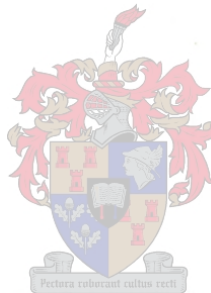


**FACTORS UNDERLYING WOMEN'S DECISION NOT TO
REPORT PHYSICAL ABUSE: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION**

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the University of Stellenbosch.**

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April 2003**

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

ABSTRACT

Violence against women, commonly known as women abuse, is currently evolving into a serious social problem. In South Africa thousands of women are victims of violence inflicted by their intimate partners. Although violence against women is a serious violation of human rights, it is often not recognised as such. Violence against women in intimate relationships often results in women experiencing serious physical, psychological and reproductive health problems. When living or trapped in abusive relationships, women are exposed to injuries, ailments and diseases, wounds, chronic pain, infertility and internal bleeding. In spite of the fact that governments, including the South Africa government, have committed themselves to addressing women abuse through legislation, large numbers of women still experience extraordinary high levels of violence. However, many women neglect to report incidents of violence. Many women remain in such relationships, legislation aimed at protecting their rights notwithstanding. The aim of this study was to explore why women neglect to report incidents of violence and to explore women's experiences of violence. Seven coloured women between the ages of 21 and 38 years and living in a small rural town in the Western Cape participated in the study. In-depth interviews were used to obtain information from these women.

The extent of the problem of women abuse worldwide and in South Africa is illustrated by research conducted internationally as well as locally. Radical feminism is used as a theoretical framework to interpret the causes of women abuse, the 'acceptance' of women abuse by the community and society and the reasons why women choose not to report incidents of abuse. The analysis and the interpretation of the data is done against the background of social practices embedded in the patriarchal structuring of society. It was found that women's experiences and lives are predominantly structured in terms of their sex and that women comply with expectations set by their intimate partners, family and friends. In order to maintain their relationships, secure a household income and to protect their children against poverty, women remain silent about the abuse they suffer. The study also found that women's responses to abuse relate to the sources and options available to them.

OPSOMMING

Geweld teen vroue wat algemeen bekend staan as vrouemishandeling, is tans besig om in 'n ernstige sosiale probleem te ontwikkel. Binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks is duisende vroue die slagoffers van geweld binne intieme verhoudings. Alhoewel vrouemishandeling 'n ernstige skending van menseregte is, word dit nie altyd as sodanig erken nie. Mishandeling binne intieme verhoudings lê dikwels ten grondslag van vroue se fisiese, sielkundige en reprodktiewe gesondheidsprobleme. Vroue wat vasgevang is in sulke verhoudings word blootgestel aan beserings, kwale en siektes, wonde, kroniese pyn, onvrugbaarheid en interne bloeding. Ten spyte van die feit dat verskeie lande se regerings, insluitende Suid-Afrika, hulself verbind het tot 'n stryd teen vrouemishandeling met behulp van wetgewing, ervaar groot getalle vroue wêreldwyd nog steeds buitengewone vlakke van geweld. Baie vroue versuim egter om insidente van mishandeling te rapporteer. Baie vroue bly in intieme verhoudings ten spyte daarvan dat wetgewing wat gerig is op die beskerming van hul regte in plek is. Die doel van hierdie studie was dus om vas te stel waarom vroue versuim om insidente van mishandeling te rapporteer en om insig te verkry in die ervaringswêreld van mishandelde vroue. Sewe Kleurling vroue tussen die ouderdomme van 21 en 38 jaar en woonagtig in 'n klein plattelandse dorpie in die Wes-Kaap het aan die studie deelgeneem. 'n Kwalitatiewe benadering is gevolg en data is met behulp van in-diepte onderhoude ingesamel.

Die omvang van vrouemishandeling wêreldwyd en binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks word geïllustreer aan die hand van internasionale en plaaslike navorsing oor die verskynsel. Radikale feminisme word as teoretiese vertrekpunt geneem in die interpretasie van die oorsake van vrouemishandeling, die 'aanvaarding' van die verskynsel deur die gemeenskap en samelewing en die redes waarom vroue nie insidente van geweld rapporteer nie. Die analise en interpretasie van data is gedoen teen die agtergrond van sosiale praktyke binne die konteks van patriargale strukturering van die samelewing. Die studie bevind dat vroue se ervarings grootliks gestruktureer word in terme van hul geslag en dat hulle hul gedrag in ooreenstemming bring met die verwagtings van hul intieme maats, vriende en familie. Ten einde hulle verhoudings in stand te hou, 'n huishoudelike

inkomste te verseker en hul kinders teen armoede te beskerm, besluit vroue om 'n stilswye rondom hul mishandeling te handhaaf. Die studie toon dat vroue se response verband hou met die bronne en opsies wat tot hul beskikking is.

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INTRODUCTION

i Addressing the issue

Women abuse can be regarded as being one of the most sensitive topics addressed by the social sciences. Violence against women is an insidious and pervasive problem. It has continued right throughout history, most of the time unreported and unchallenged. Globally, even at the end of the 20th century, significant numbers of women are still victims of brutal forms of abuse (Vogelman, 1990). The difficulty of exposing abuse lies in the fact that it occurs within intimate privatised relationships (Maconachie et al., 1993). Due to the sensitive nature of women abuse people are not always keen to explore the complexities of this phenomenon. Abused women often re-live their experiences of the abuse, whilst sharing their stories (Damon, 2000). Women abuse is a very difficult phenomenon, since it covers a wide range of actions and has a subjective component (Maconachie et al., 1993).

Violence directed at women is a way to subordinate them in the society. The fact that women are much more likely than men to experience particular crimes, is no accident (Usden et al., 1999). Beliefs about maleness and femaleness play a significant part in violence against women. To put an end to women abuse is a difficult struggle. This is highlighted in previous studies which all concluded that constant abuse reinforces women's passivity. Their experience of abuse becomes distorted and invisible. Abuse pervasively saps away all the victim's energy. The negative consequences of abuse extend beyond women's overall health to the economic and social fabric of nations.

ii How common is intimate partner abuse?

Women abuse is a global phenomenon which transcends social, economic, geographical, religious, linguistical and cultural boundaries. Many people believe that it is only certain types of women who run the risk of being abused, for example, black, uneducated and working class women. However, this is not true. Worldwide a third of all women experience violence in their marriages at some point (McCall, 1993).

Some people are under the impression that women abuse is non-existent in small primitive societies, and that it is only present in large scale industrialised first world countries. However, according to an anthropologist, David Levinson (1989), partner violence is present in at least 90 peasant societies across the world, including those in North and South America; Asia; Africa; Europe; the Middle East and former Soviet Union. Levinson also found that most people in the world experience partner violence, either as a victim or perpetrator.

iii The dynamics of intimate partner abuse

Many cultures - Western and traditional - hold the belief that men have the right to control their partners' behaviour and that women who challenge that right deserve to be punished. Cultural institutions, beliefs and practices have the tendency to undermine women's autonomy. It legitimises the unequal power structure, supporting men's use of physical force. Men use cultural prescriptions as an excuse for their abusive behaviour. Even if they beat their partners to death, they (men) use their culture to justify their behaviour. A husband has the right to correct his erring wife. Social norms that treat women as sub-or half-human constitute powerful obstacles when trying to prevent abuse. Women living in a normalised society often deem it (their abuse) as natural. To challenge such deep-rooted attitudes is a tremendous task indeed.

iv The global magnitude of this phenomenon

The following statistics provide some insight into the extent of women abuse worldwide. According to Gellas and Strauss (1988), approximately 1.8 million women globally suffer from violence inflicted by a partner or husband every year. In the United States it is estimated that, a woman is battered every 18 seconds (NICRO Statistical Report, 1997). At least one out of three women is regularly beaten or abused in Malaysia, Mexico, South Korea and Zambia. In Canada, by 1997 about 43% abused women who decided to seek help, had to receive medical treatment for the wounds they sustained in the abuse (Rodgers, 1997). In Chile, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Tanzania at least 60% of the women who are abused, report that the perpetrator was an intimate partner (World Bank Report, 1997).

Worldwide an estimated 40% to over 70% of homicides of women are committed by intimate partners, often in the context of an abusive relationship (Gilbert, 1996). In Russia, during 1993, about 14 000 women were killed by their husbands, former partners and lovers (Sunday Independent Newspaper, 1995).

v Intimate partner abuse in South Africa

South Africa is not unique when it comes to crime. The number of women applying for an interdict in terms of the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 gives an indication of how serious women abuse is (Keen and Silove, 1996). Crime remains a serious problem for both developed and developing countries, but it is the level of violent crime committed in South Africa that is alarming. Violence feeds from a vicious cycle whereby more and more people join the ranks to become perpetrators and victims. Violence is also complex. There is no single cause of violence, nor is violent behaviour restricted to specific groups of people.

In a survey carried out by Interpol of its 96 member countries in the mid 1990's, South Africa had the worst rape statistics, was the third worst in terms of murder statistics, and fared poorly in any crimes where violence was involved (Marsh, 1999). South Africa is without doubt one of the most violent countries in the world. The murder rate is so horrific and violent crimes are so endemic that there are reports that some police stations no longer bother keeping records of less serious crime such as petty car theft and vandalism (Marsh, 1999).

Three out of every 10 women living in the South of Johannesburg had experienced a severe form of sexual violence between the period of 1997 till 1998. The perpetrators were described as being family or domestic members (Usden et al., 1999). It is often been said that women should be wary of strangers, but as statistics clearly indicates, they should be aware of the possibility that they can become a victim of intimate partner abuse. In seven magisterial districts of Cape Town, 5000 interdicts were granted during 1994, 98% of these were to women against male partners and only 2% were to men against female partners (Keen and Silove, 1996).

Out of a sample of 412 women attending a community health centre in Mitchell's Plain, 55.6% (229) experienced past or current abuse by their partners or husbands (Jacobs et al., 1998). A study which was conducted by Maforah, et al. in 1997 at an antenatal clinic in Cape Town, South Africa found that 58% of women who participated in the study said that their partners had regularly beaten them. Monthly, about 423 South African men appear in court for the assault of a spouse or intimate partner (NICRO Statistical Report, 1997). One has to bear in mind that although these statistics may be shocking, intimate partner abuse is in fact notoriously under reported, thus making it very difficult to get hold of reliable statistics on violence against women. Not all the survivors of abuse report the crimes. The South African Police Service (SAPS) also record domestic violence cases under the general record of assault and thus do not keep separate statistics where the assailant is the current or ex partner of the complainant (Keen and Silove, 1996).

vi Intimate partner abuse and human rights

South Africa, like other countries, is trying to address this phenomenon. Although the South African Government has committed itself to eradicate violence against women, by passing and reinforcing laws that ensure women's legal rights, legislation alone has not succeeded in ending violence against women. Although, South Africa has a progressive constitution and Bill of Rights which protects its citizens, these rights are not always automatically applied in the private domain. Violence against women violates a number of clauses in South Africa's Constitution's Bill of Rights (Violence Against Women in South Africa, 1999: 8). Under the Bill of Rights, women have the right to equality, dignity, life and freedom of association, movement and residence. According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, violence against women is a crime against humanity. The freedom and security of a person is a basic human right which is in our Constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (The Teacher Newspaper, 2001).

In the past two years, the WLC (Women's Legal Centre) has tried to ensure that the freedoms enshrined in our Bill of Rights filter down, through the law into everyday life (Thamm, 2000).

However, many South African women continue to face extraordinary high levels of violence. This prevents them from enjoying the rights they are guaranteed under the new dispensation. Though the new Domestic Violence Act no. 116 of 1998 guarantees every woman their safety, there are indications that abused women are reluctant to report physical abuse.

The new Domestic Violence Act no. 116, which was passed in the beginning of 1998, goes a long way in addressing the inadequacies of the 1993 Prevention of Family Violence Act. This new Act provided South Africa with its first broadened legal definition of domestic violence. Abusers, who fail to comply with a Protection Order issued under this Act, can face up to five years imprisonment. Under the Act abusers also are obliged to continue supporting their wives and children financially (Usden et al., 1999). Even though the South African government at the highest policy making levels, has expressed a commitment to address different forms of violence against women by passing acts and laws, only a handful of women report assaults.

vii Women's responses to abuse

According to Campbell and Soeken (1999), in the United States, a woman suffers being battered on 39 times before she actually seeks help. In South Africa, women on average stay for up to ten years in abusive relationships (NICRO Statistical Report, 1997). It is often hard to understand why abused women continue to stay with people who physically abuse them. Not everyone knows what it is like to be trapped in an abusive relationship until they find themselves in the same situation. To leave an abusive relationship is a very traumatic process. Most of the time it will include periods of denial, self-blame and endurance before women come to recognise and realise that the constant abuse follows a pattern. The victims of intimate partner violence become hostages of their partners; emotionally, physically, financially and socially. The constant physical battles cause that the abuser, triumphantly degrades his victim to the point where she is afraid to make any move, let alone to leave him for good (McCall, 1993). Women who are physically abused will absorb extreme violence over a long period of time without seeking help (Hansen and Harway, 1993).

While women abuse is seen as disreputable, it is not often a topic which is discussed publicly. Although women abuse has become part of contemporary life, it still remains a widely hidden phenomenon. It is considered a private matter, concerning only the two people involved. Many acts of abuse have been shut behind closed doors. For many women who are subjected to male violence, the public scrutiny into their private lives brings with it unwanted intrusion and interference from outsiders.

Women who are beaten by their partners on a regular basis, are often ashamed of the situation they find themselves in. Therefore they remain quiet. During this period abused women will react as if the abusive incidences never occurred. They will try to go about their lives as normal as possible, so that no one will suspect that they are being abused. They will even tell you that things are much better than it used to be and their partner does not abuse them anymore. This makes it difficult for any government to intervene and protect women against violence, no matter who the perpetrators are. Governmental incursion into areas, which have traditionally been deemed as private, is viewed as unacceptable. Battering is not simply a family problem, but is a far reaching social problem, affecting many people. However, violence against women is not a private, but public issue, which necessitates governmental action to protect women against any kind of violence.

viii The current situation

Around the world, a growing number of people are speaking out about the widespread problem of violence against women (Heise, 1999). More and more organisations and policy makers are recognising that violence against women has serious adverse consequences for women's health and for society. Many people are getting the message. The current situation in South Africa is, that a significant number of women are daily admitted to hospitals and clinics, presenting injuries which they had sustained in abusive events (Usden et al., 1999). Why is this happening if we have a wonderful legislation which serves to protect South African citizens? Why are so many women still abused? Are the awareness created in communities not effective enough?

ix A word about the study

This study explores women's reluctance to report physical abuse suffered at the hands of husbands and partners. It focuses on a very specific coloured community in the Boland, that is, the abused women residents of Bella Vista. Bella Vista is located 6 kilometers from Ceres, where the nearest police station and free provincial hospital is situated. In this community countless numbers of women experience abuse, but fail to report physical assaults. According to an article in the local community newspaper, a police official stated that for one month alone, they dealt with about 107 cases of domestic violence. In all of these cases the victims were women (Witzenberg Herald, 2001).

Many cases go unreported. A local spokesperson at the Provincial Hospital confirmed that the people regularly seeking treatment for injuries, were abused women living in Bella Vista. Instead of reporting the abuse these women (patients who seek treatment) will remain with their partners. Not everyone understands why women stay in abusive relationships. It was, with this in mind, that I felt that it was important to explore the complexities of reporting physical assaults. Only after exploring and identifying which factors impede the reporting of abuse to law enforcers can one address physical abuse.

By carrying out a qualitative study through in-depth interviews, I was able to explore why some of the women living in Bella Vista fail to report physical abuse to the police, in spite of the abusive conditions they live in. Seven coloured abused women between the ages of 21 to 38, residing in Bella Vista participated in the study. The interviews were conducted at the homes of the participants, who willingly volunteered. The reason why I focused on Bella Vista, was the fact that the crime rate (incidences of murder, abuse, gangsterism and drug and alcohol misuse) in this area has become exceedingly high, almost beyond the control of the police.

x Chapter organisation

In chapter one of this thesis, I present a definition of women abuse and provide some relevant research findings pertaining to the health effects of physical abuse and the non-reporting of assaults.

In the second chapter, I discuss various sociological theories which explain this social phenomenon. Chapter three outlines the methodology employed in obtaining information. I discuss the aims, methods and the approach I adopted. In the fourth chapter I discuss the results of my research. I introduce and describe the women who participated in the study, as well as the factors underlying their decision not to report physical assaults. In the final chapter, I conclude in discussion by presenting possible solutions, which could assist policy planners in their struggle to eliminate violence against women.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

Violence is a multifaceted and complex problem (Marais, 1998). Different forms of violence have different backgrounds, explanations and effects. Women abuse as a form of violence is an age-old problem. From biblical account to our daily newspaper reports, history provides a continuing saga of women abuse. Historically, women have been oppressed and beaten with the approval of societies dominated by men. An ancient Hebrew law decreed that a woman who was verbally abusive to her husband was to have her name carved on a brick, which would then be used to knock out her teeth (Brinegar, 1992). Violence is not acceptable in the home or anywhere else in society. Yet, some men continue abusing their wives and partners. In the following sections I define the concept 'women abuse'. I also provide some research findings pertaining to the health effects of physical abuse / violence directed at women and the non-reporting of assaults.

1.1 *Defining intimate partner physical abuse*

It is often very difficult to define the term, women abuse, since it covers such a broad scope of actions and actors. According to Van der Spuy (1994), the conceptualisation of abuse is complicated by a wide range of interpretations, dialogue and definitions assigned to concepts like domestic, family, violence and abuse. To eliminate confusion in terms of conceptualising intimate partner abuse, one only needs to focus on 'who' was involved and 'where' the incident took place. As defined by Heise (1999), the phrase women abuse refers to the different types of harmful and destructive behaviour directed at women because of their sex. For the purposes of this study, intimate partner physical abuse is defined as aggression with a purpose, that is, to subjugate and intimidate one's partner using physical force. Women abuse is thus the name we use to describe a situation where a person (woman) involved in an intimate relationship is subject to a consistent pattern of violence by the person (most of the time a man) they are intimately involved with. Although women can also be violent and abusive, globally the vast majority of partner abuse is perpetuated by men against their female partners.

1.2 The physical, reproductive and psychological effects of violence

According to Vogelman (1990), physical violence is present in about 50% to 60% of marital relationships. The outcome of this behaviour is to achieve control. Levinson (1989), found that wife beating was the most common form of violence within the family. Physical abuse has a detrimental effect on women's physical well being. Physical injuries resulting from violence globally represent a large portion of the caseloads in many hospital emergency rooms. In the United States, partner violence alone causes more than 30 000 emergency room visits to hospitals annually (McCall, 1993).

The types of injuries women sustain in abuse range from cuts, concussions, burns, penetrating knife wounds, loss of teeth, bites, damaged joints and broken bones to loss of consciousness (Judd, 1991). The more severe the physical abuse gets the more severe the impact is. According to Alpert (1995), health care providers have noted that the injuries women sustain during partner violence are more often found in central areas of the body, including the neck, face, breast and abdomen compared with accidental injuries which are more likely to involve more peripheral parts of the body such as the arms and legs. According to Appleton (1980), the head, face and neck are the most common identified areas where women sustain injuries incurred by partner violence. Fractured mandibles (broken jaws) are worldwide one of the most common facial injuries women sustain in intimate partner abuse (Alpert, 1995). Although injuries to the more central parts of the body are most common, another type of characteristic partner violence related injury involves the bruising of the arm. These injuries can result as women raise their arms to protect their faces from the blows during the assault (Alpert, 1995).

A study which was conducted at a local day hospital in the outskirts of Cape Town, found that the most common injuries women sustain during events of physical abuse, are cuts under eyes, broken jaws, split lips and wounds to the cranial area. Seven out of the ten women interviewed, admitted that the cranial injuries and facial bruises they sustained were as a result of intimate partner abuse (Damon, 2000).

Physical injuries are not the only outcomes of gender-based violence. Some long-term effects of violence include disabling conditions such as the loss of sight and hearing, paralysis, amputations and crippling. Irritable bowel syndrome and gastrointestinal disorders are some of the ailments of violence. Women who are abused by their partners suffer more depression, anxiety and phobias than women who have not been abused (Heise, 1999). South Africa's high levels of sexual violence and women abuse make women more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infections (Usden et al., 1999). In South Africa violent indignation has become an appropriate response to women who request the use of condoms during sexual intercourse. The AIDS epidemic is spreading rapidly amongst young women. The HIV prevalence rate amongst women has dramatically increased in three years from 7% in 1992 to 21% in 1995 (Usden et al., 1999). The stress of physical abuse has been shown to compromise or subdue the functioning of the immune system, which reduce bodily defenses against a variety of illnesses (McCall, 1993). A study which was conducted in the Western Cape found that 84% of the abused women who participated in the study, suffered significant health consequences as a result of the constant physical abuse (UCT Health Research Unit Report of 1998).

A growing number of studies document that intimate partner abuse not only affects abused women physical well being, but also their reproductive health. For some men, lots of children within the marriage or relationship, is a sign of their virility. A study which was done by Wood and Jewkes in Cape Town in 1997 found that men regularly beat their partners if they found out that they have been using family planning. It would appear that women who use family planning affront their partners' or spouses' masculinity (Shedlin and Hollerbach, 1991).

