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**Of butter knives, juice boxes, and turning points:
Accounts of domestic violence on two sides of the Atlantic**

Greta Kenney, KNNGRE002

Supervisor: Dr. Melissa Steyn

A minor dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy in Diversity Studies

Faculty of the Humanities
University of Cape Town
24 June 2011

COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Abstract

This qualitative comparative analysis examines the experience of being in an abusive relationship as well as of leaving it from the perspective of domestic violence survivors and their service providers. Seventeen semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in June and July of 2010 in Boston, and January through March of 2011 in Cape Town – thirteen with *survivors* and four with *service providers* – were analysed, drawing on feminist frameworks, to elicit the discursive themes employed. This work demonstrates the inadequacies of analysing domestic violence as solely an individual problem *or* merely as a structural issue. Instead, I argue for a comprehensive approach to understanding women's experiences with intimate family abuse by acknowledging the complexities of how external factors explicitly *inform* a person's internal process when navigating an abusive relationship. Social and institutional factors such as *legal responses*, formalised *resources*, *religion*, and problematic *discourses* shape survivors' internal developmental and emotional processes, such as *emotional obstacles*, experiencing a *turning point*, *accessing outside information*, and *self-empowerment*. This work prioritises the voices of those affected by domestic violence and thus bridges a gap in the field, providing a comparative analysis that is qualitative in nature.

Acknowledgments

I am standing on the shoulders of giants. It is an honour to thank the many people who helped make this thesis possible.

My gratitude and admiration go to the courageous and amazing women who I interviewed for this project. Thank you for opening up and letting me in.

I am indebted to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Melissa Steyn for her support, guidance, enthusiasm, expertise, flexibility, and humour. There aren't words to convey my gratitude and appreciation for the incredible learning experience you have provided me with.

I am grateful to Jane Bennett, Claire Kelly, Thierry Luscher, Deborah Posel, Helen Scanlon Marita McComiskey, Evelyn Simien, C. Wesley Younts, and Carole Thompson who have taught, educated, and mentored me at the University of Cape Town, the University of Connecticut, and in life. It is because of each of you that I have accomplished what I have.

I would like to thank Haley McEwen, Theresa Daniels, Charmaine van Kradenburgh, Wickus Joubert, and Galiema Darries for their behind-the-scenes support.

This thesis would not have been completed if it weren't for the support, camaraderie, and intellectual stimulation from my student colleagues and friends Sepideh Azari, Jeannie Elliot, Emily Garcia, JP Solomon, Tauriq Hartley, and many others. I am particularly indebted to my TPMs Danya Davis and Tanya Charles for holding me accountable and convincing me it could be done. I owe the world to Emma Arogundade for her honesty, openness, and love. Em, you – and our friendship – inspire me.

I am forever grateful to Deborah Hughes, Tracy Wetterlow, Alex Cody, Eliza Cody, Gretchen Ferrari, Alejandro Montero, Judi Sabella, Rebecca Lumsden, and Bianca Takaoka for their support, humour, and encouragement. Even from across the pond, I felt every ounce of positive energy you sent my way.

Words cannot express the love and gratitude I have for my family – my sister Alycia Kenney Montero and my parents Mary Cody-Kenney and John Kenney. It is because of you that I leapt. Your unconditional love, endless support, and insightful wisdom are the reasons this thesis got done.

To Cindy de Bruyn, Rachel Doyle, and Whitney Barnett – you are my South African family. It simply wouldn't have happened without you. Thank you for being my sounding boards, my rocks, and for giving such great fireside advice. The endless fits of laughter made it all manageable. Rooms, thank you for being my expert proof reader and for your future dusting, in a manner of speaking. Brain especially, thank you for the trees, tart, and for my cubes and crown. You were my biggest cheerleader and believed in me when I couldn't.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood. –Audre Lorde¹

1.1 Background

The United Nations Development Fund estimates that one in three women will experience abuse – physical, sexual, or emotional – in her lifetime². A 2005 study conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) reveals that a woman is more likely to be harmed by a current or former intimate partner than by any other person (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006). To clarify, that is over 994 million women who endure gendered violence at the hands of someone she knows and trusts; 994 million human beings with favourite colours, senses of humour, fond childhood memories, and very real experiences with trauma and abuse. One sixth of the world’s population has been isolated, humiliated, and demeaned through the misuse of words and hands. As either a primary or secondary survivor, every single person on this planet – each and every one of us – is affected by domestic violence.

As Garcia-Moreno et al. (2006) point out, “violence against women is a serious human rights abuse and public health issue” (1260). Similarly, domestic violence is unapologetically pervasive and all-too-common; it is proven to be psychologically damaging (see Golding, 1999), bad for your physical health (see Campbell, 2002; Campbell et al., 2002) astronomically expensive³, and it teaches young people to engage in abusive behaviour, continuing the cycle of abuse (see Bevan and Higgins, 2002). However, even with the recognition of its gravity, it remains a very real risk for women globally. While the WHO

¹ From a speech given at the Modern Language Association’s “Lesbian and Literature Panel,” Chicago, 28 December 1977.

² From *Not A Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women*. 2003. United Nations Development Fund for Women, New York. Retrieved on 24 March 2011 from http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=7

³ The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that domestic violence abusers cost the U.S. government \$5.8 billion annually in victims’ health care costs and lost work productivity. This number does not include the costs incurred by law enforcement agencies in response to, and investigations of instances of domestic violence, nor does it account for the time and money spent in other branches of the civil and criminal legal system.

study, and others of a similar vein, are essential in that they capture the sheer magnitude of the prevalence of domestic violence, they leave us knowing nothing about the impact of violence and abuse on an individual level, as well as the intricacies involved in successfully leaving a violent relationship. Similarly, much of the existing research in the field focuses primarily on systemic causes and factors that increase a person's risk of becoming a victim of intimate partner abuse, as well as institutional factors that create obstacles for women when they attempt to leave the abusive relationship. Much of the qualitative research that explores individual experiences is not only outdated, but also examines domestic violence within one static context. It is within these gaps that my research is situated.

It is a commonly held belief that women⁴ who are in domestic violent relationships “should” leave their abusive partner. In fact, we often ask the patriarchal and victim blaming question, “why doesn't she just leave?” This question, at the very least, is an oversimplification of a complex dynamic of power and control that fails to place responsibility on the person actively perpetrating violence. Leaving an abusive partner is complex and dangerous; it is often a lengthy process that involves outside supports. For women who choose to leave their abusive relationship, and are able to successfully do so, how did they go about it? The research presented here traces the experience of creating distance – geographical and emotional – between a survivor and her abuser.

Working as a domestic violence case manager and advocate in metro-Boston, Massachusetts for three years starting in 2007 gave me an on-the-ground, grass-roots-level understanding of the complexities and dynamics of domestic violence. Working side-by-side with victims and

⁴ While men absolutely experience domestic violence, the overwhelming majority of domestic violence victims and survivors are women. Because of this, I will use gender-specific pronouns, referring to victims and survivors as women. This is, however, not intended to erase or render invisible the experiences of men who are victims of domestic violence.

survivors invoked in me an internal push to research the experiences of women's abuse and attempts (successful or otherwise; in theory or in practice; literally, or emotionally) to leave the domestic violence situation. Similarly, I am curious about how those providing support to domestic violence survivors view the experiences of the victims they work with. My concern is not with the magnitude and scope of domestic violence on a macro level, but with how abuse is experienced by individuals, and how survivors and service providers make sense of domestic violence.

While volunteering at a domestic violence shelter in Cape Town in 2009, I spoke to residents about the abuse in their intimate relationships. I was struck by what seemed to be both similarities and differences in the experiences of abuse survivors in Cape Town as opposed to survivors in Boston. I noticed that the actual experience of the abuse seemed to hardly differ. The details of the abuse varied, but the overarching presence of power, control, manipulation, isolation, and humiliation in the relationship, exerted by the abuser, were present for women from the two cities in both countries. Additionally, the way in which survivors seemed to deal with the abuse, on an emotional level, appeared to be similar. In particular, it appeared to me that the dynamics of abuse and the tactics employed by perpetrators, as well as the way in which trauma is experienced seemed to be the same cross-culturally and trans-nationally. Essentially, abuse and trauma seems to transcend national contexts. However, the differences that seemed apparent were in the resources available to survivors transitioning out of the abusive relationship. Women in Boston appeared to have a wider net of support services to aid them in leaving the abusive relationship, while Capetonian women seemed to struggle to leave their abusers with little or no support and/or resources.

1.2 Problem Identification

It is out of observations such as the above that this research was born. I am left with questions. What is it like to endure domestic violence in Cape Town, and in Boston? Are there parallels between survivors' experiences across country of origin, culture, language, and race? How do women understand their abusive relationship and make sense of leaving it? How do domestic violence service providers understand how victims navigate abusive relationships, as well as accessing resources? Does a person's location determine or differentiate the abuse they experience? Do women have more or less access to resources, and thus, more or less support to leave an abusive relationship, depending on where they are living? Of course, when considering one's location, I am not simply concerned with where one resides, but acknowledging the varying systems and institutions, as well as historical, cultural, and political factors that contribute to the overall way of life in that particular place. And how do such differences, in turn, impact the experience of abuse and trying to leave such relationships?

1.3 The aim and delimitation of the research

The aim of this research is to capture the lives of a handful of women, as they have been impacted by domestic violence. I intend to make no broad sweeping generalisations or conclusions about all survivors, or how they access safety from their abusers. Rather, this work acts as a "slice of life", a window into the lives of women from Boston and Cape Town who experienced abuse at the hands of their romantic partners. The forthcoming comparative analysis is not of systemic gendered violence between two nations, but rather of the experiences of women from two different countries. Similarly, no conclusions will be made about the commonalities and differences of domestic violence survivors in all first world and developing nations, nor is this a cross analysis of violence against women in the global north

versus the global south. Of particular interest is the ways in which individual survivors endure emotional and physical abuse, the “weighing up” that they do when negotiating whether or not to remain in the relationship, what happens for them internally as they begin the process of accessing safety, and how they make sense of these experiences, and how all of this may look both similar and different for those living in the greater Boston and the metro Cape Town areas. No conclusions will be drawn about the impacts of domestic violence in any other geographical contexts.

1.4 Limitations of the research

As with any body of research, there are limitations within this work. Because my research aimed to gain in-depth insight into personal experiences rather than to make larger scale generalisations, my sample size of respondents is relatively small. While one could always have interviewed more respondents, it was not deemed to be necessary for the research design. Moreover, the word limit placed upon this thesis did not allow me to explore all of the possible themes that were revealed from the in-depth interviews that were conducted, and I had to use my judgement as to the most pertinent to write up. It was my goal to have a diverse population of interview respondents, and while I was able to interview a diverse range of women, I was not able to secure interviews with any black African or lesbian women in Cape Town in the period available for field work. I view this as a drawback to my research and findings.

An additional limitation of this research lies in the type of analysis that is executed. As I conducted a thematic analysis, I do not fully explore the discourses that the broader society employs when talking about gendered violence. In her critique of the individualistic research bias, Fine (1989) calls into question the way that research on the individual “contributes to a

discourse that finally blames individual survivors,...decontextualize[s] a woman from her political, social, and personal worlds,...[and] renders oblique the structures of patriarchy, racism, classism, and advanced capitalism that have sculpted what appear to be the ‘conditions’ or ‘choices’ of her life” (551-552). While a critical discourse analysis must be conducted on the ways domestic violence is framed, politicised, and depicted on multiple levels – legally, socially, academically, and popularly – this research does not embark on that critique. As a result, the language I use could be regarded as problematic, as it does not actively contribute towards deconstructing stereotypes and the overarching patriarchal socio-political structure that helps to shape our culture of violence. That is, this research does not fundamentally shift the way in which we talk about gendered violence. That being said, it is my argument that deeply engaging with the impacts of domestic violence on the individual is essential in understanding the intricacies of living with, and leaving an abusive relationship. Without a doubt, the overarching systems and structures are responsible for supporting a culture of gendered violence; however, that does not give us permission to ignore the stories of those most directly impacted.

1.5 Contribution of this research

This work will examine the existing relevant literature, outline the methodology used, and conduct a thematic analysis of the relevant themes before drawing conclusions and determining where we must go from here. This thesis will not report on the prevalence of gendered violence or the risk factors associated with becoming a victim as many other comparative analyses do using quantitative research; it instead tells an extraordinarily important story prioritising women’s own understanding of their experiences with abuse. Having worked closely in the field of domestic violence – both on the ground, side by side with those affected, and as a researcher within an academic institution – it seems to me that

there is a large disconnect between what is written about domestic violence from the academy and how it impacts those who are forced to endure it. This piece prioritises survivors' own meaning making of the violence they experience, not through psychological, health, or legal frameworks, but through examining the language they *themselves* use. One of the aims of this research is to accurately highlight the complexities of domestic violence by exploring the connection between the societal and individual factors that impact a woman's experience with intimate violence. By comparatively analysing the experiences of domestic violence survivors through one-on-one in-depth interviews, I have created space for thirteen women to tell their stories. These stories are used to help us genuinely understand how survivors make sense of their paths to safety, as well as the emotional and physical violence that precedes it.

University of Cape Town

Chapter 2: Methodological Approaches

This chapter will outline the methodological approaches used while conducting this research. The sections of this chapter deal with research design and methodological choices, data collection, and data analysis. I will examine additional factors related to data management, ethics, and my positionality as researcher.

2.1 Research Design

As this research topic was born out of observations and conversations I had with domestic violence survivors in two different places, the research design organically came into being as a comparative analysis. Smelser (2002) informs us that a “comparative analysis has come to mean the description and explanation of similarities and differences (mainly differences) of *conditions* or *outcomes* among large-scale social units, usually regions, nations, societies and cultures (645; emphasis in original). In this particular case, the conditions in question are the experiences of domestic violence survivors and the units are the two geographical contexts: Boston and Cape Town; Massachusetts and the Western Cape; the United States and South Africa.⁵

A comparative analysis is conducted between these two locations not simply because of the researcher’s location, but because of the important academic insight that can be gained from examining domestic violence in these two very different places. South Africa is considered a developing nation,⁶ while the United States is a first world country. There are also notable differences between Boston and Cape Town’s economic, racial, linguistic, cultural, historical, and political contexts. Post-apartheid South Africa is a young

⁵ It is important to provide important contextual information on both locations covered in this thesis. For statistical demographic information about both Boston and Cape Town see Appendix B.

⁶ International Monetary Fund’s World Economic Outlook Report, April 2010

democracy with a legacy of a deeply dehumanized population and yet a progressive human rights-oriented constitution; Boston is one of the oldest cities in the United States.

Comparing experiences from two dissimilar populations highlights those aspects of domestic violence survivors' meaning-making that may transcend specific contexts, thus deepening our understanding into the operations of power, resistance, and human resilience. Additionally, divergent trends may suggest how we are able to utilise what 'works' in one context to strengthen and transform support given in another. There are strong similarities in aspects of government response to domestic violence in both contexts. In June of 2008 Massachusetts governor Deval Patrick issued a Public Health Advisory on domestic violence⁷, indicating the region's heightened concern about the prevalence of incidences of intimate partner abuse. Similarly, in June of 2011 South African Minister for Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Lulu Xingwana requested urgent action in order to end gendered violence, saying, "our country faces a serious crisis of violence against women"⁸.

The research design and its overall shape aims to prioritise how survivors internally process, live out, and articulate what it was like to be victimised. The nature of this work is deliberately exploratory so that the interviewee's understanding of their experiences is captured in an emergent way. The forthcoming research is not longitudinal in design, but rather measures people's experiences and meaning-making at a particular point in time, but in two particular places. That is, how do survivors of domestic violence make sense of the abuse they endured? What resources do women draw on to cope? How do survivors

⁷ Available at:

http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2pressrelease&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eeohhs2&b=pressrelease&f=080605_domestic_violence&csid=Eeohhs2

⁸ Press release available at: <http://www.info.gov.za/speech/DynamicAction?pageid=461&sid=19317&tid=35594>

conceptualise what motivated them to leave their abusive partner? What influences the way that victims make sense of their experiences with domestic violence?

