THE EXPERIENCE OF LOW-INCOME

FEMALE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

by

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DECLARATION

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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ABSTRACT

Domestic violence crosses all boundaries and is regarded as a universal challenge affecting women of all spheres of life. Domestic violence is seen as a serious social problem in South Africa. It is regarded by many researchers as a leading cause of female injury. Domestic violence can be described as an act by a member of a family against another member with intent to do physical injury, psychological or emotional harm, or an assault or a threat that reasonably places that member in fear of imminent physical injury or emotional harm. It has major consequences, not only for the abused woman, but also for her children and society at large. Many low-income women cannot escape their abusive circumstances due to a lack of resources. Despite the fact that they cannot leave their situation, many women display certain strengths, helping them to deal with their difficult situation. These women can be viewed as heroic, assertive and persistent. They are not victims, but active survivors. The social work profession could benefit from greater insight into the strengths and coping mechanisms of low-income female survivors of domestic violence.

The goal of the study is to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and on their coping mechanisms (inner resources/strengths). To achieve this goal, the objectives are: to present a theoretical overview of the nature and extent of domestic violence; to describe the environmental resources (such as family, friends and community) of low-income abused women from the ecological perspective; to explore the coping mechanisms (inner resources) of these women in terms of the principles of the strengths perspective; and to analyse and interpret the data obtained from the study. The research utilises an exploratory and descriptive design. The research question is, "What are the experience (environmental resources) and coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income female survivors of domestic violence?"

This question was addressed by means of qualitative research. Twenty participants took part in the study. Purposive and snowball sampling were used to select the participants. They were interviewed by the researcher, and the data obtained from the interviews were organised into themes. Five themes namely, the experience of domestic violence, low-income, resources,

coping mechanisms and statutory intervention were identified. These themes were further divided into sub-themes and categories.

Conclusions derived from the data included: domestic violence is a phenomenon that cuts across all racial, marital status or age boundaries; some low-income female survivors of domestic violence experience their situation as stressful; low-income is one of the determining factors preventing some abused women to leave their situation; resources play a significant part in the lives of some low-income abused women; certain strengths from some low-income battered women help them cope; and some abused low-income women do not find an Interim Protection Order (IPO) or the police to be helpful.

The recommendations are that social workers should assess primary, secondary and tertiary intervention in dealing with domestic violence; the ecological and strengths perspectives combined would be helpful in assessing resources and coping mechanisms in low-income abused women and collaboration between social workers, the court and the police could help low-income abused women to use statutory services effectively.

OPSOMMING

Gesinsgeweld ken geen grense nie en word beskou as 'n universele bedreiging vir vroue uit alle sektore van die samelewing. Gesinsgeweld word beskou as 'n ernstige maatskaplike probleem in Suid-Afrika. Dit word deur baie navorsers beskou as 'n hoofoorsaak van vrouebeserings. Gesinsgeweld kan beskou word as 'n daad deur een lid van die gesin teen 'n ander wat gemik is op fisieke skade, sielkundige of emosionele teistering, of 'n aanval of 'n dreigement wat die lid van die gesin laat vrees vir fisieke beserings of emosionele skade. Dit het grootskaalse gevolge, nie net vir die mishandelde vrou nie, maar ook vir haar kinders en vir die breër gemeenskap. Baie lae-inkomste vroue kan nie uit hulle gewelddadige situasie ontsnap nie, vanweë beperkte bronne. Nieteenstaande die feit dat baie vroue nie hul huidige omstandighede kan ontkom nie, toon hulle sekere sterktes wat hulle help in hulle moeilike omstandighede. Hierdie vroue kan beskou word as heldinne wat nie tou opgooi nie. Hulle is nie slagoffers nie, maar oorleef aktief [Engels: "active survivors"]. Die maatskaplikewerk-professie kan baat by groter insig in die sterktes en hanteringsvaardighede van lae-inkomste vroue wat gesinsgeweld oorleef.

Die doel van die studie is om groter insig te verkry in lae-inkomste vroue se ervaring van gesinsgeweld, veral hulle omgewingsfaktore (insluitende familie, vriende en gemeenskap) en van hulle hanteringsmeganismes (innerlike bronne/sterktes). Om hierdie doel te bereik, is die doelwitte: om 'n teoretiese aanbieding van die aard en omvang van gesinsgeweld te gee; om die omgewingsbronne (soos familie, vriende en gemeenskap) van lae-inkomste mishandelde vroue te verduidelik; om die hanteringsmeganismes (innerlike bronne) van hierdie vroue te eksploreer in terme van die beginsels van die sterkte perspektief; en om die data van die studie te analiseer en te interpreteer. Die navorsingsontwerp is eksploratief-beskrywend van aard. Die navorsingsvraag lui soos volg: "Wat is die ervaring (omgewingsfaktore) en hanteringsmeganismes (innerlike bronne) van lae-inkomste vroue wat gesinsgeweld te bowe kom?"

Die vraag is aangespreek deur middel van kwalitatiewe navorsing. Twintig deelnemers het deelgeneem aan die studie. Doelgerigte- en sneeubal steekproeftegnieke is gebruik om die deelnemers te verkry. Die navorser het met hulle onderhoude gevoer en die data wat verkry is,

is georganiseer in temas. Vyf temas, naamlik die ervaring van gesinsgeweld; lae inkomste; bronne; hanteringsmeganismes; en statutêre intervensie is geïdentifiseer. Die temas is in subtemas en kategorieë onderverdeel.

Gevolgtrekkings wat gemaak is uit die data is: gesinsgeweld is 'n verskynsel wat alle ras-, huwelikstatus- of ouderdomsgrense oorskry; sekere lae-inkomste vroulike oorwinnaars van gesinsgeweld ervaar hulle situasie as stresvol; hulpbronne speel 'n betekenisvolle rol in die lewens van sommige lae-inkomste mishandelde vroue; sekere sterktes van lae-inkomste mishandelde vroue help hulle om die situasie te hanteer; en sekere lae-inkomste, mishandelde vroue vind nie 'n Interim Beskermingsbevel (IB) of die polisie as hulpvaardig nie.

Die aanbevelings is dat maatskaplike werkers primêre, sekondêre en tersiêre intervensie behoort te assesseer by gesinsgeweld; die ekologiese en sterktes perspektiewe behoort saam aangewend te word om die omgewingsbronne en hanteringsmeganismes van lae-inkomste mishandelde vroue te ondersoek; en samewerking tussen maatskaplike werkers, die hof en polisie kan lae-inkomste mishandelde vroue help om statutêre dienste beter te benut.

Gabriella's song from "As it is in heaven" (Py Bäckman, 2004)

It is now that my life is mine
I've got this short time on earth
And my longing has brought me here
All I lacked and all I gained

And yet it's the way that I chose
My trust was far beyond words
That has shown me a little bit
Of the heaven I've never found

I want to feel I'm alive
All my living days
I will live as I desire
I want to feel I'm alive
Knowing I was good enough

I have never lost who I was
I have only left it sleeping
Maybe I never had a choice
Just the will to stay alive

All I want is to be happy
Being who I am
To be strong and to be free
To see day arise from night

I am here and my life is only mine
And the heaven I thought was there
I'll discover it there somewhere
I want to feel that I've lived my life!

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> "*You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted. You hear, O Lord, you give them strength and listen to their cry. You hear, O Lord, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, that they may live in fear no more.*"
> (Graham Kendrick, 2001 Make Way Music)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

The right to life and the security of a person are considered to be two of the most basic entitlements. Unfortunately for many low-income female survivors of domestic violence, remaining alive and secure requires a constant effort. Research and specialised practice indicate that women who are abused by their intimate partner are at an increasing risk the longer the abuse continues. Many men show escalating violent behaviour toward their female partners and many women are killed by their partners (Roche, 1999:24). Several researchers (Artz, 1999:2; Damon, 2003:94; Flinck, Paavilainen & Asredt-Kurki, 2005:383; Gelles, 1999:168; Vincent & Jouriles, 2002:7) view domestic violence as a leading cause of female injury in almost every country. Dwyer, Smokowski, Bricout and Wodarski (1995:185) claim that injuries as a result of domestic violence are more common than muggings, car accidents and cancer deaths combined.

In South Africa it is estimated that between 40% and 70% of all murder victims are killed by their intimate partners, usually after a long history of domestic violence (Rapport, 2007-02-11). The Annual Report of the South African Police Service (SAPS) for 2004-2005 indicated that women and children accounted for 100% of rape victims, 83.3% of indecent assault cases, 64.2% of common assault victims and 59% of contact crime. These types of abuse happen mostly in the home which is supposed to be a safe shelter for women and children (Carlson, 1991:471; Griggs, Morris & Ehlers, 2005:1). Small wonder that researchers like Danis and Lee (2003:237), Stephens and McDonald (2002:81) and Sullivan and Hagen (2005:346) claim that the home can be one of society's most dangerous institutions when violence occurs in intimate relationships.

The Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1999 was promulgated in SA to address the high rate of domestic violence, mainly perpetrated by men, violating women in their domestic environments. Each police station is supposed to keep a register of cases of family violence, noting all violent incidents in the home. Authors like Amoakohene (2004:2373), Artz (1999:3) and Damon (2003:94) however indicated that some women who are abused are reluctant to go

to the police for help, reporting that they were ineffective or insensitive. The actual incidence of domestic violence cases might thus be much higher.

The impact of domestic violence is broad with serious consequences not only for the battered woman, but also for her children and society at large. Some scholars even reason that society at large suffers practically and morally by failing to stop or minimise domestic violence, thus allowing the perpetuation of a subculture that devalues women (Carlson, 1997:292; Danis & Lee, 2003:147; Vincent & Jouriles, 2002:8). Violence towards women by an intimate partner is thus a social and tragic problem of enormous and staggering proportions. Domestic violence can be formally defined in the following significant, yet poignant and harsh way: "an act by a member of a family or household against another member that is intended to result in physical harm, bodily injury, assault or a threat that reasonably places that member in fear of imminent physical harm" (Stephens & McDonald, 2002:79).

Research done by Bollen, Artz, Vetten and Louw (1999:6) states that domestic violence knows no geographical, cultural or linguistic boundaries and that it can be seen as a global, universal epidemic. It affects women of all spheres of life. However, research done by Parenzee and Smythe (2003:48, 49) found that some women are caught up in a cycle where they can never escape "being poor" and being dependent. Their housing is often directly linked to their husbands' employment contract. Taking action against domestic violence might result in a loss of employment, housing and income. This is further exacerbated by the fact that these women usually have low levels of education, reducing the possibility of alternative employment and reinforcing the poverty. Pretorius's research (2000:5) also indicates that poverty is a fuelling factor in domestic violence. International authors like Bassuk, Dawson and Huntington (2005:387); Carlson (1991:474); Lee (2001:249) and Pyles (2006:66) are also of the opinion that low-income families are significantly more likely to engage in domestic violence and that it is closely linked to poverty and the stress poverty creates. Some low-income women keep potentially dangerous men in their lives, so that their basic needs can be met (Purvin, 2007:206).

As mentioned earlier, domestic violence can be regarded as a global, universal epidemic. Women of a low-income however seem to be more vulnerable to physical abuse as a form of domestic violence than women of a higher income, because they have limited access to

resources such as own transport and finances to help them escape from their violent situation. According to Wiehe (1998:6) the four types of domestic violence are emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse and economic abuse. These four types often happen simultaneously.

Research (Artz, 1999:14; Parenzee & Smythe, 2003:3; Postmus & Hahn, 2007:475) confirms that for low-income battered women there are limited physical resources such as affordable public transport, hospitals or shelters. These women have to rely on their own coping mechanisms and environmental resources (i.e. extended family, friends and organisations like women's clubs and churches).

In view of the above, one can conclude that several battered women do not leave their situation, often because they are poor and do not have the means to escape. Some literature (Jackson & Dilger, 1995:51; Makofane, 2002:86; Nordien, 2003:40) suggests that battered women display certain strengths in the midst of their difficult circumstances. Women who stay in an abusive relationship tend to acquire mechanisms to cope with their circumstances. These battered women may be capable, motivated, resilient and respectable and have a number of competencies and resources that may be used to improve their situation. Some battered women are not passive. They seek to prevent further harm, but a lack of effective remedies restricts them. These women can be described as active survivors, because they are heroic, assertive and persistent. Failure to get out of their situations, is not because they are passive, but because of inadequate resources to leave their situation (Callaghan, 1995:18; Gelles, 1999:21; Makofane, 2002:85; Riger, Bennet, Wasco, Schewe, Frohmann, Camacho & Campbell, 2002:33).

The Sabinet database shows 18 completed SA studies on domestic violence. Mouton (2006:31) is of the opinion that The Nexus database of the National Research Foundation is the most comprehensive database and a very useful tool for post-graduate students. On this database 32 completed studies on domestic violence were registered over the past 10 years. Most of these studies were done in the fields of Psychology, Sociology and Criminology and used the feminist theory as a theoretical framework. Only six of these 32 studies were conducted in social work. Themes of these social work studies related to: the relationship between alcohol abuse and domestic violence (Harrison, 1998), children's experiences of domestic violence (Kemp, 2005), health consequences for women who are battered (January, 2004) and women's experiences of domestic violence (Jacobs, 1999; Madonsela, 2002;

Nordien, 2003). Some overseas studies indicated that battered women are survivors rather than victims of domestic violence and display certain strengths and coping mechanisms that help them in their difficult circumstances (Blum, 1997:492; Haj-Yahia, 2000:237; Lee, 2005:3158; Ruiz-Perez & Mata-Pariente, 2006:1156). The social work profession would benefit from greater insight in the strengths and coping mechanisms of South African, low-income female survivors of domestic violence.

1.2   RESEARCH PROBLEM AND FOCUS

While several studies (Damon, 2003; Mbambo, 2006; Pretorius, 2000; Sharrock, 2005; Shilubana, 2001) were done on domestic violence in other fields, like Sociology, Psychology and Criminology, far too few (only 6 in the past 10 years) were conducted in the social work profession with none departing from an ecological and strengths perspective and focusing on the coping methods and resources of battered women. It is evident from literature (Callaghan, 1995; Harrison, 1998; Nordien, 2003; Makofane, 2002) that a number of battered women are unable to leave their situation, but still cope. It would benefit the social work profession to explore these women's experience of surviving in the context of domestic violence. This would help the profession to grasp and gain insight into the enormous problem of domestic violence and on how to address this problem from a strengths and an ecological perspective.

1.3   THEORETICAL POINTS OF DEPARTURE

There is no single recognized causal theory for domestic violence. Criminal justice interventions are based upon four theories, namely social exchange, social learning, feminist theory and the ecological perspective. The ecological perspective has been proposed as an approach to understand domestic violence since the mid-1980s (Carlson, 1991:471; Danis & Lee, 2001:239; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:35). Authors like Cary (2006:3459), Goodman, Dutton, Vankos and Weinfurt (2005:79); Perilla, Bakeman and Norris (1994:326) and Heise (1998:262) encourage use of the ecological perspective to gain a better understanding of domestic violence. Social workers are uniquely trained to both understand and intervene effectively in domestic violence situations, using the ecological perspective as a framework, focusing on coping mechanisms, positive relationships, and empowering (Carlson, 1997:499; Germain & Gitterman, 1987:488). For the purposes of this study, the strengths and ecological perspectives will be used as theoretical frame of reference.

1.3.1 The ecological perspective

According to the ecological perspective, a relationship exists between a person or persons and the social environment. Both people and environments have needs and resources. If needs are met and there is a "fit" between people and their environment, a state of congruence exists. Unmet needs of people reflect an imbalance between the needs of the person and the provision of the environment, often because there are insufficient resources available. This leads to a state of incongruity, or an improper "fit" between a person and the environment (Johnson & Yanca, 2004:12).

The ecological perspective was applied in this study, as it contributed to an understanding of the context within which low-income women in a situation of domestic violence must survive and also the nature of their social environment (resources) i.e. family, friends, and community (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:22). As mentioned before, several authors (Carlson, 1997; Cary, 2006; Heise, 1998; Perilla *et al*., 1994) used the ecological perspective to assess domestic violence. This perspective also helped to gain an understanding of these women's coping mechanisms (inner resources), environmental resources and their capacity to strive towards health, growth and release of potential.

1.3.2 Strengths perspective

The developmental approach has been adopted as a service delivery model by the Department of Social Welfare. The focus is on exploring the strengths of people, rather than on an overemphasis of the problem. Vulnerable women, including victims of violence, the poor and unemployed are viewed as one of the target groups to whom social services should be rendered. The developmental approach recognises the need for a strengths-based approach to service delivery (Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2006:27).

As this study focused on women, it was useful to study literature on women viewed from the strengths perspective. According to Davis (2001:1) the social work profession has a unique perspective on "women's issues". From the beginning women have been the major players on both sides of the profession, as social workers and as clients. It is also female leaders such as Jane Adams and Mary Richmond that provided strong leadership to develop strategies for meeting the needs of people who were most oppressed, mostly women and children. It is also

mostly the social work profession that intervenes when damage is being done to vulnerable people such as abused women.

The strengths perspective developed specifically for social workers by Saleebey (2002) will be very useful for an exploration of low-income women's coping mechanisms and resources in domestic violence. The strengths perspective does not ignore the pain people experience, but it focuses on people's personal and environmental resources rather than on pathological patterns. The strengths perspective is especially relevant for oppressed and marginalized groups such as battered women as it counteracts their devaluation by submitting a view of them as capable and respectable (Johnson & Yanca, 2004:12; Roche, 1999:23; Saleebey, 2002:3).

Some of the principles of the strengths perspective viewed against the background of the experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence are:

- Each low-income woman who is battered by her partner may have strengths that help her cope, such as protecting her children and loyalty towards her family.
- The abuse these women suffer may be injurious, but according to the strengths perspective, it could also be a source of challenge and opportunity, for instance a chance to seek friendship and support from people in the community.
- The environment of battered low-income women might lack physical resources such as good public transport and shelters, but could hold many social resources, such as extended family, churches and women's clubs.
- Lastly, the low-income battered woman may find meaning in caring for other people such as her own children (Saleebey, 2002:14-18).

The strengths and ecological perspectives combined views low-income female survivors of domestic violence as people with their own abilities, choices and opportunities. The focus in this research would be on inner resources (coping mechanisms) and resources from their families and communities. The researcher was alert to how elements of the environment eventually pervade individual identity and energy and how the participants in this study had managed to survive, perhaps thrive in an oppressive, even catastrophic environment (Roche, 1999:29; Saleebey, 2002:7). A combination of these two perspectives was thus used to assess support systems and resources available to the woman, from within herself and from her environment (Johnson & Yanca, 2004:13).

1.4   GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION OF THE STUDY

The goal of this study is to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and on their coping mechanisms (inner resources /strengths).

To achieve this goal, the following objectives are formulated:

- To present a theoretical overview of the nature and extent of domestic violence as a social problem from a social work perspective.
- To describe the environmental resources (such as family, friends and community) of low-income women from the ecological perspective.
- To explore the coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income women who are survivors of domestic violence, in terms of the principles of the strengths perspective.
- To investigate the experiences of low-income female survivors of domestic violence within the context of the ecological and strengths perspectives.

The research question in this study will be:

What are the experience (environmental resources) and coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income female survivors of domestic violence?

1.5   RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

A qualitative study with a phenomenological approach was proposed as will be discussed in Chapter 5. A phenomenological approach is described as research in which the researcher identifies the "essence" of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by participants in a study (Cresswell, 2003:15). It is a study that describes the meaning of the experience of a phenomenon (in this case domestic violence) by various individuals (in this case low-income women) (Fouché in De Vos, 2005:270). Henning (2004:3) elaborates that in qualitative, as in quantitative research, the researcher wants to know what happens, how it happens and why it happens. In qualitative research however, it is not only the actions, such as speech and writing of human beings that are important, but also their feelings and thoughts. The researcher also investigates the qualities of certain phenomena, to find out what they are about and what they might mean. In this study domestic violence among low-income women will be examined as well as their resources and coping mechanisms.

The study was based on in-depth interviews with 20 women in and around Cape Town, supplemented by an extensive literature review. A pilot study was conducted where the researcher interviewed two low-income women, in order to make adjustments to the interview schedule before the main investigation (see Addendum B). This served as a trial run (Strydom, 2005:206).

As indicated in Fouche and De Vos (2006:106), the study utilises an exploratory and descriptive design. Exploratory studies aim to gain insight into a situation, phenomenon or person(s). In this study insight was gained into domestic violence. A "thick description" of the data of the interviews was obtained, and in this regard the study can also be viewed as descriptive.

1.6 SAMPLING

Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were used in this study. Two NGOs and one psychologist were approached to obtain the sample of 20 participants. The sample was drawn from a population that had to meet the following criteria for inclusion:

- They must be female, between the ages of 22 and 60.
- They must be presently in an abusive relationship, or must have been in an abusive relationship less than 6 months ago.
- They must reside in or around Cape Town.
- They must have received, less than 6 months ago, or are still receiving professional help by a social worker, psychologist or nursing sister.
- They must earn less than R4000 a month.

These criteria for inclusion will again be addressed in Chapter 5. Although data saturation was reached before the 20 participants were interviewed, all the interviews were conducted as explained in Chapter 5 (Tutty, Rothery & Grinnell, 1996:82).

1.7   METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted after the literature review was completed. Although a literature study is usually done after data gathering and analysis in a phenomenological approach, in this study the researcher viewed the literature review as a framework to help her gain a clearer understanding of domestic violence. The enquiry was thus deductive (Delport & Fouché, 2005:265). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, the literature review in this study was also an ongoing process. Interviews were recorded using a semi-structured interview schedule (see Addendum B) with the permission of the participants and transcribed by the researcher. The data were organised into themes, sub-themes and categories, characteristic of qualitative research. This will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6.

1.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The researcher is registered with the South African Council for Social Service Professions and must adhere to the Code of Ethics which includes issues such as confidentiality and the client's self-determination. This study was approved by the Ethical Committee of Stellenbosch University and the researcher has completed and handed in the necessary documentation.

Informed consent, confidentiality and debriefing were all taken into account when the study was conducted. All the participants signed a consent form, stating that they voluntary took part in the study and did not mind the interview being recorded (see Addendum A). The participants were offered the opportunity to debrief after the interviews. None of them wanted to. They all had access to professional services should they want to debrief at a later stage (Mouton, 2006:24; Strydom, 2005:61).

1.9   METHOD OF DATA VERIFICATION

Krefting (1991:214) and De Vos (2005:346) refer to the norms of credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability in order to assess the trustworthiness and validity of a qualitative study.

1.9.1 Credibility

Credibility is regarded as the alternative for internal validity. The strength of a qualitative study will be its credibility. An in-depth description of the data within the parameters of the

population and theoretical frameworks is an indication that the research is valid. A researcher should thus adequately state the parameters, placing boundaries around the study. In this study the theoretical frameworks (Chapters 3 and 4) and the parameters of the population (Chapter 5) were clearly set out and the data described with great thoroughness (Chapter 6). This all added to the credibility of the study (De Vos, 2005:346).

1.9.2 Transferability

Transferability is regarded as the alternative for external validity or generalisability. This implies that the findings could be transferred to other settings and populations. This is where the researcher can return to the theoretical frameworks to show how data collection and analysis will be guided by concepts and models. In this way the theoretical parameters of the research are set. In this study the two theoretical approaches guided the way data were collected and analysed. It is believed that the findings of this study could to some extent be transferred to other research done on domestic violence. The recommendations could also be useful to social workers dealing with domestic violence (De Vos, 2005:346).

1.9.3 Dependability

Dependability is the alternative for reliability in which the researcher attempts to account for the changing conditions in the phenomenon chosen for the study. As the social environment is always being constructed, an inquiry cannot be easily replicated to another set of conditions, which is what the positivist researchers aim to do. For this study, the research would originally have taken place in Villiersdorp, where the researcher resided. The necessary changes were made when she moved to Cape Town. Originally one NGO would be used to obtain the sample, but changes had to be made to involve another NGO and a psychologist in order to conduct 20 interviews. The goals, objectives and the research question were not affected by these changes (De Vos, 2005:346).

1.9.4 Conformability

Conformability is the alternative for objectivity. Conformability of a study implies that the study's findings could be confirmed by another. All the excerpts in Chapter 6 were the participants' own words without any changes made by the researcher. All the themes, sub-themes and categories that were identified in Chapter 6 also have a literature control, indicating that this study's findings conformed with previous research. Four of the twenty

participants (20%) were given the opportunity to read through their transcribed interviews and were satisfied that it was true reflection of their interviews (De Vos, 2005:346).

1.10   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As far as possible, it was attempted throughout this study to act in a scientific and professional manner. Certain limitations were therefore identified of this study:

- The study was done in only one Province, namely the Western Cape. The findings can therefore not be generalised.
- A relatively small sample was taken, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised.
- Some literature with regards to the ecological perspective was dated.

In order to compensate for the last limitation great effort was made to explore as much recent literature of the ecological perspective as possible.

1.11   CONTENT OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

The research report is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter provides information regarding the rationale for the study, theoretical points of departure, the goals, objectives and research question of the study. The ethical considerations and limitations of the study are also addressed. In Chapter 2 domestic violence as a social phenomenon from a social work perspective is presented. In this chapter the forms of domestic violence is discussed, as well as the profile of the battered woman and social work intervention. The social environments of low-income abused women are explained from an ecological perspective in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4, the strengths perspective is discussed and how this perspective could provide insight into the circumstances of low-income female survivors of domestic violence. The principles and elements of strength-based practice are examined, as well as the lexicon of strengths and language and narratives characteristic to the strengths perspective. Chapter 5 presents information regarding the research methodology, and Chapter 6 presents the experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence within the context of the ecological and strengths perspectives. Chapter 7 consists of the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON FROM A SOCIAL WORK PERSPECTIVE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

It is clear from Chapter 1 that domestic violence is a serious social problem, in fact a human rights emergency. No one deserves to be hit, beaten, threatened, humiliated or otherwise subjected to physical or emotional harm. As a society we strive to espouse peaceful solutions to disagreements, tolerance towards those who are different, kindness to other human beings and tender care of our loved ones. Much louder and shriller is the disturbing sound of fists upon flesh of women who suffer domestic violence, often referred to as the silent crime (Gullotta & McElhaney, 1999:7). The social work profession is in a position to break this silence by using knowledge, skills and values to assist clients affected by domestic violence. Because domestic violence is a cross-cutting problem, social workers will encounter abused women and their children in all the different fields of social work such as family therapy, marriage counselling and children's court enquiries (Danis & Lockheart, 2004:6).

As discussed in Chapter 1 the goal of this study is to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and on their coping mechanisms (inner resources/strengths). For this a thorough literature study on domestic violence would be helpful. This is also the first objective of this study, namely to present a theoretical overview of the nature and extent of domestic violence as a social problem from a social work perspective.

In this chapter a brief historical background of domestic violence will be given. A description of the nature of domestic violence will follow. The different forms of domestic violence will be examined, and the origins of domestic violence will be discussed. The role of the law and police intervention in domestic violence will also be explored. Lastly the profile of low-income female survivors of domestic violence will be explained, as well as the consequences

of domestic violence and the different forms of social work intervention regarding domestic violence.

2.2   HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The subordinate status of women throughout history has encouraged physical force and violence. A Roman husband could chastise, divorce or kill his wife. It was only in 1641 that the Puritans enacted the first law in America to prohibit wife beating. Unfortunately this and other such laws were rarely enforced as family matters were seen as private and men held positions of authority in the home and society. Wife beating was legal and the Supreme Court of North Carolina of 1874 stated that "if a husband chastises his wife and there is no permanent injury, it is better to draw the curtain and to forgive and forget". It was only in 1871 that Alabama abolished the legal right of the husband to beat his wife. The State v Oliver case in 1874 in North Carolina followed Alabama's example with the stipulation that it was best to view such incidences as private family matters, unless permanent injury was incurred (Ferrato, 2000:14; Hampton, Vandergriff-Avery & Kim, 1999:40).

Public attention by feminists and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) led to an increase in the protection of women against abuse during the last quarter of the 19th century. The WCTU believed that wife battering was directly linked to the husband's misuse of alcohol. As a result, 20 American states passed legislation that allowed abused women to sue saloon owners and keepers for personal injuries inflicted by intoxicated men. Yet, despite the fact that wife abuse was illegal and even with the increase of court protection, violence within the family in the late 19th century was often ignored by the criminal system in Canada and the USA, unless someone was murdered. The recognition of wife abuse as a serious crime began to fade during the first quarter of the 20th century. For many years, domestic violence was often ignored or condoned, because it was regarded as a private matter, committed in the sanctity of the home. Only recently, has physical abuse of women by their intimate partners become an issue of great international concern (Fineman, 1996:37; Gelles, 1999:49). It was only in the late 1960s and early 1970s that feminists "rediscovered" the silent crime. Feminist grassroots organisations began to develop a variety of services for victims of domestic violence (Ferrato, 2000:14; Hampton *et al*., 1999:40, 41).

Even now at the beginning of the 21st century staggering numbers of women are still slaves, sexually mutilated, and victims of abuse in its many brutal forms. In South Africa domestic

violence is still one of the most pervasive, yet least recognised human rights abuses. Artz (1999:6) states that domestic violence in South Africa is of great concern, and resource and support systems are few and inadequately funded. Unfortunately there are still men who view women as possessions, where tradition stereotypes and represses women.

A brief historical background was given of domestic violence to provide a context for the understanding of domestic violence, because the focus of the study is on the experience of the survivors of domestic violence. The intention was not to provide an in-depth overview. Next a discussion and explanation will be given of the nature of domestic violence in order to gain more insight into this social phenomenon.

2.3   THE NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The problem of domestic violence was brought to the social work profession by female survivors of domestic violence. It has been loosely defined as a phenomenon in which women are victimised by their male partners. Domestic violence can however also occur in both gay and lesbian couples. It can also happen that males are the victims and women the abusers. Most perpetrators are however males in heterosexual relationships and in this study the focus will be on women who are the victims of their intimate male partners, as women are by and large much more vulnerable than men, as will be discussed in paragraph 2.8.1 in this chapter (Vincent & Jouriles, 2002:10).

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (1994) describes gender violence as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life".

Abuse that occurs in families is referred to by several terms. *"Family violence"* describes a broad range of behaviours whose victim might be anyone in a familial relationship. *"Spouse abuse"* implies marital violence, abuse committed to or by a spouse. *"Domestic violence"* has been used to describe intimate partner violence and implies a gender specific analysis. *"Women abuse"* refers to adult women who are abused by their intimate partners and is again gender specific. *"Intimate partner violence (IPV)"* is another term for domestic violence. For the purposes of this study, the terms "domestic violence", "wife battering", "women abuse"

and "intimate partner violence (IPV)" will be considered synonyms and will also be gender specific where the man is the perpetrator and the woman the survivor (victim). Domestic violence includes physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence as well as threats of violence (Flinck *et al.*, 2005:384; Jenkins & Davidson, 1999:245). Scholars also agree that domestic violence follows a pattern, and is not just a single event (Carlson, 1991:471; Hampton *et al.*, 1999:44; Wiehe, 1998:75).

Stephens and McDonald (2002:80) state that some women are exposed to intense physical violence at home, sometimes referred to as "patriarchal terrorism". This kind of violence can be described as severe, where a male partner's violent actions escalate over time. Some men might even use weapons such as knives and guns in their violent behaviour. "Ordinary" or "everyday" domestic violence is violence where conflict often gets out of hand and typically involves acts of pushing, grabbing or shoving. These "milder" incidences of violence should be of as much concern as "patriarchal terrorism", because all incidences of domestic violence should be seen in a serious light. In some cases, milder incidences of abuse also give rise to more extreme acts of aggression. The fact is that no matter how severe or "mild" the domestic violence is, if violence is used by men to resolve conflict with their partners, it should always be regarded as a serious issue (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005:19).

Browne and Herbert (1997:3) are of the opinion that there are usually three components present in violent behaviour, namely affect (anger), behaviour (injurious) and intent (harm). In assessment of domestic violence, social workers should be aware that these three components could be present. They are best regarded as related, but separate characteristics of violent behaviour as can be seen in Figure 2.1.
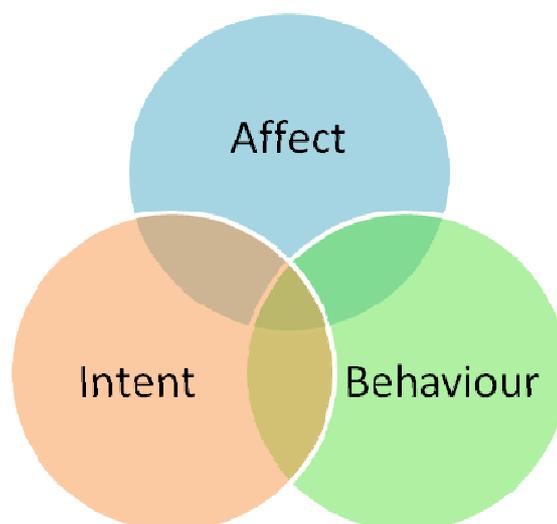
Figure 2.1:   Three components characterising violent behaviour
Source: Browne & Herbert (1997:3)

In an abusive relationship, where these three components overlap, the receiver of the abuse must bear all the anger, behaviour and intent. For example if an abusive partner becomes angry towards his female partner (affect), his behaviour towards her might display aggressive behaviour, such as beating her (injurious), with the intent to harm her. The consequences are serious for the whole family and therefore social work intervention should explore the relationship among these components. Unfortunately social workers often only enter after several incidents of violent behaviour (tertiary intervention) and not primary or secondary interventions as will be discussed in paragraph 2.10.

The background and nature of domestic violence was discussed so far. The different forms of abuse are subsequently expounded.

2.4   FORMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

According to several authors such as Bassuk *et al.* (2005:33), Danis and Lee (2003:28) and Riger *et al.* (2002:15), domestic violence generally occurs in the form of physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse.

2.4.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse can either be controlled or impulsive and consists of physical assaults. These assaults result in injuries ranging from bruising, scalding, burning and stabbing to internal injuries, cracked ribs or broken bones. Persistent blows to the head may cause serious head injuries which often go undetected and untreated. Some abusers will make sure that they inflict the physical injury to parts of the body not normally seen, such as the torso, rather than leaving marks on the face or limbs.

Another part of physical abuse leaves no physical evidence such as shoving a head in the toilet, ice cold baths and locking up. Physical neglect such as withholding or eliminating food, shelter and clothing may also form part of physical abuse. Physical abuse includes throwing things, kicking, slapping hitting, pushing, shoving, grabbing, choking, strangling and inflicting head injuries to name but a few. Death as a result from physical injuries is the horrible outcome for some women who are in an abusive relationship (Sanderson, 2008:23).

Ferrato (2000:8) compiled the following warning signs of controlling behaviours to identify physical violence. If a male uses intimidation in his relationship with his partner and often makes angry comments he might be inclined to physically abuse his partner. Behaviour that is characterised by destruction or threats might also be a warning sign. A history of physical violence with other people, maybe a former partner is also regarded as a danger sign. If a man uses any type of weapon to handle conflict, this would also signal danger. In other words if one or more of these behaviours are present in a potentially violent situation a woman should take precautionary steps , to protect herself and her children, as will be discussed later.

2.4.2 Emotional or psychological abuse

Emotional abuse can be verbal or non-verbal. It is persistent and corrosive in destroying self-worth and self-esteem. This type of abuse usually includes the use of ridicule, insults, accusations, infidelity and ignoring one's partner, all of which result in the breaking down of the victim's self-esteem and self-worth. Emotional abuse can also occur when the perpetrator places his partner in a position to gain his favour through her compliant behaviour, like a young child who misbehaved. Deliberate isolation from family, friends and neighbours is another form of emotional abuse (Sanderson, 2008:23; Wiehe, 1998:6). Authors such as Browne and Herbert (1997:83), Romito (2008:17) and Sanderson (2008:23) are of the opinion

that emotional abuse is more frequent than physical abuse and more difficult to detect. Both forms of violence are equally destructive.

Ferrato (2000:7) compiled the following warning signs of controlling behaviours to identify emotional abuse. A continuous, destructive criticism of his partner would qualify as emotional abuse. Verbal attacks such as name calling, mocking, swearing and making humiliating remarks or gestures could all be regarded as warning signs. Pressure tactics such as guilt tripping, threats to withhold money and manipulating children are all regarded as emotional abuse. A man who abuses his authority, abuses trust, breaks promises and treats people with disrespect might also be prone to abuse his partner emotionally. Minimizing his misbehaviour, denying and blaming are other danger signs that could lead to emotional abuse. Some men also use isolation and prevent their partners from seeing friends in order to control them. He might also harass her by checking up on her. Lastly self-destructive behaviour in the abuse of drugs and alcohol is also a warning sign.

In other words if one or more of these behaviours are present in a marriage or co-habiting relationship, a woman should be made aware of what she can do about her situation, and that physical abuse might also be a real threat (Flinck *et al.,* 2005:383). Hagen (2001:127) pointed out that women who are physically abused are usually abused emotionally as well. It is further stated that abused women often suffer severe emotional and mental consequences. These consequences of domestic violence will be discussed in paragraph 2.9.

2.4.3 Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when the perpetrator demands sexual activity without the woman's consent. It is also referred to as marital rape, where the male assumes it is his right and privilege to have sex whenever he wishes and in any form he desires, without taking his female partner's feelings into consideration (Wiehe, 1998:6). Stereotyped sex roles might lead to an increase in sexual abuse. Some women do not realise that they also have rights, and will do everything their partners demand of them, just because they feel it is the right thing to do. Often women are not even aware they are sexually abused. Several studies have indicated women's discomfort with certain sexual acts expected by their partners, but will still comply with these behaviours as they see it as an obligation towards their partners (Bollen *et al.*, 1999:21; Chapleau, Oswald & Russel, 2007:131; Parenzee & Smythe, 2003:23).

According to Laird (2001:286) sexual abuse is often reinforced by an unspoken code of silence. Some women are just not in a position to talk about their sexual abuse due to shame, guilt and a fear that their families might disintegrate. Views by Bollen *et al*. (1999:25) support this code of silence, stating that of all four forms of abuse, sexual abuse is the least reported, the reason for this code of silence being the social stigma attached to sexual abuse.

2.4.4 Economic abuse

This abuse implies withholding of economic support and having a tight control over the family's economic resources such as money and transport. Often the false perception is that the woman in the relationship is solely responsible for all the housekeeping and child-rearing tasks with the minimum financial assistance, and that the woman must also work a full day to provide for the family's financial needs.

Davhana-Maselesele, Myburg and Poggenpoel (2009:2517) found in their research that some women could not do anything without their partners' approval. Even if they had money, they could not buy what they wanted and had to get their partners' approval for any financial decisions. Some abused women do not have control over their money, as their partners control all the finances. It was also found that some abused women who worked had to give their salaries to their partners. Often this money would be misused and there would be no money available for necessities such as school and taxi fees. Some perpetrators would also exert financial control by denying their partners access to bank accounts or credit cards. Pyles (2006:69) is also of the opinion that some low-income women may want to seek employment to improve their financial situation, but are prevented by their controlling partners.

All four forms of abuse often happen simultaneously. Several women who are physically abused, are also abused emotionally. Several scholars (Leiner, Compton, Houry & Kaslow, 2008:473; Pineless, Mineka & Zinbarg, 2008:166; Scott-Tilley, Tilton & Sandel, 2010:26; Stephens & McDonald, 2002:78) are of the opinion that psychological aggression is often a precursor to physical aggression. Economic abuse and sexual abuse often go hand in hand with physical abuse and emotional abuse, but are not mentioned as frequently by abused women. Parenzee and Smythe (2003:21-25) observe that a possible reason for not mentioning these two forms of abuse, is a lack of knowledge of the different forms of abuse. A discussion of the origins of domestic violence follows.

2.5 ORIGINS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Questions that need to be addressed by helping professions are what kinds of men abuse their female partners and why do they abuse? Hampton *et al.* (1999:46) state that these questions can be answered from an individual level, an interactional level, a socio-cultural level and an ecological level. An overview of these different levels is presented below.

2.5.1 Individual level

There is no complete unitary "profile" of the typical assaultive man. The following general characteristics, closely linked to Ferrato's (2000) warning signs of controlling behaviours resulting in physical and emotional abuse, as was discussed in paragraphs 2.4.1 and 2.4.2, were found to be characteristic of abusive men. They are found to be more hostile than non-batterers. They were exposed to violence as children. They usually suffer from a low self-esteem and display a high need for control. They often display a low level of assertiveness and are very jealous. They tend to be aggressive towards their children and also sexually aggressive. Substance abuse may also play a role in domestic violence, which will be discussed in the last paragraph of this section. Blame is often placed on the female partner and on her behaviour. Men of low-income are more inclined to abuse their partners than those of a higher income. In inner city areas there might be more domestic violence than in less densely urbanised areas. Lastly if a man has a low status in society, he might also be more inclined to abuse his partner (Hampton *et al.*, 1999:47; Twala, 2004:8-15; Wiehe, 1998:102).

Wiehe (1998:102) is also of the opinion that men who display psychological traits such as depression, moodiness, sullenness, over-sensitivity and over-reaction to rejection are more inclined to abuse their intimate partners. Men with high levels of anxiety and who are in general more dissatisfied with life and show evidence of personality disorders are also more likely to be abusive to their partners. Abusive men could be characterised as impulsive, showing lack of respect for social standards, having frequent clashes with the law and with their families and have a lack of social contact.

Wiehe (1998:102) argues that although substance abuse plays a role in domestic violence where excessive drinking is associated with a higher incidence of wife abuse, alcohol is not an immediate precursor of domestic violence. It is rather a combination of factors that will lead to domestic violence. In a study done by Klostermann and Chen (2009:497-505), it was found

that when abusive men who complete alcoholism treatment relapse to alcohol, they are also likely to relapse to violence.

2.5.2 Interactional level

Other researchers (Chilman, 1977:1385; McKeel & Sporakowski, 1993:101; Yegidis, 1992:519) take a different perspective on domestic violence and place the focus more on interactions of persons involved with each other than on the individual. Circular rather than linear explanations are used to understand problems and non-verbal communication is also taken into consideration. The systems theory is an example of the interactional viewpoint where domestic violence is seen as an interactional pattern between the abuser and the abused – one could not exist without the other (Hampton *et al*., 1999:48). Cascardi and Vivian (1995:269) found in their study of 62 couples that both parties were active in the escalation of violence. This approach is in contrast to the feminist framework that rejects the notion that a woman shares the responsibility for her partner's behaviour. This viewpoint raises much controversy in the field of domestic violence. The critics of the systems theory argue that partner abuse is not a "two-way street". Women who abuse their partners mostly do it out of self-defence, which can hardly be characterised as mutual battering. It is however important to note that one of the basic principles of the systems theory is that regardless of the behaviour or contribution of any member of the social system to the problem, no one deserves to be beaten or abused. Critics of the systems theory also argue that in this perspective, the perpetrator does not have to accept full responsibility for his behaviour. Another principle of the systems theory is however that the male abuser is personally responsible for his abusive behaviour and for his failure to respond to tensions in his intimate relationship in a non-violent manner (Wiehe, 1998:90).