Several studies have all concluded that constant abuse may be linked to the risk of miscarriages, unwanted or mistimed pregnancies, abortions, premature labor and fetal disorders. This not only puts the unborn child's life in danger, but also the mother's. Battered women run twice the risk of a miscarriage and four times the risk of having a baby that is below average weight (World Bank Report of 1997). Physical abuse also appears to increase a woman's risk for many gynecological disorders.

Although chronic pain is commonly caused by adhesions, endometriosis or infections, about half of the cases of chronic pain do not have any identifiable pathology (Ehlert et al., 1999). A variety of studies have found that women suffering from chronic pelvic pain are likely to have a history of physical abuse, inflicted by an intimate partner or spouse (Schei, 1991).

Involvement in an abusive relationship creates severe psychological trauma. Existing research suggests that many abused women experience a traumatic bonding process in which the internalisation of learned helplessness leads them to constantly hope for change in the violent partner (Motingoe and Gilchrist, 1996). Battered women who have experienced physical abuse over a long period of time may be suffering from Battered Women Syndrome. Battered women learn that they cannot control their abuser's violence, and they begin to believe that they cannot escape it. After a cycle of beatings which they (abused women) have not been able to prevent, and experiences that make them believe that there is no possibility for them to escape from the situation, they become helpless, powerless and defenseless. Such feelings ensure that the victim becomes a prisoner of her own home. Many women do not report their victimisation. Some researchers have suggested that the constant physical abuse results in depression (Astbury, 1999). According to Feletti et al. (1998), the influence of physical abuse persists long after the abuse has stopped. For some women the negative connotation that is attached to abuse is so great that they want to end their lives. Some women believe that the only way they will be free from physical abuse is to take their own lives. According to Rein et al. (1996), one in four women who are in abusive relationships attempts suicide. Most of the time attempted suicide is a response to a traumatising episode (McCall, 1993).

According to Campbell and Soeken (1999), physical violence in intimate relationships is usually accompanied by psychological abuse. In the United States the chances that a woman will develop depression or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is about 50% to 95% after being physically abused. As a result of the constant physical abuse, about 35.3% to 48.2% of abused women in South African develop major depression or PTSD

(Marais et al., 1999). The constant fear of physical/bodily exploitation leaves women feeling emotionally numb. They will start developing feelings of worthlessness and they believe that they not only deserve the abuse, but are also responsible for it.

1.3 Factors that influence the non-reporting of assaults

A woman's response to abuse is often limited to the options available to her. Some abused women are not passive victims, but use active strategies to maximise their safety and that of their children (Heise, 1999). Many women do not immediately report abuse because they fear being disbelieved. Some women do not immediately define their experiences as abuse when it does not fit stereotypical perceptions of what constitutes abuse. Reporting an assault is often a process of denial, self-blame and endurance before women realise the abuse as a pattern and that other women also find them in similar situations (Heise, 1999). The difficulty in determining the exact extent of the problem of domestic violence is also increased by the fact that most women, who are abused by their partners, do not seek help outside an informal network of friends and family.

1.3.1 Common myths regarding abuse

Countless misconceptions about abuse trivialise and justify it. As a result women accept abuse rather than challenging it. Stopping abuse requires actions that would change the nature of thinking and being of abused women (Brinegar, 1992). Old monologues will not give way easily. A new message is needed: "Abuse should not be accepted under any circumstances".

1.3.1.1 Abuse only happens once

Battering/abuse should not be considered as isolated incidents following family disputes or disagreements. It happens in cycles, during which there may be periods of apology and non-violence (Usden et al., 1999). This is called the "cycle of abuse". Most women who suffer any physical aggression generally experience multiple acts over time (Heise, 1999). It is a process in which women will leave and take back their partners over and over again.

Once the abuse has started, the possibility that the abuse will decrease would be very low. It will rather increase. In the first attack the women might receive a slap or kick from her partner. In the follow up session she might sustain a broken jaw and cracked ribs. Population based studies which were conducted globally suggested that 40% to 70% of abused women, are seriously injured at some point in their lives (O'Conner, 1995). A study which was conducted in Sierra Leòn, found that 60% of the abused women who participated in the study, were beaten more than once during the previous year. In the same study 20% of the participants experienced severe violence more than six times (Ellsberg et al., 1999). Abuse does not occur as a singular event.

1.3.1.2 The abuse isn't so bad, because she doesn't leave

One of the most common myths about women abuse is that it can't be that bad, or else the woman would have left a long time ago. In a sense, some of these beliefs have become so powerful that it influences the ways in which battered women, their friends and family, the general public and trained officers respond to specific incidents of battering. Many women stay in violent relationships for the sake of their children. Some are financially dependent on the abuser and worry about how they and their children will survive if they leave their abuser (Heise, 1999).

1.3.1.3 Women provoke and deserve abuse

It is a myth that battered women ask, want or provoke the abuse. This myth encourages women to stay with their abusive partners. This victim-blaming statement also suggests that abused women should look for the reasons of violence in their own behaviour. What this proposes is that women should change their behaviour and the abuse will stop.

1.3.1.4 It is only strangers who attack women

Several earlier studies indicated that women are more likely to be seriously injured by someone they know. However, there still remains a high possibility that a stranger might attack them. Research carried out in Soweto, South Africa in 1994 for example, found that one in three women attending a clinic for any reason had been battered at some time by an intimate partner (NICRO Statistical Report, 1997).

Several earlier studies, which were all conducted in Western Cape, indicated that one in five Cape Town women are battered by their partners (Usden et al., 1999). Rape is also committed by husbands, boyfriends, relatives, friends and acquaintances. More than half of the rape survivors in Johannesburg's Southern Metro Region between 1998 – 1999 personally knew their assailants (Violence Against Women In South Africa, 1999).

1.3.1.5 Wives need to be kept in line by their partners

This myth reinforces unequal relationships and justifies the use of force to maintain inequality. Men are taught to use violence as a legitimate means of solving disputes. Women are not children that need to be disciplined. There is no justification for violence against women (Usden et al., 1999). Women who set unreasonable demands might be annoying, but it does not give men the right to abuse them. After all it is not acceptable to hit a shop assistant or colleagues, just because they behaved differently to what we are normally used to.

1.3.2 For the sake of the children

Sometimes men will even threaten to kill the children born within the relationship; therefore women will endure the bruises, broken ribs and open gashes just for the sake of the children. Even if they leave their partners, they will not be able to support themselves, let alone their children. On the average, women earn more than half of what their partners earn (Heise, 1999). Where will they get the money to tend to their children's needs? What will the child's friends at school say if they heard that his or her parents do not live in the same house? The fact is that some children may even be better off in single parent households, where they are not subjected to violence in the home on a daily basis. Disturbingly, research suggests higher rates of partner violence in men who were abused as children or witnessed the abuse of their mothers and close family members (Keen and Silove, 1996).

1.3.3 Economic factors

Women's economic dependence on men is a reality, which traps battered women in destructive relationships or marriages. In Russia, women make up at least 70% of the

unemployed and if they are employed, they earn on average 40% of what men make (Heise, 1999). In Papua New Guinea, only 30% of all women staying there have jobs (Sunday Independent Newspaper, 1995). A study which was conducted in Managua in 1997, found that abused women earn about 46% less than non-physical abused women (Morrison and Orlando, 1997). The reason for this was that abused women suffer more physical and psychological problems that effect their job performance. In rural South African areas, four in five women are financially dependent on their partners, have no employment and no income of their own (Artz, 1999). Because men earn much more than women and are the breadwinners, they believe that their use of violence is justified. Men are given relatively free reign, as long as they fulfill their duty as head of the household by providing for the family.

Studies which were conducted in South Africa, concluded that the majority of court ordered child support payments are never made to the custodial parent (Heise, 1999). Just in a few exceptional cases the father gets custody over the children. Most of the time the mother gets guardianship. Although the South African government has passed a law – The Maintenance Act no.99 of 1998 - which forces men to pay child support, most men do not pay it. Over the course of this decade, the rates of employment have considerably decreased in South Africa. Many South African citizens are employed regardless of their academic background, race and gender (Marsh, 1999). Despite a political will to improve this situation by reforming legislation, there is still limited or non-existent financial assistance to women who are financially dependent upon their partners. “Even when (abused) women have left their partners, the limited effectiveness of the current Maintenance Act no.99 of 1998 keep women poor or still subject to their abuser’s control” (Usden et al., 1999:14). It is for these reasons that women will stay with their partners.

Violence that occurs in the family nearly always produces disruption. The constant abuse hinders women’s participation in economic development. In addition to producing physical injuries, violence often damages the social functioning of its victims, hampering their relationships and routines (McCall, 1993). Women who sustain injuries due to the

abuse often stay at home to recover. This causes loss of wages and strengthens their economic dependency on their partners / husbands.

1.3.4 *Fear of stigmatisation*

The fear of social stigma often prevents women from speaking out and laying a charge against their partners for physical assault. Women are often ashamed of the fact that they are being abused. Many abusers are very respected and well-liked community members and women will remain quiet, because they think that no one will believe them (Violence Against Women In South Africa, 1999). For example, if you were the ex-wife of a very well known and respected politician, and you made accusations that he abused you during your marriage, or is still abusing you, people will be inclined to attribute these stories to jealousy.

1.3.5 *Fear of reprisal from partner*

It has been estimated that as many as 41%, of abused women worldwide have never told anyone about the abuse (ISS Monograph Series no.41, 1999). A study which was conducted by Heise in 1999 in the United States of America, discovered that from 22% to almost 70% of abused women admitted that they never told anyone that they are abused at home. The fear of reprisal from their partners is another reason why abused women remain silent. This is an additional barrier that keeps women tied to abusive intimate relationships (George, 1998). Sometimes women keep quiet to prevent that the violence gets worse.

1.3.6 *Fear of being killed*

Death is, of course, the most serious outcome of violence (McCall, 1993). Leaving an abusive relationship doesn't guarantee an abused woman's safety. According to Campbell (1995), the risk that a woman is killed after she reported and left her partner is very high. According to McCall (1993), women are more than twice as likely as men to be killed by their spouses. In 1995 25% of female murder victims in the United States were killed by their spouses or boyfriends. In Canada's 1993 national survey on violence, about one-third of the women who were constantly physically abused by a spouse or

partner, said that they feared that they would be killed if they left their partners (Heise, 1999). Instead of being killed and leaving her children behind, she will stay with her partner or spouse and endure the continuous physical abuse.

In the booklet, “Man Shoots Wife”, Lisa Vetten, a South African researcher presents a study on men who have killed their partners. In exploring the causes of the unnatural deaths of 115 women living in Johannesburg in 1994, Vetten shows that a large number (29) resulted from injuries inflicted by other people. Of the 29 murdered, 16 were murdered either by the victim’s husband, common law partner, friend, family member or acquaintance. Vetten’s research suggests that the average South African woman stands a higher chance of being murdered by a man she knows rather than by a stranger. It is ironic because women are always warned to be wary of strangers. The research also confirms what was previously held to be common knowledge, namely that some men develop proprietorial attitudes towards their intimate partners. Women who were divorced, separated and estranged were identified as being at risk of being murdered by their ex-partners (Marsh, 1999). In South Africa 41% of the female homicides are perpetrated by the women’s partners (NICRO Statistical Report 1997). Men who have been convicted of killing their partners have stated that they believe that intimate femicide should be viewed as a crime of passion, committed by a man who dearly loves his partner, not as blatant murder (Usden et al., 1999).

1.3.7 Socialisation

“Sociologically speaking, high rates of violence can be seen to be evidence of the fact that the normative order in society is no longer functioning successfully” (Marais, 1998:1). For many women the cycle of abuse already starts in childhood and will be perpetuated in the lives of their daughters. As girls, most abused women saw their mothers poorly treated. Therefor they learned to associate love with hurt because they were not exposed to other normal non-abusive families. According to Marcus (1994), violence in the home is usually characterised by the euphemistic term, keeping order and discipline in the home. Older family members pass patriarchal traditions and customs on from generation to generation, maintaining the notion of male dominance and female

subordination. There is evidence that indicates that many abused women grew up in families that believe that women should obey and respect their partners or spouses, no matter what! Therefore, for many women, physical violence/abuse has become accepted, rather than something to be challenged.

Society expects it from a woman, that once she marries, she should respect her husband's authority. If he 'disciplines' her, it must somehow be her own fault, or as a result of her own behaviour. In rural Egypt, for example, about 80% of the women residing there said that beatings were justified under certain circumstances (Heise, 1999). To men, women are seen as mere objects that satisfy their human drives, nothing more. According to Alsdurf and Alsdurf (1989), a battered woman's understanding of the principle of submission will have a profound impact on how she will respond to abuse. In many developed countries in the North and West, women share the same sentiment that men have the right to discipline their wives by employing physical force (Heise, 1999).

According to Lewis (1994), the term, "culture of violence" is used to describe and explain the high rate of violence South Africa is currently experiencing. Many South Africans, who are directly or indirectly affected by violence, have started to believe that it is the only way to solve problems and to gratify needs. If you have a problem, solve it with force or the threat of force. Matthews (1998) documented that the high levels of violence in the society echo the levels of violence in the home. The rates of women abuse are the highest within families, although the home is supposed to be a safe, loving and secure environment.

A study, which was conducted in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, found that 28% of the women who participated in the study admitted that their first sexual and follow up sexual experiences were all forced (Buga et al., 1996). The women in the study admitted that they were taught to be submissive and that they should tend to every single need of their partners, whether it is to their discomfort or not. According to Varga (1999), frequent, forced sex has become a norm in South Africa.

A survey in which 2000 South African men residing in Soweto, participated, concluded that 58% believed that the concept of marital rape did not apply to a husband, who is continuously forcing his wife to have sex (Reproductive Health Research Unit, 1998). In the same study, 22% of men also approved of a man hitting his partner. A study which was conducted in Retreat, in the South Peninsula, found that women tend to associate the wounds and injuries they sustain during physical abuse as physical signs of love. The more severe the injuries are you sustain in the attacks, the more it shows that your partner really loves and appreciates you. Women, who do not have any real experiences of love, interpret abuse in such a way. (Damon, 2000).

A study, which was conducted in Lavender Hill, Cape Town, found that every second woman residing in this residential area is abused, therefore they (women affected by violence) and their children perceive women abuse as a normal and common phenomenon (Damon, 2000). It's part of everyday life. Women are the most vulnerable members of society. They are taught to be polite and passive, and that it is wrong to stand up against someone who has power and authority. Men on the other hand are taught to be aggressive, take control and be in charge. Women are not physically as strong as men; therefore they are regarded as soft targets. They are more susceptible to become victims of any type of abuse, which is inflicted by an intimate partner or spouse, whereas men are more prone to violence that occurs outside the home, for example, gang fights, muggings and hijacks.

1.3.8 Abused women's ignorance of state implemented protection strategies

In 1992, South Africa signed an agreement at the "The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), which stated that the government had to and still has to protect women and their legal rights in every aspect of the economy and society. Two years later in 1994 we embraced a new Constitution after our country's first national general election. The new Constitution of South Africa, with its particular focus on the right to equality and freedom of a person, led to an implementation of a new act, called the Domestic Violence Act of 1998. The Act recognises domestic violence as a serious social evil and its function is to create

awareness amongst abused women that male violence against them is unacceptable. Women should know that it is not their duty to suffer any physical aggression and emotional abuse. Right until the new Act was passed, women could not obtain legal restitution for any verbal, emotional or psychological abuse. The same act that would have been punishable, if it was directed at an employee would go unchallenged if it was directed at a woman the offender knew-especially if they were married to that person.

The Domestic Violence Act no. 116, broadens the definition of domestic violence. The Act does not only apply to married couples alone, but also to same gender partners, divorcees, people sharing the same living arrangements and people who are currently dating or having a sexual or intimate relationship. Sharing living arrangements does not mean that the man has the right or licence to abuse the woman. Before this Act was implemented, it was very difficult for a woman to prove that she did not consent to sex because there were no witnesses to support her claim. Today, however, common law defines rape as unlawful intentional sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent. If a woman was threatened or forced she did not consent. If she was drugged, asleep or even drunk, she also did not consent. Rape can occur in the context of a relationship (as in rape within marriage or by a boyfriend, a family member or friend). Its effects are devastating, whatever the context (Usden et al., 1999). It is best described as a crime of violence where sex is used as a means of physically injuring and harming another.

The Act obliges the police to assist women. They (police) are compelled to explain to abused women their legal rights, to find them safe refuge to stay and to assist women with medical attention, if necessary. With assistance from the Act, the State aims at ending violence against women. Failure to comply will lead to disciplinary action. Even though the State tries its best to prevent abuse, women either do not know that such laws exist, or they are just too ignorant to make use of these laws. Women should know that, with the new laws and Acts recently passed, perpetrators can be found guilty and they (abused women) will be protected no matter what.

1.3.9 Criminal justice's response

There are many reasons why women do not report physical assaults to the police. Except for the notion that women should always be loyal to their partners, some women are not always in reach of the facilities which assist abused women. A study which was conducted by Artz (1999), found that access to justice for rural women in the Southern Cape, is very difficult. It was found that there is a lack of permanent police stations in the area, which causes that women are unable to report the crimes. Based on the testimonies of women who participated in her 'rural women's research project', Artz found that women spent four days going to the police, acquiring interdicts and attending court. There are laws that protect women against abuse, but even the law enforcers, such as the magistrates and the police, are not always aware of them. Ignorance about the law within the police continues to be prevalent, despite memoranda issued to them by the Department of Justice. A woman in crisis always needs physical safety, emotional support and assistance when she is reporting an assault.

According to Maconachie et al. (1993), 57% of the women residing in a safehouse in Cape Town said that they would never again go to the police to lay charges of abuse because of the way they were treated. If police officers are not properly trained to handle women who have been physically assaulted, they (policemen) can become very insensitive. To some policemen, abuse is a private matter which should be resolved between the two people involved. They do not interfere with domestic problems. Several studies suggest that the police are hesitant when women want to lay charges against their partners, because they believe that the women provoked the physical assault. About 36% of all physical assault charges get lost, resulting in no action by the police. It has been estimated that only 1 in every 20 cases of continuous physical abuse, which includes act of rapes and beatings, are reported to the police (NICRO Statistical Report, 1998). According to Maconachie et al., (1993), an estimated 7% of all rape victims report the rape to the police. The process of interacting with police officials can be extremely traumatic when the survivors are treated with suspicion, antagonism, insensitivity and as objects instead of as people in crisis.

1.3.10 Health care practitioners' response

What health care providers say and do, often have an important influence on an abused woman's course of action (Gerbert et al., 1999). Visits to healthcare providers should be seen as a window of opportunity to prevent further intimate partner abuse. However, most of the time they (health care providers) miss the opportunity to help physically abused women by being nonchalant, unaware and judgmental. With a little training and support, they can do more to respond to the physical, emotional and security needs of physically abused women (Heise, 1999). According to Lewis (1994), woman who has been abused has to see a doctor as soon as possible even if she hasn't been seriously injured. She might have injuries of which she is not aware of because of the shock. Once a woman decides to seek help from a health care institution, the response she receives is crucial. If she chooses to press charges against her perpetrator, she needs all the support from the people who are trained to help her. Doctors and nurses often think that their patients (abused women), rather than themselves, constitute the main obstacle to better care (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1993). However, they often contribute to the decision by abused women to stay in the relationship.

An indifferent or hostile reaction from health care providers reinforces a woman's feelings of isolation and self-blame, which makes it harder for her to mention the topic again. A study in the United States in 1994 found that two-thirds of health care practitioners never received training on domestic violence (Tilden et al., 1994). In Zimbabwe, health care practitioners admitted that they only received medical training to treat injured people. When they had to treat and comfort physically abused women, they were incapable of doing it (Watts and Ndlovu, 1997). In order for practitioners to assist women, they will need more information about how to handle women who are abused and what the physical and psychological impact of violence is. Abused women do not come into health care practitioners' offices, saying that they are being pushed, slapped or beaten by their partners at home.

A study which was done in a local Cape Town community health clinic in 1998 found that about 88% of the abused women who participated in the study, said that they would

have welcomed a routine inquiry about violence while they were at the clinic for a health visit (Marais et al., 1999). Women who are abused need to feel that they can speak to any health care worker, no matter how personal the problem is. By seeking advice from properly trained health care workers, abused women will at last come to the realisation that their situation at home should not be tolerated anymore. If practitioners receive proper training, they will feel competent enough to address the issue of violence (Moore et al., 1998). Some health care providers even share the same cultural values and social attitudes as men who abuse women. A study which was conducted in the United States found that male clinicians are hesitant to accept a woman's account of violence because they identify with the offender (Rittmayer and Roux, 1999). They (male doctors) may even go as far as to agree with men, who state that women should be sexually available to their partners at all times (Kim and Motshei, 1999).