I employ qualitative methods in order to explore the insights into the experiences of domestic violence survivors, as well as those who provide services to women affected by abusive relationships, in both the greater Boston and metro-Cape Town areas. More specifically, I utilise semi-structured, in-depth interviews to examine the sense-making that is created by the research participants. In-depth interviewing gives researchers access to respondents' construction of their social worlds, individual lives, and their understandings of events (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). As Rossman and Rallis (1998) articulate, in-depth interviewing is a "guided conversation whose goal is to elicit from the interviewee rich, detailed materials...and discover the [interviewee]'s experience of a particular topic or situation" (18; qtd. in Cheong & Poon, 2009: 4). Similarly, conducting in-depth qualitative interviews allows us to create knowledge interactively (Kvale, 1996; Wengraf, 2001). Kvale (1996) reminds us that an in-depth interview is "where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee. An interview is literally an *inter-view*, an inter-change of views between two persons" (3; emphasis in original). It is only through the interview process that the depth and expression of words, experiences, and sense-making becomes available for knowledge creation.

While there is an inherent power differential between the researcher and respondent, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed insights to be co-shaped and co-created through dialogue. My own experiences with gendered violence – personal and professional – were used to empathise with interview respondents and provide a "safety blanket" if needed. I shared with each respondent that I had previously worked as a domestic violence case

manager in attempts to balance the power hierarchy and acknowledge a shared understanding of gendered violence. This approach, which was executed with a level of reserve and professionalism did not lead or dictate conversation, but instead gave space for each respondent, in partnership with the researcher, to verbalise her own emotional and intellectual meaning-making of her experiences with violence, trauma, as well as emotional and physical safety.

2.2 Data Collection

My research was conducted over a ten month period, from June of 2010 through March of 2011. However, the majority of the interviews conducted were concentrated in two intensive time frames. That is, I conducted interviews in the greater Boston area of Massachusetts over a six week period in June and July of 2010; interviews in Cape Town were carried out between January and March of 2011. My previously established networks – through my professional experience as a domestic violence advocate in Boston and volunteer experience at a domestic violence shelter in Cape Town – gave me initial access to my research population. I was able to personally contact women who agreed to become respondents, or put me in contact with other potential subjects. Thus, participant access was initially gained through various personal and professional circles; from there, snowball sampling was used. While often criticised for being non-random, Hendricks and Blanken (1992) point out the strengths and benefits of chain referral sampling: “if the aim of the study is primarily explorative, qualitative, and descriptive, snowball sampling offers clear practical advantages in obtaining information on difficult-to-observe phenomena, in particular in areas that involve sensitive...issues. It provides an efficient and economical way of finding cases, that may otherwise be difficult or impossible to locate or contact” (qtd. in Faugier & Sargeant, 1997:

792). Chain referral sampling gave me access to a number of participants who I would not otherwise have been able to make contact with.

Eight semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in the United States: six were with survivors of domestic violence, two were with service providers. The majority of interviews were conducted with survivors because the main objective of the research is to examine the sense-making of people who have themselves endured violent relationships. The decision to interview service providers in addition to victims was made because their insight and understanding of domestic violence survivors' experiences provides a multi-layered perspective which enriches the research. It is important to note that these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. That is, for the purpose of this research the respondents were identified as a survivor or service provider prior to the interview as to indicate which questions would be asked. However, within the data set of interviewees in Boston, two 'survivors' were employed at domestic violence agencies and one 'service provider' disclosed that she too had experienced domestic violence on a personal level. I conducted nine interviews with respondents in South Africa: seven were with survivors, and two were service providers. Here, it is necessary to note a limitation, or obstacle encountered within my data collection. Two of the survivors interviewed in Cape Town did not disclose being abused by a romantic partner. At the time of the interview, both women were living at a domestic violence shelter in the greater Cape Town area; however their only disclosure came when they volunteered to be interviewed as part of this research. Having explicitly described the nature of my research to a large group of residents of this particular domestic violence shelter, I not only assumed each woman was a survivor (based solely on their residence at such a shelter), but additionally assumed that those willing to be interviewed would discuss their history of abuse. While both of these women had clearly experienced a life time of

trauma and abuse (as indicated by their own reporting), neither participant explicitly spoke about an abusive intimate partnership, nor identified as being a survivor. It is unknown to me whether these women had not experienced domestic violence (and thus entered into the interview “mistakenly”) or for reasons unbeknownst to me, chose not to speak openly about their domestic abuse. Because of these occurrences, I reflected on how my definition of domestic violence is not universal. In fact, I became aware of my positionality and bias in defining a domestic violent relationship as one that occurred between two adults mutually involved in a romantic partnership. Rather, because of the insight I gained after these two particular interviews, I expanded the definition of domestic violence that I use in this research to be broader and more abstract. I looked to respondents to inform my understanding of domestic abuse, which evolved to be conceptualised as any form of abuse or violence that left the survivor feeling trapped. Specifically, domestic violence is perpetrated not only by one intimate partner against the other, but can also be carried out by a parent onto a child, a teenage child onto a parent, a caregiver onto a dependent, and so on. One service provider interviewed for this piece spoke about expanding the definition of what constitutes domestic violence. She said,

I'll see this mom who is being abused by her son, or her daughter. An elder is being abused by a caregiver, and then a woman comes from Southeast Asia who's being abused by her mother-in-law as proxy for her husband. And I regularly have clients now who are 80 and 90. I used to think that was a whole other thing. “Eighty, ninety year old people can't abuse each other, they don't have the energy or the physical strength.” Yeah they do. The more we do this work, we see the type of relationship doesn't matter, it's exactly the same thing. It's all about power and control.

While I began my research with a clear definition that a perpetrator was a batterer in an intimate partnership, I am now less concerned about *who* was doing the abusing (perhaps it was a romantic partner, or a father, child, or pimp) and primarily concerned with the *impact*

of the abuse. This flexibility in expanding the definition leaves me focused more on the coercive power dynamics and presence of control, manipulation, and isolation.

Based on location, there are two sets within each data set of ‘survivor respondents’ and ‘service provider respondents’: Boston and Cape Town. There were different interview schedules and sets of questions for each ‘type’ (‘survivor’ and ‘service respondent’) of respondent; however, there was no variation in the questions asked based on location. I collected demographics for every respondent. For the survivors interviewed, I gathered information regarding their (a) age, (b) race, (c) sex, (d) sexual orientation, (e) highest level of education, and (f) country of origin. The following demographic information was gathered for service providers: (a) age, (b) race, (c) sex, (d) professional title, and (e) the name of the agency they work for. Of the survivors interviewed in Boston, all were originally from the United States. Two self-identified as black⁹, two as multi-racial, one each as white and Hispanic/Latina. The respondents’ level of education ranged from having completed some high school to having obtained a postgraduate degree. At the time of interviews, the youngest respondent was 27 and the oldest was 60; however, the remaining four respondents were all in their 30s. One interviewee identified as a lesbian and named her former abusive partner as a woman; the remaining five respondents identified themselves as heterosexual and their abusers as men. Six of the seven survivors interviewed in Cape Town self-identified as coloured, while the last respondent identified white. I identify the uneven and lop-sided racial background of this group of respondents to be a major limitation to this research.

While exhaustive attempts were made to interview black African women, as well as Indian

⁹ As respondents self-identified their racial/ethnic identity, I use the subjects’ own language to provide racial demographic information. It is important to acknowledge that such racial categories are not fixed or unchanging. The language used to refer to a respondent’s ‘race’ is problematic and a point of contention within the discourses on racialised identities. However, the language used to describe subjects’ ‘race’ is done so deliberately because they remain socially salient.

women and more white women, all efforts were futile. Similar obstacles were encountered when attempting but failing to interview queer women who had experienced domestic violence. Given the time constraints faced, it was necessary for the research to continue without a more diverse group of South African respondents. One South African survivor was in her twenties (26), four were in their thirties (34, 35, 38, 38), and the remaining two were in their forties (40, 45). The educational experience of the South African survivors ranged from one woman having completed the first year of high school, to another currently writing her PhD. Both the service providers interviewed in the United States were white and worked directly with clients providing case management, counselling, and advocacy services. One interviewee worked in a hospital setting, while the other worked in the community outreach program for a non-profit organisation. One of the service providers interviewed in South Africa was coloured; she worked as the manager of a domestic violence shelter. While she did not work with residents in a social work or counselling capacity, she worked closely with them as their mentor, spiritual leader, friend, and *tannie* (auntie). The remaining South African service provider, who was white, worked as a social worker at a different domestic violence shelter.¹⁰

Nineteen pre-set questions were asked of the service providers; fourteen were asked of survivors. However, as the interviews were semi-structured in design, additional follow up questions were asked when relevant, depending on the content of what the interviewee said. Depending on the depth to which respondents answered each question, interviews ranged in length from thirty-two minutes to over ninety minutes. The questions I posed to respondents were open-ended and designed to encourage survivors to share their experiences and reflect on their internal process (ie, “how did you go about leaving your abuser?”, “what family,

¹⁰ See Table 1 in Appendix C for demographic information for all respondents, as well as the pseudonyms used.

friend, or community support helped you to transition out of the abusive relationship?”, and “what was happening for you emotionally as you prepared to leave?”). These questions, and their corresponding answers, help us to shed light on what it is like to negotiate the emotional layers and logistical complications when attempting to access safety. Questions asked to service providers were aimed to explore the professional’s perceptions of obstacles faced by survivors, as well as successes achieved (ie, “how might people in abusive relationships find out about services that are available?” and “tell me about a time when you’ve seen a victim successfully leave an abusive relationship.”). These questions are designed to gain insight into how difficulties present themselves for those in abusive relationships, and what a woman must overcome in order to separate herself from her perpetrator. In general, the answers each respondent provided serve as access to their sense-making about the convergence and interconnection of love, trauma, abuse, safety, resources, and support.

2.3 Data Management, Ethical Considerations, and Researcher Positionality

Each interview was transcribed verbatim, either by the researcher or a Cape Town based transcription company, which was hired by the researcher. It is important to note that both an interpreter and translator were used for one particular interview. One of the South African survivors that participated in the research is an Afrikaans speaker. While she understands English and is moderately fluent in the language, she preferred to answer questions in Afrikaans. Thus, a third party interpreted the respondent’s answers to me, so that I could ask the appropriate follow up questions. The interpreter, whose first language is Afrikaans, was a mutual friend to both the researcher and the respondent. The interpreter, who is fluent in the language, has known the respondent for eight years and had known about the respondent’s experience with domestic abuse prior to the interview. Thus, I am confident that the respondent did not withhold information because of the presence of a third party. The

interview was transcribed and translated by the same person. Although Afrikaans is not the first language of the translator, he has been speaking it fluently for approximately eighteen years, and has a high level of familiarity of Coloured Afrikaans culture. It is with this background that the translator was able to make appropriate translation decisions given the context and topic of discussion. To ensure correct translation, a complete cross-check was made between the audio file of the interview and the translated English transcript by the interpreter who was present for the interview. There is always a loss of some meaning when data is collected in one language and analysed in another (Birbili, 2000; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Temple & Young, 2004). However, given the steps taken, I am satisfied that the loss is not significant.

It is essential to identify the ethical considerations that were taken into account while executing this research (Ellsberg et al., 2001; Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). When working with sensitive populations, it is imperative to fully understand the risks respondents take by being interviewed. Domestic violence victims face being emotionally triggered when talking about their experiences with abuse (Ellsberg et al., 2001). By agreeing to participate in a conversation that will eventually inform a written academic work domestic violence survivors also risk their physical safety. Before embarking on this thesis, I was aware of the need to prioritise the emotional and physical well-being of those who participated in this research.

To start, both physical and emotional safeties were prioritised by informing participants of the power, control, and rights they have in this research. That is, each interviewee was told that they could remove themselves from the process at any time. Respondents could stop the interview at any time; additionally, they were informed that if they wanted to remove

themselves from the research at any point up until submission, that request would be honoured. While physical safety could not be guaranteed, I have taken measures to protect each respondent's well-being. People's names, and other identifying factors, have been changed to ensure anonymity. While this is not a perfect solution, it provides an extra layer of security. The emotional health of respondents was, and continues to be and priority a concern. Because of my previous professional employment as a domestic violence case manager and advocate, I am trained in trauma-informed interviewing, empathic listening, how best to support survivors and "hold" people's pain. I employed some of these skills both during and after interviews. In order to provide continual support after our interviews, I provided respondents with my phone number and offered to meet with them again. No respondents requested to meet again, but I did speak with one respondent on the telephone a few times, providing emotional support and connecting her with local NGOs that provide formalised support for domestic violence survivors. Many survivors were residing in domestic violence shelters at the time of our interviews; shelter staff was aware of their interview with me and was thus in place to provide additional support if needed.

Before delving into the findings, it is important to acknowledge interviewee performance and presentation of self. Riessman (2001) piggy-backs off Goffman's (1969; 1981) work that conceptualises social actors to be continuously performing on the social stage, to include the research respondent's performance. Riessman (2001) argues that interview subjects "negotiate how they want to be known by the stories they develop collaboratively with audiences...as they perform a preferred self" (12). The interview itself is a performance, and the subject's responses are, in part, based on a need to bring about their own agendas. This became evident on one particular occasion: after casually, but honestly chatting about domestic violence with one of the service providers, I turned on the recording device to begin

the formal interview, to which she responded, “oh it’s on now so I must be nice”. This was a clear declaration, made by the subject, that there was an element of performance in the interview that was about to take place. However, I am confident that this does not greatly detract from the findings in this thesis. After all, “storytelling is what we do with research...and what informants do with us” (Riessman, 2001: 696). Through this mutual storytelling, I was “let in” to the ways that the respondents construct difficult and private feelings and make sense of their experiences. Many respondents even alluded to this “letting in” that occurred. One said, “this is the first time I’ve opened up to somebody like this.” Another said, “I never had the opportunity to do this before, to do what I’m doing now... to talk.”

Rose (1997) reminds us that “doing research...is a messy business” (314). The complexities of examining a person’s sense-making of experiencing domestic violence, and my understanding of it both needs to be appreciated in light of this ‘messiness’. As a part of naming my methodological approaches, I find it important also to name my own positionality and reflexively engage with its influence on this work. My identity, subjectivity, biases, and positionality all contribute to the layered messiness of the research. I was born and raised in an upper-middle class home in a seaside suburb of Boston in the United States. I am a white woman; I identify as queer. I am privileged by many factors including, but not limited to my able-bodiedness, race, education, socio-economic status, and country of origin. I am a survivor of both rape and an abusive dating relationship – each perpetrated by a man I knew and trusted. I worked in the field of gendered violence for six years – as a workshop facilitator on the education about and prevention of sexual assault, and as a domestic violence case manager and advocate.

I have feelings of being both an insider and outsider as it relates to this body of research. I, too, am a woman and a survivor of gender based violence. Thus, on a visceral level, I relate to having to negotiate the complexities of being in a relationship with someone who harmed me, someone whom I loved. However, I am also aware of the space between myself and my research subjects. I was never punched, kicked, or choked by my partner; I never lived in a domestic violence shelter. Of particular note is my position as an outsider in relation to the South African survivors I interviewed. The privileges I have based on my race, class, country of origin, and first language directly impacted not only my accessibility to resources and safety when being harmed, but currently impact how I framed this body of research. Specifically, when designing this research and developing interview questions, I was not consciously aware of the breadth of my privilege and positionality. To my surprise, interview questions that were perfectly applicable in the United States context “fell flat” and were not relevant in South Africa. To compensate for this, more relevant follow up questions were asked to the respondents. There were two particular interviews where questions “fell flat”, both of which were some of the very last interviews conducted. Thus, I was comfortable with the interview format and material to develop more relevant questions “on the spot”. This level of comfort and the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed me to engage interviewees to share their stories. Through the process of my data collection, I became aware of how truly enormous the impact of one’s subjectivity and locality is on research design and execution. It is with humility that I acknowledge my (in)visible presence in this research, and recognise my own growth alongside and in congruence with the development of this body of work.

As I embark on a thematic analysis of the experiences of domestic violence survivors, it is important to note Rose’s (1997) articulations that, “the sort of knowledge made depends on

who its makers are” (306-307). The author goes on to point out that one’s own multiple identities influence the information sought, data collected, and thus the production of new knowledge (308). Although I cannot fully understand exactly *how*, I do know that my identities and positionality have an impact on the lens(es) from which I view, read, understand, and respond to the issue of domestic violence, the relevant academic literature, and the meaning-making that I create of the respondent’s own accounts. Similarly, because my privilege, positionality, and identity influence my choices, interpretation, and construction of knowledge, I am careful not to make any general, broad-sweeping claims about what it is like to survive an abusive relationship. That is, all I have is my own analyses, my own lenses, my own words – nothing more, nothing less.

