

**THE EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN WHO ENCOUNTER EMOTIONAL OR
PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE BY THEIR MALE PARTNERS**

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
M Psych in the Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape,
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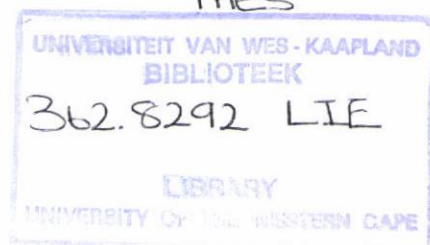
Key words

Woman abuse, psychological abuse, emotional abuse, intimate relationships, gender, patriarchy, power, control, self-esteem, empowerment



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ABSTRACT

Today, violence has become deeply entrenched in South African society. As such, it is not surprising to witness the widespread abuse against women. A review of the literature shows that research on men abusing women had been largely confined to the area of physical abuse. Only recently has an investigation of the prevalence, severity and consequences of psychological abuse of women by their male partners been conducted to provide insight into this form of abusive behaviour. The central aim of the present study was to explore psychologically abused women's experiences of abuse. The research was approached from a feminist perspective, utilising a qualitative methodology. The participants were diverse in terms of age and background and drawn from clients of the Catholic Welfare and Development (CWD) Counselling Centre in Elsie's River. A semi-structured interview schedule was utilised. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured and post-interview counselling was offered. Each interview was tape-recorded and transcribed and a qualitative thematic analysis was carried out on the data. The participants' accounts reveal that psychological abuse is an escalating pattern of abuse where one partner in an intimate relationship controls the other through intimidation and fear. Their relationships were characterised by intimidation, emotional harm, coercion and threats which were used continuously by the abuser to maintain power and control over them which resulted in traumatic consequences for them. Some of the participants reported feeling a lowered sense of self-worth as well as suffering from depression and other

related illnesses. Some of the participants also felt that the abusive experience had somewhat hardened them. It is significant to note that this change in sense of self was perceived positively by some of the participants, who reported that they had become more assertive. These findings show that despite the profoundly painful experience of psychological abuse, the participants' accounts bear testimony of their courage and resilience. Due to the extent of psychological harm that accompanies psychological abuse in a relationship, as well as the paucity of research in this particular area, it is my recommendation that much more research of this nature be undertaken.



DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation, unless specifically indicated to the contrary in the text, is my own original work and that I have not submitted it, nor any parts of it, for a degree at any other university.



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MS D. LIEDEMAN

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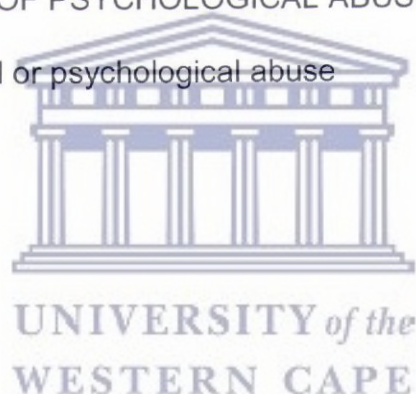
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the present study and provides a brief overview of the severity of the social problem of woman abuse as well as the rationale for the current research project.

1.1 INTRODUCTION TO WOMAN ABUSE

Woman abuse is a social problem which dates back to time immemorial (Makofane, 1999). The abusive power and control of men over women in intimate relationships is very common. Throughout history, men's abuse of women has been condoned by society and viewed as natural, understandable, tolerable, deserved and inevitable (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Moore, 1979; O'Toole & Schiffman, 1997). A perusal of the literature shows that a significant number of women have been subjected to physical, emotional, sexual and economic abuse. The devastating impact of the abuse they have suffered by their partners has affected their physical and psychological well-being (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, Polek., 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Makofane, 1999; Mullender, 1996; Murray, 2000; Orava, McLeod & Sharpe., 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).

Feminists argue that all abuse can be understood within the context of gendered power relationships. These relationships are sexist in nature and rooted in the traditions of a male dominated society. Men's abuse of women can be understood by its patriarchal roots, especially since subjection and submission of women were sanctioned by the church and the state (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; O'Toole & Schiffman, 1997). Both masculinity and male sexuality are synonymous with power and are socially constructed to be oppressive. In most social spheres, men are awarded more power than women, thus benefiting by this positioning. The power men wield over women is in most men's interest to maintain this status quo of gender inequality and patriarchal dominance (Maconachie, 1993; Mullender, 1996; Roopnarain, 1999).

Since crime is currently South Africa's most serious problem, the profound impact of woman abuse in South Africa cannot be underestimated (Roopnarain, 1999; South African Human Rights Commission, 1998). Research in this area is imperative as effective social action is impossible without a comprehensive understanding of the nature and extent of the problem. This means that a clear understanding of why men abuse women based on an analysis of men's social power lead to quite different responses which emphasise safety and empowerment for women (Hoff, 1990; Mullender, 1996).

At the heart of the debate on woman abuse lies the issue of inequality. Our history of colonial domination, patriarchy, segregation and apartheid has burdened us with a legacy of racism and sexism. Since 1994 a plethora of legal mechanisms have been developed to restore justice, provide redress and

establish a culture and ethic of human rights consciousness and practice. Section nine of the Constitution describes the right to equality and gives powerful impetus to women's empowerment (Baden, Hassim, Meintjies, 1999; South African Human Rights Commission, 1998; Sowetan, 2001). Despite this progress, the changes to women's lives seem minimal as women continue to be the victims of abuse (Parenzee, Artz & Moul, 2001; Roopnarain, 1999).