Walker's cycle theory (1984:29) was also developed out of the interactional perspective. According to her three distinct phases occur in domestic violence. Figure 2.2 illustrates this battering cycle.
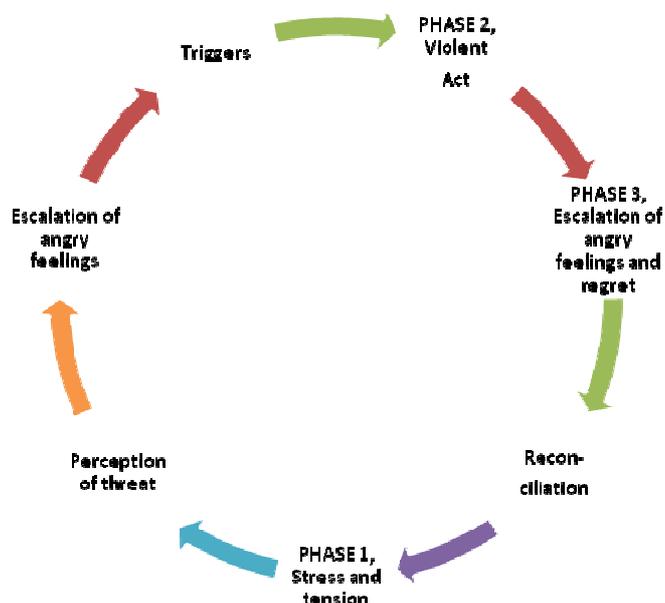
Figure 2.2   **The battering cycle**

   Source: Walker (1984:32)

Phase 1 is the tension building phase in which the perpetrator engages in minor abusive incidents with his partner. She tries to keep the peace in the family, diffuses the situation by denying the seriousness of the violent incidents and blames herself or an external factor for provoking the abuse. Her behaviour indicates her belief that she is capable of controlling the violence of her partner. This phase may last a couple of weeks, months or even years (Walker, 1984:32).

Phase 2 is the acute battering incident where something causes the perpetrator to lose control. The battering incident may be brief, lasting less than an hour, or it may go on for several hours. The woman may be seriously injured. She may call the police. If police intervention is inadequate, the violence is most likely to erupt more severely later due to the perpetrator's anger towards his female partner. To break the cycle of violence, a woman must leave to go to a safe place like a shelter or stay with friends or family and, where laws provide for such action, have the husband removed from the home. An alternative solution to break the cycle of violence is intensive marriage counselling (Walker, 1984:32).

Phase 3 follows the turmoil of phase 2 where the perpetrator displays kindness and contrite loving behaviour. This phase is also known as the honeymoon phase. The victim may be

physically injured and certainly emotionally upset. When the man realises the consequences of his assault, he engages in kindness and contrite behaviours such as begging for forgiveness and promises that it will never happen again. He might bestow gifts and flowers on his partner and the couple may engage in passionate sexual relations. If however they have not sought professional help, or if the victim has not separated herself from her perpetrator in phase 2, the cycle will repeat itself. Despite promises of the perpetrator that such abusive behaviour will never occur again, the couple will gradually slip back into phase 1 where the tension builds up again. Some women say that this period of contrition becomes shorter and shorter after repeated incidents of battering; and some even some say this phase never existed for them (Walker, 1984:32).

2.5.3 Socio-cultural level

On the socio-cultural level, domestic violence has been viewed through many lenses, but for the purposes of this study the feminist framework, the social learning theory and the social exchange theory will be discussed, because they provide the context for a better understanding of domestic violence.

2.5.3.1 *Feminist framework*

Several researchers (Artz, 1999:9; Callaghan, 1995:8; Flinck *et al.*, 2005:385; Hampton *et al.*, 1999:49) trace the root of intimate partner abuse to the patriarchal society's view of women. The abuse of women by their male partners is seen as a result of patriarchy and a culture that maintain the dominion of men over women. Violence is perceived as a problem-solving method and is shared with "macho" male friends by many male perpetrators (Wiehe, 1998:102). Yllö and Strauss (1990:283) have found a curvilinear relationship between the status of women and wife abuse. In countries where structural inequalities were great, the rates of violence against women were correspondingly high. As the status of women across the world increased, the rate of women abuse decreased, but in countries where women have the highest status, the rate of women abuse increased. The authors attributed this finding a backlash against the improved status of women.

2.5.3.2   Social learning theory

This theory posits that one acquires behaviour by observing others and models what one sees. Therefore, if a male has witnessed or experienced a great deal of domestic violence, he will also be violent, especially if being violent bears positive results. Male violence against women endures, because it usually has positive results, like reducing tension, the perpetrator feels better, arguments (at least for a while) end, and is rarely associated with punishment for the perpetrator (Hampton *et al.*, 1999:50). Several studies (Buttel, 1998:9, Lee, Uken & Sebold, 2004:463; MacKenzie, 2006:278) have indicated a link between exposure to violence as a child or being a victim of child abuse, and the use of violence towards female partners.

2.5.3.3   Social exchange theory

This theory asserts that individuals trade, as in a marketplace, emotions for other emotions. Humans seek rewards and avoid punishments. When they interact with each other, they seek to maximize profits for themselves and minimize the costs. Humans are rational beings and with the information they possess, they calculate rewards, costs and alternatives before acting. They will choose the least costly option if there are no desirable alternatives. The standards humans use to evaluate rewards and costs will differ from person to person and can vary over the course of time. The importance that humans attach to the behaviour of others in relationships varies from person to person and these experiences can carry over the course of time. The greater the value of a reward exceeds one's expectations, the less valued the reward will become in future. Domestic violence will thus continue when the awards drawn from being violent outweigh the costs of not being violent (Hampton *et al.*, 1999:50).

2.5.4   Ecological perspective

The ecological perspective will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3. This perspective integrates all of the already described theories and would, according to the researcher, describe domestic violence at best as a social problem.

The origins of domestic violence were discussed in order to gain a clearer picture of the different levels through which domestic violence could be viewed. The following point that will be described is the relationship between domestic violence and race and ethnicity.

2.6   RACE AND ETHNICITY

Several studies (Bent-Goodley, 2000:327; Davis, 2001:19; Loubser, 1999:9; Lum, 1992:56) have shown that there is no significant difference between racial groups and the occurrence of domestic violence. It was however found that people of colour in America are more likely to report the occurrence of domestic violence than white Americans (Hampton *et al*., 1999:51). In South Africa several researchers (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 1999:13; Madonsela, 2002:11; Nordien, Alpaslan & Pretorius, 2004:17; Prinsloo, 2007:19; Twala, 2004:21) confirm that domestic violence has no racial or ethnic boundaries. Some ethnic groups might report abuse more than other ethnic groups, or connect with social workers more due to social problems such as poverty. This however does not mean that domestic violence occurs more in certain ethnic groups than in others. But it is true that low-income plays a significant role in domestic violence as will be discussed in paragraph 2.8.2 (low-income).

2.7   THE LAW AND POLICE INTERVENTION

Domestic violence is a serious social concern. Its true extent is not known. Early in the 1990s legislative efforts to curb domestic violence were started. The Domestic Violence Act, No. 116 of 1999 was promulgated in South Africa because of the high rate of domestic violence, which mainly included men violating women in their domestic environments. Shocking crime statistics from April 2006 to March 2007 indicate that 80% of all murders in the Western Cape are committed by a family member or a close friend (Die Burger, 06-07-2007; Prinsloo, 2007:18).

Some women are however sceptical about police intervention and often complain about insensitivity or inadequacy. Sullivan and Hagen (2005:346) found in their research that all the women they interviewed (61), except one did not notify the police of their abusive situation. They felt they were victimised again by the legal and police system. Ludsin and Vetten (2005:37) are of the opinion that a significant number of women do not consider the police as a viable option for escaping abuse.

Police often do not know what to do when they arrive at a home and the man sits calmly in the living room, pretending that nothing has happened, the picture of innocence. They fail to treat it as a crime, and consider it a private matter, unless there are severe injuries. In practice it is

also difficult for a woman to go at night, with all her children and with little or no money, to the police station to lay a charge (Ferrato, 2000:340).

Protective orders can be a chief means of protecting women (Trinch, 2003:61). Vogt (2007:13) observes that from March 2003 to February 2004, 27 071 people were assisted by an NGO, Mosaic which provides free support to victims of domestic violence to obtain an Interim Protection Order (IPO). In Vogt's study (2007) it was found that although the IPO did not contribute significantly to the reduction of the total abuse exposure, it contributed significantly to the reduction of total impairment. On a physical level, it contributed significantly to the reduction of health status, on a psychological level it contributed significantly to the reduction of concern with physical harm and on a social level it contributed significantly to the reduction in relationship disability. The study concluded that there are still shortcomings in the application of IPOs and that education and support structures are still needed for the courts and the community to make use of it more effectively.

In South Africa there is supposed to be a family violence register at all police stations where all reported incidents of family violence must be noted. In areas where this was done, there was a decline in reported family violence. All police staff are supposed to be trained on how to implement the Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998 and how to handle sensitive cases. There have been reports where police staff members were involved in violent behaviour, as a result from stress at work (Die Burger, 2007-07-06).

In a study done in a rural area (Damon, 2003:94), seven battered women were interviewed. None of the seven women reported the abuse or laid charges against their husbands. Some reasons for this were distrust of the police, self-blame, economic dependence, fear of being killed and protecting children's interests.

It is thus clear from the above that although the Domestic Violence Act, No.116 of 1998 and police intervention are there in theory to protect women who are exposed to domestic violence, in practice there are still some challenges that need to be worked through in order to make legal and police services more victim-friendly. The profile of the battered women will be explained next.

2.8   THE PROFILE OF THE BATTERED WOMAN

Romito (2008:13) used the following illustration to point out the continuity of violence in the life cycle of some women:

TABLE 2.1

Violence against some women in their life cycle

BEFORE BIRTH	Selective abortions, consequences of violence in pregnancy
EARLY CHILDHOOD	Female infanticide, selective negligence in care, sexual and psychological violence
LATE CHILDHOOD	Forced marriage of girls, mutilation of female genitalia, physical, sexual (incest) and psychological violence, child prostitution, pornography
ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD	Incest, courtship violence (date rapes, acid attacks, sex due to economic necessity, violence by partner (until death), rape, femicide and forced pregnancy, sexual harassment at work, forced prostitution, pornography
OLD AGE	Murder or forced suicide of widows, physical, sexual and psychological violence

Source: Romito (2008:13)

From the table above it is clear that some women, especially in certain cultures are still being devalued as human beings throughout their life cycle. In each life cycle some women are extremely susceptible to violence. For instance, at times female foetuses are aborted, as girls are not regarded as important as boys. Some girls are also sexually abused from a very young age and might end up as a child prostitute in late childhood. Some teenage girls and women get raped, or are being abused by their intimate partner and then some older women are also exposed to domestic violence (Romito, 2008:13). Mesatywa (2009:107) states that the practice of ilobola might also make some women vulnerable to domestic violence where some men view their wives as their property. These men sometimes reason that because they bought their wives, they can treat them as they wish. Some women are thus extremely vulnerable to domestic violence as will be discussed in the next section.

2.8.1 Vulnerability of women

The question is still asked why some men abuse women. The answer is as simple as that they get away with it. Some violent men will get their way, at least in the short term. They do not just accidentally "lose it". They know what they are doing and want to control their partners and their lives. Some coercive techniques are usually used such as bribery, lies, withholding of money, love, sex and destruction of property to name but a few. Women can use these techniques too, but they rarely give a black eye, break an arm or rape. Also, never in history have women been entitled by law to beat and abuse their partners (Ferrato, 2000:12).

A survey at the University of New Hampshire indicated that 28% of marriages reported incidences of marital violence at some time. Men are also at risk as women can also become violent. Within these violent homes a quarter of domestic violence cases had women as offenders and men as victims and in a quarter men were offenders and women were victims. In the other half of cases, both partners were violent (Browne & Herbert, 1997:64). These cases of violence however did not constitute a pattern and it was reported that most of these women became violent out of self-defence.

Several scholars (Browne & Herbert, 1997:63; Hampton *et al*., 1999:39; Jenkins & Davidson, 1999:245) are of the opinion that women are much more at risk than men. The battle between men and women is decidedly one-sided and for the man who wants his way, nothing works so well as a show of force. Women are physically just not as strong as men. In the long run domestic violence takes its toll and the controlling man might lose his partner, if not physically, then emotionally. The woman often begins to withdraw. Often though, a woman cannot leave because of her circumstances, such as the responsibility for children and having to seek employment.

The more some abused women want to get away from their controlling partners, the more coercive and dangerous they become. Newspaper headlines like "man shoots estranged wife and self", make many women decide it is safer to stay, taking an occasional beating, than to leave and get shot. These women are not wives or girlfriends, they are prisoners. The question is often asked why the abused woman does not simply leave her situation, implying that battered women should disrupt and uproot their lives, leaving their neighbourhood and friends to be "safe" from an abusive partner. Leaving is much more difficult than it appears. To leave or attempt to leave is often one of the most dangerous times in a woman's life. "Separation violence" refers to the escalation of abuse tactics at this point by the abusive man. He wants to

control his partner and behaviour and is threatened and challenged by her desire to leave. If the battered woman leaves, her safety is often just temporary. She has three options: to return to her abuser, to establish independent living near her family and community, or to establish independent living in a new community. Each of these choices holds the possibility of more violence. The assumption that if a woman leaves her abusive partner, she will be safe is therefore not true (Ferrato, 2000:12; Jenkins & Davidson, 1999:249).

Ferrato (2000:14) considers it a misconception that women are looking for abuse or that they provoke it. The only characteristic all abused women have in common is that they are female! They are battered, because they are women. Some police still treat domestic violence as a private matter. Every year world-wide thousands of women are killed by their male partners. And then there are the women who kill. Most husband killers receive sentences of 50 years without parole. They will never get out of prison alive. And most of them killed to save themselves and their children (Ferrato, 2000:1163).

Another problem is that women often have to flee in the middle of the night, suffering exhaustion, fear, stress and physical injury, running for their lives, with their children – the victims of the silent crime. They have to hide in homes with barred windows, watching out for their enemy, while the abusive man remains safe at home. No wonder that Ferrato (2000:48) states. "*Once you have a violent man in your life, it is very hard to get rid of him, or the fear of him.*" In a study in America using the computerised Victim Database in District Attorney's office, 2 668 cases of domestic violence were reported over a 9-month period. The majority of cases, 91% or 2 426 who sought protection from their male partners were women. Their ages ranged from 18 to 75, but most were between 18 and 45 years old (Trinch, 2003:11).

Surveys in the USA indicate that over the course of a lifetime, 21-34% of women will be assaulted by a male partner (Stephens & McDonald, 2002:78). Current surveys in countries such as Egypt, Palestine, Israel and Tunisia indicate that one out of every three women is beaten by her husband (Douki, Nacef, Belhadj, Bousaker & Gacham, 2003:168). In Finland up to 40% of women had been subjected to physical or sexual abuse or threats by a man in their lifetime (Flinck *et al*., 2005:383). In Peru 70% of all reported crime involve women beaten by their partners and at least one out of three women is beaten or abused in Malaysia, Mexico, South Korea and Zambia (Artz, 1999:3). Police records in Scotland indicated that where violence in the home was reported, 78% represented wife battering, 10.5% represented child

beating and 1.2% represented husband beating. Ninety-seven percent of the offenders were male and 94.4% of the victims were female, where four out of five women required medical treatment for their injuries (Herbert, 1997:65).

South Africa has been described as one of the gender violence capitals of the world. In South Africa, research estimates (Bollen *et al.*, 1999:5, Damon, 2003:94; Wright, Kiguwa & Potter, 2007:616) that one out of six to one out of four women are in an abusive relationship, up to 107 cases of domestic violence were reported to police in a certain area in one month and 40-70% of all murder victims were murdered by their intimate partners (Rapport, 2007-02-11). A study in the Moses Kotane Municipality indicated that social workers had to deal with ten to 15 cases of women abuse per month. Most reported was physical abuse combined with emotional abuse (Twala, 2004:63).

It is thus clear from this discussion that women are in an extremely vulnerable position, and once they are caught up in this spider web of domestic violence, escape is almost impossible. Another factor that complicates leaving an abusive relationship is low-income and will be discussed next.

2.8.2 Low-income of women

As mentioned in Chapter 1, women with a low-income are more vulnerable to domestic violence than other women due to a lack of resources. They are caught up in a cycle of poverty and being dependent. Taking action against domestic violence might result in a loss of employment, housing and income. This is further exacerbated by the fact that low-income women often have low levels of education, reducing the possibility of alternative employment and reinforcing poverty (Parenzee & Smythe, 2003:48, 49). Research findings suggest that economic resources are often a determining factor whether women leave their battered situation or remain. Poor and low-income women face higher risks of violence, particularly severe violence. Up to 60% of low-income mothers who were part of the Aid to Families with Dependent Children programme (a welfare programme) were victims of severe violence by male partners and one third reported severe physical violence inflicted by their present partners. Some form of violence over their life-span was reported by 85% of the sample (Hagen, 2001:126).

In a study conducted by Parenzee and Smythe (2003:48, 49) it was found that Coloured and African women in rural areas are caught up in a cycle where they can never escape poverty and being dependent. Their housing is directly linked to their husbands' employment contract and should they take action against domestic violence, they might lose employment, housing and income. Browne, Salamon and Bassuk (1999:393) found that some poor women, who are abused, find it difficult to carry on with their work due to their physical injuries and because their partners often interfere with their work in order to control them. Purvin's research (2007:206) indicated that some low-income women choose to keep potentially dangerous men in their lives in order to meet their basic needs. The severity and frequency of their abuse, from their perspective, do not outweigh the substantive resources and economic security they experience in these abusive relationships. Some women choose not to avail themselves of domestic violence policies that might help them to cope financially outside an abusive relationship. They do not accept the abuse or believe it was inconsequential, but choose to stay in their abusive relationships, because leaving would be too dangerous and stressful.

Stainbrook and Hornik (2006:55) also found that women in domestic violence shelters have financial needs that they cannot meet. McKenry (1995:5) also mentions that social factors such as low-income and poor family relationships are often predictors of which men might become abusive. People with lower income have fewer resources to resolve marriage difficulties and fewer problem-solving skills which add to stress. Twala (2004:63) indicated that a low income is one of the factors leading to domestic violence.

Having children is another factor that plays a very important role in domestic violence, and will be discussed next.

2.8.3 Children in the home

A significant number of women who are abused have children. These children are exposed to violent behaviour which has devastating effects on them. Suspicion and fear are common among children who have lived in violent homes (Ferrato, 2000:53). What makes domestic violence a distinct type of trauma, is that the perpetrator stays in the same home as the child and is often the child's father. Children exposed to this type of violence often have feelings of betrayal. Their perceptions of home and safety are seriously marred. Children exposed to domestic violence are at increased risk of multiple behavioural and emotional difficulties, like low self-esteem, anxiety attacks, displaying aggressive behaviour, withdrawal and suicidal

thoughts (Danis & Lockheart, 2004:34; McCloskey, Figuerdo & Koss, 1995:239; Tamija, 1999:1308). Child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present (Wiehe, 1998:114).

Research conducted by Van der Merwe (1998:4) indicated that children in this study of domestic violence homes displayed inadequate coping and problem-solving strategies. Reported long-term effects were a propensity to either commit violence or to be the object of abuse and violence in subsequent future intimate relationships or to abuse alcohol or drugs. Children are therefore not just mere witnesses of domestic violence. It is encouraging to note that not all children were doomed to become abusers or to display maladaptive coping mechanisms. Some children displayed resilience, despite their adverse home circumstances. Personality characteristics and the availability of external support systems played a significant role in how these children coped with their circumstances.

2.9   CONSEQUENCES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FOR WOMEN

As was discussed in Chapter 1, the consequences of domestic violence are severe. The three aspects that will be discussed here are the personal suffering, battered women as victims versus battered women as survivors and leaving the home, as these aspects address most of the challenges abused women have to deal with.

2.9.1 Personal suffering

The most obvious and serious consequence of intimate violence toward women is the personal suffering it causes and also the long-term toll it takes on them and their children. Numerous studies indicate a number of difficulties shared by battered women like depression and posttraumatic stress symptomatology. Bollen *et al.* (1999:41) identified anger, depression, nightmares, suicidal thoughts, panic attacks and flashbacks as clear indicators of distress in victims of domestic violence. Existing research however does not show that physical violence *per se* is solely responsible for these problems. Many physically abused women are also subjected to psychological abuse. Indeed, several researchers have found that psychological aggression is often a precursor of physical aggression (Raphael, 2001:699; Roche, 1999:24; Stephens & McDonald, 2002:79).

Psychological abuse often occurs more frequently and chronically than physical violence and the well-being of many women is affected negatively by psychological abuse. The range of abuses women may suffer is wide and as mentioned earlier it can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, as well as stalking, forced isolation in the home and other controlling behaviours. The results of domestic violence are severe, the trauma lifelong (Bollen *et al.*, 1999:7).

Depressed moods, sleep problems, loss of energy, inappropriate guilt, problems with concentration, feelings of worthlessness and other associated symptoms of depression are reported by a large number of battered women. These symptoms are reported both by women in shelters and their sisters in the community. Research indicates an association between husband violence and women's depression. Low self-esteem is closely related to, and often co-occurs with depression: an overall negative self-evaluation. Lower levels of self-esteem occurred more in battered women than in non-battered women (Stephens & McDonald, 2002:82; Wiehe, 1998:91).

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) with symptoms such as anxiety, hyper vigilance, sleep difficulties, problems with concentration, irritability and feelings of detachment are common in abused women, as well as substance abuse. Suicidal thoughts are also more common in abused women than in non-abused women (Bollen *et al.*, 1999:39). Research conducted by Eby (2004:221) showed that battered women reported higher levels of stress than women who did not experience abuse. Symptoms like heart pounding and racing, trembling hands, headaches and sleep problems were common in abused women.

It is clear from the discussion above that domestic violence could have severe personal consequences for some women. The two views of women who are exposed two domestic violence will be discussed next.

2.9.2 Battered women as victims versus battered women as survivors

Two views regarding the consequences of domestic violence emanate from the literature on battered women. The first view portrays the battered woman as helpless and a passive victim. The concept of "learned helplessness" is used to illustrate the victimization process. Walker (1984:32) suggests that repeated battering diminishes the woman's motivation to respond. This results in a tendency on the woman's part to be submissive in the face of intermittent punishments or abuse. As the abuse continues, the woman becomes immobilized, feels a loss of emotions over the abuse and begins to blame herself for the abuse inflicted upon her by her partner. Walker views learned helplessness as a core feature of battered woman's syndrome, where the woman feels she can do nothing about her battering and that she might even deserve it.

Barnett and La Violette (1993:35) view learned helplessness a little more broadly. They argue that some women have been socialised into a belief system that devalues women, especially unmarried women. In battered women this creates a high sense of responsibility to maintain the family unit. The breakdown of the family in this particular belief system that devalues women blames the woman for the breakdown, even in the face of severe assaults and violence. The authors add that relationship hope seems to be internalised and reinforced in these devalued women. Learned hopefulness is a battered woman's ongoing belief that her partner will change his behaviour and his personality. Learned hopefulness often explains why some women remain with their abusive partners and why women are likely to return to their violent partners. Makofane's research (2002:18) revealed that 60-70% of women who seek help in shelters and even those who seek separation through the courts, eventually return to their abusive home situations. Other possible reasons apart from learned hopefulness is emotional attachment and as mentioned before, the reality that there are no financial resources for a number of women to leave their abusive relationship permanently

The second view of the battered women regards the woman as an active survivor. This view argues that women respond to abuse with help-seeking efforts that are largely unmet. Other scholars (Davis, 2001:5; Humphreys, 2003:137; Jackson & Dilger, 1995:51; Roche, 1999:23) suggest that the perceived helplessness of some battered women may simply be the reality of inadequate resources such as police responsiveness, community services, lack of shelters and day care. Some women who remain in abusive relationships do so because of failed attempts to escape. These women increase their help-seeking efforts in the face of increased violence.

They attempt in a logical, consistent way to assure themselves and their children of protection and survival. These attempts supersede fear, giving up, depression or the passivity of the learned helplessness state. There is a growing body of researchers (Hagen, 2001:119; Laird, 2001:271; Lee, 2001:98; Yoshihama, 2000:207) that endorse this "survivor hypothesis" meaning that women in isolative relationships show a high degree of resourcefulness in response to their violent situations. This theme of survivor hypothesis will be discussed in more detail together with the strengths perspective in Chapter 4.

The last consequence of domestic violence addresses the challenging situation that some abused women have to face, namely to leave the home. As was discussed under the vulnerability of women (paragraph 2.8.1) a significant number of women cannot escape from their abusive situation. There are however some abused women who leave their home, at least temporarily as will be discussed next.

2.9.3 Leaving home

A significant number of low-income women who manage to escape from their violent situation seek refuge in shelters. Shelters and women's support groups have been rated by those who use them as the most helpful and effective means of coping with domestic violence in the short term. However, shelters are not always available and there is also a stigma attached to going to a shelter. If a woman had been a victim of domestic violence, she can go directly to a shelter. The location of the shelter is often kept confidential within the community to serve as a refuge or safe harbour for traumatised women and their children, preventing perpetrators to contact them. Women may see their perpetrators or phone them while in the shelter, but not at the shelter, to keep the location of the shelter confidential. Shelter residents are usually expected to care for themselves and their children. Supportive services such as counselling and child care are usually available. A woman may usually stay not longer than 90 days in a shelter. Research indicates that women's experiences of a shelter are usually positive and their sense of self-worth improves, while there. A woman's economic dependence on her partner plays a significant role whether she will return to her partner or not. Women who leave the shelter need a number of social services, like health care, employment, child care and legal assistance (Wiehe, 1998:114).

On the other hand, some women feel entrapped in shelters. Middle class or upper middle class women can often not relate to the other women in the shelter. Shelters are often overcrowded, offering little privacy. Some shelters do not allow boys older than 12 and this creates problems for women with older male children seeking protection (Ferrato, 2000:48).

Wright *et al*. (2007:616) found that the participants in their study considered the shelter a safe place to stay. Their basic needs were met and they were able to escape from abusive relationships. Certain questions however were raised. What happens after the participants have left the shelter? Will they return to the abusive situation or will they be able to make it on their own? One can conclude that shelters play an important role in offering a refuge to women if their homes are too dangerous. The reality is however that a significant number of women will not be able to leave their abusive situations permanently.

The consequences of domestic violence on women have been discussed. Social work intervention will be addressed in the following section.

2.10   SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION

As was seen from the previous section the consequences of domestic violence are huge and social work intervention could be of great benefit to low-income female survivors of domestic violence. The Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006:18) was developed in order for social workers to render services to their clients that will result in the desired level of social functioning as can be seen in Figure 2.3. This figure was adapted from the Developmental Approach in Social Work in order to illustrate how social work intervention might occur in domestic violence (Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2006:19).

Reintegration

Crisis intervention
(Safety plan, IPO or
shelter)

Early intervention

Community awareness and
prevention

Desired level of functioning
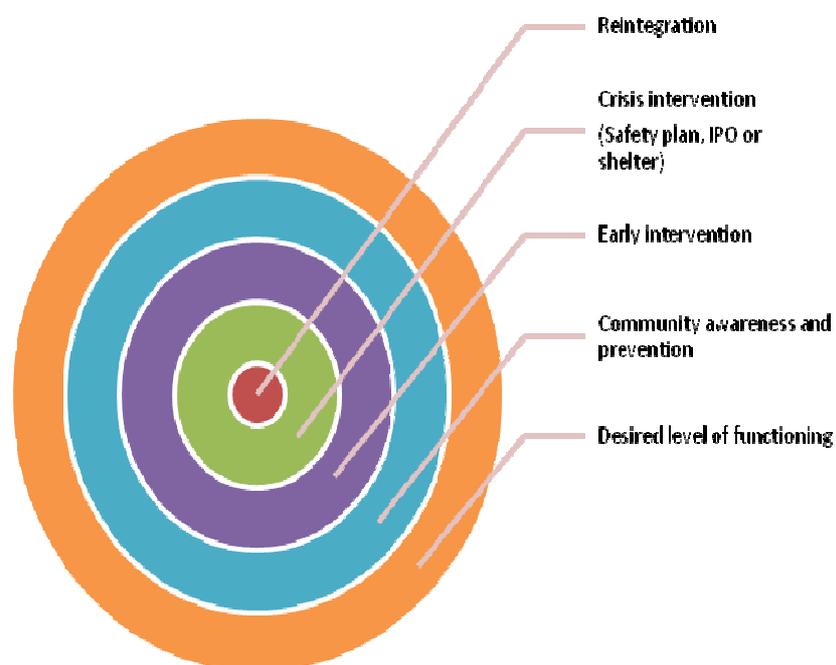
Figure 2.3: **Social work intervention**

Source: Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006:19)

The outside circle (orange part) of the figure could be seen as the desired level of functioning of a low-income woman. On this level little or no intervention is required, as a woman would typically be in a stable, loving relationship with adequate resources for healthy functioning.

The turquoise part of the figure could be seen as the most important part of social work intervention, and in this case for domestic violence. It is through community awareness that children and other people in the community such as community leaders, men and women could be made aware of domestic violence and how to prevent it.

The purple part of the figure represents typically when an abused woman would come to seek help. Domestic violence is not always the presented problem and other challenges that the woman face are usually also addressed (Lown, Schmidt & Wiley, 2006:1409). Once domestic violence has been identified, social work intervention might include counselling, support and group work to name but a few.

The green part of the figure is where violence usually escalates to such an extent that women are desperate for help. At this level the police and the legal system with Interim Protection Orders (IPOs) may be valuable resources. Some women are so desperate to escape their violent situation for fear of being killed that getting into a shelter is the only solution. Unfortunately some women cannot leave their situation and have to rely on other resources such as friends and family to help them. Social work intervention on this level would often be crisis intervention, services to ensure the safety of the women and children and services rendered to the perpetrator.

The red part of the figure involves the reintegration process. Abused women in shelters need to be reintegrated into society. Abused women who remain in the community need to recover from physical and emotional scars. This is of course much easier said than done. It is here where social workers are often challenged with the complexity of an abusive relationship and the challenge to help an abused woman and her family to cope. The goal of this part is always to get the woman to a desired level of functioning.

Against the background of the above discussion, the different forms of social work intervention are discussed below.

2.10.1 Primary intervention in domestic violence

Primary intervention could be to eliminate norms that legitimate and glorify violence, such as in the entertainment media. Domestic violence can be reduced by attempts to minimise stress created by society such as poverty and inequity. Families could also be incorporated into a network of kin and community, reducing social isolation. The sexist character of society could be changed by social awareness programmes. Lastly the cycle of violence can be broken in the family by teaching respect for each family member (Browne & Herbert, 1997:19, Landy & Menna, 2006:21).

2.10.2 Secondary intervention in domestic violence

Secondary intervention entails the development of methods to detect risk factors that might lead to domestic violence, such as high stress levels, aggressive behaviour and abuse of alcohol or drugs. It is important that social workers and health care workers be adequately trained to screen families that might be at risk of violence. Lastly, intervention strategies can

be developed to ameliorate undesired outcomes, like stress management, and reducing aggression (Browne & Herbert, 1997:20; Saunders, Holter, Pahl & Tolman, 2006:310).

2.10.3 Tertiary intervention in domestic violence

Tertiary intervention is done where family violence has actually been determined and is already happening. It is aimed at reducing the risk of repeated physical injury and psychological damage. Families in this category are high-risk families (Browne & Herbert, 1997:21). The following aspects should be taken into consideration.

2.10.3.1 *Principles for treatment of perpetrators*

Wiehe (1998:102) discusses certain principles underlying the treatment of batterers:

- Each person is responsible for his behaviour.
- The victim cannot cause the violence or eliminate it.
- Violence is behaviour of choice, a dysfunctional, destructive choice with negative consequences.
- Non-violent alternatives exist to violence as functional, appropriate choices and perpetrators should learn these non-violent behaviours.
- Violence is a learned behaviour. As the perpetrator learnt to be violent, so he can also be taught to be non-violent.
- Violence impacts on all family members.
- Children in violent homes learn that violence is an acceptable method of problem-solving. The perpetrator should realise the negative effects of his violent behaviour on his children.

Social workers should be aware of these principles and address them in intervention with perpetrators of domestic violence. Gondolf (2007:341) states that perpetrators of domestic violence could benefit form long term intervention, but need to take responsibility for their behaviour and actions.

Some men do take responsibility. One such man is Bearnard O'Riain who applied these principles in his life. He abused his wife for 20 years of their 25 years of marriage. In the last five years, he changed his behaviour after intensive therapy with his wife. Together they wrote a book "Running to stand still" (O'Riain & O'Riain, 2004:4). He also founded Abusers Anonymous where males who struggle with violent behaviour towards their female partners,

can find help and encouragement. One must however be realistic and research clearly found that it is a long and painful process to change violent behaviour, to break the cycle of violence and to replace controlling behaviour with more appropriate, loving and trusting behaviour (Gondolf ,2007:341; McKenry, 1995:6; Pyles & Postmus, 2004:376; Wiehe, 1998:105).

2.10.3.2 *Intervention for abused women*

It is not only abusive men that need social work intervention, but also abused women. Two aspects that should be addressed in social work intervention with abused women are a safety plan and empowerment that will be presented below.

(a) *Development of a safety plan*

Social workers should help battered women in high-risk families to compile a safety plan. This would typically entail important telephone numbers, possible places to go to for safety, where an emergency bag can be kept, if she can afford it and her own savings account. If a woman decides to leave her abusive partner, she must know that she might be in a more dangerous situation than before. She should inform people like neighbours of her situation. If she can obtain an Interim Protective Order (IPO) order, it might help to assure her and her children's safety. She should find out from her police station how in practical terms could an Interim Protection Order could prevent further harm, and if she finds that the police would not protect her, she should look for other support such as from friends and family, or enter a safe house. Should a woman return to her abusive situation (often because there is no other solution), counselling and support groups can help her to cope (Ferrato, 2000:9).

(b) *Empowerment of abused women*

Empowerment is a useful process that social workers can use through which oppressed women are taught to take charge of their lives. Empowerment is a process that aims to reduce the powerlessness of the individual. The goals of empowerment are to learn how to take care of oneself… and to become involved in the creation of a better environment (Ferrato, 2000:72). Closely linked with empowerment are the strengths of battered women (Saleebey, 2002:21), which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

As discussed earlier, the reality is that many battered women choose to remain in the violent relationship and view the violence as just another stressor. These women's levels of stress could be reduced by increasing their coping skills and helping them in the empowering

process. One problem is that in most instances domestic violence is not reported or is undetected, as mentioned earlier. Social workers need to be sensitive, ask the right questions and be empathic to help break the silence surrounding domestic violence (Browne & Herbert, 1997:110).

This section of social work intervention can be concluded by the following summary by Browne and Herbert (1997:110): Professional help has concentrated on removing the immediate threat of violence by providing shelters, safe houses and refuges for battered women, followed by helping them to leave the violent relationship. The reality is however that many battered women choose to remain in the violent relationship and view the violence as just one of their stressors as was mentioned earlier. These women's levels of stress could be reduced by increasing their coping skills. The other problem of offering intervention is that in most instances, domestic violence is not reported or is undetected. Social workers need to intervene on all levels that were discussed in order to reduce this evil of domestic violence in society.

2.11   CONCLUSION

From the historical background one can conclude that domestic violence has been a social challenge for centuries and throughout ages and time. Still today many women are trapped in an abusive, poverty cycle from which they cannot escape. The four forms of domestic violence often happen simultaneously. The question of why abuse happens can be addressed from an individual level, an interactional level, a socio- cultural level and an ecological level. It can also be concluded that domestic violence knows no racial or ethnic barriers.

The Domestic Violence Act, Act No. 16 of 1999 was promulgated in South Africa to reduce domestic violence. It however seems that a significant number of abused women are reluctant to use the criminal system or police intervention to address their violent situation. The vulnerability of some abused women is complicated further by their poverty and the fact that they have children to care for. The consequences of domestic on women is severe and the trauma often life long. Social work intervention in domestic violence could be primary, secondary or tertiary, depending on the nature and scope of the situation.

The next two chapters will present a description of the ecological and strengths perspectives.

CHAPTER 3

THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT OF LOW-INCOME ABUSED WOMEN (ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE)

3.1   INTRODUCTION

The social work profession has a historical commitment to the person-in-environment fit. In social work intervention, social workers focus on both person and environment and on their reciprocal relationship. The ecological perspective helps social workers to gain a better understanding of the interacting personal, environmental and cultural factors involved in complicated troubled situations such as domestic violence. The use of this perspective increases the quality of help offered to clients to modify their situation (Carlson, 1991:471; Germain & Gitterman, 1987:488; Siporin, 1977:3).

Social workers can benefit from using the ecological perspective as it focuses on different systems and environments and how the reciprocal relationship between them exists. The social work profession can be said to adhering closely to the principles underlying ecology, because of the interdependence of organism and environment, with social workers dealing with people in their environments on a daily basis. This ecological metaphor helps the profession enact its purpose of helping people and promoting responsive environments that support human growth, health and satisfaction in social functioning (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:17; Francisco-La Grange, 1985:3).

As was already discussed the goal of this study is to is to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and on their coping mechanisms (inner resources/strengths). The second objective of this study is also to describe the environmental resources of low-income battered women from the ecological perspective. To this end, this chapter presents an overview of the ecological perspective.

This will be done by discussing the assumptions of the ecological perspective. An overview of the goals of the ecological perspective will also be presented. The life model of Germain and

Gitterman (1986) will then be explored through a discussion of the different concepts of the life model. The stress and coping model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), specifically focusing on abused women will also be explained in this section. As social systems and their environment form an integral part of the ecological perspective it will also be addressed in this chapter. Finally, two studies, focusing on abused women from an ecological perspective will be presented.

3.2   ASSUMPTIONS OF THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to authors such as Bronfenbrenner (1979); Chetkow-Yanoov (1992); Carlson (1997); Chung and Pardeck (1997); Francisco-La Grange (1985); Laird (2001); Lazarus and Folkman (1984); Mackenzie (2006) and Mojab (2007) the following assumptions can be made of the ecological perspective.

The first assumption is that the person-environment configuration is helpful for social work intervention as people and the environments they stay and function in are closely interrelated. The next assumption is that several of these environments can be viewed as systems where there is a dynamic interaction among them. (These systems will be discussed in paragraph 3.5 in this chapter.) The family is viewed as the primary environment and also the primary client system. There is a constant search for balance between the needs, competencies and aspirations between humans and resources, demands and opportunities in the environment. This assumption plays an important role in exploring how supportive or unsupportive a family is in a client's life (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:3; MacKenzie, 2006:279).

The next assumption is that environments can either offer or prevent opportunities, solutions to problems and the development of human potential. Environments either offer circumstances where people can utilise opportunities, or circumstances where people are hampered in using opportunities. If for instance a battered low-income woman stays in a supportive community, this social environment might help her to utilise the opportunity to cope with her situation, whereas an unsupportive, hostile environment might make it more difficult for her to cope (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:4).

In the meeting of needs, problem solving, growth and development of people, environments can either be enhancing or restrictive. This assumption implies that an enhancing environment will add to a battered woman's resources, and a restrictive environment will prevent her from

utilising resources necessary for her to deal with her situation. The next assumption is that human beings can use, choose, protest to, redefine, change and be creative with the characteristics of their environments, because they are not passive towards their environments. A low-income female survivor of domestic violence may for example choose to form a support group for battered women and therefore creatively redefine an unsupportive environment to a more empathic environment (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:5).

How human beings handle the characteristics of their environments, will determine how well their adaptation will be in their environments. The demands of adaptations activate human beings as well as their environments. Environments are forced (directly and indirectly), to supply sources that will provide in human beings' needs. A person's conscious awareness, quality of life and life satisfaction determine her adaptation to her environment. These adaptations require complex interactional and transactional processes in space and time (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:6; MacKenzie, 2006:280).

Another assumption is an awareness of space that enables a person to be sensitive of realities. A time dimension includes the past-present-future-continuum of each person that gives space to experiences (past), actuality (present) and aspirations (future). A woman's violent experiences of the past, will most probably affect her present and future functioning, especially if she must continue to deal with domestic violence. The last assumption is that of maladaptions. Maladaptations happen as a result of unfavourable environments, dysfunctional interactions and transactions in the environment, stressful life changes and problematic inter and intra personal processes. A low-income female survivor of domestic violence might experience maladaptations as a result of an unfavourable environment, where the interaction and transactions in her environment might keep her in the trap of poverty. Combined with the stress of domestic violence, this might just enhance her maladaptation (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:6). Bassuk *et al.* (2005:387) view poverty as a high-risk stress factor in domestic violence.

The abovementioned assumptions illustrate that the focus of the ecological perspective is trained on the transactions between people and their environments where environments can either be supportive or restricting.

3.3   GOALS OF THE ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Based on the abovementioned assumptions, the following social work goals in working with people can be determined (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:3; Laird, 2001:77):

- To enhance interaction and transaction between people and their environments, not to carry out the interaction or transaction, as people must learn how to live with and in their environments, making the best of it.

- To make the systems in which people function, more dignified and sympathetic, so that it can meet needs and to promote growth, development and problem solving.

- To enhance people's capacities in order to help them cope with their life experiences and aspirations.

- To encourage adaptation processes and to discourage maladaptations.

- To link humans with appropriate resources. In the case of domestic violence this goal is especially important as survivors of domestic violence need appropriate resources to deal with their severe circumstances (Charlap, 2006:12).

The goals indicate that no person is an island, but lives in close interaction with his/her environment. The way the environment of a person is set up will have an effect on how the person and specifically a low-income battered woman will cope in life. In order to gain a clearer picture of the dynamic interaction between a person and her environment, the life model, based on the ecological perspective will be discussed.

3.4 THE LIFE MODEL

The term *life model* in social work practice was inspired by the work of a Boston psychiatrist, the late Bernard Bandler who worked closely with social workers. He introduced the idea that social workers should utilise real life processes for problem solving and need satisfaction. He challenged social workers to learn from people who cope effectively with inevitable life stressors and from those who nurture their children well. Germain and Gitterman developed the *life model*, or as it was later called, *the life modelled practice*, used by social workers worldwide today (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:26).

The life model views humans as people acting within a physical environment, a society and a culture. An environment consists of physical and social settings. Physical settings include the natural world, structures like buildings built by people, the space which supports, contains or arranges these structures and the rhythms of environmental and human biology. The social

settings include friendships, dyads such as couples and larger groups such as the family, social networks and the community and society itself, including its political, economic and social structure and the law. These two settings are in close interaction with each other (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:27; Laird, 2001:6).

Gondolf (2007:341) observes that culture which forms part of the environment and part of the person, is expressed through each person's values, norms, beliefs and language. Although definitions of culture vary, they all refer to how human groups differ in the way they act and behave, their worldview, their perspective on the rhythms of life and their concept of the essential nature of the human condition. From a holistic viewpoint, people and their physical and social environments can only be fully understood in the context of the relationship between and among them, in which individuals, families, groups and environments continually influence the operation of the other. These dynamic arrays of linked influences always occur in a cultural context (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:7). In the case of female survivors of domestic violence their culture will play a significant role in the way they view and cope with domestic violence.

Ecological thinking as displayed in the life model focuses on the reciprocity of person-environment exchanges, in which each moulds and influences the other over time. As discussed in Chapter 2 this type of thinking differs from linear thinking. Ecological thinking explains complex phenomena as encountered in social work practice, like domestic violence. X and Y are in a reciprocal relation rather than a linear one. X might act in a way that leads to change in Y, which in return affects X again. Each element in the loop influences (directly, or indirectly) every other element (Chung & Pardeck, 1997:625; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:7; Myers, 2005:292; Patterson & Malley-Morrison, 2006:75).

The following case study illustrates ecological thinking:

<u>Case study</u>
John and Mary, a married couple have three children. John batters his wife. This behaviour of John has resulted in emotional withdrawal from Mary. John, feeling more frustrated increases his violent behaviour towards his wife. Their three children display emotionally distressed behaviour at school. The school's concern for the children burdens Mary with more stress which results in a warning from her employer to put more effort into her work, otherwise she

will be asked to leave. The family as a whole, who already struggles financially and can be described as a low-income family, displays feelings of anxiety. John, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, has threatened his family several times that he will wipe out the whole family. These threats again influence the family environment, Mary's work environment and the children's school environment.