2.4 Data Analysis

After all of the interviews were fully transcribed and translated, the data was coded. Transcriptions as well as hand-written interview notes were analysed, coded, and interpreted. I used Payne and Payne’s (2004) definition of coding to guide my analysis: “coding organises and conceptualises the detailed components of data into patterns by use of symbols and labels to identify and interpret elements that will feature in the [findings]” (36). Coding was done by hand, without the use of a computer program. The particular style of coding used was to look for emergent themes or repeated meanings and patterns in each interview (Lofland & Lofland, 1995; Rossman & Rallis, 1998). The preliminary analysis included tagging significant words, phrases, and passages within each transcript. From there, broad categories were identified and specific codes were classified. Themes were identified at multiple vertical and horizontal levels. For example, when respondents spoke about such things as “fear”, “anger”, “commitment”, “sadness”, “relief”, “love,” and “joy” these words were categorised within the theme identified as “emotions”. As interview questions were designed

to explore survivors' experiences both *within* and *getting out* of abusive relationships, such themes as "obstacles" and "support" emerged. Based on the respondents' account of their experiences, some codes within the subset "emotion" (for example, "fear", "love", and "commitment") were identified to fit within the theme "obstacles".

Once all of the broad emergent themes were identified and had related subsets, the second phase of analysis began. Each theme was examined with the specific intention of analysing the similarities and differences between Boston and Cape Town. Similarly, the two different data sets – service providers and domestic violence survivors – were comparatively analysed to explore parallels and variations. At this stage of the analysis, it emerged that all of the existent coded themes fell into *two* broader categories: internal and external. That is, the experiences of domestic violence survivors were identified to be influenced by a woman's *internal emotional process* and *external community and societal factors*. These considerations were cross-analysed with the other significant distinct categories: domestic violence survivors and service providers; Cape Town and Boston. During this stage of analysis, a three dimensional cube was drawn to visually make sense of the convergence of factors.¹¹

Within the broad theme of a woman's *internal emotional process*, the following themes were categorised and analysed: *emotional obstacles* as challenges; a *turning point* occurring for the survivor; how *access to outside information* transformed survivors' understanding of their experience; and the *self empowerment* that was discovered by survivors. The *external factors* that impacted a woman's experience with domestic violence yielded the following two main

¹¹ See Table 2 in Appendix D which demonstrates the intersecting and overlapping nature of each sample population, data set, and overarching emergent theme.

themes: *(in)formal systems* and *discourses*. Each of these had additional sub-categories. Within *(in)formal systems*, *legal responses* and *resources* developed as separate categories. *Religion* and *victim-blaming language* emerged as distinct themes within the broader category *discourses*. Each of these is fully explored in the fourth chapter.

Chapter 3: Theory, Literature, and Analytical Frameworks

3.1 Social Constructionist Feminist Framework

As a sociologist and a researcher, I operate from a social constructionist framework. Our social reality exists because actors repeatedly engage with thought and action, which leads to the development of a social ‘fact’ – which mutually reinforces the existence of social institutions that reciprocally reinforce social actors’ behaviour (Berger and Luckmann, 2002). Social phenomena – including such constructs such as ‘women’ and ‘domestic violence’ – are created and exist within social contexts. More specifically, our social reality is framed by language. Social reality does not exist within a vacuum, but conversely, is constructed and maintained through the use of various discourses. Discourses, “interrelated set[s] of texts and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 3), are “delimited tissues of meaning reproduced in any form that can be given an interpretive gloss” (Parker qtd. in Wooffitt, 2005: 148) in a variety of forms such as “written texts, spoken words, pictures, symbols, artefacts, and so forth” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002: 4). Thus, while social phenomena are not ‘real’ – in the sense that there are no foundational essences to them – they are real by consequence. That is, while gendered violence is a social construction, it is real in that it brutally impacts millions of women globally.

While positioned broadly within social constructionism, this research operates more specifically within feminist sociological perspectives and feminist theoretical frameworks.

Because this work is deeply personal and subjective, and examines domestic violence within the context of greater societal power and patriarchy, I draw on feminist theory (see Fine, 1994; Hegde, 1998; hooks, 1984, 1989, 2000; Mohanty, 1991 Mohlakoana, 2008; Rose, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1983) including lesbian feminism (see Rich, 1980; Stein, 1995). Feminist sociology, as an overarching body of thought, analyses gender in relationship to power and thus engages with systemic gendered oppression (Smith, 1987). Similarly, feminism is a critical theory that is fundamentally rooted in questioning and critiquing (hooks, 1989). Feminist scholars dispute positivism by challenging ‘the evidence’ and ‘the facts’ (Stanley & Wise, 1983: 8) of normative society, and thus call into question that which is accepted. I also engage with queer theory (see Stein and Plummer 1994): “queering” is not simply limited to unpacking one’s sexual orientation; queering can be the simple calling into question of that which is constructed as the norm. It is because of feminist thought that we are able to understand and grapple with power, patriarchy, and institutionalised oppression (hooks, 2000). Adams (2006) writes that a feminist framework is an “analytical tool that helps expose the social construction of relationships between humans” (11). In the forthcoming analysis, I pull on the frameworks Adams (2006) speaks of to examine the relationship between a woman and her abuser, as well as her relationship with the larger system as she attempts to access safety.

hooks (2000) reminds us that both men and women are socialised from birth to accept patriarchal thoughts and actions. That is, patriarchy, or systemic sexist oppression, is not something consciously created by males; it is an institutionalised, yet socially constructed, system that we are all a part of. We are all socialised by it, and must all actively engage with it in order to understand and move beyond its power. It is feminist theory that provides us with the space to deeply interrogate and attempt to reverse these socialisations. It is in that

spirit that many feminist scholars insist “on the discursive and political nature of experience” (Hegde, 1998: 287). In order to best understand patriarchy and gendered oppression, we must acknowledge our role in patriarchy (see hooks, 2000; Mohlakoana, 2008). Hegde (1998) points out, as feminist scholars, we are directly connected to and “defined by the communities with which we work” (275). The researcher cannot be separated from her interview subjects; similarly, respondents are deeply connected with the researcher and the scholarly work published about them. Both researcher and respondent are defined by their link to, and partnerships with the other. Feminist theory honours the validity of every person’s experience (Stanley & Wise, 1983). This validity of women’s experiences speaks to the issue of how we conceptualise and talk about domestic violence, an issue that will be revisited later in this chapter.

Hegde (1998) argues for feminist theory to address “the ways in which gendered subjectivity is constituted within relations of dominance” (277). Ultimately, we must aim not simply to engage with the coexistence of gender, power and oppression, but we must critically unpack these connections, as well as the makings of them. Furthermore, it is because of (lesbian) feminist theoretical frameworks that we know that “we are confronting not a simple maintenance of inequality...but a pervasive cluster of forces, ranging from physical brutality to control of consciousness” (Rich, 1980: 640). It is within that continuum that domestic violence exists. hooks (2000) reminds us that men are the beneficiaries of patriarchy, but at the price of having to dominate and oppress women, “using violence if they must to keep patriarchy intact” (ix). I am in agreement with hooks’ argument that patriarchy is an overarching system of oppression that is kept in place by various tactics, including violence. However, this relationship between individual violence and institutionalised violence is reciprocal. Society’s overall framework of violence and oppression creates the space for

individual violence to occur, while individual violent acts simultaneously reinforce the larger culture of violence and domination.

The feminist critical analyses of societal structures, power, and gender are particularly useful as they relate to domestic violence. Connell's (1987) analysis of gender constructions and sex inequality illustrate foundational precursors that encourage and perpetuate domestic violence. That is, communities, nations, and societies – as well as resulting common sense discourses – support gendered violence via a culture full of socially constructed gender norms and stereotypes, as well as tangible and concrete inequality across gendered lines (such as wage discrepancies and the high rate of rape of women). The researcher shows that the “collectivities [that an individual] lives in: city, state, country, world” (Connell, 1987: 1), along with the existing patriarchal structures in these contexts dictate one's gendering process, as well as risk¹² towards gendered violence.

I also will use intersectionality as a theoretical approach to engage with the experiences of my research participants (see Brah, 1996; Hill Collins, 1998; hooks, 2000), as we cannot compartmentalise the race, class, gender, religion, education, and sexualities of survivors of domestic violence (see Crenshaw, 1991). Victims of gendered violence – in both the United States and South Africa – experience multiple matrixes of domination (Hill Collins, 2000) that are continually and intrinsically intertwined. Additionally, structural intersectionality exists to further oppress low-income women of colour who are already marginalised based on their individual identities (Crenshaw, 1991). These identities and experiences – as women

¹² By using the word risk here, I do not intend to insinuate a women's own behaviour or choice place responsibility on her for whether or not she experiences gendered violence. I use the word risk to assert that simply being a woman puts one at risk of being a victim of gendered violence.

and as survivors – cannot be understood based solely on one or two of the factors that influence their lives. Bograd (1999) argues for the direct integration of intersectionality into family therapy theories in the treatment of those affected by domestic violence. What is applicable here is her assertion that “intersectionality suggests that no dimension, such as gender inequality, is privileged as an explanatory construct of domestic violence, and gender inequality itself is modified by its intersection with other systems of power and oppression” (Bograd, 1999: 277). Bograd (1999) and Crenshaw’s (1991) direct application of intersectionality and the unveiling of hidden power dimensions within domestic violent fields – academic, therapeutic, or social justice – is greatly influential in the approaches taken in this body of work.

Our homes are the sites where social problems are acted out and systemic injustices are located: domestic violence is a global human rights issue, yet it occurs in our *homes*. It was a victory within feminism – and transformation for society – for the personal to be recognised as political. I assert that this must also be inverted: the political is personal. For many of us, social issues exist “out there”, and thus we are able to disconnect personally. However, whether or not we are personally affected by a particular social injustice, we all likely know someone who is. If we consider the political to be personal, then feminist theory and research also becomes a mode of activism. The frameworks that we, as feminists, operate from aim to more closely intertwine theory and practice, and similarly transform the margin and centre. hooks (2000) explains that simply because the oppressive system exists, and we are all victims of it, “does not mean we [necessarily] understand why it is in place or how to change it” (21); however, feminist thought demands that we develop “new models of social interaction” (hooks, 2000: 19) and transform society’s power imbalances. In particular, feminist participatory action research (see Fonow & Cook, 1991; Gatenby & Humphries,

2000; Lather, 1991; Maguire, 1987; Mies, 1991; Reason, 1994) operates from a transformative, social justice framework, and has commitments to “honouring the lived experience and knowledge of the people involved” (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000: 89) and collaboratively co-creating knowledge. The major tenets of feminist participatory research have been used when executing this research and conducting the forthcoming analysis.

It is imperative to both problematize feminist theory, and the lenses from which I conduct my analysis. Feminist scholarship, particularly Western feminism, while aiming to dismantle power and discrimination in particular spaces, often reinforces it elsewhere. As I am a white, Western woman, and examine the experience of domestic violence survivors in both the global north and global south, I am at risk of Othering “third world women”. Mohanty (1991) aptly points out that “Western feminist writing on women in the Third World must be considered in the context of the global hegemony of Western scholarship – i.e., the production, publication, distribution, and consumption of information and ideas. Marginal or not, this writing has political effects and implications beyond the immediate feminist or disciplinary audience” (55). It is my full intention to engage with the more “local and specific understanding of personhood” that Hegde (1998, 288) calls for; however, given my privileged location, I am aware of the risks, consistently grappling with the pitfalls of executing my forthcoming research. As Njambi (2004) reminds us, “the history of colonialism and neo-colonialism has afforded the more powerful west the right to intervene in the lives of its ‘third world’ Others; a right which is not reciprocal” (284). My intentions are not to intervene in the lives of my respondents, nor any domestic abuse survivor; my aim is to share the stories of those who have endured gendered violence. Intersectionality provides me with the tools to engage with women’s experiences with gender violence and not make broad-based assumptions about solidarity or sameness. It is not my intention to speak

for, nor objectify, the research subjects I interviewed – or any other South African woman; I do, however, wish to share their words in the hopes of relaying their stories of pain and survival. This, I hope, will add a ripple to the wave of activism that aims to undo oppression.

Because of my experience – and identity – as a domestic violence case manager, it is important to mention my use of the Social Ecological Model (Krug et al, 2002) as a framework of understanding, which also speaks to Baderoon's (2003) concept that words matter because they create worlds on multiple levels. The Social Ecological Model is a framework that is used to comprehensively understand and interpret the interplay between individuals, institutions, communities, and broader cultural and societal contexts. That is, examining only one layer – the individual, for example – fails to fully grasp a reality because it minimises the relevance (at best) or completely ignores (at worst) other contexts. The Social Ecological Model acknowledges four different levels: microsystems, or individuals; mesosystems, or organisations and institutions; exosystems, communities; and macrosystems, or culture and society – physically, geographically, emotionally, and ideologically. As macrosystems are the largest of systems, each other system fits within the broad spectrum of society. Similarly, mesosystems exist within exosystems, but also hold microsystems. That is to say, individuals are part of organisations, which are a part of communities, which make up society.

I draw from Kearney's (2001) grounded theory to inform my understanding of the intricacies of experiencing both being in a domestic violence relationship, and leaving one. Kearney's (2001) grounded theory, *Enduring Love*, was developed with the hopes of "synthesizing a middle-range theory of women's responses to violent relationships" (270). I find Kearney's theory significantly relevant as she traces the various emotional phases that women go

through while in an abusive relationship; this is done without negatively reinforcing stereotypes of ‘blaming the victim’. The researcher argues that society’s normalisation of intimate partner violence and the fact that survivors (much like anyone in a long-term, committed relationship) experience unconditional and enduring love for their partners paint the backdrop for the four phases of *Enduring Love* (Kearney, 2001: 275). Kearney (2001) theorises that the first phase is when women are happily coupled as “romantic involvement fulfilled their dream of loving and being loved” (275). Following that phase, survivors articulate an inability to make the abuse stop, and thus “fail” at making the relationship better (Kearney, 2001: 276). Next, survivors experience an emotional shift where they are motivated to take action, and attempt to leave the violent relationship (Kearney, 2001: 278). Lastly, women articulate a self-discovery process and development of a new identity; Kearney (2001) points out that this phase comes with immense challenges and sometimes leads to a woman’s return to her abuser (278). While Kearney’s theory is based on a small data set, the strength in her work is evident as it textures the complexity of domestic violence, and traces the journey survivors’ experience. Kearney does something that many in the field shy away from: she acknowledges what it is to love one’s own abuser. This grounded theory directly informs my analysis and understanding of my research respondent’s experience with intimate partner violence.

3.2 The literature on domestic violence

The bodies of literature on domestic violence are produced using many different lenses and theoretical frameworks, and come from various disciplines – legal (for examples, see Buel, 1999; Burman & Chantler, 2005; Dugan et al., 2003; Crenshaw, 1991; Usdin et al., 2000), feminist (for examples, see Anderson, 1997; Bograd, 1999; Buel, 1999; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Crenshaw, 1991; Waldrop & Resick, 2004), psychological and psychiatric (see Burman

& Chantler, 2005), marriage and family therapeutic approaches (for examples, see Anderson, 1997; Bograd, 1999, Ellsberg et al., 2001; Johnson & Ferraro, 2000; Strube & Barbour, 1983; Waldrop & Resick, 2004) medical and health (for examples, see Campbell, 2002; Campbell et al., 2002; Campbell, 2003; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Jewkes et al., 2002; Kim & Motsei, 2002; Usdin et al., 2000), social scientific (for examples, see Dugan et al., 2003; Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002; Kim & Motsei, 2002), discourse analytic (see Baly, 2010); and even geographical frameworks (Warrington, 2001). Some of these researchers obviously use more than one approach to conducting their work, as there is an interplay and cross-cutting of theoretical frameworks. While there is not enough space to fully examine all intricacies of the literature, many pieces assume a domestic violence victim to be heterosexual and married, often white, and often from the West. Some literature examines “minoritisation” (see Burman & Chantler, 2005 and Crenshaw, 1991) and race, but race (like sexual orientation) is predominantly mentioned when it is not the invisible norm. That is, race is discussed when the victims are not white; sexual orientation is discussed only when survivors were abused by a same-sex partner. Pertaining to the overall body of literature, what is particularly noteworthy are the partitions between literature out of the West about domestic violence in Western contexts; Western literature about domestic violence in countries from the global south; and literature from non-Western contexts, pertaining to domestic violence in similar societies.