1.2 EPIDEMIOLOGY

Woman abuse is a common occurrence in many intimate relationships (O'Leary, 1996). An examination of the literature shows that it is prevalent in all continents and cuts across racial, ethnic, cultural, educational, age, sexual orientation and economic lines in equal proportions (Cape Argus, 1997; Commission on Domestic Violence, 2001; Makofane, 1999; Moore, 1979; Mullender, 1996). Woman abuse in South Africa is a serious and extensive problem (Lawrence 1984) and reportedly amongst the highest in the world (Parenzee *et al.*, 2001). Although it is often unrecognised and underreported, there are some statistics relating to specific areas of the country and some national data regarding the status of the problem. A few selected examples as an indication of the scope of abuse follows. In South Africa it is reported that 50 % to 60 % of marital relationships involve abuse. It is estimated that more than one out of every four women experienced abuse by an intimate partner (Roopnarain, 1999; South African Human Rights Commission, 1998). The Department of Justice and

research conducted by women's organisations estimate that between one in three and one in six women are abused by an intimate male partner. A survey conducted by the South African Medical Research Council between 1990 to 1992, revealed that of all inter-personal violence, woman abuse constituted one third of the total (South African Human Rights Commission, 1998). Estimates on the incidence of woman abuse and its impact shows that one in two women (49%) attending a Community Health Centre in the Western Cape reported experiencing past or current abuse by their male partners. As a result, 84% of these women suffered severe physical or mental health consequences. Research conducted in Soweto in 1994 revealed that one in three women utilising medical services had been abused by an intimate partner. It is estimated that over 50 % of women are killed or murdered by an intimate partner (Domestic Violence Act, 1998; People Opposing Women Abuse, 2001). In Cape Town, the Rape Crisis Centre estimated that one out of every six women are abused by their partners (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). In 1990 a study on abuse against women found that one in six women in the Western Cape were abused. A second study carried out in 1997 reported that at least one woman is killed by an intimate partner every six days in South Africa (Cape Argus, 1997; Domestic Violence Act, 1998).

Difficulties in obtaining prevalence data have been exacerbated by apartheid and the fragmentation created by bureaucracy, the lack of resources to confront the problem of woman abuse as well as the fragile relationship between the police and the community (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). The scope and extent of

emotional abuse of women by men is only recently becoming fully understood. Because of the concealed nature of the issue, adequate statistics are not available (Cape Argus, 1997). In my opinion, the extent of psychological and emotional abuse is likely to be far greater than is estimated. Many women view emotional and psychological abuse as “normal” in intimate relationships as it happens so commonly and is accepted, instead of perceiving it as problematic and intolerable (Levy, 1991). Bateman (1991) asserts that the problem of woman abuse is a societal manifestation of the power imbalance between the sexes where men are socialised into roles of power and domination and females are socialised to be passive and dependent. Although attitudes have been changing, male domination and female passivity remain prevalent concepts (Murray, 2000). Given this cultural context, it is not surprising that few women report abuse. Many women do not even recognise that they are emotionally abused. This lack of recognition may be a result of a remarkable tolerance for or justification of emotional abuse (Bateman, 1991), thus contributing to the difficulty in ascertaining the extent of this social problem. Even though the definition of domestic violence has been broadened to include emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, reasons for difficulty in ascertaining its prevalence include the paucity of research in this area. Separate statistics specifically pertaining to psychological abuse appear not to be reported as it co-occurs with many other forms of abuse, particularly physical abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Levy, 1991; Makofane, 1999; Moore, 1979; Mullender, 1996;

Murray, 2000; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).

Moore (1979) states that it is evident that the problem is a human one, not a statistical one. Society needs to develop better tools to define the extent of the problem. Despite South Africa's progressive constitution and legislation, abuse against women is still regarded as the norm. There is no indication that the levels of woman abuse in South Africa are receding or are likely to do so in the future (Parenzee *et al.*, 2001).

1.3 THE PRESENT STUDY

Research on psychological abuse has primarily been conducted in terms of its relationship to physical abuse and is still in the exploratory stage (Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997). Subsequently, a small number of studies have examined it as a variable separate from physical abuse. However, despite the studies on psychological abuse being published in the last few years, much research is still needed in this area.

In light of the above considerations, this study addresses the issue of woman abuse, particularly with regard to psychological and emotional abuse. An investigation of the literature reveals that there are various forms of abuse that women experience (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Levy, 1991; Makofane, 1999; Moore, 1979; Mullender, 1996; Murray, 2000; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). The central argument in this thesis

is that the psychological abuse of women by men is rooted in patriarchy (this will be discussed at length later). Feminist writers have emphasised in the literature that abuse is only one dimension of the complex patterns of control and domination of women by men (NiCarthy, 1986; Yllo and Bograd, 1988). A greater understanding of abuse will be achieved through careful consideration of the nature of the social settings and situations in which it occurs (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Emotional and psychological abuse in marital and dating relationships recently has begun to receive serious attention (O'Hearn & Davis, 1997). Researching psychological abuse has proved to be challenging because of the difficulty of defining and identifying it. The focus on psychological abuse by researchers has prompted some to try to define this type of abuse as well as gain an understanding of women's experiences of it (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992). It was also reported that psychological and emotional abuse is the most detrimental component of all forms of abuse (Garbarino, Guttman & Seeley, 1986, cited in O'Hearn & Davis, 1997). The literature shows that many women indicated that emotional abuse is more severe than physical abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Makofane, 1999; Makofane, 1999; Mullender, 1996; Murray, 2000; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).

Though there is a plethora of literature pertaining to physical abuse, psychological and emotional abuse has been neglected and has not received much attention in the South African context. Given the paucity of research in this

area, the present study has explored the experiences of psychologically abused women. An examination of the literature reveals that abuse is a complex interactional process between personal, cultural, political and economic factors (Hoff, 1990; Mullender, 1996). In this paper it is argued that sex-role socialisation teaches girls to be nurturant, compliant and passive while boys are taught to be strong, aggressive, in charge and in control, set the stage upon which later abuse is played out (Levy, 1991; Moore, 1979). Due to the power disparity between men and women, social power advantages for males means that they are in a position of power to maintain control and therefore more likely to perpetuate abuse. Abusive partners often rely on the use of coercive power such as psychological tactics to establish dominance over the women. The abuser's behaviour is not only a way of maintaining control over their partners, emotional and psychological abuse are also extremely damaging to women (De Sousa, 1991; Levy, 1991; Mullender, 1996; Murray 2000; Tolman, 1989).