As can be seen from the case study, the life model is less concerned with causes than consequences. It concentrates on helping to change maladaptive relationships between people and their environments. The question "What is going on?" rather than "Why is it going on?" should be asked. How can it be changed rather than whom (scapegoating)? Person: environment exchanges (transactions) can be positive, negative or neutral. The complexity of these relationships is captured in the following quote from Werner, Altman, Oxley and Haggard:

"*Psychological phenomena are best understood as holistic events composed of inseparable and mutually defining psychological processes, physical environments and social environments and temporal qualities. There are no separate actors in an event; the actions of one person are understood in relation to the actions of other people, and in relation to spatial, situational and temporal circumstances in which the actors are embedded. These different aspects of an event are so intermeshed that understanding one aspect requires simultaneous inclusion of other aspects in the analysis*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:8).

In order to gain a clearer picture of ecological thinking, the complexity of the different concepts that form part of the life model will now be discussed. The following table illustrates the different concepts which form part of the life model (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:8).

TABLE 3.1

Concepts of the life model

CONCEPTS	ATTRIBUTES	EXPLANATION
1 **Person-environment fit**	Adaptedness and adaptation	Change in the person, environment, or both.
2 **Stress**	Life stressors and stress Appraisal Coping Feedback	Stress and coping approach of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) with three stages.
3 **Emotional and social ties**	Relatedness Competence Self-esteem Self-direction	All four closely linked. Based on Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory.
4 **Power**	Power Powerlessness Pollution	In domestic violence an abused woman might experience power-lessness which leads to pollution such as sexism.
5 **Habitat and niche**	Physical dwellings Social structures	Can either be supportive or restrictive.
6 **Life course**	Historical time Individual time Social time	Individualise personal and collective experience. Human behaviour is indeterminate.

Source: Germain & Gitterman (1996:9-22)

These six components of the life model, namely person-environment fit, stress, social and emotional ties, power, habitat and niche and life course will form one of the lenses through which the empirical data in Chapter 6 will be interpreted. These components are discussed below.

3.4.1   Person-environment fit

The first concept in Table 3.1 is the person-environment fit, which is the "favourable or unfavourable fit between the needs, capacities, behaviour styles and goals of people and the characteristics of the environment" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:9). If there is a good fit between humans and their environment, both flourish. A poor fit between a person's environment and his needs, capacities, rights, aspirations, personal development and functioning impair and damage both person and environment (Francisco-La Grange, 1985:4). The attributes adaptedness and adaptation are discussed to gain a clearer picture of how people fit with their environments.

- **Adaptedness and adaptation**

Adaptedness is a "favourable person-environment fit that supports human growth and well being and preserves and enriches the environment" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:6). A condition of adaptedness exists where the environment provides resources and experiences at the appropriate time and in the appropriate form to assure humans' maximum biological, cognitive, sensory, perceptual, emotional and social development and functioning (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:6-8).

The word adaptive according to the life model refers to the "person-environment exchanges that release and support human potential for adaptedness" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:9). An adaptive person is one that "enhances environment exchanges and release human potential, growth, health and satisfaction". Dysfunctional exchanges fail to support adaptedness or interfere with potential for adaptedness. Exchanges are the "*continuous transactions between people and their environments in which each shape the other over time*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:9). Ultimately maladaptive exchanges may result in an unfavourable fit, unsatisfactory development and even a damaging environment. The relationship between a person and his environment is not fixed and is constantly changing in smaller or bigger ways (Carlson, 1997:291; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:9).

Adaptation refers to behaviours that move a person to:
- Change him-/herself in order to meet the environment's expectations and demands and to use environmental opportunities.
- Change the environment so that the social and physical environments are more responsive to his/her needs and goals.
- Change the person: environment relationship in order to achieve an improved fit.

As can be seen from the above explanation different kinds of change can occur in order to help people to adapt and will vary form situation to situation.

Adaptedness and *adaptation* are not passive, but action orientated and change orientated. Neither of them avoids or ignores issues of conflict and powers that are as prominent in nature as in society (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:9; Laird, 2001:8).

In addition from the discussion above one can conclude that there are favourable and unfavourable fits between human beings and their environments. The constant changes between a person and his environment also determine how good or poor the fit between them will be.

3.4.2 Stress

Stress is the second concept in Table 3.1 to be discussed. The attributes related to stress are *life stressors* and *stress*, *appraisal*, *coping* and *feedback.* Social work practice suggests that people who come for assistance are trying to manage a stressful issue, although they might not necessarily present their request for service in these terms. This is also true for those who are referred to welfare agencies by a third party. In the stressor-stress-coping paradigm, the characteristics of a person, the operations of the environment as well as the exchanges between these two are taken into consideration (Thomson, 2006:42).

- **Life stressors and stress**

Life stressors are "*life transitions, events and issues which disturb the level of person: environment fit or a prior state of relative adaptedness*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:14). Stress is "*an internal (physical or emotional) response to a life stressor that exceeds one's perceived personal and environmental resources to cope with it*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1986:14). Life stressors and life stress are different concepts from stress management which implies day-to-day control of tensions, annoyances and frustrations and self-administration techniques such as relaxation exercises. The reason for these differences is that ecological thinking takes emotional and cultural features of stress as well into consideration. A life stressor which is externally generated may take the form of harm or loss or the threat of future harm or loss (such as being battered). The resulting stress, which is internally generated, may have physiological or emotional consequences. Often it has both (like depression and shaking). Stress is not the same as an internal anxiety, as this is one possible internal response to an external life stressor. Psychological and emotional stresses are consequences of people's appraisal that a difficult life transition, traumatic event or any other critical issue exceeds their personal and environmental resources. Stressful feelings caused by the stressor are negative and usually immobilizing. Feelings like anxiety, guilt, anger, depression and helplessness may be as a result of a stressor (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:11; Thomson, 2006:42).

- **Appraisal**

Primary appraisal is the "*conscious or unconscious processes through which a person judges whether an issue is irrelevant, benign or a stressor*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14). A stressor is associated with negative feelings, while a challenge is associated with positive feelings. Secondary appraisal is the "*consideration of measures and resources to deal with a life stressor*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14; Thomson, 2006:42). In other words, the person's appraisal of a stressor will determine how he/she will be able to deal with it.

Primary appraisal in an abusive relationship would typically determine whether an abusive event is stressful. If the conclusion is that the abusive event is stressful, secondary appraisal would determine what can be done to respond or how to cope. Appraisal can be viewed as a rational process, but in reality it is influenced by a variety of factors, such as personality, culture and family background of the woman. As will be discussed next, a woman's resources and constraints in use of resources will play a role in her way of coping. Coping resources include health and energy, positive beliefs (for example high self-esteem and hope), problem-solving skills, social skills that enable her to use other resources, social support and material resources (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:13).

- **Coping**

Coping refers to the "*behavioural and cognitive measures to change some aspect of oneself, the environment, the exchanges between them, or all three in order to manage negative feelings aroused*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14). When efforts at coping are ineffective, physiological and emotional stresses are likely to intensify and may lead to physical, social and emotional dysfunction. Stress in one area might lead to other stresses. For example the stress a woman experiences as a result from domestic violence may affect her working performance and make work an additional stressor. Stress alone does not cause dysfunction. It is rather the maladaptive outcome depending on personal vulnerability and ineffective coping. Some coping attempts are doomed to fail, and this results in added stressors. For example, a man who experiences several stressors like poverty and lack of coping skills, batters his wife to release aggression, but this just worsens the situation (Beaulaurier, Seff, Newman & Dunlop, 2007:747; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:12; Rumptz & Sullivan, 1991:237).

Most people cope quite well with serious life stressors and the same apply to abused women. In some instances the stressor is ameliorated or its consequences are mastered. An abused

woman might grow as a result of coping with the stressor of domestic violence; her self-esteem and sense of competence, relatedness and self-direction are strengthened by her triumph over adversity (Beaulaurier *et al*., 2007:747; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14).

Personal constraints that might hinder a woman from coping are "*internalized cultural values and beliefs that prescribe certain types of actions or feelings, and psychological deficits that are a product of a person's unique development*" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:13). An example would be a woman who was suppressed her whole life and now has difficulty to behave in an empowered way. Environmental constraints interfere with the optimal use of resources by thwarting a woman's coping efforts, for example a police officer who does not know how to issue a protection order to protect a woman from her perpetrator. A woman may display intense emotional reactions such as fear or rage if she experiences extreme levels of threat by her perpetrator that could interfere with her ability to enact effectively focused coping or leads to "*primitive, desperate or regressive emotion focused coping strategies, like ignoring the problem*" (Carlson,1997:294).

Being abused by an intimate partner is most likely to be perceived as stressful because of its strong potential to surpass a woman's resources and to endanger her well-being, and may lead to the loss of a valued relationship. Stressful appraisals are likely to be made as the abusive relationship could include aspects of harm or loss, threat and/or challenge. Abused women experience stress when violence occurs, but also from its anticipation. Such women use secondary appraisal to cope with their situations (Carlson, 1997:295; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:14).

Lazarus and Folkman (1984:15) developed a stress and coping ecological model specifically for abused women. This model gives insight into how abused women deal with the stress associated with domestic violence and what environmental resources they might use.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984:12) define stress as a "*property of the person-environment relationship in which the person perceives something as taxing or exceeding her resources and endangering her well-being*". Central to this view is the role of cognitive appraisal where the abused woman constantly evaluates an encounter in terms of its implications for well-being. Each woman's subjective meaning attached to an abusive event must also be taken into consideration.

It is known that physical abuse, especially chronic abuse, is a significant stress for women who experience it. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984:5) ecological model of stress and coping recognises that people's actions are determined by a variety of factors located within themselves, in their families of origin and procreation, in the social structure and in the larger socio-cultural environment. This model recognises the stages abused women may experience in their appraisal of the abuse experience.

3.4.2.1 *The stress and coping model*

There are three stages of appraisal and coping model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984:15-19).

- *The first stage is called the "It is my fault" stage,* and is characterised by guilt and self-blame, where women often feel the abuse is caused by their own shortcomings and failings. These feelings are enhanced by the abuser's criticisms of her. Problem-focused coping might entail an improved performance as wife and mother (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:15).

- *The second stage is called "It is your fault, but I'll help you."* As the abuse continues, the woman realises the abuse is not as a result of her behaviour, but relates to the perpetrator's behaviour. Self-blame is replaced by a feeling of responsibility to help the perpetrator. In this stage the focus is on trying to change the perpetrator's behaviour, using problem-focused strategies, for example to control his drinking behaviour, or more emotion-focused behaviour, such as discussing her situation with friends and family. (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:15).

- If none of these stages and kinds of coping eliminates stress, the woman often realises that the abuser is solely responsible for his behaviour. This stage, the "*It is your fault, and I hope you will change*" coping option is primarily emotion-focused, because she appraises the source of stress as not being amenable to her change efforts. She may feel entrapped in the abusive relationship, depressed, anxious, overwhelmed and frightened. Avoidance strategies like withdrawing from friends may increase. Typically psychosomatic symptoms associated with stress and anxiety occur, such as headaches and extreme fatigue, leaving the abused woman with even more to cope with. For some women leaving temporarily or having the perpetrator arrested can serve as a problem-focused coping strategy, if it motivates the abuser to change or seek professional help (Carlson, 1997:295; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:16).

- *The third stage is called "despair".* If above strategies fail, the abused woman arrives at the final stage in her understanding of her abuse, namely "Despair". A sense of hopelessness may be experienced in this stage (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:16). Some researchers (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14; Saleebey, 2002:5; Yoshihama, 2000:207) argue however that despite unbearable circumstances, some women still have strengths and develop certain resilience in their difficult circumstances as will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Carlson (1997:291) argues that limited focus has been placed on therapeutic work with abused women. There are reservations among certain women's movements regarding therapy for abused women. The ambivalence appears to be grounded in four factors. First is the concern that providing counselling for abused women, implies that there might be certain deficits in them that contributed to the abuse, which in turn can lead again to victim blaming. Second, some negative experiences were reported by many battered women who felt they were held responsible for the abuse, or just that they did not get the help they wanted. Third, the issue of power imbalance in a therapeutic relationship might increase the feelings of powerlessness in abused women. Last and most probably the most important reason, is that abused women need other resources more than counselling. As will be explained in the next few paragraphs, in social work intervention, an abused woman's coping mechanisms and resources should be explored in order to reach the desired level of functioning as was discussed in Chapter 2.

Each woman who experiences domestic abuse is the unique product of many factors, including her age, cultural background, experiences in her family of origin, economic circumstances, sexual orientation, intelligence and so forth. As a result of the stressfulness of domestic violence, there are also numerous common effects as discussed in Chapter 2, such as fear and anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, suicide or a high risk of it, confusion and memory loss. These effects are much more common in women who are exposed to patriarch terrorism, where men usually increase their violent behaviour towards their female partners (Carlson, 1997:293; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:12).

In an assessment of abused women, her coping resources should be carefully evaluated. It would include her physical health, mental health and well-being, belief system regarding her view of herself and causes of the abuse, self-esteem, problem-solving skills, social skills and existing social supports and material resources. Constraints to effective coping should also be

evaluated, including environmental constraints and level of threat. Concurrent stressors should also be evaluated, like low-income (Carlson, 1997:296; Levendosky & Graham-Berman, 2001:171).

- **Feedback**

Feedback is the "*error-correcting internal and external signals and cues from a person's cognitions and sensory perceptions and from the environment about the effectiveness of the coping efforts*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14). Personal resources for coping include motivation, problem-solving and relationship skills, a hopeful outlook, optimal levels of self-esteem and self-direction, the ability to identify and use information from the environment about the stressor and how to deal with it, self-restraint and an ability to seek environmental resources and to use them effectively. Flexibility and optimism form part of the resources that help people cope with life stressors and stress. Environmental resources include formal service networks such as public and private organisations. Support also includes informal networks of relatives, neighbours, friends, and colleagues. Informal networks often serve as a buffer against stress. The social and physical environments involved in coping must be examined as well (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:14; Thomson, 2006:43).

Stress and how people cope with it has been discussed as the second concept of the life model. Lazarus' stress and coping model (1984) specifically designed to assist women in an abusive relationship was also explained. Emotional and social ties, as well as power are the following two concepts of the life model to be explored.

3.4.3 Emotional and social ties

The third concept of the life model (see Table 3.1) has to do with the ties a person have to other people. According to Germain and Gitterman (1996:15-18), emotional and social ties of a person are best described by *relatedness, competence, self-esteem* and *self-direction* which are interdependent. Relatedness however could be viewed as the central attribute.

- **Relatedness**

Relatedness refers to "*the innate capacity of human infants to form attachments and later to form friendships and other social affiliations*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:16). In adulthood an attachment may or may not include a sexual relationship. All cultures seek to support

relatedness. Relatedness is based on Bowlby's (1973) attachment theory which proposes that relatedness is an innate capacity of human beings and part of their genetic structure. In adulthood attachment are restricted to a few people. The need for proximity to those people is strong and temporary separations are painful and permanent loss profoundly debilitating. This might explain why abused women are reluctant to leave. Social networks can be supportive or they can be negative. An abused woman for example might have supportive networks if there are people or places in her environment to which she can go if she needs to get out of her home (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:16).

There is a difference between emotional ties (attachment) and social ties (friendships and other relationships). Emotional isolation and loneliness as in the abused woman's relationship with her partner can only be relieved by developing a new attachment, like an attachment to her children. The social network may be helpful for the abused woman, but the emotional turmoil can only be worked through by the woman herself. Social isolation and loneliness on the other hand can only be relieved by developing a new social network, like a support group for abused women. Stress and social loneliness can still be experienced, even though a personal attachment remains available. Eco-maps are useful assessment and intervention tools for social workers when looking at relatedness, loneliness and isolation (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:16; Laird, 2001:789). An explanation and discussion of the eco-map will be presented in paragraph 3.5.1.

- **Competence**

Closely linked to relatedness is competence. Competence *"is the inner sense derived from accumulated experiences and at times associated with the ability to seek and accept help when needed"* (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17). Innate competence motivation is an important hypothesis for social workers where it suggests that the client's motivation to be effective in the environment can be mobilized, even after life experiences have dampened it. People's values also contribute to how competence is defined. It is important for the social worker and the abused woman to mobilize, enhance or restore her sense of competence and heightened relatedness, self-esteem and self-direction (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17; Hutchison, 2003:143).

- **Self-esteem**

The third attribute of the ties a person has with other people is self-esteem. Self-esteem is the *"extent to which a person feels capable, significant and worthy of respect or love"* (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17). Self-esteem has a major influence in human thinking and behaviour. Low self-esteem indicates a lack of self-respect, feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy and inferiority. As mentioned in Chapter 2, abused women often have a low self-esteem which is associated with depression (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17).

- **Self-direction**

The fourth attribute of a person's emotional and social ties is self-direction. Self-direction which is closely linked to a person's self-concept is *"the sense of having some control over one's life and ability to take responsibility for one's decisions and actions, while respecting the rights and needs of others"* (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17). Issues of personal power and powerlessness are vital in self-direction. Where people's life circumstances narrow their options so that personal choices are meaningless, or when they feel helpless over certain life events, their self-direction, self-esteem and sense of competence might be threatened (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17).

Form the above it can be concluded that the social and emotional ties a person has with significant others play a very important role in dealing with stress challenges.

3.4.4 Power

The fourth concept of the life model is power (see Table 3.1). Power and its abuse are the antithesis of growth-promoting, self-healing life forces. When a dominant person like an abusive male, withholds *power* from his more vulnerable wife, it might lead to oppression and *powerlessness*. This type of abuse leads to social *pollution* like sexism and repressive gender roles (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:19; Martin & Artz, 2006:72).

Powerlessness in low-income abused women is likely to lead to more disruptive life stressors. On the other hand, effective coping mechanisms in these women must not be overlooked. A discussion will be given in Chapter 4 on these women's strengths (Heise, 1998:262; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:17).

So far four concepts of the life model has been discussed. A discussion of the last two concepts, habitat and niche, and life course follows.

3.4.5 Habitat and niche

This is the fifth concept of the life model (see Table 3.1). Metaphorically speaking, people's *habitats* refer to their *physical places* of dwellings, transportation, workplaces, religious structures, social agencies and amenities such as libraries, parks and museums. Habitats may hamper the basic functions of families if they are not supportive of growth, health and social functioning and if they promote isolation, disorientation and helplessness (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:20).

Niche refers to the status of an individual in his/her social structure. Millions of women occupy niches that do not support human needs, rights and aspirations. Niches are shaped and sustained by a society's tolerance of the misuse of power. Niches of abused women would typically be unsupportive of their needs, rights and aspirations (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:20; Levendosky & Graham-Berman, 2001:173).

The habitat and niche of a person play a significant role in how her needs, rights and aspirations are being met.

3.4.6 Life course

The last concept of the life model is the one of life course (see Table 3.1). This term refers to the unique pathways of development each human being goes through from conception to old age. "Life course" replaces the traditional terms of "life cycle" or "life stages". The term life course focuses on "*an ecological view of non-uniform, indeterminable pathways of bio-psychosocial development within diverse environments and cultures*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:21). It focuses on the following elements:

- Human diversity which includes race, ethnicity, gender, culture, socio-economic status and religion. The life course concept adopts an approach of individualised personal and collective experience rather than placing people in predetermined, universal developmental stages. Human behaviour is thus indeterminate.
- The self-regulating, self-directing, indeterminable nature of human beings and their innate push toward growth and health.

- Environmental diversity including aspects like economics, politics, history and sociology, taking into account the effects of poverty and discrimination on human development and functioning.

- Newly emerging family forms and their unique tasks and issues in addition to those faced by traditional families.

- Rapid shifts in the values and norms of society and community regarding today's world.

- The crucial significance of global and local environments. As there is a growing awareness between humans and their reciprocal influence on global as well as on local environments, this is specifically relevant to social workers working from an ecological perspective (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:21; Thomson, 2006:43).

These elements of diversity and development will promote an understanding of the life course of a person. In addition, human development and social functioning are placed in a matrix of historical, individual and social time.

- **Historical time**

Historical time refers to the "*formative effects of social change on birth cohorts (segments of the population born at the same historical point) that help account for generational and age differences in bio-psychosocial development, opportunities and social expectations*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:22). For example, women born in South Africa between 1995 and 2005 differ in psychosocial development, opportunities, expectations of marriage, parenting and work from women born 50 years earlier. Historical time is an important aspect for social workers to take into consideration when gaining insight in the differences in personality, culture and life experiences of humans (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:22; Hutchison, 2003:143).

- **Individual time**

Individual time refers to the "*experiences, meanings and outcomes of personal and environmental factors over the life course, within a given historical and cultural context*" (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:23). Each person has a self-constructed life story to tell where she interprets the past, selects and shapes memories and reassesses past events to make sense of her own unique world (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:23; Laird, 2001:79).

- **Social time**

Social time refers to the *"timing of collective life issues in a family, group or community and the transformations or disorganizations occur as consequences of individual and collective processes, shifts in issues facing the group, and the myths and rituals families, groups, communities and organizations develop to explain their experiences"* (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:24). Often groups develop cherished rituals and myths about their origin and experiences. The phenomenon of gender crossover is also expanding. Gendered family roles are also changing in respect of child rearing, household duties and full-time employment (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:23).

From the above one can see that the life course of a person also depends on historical time, individual time and social time. The diversity of people and environments are also aspects that play a role in a person's life course.

The different concepts and attributes of the life model have been discussed in order to gain a clearer understanding of the ecological perspective.

3.5   SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

Against the background of the explanation of the different concepts that constitute the ecological perspective, it is also important to have an understanding of social systems and how a human being as a system interacts and grows within a variety of other systems and environments. It would also be useful to describe the full complexity of person-environment interactions. All human beings (each of whom is a system) find themselves within multiples nearby and distant environments. Potentially, all persons interact with elements of the following environments:

1. Individual
2. A nuclear family or multi-generational tribe/clan
3. A participatory environment or reference group
4. A local or municipal community
5. A culture, society or nation
6. The international scene
7. The cosmos (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:7).

The following figure illustrates the different systems.
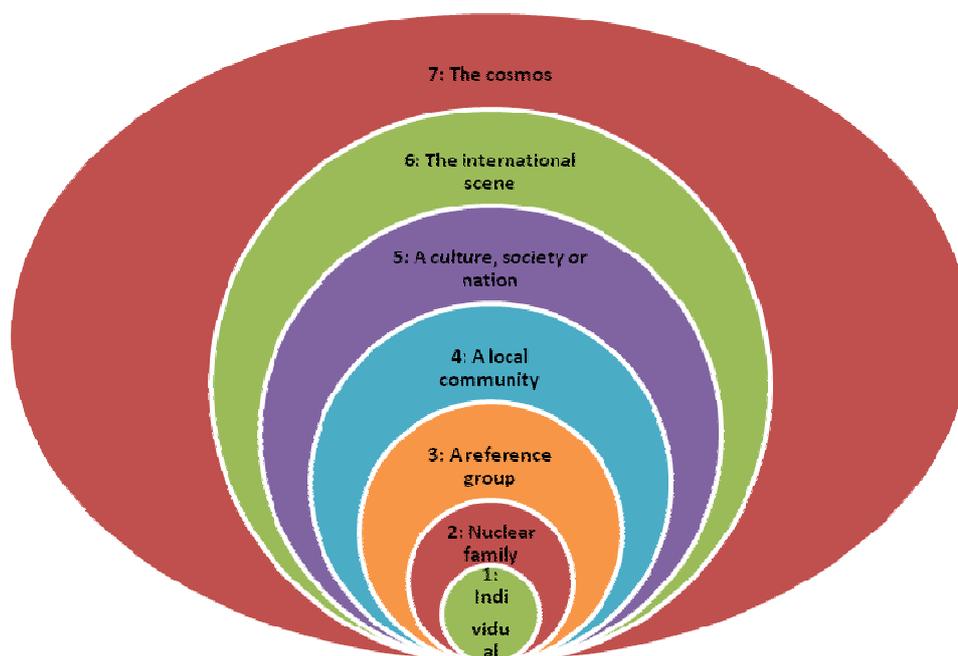
Figure 3.1: **The different systems in a person's life**
Source: Chetkow-Yanoov (1992:7)

The small circle represents an individual. All the other circles illustrate the different systems and environments that play a role in a person's life. Each of these six environments can also be examined as a system, and they all influence, and are influenced by the others. Social workers often have to help people deal with the consequences of changes that have taken place in near or distant environments.

A case study will be used to illustrate the different environments. Rachel was brutally murdered by her ex-boyfriend on 2007-08-11 in Villiersdorp (Cape Sun, 2007:4).

The ontogenic system is the first small circle. This represents a unique individual, with a unique personality and a unique way of dealing and interacting with his or her different environments and systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:14). Rachel was twenty-three years old. She was described as a pleasant woman and a hard worker.

The second circle, the **family environment** is also called the **micro system**. This system consists of the nuclear and extended family, as well as the interactions that take place among members. Rachel had close ties with her family. She stayed with her mother, Mary, together

with her younger brother, Sam, who is working long hours. She had a little girl, Sally, of three years old, born out of the relationship with her ex-boyfriend, Mario. This relationship was stormy and Rachel was abused on a regular basis by Mario. In this regard her micro system was stressful and in this system where she was supposed to be nurtured, she was abused. She would often flee to Mary with Sally if she felt it was too dangerous to stay with Mario. Sam would protect Rachel where he could, but was often absent from home. Mary's sisters (Rachel's aunts) Christine and Anne were very supportive of Rachel, but stay far out on a farm. They also have their own families to look after and are also exposed to poverty.

In the **participatory environment** (circle three) Rachel maintained two jobs. She worked at a fruit packing shed and would sell chips and sweets to provide for her and Sally's needs. This was at times very stressful for Rachel, but she had to do it to meet in the family's material needs. Sally would often stay with Mary when her mother was at work. She also has a good relationship with Mario's parents who are farm labourers on a farm close by and would spend some weekends with them.

The **community environment** (the fourth circle), comprises of the surrounding community including clinics, welfare agencies and the police. Bronfenbrenner (1979:14) calls the participatory environment circle and the community circle together the exosystem. The socio-economic status of a person plays a significant role in domestic violence as mentioned earlier. The community view of domestic violence, can be described as a risk marker where a blind eye is turned to it. A risk marker is not the same as an indication or a cause. Due to the fact that Rachel stayed in a low-income environment, where most people struggle to make a living, the community does not view domestic violence as a priority problem and rather tries to solve the high incidence of drug and alcohol abuse. Domestic violence is seen as a private matter (Bronfenbrenner, 1979:15). Rachel managed to get three Interim Protection Orders (IPO's) against Mario and the last one forbade him to approach the front gate of Mary's home (where Rachel stayed). The police had arrested Mario several times in the past because of his violent behaviour. He was usually released the next day.

Circle four tends to favour people of a higher social class, and not usually low-income people. Many studies (Bassuk *et al*., 2005:387; Douki *et al*., 2003:166; Haj-Yahia, 2000:237 Madonsela, 2002:4; Pretorius, 2000:6) indicate that if you are in a low-income group, your

community involvement is usually much more limited. This also applied in Rachel's life. She was poor and struggled to make ends meet. Mary, Sam, Christine and Anne are also poor and together they would help each other to make life a bit easier. Rachel's older sister, Beth, stays in Cape Town and does not have regular contact with her family.

Circle five is described as the **national environment**. As was discussed in Chapter 2, several social and economic factors are related to domestic violence. It appeared that domestic violence is a crosscutting issue and can be found in all educational, economic, religious and ethnic groups, though not necessarily to an equal extent. It must be stressed again that on a societal level, poverty and the stress it creates is the most powerful demographic correlate of domestic violence (Carlson, 1991:477).

Rachel has been influenced by this environment where she could, according to the Domestic Violence Act (Act 96 of 1997), obtain an Interim Protection Order (IPO) against her ex-boyfriend. As mentioned earlier, she obtained three IPO's against Mario, but this did not prevent him from coming to her home in broad daylight and brutally killing her. If one views this system, a society's overarching patriarchal, male dominance value system can have an effect on the view of domestic violence in a society. This definitely applied in Rachel's situation where some women are still treated as objects. Rachel was brutally murdered by her controlling jealous ex-boyfriend, Mario who could not handle a life without Rachel, but when he was with her, he would severely abuse her.

Circle six, the **international environment** comes into play where domestic violence is regarded as a worldwide problem and where helping professionals worldwide strive to stop this silent crime.

Circle seven, the **cosmic environment** had an influence on Rachel's life last winter which was extremely cold. At this stage she was still with Mario and one night she and Sally had to stay outside their informal dwelling for three hours, after Mario had threatened to kill her and Sally and she had to wait for him to calm down before she could go into her home to be with her children. Mary was not at home at that stage and Mario also threatened Rachel that if she went to anyone's home, he would come and "get her". Exposure to cold and wet weather, caused both Rachel and Sally to catch pneumonia. Rachel lost two weeks of work, was not paid, and still had to pay for medicine and the doctor's bill.

Bronfenbrenner (1979:16) views circles five and six as the macro system that includes a society's formal and informal social rules and norms. Each of these environments can contribute to or hinder a person's development and in turn can be influenced by the growing person. According to this model, the family is a person's first and most significant environment. That is why domestic violence is such a traumatic event, as the environment which is supposed to protect and nurture an individual changes into the most dangerous and even fatal environment for the abused woman, as it was in Rachel's case.

Domestic violence is determined by the interplay of forces within the embedded factors in all the different environments that were discussed. There is not only one variable that causes domestic violence, but an interaction among several (Hampton *et al.,* 1999:51).

Another aspect of system functioning that needs to be taken into consideration is whether a system is closed or open. A system is considered to be open if its boundaries are relatively crossable in other word when energy, information and resources are exchanged with other systems and its own environments. A closed system can be described as one where the boundaries are relatively difficult to cross. It is regarded as unhealthy for a system involving human beings to be totally closed and also to be totally opened (vulnerable). Social work practice tends to view the world as many types of open systems and would view a problem as holistically as possible (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:22). The typical domestic violence family would thus rather be explored by viewing the whole family, taking its support systems and significant environments into consideration, than just focusing on the abuse. A domestic violence family might be seen as a dependent or weak system (partially open) and is often vulnerable to external influences.

Any weak or frail system is likely to be influenced by pressures from different environments, like in Rachel's case where her ex-boyfriend and the father of her child, was extremely cruel to the point where he killed her, and tried to control her to be with him, even when he continued to abuse her. The community where she stayed also still to a large extent devalues women.

Labelling people, such as "women are objects or possessions" exploits frail systems and this is where many of the problems social workers have to deal with have their origin, i.e. powerful groups in powerful environments misusing their power.

A closed system has a fixed structure and no vertical interaction with its environment and its members only experience vertical relationships (i.e. within the closed system only). Such a system creates its own internal equilibrium. Many domestic violence families act as if they are in a state of equilibrium (closed to their environment). Typically a domestic violence family might try to hide behind closed boundaries and an abused woman "defends" herself against inputs from other systems in her environments by functioning in equilibrium (also because of the husband's controlling behaviour which prevents inputs from other systems (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:37).

Homeostasis is used to describe a system that is "*in constant interchange with its environment*" (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984:16). Most healthy relationships include give and take or homeostasis with different systems in various environments, i.e. in a healthy marriage husband and wife give and take respect, love and mutual understanding.

Steady state refers to "*an open system that conducts not only exchanges with its environments, but is capable of altering its structure in order to adapt to changing conditions*" (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:37). Healthy persons, organizations and groups and even cultures are seeking challenges. Healthy open systems do not aim for stability or focus only on need reduction. They rather view tension, strain and conflict as positive as these create the necessity for coping and also function as a precondition for growth. Thus battered women who manage to break the silence about their abusive partners and who are in a relatively steady person-environment interchange are likely to survive further conflicts and abuse. A healthy family can be analysed as an open system, exchanging in a steady way with diverse ways (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:38).

The above discussion on different systems and environments demonstrates that several aspects need to be taken into consideration when assessing a person or a family. An assessment tool is subsequently discussed.

3.5.1   Eco-map

As was discussed under in paragraph 3.4.3, namely the ecological concept of emotional ties, the eco-map is a useful assessment and intervention tool for social workers. Hartman (1994:158) designed the eco-map social workers to assess who and what are significant in a person's life, which relationships are strong and which relationships are stressful and tenuous. Figure 3.2 is an example of an eco-map of the case study of Rachel that was presented earlier.
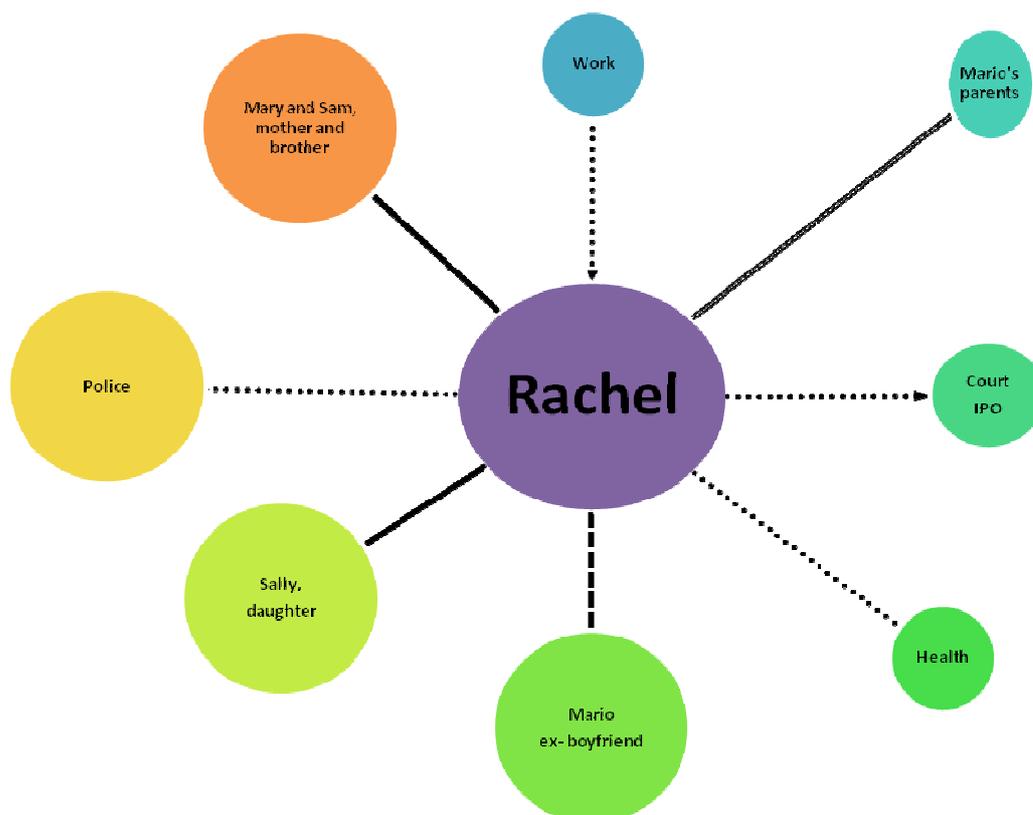
Figure 3.2:   An eco-map of the case study of Rachel

Source: Adjusted from Hartman (1994:158)

The two circles linked with a thick, compound line to Rachel indicate a healthy, very strong relationship. Rachel had a good relationship with her daughter Sally, and her mother and brother, Mary and Sam. The two thin compound lines indicate a good relationship. Rachel had a good relationship with Mario's parents, although her involvement with Mario prevented the relationship to develop into a very strong relationship. The thick dotted line between Mario and Rachel indicates a very stressful relationship. The fact that she had left him several times and had three Interim Protection Orders (IPO's) against him was proof of this stressful relationship.

The smaller dotted lines indicate tenuous relationships. Rachel's health was not good, due to stress, the domestic violence and the pneumonia she had had. She also had a tenuous relationship with the police who despite several efforts to arrest Mario could not prevent him from murdering her. Her work was stressful due to long hours and having to do two jobs. The arrow towards Rachel's circle indicates that there was a significant flow of energy. The energy in this case was the financial provision for the family's basic needs. The relationship between Rachel and the court also proved to be tenuous. The arrow to the court indicates that Rachel at least succeeded in obtaining three Interim Protection Orders (IPOs). Unfortunately the energy flows just from one side, indicating that the court and the IPOs could not provide the necessary protection to save Rachel's life.

It can thus be seen from the discussion above that the eco-map is a useful tool to help the social worker and clients to explore certain relationships and aspects in their lives. In the next section domestic violence will be viewed from an ecological perspective. An overview of three studies done from an ecological perspective on domestic violence will also be presented.

3.6   DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VIEWED FROM AN ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Domestic violence is an enormously complex issue. Carlson (1991:473) states that there are many factors that come into play when doing research on this topic such as the stigmatising nature of the problem, norms about family privacy and difficulties in generalising from clinical samples. The nature of one's understanding and the conclusions one draws about the causes of domestic violence, will directly influence social work intervention. If one concludes that a sexist society and a dominant patriarchal society are the major causes of domestic violence and its perpetuation, intervention should be at a societal level, modifying social norms, aiming to empower women and promoting equal opportunities in education and employment for men and women. If one views the primary cause of domestic violence as problems between couples or in the individual man or woman, interventions would be more therapeutic towards the family and the individual. The ecological perspective adopts a multivariate approach, spanning societal, family and individual levels. An overview of two studies is presented below.

3.6.1 Studies conducted from an ecological perspective

Two studies done from an ecological perspective will be presented. The first study explored how abused women viewed the legal system and if they would reuse it. The second study explored the parenting skills in battered women.

3.6.1.1   Study 1: Fleury-Steiner, Bybee, Sullivan, Belknap and Melton (2005:338)

In this study 178 women were interviewed whose assailants had been charged with a domestic violence-related crime against them. Consistent with the ecological perspective, the context of the women's lives, the violence they experienced and their experiences with the police and the legal system it was found that battered women's intentions to reuse the criminal legal system (lay charges and instigate court proceedings against the abuser) are informed by several factors. Personal circumstances, relationship with the perpetrator, community-level and systems factors all support or hinder a woman's future intentions to use the criminal legal system for protection. Survivors of domestic violence that were legally or financially dependent on their perpetrators were less likely to use the criminal legal system in the future should the abuse recur. Women financially dependent on their abusers felt that they had more to lose and less to gain by laying charges. Fear of jail sentences for the perpetrator (though unlikely) and thus losing financial support for themselves and their children made these financially dependent women more reluctant to reuse the criminal legal system. In contrast, women who were employed were more likely to use the system, should it be necessary. Economic self-sufficiency thus allows women more scope and resources to survive domestic violence.

3.6.1.2   Study 2: Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001:171)

This study explored the parenting skills of battered women. The hypothesis of this study was that the ecological perspective would demonstrate the importance of additional environmental variables in understanding the effects of domestic violence on women and children that cannot be tested in a simple direct effects model. An integration of the ecological perspective and trauma theory was used in this study. The sample consisted of 120 women and one of their children residing in the community or in domestic violence shelters. The mean family income was low. Three environments were studied, namely the ontogenic environment, the family environment and the community environment. All three environments played a role in the women's parenting abilities and how they coped with the domestic violence.

Both these studies illustrate that the ecological perspective can be used very effectively in assessing the different systems and environments involved in domestic violence.

3.7 CONCLUSION

The ecological perspective is useful to assess an abused woman, her resources and her different environments. Its different assumptions and goals provide a valuable framework to determine the stressors and resources in female survivors of domestic violence. The life model provides important concepts that could help social workers to evaluate the different attributes of abused women. The stress and coping model is helpful to explore an abused woman's physical and mental health, her well-being, problem-solving skills and resources.

Closely linked with the life model and stress and coping model, is the analysing of the different systems in a person's life. The system of the family environment is supposed to protect and nurture a person and that is why domestic violence is such a traumatic crisis, as this system might become the most dangerous and even fatal system for abused women. The eco-map as an assessment tool was also presented in this chapter. The two case studies illustrate the value of the ecological perspective in dealing with a complex issue such as domestic violence.

In the next chapter an explanation of the coping methods and inner strengths of abused women will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

THE RELEVANCE OF A STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE IN UNDERSTANDING LOW-INCOME FEMALE SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

4.1   INTRODUCTION

As was discussed in Chapter 1, the Department of Social Development renders services to individuals, groups and communities, recognising their strengths and capacity for growth and change. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997) and the Integrated Service Delivery Model of the Department of Social Development (2006) also view services to women with the aim of empowerment as a priority to reduce gender-based violence. The strengths perspective fits in well with the ecological perspective and the Government's view on empowering women as it focuses on the capabilities rather than the pathologies of humans (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:6; Saleebey, 2002:xiii).

The strengths perspective demands of social workers to view their clients and their environments in a different way than a reactive problem-solving way as will be discussed later. Social workers should look past people's appearance, social situation, social class, economic situation and labels. Assessment of people should be aimed at enabling them to discover and explore their strengths and resources. Service rendering should be aimed at assisting people to achieve their goals, realise their dreams and overcome their own inhibitions and misgivings to face and challenge a community that might look down on them. People should be viewed as capable, motivated, resilient and respectable. The strengths perspective assumes that clients have a number of competencies and resources that may be used to improve their situation (Lee, 2001:94; Roche, 1999:23; Saleebey, 2002:1).

Although the strengths perspective does not turn a blind eye to the problems or pain people (and specifically women for the purposes of this study) experience, it guides social workers to identify, build on and mobilize people's personal strengths and environmental resources. The Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006:7) states the following: "*the social development approach aims at collective empowerment, facilitating processes that help the poor, vulnerable and marginalised to regain control over their lives*".

The Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006:10) has the following core values that complement the strengths perspective. The first value is acknowledgement of and respect for people's potential to develop and change. The second value is the recognition of the rights of all to participate in their own development and decision making, and to be accountable for their own lives. Third is the value of commitment to facilitate social processes that build on strengths, effective relationships and healthy organisations and communities. These core values also focus on people's strengths and rights to decide how and what in their lives they want to change (Lee, 2001:94; Roche, 1999:24; Ruiz-Perez & Mata-Pariente, 2006:1156).

The previous discussion indicates that the strengths perspective may enable social workers to develop a better understanding of the situation of low-income female survivors of domestic violence. For the purposes of this study concepts such as service rendering, empowerment, facilitating, collaboration, assessment and intervention will all be used as a framework to describe the professional relationship between a social worker and a low-income female survivor of domestic violence. The different phases or stages of intervention will not be identified or discussed.

As was already stated the goal of this study is to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and on their coping mechanisms (inner resources/ strengths). The third objective of this study is to explore the coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income women who are survivors of domestic violence, in terms of the principles of the strengths perspective. This will be done in this chapter.

The philosophy of the strengths perspective will also be discussed. Second, the underlying principles will be reviewed. The philosophy and principles should not be seen as different entities, but rather as a whole where each part is needed to fully grasp the operation of the strengths perspective. Third, the elements of strengths based practice will be discussed. Fourth, the lexicon of strengths will be examined, and fifth, the language of strengths-based practice will be explored. Finally a case study of a low-income female survivor of domestic violence will be reviewed.

4.2   PHILOSOPHY OF THE STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE

Two ideas derive from the philosophy of the strengths perspective, namely liberation and empowerment, where people have hope. Opposite of this is alienation and oppression that might smother flickers of hope. These two ideas will be discussed now.

4.2.1 Liberation and empowerment: heroism and hope

Liberation is founded on the idea of possibility where there is opportunity for choice, commitment and action. All people have an inherent longing to transcend circumstances, to develop their own potential, to minimize adversity, to stand up and be recognised. Unfortunately too often social institutions and oppressors (like a perpetrator in domestic violence) smother this yearning or distort it, so that it serves the interest and purposes of others and not of them with the longing. It is vital that the social worker finds ways for clients for the possible and the unimaginable to survive and find self- expression. Liberation can be powerful and challenging to the powers that be, but it is often modest and unassuming such as when an abused woman tries out new behaviours (like working out a feasible safety plan), forges new relationships or makes a new commitment. There is a certain hope and belief in the possible that need to be cherished and nurtured (Lee, 2001:96; Saleebey, 2002:7).