Much of the literature comes from the global north and fails to name that context as the centre, effectively rendering invisible gender violence in non-Western context. Anderson (1997) and Dugan et al. (2003), for example, write from the United States, about domestic violence in the same country. While these scholars speak to the power dynamics within abusive relationships – and patriarchy as an overarching supporter of such inequalities – they

fail to articulate the power dynamics *within* and *about* her research. That is, the authors do not acknowledge their own positionality, or that their particular research and arguments may only ‘work’ successfully in the context of domestic violence in the United States. While Anderson (1997) briefly acknowledges sociological factors such as race and class, she fails to deconstruct the normalised power inherent within such categories. Similarly, Anderson (1997) also fails to acknowledge such realities as same-sex gendered violence. In effect, while Anderson’s (1997) arguments to integrate feminist and family violence approaches to understanding domestic violence are worthy, she is marginalising the experiences of entire populations of domestic violence survivors *and* assuming universality in applications of her theory, which as a result, Otherize particular contexts where her arguments may not be relevant (anywhere other than United States, in countries with their own individuals sets of laws, and societal and cultural responses to domestic violence). While Dugan et al. (2003) provide substantial data that indicates the complexities of assisting domestic violence victims to access legal resources and the correlation between seeking help and increased danger, the scholars fail to incorporate literature of perspectives from a global context.

Similarly, Johnson and Ferraro (2000), reinforce the West as a powerful, invisible, central force. Their published work reviews research on domestic violence in the 1990s. I find it important to give due credit to these two authors who take an extraordinarily exhaustive approach in their review, highlighting two important themes in the field of domestic violence research. Johnson and Ferraro (2000) assert that there is a critical need to distinguish among different types and contexts of violence (“common couple violence” versus intimate patriarchal, for example). Similarly, the authors challenge researchers to more holistically examine control in connection with power and violence on larger scales, as opposed to individual men’s control over “their” women. These aspects of their work assist me in my

own understanding of the meaning-making created by my research participants. Johnson and Ferraro (2000) successfully expand the common sense discourse on domestic violence by including various types of relationships (including same-sex partnerships), and perpetrators. The scope of literature examined is narrow, as North America is contextualised as the centre; there is a limited acknowledgment of a global context. This act renders domestic violence research *from* or *about* the global south as translucent at best, transparent as worst. The failed reflexivity of position and power undermine much of the progressive strides that they do take in their research. That is, the assumed universality and global applicability of the Western literature the researchers review fails to highlight Western literature as a dominant and particularly situated set of discourses that may not be relevant in all societies.

Literature that comes out of the West that is about domestic violence in non-Western societies tends to quantify intimate partner abuse (Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Ellsberg et al., 2001). Both Garcia-Moreno et al. (2006) and Ellsberg et al. (2001) use quantitative data to show prevalence of domestic violence in countries like Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Namibia, Samoa, Serbia, Thailand, Tanzania (Garcia-Moreno et al.) and Nicaragua (Ellsberg et al.). While such studies are important to show that domestic violence is happening at alarming rates, these types of research also contribute to the silencing of domestic violence survivors in the global south. Numbers allow us to *know* that it is happening, but prevent us from *understanding* the realities of what it is to be a domestic violence survivor in Samoa or Nicaragua, for example. This lack of voice further marginalises said survivors, while simultaneously perpetuating normative European centrality and Othering of the “third world”. While it could be argued that quantitative statistics are important and not silencing domestic violence survivors in the global south, I assert that we are in fact rendering these survivors and victims invisible when it is the *only type* of literature about domestic violence

in the global south coming from the global north. Rose (1997) uses Radcliffe to remind us that, “in producing representations of (Third World) women, we are inextricably bound up with questions of authority, communication and representations, and the positions generated by such questions are inherently political” (307). Similarly, Njambi (2004) highlights that “even as we extend our hands for a ‘common theoretical and ethical ground from which to argue for political solidarity’ with other women everywhere, we must learn how to do so ‘without objectifying the “other” woman, or subsuming collective goals under a banner of sameness’” (299). Even when using quantitative data, we must remain starkly aware of the risk of Otherizing, minimising, and marginalising those who experience domestic violence in non-Western nations.

Literature coming out of the global south about domestic violence within those same contexts (see Jewkes, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002; Usdin et al., 2000) tends to concretise the complexities of domestic violence in a way that oversimplifies both the contributing factors of intimate partner violence and the way in which the “problem” can be “solved”. Jewkes (2002), for example, asserts that there are concrete determinants that cause and prevent domestic violence. While there are particular factors that must be considered, I assert that domestic violence, its causes and preventions are messy, and an imperfect science. The researcher provides a table that depicts the causes of domestic violence; she traces the influencing factors, processes, manifestations, and ideology of intimate partner violence (Jewkes, 2002: 426). I question the order in which Jewkes (2002) asserts various factors lead to domestic violence. For example, contrary to Jewkes (2002), it is my assertion that ideologies such as male superiority and a culture of violence presuppose influencing factors such as poverty and alcohol. That is, alcohol can be an *agitator* or exacerbating factor to someone who is also *already* abusive. Poverty or alcohol alone, however, does not cause

someone to be abusive. Jewkes' (2002) concrete and exact reasoning fails to acknowledge the authentic and convoluted intricacies of gendered violence. Layering must be taken into account, as well; domestic violence does not happen in isolated vacuums. There is not a linear cause and effect that takes place, ending in abuse. The Social Ecological Model speaks to this issue as it acknowledges the micro-, mesa-, exo-, and macro-systems that contribute to the large-scale and individual factors that mutually support intimate partner violence.

The perspectives I have are, in part, inspired by Crenshaw (1991) and Bograd's (1999) call for the integration of intersectionality into our understanding and analysis of domestic violence, and our support of victims and survivors. Both scholars showcase the detrimental impacts of failing to engage with domestic violence from an intersectionality approach. For example, Bograd (1999) highlights the invisibility and marginalisation that occurs when we refer to victims as "she" and perpetrators as "he"; when we excuse gendered violence as culturally appropriate; or when we remain unaware of the "microaggressions of racism, heterosexism, and classism" that can further victimise a domestic violence survivor (281). Crenshaw (1991), like Bograd (1999), examines many of the direct impacts that the matrixes of domination (Hill Collins, 2000) have on the lived experiences of survivors. The scholars examine law, policy, police response, and social response and how it fails domestic violence survivors who are marginalised based on race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and so on. This syncretism of domestic violence and academic theories of multiculturalism, intersectionality, and critical race theory is the impetus we need to transform the way that we engage with these issues. Bograd (1999) questions whether the "neutral universal language" (279) that much of the theories are written in, marginalises those that do not occupy the centre. It is my argument that there is no neutral universal language, and it is our

responsibility to actively highlight this truth. It is from this location that my research picks up.

The literature on domestic violence is extensive and has been crucial to the field. In fact, I am standing on the shoulders of giants; the academic road has been paved for me by those who have previously researched and written about intimate partner violence. However, I believe my research does make a contribution. The study is a comparative analysis, yet it is qualitative in nature. Previously published comparative analysis conducted between countries highlight the prevalence of gendered violence, but quantify survivors. They do not operate from a feminist participatory research, social justice, or intersectionality framework. Conversely, qualitative research that engages with women's experiences with abuse – and directly pulls on intersectionality and feminism – exist within one context. Similarly, scholars producing those types of work fail to reflexively engage with the influence that their subjectivity has on the work. Thus, I have found a space to qualitatively examine the experiences of domestic violence survivors from two different contexts, in the hopes of contributing to a larger movement to end gendered violence, while also reflexively engaging with my own positionality and its impact on my research subjects, the location of academia, and the lives of those who endure domestic violence.

3.3 Framing domestic violence

Before continuing, it is necessary to problematize language. The language which we use to describe domestic violence and the location of responsibility is highly problematic. Within common sense discourses victim blaming language is the norm: “you must have provoked him”, “why didn't you just walk away?”, “you should have known he was going to do that to you”, and so on. One of the most commonly used phrases to describe someone who has

experienced domestic violence is “battered woman”. This even includes academic literature (see Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979, 1984; Alexander, 1995), and the mental health diagnoses of Battered Woman Syndrome (Walker, 1979, 1984), similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, a psychological condition that one can result after one endures emotional, verbal, and/or physical abuse. I contend that the phrase “battered woman” – including in the use to describe a very real and very debilitating psychological obstacle – is extraordinarily troublesome. Allow me to demonstrate: *John beat Mary* depicts what happened. Linguistically, it is not a far stretch to invert the pronouns to have: *Mary was beaten by John*. This then becomes *Mary was beaten*, and finally *Mary is a battered woman*. What we now have is a phrase that lacks the actor, the perpetrator, the abuser, the one that has done the abusing. We are left with a phrase that focuses on the victim, the survivor – as if she is responsible for the fact that she is a battered woman. The force of power is notably absent. The perpetrator – like the white person when examining race and colonisation; like the able-bodied “norm” when discussing handicap access; like heteronormativity and heterosexuals when debating sexual rights as human rights – is often notably absent. I assert that not only is the perpetrator able to abuse because of the larger patriarchal structure that supports gendered violence, but also because of the additional power he attains by remaining invisible. If we transform the language we use to discuss domestic violence, and who is affected by it (as both victim and perpetrator), we will begin to see a shift from it being constructed as a woman’s issue, to a man’s responsibility.

Another quite common representation of victim-blaming discourse takes the shape of the question, “why doesn’t she leave?”. This notion is not simply street talk, but is also perpetuated in academic literature. Academic research that reinforces such discourses is unfortunately not unheard of (see for examples, Gelles, 1976; LaViolette & Barnett, 2000).

Even if such research is working positively to understand domestic violence, the language used to describe it reinforces negative stereotypes and problematic discourses. These discourses are being challenged by many, including Johnson and Ferraro (2000), and Buel (1999). Like them, I assert that we are asking the wrong questions. We must be asking “why is he able to abuse her?” rather than “why doesn’t she leave?” Buel’s (1999) piece inverts the question from a victim-blaming stance, to instead highlight the obstacles that a domestic violence victim faces when attempting to leave an abusive relationship. While Buel (1999) provides a list of fifty, some of the key obstacles include: the social status (and power) of the batterer, the best interest of children, racial and cultural influences, fear of violence in the name of retaliation, financial considerations, emotional and physical isolation, and a lack of knowledge of options of resources. Buel’s (1999) article is not deeply academic, or at all theoretical, however, its value lies in highlighting the extraordinary challenges that victims face. Buel (1999) identifies her positionality and acknowledges her personal experience with domestic violence, engaging the reader in a tangible and importantly relatable conversation about the realities of domestic violence.

Piggy-backing off Buel’s (1999) work, I also assert that we must evaluate our own value judgments about choices that a woman makes. That is, we must examine the unspoken expectation that a victim *should* leave, or *wants* to leave an abusive relationship. What if she chooses to stay? What if she remains committed to loving her abuser? As a domestic violence case manager, and now as a researcher, I must challenge my own personal beliefs as to what is best. How do we research and report on that? What discourses does that challenge? And what potential negative stereotypes may be reinforced when an empowered woman chooses to love an abuser? Thus, we must be more nuanced in how we examine and make sense of survivors’ power, agency, choices, and success.

Baderoon (2003) aptly articulates that “words...matter because they *make worlds*” (316; emphasis in original). These words and “other forms of representation” (Baderoon, 2003: 316) become meaningful in their literal and figurative representation of real life. They both reflect and simultaneously reinforce common sense, and the lived experiences of people. Words do not exist in vacuums – they are spoken by people and they influence people. These stories shape the lives of individuals, make worlds for communities, and become the impetus for academic research. Words are used by researchers to do the same: reinforce or challenge particular discourses, tell stories, create knowledge, build upon previously created worlds, and understand the lived experiences of individuals and groups – often those that are constructed as the Other.

This notion that words create worlds holds true – on multiple levels – as it relates to domestic violence. Words are used by perpetrators to create worlds of damage and denigration for their victims. Those who experience domestic violence use words to understand and process the trauma they have endured. People affiliated with various services and resources – whether familial, therapeutic, medical, legal, or otherwise – that may or may not be accessed by domestic violence victims use words to create a separate set of worlds. Depending on the service provider, the institution, and the lens from which domestic violence is viewed, these worlds can be spaces of empathy and care, or of judgment and blame for survivors.

Additional worlds and discourses are created by us, academic researchers. How we conduct research, the way in which we report on our findings (see Ellsberg et al., 2001), and the knowledge that we create establish influential realities about domestic violence not only in academic spaces, but also in common-sense, mainstream discourses, and the lived experiences of those affected by domestic violence. It is my goal, with the forthcoming

analysis, to create worlds of support and empowerment, respect and honour, and justice and transformation.

Chapter 4: Survivors' Experience with Abuse

As with the “messiness” in research that Rose (1997) writes about, my findings are particularly messy, as they involve various, multiple, yet intersecting factors. My analysis aims to unpack the complexity of enduring an abusive relationship, as well as the intricacies in leaving one. These factors are explored while analysing empirical data from both intimate partner violence survivors and service providers. The integration of these two data sets is comparatively analysed between samples from two different locations – Boston, Massachusetts, United States and Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa. Thus, the various factors contribute to the layered and multi-dimensional nature of the analysis. Before delving into my analysis, it must be said that the research conducted garnered fascinating and thought-provoking results that could be related to multiple facets of diversity studies, gender studies, and sociology. Unfortunately, there is not space here to explore all of the possibilities.

The results that emerged from this empirical data can be broken into two major categories: a survivor's internal emotional and developmental process, and external factors that impact a woman's experience with abuse, and attempting to leave. Very compelling themes arose within each broad categorisation, all of which are outlined below.

4.1 Internal Processes

The emotional process that a survivor moves through within the duration of an abusive relationship is extraordinarily taxing, as reported by my interview subjects. Additionally, the process of leaving the relationship is equally emotionally complex, and often continues long after the physical relationship has ended. The empirical data reveals survivors' own *emotional obstacles* as challenges; a clear *turning point* that occurred within each relationship; how *outside information* transformed survivors' meaning-making and acceptance of their experience; and the after-the-fact *self empowerment* that is coupled with the continued challenges of navigating post-abuse life. It was in these internal processes where most of the similarities were found between women in Cape Town and Boston.

4.1.1 Emotional Obstacles

Respondents reported that the wide range of emotions involved – love, commitment, fear, loyalty, stubbornness, and hope – created many obstacles to leaving the abusive relationship. Several survivors spoke about their hope for love, desire for life-long companionship, and commitment to their partner as a challenge. Danielle (SA/C)¹³ reported that, “I thought this is the right guy and we’re gonna marry. This is gonna be the last one. And I was very close to him.” Sasha (US/Bi) echoed the same sentiments,

I kind of always had a fear that I would be alone for my life. I thought I would never end up in a relationship or no one would ever wanna marry me, or whatever. So I think that was the biggest thing that I toiled with. I didn’t wanna have to look anymore. And I was holding on to – if he could only change it would be amazing, and I’d have a father figure for my daughter. So that was the biggest obstacle.

¹³ Brackets after respondents' pseudonyms, which identify their country of origin and race, are provided to increase the reader's ease of understanding each respondent's particular context. A list of all abbreviations is provided in Table 1 in Appendix C.

Similarly, Maggie (US/W) spoke of her commitment to her children being raised with two parents: “I came from a single-parent household and so we swore to each other that we would raise our kids together. So, my own belief set was a big obstacle.”

Service providers spoke about similar emotional obstacles that they see in the clients they serve. Jodi (SA/C) pointed out that “we all have a strong desire to belong to somebody, to be special in somebody’s life.” Alice (SA/W) said:

A lot of the women who come here don’t want to be alone. I think that’s what leads them to staying in the relationship for so long. You have to have a partner, otherwise you’re not whole. And, I mean, everybody goes into a relationship hoping that it’s going to work. You don’t go in thinking that it’s not going to, otherwise you won’t go into it in the first place.

This desire for committed partnerships is theorised by Strube and Barbour (1983) as an obstacle to living a life free of abuse. The authors write “society places the burden of family harmony on the woman, with the implication that a failed marriage is her fault” (Strube & Barbour, 1983: 787). This societal pressure, as well as love had for their partners suggests survivors are more likely to tolerate abuse as a sacrifice.