My motivation for conducting this research is to make a personal contribution to the enhancement of the psychological well-being of women in a traditionally patriarchal South African society. The focus of this study centers around psychological health as a very important facet of well-being. In the absence of health, be it physical or psychological, it would prove very difficult to significantly improve the well-being of South African women. Engel (1990) states that despite the tremendous damage emotional abuse does to women, it is rarely identified as abusive behaviour. It may be difficult to recognise this kind of abuse because it is not visible (De Sousa, 1991; Kirkwood, 1993) and the social acceptance of

men's controlling behaviour. It is thus critical that research be conducted in this area in order to heighten awareness and educate women by not putting them at greater risk of psychological abuse. It has been reported that prolonged exposure to psychological abuse can result in various other serious mental health illnesses (Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; McGibbon *et al.*, 1989, cited in Mullender, 1996). Research was approached from a feminist perspective as it focuses on the relationship between patriarchy, traditional beliefs and woman abuse. This research aspired to empower women through validating their experiences. By giving voice to many voiceless women, research in this area can inform us about women's reality. When focusing on what women experience, help can be offered.

1.4 AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY



The central aim of the present study was to explore psychologically abused women's experiences of this abuse. More specific objectives included an investigation of :

- how women perceive psychological abuse;
- what they perceive the impact of this abuse is; and
- how they understand the problem.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research is significant for several reasons. Firstly, since the new Constitution and Domestic Violence Act (1998) came into being in the post-apartheid era, it is my view that research into the psychological abuse of women is well-timed. In South Africa, there is currently a paucity of research in the area of emotional and psychological abuse and a review of the literature offers only the barest insights into this form of abuse. Secondly, since the Domestic Violence Act (1998) incorporates emotional and psychological abuse in its definition, the focus of this research will allow us to learn more about this area. The Constitution and the Domestic Violence Act emphasises the right to health and well-being. In order to address the health and thus the well-being of women in the South African context, it is imperative that a balanced view of health be taken, namely not only research into the physical aspect of woman abuse, but also the neglected aspect of psychological abuse. Knowledge about women's experiences of psychological abuse will contribute to our understanding of this kind of abuse and how to help women in controlling relationships. Thirdly, woman abuse is a major problem in South African society (Makofane, 1999). According to the literature, all physical abuse involves emotional abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995). Given the prevalence of woman abuse, research in this area is particularly urgent. It has been reported that many services for abused women have found that women can be severely terrorised and abused without the use of physical abuse by their partners (Kirkwood, 1993). The most

common myth about emotional abuse in our society is that unless someone has bruises, a black eye or even a broken jaw or ribs, they haven't been abused (Murray, 2000). Another perception is that emotional abuse is really not that bad which results in minimising the severity of the problem. This is particularly serious especially since psychological and emotional abuse have been identified as the most severe of all forms of abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Makofane, 1999; Mullender, 1996; Murray, 2000; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). It has been reported in the literature that the impact of psychological abuse is extremely detrimental to women's well-being (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Richardson & Robinson, 1993). In spite of this, psychological abuse has not been significantly researched in the South African context. Tolman (1989) reported that men are able to stop their physically abusive behaviour while under the scrutiny of a counselling programme. However, their use of other abusive behaviours continued and even increased as a way of maintaining their control over their partners. Thus, due to recent efforts to redress the traditional inequalities in relationships between men and women, women currently have more rights that protect them from being abused. However, it has been argued that many men are now struggling to maintain what they believe to be their "rightful" position of authority and dominance over their partners. Thus, when women challenge their partners

authority become too frequent or excessive, he may reassert his authority not necessarily by physically abusive behaviour to coerce her into submission, but instead continue or increase psychologically abusive behaviours as a way of maintaining his control over his partner. This is evidence of how deeply entrenched the inequalities between men and women are and how difficult it will be to eradicate them without massive changes at all levels of society (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Tolman, 1989). Fourthly, emotional abuse has been more difficult to recognise. Because men are socialised into assuming domineering and controlling roles, some women are often not aware that they are being psychologically abused because they may view this behaviour as being socially acceptable (Engel, 1990; Mullender, 1996; Murray, 2000). In our society, men have traditionally been granted more power in determining the behaviour of their partners. While attitudes have been changing, women who are experiencing emotional controlling behaviours may be less likely to recognise that they are victims of abuse (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Levy, 1991). Fifthly, it has been well documented that psychological abuse is frequently a precursor to and an accompaniment of physical abuse (Murray, 2000; Tolman, 1989). In light of the above, I feel it is essential to understand this phenomenon.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THESIS

Chapter one has provided an introduction to the study as well as the significance for research in this area. It also examined why research in this area had been

neglected and had only until recently received attention. Chapter two presents a contextualisation of the issue of woman abuse in South Africa. It also explores the literature on the incidence of psychological abuse and various terminologies and theories relating to woman abuse. Chapter three outlines the background to the research methodology utilised in this project. Chapter four provides an analysis of the common themes that emerged from the interviews with the women. Chapter five concludes with a brief overview of the present study and recommendations for future research.



CHAPTER TWO

THEORISING WOMAN ABUSE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The subordinate status of women in most of the world's societies is well documented. For many years the issue of gender has influenced the lives of every human being. Women's ability to bear children attributed to the belief that women and men should occupy different social roles and has served as a means of ideological control over women (Powell, 1999). The roles of wife and husband did not grow out of biological reality, instead it was arbitrarily set to preserve the patriarchy. In this way the unequal relationship between men and women was legitimised and incorporated into cultural values, morality and social structure, thereby obscuring the true nature of this relationship – the existence of inequality (Moore, 1979). The history of the subordination of women is closely related to the history and causes of violence and abuse within the family (Gelles & Cornell, 1990). According to the literature, woman abuse can be understood as structural violence rooted in patriarchy (Radford, Friedberg & Harne, 2000; Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The origins of abuse lie in the subordination of women and their subjection to male authority and control. This relationship between women and men has been institutionalised in the structure of the

patriarchal family. The power in the relationship is not divided equally and the man has authority in the home. It is supported by economic and political institutions and the belief that this relationship is natural. This structure and ideology was reflected in two societies, namely the Romans and early Christians (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Moore, 1979). The subjugation of women by men in ancient times served as a model for the development of later forms of oppression. Historically, in South Africa, systems of oppression based on hierarchies of race, religion, class and sexual preference tolerated and engendered abuse against individuals which were assigned a subordinate position (Lerner, 1986). Today, in South Africa, the staggering incidence of woman abuse is an indication that millions of women are still raised in abusive environments (Roopnarain, 1999). Due to the legacy of apartheid, South Africa is burdened with a complex social context. This poses great challenges for the effective implementation of legislation. Many people are still living in poverty with needs for food, water, housing and health care. It has been argued that in this context, these basic needs precede the need for a violence free society (Parenzee *et al.*, 2001). The remaining part of this chapter provides a definition of psychological and emotional abuse. In the ensuing discussion, various theoretical frameworks on woman abuse will be reviewed. An analysis of woman abuse rooted in patriarchy follows as well as a contextualisation of this issue in South Africa. The devastating impact of psychological and emotional abuse on women's mental health is also examined.