Focusing on problems may create a trap for both the client and the social worker as it saps the energy for productive working together. As will be discussed later in this chapter, to listen to a client's story and how the problem began, is an important starting point in the helping process or as it is referred to throughout this chapter, intervention. It is however important that the story does not take on mythic proportions. The focus should be on the bright side, the aspirations, capacities, skills and on hope, not on hopelessness (Saleebey, 2002:101).

4.2.2 Alienation and oppression: anxiety and evil

It is a fact that bigotry, hatred, war and more quietly but not less damaging, setting people aside, despising them and controlling their entire lives, are daily reminders of evil, brutality and despotism (as in a typically abusive relationship where a controlling man would mistreat his intimate partner).

Vicious acts of cruelty and violence as a result of intolerance and hate are part of the world and the social work profession often has to heal the wounds of the oppressed (Saleebey, 2002:8). However from the ashes of destruction, mayhem and oppression there rises a flicker of hope: the human spirit! Despite destruction and seemingly hopeless circumstances the human spirit flourishes!

Take for instance Anna, a young single mother of 23 years. Her boyfriend has abused her physically, sexually, emotionally and economically over the last five years. The last violent outburst occurred 6 weeks ago. He almost killed her, breaking her front teeth, leaving knife scars that will remain for ever over her fragile body. This was just because she refused to have sex with him when he came home one night totally intoxicated and after he vomited all over the bed and demanded of her to clean up the mess. It was in these destructive, oppressive, degrading circumstances that Anna's spirit showed this flicker of hope, typically the focus of strengths perspective. She could not leave as she had nowhere to go, but displayed certain resilience and discovered that there was a support group for abused women close by that she joined, helping her to cope (Lee, 2005:158; Makofane, 2002:84; Saleebey, 2002:8).

The philosophy underlying the strengths perspective demonstrates that in the midst of alienation and oppression, people long for better circumstances and liberation. There are certain principles that tie in closely with the philosophy of the strengths perspective that will be discussed below.

4.3   PRINCIPLES OF THE STRENGTHS PERSPECTIVE

In order to gain a clearer picture of these principles, it could be compared with a typical, reactive diagnosis of the problem versus a pro-active focus on capacity and growth. Saleebey (2002:4) advocates for the latter. Table 4.2 compares this "typical simplistic problem focus" to the principles of the strengths perspective.

TABLE 4.1

Reactive diagnosis of the problem versus pro-active focus on capacity and growth

REACTIVE DIAGNOSIS OF THE PROBLEM	PRO-ACTIVE FOCUS ON CAPACITY AND GROWTH (PRINCIPLES)
1. People fit into different "problem boxes".	Each person has a unique set of strengths.
2. People are viewed with professional cynicism.	Hardship can be a source of opportunity.
3. Focus on problem-based assessment without taking ecological environments of people into account.	Each person has the capacity to grow and change.
4. Distance and power inequity mark the relationship between social worker and client.	Social workers are collaborators and facilitators. Social work is all about care.
5. There is a simple linear line between cause, disease and cure.	Each environment is full of resources that can be helpful to people.

Source: Saleebey (2002:4)

The table above illustrates typical problem based diagnoses compared to strength perspective principles. These problem based diagnoses and principles will be discussed below in an attempt to indicate that the strengths perspective is more liberating and empowering to use than simply diagnosing the problem.

Reactive problem diagnosis 1: <u>The person is named in terms of the problem or pathology</u>

It is very tempting and easy to "put people into boxes". The social work profession has also allocated certain labels to clients for instance "the poor", "the mentally challenged", "the children in need of care", "families exposed to violence" and even social work statistics at the end of each month place the case-load of unique individual people into neat little boxes. Though statistics are important it is degrading to label a person, for instance describing a battered woman as a victim, or a family as poor. Other elements of people's unique characters, experiences, knowledge and aspirations move to the background and are replaced by the language of the symptom and the "type of box they fit in". The "label" clients tend to receive are seldom neutral. These labels tend to separate those who "fit into the box" from those "who are out the box". Focusing on people's unique strengths and capabilities is much more empowering and dignified than labelling as will be discussed in the following paragraph (Grobler, Schenck & Du Toit, 2003:6; Rogers, 1987:7; Saleebey, 2002:4, 14).

Principle 1:   Every individual, group, family and community have strengths

Each client, whether an individual, a family, a group or a community possesses certain assets, resources, wisdom and knowledge that social workers are unknown with. It is the first and foremost aspect of the strengths perspective to together with the client discover, explore and discern these assets and resources, respecting them, and to assess the potential they might have for reversing misfortune (Saleebey, 2002:14).

In this study abused low-income women are seen as survivors. Survivors are exceptionally adaptive. Despite poverty, oppression, discrimination and hostility survivors still resolve to live each day as best as they can. Despite external challenges and internal pain (and in the case of abused women external pain as well) survivors do not give up. They are creative, resilient, persistent and courageous (Grossman, Cook, Kepkek & Koenen, 1999:4; Ruiz-Perez & Mata-Pariente, 2006:1156; Saleebey, 2002:14).

According to Saleebey (2002:14) clients and specifically in this study, abused low-income women want to know that social workers care for them. No one wants to be just a number on a big case-load. Clients want to feel that social workers care for them and that how they cope with life's challenges will be important to social workers. They want to be listened to and feel respected, no matter their history. They also want social workers to believe that they can build something of value with the resources within and around them. Most of all they want to know that social workers believe that they can surmount adversity and begin the process of transformation and growth. Abused women should decide for themselves what they want in life, even if their decision statement is as basic as "I just want to live." To be able to express one's personal aspirations and desires is an important strength. To be able to help people to identify their strengths, hopes and dreams is much more liberating than to act like the "expert" on people's lives and not taking into consideration people's unique strengths (Grobler *et al.*, 2003:11; Saleebey, 2002:16; Vandergriff, Andersen & Braun, 2004:371).

Reactive problem diagnosis 2: The language of pessimism and doubt: professional cynicism (see Table 4.1)

Saleebey (2002:4) calls it medical hexing: "*professional predictions and inimical attributions powerful enough to lead to anxiety, fear, depression and resignation in clients*". Social work practice should not focus only on people's problems and disorders, but on their strengths and on the opportunities the environment offer. As seen in Chapter 3, the person-in-environment

must be explored, with the social worker understanding the web of institutional and interpersonal relationships of each person and the possibility of rebirth and renewal, even under dire circumstances (Grauwiler, 2008:311; Laird, 2001:271; Mullender & Hague, 2005:1321).

Principle 2: <u>**Trauma, abuse, illness and struggle may be injurious, but can also be sources of challenge and opportunity**</u>

This principle illustrates that social workers should not focus on pessimism and doubt but rather on challenges and opportunity. A victim mindset will most likely will lead to discouragement, pessimism and despair. As mentioned in chapter two, research indicates that children who experience trauma in their lives are not merely passive recipients. They are active, developing individuals who learn through trials and develop attributes that help them cope with future calamities (Garbarino, 2001:169; Grossman *et al.*, 1999:4; Miller, 2006:185). Researchers agree that the same would apply for low-income female survivors of domestic violence (Blum, 1997:492; Hagen, 2001:119; Makofane, 2002:84; Yoshihama, 2000:207).

Humankind have a dignity, called "survivors pride", a deep-dwelling sense of accomplishment in having overcoming some obstacles, not without fear or even terror and certainly with wounds. This pride as will be discussed later is often hidden under embarrassment, confusion, distraction or self-doubt. If this pride is lit, it can burn into a big flame of hope, bringing change. For instance a battered low-income woman who struggle to make ends meet and have the threat of another beating, may, though in pain and anguish already have a resilience, is motivated and is resourceful. Despite the fact that individuals may have been blamed, been disapproved of, been oppressed, at some levels, they usually know what is right for them (Humphreys, 2003:137; Laird, 2001:271, Makofane, 2002:84; Profitt, 1996:23; Saleebey, 2002:14, 80).

As will be discussed at a later stage, each person has knowledge and talents, skills and resources that can be used in pressing forward towards a unique life – including her hopes, dreams, own solutions to problems, meeting her own needs and regeneration of the quality of her life. It is much more meaningful to press forward, to traffic the possibility, than to become despondent and overwhelmed by the disappointments and injuries of the past. Even if an individual has been injured, whether by herself or by others, the desire to meet the needs of

respect, control over one's own life, security, love and connection is still present (Saleebey, 2002:80).

Reactive problem diagnosis 3: <u>Context stripping</u> (see Table 4.1)

Social workers must guard against problem-based assessment which encourages individualistic rather than ecological accounts of clients. If persons are fitted into little labelled boxes, important aspects of their lives such as cultural, social, political, ethnic, economic and spiritual aspects and how they contribute, sustain, and or shape persons' misery, struggles and mistakes will most probably be overlooked. Contextual information of each client's life is of utmost importance to determine important resources for help and transformation. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the eco-map is a useful tool to assess significant resources in people's lives (Humphreys, 2003:137; Saleebey, 2002:5; Vandergriff *et al*., 2004:562).

Challenges in clients' lives should be viewed in context and not as an all-consuming fire that will destroy their lives. A challenge should be seen in its context, as an obstacle that can be identified. A person's hopes and dreams also provide for the larger context of her life.

For example, a low-income female survivor of domestic violence may view her abusive circumstances as a serious challenge, but her hopes and dreams of raising and supporting her children give energy and resilience to deal with her circumstances (Bassuk *et al.*, 2005:387; Saleebey, 2002:101). Contrary to context stripping, social workers should rather help clients to identify and achieve their aspirations as will be explained in the next paragraph.

Principle 3:   <u>A social worker does not know the upper limits of the capacity to grow and change and each person's aspirations should be taken seriously</u> (see Table 4.1)

Social workers should be extremely careful that their assessments of their clients do not set parameters of possibility. In other words assessments should never become a verdict or a "jail sentence". Rather the focus should be on the promise and possibility of each client. The researcher has a missionary friend who works in Darfur and Chad. When he is asked about the supposedly bleak circumstances of the people in the refugee camps, he talks with great enthusiasm about the possibilities of growth and change in these people's lives. Positive emotions have a profound effect on our wellness and health. If people feel that there is hope, despite adverse circumstances, they cope better. All humans have the innate capacity for self-righting and health (Mullender & Hague, 2005:1321; Saleebey, 2002:80).

Reactive problem diagnosis 4: <u>**Distance, power inequity, control and manipulation mark the relationship between the helper and the helped**</u> (see Table 4.1)

Distance in a relationship may imply inequality between the social worker and the client, whether it is distance of class, privileged knowledge, institutionalized role or normative position. In the end the client's viewpoint may become irrelevant. Take for example a "resistant" low-income family. In each social worker's case-load there is a significant number of these "resistant low-income families". A social worker dealing with them may already be in a power relationship because she is in a different financial bracket, has more privileged knowledge and if she does not focus on their strengths, might also be manipulative in order to get them to co-operate. Social workers should work according to their clients' frames of reference. They are the experts on their life and social workers serve clients best by collaborating with them, as will be discussed in the next paragraph (Grobler *et al.*, 2003:3; Rogers, 1987:6; Saleebey, 2002:4).

Principle 4: <u>**Social workers serve people best by collaborating with them**</u>

As will be discussed in paragraph 4.5 (the lexicon of strengths), the role of a professional or an expert does not fit very well with the strengths perspective. Social workers should rather be called collaborators, facilitators or consultants. This supposes that because of specialized education, experience and some tools social workers have certain knowledge base, but clients' experiences and contributions form an integral part in the helping process. Social workers should thus rather work with their clients and not on them. This aspect forms an integral part of intervention as will be seen later in this chapter. There is something liberating for all parties involved in connecting clients' stories, hopes, dreams and resources, rather than have a preset treatment plan, a "one size fits all" approach. A collaborative approach of intervention reduces the vulnerability of clients to be treated as inferior or from a paternalistic viewpoint. People who confront stress usually develop some ideas, capacities, traits and motivations that may be useful to them in trying to improve their quality of life. Social workers should rather concentrate on people's compensation and transformative responses to challenges (Grobler *et al.*, 2003:11; Rogers, 1987:5; Saleebey, 2002:14, 80).

A low-income female survivor of domestic violence knows her resources, strengths and unique circumstances better than anyone else. A paternalising, victim-creating approach will

not be as effective as to listen to her story and collaborate with her and even to advocate for her, for instance to obtain a protection order (Laird, 2001:273; Vogt, 2007:4).

Closely linked with collaboration is the idea of care, caretaking and context. In our society of individualism the concept of care does not seem to fit – to reach out to other people. To care for is essential to human well-being. Saleebey (2002:17) suggests that we have three rights to care. First, families should assist and care for their members. Second, paid caregivers such as social workers need to be able to give the support and quality care without subverting their own well-being. Last, there is the right of all who need care to receive care. People are dependent on each other and caring for each other is the most basic form of civic participation. Caretaking is all about the revolutionary possibility of hope, a hope that starts through the strengthened sinew relationships in family, neighbourhood, community, culture and country (Douki *et al.*, 2003:165; Pyles & Postmus, 2004:376; Saleebey, 2002:18).

The social work profession is all about care and caretaking. Saleebey (2002:18) refers to caretaking as an activity that is the social work profession's first and hidden voice. Healing, transformation, regeneration and problem solving almost always occur within the confines of a personal, friendly, supportive and dialogical relationship. In other words, relationships with significant others help a person to face life's crises and challenges (Bosch, 2005:311; Saleebey, 2002:18).

Reactive problem diagnosis 5: <u>The supposition of disease assumes a cause for disorder and thus, a solution</u> (see Table 4.1)
Dealing with people implies that there is no simple linear line between cause, disease and cure as was discussed in Chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter. Human beings in their environments make up a complex system of interwoven transactions and interactions. In each person's life there is some or other support system, such as family, friends and neighbourhood. There are also many cultural and spiritual avenues for transformation and healing that might serve as linkages between the problem and its relief. Social workers should always determine how their clients view their situation, problems, as well as possibilities and how they have managed to survive so far (Bosch & Bergen, 2005:311; Saleebey, 2002:7). In other words each client has certain resources that should form part of the intervention process towards healing and transformation.

Principle 5: <u>Every environment is full of resources</u>

Informal systems of individuals, families and groups work to assist, support, instruct and include members of a community. Inclusive communities have many opportunities for involvement. There are often different support groups such as Alcohol Anonymous groups and women support groups. Spirituality also makes people feel they belong as will be seen later in this chapter (Hodge, 2005:287; Saleebey, 2002:17).

There is an awareness, recognition and use of assets of most members of a community, should the community enhance individual and group resilience. Although some communities can be harsh, and be difficult for individuals to live in, the potential of resources and possibilities should never be underestimated. A hostile environment should thus not only be described as toxic, but rather be viewed as a place where its inhabitants may grow and develop to enhance themselves and the environment. Even in the harshest and mean environments there are plentiful natural resources – individuals, families, neighbourhoods, associations and institutions – available (Besthorn, 2002:221; Perilla *et al.*, 1994:325; Saleebey, 2002:80).

Saleebey (2006:51) uses the metaphor of a forest and trees and is of the opinion that trees are often disregarded and we as social workers only tend to look at the big forest. Changes in one tree (fix a window, create a communal garden, provide a ramp for a person in a wheel chair) may harness the "powerless" and the small, creating quiet but powerful new messages about the larger sometimes forbidden forest. In the case of a low-income female survivor of domestic violence, a supportive neighbour or friend who provides a listening ear might be a small tree in her forest characterised by turmoil, abuse and poverty, but might be powerful enough to provide a flicker of light at the end of her forest.

The difference between the problem based approach and the strengths perspective have been presented. It could be concluded that the strengths perspective focus more on the capacities of people and the utilising of resources than the problem based approach. These capacities of people (inner strengths) and utilising of resources (outer strengths) will be discussed in paragraphs 4.5.1 and 4.5.2. It would be useful against the background of the principles of the strengths perspective to examine elements of strengths-based practice that social workers could use during the helping process.

4.4 ELEMENTS OF STRENGTHS-BASED PRACTICE

Saleebey (2002:90) identified four elements of strengths-based practice that would be helpful for the intervention process with abused women.

4.4.1 Acknowledge the pain

The first aspect deals with the pain people experience when facing a challenge or traumas. For many abused women there is real use and purpose in addressing, acknowledging, re-experiencing and putting into perspective the pain and trauma of her life. Catharsis, grieving, expression of rage, anxiety and reconstruction are important in developing an understanding of what their struggles were, what current challenges there are, and what emotional and cognitive baggage they carry with them. It is important for these women to let go of the past and obtain a viewing of the present and the future that would be more hopeful. For some it may be beneficial to explore the roots of trauma in family, community and culture. The purpose is always to look for seeds of resilience and rebound, the lessons learnt from adversity and the different types of resources of adaptability (Saleebey, 2002:90; Yoshihama, 2000:229).

4.4.2 Stimulate the discourse of narratives of resilience and strength

The second aspect of strengths-based practice is closely linked with the language of strengths as will be discussed later. Sometimes people do not want to acknowledge their competence, reserve and resourcefulness. Signs of strengths are also sometimes hidden under the rubble of years of self-doubt, the blame of others and sometimes the wear of a diagnostic label. Sometimes the difficulty of discovering strengths lies with the lack of words or disbelief or lack of trust. Daily struggles, narratives and triumphs are revealed in stories, as will be discussed later. In the process of storytelling people do acknowledge strengths, play them out, see them in the past and the present, feel them and have them affirmed by a social worker and other people. Reframing, that will also be viewed later, is part of stimulating a strength focus. As the main theme of this study implies, victims of domestic violence should rather be reframed to survivors of domestic violence (Hagen, 2001:119; Saleebey, 2002:91).

Social workers could adopt certain ways of discussing issues to make a person's problem less mysterious and more manageable. Life entails real challenges and if people realise that they do not have to view their problem as an esoteric category of psychological diagnosis, but just as a challenge, they might be able to face a difficult situation much better. For example: a

behavioural disorder can be termed having relationship disappointments. Problems should no longer be in the centre of the stage. They are minor characters with small roles. The strengths perspective is anchored in the belief that a problem does not constitute all of a person's life. A person is always more than her problem. Problems do create uncomfortable emotions. It signals danger, but having a problem is not the problem, rather how a person is going to deal with it. For example, an abused low-income female survivor might decide that despite her violent marriage, she is going to start a support group for other women in her area with the same problem. By doing this, it would assist her not to see her difficult situation as overwhelming (Saleebey, 2002:92; Vandergriff, 2004:371).

4.4.3   Act in context: education, action, advocacy and linkage

The third aspect of strengths-based practice deals with how social workers can empower their clients. A female survivor of domestic violence could be encouraged to take risks of acting on her expectancies, using the newly found competencies as well as already active strengths. It might be that she can go to a shelter for a couple of weeks or even just share her story with a trusted friend. Social workers can act as advocates. In domestic violence this would imply assisting the woman to gain an Interim Protection Order (IPO), and exploring her own unique inner and environmental resources (Saleebey, 2002:92).

Consistent with circular thinking, the strengths perspective and the ecological perspective (Chetkow-Yanoov, 1992:4; Germain & Gitterman, 1996:7; Saleebey, 2002:9), it is important to bear in mind that problem situations are interactive, multi-causal and ever changing. Social workers should give pre-eminence to the client's understanding of the facts. Then it is also important to believe the client. They need to be treated as trustworthy people. To prejudge a person as being untrustworthy is contrary to social work values such as respect and dignity. To discover what the client wants is vital. This entails, first, what does the client want and expect from service delivery. Second, it entails what the client wants to happen in relation to her current situation. This would indicate the client's goals and what the client perceives to be a successful resolution to the problem situation. For instance, the goals of a low-income female survivor of domestic violence, and perception of her situation might not be to leave her partner, but to ensure that she can provide financially for her children (Ruiz-Perez & Mata-Pariente, 2006:1156; Saleebey, 2002:93).

In assessment the focus should be on strengths in the client and the environment. Obviously some personal and environmental obstacles might hinder the resolution of difficult situations. Focusing on strengths might creatively negotiate these obstacles. Assessment of strengths could be multidimensional such as looking at interpersonal skills, motivation, emotional strengths and the ability to think clearly. As was discussed in Chapter 3 external resources come from family networks, significant others, voluntary organisations, community groups and public institutions. To discover these strengths is central to intervention. Multidimensional intervention includes an examination of power and power relationships in transactions between the client and environment (Chilman, 1977:1385; Perilla *et al.*, 1994:325; Saleebey, 2002:94; Siporin, 1977:507).

In strengths-based practice, assessment could also be used to discover uniqueness. This is an important aspect for abused women to know, that despite all that they have in common with other abused women, they are still unique. Closely linked with this is to use the clients' words as will be discussed in paragraph 4.5 (the lexicon of strengths). Direct quotes from clients could be used so that the assessment reflects the client's values, places the client in the role of the expert on her situation and places the onus on the social worker to gain an understanding of what the situation means to the client. Assessment should also be a joint activity between worker and client. In this way the inherent power "struggle" between worker and client can be minimized. A social worker's main task is to listen (attentively) and assist clients in discovering, clarifying and articulating. The client gives direction to the content and the assessment. Clients must feel ownership of the process and product. A mutual agreement on assessment should also be reached. Social workers should not have secret assessments. As will be discussed under the lexicon of strengths (paragraph 4.5) in this chapter, blaming should always be avoided. Blaming clients for certain scenarios leads nowhere except perhaps to a low self-esteem in clients. Cause and effect thinking should also be avoided. As was discussed before, linear thinking is too simplistic. Domestic violence a complex issue and all of the woman's internal and external resources should be taken into consideration (Greene, Lee & Hoffpauier, 2005:279; Grobler *et al.*, 2003:17; Saleebey, 2002:94, 114, 115).

4.4.4   Move toward normalizing and capitalizing on her strengths

The last element of strengths-based practice deals with what happens after a challenge has been dealt with. The social worker should try to cement the foundation of an abused woman's strengths. If for example a low-income female survivor of domestic violence indicate that her strengths are her ability to predict violent outbursts from her partner and to escape from

potentially violent situations, both these strengths could be cemented together in a foundation of being a survivor. A process of disengagement might also be part of this intervention process, especially if a woman must leave a shelter and return to her old circumstances or start a new life without her partner. It is important to determine that a woman's personal strengths and communal resources are identified and in place (Lee, 2005:3158; Saleebey, 2002:91).

The following table illustrates the elements of strengths-based practice that were discussed.

TABLE 4.2
The elements of strengths-based practice

Risk factors			Protective/generative factors	
Challenges			*Resources*	
Damage	Internal	+	Strengths	Internal
Trauma	and		Capacities	and ▸
Disorder	external		Talents	external
Stress			Gifts	
Expectations			*Decisions*	
Hopes			Choices and options about	
Dreams			paths to be taken	
Visions		▸	Defining opportunities and	
Goals			setting directions	
Self-righting			Gathering resources and	
			Mobilising strengths	
Project				
Mutual collaboration in work				
toward		▸	A better future	

Source: Saleebey (2002:94)

In the above table Saleebey (2002:91) illustrates that there are certain risk factors that clients need to face in order to change. These include challenges, expectations and the project (plan of action) to accomplish what the client desires. Resources, both internal and external are part of the protective factors of clients that help them face challenges. The decisions clients make, based on their expectations, lead to the project (plan of action) towards a better future.

4.5   THE LEXICON OF STRENGTHS

Several researchers (Bosch & Bergen, 2005:311; Flinck *et al.*, 2005:383; Goodman *et al.*, 2005:311; Grossman *et al.*, 1999:3, Hagen, 2001:119; Profitt, 1996:23) have indicated that people display certain strengths despite adverse circumstances, as was discussed earlier. Saleebey (2002:9) identified 14 strengths. For the purposes of this study they were placed into three different categories, namely inner strengths, outer (environmental) strengths and coping strengths as the following figure illustrates.
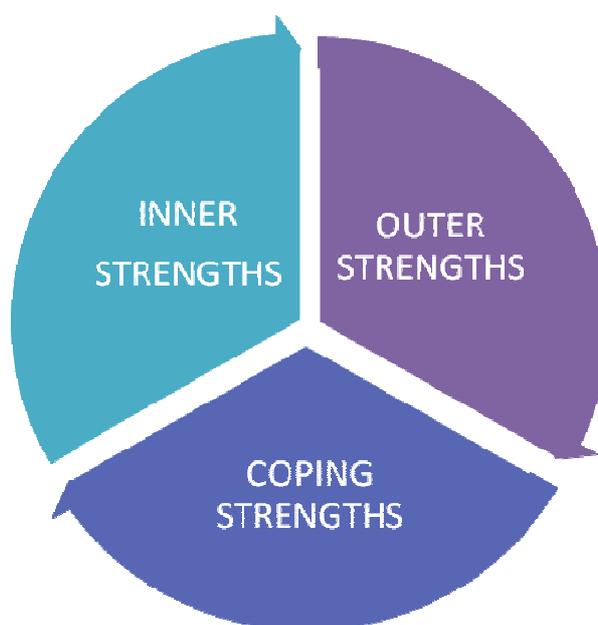
Figure 4.1: **The three different categories of strengths**
Source: Saleebey (2009:9)

These three categories are closely linked and it does not mean that a strength cannot be moved or slot into other categories. Take for example the strength "spirituality". It could easily also be identified as an outer strength, where a client views the people that form part of her religious place of worship as part of her support system. On the other hand spirituality could also be identified as a coping strength, for instance where a woman who is battered finds that her spirituality helps her to cope. Social workers should assist clients to identify their own set of unique strengths.

Table 4.3 illustrates the different categories and strengths.

TABLE 4.3

The lexicon of strengths

INNER STRENGTHS	OUTER STRENGTHS	COPING STRENGTHS
Resilience	Membership	Empowerment
Spirituality	Environmental factors	Healing and wholeness
Personal qualities, traits and virtues	Cultural and personal stories and lore	Dialogue and collaboration
Pride		Hope
		Qualities of a good helping relationship
		Suspension and disbelief
		Insight and knowledge

Source: Saleebey (2002:9-22)

Table 4.3 forms the other lens through which the empirical data in Chapter 6 will be interpreted. The first lens was Table 3.1 which indicated the concepts of the life model. The metaphor can be used of a pair of glasses. One needs both lenses of the pair of glasses in order to get a clear picture. In this study the concepts of the life model (Table 3.1) and the lexicon of strengths (Table 4.3) are needed to gain a clear picture of the empirical data.

The following strengths that fit in well with the ecological perspective discussed in Chapter 3 will be discussed below according to the three categories inner strengths, outer strengths and coping strengths.

4.5.1 Inner strengths

Inner strengths can be seen as the inner capacity a person has to deal with certain challenges in life. There are four inner strengths that will be discussed.

4.5.1.1 Resilience

Grossman *et al.* (1999:3) define resilience as *"doing well in the face of a history of serious trauma or stress"*. According to several authors and scholars (Ali, 2007:5; Grossman *et al.*, 1999:3; Harney, 2007:73; Humphreys, 2003:137; Lee, 2005:3158; Profitt, 1996:23; Saleebey, 2002:11; Vandergriff *et al.*, 2004:371) it is the rule rather than the exception that people do rebound from serious hardship. Thus despite particularly demanding and stressful experiences, even ongoing ones, this does not inevitably lead to vulnerability, failure to adapt and/or psychopathology. Resilience does not imply a cheerful disregard of difficulties and challenges or a naive discounting of life's hurts and pains, but rather the ability to bear up in spite of all these ordeals. Emotional and physical scars will be the evidence of the damage that took place in a person's life. Especially women who are in an abusive relationship often have physical, emotional and psychological scars. Resilience should be seen as a process where there is a continuing growth and articulation of capacities, knowledge, insight and virtues derived through meeting life (Ali, 2007:5; Humphreys, 2003:137; Saleebey, 2002:11).

4.5.1.2 Spirituality

For many, individual spirituality is a grand bulwark against life's stresses and demands. It is also a way of discovering meaning notwithstanding the vexing and often incomprehensible events of daily life. Spirituality is the hopeful compass that can set possibilities for the future (Saleebey, 2002:87). Hodge (2005:287) is of the opinion that religion and spirituality are important aspects to enable people to cope with the demands of life. Spirituality tends to give hope, purpose and meaning to people's lives. The role of forgiveness may also form part of spirituality. This would have implications for abused women where they need to forgive in order to move on. It does not imply that women should turn a blind eye to the abuse, but rather that they do not allow bitterness and resentment to hamper their future social functioning (Hargrave, 1994:5; Saleebey, 2002:87).

4.5.1.3 Personal qualities, traits and virtues

Sometimes forged in the fires of trauma and catastrophe, a sense of humour, caring, creativity, loyalty, insight, independence and/or patience are found. These personal qualities in people's lives might become sources of energy and motivation helping them through crises. The talents people have could also play a role. Talents include activities such as playing a musical instrument, baking cookies, applying domestic talents or artistic talents. These qualities can be

instrumental to foster solidarity, strengthen mentorship or to cement friendship and help to soften the blows of adversity, including domestic violence (Saleebey, 2002:86; Ruiz-Perez & Mata-Pariente, 2006:1156).

Thomson (2006:42) conducted art therapy classes for abused women. She said: "We are strong and fragile like the clay we work with. It soothes and calms us, connecting us with our creative passion, moving us forward in our lives." Women survivors of violence participated in an expressive art project where they turned their traumatic narratives into clay, transforming their pain and reconnecting their strengths. After they had completed those art projects, the women designed and installed an art exhibit, each one offering a unique and compelling window into their reflection on and hope for healing. These women used their artistic talents to help them through their trauma.

4.5.1.4   *Pride*

Several authors (Humphreys, 2003:137; Laird, 2001:271, Makofane, 2002:84; Profitt, 1996:23) agree that people who have came through a difficult trial in their lives, who have rebounded from misfortune and hardship have survivors pride, closely linked to resilience. Often this self-regard is buried under an accumulation of blame, shame and labelling, but if social workers focus on strengths, this survivors pride is uncovered and starts to blossom (Saleebey, 2002:87).

These four strengths, namely resilience, spirituality, personal qualities, traits and virtues and pride have all in common that they are part of a person and his/ her potential to deal with life in general and also with the challenges in life.

4.5.2   Outer strengths

Outer strengths refer to how a person can utilise external resources. Inner strengths and outer strengths are both important in a person's life, as a person's potential, together with the utilising of resources are needed to deal with adversities. Three outer strengths are presented namely membership, environmental resources and cultural and personal stories and lore.

4.5.2.1 Membership

According to the strengths perspective people should be viewed as members of mankind, entitled to dignity, respect and responsibility. Saleebey (2002:10) observes that to be without some membership is to be in a *"condition of infinite danger"*. Without membership one is almost without identity and a sense of belonging. Each one of us wants to belong somewhere as this is part of human nature and also part of forming one's identity. Without membership a person is at risk of marginalization, oppression and alienation. Unfortunately abused low-income women often have no place where they can feel comfortable or where they experience a sense of belonging, where they are treated as dignified human beings. For at least some of these women in their most intimate relationship where they should experience a sense of belonging and respect, they instead experience this "condition of infinite danger" as they are oppressed and marginalized (Saleebey, 2002:10; Purvin, 2007:188).

4.5.2.2 Environmental factors

Assets and resources within the ambient environment is another important strength, also applicable to the ecological perspective. Supportive kin, friends and neighbours may help to reduce stresses and other negative factors in a person's life. The community is a physical, interpersonal and institutional terrain full of riches to be tapped into. The informal and natural environment is an especially rich landscape full of people and organisations and networks. The social worker can germinate the saplings of strengths and resourcefulness in the community. Institutions and associations such as churches, temples, youth groups, schools and ethnic associations are powerful facets of strengths to help people who are struggling (Germain & Gitterman, 1996:23; Perilla *et al.*, 1994:325; Saleebey, 2002:84).

4.5.2.3 Cultural and personal stories and lore

Personal stories are sources of strength, guidance, stability, comfort or transformation. As will be discussed later in this chapter people's stories and their language are important tools and strengths that can be used to improve their circumstances. Culture also plays an important part and folklore helps people give shape and form to their stories (Douki *et al*., 2003:165, Pyles & Kim, 2006:63; Saleebey, 2002:85).

The outer strengths that were discussed have in common that they link people to resources. As was discussed in Chapter 3 the person-environment fit determine how well or poor people will adapt to their environment and it is here where outer strengths play a significant role.

4.5.3 Coping strengths

Coping strengths can be seen as a combination of a person's inner capacity and his/her utilising of external resources. Seven coping strengths will be discussed.

4.5.3.1 *Empowerment*

Empowerment indicates "*the intent to, and the process of, assisting individuals, groups, families and communities to discover and expand the resources and tools within and around them*" (Saleebey, 2002:9). In order to discover the power in people and communities, pejorative labels must be avoided, opportunities be provided for connections to resources (whether family, institutional or communal), the victim mind set and paternalisms should be rejected, people's intuitions, accounts, perspectives and energies be trusted and their dreams be believed.

Saleebey (2002:9) identifies five necessary ideas of empowerment. First, there are the collaborative partnerships with clients and constituents. Second, there is an emphasis on the expansion of client strengths and capacities rather than the problems. Third, the focus should be both on the individual or family and the environment. This aspect was discussed in Chapter 3. Fourth, social workers should view their clients as active agents in the helping process and not as passive recipients. The fifth and last idea ties in well with the idea of low-income female survivors of domestic violence: this is to direct one's energy to the disadvantaged and oppressed.

Taking these five ideas into account it is essential to have a conviction of democracy. Tensions and conflicts need to be addressed. The strengths of individuals and communities should be seen as renewable and expandable resources in the process of empowering. The assets of an individual almost always are embedded in a community of interest and involvement for example an abused low-income woman will view the resources in her community, such as a supportive neighbour or a shelter, as assets to help her to deal with her situation (Flinck *et al.*, 2005:383; Nam, 2002:241; Saleebey, 2002:10).

4.5.3.2 Healing and wholeness

Healing and wholeness are closely linked to resilience. Healing implies *"both wholeness and the inborn facility of the body and mind to regenerate and resist when faced with disorder, disease and disruption"* (Saleebey, 2002:11). Healing and wholeness imply that human beings have naturally occurring self-righting tendencies as well as the inclination for healing. Though trauma, environmental toxins (such as a patriarchal society that does not view women as dignified human beings), bodily disorganization (as a result of illness, injury, malnutrition or old age) and some professional intervention philosophies and systems that do not view people as being capable of seeking their own solutions for challenges might hamper healing, but it seems that the human spirit has a natural tendency to heal spontaneously. This aspect of healing and wholeness challenges the view of the disease model where only experts know what is right for their clients and think that curing and healing or transformation comes exclusively from outside resources and not from the clients' capabilities (Grobler *et al.*, 2003:14; Rogers, 1987:4; Saleebey, 2002:11).

4.5.3.3 Dialogue and collaboration

According to Saleebey (2002:12) human beings can only come into being through creative and emergent relationships with significant others. Through these transactions among human beings, a person is able to test her powers, knowledge and heighten her awareness and internal strengths. With dialogue we confirm the importance of significant others in our lives and the possible rifts begin to heal between self, other and institution. Dialogue requires empathy, identification with, and the inclusion of other people. Paul Freire who worked many years with oppressed people was of the opinion that only humble and loving dialogue can surmount the barrier of mistrust based on years of paternalism and the rampant subjugation of the knowledge and wisdom of the oppressed (Saleebey, 2002:120). With love, faith and humility as foundation, dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship where there is a mutual trust between the dialoguers (Grauwiler, 2008:311; Mullender & Hague, 2005:1321; Saleebey, 2002:12). The whole aspect of dialogue and language will be discussed in paragraph 4.6.

Collaboration has a more specific focus, namely that social workers work together with their clients by becoming their agents, their consultants, their stakeholders and work together with them as equals to mutually craft their dreams and aspirations. Some welfare agencies require

that social workers draw up a working contract with their clients that would form part of the "map" in intervention. Collaboration requires openness to negotiation and an appreciative attitude to views and aspirations different from ours. Our voices might be quieted in order to give voice to the voiceless. We are not the experts, our clients are the experts of their own lives (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005:9; Laird, 2001:271; Rogers, 1987:7).

4.5.3.4 Hope

To have hope despite adverse circumstances is a valuable strength in difficult times. A social worker's expectation of her client to prevail through tribulations, translates into the rebirth of hope, the revival of a dream, no matter how small. A focus on possibility, an eye cast to a brighter future, and the creation of justifiable optimisms, all promote movement toward one's aspirations.

One of the most intriguing aspects in human functioning is probably the placebo effect, which has long been recognised in medical and pharmaceutical research. Its power to change has hardly been recognised. If a person is sick, but has a hope, an expectation to get better, the healing systems within are mobilised. If people have dreams and aspirations there is hope that circumstances will get better (Saleebey, 2002:83).

The clear expectation of the social worker should be that the person will stand up and get out of the hole, using her unique sets of strengths. The emotional, non-verbal and verbal messages accompanying the placebo are also very important. There should be an expectancy, a hope and belief that things will improve (Harney, 2007:73; Profitt, 1996:23; Saleebey, 2002:83).

4.5.3.5 The qualities of a good helping relationship

Social workers know the importance of the helping relationship and the use of self as the medium of change and growth. Literature (Grobler *et al.*, 2003:110; Rogers 1987:9) shows that Carl Rogers, the father of the client-centred theory emphasised the importance of being non-judgemental, with empathy, caring, a positive regard, genuineness and respect. The quality of the helping relationship cannot be underestimated. Saleebey (2002:84) indicates that Charles Rapp, one of the most important figures in the strengths perspective defined the effective helping relationship as purposeful, reciprocal, friendly, trusting and empowering.

4.5.3.6   Suspension of disbelief

Closely linked to the qualities of a good helping relationship is the suspension of disbelief. Saleebey (2002:12) warns against the culture of "professionalism". Although the social work profession has a code of ethics that expects of social workers to treat their clients with dignity and respect, there are too many cases where social workers do not work according to the client's frame of reference and write reports that are judgemental. The training of social workers expects of them to put themselves in their clients' shoes, but when they start to practice they tend to forget this important aspect. Some social workers also like to give out advice to clients in a casual way and might for instance tell an abused woman to leave her husband, without trying to put themselves in her shoes. Do social workers make an effort to try to understand her situation and what it would take for her to leave her husband? As was discussed in Chapter 2, it might be much more dangerous for her to leave than to stay, and where would she go where she could make a living? Rogers (1987:9) encourages a warm, non-threatening climate for therapy where the client will feel safe to share her story without the fear of not being believed (Ferrato, 2000:5; Madonsela, 2002:12; Saleebey, 2002:83).

4.5.3.7   People's insight and knowledge

What people have learnt about themselves and others, and their world as they have struggled, coped with, and battled abuse, trauma, illness, confusion, oppression and even their own fallibility, constitutes another strength. It seems that people do learn from their trials, even the trials they seem to inflict on themselves. People learn from successes as well as difficulties and disappointments. A low-income female survivor of domestic violence might have learnt how to "read" a situation and act accordingly in order to avoid another violent incidence. Insight and knowledge may include educational experience as well as life experience. Social workers should observe and ask people what they know of the world around them and use this as a foundation for intervention (Saleebey, 2002:85; Yoshihama, 2000:207).

These seven strengths that were discussed have all in common that people can and do take charge of their own lives and that they are capable and able to face and overcome obstacles. Social workers are merely facilitators in the intervention process. The lexicon of strengths that was discussed would help social workers in the intervention process to view clients as more as their problems and assist them to identify ways of dealing with their challenges, using their unique strengths.

4.6   LANGUAGE AND NARRATIVES

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, dialogue and language are vital aspects in the helping process, and the main form of communication between the social worker and the client. Language is the primary means of human interaction and communication. The meaning of words is arbitrary and therefore words can be filled with nuances and subtleties that often leave their meaning vague and subject to misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Word and language can never fully and accurately represent all aspects of a person's experience. Greene *et al.* (2005:270) are of the opinion that we are able to think and see only as much as our language permits. Human beings use words and language to filter, differentiate, categorize and label their lived experience. Language has long been understood as a powerful determinant for moods, views, behaviour and decisions. This power of language to influence perception and the development of self-fulfilling prophecies can create positive or negative outcomes (Greene *et al.*, 2005:270).

As was argued earlier social workers' assessments and interventions with clients should be empowering. To identify and discover a client's strengths with him or her, should be an empowering exercise. The inherent paradox in strenghts-based practice is that if social workers are not careful, their knowledge and expertise can disempower clients. Well meaning social workers may at times do more harm than good if intervention causes feelings of helplessness and dependency in clients. Words used to describe health, illness, challenges and client's situations should be carefully chosen (Grauwiler, 2008:311; Green *et.al.*, 2005:270; Laird, 2001:275).

According to Greene *et al.* (2005:270) language has its own independent healing qualities. The human mind can only be healed by reflection of itself and its most direct reflection is human language. Thus language not only reflects one's reality, but can only change it. Language is the main tool in assessment and intervention. As social workers are in the business to change and empower people's lives, it is of the utmost importance to carefully examine the use of language. Language should thus be used in such a way that it will enhance clients' sense of strengths, competencies and power (Enosh *et al.*, 2005:9; Greene *et al.*, 2005:270).

The following figure illustrates ways of empowering clients through language:

Identifying and amplifying existing
client strengths and competencies

Social worker's use of

•language of collaboration
•language of ownership
•language of possibilities
•language of solutions
•language of elaboration and clarification

Increases in client empowerment

Identifying and using hidden or
forgotten client assets and
resources
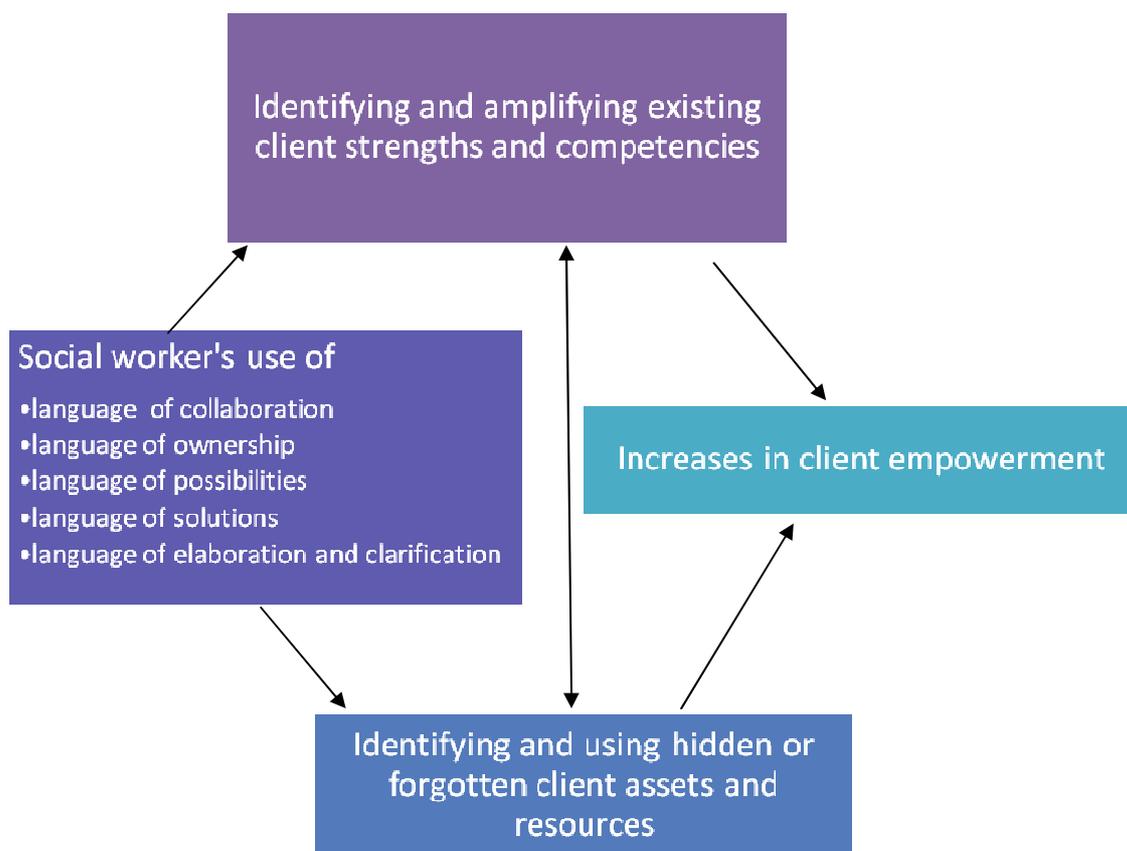
Therapeutic conversations as an ongoing co-constructing process

Figure 4.2: **Languages of empowerment and strength**

> **Source:** Greene *et al.* (2005:279)

The above figure shows that therapeutic conversations during the helping process could assist clients to identify and amplify their strengths and competencies. This is done where social workers use the language of collaboration, ownership, possibilities, solutions and lastly elaboration and clarification. The end result would be an increase in client empowerment (Greene *et al.*, 2005:279). This figure will be discussed now, looking at the language of collaboration, ownership, possibilities, solutions and elaboration and clarification. Gender and the socio-cultural environment will also be viewed.