Having made a commitment to their relationships, survivors loved their abusers and struggled to negotiate this love with the abuse they were enduring. Sasha (US/Bi) made sense of this negotiation by articulating that, “it was the struggle between what I wanted, and what I was getting.” Caitlin (SA/W) highlighted this conflict by sharing:

Well, you know, I loved him, as well. Ya, I loved him. And I always saw him as damaged. And that he really was just working through his shit. You know, it wasn’t his fault, he just had issues. And that at some point, he would work through them and he would be okay. Because when he was okay, he was lovely. I mean, I didn’t stay with him for eight years because he was a complete bastard. I loved him. And we had a really powerful connection. And we had fun together, most of the time in fact. Also, I felt that I had invested

so much in this. I was damned if I was going to see it lost.

When acknowledging the extent of the abuse they were experiencing, survivors continued to struggle with emotional obstacles they faced that were a result of their partners' violence.

Factors such as abuser-induced fear, self-doubt, depression, and isolation created challenges for survivors when attempting to access help. Danielle (SA/C) articulated that,

I was too scared of him to go to the police myself. I'd say I would do it, but I never did. I was very scared to phone the police because I knew if he comes out [of jail], he's gonna get me. He knows where I work, he knows everything.

Similarly, Piper (US/BI) spoke about the erosion of her self esteem and the resulting lack of confidence in her choices to get help:

It was a lot of emotional and verbal abuse, and so I never felt secure in my decisions. I always was questioning my judgment and the decisions that I was making, as if I wasn't strong enough, or sound enough to make them for myself.

Yolanda (SA/C) spoke about how debilitating her fear and resulting hopelessness became:

I just became so depressed. You don't know what's gonna happen, but you are so unhappy, so depressed. I used to sit on my bed, stare out of the window. I used to sit and cry. I started getting anxious whenever I used to hear [his] car, my tummy would turn into knots. I would physically get nauseous. I was so scared.

Kearney (2001) notes that domestic violence victims often minimise the abuse and sometimes engage in the "suppression of awareness [of the abuse] in an unconscious" way. Cecilia (US/W), a service provider who also endured an abusive marriage, said, "A lot of what I tried to do in those early years was hide this little secret from everybody. But it wasn't until much later that I even realised I did that." Conversely, Raesa (SA/C) consciously kept the abuse to herself, by articulating that "I just tried to handle all these things on my own, so no one

else would know.” This secret-keeping often took place in order to protect oneself from outside interventions which could potentially cause “subsequent retaliations from the abuser” (Kearney, 2001: 277). The minimisation also occurred in a way where women blamed themselves as a way of rationalising the abuse. Danielle (SA/C) said,

He hasn't been abusing me like in hitting me where there's blood. He always used to just slap me if I said something wrong. Sometimes I think it's my own fault. I can't call it really abusive.

The blame that Danielle (SA/C) placed on herself is not only an attempt to have a “logical explanation for [her] partners' abusive behaviour and [her] inability to control it” (Kearney, 2001: 277), it is the internalisation of victim-blaming discourses, a point that will be further explored later.

Survivors, while minimising the abuse to the outside world, adjusted their behaviour with their partner, in attempts to avoid violent episodes. Maggie (US/W) and Raesa (SA/C), who live in two different countries, speak two different first languages, and are of a different race and socio-economic classes, spoke about eerily similar circumstances. Raesa (SA/C) reported, “I had to pretend that I had a wonderful life because he is a priest”, while Maggie (US/W) echoed a similar reality, “He was the president of the denomination. So I couldn't set foot in [the church]. No one believed me.” Additionally, both women shared their experiences with the “reading” they did of their husbands and the subsequent manoeuvring they did within the relationship. Smith et al (1995) conceptualise that women “assess their situations as harmful or not” and in response, adjust their behaviour accordingly to “manage” the abuse (189). Maggie (US/W) said, “I'd watch when he came home, how he got out of the car. And depending on his body language, it would determine how and what I did in the household.” Raesa (SA/C) explained,

He would always say to me that I have a split personality. But that's how I must fit myself in. Because today I see he's like this, then I must fit myself in this way. And tomorrow I see he's in this mood again, and so I must fit myself in with that.

The data that emerged from this comparative analysis indicates that women from both sample populations, regardless of race, culture, language, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation experienced starkly similar emotional obstacles, which aligns itself with Kearney's (2001) findings that these factors occur "across all cultures represented in these samples" (276). These similarities, as Kearney (2001) writes about, include the demoralisation and "shrinking of self" (277) that victims endured. Alexis (US/BI) shared, "it was just like this dream man took me from everything to zero. I had no energy, I was depressed, I had nothing." Piper (US/BI) illustrated the impact of a complex array of emotions:

I was broken. I was so sad and just so disappointed. I just felt like my air had been, like, sucked out of me. I was scared because I didn't know what she was capable of doing.

Many survivors' compassion and empathy manifested as roadblocks to their own safety as several respondents expressed a desire to help their partners. Carina (SA/C) said, "I care about him because he's family, and I want to help, but he don't wanna set right." Sasha (US/BI) spoke about the questions she asked herself,

What is a batterer? Like, what is a batterer and what's mental illness? You know, what is the difference between the two? Because if it's just mental illness, and they [are] just psychopaths, and can't be treated, whatever. But, do I need to help him?

Danielle's (SA/C) compassion endures, even after the her relationship to her abuser has ended,

I would like to give him the opportunity, and to guide him, and show him what to do, the right ways. And how to get

over [his own] trauma, so it doesn't happen to the next woman. But I can't get through to him.

Survivors' emotions – whether rooted in their strong desire to have a successful partnership, or occurring as a result of the abuse they endured by their perpetrator – were often blocks to recognising their relationship as abusive, and asking for help. To be clear, this finding should not be confused with the researcher placing *any* blame on the individual for the violence they experienced. Rather, it is to highlight that the emotions felt – love and commitment, fear and anxiety, compassion and empathy, depression and self-doubt – create complex meaning-making for survivors, which impacts their access to safety.

4.1.2 A Turning Point

From the interviews conducted for this research, a theme emerged that there was a clear turning point for women who were being abused. This turning point often began, or developed alongside, the process of accessing safety. Kearney (2001) argues that there becomes a point in abusive partnerships where victims begin to redefine their relationship, their self, and their commitment to their abuser. The author writes that,

This turning point could be subtle or sudden and was associated with one or more of the following: deliberate intervention from the outside; inadvertent exposure of the abuse...; an act by the partner so egregious that its wrongness became undeniable; and internal accumulation of hurt and disillusionment that finally outweighed the hope of improvement; or an increase in self-worth because of an outside experience that made independence seem possible (277).

The most notable factors that appeared in my research were the public exposure of abuse, a heightened level of severity of the abuse, and a tiredness that built up over time. For many survivors, a few factors were combined to create the impetus for the turning point. Jodi

(SA/C), a service provider, spoke about the egregious nature of some assaults as a final straw for many of her clients:

I've seen many of them leave when there is something very traumatic that happens. There is a gun pulled out or a dagger is held to their jugular. And then they realise, ja. So, for some people the first time he does it, they will hold out and they begin to tolerate a level of violence. But people only have certain degrees of violence that they can tolerate.

Alexis (US/BI), who had endured multiple episodes of physical violence, reached that level when she was kidnapped. She shared the accumulation of abuse and the increased severity of it,

He had already said that he had felt like dying. He felt like the world was over and he just wanted to commit suicide and I mean, that... I felt that meant, you know, "I'm gonna kill you, too". And I just knew that was it.

For many, the intolerance of certain violent episodes not only had to do with severity of abuse, but with space and location. Several respondents recounted their feelings of shame and guilt when the abuse became public. Caitlin's (SA/W) abuser assaulted her at a party and was thus propelled to leave, saying,

In some ways when it happens in private you can live with your own story about what happened. There is no one to go "actually that's fucking bullshit." So, it's kind of just... you have this counter story, which you don't have when it happens in private. And it was almost out of, like, public shame. Like, after everyone had seen it, it was like I can't, I just can't continue with this.

Piper (US/BI) made sense of the turning point she experienced after her abuser assaulted her in a nightclub by articulating,

'Cause it was in public, like she did that in front of a ton of people that I know, and she didn't care. Like, she just stopped caring where she was doing that. Before it was always behind closed doors. And I was just like, "no, no, no, no, no, no. This is not gonna work for me." I was just so embarrassed.

Similarly, Raeesa (SA/C) discussed her devastation after her husband dragged her by her hair through the streets of their home town,

The day when he actually embarrassed me in front of the whole world, I stopped loving him. Everyone saw, everyone knew. He took my dignity. There was something my oldest brother told me. He said to me, “remember one thing, people can take everything from you, but not your dignity.” But when [my husband] almost killed me, he took my dignity that day. I lost everything. I’ll never forget it, I’ll never get over it.

While the particular incident did not happen in public, Sasha (US/Bi) explains how having a juice box thrown at her eye nearly blinding her, was her turning point:

Actually having a physical reminder that was public, that was visible. It was like a symbol of what this relationship was like. And it didn’t go away right away.

Amy (US/Bi) captures a theme that emerged for some respondents by articulating that “it’s one thing to attack me, it’s another thing to go after my kid.” Ghaliyah (SA/C) spoke about an incident when her children became at risk:

The last straw was when he tried to stab me while I was breastfeeding my five month old daughter. That was just it. I think I knew that at some point I was going to leave. But the fact that he didn’t care about carrying on while I had the child in my arms, that made me decide.

Other women discussed the piling up of factors over time that contributed to the turning points which they experience. Robyn (SA/C) shared, “One night I just had enough of it all. He slapped me, and so I took the knife and I stabbed him.” As Robyn’s husband, who has stabbed Robyn in the face with a butter knife, still resides with her and her family, he continues to attempt to exert control over her life. Robyn, however, spoke about having had enough,

He phones every afternoon, when I come out of work. Then I must go and report to him at his work. I have to report everything to him and tell him that I'm going home now. And then I thought "No, I'm not going around by his work anymore. I'm tired." So I climbed in a taxi and went home. It's not long before he phoned me. "Where are you now?" So I told him I'm at home. "Now why didn't you come around here?" Then I told him "I'm tired. And I'm not an inmate."

A few respondents spoke about the clarity they got about the abuse, and arriving at their choice to leave after years of accumulated violence. This emergent theme aligns with Anderson and Saunders' (2003) assertion that survivors experienced a gradual shift that transformed their understanding of the relationship as abusive as well as the emotional act of giving up hope that the relationship would improve (175-176). This shift began survivors' emotional transformation (Anderson & Saunders, 2003) which incited the beginning of each woman's separation from her abuser. Maggie (US/W) said,

When I went into the hospital, the mask broke. And I started, without even realising it, talking about the abuse. Then I tried to put the mask back on and it didn't fit anymore. He wanted me to pretend that we had a family. And after a long-term abusive marriage, I couldn't pretend anymore.

Sasha (US/Bi) talked about the peace of mind she got once she made her choice,

All of a sudden, I was so sick. I was so sick, so anxious, it was like a constant panic attack. I was throwing up, diarrhoea, stomach cramps. And I had suffered from anxiety and it was like an anxiety attack for two days. And I really remember it just hitting me, like "I gotta go." And then all of the sudden all the anxiety and everything just went away. And I was like, "oh, that's it. I gotta go. This is the choice to make right now."

Kearney (2001) aptly conceptualises that survivors reach a turning point in how they relate to their relationships, in part, when the severity of violence increases, when it becomes public, or when women can no longer remain hopeful about a positive future for the partnership. However, the researcher's list of factors that instigate a turning point falls short. Kearney

(2001) fails to acknowledge the effects a survivor's own anger – and potential to act on that anger – can have. That is, it must be noted that half of the survivors interviewed for this research spoke about leaving the relationship in order to ensure their abusers' own safety.

Piper (US/BI) made sense of this by articulating, “you either hurt them or you walk away.”

Similarly, Rochelle (US/H) conveyed that,

I wanted to actually bring harm to him, like physical harm, and not care about the consequences. I felt myself getting out of control and wanting to cause physical harm to him, and in my mind, preparing to do so. That made me feel very nervous and scared. That's why I knew I had to get out of there. Because I felt like if I didn't, I was gonna go to jail for murder.

Ghaliyah (SA/C) shared similar sentiments,

I would peel the onions and stuff, and look at the knife and wicked thoughts would go through my head. I wanted to kill him. There was one day, I'll never forget this day, where I had the knife and I held it tight and I thought I could just go in there while he was sleeping and stab him and pull the knife and stab him again and pull it out and stab him again. And then when I realised what I was thinking, I threw the knife into the wall. That is how they can drive you to... I mean, you can actually kill them. I'm really calm, but if you push me over the edge I'm scared that I won't even know what I'm doing.

Rochelle (US/H) and Ghaliyah's (SA/C) fear of losing control and killing their abusers reflects the Battered Woman Syndrome (Walker, 1979, 1984). Walker (1979) asserts that because of the combination of individual abuse, societal gendered oppression, and an “indifferent society” (Rothenberg, 2003: 777), abuse victims develop psychological problems. These psychological problems can sometimes result in survivors killing their abusers (Rothenberg, 2003; Walker, 1979).

Robyn (SA/C), who also feels as though she is capable of harming her husband, said,

Sometimes I just felt that I could kill him. I am not a person that runs away from someone. I am so hard towards him that I don't care. I will hurt him. I don't care about what I do. And he knows it.

Raesa (SA/C) articulated,

I'm afraid I'm gonna kill him. Because many times I would stand when he just sleeps. But I don't have the guts. Sometimes I feel maybe that's the only option, to kill my husband now. I would have no remorse in court for what I did. And if you don't have any remorse, you pay for it. But then I think of my kids, man.

Rochelle (US/H) summarised many survivor's sentiments by sharing that "the biggest fear for me was that I was gonna become to other people what he was to me. I was becoming that person."

It is possible that a survivors' fear of harming or killing their abusers could be linked to their "internal accumulation of hurt and disillusionment" (Kearney, 2001: 277) or in response to a flagrant episode of violence, or an intervention from the outside. However, their recognition in the similarities between the behaviour of their perpetrator and their internalised fear of their own capacity for violence stands separate as a noteworthy turning point. Survivors' anger towards their abuser and correlated urge to cause harm, coupled with their empathy and concern for others (either their abuser or their children) motivated them to distance themselves from their partner. Based on these specific experiences, it could be argued that their motivation to leave the abusive relationship was based less on their need to access safety for themselves, and more on their desire to ensure it for their partner – a fascinating possibility that could not be explored within the scope of this research, but is a necessary topic to be examined elsewhere.

Regardless of the reason that survivors cited for experiencing a turning point – harm to children, a fear of causing harm to their partners, or a violent episode of an extreme nature – or their country of origin, both the victims and service providers interviewed acknowledged

that a particular occurrence created a shift in the abusive relationship. It should be noted that the turning point did not necessarily indicate the end of the relationship; it did at the very least, however, began the *process* of separating from the abuser – emotionally or physically or some combination thereof.

4.1.3 Access to Outside

Several survivors reported that they did not recognise their relationship as abusive or constituting domestic violence for a significant time period. For some women, this realisation only came long after the relationship had ended. Others still do not identify their relationship as “that” abusive. When women still in the abusive relationship had access to outside information, this linked to their turning point. However, I focus primarily on the access to outside information not falling under the umbrella of experiencing a turning point, but instead as having a direct impact on the survivors’ re-definition of the relationship and its classification as abusive. Mills (1985) articulates that some victims re-evaluated their relationships and began to re-conceptualise them as abusive “in light of messages from others that the abuse was wrong” (qtd. in Walddrop & Resick, 2004). The transition from identifying the relationship as normal or a merely unhealthy to labelling it as abusive (to whatever degree recognised by the survivor) was often congruent with her accessing outside information. This outside information could be formal domestic violence literature, spending time with peers who work in the field of gendered violence, or even traumatic emotional knowledge experienced after surviving *other* violence. Both Piper (US/BI) and Caitlin (SA/W) talked about being emotionally re-triggered after experiencing assaults by strangers, years after their abusive relationship ended. These assaults propelled a change in Piper and Caitlin’s sense-making of their former relationships. Piper, concisely, shared, “Oh I didn’t know that I was in a domestic violence relationship. I didn’t know I was in an abusive

relationship at the time. I just thought we had issues. It didn't start to trouble me until five years later. And part of that was because of when I was assaulted in broad day light." Caitlin said,

I've never fully, kind of processed the trauma of that relationship. Because I didn't have it as anything that was unusual or traumatic, he was just like my crazy boyfriend... very passionate relationship. But I think just the way in which the stabbing unearthed all sorts of weird stuff. The only two people in the world who have, like, left their mark on my body in a violent way are him and that mother fucker in the *vlei*. I mean seriously, that's the company that [he keeps].

