. The aggression was related to alcohol intoxication, and she was often fearful on the weekends because that is when he would drink. She experienced him to be easily offended and aggravated – just a wrong look would make him angry – and she struggled to keep quiet in those times. She feels a person grows out of drinking and abuse. In their relationship, her husband's violence stopped when she fell pregnant. He is still a very jealous man. He often accuses her of infidelity and refuses to let her go anywhere on her own. She did not seem to mind this, or the fact that he often still shouts and swears at her.

Participant 8

Participant 8 is 49 years old and has been living with her boyfriend for 25 years. She has 3 children, 2 with her current boyfriend. There is a feeling of resignation from her as she speaks of continuing in the relationship, as if it is the only option. Their relationship is defined by intense violence. He physically, verbally, emotionally and sexually abuses her. With regards

to the latter, she has given up trying to resist him. She expresses constant fear of him and will run into anyone's house to escape him. The weekends are dreaded because he is particularly violent, and he forbids her to leave the house or see friends. Members of the community often try to speak to him about his behavior, but they are also scared of him, and he pays no attention to what they say.

She states that he is less violent since she got an interdict against him, but he swears constantly and is still rough with her. She got the interdict after he was violent with their daughter. Community members pressurized her to withdraw it and are unhappy because she phones the police so often. He comes home drunk every day and finds fault with everything. She never knows what to expect when he comes home and so she hates being there then. He is unpredictable and has a very bad temper.She has often thought of leaving him, and has done so at least three times, but the thought of leaving behind friends for good and starting over is too much effort for her. The times she did leave, she found her family treated her almost worse than he did, making her work and being drunk all the time. When he fetched her, she went with him. She says she would not mind if he left her, and if they did not have children she probably would have left him by now.

Participant 9

Participant 9 did not disclose her age, but revealed that she has been married for 29 years and had 5 children. Unfortunately one passes away shortly after being born. She describes her relationship as good and loves her husband. They chat comfortably and during the week he is pleasant to be around. On weekends he drinks, and she believes this is the reason he becomes so difficult. He is verbally and emotionally abusive, finding fault with everything she does,

and angrily swears at her for most of the weekend. She is scared of him because he often threatens to hit her, or he begins to and then stops. She thinks his lack of violence is due to their 22 year old son who would intervene to protect her.

Their relationship used to be calm and relaxed but since they moved to this farm, both her and her husband drink and fight a lot more. She feels it is their friends that encourage such behavior After a typical weekend, her husband is remorseful about how much he drank and his behavior She forgives him immediately and does not seem angry. Her drinking is a significant problem for the family. Her daughter attempted suicide because the participant was drinking too often. She promised to never drink again, but she does drink when nobody is around. She associates sobriety with a loving atmosphere at home, and intoxication with anger.

In an argument, she often shouts back at him, but will walk away because she does not want the community members to know about their private issues. Her husband is a very quiet man when he is sober; he does not talk about his life at all. But when he drinks, he is stubborn and always wants to fight. He can never say exactly what she does that displeases him so much, he just critises and insults her. He shouts all his grievances and forbids her to go out with her friends because he thinks she will be unfaithful. She defines herself as a good housewife, her only fault being her drinking, not infidelity. She acknowledges that he is the man and so she obeys his wishes.

Religious values are important in her life. The church intervenes whenever she starts drinking again. They give her advice about resisting temptation, and encourage her to trust God to help her overcome. She is very grateful for the church members support and care. Her belief that

God put her and her husband together causes her not to follow through with the thoughts of leaving her husband. She is ashamed, however, that he is not a Christian because the church members frequently ask about him.

Participant 10

Participant 10 is 55 years old and has been married for 22 years. She has 5 children, aged 32, 25, 24, 22 and 18 years old. She was reluctant to talk about her relationship with her husband when they were younger. He drank a lot, and was both physically and verbally abusive. Her philosophy is that it is best to leave things of the past alone, and her mother taught her to always focus on the future.

She did describe how their relationship during the time her husband drank a lot. He was rough with her and she often had to run out of their house to escape him. Weekends were the worst because he spent all their money on alcohol and beat her frequently. She often had to rely on community members for food for her family. He would find fault with everything she did and was always angry. She found that period very difficult and describes herself as always being scared. I found she struggled to describe in what ways those times were bad. She states she always pretended there was nothing wrong in her relationship. Her mother taught her that family affairs are private and she did not want others to know what hard her life was.