4.6.1 The language of collaboration

The word "helping" is closely associated with social work. By implication, if there is a helper (social worker), then there must be someone being helped (client). If social workers start their

interviews with questions such as "How can I help you?" or "What kind of help do you want from me?", it might just increase the clients' views of themselves as powerless, deficient and unable to live effectively. To use the language of collaboration, rather than the language of help, would assist clients to view themselves as knowledgeable and also experts in their current situation. Questions such as "What do you want for yourself today?" or "What concerns of yours do you want to address today?" should rather be asked. This type of question respects clients as equal participants in a collaborative process, and who are capable of being self-directing and self-determining (Greene *et.al.*, 2005:271; Laird, 2001:271).

Saleebey (2002:89) emphasises that certain types of questions should be asked such as survival questions, support questions, exception questions, possibility questions, and esteem questions. Questions that focus on a client's situation as a huge problem are not empowering to her. Grobler *et al.* (2003:23) discourage too many questions and encourage social workers rather to reflect on what the client has said in order to help the client find her own way of dealing with a specific situation.

4.6.2   The language of ownership

When people are being self-directing and self-determining in their lives, they are more likely to have a sense of ownership. The other side also applies. If people feel powerless they most probably do not have a sense of personal ownership and do not believe they have options or resources in difficult situations. The whole aspect of learned helplessness was discussed in Chapter 1. This lack of personal ownership is often reflected in clients' stories. For example a low-income female survivor of domestic violence might say "you feel good" after she managed to escape a violent situation, instead of saying "I feel good/empowered/more in control." Social workers should encourage clients to take ownership and personalise their stories and not to tell them in the third person (Greene *et al.*, 2005:24, Mullender & Hague, 2005:1321).

If people do not believe they have options, they are inclined to see external forces as having more control over their well being than the decisions they make themselves. They tend then to take a passive approach to their situation. Therapeutic dialogues with clients should aim at faciliting co-construction in order for them to develop a sense of being active in their decision making and being the authors of their own stories. Reframing words in such a way that clients

feel empowered, they will most probably also experience a sense of internal control and personal ownership (Davis, 2001:13; Greene *et al*., 2005:272; Saleebey, 2002:10).

4.6.3 Positive reframing: the language of possibilities

The way language is used has an effect on the way people view themselves and also the way they perceive their different options and choices. To reframe clients' situations and challenges in a positive way, is one way to empower them. It changes clients' often narrow worldview by redefining their reality to include more alternatives and to perceive their challenges as resources rather than deficits. Positive reframing enlarges clients' perspectives around their situation. The reframing process involves offering clients a plausable, alternative, positive interpretation for something they have defined as undesirable, unchanging and negative. The social worker should use positive reframing in a way that is compatible with the client's beliefs, culture and values. For example a low-income abused female who is in a culture where women must be submissive to their husbands, with this also forming part of her belief system, should be allowed to choose her own way of dealing with the situation that would fit in with her values. To work according to her frame of reference would imply exploring resources and alternatives that would not contradict her belief system, as this would just put more pressure on her (Greene *et al*., 2005:275; Mullender & Hague, 2005:1323).

4.6.4 The language of solutions

Literature (Greene *et al*., 2005:277; Vandergriff *et al*., 2004:371) shows that the problem-solving paradigm and disease model are saturated with words such as pathology, deficits, problems, victims and disorders. Although clients have problems, which is probably why they come to see social worker, they also have strengths, resources, capacities, talents, competencies and passions. Latter qualities of clients are often overshadowed by the language of problems and deficits. The language of solutions challenges both worker and client to shift from problem to solution talk. In using the language of solutions the focus is on direction, identifying, amplifying and directing of people's strengths, resources and potentials.

The solution-focused approach (Greene *et al.*, 2005:276) operates from the assumption that change is occurring much of the time and that there are times when the problem is less frequent and intense and not even present. For example a battered women might have times when her relationship with her partner is going well, being what Walker (1984:4) refers to, as

the honeymoon phase. The language of solutions facilitates and identifies the strengths, resources and competencies clients use if they experience certain challenges in their lives. The language of solutions also amplifies and reinforces the clients' use of these strengths, resources and competencies. The language of solutions does not attempt to deny the existence of problems, but the focus is on strengths, competencies, resources, potentials and creativity (Saleebey, 2002:10).

4.6.5 The language of elaboration and clarification

Clients can also limit their resources and options by not giving full linguistic representation to all their lived experience. Clients should be able to elaborate on and add to the telling of their story. This allows them to clarify and rediscover information and resources they may not have previously used or have forgotten. A female survivor of domestic violence might be so traumatised when first telling her story, that she needs to clarify and edit her story at a later stage. Language can be used to broaden clients' perception of reality which in turn may increase their options for finding resources and solutions. It is important to know and understand clients' language. For example if an abused woman says the beating she received was not too harsh, it might still be very severe, just according to her frame of reference a blue eye and broken rib might not be as bad as the knife stab she received previouly (Ali, 2004:6; Ferrato, 2000:13; Flinck *et al.*, 2005:383; Greene *et al.*, 2005:278; Makofane, 2002:84).

Languages can thus be both powerful and empowering. The meaning given to events, perceptions and ideas is integrally related to one's cognitive experiences constructed through language. One's conception of reality (meaning) is formed through the intersubjective use of language. People do not respond only to behaviour or perception, but rather to the meaning attached to them. The meaning attributed to a situation or set of circumstances is defined by someone's perception of reality together with the perception of significant others. Social worker's use of words and language with the client is critically important. The language of empowerment and strengths, aims at increasing a client's ownership and power to create a better life for herself and others. This language is consistent with social work values (Greene *et al.*, 2005:278; Laird, 2001:275).

4.6.6 Gender and socio-cultural environment

Finally in this section on language and narratives it would be useful to view the role of gender and the socio-cultural environment in women's stories. As was said earlier, the language, stories and narratives of people are of the utmost importance. It is their unique way of communicating their life story. Learning the language, the symbols, the images and the perspective that move people – for good or ill – are ways to encounter their challenges and triumphs over time (Grauwiler, 2008:315; Saleebey, 2002:81).

Laird (2001:275) states that gender is socially constructed. The meanings of being male and female differ from culture to culture through language, social discourse, the stories that a person tells about herself and the stories other people tell about her. These socio-cultural stories reveal what a person is like, how she would like to be, how she thinks, with whom she should choose to be and even the way she speaks and does things. In circular thinking as was discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, these narratives both reinforce what already is and create new narratives as a person speaks of her life within the constraints of prevailing public discourses (Grauwiler, 2008:311; Laird, 2001:272).

Stories in the socio-cultural surroundings provide the contextual background people draw upon to construct their autobiographies, their life stories that are built and revised as they construct, deconstruct and reconstruct themselves. The shape of these life stories is influenced by prevailing folktales in families and other significant groups by their unique ways of translating larger social constructions into prescriptions for living (Gondolf, 2007:341; Greene *et al.,* 2005:278; Laird, 2001:272). The relationship between the personal and the social story is an interactive one. Larger social discourses are constructed from local knowledge and in turn provide contexts in which local knowledge may flourish, or, conversely become extinct or go underground. Local knowledge, such as sets of ideas, explanations, and interpretations about the world gradually takes hold and may gain increasing validity. As local knowledge and stories become part of the surrounding discourse, they guide people's everyday words, thoughts and actions. They shape the lives of women in very powerful ways, guiding and constraining their speech and thoughts. For example a low-income female survivor of domestic violence who was oppressed her whole life might have a story that will be shaped by her oppressed background (Ali, 2007:6; Artz, 1999:9; Laird, 2001:273).

The language of mental health professions also has an enormous influence in shaping the public's ideas about people and about individual and family functioning. For example

widespread "depression" among women is seldom called "oppression" which is more difficult to "treat". Often the focus is rather on women's symptoms, away from the original offences and offenders and naming the molestation and violence that men commit against women. Labels given to women such as "borderline personality disorder", "multiple personality disorder" are sometimes as a result of abuse and violence she experienced in her life and again the focus is diverted from the offenders. Euphemisms such as marital discord rather than wife beating emphasise oppression and the gender roles (Ferrato, 2000:7; Laird, 2001:273; Yllö & Strauss, 1990:23).

A story metaphor can both be a tool to understand and transform women's lives. It is important to assess how women use their voices or not, how women's language is constituted and perceived, how women are silenced, how they can and do resist oppression through finding their voices and using their silences in strengthening ways and how they can transform their stories and thus themselves (Laird, 2001:274).

The role between gender and power should also be taken into consideration. Laird (2001:271) is of the opinion that ways of knowing and speaking are gendered and are socially reproduced through mothering, education, story and folklore, ritual, the popular media and in arts, actually in all the contexts in which people's lives are defined. The making of women's narratives and women's silences should thus then always be explored with constant attention to gender and power and how these forces operate in the constituting of women's lives. Research (Davis, 2001:4; Flinck *et al.*, 2005:383; Laird, 2001:275; Ruiz-Perez & Mata-Pariente, 2006:1156) indicates that many women feel voiceless and unheard. Their stories are often ignored, overlooked or viewed as insignificant.

As was discussed in Chapter 2, domestic violence is often viewed from the feminist theory. Although this study's theoretical frameworks are the ecological perspective and the strengths perspective, literature from the feminist theory is also used (Artz, 1999:13; Ferrato, 2000:23; Laird, 2001:273). Other researchers such as Battaglia (2002:1); Besthorn (2002:221); Ferrato (2000:3) and Twala (2004:9) observe that throughout history a significant number of women have been denied their own experience, and this was destructive to their survival. They were silenced and prevented to shape and form their own stories. Stories of violence, especially domestic violence have been until recently been unspeakable, in the sense of being unable to be spoken. Both victimizer and victim often maintained silence, and also the world around

them, protecting patriarchal definitions and power structures in the society and in the family. The story of the battered woman was not only suppressed by her husband, but could not be heard by her husband or the police or the judge, according to abovementioned researchers. Despite the fact that Interim Protection Orders (IPOs) have been established, there are still a significant number of women who are abused or even murdered by their partners, despite the fact that they had an IPO (Cape Sun, 2007:4; Vogt, 2007:17).

Often in domestic violence, a woman prefers to keep the abuse a secret because of fear, shame and guilt. The fear is not only for herself, but also for her family that might disintegrate and for the fear of losing her identity, for example the good loyal wife. Poor women are even more dependent on men's incomes and ill prepared for further poverty and despair because of single parenthood. Abusers not only enforce a code of secrecy and silence, but in a sense shatter the language of pain. Abusers often not only fail to recognise the moral failure, but also the severe emotional and physical pain they are inflicting on their partners (Ali, 2007:12; Laird, 2001:285).

The spoken and unspoken constitute each other. In domestic violence some men play the blaming the victim game. The fact that the male is the offender often remains an unspoken part of the social discourse. The challenge for social workers in the story telling process is that the central person in the story should not be the victim in need of rescue. The abused woman should be able to find great power in her own story by redefining her experience where she is a heroine and a survivor and where she is able to prescribe the treatment (Ferrato, 2000:17; Laird, 2001:286; Makofane, 2002:84).

According to Laird (2001:295) women from all spheres of life are slowly but surely getting more courageous and are breaking the silence. Some write their stories, others go to court and gain Interim Protection Orders, others go to social workers, others leave their situation. Those who stay rediscover an inner strength. They reshape their stories and do not view themselves as debilitated or as victims, but as survivors. Davis (2001:13) notes however that women are still oppressed worldwide. She states that there is still a gender hierarchy in the objective world and deep resistance to change in our society, and in the social work profession we need a women's agenda. Even if women do not have a privileged perspective and have been suppressed, they might display a number of strengths as was discussed earlier. These strengths need to be recognised and applauded.

4.7 CASE STUDY

Roche (1999:24) attempted with the following case study to illustrate how strengths-based practice could be used with of a low-income female survivor of domestic violence:

Donna is a 19-year-old pregnant black woman with a two-year-old daughter who moved away from her abusive boyfriend, Jack. She moved to another town. She managed to get a job, but struggled to make ends meet. Jack moved after her in order to reconcile. By the time he arrived she did not have any money left to pay her rent, crèche for her daughter or taxi fee to work. She was despondent about her financial crisis and the feeling of loneliness in a new community was too much for her to handle. Although she did not want to reunite with Jack, she did not really have another option. Both her parents had died of AIDS and her maternal grandmother was looking after her younger siblings and could not help her financially.

She agreed to take Jack in on a trial basis. The trial did not last long before Donna received her first beating and severe kicks in the stomach. Neighbours who heard the attack called the police. The social welfare was informed the following day. The social worker paid Donna, who was recovering from the abuse, a home visit. She had also lost her job as she was still on a trial basis and was not allowed any sick leave. Although Donna was ashamed of the bruises on her face, she could talk quite openly to the social worker. The social worker asked her how she and her daughter were getting along making a new home for themselves. Donna explained that her daughter enjoyed visiting the next-door neighbour and the occasional visits with the neighbour gave Donna more freedom to explore the community. Donna explained further that her daughter was with the neighbour now, and had not gone to crèche that day, as she felt anxious and wanted to be close to her mother.

As the social worker was assured of the child's safety, she gently commented on the bruises on Donna's face and arms. Donna began to cry. The social worker remained quietly attentive, giving her the necessary uninterrupted time she needed to cry. The response from Donna to this empathic, unobtrusive contact was to open up and shared what had happened and revealing how stupid she been to fall for Jack's promises again like so many times before. She expressed anger and shame for having endangered both herself and her daughter and the fear of seeing him again. The social worker's responses conveyed to Donna that she did not think of Donna as stupid or to blame for Jack's behaviour.

Donna became even more open and self-reflective as the social worker demonstrated that she believed Donna and was genuinely interested in hearing what she had to say and that she was uncritically concerned about Donna's well being. Together they drew up a safety plan, including a protection order against Jack, preventing him to come close to her. The neighbour offered a room for Donna and her daughter for the time being, to ensure Donna and her child's immediate safety.

The social worker made an appointment to see Donna again in a week's time. Donna agreed to come to the office with her daughter. As the social worker left, Donna expressed how she appreciated the social worker's concern and not ignoring the seriousness of the abuse without being "pushy" (Roche, 1999:24-26).

4.7.1 Engaging abused women

As the above case study indicates, strengths-based engagement involves establishing a working partnership in which social workers and abused women mutually identify, assess and build on values, hopes, competencies and relationships which have enabled women to cope, resist and survive. Women, who have been repeatedly and severely abused by an intimate partner, do not trust easily. To engage in partnership is quite a difficult thing to do. Choosing to rely on a social worker can be described as taking hold of a life line. They will only disclose the abuse, its consequences and their hopes to earn this trust, it is simply not enough to mean well. Social workers must demonstrate their reliability, which is the key to the engagement process (Mullender & Hague, 2005:1321; Roche, 1999:27).

Demonstrating reliability requires an understanding that any woman can be abused, not only those who have a particular personality type or social class. Abused women may also be anywhere on the experimental continuum of defining the abuse as such. This recognition can be expressed through gently and openly asking women about their safety and well-being in language that is at least initially free from terms such as "abuse", "battering" and "victim". These terms may be labels and abused women need not to be labelled, but need to express their own unique experience (Greene *et al.*, 2005:271; Roche, 1999:27).

4.8   CONCLUSION

If people have hope, there are usually liberation and empowerment. Even in adverse circumstances their might be a flicker of hope that help people to keep going. It is this flicker

of hope that social workers together with their clients could nurture, so that it might blossom and develop into a lexicon of strengths. Every person, including the abused woman has unique strengths helping her to cope, despite terrible conditions. The capacity to grow and change should never be under estimated. In strengths-based practice, the pain of people is not ignored, but the focus is on lessons that were learnt from the pain and the resilience and strengths that came about. Reframing might help abused women to view themselves as active survivors and not as passive victims.

The lexicon of strengths can be grouped under inner strengths, outer strengths and coping strengths, all very applicable to the low-income female survivor of domestic violence. These strengths could assist social workers in the helping process, empowering abused women to move away from self-doubt to competent human beings who can stand up for themselves and make their own informed choices that would fit the best with their unique situations. This is where social workers could collaborate with them.

The language social worker use could also focus on empowerment and strengths where the focus should be on ownership, possibilities and solutions rather than on the problem and diagnosis. To listen to clients stories in an attentive manner could assist clients to enhance their sense of competence and power.

The ecological and strengths perspectives were discussed in the last two chapters. The next two chapters will focus on the research methodology and data analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

5.1   INTRODUCTION

In order to do meaningful, professional research, it is vital to follow certain consecutive steps. De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delport (2005) identified the following steps.

The first step is to identify a researchable topic. Step 2 is that of assessing the suitability of the research problem. The formulation of the problem is the third step and the fourth step is the writing of the research proposal. Literature review is covered in step 5. Step 6 is all about the research design, and step 7 about information collection. Step 8 entails the sampling method and in step 9 the aspect of the pilot study is addressed. The last two steps, steps 10 and 11 address data analysis and interpretation and the writing of the research proposal.

These steps will be discussed below.

5.2   STEP 1 – SELECTION OF A RESEARCHABLE TOPIC

This step can be described as the starting point of the research. As was discussed in Chapter 1, it is important to identify a research problem and make sure it is researchable. The research problem can also be described as the need for this topic to be studied (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:90).

An appointment was made to see the study leader in the beginning of 2007. After consultation, it became clear that domestic violence was a serious social issue and there was a great need for research on this issue. Mouton (2006:28) argues that a study leader or supervisor usually has a great wealth of experience and areas of interest that could form good research topics. The focus of the Department of Social Development (Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006); White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)) is also on rendering services to vulnerable people. "*The primary target groups of the Department are the poor and vulnerable sectors of the community. One of the target groups is vulnerable women including victims of violence, poor and/or unemployed.*" (Integrated Service Delivery Model, 2006:27). The research topic thus fitted well with the Department of Social Development's focus.

Creswell (2003:4) formulated some factors to be considered in order to determine whether a topic is researchable. One factor in this regard relates to the time, resources and availability of data. Enough time was given to study this field of domestic violence. Together with the year during which the research proposal was finalised, four years was spent on conducting this study. There were sufficient resources and data available on this topic as domestic violence is a matter of concern not only in South Africa, but worldwide. Different fields such as Psychology, Sociology and Nursing also yielded several studies done on domestic violence.

Another factor that Creswell (2003:4) mentions is whether the topic has an adequate degree of personal interest for the researcher. This was indeed a very challenging topic to research due to the sensitive nature thereof, but it was found to be very significant and meaningful. During the field work stage of the research, participants were viewed as the experts on their own lives and the researcher's main function was to listen and learn from their experiences.

The last factor listed by Creswell (2003:4) is whether the results of the study would be of interest to others. One of the NGOs that was used to obtain some of the participants, indicated that they would be interested in the findings of the study. Due to the fact that the Department of Social Development (Integrated Service Delivery Model (2006); White Paper for Social Welfare (1997)) views domestic violence as a priority and vulnerable women as one of the target groups, the results of this study might also be of interest to them.

5.3   STEP 2 – ASSESS THE SUITABILITY OF THE RESEARCH APPROACH

This step implies that it must be determined whether the research will be of a quantitative or a qualitative nature. As was discussed in Chapter 1, a qualitative approach was chosen due to the fact little was known of the experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence. Drisko (2006:589) and Mouton (2006:107) view qualitative research as not as strictly formalized as quantitative research. Qualitative research is a broad umbrella term for research methodologies that explore, describe and explain persons' experience, behaviours, interactions and social contexts without the use of statistical procedures or quantification. Qualitative research also tends to view data in the form of words, rather than numerical

information. Primarily the focus is to understand the individuals' own accounts of their perceptions, views and experiences (Whittaker, 2009:9).

Qualitative research tends to explain the meaning of social phenomena such as domestic violence through exploring ways in which individuals understand their social worlds. It addresses the question "what is going on here?" In other words in qualitative research the meaning of what is happening is explored. In this study the narratives of the 20 participants were classified into themes, sub-themes and categories in order to address the question "what is happening in the participants' lives?" The way these themes, sub-themes and categories were classified will be addressed in steps 10 and 11.

5.4   STEP 3 – FORMULATE THE PROBLEM

Mouton (2006:50) suggests the following points that were followed in this study to transform research ideas into research problems:

- To read as much as you can about your research idea. This is also referred to as preliminary literature review. This proves to be very helpful in order to determine in which ways the specific phenomenon has been studied. This was done from the onset of the study.

- To be clear about the unit of analysis, in other words, what exactly is to be researched. In this study the unit of analysis was individuals, as individual participants were interviewed.

- To be clear about the goal and objectives in your research. As was discussed in Chapter 1 the goal of the proposed study was to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and coping mechanisms (inner resources/strengths).

    To achieve this goal, the following objectives were formulated:

    - To present a theoretical overview of the nature and extent of domestic violence as a social problem from a social work perspective. This was done in Chapter 2 of this study.

    - To describe the environmental resources (such as family, friends and community) of low-income women from the ecological perspective. This was presented in Chapter 3.

- To explore the coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income women who are survivors of domestic violence in terms of the principles of the strengths perspective. Chapter 4 presented this goal.
- To investigate the experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence. This will be discussed and presented in Chapter 6.

- To ensure the formulation of your research problem is of such a nature that it is feasible. The research question as seen in Chapter 1 is: "What are the experience (environmental resources) and coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income female survivors of domestic violence?"

5.5   STEP 4 – WRITING THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

A research proposal is a document that outlines how the research project will be conducted. From a qualitative research perspective a proposal can be described as a plan to systematically formulate how the social phenomenon will be assessed. The proposal is there to convince the reader that the research holds potential relevance, that the design of the study is sound and that the researcher is capable of successfully completing the study. A good research proposal is an excellent working document that can be used to refine and finalise the first chapter of a thesis (Fouché, 2005:111-120).

The research proposal for this study was completed in 2007. It is the University's policy that the research proposal of a study should first be approved by a research panel before a student can enrol for studies. This research proposal was approved by the end of 2007. As Fouché (2005:120) has indicated this research proposal was refined with minor changes and is formulated in Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

5.6   STEP 5 – LITERATURE REVIEW

As will be shown in the next step and as stipulated in Chapter 1, this study was phenomenological in nature. Delport and Fouché (2005:264) argue that in a phenomenological study the researcher enters the field with a "*strong orientation framework*" of what will be studied and how it will be studied. The researcher thus needs to study the literature extensively before data collection or the research field is entered. It is also vital to have a literature control after the data have been collected. An extensive literature review was done on domestic violence. As this is a social problem worldwide, relevant literature and studies were found.

Previous research done on domestic violence was also studied. As was discussed in Chapter 1 a great need was identified for research in the social work field as little research has been done on domestic violence. As was also mentioned in step 1, different professional fields have done research on domestic violence and these finding were also studied. After the data collection was done, a literature control was done on each category that was identified. Whittaker (2009:19) states that a literature review is an ongoing process that will start in the early stages of a study and will continue throughout the life of the study. It is important that literature is reviewed on a regular basis as new material becomes available. This was definitely the case in this study as from 2007 to 2010 a significant number of new studies and literature became available on domestic violence.

5.7   STEP 6 – RESEARCH DESIGN

As declared in Chapter 1 a qualitative study with a phenomenological approach was used in this study. This implies that social phenomena such as domestic violence would be explained through understanding the way individuals make sense of their social worlds. A phenomenological study is a study that attempts to understand people's perception, perspectives and understanding of a particular situation. Phenomenology "aims to understand and interpret the meaning that subjects give to their everyday lives" (Fouché, 2005:270; Whittaker, 2009:9). In this study the "subjects'" life worlds were entered through contacting them personally and conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews and by listening to their stories. The design of this study, as was also pointed out in Chapter 1, was exploratory and descriptive in nature.

5.8   STEP 7 – INFORMATION COLLECTION

Interviewing is the predominant mode of information collection according to Greef (2005:287). In the process of interviewing, people's stories are told. Stories are a way of knowing a bit more of peoples' lives. Whittaker (2009:15) mentions that narratives may contain valuable information for the researcher. Narrative approaches are interested in the stories people tell. The person's story plays an important part in the formation of an identity. "*Stories are the womb of personhood. Stories make and break us. Stories sustain us in time of trouble and encourage us towards the ends that we would not otherwise envision*" (Whittaker, 2009:16). The narrative approach focuses on the spoken recounting of events that happened to the narrator. It is interested in the lived experiences of people and is particularly applicable if

sensitive issues are researched. In this study a significant part of the data collection was that of the participants' stories. Although some questions were asked, the aim of the interviews was to gather information on how participants experienced their situation and what their stories were. In this study semi-structured interviews were used (see Addendum B for the interview schedule).

Focus groups were considered, but due to the sensitive nature and difficulty to get participants together, it was decided to just use in-depth interviews. Greef (2005:302) argues that focus groups should be avoided if sensitive information is shared and if confidentiality of the sensitive information cannot be ensured. Both these aspects were relevant in this study.

5.9   STEP 8 – SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was used in this study. This is the procedure where the researcher chooses the participants. Selection of participants is based mainly upon their knowledge, experience and role of the phenomenon that will be researched. There are no set rules about the sample size in a qualitative study, but smaller sample sizes are usually used (Whittaker, 2009:34).

Snowball sampling was also used, because the NGOs could not identify enough participants and saturation was not yet reached. In snowball sampling the researcher collects data on a few members and these members refer him to other members. Four participants were identified in this way (Strydom & Delport, 2005:327).

Strydom and Delport (2005:328) point out that the researcher should critically think about the parameters of the population, before a sample is chosen. The following parameters were set out in this study of the population, as was also discussed in Chapter 1:

- Participants must be all females.
- They must be between the ages 22 and 60.
- They must be presently in an abusive relationship, or must have been in an abusive relationship less than 6 months ago.
- They must reside in and around Cape Town.
- They must have received (less than 6 months ago) or are still receiving professional help by a social worker, a psychologist or a nursing sister.
- They must earn less than R4000 a month.

The following figure represents where and how the twenty participants (the sample) were obtained:
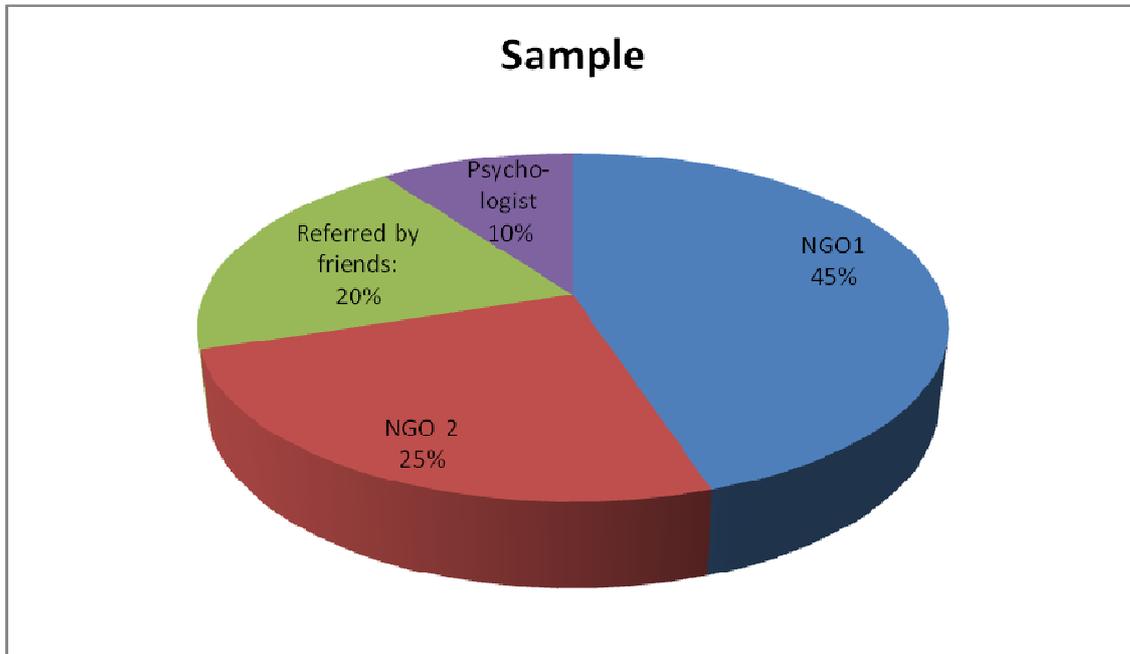
Figure 5.1:   Different ways in which sample was obtained

In the blue segment of the pie figure is shown that nine of the participants (45%) were obtained through NGO 1. The red segment indicates that five participants (25%) were obtained by NGO 2. The green segment represents 4 of the participants (20%) who were referred to the researcher by their friends. The friends formed part of the red segment of the circle. The purple segment represents two of the participants (10%) who were referred to the researcher by a psychologist.

The interviews were all conducted within a period of three months from September 2009 to November 2009.

The head office of NGO 1 was firstly approached to ask permission to interview participants who fitted the requirements of the population (see Addendum C for letter). Permission was granted with the request that the results of the study would be made available to them. Five different offices of NGO 1 were approached to obtain names of possible participants. The location of names of these offices will not be mentioned, to protect the participants and to maintain confidentiality. The reason why these offices were approached is that they were easily accessible. Although all the offices were very keen to assist only three offices could

provide names of prospective participants. The other two offices struggled with a high staff turnover where the social worker was new, and did not know their clients well. It was thus difficult for them to provide names of prospective participants, as domestic violence is seldom the presented problem and could only be determined as a problem after the social worker has got to know her clients.

Names, addresses and a contact number if available of the prospective participants were emailed to the researcher. The contact numbers proved to not be very reliable and the researcher went to the physical addresses to meet the prospective participants. Details of 13 possible participants were given. Only nine of them participated in the study. One person did not wish to partake in the study and the other three moved away from the given addresses and could not be found. The interviewing took place at different places. The different NGOs could not provide an office due to a lack of space. Four interviews were done in "The Wimpy" and five were done in the researcher's car. The participants' home circumstances were of such a nature that the interviews could not be conducted there.

NGO 2 was also approached. This NGO runs a preschool and a clinic. An appointment was made to see the principal of the preschool. The researcher explained her role. The principal was very enthusiastic and mentioned that domestic violence is a huge challenge in that area. She offered to draw up a list of participants who met the criteria for inclusion and that they could be interviewed at the counselling room at the preschool. On two different occasions only one respondent turned up. This respondent could not take part in the study as she had been in an abusive relationship more than six months ago. The necessary social work services were though rendered to her by the researcher. On reflection it was realized that it had been too risky for the participants to share their sensitive stories on domestic violence as this was a very small community where everyone knows everyone's business. It was decided to try to work through the clinic which proved to be much more fruitful. The researcher was "less visible" and several adults would come to the clinic for medical help so the prospective participants were not as "exposed" as they would have been at the preschool.

Five participants (25%) were seen at the clinic. The interviews were done in a small, cramped office, in the researcher's car and under a tree. Some of these participants indicated that they had friends or neighbours that would also share their stories with the researcher. The researcher followed up these contacts and four more participants (20%) were seen by the

researcher at the clinic. Interviews were conducted again wherever space was available. These four participants also made use of the clinic for their health needs.

A colleague of the researcher is a clinical psychologist. Two participants (10%) were identified through her. These interviews were conducted in the psychologist's office.

In qualitative research interviews can be discontinued, if the information gathered becomes repetitive and data saturation is reached (Tutty *et al.*, 1996:82).

After 15 interviews the researcher felt that this point was reached, but because appointments were already made with the rest of the participants, it was decided to complete all 20 interviews.

5.10   STEP 9 – THE PILOT STUDY

A pilot study in qualitative research is usually informal with a couple of participants possessing the same characteristics as those in the main investigation. Strydom and Delport (2005:331) mention four important aspects of the pilot study. The first aspect is to study the literature. As was mentioned in step 5, studying the literature is an ongoing process as was the case in this study. The literature study during the pilot study does not entail a detailed study of all available research, but serves as an orientation in the specific field of the research.

The second aspect of the pilot study is the experience of experts. Strydom and Delport (2005:331) view interviewing experts as an important part of in qualitative research, for the purpose of identifying themes and to do a more thorough literature review. The researcher spoke to her study leader who has an extensive knowledge of qualitative research and domestic violence. Interviews were also conducted with three social workers who deal with domestic violence.

The third aspect of the pilot study concerns the feasibility thereof. It is here that the researcher can already form an opinion on the openness of the community or the group of participants and their willingness to co-operate (Strydom & Delport, 2005:331). It was found in this study that to interview participants who have been abused, is a sensitive matter and that participants might feel it is too risky to share their stories.

The fourth and last aspect of the pilot study that Strydom and Delport (2005:331) mention is the testing of the measuring instrument. Whittaker (2009:38) suggests that if a researcher uses a structured or semi-structured interview schedule, it is useful to "test" the schedule with someone who would fit the sample. The researcher did this with two participants. This proved to be a very valuable exercise as initially the interview schedule was too structured and could be modified to be less structured and allowing participants to share more of their lived experiences. The other stumbling block that was identified was a tape recorder. The two participants who partook in the pilot study found this a bit intimidating and mentioned afterwards that they were not at ease with the tape recorder. It was then decided to rather use a digital recorder that is much more "user friendly" as it is small and compact and does not make any noise. Another practical lesson that was learnt was to keep tissues available as participants often would cry while sharing their stories. No tissues were available when the first respondent was interviewed, and a roll of toilet paper was used.

5.11   STEP 10 – DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

De Vos (2005:334) identified the following steps that should be helpful when analysing and interpreting data in qualitative research. These steps often overlap or some steps were carried out before the others.

Step 1 Planning for recording of data

As was set out in Chapter 1 and the previous step, a digital recorder was used to record data. This enabled the researcher to listen attentively to the participants without having to take any notes. All the participants signed a consent form indicating that they participated voluntarily in the study and that they gave consent for the interview to be recorded (see Addendum A for consent form). All the participants' biographical data were stored in a safe place and they were marked from number one to 20. The date of the interview, and where the interview took place, were also documented.

Step 2 Data collection and preliminary analysis

In qualitative research data collection and data analysis form an inseparable relationship, going hand in hand in order to build a coherent interpretation of data. In this study the transcripts of the interviews were done as soon as possible after every interview were conducted.

Step 3 Managing data

De Vos (2005:336) mentions further that all data collected should be properly organized. The recorded interviews were formatted to a laptop and two computers afterwards. The recorded interviews were marked from one to 20, as were the transcripts. This was done to ensure that none of the interviews would get lost. The researcher did all the transcripts herself to "*get immersed in the data*" (De Vos, 2005:336). This gave tremendous insight into all the different stories, and tentative themes already started to emerge after eight interviews. Backup copies were made of all the transcribed interviews.

Step 4 Reading and writing memos

De Vos (2005:337) emphasizes the value of reading the data over and over again. This was done and the researcher was able to immerse herself in all the details. Correlations between different stories of the participants were also written down at this stage.

Step 5 Generating themes, sub-themes and categories

De Vos (2005:338) indicates that this step is at the heart of qualitative data analysis. It can be described as the most difficult, complex, ambiguous, creative and enjoyable phase. It is important to be aware of the subtle undercurrents of the social lives of the participants. Dealing with different cultures also implies that one understands what different cultures mean when certain things are mentioned. In this study the researcher made sure that she understood what the participants meant when they shared their stories, by using interviewing techniques such as probing and clarifying (Greef, 2005:288; Silverman, 2005:16).

Themes were identified by looking at the overall goal of the study, the objectives, the research question and regularities in the stories of the twenty participants. Themes should be internally consistent, but also distinct from one another. Whittaker (2009:94) views a theme as "*something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set*".

Five themes were identified after having read the stories of the participants a couple of times. These themes fitted well into the research question: "What are the experience (environmental resources) and coping mechanisms (inner resources)) of low-income female survivors of domestic violence?"

The themes identified were:

- The experience of domestic violence
- Low-income
- Resources
- Strengths/coping mechanisms
- Statutory intervention.

The themes were divided into different sub-themes. These sub-themes were divided into different categories as set out in Table 6.2 of Chapter 6. The themes can be seen as the "grandparents", the sub-themes the "parents" and the categories the "children", all part of one family (De Vos, 2005:338).

Step 6 Coding the data

Closely linked with generating themes, sub-themes and categories are the coding of data. This is also referred to as the formal representation of analytical thinking. The researcher made use of different colours of highlighters, Koki pens and colouring pencils to identify the different themes, sub-themes and categories, for which a file was also opened on the computer. If reading through the data, a certain theme, sub-theme or category was identified, the number of the participants was indicated on this file and the different colour on the participants' file, to try to keep the coding as simple and effective as possible (De Vos, 2005:339; Rossouw, 2009:6).

Step 7 Testing emergent understandings

This step emphasises the importance of ongoing evaluating. Once the themes, sub-themes, categories and coding are well under way, it is important to evaluate the data for usefulness and centrality. In this study, some categories were changed and moved to be more relevant to the goal and research question as the data were studied again. This was done after consultation

with the study leader in order to determine which themes, sub-themes and categories would fit best with each other (De Vos, 2005:339).

5.12   STEP 11 – WRITING THE RESEARCH DOCUMENT

According to Delport and Fouché (2005:351) the qualitative report is less structured, more intertwined with the total research process and usually longer and more descriptive than the quantitative report.

In Chapter 1, the criteria against which trustworthiness of this study was assessed were discussed. The ethical considerations and limitations were also addressed in Chapter 1.

5.13   CONCLUSION

In doing research it is helpful to follow certain steps. Eleven steps were discussed in this chapter. The identification of a research topic and to determine whether a research topic is researchable, is the starting point of the research. The research approach and design, goals and objectives of the study, literature review, sampling and method of data collection all form part of the research methodology.

Coding of the data is necessary in order to organise the data into themes, sub-themes and categories. During the last step, namely the writing of the research document, the trustworthiness of the study, as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study should be addressed, as was done in this study.

The next chapter presents the themes, sub-themes and categories.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND VERIFICATION

6.1   INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5 the research methodology was discussed. In this chapter, the findings of this study will be presented and analysed by means of different themes, typical of qualitative research.

The fourth and last objective of this study, namely to investigate the experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence within the context of the ecological and strengths perspectives will also be addressed in this chapter.

First, the biographical details of the sample will be presented and analysed. Then the five themes will be identified. Each theme will be subdivided into two or more sub-themes. The sub-themes will be divided into relevant categories. The narratives of the participants will be used in order to identify the themes, sub-themes and categories. Finally a literature control will be presented for each category.

6.2   PERSONAL INFORMATION

The 20 participants who were involved in the study were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Where a name of a social worker or any other person was named, pseudonyms were also allocated. In Table 6.1 the personal details of the participants will be presented, supplying the pseudonym of each respondent, her race, age, marital status and number of children. Her highest school grade passed, her income per month and also type of accommodation will be presented.

TABLE 6.1

Personal details of participants

Partici-pant	Race	Age	Marital status	Number of children	Highest School Grade passed	Income per month	Accom-modation
1 Amy	Brown	26	Cohabiting	2	9	R500	2 rooms
2 Beth	Brown	33	Cohabiting	3	12	R1 000	Shack
3 Cathy	Black	32	Married	3	4	R400	3 rooms
4 Diane	Brown	31	Married	3	12	R1 200	5 rooms
5 Edith	Brown	38	Married	5	10	R1 400	3 rooms
6 Florry	Brown	41	Cohabiting	5	None	R700	Shack
7 Gill	Brown	47	Married	5	4	R1000	3 rooms
8 Hope	Brown	34	Married	3	9	R1 200	Shack
9 Ivy	Black	47	Married	1	None	R1 100	4 rooms
10 Joy	Brown	23	Separated	2	8	R1 800	1 room
11 Kay	Black	46	Married	3	6	R1 200	4 rooms
12 Lara	Brown	33	Separated	3	7	R2 700	Shack
13 Meg	Brown	27	Separated	2	7	R1 000	2 rooms
14 Nita	Black	31	Separated	2	10	R1 800	Shack
15 Olive	Brown	49	Married	3	7	R1 600	Shack
16 Pam	Black	34	Married	3	9	R2 200	3 rooms
17 Rosy	White	37	Separated	2	8	R1 500	1 room
18 Sally	White	37	Cohabiting	3	12	R3 000	3 rooms
19 Tina	White	42	Separated	2	12	R3 500	2 rooms
20 Val	Brown	28	Cohabiting	2	10	R 1 500	3 rooms

Table 6.1 is discussed below.

6.2.1 Race

Of the 20 participants five (25%) were black, 12 (60%) were coloured and three (15%) were white. No significance can be read into the fact that 12 (60%) of the participants were coloured. Hampton *et al*. (1999:23) and Abram, Oxford and Roffle (2001:197) state that people of colour in America are more likely to report the occurrence of domestic violence than white Americans and that people of colour are more open to talk and to seek help. However, several studies (Bent-Goodley, 2000:327; Davis, 2001:19; Lum, 1992:56) have shown that there is no significant difference between racial groups and the occurrence of domestic violence. In South Africa, Wright *et al.* (2007:616) also indicated that domestic violence has no socio-economic, racial, ethnic or national boundaries.

6.2.2 Age

The age of the sample varied between 23 and 49. Researchers such as Amoakohene (2004:23), Fleury-Steiner *et al*. (2006:327) and Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana (2002:1603) indicate that women of child bearing age are much more vulnerable to domestic violence than women whose children are independent, as the need to provide for their children creates extra pressure. It is significant that nineteen (95%) of the participants still had dependent children in their homes to care for. However, authors such as Danis and Lee (2003:28) and Lundy and Grossman (2009:297-309) argue that women of all ages and circumstances are exposed to intimate partner violence and not only those who still have children in the home.

6.2.3 Marital status

Nine of the participants (45%) were married. Five of the participants (25%) were cohabiting. Six of the participants (30%) were separated from their partners at the time the interviews were conducted. The decision to leave their partners was not easy as all of them faced huge financial challenges. Only two of these six participants, Tina and Nita, who were separated from their partners seemed adamant never to return. Their main concern was that they would have to look for other work in order to survive financially and they struggled with affordable accommodation. This echoes findings by researchers such as Artz (1999:3), Ferrato (2000:10), Danis and Lockheart (2004:15) and Vincent and Jouriles (2002:78), that there are several serious challenges for women who plan to leave their partners such as accommodation, raising of children, making it on your own and other practical matters. According to the literature no significant associations were found between domestic violence and or marital status (Jewkes *et al.*, 2002:1603-1617).