Caitlin (SA/W), like many respondents, also spoke about how being exposed to new information transformed their meaning-making of their relationship. She went on to say,

I didn't even consider it domestic violence. I just thought it was fucking crazy. Only until recently [did] I start thinking about it as that. I think it's more to do with my conscientization, you know. And like, knowing, understanding. Doing my masters [degree] was a big leap in my consciousness. And befriending people who know about this stuff. Who I can talk to about, and start telling. And they were like, "that's what it is." It has just never been part of my vocabulary almost. And I started to see "oh, that's actually what happened." So it was only recently, moving in new [social] circles, and having access to feminist thinking, and reading on this things that I was able to make that connection.

Cecilia (US/W) shared an "aha" moment she had when in attendance at a presentation on the warning signs of domestic violence. Her access to outside information while still in her violent marriage, propelled her turning point, creating a notable transformation of her understanding of her relationship as one encompassed with domestic violence:

I was sitting in this room, we had ushered all these students in, and we're going through the checklist of abuse and I checked everything off but the gun. And it just hit me like a freaking *mack truck*. Like "oh my freaking god, there's a name for this. Holy shit." I can still remember that moment, and I knew I had to get the hell out, I knew it.

Amy (US/Bi) recalled when, years later, she understood her relationship as one involving domestic violence,

It didn't occur to me at all that I was in an abusive relationship until I was actually doing the Healing Abuse Working for Change volunteer training. That's when I got it, that I realised it was abusive. I didn't see the severity.

Alexis (US/Bl), who furthered her education after fleeing her abusive relationship, made sense of the violence months after separating from her perpetrator,

When I started school, everything started to become clear. Now I know. That is what it was, and this is what I need. There is where I belong.

It must be noted that of all of the respondents who reported defining their relationship as abusive after being exposed to outside information, only one was from the South African data set. This respondent was the only white South African respondent, and the most formally educated (she is currently enrolled in a PhD program) of that sample. Thus, the emergence of the reality that survivors meaning-made their partnership as one constituted by domestic violence only after access to outside information was predominantly seen within subjects within the sample within the United States. Conversely, more than half of the survivors from South Africa spoke about their relationships as either “not that abusive” or not abusive at all.

As the previously cited comment by Danielle (SA/C) says,

He hasn't been abusing me like in hitting me where there's blood.
He always used to *just* slap me if I said something wrong.
I can't call it really abusive. [my emphasis]

When Robyn (SA/C) spoke about her own feelings of strength and empowerment, she made sense of her relationship by discounting the extent of the violence she experienced. She said, “It's not that bad, really. There are many others who are being abused more than me.” Two

other respondents, Carina (SA/C) and Yolanda (SA/C), told me at the start of their interviews that they had never experienced domestic violence at all. However, at some point in their interviews both women spoke about being physically slapped and punched, and sexually assaulted within intimate relationships. There are countless possibilities that may explain the disconnect between not defining oneself as a survivor of domestic violence or having endured abuse and having experienced incidences of physical violence; however, the full extent of these possibilities are not explored within this piece. It is necessary though, to note that the parallels between the survivors who regarded their relationships as “not abusive” or “not that abusive” were the survivors with the *least* amount of formal education and of a low socio-economic status. There was a divergent trend that those with more formal education were more likely to define their partnerships as domestic violence once exposed to outside information. While all of the women interviewed did not initially identify as survivors of abuse, and underwent a process before claiming that identity, those of less formal education and from the poor Cape Flats area of Cape Town did not make sense of the experience as abusive while those with a higher level of formalised education did. Thus, in this sample there appears to be a convergence of class, culture, and level of education that impact a woman’s self-identification as someone who has been in an abusive relationship. When discussing the impact of education and culture on a survivors’ experience with domestic violence, service provider Elaine (US/W) said,

How we define what is happening to her as abusive or illegal, or problematic or objectionable, has a lot to do with culture. And I think we need to be careful when we say that, because lots of times, we automatically go, "Oh Saudi Arabia, they oppress women". And they do oppress women. So does my community, Irish-Catholic oppress the hell out of women and we long have. So it's present in every community and I think sometimes we make the mistake, when we start talking about culture, and race, and immigration, of blaming the culture. So I want to be really careful about that. But having said that, you know *whether or not it even gets defined as abuse*, whether or not someone seeks to leave, or seeks to take some other remedy, or feels like it’s appropriate to reach out for help...and then who they

can reach out for help to. I think it really shapes and defines what happens.

Elaine went on to add,

Information spreads differently. Across demographics around age, certainly around language, and immigration. I think part of it depends on community, and that's professional community and educational community, and, um I think what kind of information you get also differs by family and community culture.

Like Elaine (US/W), the other service providers spoke about how culture and education can create both community and access, and isolation and barriers. Echoing Elaine's sentiments, I assert that culture and education are not the sole "reasons" why a survivor may not define her relationship as abusive, but such factors do create and reify everyday discourses that are pulled on by women when they make sense of their partnerships and their lives. Within certain communities, if gendered violence within intimate relationships is constructed in a certain way, those master discourses will play out on micro, individual levels. This point will be explored further in the following chapter.

4.1.4 Self Empowerment

Kearney (2001) asserts that the fourth and final phase that survivors go through while experiencing domestic abuse is constituted by a woman leaving the violent partnership, facing numerous barriers (including increased violence by the abuser, limited resources, and a lack of support from outside resources), and slowly re-defining self (278-279). Because of the combination of survivors' emotions, failing services, and an increased risk of danger, women are faced with complex situations while navigating starting over. Sometimes women return to their abusive partners; sometimes survivors find independence. Sometimes they feel fear and anxiety; sometimes they become empowered and find peace. Sometimes *all* of these things are experienced by one woman as these realities are not mutually exclusive. This

complexity is illustrated by many respondents' experiences. Maggie (US/W) spoke about what it was like once the relationship was over,

I was terrified. I lived in a constant state of fear. I thought he was going to come find me and kill me. I slept on the couch so I could see all the entry points. I was in a constant state of hyper-vigilance.

She also went on to speak about the strength she maintained and nurtured,

But there was, like, a tiny, tiny spark of my spirit left. So I know what baby steps are about. I slowly filled with the goddess. And I'm my own advocate, so I won't let myself go down a rabbit hole. Ever again.

Caitlin's (SA/W) words also highlight the complex combination of danger and wide array of emotions that are processed when exiting an abusive relationship:

I was afraid. I was very scared that he would come and find me. And it was also the sadness and numbness that happens when you have a break up. The night that I was packing all my stuff up and he came back and it was the worst he'd ever beaten me. He seriously nearly killed me and at that point... if there had been any shred of doubt in my mind it was gone.

When describing what it was like to leave the home she shared with her abuser to move back in with her parents, Caitlin (SA/W) went on to say,

I remember driving and feeling quite tired, because I'd been crying the whole fucking way and I just had quite a traumatic time. But I was feeling quite light. I remember sleeping really well that night. And the trip was actually quite lovely. It was beautiful. The landscapes were just... and I was just taking stuff in. It was a very heightened emotional space. There's a dirt road which cuts through the most beautiful valley and I just thought "I'm taking that road." I was kind of feeling unconstrained in some way.

She also went on to describe her strength,

I started really asking serious questions and I found a lot of myself and my power. I have no doubt that I found some of my power in that space.

Cecilia (US/W) reflected on the long process before she could feel safe,

He can no longer disparage me, he can no longer break me down. The power dynamic has been reversed as far as I'm concerned. And so I feel like I've been successful in tipping that scale, but it took a long time. And you know, there's still times when stuff bubbles up, but it took maybe eight years to get to a point where I felt pretty confident that I didn't have to worry about his bullshit.

Empowerment was conceptualised in many ways by survivors. Additionally, it was rooted in many different sources. Amy (US/Bi) spoke about how she gained power when navigating the legal system: "the control shift that I got from being in court shifted the power in the relationship." Similarly, Robyn (SA/C) reflected on the power she attained when obtaining a protective order. She said, "I can do anything with this interdict. There is power in it. I have more power than him." While the legal and justice systems often fail survivors of domestic violence and perpetuate dangerous stereotypes, they can be a source of transforming the power dynamic between two people in an abusive relationship.

For other women, empowerment was talked about as something that came from within.

Ghaliyah (SA/C) said, "you actually grow stronger with all the obstacles. You come out on top. I refuse to let my spirit die or crack. I just grind my teeth and move on. I was determined." Carina (SA/C), recognising that empowerment and healing is a continual process, remarked that, "I will find a better person in myself." Yolanda (SA/C) spoke about the power she exerted when being abused by her father by saying that,

I knew what he was doing was wrong. I promised myself not to keep quiet. I'm going to speak up because he's violating me. And so I spoke up. And he got what he deserved.

Because of the increased level of danger and barriers faced by survivors, many women return to their abusive partner. Women who returned to their abusive partners also found strength,

even if it looked “different”. After our interview was concluded, Raeesa (SA/C) spoke to me about how proud she felt of herself for speaking to me honestly, and how even though she was living with her husband, she would not have previously agreed to be interviewed – indicating a process of self-discovery and empowerment. Similarly, she talked about the positive overflow of emotion she felt when she attended church. She said, “I was sitting there and I couldn’t believe what I was doing. For the first time in my life, I went to church. I was sitting there, I was so full I couldn’t even speak.” Alice (SA/W), a service provider, shared the story of a client who returned to her perpetrator, feeling stronger than ever:

I thought she would never ever go back, and we went to court, she got the protection order. The magistrate was very sympathetic to her, the system worked in her case. And she went back. She said “now everybody knows. It’s not a secret anymore. I’ve told my family, I’ve told my friends, I’ve spoken in court, the court knows. It’s not a secret anymore, it’s out in the open. So he can’t hide it anymore, and neither can I.”

Everyday discourses dictate that victims of domestic violence are successful only when they have left the relationship. However, many survivors – including those in this research – discover/ed their power and feel successful *in* the abusive relationship, which forces us to re-conceptualise what success is for a survivor. Grossman (2004), who writes about the choices that South African domestic workers make in relation to their employment, challenges us to acknowledge the unseen power that these employees have. Similarly, I challenge us to see the same unseen power – this expression of resistance and agency – that domestic violence survivors have. This unnoticed power is when a woman knows her abuser so well she actively chooses to stay because she *knows* if she attempts to leave she will be killed. Or it is the power of silently switching roles: “I think that we are much more clever than they are because we know that we have to play the game. We’ve always had to live two lives – one for them and one for ourselves” (Grossman, 2004: 9). This ‘playing the game’, silent

planning, and conscious choosing is a form of power, and a type of success. It is the domestic violence survivor practicing agency and resisting her abuser – whether while still in the relationship, or by attempting to leave it. Service provider Elaine (US/W) said,

We literally are pushed into a place of redefining success.
If the goal isn't to escape the abusive partner, that's okay.
And I think the challenge is we define it as success because she left. So it's about defining success on *her* terms. [my emphasis]

Elaine continues,

For some, success will look very different. Success for them will mean they keep coming back [to therapy] or they get the opportunity to be of service, or that their kids get out and their kids move on and have a life that looks different from theirs. Lots of success stories look really different in different contexts. Eventually everybody has some form of success.

This re-imagining of success and empowerment for survivors is the first step in transforming the way in which we conceptualise and make sense of the external factors that contribute to a woman's experience with domestic violence.

4.2 External Factors

Kearney (2001) correctly asserts that there is a broad societal acceptance of intimate partner violence by articulating that “violence against women was invisible and accepted by the women themselves, the couple, their families of origin, and their acquaintances and community” (275). Beyond the invisibility held by individuals and their communities, there is a wide-spread societal culture that supports gender based violence (Burman & Chantler, 2005; Connell, 1987; Hegde, 1998; hooks, 2000; Rich, 1980). This is not only visible in feminist frameworks and academic theory, but is understood by those doing the work on the ground. Service provider Cecilia (US/W) said,

There is a way in which misogyny feeds into this, that there's sort of this general acceptance of this patriarchal society stuff. There's, like, a baseline acceptance of this sort of macho, abusive behaviour. I think that feeds a lot of what makes us turn the other way, when we see or hear about domestic violence. Or even survivors themselves in relationships are prisoners to how they view the world from that lens.

While examining the experiences of domestic violence survivors, the data depicted two separate categories of influencing factors. In addition to the internal processes that survivors go through, which was examined in the previous chapter, there are several external factors that impact a woman's experience enduring an abusive relationship. The external factors that are explored in this chapter fall into two categories – *(in)formal systems* and *discourses*, both of which exist in the context of sociocultural normalised gendered violence. Many of the differences that were found between populations are external factors.

4.2.1 *(In)formal systems*

Both formal and informal systems that were external to the survivor had a major impact on their experience. Sometimes these systems supported and assisted them, but other times they existed as obstacles, barriers, and sources of placing blame on the woman. However, most respondents spoke about a blend of successes and challenges experienced when interacting with (in)formal systems.

4.2.1.1 *Legal Response*

While legal and justice systems are designed to assist victims of crime – including victims of domestic violence – these systems do not always ensure safety or provide victims with the necessary resources. Some survivors had never used the court or legal system for a few reasons: they feared their abuser would find out, which would increase violence; it never

occurred to them as an option; or they had no faith that it would be helpful. However, generalisations about the efficacy of these systems cannot be made – many survivors report being supported and gaining empowerment via these systems, while others report on being re-victimised when navigating the systems. For many, both of these experiences existed together. From this emerged the reality that if nothing else, legal responses are inconsistent. Service provider Jodi (SA/C) said,

There's a certain police station in our area where they have the victim empowerment program, so they'll call in people who have been trained to come and deal. But that just doesn't happen. And those people are not always there twenty-four hours, so your initial contact is with that person behind the chief office desk. So you just never know.

Also showcasing the inconsistencies with police response is the fact that two South African survivors, Raeesa (SA/C) and Robyn (SA/C), who are from the same town, have had markedly different experiences with the same police station. Raeesa said, “the police in [my local town] are so corrupt. They don't help me, I can't call them anymore.” Conversely, Robyn who utilises the police services often has only had positive experiences with them,

They know already [about the abuse]. Where I stay, there are many policemen living there and they know what's going on. *They're always willing to help.* There is one policeman, Constable Coetzee; he's a very good policeman. He gave me his cell phone number. If anything happens to me then I must phone him, even if he's not on duty. I must phone him. [my emphasis]

Like Robyn (SA/C), Amy (US/Bi), Yolanda (SA/C), Rochelle (US/H), and Danielle (SA/C) – survivors from both Boston and Cape Town – all had similarly positive experiences with the police and legal systems. Each survivor spoke about feeling supported and validated by the police officers they interacted with, and felt strong for having gained power back via the systems in place. Rochelle (US/H) said,

Having all my ducks in a row and having the [legal] document-

ation gave me more strength to feel like I had some power behind what I was saying. I had a legal advocate through the court as well. That stuff sparked a fire in me and helped me get my mind right.

Other respondents had mixed experiences. Alexis (US/BI) felt the police force worked in her favour, but the court system did not. She said, “you don’t have the support, especially from the district attorney I dealt with. She was like ‘that’s the situation you chose, you have to deal with it.’” Two survivors from the United States, Sasha (US/Bi) and Maggie (US/W), spoke about having to “work the system”, specifically related to obtaining a protective order. Both women felt as though the law only worked in their favour because they *made* it work for them. Sasha (US/Bi) said,

I got a restraining order, as well. I actually lied, though. I wasn’t scared that he was gonna kill me, like what the restraining order is usually for, to protect you from imminent danger. I just said “yeah, I think he’s going to kill me”, but it really wasn’t that. I got the restraining order to help myself not go back to him.

Ghaliyah (SA/C) who was failed by the police, said,

I went to the police once to report the violence, and they weren’t very helpful. They just said if it’s domestic violence there’s nothing we can do. And I mean, if the police won’t help you, then that’s it, you’re stuffed.