At a certain point, her husband became very ill. He had to stop drinking alcohol, and it was at this time their relationship experienced a dramatic change. He was no longer able to work, and there was a change of roles in their relationship. She now provides financially, and he does housework. She laughs at the realization that he now works for her. He asks her when he

wants to go out with friends, and since he has stopped drinking she finds that communicating with him is a lot easier. She is no longer scared to talk to him Although she is very content and happy in her relationship now, she left him once when he was abusive. However while she was away, he was stabbed one evening at the smokkelhuis so she came back to care for him. He caused so much trouble when he was younger; she thanks God that her husband became a Christian She would not consider leaving him now because they have been through so much and things are better.

Participant 11

Participant 11 is 39 years old and has been with her husband since she was 19 (20 years). She has 4 children, 3 with her husband. She is currently looking after her baby, but would like to start working again because they struggle financially.

She tells her story in a very thought out way, and I find out later that she often tells her life story to abused women at her church, to encourage women to stay in their marriages, do their best and keep trusting God to change their husbands behavior She tells this story in a very positive manner, often explaining how much she learned and grew from some horrific abuse experiences. She thanks God at several points throughout the interview for keeping her alive, and continuously praises her husband's abilities and strengths.

He was her first boyfriend, but he cheated on her and they only got back together again when she was 24 years old. By this time he was heavily involved in drugs, had been in jail for domestic violence and was very abusive. Without alcohol in him, she describes him as being a wonderful man, and that she has been waiting for the real him to emerge all these years.

She became a Christian in 1989, and this forms the primary theme of her narrative. She describes numerous abusive incidents, and goes on to say how her husband's violence has been a test of her faith in God. She feels she has had to learn to rely on God's protection because there is nobody else to help. Her parents are dead and the community members are also scared of her husband. She believes she cannot ask God for his help if she harbors angry or bitter thoughts against her husband. Thus, despite the abuse, she forgives him, apologizes for whatever has made him angry, and carries on. She believes her love, persistence, and trust in God is what enabled him to change, as well as her attempts to do everything perfectly at home so he would realize how good she is, and change. By never responding to his goading and abuse in a defensive, mean way, she did her best to change him. A Christian woman should put others first, support and submit to her husband at all times.

The abuse was intense and she admits to being attacked by her husband every evening. Two years ago, things were going very badly in their relationship. There was no money and he was always on drugs. He also raped her. She was losing hope. She got an interdict against him, but it made no difference to how he treated her. When he physically attacked one of her children, she gave him an ultimatum – drugs or her. He went to a rehabilitation clinic for 3 months, and when he came back her was sober, and had become a Christian She had thought of leaving him previously, but without family and a place to go, she decided to persevere in the relationship. She wanted to provide a good example for her children as a family.

Since this change, she describes him in idealistic terms. He is upright, wise, and has so much to teach her. He is always right and often tells her how wrong she is, which she appreciates because it makes her a better person. Further inquiry reveals that despite his changed behavior

he still gets very angry if she talks to him too harshly. She acknowledges she has to be wary of what she says and how she says things to him. She is always the one to apologize and restore the relationship, and only stands up to him when he has hurt the children. Even then, however, she knows she must phrase it nicely and not be too accusatory. He stopped drinking for 1 year at a certain stage, but she still feared him and was not comfortable to talk or relax around him. While she expected the relapse last time, she is sure that this time the change is permanent.

Participant 12

Participant 12 does not disclose her age, nor how long her and her husband have been married, but does say that she has 3 children, and he has another 2. She had 3 miscarriages before the birth of their last daughter, and she believes this is due to the fear and stress of violence in their relationship. Her husband had started drinking again, and the previous evening he had violently attacked her and kicked her out the house. She is very disturbed by his drinking, feeling that this is a turning point in their relationship – he will never stop drinking, and she expects to be physically and verbally abused every evening when he comes home drunk from the smokkelhuis. She considers alcohol to be the biggest problem in their relationship. He stopped drinking for a while, from the time he was in jail for domestic violence until recently, and she describes him as wonderful. He was relaxed, and hearing gossip about him did not bother him at all. However, she does mention that he does not speak at all when he is sober. When he drinks he is violent, aggressive and derogatory. He just shouts out all his grievances, and does not listen to anything she says. He wants her to agree with everything he says, and not contradict him. In the morning he never remembers anything that he did the previous evening.

She feels the community does not stand together and that they do not like her. They are never willing to offer help or a place for her to stay, but will gossip about her troubles all the time. It hurts her that they take her husband's side and actually come to her house to shout at her for involving the police. At the moment the participant and her husband are at a trial for his domestic violence, and she tells of how both her husband and the community have pressured her to drop charges. She refuses because if she does she knows the abuse will just get worse, and her children cannot take anymore. She blames alcohol and his friends for her husband's violent behavior She actually accused them for giving him alcohol without knowing what he is like when he comes home.