6.2.4 Children

All the participants still had children in the home, except Olive whose children had grown up. As was discussed in paragraph 6.2.2 (age of participants), women who still have children to care for are in a much more difficult position to leave their partners than those who do not have children around. A significant number of women who are abused have children, who are then exposed to violent behaviour that has devastating effects on them. Suspicion and fear are common among children who have lived in violent homes (Ferrato, 2000:53). What makes domestic violence a distinct type of trauma, is that the perpetrator stays in the same house as the child and is often the child's father. Children exposed to this type of violence often have

feelings of betrayal. Their perceptions of home and safety are seriously marred. Children exposed to domestic violence are at increased risk of multiple behavioural and emotional difficulties, like low self-esteem, anxiety attacks, displaying of aggressive behaviour, withdrawal and thoughts of suicide (Danis & Lockheart, 2004:34).

6.2.5 Educational level

Figure 6.1 illustrates the range of the educational levels of the participants:
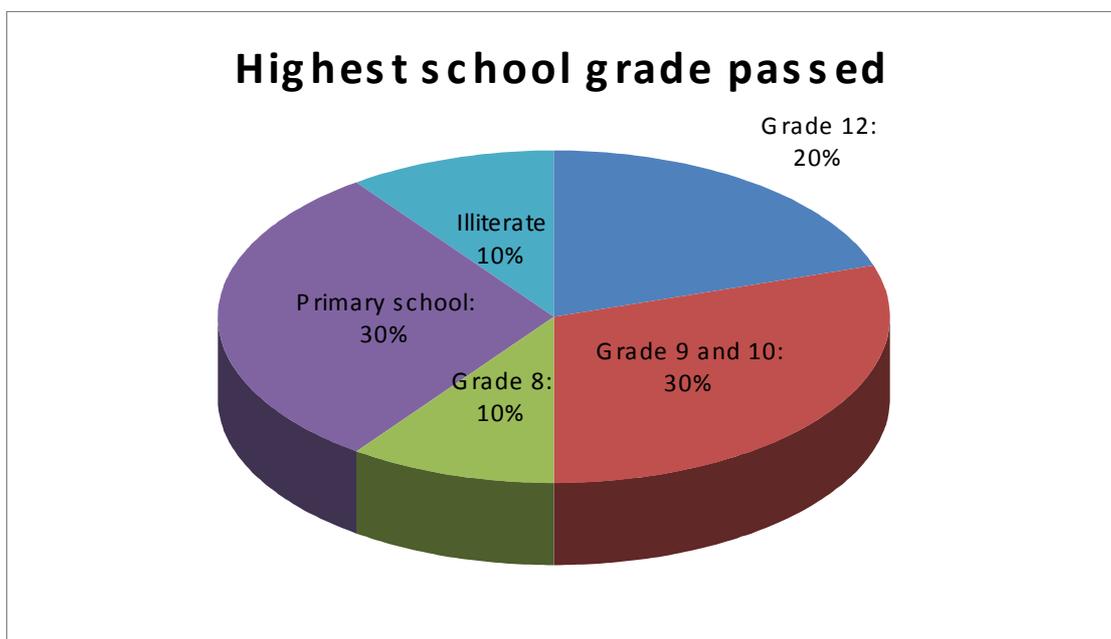
Figure 6.1: **Educational level of the participants**

It is significant that none of the participants had a post-matric education. Only four participants (20%) had grade 12 (dark blue segment of the pie chart in Figure 6.1). Six participants had an educational level of grade 9 or 10 (red segment of Figure 6.1). Two of the participants (10%) had grade 8 (green segment of Figure 6.1). Six participants (30%) had a primary school education varying from grade 4 to grade 7 (purple segment of Figure 6.1). Two participants (10%) were illiterate (light blue segment of Figure 6.1). This correlates with research conducted by Parenzee and Smythe (2003:48, 49) who found that the relationship between low-income and low education levels is significant. Abused low-income women usually have low levels of education, reducing the possibility of alternative employment and reinforcing the poverty.

6.2.6   Income per month

The highest income per month was that of Tina, at R3 500. She was separated from her husband and had started divorce proceedings during the time the interview was conducted. Her husband failed to pay any maintenance towards the children. The lowest income was that of Cathy (R400). Her husband was doing some contract work, but misused his income largely on alcohol. Twala (2004:63) indicated that low-income is one of the factors that leading to domestic violence.

6.2.7   Accommodation

Figure 6.2 below presents the type of accommodation of the 20 participants. Accommodation varied from five-roomed homes to shacks. Rooms in this study included bathrooms, lounges, and kitchens. A five-roomed house would thus consist of two bedrooms, a lounge, a kitchen and a bathroom.
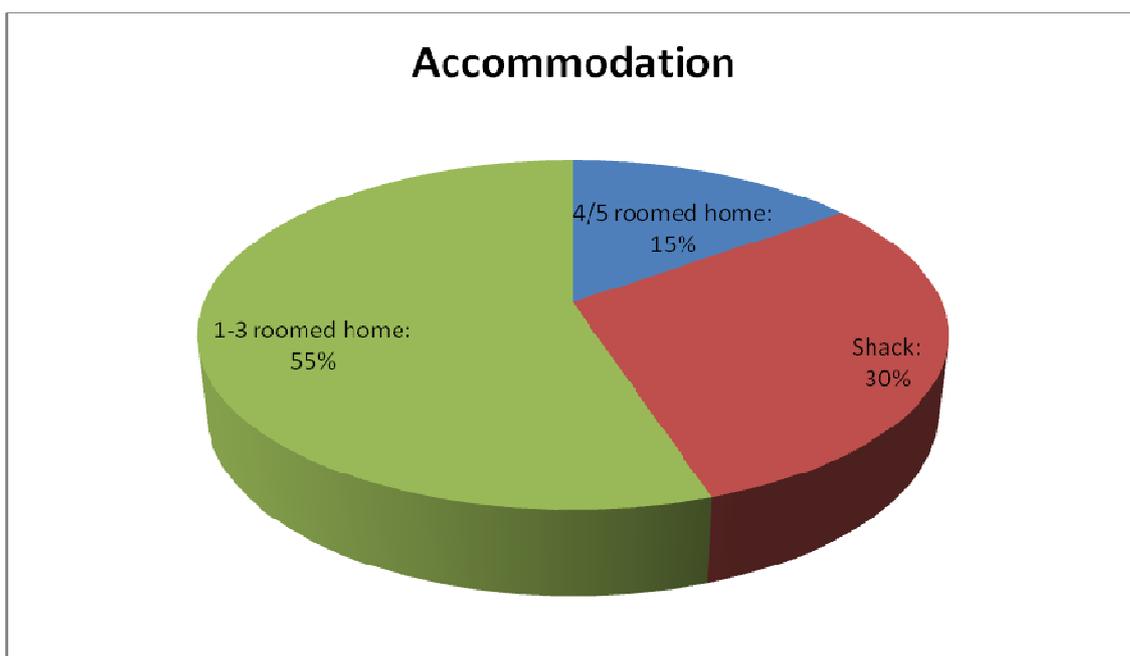
Figure 6.2:   Accommodation of the participants

Three participants (15%), stayed in a four- or five-roomed home and seemed to have sufficient space and privacy (blue segment of Figure 6.2). The rest stayed in cramped conditions. Six of the participants (30%) stayed in shacks (red segment of Figure 6.2). Eleven of the 20 participants (55%) stayed in a home with only one, two or three rooms, with their children and boyfriends or husbands (green segment 3 of Figure 6.2). These homes were often shared with other people such as family or close friends. This confirms what Hagen (2001:126) indicated that poor housing conditions may fuel domestic violence. Insufficient housing reaffirms

poverty. He also argued that poor and low-income women face higher risks of violence, particularly severe violence.

6.3   THEMES

As was discussed in Chapter 5, five themes emerged from the responses of the participants. These themes were subdivided into sub-themes. Theme 1 was divided into six sub-themes. Theme 2 was divided into three sub-themes. Theme 3 was divided into three sub-themes. Theme 3 was divided into five sub-themes and theme 5 was divided into two sub-themes. All the sub-themes were divided into different categories as set out in Table 6.2. After each sub-theme and category, the relevant numbering where it will be discussed in this chapter is given in brackets.

As was discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, two tables, namely Table 3.1 (the concepts of the life model) and Table 4.3 (the lexicon of strengths), formed the theoretical framework through which the empirical data in this chapter will be analysed and interpreted. The metaphor of a pair of glasses was used where both lenses are needed to gain a clear picture. These two tables were combined in Figure 6.3 to illustrate how these two lenses were used in interpreting the data.

Theme 1: The experience of domestic violence	• Person- environment fit: Cultural and personal stories • Stress: Membership • Life course: Insight and knowledge
Theme 2: Low- income	• Stress: Suspension and disbelief • Habitat and niche: Membership; resilience
Theme 3: Resources	• Person- environment fit: Spirituality; environmental factors; cultural and personal stories • Habitat and niche: Membership; suspension and disbelief • Emotional and social ties: Qualities of a good helping relationship
Theme 4: Coping mechanisms	• Emotional and social ties: Spirituality; dialogue and collaboration • Power: Empowerments, resilience; hope; pride • Life course: Healing and wholeness
Theme 5: Statutory Intervention	• Power: Empowerment; dialogue and collaboration • Habitat and niche: Insight and knowledge

Figure 6.3:   Themes, ecological concepts and strengths
             Sources: Germain & Gitterman (1996:9-22); Saleebey (2002:9-22)

As can be seen in Figure 6.3 the ecological concepts (see Figure 3.1) were paired off with the five themes. Some of these concepts, such as stress and social and emotional ties fitted in well with more than one theme. The different strengths displayed in Figure 4.3 were again paired off with the different ecological concepts. There were also some strengths, such as membership and spirituality that fitted with more than one ecological concept.

The ecological concepts and strengths illustrated in Figure 6.3 were used to identify the sub-themes and categories, as set out in Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2
Themes, sub-themes and categories

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
1 **The experience of domestic violence**	1.1 Extremely difficult circumstances (6.3.1.1)	Traumatic childhood (a) Family disharmony (b)
	1.2 Forms of domestic violence (6.3.1.2)	Physical abuse (a) Emotional abuse (b) Sexual abuse (c) Economic abuse (d) All forms of domestic violence (e)
	1.3 Complex Traumatic Syndrome (6.3.1.3)	Suicidal feelings (a) Suicide attempts (b) Depression (c) PTSD symptoms (d)
	1.4 Substance abuse by partner (6.3.1.4)	Alcohol abuse by partner (a) Drug abuse by partner (b)
	1.5 Extreme jealousy of partner (6.3.1.5)	Controlling behaviour (a) False accusations (b)
	1.6 Pattern of abusive relationships (6.3.1.6)	Return to abusive partner (a) Different abusive relationships (b)
2 **Low-income**	2.1 No way out (6.3.2.1)	Financial restrictions (a) Other restrictions (b)
	2.2 Struggle to make ends meet (6.3.2.2)	Difficulty to care for children (a) Loss of property and belongings b)
	2.3 Low education level (6.3.2.3)	Illiteracy (a) Poor job opportunities (b)

THEMES	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES
3 **Resources**	3.1 Significant others (6.3.3.1)	Family and family in law (a) Friends (b) Neighbours (c)
	3.2 Church (6.3.3.2)	Pastor/minister (a) Church members (b)
	3.3 Professional help (6.3.3.3)	Social worker: Case work (a) Social worker: Group work (b) Clinic sister (c) Psychologist (d)
4 **Strengths/** **coping methods**	4.1 Children (6.3.4.1)	Meaning in life (a) Goal to bring them up (b)
	4.2 Religion (6.3.4.2)	Prayer (a) Trust in the Lord (b)
	4.3 Hope (6.3.4.3)	Dream (a) Determination (b) Projects (c) Improve educational level (d)
	4.4 Survivor (6.3.4.4)	Remain silent (a) Resilience (b) Pride (c)
	4.5 Alcohol (6.3.4.5)	As a means to forget (a) As a means to cope (b)
5 **Statutory** **intervention**	5.1 Protection Order (6.3.5.1)	Obtained IPO (a) Did not obtain an IPO (b)
	5.2 Police (6.3.5.2)	Helpful (a) Not helpful (b)

These themes sub-themes and categories will be presented in the following tables with excerpts from participants. After each table the excerpts will be analysed and interpreted with a relevant literature control.

6.3.1 Theme 1: The experience of domestic violence

As was discussed in Chapter 2, some women who are in a violent relationship experience major challenges. These experiences will now be presented, discussed and analysed according to the relevant sub-themes and categories, as was displayed in Table 6.2.

6.3.1.1 *Theme 1 – Sub-theme 1: Extremely difficult circumstances*

All the participants in this study indicated that they experienced their circumstances as extremely difficult. The range of difficulty would be from struggling to cope with the stressful circumstance of the abusive relationship (*"I find it very difficult. My circumstances are <u>very stressful</u> and I feel no one really understands..." Hope*) to fear of being killed (*"He would have fought more. I am still afraid <u>he will kill me</u>." Joy*) This finding correlates with research conducted by Davhana-Maselesele *et al*. (2009:2518) who found that participants in their study expressed the intensity of their difficult circumstances such as physical injuries, emotional trauma, spiritual emptiness and social isolation.

The following table contains the excerpts of participants related to "traumatic childhood".

TABLE 6.3

Extremely difficult circumstances: Traumatic childhood

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Extremely difficult	Traumatic childhood	*My mom and dad were separated. <u>My mom was not so nice with me. She always swore and called me names</u>... still today.* "My ma en Pa is uit mekaar. My ma is was ook nie so nice met my nie. Sy het my net altyd gevloek en geskel ... nou nog." Amy
		<u>*My mom dumped me when I was two*</u>. *I was also tied up by my step dad and <u>raped</u>.... I have been beaten with his fists.... I was sent to a Reformatory. <u>I was 16 when I had my first child</u>. It was my stepdad's child. The baby was given up for adoption.* "My ma het my weggegooi toe ek twee was... Ek is vasgebind deur my stiefpa en verkrag. Ek is geslaan met sy vuiste. Ek is na 'n Verbeteringskool toe gestuur is. Ek was16 toe ek my eerste kind gekry het. Dit was my stiefpa se kind. Die baba is gegee vir aanneming." Rosy
		I was an <u>illegitimate child</u>. I always felt that no one cared about me. <u>I was molested</u> when I was 10 years old. I had a "wonder-ful" mom who ignored everything. "Ek is buite-egtelik gebore. Ek het altyd gevoel niemand stel in my belang nie. Ek is gemolesteer toe ek so 10 was. Ek het 'n 'fantastiese' ma gehad wat alles geïgnoreer het." Tina

(a) *Category: Traumatic childhood*

It emerges from the underlined sections of the excerpts of this category that these participants experienced their childhood as traumatic. Most of the participants in this study indicated that they had a difficult childhood. At least 11 of the participants (55%) indicated that they were abused or maltreated as children. This echoes research conducted by Flinck *et al*. (2004:386) that indicated that most of the abused women in their study revealed that they had had traumatic childhoods and fear. Researchers such as Jewkes *et al*. (2002:1603-1617) are of the opinion that domestic violence is significantly positively associated with violence in a woman's childhood.

Literature (Danis & Lockheart, 2004:34) also indicates that children exposed to intimate partner violence often have feelings of betrayal. Their perceptions of home and safety are seriously marred. As was discussed earlier, children exposed to domestic violence are at an increased risk of multiple behavioural and emotional difficulties, like low self-esteem, anxiety attacks, displaying of aggressive behaviour, withdrawal and thoughts of suicide. Child abuse is 15 times more likely to occur in families where domestic violence is present (Wiehe, 1998:114). Research conducted by Van der Merwe (1998:4) indicated that children in this study of domestic violence homes displayed inadequate coping and problem-solving strategies. Reported long-term effects were a propensity to either commit or to be the object of abuse and violence in subsequent future intimate relationships or to be inclined to abuse alcohol or drugs.

The second category under the sub-theme "extremely difficult" is family disharmony which is presented in Table 6.4 and is subsequently analysed and discussed.

TABLE 6.4

Extremely difficult circumstances: Family disharmony

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Extremely difficult circum-stances	Family disharmony	*He will also call me names and be unfaithful. This causes a lot of tension in the house. He has several girlfriends.* "Hy noem my name en is ontrou. Dit veroorsaak baie spanning in die huis. Hy het al baie girlfriends gehad." Olive *He does not want to marry me. He fights a lot with me and the children... He is now ugly with the child. The child of 15 also gives me problems.* "Hy wil nie met my trou nie. Hy baklei baie met my en die kinders... Hy is nou so lelik met die kind. Die kind van 15 gee ook vir my probleme, Mevrou." Florry *And he always fought in front of our daughter. I was so used to it that he would fight with me and beat me, and then she would <u>help me by hitting him back</u>. She was still young. She could not really help. She was too small.* "En hy het altyd voor haar (dogtertjie) baklei. Ek was al so gewoond daaraan dat as hy met my baklei en my slaan, en dan help sy deur hom te slaan. Dan was sy nog klein. Sy kon my nie eintlik gehelp het nie. Sy was te klein." Kay

(b)   Category: Family disharmony

At least 16 of the participants (80%) indicated that they experienced family disharmony whilst in the abusive relationship as can be seen from the excerpts above. Family disharmony varied from tension as a result of a partner having other girlfriends (*He has several girlfriends. Olive)*, behavioural problems with children (*The child of 15 also gives me problems. Florry)*, to children witnessing the abuse. Flinck *et al*. (2004:387) mentioned in their research that the children would typically stand up for their abused mother. This can be seen in Kay's statement (*she would help me by hitting him back).* Authors such as Carlson (1997:291), Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001:171) and Mullender and Hague (2005:1321) observe that family disharmony will be present during domestic violence as domestic violence cannot be seen as a linear event, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Sub-theme 2 of theme 1 is subsequently presented and discussed.

6.3.1.2 Theme 1 – Sub-theme 2: The forms of domestic violence

As noted in the previous chapter, all the participants of this study must have been in a physically abusive relationship not more than 6 months previously, or must be in an abusive relationship at the time of the study. The range of abuses women may suffer is wide and as mentioned in Chapter 2 it can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse, as well as stalking, forced isolation in the home and other controlling behaviours (Bollen *et al.*, 1999:7).

These forms of domestic violence will be discussed in the following sub-themes and categories. Finally a category where all four forms of domestic violence were present will be presented and discussed.

TABLE 6.5

Forms of domestic violence: Physical abuse

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Forms of domestic violence	Physical abuse	*Sometimes if I am asleep, <u>he will throw water over me</u> that I am drenched.* "As ek partykeer lê en slaap dan loop gooi hy vir my waternat." Beth
		He would beat me severely, so that my eyes were blue. I also had bruises on my body. <u>I was pregnant with her, and then he would also beat me.</u> The last time he beat me was with a thick stick on my ankle. I could not walk for three days. I could not go to work. "Hy het my baie erg geslaan, dat ek blou oë het. Ook blou kolle op my lyf. Ek was swanger met haar, toe slaan hy my ook. Die laaste wat hy my geslaan het was met so 'n dik stok hier op my enkel, Mevrou. Ek kon vir drie dae nie geloop het nie. Ek kon nie gaan werk het nie." Joy
		He <u>kicked and beat</u> me regularly. <u>He shoved my head in the toilet.</u> "Hy het my baie geslat en geskop. My kop is al in die toilet gedruk." Rosy
		People did not realise how intensely I experienced this and through what emotions I had to struggle. <u>He would beat me</u> if I ever tried to say how I felt. I did not have anywhere to go. You can only stay two or three days with a pal and <u>then you must go back to the mess with all your emotions.</u> "Min het hulle geweet hoe intens ek dit ervaar het en watse emosies ek moes deurworstel. Ek het ook nooit êrens gehad om heen te gaan nie. Jy kan net twee of drie dae by 'n pêl woon, dan moet jy maar terug in die gemors met al jou emosies." Sally

(a) Category: Physical abuse

The most obvious and serious consequence of intimate violence toward women is the personal suffering it causes and also the long-term toll it takes on women and their children, as can be seen from the above excerpts. It is significant that some participants indicated types of physical abuse other than the "normal" physical abuse such as kicking and hitting (*He will throw water over me* Beth; *He shoved my head in the toilet* Rosy). This is revealed in literature by a whole range of humiliating acts against women such as pushing, slapping, belittling, burning, strangling and tying up that can all be classified under physical abuse (Romito, 2008:17). As will be discussed in paragraph 6.3.1.5 (extreme jealousy) all these insulting actions by perpetrators boil down to keeping "their women" under control.

Most of the participants in this study indicated that their children were present while they were physically abused. This is supported by Bollen *et al.* (1999:25) who reported that out of the 269 women they interviewed, 98% indicated that their children were present while they were being abused.

Literature (Stephens & McDonald, 2002:80) indicates that some women in violent homes are exposed to severe physical violence, sometimes referred to as "patriarchal terrorism" where abuse happens on a regular basis, even up to 60 times annually. Weapons such as knives and guns may also be used. At least five of the twenty participants (25%) indicated that they were exposed to "patriarchal terrorism" where they were physically abused at least once (at times up to three times) a week. They also had physical scars on their bodies and faces caused by stabbing and hitting with an object ("*See how I look ... these are wounds where he stabbed me..."Cathy*). Their exposure to violence would range from being kicked, being hit by fists, cracked ribs, being hit by an object, being threatened with a weapon to stabbing. All five participants (25%) had to be hospitalised at some or other stage as a result of wounds caused by the violence.

All the participants indicated that they were exposed to "lesser" forms of violence such as hitting and kicking, from the excerpts in Table 6.5. Stephens and McDonald (1999:80) refer to this as "ordinary" or "everyday" domestic violence where conflict often gets out of hand, as discussed in Chapter 2. These "milder" types of physical violence should be of as much concern as more serious types of physical abuse, because all types of physical abuse are problematic. Milder forms of abuse in some cases also give rise to more extreme acts of

aggression. Several scholars (Browne & Herbert, 1997:63; Ferrato, 2000:41; Hampton *et al.*, 1999:39; Purvin, 2007:188) observe that women and children are more vulnerable than men in inter partner violence. In the long run domestic violence takes its toll on the whole family and the family discord has serious emotional implications as can be seen from Sally's response (*People did not realise how intensely I experienced this and through what emotions I had to struggle)*. As Bollen *et al.* (1999:7) rightly stated: "*The results of domestic violence are severe, the trauma lifelong.*"

Another form of domestic violence, namely emotional abuse is discussed below.

TABLE 6.6

Forms of domestic violence: Emotional abuse

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Forms of domestic violence	Emotional abuse	*And then there is the verbal abuse. I do not mind all the physical stuff, but the words ... they hurt the most. Your bruises disappear, but the words ...they remain.* "En dan is daar die abuse met die mond. Ek gee nie om vir al die fisiese goed nie, maar die woorde… dit maak die seerste. Jou blou merke verdwyn , maar dis die woorde…dit bly." Rosy *He beats me, but the worst is the verbal abuse. Hy calls me all kinds of horrible names... and in front of the children.* "Hy slaan my, maar die ergste is die woorde wat hy my toesnou. Hy noem my allerhande aaklige name... en dit voor die kinders. " Tina *Yes, I have often been beaten and kicked. That is why I left. He also called me names.* "Ja, ek is baie geslat en geskop. Dit is hoekom ek weg is. Hy het my baie geskel ook..." Lara *He has two children with another girl. It is hard for me that he had these children, while he was still with me.* "Hy het twee buite kinders by 'n ander meisie. Dit is vir my swaar dat hy hierdie kinders het by haar terwyl hy saam met my was." Val

(b)   Category: Emotional abuse

All 20 participants experienced emotional abuse together with the physical abuse as can be seen from the excerpts above. Emotional abuse varied from insults, shouting, name calling, to belittling in front of children or other people. As can be seen from Tina's response (*but the worst is the verbal abuse...*) the emotional abuse was worse than the physical abuse. Most of the participants indicated that the emotional wounds were deeper and more painful than the physical wounds. This correlates with Walker's (1984) view which describes emotional trauma as characterised by degradation and humiliation which is the most painful form of abuse women suffer.

Authors such as Enosh *et al.* (2005:9); Ludsin and Vetten (2005:18); Pineless, Mineka and Zinbarg (2008:166) and Vincent and Jouriles (2002:8) state that physical abuse is almost always accompanied by some form of emotional abuse. Women who have experienced domestic violence therefore have frequently received negative feedback from their partners about different aspects of their character, aptitude, attractiveness, and personality. Further, they may internalize their partners' negative views of them and blame themselves for their partners' abusive actions. Bollen *et al.* (1999:7) note that psychological abuse often occurs more frequently and chronically than physical violence and the well-being of many women is affected negatively by psychological abuse. This correlates with Rosy's response (*Your bruises disappear, but the words ... they remain).*

It is significant that eight of the participants (40%) were affected by unfaithfulness of their partners. Unfaithfulness is seen by several authors such as Artz (1999:12), Makofane (2002:84) and Ruiz-Perez and Mata-Pariente (2006:1156) as part of emotional abuse. The unfaithfulness varied from having a one-off sexual relationship with another woman, to having several girlfriends to having children with other women. The participants whose partners were unfaithful struggled to come to terms with it, and would often during the interviews mention their feelings of betrayal (*He has two children with another girl. It is hard for me that he had these children, while he was still with me. Val).* They then also had to deal with the harsh reality of domestic violence. Two of the participants (10%) who were separated indicated that unfaithfulness and not the physical abuse was the main reason they had left their partners. Infidelity was also mentioned by Flinck *et al.* (2004:386) as a problem experienced by participants in their study.

Sexual abuse is the next form of domestic violence to be discussed.

TABLE 6.7

Forms of domestic violence: Sexual abuse

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Forms of domestic violence	Sexual abuse	*It is like that that he sometimes <u>forces me to have sex</u> if he is under the influence of drugs and it just doesn't stop. It is a continuous thing…* "Dis nou so dat hy my soms dwing om seks hê as hy onder die invloed van drugs is en dit kry mos nou net nie einde nie. Dis 'n aanhoudende iets..." Hope
		He has already <u>raped me</u>. I cannot fight him, he is too strong. He treats me like a sexual object… not like a human being. "Hy het my al gerape. Ek kan my net nie teësit nie, hy is te sterk. He behandel my soos 'n seksobjek ... nie soos 'n mens nie." Edith
		He also <u>forced me to have sex</u> and expected things of me that I did not want to do. I also had to wear clothes that I did not want to wear ... you know ... exposing ones. "Hy het my ook gedwing tot seks en het van my dinge verwag wat ek nie wou doen nie. Ek moes ook klere dra wat ek nie wou nie ... Mevrou weet ... sulke kaal klere." Joy

(c) Category: Sexual abuse

Four of the 20 participants (20%) in this study indicated that they were sexually abused by their partners. The sexual abuse ranged from being referred to as sexual objects (*He treats me like a sexual object. Edith)*, being forced to wear "sexy" clothes (*I also had to wear clothes that I did not want to wear ... you know ... exposing ones. Joy)*, forcing certain sexual behaviours while the male partners was under the influence of substance abuse (*It is like that that he sometimes forces me to have sex if he is under the influence of drugs. Hope)* to rape (*He has already raped me. Edith)*. This correlates with findings by Flinck *et al.* (2004:387) where sexual abuse was described as treating women as sexual objects, intercourse by coercion, undressing the victim, demands relating to clothing, derogatory name-calling and inflicting pain. Authors such as Bollen *et al.* (1999:23), Haj-Yahia (2000:237), Nam (2002:241) and Postmus and Hahn (2007:475) indicate that sexual abuse is often a sensitive, taboo topic among certain cultures. Vincent and Jouriles (2002:87) indicated in a study that 43 of 97 women who were physically abused (44%), also indicated that they were sexually assaulted by their partners.

The last form of domestic violence, namely economic abuse will now be discussed.

TABLE 6.8

Forms of domestic violence: Economic abuse

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Forms of domestic violence	Economic abuse	*He said I just want his money ... <u>he never gives me enough money</u> for food.* "Hy het gesê ek wil net sy geld hê ... hy gee my nooit genoeg geld vir kos nie." Florry
		<u>*He does not pay a cent*</u> *towards their education.* "Hy dra nie 'n sent by tot hulle se opvoeding nie." Lara
		... and I could not get out of the situation. Who is going to pay for the house, who is going to look after the children? What about the medical aid? Financially he did not do his part. <u>He drank away all our money</u> and we lost the house. I was like a prisoner and he had the keys. "...en ek kon nie uit die situasie nie. Wie gaan die huis betaal, wie gaan na my kinders kyk? Wat van die mediese fonds? Hy het net nie finansieel sy deel gedoen nie. Hy het al sy geld uitgesuip en ons het die huis verloor. Ek was soos 'n gevangene en hy het die sleutel gehou." Sally

(d)   Category: Economic abuse

Half of the participants (50%) in this study indicated that their partners failed to provide financially for their families. Five of these participants, (25%) stated that their partners would deliberately withhold money for necessary household items and would use it on alcohol or drugs, as can be seen from Sally's response *(He drank away all our money)*. Economic abuse would vary from irresponsible behaviour such as squandering money on chemical substances to refusing to contribute financially to the living expenses. As was discussed in Chapter 2 there is often a false perception that women are solely responsible for the housekeeping, child-rearing and being the only breadwinner, thus being exposed to economic abuse (Wiehe, 1998:6). Flinck *et al.* (2005:384) found that all seven participants in their study were exposed to some or other form of economic abuse and this echoes the findings in this study. Jewkes *et al*. (2002:1603) are of the opinion that women who are battered by their intimate partners, often also have to deal with economic abuse. Pyles (2006:65) and Chronister (2007:706) indicated that low-income women, who are exposed to economic abuse, face huge challenges in making a living for themselves and their children.

Finally, under sub-theme 2 a presentation and discussion will be given of situations where all four forms of domestic violence were present.

TABLE 6.9

Forms of domestic violence: All four forms of domestic violence

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Forms of domestic violence	All four types of abuse	*He went on the whole evening. He kicked me and he shouted at me and called me names throughout the night. We could not sleep. He also does not give me money to buy food for the kids…. He then started to beat me and how could I say, also abused me sexually.* "Hy het die hele nag aangegaan. Hy het my geskop en geslaan en het my name genoem. Ons kon nie slaap nie. Hy gee my ook nie geld om kos vir die kinders te koop nie…. Hy het begin om my te slaan en hoe kan ek nou sê, ook seksueel te abuse." Edith
		He beat me and kicked me and abused me severely...because I could not do it on my own, as he never gave me money... but the words ... they remain. He also raped me... "Hy het my geslaan en geskop en my baie mishandel. ... want ek kon nie alleen op my eie nie, want hy het my nooit vir my geld gegee nie.... maar dis die woorde…dit bly. Hy het my ook al verkrag." Rosy
		He calls me names me and then beats me, not in the face so that the people can see, but on my body ... with a stick or a belt or a broom ... Then he also gives money to his girlfriend, but not to me for food ... he also forces me to wear these exposing clothes which I don't like. "Hy skel my en dan slaan hy my, nou nie op my gesig dat mense kan sien nie, maar op my lyf … met 'n stok of 'n belt of besem ... Dan gee hy ook geld vir sy meisie, maar nie geld vir my vir kos nie ... Hy dwing my ook om hierdie kaal klere aan te trek waaarvan ek nie van hou nie." Val

(e) Category: All four types of abuse

Four of the participants (20%), indicated that they were exposed to all four forms of domestic violence as can be seen by the excerpts (*He went on the whole evening. He kicked me and he shouted at me and called me names throughout the night. We could not sleep. He also does not give me money to buy food for the kids……He then started to beat me and how could I say, also abused me sexually. Edith*) Several authors (Bollen *et al*., 1999:8; Bassuk *et al*., 2005:387; Griggs *et al*., 2005:68; Wiehe, 1998:6) agree that all four forms of domestic violence often happen simultaneously. Vincent and Jouriles (2002:78) concluded that the well-

being of many women is negatively affected by their partners who use different forms of domestic violence. Davis (2001:33) argues that social workers should be trained to identify the different types of domestic violence and to deal with this complex issue.

6.3.1.3 Theme 1 – Sub-theme 3: Complex Traumatic Syndrome (CTS)

Sub-theme 3, Complex Traumatic Syndrome (CTS) is the next sub-theme with four different categories that will be interpreted and analysed. Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001:172) argue that a woman in an abusive relationship might suffer from a complex traumatic syndrome (CTS). This is similar to the diagnosis of PTSD, but includes additional symptoms such as depression, suicidal thoughts and/or attempts. Some authors (Eby, 2004:221; Stephens & McDonald, 2002:82; Wiehe, 1998:91) indicate a number of difficulties shared by battered women such as depression, suicidal feelings and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

TABLE 6.10

Complex traumatic syndrome: Suicidal feelings

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Complex Traumatic Syndrome	Suicidal feelings	*I am stressed out. <u>At times I want to kill myself</u>. At one stage things were too much for me. I felt that life was not worth living for.* "Ek is baie gestres. Ek voel by tye dat ek kan selfmoord pleeg. Dinge het net te veel geraak vir my en ek wou meer as een maal 'n einde maak aan my lewe. Ek het gevoel ek kan nie langer so aangaan nie." Meg
		Sometimes <u>I do not want to live any more</u>. "Ek wil partykeer nie langer lewe nie… Nita
		I burst into tears... I cannot take it any longer... sometimes <u>I wish I was dead</u>. " Ek het in trane uitgebars… ek kan dit nie meer hou nie… ek wens soms ek is dood. *"* Gill
		"*I do not feel good about myself, because he always belittles me. <u>I don't like this life</u>."* Pam

(a) *Category: Suicidal feelings*

Although it was not directly asked, 13 out of the participants (65%) indicated that they had experienced feelings of wanting to end their lives, as can seen from the excerpts above. Meg's statement sums up the general feeling experienced by the 13 participants (*I am stressed out. <u>At times I want to kill myself</u>. At one stage things were too much for me. I felt that life was not worth living*). These findings support research conducted by Bollen *et al*. (1999:39) who found that suicidal thoughts are also more common in abused women than in non-abused women. Some low-income women, who are in an abusive relationship, think of suicide as the only way out, because of the feeling that there is no way out of their situation. The fact that domestic violence is often still seen as a private matter enhances the "being trapped" feeling of some abused women. In a study conducted by Joyner, Theunisen, De Villiers, Suliman, Hardcastel and Seedat (2007:15) 95% of the 62 participants indicated that they did not receive the adequate care and help after they were treated for their physical wounds due to domestic violence. This lack of follow-up might have contributed to the suicidal feelings. Closely linked to suicidal feelings are suicide attempts that will be presented and discussed next.

TABLE 6.11

Complex traumatic syndrome: Suicide attempts

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Complex Traumatic Syndrome	Suicide attempts	*I often feel that life is getting too much for me. I wanted to kill myself already because of the entire struggle. I have taken an <u>overdose of pills… Twice</u>. It is because I am struggling. Life with him is not nice (cries).* "Ek voel baie keer die lewe raak te veel vir my. Ek wou al myself doodgemaak het. Van al die swaarkry. Ek het al pille gedrink. Ook 'n tweede keer. Dis omdat ek kry swaar. Saam met hom is die lewe nie lekker nie (huil)." Cathy
		I wanted to commit suicide<u>. I have already cut my wrists because of him. When I woke up I was in Tygerberg Hospital. The madhouse section.</u> "Ek wou al 'suicide' doen. Ek het al my polse gesny oor hom. Toe ek wakker word, toe was ek in Tygerberg Hospitaal. Die malhuis afdeling." Rosy
		I still feel alone and things get too much. I have already taken <u>an overdose of pills</u> "Ek voel nog steeds alleen en dinge raak te veel partykeer. Ek het al 'n oordosis pille gedrink." Beth

(b) *Category: Suicide attempts*

At least three of the 20 participants (15%) indicated that they had attempted suicide to escape from their situation, as can be seen from the excerpts. These suicide attempts varied from cutting wrists (*I have already cut my wrists*. *Rosy)* to an overdose of pills (*I have already taken an overdose of pills*. *Beth*). This correlates with research conducted by Callaghan (1995:12) where it was found that suicide attempts were more likely to be reported in women who were abused by their intimate partners than women who were not abused. It is estimated that battered women are five times more likely to attempt suicide than non-battered women (Vincent & Jouriles, 2002:86). Bollen *et al*. (1999:39) noted that a quarter of their participants had attempted suicide. The next category of the CTS syndrome is depression.

TABLE 6.12
Complex traumatic syndrome: Depression

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Complex Traumatic Syndrome	Depression	*I started to suffer from depression. I did not want to get up in the mornings.* <u>*I was totally depressed*</u>*. I was booked into a clinic where I received psychiatric treatment. I also had anxiety attacks.* "Ek het aan depressie begin ly. Ek kon nie in die oggende opstaan nie. Ek was heeltelmal depressief. Ek is in 'n kliniek ingeboek waar ek psigiatriese behandeling gekry het. Ek het ook angsaanvalle begin kry." Sally *I have been struggling for years now with* <u>*depression. I take medication. I suppose I will never get over it.*</u> "Ek sukkel nou al vir jare lank met depressie. Ek is op medikasie. Ek sal seker nooit oor dit kom nie." Tina *He beats me up severely. Look at me. I get very* <u>*depressed*</u>*.* "Hy slat my baie erg. Kyk hoe lyk ek al. Ek raak baie depressive." Olive

(c) *Category: Depression*

All 20 participants (100%) indicated that in some or other stage in their abusive relationship they experienced feelings of depression, as can be seen from the excerpts. Depression varied from feelings of depression (*I get very depressed. Olive)*, taking medication (*I take medication. Tina)*, to psychiatric treatment (*I was booked into a clinic where I received psychiatric treatment. Sally).* Three participants (15%) received psychiatric treatment, while they were in the abusive relationship. These findings are supported by a study by Callaghan (1995:12) who found that patients with a history of domestic violence were prone to suffer

from major depression. Women in abusive relationships are more likely to be depressed and less likely to have positive self-views. Survivors of domestic violence often have elevated levels of depression. This is not surprising given the considerable life stress endured while in an abusive relationship. Physical abuse is almost always accompanied by some form of emotional abuse and women who have experienced domestic violence have frequently received negative feedback from their partners about different aspects of their character, aptitude, attractiveness, and personality. Further, they may internalize their partners' negative views of them and blame themselves for their partners' abusive actions. This all adds up and contributes to depression (Miller, 2006:185; Pineles, Mineka & Zinbarg, 2008:170). The last category under CTS, namely PTSD symptoms, will now be addressed.

TABLE 6.13

Complex traumatic syndrome: PTSD symptoms

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Complex Traumatic Syndrome	PTSD symptoms	*I am scared to death and <u>my body shivers</u> very much. I suffer from bad headaches.* "Ek is tot die dood toe bang en my lyf bewe vreeslik. Ek kry vreeslike hoofpyne." Hope
		My <u>heart already beats so fast</u> and my <u>hands are sometimes very shaky</u> "My hart gaan al klaar so vinnig aan die klop en my hande bewe partykeer so erg." Ivy
		<u>It gnaws at me. I struggle to sleep</u>. "Dit vreet aan my. Ek sukkel om te slaap." Beth

(d)   Category: PTSD symptoms

Ten participants (50%) indicated that they experienced PTSD symptoms. These symptoms varied from heart pounding (*My heart already beats so fast... Ivy)*, trembling hands (*My hands are sometimes very shaky... Ivy)*, headaches (*I suffer from bad headaches. Hope)* and sleep problems (*I struggle to sleep. Beth*). Research concurs that posttraumatic stress disorder with symptoms such as anxiety, hyper-vigilance, sleep difficulties, problems with concentration, irritability and feelings of detachment is common in abused women (Eby, 2004:221). According to Scott-Tilley *et al.* (2010:26) and Krause, Kaltman, Goodman and Dutton (2008:86) it is clear that female victims of intimate partner violence develop PTSD and subsequent consequences at an alarming rate.

According to researchers such as Bollen *et al.* (1999:39), Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001:172), Eby (2004:221), Scott-Tilley *et al.* (2010:26) and Vincent and Jouriles (2002:86), PTSD is significantly more prevalent in abused women than in women who experience trauma not from intimate partner violence. Estimated prevalence for PTSD among female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) is 74-92%. This is approximately three times the rate of PTSD in women not exposed to IPV who experience trauma.

6.3.1.4   Theme 1 –   Sub-theme 4: Substance abuse by partner

The fourth sub-theme under theme 1 is substance abuse by the partner. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Wiehe (1998:102) observes that although substance abuse plays a role in domestic violence where excessive substance abuse is associated with higher female partner abuse rates, it is not an immediate antecedent of domestic violence. It is rather a combination of factors that will lead to domestic violence. The two categories under this theme are alcohol abuse and substance abuse.

TABLE 6.14

Substance abuse by partner: Alcohol abuse by partner

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 4	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Substance abuse by partner	Alcohol abuse by partner	*He takes a "doppie". He messes me up even if he has not taken a "doppie".* "Hy neem 'n doppie. Hy verniel my nie net as hy 'n doppie in het nie." Diane
		Yes, he drinks too much. Every night if he is drunk, he calls me names. He also swears at me. "Ja, hy drink te veel. Hy is elke aand dronk en skel hy my. Hy vloek my ook." Florry
		"He does drink a lot, but he will also beat me even if he is sober." Nita
		If he drinks he beats me. He will also beat me, even if he does not drink, but not so severely. "Hy slaan my as hy gedrink het. Hy sal my ook slaan al het hy nie gedrink nie, maar nie so erg nie." Pam

(a)   Category: Alcohol abuse by partner

In this study at least nine of the 20 participants (45%) indicated that their partners had a drinking problem. The alcohol abuse by the male partners varied from taking a "doppie" as

Diane indicated, to excessive drinking (*he drinks too much... Florry).* Seven participants (35%) said that the abuse would continue, even if their partners were not under the influence of alcohol (*He does drink a lot, but he will also beat me even if he is sober. Nita).* This view is supported by Cunradi, Todd, Duke and Ames (2009:63-74) who found alcohol abuse as such is not a single cause for domestic violence. It was however found that for couples in which the male was a problem drinker, and in which the male worker was currently unemployed, the risk for domestic violence was significantly higher than it was for couples where the male was not a problem drinker.

TABLE 6.15

Substance abuse by partner: Drug abuse by partner

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 4	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Substance abuse by partner	Drug abuse by partner	*My <u>boyfriend uses tik</u> and then he gets otherwise. If he is under the influence, <u>I stay out of his way</u>. He threatens and calls me names.* "My boyfriend gebruik tik en dan raak hy anders. As hy getik is bly ek uit sy pad . Hy dreig my en skel my.. ." Amy *If he doesn't have money for drugs, things are a little bit better. He smokes dagga.* "As hy nie geld vir drugs het nie, gaan dinge 'n bietjie beter. Hy rook dagga." Hope *He uses tik. He also uses cocaine and.... then <u>it is very dangerous for me</u>.* "Hy gebruik TIK. Hy gebruik ook kokaïne en... dan is dit baie gevaarlik vir my." Joy

(b)   Category: Drug abuse by partner

Four participants (20%) indicated that their partners used drugs and that this increased violent behaviour as can be seen from the excerpts. Drug abuse by male partners in this study varied from using dagga (*He smokes dagga. Hope)*, tik (*My boyfriend uses tik. Amy)* and cocaine (*He also uses cocaine...Joy).* This correlates with Hampton *et al.* (1999:47) who indicated that drug abuse might play a role in abusive behaviour. Grisso and Schwartz (1999:1899) concluded that "substance abuse, particularly cocaine use, is a significant correlate of violent injuries". They also came to the conclusion that some low-income women who stay in communities where drug abuse is a problem, have to deal with violence from their partners as well as from other persons.