2.2 DEFINING PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

A perusal of the literature shows that attempts to define psychological abuse empirically have been limited. Many people find it difficult to determine what constitutes psychological abuse (Engel, 1990; Murray, 2000). The lack of a clear definition constitutes a serious impediment to research in this area (O'Hearn & Davis, 1997). Part of the difficulty in defining psychological abuse is that there are no "pure" forms of abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Kirkwood, 1993). Women may be subjected to a combination of physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). It has been argued that even though psychological abuse is difficult to define and identify, it can be severely damaging. It is reportedly the most detrimental component of other forms of abuse, is often continuous with long lasting damaging effects (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; O'Hearn & Davis, 1997; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). It has been reported that emotional abuse is not visible and does not involve physical force or harm (Engel, 1990; O'Hearn & Davis, 1997). It constitutes behaviours that serve to reduce the victim's status (Walker, 1979), thus rendering the victim more easily controlled by the abuser (Dutton & Golant, 1995, cited in O'Hearn & Davis, 1997). Emotional abuse is distinguished from occasional outbursts of anger by virtue of the intention of the abuser. Emotional abuse is an intentional action that reduces the victim to a lower status.

“Successful” abuse results in the lowering of the victim’s self-concept and self-esteem (Bergner, 1995, cited in O’Hearn & Davis, 1997).

NiCarthy (1986) attempted to define emotional abuse. She searched for ways to distinguish it from the ordinary irritability and occasional name-calling that most couples engage in from time to time. Although much of this behaviour is abusive, it may not be permanently damaging until it reaches a level of reducing the partner’s sense of self-worth and maintain control. Hoffman (1984) defines psychological abuse as behaviour that is threatening to the woman so that she believes her ability to work, interact in the family or society, enjoy good physical or mental health, has been or might be threatened. Marshall (1996) distinguishes it from occasional obnoxious behaviour whose impact is unpleasant and short-lived versus psychological abuse which has long-lasting debilitating effects on the partner. Murray (2000) defines it as the intentional use of abusive tactics in order to obtain and maintain power and control over an intimate partner. There is a significant similarity in these definitions. The authors have tried to distinguish psychologically abusive relationships from “ordinary” relationships. Abusive behaviours are intentional (Murray, 2000). Psychologically abusive behaviour is continuous, unlike occasional arguing in other relationships. It reduces the victim’s sense of self-worth and has long-lasting debilitating psychological effects on the victim as a result of emotional or psychological abuse. Power and control are also crucial words since the abuser uses tactics of control and coercion to keep his partner tied to him (Engel, 1990; Murray, 2000). It has been reported that abusive partners often rely on the use of coercive

power such as threats of severe physical harm to establish dominance over the woman (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990).

The literature reveals that many authors have identified behaviours by the abuser that characterise emotional and psychological abuse. Behaviours identified as being psychologically abusive include domination, verbal assaults, abusive expectations, emotional blackmail and manipulation, unpredictable responses, constant criticism, character assassination, gas lighting, constant chaos, intimidation, humiliation, degradation, threats, economic deprivation, using the children, using male privilege, rejection, ignoring her needs, jealousy, possessiveness, social isolation, constant surveillance, refusal to ever be pleased, infidelity, sexual harassment and sexual abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Murray, 2000; O'Hearn & Davis, 1997; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). Verbal abuse has been reported as the most powerful coercive technique experienced in an abusive relationship (Tolman & Bhosley, 1991, cited in O'Hearn & Davis, 1997).

In summary, anger, conflicts, arguments and unhappiness are common in all relationships at some time. However, their presence does not automatically imply that the relationship is an abusive one. What set abusive relationships apart is the function or purpose of the abuse within the relationship and its impact on the abused person (Domestic Violence Act, 1998). The above literature all point to the function of psychologically abusive behaviours as being one of controlling the woman's behaviour by using fear, humiliation and verbal abuse (Murray, 2000). These controlling behaviours are harmful to the woman's

independence and contribute to her inability to deal effectively with the abuse (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). For the purposes of this study, the focus will be on psychological or emotional abuse directed against women by their male intimate partners. The term “woman abuse” will be used and encompasses a spectrum of emotionally and psychologically controlling behaviours with the intention of obtaining and maintaining power and control over an intimate partner and reducing her sense of self-worth (Murray, 2000). Because it is recognised that women who are being abused may not be married to their abuser, the term intimate partner or male intimate partner will be used interchangeably.

2.3 THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO WOMAN ABUSE

An examination of the literature shows that there are various theoretical debates concerning the causative explanations of woman abuse. Three broad explanatory frameworks concerning the causative explanations of woman abuse appears to be prominent in the literature. These have been referred to as psychoanalytical, social learning and sociopolitical theories (Harway, 1993). It has been argued that these theories of woman abuse are similar and simply represent different dimensions of human behaviour (Nosko & Wallace, 1988). In the ensuing discussion some of the theoretical approaches will be explored.