For example, a study which was conducted at Tygerberg hospital in Cape Town in 1998 found that the female nurses in the hospital recognise women abuse as a serious social problem that is really getting out of control (Kim and Motshei, 1999). However, most of the female nurses also believed that abused women themselves acted in such ways that provoked their husband and partners to physically abuse them. Male nurses in the same study also gave a long list of reasons that justified men's beating of their wives or girlfriends. Almost all the male nurses who participated in the study also did not think that a man had committed rape if he forced his wife to have sex. For these male nurses, it is a wife's duty to provide her husband with sexual pleasure. They also thought that the practice of wife beating was both a means of discipline and a way of expressing love or forgiveness (Kim and Motshei, 1999). Thus, their attitudes conform to those previously discussed. In the United States of America clinicians have revealed that they have had biased attitudes towards women who were and are currently abused. Some clinicians admitted that it is very difficult to work with abused women who don't get out of abusive relationships (Cohen et al., 1997).

When abused women seek treatment for the injuries they sustained in an attack and they get a hostile reaction from the health care providers, they will not even consider returning

for help in the future. Almost 90% of the women who were interviewed at a local day hospital in Retreat, in the South Peninsula, responded by saying that doctors treated them with a lack of sensitivity. Due to the numbers of people awaiting treatment, the doctors on duty did not even ask them how they sustained the injuries. Most of the time they wanted to confide in someone and tell them (doctors and nurses) how they sustained the injuries. However, because they were not given the opportunity, they remained quiet (Damon, 2000). Even though the hospital had a full time social worker on staff, none of the women in the study were referred to the social worker for counseling or advice. Some of the nurses in the same study shouted at the abused women, while some of the doctors even told the women that they did not have time for their sob stories, because the hospitals was bursting out of its seams. Some of the respondents said that the female doctors, however, were more sensitive and sympathetic than the male doctors (Damon, 2000). For many women, facing indifference and hostility from health care personnel is like being victimised again by the system that is supposed to help you. Women want to be listened to, within an atmosphere of respect and they also want to be believed by health professionals (Hamilton and Coates, 1993). A health care provider's aim is to facilitate abused women, and not to humiliate and degrade them more than they already are. If health workers are properly trained they will be able to detect and refer victims of violence to trained experts and counselling agencies (Usden et al., 1999).

Twenty years ago, when searching for information about women abuse, one probably would have experienced frustration due to the shortage of literature (Brinegar, 1992). Today we are so fortunate to have facts, know many of the causes and have made progress in raising public consciousness about this phenomenon. More organisations, service providers and policy-makers are recognising that violence against women has serious adverse consequences for women's health and society. Around the world, people are getting the message. As more becomes known about the scope of gender-based violence, more programmes are finding ways to address it. Although this may sound positive, many abused women's voices are silenced. They live in prisons of perils within their own homes and are often too afraid to speak out and ask for help. Women abuse, the so-called 'silent crime', is more common place than many South Africans imagine. This

malaise seem to be endemic and spreading rapidly through South African society causing a majority of people, especially women, living in fear (Marsh, 1999). The woman sitting next to you might be a victim of abuse!

One may think that the abuse can't be so bad if a woman hasn't left her partner. However, sometimes things aren't always what they seem to be. In the following chapter I discuss different sociological theories which attempt to account for the social phenomenon of women abuse.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORIES EXPLAINING WOMEN'S TOLERANCE OF ABUSE

Violence against women is a fundamental human rights violation (Usden et al., 1999). It affects a woman's ability to act in the world. A question which we seem to ask ourselves over and over again is, why they (abused women) remain quiet even though there exist state implemented acts which aim to ensure their safety and security? Human beings have always been curious about the sources of their own behaviour. For thousands of years our attempts to understand ourselves, relied on ways of thinking passed down from generation to generation. Human behaviour is complicated and many-sided. To understand human behaviour, we need theories. Theories thus represent attempts to explain particular sets of social conditions or types of occurrences.

With the assistance of Radical Feminism and The Exchange Theory, I attempt to understand why abused women's voices are silenced. Each of the above mentioned theories offer an unique explanation as to why (abused) women remain quiet about their abuse. However, since I'm quite interested in understanding how patriarchy manifests itself in a poor community such as Bella Vista, Radical Feminism fundamentally forms the core of my pursuit. Radical feminists have argued that patriarchy exists as a near-universal social form because men can muster the most basic power source, that is, physical violence, to establish control. Patriarchy is not a single entity. It takes up different forms in different contexts (Ramphela and Boonzaaier, 1988).

2.1 Radical feminism

Before the advent of feminism the burden of women's traditional responsibilities for rearing and bearing children were never recognised. Women's needs were thus entirely ignored. Feminism is a social movement which originated in 18th century England. It is a historical, diverse, cultural and international movement. According to Humm (1992), the word "feminism" stands for the belief in sexual equality combined with a commitment to obliterate sexist domination. It can be seen as a doctrine for equal rights of women as

well as an ideology of social transformation aiming to create a world beyond social inequality (Charvet, 1982).

The basic idea of feminism in its various forms is that women are free human beings whose nature and worth is the same as men. Feminism is based on the premise that women can consciously and collectively change their social place in society. It basically deals with the inequalities of women with men. Nowhere in the world are women equal to men. All versions of feminism assert that the existing relations between the sexes, in which women are subordinated to men, are unsatisfactory and ought to be changed (Ramzanoglu 1989). All perspectives of feminism recognise the conflicting demands set on women as wives, lovers, mothers and workers (Tong, 1998).

Radical feminism is a hybrid of this doctrine. It's a contemporary phenomenon which originated in the late 1960's and early 1970's. Charvet (1982) stated that Radical feminism is self-evidently the most extreme form of feminism. It attaches no value whatsoever to the differentiation of the sexes. Apart from physical form in sexual organs and other possible physical characteristics, Radical feminism sees something not determined by biology, but by the interests of men. Unlike Liberal and Marxist feminism, which have internalised male culture and values, Radical feminists have challenged the values of male culture (Tong, 1998). The core of Radical feminism is reproductive rights. Radical feminists claim that reproductive technology is used against women to reinforce male dominance. Radical feminism sets out to destroy harmful patriarchal beliefs which encourage men to behave harmfully towards women. It focuses on the root of male domination and claims that all forms of oppression are extensions of male supremacy.

Radical feminists seek at redescribing current oppressive social reality which seeks at weakening women. Radical feminism allows us to see old facts in new ways which will enable us to see irregularities and inequalities as never before. Radical feminists claim that a woman's main enemy is patriarchy. The problems women experience are not a result of their failure and incompetence. External problems, such as sexual harassment

and internal problems, such as women's indecisiveness, resulted from male domination (Jagger, 1983).

The goal of Radical feminism is not so much to claim what man has and his rights, but to win women's existence as a free subject by defining her own identity, by giving her a past and future and creating for herself solidarity with other women (Charvet, 1982). Radical feminism demands the abolition of all differentiated sex roles in an androgenous world. The current political structures of social reality need to be overthrown, so that women no longer would accept being exploited and dominated by men. Radical Feminism seeks to uncover women's domination which have been concealed by patriarchy. The aim of Radical feminism is to make the invisible, visible. It makes visible distinctions between the sexes not only obvious in the public, but also in the private domain. Practices such as abuse, lesbian bashing, rape, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and Indian *Sati* which had gone previously unexamined, were now subjected to political analysis.

Although 'male' and 'female' are in themselves unproblematic categories based on clearcut biological differences, there are powerful cultural constructions associated with the different positions of men and women in society (Ramphela and Boonzaaier, 1988). These culturally constructed roles have significant social consequences – they define the parameters within which the domination of men over women takes place. Gender is seen as a force which influences one's relation to labour, to performance, to authority and critically – sexuality. Becoming gendered thus involves both the likelihood that a woman will be expected to perform the bulk of reproductive labour in her community and that her sexual interests are all directed towards men (Bennett, 2001). Gender qualities such as passivity, subservience and self-sacrifice are ascribed to women which men use to exploit them. Free from gender roles women would no longer be subservient to men. Men in patriarchal society use constructed gender roles to keep women oppressed.

Radical feminism provides the foundation for bringing sexual, childrearing and bearing practices into a domain of politics. "The personal is political" was a 1960's slogan which

encapsulated the basic insight of radical feminism” (Jagger 1983: 101). Radical feminists used this slogan to illustrate and uncover men’s domination of women in the private as well as public sphere. An additional meaning of this slogan is that women’s experience in the private sphere can provide the basis and inspiration of a new life where male dominance is overthrown. For Radical feminists encapsulating this slogan, there is no distinction between political and personal realms. For them (Radical feminists) every area of life is a realm of sexual politics. The slogan reveals how male power is exercised in private institutions such as marriage, childbearing, rape and through prostitution to sexual intercourse itself. Violence can be hidden and take on more subtle forms of exploitation.

Almost all relations between men and women are institutionalised relationships of power which establish subjects for political analysis. (Jagger, 1983). Radical feminists are concerned with the political structure of our existing reality – how patriarchy undermines and distorts women’s sense of reality; and how such a system should be replaced. Radical feminism is thus a political movement which sees the need for a political struggle against male power. Radical feminists perceive patriarchy as a total system of male domination. For many Radical feminists male dominance is not natural. It is nothing more than a set of prejudices. With the assistance of oppressive ideologies men only gain benefit from their domination and exploitation of women.

Patriarchy means to all intents “rule of the father”. It is a system of society and government ruled by men with descent through the male line. The term described social systems where authority is in the hands of the men. This type of paradigm demands female obedience and male domination. Patriarchy can be regarded as a cultural belief system that allows men to hold greater power and privilege than women on a social hierarchy. In its extreme form patriarchy allows men the right to dominate and control their partners. According to Ramazanoglu (1989), patriarchy encapsulates the mechanism, ideology and social structures, which have enabled men right throughout much of human history to gain and maintain domination over women.

In its origins, patriarchy emerges from male physical strength – a mere biological characteristic, which according to Millet (1970), is exploited in socialisation processes whereby men are taught to be aggressive and women passive, understanding and submissive. Biological considerations are important, but they should not determine a woman's destiny (Charvet, 1982). Millet suggested that patriarchal ideologies exaggerate physiological differences between men and women, ensuring that men will always be dominant. Human anatomy allows men - the dominant sex - to rape women.

Male biology is to blame for women's oppressive conditions. The discovery, that they (men) could rape and women not, led to the legitimisation of rape. Because human anatomy remains unchanged, women would continue to be dominated through the persisting threat of rape. The decisions made by women are influenced by men's threat of rape. The knowledge that rape might be a permanent possibility influences the life of most women. Women shape their daily activities around the decisions made by their partners' just to avoid further reprisals. Rape is thus a conscious and political process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a constant state of fear (Jagger, 1983).

Patriarchy reflects the interests of the socially dominant group – men. To legitimate their domination, the dominant male culture invents ideologies which are to their advantage. Patriarchal ideologies corrupt women's sense of individuality. Women are defined in a way specific to their sex – as beings whose function is to bear and raise children and gratify their partners' sexual needs. Society instigates rules which constitute how a woman should live her life. Radical feminists believe that patriarchal ideologies imposes polarities on reality – ideally separating aspects of reality which in fact are not separable (Jagger, 1983). It opposes mind to matter, reason to emotion and self to other. Under patriarchy, women's minds and their bodies are under constant attack. According to Radical feminism women's perception of reality becomes distorted and later denied. Patriarchy promulgates a certain picture of social reality, which clearly favours men. Radical feminists claim that existing reality is male-biased. In particular, “patriarchal language distorts the way in which women are exploited and oppressed” (Jagger, 1983 : 268). According to Firestone (1970) male dominance is strengthened through

contemporary ideologies of love, obedience and romance. Being in submission has become the standard of what it means to women to be a good, loving wife and partner. Patriarchy is supported by a moral order which makes it very difficult for women to struggle against it and other forms of domination and control. Through patriarchy the rights of women are rejected in order that the airtight system of male dominance would not be disturbed (Alsdurf and Alsdurf 1989). Verbal bullying, hostile or obscene remarks and ultimately physical force exercised on women continue to exist due to patriarchy and society's expectation of them (women) fulfilling the traditional role, which is to be submissive and obedient towards their partners. Men do whatever they want to do to women. Physical violence is not simply a case of brute force - beating or rape – it has developed into sophisticated, accepted cultural forms of control.

In patriarchal culture, women are robbed of their mental as well as intellectual powers (Jagger, 1983). Women start to believe that it is a man's legitimate right to discipline his wife. Women should accept their husbands' authority. His word is law. The cultural values women hold, which are enforced by patriarchy, play a direct role in their response to abuse (Gellas and Cornell, 1990). It justifies a man's use of physical violence. It is programmed in their (women's) minds that if a man uses physical violence to discipline his wife or partner, it should be accepted with good grace. Women in patriarchal societies are seen as male possessions. Patriarchy suggests that battering is used as a means of control through which men can assert their authority (Hansen and Harway, 1993).

Despite everything that happens to a woman in her relationship with a man, patriarchal ideologies state that women should remain loyal to their partners. A woman's rightful place is next to her husband or partner. If a man assaulted his wife or partner, she most probably deserved it. When abused women seek help, it is interpreted as betrayal. A woman should remain loyal to her partner. Instead of being labeled as a traitor and disloyal partner, abused women will absorb extreme violence without seeking help (Warell and Remer, 1993). Women who leave their partners are regarded by others, as being incapable of attending to their partners needs. Patriarchal ideologies are so powerful and influential that men get consent from women to abuse them. Instead of

being labeled as a failure, they (abused women) will stay with their partners and not report the abuse.

Radical feminists assert that patriarchy has many means of compulsion. Many Radical feminists also agree that the basis of women's domination and exploitation is somehow connected with what Marxists call the sphere of reproduction (Jagger, 1983). Patriarchy subjects women to intense pressure to engage in sexual relations and obligatory motherhood. Patriarchy has legitimised and justified forced motherhood by explaining that there exists a special bond between mother and child. Women are said to recognise and admit that they are part of nature, rather than separate of it. Radical feminists have established that women are forced to be mothers.

Under patriarchy women are not really free, in fact they are enslaved. Even when women do not desire pregnancies, they are obliged just to please their partners. Some women are so brainwashed and influenced by patriarchal ideologies, that they start to believe that they are on a mission to bear children. Children in a marriage are the consequence of genital sex where women are sometimes forced to have sex against their will. Eisenstein (1984) suggested that biological motherhood and its concomitant features of menstruation lay the foundation to women's oppressive conditions. Women are under immense pressure to engage in sexual activities against their will just to please their partners. The sexual act itself is rape, but under patriarchal ideologies it's part of a woman's duty she has to fulfill. Sex is the most influential factor in determining a woman's position, life experience, interests, values and physical and psychological well being (Jagger, 1983).

For a man, a child is a way to immortalise his existence, name, class and ethnic identification and for a woman justifies her homebound existence (Tong, 1998). Oakley (1974) suggested that biological motherhood is not a natural need for all women. She established that motherhood is a cultural construction, a myth with an oppressive function and purpose (Tong, 1998). Daly (1973) claimed that if women would refuse to be the other, by becoming people with needs, wants and interest, they will end the regime of

where man was master and woman slave. However, patriarchal ideology compels women to become mothers if they want to justify their existence as human beings.

Firestone (1970) claimed that the joy of giving birth is a myth in patriarchal societies. She claimed that a woman's body is the source of her enslavement. Nothing fundamental will change for women as long as natural reproduction is the rule and artificial or assisted reproduction becomes the exception. It's a woman's biological function as mother and child minder which impose passivity on her (De Beauvoir, 1972). Biological motherhood is an institutional response of patriarchy (Rich, 1979). Patriarchy often deprives and limits women to options they seek when they do not want to give birth. Just because a woman has a womb, it does not necessarily mean that she has to give birth. Not all women need to become biological mothers. Social mothers are just as effective as biological mothers. Natural reproduction is not always in the best interest of the mother.

According to Firestone (1970) natural reproduction is the root of all evils. Childbirth is only one aspect of a woman's life. A woman cannot only be understood in terms of her biological function. Under patriarchy women who can't bear children are pitied and women who do not want to bear children are described as immature, selfish, unnatural and unfeminine (Jagger, 1983). For many women maternity becomes a service. Radical feminists describe that the key to women's freedom will be their release from their 'biological fate'. Women's oppression results from men's need to keep patrimony intact. The key to the mystery of women's subordination lies in the fact that whilst men actualise their freedom and existence in the future, women through their biological destiny are directed towards the repetition of life (Charvet, 1982).

Not only does patriarchy force women to become mothers, it also determines the conditions of their motherhood. Men dominate within their homes. They are the ultimate source of discipline for their children and they also evaluate their partners' childrearing skills. Under patriarchy men have even justified cold-blooded murder as maintaining order within the house (Jagger, 1983). Men determine how their partners should rear their children. Girls should be taught to submit to their partners and boys should be taught to

dominate partners when they grow up. Patriarchy sentimentalises motherhood. On the one hand motherhood is the source of women's oppression, on the other hand it's the source of women's special values. Radical feminists have pointed out that motherhood is an ideological ploy. Radical feminists argue that under patriarchy a woman's body and its functions are exploited, however it should be glorified. Menstruation, which was regarded as a 'curse', should for instance be viewed as a 'blessing' from God. Their sexuality and culture should be celebrated instead of being exploited and devalued (Jagger, 1983).

Women under patriarchy are not only forced mothers but also sexual slaves. Forced motherhood begins with sexual coercion (Jagger, 1983). Mothers are forced to exploit their sexuality. Men see women as sexual objects for male pleasure. By defining women as sexual objects, men take possession of those objects. They use ideological coercion to take control of their partners' sexual activities. In the context of patriarchal culture, the male culture defines women as objects for male pleasure. Radical feminists argue that all women are sexual slaves of men. Almost all women's sexual relations with men under patriarchy is 'rape'. Rape is thus a defining feature of patriarchy. "Overtly patriarchy condemns rape; covertly it legitimises rape by viewing it as normal" (Jagger 1983: 261). Under patriarchy men are regarded as having a drive towards heterosexual intercourse, which their partners have to satisfy, whether they want to or not. Although patriarchy condemns rape, its one-sided definitions of male and female sexuality provide an implicit legitimisation of rape.

Under patriarchy women are regarded as sexual passive and receptive beings. Sometimes women's absolute refusal is interpreted as consent due to ideological ploys. In theory, patriarchal ideology preaches that rape is wrong because it violates a woman's dignity, however, in practice it commissions the sexual exploitation of women. Radical feminists define rape as a political act of aggression exercised by members of a powerful group on members of a weak group. Under patriarchy a woman's virginity grants her honour. For example, if a young woman was raped and she wasn't a virgin, the rape isn't considered as such a serious violation. Rape is also defined in terms of who perpetrated it. Sexual normality under patriarchy depends on the different interpretations to physical acts

perpetrated by men in society. For example, it's not rape if your husband, boyfriend or partner forced you to have sex against your will. Men's claim to free sex in a relationship is a freedom and right which cannot be denied to any man.

Patriarchal society teaches men to accept women only for their sexuality. Another form of rape is prostitution. Women are forced into prostitution through a variety of promises made by men such as love, marriage and employment. (Jagger, 1983). It is possible that any woman can easily become a sexual slave. Men perceive prostitution as something normal which exists to fulfill men's sexual needs. Jagger (1983) notes that patriarchal ideology refuses to accept and admit that men coerce women to sell their bodies. Under such ideologies women are seen as seducers and exploiters of men and not vice versa. Prostitutes are viewed by men as 'fallen women'. No prostitute will stand a chance in a court of law if she was raped due to this mindset.

Radical feminists have argued that even marriage under patriarchy is a form of sexual slavery. Young women are often tricked into getting married. This is because patriarchy romanticises marriage. Marriage under patriarchy is an illusion. Once married, a woman has no freedom. She has to obey her husband and be his wife in every sense. The husband being the head of the household has the right to decide how the couple will live their lives, how many children would be born and where they will live. Many radical feminists have argued that although women have the perfect biological make up to bear children, it does not necessarily mean that they have to do it. De Beauvoir (1972) stated that as long as production and reproduction is in the hands of men in patriarchal societies, women will stand no chance when they are fighting men, thus they will remain oppressed.

In many countries marriage laws require wives to engage in sexual relations with their husbands. The possibility of rape is thus destroyed. Instead of protecting the rights of women over their own bodies, patriarchy protects the rights of men over women's bodies. Under patriarchy a woman's body does not belong to her. It belongs to her partner. The reality of rape is often concealed from the participants themselves. Patriarchy mystifies romantic love. Often women are raped by their partners and are told by them that they did

it out of 'love'. Firestone (1970) stated that 'love' is the pivot of women's oppression. The emotions (love) men have for women are unrealistic. Radical feminists argue that all sexual relations occurring within marriages are rape.

Our intimate heterosexual relationships are despite the potential to produce pleasure and creativity often zones of illness, violence and miscommunication (Bennett, 2001). By reconstructing patriarchal language Radical feminists aim at renaming consent to coercion. What are seen as atrocities in real life such as rape, femicide, pornography, lesbian bashing and wife battering, do not exist in patriarchy. In reality men are not really providers - they are exploiters. For many Radical feminists patriarchy is best understood in terms of slavery. The motive of patriarchal ideologies is to control women's bodies and their sexuality. Patriarchy traps women in situations where they become forced mothers and sexual slaves.