6.3.1.5 Theme 1 – Sub-theme 5: Extreme jealousy of partner

The fifth sub-theme of theme 1 is extreme jealousy. Extreme jealousy is usually one of the characteristics of abusive men according to Hampton *et al.* (1999:47) and Mesatywa (2009:134). The two categories that emerged in this study regarding extreme jealousy are controlling behaviour and false accusations.

TABLE 6.16

Extreme jealousy: Controlling behaviour

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 5	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Extreme jealousy of partner	Controlling behaviour	*He has a jealousy... he does not trust me at all. He sent a message with another woman that he does not trust me and that he will kill me... he locks me in the house and takes the keys.* "Hy het 'n jaloesie.... Hy vetrou my glad nie. Hy het 'n boodskap saam met 'n ander vrou gestuur dat hy my nie vertrou nie en my sal doodmaak... en hy sluit my toe in die huis en hy vat die sleutel." Diane
		He is also very jealous. I am not allowed to talk to anybody, then he wants to beat me. He wants to know the whole time where I am going. I cannot even go to town alone. He wants to keep watch over me the whole time. I feel trapped. "Hy is ook baie jaloers. Ek mag met niemand praat nie, dan wil hy my ook slaan. Hy wil heeltyd weet waarheen ek gaan. Ek kan nie eers alleen dorp toe gaan nie. Hy wil my heeltyd dophou. Ek voel baie vasgehok…" Olive
		But I could not go anywhere. He watched me like a hawk. If I was away for too long, he would beat me. "Maar ek mag nêrens heen gegaan het nie. Hy het my soos 'n valk dopgehou. As ek te lank weg was, het hy my geslaan." Lara

(a) Category: Controlling behaviour

Sixteen of the 20 participants (80%) indicated that their partners would try to control their movements and would question them and get violent if they were away for too long from their homes, as is shown by Lara's response (*But I could not go anywhere. He watched me like a hawk. If I was away for too long, he would beat me*). Controlling behaviour varied from being watched the whole time, such as Lara being locked up (*He locks me in the house and takes the keys. Diane*) to threats of being killed (*He threatened to kill me if I stay away too long. Joy*). This echoes findings by researchers such as Johnstone, (1999:8), Hampton *et al.* (1999:47), Nordien *et al.* (2004:39) and Pyles's (2006:69) view that some abusive men have a great need

to control their female partners. Some abused women are so controlled that they do not even have the freedom to look for work or go shopping on their own, as can be seen from Olive's response. *(I cannot even go to town alone. He wants to keep watch over me the whole time.)*

According to Romito (2008:17) women who are insulted, humiliated, belittled, threatened, forced to not see friends or relatives, pushed, slapped and beaten, to name but a few are all caught up in domestic violence. Domestic violence is understood to be a pattern of a continuous series of actions which are diverse, but are characterised by one common purpose: control. Perpetrators of domestic violence often use deliberate isolation from family, friends and neighbours to control their female partners.

TABLE 6.17

Extreme jealousy: False accusations

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 5	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Extreme jealousy of partner	False accusations	*"My boyfriend has a big jealousy… No one can come to me. He doesn't trust me and thinks I have affairs. He gets very jealous."* Nita *It was not even four months that we had a relationship when it started. I was not allowed to go to other peoples' homes, then he starts. He accused me of having affairs and would then beat me.* "Dit was nog nie eens 4 maande wat ons uitgegaan het nie, toe begin dit. Ek mag nooit by ander mense se huise gaan sit het nie, dan begin hy. Hy het my beskuldig van ander mansmense. " Joy *He always checks my phone to see who phoned me and whom I phoned.* "Hy check altyd my foon om te sien wie my gebel het en wie ek gebel het." Edith

(b)   Category: False accusations

Another significant aspect that emerged, was that of the 16 participants whose partners displayed controlling behaviour, at least six (30%), were accused falsely of having affairs, as seen from the excerpts. If they went to visit friends or even went to church and came home a bit late their partners would blame them and falsely accuse them of having boyfriends. Edith's boyfriend would check her cell phone regularly and would phone any new number. (*He always checks my phone to see who phoned me and whom I phoned.*) This supports Wiehe's

view (1998:102) that false, irrational accusations and putting blame on the female partner are often characteristic of the abusive partner.

6.3.1.6   Theme 1 – Sub-theme 6: Pattern of abusive relationships

The sixth and last sub-theme under theme 1 is the pattern of abusive relationships. Two categories were identified, namely, "return to abusive partner" and "had more than one abusive relationship". Learned hopefulness that was discussed in Chapter 2, also often explains why some women remain with their abusive partners and why women are likely to return to their violent partners or enter into another abusive relationship. Makofane's research (2002:18) revealed that 60-70% of women who seek help at shelters and even those who seek separation through the courts eventually return to their abusive home situations. Other possible reasons except for learned hopefulness is emotional attachment and as mentioned before, the reality that there are no financial resources for a number of women to leave their abusive relationship permanently (Walker, 1984:13).

TABLE 6.18

Pattern of abusive relationships: Return to abusive partner

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 6	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Pattern of abusive relationships	Return to abusive partner	*I have left him several times. I cannot remember how many times.... I thought... I told him one day if he is not going to stop, I will go to my mom. Then it is final and you can forget that I will return. And every time I have moved, he begged me to please come back.* "Ek het hom al baie kere gelos. Ek kan nie onthou hoeveel keer nie... Toe dink ek.., ek sê toe vir hom toe eendag as jy nie gaan ophou nie, gaan ek weer na my ma toe. Dan is dit finaal en jy kan maar vergeet dat ek weer sal terugkom. En elke keer as ek getrek het, dan beg hy weer kom tog asseblief terug." Edith
		"Yes, I have left him several times. I am on my own now." Nita
		I have left him several times... at least five times. "Ek het hom al baie gelos... ten minste vyf keer." Rosy

(a)   Category: Return to abusive partner

Twelve participants in this study (60%) revealed during the interviews that they have left their partners at least twice, only to return again. Times that the participants left their partners varied from twice to several times. (*I have left him several times. I cannot remember how*

many times ... Edith) The main reason mentioned for returning was the financial restrictions, as well as for their children's sake. These findings are supported by authors such as Bassuk *et al.* (2005:387), Blum (1997:492) and Danis and Lockheart (2004:14) who argue that women often return to their abusive partners, because they cannot survive financially on their own and they need to raise their children. Pineless *et al.* (2008:166) argued that the relative lack of positive feedback, especially from abused women's partners may play a role in their return. It was indicated further that although most women in abusive relationships attempt to leave at least once during the course of abusive relationships, many women eventually return to their partners. For example, approximately half of women who seek shelter through domestic violence programmes return to abusive relationships after leaving the shelter.

TABLE 6.19

Pattern of abusive relationships: Had more than one abusive relationship

THEME 1 THE EXPERIENCE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE		
SUB-THEME 6	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Pattern of abusive relation-ships	Had more than one abusive relation-ship	*... my previous husband was also rude to me. He would beat me up. He would beat me up so badly that I still have scars today... This one also beats me...* "My vorige man was ook lelik met my. Hy het my ook geslaan. Hy het my so erg geslaan dat ek letsels het, vandag nog... Hierdie een slaan my ook." Olive *I was in three abusive relationships that were harmful to me.* "Ek was in drie abusive verhoudings wat my skade aangedoen het." Tina *This is now the second time that I am in such a relationship. My first boyfriend would beat me severely and I often had to flee for my life... Now I am involved with the same type of man. He promised me the sun, moon and stars, but he did not keep his promises.* "Dit is nou die tweede keer wat ek in so 'n verhouding is. My eerste boyfriend het my stukkend geslaan en ek moes dikwels vlug vir my lewe... Nou is ek weer met so 'n man deurmekaar. Hy het my die son, maan en sterre belowe, maar hy het my in die steek gelaat." Amy

(b)   Category: Had more than one abusive relationship

Three participants (15%) indicated that they had more than one abusive relationship. Two of them had two abusive relationships and the other one three as is shown in the excerpts. They did not reveal possible reasons why they had more than one abusive relationship and this did

not come out during the interviews. Rokach (2007:19) states that loneliness might be one of the factors why women have more than one abusive relationship in their lives. They might have the courage to leave their abusive partner, but because of loneliness, get involved with another person of similar qualities than their previous partner, which might result in another abusive relationship. As was stated under (b) in paragraph 6.3.1.2, some abusive men have other sexual relationships and might also move on to a new girlfriend. This makes low-income abused women vulnerable to more abuse as she might enter into a new relationship in order to survive financially.

6.3.2   Theme 2: Low-income

The second theme, low-income with three sub-themes "no way out", "struggle to make ends meet" and "low education level" will be discussed. Pretorius (2000:5) indicated that poverty is a fuelling factor in domestic violence, as discussed in Chapter 2. Authors like Bassuk *et al.* (2005:387); Biggerstaff, Morris and Nichols-Casebolt (2002:268), Carlson (1991:474), Lee (2001:249) and Pyles (2006:66) also hold the opinion that low-income families are significantly more likely to engage in domestic violence and that it is closely linked to poverty and the stress poverty creates.

6.3.2.1   No way out

A significant number of low-income women in abusive relationships have little or no economic resources and have no choice but to remain in the abusive relationship. Artz (1999:1) argues that poverty keeps women imprisoned in their violent situations and there is no escape (*I am trapped. I need to stay, I won't make it on my own with all the children. I also need the money from him. Cathy).*

TABLE 6.20

No way out: Financial restrictions and other restrictions

THEME 2: LOW-INCOME		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
No way out	Financial restrictions	*... because I <u>don't have money to go and stay on my own. I do not have another place.</u>* "...want ek het nie geld om alleen te gaan woon nie. Ek het nie 'n ander plek nie." Florry
		I wanted to leave him, but <u>I need his money to survive</u>. "Ek wou hom al gelos het, maar ek het sy geld nodig om te oorleef." Pam
		I am trapped. I need to stay. I won't make it on my own with all the children. I also need the money from him. "Ek is vasgevang. Ek moet bly. Ek sal dit nie op my eie maak nie. Ek het ook die geld van hom nodig." Cathy
	Other restrictions	*I always went to my grandmother if things got hectic. She died a year ago. My parents are also dead. <u>I have nowhere to go...</u>* "My ouma het my baie gehelp as dinge te rof geraak het. Sy is 'n jaar gelede oorlede. My ouers is ook dood. Ek kan nou nêrens heengaan nie..." Beth
		What can I do? Who am I? <u>Am I just an abandoned dog?</u> Twelve years this has been going on... <u>a whole twelve years with nowhere to go.</u> "Wie is ek? Is ek maar net 'n weggooihond? Twaalf jaar gaan dit nou al so aan... 'n Hele twaalf jaar en nêrens om heen te gaan nie." Kay
		"I can't stay on my own.... <u>He will kill me if I leave him.</u>" Pam

(a) Category: Financial restrictions

Fourteen participants (70%) who were married or cohabiting indicated that they remained in their abusive relationships because they would not be able to make it on their own financially (*I need his money to survive. Pam).* These findings correlate with other researchers such as Bell (2003:1247) and Twala (2004:63) who argued that some low-income women keep potentially dangerous men in their lives, so that their basic needs can be met. Many low-income abused women know they cannot keep their families housed, healthy, safe, and solvent on their income and resources alone. As was also discussed in paragraph 6.2.6 of this chapter low-income is one of the factors that might fuel domestic violence, due to the pressure of financial burdens (Purvin, 2007:206).

(b) Category: Other restrictions

Eight of the participants (40%) indicated their frustrations at being stuck (no way out) in the abusive relationships. These other restrictions (apart from financial restrictions) ranged from a sense of unworthiness (*Am I just an abandoned dog ... with nowhere to go? Kay)*, to having no place to stay other than in the abusive home (*I have nowhere to go ... Beth*), to fear of being killed if she leaves (*He will kill me if I leave him. Pam)*. This is supported by Grauwiler (2008:311) and Hampton *et al.* (1999:31) who state that often abused women cannot leave their partners, because of their circumstances, such as the responsibility of children, having to seek employment and leaving their own community and friends. Some women choose to stay and manage the violence. They regard this as a safer option than to lose everything and propelling themselves and their children into homelessness and more poverty.

Ferrato (2000:9) adds that leaving is often much more difficult than it appears. To leave or attempt to leave is often one of the most dangerous times in a woman's life. "Separation violence" refers to the escalation of abuse tactics at this point by the abusive man.

6.3.2.2   *Theme 2 – Sub-theme 2: Struggle to make ends meet*

Closely linked to the sub-theme of "no way out" is sub-theme 2 "struggle to make ends meet". Two categories namely, "difficulty to care for children" and "loss of property and belongings" were identified. Rosy's statement clearly reflects how she struggled to make ends meet (*At one stage my daughter and I were on the farm. There was no food. That was one of the times I left him. We ate dog chunks. It tastes OK if you are hungry … I also stole potatoes out of the farmer's land and made mash with the dog chunks over it, with a little bit of salt. If you don't have food, it tastes very nice).*

TABLE 6.21

Struggle to make ends meet: Difficulty to care for children

THEME 2: LOW-INCOME		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Struggle to make ends meet	Difficulty to care for children	*My child's shoes are broken… The other day he told me there are shoes at the Spar. I asked him where must I get money for new shoes?* "My kind se skoene is stukkend…. Die ander dag sê hy vir my daar is skoene by die Spar. Ek vra hom toe waar moet ek geld kry vir nuwe skoene?" Hope
		They sometimes go to school hungry. The school gives them sandwiches. We eat "pap" in the evenings. "Hulle gaan partykeer honger skool toe. Die skool gee vir hulle broodjies. Ons eet pap in die aand." Lara
		At one stage my daughter and I were on the farm. There was no food. That was one of the times I left him. We ate dog chunks. It tastes OK if you are hungry… I also stole potatoes out of the farmer's land and made mash with the dog chunks over it, with a little bit of salt. If you don't have food, it tastes very nice. "Op een tydstip het ek en my dogter op die plaas gaan woon. Dit was een van die kere wat ek hom gelos het. Ons het hondeblokkies geëet. Dit proe OK as jy honger is… Ek het ook aartappels uit die boer se land gesteel en het mash gemaak met die hondeblokkies bo-oor dit, met 'n bietjie sout. As jy nie kos het nie, proe dit baie lekker." Rosy

(a)   Category: Difficulty to care for children

Fifteen participants (75%) indicated that they received "All Pay", government funding to help them with caring for their children. They still struggled to provide sufficiently for their children. Difficulty to care for their children ranged from struggling to buy clothes and shoes for the children (*I asked him where must I get money for new shoes. Hope)* to struggling to feed the children (*They sometimes go to school hungry. Lara).* This concurs with Bell's (2003:1245) finding that a significant number of low-income abused women need government aid to help them care for their children. The fathers of these children often fail to provide sufficiently for them, making it more challenging for the mothers. Several authors such as Bell (2003:1245), Hagen (2001:121) Postmus and Hahn (2007:475) and Pyles (2006:63) have indicated the link between social welfare and domestic violence.

TABLE 6.22

Struggle to make ends meet: Loss of property and belongings

THEME 2: LOW-INCOME		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Struggle to make ends meet	Loss of property and belongings	*I really struggle. I get a very small salary. I left him 6 months ago. I stay with my brother. <u>I lost the house</u>… had to sell it. I cannot afford to stay on my own. <u>I also had to sell my car</u>. I could not afford it any longer.* "Ek sukkel rêrig. Ek kry 'n baie klein salarissie. Ek het hom 6 maande gelede gelos. Ek woon by my broer. Ek het die huis verloor...moes dit verkoop het. Ek kan nie bekostig om op my eie te woon nie. Ek moes ook my kar verkoop het. Ek kon dit nie langer bekostig het nie." Sally'
		It was a letter from the bank to say that they are <u>going to repossess our belongings,</u> because we owe them money. "Dit was 'n brief van die bank wat gesê het hulle gaan al ons goed kom neem, want ons skuld hulle geld." Ivy
		At present <u>I am staying with my sister</u>. It is a three-roomed house. <u>We are eight with the children</u>. <u>It is a bit cramped</u>, but we go on. I had to move in with her, as I lost my job and I left him. "Ek woon op die oomblik by my suster. Dit is 'n drie-vertrek huisie. Ons loop 'n bietjie oormekaar, maar ons gaan maar aan. Ek moes by haar intrek, want ek het my werk verloor en ek het hom gelos." Joy

(b) Category: Loss of property and belongings

All six participants who were separated (30%) experienced the loss of material possessions. These losses varied from loss of possessions (*It was a letter from the bank to say that they are going to repossess our belongings. Ivy)*, to loss of a house and a car (*I lost the house… had to sell it. I cannot afford to stay on my own. I also had to sell my car. I could not afford it any longer. Sally)*. This is supported by Sanderson (2008:212) who mentions a couple of losses that survivors of domestic violence have to bear. Included in material losses are the losses of home and possessions. If an abused woman should start divorce proceedings as Sally did, material losses are extremely difficult and stressful together with all the other losses such as loss of trust and intimacy. All 20 participants experienced some or other form of material loss. Another loss was loss of employment, because of absence while recovering from domestic abuse or leaving the abusive partner. Joy had to move from one town to escape her boyfriend's violent attacks and as a result lost her job. It is indeed her former employer who helped her get out of her violent relationship. As a result she stays in overcrowded conditions and is

struggling to find a job (*I am staying with my sister. We are eight with the children. It is a bit cramped. I had to move in with her, as I lost my job when I left him. Joy*).

6.3.2.3   Theme 2 – Sub-theme 3: Low education level

Sub-theme 3, namely a low education level is the last sub-theme under theme 2. The two categories identified under this sub-theme are "illiteracy" and "poor job opportunities". Authors such as Brown *et al.* (1999:393), Hagen (2001:119) and Vandergriff *et al.* (2004:372) agree that there is a relationship between low education levels and poverty and those women who are poor with low education levels are more vulnerable to domestic violence than women who have higher levels of education. Gill's response indicates this relationship between poverty and low education levels (*I finished grade 4. It was circumstances. My father did not work, my mother neither. I cannot find a job).

TABLE 6.23

Low education level: Illiteracy and poor job opportunities

THEME 2: LOW-INCOME		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Low education level	Illiteracy	*I never went to school. I cannot find a job. They are looking for someone who can read.* "Ek het nooit skool toe gegaan nie. Ek kan nie 'n werk kry nie. Hulle soek iemand wat kan lees." Edith *I gave the letter to my nephew and asked him to read it for me. (Cannot read)* "Ek het die brief vir my suster se kind gegee om te lees. (Kan nie lees nie)" Ivy
	Poor job opportunities	*I really want a job, but it is difficult. I only have grade 7*. "Ek wil rêrig 'n job hê, maar dit is moeilik. Ek het net standerd 5." Meg *I finished grade 4. It was circumstances. My father did not work, my mother neither. I cannot find a job.* "Ek het standerd 2 klaar gemaak. Dit was omstandighede. My pa het nie gewerk nie, ook nie my ma nie. Ek kan nie 'n job kry nie. " Gill

(a)   Category: Illiteracy

Two of the 20 participants (10%) had not received any schooling and had to rely on their partners or other people to help them with basic tasks such as completing a form or reading a letter as can be seen from the excerpts. These two participants indicated that their partners controlled their lives and that they had little freedom to go as they pleased (*I must always ask*

him if I can go anywhere and he will not let me go and visit my friends. Ivy). This is supported by literature. Illiteracy hampers a person to function effectively in today's society. Women who are illiterate are often exploited by their partners and do not have the knowledge to stand up for themselves. Douki *et al*. (2003:165) found that some men will make sure their women are illiterate as a means to control them. This has relevance to paragraph 6.3.1.5 (extreme jealousy by partner). Deyessa, Berhane and Ellsberg (2010:12) and Pandey, Neely-Barnes and Menon (2000:56) found that some illiterate women were more likely to accept domestic violence as part of their lot than women who were literate.

(b)   Category: Poor job opportunities

Six participants (30%) had only a primary school education as can be seen in Figure 6.1 and this contributed to their struggle to find suitable employment (*I really want a job, but it is difficult. I only have grade 7*.). Literature (Postmus & Hahn, 2007:475; Jewkes *et al.,* 2002:1603) reveal that poor working conditions and opportunities go hand in hand with low levels of education, as was discussed earlier.

6.3.3   Theme 3: Resources

The third theme relates to resources. Germain and Gitterman (1996:43) view resources in a person's life as either supportive or unresponsive. Carlson (1991:475) argues that women will often use resources such as friends, family, neighbours and the church to help them when they have been abused, before they will seek professional help. Saleebey (2002:16) is of the opinion that informal resources always have something to offer to a person who is in need, despite poverty, oppression and other hampering factors. This emerged very strongly from the participants' stories, that there was help available in a crisis (*The people care for me. They will help me if he beats me. I can always go to Jacky if there is a problem. She always welcomes me with an open heart. Cathy).* Three sub-themes were identified namely significant others, church and professional help. These sub-themes will be analysed and interpreted below.

6.3.3.1   Sub-theme 1: Significant others

This sub-theme of significant others was placed in three categories namely family, friends and neighbours. It is significant that most of the participants found their family, friends and neighbours to be very supportive (*I have two friends. They help me and talk to me. Nita).*

TABLE 6.24

Significant others: Family and in-laws

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Significant others	Family and in-laws	_My mother is my biggest support. She is very good to me and helps me the most._ "My ma is my grootste ondersteuning. Sy is baie goed vir my en help my die meeste." Edith
		His family helped me a great deal and talked to him if he messed with other women and also when I was beaten up, especially his mother. "Sy familie het my baie gehelp en met hom gepraat as hy lol met ander vrouens en ook as hy my geslaan het, veral sy ma." Meg
		Sometimes my family will help me, but they are also upset that I do not want to leave him. "My familie help my gewoonlik, maar hulle word ook baie kwaad oor ek hom nie los nie." Olive

(a)   Category: Family and in-laws

It is significant to note that in-laws were also viewed as supportive (_His family helped me a great deal. Meg_). Trotter and Allen (2009:229) view informal helpers as important role players in assisting women living with or attempting to end the abuse. Family might be of great help to an abused woman, but can also put unnecessary pressure on her to either stay or move on if she is not ready to do either. Their study shows that negative and mixed reactions from family and friends are not rare occurrences in the lives of survivors. Moreover, it highlights that separating the assessment of positive and negative reactions lends support to the notion that "social support" is a multifaceted construct that cannot be understood by collapsing positive and negative reactions into a single construct. Figure 6.4 indicates how supportive the participants viewed their family.
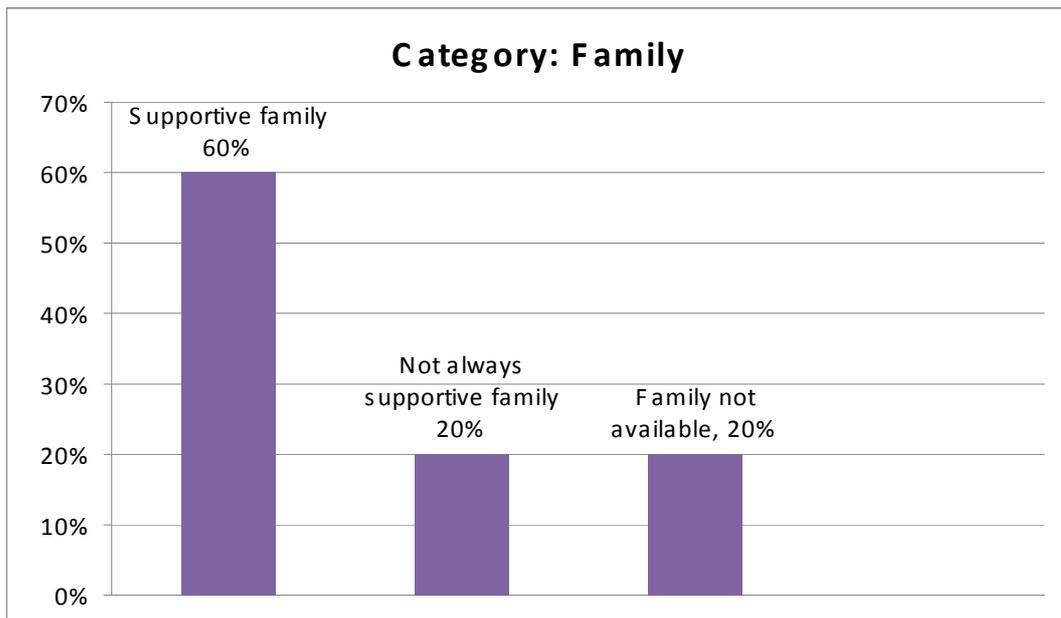
Figure 6.4:   Family of the participants as resources

Twelve of the participants (60%) concluded that their family or in-laws were supportive of them in their situation (first column of Figure 6.3. *My mother is my biggest support. She is very good to me and helps me the most. Edith)*. Four participants (20%) indicated that their family were not always supportive and blamed them for not leaving their partners (second column of Figure 6.4. *My family is upset with me, because I do not leave him. Ivy)*. Four participants (20%) had family who stayed far away or were deceased (third column of Figure 6.4. *My parents are both dead, and my sister stays in the Eastern Cape. Nita)*.

Friends as support is the following category to be discussed:

TABLE 6.25
Significant others: Friends

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Significant others	Friends	<u>*I also have a good very friend*</u> *to whom I can talk. I go to her to escape from my circumstances. She cheers me up. We laugh and make jokes.* "Ek het ook 'n baie goeie vriendin met wie ek kan praat. Ek gaan soontoe om te ontvlug. Sy 'cheer' my op. Ons lag en maak grappies." Amy *There is one woman I can talk to.* <u>*She is a friend*</u>. "Daar is een vrou met wie ek kan praat. Sy is 'n vriendin. " Ivy "<u>*I have two friends*</u>. *They helped me and talk to me, but they also wanted me to leave him. They could see his jealousy."* Nita

(b)   Category: Friends

Trotter and Allen (2009:229) also found that friends of women who are abused can be of great support, but can also expect of her to act in ways toward her partner that she might not be able to do. Flinck *et al*. (2005:386) were of the opinion that friends played an important supportive role in abused women's lives.

Figure 6.5 illustrates how the participants viewed their friends.
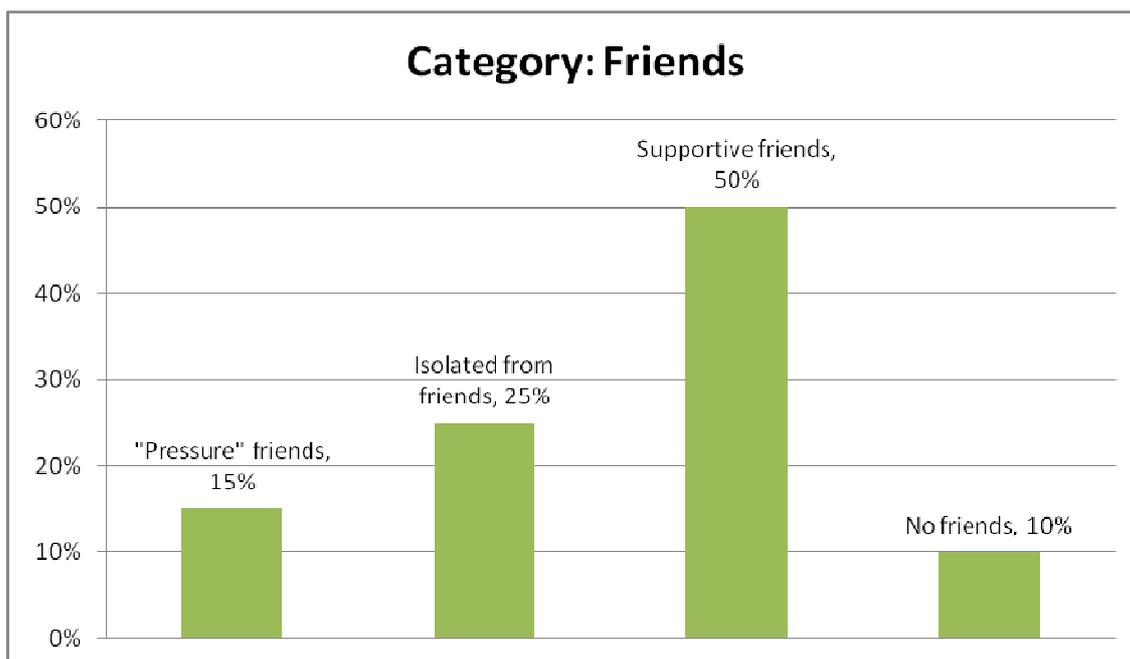
Figure 6.5: **Friends of the participants as resources**

In this study three participants (15%) mentioned that their friends tried to put pressure on them to leave their partners (first column of Figure 6.5. *They helped me and talk to me, but they also wanted me to leave him. Nita*). Five participants (25%) indicated that they were isolated from their friends (second column of Figure 6.5. *My friends are all in the Eastern Cape…Nita*). Half of the participants (50%) indicated that their friends were supportive of them and empathic towards their situation (third column of Figure 6.5. *I also have a good very friend to whom I can talk. I go to her to escape from my circumstances. Amy*). Two of the participants (10%) did not mention their friends (fourth column of Figure 6.5).

The last category under significant others is neighbours.

TABLE 6.26
Significant others: Neighbours

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Significant others	Neighbours	*The <u>aunty there over the road encourages</u> and supports me tremendously.* "Die tannie daar oorkant die straat praat my baie moed in en gee my vreeslik baie ondersteuning." Florry *"The people who stay behind us come and knock if he beats me. <u>He stops then if they come</u>...* "Die mense wat agter ons woon kom klop as hy my slaan. Hy hou dan op as hulle kom...." Olive *"If he beats me too much, <u>I go to the neighbours</u> and that man will come and talk to him."* Pam

(c)   Category: Neighbours

Eleven of the participants (55%) would run to their neighbours or shout when their partners beat them and found the neighbours extremely helpful if things were getting out of control (*If he beats me too much, I go to the neighbours and that man will come and talk to him. Pam*). Three participants (15%) regarded their neighbours as women to whom they could talk and who would help them unload their burdens (*The aunty there over the road encourages and supports me tremendously. Florry).* Authors such as Bosch and Bergen (2005:311), Douki *et al*. (2003:1650) and Pyles and Postmus (2004:376) agree that neighbours and a community should be involved in caretaking. Caretaking is all about the revolutionary possibility of hope, a hope that starts through the strengthened sinew relationships in family, neighbourhood, community, culture and country. It is clear from the responses from Florry and Olive that they experienced their neighbours as part of their resources helping them to cope.

As was discussed in Chapter 4 the abuse women in intimate partner violence suffer may be injurious, but according to the strengths perspective, it could also be a source of challenge and opportunity, for instance a chance to seek friendship and support from people in the community (Flinck *et al*., 2005:386; Saleebey, 2002:14). Chan, Lam and Cheng (2009:559) suggest that the community can be very effective in helping to fight the family violence problem. Neighbours for instance can form part of the safety plan that was discussed in Chapter 2.

6.3.3.2   Theme 3 – Sub-theme 2: Church

The next sub-theme that will be discussed is that of the church, which the participants indicated as a resource. The categories, namely the pastor/minister and members of the church are closely linked.

TABLE 6.27

Church: Pastor/minister and members of the church

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Church	Pastor/minister	*The pastor prays for me often and told me several times that I must leave him.* "Die pastoor bid baie vir my en het al baie gesê ek moet hom los." Beth *The minister organised a camp. I attended. The sessions were outstanding and helped me to realise that I am not useless.* "Die predikant het 'n kamp gereël waarheen ek gegaan het. Die sessies was uitstekend en het my gehelp om te besef ek is nie useless nie." Sally *The pastor took me to the court and helped me to get a protection order.* "Die pastor het my hof toe geneem en gehelp om 'n protection order te kry." Rosy)
Church	Members of church	*There is a <u>church sister</u> that always <u>helps me</u>.* "Daar is 'n kerksustertjie wat altyd help." Gill *The sister of the church told me she would ask her sister if I could stay there. <u>They will receive me with open arms</u>.* "Die suster van die kerk, het gesê sy gaan haar suster bel en vra of ek daar kan woon. Hulle sal my met 'n ope hart aanvaar." Cathy *The church people help me sometimes... especially if things are difficult. The one church man has also called the police* "Die kerkmense help my partykeer...veral as dinge swaar gaan. Die een kerkman het al die polisie gebel". Kay

(a)   Category: Pastor/minister

Pastoral care varied in this study from the minister/pastor being actively involved in counselling and praying (*The pastor prays for me often and told me several times that I must leave him. Beth)*, to more practical help such as helping to gain a protection order (*The pastor took me to the court and helped me to get a protection order. Rosy*). Four participants (20%) said that their pastor or minister helped them in their struggle with domestic violence (*The pastor prays often for me. Beth*). This echoes Dyer's research (2010:33) that indicated that some women exposed to intimate partner violence will go to a minister or pastor for help, and that perspectives and practices used by clergy to address partner violence are mostly

compatible with clinical best practices. Hodge (2005:287) compiled a spiritual eco-map that could be used to help people. He concluded that spirituality and religion are important aspects to enable people to cope with life. Some people who experience hardship will go to their pastor or minister for help.

(b)   Category: Members of church

Eight participants (40%) said that people at their church were a great support and helped them also practically such as looking after children and calling the police if necessary (*The church people help me sometimes... especially if things are difficult. The one church man has also called the police. Kay).* Two participants (10%) listed some negative aspects of the members of their church such as gossiping, but still regarded the other people in the church as helpful and would just avoid the gossips. Participants' views on the church as a helpful resource varied from finding the church very supportive (*There is a church sister that always helps me. Gill)* to not always finding the church helpful (*There was a church woman whom I talked to. She talked behind my back…now I don't talk to her anymore. Rosy.).* Fourré (2006:111, 174) observes that faith communities such as churches can provide tremendous support to vulnerable women. Support groups where women in similar situations meet and support one another could help the process of restoration. In this study none of the participants indicated that they were part of such a support group, but the responses of Gill and Cathy indicated that they found members of the church to be supportive.

6.3.3.3   Theme 3 – Sub-theme 3: Professional help

The third and last sub-theme under the theme of resources is professional help. Four categories were identified and will be presented in the following four tables. All the participants in this study made use of some or other form of professional help. The professional help varied from medical intervention, social case work, social group work to psychological help.

TABLE 6.28

Professional help: Social case work

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Pro-fessional help	Social worker: Case work	*Anna (social worker) helped me to go to the court to get a protection order.* "Anna (maatskaplike werker) het my gehelp om na die hof te gaan om 'n protection order teen hom te kry." Amy
		Mrs Brown of the Welfare was very good to me, she helped me tremendously. "Mevrou Brown van die Welsyn was baie goed vir my. Sy het my vreeslik baie gehelp." Sally

(a) Category: Social worker, case work

Twelve participants (60%) received some or other form of social work intervention, whether it was support services or practical help regarding their children. Social work services varied from counselling (*Mrs Brown of the Welfare was very good to me, she helped me tremendously. Sally)*, intervention (*She saw us together and told him that he cannot beat me up like this. Joy)*, introducing women to valuable resources such as child care grants (*She helped me to get "All Pay". Gill*) to help to gain legal protection (*Anna (social worker) helped me to go to the court to get a protection order. Amy*). This correlates with Hagen's view (2001:121) that for many battered women, social work intervention provides a safety net. Despite services such as introducing abused women to the necessary resources, counselling and consultation services, social workers may help abused women to cope better with their situation. Davis (2001:1) and Wahab (2005:34) observe that it is mostly the social work profession which intervenes when low-income women are exposed to domestic violence, as these women often need help with their children and with resources. Postmus and Hahn (2007:1044) supported David's view and indicated the intertwined relationship between poverty and violence. This is where social workers often get involved in women's lives when they experience intimate partner violence (IPV).

TABLE 6.29
Professional help: Social group work

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Professional help	Social worker: Group work	*There was a Social worker at the welfare office that had a group for depressed people. She helped me a great deal. She was like a friend to me. If it was not for her, I wouldn't have made it.* "Daar was 'n maatskaplike werker by die Welsynskantoor wat 'n groep gehou het vir depressiewe mense. Sy het my baie gehelp. As dit nie vir haar was nie, sou ek dit nie gemaak het nie." Tina
		My Welfare is very proud of me. I attended all the group sessions. It was every Wednesday from 9 to 10. I also received a certificate. "My Welsyn is baie trots op my. Ek het die groepsessies almal bygewoon. Dit was elke Woensdag vanaf 9 tot 10. Ek het ook 'n sertifikaat gekry." Rosy

(b)   Category: Social worker, group work

Three of the 12 participants who received case work intervention (15%) indicated that at some or other time in their abusive relationships they were also part of a social work group (*My Welfare is very proud of me. I attended all the group sessions. Rosy*). This echoes findings of Grauwiler (2008:318) that indicated that the 15 women in her study experienced social group work as essential in their efforts to come to terms with IPV and to resolve subsequent consequences of the abuse. The support these women received from one another helped them also to learn how to cope in life. Jackson and Dilger (1995:51) as well as Andrews (1987:39) also supported group work for abused women, because of its empowering qualities. Gondolf (2007:341) again argued the value of culturally-focused counselling groups for perpetrators of domestic violence.

TABLE 6.30
Professional help: Clinic sister

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Professional help	Clinic sister	*I've never been to the Welfare. I was too scared to go there. I was scared of him. I could go to the clinic and <u>talk to the clinic sister</u>.* "Ek was nooit by die Welsyn nie. Ek was te bang om na hulle toe te gaan. Ek was bang vir hom. Ek kon na die kliniek gaan en met die klinieksuster gaan praat." Joy
		"<u>I come here to the clinic and the sister helps me.</u> She also helps me with pills and a food parcel." Pam

(c)   Category: Clinic sister

The participants all made use of medical services for treatment of wounds. Medical care varied from treating wounds in the clinic or day hospital (*The sister here at the clinic treated my stab wound. Hope*) to hospitalisation (*I was in the hospital for two days, because of all my wounds. Meg).* These findings are supported by Davhana-Maselesele *et al.* (2009:2524) who indicated that women in IPV tend to visit hospitals or clinics frequently due to injuries or miscarriages as a result of assaults during pregnancy. Fleury-Steiner *et al.* (2006:339) indicated that tangible support such as medical care may bolster survivors' confidence. Seven participants (35%) indicated that the clinic sister also helped them to deal emotionally with their trauma (*I could go to the clinic and talk to the clinic sister. Joy).* Joyner *et al.* (2007:19) recommended in their study in the trauma and resuscitation unit of an urban hospital in South Africa that the health care sector should receive adequate training to deal with the huge fall-out of domestic violence. Flinck *et al.* (2005:341) agreed with this and stated that in a clinical context, nurses should be trained and develop the necessary skills of how to deal with IPV.

TABLE 6.31

Professional help: Psychologist

THEME 3: RESOURCES		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Professional help	Psychologist	*My psychologist tells me regularly what a strong woman I am. She helps me to work through everything. If I divorce him, I won't be on his medical aid anymore and won't be able to go to her anymore.* "My sielkundige vertel my gereeld watter sterk vrou ek is. Sy help my om deur alles te werk. As ek van hom skei, is ek nie meer op sy medies nie, en sal nie meer na haar toe kan gaan nie." Sally
		In Stikland the psychologist helped me to go on and she taught me to be more assertive. I also got medication. "In Stikland het die sielkundige my gehelp om aan te gaan en het sy my geleer om meer assertive te wees. Ek het ook medikasie gekry." Rosy

(d)   Category: Psychologist

In this study three participants (15%) had at some or other stage in their abusive relationship received psychological services. Two of them (10%) were also involved in social work intervention. Psychological services varied from counselling (*She helps me to work through everything. Sally)* to inpatient treatment for depression (*In Stikland the psychologist helped me to go on and she taught me to be more assertive. Rosy).*

As discussed under theme 1, women in IPV often suffer from depression and there is a need for psychological service. Wright *et al*. (2007:631) argued that in therapy abused women might be able to identify their situation, be able to speak about it and after a while be empowered. Vivian and Molone (1997:3) echoed previous researchers' view of therapy and argued that because of the severe trauma abused women face, psychological help may be of great benefit. Levendosky and Graham-Berman (2001:181) took this argument even further, adding that if the psychological functioning of abused women is not addressed, it might be harmful to their children because of the risk of child abuse.

6.3.4   Theme 4 – Strengths/Coping mechanisms

The fourth theme relates to strengths/coping mechanisms. It is significant that despite adverse circumstances the participants could all find their own unique way of coping. As Saleebey (2002:80) puts it so well, "*even though individuals may have laboured for years under the blame and disapproving opinion of others ... or unfortunate life decisions, they almost always know what is right for them*". The participants all found their strengths and coping mechanisms in one or more of the following sub-themes: children, religion, hope, survivor and alcohol.

6.3.4.1   Theme 4 – Sub-theme 1: Children

Despite the fact that most low-income abused women struggled to make ends meet and care for their children, as discussed under (a) of paragraph 6.3.2.2 it is significant to note that children also helped these women to cope as can be seen from the excerpts. The two categories that will be looked at are closely linked and can almost be regarded as one. However the participants indicated both categories and they will be discussed separately.

TABLE 6.32

Children: Meaning in life and goal to bring them up

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Children	Meaning in life	*I live for my children. They make life worth living.* "Ek leef vir my kinders. Hulle maak die lewe die moeite werd." Amy *My children give great significance to my life. They are the reason I am living.* "My kinders beteken vir my baie. Hulle is die rede waarvoor ek lewe." Beth *It is just my children. They are very important to me. I love them very much. They are the reason I am going on.* "Dit is maar net my kinders. Hulle is vir my baie belangrik. Ek is baie lief vir hulle almal. Hulle maak dat ek sal aangaan." Edith
	Goal in life	*"... but then I think what will happen to my child if I am not there. I do not want to give this child more pain. I must be there for him, until he is grown up.* "...maar dan dink ek wat sal gebeur met my kind as ek nie daar is nie. Ek wil hom nie meer pyn gee nie. Ek moet daar wees vir hom tot hy groot is." Ivy *I cope to be there for my child. I want to give her the best I can. She is everything to me…* "Ek cope om daar te wees vir my kind. Ek wil haar die beste gee. Sy is alles vir my." Rosy *"They cannot go on without me. They need me to bring them up. I will do it for them."* Nita

(a)   *Category: Meaning in life*

Most of the participants (75%) indicated that their children gave meaning to their lives, despite the financial burden. This "meaning in life" ranged from living for children (*I live for my children. They make life worth living. Amy),* to children giving significance (*My children give great significance to my life. They are the reason I am living. Beth*) to the reason to go on (*I love them very much. They are the reason I am going on. Edith*). These findings are supported by Bell (2008:1246) who indicated in her study that some abused women want to keep their families intact. They would typically reveal that their children made their lives meaningful, similar to what Amy, Beth and Edith said. Saleebey (2002:14-18) also notes that when some people experience adversity in their lives, they will cope better if they have something that would give meaning to their lives, as some women in this study indicated their children giving meaning to their lives.

(b)   *Category: Goal in life*

Eleven participants (55%) said that they had to go on despite the abuse in order to bring up their children. "Children as a goal in life" varied from being available for them (*They need me to bring them up. I will do it for them. Nita)* to a determination to give the best for the children (*I want to give her the best I can. She is everything to me… Rosy).* Authors such as Saleebey (2002:14-18) has suggested each low-income woman who is battered by her partner may have strengths helping her cope, like protecting her children and loyalty towards her family (*I do not want to give this child more pain. I must be there for him, until he is grown up. Ivy*). A low-income battered woman may find meaning in caring for other people such as her own children and this might give her a goal to live for and make life worth living. Although her abusive circumstances should be viewed as a serious challenge, her hopes and dreams of raising and supporting her children might give energy and resilience to deal with her circumstances (Bassuk *et al.*, 2005:387; Saleebey, 2002:101). Some female survivors of domestic violence try to negotiate financial and emotional support in caring for their children. They view their children as a good reason to carry on, despite adverse circumstances (Bell, 2003:1250).