She went on to add,

It was all males there, so now you're coming in there and they look at you and then you explain your situation to them and then they just don't help you. You feel, you feel lost. You feel very angry. And I mean then you just have to go back to the abuse, and what can you do? You're fearful also because you're thinking “now what? If I go back is he gonna hit me even more? Is it gonna be worse? What’s gonna happen now?” You know.

Many respondents spoke about the inconsistencies and holes in the legal and justice systems.

American service provider Cecilia (US/W) highlighted the failures in the system by saying,

The systems that are in place don’t work the way they should work. There’s still a lot of stereotypes and denial about the

reality and the danger of these relationships. And you know, daily we hear in the news about murders that happen as a result of the failures of the [legal] system.

Pertaining specifically to protective orders, South African service provider Alice (SA/W) said, “I mean, professionally, I always say ‘I advise that this is what we can do’, but I do not have confidence.” Piper (US/BI) spoke about the inverted order in which events need to take place for the system to work,

You need something bad to happen before you can access a restraining order. You need to have proof or evidence that you are being battered or stalking or something, to say “I need this one little piece of paper that can really get me the police protection that I need... or any immediate response.” But what happens before that?

The analysed data shows that service providers from both sample populations criticised police response, and the legal and justice systems for not doing enough for supporting and/or protecting victims of domestic violence. There was no consistent theme that emerged from the survivors’ experiences with the same systems. While some women had positive experiences and others had negative experiences, these trends did not fall along lines based on race, language, socio-economic class, level of education, or country of origin. In contrast, the inconsistent nature of women’s experiences pointed to factors outside of their control. Conclusions cannot be made about these factors, as examining police response to domestic abuse or analysing the efficacy of domestic violence legislation in particular locations was not the focus of this research. However, as mentioned by some of the subjects, one possible contributing factor that determines whether a woman has a positive or negative experience with the legal systems could be the level of training that police officers and court personnel have on the topic of domestic violence. Additionally, a theme emerged that the abusers’ individual perception of the law had a major impact on the survivors’ evaluation of the efficacy of legal responses.

When Danielle (SA/C) spoke about the helpful nature of the police, she attributed it, in part, to her abusers fear of the police: “he was very scared of the law. It’s not all of them that’s scared of the law, I’m telling you. When they wanna kill that woman, they kill her. But he totally stayed away after [I obtained an interdict].” Similarly, Robyn (SA/C), who asserts that she holds power over her husband because she has an interdict against him, said: “he was very scared of the police. He ran away and then became nice [to me]. He doesn’t want to go to jail.” Both of these women’s positive experiences with the police could be partially attributed to the level of fear their partners had of the legal system. Other survivors who reported a lack of trust in the legal system also spoke about their partners’ disregard for the law. Piper (US/BI), whose abuser was a female police officer and often saw herself “above the law”, said,

She would show up at my house, she would chill by my school, would chill by my door. Calls non-stop through the night, just anything and everything. You think “I’m gonna get a protective order. If I get the protective order they’ll be concerned and they will have to stay away.” These people just don’t stay away.

Similarly, Raeesa (SA/C) said, “Because for him, it’s just no big deal. Such a lot of times he already went to jail. For him, it’s nothing, man. The law doesn’t work on him.”

4.2.1.2 Resources

Waldrop and Resick (2004) articulate that formalised resources have a direct impact on a survivor’s coping mechanisms, which in turn influences a woman’s motivation to stay or leave the relationship. As with legal systems, resources are designed to assist survivors.

Women from both Boston and Cape Town who received services from domestic violence agencies – whether it was shelter, therapy, legal advocacy, or support groups – spoke about both the transformative logistical and emotional help received. When accessed by victims,

these agencies often proved to be immensely beneficial. Yolanda (SA/C) explained that the service providers she was working with while living in a domestic violence shelter were helping her to build herself back up again. She said, “We’re still lambs. We let the lion rule, you know. So they’re teaching us to become the lion.” Similarly, Maggie (US/W) shared,

[The service providers] helped me to reframe my thinking about the finances and this interdependence we had. And they also empowered me, they brought back my spirit so that this little flame started to grow again.

Many women, however, spoke about not knowing that services were available. Before finding out about the particular domestic violence shelter she was living at, Danielle (SA/C) felt alone: “It was just me alone in this world. I never had the knowledge that places like these were out there.” Ghaliyah (SA/C), who never accessed services, said,

There was nothing, just nothing back then. I mean, if there was an organisation, I didn’t know about it. They’re not well known; they don’t advertise themselves very well. You don’t know about anything. At all.

Raesa (SA/C) echoed these sentiments, saying, “there’s no one that would come out and talk to me about these things. Nobody ever did this, nobody ever helped me.” When I asked if she had ever contacted a domestic violence shelter she asked, “is there such places?” Cape Town shelter manager Jodi (SA/C) talked about the wide-spread lack of knowledge that support services exist. She said, “Often women say ‘I never knew there was a place like this.’ Once they have knowledge of places, that gives them the oomph to say ‘I can go now because there is a place.’”

For survivors who had no knowledge of such organisations, medical professionals proved to be a source of potential intervention. After a particularly abusive incident Ghaliyah (SA/C) went to her doctor. She said,

The doctor actually spoke to me and he said “I’m not speaking to you as a doctor now but as a father. If this was my daughter, this is the advice I would give her: no person deserves treatment like this.”

Raesa (SA/C) had a similar experience at the hospital, saying,

And this doctor made a case at that hospital. I come there to the hospital, they actually help me immediately. And I lied to him. I said “no I was drunk and I fell” this doctor said “no, stop lying. This is someone who did this to you and I really would like to see this person in court.”

These verbal interventions validated survivors, and often contributed to the turning point they experienced. The medical professionals who intervened predominantly recommended that survivors take legal action against their abusers. However, for many survivors, this was not an option. Thus, while the doctors’ concern was pivotal, it ended up being an isolated showing of symbolic support leaving women who were not connected with other resources to fall through the cracks.

Service providers from both sample groups spoke about the role that their agencies take in supporting women who have endured intimate partner abuse, while also acknowledging their challenges – which often exist as barriers for victims. Each service provider explained that their job is to connect clients with other necessary resources. Elaine (US/W) explained this by saying, “We’re literally building bridges to ensure that people have the access they need to all the other community based resources.” Cecilia (US/W) spoke about the network of various services that supports clients, while Jodi (SA/C) said,

Part of the role the shelter plays is to educate people. People often don’t know what is available [to them]. Ideally what we are doing is giving them a phone number for each of the services that they could possibly require. So they have a support structure.

The words of these service providers and the experiences of the women who did not know that domestic violence agencies existed showcase that if a survivor accesses one service, she

has a plethora of resources at her fingertips. On the other extreme, if a survivor does not have access to any services, her isolation and continued obstacles remain as impossible barriers.

An individual survivors' experience with domestic violence agencies exists within the context where that resource is located. Thus, a woman's experience with accessing resources is dramatically influenced by the organizations that are providing the support, as well as the larger social systems and contexts. When service providers were asked about the obstacles that victims of domestic violence – and potential clients – are faced with, an interesting theme emerged. One service provider from the United States shared that she had yet to have a client disclose that she was HIV positive, while the other American service provider said she works with one client whose status is positive. On the contrary, working with HIV positive populations is part and parcel of South African service providers' jobs. Alice (SA/W) said, "we operate from the assumption that everyone is HIV positive." Jodi (SA/C) shared some of the challenges the organisation faces when shelter residents are positive:

more and more we are having to deal with folk coming in who are positive. Because of the confidentiality you cannot obviously divulge, but then there are days that the women are not feeling good and they can't do their chores in the house. And that causes a stir "how come she gets away with only doing this and we have to do that?" You want to give them the edge when it comes to diet, so "how come she can get a salad and we can't?" So there are practical challenges. And you would not like to stigmatize them, but maybe we should look at a facility which can address the abuse, but can also help them as far as the treatment plan is concerned.

The prevalence of HIV/AIDS in certain South African populations, as well factors such as languages spoken by both domestic violence victim and service providers; NGOs requirement of shelter residents to not be currently battling a substance addition; maximum income cut-offs preventing middle or upper class survivors to access assistance; and a widespread lack of funding for domestic violence agencies have direct impacts on the ways in

which women navigate not only the network of services, but also their abusive relationship. The reality of waiting lists, for instance, is an obstacle faced by service providers in both sample populations, and directly impacts a survivors' ability to access safety. Jodi (SA/C) said,

It sounds terrible to put someone's abuse on a waiting list, I mean, particularly when you know that she has reached crisis point when she is making the decision to get out. And by you not being able to help her she may well [be] forced to stay and stick it out. And please God, may she survive. Cause you wonder how many don't survive because of that.

These external factors that exist outside of the survivor's being, and even outside of the agency providing services speaks to a larger systemic context that influences the way in which agencies *can* provide services, which trickles down to impact the ways that survivors experience navigating support services.

4.2.2 *The permeation of discourses*

The research conducted for this study highlights the ever-present existence of discourses that not only contribute to women's vulnerability for experiencing domestic violence, but more importantly, impact a woman's personal process with enduring abuse. These discourses both shape other people's response to the abuse a woman endures, and are drawn on by survivors themselves to make sense of their traumatic experiences. Kearney's (2001) grounded theory of the phases that victims go through in relation to their experiences with domestic violence captures the emotional and developmental factors that are navigated by women. While the author appropriately frames the phases within a sociocultural context that renders intimate partner violence invisible, she fails to delve deeper into the *interlocking* nature of sociocultural factors and an individual woman's experience enduring domestic abuse. Kearney (2001), of course, cannot be critiqued for what she did not set out to research,

however, it is imperative to highlight that we cannot understand a victim's developmental process without directly connecting it to the master narratives that are the fabric of society. That is, for many survivors, sociocultural factors *become* their internal sense-making. Two of these internalised discursive themes that emerged from this data are *religion* and the *victim blaming language* used to discuss domestic violence.

4.2.2.1 Religion

Pargament et al. (1988) asserts that religion serves an "important function in helping people understand and cope with life events by offering guidance, support and hope" (91).

Pargament et al.'s (1988) theorisation that religion is used as a coping mechanism to problem solve through life's challenges is applicable for many survivors interviewed here. Religion, as a discourse, was widely used by the South African survivors to make sense of their trauma and abuse. Some women spoke about how God helped them endure their violent relationship, while others spoke about trusting God's plan. Ghaliyah (SA/C) said,

What really helped me get through all this stuff was my faith. That I kept on talking to God all the time. Even now I still do. If I have a problem I'll always place it in His hands and that helped me big time.

Alexis (US/BI), the only survivor from the United States who spoke about God, echoed similar sentiments: "I have been blessed over the past three years. God just opened everything up for me, and I've just seen everything. I'm on His path." Yolanda (SA/C) thanked God, saying,

I'm so blessed here [at shelter]. I'm not working, you know. I have money almost every day and I'm never hungry. God is good. God is really good. I'm happier in a sense that I'm free. I am, I've been in a cage for so long. I'm free here, I get so much love here. That's how blessed I am. I know I'm in the right place.

While talking about the pain she still feels, Danielle (SA/C) put her trust in God, and deferred to Him (Pargament et al., 1988). She said,

Only God can take this trauma away from me. I'm getting a lot of knowledge, but He's still got the last say. Like, I've been going to counselling, but I'm too scared. I [don't] feel comfortable speaking about everything. But I know the Lord is with me. He knows best.

All but one South African respondent spoke about relying on God for support and guidance, and only one survivor from the United States made sense of her experience by using God and religion. This stark difference speaks to a larger theme of dissimilarity between the two population samples. The majority of the South African respondents are from the Cape Flats, a low- to working- socio-economic class, and do not have much education beyond high school. The only South African survivor who did not draw on religious discourse to make sense of her violent relationship was middle class and was working towards the completion of her PhD. Conversely, the majority of survivors from the United States were from middle class urban settings and had at least completed some university classes (with many having postgraduate degrees). The only woman from the U.S. who spoke about God while sharing her experiences of a violent and traumatic relationship was from a working class area, and did not have education beyond high school. So while the variance of the use of religious discourse initially appeared to vary between countries, upon further examination the differences lay more within socio-economic class and level of education. A recent Oxford University study that spanned three years and conducted research in twenty countries examined whether or not people's beliefs in God were learned behaviours or part of human nature. Researcher Dr. Justin Barrett said, "religion is less likely to thrive in populations living in cities in developed nations where there is already a strong social support network" (qtd. in Ross, 2011). While it is not the place of this research project to pronounce on the

validity of the Oxford study, there certainly is corroborating evidence in this project that survivors of domestic violence that made sense of their experiences through religion and the existence of God may have done so, in part, because they lacked other forms of support. Women with a higher level of formal education and from a higher socio-economic class, who were often from urban settings, did not “need” religion as a form of support when navigating an abusive relationship as they relied on other socially institutionalised resources to assist them.

4.2.2.2 Victim blaming language as a discourse

Peck (1993) writes that “the power of discourses resides in their ability to impose constraints and win participants’ consent to abide by them. Ideologies are most effective when they are least visible, when they have become ‘common sense’” (92-93). Societies, at large, abide by discourses that perpetuate victim blaming (Hegde, 1998; hooks, 2000; Rich, 1980). Burman and Chantler (2005) assert that social, political, and economic factors support and reinforce gendered violence, which perpetuates locating blame and responsibility on the victim, and “fails to recognise structural, material, and cultural barriers to leaving” (62). Often, these victim-blaming discourses are visible only to women who have endured violence. Even still, sometimes they are internalised by survivors. This showcases the extent to which these discourses not only permeate society, but directly impact a woman’s sense-making of her experience with trauma and abuse. Many survivors spoke about the shame and isolation they felt because of how others responded to their situation. Ghaliyah (SA/C) said,

My mom always said that before she’s gonna side with her own children, like, we’ve made the choice to get married, so she will side with the other person. She said ‘if you get married one day, don’t think you can come running back to this house if you have problems.’ And I just saw the abuse as my own problem, and not anyone else’s problem. So I didn’t go back there for help. I just thought ‘I’m gonna have to sort it out myself.’”

She went on to explain why she chose not to share the abuse with any other friends or family:

I didn't want to hear negative things. Even if maybe they wouldn't say negative things, maybe they would have been supportive, but I just didn't want to risk it. I didn't want to hear 'try again' or 'don't you think you should go to counselling?' I wasn't interested. I didn't want counselling. I didn't want to make it work anymore. He was the abuser, not me.

Similarly, Raeesa (SA/C) said, "I never asked any people for help. They knew what was happening, but for them it's like 'you had your choice and you made a bad choice so you must sit with it.'" The nature of victim-blaming discourses are so extensive and infiltrative that even if not explicitly stated, as with Ghaliyah's (SA/C) family and friends, we *expect* for them to be drawn on. The existence of such a dominant school of thought prevents survivors from reaching out for support. Additionally, often times survivors' concern that people will blame or judge them for their abusive situation are legitimate. Raeesa said,

My co-workers are now very cross with me because they knew about the fight. Everybody knew what happened. They were very sympathetic with me, and they tried to help me get away. My work people helped me a lot. But when I had to go back to him it was like everybody just turned their faces on me. And their backs. I knew it would happen, too.

Victim-blaming language was also internalised by survivors, as they wondered out loud what they did to cause the abuse or what more they could have done to minimise the violence and maximise support. Raeesa (SA/C) simply asked, "is it my fault? I could have done more." Danielle (SA/C) said, "But sometimes it doesn't come from the abuser. It comes from the opposite party. Why is this man hitting me? Why is that?"

Interestingly, many respondents took personal responsibility for the choices that they made that had an impact on their relationships. For example, Maggie (US/W) said,

The choices that we make have consequences that we can't even fathom. The choices that we make in our lives cause us

to be victims. And I would never say that to a person who has gone through it, but I know that. He was my best teacher. And I'm glad I went through it because if I hadn't, I wouldn't be the person I am today. And I like who I am now.

Similarly, Caitlin (SA/W) said,

There is a lot of stuff that I need to take responsibility for. I was toxic in that space. I really did antagonise him sometimes. It's not to justify what he did, but just to acknowledge that there was ugliness from my side.