She contemplates leaving him, but has nowhere to go. Her family will not take her back and nobody in the community will help her. She has no job because her husband forbids her to work, saying that he married her to be a housewife; to cook and clean. She has repeatedly asked him to make up his mind whether he wants her as his wife or not, but he cannot have her and treat her this way. She feels it is his decision to make, not hers. Thought of killing him have entered her head, but she worries about what will happen to her children. She needs him to work for the house and money.

Participant 13

Participant 13 is a 55 year old, and cannot remember exactly how long she and her husband have been together, but it is almost 40 years. They had 4 children, although 1 has subsequently passed away. She does not have a job, but would love to work.

She describes her marriage as having good and bad times, and that they would fight sometimes. Whenever he is drunk or has used drugs he is very violent. The intensity of abuse has decreased over the years; he was continuously drunk and violent early in their relationship. She thinks she would probably be dead by now if he carried on in that way. She attributes the lessened abuse to the fact that her son is now older and intervenes if her husband hits her, as well as the threat of sending him back to jail to complete his 5 year sentence for domestic violence. The interdict that she got helped for a little while, but then he tore it up and carried on being abusive. Now if she even mentions the police, he beats her.

Her husband stopped drinking for a while when he developed a stomach ulcer. When sober, he is quiet and relaxed. When they moved to his farm, he started drinking again, and she believes it is because of the type of friends he keeps. She expressed disappointment and hopelessness at his resumed drinking because of the inevitable violence that will occur. He is unpredictable – sometimes nice, other times he is angry and abusive. However, the weekends are usually feared because he drinks at the smokkelhuis and then comes home to fight. He is physically, verbally and emotionally abusive towards her. She believes that it is the combination of drinking and using drugs that causes him to be so violent, although she admits he is aggressive even when he is sober.

Her relationship with other people in the community is strained because he forbids her to help others in need and share things. On the other hand, if he wants something she has to ask the same community members. They resent her because they know he earns a good salary. They do not know that she never receives any money and has no say in money issues at all. If she asks for money he gets angry and abusive.

She has never left him, but he often kicks her out the house for a couple of days at a time. Her mother did not take her in, saying she needed to make the marriage work. She regrets marrying him but has persevered through so much in the relationship that she would not leave him now. She wishes he would treat her better – she is always left to fend for herself on the weekends, and often feels lonely. The never discuss issues, but often fight and shout their problems. He blames her for his violent behavior because she shouts back at him in an argument. She feels that this accusation is justified because she does not keep quiet. She knows she should just keep quiet like other women because it prevents the violence from escalating. He complains about everything and criticizes all she does, but it is when he insults her mother that she really feels hurt and angry. She does not think it is fair that he never tries to understand her and that he always wants to be right.

Participant 14

Participant 14 is a 51 year old woman who has been married for over 20 years. They have one son who is in his 30s. Her relationship with her husband is now very good; they rely on and understand each other. Due to illness and injury, neither of them work and money is tight, but they do not talk about the future. He is quite a few years older than her. They persevere through arguments, bad times, health issues, their relationship etc. and just accept whatever happens. She does not enjoy dwelling on past hurts and problems, and was a little reluctant to talk of how their relationship was in the past. However, she does disclose that her husband was very violent early in their relationship when they both used to drink a lot.

She explains how she would probably have been killed by now if they both had not stopped drinking. She could never tell him when he did something that hurt her, he always became

angry. There was infidelity, fighting and she expresses being scared of him. When he drank, she kept quiet and often ran away to avoid being beaten. It did not bother her to run away or hide; she felt it was a better option that staying and being abused.

Even though she describes herself as being very unhappy early in the relationship, she never considered divorce. She spent weekends with her mother, but would always be encouraged to go back to her husband. Thus, when he came to fetch her, she would forgive him because he is the husband. Her views on feminine roles are well-defined. She feels women should not drink as it makes them want to dominate their husbands and this causes conflict. Women are supposed to make sure that things run smoothly in the home, and look after the children. She feels it is her duty to care for her husband. She stopped drinking because her son told her he was unhappy and ashamed to bring friends home.