Firestone (1970) stated that romantic love is corrupted by patriarchy. Women do not really know what real love is. Under patriarchy women's understanding of what romantic love is are distorted. Sex blinds a woman reality on love. For many women sex entails the making of love to the person you love, but for many men, sex is just sex. "The rape of women is often concealed by the patriarchal mystique of romance" (Jagger 1983: 265). Patriarchy romanticises rape. Millet (1970) suggested that the degradation and rape of women are considered erotic by patriarchy. Even if a woman had sexual intercourse and it was nice, it was still rape, because men have power over women whether they use it or not. According to Millet men use their sexuality to control women. In patriarchal societies heterosexual activity is the way of dominating women.

An important strategy to confront patriarchy is also that of separatism. Radical feminism is characterised by different degrees of separatism. Under patriarchy heterosexuality itself is oppressive to women. Because heterosexuality is a cultural norm, it deprives women of their right to leave abusive partners. It also deprives women the right of self-determination and sometimes define them sick or abnormal if they have a relationship with a woman where no violence is present. Patriarchy lets women suppress their lesbian

side. In a patriarchal society it is the men who are masculine and not women. Women are for sexual pleasure. For women to be free from forced motherhood and sexual slavery they should escape patriarchal institution of marriage and family. Being lesbian does not rule out the possibility of becoming a victim of male rape. However, if women want to take control over their lives / bodies, they can take the first step by saying no to heterosexual activities (Jagger, 1983). In reality Radical feminism sees patriarchy as an exploitative system characterised by death, violence and domination. Because we are so used to violence and death everywhere, patriarchy appears to be natural. Radical feminism can be viewed as a consciousness which aims at making the destructive power of patriarchy visible. It demonstrates the drudgery of motherhood, romance and equality in a supposedly androgynous society. Radical feminism has definitely revealed a different reality. It has shown us a world where the exploitation and domination of women are sugar-coated. Male dominated institutions trap women in situations from which they cannot easily escape.

In the discussion of the basic arguments put forward by Radical feminism, it is important to note that no feminist theory is entirely coherent. Tong (1998:46) makes this point when she says the following in relation to Radical Feminism: “As hard as it is to draw a boundary line between “liberal” women’s rights groups and “radical” women’s liberal groups; it is even more difficult to articulate the differences existing within the Radical feminist community”.

2.2 The exchange theory

George C. Homans’s Exchange Theory also deals with the interconnectedness and exchange relations of actors in the social world. “The theory attempts to explain social life by rational choice methods” (Marshall 1996: 164). The theory can be applied in the analysis of events occurring within families, for example, between family members such as husbands and wives. The meeting of personal needs connects people. In our everyday practices we tend to make distinctions between goods and services that we need. Some people find the strangest things valuable and will at all cost try to keep hold of those things. Values like pride and altruism are sometimes an actor’s reward.

The Exchange Theory deals with the personal advantage individuals gain through co-operation, even if it has unpleasant consequences for the individual (Marshall, 1996). When an activity emitted by one person is rewarded or punished by an activity emitted by another, we say that the two have interacted. According to Homans (1961), the open secret of human exchange is to give the other person behaviour that is more valuable to him/her than costly to you and to get from him/her behaviour that is more valuable to you than costly to him/her. The theory was partially influenced by Behavioural Psychology.

Behaviourism is an approach in psychology which denies that the consciousness has any relevance to the understanding of human behaviour (Marshall, 1996). It presents an extreme environmentalist position regarding the question of what guides human actions. Behaviour is seen in terms of an identifiable and measurable response to an external or internal, recognisable and measurable stimuli. The response can be modified by rewards or various forms of discouragement - a process known as conditioning (Marshall, 1996). "We all hold that all the activities and sentiments emitted by one man in response to the behaviour of another are more or less reinforced by the behaviour of other" (Marshall 1996: 34). Behaviourism can only give account to why people do certain things and not their feelings. According to all behaviourists much of our behaviour for example, refusing to report abuse is the result of learning.

Learning is defined as a relatively permanent change in behaviour that results from one's experiences. It is change in thoughts, perceptions or reactions to the environment - that is neither programmed by genes nor due to maturation (Domjan, 1993). Learning occurs because responses come to be influenced by outcomes that follow them. "If it were possible to strip away your learned response, little behaviour would be left" (Weiten, 1995: 223). An important form of basic learning is operant conditioning. The term operant conditioning derived from Skinner's belief that in this type of responding an organism operates on the environment instead of simply reacting to a stimulus. Operant conditioning is governed by voluntary responses. Through operant conditioning we learn new skills and habits, both good and bad.

We are likely to keep on doing things that allow us to escape or avoid unpleasant events. For example, if a teenager finds that lying to her gym teacher will get her out of the gym classes, she will keep right on lying. If a man feels that a few beers will help him to stand up against his dominating wife, he'll keep right on drinking. In each of the above cases behaviour is strengthened through previously learned experiences. The principle of reinforcement clearly governs complex aspects of human behaviour.

Following in the footsteps of E.L. Thorndike, B.F Skinner based his theory of learning on Thorndike's principle - "the law of effect" (Weiten, 1995). According to the "law of effect", if a response in the presence of a stimulus leads to satisfying effects, the association between the stimulus and response is strengthened. Skinner demonstrated that organisms tend to repeat responses that are followed by favourable consequences. "Reinforcement occurs when a response increases an organism's tendency to make that response" (Weiten, 1995: 224). Sometimes the consequences of reinforcement decrease an organism's tendency to make a response. In Skinner's model of operant behaviour such consequences are called punishment. Punishment mostly involves the presentation of an aversive stimulus. Punishment may come from internal as well as external environments (Homans, 1961).

The concept of punishment in operant conditioning is often confused with negative reinforcement. Negative reinforcement involves the removal of an aversive stimulus thereby strengthening a response, whereas punishment on the other hand, involves the presentation of an aversive stimulus, thereby weakening a response (Weiten, 1995). If an actor is positively reinforced, the prevalence rate of that act occurring again will be high in contrast to negative reinforcement where the prevalence rate will be lower. The exchange of rewards tends towards stability and continued interaction. The more an organism attaches value to an activity, the more he or she will value that activity. Much of our everyday behaviour is regulated by reinforcement. The principle of reinforcement governs complex aspects of human behaviour.

Influenced by behavioural psychologist, B.F. Skinner, Homans tried to make sense of human social behaviour by trying to explain it (certain human behaviour) by looking at animal behaviour. Both animal and human behaviour work according to a stimulus response model. Homans tried to explain certain human behaviour by focussing on conditioned responses. Take for instance Skinner's experiment with the pigeon in the cage. 'Suppose that a fresh or naïve pigeon is in a cage in a laboratory. Its peck is an innate repetition of behaviour which it uses to explore its environment. As the pigeon wanders around the cage pecking away, it hits a round red target. At that exact minute the waiting psychologist or an automatic machine feeds it. The probability of the pigeon emitting the behaviour again and not just pecking around in the cage, but pecking the target, has increased. Should we prefer our own language, we can say that the pigeon has 'learned' to peck at the target because it was previously rewarded for doing so' (Homans 1961: 34). Relating this to the behaviour of abused women, in Skinner's language, abused women's behaviour (their decision not to report the abuse) is an operant. The operant has been reinforced by reinforces (norms and financial security) and the women have undergone operant conditioning.

In our own words we may say that the women have learned to live with abuse because they get something in exchange. Homans took findings of Behavioural Psychology but modified it so that it could apply to human exchange. "In Operant conditioning, a learner first emits a response, or behaves in some way, and then comes to associate this action with positive or negative consequences" (Sigelman and Shaffer 1995: 223). It's sometimes hard to believe that all human behaviour, no matter how subtle, is shaped by differential reinforcement of quite simple actions produced the first time as if it was by chance (Homans 1961). Skinner and his followers have shown that that much of our everyday life is regulated by reinforcement (Weiten, 1995).

As you have probably noticed, people avoid facing awkward situations at all costs. The roots of avoidance lie in escape learning. In escape learning an organism acquires a response that decreases or ends aversive (unpleasant) stimulation (Weiten, 1995). A woman's decision not to report abuse might have been influenced by what had happened

to her in the past when she reported the abuse for the first time. An abused woman might either face financial loss when she reports the abuse, or might be seen as a traitor by the community. She might also face further reprisal from her partner. We are likely to keep on doing things that allow us to escape or avoid unpleasantness, so we learn many habits through negative reinforcement. According to Sigelman and Shaffer (1995), we tend to repeat behaviours that have pleasant consequences and cut down on behaviours that have unpleasant consequences. From man's past history, we have valid reasons for knowing that when an actor finds a particular reward valuable, and that an activity which gives him / her reward, is part of his / her repertory (Homans, 1961). For example, if a child cleans his room and then receives a hug, the hug will probably provide positive reinforcement for room cleaning and make the behaviour more likely to occur in the future.

Unlike the observations a psychologist or scientist makes of pigeons in a laboratory, the observations we make of actors in everyday life are not precise and accurate enough to let us determine at what ratios and variables the activities of humans are rewarded. Sometimes internal, as well as external factors, can influence an actor's decision to take part in an exchange transaction. One can reinforce a diversity of human activities by providing social approval and similar sentiments in return. Society teaches women that once their partners financially provide for them, they (women) should in exchange be loyal and not report any kind of abuse. The mere thought and the actual event itself - depriving yourself from all that privileges - are enough to let you change your mind and not report the abuse. Once an abuser is arrested, he will be unable to support his family. The withdrawal of an expected reward is not just something that releases emotional behaviour; it is also a punishment and its avoidance is a reward (Homans, 1961). Not only does an actor display anger and or guilt when distributive justice fails, but they learn to do something about it. People learn to avoid activities that get them into unjust and unfair exchanges and they learn to emit activities that are rewarded.

The power of the stimulus (financial support of partner or threat or fear of being killed) to elicit the behaviour (decision not to report the abuse) is no doubt greater when it has

occurred in the past in conjunction with an activity that has been rewarded, or with one that has partially been rewarded (Homans 1961). For an actor to partake or participate in a transaction an appropriate stimulus has to be present. In Skinner's explanation of exchange in human activities variables determine the rate of emission of an activity. Deprivation and satiation are two concepts Homans used which represent high and low variables, which influence transactions and the interconnection of actors. Variables most often determine the state of an organism or actor and rate of reinforcement. The activity an organism emits is always strengthened by a reinforcer. The higher the need for that reinforcer, the higher the probability that the actor will take part in the transaction and vice versa. The more the actor is positively reinforced, the higher would be the exchange. Abused women learn, that once they report the abuse, they will no longer have financial support. Punishment must have occurred at least once, before it will fully set off avoidance behaviour. "If in the past the occurrence of a particular stimulus situation has been the occasion on which a man's activity has been rewarded, then the more similar the present stimulus situation is to the past one, the more likely she is to emit the activity, or some similar activity, now" (Homans 1969: 53). For all actions taken by persons, the more often the particular action of a person is rewarded, the more likely that person is to perform that action (Marshall 1996). "In triple contingency a stimulus occurs on an occasion in which an activity is followed by reinforcement (Homans, 1961: 59). It is such contingency that brings the behaviour of an organism under more and more precise and accurate control by the environment, physical and social. Some activities are both reinforced and punished at the same time, and sometimes they cannot get one without inducing the other.

The more abused women value their partners' financial support or life, the more they would contemplate whether or not they want to report the abuse. "The more often within a given period of time a man's activity rewards the activity of another, the more the other will emit the activity" (Homans 1961: 54). An abused woman's decision not to report abuse will also rest on the social approval she receives from the community in her act of loyalty towards her partner. "The more valuable to a man the unit of the activity another gives him, the more often he will emit the activity" (Homans 1961: 55). Once men stop

providing for their partners, abused women might rethink the situation and report the abuse. The more an organism or actor is deprived from a positive reinforcer, the more often that actor would emit an activity if so reinforced. If abused women receive nothing in exchange for their loyalty to their partners they might as well report the violation.

“If under this condition, an activity emitted by Person (a woman), once rewarded by an activity of Other (a man), and is not thereafter so rewarded, Person will sooner or later stop emitting the activity (keeping quiet about the abuse)” (Homans 1961: 57). The exchange of punishments tends towards instability and the eventual failure in interaction. Women would not stay in abusive relationship, unless they gain something from the relationship. Where Person and Other are exchanging help for approval, we can assume that over and above, the immediate exchange itself, the two people emit sentiments indicating that they both find the exchange rewarding.

It is true that the more valuable the reward of an activity, the more often a man will emit it and the more costly, the less often he will do so (Homans 1961). “A person involved in an exchange relation with another will expect that the rewards of each person be proportional to his or her cost – the greater the costs, the greater the rewards” (Homans 1961: 57). For example, a woman will go for a full body wax and let her eyebrows be plucked, just to feel good about herself and get a lot of compliments from her partner. Women will suffer in exchange to look and feel good about themselves. Abused women will endure numerous physical assaults which result in broken jaws, fractured bones, stab wounds and concussions without reporting the abuse, just to get social approval and acceptance from neighbours, accommodation, food and the financial support from their partners.

The removal of an expected reward is not just something that releases emotional behaviour; it is also a punishment, and its avoidance is accordingly the reward. Women learn to avoid activities, which get them into unjust exchange relations. What may seem to us as irrational behaviour might be rational behaviour for abused women who have learned what the consequences would be, if they report the abuse.

Sometimes it is really hard to understand why women do not report physical assaults. Outsiders might think that the abuse isn't so bad because the woman doesn't leave her partner. There are many reasons why women find it difficult to leave abusive relationships. We do not always know what these reasons are, and therefore countless misconceptions are formed about women's reluctance to report abuse. Due to these misconceptions many women feel that they are to blame for their own abuse. It is not easy to talk about frightful and awful things that have happened to you in the comfort of your own home. As outsiders we cannot accuse abused women of being passive victims because many of us haven't even experienced violence within our own homes. No one knows how abuse feels until they find themselves in a similar situation. Once caught in its web, it's not easy to break free from abuse. Thus, "when a social phenomenon such as women abuse has to be explained, it's common to think of a theory as predicating certain fundamental mechanisms that would render an explanation of perceived patterns of regularities in such a phenomenon" (Jagger, 1983: 267).

Why do women shroud and tolerate their abuse? To answer this question and many more we need to delve deeper and do more in-depth investigations. However, sometimes it is easier said than done. The following chapter will thus provide you with a 'behind the scenes look' relative to ethical procedures, selection of study subjects, research designs and methods.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

When talking to abused women researchers often face a number of difficulties extracting information from the participants. Due to the sensitive and volatile nature of abuse, women do not always want to participate in such studies. Not every person is as open as the next in disclosing what happens to them behind closed doors. Feelings of shame often prevent abused women from coming out into the open (Motingoe and Gilchrist, 1996). This contributes to unreliable estimates of women abuse. Not everyone wants to share with other people what happens to them behind closed doors. South Africa is no different from any other country when it comes to the reporting of abuse. We are facing an enormous problem when it comes to the reporting of crimes.

Many South African women do not report their victimisation. Since 1994 there has been a marked increase in violence (political as well as interpersonal) especially in reference to interpersonal violence and rape (Marais, 1998). There have been various attempts to determine the extent, prevalence and causes of women abuse in South Africa. South African research on women abuse is still in its infancy, but the research that does exist has illuminated some of the devastating effects of this widespread phenomenon (Artz, 1999). The statistics that are available only reflect a small portion of cases that have been reported. The research that exists does not always clearly emphasise why women are so reluctant to report abuse. Therefore, the reasons as to why many women do not report their abuse remain unknown. In this chapter I will discuss the methodological approach I used and how I went about finding out why abused women's voices are silenced.

Striving for knowledge and understanding is a fundamental component of any human being's life. Much of what we have learned and know in today's life has been acquired through experiences and observations of situations. We need knowledge to cope and survive in this world. Research can thus be defined as a systematic scientific investigation (inquiry) of a phenomenon to improve human understanding and knowledge (Information Service On Higher Education, 1999). Research is carried out within a system of ideas. It

is concerned with ‘what is’ and sometimes with ‘what might be’ – it cannot determine ‘what ought’ to be. A vast majority of social scientific research is conducted to explore a topic or phenomenon or to provide a basic familiarity with the topic (Babbie and Mouton, 2001).

3.1 Aims, objectives and motive of the study

There is a general need for in-depth studies concerning the experience of abused women. Women are oppressed in society, and it is also with this in mind that I wanted to make a contribution. The reason why I decided to explore why women’s voices are silenced, when it comes to reporting physical assaults, is that when this study is combined with similar studies, it can be used to assist and improve the lives of battered women (Damon, 2000). As a woman I may also one day become the victim of physical violence. The purpose of my study is thus to gain some understanding as to why women will endure the abuse, instead of reporting it. Researchers in this specific field motivated me to explore why women find it so difficult and troublesome to report assaults. The aim of my study is to provide abused women with an opportunity to tell their stories and to give “voice” to their experiences.

3.2 Research design

Exploratory research usually leads to insight and comprehension rather than the collection of detailed and replicable data. Instead of testing a hypothesis (investigating whether there exists a relationship between two or more variables in a setting), I conducted an explorative study, which gave me more insight into why abused women’s voices are silenced. “Exploratory studies are also most typically done to satisfy curiosity and desire for better understanding” (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 80). Such studies frequently involve the use of in-depth interviews, the analysis of case studies, and the use of informants.

The most commonly used methodological approaches in social scientific research are qualitative and quantitative investigation (Marshall, 1996). The debate about which research paradigm seems more suitable for social research has been taking place at least

since the 19th century. This debate arises from the different epistemological positions held by the two approaches. Qualitative and quantitative research have always been represented as opposites; one presenting the true way, the other one the false way. A great deal of emphasis has always been placed on the reasoning being that the right method will lead to the truth (Garbers, 1996).

Qualitative methodology is generally associated with interpretive epistemology. It tends to be used to refer to forms of data collection and analysis which rely on understanding, with an emphasis on meaning (Marshall, 1996). Qualitative researchers always strive to study human action from the viewpoint of the social actors themselves. An advantage of this approach (qualitative research) is to describe and understand rather than to explain human behaviour (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that the research which is conducted in the former, is done in the natural setting of the actors. Qualitative research can be seen as a process of systematic inquiry into meanings which people attach to make sense of and guide their actions (Information Service On Higher Education, 1999). Qualitative research provides a meaning for understanding the richness and subtlety of human experience. It is best understood as an active process and cannot be seen in isolation from the culture, context and the participants involved (Walsh, 1996).

In qualitative research the main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (idiographic motive), rather than attempting to generalise to some theoretical population. Qualitative research is associated with participant observations, interviewing, focus groups, various language based techniques such as discourse analysis and the examination of texts (Granafaki, 1996). In quantitative research the researcher usually aims at testing variables and the relationship between them in isolation from the context of the setting. With the qualitative research the researcher takes the exact contrasting approach. The aim of qualitative research is to describe and understand the events within the concrete natural context in which they occur.

“A qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent” (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 289). In such interviews the respondent ideally does most of the talking. Qualitative research is especially effective for studying attitudes and behaviours over time. An advantage of qualitative research is that it lies in the depths of understanding. Qualitative research designs are very time consuming. However, according to Yllo and Bograd (1988) a major advantage of this approach is the prospect of developing trust and exploring the contributor’s insight, feeling and rationale through dialogue.

Quantitative researchers’ emphasis is placed on variables in describing and analysing human behaviour. Quantitative analysis deals with numerical representation, rather than describing and explaining of phenomenon (Information Service On Higher Education, 1999). Within the nomothetic (quantitative) tradition, it is the obligation of the researcher to ensure that the findings from the research can be generalised from a sample to its target population. Although this approach allows data to be collected in a short period of time it has the ability to distance the researcher from the people being studied. The reason why I did not opt for a quantitative research design was because I wanted to gain a close and intimate familiarity with the people and area where the study was conducted. Researchers are suppose to be detached from the subjects they study, but this position sometimes objectifies the respondent.

In my study, I had no interest in the quantification of data. The aim of my study was to understand events within the context it occurs. I was interested in the everyday experiences and the terminologies of the participants themselves, and not in pre-set theoretical constructs (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The study I conducted was ideographic in nature. The term ideographic refers to those methods which highlight the unique elements of the individual phenomenon. In contrast, nomothetic seeks to provide more general law like statements of social life, usually by emulating the logic and methodology of the natural science (Marshall, 1996). The sole aim of the study was to explore women’s reluctance to report physical abuse on the part of their husbands and

partners. What factors influence women's decisions not to report such acts? Close contact with the subjects enabled me to view the problem of physical abuse through the eyes of the people being studied – a notion of understanding or “Verstehen”.

3.3 Data collection procedure

The process of collecting data may present serious practical difficulties, for example, where will I find women who are willing to talk about their experiences of abuse. Gaining entry or getting access to the field is an essential precondition for conducting research. Before I could have conducted any interviews, I had to get acquainted with the research area through numerous visits to the setting. The research I conducted was overt in nature and the women knew what my purpose was. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, I knew that not all the women who I would approach would be willing to participate in the study. The reason being that it is believed that abuse is a private matter, which concerns no outsider. Due to the negative connotation attached to abuse, I expected most women to refuse to participate in the study. To prevent this from happening I got assistance from an informant working at the local crisis centre situated in Bella Vista.

On my behalf, the informant first approached the women. She explained to them why I wanted to speak to them. Only after the informant got the survivors' permission, did I received a list from her with the telephone numbers and names of the women whom the trauma counselors treated at home. By now you are probably wondering how the trauma counselors got in touched with the women they counsel at home. Well, with the centre's inauguration an informal non-restricted cocktail evening was held with the purpose of introducing the centre and its trauma counselors to the community. Anyone staying in the vicinity of Bella Vista could attend. This strategy allowed abused women to seek help without their partners knowing what the real intent of their visit to the centre was.