2.3.1 Psychodynamic framework

The central focus of intrapsychic psychodynamic theories was mainly on the personalities of either the abuser or the victim (Harway, 1993). The abuser was viewed as helplessly driven by his naturally aggressive nature, psychologically deranged, sick or mentally ill (Maynard, 1993). It was also proposed that his poor ego development, unmet infantile dependency needs or lack of emotional controls made him volatile and aggressive towards others when he felt deprived (Celani, 1994; Dobash & Dobash, 1992). These theories also assumed that certain psychological characteristics predisposed a woman to abuse. The concept of masochism was used to explain women's submission and suffering (Dobash & Dobash, 1992) or learned helplessness to explain why she remained in the relationship (Walker, 1978). Women were also perceived to incite the abuse by their pathologically provoking behaviour (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

Criticism has been levelled against these approaches as it pathologises the problem by highlighting personality traits and psychopathology of the abuser and victim as being the main determinants of woman abuse. It has, however been reported that very few instances of abuse are solely attributed to personality traits, mental illness or psychopathology (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Mullender, 1996). Research has shown that abusers are not necessarily sadists or psychologically ill. They come from all walks of life, hold good positions in the community, serve in our courts, police agencies and mental health institutions (Dobash & Dobash 1992; Moore, 1979). It has been argued that intrapsychic

models that dwell on the past allow men to point to formative experiences beyond their control and serve as an excuse for men to deny responsibility without ending the abuse (Bograd, 1988). The men deny responsibility by claiming they were “provoked”. The “provocation” excuse solidifies male domination (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Since the abuser is seen as being emotionally and psychologically disturbed, he is not responsible for his actions. Bograd (1988) asserts that woman abuse is far too prevalent to be the deviance of a few, instead it is a psychosocial disorder of society at large. We need a systematic approach that affects every level of society so we can eliminate this problem through social change (Moore, 1979).

A common myth that has been popularised, is that women enjoy being abused or they are mentally ill (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Moore, 1979). Considerable research has been conducted that refutes the myth of the masochistic abused woman. Research found that economic, emotional, cultural and social factors constrain women from leaving abusive relationships (De Sousa, 1991; Hoff, 1990; Moore, 1979). A woman may accept being abused because she does not think she can escape from her partner. Her victimisation often causes her compelling psychological problems, which then binds her to this symbiotic relationships (Dobash & Dobash, 1992; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Moore, 1979).

Blaming the abuse on individual psychological or physiological factors in either the abusers or victims attempts to dilute men’s abuse of women into a depoliticised, individualised and professionalised issue rather than focusing on socio-cultural and political perspectives (Harway, 1993). These approaches have

been challenged since they ignore male domination and power and the prevalence of male abuse by substituting men as the victims. Blaming the victim not only implicates women as partially responsible for the abuse, it also portrays the abuser in a sympathetic light. These approaches encourage women to believe the victim-blaming messages from their abusers and society (Bograd, 1988).

By emphasising the pathological or deviant characteristics of individuals, this approach does not take social, cultural or contextual factors into account (Richardson & Robinson, 1993). These theories deflect our attention from wider social tolerance of abuse. It ignores male domination and power and the prevalence of male abuse by viewing men as the victims of their supposedly sick or vulnerably aggressive natures (Moore, 1979). Bergen (1998) asserts that these approaches serve as excuses and justifications for the abuser's behaviour. At the individual level they obscure the abusers self-interest in acting abusively, at the societal level, they mask the male domination underlying woman abuse. Viewing woman abuse solely in terms of the personal interaction between two people is too simplistic. In order to understand woman abuse, we must recognise the social imperatives such as sex-role socialisation that influence behaviour as this has a powerful influence in our personal relationships (Moore, 1979).

2.3.2 Psychosocial framework

This is a variation on the psychological approach. It attempts to explain woman abuse by examining the interaction between individuals and their social environment. These theories claim that men become abusive toward women in response to social and environmental stresses experienced in the form of poverty, poor housing and living conditions, unemployment or exploitation in the workplace, racism, educational underachievement, unfulfilled aspirations and a sense of hopelessness about the future (Richardson & Robinson, 1993; Mullender, 1996).

Why men abuse?

Arguments have been lodged against psychosocial theories as it does not explain why stress should lead to women being the targets of abuse. It also does not explain why many men who are not stressed abuse women and why many men who are stressed do not abuse women. Due to stress, men are also not held accountable for their actions. Psychosocial theories have been challenged since it is well documented that abusers represent all ages, educational levels, religions, socioeconomic classes (De Sousa, 1991; Moore, 1979; Richardson & Robinson, 1993). The assumption that abuse occurs more frequently among lower-class families could be due to variations in reporting. Having fewer resources, poorer women are more apt to call police or utilise the services of public agencies. Middle or upper class women have greater access to private support services (De Sousa, 1991; Moore, 1979). It has also been argued that stress and woman abuse are separate issues and should be understood as such

(Mullender, 1996). The argument that men abuse women as a result of coping with stress related to unemployment, poor working conditions and inadequate income and health care suggests individual pathology (Moore, 1979). Two psycho-social theories will be briefly outlined.

(i) Social learning framework

This theory suggests that abusive behaviour is learned from observing others being abusive. This is known as social learning theory and the process on which this theory is based is referred to as modelling (Wiehe, 1998). It is assumed that individuals tend to imitate or model the behaviour of others they regard as important, powerful or successful. Parents serve as important role models for children through their behaviour toward each other (Bjorkqvist & Osterman, 1992, cited in Wiehe, 1998). Behavioural techniques have become common in re-educational programmes as it is assumed that what has been learned can be unlearned or new behaviour could be acquired. It has been argued that in re-educational programmes, men tend to learn the techniques without undergoing real change (Gondolf & Russell, 1986, cited in Mullender, 1996). This approach has been criticised as it avoids focusing on the power and control inherent in woman abuse (Mullender, 1996).

(ii) The intergenerational transmission of violence or the “cycle of violence”

This explanation asserts that men learn to abuse when they grow up in abusive environments (Walker, 1984). The family plays a pivotal role in children learning the roles of mother, father, husband and wife. The family is viewed as the first place where children witness abuse and learn how to cope with stress and frustration. Children are not only exposed to abuse, they also learn the social and moral justifications for this behaviour. Abuse thus transforms a generation of children into another generation of men who abuse women (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Mullender, 1996; Pagelow, 1992). Pagelow (1992), however, asserts that a family history of abuse is only one factor out of several that may be related to woman abuse. Other factors such as norms of male dominance are even more significant in accounting for why some males adopt abusive behaviour (Moore, 1979). This theory does not explain why some men who grew up in abusive homes do not become abusive themselves. Men who grew up in abusive families may be more motivated to avoid abusing women particularly since they would be more aware of the damage it can inflict. This approach attempts to generate sympathy for the abuser by assuming that he cannot heal from an abusive childhood and thus removes blame and responsibility from him (Mullender, 1996). The argument that abuse is transmitted by the family through social heredity leads to the perception of the family as shaped more by psychological and pathological processes than by social and historical family and gender structures (Moore, 1979). It has been argued that the literature reveals

divergent findings when examining the impact of witnessing abuse in the family of origin. This discrepancy in the findings offers only minimal support for the intergenerational transmission of aggression hypothesis (Makepeace, 1981; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1991).