Participant 15

Participant 15 is 35 years old and has been married for 12 years. She had 2 children, but her eldest daughter was recently murdered so there is one son left. She believes that everything happens for a reason, and feels that nobody can understand what it is like for her to lose her daughter. Her husband is an alcoholic and she always accepted that, but with the death of their daughter she hoped he would stop. His increased drinking and apparent lack of emotion about their daughter, has led her to reassess their relationship. She questions why she even has a husband, and regrets marrying him. Throughout the interview she states that she is tired of the way their relationship is, and really cannot go on like this.

She feels as if she is working on their marriage alone; carrying the burden of raising children

and trying to discuss issues. She does not need him on a personal level anymore – he does not protect her, care for her, share anything with her, or look after himself so that he will live longer. Thus, there is a sense of finality in her narrative, of how she has applied for her own house, and will work for the child on her own, and does not want to be with him anymore. But further conversation reveals that she wants to grow old with him, and she wants his support and companionship. She is tired of worrying about him, and trying to make him take his medicine, and trying to make the relationship work when it seems all he wants to do is drink with his friends. One of the reasons she is leaving him is so that it will not her responsibility if he falls ill again. She left him once, but had to come back because he became very ill and she had to care for him. He never appreciates what she does for him.

Her son is all she has left and she feels very protective towards him. She tells of her dreams for him, and how she fears something might happen to harm him. She feels her husband is not a good role model for her son. Her husband drinks all the time, and is badly scarred from falling off the tractor during an epileptic attack. She is ashamed to be seen with him because other people will gossip about how bad he looks and how he behaves when he is drunk. Gossip in the community is a big problem – she says they live for gossip. It causes her to be isolated and not to talk to any of her friends about her relationship or her daughters death.

Money is a problem in their relationship because he never wants to share what he earns, and says that the house and his earnings are his. She is frustrated because she says she works for the family but he works for drinking money. He is aggressive whenever she asks for money, and she now refuses to beg for anything from him. She is determined not to need him. Communication between them is strained. She refuses to speak to him when he is drunk because he never remembers their conversations, and he becomes stubborn and wanting to

fight. He accuses her of trying to be the boss in the relationship. But when he is sober, he refuses to talk to her or discuss any problem in their relationship. She feels that her say is worthless, and even though she is his wife, his friends come first. At this point in time, she has nothing left to say to him.

APPENDIX B

ONSENT FORM

he purpose of this research is to explore communication between people who are in abusive relationships. 'e want to understand how abuse influences communication in an intimate relationship. We also want to ıderstand how women express themselves; what they think about the communication in their own lationships, and how woman abuse influences this communication.

. this part of the study, I am not going to ask you many questions, but I would like it if you would just talk ɔout your relationship with your partner – how you communicate, how the violence impacts the way you lk with your partner, what frustrates you, and what you enjoy in the relationship. I want to spend this ɔur listening to what you say about your relationship with your partner. There is not a right or wrong way ' having a relationship, just tell how it really is for you.

ou will get a R20 food voucher just to say thank you for your participation and time.

ou may feel uncomfortable to talk about your relationship. I understand that and I will do everything ɔssible to minimize your discomfort. Please feel free to tell me about any difficult or negative emotions at come up for you as a result of your participation in this research. You are more than welcome to stop is interview at any time. It is possible that some of the questions will remind you of painful experiences at you have experienced in the past. Please tell me about this because there are counselors available if ɔu would like help.

very effort will be made by the researcher to keep the information in this study confidential. Names and ɔntact details will be kept by the researcher and every name will be replaced with a code. Your name will

ɔt be named in any publications that may result from this study.

ou agree that your participation in this study is completely voluntary and that you can withdraw at any ne without any negative effects. If you have any questions regarding your participation in this study, you ın phone Desiree Gardiner 082 555 7191 or my supervisor, Floretta Boonzaier 021 650 3429.

y signing below, you agree that you have read and understood the consent form, and that you agree to ırticipate in this study.

ırticipant's signature Date

ŊWILLING OM DEEL TE NEEM FORM

ie doel van hierdie navorsing is om kommunikasie tussen mense wat in n geweldadige verhouding is te ıdersoek. Ons wil beter verstaan hoe gesinsgeweld kommunikasie beinvloed in n verhouding. Ons will ɔk weet hoe vroue hulleself uitdruk; wat dink hulle van die kommunikasie in hulle eie verhoudings; en ɔe gesinsgeweld hierdie kommunikasie beinvloed.

. hierdie deel van die studie, ek gaan nie jou baie vrae vra nie, maar ek wil he dat jy net praat oor jou ɛrhouding met jou man - hoe julle kommunikeer, hoe beinvloed die geweld die manier jy met jou man ɑaat, wat frustreer jou en wat jy geniet in die verhouding. Ek wil hierdie uur spandeer om te hoor wat u ɔr jou verhouding met jou man se. Daar is nie n regte of verkeerde maneer om n verhouding te he, vertel y net hoe dit regtig vir jou is.