3.4 Presentation of the researcher

The way in which a woman is asked about violence makes an enormous difference to whether she will disclose her situation. Women are more inclined to discuss their experiences if they perceive the researcher to be caring and easy to talk to. If asked about

violence in a nonjudgemental, empathetic way, an abused woman is more likely to answer truthfully (Usden et al., 1999). I first started off by engaging in normal conversation with the women, inquiring about the area they live in. After this was done, I asked the women whether they were interested in sharing some information regarding their experiences of abuse with me. I told the women that I'm a graduate student conducting research on abuse, with the hope that policy makers can make use of the information to develop intervention programmes to meet the needs of abused women. I had to inform the women, prior to interviewing them, what my intention was, to allow them to decide whether they were comfortable with the approach.

The first seven women whom I selected from the list and telephoned immediately agreed to participate in my study. After all the necessary informed consent was obtained, I was able to start interviewing the participants at their homes. The reason why I interviewed the women at their homes was that they were afraid that someone might see them at the crisis centre talking to a stranger. I had to contact the women telephonically to find out whether it was safe for me to go to their homes to listen to their stories. I, however, was at first hesitant thinking about what the consequences as well as the implications would be for the women and me, if their partners caught us whilst we were having a conversation.

3.5 In-depth interviews

“An interview is a social interaction which results in the transfer of information from the interviewee to an interviewer or researcher” (Marshall 1996: 257). Interviews can be conducted face to face or by telephone. Interviews vary in style and format, from the structured interview based on a questionnaire, to an unstructured interview based on a list of topics to be covered, to the in-depth interview or qualitative interview which may last hours and range widely around the topics in an interview guide (Marshall, 1996).

In in-depth interviews, people are interviewed at a considerable length. The objective is to develop in-depth information. In in-depth interviews biographical material is assembled about particular individuals – usually recounted by themselves. With in-depth

interviews the subjects are the experts of their own lives and are approached one at a time (Scheurich, 1997). No other method of research can give us as much detail about people's beliefs and attitudes. In-depth interviews confirm intimate and personal facts and matters about subjects. It allows researchers to explore social issues in depth and to identify factors and relationships that may not be understood through quantitative research. It gives insight into why women would remain silent about abuse. It gives ground for an in-depth sociological engagement with the people being studied. In-depth interviews provide verbal accounts of the past supplied by those who lived through the events. Some social scientists feel that this method is too unreliable to provide useful information. Other social scientists' believe that in-depth interviews offer insight that few sociological research methods can match. In-depth interviews have been successfully employed in studies of major importance and are widely used in anthropology, as well as sociology (Giddens, 1989).

A set of five open-ended questions was employed in the study. I made use of probing, a technique used in interviewing to solicit a more complete answer to a question (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). The reason was that I didn't want to limit the women in their responses. Whilst conducting the interviews, I could not write down any notes, because it disturbed the interviewees whilst they shared their experiences with me. Therefore I had to use a tape recorder. The subjects often felt intimidated by the sight of a recorder, and were afraid that anything that was recorded could be used against them. This was due to rumours in the area that other researchers used the people's real names and identities in their reports. I ensured them that I would not make myself guilty of this. I informed them that a person who has been defamed could apply for an interdict or sue me for damages or demand an apology or retraction.

Whilst conducting the interviews at their homes, I tried to keep the format of a conversation which looked and sounded natural in that setting. I found that it was the most effective way to generate information. Sometimes the women's shared experiences had a very powerful emotional effect on me. I could sometimes hear my voice start to shake or tears would come to my eyes. In such cases I had to stop the conversation

because I didn't want to upset the women further. During the interviews I never let my attention slip from the woman who was talking. I wanted each of them to understand how important they were to me. I had to adopt the local dialect, spoken by the people in the area, to secure successful communication. Sometimes I felt very disturbed by the way the women were treated by their partners and often felt that the crisis centre did not do enough to assist these women. I was informally dressed to blend in with the people and had to make use of public transport to get to the women's homes. I, was, however, immediately identified as an outsider and people looked at me with suspicion. The information that was obtained from them, was kept under strict confidentiality. The reason for this was to protect the women's identity and to ensure their safety.

3.6 Ethical considerations

How can a researcher accurately present the subjects' point of view without imposing his or her own ideas, views and beliefs? I entered the world of the subjects with the aim to perceive the world from the subjects' point of view. It enabled me to establish how the participants construct and interpret their experience of abuse. Being close to the researched provides us with inside information that we would not have been able to gain, if it wasn't for the bond that existed between the explorer and the explored. However, we also have to bear in mind that being too close to the researched is also problematic. Subjects might even perform or lie about their experiences. As an outsider, I was quite aware of this.

“Ethical issues arise out of our interaction with other people, other beings and the environment, especially where there is potential for, or is, a conflict of interest” (Babbie and Mouton 2001: 520). A researcher has the right to truth, but not at the expense of the rights of other individuals in a society. Most of the time social research is an invasion into other people's lives. Not harming people is easy in theory, but difficult in practice.

Until very recently sociologists and social scientists often displayed arrogance in their treatment of their research subjects, justifying their actions by the search for truth. This trend is now being redressed, especially in industrial societies, with the adoption of

formal codes of conduct and a greater emphasis on ethical research procedures (Marshall 1996). The means and goals of social science investigation are intrinsically bound up with ethical considerations (Marshall 1996). There is no clear consensus on a complete set of ethical rules to be followed when conducting research involving human subjects – although there are some generally agreed professional guidelines. One of the basic tenants is that subjects should normally have their privacy protected through the practice of informed consent. Thus the interviewees in the study were assured that they will remain anonymous and that their abusers would not find out that I had spoken to them.

The researcher is also responsible for preserving the confidentiality of any information that could identify subjects. The protection of data, so that anonymity is assured, is an increasing concern and is now subject to certain legal requirements. “Ethical principles guide not only the conduct, but also the presentation of research, and the ethical implications concerning how the results might be used” (Marshall 1996: 157). The women had to sign a form of consent indicating that they were willing to participate in the study. This would rule out any observation of private behaviour without the explicit and fully informed permission of the person to be observed. Research subjects should not be exposed to unnecessary stress, or manipulation, or personal risk.

Over the past few years there has been a tremendous focus on ‘women and violence’ in South Africa. Although our country has promulgated many laws and legislation which serve to protect abused women’s rights, it still fails. Why do women continue to stay silent about what is happening to them and why don’t they access state-implemented services? We do not always know and understand why abused women do not report assaults. However, by personally talking to women, who are or were abused, one gets a better understanding of what it might be like to find yourself in an abusive relationship. With the right attitude towards life and people, even though it might now seem funny, a researcher can win his or her research subjects’ trust and gain a lot of valuable information.

In the next chapter I am giving voice to seven abused women. Each of them will be sharing some of their experiences of abuse to help us understand why they didn't and couldn't report the abuse. All women are not the same. They will not respond in the same way to being victimised, nor will they be victimised in identical ways. They will also not cope with their experiences in the same way. This means that there is no prototypical abused woman against whom all other women should be measured (Usden et al., 1999).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Violence against women is a worldwide appearance. Large numbers of women are daily subjected to inhumane practices which violates their human rights and dignity. South Africa has one of the highest levels of abuse against women in the world (The Good Hope Newspaper, 2001). Each year the figures of abuse increase. Thousands of women are suffering similarly, but in silence. No one wants to speak out and be labeled as a “traitor”. All that is needed for women abuse to flourish, is for a woman to remain silent.

In this chapter I aim at bringing together the words of seven abused women for people to read, understand and even perhaps identify with. I introduce and discuss the seven women; the area they reside in and why they did not report their abuse. In this chapter the discussion of my research findings are done against the back-drop of social practices such as male supremacy and female subservience (patriarchy). Although I also incorporate Exchange Theory in an attempt to explain the shrouding of abuse, I found that Radical feminism provides a more useful framework to explain and understand why women choose not to report their abuse. The study examines how patriarchy manifests itself in this specific community (Bella Vista). Official statistics seem somewhat irrelevant, since it cannot really help us to understand why abused women everywhere shroud their abuse. It wasn't until I began talking to the “experts” – the women themselves - that I really began to understand the depth of the problem. Abuse has been a silent subject for too long (Dowdeswell, 1986).

4.1 Description of the area

Bella Vista is a ‘coloured’ residential area, situated 6 kilometres from the nearest town, Ceres. In 1967 the Department of Development which specialised in the implementation of land segregation and group areas was approached to assist the local government of Ceres to find a suitable area for development. The land which was bought was named ‘Gebied K’, which stood for Gebied Kleurlinge. The idea was that Ceres had to become a predominantly white residential town and all the coloureds residing there, eventually

were to move to 'Gebied K'. It was only by 1973 that 'Gebied K's name changed to Bella Vista.

With an estimated population of just under 10 000 people, Bella Vista is steadily becoming over populated. It is divided into two sections, the working and middle class areas. Unlike the residents from the middle class area, the people who reside in the working class area are dependent on public transport, which terminates at nine o' clock in the evening. The houses in this area (working class) are all semi-detached. Almost on every second street there are about two to three house shops and three to four shebeens. Most of the council houses are supplied with running water, an efficient sewerage system and electricity. The people who reside in the middle class area can afford medical aid. The houses in this area are also more spacious and are built on one plot. The residents are also more educated and occupy positions at hospitals and schools. Bella Vista itself is not very attractive, due to the constant vandalism of buildings and pollution in the area.

Recently, a post office, high school, a community centre, a rugby field and two tennis courts, a pre-natal clinic, crisis centre, swimming pool, a day care centre and library were built in this area. However, there is still no police station. There are about three schools in this area, of which two are primary schools and one a high school. Bella Vista shares a police station with another residential area, N'duli, which is situated about 8 kilometres from Ceres. Other problems, which raise concern in this specific area, are alcohol and drug abuse, child abuse, poverty / unemployment, gangsterism and a rise in the level of HIV/AIDS infections (Snyman, 2002). The crime rate in this area has become extremely high, beyond the control of the police.

4.2 The study group - A profile

The women in the study had much in common with one another. They shared experiences of violence and pain. All of the seven women interviewed stayed in the vicinity of Bella Vista. Six of the seven women are currently living with their abusive partners. The women were all Afrikaans speaking. In terms of marital status, four of the women were

married; one was divorced and two are currently cohabiting. The names of the participants were changed to protect their identity.

From the sample, five of the seven women were unemployed. The highest grade finished by four of the women was grade 10 (standard 8). The other three participants left school at grades three, four and five respectively. All the women have between one and four school going children. Four of the participants are 38 years old. The other three participants are 21, 25 and 35 years old respectively. Two of the participants suffered abuse for approximately 15 years. The other five participants suffered abuse for two, four, five, nine and eleven years respectively. See the table below for a diagrammatic presentation of the study group.

Study Group	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Education Level	Employed	Suffered Abuse?	Reported Abuse?
Annah*	25 yrs.	Co – habiting	One	Gr. 10	No	4 yrs.	No
Diana*	21 yrs.	Co – habiting	One	Gr. 10	No	5 yrs.	No
Susan*	38 yrs.	Divorced	Three	Gr. 10	Yes	15 yrs.	No
Deborah*	38 yrs	Married	Four	Gr. 10	Yes	15 yrs.	No
Sandra*	35 yrs.	Married	One	Gr. 3	No	11 yrs.	No
Marietta*	38 yrs.	Married	Four	Gr. 5	No	2 yrs.	No
Leah*	38 yrs.	Married	Three	Gr. 4	No	9 yrs.	No

Although it's expected of women to report abuse there are many reasons why they do choose not to. Many abused women know what their partners / abusers are capable of. Perpetrators of abuse are often extremely powerful, influential, aggressive and manipulative people. We do not always know what it is like to be trapped in an abusive relationship. Therefore, we cannot presume that the abuse is not so bad.

Women who find themselves victimised by an abusive relationship often do not know where to turn to or what to do. Beaten down into submission, victimised and humiliated women frequently feel that they are no good and worthless. The emotional damage from being physically abused creates a tremendous burden on a person's ability to cope with situations in life (Brinegar, 1992). Abuse is one of the most under-reported crimes and official figures form only a proportion of the total crimes committed (Dowdeswell, 1986). Although we may think that the rates of violent crimes such as abuse and rape have gone down, it has in fact increased. Women are often presented with a number of difficulties when they want to lay charges against their assailants.

4.3 *Transcribed interviews*

The following quotes you're about to read are the direct words of the women I interviewed. By reading what they experienced you'll get a much clearer understanding as to why it is was so difficult for them to report their abuse. Each person's experience is deeply personal and individualistic. Listen to what they have to say...

Ten months ago Annah aged 25, was rushed to the local provincial hospital. She had several broken ribs, one black eye and a punctured lung. She was bleeding internally and almost died due to a lack of oxygen. Her boyfriend had assaulted her. After two weeks in hospital she was discharged and is currently living with her boyfriend at her mother's home. She is unemployed and has one daughter attending primary school.

My boyfriend and I had a slight argument about him using our food money for marijuana and buttons. He told me to chill out, but I just could not take it any more. Before I knew it, he started kicking me. He kicked me from the living room to the kitchen to our bedroom. Most of the time I was just thinking about my child. Luckily she was at a friend's house, sleeping over. I tried to fight back, but he was too strong. You know what they say about marijuana! I screamed and begged him to stop. My mother also tried to stop him, but he told me if she interfered he would kill us all. He pushed my mother out of her own house and locked the door. No one could help me. My mother went to a neighbour to call the police. I knew that it would take hours before they got there. I prayed that he would not kill me.

He started hitting me in the face and with the first blow, my left eye immediately started to swell. Other times if we had an argument we will always just swear at each other or he will just slap me once or threaten me. I realised that he was really insane. While he was hitting and kicking me I realised what his intentions was when he unzipped his pants. I always enjoy it when we have sex but after he had kicked me so much I decided against it. I waited for him to drop his pants and ran past him into the kitchen. Before I could leave the house he pulled me back. I saw the bread knife lying in the kitchen table and I tried to stab him. The first time I missed and when I tried again, he took the knife and stabbed me in my chest. The last thing I remember was that he kicked me in my face. When I came by I was in hospital with a swollen black eye, a couple of broken ribs, a few bruises and scrapes and a hole in my chest.

Interviewer: What did you do after you woke up in hospital and realised that your partner assaulted you?

I thought of leaving him or going to the police, but then I realised that I had a child to think of, our child. I didn't want my child growing up without a father. What would her friends say at school if they heard that her mother laid a charge against her father? I do not want her friends to know what her father did to me. My mother was a single parent and I know how difficult it was for her to raise me and my brother and sisters alone. My mother and sister tried to convince me to lay a charge against him but I just could not do it, not after he came to me to apologise. My sister told me that if it happens once, it could easily happen again. By the way it was not abuse. It does not happen often. My boyfriend told me that he loves me deeply and that I was the best thing that ever happen to him. I knew that he would never hurt me. It was that marijuana and buttons. He loves me and will never really intentionally hurt me.

Who will support me if he leaves me? I need his money to tend to our child's needs. You know how expensive school fees, clothes and books are. How am I going afford it? I did not even finish high school. What employment agency will take a woman whom did not even finish primary school? I can't take chances with my child's future. I want to give her all the things that I didn't have as a child. Come to think of it if I didn't nag on his head that night, he wouldn't have got upset with me. My boyfriend isn't the violent kind. In the past, if we had an argument, he would have always buy me flowers and ensured me that he loved me. I actually think that I provoked him. He will never lift his hand to hit me without a cause.

Why should I lay a charge of assault against him if I caused my own beatings? I am not going waste my time following legal procedures and at the end of the day I withdraw the charge laid.

Interviewer: How did the hospital staff treat you?

Fine, I guess. No one bothered me with unnecessary questions about how I sustained my injuries. I think that they didn't want me to feel uncomfortable. I got the same treatment as all the other patients did, so actually I can not complain.

Interviewer: After you were released from hospital, how did your partner treat you?

Good. He bought me lots of flowers and nice things. For the first time, he actually gave me more money than usual. I could buy more food. To be honest you, he's not violent. He only gets angry and upset if I really piss him off. The last couple of times that we have argued, he slapped me in my face and gave me a shiner or two. At least he didn't stab me or broke my nose!

Interviewer: Do you know that laws exist which protect the rights of abused women?

No! Really, since when? No one told me. Anyway even if there exists such laws, it would never solve the problem. You can't depend on the police. They are just as corrupt as the criminals are. Let me tell you, some police officers even accept money to let paperwork disappear. My best friend has first hand experience of that. You can't trust a cop.

Interviewer: Did you consult the crisis centre at any stage?

No. I am too ashamed. I do not want people to know what my 'boy' did to me! People like to talk.

Interviewer: Did you go to the police at some stage?

No. The police station is too far. It is too much hassle. Why should I go through so much deep water if I know that I will not be able to leave him.

Diana is a 21 year old woman who has been living with her boyfriend for the past five and a half years. She is unemployed and has one son attending school. Five years ago, whilst living with her boyfriend, she was severely beaten by him after giving birth to their son.

Although she had to seek hospital care, she did not lay any charges of assault against her partner.

I grew up in a house where my father regularly abused my mother. Every weekend after he came from the shebeen it was the same story over and over again. My mother always tried to keep him away from me. Today, I think it was because she was afraid that he would hit me too. I was in standard 5 when I met this guy. He was 16 years older than I was. At first we were just friends. He took me to school in the morning and at weekends we would usually go out clubbing. By the time I was in standard 7 we already had sex. I knew that he had a girlfriend and child, but I did not care. He told me that he loved me! I fell pregnant the next year and couldn't finish school. My father was so upset. He slapped me and after that till today we haven't spoken to each other. After my baby was born, I stayed with my mother for the first couple of months, but my father's attitude towards me caused that I moved out. I moved in with my boyfriend and I immediately realised that his attitude towards me had also changed. He started yelling about stupid and silly things. I confronted him one day and he got so upset that he slapped me and kicked me in the stomach. If I were still pregnant at that time, my baby would surely have been killed. My back was for days sore. After that, he begged me to forgive him. I wanted to move out, but he convinced me to stay.

Three months later, out of the blue when I came from town he started to hit me. He told me that I was a bad mother and lover. I was so shocked that I could not do anything. Even though I tried to defend myself, I was numbed. He took a glass bottle, broke it against the wall and slashed my face with it and stabbed me on my left breast. He was like a crazy animal. When he saw the blood, he rushed me to hospital. Before we got to the hospital, he told me that he was sorry and that it would never happen again. He told me that if I would report him he could lose his job and if he lost his job he would be unable to support my child and me. He pleaded with me and I agreed to keep quiet, for the sake of my child. I can still remember that I got 14 stitches in my face and 29 on my chest and breast. Altogether, I received 43 stitches. Look, you can still see some of the scars if you look carefully. I used to have this nice soft skin, but now you can see for yourself. It's ugly hey? I don't think that any man would like to touch this skin! It looks and feels like a grater.

Interviewer: How did they treat you at the hospital?

Very bad. The nurses told me that I deserved it. There was this one nurse in particular that told me that I had to accept the responsibilities and consequences of living with a man in sin. I was in the hospital for a few days, just for observation, but whilst I was there I sensed that the nurses were acting indifferent towards me. When the shifts changed some of the nurses coming to work would ask if “grown up child” was still there. Whilst I was in the ward and saw what some of the other abused women’s injuries were I wanted to report the assault, but because the nurses had that attitude I decided to leave it at that. No one even asked if I wanted to lay charges. After I was released from hospital I went to live with my boyfriend again. For a couple of years our relationship was great. We did not even argue, until recently. I hoped that it would not happen again. He abused me again but not too severe. Just a few slaps!

Interviewer: Why did you go back to your boyfriend?

I had nowhere else to go. I could not go back to my mother’s house, because I was afraid that my father might hurt my baby or me. I was thinking of my child’s safety and health. I know my dad. If he’s upset about something, he will take it out on my mother. He blames her for everything.

Interviewer: Did you go to the crisis centre in Bella Vista for help or advice against any further abuse?

No! Everyone knows everyone in Bella Vista. You know where the crisis centre is situated. It’s in the main road and if I go there everyone would know that I am abused. The possibility that someone might see me is too big. By the way, they will only tell me to get a protection order against my boyfriend. What man would support his child if he can’t even come near the mother? He is the father of my son. I didn’t finish school and who is going to support me. Where the hell am I going get a job. I would rather stay with him than live in poverty. You see how life is today.

Interviewer: Did you ever consider going to the police yourself?

Yes. Everyone thinks that it is the right thing to do, but it would complicate my life. Who would look after my child and me if my boyfriend has to go to prison? My mother is disabled and my father

is evil. No other family member will take us in. They all hate my boyfriend because he got me pregnant while I was still in school. The abuse thing, was my own fault. If I only kept my mouth shut all the times. Why should I even send an innocent man to prison?

Interviewer: Before moving in together, were there any signs that would have indicated to you that you were getting involved with a potential abuser?