While the responsibility that survivors took came from a place of personal empowerment, I assert that it is situated on the same continuum of victim-blaming discourse. A survivor saying "*it was my fault*" is often constituted as internalised self-blame; conversely, a survivor saying "*I take responsibility*" is viewed as personal empowerment. It is my contention that while a survivors' *feelings* behind those statements are drastically different, it must be noted that each statement is intertwined with the other in acknowledging a survivors' *role* in the abuse she endured. Recognising and acknowledging responsibility can be incredibly empowering for many survivors; however, we must be careful to recognise that the taking of responsibility could actually be inverted and repackaged victim-blaming discourses. This possibility is not meant to undermine the responsibility and power reclaimed by survivors, but is suggested that empowerment is complexly linked to blaming the victim. This phenomenon, which cannot be fully explored in this space, speaks to the complicated and ingrained nature of discourses, and the fact that these occurrences must be examined in connection with each other.

Various types of external discourses -- including religion and victim-blaming language, the two discourses explored here -- are outside of an individual's violent partnership. However, both discourses are drawn on and internalised to make sense of the abuse. While religious

discourses were used by survivors to support themselves in times of trauma, victim-blaming discourses created isolation and continued barriers for women.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This comparative analysis explored the similarities and differences between the experiences of domestic violence survivors from two populations – one from the greater Boston area and the other from metro-Cape Town. Several similar themes that emerged from the data tells us that women who have endured abuse in intimate partnerships move through similar internal processes, and are additionally faced with various external obstacles. The meaning-making of survivors and domestic violence service providers alike help us understand the process that victims go through, influenced by both internal emotional processes and external structural factors. The tactics employed by perpetrators in addition to a survivor's commitment to having a successful partnership, prevent many relationships from being recognised as abusive. As a result of both internal emotions and external interventions however, survivors eventually reached a turning point that propelled them to begin looking for ways to separate from their abusers. This turning point may or may not have coincided with the recognition that the partnership was abusive. Ultimately, while (re)claiming power in their lives and (re)gaining independence, women faced numerous obstacles. These realities were seen in both sample populations.

The differences found between populations were few and lay predominantly with an individual's position in relation to macro systems. That is, there were differences between survivors' experiences based on their relationship to larger societal institutions – religion, law, formalised domestic violence resources, the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, and so on, which calls for research to be executed on a larger examination of broader systems. It is important to note that the differences that appeared did so not necessarily *between*, but also *within*

sample populations. Again, this speaks to a survivors' position in relation to macro systems. That is, a woman's experience with domestic violence was impacted by her religion, support network, community, and socio-economic status regardless of her country of origin.

The overarching sense of similarities between various women's experience with domestic abuse and their own individual understanding of it requires us to examine discourses, and the way they work. Peck (1993) reminds us that discourses are most effective when they are invisible. Everyday-discourses, including the notion that "you made your bed, now lie in it" and the commonly held belief that all victims of domestic violence *should* leave their abusers are often invisible. These discourses greatly impact how a woman experiences domestic violence. While theories like Kearney's (2001) are imperative in that they help us to understand what a victim of intimate partner violence goes through, they fall short. We must more directly examine the mutually reinforced link between dominant discourses and individuals' internal processes. External and internal factors have been analysed separately here, but the connection between both was highlighted. Most simply put, individuals pull on widespread 'external' discourses to make sense of their experiences; survivors' emotions and understanding of their relationships is directly impacted by the discourses at play. As service provider Elaine (US/W) said,

We need to look at all the different ways in which language moves and we need to think of language less as static and more as movement. We need to constantly keep changing it and be new to it. If we're not careful, the same stereotypes [about gendered violence] get heaped on top of new words. We need to keep being mindful. Language constructs meaning so [if we're not careful] we're dehumanising people, we're minimising people.

Elaine's sentiments speak to the power of language, and mirror Baderoon's (2003) apt explanation that words create people's lives and communities. Words, language, and

discourses may be “out there” in society, but they construct social reality and are internalised by each of us to make sense of our own experiences, as well as our understanding of issues like gendered violence. Academic and common sense discourses often place responsibility of domestic violence on the victim, expect her to leave, and quantify and universalise her experience. These discourses Other the survivor and place blame on her for that which is done to her. The cause and effect relationship between academic discourses, common sense discourses, and the realities of violent relationships are fluid and interchangeable. More specifically, all of these discourses are located *within* all of us – including those that endure domestic abuse. The personal is political and the political is personal. We cannot compartmentalise the internal and external, the emotional and systemic, or the individual and structural – discourses that support domestic violence shape all of these spaces. Discourses move and circulate between all of these spaces to recreate, reinforce, and reify what simply *is*.

Operating from these lenses allows us to more fully understand a domestic violence survivors’ sense-making of the abuse she endured. Additionally, it requires us to expand upon the current state of academic research. Research on domestic violence comes from a plethora of academic disciplines and frameworks: legal, feminist, therapeutic, medical and health, and human rights. This work has demonstrated the inadequacies of analysing domestic violence as solely an individual problem *or* as a structural issue. This thesis expands the repertoire by engaging with both feminist and discursive thematic analysis, giving priority to the voices of those most affected by domestic violence. Additionally, as much of the relevant literature that comparatively analyses domestic violence from various contexts is quantitative in nature, this work fills an important gap in the field. Going forward, our research will only truly become activism – which, for me, is the goal – when we

transform our response to and analysis of gendered violence, which must begin with removing the invisibility cloak from the various discourses at play.

The incredible courage, grace, and resistance of domestic violence survivors worldwide requires us to honour their experiences by critically examining the complex array of internal and external factors that contribute to a survivors' experience. The inspiration gained by the survivors in this study invokes in us the acknowledgment that some risks are too great: "To speak, one risks the censure of one's closest allies. To remain silent renders one continually vulnerable to the kind of abuse heaped upon people who have no voice" (Crenshaw, 1992: 1472).

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Appendix B

Boston and Cape Town Background and Demographics

Boston is the capital of Massachusetts, United States, with a population of 617,594 (Greater Boston has a population of approximately 4.5 million). According to the 2010 United States Census, 47.0% of the population is White, 22.4% is Black, 17.5% is Hispanic, 8.9% is Asian, and other races make up 4.2%¹⁴. Violent crime has decreased in Boston since the early 1990s: there were 75 in 2005, down from 152 in 1990.¹⁵

Cape Town, Western Cape, South Africa's population in 2007 was approximately 3.5 million people. Racially, 34.9% of the population is Black African, 44.0% is Coloured, 19.3% is White, and 1.8% is Asian¹⁶. An average of 5.5 murders were reported daily in Cape Town in 2008, totaling approximately 2,007 murders for the year.¹⁷

As demonstrated with the above statistics, there are vast differences between Boston and Cape Town based on race, population size, and incidences of violent crimes.

¹⁴ Available at: <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/data/>

¹⁵ Boston Crime Statistics and Crime Data. Available at: <http://boston.areconnect.com/crime1.htm>

¹⁶ Small, K. 2007 Community Survey Analysis for Cape Town. Available at:

<http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/CityReports/Documents/2007%20Community%20Survey%20Report.pdf>

¹⁷ City Statistics, Cape Town. Available at: <http://www.capetown.gov.za/en/stats/Pages/CityStatistic.aspx>

Appendix C: Table 1: Respondent Demographic Information

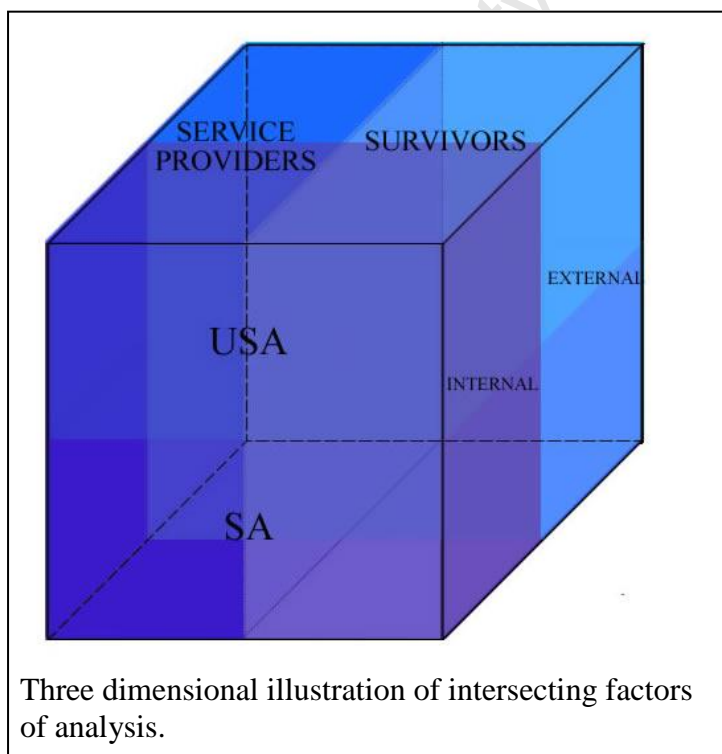
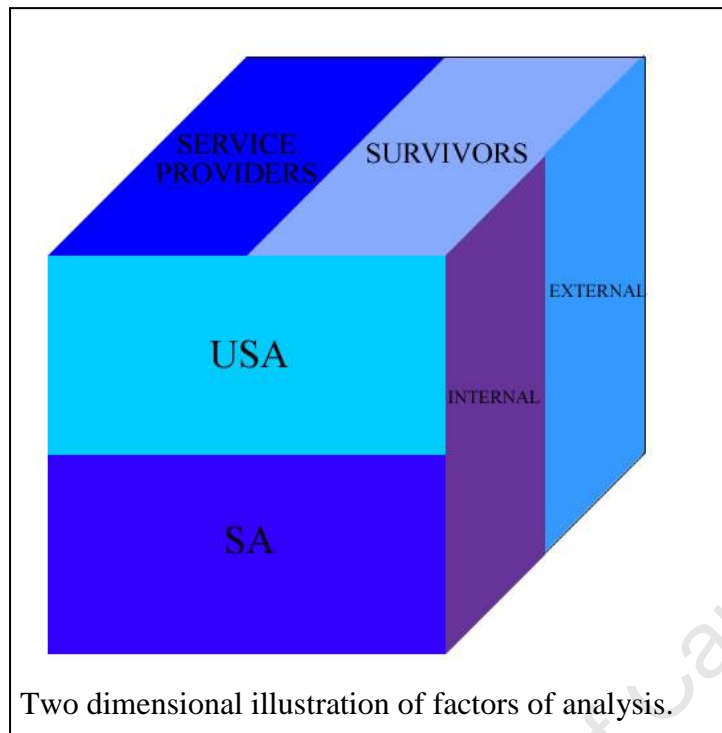
Survivors' pseudonym	Country of Origin	"Race"	Age	Highest Level of Education	Sexual Orientation
Caitlin	South Africa	White	34	postgraduate	heterosexual
Carina	South Africa	Coloured	26	some high school	heterosexual
Danielle	South Africa	Coloured	40	completed high school	heterosexual
Ghaliyah	South Africa	Coloured	45	some university	heterosexual
Raeesa	South Africa	Coloured	38	some high school	heterosexual
Robyn	South Africa	Coloured	35	some high school	heterosexual
Yolanda	South Africa	Coloured	38	some high school	heterosexual
Alexis	United States	Black	38	completed high school	heterosexual
Amy	United States	Biracial	33	postgraduate	heterosexual
Maggie	United States	White	60	some university	heterosexual
Piper	United States	Black	27	postgraduate	lesbian
Rochelle	United States	Hispanic	39	some university	heterosexual
Sasha	United States	Biracial	31	postgraduate	heterosexual

Service Providers' pseudonym	Country of Origin	"Race"	Age	Job Title
Alice	South Africa	White	60	Social Worker
Jodi	South Africa	Coloured	60	Shelter Manager
Cecilia	United States	White	50	Program Director
Elaine	United States	White	45	Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program Coordinator

Legend of Abbreviations Used

SA: South Africa	C: Coloured
US: United States	Bi: Biracial
	Bl: Black
	H: Hispanic
	W: White

Table 2: Cubes of Intersecting Analysis Factors



Interview Schedule: Survivors

Date _____	Location of Interview _____
Name of Respondent _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age _____	Race/Ethnicity _____ Country of Origin _____
Highest Level of Education _____	Sexual Orientation _____

Informed Consent	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I understand that I am participating in an interview as part of research that is examining the experiences of victims of domestic violence as they attempt to access services.2. I understand that this interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes.3. I understand this interview will be tape recorded.4. I understand that I have a right to decline to participate in this interview at any time.5. I understand that my confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.6. I understand that this interview is not, in any way, associated with The Second Step, Inc.7. I understand that should I have questions or concerns, I should contact Greta Kenney at 978-853-1571 (United States) or 079-212-1757 (South Africa) or greta.e.kenney@gmail.com	
_____ Signature	_____ Date

TQ1: What obstacles do domestic violence victims face when leaving an abusive relationship?

IQ1.1: How did you go about leaving your abuser?

IQ1.2: What domestic violence resources did you access?

IQ1.2a : (Prompt, if necessary, with) How did you find out about these resources?

IQ1.3: What obstacles did you face when attempting to leave the abusive relationship?

IQ1.4: What was it that brought you to leave your abuser? (What was the final straw?)

TQ2: What is it that helps domestic violence victims transition out of the abusive relationships?

IQ2.1: How did the services you received (therapeutic, advocacy, legal, etc) help you to leave your abuser?

IQ2.2: What family, friend, or community support helped you to transition out of the abusive relationship?

IQ2.3: What was happening for you internally or emotionally as you chose to leave, and prepared to do so?

TQ3: To what extent does domestic violence related legislation, law, and police response impact a victim's ability to leave an abusive relationship?

IQ3.1: Were the police ever called because of a violent episode?

IQ3.1a: If so, what was their response like? Did you find them the helpful?

IQ3.2: How did the legal/justice system play a role (if at all) in your leaving your abuser?

IQ3.2a: If not, why did the legal/justice system and/or police not play a role?

IQ3.2b: Would you have like it to?

IQ3.3: What was it like for you navigating the legal/justice system related to the domestic violence?

Interview Schedule: Service Providers

Date _____	Location of Interview _____
Name of Respondent _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Age _____	Professional Title _____ Agency _____

Informed Consent	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. I understand that I am participating in an interview as part of research that is examining the experiences of victims of domestic violence as they attempt to access services.2. I understand that this interview should last approximately 60-90 minutes.3. I understand this interview will be tape recorded.4. I understand that I have a right to decline to participate in this interview at any time.5. I understand that my confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.6. I understand that this interview is not, in any way, associated with The Second Step, Inc.7. I understand that should I have questions or concerns, I should contact Greta Kenney at 978-853-1571 (United States) or 079-212-1757 (South Africa) or greta.e.kenney@gmail.com	
_____ Signature	_____ Date

TQ1: What are the constraints to access of services for domestic violence survivors?

IQ1.1: Tell me about the backgrounds of victims of domestic violence that you have worked with.

IQ1.1a: (Prompt if necessary) Tell me about their race, class, gender, socio-economic status, education level, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS status.

IQ1.2: For victims who have dependant relationships with their abusers, how does this impact their ability to leave?

IQ1.2a : (Prompt, if necessary) Can you tell me more about that?

IQ1.3: What services are available to people in abusive relationships in the metro-Boston area?

IQ1.3a: How might they find out about these services?

IQ1.4: In your experience, do different groups of people have different experiences in accessing resources?

IQ1.4a: How does that play out?

IQ1.5: Who do you think leaving an abusive relationship is hardest for?

TQ2: What effect do the policies and procedures of your NGO have on victims or domestic violence and thus, potential clients?

IQ2.1: How do people find out about your NGO/services?

IQ2.2: What areas do your services cover?

IQ2.3: Who is eligible for services from your agency?

IQ2.4: Have you ever had problems with not being able to serve all those wanting or needing services from your agency?

IQ2.4a: (Prompt if necessary) How have you handled that?

IQ2.5: Are there any people you would not, or could not, help?

TQ3: What are the systemic realities that create obstacles for victim's when attempting to leave domestic violence relationships?

IQ3.1: How do culture/tradition and stereotypes/misconceptions play a role in a victim's experience and his/her ability to leave an abusive relationship?

IQ3.2: How aware and educated does the general public seem to be about domestic violence?

IQ3.3: Tell me about a time when you've seen a victim successfully leave an abusive relationship.

IQ3.3a: (If none) Why do you believe he/she didn't leave?

(If yes) What obstacles did he/she need to overcome?