The above theories appear to be inadequate as they do little to shed light on our understanding of the insidious problem of woman abuse. These theories have been challenged since focusing on intrapsychic and psychosocial factors seem to excuse men's behaviour and they are then not held responsible or accountable for their actions. These theories are limiting because they do not consider or include sociocultural and political factors as a contributory cause of woman abuse. It has been argued that woman abuse can only be understood by taking a feminist view of gender inequalities in society, especially since women are largely the victims of men's abuse. This is also the only explanation that can satisfactorily encompass both the persistent and escalating nature of abuse as men increasingly exercise their domination and emotional control (Bograd, 1988). Feminists argue that male dominance should be a central aspect of an analysis of woman abuse. It is believed that when male dominance is not a central feature of the analysis, women are viewed as one of several groups of victims of abuse. This deflects attention from one of the key places where women's oppression occurs, that is, in the family (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Feminist theory challenges these perspectives by highlighting the degree to which woman abuse is constructed within the patriarchal order and serves to maintain the status quo. A discussion on a feminist perspective of woman abuse follows.

This will also serve as the main theoretical approach utilised in this study since feminists place male-female relations at the center of their analysis and view inequality between men and women as a key factor in the interpretation of woman abuse (Bart & Moran, 1993). Since feminists view women's subordination as central in their interpretation of woman abuse, I argue that the feminist perspective portrays the realities of woman abuse more comprehensively.

2.3.3 A feminist framework

The women's movement led to the development of feminist theories that began to influence the way in which feminists analysed women's position in society. Feminism is not a homogenous school of thought as feminists differ among themselves politically and epistemologically. Although feminism is made up of multiple and contesting theories, there seems to be three central elements that characterise mainstream feminism. Firstly, gender is central to understanding social relations, institutions and processes. Secondly, gender relations are viewed as problematic since they are linked to dominance, inequality, and conflict. Thirdly, gender relations are seen as socially constructed since they are a result of socio-cultural and historical conditions and can be altered by human action (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Ollenburger & Moore, 1992).

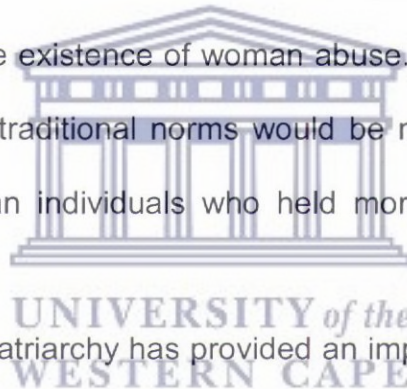
An examination of the literature reveals that abuse is a complex interactional process between personal, cultural, political and economic factors. Because feminists assume a relationship between the personal and political, the feminist

theoretical framework focuses on the relationship between patriarchy, traditional beliefs and woman abuse (Hoff, 1990; Lather, 1991; Mullender, 1996; Romm & Sarakinsky, 1994).

One of the significant roles of feminist theory has been to try to account for women's subordination in society. This has been important in producing some idea of how gender inequality could be challenged and transformed politically. Feminist theory offers critical explanations of women's subordination. Feminist theory offers an explanation of how and why women have less power than men and how this imbalance could be challenged and transformed (Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

Feminists argue that traditional mainstream research has been male-dominated. The dominating principles and rules of science are regarded as part of the general patriarchal domination. This has also determined which issues were researched or not researched as well as the manner in which it was conducted (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000). Traditional mainstream research reflects the sexist values and ideology of men and thus contains hidden expressions of sexism in its focus, language and results. In this way the asymmetrical gender relations in society are legitimated and reproduced. Thus, women's experiences and perspectives have been disregarded. Feminists critique existing theories, most of which contain gender bias. Feminists indicate neglected areas and show how elusive conditions can contribute to create a variety of social structures (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

An important outcome of the feminist movement in the early 1970s was the identification of woman abuse and publicising it as a major social problem. In an attempt to intervene and prevent further abuse of women, social scientists sought to determine the causes of woman abuse. Several cultural factors were cited as contributing to the occurrence and social tolerance of woman abuse. The historical tradition of patriarchal rule over women, a legal tradition of “wife chastisement” laws, authorised a permissible level of abuse against women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Patriarchy theory suggests that men were socialised to perceive their partner as their property (even in a non-marital relationship). Patriarchy theorists have argued that the culture’s norm of male dominance is a significant factor contributing to the existence of woman abuse. It was predicted that individuals who subscribe to traditional norms would be more predisposed toward abuse in relationships than individuals who held more liberal sex-role attitudes (Gamache, 1991).



In light of the above, the term patriarchy has provided an important concept in understanding how and why women are oppressed. This is useful as it provides an understanding to male dominance in society. All feminists acknowledge woman abuse as significant and assert that women are oppressed by a patriarchal social system on which women’s subordination is built. Feminists question why women are overwhelmingly the targets of abuse (Bart & Moran, 1993; Ollenburger & Moore, 1992; Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

Feminists point out that historically major institutions sanctioned the use of abuse by men to control women. Feminists argue that woman abuse is just one

of a variety of controls that men try to exercise over women, others include anger and psychological abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Men use abuse as a way to control female partners to comply with their wishes. Abusers increasingly control women through the use of intimidation and isolation (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Pagelow, 1992). Men believe they are justified in their use of abuse against their intimate partners and by what they feel are acceptable norms (Bart & Moran, 1993). They argue that woman abuse is a way of controlling women and contributes to male power. Feminists also explain that the rapid increase in woman abuse is due to men exercising their dominance and control over women (Ollenburger & Moore, 1992; Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

SIA { It has been argued that South African society is highly patriarchal in nature and still shackled by gender oppression and the legacy of apartheid (Dangor, Hoff & Scott, 1996). Thus, it could be safely assumed that woman abuse is intrinsically located within the social context of South African society. In keeping with a feminist framework, it is argued that woman abuse cannot be understood outside of a power analysis.