No, not really. While we were dating, he was so sweet and sensitive. I felt safe with him. He always defended my honor. One time he even slapped his ex because of the stories she spread about our relationship. This meant a hell of a lot to me. Before we became sexually intimate he forced me into having oral sex with him. I didn't want to lose him, so I did it even though I wanted to throw up in his face. I was afraid that if I didn't do it, he would leave me and take another girlfriend. That is what most of the men do. If they can't score with you, they drop you.

Interviewer: Did you ever seek advice from a friend?

No. I know what they will say! All my friends are against our relationship. They don't like him. They actually hate him because I got pregnant in school.

Susan is a 38 year old divorced women. She has three children still attending school and is currently working as a domestic servant in Ceres. Only after 15 years of marriage did she decide to divorce her abusive husband after she was hospitalised quite a few times. Not once during those 15 years she spent living in terror with her husband did she decide to lay a charge of assault against him. This is what she had to say:

Let me tell you what that rubbish did to me. After all my children were in school I decided to go job hunting. We couldn't pay our bills and we had to buy clothes for our children. After a few months, I got a job at a canopy making shop. I was so happy. At first my husband wasn't really impressed by the idea that I worked because he believed that he brought enough money home. For two weeks everything was okay at home. One night when I got home, he started screaming and pushing me around. He locked our children in their room so that they couldn't see what he was doing. He started to push me around and hitting me with his fists all over my body. He told me that he would not hit me in the face because I had to go to work the next day. He did not want to leave any

evidence on my face that could be used against him. He stepped with his shoe on my hand and the next day it was still swollen. I had to call in sick. The following day he cried like a baby and asked me to forgive him.

When I went back to work the following week I was nearly fired. He went to the place where I worked and accused my manager of having an affair with me. Every night he came and fetched me from work. I couldn't even talk to the other women I worked with, otherwise he accused them of organising and providing me with lovers. I lived in fear because I didn't know whether he would come to my work and make a scene. I was afraid of losing my job. At the end of that month I had to resign. The owner told me that my husband's outbursts were bad for his business.

Interviewer: Did you ever seek any help or advice from a friend or neighbour?

Yes, but not always! The bastard was too clever. Every time I tried to get help from a friend, he would stop me. He made promises to me that he will stop hitting me. I always fell for it. My children were also terrified of him. One day, I can still remember it like it was yesterday. While taking our youngest child to school a young man of about 16 years asked directions to a certain street. Whilst I was directing him, my husband drove by. At that stage my husband was a taxi driver. He told me to go home because he wanted to show me something. Me old stupid believed him. When I got home, he was already waiting for me. He told me to get into the taxi and we drove out of town. He drove to a deserted farm road where he started accusing me of having an affair with that boy. I laughed in his face. He told me that I wasn't respecting him and he started pulling at my skirt. He tore my panties off and inserted himself in me. I wanted to fight back, but he was my husband. He forced himself on me over and over again. I screamed, but no one heard me.

He forced me to do terrible sexual things to him that I have never done before. I didn't enjoy it. Whilst I was doing these things to him I felt like dying. He held a screwdriver against my neck and told me that he could kill. No one would ever find my body. After having sex with me, he called me a slut. He started kicking me in the face. He told me that I had to decide whether or not I was going report him to the police. He threatened to leave me there so that someone else can kill or rape me. I had to decide there and then what I was going to do before he started the ignition. Before I knew it, after I promised him that I will keep quiet, he stabbed me

with the screwdriver in my arm and punched me in the face. It was a small wound but it bled like hell. When he saw the blood he decided that we should go home. It was already night and when we got home our children were already asleep. Luckily they didn't see what I looked like. He told me that night if I tell anyone about what happened he would not only kill me, but the children as well. For the safety of my children I kept quiet.

Although I wanted to tell someone, I could not do it because I was too afraid that he would hurt me again or even our children. One of his friends has a gun. I just couldn't take the chance of reporting him to the police or telling someone. The safety of my family always comes first. That same night when we got home, he started swearing at me again and told me that I was a lazy bitch, because I didn't even clean the house or cooked food to eat. He forced me to have sex with him. After we had sex, he slapped me again and tried to strangle me. I went to his sister's house, told her everything and asked her to call the police for me.

Interviewer: Did you go to the crisis centre at some point?

No, I was too afraid. My husband warned me about what would happen if I tell someone. He would definitely kill me. I know how he is like. I just could not risk it all. Who would look after my children if I die while they are still young? I do not want my children to grow up in an orphanage. I know his family will never take my children because they don't like me.

Interviewer: What were your neighbours, friends or family's response when you asked them for their help and advice about your situation?

When I got there, his sister tried to persuade me not to go to the police. She told me that if I call the police I would be making one of the biggest mistakes in my whole life. She told me that a woman is suppose to stand by her husband no matter how bad situations are. I just couldn't take it anymore. I wanted to go to the police, so I started walking towards the taxi rank. Luckily I got a lift to Ceres. After nine there are no taxis available. When I got to the police station, my husband and his sister were already waiting for me. Both of them tried to convince me not to report him. He told me that he loved me and his sister said that I would break him if I would take his children away from him. They both persuaded me, so we left the station together.

For a few months he did not lift his hands against me until one night we had an argument. He slapped me twice. That was the last straw. I was too afraid that he would beat me again and I just couldn't face it anymore to be humiliated. A couple of months ago I got a divorce from him without him knowing it. I went to a Legal Aid Clinic in Stellenbosch and got a very quick and cheap divorce. Today I have a crooked arm and can't do all the kinds of things that I always used to do. Sometimes, my ex husband still bothers me.

Interviewer: In what way does your ex husband still bother you?

Well, the idiot keeps on calling me. Last week he brought me flowers and told me that we belong together and that our children need both parents. He begged me to take him back. He told me that he loves me and will love no other woman like he loved me. I don't think that I will ever take him back as long as I live. I have suffered too much.

Interviewer: What or who convinced you to stay with your partner before finally leaving him?

Money. I would have left him ages ago, but I didn't have enough money to support my children. You have to buy schoolbooks, clothes and food. I wouldn't have been able to cope. My husband also promised me that he would kill me if I took his children away from him.

Interviewer: Why did your husband beat you?

I don't know why, but I think he was jealous. I wasn't a bad wife or mother. I always tried to please him no matter what. I even went to look for a job so that both of us could equally contribute towards our children's expenses. Maybe my husband wanted a wife who stayed at home 24 hours non-stop! Maybe if I stayed at home, he wouldn't have assaulted me.

Interviewer: While you were married did you have any knowledge about how the Domestic Violence Act of 1998 is implemented against abusers?

No! Even if I did, I doubt that it would have helped me. The police are not always available when you need them the most. The police can't force your husband to stop beating you or make him pay child support. The only way that you could ensure that your

husband pays child support is to stay with him and not offend him in any way.

Deborah is 38 year old married woman who has been living in an abusive relationship without ever reporting an assault. She has four children; the youngest just turned seven. All her children are attending school. She is currently working as a domestic worker. She is living with her children and husband in a two bedroom servant's quarter. Six weeks ago, she was hospitalised. Her husband severely assaulted her and his acts went unpunished.

I married my boyfriend after 3 years of courtship. When we met, he was the most wonderful guy. He was the perfect gentleman. During our courtship, he never got aggressive. However, one night I could not make a date and he got so angry and jealous that he pulled my hair and arm. I immediately wanted to break up but he begged me not to leave him. After we broke up I realised that I was pregnant and we had to get married against my will. I had to quit school. My mother kicked me out of the house, because she said that I disappointed her.

After our first child was born he started having an affair. I wanted to leave him but he convinced me to stay. One night he wanted to have sex, but I wasn't in the mood so I said 'no'. He got so upset that he started hitting me in bed. The next day I went to a bar and bought me some booze. I couldn't take it that my man was sleeping with another woman. That night he started hitting me. I was running around in the house. His mother and stepfather took his side. They told me that I was tempting him and I deserved everything that was coming to me. He took a rock and started hitting me in the face with it. My left eyebrow was bleeding. I had to get a number of stitches. At the hospital I lied about how I got the injury. I decided to take my child and move out.

Interviewer: What did you do next?

I wanted to go to the police but then my mother-in-law talked me out of it. She convinced me not to lay a charge of assault against him, because he was the only breadwinner in the house. She convinced me to believe that if I went to the police he would immediately be arrested. I didn't want my child to grow up without a dad. Sometimes children don't turn out right, then people say that it's because a father figure was missing. We made up and I fell

pregnant again. While I was pregnant he became abusive and I was hospitalised again. My injuries weren't that serious.

Interviewer: How did they help you at the hospital?

Well, the nurse that night on duty informed me that I could take steps against my husband after I told her what he did to me. She told me that I can get a protection order and if he is arrested, he still has to pay child support. I decided that I had enough and that night I walked from the hospital to the police station. The nurse even wanted to call someone to fetch me. She was very helpful unlike the other nurses. I guess you can she was really qualified to work with people in need.

Interviewer: Did you take the nurse's advice?

Yes. I laid a charge of assault against my husband. Two weeks later we had to appear in court. Before I could tell the magistrate what the reason was why we were in court he asked me why I did not lay a charge against my husband for non-support. For me this was strange. The magistrate told me to change my complaint from assault to non-support. I really couldn't understand it. He told me that it would be to my advantage and at the end of the day I would win. Me old stupid believed the magistrate and I change my complaint. I wanted to kick myself, after I realised what I just did. How could I have been so stupid! The magistrate told me that if I wanted my husband to support me, I had to move in with him again. I could have kicked myself. For a couple of years, he didn't lift his hands against me once.

Interviewer: Did you have any lawyer defending you the day you had to appear in court?

No. I just went to court. No one told me at the police station that I needed a lawyer. It was only at court that I heard that I had to have a lawyer. I heard from my sister that my mother in law bribed the police officer that was on duty to misinform me about the court procedures when I went to the station to find out when I had to appear in court. My mother in law also worked for the magistrate who heard my case at that time. I think that she asked the magistrate's help so that her son couldn't go to jail.

Interviewer: Do you trust your partner?

Yes. I trust and believe my husband no matter what! If he makes a promise, he always keeps it. I don't know why I believe him every time. Maybe it is because I love him so much. I just want our marriage to work. Besides the well being of our children, the second most important thing is my marriage. I do not want my children to grow up in a broken home.

Interviewer: How did his parents make you feel after he had abused you?

Bad, dirty, worthless and guilty! I often felt that I deserved the beatings. You know, I hate my mother in law. She always takes her precious son's side. In her eyes, he can do nothing wrong. It's always my fault. Maybe she's right.

Interviewer: Why did you stay with your partner?

I loved him too much. A woman is suppose to stay with her husband no matter what. The vows you took on your wedding day are serious. You must also be able to forgive and forget. That is what the word of God says. I also wouldn't have been able to look after our baby so soon after her birth. Newborns need a lot of things like diapers, clothes and special food which are very expensive today. On my own, I wouldn't have been able to cope. I didn't want my child to suffer.

Interviewer: The crisis centre in Bella Vista offers a variety of services to abused women.

Did you consult them?

No. I was too ashamed. I felt that I caused my abuse. I don't want people to find out that my husband hits me. Who in their right mind would also go look for help, if they know that they caused their own beatings?

Sandra is a 35 year old unemployed, married women. She has been married to her husband, David for the past 7 years after cohabiting with him for about eleven years. They have one adopted child who is in grade three. For the past fifteen months, Sandra has been in and out of hospital more than four times due to injuries, which were inflicted by her husband.

Interviewer: Why did your husband hit you?

I do not know! Maybe I said or did something wrong. Today, I still can't lay my finger on what might have triggered the assaults. It just happened out of the blue without any warning. Maybe it was work stress, or maybe I did something wrong. David, is a very considerate person. He wouldn't even hurt a fly. Even while we were dating, he never became aggressive even if his friends teased us. You can say that he was the "perfect gentleman".

Interviewer: What type of injuries did you sustain?

Well, where can I start. The first time he hit me he gave me two shiners. I wore sunglasses the whole time. I was too embarrassed. Then one day out of the blue without any warning he just broke my nose. You know how a person's face looks if their nose is broken, blue all over. The whole time I was in the house. Once he broke my jaw and fractured two of my ribs. The last time I was in hospital I had to get stitches because my upper lip was split in two. I also had to get four of my front teeth removed because it broke whilst he was hitting me. I couldn't eat for a week. I had to live on drinking yogurts and custards. The doctor who treated me told me to go and lay a charge against my husband. He told me that he wasn't going to treat me again. I decided to go to the police.

Interviewer: How did the police officers treat you at the station?

Man, they were very disrespectful. I could not speak right due to the stitches on my lip. I was accused of being under the influence of alcohol. The officers told me that they don't take complaints if the complainant is drunk. One of the police officers who were working that night told the other one that my husband probably abused me because I didn't want to have sex with him. I didn't like what they were saying. I felt humiliated. To think I was trying to lay a charge of assault against my husband. One of the officers told me to wait until the inspector arrives. He told me that it might take hours. He also said that they could assist me if I was willing to have sex with both of them. I blatantly refused. Whilst filling in forms one of the officers also told his colleague that I will be back. He said that women like me only waste the police's time and the government's money. After the inspector arrived he dismissed the officers and I was called into his office.

Interviewer: Was the inspector helpful enough?

Not really. He asked me if I was drunk whilst my husband was beating me. I felt offended, how could he ask me that! Couldn't he see that I had stitches in my lip. He told me that women often cause their own abuse and at the end of the day it's the men who are innocently sent to jail. He asked me if I didn't do anything that provoked my husband to beat me. He told me that women need to be kept in line. I was confused. I didn't know whether or not I had to lay the charge against my husband. I didn't want to send my husband to jail if he is innocent. You know what they do to fresh meat in jail. I filled in a form and received a docket ticket. The inspector told me that if I wanted to formally lay a complaint against my husband, I had to keep the ticket for more than three days.

Before I left, the inspector told me to carefully reconsider what I was about to do. He told me that this decision could change my life. I was now more confused than before. When I got home that night, my husband was already remorseful. He begged me not to do anything stupid. One of his friends saw me at the police station. He told me that he loved me and that he was jealous. He was afraid that I might leave him for someone else. He promised me that he would never hit me again. I believed him. The following day I went back to the police station to return the ticket. My husband wasn't formally charged with assault. I told myself that I was going to make our marriage work.

For a few days everything was okay. A week later, we had an argument about the washing. He pushed me against the door and started hitting me in the stomach. He tried to strangle me. I fought back and tried to grab the bread knife that was lying on the table. He told me that I was going to regret it and then tore off my clothes. He just had sex with me there on the floor. Luckily there was no one around to see what he was doing. I tried to scream, but he closed my mouth with his hand. He spat on me and told me that I was a whore. I wanted to go to the police but then I decided not to go.

Interviewer: Why didn't you want to go to the police to lay a complaint against your husband?

There were also no physical signs on my body which would indicate that my husband forced me to have sex against my will. It would just be a waste of time and money for them and me. I was

also too ashamed to go to the police station because I was afraid that I might be assisted by the same police officers that were on duty that day. I withdrew the charge I laid against my husband. I also recalled the inspector's words. What he was talking that day was the truth. I did not want to struggle in life. I wanted to keep my family together. I also didn't want to lose David.

Interviewer: Did you know that if you didn't consent to having sex with your husband it is rape and against the law?

No, I did not know that. But I also think that it is not right. I think that a husband should be allowed to have full access to his wife's body. David and I have been walking a long path together. Before we got married, we lived together for more than ten years. We have been having sex for quite a long time, so I guess that it's okay! We love each other. That is the most important thing. At least I also know that he is not sleeping around or is having an affair with another woman. With diseases such as Aids going around today, I will say that I'm still lucky. Some of today's men believe that you should have more than one sexual partner. Come to think of it now, I have never had a sex disease before. You get tested at the clinic if you go there to get a Depo. At least, he is still interested in me. That is enough for me to know.

Interviewer: Was David under the influence of any illegal narcotics or drugs when he abused you?

Never! He was always sober. My husband isn't an alcoholic. He will drink, but then it will be with friends of ours. He doesn't even smoke. He hates people who drinks or smokes.

Interviewer: While you grew up, did you ever see your father beating your mother or other sibling?

Yes, always! If my father was teaching my mother a lesson, we always had to play outside. He always locked us out. One day I tried to see why she was pleading and crying. I saw my dad pulling her by the hair, slapping her and spitting her in her face. He called her stinking bitch and lazy whore. I tried to help her but she told me not to get involved because she was naughty and daddy was

teaching her how to behave. She told me that we always had to listen to daddy, because he was the one who put food in our tummies and clothes on our backs. From that day onwards, I always did what my father told us to do.

Marietta is 38 years old married woman living with her husband and four children in a two room Wendy house in Bella Vista. She is currently unemployed. Her husband, Peter is a committed youth pastor at a local church and factory worker. At the end of 2000, Marietta seriously sustained cranial injuries and third degree burns on her right arm whilst at home. Six months later, doctors had to drain blood from her kidneys. No formal complaint was laid against her assailant.

Interviewer: Can you please tell me what happened to you that day while you were alone at home?

I was preparing lunch for my husband. That day I was running late. I had to go to church that morning to go and see if the flowers were okay for the service that night. When I got home my husband was already there. He was upset because he felt that I wasn't paying any attention to him. I tried to explain to him where I went and why I was running so late, but he didn't believe me. He said that I was just a plain old lazy housewife always walking around. He said that he was sick of me, undermining his authority. I didn't know what to do. I always knew that he had a bad temper, but that day he was acting so differently. I tried everything I could think off to calm him down. He started shouting and screaming. He said that he was going to show me who the man in the house was. Before I knew it, he was hitting me with his fist in my face. I couldn't do anything.

He started hitting my head against the wall, over and over and over again. I couldn't even see straight anymore. He shoved my head in the closet and then he closed the closet door so that it hit me right in the face. I didn't even know if it was my face that was bleeding or my head. I just prayed that he wouldn't kill me. What would happen to my children if they don't have me anymore? I begged him to stop. He was like a crazy animal. He pulled me from the bedroom to the kitchen. I tried to get away but he was just too strong. We had a gas stove in the kitchen and before I knew it he took my right arm and a pot and pressed it both at the same time on the stove. Look, can you see how my arm looks like. It was he. I

can't wear short sleeve tops anymore. I tried to get away from him by pushing him with my left arm but I was too weak. With a little bit of luck I escaped but just to be caught at the kitchen door. Before I knew it, he took a knife and stabbed me just above my ear. When I woke up I was in hospital. I did not know how I got there!

Interviewer: How did you feel after the abuse?

Ashamed, inadequate and depressed. I thought of killing myself. I felt like a failure. I felt worthless and wanted to die. If it weren't for my children, I would have surely drunk sleeping pills. After I was discharged from hospital, I tried to walk in front of a car. I also tried slashing my wrists.

Interviewer: How did the hospital staff treat you?

Without any sympathy even though they knew that I was a pastor's wife. No one asked me if I wanted help. No one even asked me how I sustained my injuries. I got my medicine on time and was routinely checked for infections, but nothing more.

Interviewer: Do you think that you caused your husband's outburst?

Yes, in a way I am to blame for what happened. Beating up people is wrong, but I was a bad wife. If I was at home when he arrived and the food was prepared, I don't think it would have happened. Although my husband has a bad temper he is quite a gentleman. He is a youth pastor, you know! You know, when a woman marries a man she has to tend to all his needs no matter what. Our head pastor always says that women should put their husbands' needs before their own. I should have been at home that day. That is what I should have done. I know at what time he gets his lunch break but I just didn't think of him. I only thought of myself. I deserved it. It was a wake up call for me.

Interviewer: Why didn't you go to the police?

I can't tell on my husband. It would be like cheating. At first I was a bit confused. I didn't know what to do. Should I report him or not? When our pastor came to visit me in hospital he gave me advice. He told me that I should stand by my husband, no matter what. He told me that sometimes when we do not understand things we should just accept it as it comes. He told me that my husband plays too an important role in the church. What would the

fellow church members think of him if they heard what he did to me? His reputation would be ruined and then the youth would not even respect or listen to him anymore. I decided to keep quiet for the sake of my husband.

I also did not want my children to grow up without a father. A father figure is really important. What would our children think if they knew that their father almost killed their mother? I don't want people to say that there go the children whose father almost killed their mother. If my husband goes to jail, who will look after us? He is the only breadwinner in the house. I'm not educated. Where will I get a job? By the way if I get a job, who will tend to my children's needs? I also don't want to be a bad mother. If I had gone to the police and laid a complaint against my husband, I would have torn our family apart. My family is too important. I will do anything to prevent us from becoming a broken family. I grew up in a family, where my father regularly abused my mother. My mother left him and at the end of the day we were all suffering.

Interviewer: How did you husband treat you after you were released from hospital?

Good, but it did not last long. I got my first fist punch three months after they drained the blood from my kidneys. After that a couple of weeks later, he gave me a black eye. Since then, it has been on and off.

Interviewer: Do you know that laws exist which protect abused women?

Mmm... In a way, yes. Even though there exist laws, I still believe that it is a woman's duty to stand by her husband through thick and thin. It's also the duty of a husband to discipline his wife if she did something wrong. I also think that it is only fair that a woman should remain loyal to her husband. After all, he is the one who puts food on the table and money in the wallet.