' sal R20 food voucher kry net om dankie te se vir u deelname en tyd.

it is moentlik dat jy ongemaklik voel om oor jou verhouding te praat. Ons verstaan dit, en sal geen moeite ıtsien om u ongemak te minimiser. Voel asseblief vry om met die navorsers te praat oor enige moelike nosies of negatiewe gevoelens wat ontstaan as gevolg van u deelname aan hierdie narvorsing. U is meer welkom om die onderhoud enige tyd te stop. Dit is moontlik dat die vrae u sal herinner aan pynvolle varinge wat u in die verlede beleef het. Noem dit asseblief aan die navorser, beraders sal beskikbaar wees ɔu u hulle hulp benodig.

lke poging sal deur die navorser aangewend word om al die inligting in hierdie studie, streng vertroulik te ɔu. Name en kontak besonderhede sal slegs deur die navorser gehou word en elke naam sal deur n kode ɛrvang word. U naam sal nie in enige publikasie wat die gevolg van hierdie studie is, genoem word nie.

stem saam dat u deelname aan hierdie studie heeltemal vrywillig is en dat u enige tyd kan onttrek sonder ıige negatiewe gevolge. As u enige vrae rakende u deelname aan hierdie studie het, kan u Desiree ardiner 082 555 7191 of my toesighour, Floretta Boonzaier 021 650 3429 skakel.

eur hierdie onder te teken, dui u aan dat u die toestemmings vorm gelees en verstaan het en dat u instem n deel te neem aan die navorsingstudie.

eelnemer handtekening Datum

APPENDIX C

Interview guidelines

Hoe oud is jy?

How old are you?

Is jy getroud? Hoe lank is jy en jou man saam?

Are you married? How long have you and your partner been together?

Het jy kinders?

Do you have children?

Werk jy? Wat se werk doen jy?

Do you work? What work do you do?

Vertel my van jou verhouding met jou man

Tell me about your relationship with your partner

- Kan jy gemaklik met hom gesels?
- *Do you feel you can talk freely with him?*
- Is jy ooit bang om vir hom te se wat jy dink of voel?
- *Are you ever afraid to tell him what you think or feel?*
- Hoe bespreek jy sensitiewe of belangerike sake met jou man?
- *How do you discuss sensitive or important issues with your partner?*
- Is dit vir jou makliker of moeliker om met jou man te praat as julle dronk is? Hoekom dink jy dit is so?
- *Do you find it easier or more difficult to talk with your partner when you or/and your*

partner are intoxicated? Why do you think this is?

- Het jy iemand met wie jy kan praat?
- *Do you have somebody you feel you can talk to?*

Hoe voel jy na jou man jou beseer het?

How do you feel after your partner has hurt you?

Hoe verander die manneer hoe jy met jou man kommunikeer na n geweldadige episode?

How does the way you communicate with your partner change after a violent episode?

- Is julle gesprekke enigsins ongemaklik?
- *Is conversation awkward or stilted at all?*
- Hoe is dit vir jou om inligting met jou man te deel na die stryd?
- *How do you feel about sharing information with your partner after the fight?*
- Beskryf hoe die gesinsgeweld jou gevoelens teenoor jou man beinvloed?
- *Describe how the violence affects your feelings towards your partner*

Vertel my van n keer waar daar goeie kommunikasie tussen julle was, en een waar daar slegte kommunikasie was.

Tell me about an experience you and your partner had where there was good communication and one where there was poor communication between you two.

Wat dink jy bepaal goeie kommunikasie tussen n man en vrou?

What do you consider communication between intimate partners to include?

- Waaroor wil jy met jou man kan gesels?
- *What sort of things would you like to talk to your partner about?*

- As jy einge iets vir jou man kan se, wat sal dit wees?
- *If you could tell him anything, what would you say?*

Het jy al ooit gedink om jou man te los?

Have you ever thought of leaving your partner?

Het jy ooit die polisie ingeroep of n interdik gekry? What het gebeur?

Have you ever called the police or gotten an interdict? What happened?

APPENDIX D

Transcription detail

- - Conversation is cut off (either by other speaker or by participant who interupts her own sentence to say something else).
- ( ) stating a non-verbal incident that occurred in the interview. For example (she was crying)
- (( )) an explanation of the text that may be confusing
- ?? Incomprehensible word or phrase
- ... Pause

___ Underlined word indicates emphasis or loudly spoken