In summary, the preceding section shows that social scientists differ greatly in their interpretation of the causes of woman abuse. Each perspective views women differently and therefore each has consequences for our understanding of woman abuse. Feminists argue for widespread public educational campaigns to arouse support for reforms that will make institutions more responsive to abused women. The ensuing discussion focuses on the origins of woman abuse by reviewing the roots of patriarchy and how the manifestation of male power and

control in relationships between men and women is derived from broader society.

2.4 PATRIARCHY, WOMAN ABUSE AND THE DYNAMICS OF CONTROL

In order to understand woman abuse in contemporary society, we need to understand and recognise the century-old legacy of women as the victims of abuse. According to the literature, woman abuse is an expression of patriarchal domination and a means by which men control and oppress women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Patriarchy, is the institutionalisation of male dominance over women in both the public and private spheres. It is the most widespread cultural expression of hierarchy based on sex. Patriarchy operates at two levels, that is, structural and ideological. On a structural level it regulates men into positions of power, privilege and leadership while women are ascribed positions of subservience. Women are kept from positions of power and influence so that they would not challenge the status quo. On the ideological level, patriarchy ensures internal controls through the socialisation of boys and girls into their “rightful” positions. Any challenges to this hierarchical structure are met by external constraints that prevent and punish “deviance” (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Levy, 1991; Moore, 1979).

Throughout history, abuse has been directed toward women, which is evident mostly in Europe, America and Britain. During the Middle Ages in Europe, church law had a strong influence on behaviour and permitted men to exercise authority over women. Church law supported men in correcting women's

behaviour through punishment. This legacy of medieval law not only sanctioned the abuse of women, it also permitted men absolute family power such as the use of violence against family members, which included murder (Davidson, 1977, cited in O'Toole & Schiffman, 1997). The early Roman family was the cornerstone of society and seemed to be one of the strongest patriarchies known. The man was the head of the household and owned and controlled everything, including his wife and family (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). During the early patriarchal period, a woman was chastised or killed by her husband for committing adultery and drinking. These were the very same behaviours that he engaged in daily. English common law permitted husbands to chastise their wives who transgressed by using a stick that was not thicker than his thumb, hence the rule of thumb (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Moore, 1979). Economic, social and political processes operate directly and indirectly to support a patriarchal or male-dominated social order. Patriarchy leads to the subordination of women and causes the historical pattern of abuse against women. The use of force to maintain privilege is a significant characteristic of male behaviour in patriarchal societies. The power structure in society affords male abusers more resources with which they can enact control (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; O'Toole & Schiffman, 1997). These patterns are so pervasive that they have been perceived as normal and natural. They have also provided the roots for our cultural legacy. Patriarchy is still entrenched in most cultures today where rules and values affirm the superiority of males' interests in relation to his female

partner (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Moore, 1979).

As previously argued, attitudes about acceptable male and female behaviours lead to a psychological expectation and acceptance of abuse by men against women. Boys are socialised to be independent, aggressive and controlling, while girls are socialised to become dependent, passive and conforming. These behaviours are carried into adult relationships which leads to the acceptability of men taking charge of a relationship and the woman accepting his control, even if that control assumes an abusive form (Martin, 1976; Walker, 1979). The profound influence of patriarchal ideals results in internalised stereotypes which often result in men and women enacting roles that are expected of them. This means men who abuse women rationalise their behaviour in terms of their need to assert their socially expected control over women (Celani, 1994; Roopnarain, 1999).

In an unequal relationship, control by one over another happens when one person has greater influence over the other's behaviour or thoughts. Since their influence on each other is unequal, the dominant partner is more able to shape, alter and maintain behaviours, thoughts and feelings in the other. The dominant partner controls, oppresses and exploits the other by influencing her to act, think or feel in ways which are more to his advantage than hers (Kirkwood, 1993; Dallos & Dallos, 1997). In an abusive relationship, control is enacted in an emotional and physical way. Emotional control occurs when women start to lose touch with their own wants, needs and perceptions and are influenced by the demands and views of their partners. An abusive partner uses his powers of

persuasion and sensitivity to the vulnerabilities of his partner as well as other personal resources to enact control (Dallos & Dallos, 1997). Men may use many techniques that keep a woman afraid to assert her own needs. Many men rely on these techniques in order to gain compliance from women (NiCarthy, 1986). These psychological tactics force women to live in constant terror and fear. Women experience feelings of resentment, hurt, anger, emotional pain and low self-esteem. Abuse is thus a means for a male to maintain power and control within a relationship (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Celani, 1994; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Mullender, 1996).

It is evident from the above discussion that unequal power relationships between men and women exist as a result of patriarchal influences and contribute to woman abuse. Men's abuse of women serves to control and intimidate them. Repetitive patterns of psychological tactics used by the abuser results in the success of achieving total control over his partner's behaviours and feelings (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Mullender, 1996; Yllo & Bograd, 1988).

The women's movement has challenged the traditional roles of women in society and the abuse that they have accepted as their lot (Radford *et al.*, 2000; Roopnarain, 1999). The women's movement has played a critical role in making the abuse of women a social issue by bringing it to public attention. Feminist perspective argues that institutions play a central role in woman abuse. Traditionally, the legal system defined woman abuse as a private family matter and has been instrumental in enforcing its privatisation (Bart & Moran, 1993).

Feminists view woman abuse as a function of women's oppressed position. They argue that the purpose of woman abuse is to control women (Eekelaar & Katz, 1978). Feminists contend that men use abuse as a way to control their female partners. This is substantiated in the literature that reports that women demonstrated that abuse occurred when men tried to make them comply with their wishes (Bart & Moran, 1993).