Leah is a 38 year old unemployed domestic servant. She is married and has three children attending school. She lost her job a couple of months ago. The reason - she spent most of her time recovering from injuries she sustained in intimate partner violence. Although women abuse is a crime and punishable, not once did she lay a charge of assault against her husband.

I can still remember that night I thought that my husband was going to kill me. I was busy preparing supper for that night. Out of the blue he started shouting and screaming. He told me that he was

sick and tired of working for peanuts. He said that I was wasting his money. I tried to calm him down, but nothing I did worked. I begged and pleaded. I told him that I used the money to buy food, but he didn't believe me. Luckily our children were sleeping over at a friend's place. The next thing I knew, he started hitting me with his fists. Both my eyes immediately started to swell and I couldn't see a thing. While he was taking out a paper box cutter to cut me, I tried to escape. Before I could reach the door he caught up with me. He pulled me into our bedroom and started ripping of my clothes. He took out a sambok and started hitting me with it all over my body. Whilst I was lying on the floor he poured hot salt water over my wounds. He said that if I told someone, he would kill me. For a week, I couldn't go to work. I lied to my employer and told her that I had flu. I was excused but she told me that I was skating on thin ice.

Three weeks later, I found myself in the same situation. I had to work late one evening. When I got home, my husband was clearly upset. He accused me of having an affair with my employer's husband. He told the children to go to their room and locked the door from the outside. He told me that he was going to cut up my face so that no other man would ever look at me again. I tried to calm him down but nothing I said seem to work. He took out the same box cutter and started chasing me. Before I could leave the house, he slashed me twice on my back. I couldn't go to hospital because it was already past ten that evening. You know at what time the taxis stop running. I had to stay over at a friend's place. It was only the next morning that I could go to hospital.

At the hospital, doctors took something that looked like a thermometer and pushed it into my cuts to see how deep the wounds were. I received about 57 or so stitches. I had stayed in hospital for a couple of days. After I was released I tried to go back to my job, but I was fired. My husband promised me that he wouldn't hit me again. I believed him and went back for the sake of our children. I don't want my children to grow up without a father. After careful consideration, I decided to take my husband's offer and stay with him.

Interviewer: What type of advice and service did you receive from the hospital staff?

The service was bad, I am telling you! No one treated me with respect. They shouted and screamed at me. Most of the time I felt offended. No one asked me if I wanted to talk to someone who can counsel me about the abuse. They just cleaned my wounds on a daily basis and gossiped about how men beat their wives who are

lazy. One nurse in particular said that some women need to be manhandled if they neglect their wifely duties. After hearing this, I repeatedly asked myself whether it was my own fault that my husband slashed me with the box cutter.

Interviewer: Did you feel that you were to blame for your abuse?

Yes. I should have learned how to work with money. I like to buy new things and most of the time it's unnecessary. Sometimes, I just don't think. I can be very insensitive. My husband works like a slave and all that I do is to spend his money on crap. I think he had good reason for beating me.

Interviewer: Why did you go back to him again?

I was unemployed. I couldn't pay the bills and my children had to eat. I also believe that a father figure should be present in a child's rearing. I was also afraid that my husband might hurt me. He becomes uncontrollable if he gets angry or upset.

Interviewer: What prevented you from reporting your abuse?

Hmmm... Let me quickly think. My husband said that if I told someone about the abuse he would kill me even though he promised me that he wouldn't hit me again. I couldn't take the chance. What if he really decided to kill me? Who would look after our children? My husband can't even look after himself. By the way, I am actually taking chances by talking to you, but you said that I could take legal steps against you if you used my real name. It is also very difficult to get transport late in the evening. During the week the taxis stop running at eight. On the weekends the taxis stop at nine. If you want to go to hospital, you have to walk. It's about a half an hour's walk to Ceres. It's not far but if you are injured, it's very far. By the time you get to hospital you're too tired to go to the police station. That night when my husband slashed me, I was too afraid of walking to town. Although I asked the lady next door for some help, she didn't want to help me. She didn't want to interfere. I had no other choice but to stay at a friend. What if I walked to Ceres and along the way someone raped me? People would say that I was looking for trouble. It's enough that my husband nearly killed me.

Interviewer: Do you think that if there was still a police station in Bella Vista, you would have reported your abuse?

To tell you the truth, I really don't know! If there was a police station here in Bella Vista, I might have reported the abuse. Somehow, it might have made a difference, I am not even sure! Even if there was a police station in Bella Vista, I would have had to think it thoroughly through before going there. My husband told me, if I tell someone about the abuse, he will kill me for sure! What would happen to my children?

Interviewer: Do you know that state-implemented laws exist which protect you against your partner, no matter what?

No, not really. I have heard some women talking about an Act or something which protects women, but I have not really paid attention. Even though these laws exist, women are still abused by their partners. Laws do not stop men. At the end of the day your partner will be free and you would only have wasted your time and money.

Interviewer: How do you cope, knowing that you were, are and might be abused in the future?

I just tell myself that it is okay. Thousands of women go through this everyday. It's not like it's the end of the world. Sometimes if he hits me, I just close my eyes and think of something else. I know that he hits me because he loves me. It might sound funny, but it is the truth.

Interviewer: Would you have consulted the crisis centre if it was possible?

No! Definitely not. I'm too ashamed. Some of the people who work there are friends with my husband. What would they think of our marriage and us? No ways! They would definitely gossip about us, him being an abuser – me being a bad wife, lover and mother. My husband also told me that if I tell someone about what happens in our house, he would really kill me. I know that some of the women at the centre would not be able to keep their mouths shut! I'm not prepared to take chances. If I did not have any kids it would have been okay.

4.4 Discussion of results

In this section, I analyse the interviews conducted. The analysis of the information is done against the back-drop of the literature overview provided in chapter one and the theoretical frameworks discussed in chapter two. Women abuse covers a broad scope of actions. As indicated earlier, the analysis will focus on the factors underlying the seven abused women's decision not to report abuse.

The physical effects of patriarchy were visible on the faces and limbs of the women who participated in the study. Knives, paperbox cutters, rocks, broken glass and fists were amongst the most common instruments used in inflicting injuries. Some of the women in the study were appallingly injured. All the women sustained physical injuries which had to be treated in hospital. Cuts under eyes, stab wounds, sexual assaults and abrasions were amongst the most common injuries the women in this study sustained. These women did not formally lay charges against their partners; neither did they consult the crisis centre in Bella Vista.

FACTORS UNDERLYING ABUSED WOMEN'S DECISION NOT TO REPORT ABUSE:

CONSTRUCTED MYTHS

****It is only strangers who attack***

Contrary to the belief that it is only strangers who assault women, who are violent / dangerous and who strike in dark alleys, a woman is more likely to be assaulted by someone she knows or whom she has seen before. Assailants can be husbands, ex-boyfriends, friends, family members and neighbours. Although all the participants in this study were assaulted by their intimate partners, many of them (abused women) preferred to believe that it is only strangers that can hurt them. One woman said, "*I know my boyfriend...It wasn't abuse...My boyfriend isn't the violent kind...*". Another participant said, "*He is not violent ... He only gets angry and upset if I really piss him off ... He is a very considerate person ...He would not even hurt a fly*". Abuse often seems unreal to a woman - particularly if she knows the abuser. Sometimes women aren't always prepared for this and find it difficult to talk to someone and admit that they are abused. In an

attempt to mentally survive, abused women try to convince themselves that what they are experiencing isn't abuse (Dowdeswell, 1986).

****Women deserve and provoke abuse***

All the participants felt that they provoked their abuse. Women often believe that the rape or assault was their fault because they are brought up with the notion that 'women ask for it'. However, no one wants to be raped or abused. People often say that a woman 'asked' for it by her actions (Lewis, 1994). An abused survivor often feels that if she 'had done this' or 'had done that', she would not have been abused. The fact is that these rules only shift the blame from a man to a woman. Patriarchal ideologies are so influential that women start to look for clues in their behaviour which might have triggered the abuse. It is never the man's fault; it's always the woman's. Radical feminists argue that patriarchal ideologies are so persuasive that women start to accept that they caused their abuse (Jagger, 1983).

The consequences of rape are often worse when the attacker is someone you know. The temptation to feel guilty about the abuse is greater when you know the attacker. We are so conditioned by the stereotypes of the stranger-rapist that it is difficult to imagine being forced to have sex by someone you know in a familiar setting. As a result, women are even more likely to assume responsibility and think that they led on the attacker (Dowdeswell, 1986). Because we grow up in a patriarchal world, we start to accept that it is always women who are to blame for what has happened to them. Abused women often internalise their abusers' accusations that they are to blame. This is what one woman said, "*He will never lift his hand to hit me without a cause... I actually think that I provoked him... If I stayed at home, he wouldn't have assaulted me...*".

****Abuse only happens once***

Of the seven women interviewed, three participants said that they did not report their abuse because they believed that it would not happen again. The three women said that they trusted their partners in spite of what happened before. Women desperately want to believe that their partners will change and that the abuse will stop. However, most of the

time the abuse only gets worst. Once the abuse has started, it is likely that it would decrease. It would rather increase. This is called the 'cycle of abuse'. Women are brought up with the ideology that you should trust, believe and stay loyal to your partner no matter what. This ideology is illustrated by the following comment: *"I trust and believe my husband no matter what!... If he makes a promise, he always keeps it ..."* .

Radical feminists argue that patriarchy romanticises marriage, commitment and the idea of everlasting love, so much so, that it becomes very difficult for a woman to leave an abusive relationship (Jagger, 1983). Although there are considerable variations in the respective roles of men and women, there is no instance of a society where unreasonable demands such as above are set to men. Under patriarchy women become so desensitised that they start to believe that a woman's purpose in life is to be a loyal subject, sex slave and confidant to a man.

****Men who commit violence do so because they are stressed at work***

Of the seven women interviewed, one admitted that she did not report her abuse because she felt that it was caused by the stress her partner experience at work. The participant expressed that her partner was *"Sick and tired of working for peanuts"*. However, everyone experience feelings of helplessness and powerlessness (Usden et al., 1999). One cannot reassert ones self-esteem by exercising power over other people.

****Wives need to be kept in line by their partners***

Of the seven women interviewed one participant admitted that she did not report her abuse because she felt that her partner had to discipline her: *"I was a bad wife... He was sick of me undermining his authority..."* .

****Unless a woman has sustained physical injuries, she wasn't abused or raped***

Of the seven women interviewed, one admitted that she did not report her abuse because there were no visible injuries to her face which would indicate that she was abused. *"He told me that he would not hit me in the face because I had to go to work the next day ..."*

He didn't want to leave any evidence on my face that could be used against him", was the participant's response to the question as to why she remain silent about her abuse.

ECONOMIC FACTORS

All seven participants felt that economic dependency on their partners was one of the biggest factors which influenced in their decision not to report their assaults. Even though two of the participants were employed, they still felt that they didn't earn enough to sustain the household. Women workers today are overwhelmingly concentrated in poorly paid routine occupations. Because of their roles as mothers, women are primarily absorbed in domestic activities. Women become what the French novelist and social critic, Simone de Beauvoir, called the 'second sex' because they are excluded from public activities (Giddens, 1989). Changes in organisation of employment as well as sex role stereotyping and discrimination have contributed to this.

The rates of unemployment in South Africa have fluctuated considerably over the course of this decade (Marsh, 1999). In rural South Africa, more than 80% of the women are unemployed or have very low income (Artz, 1999). Many women, if they're employed, are often paid less than men for doing the same job. This intensifies women's dependency on men. In many cases women start to believe that they cannot survive without their partner's financial support. What may seem to be irrational behaviour – remaining quiet about their abuse - might in fact be rational behaviour to many abused women who are unemployed or trapped in poorly paid jobs. Exchange theorists argue that people learn to avoid activities that get them into unjust and unfair exchanges and they learn to emit activities that are rewarded (Marshall, 1996). The mere thought of losing financial support has made the seven participants think twice before reporting their assaults. The higher the need for a reinforcer the higher the probability that an actor will take part in a transaction (Homans, 1961). The women in the study sacrificed their freedom and tolerated their abuse just to secure a steady income.

Of the women interviewed, two participants admitted that they grew up in poverty and was afraid that, should they report their abuse, they might live in extreme poverty again.

Women in relationships involving violence often find it difficult to leave the household if they know that they will not be able to survive without their partners' income (Giddens, 1989). The following quotes represent and summarise what most of the women in the study felt: *"Who will support me if he leaves me? ... What employment agency will take a woman who did not finish primary school? ... I would have left him ages ago, but I did not have enough money..."* ; *" I need his money to tend to our child's needs... You know how expensive school fees, clothes and books are ...; The only way that you could ensure that your husband pays child support is to stay with him"*.

IDEOLOGY / NOTION OF 'TRUE LOVE'

Two out of the seven women admitted that they didn't report their abuse because they 'loved' their partners too much and vice versa. One survivor said, *"My boyfriend told me that he loves me deeply and that I was the best thing that ever happen to him..."*. Another said: *"He told me that he loves me and will love no other woman like he loved me"*. Radical feminists argue that through the practice of patriarchy women's perception of reality becomes distorted (Jagger, 1983). In reality, many women do not know what real love is. Love is not an affection which involves violence and force. However, within patriarchal societies many women come to believe that the injuries they bear are evidence of their partners' love for them. Patriarchal ideologies are so influential that abused women themselves justify their partners' use of violence. In fact, many of the women in the study interpreted their partners' violent outbursts as a 'declaration of 'love'.

FEAR OF BEING KILLED

Exchange theorists argues that we are likely to keep on doing things that allows us to escape unpleasant events (Marshall, 1996). Most of the participants claimed that they didn't report their assaults because they were too afraid that their partners might act out their promises and threats to kill them. The following quotes illustrate this point: *"My husband said that if I told someone about the abuse he would kill me ... He becomes uncontrollable if he gets angry or upset"*; *"He told me that night if I tell anyone about what happened he would not only kill me, but the children as well"*. Many studies have found that most abused women are murdered after they have left their abusive partners

(Heise, 1999). We are always foretold to be wary of strangers. However, as Vetten's (1995) study suggests, the average South African woman stands a higher risk of being killed by a man with whom she has an intimate sexual relationship. The fear of being killed leads many abused women to remain quiet about their abuse.

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN

Exchange theorists argues that the more valuable to a man the unit of activity another gives him, the more often he will emit the activity (Homans, 1961). The women in the study valued their children's security more than their own well-being. To protect the interests of their children they sacrifice their freedom. Many abused women stay in abusive relationships for the sake of their children. Four of the participants admitted to this. Reasons such as "*I didn't want my child growing up without a father*"; "*I don't want my children to grow up in an orphanage*"; "*I need his money to tend to our child's needs*"; "*For the safety of my children I kept quiet*"; "*Who would look after my child if my boyfriend goes to prison*" were given by many of the women as to why they did not report their abuse. Many abused women are afraid that once they report their abuse, their children might suffer.

Even though there exists a law (The Maintenance Act no.99 of 1998) which forces men to pay child support, the limited effectiveness of this law keeps women poor and subjected to their partners' control (Usden et al., 1999). Many men refuse to pay child support if they are not directly involved in their children's rearing. By keeping quiet about their abuse, women ensure that their children have a means to survive and have a chance in life. Patriarchy often overemphasises the importance of a father figure in rearing a child. Under patriarchy, the importance of fatherhood is often an ideological ploy which aims at keeping women in subordination. Women start to believe that a father figure is necessary in a child's rearing. However, it is not. It is sometimes better to grow up in a single parent household, than in an abusive one (Usden et al., 1999).

ROLE OF FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Three out of the seven participants confirmed that friends and family members persuaded them not to report their abuse. These three women felt legally and socially entrapped in their relationships. One participant remarked that *"I wanted to go to the police but then my mother-in-law talked me out of it ... She convinced me not to lay a charge of assault against him, because he was the openly breadwinner in the house"*. Another one said: *"His sister tried to persuade me not to go to the police ... She told me if go to the police I would be making one of the biggest mistakes in my life"*. Society expects it of a woman, that once she has committed herself to a man, she should stand by him no matter how bad the situation is. Friends and family members often try to assist or manage the survivor. Although an abused woman needs all the support she can get, it is often better to allow her to make her own decisions and to do as much as possible for herself. It is very important to treat each survivor as an individual and to try and understand how she experiences abuse.

The reactions of friends and family members have a profound impact on a woman's decision to report her abuse. Friends and family often find it difficult to respond in a helpful way if they are close to the abuser (Lewis, 1994). It is often the perpetrator that is assisted by friends and family. It is quite important that friends and family members examine their beliefs about abuse, the duty of a wife/partner and the concept of loyalty before rendering advice and guidance to a woman. It's not helpful to ask an abused woman what she did that triggered the abuse. A woman's family, the abuser and society / community often make a woman feel guilty for what has happened. By taking responsibility and blame for the abuse, a woman often feels that she cannot report the abuse.

FEAR OF STIGMATISATION

Six participants admitted that 'shame' and social stigma prevented them from reporting their assaults to the police. Many abused women do not report their abuse because they fear being labelled as an inadequate housewife, mother and lover. One woman stated that, *"I was too ashamed ... I don't want people to find out that my husband hits me"*. Another

woman stated: *“Everyone knows everyone in Bella Vista ... If I go there (the crisis centre) everyone would know that I am abused ... I do not want people to know what my boy did to me ... People like to talk”*. People are very sensitive to how they are perceived by others. It is often believed that women provoke their own assaults through unreasonable demands and not fulfilling their household duties. However, this is not true. There is no justification for violence against women (Usden et al., 1999). A woman will endure violence day in and day out just to prevent stigmatisation. Feelings of shame were so common among the six women, that it made it impossible for them to report their assaults.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE RESPONSE

Of the seven women interviewed, two said that they didn't report their abuse due to the previous ill treatment and response they received from the SAPS. Police and other criminal justice officials often believe that if a woman is abused she acted or behaved in a certain way which caused the abuse (Lewis, 1994). One woman said, *“They were very disrespectful ... I couldn't speak right due to the stitches on my lip so they told me that I was drunk ... They told me that women cause their own abuse and at the end of the day it's men who are innocently sent to jail”*. Another survivor stated: *“No one told me at the police station that I needed a lawyer ... I heard from my sister that my mother-in-law bribed the police officer that was on duty to misinform me about the court procedures”*.

HEALTH PRACTITIONER'S RESPONSE

Three out of the seven participants said that they didn't report their abuse due to the treatment and advice they received from the hospital personnel during their hospitalisation. *“The nurses told me that I deserved it ... No one even asked if I wanted to lay charges”*; *“They said I had to accept the responsibilities and consequences for living with a man in sin”*, was one woman's response. *“No one treated me with respect ... They shouted and screamed at me”*, was another participant's response. After being abused, a woman may feel guilty and unsure about many issues. Often, due to the lack of proper training, health care workers are not always capable of treating abused women. A woman needs to be assured that what she did during the assault was the right thing to do and that

it probably saved her life (Lewis, 1994). She needs to be assured that she wasn't to blame for anything that has happened to her. Hospital staff and health care workers often reinforce patriarchal ideologies and myths about abuse.

FEAR OF FURTHER REPRISALS

Some of the women explained that they did not report their abuse because they were afraid that if they told someone their partners might beat them again. Women are often afraid and worried of what their abusers will do if they report them to the police. One of the women said, "*Although I wanted to tell someone, I could not do it because I was too afraid that he would hurt me again*". Another said: "*My husband said that if I told someone he would kill me even though he promised me that he would not hit me again*". A woman may fear that her abuser would take revenge by attacking her again. Sometimes abusers are released on bail. This means that there exists a possibility that the abuser may come back to cause more hurt and harm. Abusers often threaten women after they have abused them. Often, an abuser might say that he would kill someone the victim loves dearly or even herself, if she reports the abuse. A woman often has reason to believe that he (the abuser) might just follow out his threats since he has already shown her just how violent he can be (Lewis, 1994). Women thus remain silent about their abuse.

Three of the women interviewed felt that they just could not take the risk. They felt that their physical health meant more to them than reporting their abuse to the police. According to Campbell (1995), a woman stands a greater risk of being seriously injured or even killed after she has left her partner and reported her abuse. It is often very difficult for a woman who is powerless to tell the abuser to stop the abuse.

LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF STATE-IMPLEMENTED STRATEGIES

In the past, the law of this country didn't recognise rape in marriage. This meant that when a woman got married, she also had to consent to any sexual approaches her husband chose to make to her, even if it was violent. Today, everything changed with the passing of the 'Prevention of Family Violence Bill in 1993 and the Domestic Violence Act of 1998'. Presently, there is no reason why a woman shouldn't be able to charge her

husband with rape. After talking to the women I found that none of them knew that laws exist which protect the rights of abused women. *“A husband should be allowed to have full access over his wife’s body”* was one participant’s response after I asked her if she knew that marital sex without consent is rape. Another woman said: *“Even though there exist laws, I still believe that it is a woman’s duty to stand by her man through thick and thin”*.

After informing the women about their rights, four of the participants felt that, although such laws exist, they still would not report their abuse. They felt that even though the Government makes provision for abused women, their abuse would never stop. In spite of the fact that only two women were badly treated by police officers, the other five participants also mistrusted the police. To illustrate abused women’s ignorance of the law, the following quotes serve as examples. One woman said, *“Even though these laws exist, women are still abused by their partners ... Laws do not stop men”*. Another woman said, *“The police can’t force your husband to stop beating you ... They are just as corrupt as the criminals”*.