6.3.4.2   Theme 4 – Sub-theme 2: Religion

The second sub-theme is religion. It is significant to note that most participants indicated that religion is one way of helping them cope with their difficult situation (*In the morning I go on my knees and ask God to help me. Cathy*). Landman and Theron (2007:202) verified this by indicating that some abused women experience praying and trusting in God as part of their healing process. Praying and trusting in the Lord were the two categories that were identified in this study as well. They are closely linked, but will be presented separately.

TABLE 6.33

Religion: Prayer and trust in the Lord

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Religion	Prayer	*In the morning I go on my knees and ask God to help me. I pray that this heaviness will leave me.* "In die oggend gaan ek op my knieë en vra dat die Here my moet help. Ek bid deur die dag dat die Here my moet help dat die swaarheid van my kan wegkom." Cathy
		"*I pray every day that God will help me and protect me. It helps me to get through the day.*" Nita
		If he starts to beat me I pray to God to help. "As hy my begin slaan bid ek dat die Here my sal help." Val
	Trust in the Lord	*The Lord carries me through this difficulty. Last week He supplied abundantly for me.* "Die Here dra my deur hierdie swaar. Hy het laas week lieflik vir my voorsien." Diane
		I have been walking a path with the Lord for two years now. The Lord helps me. If I had not given my heart to the Lord, it would have been more difficult. "Ek stap nou al twee jaar 'n pad met die Here. Die Here help my. As ek nie my hart aan die Here gegee het nie dan sou dit baie swaarder gegaan het." Rosy
		I cry then and ask the Lord to help me. The Lord helps me to stay, even though it is difficult. "Dan huil ek en ek vra dat die Here my moet help. Die Here help my om te bly, al gaan die moelik." Florry

(a)   Category: Prayer

In this study almost all the participants (90%) indicated that they used prayer as a means to cope, especially when they were in a dangerous situation with their partners starting to become violent. The prayers varied from praying when the violence occurred (*If he starts to beat me I pray to God to help. Val,*) to praying every day for strength (*I pray every day that God will help me and protect me. Nita).* Authors such as Hodge (2005:287) and Saleebey (2002:187) agree that prayer may be a way of discovering meaning and withstanding the stresses of the often incomprehensible events of abuse. As was discussed in Chapter 4, some abused women view spirituality as a grand bulwark against life's stresses and demands. Lehrer, Lehrer and Krauss (2009:635) indicated in their study that female students who pray and show a certain level of religiosity seem to be less vulnerable to intimate partner violence than those who did not pray and had no religiosity.

(b)   Category: Trust in the Lord

Seven participants (35%) indicated that they trusted in the Lord. Their trust in the Lord varied from a cry to the Lord in their despair (*The Lord carries me through this difficulty. Diane)* to a strong faith in the Lord (*I have been walking a path with the Lord for two years now. The Lord helps me. If I had not given my heart to the Lord, it would have been more difficult. Rosy).* This correlates with research conducted by Flinck *et al*., 2003:388 and Parenzee and Smythe, 2003:27 who found that their faith in God helped some women to cope in difficult situations. It is significant to note that at least two of the participants (10%), despite financial restrictions, also indicated that their faith prevented them from leaving their abusive partners (*The Lord helps me to stay, even though it is difficult. Florry).* Saleebey (2002:87) and Hodge (2005:287) are of the opinion that religion, also referred to as spirituality is the compass of hope that can point to possibilities for the future. Religion and spirituality enable people to cope with the demands of life, giving them hope, purpose and meaning, as is indicated in the above excerpts.

6.3.4.3   *Theme 4 – Sub-theme 3: Hope*

It is meaningful to note that most of the participants indicated that they had hope and identified that as a coping mechanism (*I believe and hope that everything will come right and that I'll be happy. It is hope that lets me go on. Val).* This correlates with literature. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984:7) coping resources in abused women could include a positive outlook on life and a hope that things will improve. Postmus (2000:244) and Saleebey (2002:101) argue that it is better to focus on the bright side, capacities and hope, rather than on the problems and hopelessness. It is significant that it is this hope that helps people go on and not give up despite difficult circumstances (*I am going forward without him. I am going to go on with my life. Diane).* The sub-theme of hope was divided into four categories as set out in the following four tables and points.

TABLE 6.34

Hope: Dream

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Hope	Dream	*I wish I could be on my own, with my children with me and that I have a good job and earn enough to look after my children. I can live without an abusive man who is rude to me. <u>I keep on dreaming</u>.* "Ek wens ek kan op my eie wees, my kinders by my en dat ek 'n goeie werk kan hê en genoeg verdien om vir almal te kan versorg. Ek sal sonder 'n man kan klaarkom wat lelik is met my. Ek hou aan droom." Meg *<u>My dream</u> is to raise my children and to be a good mother to them. <u>I dream</u> of a stable life.* "My droom is om self my kinders groot te maak en vir hulle goeie ma te wees. Ek droom vir 'n standvastige lewe." Amy *I believe and hope that everything will come right and that I'll be happy. <u>It is hope that lets me go on</u>.* "Ek glo en hoop dat alles sal regkom en dat ek gelukkig sal wees. Dit is hoop wat my laat aangaan." Val

(a)   Category: Dream

"What is your dream in life?" was specifically asked to the participants (see Addendum B). It is meaningful that all of them said that to be safe was part of their dreams. Eighteen participants (90%) indicated a house of their own with their children as part of their dream. Their dreams varied from accommodation (*If I could just have a place of my own for me and the kids ... Lara)* to a better life for their children (*I wish I could be on my own, with my children with me and that I have a good job and earn enough to look after my children. Meg)* to a hope that circumstances will improve (*I believe and hope that everything will come right and that I'll be happy. Val).* Saleebey (2002:80) notes that despite disappointments and struggles in life, some abused women will press forward and continue to dream of a better life. If people have dreams and aspirations there is hope that circumstances will get better. The clear expectation of the social worker should be that the person will stand up and get out of the hole, using her unique set of strengths. There should be an expectancy, a hope and belief that things will improve (Harney, 2007:73; Hosseini, 2007:241, Saleebey, 2002:83; Profitt, 1996:23).

TABLE 6.35

Hope: Determination

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATEGORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Hope	Determination	*I am going forward without him. I am going to go on with my life*. "Ek wil vorentoe gaan sonder hom. Ek wil aangaan met my lewe ." Diane *"... but I am on my own now for three months. He still tries to come to me at night, but I lock the door. I do not want him there. He makes it too hard and he will beat me again…I have a life without hom now...*"Nita

(b)   Category: Determination

Five of the participants (25%) were determined to break away from the abusive relationship even if it was at a later stage (*I am going forward without him. Diane*). This echoes Laird's view (2001:295) that women from all spheres of life are slowly but surely getting more courageous and are breaking the silence. Some write their stories, other go to court and gain Interim Protection Orders, other go to social workers, others leave their situation. Those who stay rediscover an inner strength. They reshape their stories and do not view themselves as debilitated or as victims, but as survivors. They are determined to survive and not let their abused partners get them down (*I have a life without him now...Nita*).

TABLE 6.36

Hope: Projects

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Hope	Projects	*I started to make an Oprah scrapbook. I have learned from it how to deal with life and I apply what I have learned. This help me to think ahead. I take one step at a time.* "Ek het vir my 'n Ophrah-plakboek begin maak. Ek het daaruit geleer hoe om my lewe te hanteer, en pas toe wat ek geleer het. Dit help my om vooruit te dink. Ek neem een tree op 'n slag." Sally *I have also learnt to make "droëwors". If I can use his machine, I sometimes sell it on a Saturday morning.* "Ek het ook geleer om droëwors te maak. As ek sy masjien kan gebruik, verkoop ek dit partykeer op 'n Saterdagoggend…" Rosy

(c)   Category: Projects

Two participants (10%) were busy with projects and indicated that this helped them to cope. Sally made a scrap-book and Rosy learned to make "droëwors" as indicated in the excerpts. Saleebey (2002:80) is of the opinion that each person has knowledge and talents, skills and resources that can be used in pressing forward towards a unique life. Thomson (2006:42) conducted art classes for abused women who did clay projects and displayed their work. One of them said: "*We are strong and fragile like the clay we work with. It soothes and calms us, connects in us with our creative passion, moving us forward in our lives.*" Thomson (2006:42) is of the opinion that practical art projects can help abused women to express and transform their pain into something constructive and to reconnect their strengths. One of the women who took part in this art exhibition said, "*…this project helped us raise awareness of abuse and to remove the stigma that keeps us silent and honour those who do not have a voice*".

TABLE 6.37

Hope: Improve educational level

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 3	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Hope	Improve educational level	*...but <u>I am not useless or a nobody</u>. I also completed a <u>computer course</u>. I started to work as a cashier. I have learnt. Now I am a manager at my work. Next year I am going to do a bookkeeping course. I have already enrolled.* "...maar ek is nie pateties nie, of 'n nobody nie. Ek het ook gegaan vir 'n computer kursus. Ek het as 'n kassier begin werk. Ek het geleer. Nou is ek die bestuurder van my werk. Ek gaan ook volgende jaar 'n kursus doen in bookkeeping. Ek het al klaar ingeskryf." Tina
		I did well. I have finished grade 10 at the night school. They want me to come back to complete grades 11 and 12. I told the principal it is difficult to attend classes at night with a child and a boyfriend. <u>But I still want to do it. I am going to do it</u>. "Ek het goed gedoen. Ek het st. 8 klaar gemaak en hulle wil hê ek moet terugkom om st. 9 en st. 10 klaar te maak. Toe sê ek vir die hoof dit is moeilik met 'n kind en 'n vriend. Maar ek wil dit doen. Ek gaan dit nog doen." Val

(d)   Category: Improve educational level

Closely linked to the previous category is this one of improving educational level. Three of the participants (15%) wanted to improve their educational level as can be seen from the excerpts. Improving education level varied from obtaining a grade 10 (*They want me to come back to complete grades 11 and 12 ... But I still want to do it. I am going to do it. Val)* to doing post-matric courses (*I also went on a computer course. I started to work as a cashier. I have learnt. Now I am a manager at my work. Next year I am going to do a bookkeeping course. I have already enrolled. Tina*). They saw this as a way to put the past behind them and to press forward. These findings are supported by Wright *et al.* (2007:631) who indicated that at least one of the four participants that were interviewed was determined to improve her educational level in order to provide a better future for herself and her daughter. Sanderson (2008:225) observes that to find meaning in life again and to explore the world again is part of the restoration of hope. Saleebey (2002:91) and Ruiz-Perez and Mata-Pariente (2006:1156) view challenges and the desire to accomplish certain tasks such as to improve an educational level as part of a client's hope for a better future.

6.3.4.4   Theme 4 – Sub-theme 4: Survivor

The fourth sub-theme under theme 4 is that of a survivor. As the title of this study indicates, abused women should rather be viewed as survivors than victims. The sub-theme of survivor also emerged clearly from the interviews (*I am a survivor. I experienced very difficult times in my life, but I survived every time. Meg).* Three categories, namely remaining silent while being abused, resilience and pride were identified.

TABLE 6.38
Survivor: Remaining silent while being abused

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 4	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Survivor	Remaining silent while being abused	*He smacks me if I talk and tell me I must keep quiet (cries again). I keep quiet, because I want to survive.* "Hy klap my as ek praat en sê vir my ek moet my mond hou (huil weer). Ek bly maar stil, want ek wil survive." Beth
		If he threatens me I remain quiet, because I am afraid he will kill me. "As hy my dreig bly ek stil, want ek is bang hy maak my dood." Amy
		I just keep my mouth shut if he gets like this (abusive), otherwise if I talk it just gets worse... "Ek hou maar net my mond as hy so anders raak, want as ek praat is dit net erger..." Olive

(a) *Category: Remain silent while being abused*

Fifteen of the 20 participants (75%) remained silent while they were being abused. They all said it was out of fear that if they talked or tried to protect themselves, the violence would escalate (*I just keep my mouth shut if he gets like this (abusive), otherwise if I talk it just gets worse...Olive)*. Eight of the participants (40%) expressed that they were afraid that their partners would kill them if them if they did not keep quiet (*If he threatens me I remain quiet, because I am afraid he will kill me. Amy)*. The six participants who were separated (30%) indicated that they were only able to speak out after they had left their partners (*It is only now after I have left him that I can talk about all that have happened. When I was with him, I was messed up. Meg*). This echoes research conducted by Wright *et al*. (2007:631) in whose study some women were only able to share their stories after they had left their abusive partners. The breaking of silence was viewed as an important aspect of empowering.

Georgiadess (2003:199) and Laird (2001:287) argue that to remain silent, although at times it may be necessary for self-protection and survival, can be costly. She encourages abused women to speak out and make their voices heard. In a study conducted by Davhana-Maselele *et al*. (2009:2532) all of the 38 participants indicated that they could not talk to other people about their experiences of domestic violence as they did not want to expose their partners. They would try by all means to avoid any form of communication with other people for a long period. Most of them also preferred to remain silent while being abused to try to bring peace. Flinck *et al*. (2005:387) indicated that secrecy and silence were characteristic of the abused women in their study. Some women will remain silent to survive and to prevent more harm done to them.

TABLE 6.39

Survivor: Resilience

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 4	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Survivor	Resilience	*I will get to the top, even if the pressure is sometimes too much. I am a fighter and he won't get me down.* "Ek sal bo uit kom, al is die druk soms te veel. Ek is a fighter en hy sal my nie onderkry nie." Amy
		I am a survivor. I experienced very difficult times in my life, but I survived every time. "Ek is 'n survivor. Ek het al baie swaar gekry, maar ek survive elke keer." Meg
		I went through hell, but it is better now. It is chaotic with the children in such a small place. I tell them often that we are fine. We went through a lot, but we will get through it. "Ek is deur hel, maar dit gaan nou beter. Dit is chaos met die kinders in so 'n klein plekkie. Ek sê gereeld vir hulle ons is fine. Ons is deur baie, maar ons sal daardeur kom." Sally

(b)   Category: Resilience

The next category, is resilience. Half of the participants (50%) viewed themselves as survivors and indicated a "fighting spirit", despite some of them using silence as a means to survive. Resilience varied from overcoming difficulties (*I experienced very difficult times in my life, but I survived every time. Meg),* to making the best of bad circumstances (*I went through hell..., we went through a lot, but we will get through it. Sally),* to a fighting spirit (*I will get to the top, even if the pressure is sometimes too much. I am a fighter and he won't get me down. Amy).* As was discussed in Chapter 4 several authors (Humphreys, 2003:137; Lee, 2005:3158; Profitt, 1996: 23; Saleebey, 2002:11; Vandergriff *et al.*, 2004:371) note that people do rebound from serious hardship, as the above excerpts indicated. Even ongoing stressful situations such as experienced by these women do not necessarily mean vulnerability, but rather a "fighting spirit". Some abused women are able to identify their own courage, wisdom and resilience and are able to view themselves as capable human beings, despite the fact that their dignity is mostly being ignored by their intimate partners (Roche, 1999:25).

TABLE 6.40

Survivor: Pride

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 4	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Survivor	Pride	*I am very proud of myself. I have been through deep waters. Every time I get on top of it. I was a prostitute, I was a "druggy", I was an alcoholic... I have been clean now for 9 years. I am a survivor!* "Ek is baie trots op myself. Ek is al deur diep waters. Ek kom elke keer bo uit. Ek was 'n hoer, ek was 'n druggie, ek was 'n alcoholic. Ek is nou skoon vir 9 jaar. Ek is 'n survivor!" Rosy
		I always believed I was a victim... that I did not have a choice and that things just happen. A while back I realised I am a survivor. How many women can sit here today and say they have been molested, raped, beaten up, messed up, kicked, left as an unwanted dog? And every time I just went on. "Ek het altyd geglo ek is 'n victim… dat ek nie 'n keuse het en dat dinge maar nou net so gebeur. So 'n tydjie gelede het ek besef: ek is 'n survivor. Hoeveel vrouens kan vandag hier sit en sê hulle is gemolesteer, verkrag, geslaan, verniel, geskop, net gelos soos 'n unwanted dog, en elke keer het ek maar net aangegaan." Tina

(c)   Category: Pride

The last category under sub-theme 4 is that of pride. It is meaningful that all six of the participants who were separated (30%) mentioned "survivors pride" in some or other form (*I am very proud of myself. I have been through deep waters. Every time I get on top of it ... I am a Survivor. Rosy).* None of the other participants mentioned it. As was discussed in Chapter 4 some people will rebound from hardship and misfortune. Humankind has a dignity called "survivors pride" which is closely linked to resilience. It is a deep sense of overcoming challenges and obstacles despite the scars, hurts and even terrors (Humphreys, 2003:137; Laird, 2001:271, Makofane, 2002:84; Profitt 1996:23; Saleebey, 2002:87).

6.3.4.5   Theme 4 – Sub-theme 5: Alcohol

The previous four sub-themes under strengths/coping mechanisms could be seen as positive ways of dealing with challenges. The last sub-theme namely alcohol can be seen as a negative way of dealing with challenges. It might help temporarily, but researchers such as Blount, Silverman, Sellers and Seese (1994:2) and Barkhuizen and Pretorius (2005:11) agree that alcohol might be a fuelling factor to IPV. It is significant to find that all four participants

(20%) who indicated that alcohol helped them to forget and to cope also indicated that religion was a way of coping. Alcohol abuse varied from six beers every Friday and Saturday evening to drinking excessively every day. None of the participants indicated that they used drugs. The following two categories are again closely linked.

TABLE 6.41

Alcohol: As a means to forget and as a means to cope

THEME 4: STRENGTHS/COPING MECHANISMS		
SUB-THEME 5	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Alcohol	As a means to forget	*No, he doesn't drink, but I do. Before the Lord, I am the one who drinks… I drink just that I do not know what goes on and that I can forget my sorrow… the life he leads me… I drink that I don't feel the pain of the beating.* "Nee, hy drink nie, maar ek drink. Voor die Here ek is ene wat drink... ek drink net dat ek kan aangaan en vergeet van my ellende... die lewe wat hy my laat lei... Ek drink dat ek nie die houe kan voel nie." Kay *I also drink to forget about all my sorrow… all the hurt…* "Ek drink ook om al my sorge te vergeet... al die pyn..." Olive
Alcohol	As a means to cope	*He takes a "doppie" and then I take a "doppie". <u>That is how I cope</u>.* "Hy neem 'n doppie en dan neem ek 'n doppie. Dit is hoe ek cope." Cathy *You enjoy "jolling". You take a "doppie" and dance <u>just to try to get through life…. And to forget the pain.</u>* "Jy jol mos maar lekker. Jy neem 'n doppie en dans en kuier lekker net om deur die lewe te kom... en om die pyn te vergeet." Sally

(a)   Category: Alcohol as a means to forget

Four of the participants (20%) stated that alcohol helped them to forget their terrible situation (*I drink just that I do not know what goes on and that I can forget my sorrow… the life he leads me. Kay*). This is supported by a study conducted by Parenzee and Smythe (2003:4) who found that alcohol use is a very popular way for some abused women to forget their terrible situation. Blount *et al.* (1994:3) agree that some women exposed to intimate partner violence will drink and misuse alcohol to escape temporarily from their misery.

(b)   *Category: Alcohol as a means to cope*

The same four participants in this study (20%) indicated that they used alcohol to help them to cope, especially if they knew there would be intimate partner violence (...*just to try to get through life ... and to forget the pain. Sally*). This correlates with Flinck *et al.*'s (2005:387) explanation that alcohol abuse among abused women is as a result of repressed anger, hate and self-hatred and that alcohol provides a form of coping.

Two of these participants (10%) could be described as heavy drinkers and not only drank when there was conflict between them and their partners. (*He takes a "doppie" and then I take a "doppie". That is how I cope. Cathy.*) Blount *et al.* (1994:3) indicated that although alcohol use may occur as a coping mechanism, it has the added disadvantage of making the woman appear more vulnerable and, therefore, an easier target for more violent behaviour. The extensive use of alcohol by women in abusive relationships is thus a two-edged sword. On the one hand it helps at once to dull the pain, and to cope at least temporarily but at the same time makes them more vulnerable to additional abuse and to addiction.

6.3.5   Theme 5: Statutory intervention

The last and fifth theme that will be addressed is that of statutory intervention. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Domestic Violence Act, Act no. 116 of 1999 serves to protect individuals against any form of domestic violence. The police are also legally obliged to protect victims of domestic violence by arresting the perpetrator and complete the domestic violence register (Combrink & Wakefield, 2010:27, Kethineni & Beichner, 2009:311, Kruger, 2004:152). It is meaningful that the majority of the participants in this study did not find the legal or police services to be helpful (*I stay far away from the police and the court. They do more harm than good...Val).*

6.3.5.1   *Theme 5 – Sub-theme 1: Interim Protection Order (IPO)*

It is meaningful that none of the participants found an Interim Protection Order (IPO) very useful. Some did not want to get an IPO, because of fear (*He will kill me if I go to court. I am too scared to go. Florry)* and others who obtained one did not find it helped them (*I got one. It did not help at all. Tina).* This echoes Prinsloo's (2007:25) conclusion. Possible reasons for the ineffectiveness of the IPO are:

- Some women are still ill-informed about their rights and various safeguards that are available to them in terms of the Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998.
- Women are sceptical and therefore refrain from going to the court.
- There is a need for alternative and informal mechanisms for conflict resolution other than the court.

Dissel and Ngubeni (2003:4) maintain that the Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998 should be seen as a serious indication of the extent of domestic violence in South Africa.

TABLE 6.42

Interim Protection Order: Obtained one and did not obtain one

THEME 5: STATUTORY INTERVENTION		
SUB-THEME 1	**CATE-GORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Interim Protection Order	Obtained an IPO	*I got an interdict against him, but he just tore it to pieces. He did not take any notice of the interdict and just carried on as before.* "Ek het 'n interdik teen hom gekry, maar hy het dit net in stukkies opgeskeur. Hy het geen notisie van die interdik geneem nie, en het net aangegaan soos vroeër." Lara *I got an interdict against him and he was locked up at one stage and was released on bail. I withdrew the case, because I felt sorry for him and did not want him to go to jail.* "Ek het 'n interdik teen hom gehad en hy was een tyd opgesluit. Hy het op borg uitgekom. Ek het maar op die ou end die saak gaan terugtrek, want ek het hom jammer gekry en wou nie gehad het hy moet tronk toe gaan nie." Meg
Interim Protection Order	Did not obtain an IPO	*I did not get an interdict against him. I was too afraid of him. If I got and interdict against him, he would have wanted to know why and then the fighting would be worse.* "Ek het nie 'n interdik teen hom gekry nie. Ek was te bang vir hom gewees. As ek 'n interdik teen hom gekry het Mevrou en dan sou hy wou weet hoekom en sou erger baklei het." Joy *"He would kill me if I tried to get a protection order. I was very scared of him."* Nita *I do not have an IPO. It will not make any difference. This man is a pig.* "Ek het nie 'n protection order nie. Dit sal geen verskil maak nie. Hierdie man is 'n vark." Hope

(a) **Category: Obtained an Interim Protection Order (IPO)**

Six of the participants (30%) obtained an IPO at some or other stage in the abusive relationship, but did not find it very helpful (*I got an interdict against him, but he just tore it to pieces. He did not take any notice of the interdict and just carried on as before. Lara).* Meg's response indicates again the emotional bond that abused women often have with their perpetrators and that they will not follow all the necessary steps in order to obtain an IPO (*I got an interdict against him and he was locked up at one stage and was released on bail. I withdrew the case, because I felt sorry for him and did not want him to go to jail. Meg).* Some of the practical problems to obtaining an IPO, were staying too far from the court and not having an adequate knowledge of how an IPO could empower them. This correlates with research conducted by Vogt (2007:244), that an IPO did not contribute significantly to the reduction of total abuse exposure in abused women. It did however play an important role in the reduction of total impairment of the experimental group. This indicated an improvement of the participants' functioning and more successful coping on emotional, cognitive and behavioural levels after an IPO was applied for.

(b) **Category: Did not obtain an Interim Protection Order**

None of the participants in this study indicated that they found an IPO helpful. At least ten participants (50%) indicated that they were afraid that the violence would increase if they tried to obtain an IPO. (*I did not get an interdict against him. I was too afraid of him. If I got an interdict against him, he would have wanted to know why and then the fighting would be worse. Joy).* Vogt (2007:244) found in her study that it was rather a lack of knowledge of how an IPO might help to reduce domestic violence and a lack of knowing what legal resources were available that made participants hesitant to obtain an IPO, than the fact that they were totally against obtaining such an order.

6.3.5.2 Theme 5 – Sub-theme 2: Police

Research conducted by Combrink and Wakefield (2010:27) indicated that police officers do receive training to deal with domestic violence. There were however shortcomings such as infringements of complainants' right to dignity (for example, making insensitive comments and "blaming" them for the violence), to conduct that endangered their lives and rights to freedom from violence, such as a refusal to intervene in potentially life-threatening situations of domestic violence. As can be seen in Table 6.43 the police played a role, but participants

often did not find the help very useful (*They arrested him and locked him up for the night. He was out the next day. I didn't go home, because he would have beaten me. Joy*).

TABLE 6.43

Police: Helpful and not helpful

THEME 5: STATUTORY INTERVENTION		
SUB-THEME 2	**CATEGORY**	**EXCERPTS FROM THE INTERVIEWS**
Police	Helpful	_They arrested him and locked him up for the night._ *He was out the next day. I didn't go home, because he would have beaten me.* "Hulle het hom gearresteer en het hom toegesluit vir die nag. Die volgende dag was hy weer uit. Ek het nie daai aand huis toe gegaan nie, want hy sou my geslaan het." Joy _The police also help me._ *They already know me...I run to them if there are problems... he is a bit afraid of them.* "Die polisie help my ook. Hulle ken my al... Ek hardloop na hulle toe as daar probleme kom... hy is skrikkerig vir hulle." Amy
Police	Not helpful	*I laid a charge against him at the police station, but they could not get hold of him.* _Then they did not longer looked for him. It still bothers me._ "Ek het 'n klag teen hom gaan lê by die polisiestasie, maar hulle kon hom nie in die hande kry nie. Toe soek hulle hom nie meer nie. Dit hinder my nog steeds." Lara *When I went to the police station to lay a charge, nothing came of it.* _They just covered for him. (Husband is a policeman)_ "As ek na die polisiestasie toe gegaan het om 'n klag in te dien, het niks daarvan gekom nie. Hulle het net vir hom gecover." Sally

(a)   Category: Helpful

Although seven of the participants in this study (35%) made use of the services of the police, only one respondent (5%) was very positive about the police (*The police also help me. They already know me ... I run to them if there are problems… he is a bit afraid of them. Amy*). The other six participants (30%) found the police helpful in a crisis, and their partners would be locked up for a night or two, but would then be released. These participants indicated they were extremely fearful of more violence after their partners returned from the police cells. (*They arrested him and locked him up for the night. He was out the next day. I didn't go home, because he would have beaten me. Joy*). As discussed in Chapter 2, all police stations in South Africa are supposed to keep a family violence register where all incidents of family violence

should be documented. In areas of police stations where this has been done, a decline has been reported in family violence. (Die Burger, 2007-07-06).

(b)   Category: Not helpful

Fourteen of the participants (70%) in this study did not find the police helpful at all (*If I went to the police station to lay a charge, nothing came of it. They just covered for him*. Sally). Four of the 14 participants (20%) contacted the police at some or other stage in the abusive relationship (*I laid a charge against him at the police station, but they could not get hold of him. Then they no longer looked for him. It still bothers me. Lara*). Half of the participants (50%) were either afraid or did not want to involve the police in their situation (*No, I will never go to the police... it will make things worse... Olive).* This correlates with research conducted by Sullivan and Hagen (2005:346) that found that all the women they interviewed (61), except one did not notify the police of their abusive situation. They felt they were revictimised by the legal and police system. In a study done in a rural area (Damon, 2003:94), seven battered women were interviewed. None of these seven reported the abuse or laid charges against their husbands. Some reasons for this were distrust of the police, self-blame, economic dependence, fear of being killed and protecting children's interests. Moody (2002:14) and Prinsloo (2007:25) came to the conclusion that some women were disappointed in police intervention. Some women also felt that police involvement in certain types of domestic violence was unsuitable.

6.4   CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter is based on the excerpts from the interviews from twenty low-income female survivors of domestic violence. The identifying details of the participants were also analysed and interpreted. From the data collected of the transcripts, five themes emerged.

All of the participants indicated their struggle with their abusive situation, as was reflected in theme 1. This struggle included their difficult circumstances, the different forms of domestic violence they were exposed to, Complex Traumatic Syndrome, substance abuse, extreme jealousy of their partners and the pattern of leaving and returning to their abusive situation. Theme 2, low-income, reflected some of the respondent's perceptions that there is no way out of their situation, the continuous struggle to make ends meet and the relationship between low-income and low education levels.

Theme 3, resources, indicated that the participants identified significant others, such as family, friends and neighbours, the church and professional help, including social work intervention, psychological help and medical help from the clinic sister as helpful in their abusive situation. The strengths/coping mechanisms, theme 4, indicated that the participants found their children, their religion, hope, being a survivor and alcohol as means to cope. Most of the participants did not find the court or the police to be helpful in their abusive situation (theme 5).

In Chapter 7 the conclusions and recommendations will be made.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1   INTRODUCTION

The experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence was investigated in this study. The aim of this chapter is to draw up conclusions derived from findings of the study and to make relevant recommendations. These recommendations could be used as general guidelines for social workers who have to deal with this complex issue of domestic violence.

The goal of the study was to gain an understanding of low-income female survivors' experience of domestic violence, focusing on their environmental resources (including family, friends and community) and on their coping mechanisms (inner resources /strengths). The goal was reached as the following objectives set out in Chapter 1 were achieved.

- In Chapter 2 a theoretical overview of the nature and extent of domestic violence as a social problem from a social work perspective was given. This provided insight and a better understanding of domestic violence. It also gave a clearer picture and grasp of the experiences of the participants.
- In Chapter 3 the environmental resources (such as family, friends and community) of low-income women were described from the ecological perspective. The importance of environmental resources in low-income abused women was identified and explored.
- In Chapter 4 the coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income women who are survivors of domestic violence were explored in terms of the principles of the strengths perspective. This proved to underpin the philosophy that despite severe hardship, the strengths of low-income abused women helped them cope with their situation.

The research question of this study was: "What are the experience (environmental resources) and coping mechanisms (inner resources) of low-income female survivors of domestic violence?" This question was addressed in Chapter 6.

7.2 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.2.1 Identifying details

The **findings** of this study regarding the identifying details are as follows:

All the participants of this study were low-income female survivors of domestic violence. The participants were black, coloured or white. Although 12 of the participants (60%) were coloured, no significance can be read into this. The ages of the participants varied between 23 and 49 years. The participants' marital status varied from being married, cohabiting or being separated. All the participants had children. The highest educational level of the participants was grade twelve and the lowest illiteracy. None of the participants earned more than R4 000 a month. The smallest income per month was R400. Accommodation varied from a five-roomed (including lounge, bathroom and kitchen) home to shacks.

From these findings the **conclusion** can be reached that domestic violence is a cross-cutting phenomenon that has no racial, marital status or age boundaries. What was however a common factor was the low-income of the participants. Low education combined with poor accommodation were other common factors. The **conclusion** can be drawn that some women in an abusive relationship also struggle with poverty and low education levels and are caught up in an abusive-poverty cycle.

Recommendations for practice

For *primary social work intervention* (as discussed in Chapter 2, paragraph 2.10) it is recommended that:

- Awareness programmes regarding domestic violence should be rendered to different groups of people regardless of their race, age and marital status as domestic violence has no boundaries.
- Awareness programmes regarding domestic violence and empowerment should be rendered to low-income women susceptible to domestic violence to prevent them from being caught up in a poverty and domestic violence cycle.

7.2.2   Theme 1 – The experience of domestic violence

The following **findings** were recorded:

All the participants experienced their abusive situation as extremely stressful and experienced adverse circumstances. All of them were exposed to physical and emotional abuse and half of them were also abused economically. All of them suffered in one or other way from Complex Traumatic Syndrome. All of them expressed feelings of depression and more than half of them experienced suicidal feelings. Almost all of the respondents indicated that their partners displayed controlling behaviour.

The **conclusion** can be reached that some low-income female survivors of domestic violence experience their situation as stressful with difficult circumstances. This was revealed in different ways as emerged from the findings above. Another **conclusion** is that some abused women suffer from Complex Traumatic Syndrome and experience the controlling behaviour of their partners as stressful.

Recommendations for practice

For *secondary social work intervention* (see paragraph 2.9 of Chapter 2) it is recommended that:

- Social workers should determine all the factors that play a role in domestic violence and realise that domestic violence is a complex phenomenon with several intertwined issues.
- Social workers should determine the impact of domestic violence on low-income abused women and assess all the stress factors that might fuel domestic violence.

For *tertiary social work intervention* (see paragraph 2.9 of Chapter 2) it is recommended that:

- Social workers should assist low-income abused women to draw up a safety plan.
- Social workers should determine feasible, realistic ways to empower low-income abused women.

7.2.3   Theme 2 – Low-income

The following **findings** were determined:

Most of the participants indicated that there was no way out of their abusive situation and received "All Pay" (Government funding) in order to help them raise their children. None of the participants had a post-matric qualification.

From the findings above the **conclusion** can be drawn that low-income and low education levels are some of the determining factors preventing some abused women to leave their partners. The **conclusion** can also be made that Government funding ("All Pay") may reduce some of the financial stress of low-income abused women.

Recommendations for practice

For *primary social work intervention* as discussed in Chapter 2, paragraph 2:9, it is recommended that:

- Awareness programmes regarding the importance of obtaining at least a grade twelve (matric) and possibly a post-matric course could reduce extreme poverty.
- Awareness programmes regarding skills training might also reduce extreme poverty.

Recommendations for policy

It is recommended that:

- Government funding ("All Pay") be administered and reviewed in such a way that the most vulnerable, low-income families be assisted in order to bring financial relief.
- Government programmes aimed at poverty relief be reviewed regularly to ensure maximum benefit to the most vulnerable.

7.2.4 Theme 3 – Resources

The following **findings** were related to the resources of low-income female survivors of domestic violence:

Most participants indicated that their family, friends and neighbours were supportive to their difficult situation and that neighbours were also to be helpful in a crisis. Some respondents indicated that their family and friends pressurised them to leave their abusive partners. A significant number of participants also mentioned that the church helped them to cope. All participants made use of professional assistance, whether it was social work intervention, psychological services or medical treatment.

From these findings it could be **concluded** that resources form a vital part in low-income abused women's lives. Informal social networks such as friends, family and neighbours often

play an important part in low-income abused women's lives although might also put pressure on them to leave their abusive situation. The church also played a significant role in supporting some of the participants. Professional assistance might also help to deal with the challenges of poverty and violence. Another **conclusion** is that family, a reference group such as friends and neighbours and a community such as a church or professional help have a positive influence on a low-income abused women's life (the different systems in a person's life, circle 2, 3 and 4 of Figure 3.1, Chapter 3).

Recommendations for practice

For *early social work intervention* as discussed in Chapter 2, Figure 2.3, it is recommended that according to the ecological perspective:

- Social workers should assess the person-environment fit of abused low-income women to determine their adaptation and what change is needed in the environment or the women.
- Social workers should also assess the habitat and niche of low-income abused women in order to find out what is supportive and what is not supportive in the environment.
- The life course of each abused woman should be taken into consideration in further intervention.
- An eco-map might be a very useful assessment tool to help abused women to view their own lives.

For *crisis intervention* as discussed in Chapter 2, Figure 2.3 it is recommended that according to the ecological perspective:

- Social workers should be aware of the stress of each abused woman. Life stressors and how abused women cope with these stressors, including domestic violence, should all be taken into consideration in social work intervention.
- The social and emotional ties of low-income abused women have should be determined in order to assess their attachment to important social networks.
- Social workers also need to evaluate the power a low-income abused women might have in her environment and what factors might hinder the desired level of functioning (see Figure 2.3, Chapter 2). Overwhelming feelings of powerlessness might hinder a woman from reaching this desired level of functioning and should be identified and dealt with in a realistic manner.

Recommendations for education

It is recommended that:

- Social work students receive education in the ecological perspective and the eco-map as an assessment tool in order to determine a person's resources, stressors and social and emotional ties.

- Education of social work students should address domestic violence and the different resources available.

7.2.5 Theme 4 – Strengths/Coping mechanisms

The following **findings** were determined:

Most of the participants indicated that their children was their goal in their life and helped them to go on. Almost all of the participants indicated that prayer helped them in difficult circumstances. All the participants had a dream of hope and safety. Most of the respondents viewed themselves as survivors rather than victims and half of them indicated that they had a "fighting spirit".

From these findings one can **conclude** that some low-income female survivors of domestic violence have certain strengths to help them cope with their abusive situation. One can also reach the **conclusion** that hardship can be seen as a source of opportunity for some low-income battered women and that they have the capacity to grow and change, despite hardship. Dreams and hope for a safer future also help some abused women to go on. Another **conclusion** is that some abused women view themselves as survivors and not as victims.

Recommendations for practice

For *early social work intervention* and *crisis intervention* (see Figure 2.3, Chapter 2) it is recommended that:

- Social workers need to identify the lexicon of strengths present in low-income battered women.

- Social workers should combine a strengths-based practice with the ecological perspective to utilise all the resources and strengths in low-income female survivors of domestic violence.

- Social workers should listen carefully to abused women's stories and collaborate with them in order to determine what way would be the best to reach their desired level of functioning.

Recommendations for education

It is recommended that:

- Social work students receive education in the strengths perspective in order to assist people to achieve their goals and realise their dreams (see Chapter 4).
- Social work students receive education to view social issues such as domestic violence out of an ecological and strengths perspective combined in order to determine the relevant resources and strengths present in abusive situations.

7.2.6 Theme 5 – Statutory intervention

The following **findings** were obtained from the study:

Most of the participants did not find the Interim Protection Order (IPO) to be useful and most of the participants did not find the police to be helpful at all. Some participants found the police to be helpful in a crisis and only for a short period.

From these findings one can **conclude** that an Interim Protection Order and police intervention are not helpful to some abused women. For some abused women, the police are helpful in a crisis, but not long term.

Recommendations for practice

For *early intervention* and *crisis intervention* (see Figure 2.3, Chapter 2) it is recommended that:

- Social workers should make abused women aware of their rights and of what statutory help they could get.
- Social workers should have a thorough understanding of the statutory resources available to abused women.

Recommendations for policy

It is recommended that:

- Collaboration between the Department of Social Development, social workers, the court that issues Interim Protection Orders (IPO) and the police should happen on a regular basis in order to fulfil the safety and protection needs of abused women.
- The application of the Interim Protection Services be revised on a regular basis in order to gain the maximum benefit for the abused party in domestic violence situations.

Recommendations for education

It is recommended that:

- Social work students receive adequate education in statutory work and specifically the Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1999 in order to have the necessary knowledge of how to assist abused who require statutory services.

7.3 FURTHER RESEARCH

In the light of the results of this study it is suggested that further research be done on the intertwined relationship between low-income and domestic violence. The experience of low-income female survivors of domestic violence could also be explored with a bigger sample and/ or in another Province. This might assist social workers with their assessment of domestic violence families.

A training programme might also be developed and evaluated for police officers and court personnel dealing with IPOs on how to empathically assist women who seek statutory assistance. This might reduce the negative experiences some women have when seeking statutory help.

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ADDENDUM A

VERKLARING DEUR PROEFPERSOON

Die nodige inligting rakende die navorsing is aan my, _____
gegee en verduidelik deur Ilze Slabbert in Afrikaans/Engels en ek is die taal magtig, of dit is bevredigend vir my vertaal. Ek is die geleentheid gebied om vrae te stel en my vrae is tot my bevrediging beantwoord.

Ek willig hiermee vrywillig in om deel te neem aan die studie. Die keuse om aan hierdie navorsing deel te neem, berus by my en nie by eige iemand anders nie. 'n Afskrif van hierdie vorm is aan my gegee.

Ek besef dat die onderhoud op band geneem sal word, en dat slegs die navorser en haar studieleier toegang daartoe sal hê. Ek besef verder dat die resultate van hierdie ondersoek neerslag sal vind in 'n doktorale verhandeling, moontlik 'n referaat en 'n artikel in 'n vaktydskrif. My identiteit sal egter nie bekend gemaak word nie, want skuilname word gebruik. My reg op vertroulikheid sal dus gerespekteer word.

_____
Naam van proefpersoon/deelnemer

_____   _____
Handtekening van proefpersoon/deelnemer   Datum

VERKLARING DEUR ONDERSOEKER

Ek verklaar dat ek die nodige inligting aangaande die studie aan _____
verduidelik het. Sy is aangemoedig en oorgenoeg tyd gegee om vrae aan my te stel. Die gesprek is in Afrikaans/Engels gevoer.

_____   _____
Handtekening van ondersoeker   Datum

ADDENDUM B

QUESTIONNAIRE

PERSONAL HISTORY

Age: _____

Parent's employment: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Education/Training: _____

Children:

Ages and sex: _____

Where do they live? _____

Are they children of the abusive partner? _____

Relationship status:

Married/Living together/separated/divorced: _____

Age when met partner: _____

How long together? _____

Have you ever left him? _____

How many times? _____

Safety Plan? _____

Objections to relationship: _____

From whom and why: _____

Able to maintain friendships during relationship. Why/Why not?
_____
_____
_____

Employed/Unemployed: _____

Monthly income: _____

Type of housing: _____

Reaction to abuse

Silence, why? _____

Effect of the abuse:

- Emotional: _____

- Physical: _____

- Relational: _____

- Social functioning: _____

- Financial: _____

How successful were your attempts to deal with the violence? _____

Feelings towards:

- Abuser _____

- Abuse _____

Tel me your story: _____

What is your dream? _____

Do you view yourself as a victim or a survivor? _____

What resources in your life help you to deal with your situation? _____

What do you identify as your main strengths/how do you cope? _____

ADDENDUM C

Patou Straat 27
Amanda Glen
Durbanville
7550
08-06-2009

Geagte XXXXXXXXXX

Ek is tans besig met my doktorale studies in Maatskaplike Werk by Universiteit Stellenbosch. Die titel van my tesis is "The experience of low- income female survivors of domestic violence."

Ek is nou by die punt in my studies waar ek onderhoude moet voer met ongeveer 20 vrouens wat mishandel word deur hulle mans of saamleefmaats. Ek sal baie dankbaar wees as ek van XXXXXXXX gebruik kan maak om my ondersoek te voltooi. Hierdie onderhoude sal opgeneem word en getranskribeer word. Slegs ek en my studieleier sal toegang hê tot die bandopnames. Die onderhoude sal tussen 60-90 minute wees. Sou daar 'n behoefte wees, sal ek beskikbaar wees vir die vroue wat wil "debrief" na die onderhoude.

Ek sal self die betrokke kantore kontak en deur die betrokke maatskaplike werkers werk om afsprake te maak met die vroue.

Die kantore wat ek in gedagte het, is:
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

My studie is goedgekeur deur die Etiese Komitee van die Universiteit Stellenbosch. Vertroulikheid sal gehandhaaf word en geen name sal bekend gemaak word nie. Deelname is vrywillig en niemand sal by die studie betrek teen haar sin nie.

U samewerking sal hoog op prys gestel word en ek sal dit baie waardeer as ek van XXXXX gebruik kan maak om my empiriese ondersoek te voltooi.

As u enige navrae het, kan u my of my studie leier, Prof. Green (021 808 2069) kontak.

By voorbaat dank!

Ilze Slabbert
082 362 6722