LACK OF PERMANENT POLICE STATIONS IN THE AREA

Of the seven women I interviewed, two admitted that they didn’t report their abuse to the police because they were too far from the police station. These two women suggested that they didn’t report their assaults because there was no transport available to them. *“I was to afraid of walking to town ... What if I walked to Ceres and along the way someone raped me”*, was the one woman’s response after she was questioned about why she choose not to report her abuse to the police. If a woman wants to report abuse, she has to go to the nearest police station which is situated in Ceres, 6km from Bella Vista. In Bella Vista there is currently no police station due to the shortage of staff. Artz (1999) found that the lack of permanent police stations in rural areas often cause women not to report their assaults.

SOCIALISATION

Of the seven participants three admitted that they did not report their abuse because they were taught from a very early age that they should accept violence in the home. "*I grew up in a house where my father regularly abused my mother*", was one woman's response. Another participant said, "*When my father was teaching my mother a lesson, we always had to play outside ...*" "*My mother told me that we always had to listen to daddy, because he is the one who put food in our tummies and clothes on our backs*". It's a husband's duty to correct an erring wife. The three participants were forced to have sex against their will and did not even know that sex without consent is classified as 'rape'. To these participants, sex is part of a woman's wifely duties. Rape within marriage is still dismissed as something that doesn't really occur.

Women often find it very difficult to acknowledge that they were raped because they often know their assailant. Like incest, rape in marriage is also a social taboo. Under patriarchy women come to believe and learn that their bodies don't belong to them. They only exist to please their partners. Many women are easy targets for potential rapists and abusers because they are brought up to be shy, passive, romantic, gentle and kind. Women are taught not to fight back and that it is wrong to stand up against men. Women abuse is thus common in societies where women's status is lower than that of men's.

After talking to the women, I realised that no matter how many different explanations and reasons they give as to why they (abused women) did not report their abuse, patriarchal ideology underlies many of the decision they make. Patriarchy reaches into levels beyond our wildest imagination. Under patriarchy every area of life becomes a realm of male supremacy. Such areas include: household duties, organisation of employment as well as childbearing and rearing activities. The results of the study indicate that none of the women escaped the exploitative force of patriarchy. All the women were in one way or another forced to submit to patriarchal ideologies.

In this chapter the women began to open their hearts and talk about their experiences. Just by reading what they had to say, you might have come to some understanding as to

why it was, and still is, so difficult for them to report assaults. Without the words of these women most of us wouldn't have understood why their voices are so easily silenced when it came to the reporting of their abuse. By revealing the plight of abused women, I have attempted to provide a deeper understanding of the depth of their trauma. The women have all expressed themselves in different ways to help us understand that abuse does not happen in a singular event. It's a social phenomenon and many women are affected by it. "Male dominance though apparently universal, does not in actual behavioural terms assume a universal content or universal shape" (Jagger, 1983: 116).

After listening to the stories of these women, I realised just how vulnerable they really are. It was with this in mind that I thought of possible solutions which could assist policy planners in their battle to eradicate violence against women. Once you are caught up in an abusive relationship, you cannot easily be freed from it. There is no easy way out. Women must be warned beforehand about what the danger signs of an abusive relationship are. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will discuss possible solutions which could be employed in fighting violence against women.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The aim of the study was to provide an in-depth understanding of why abused women choose not to report their abuse. The results of the study were devastating. It was chilling to see how none of the women I interviewed reported their abuse in spite of the effort made by the South African Government to eradicate violence against women. Reasons such as true love, provocation, self-blame, economic dependency, fear of being killed, protecting children's interests etc. were mentioned by many of the women as to why they did not report their abuse. It was also quite interesting to see how patriarchy has manifest itself in this community through violence against women. Radical feminism has made an extremely significant contribution in highlighting these women's subordination. It also emphasised that the 'institution of the family' is one of the most oppressive structures in contemporary capitalist society. Men dominate women through a variety of social structures which vary tremendously, both across and even within cultures. Although women's oppression are timeless and universal it takes different forms in different settings (Jagger, 1983). It is the differences that are of vital importance.

In the previous chapter, I have explored why abused women's voices are silenced when it comes to the reporting of assaults. In light of this the final chapter considers what can be done to prevent violence against women. In this chapter, with the inspiration and vision of Heise (1999), I offer you, the reader as well as policy planners, with possible solutions to eradicate this phenomenon. The guidelines for intervention outlined in these pages can help us curb this global pandemic. With the collective efforts of community members, violence against women need not be the war that never ends. There are many things society can do to make a woman feel safer.

Ending violence against women requires strategies coordinated amongst many sectors of society - at community and national levels. Curbing violence against women would require us to go outside our limits to a new level of thinking and being. Stopping violence against women is centred on education and raising individual and public consciousness.

Violence against women hinders women's participation in public life. By sapping women's energy, undermining their confidence and jeopardising their health, violence against women deprives society of women's full participation (Heise, 1999). For too long women have accepted and tolerated their abuse without doing anything about it. Our women are our future. They should not be an endangered species (Flannery, 1999). It is going to take a concerted effort to end women abuse. The beginning is the acknowledging that we are facing a serious social problem that is getting out of hand. Stopping women abuse also requires a deeper and more intense level of awareness and commitment. If we stay inside the usual parameters of problem solving, women abuse will never stop. It will go on and on and on. Women abuse can be stopped if we, the people, decide to do so. We are not helpless in the face of violence perpetrated by our men (Flannery, 1999). Stopping women abuse, is not something that you or I can do alone. We must stop it together. Women can be helped before the violence has run its course. There are remedies and interventions that are helpful. The following factors have to be taken into consideration if we want to end or fight violence against women.

5.1 Strategic screening for abuse at all health care facilities

Contrary to popular belief it is not always the case that women display physical signs of abuse. Unless women are directly asked about whether or not they are affected by violence, many do not disclose their abuse. There is currently no consensus in South Africa on whether women should routinely be screened for violence when they visit any health care facility. Advocates argue that the failure to screen women for abuse with every visit to the doctor, is a flaw in the quality of health care (Heise, 1999). Health care providers often feel that there is little or nothing they can do to assist abused women.

Another option is to screen women at other facilities such as pre-natal clinics. Pre-natal care settings are ideally conducive for discussing abuse. With regular check-ups, pediatricians and doctors can provide abused mothers with support and advice. Routine screenings at family planning clinics is essential. Discussion about sexually transmitted infections provide a good opportunity for discussing abuse (Heise, 1999). If a woman doesn't disclose that she has been abused with her first visit to a health care facility,

asking about it would show her that the clinician really cares. She might later decide to talk about it and ask for help.

5.2 Self-empowerment

Empowering women is not only a worthy goal; it's a strategy for eliminating violence against women. Empowerment is a long-term process which occurs at international, national, community and individual level. The first and most important thing abused women should know, is that they did not cause the abuse and that they did not deserve it. The women in the study showed a need to move away from dependency on their partners. Women will never escape abuse as long as they are financially dependent on their partners. They can financially empower themselves by starting saving clubs / 'stokvelds' or programmes run by women for women, thus breaking the stronghold men have had over them. In many countries, women are still treated as second class citizens, by denying them the right to many things such as right to own property, economic resources and etc. Because of this women often lack the power to make decisions concerning their own health or sexuality. To truly eradicate women abuse, resources should be re-directed to aid women in areas such as housing, access to legal services and family benefits which they are entitled to. By meeting the needs of abused women, we reduce their victimisation.

Worldwide, different women's activists groups at grass root levels are stressing that women no longer should derive their social value solely from roles such as wife and mother. By eliminating social and legal codes that discriminate against women, women's access and control over economic resources would increase. It is through empowerment that women's leadership would be strengthened to stop violence against women. By taking control over their lives abused women have access to more health information, which could save themselves in the future, if they find themselves in an abusive relationship.

5.3 Raising the cost to abusers

Western countries have relied heavily on the criminal justice system to end violence against women. Currently, 53 countries have passed legislation against domestic violence. More than 27 countries have enacted laws against sexual harassment and 41 have defined unwanted sexual intercourse within marriages as rape (Chiarotti, 1998). Even though legislation differs from country to country, most laws include a combination of restraining or protective orders. If a man violates a protection order, he can be arrested. South Africa has a constant crime problem. Whilst conducting the study, I found that although South Africa has a vigorous and comprehensive legal system, many men still continue to abuse their partners without regretting it or being sentenced.

Many countries have explored different means of raising the costs to individual abusers since procedural barriers, gaps and biases often undermine a law's ability to deter violence. If legislation fails, practices such as the public shaming, picketing an abuser's home or workplace and the wearing of stickers and badges which confirms that a man is an abuser, might just end violence against women (Heise, 1999). If a man feels that he is looked down on for battering his wife or partner, it is likely that the abuse would stop or even decrease. No one wants to be identified as an abuser. Community disapproval can thus help prevent women abuse.

5.4 Involving the youth

Behaviour is learned from a very young age. Around the world, numbers of organisations have worked at involving young people in programmes which challenge traditional gender norms which are often the causes of abuse. A child who sees his mother beaten by his father is likely to grow up to abuse his wife or partner. Violence is a learned pattern of behaviour that has its roots in early childhood experiences. Violence in the family serves as a training environment for children. We tend to repeat what we have learned from our parents. We are creatures of habit (Brinegar, 1992). If a mother slaps a child it must be okay and, if a father and mother scream at each other, it must also be okay. In an attempt to stop violence against women, our government should start creating more experimental

workshops and programmes aimed specifically at the youth. By attending such workshops, young people can learn how to maintain healthy non-violent relationships.

5.5 Reaching out to men

If we want to stop women abuse, we should start at the core of the problem: men. Working with men to change their behaviour is an important part to any solution to the problem of violence against women. By reaching out to men, we challenge traditional norms, attitudes, values and beliefs which encourage violence against women. In South Africa, there are not a lot of programmes which exist that target abusers' attitudes. By initiating programs that teach men how to take the responsibility for their actions, how to manage anger and interpersonal conflict and how to change or confront traditional attitudes regarding male dominance and female subordination, we can put forth efforts in stopping or decreasing violence directed at women.

Men are less likely to commit violence when they see women as equal human beings, rather than property. Just as racism increases the potential for violence against black people in this country, sexism has the similar effect on women (Lewis, 1994). Education that challenges sexism and violence against women is not only needed in schools, but in all areas of society (Vogelman, 1990). By reaching out to men, we can teach them new behaviour for resolving conflict. There is currently a huge need for the implementation of such programmes in Bella Vista and other rural surrounding areas. By reaching out to men, we can guide them in such a way that they would begin to re-examine their assumptions of femininity and masculinity. By involving men in such programmes and revealing to them the atrocities of women abuse we can prevent large numbers of women being violated. Even though men should voluntarily participate in such programmes, I feel that our government should put more effort in creating legislation which compels abusers to participate in treatment programmes.

5.6 Challenging and changing community norms

Ending violence against women means changing and challenging norms and cultural beliefs which give rise to men's abusive behaviour towards women. In many societies

cultural beliefs, institutions and norms undermine women's autonomy thus bringing about the rise of gender-based violence. Norms and beliefs are exceptionally powerful when it comes to perpetrating violence against women. These include the myth that men are inherently superior to women; they have the right to correct a partner or wife's behaviour and that using violence is the right way to discipline an "erring" partner. These are practices that undermine a woman's ability to escape from an abusive relationship. Such practices and attitudes also exacerbate the consequences of violence. With these beliefs and attitudes changed, men would no longer be able to justify their use of violence. By instilling new norms and beliefs that people, especially men, can follow, we can strive at stopping violence against women.

It's only when we start to challenge and change oppressive attitudes that women would gain greater control over their bodies, the economy, family resources as well as their lives in general. When we start to acknowledge that we are facing an enormous social problem we are one step closer in winning the battle against women abuse. However, we have to bear in mind that changing and challenging oppressive norms, values and beliefs is not enough to end violence directed at women.

5.7 Enforcing more community campaigns and projects

To be truly effective in the eradication of violence against women, we should involve our community as much as we can. Communities can experiment with low cost ways to increase women's safety. There is evidently a great lack of community launched projects in Bella Vista. By initiating community projects we can raise consciousness about issues that concern the most fragile members of our society: women. By directly involving community members, we can try to stop women abuse. Even though there is a crisis centre in Bella Vista which assists women in emergencies, the centre doesn't operate on a 24-hour basis due to the shortage of staff.

By launching workshops and offering free courses on trauma counseling, community members can enroll themselves and offer their services to many abused women on a 24-hour basis. Not everyone can afford to seek professional help. Therapy can be very

expensive. By training community members as counselors, abused women who are financially stressed or are from a low-income level, can get help and advice for free.

To put an end to violence against women, community members themselves can start support groups run by experienced and or trained volunteer workers in the field of abuse. Support groups can play a crucial role in reducing a woman's sense of isolation. In such groups, women meet fellow women who are victimised. By attending such groups for free, abused women's understanding of violence and its dynamics are broadened. By running support groups for men, volunteer workers and qualified personnel can assist men with the necessary support and advice which might deter men from abusing their partners in the future.

Community members who are trained as security and police officers can offer their expertise by starting a 24-hour neighbourhood protection service for free. By patrolling the neighbourhood and surrounding areas during the night and day, community members themselves can try to stop women abuse. By offering free self-defence classes on a weekly or daily basis, women can learn how to defend themselves when a stranger or someone they know, attacks them.

Due to their lack of education, the participants in the study did not know that legislation exists which protects abused women. Information is knowledge and knowledge is power (Damon, 2000). Men who batter withhold information from their partners. Women need to be informed that the injuries they sustain in partner violence inevitably leads to permanent long-term health effects. By broadly disseminating information about violence in the community, citizens can attempt at stopping women abuse. Pre-schools can also start educating children from an early age to understand what causes the violence and what its effects are if you are unable to leave an abusive relationship.

Libraries can also create awareness by launching programmes where children and adults learn more about women abuse by taking out books on this phenomenon. At schools teenagers can be taught in their physical training classes how to defend them when a

stranger or someone they know attacks them. Dedicated community members can offer their motor vehicles to start a 24-hour transport service to and fro the hospital and police station in an attempt to stop women abuse. Teenagers can also be taught in schools what the warning signs of an abusive relationship are and what they should do if they know of a person, especially a woman, who is abused. Even sanctuary churches can create awareness of women abuse in sermons and outreach groups.

5.8 Changing health care providers' response towards abused women

Health care providers have only very recently begun to tackle and challenge violence against women. There is currently an urgent need for health providers to change their attitudes towards women who are abused. The study demonstrated that there is still a lot that needs to be done before health care workers can really assist abused women. Even though the training of health care workers is important, medical training alone does not always teach doctors and nurses how to respond to victims of women abuse. Health care workers are often not emotionally mature and able to work with women who are abused.

As the study demonstrated, health care workers need an attitude adjustment when it comes to women who are in crisis. A hospital is a place where women should feel free to speak about how they sustained their injuries. Women should not feel afraid or ashamed to tell health care workers that their partners abuse them. The hospital might be able to help them to prevent any further abuse in the future. Nurses who treat abused women should be aware of the dynamics of the 'cycle of abuse' to ensure that they treat abused women with the appropriate care. By following instigated policies and protocols, doctors and nurses can more effectively tend to abuse women's needs. Most training programmes for health care workers have focussed on the clinical management of the victims of abuse. This approach yields limited results because providers often share the same values, beliefs, biases and prejudices of abusers.

When abused women come into a hospital seeking treatment, health care providers should immediately know what to do and how to treat them. A hospital is a place of refuge. Hospitals, such as the one in Ceres, should start launching workshops and projects

which train health care workers more on the sensitivity of abuse. By appointing a qualified social worker at the hospital, doctors and nurses can refer women to the resident social worker for guidance and help.

5.9 Proper training of protection service personnel

Our country has a punitive and active legal system which has been protecting the rights of abused women for a couple of years. The new Domestic Violence Act that was passed by our government in 1998 requires compliance of police officers to tend to the needs of abused women, no matter what. Police officers are obliged to assist abused women with immediate counseling, legal advice, emergency medical treatment and safe refuge. By properly training police officers in terms of what the Act specifies, the South African Police Service can try to eradicate women abuse.

The services abused women require are often not available at many police stations. In the Western Cape only a few police stations are properly equipped with trauma rooms and qualified trauma counselors. The study demonstrated that there is a huge need for properly trained police officers, as well as trauma rooms in Bella Vista and Ceres. The needs of abused women are complex. If properly trained, police officers would know how to treat an abused woman when she arrives at the police station to lay a charge of assault against her partner or husband. By setting up crisis/trauma centres and other services - often all in one location – the police station, women would be more inclined to seek help.

5.10 Resources and information:

This section contains a list of telephone numbers of organisations and trained experts in the field of abuse, which abused women living in Bella Vista and Ceres can contact.

Locally:

Ceres Police Station
10111

Insp. Olive Thompson
Ceres Police Station
(023) 3121204

Ms. Jolin Arendse
Community Worker and Trauma Counselor
Bella Vista Crisis Centre
(023) 3122201

Ms. Jolene Arendse
Trauma Counselor
Bella Vista Crisis Centre
(023) 3122201

Ms. Raelene Arendse – Luitjies
Social Worker
University of Stellenbosch

Mr. Wilmot Arendse
Community Worker
City of Cape Town Municipality

Dr. Bill Skinner
Clinical Psychologist
(023) 3162121

Dr. Gregg Pearton
Guidance Psychologist
(023) 31 62121

The Zurelda Arendse Project For Abused Women
Fr. Arnold
(023) 3161158 or 3161358
St. Andrews Chapel
Vos Street
Ceres

Mr. Bennie Leendertz
(023) 3161784

Mr. Michael Seroot
(023) 3122803

Ms. Lizette Müller
Social Worker
(023) 3123007
Ceres Social Services Community Centre
Lyell Street
Ceres

Ceres Advice Office
(023) 3162235

National:

University of the Western Cape
For Free Legal Advice and Service.
(021) 959 – 2756

University of Stellenbosch
(021) 808 3195

Community Law Centre (WC)
Ms. Helene Combrinck
(021) 959 - 2353

University of Potchefstroom Legal Aid Clinic
(018) 293 – 1145

University of Pretoria Legal Aid Clinic
(012) 420- 4155

Rhodes University Legal Aid Clinic
(0466) 22 – 9301

University of the Free State Legal Aid Clinic
(051) 447 –9915

University of the North Legal Aid Clinic
(015) 268 - 2506

Human Rights Commission
(011) 484 – 8300

FAMSA

(011) 975 –7106

Commission On Gender Equality

(011) 403 – 7182

Psychological Association of South Africa

(011) 760 – 3071

CCMA (Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration)

(011) 377 – 6600

National Family Maintenance Forum

(011) 658 - 0455

ICD Independent Complaints Directorate

(011) 838 – 2875

National Network on Violence against Women

(012) 348 – 1231

PAHA (People Against Human Abuse)

(012) 805 – 7416

Victim Support Centre

(013) 947 – 2238

The South African Police Service has a number of specialized Women Protection units around the country whose members are specially trained to deal with crimes against women. Rape Crisis Groups in Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban offer 24-hour telephone counseling for rape survivors.

Any woman who has been sexually assaulted - no matter how long ago the assault has happened can telephone them. Everything that is said to the crisis worker is confidential (Lewis, 1994). Rape Crisis Counseling Provides:

- *Emotional support for rape survivors.
- *Medical Treatment
- *Legal Advice
- *Proper Psychological Treatment
- *Assist women who qualify for an abortion to go through the right channels
- *Counsels Family Members, Spouses and Friends
- *Assist woman when she want to report assaults to the police

National Rape Crisis Centres are contactable at:

Johannesburg

POWA

(011) 642 – 4345

Midrand Crisis Centre

(011) 315 – 3500

Rape Crisis Centre Cape Town

Carol Bower

(021) 447 – 1467

Centre For The Study of Violence And Reconciliation Trauma Clinic

Trauma clinic provides free face to face counseling.

(011) 403 - 5102

Life Line:

Telephonic Counseling and Referrals.

Cape Town (021) 461 – 1111

Johannesburg (011) 728 –1347

Pretoria (012) 343 – 8888

Stop Women Abuse Toll-Free Helpline

0800- 150 150

All this information is accurate as of July, 1999.

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APPENDIX

Consent Form

Title: ***Factors underlying women's decision not to report physical abuse:
A qualitative exploration***

Site: Bella Vista

Area: The Boland

Introduction:

Hello. My name is Franzett Damon. I am conducting a study on women who have been and are currently affected by physical violence inflicted by men. The reason why the study is conducted is to provide policy makers with information which would enable them to develop intervention programmes that would meet the needs of abused women. Your input would be treated with confidentiality. If you should at any stage feel uncomfortable we may stop the interview at any time.

Is it okay if I ask you a few questions?

The participant's signature

***Title : Factors underlying women's decision not to report physical abuse:
A qualitative exploration.***

Guidelines for conducting in-depth interviews with participants who experienced physical abuse.

Would you like to explain to me what happened to you?

1. Why did you go back to you partner?
2. Did you ever seek advice from a friend or family member?
3. Why didn't you go to the police?
4. Did you go to the crisis centre in Bella Vista?
5. Do you know that laws exist which protect the rights of abused women?