2.5 CONTEXTUALISING WOMAN ABUSE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Abuse and violence seems to be a universal problem. South African society, like most other historical civilisations, is patriarchal. It has been argued that woman abuse in the South African context must be viewed against the sociopolitical background of apartheid, race, class and gender relations (Vogelman & Eagle, 1991). The implementation of apartheid over forty-five years ago has resulted in an economic and social crisis that has led to exceptionally high rates of violence (Violence Against Women, 1995). Because apartheid was an inherently abusive system and thrived within patriarchal traditions, women were the most vulnerable group, and as such, suffered socioeconomic and cultural impact (Dangor *et al.*, 1996). Today, South Africa is an extremely violent society, and the incidence of woman abuse has reached epidemic proportions (Roopnarain, 1999). The South African Human Rights Commission expressed concern about the high incidence of woman abuse in our country. As previously argued, feminist perspectives on woman abuse have shown that it can only be understood in its socio-political and cultural context. Thus, woman abuse is a consequence of the power differential

inherent in a patriarchal society and serves as a means of social control over women (Roopnarain, 1999; Gelles & Cornell, 1990). Today, South Africa's post-apartheid government is strongly committed to gender equality. The South African Constitution is committed to non-racism and non-sexism by redressing the legacy of past discrimination. Equality is one of the basic principles in the Constitution of what is commonly referred to as the new non-racist, non-sexist South Africa. The post apartheid government has introduced new laws and changed others in order to make them more gender sensitive (Baden *et al.*, 1999).

The South African Constitution guarantees the equality of women by establishing several bodies to ensure that gender issues are addressed. The acknowledgement of woman abuse and its physical, emotional, psychological and social toll on women's health is integral to the pursuit of political and economic reform (Dangor *et al.*, 1996). Woman abuse is viewed as a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to prevent the full advancement of women. Since the rights and principles with regard to equality, security, liberty, integrity and dignity of all human beings are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the South African Constitution, this study recognises that woman abuse is an obstacle to the achievement of equality, development and peace. Woman abuse constitutes a violation of the rights and freedoms of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Violence Against Women, 1999). The Domestic Violence Act (1998) has

broadened the definition of domestic violence to include emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, intimidation, harassment and any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards an individual that may cause harm or imminent harm to the health, safety or well-being of that individual. This is significant for many reasons. Research on woman abuse in South Africa focused predominantly on the physical aspect. If women only know the term physical abuse or battered wives, they may not apply the concept to themselves if they are psychologically or emotionally abused (Kelly, 1988, cited in Mullender, 1996). Since the Domestic Violence Act (1998) has incorporated psychological and emotional abuse in its definition and is not limited to married couples, women need to be made aware and educated about recognising this kind of abuse as well as what their rights are.

Despite the South African government's ratification of international agreements that condemn woman abuse, as well as national legislation, women continue to be the victims of abuse. It has been argued that woman abuse requires a more comprehensive remedy rather than a purely legal one (Parenzee *et al.*, 2001). As previously argued, although much has changed in the past few years, assumptions and attitudes die hard. Many non-governmental organisations fear that unless prevailing attitudes within the judiciary change radically, its powers will remain inaccessible to women (Domestic Violence Act, 1998).

In many South African communities the ideology of a dominant male still prevails and women are not treated with the same respect and authority that males are (Roopnarain, 1999). Relationships are influenced by cultural norms

that allow men to believe that woman abuse will be tolerated (Gamache, 1991). In all societies there are cultural institutions, beliefs and practices that undermine women's autonomy and contribute to woman abuse. Traditions and cultural practices are very common in South African society. The status of South African women is undermined by the legacy of apartheid and customs, culture and traditions such as lobola, dowry and arranged marriages. These practices objectify women and make them feel like male property (Dangor *et al.*, 1996). In South Africa, custom, tradition and religion hold that the man is the head of the household. Custom and tradition is used as a justification for practices which disadvantage women. In some traditional cultures, women have no decision in whom they will marry. Marriage also means becoming the property of her husband, especially since husbands are expected to pay "bridewealth" such as the practice of lobola or a dowry. Bridewealth may leave many men with the impression that they have "purchased" a wife. In a survey in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa, 82 % of women reported that it is culturally accepted that if a man pays lobola for his wife, it means that he owns her. Customary practices also prevent women from inheriting land and making reproductive choices (Women and Human Rights, 1999). It is evident that patriarchal ideology is mirrored in South African society. Many cultures still hold beliefs and norms that legitimate and therefore perpetuate woman abuse. Feminists further argue that culture is neither static nor monolithic and that communities should dismantle those aspects of culture that oppress women while preserving what is good. It has been suggested that the diminished status of women be addressed by

harmonising contemporary practices of such cultures with the rights and principles of the South African Constitution (Center for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; Women and Human Rights, 1999). Feminists contend that cultural, social and legal environments that condone woman abuse need to be dramatically transformed. The government has committed itself to overcoming woman abuse by enforcing legislation and policies that ensure women's rights. Feminist argue that woman abuse would only be eradicated through a radical change in gender relations at every level which would mean the destruction of patriarchy (Radford *et al.*, 2000; Roopnarain, 1999). Only when women gain their place as equal members of society, will woman abuse no longer be an invisible norm, but instead, a shocking aberration (The Center for Health and Gender Equity, 2001).

To summarise, this section discussed the alarming escalation of woman abuse in South Africa. The post-apartheid government has recognised that woman abuse as a major human rights violation and many laws and policies have been put into place to remedy it. Today, in South Africa, public policies have enlarged women's rights. However, this has not changed the nature of male-female relations as is evidenced by the increasing level of woman abuse (Lerner, 1986). It can be argued that since South Africa is a historically patriarchal society, the changes in legislation to remedy the problem of woman abuse will be challenging because abusers still hold strong beliefs that they have the right to control or punish their partners (Pence, 1987, cited in Mullender, 1996). As previously discussed, patriarchy operates both on a structural and ideological level. On a structural level, even though many mechanisms have been put in place and new

legislation has been created to bring about gender equality and assist the amelioration of woman abuse, the traditional ideology of men having the right to abuse women is still firmly entrenched in our society. Thus, even though new legislation was created to protect the rights of women, the abuse of woman is still continuing because of the ideology that it is acceptable. It is also contrary to our new Constitution and the Domestic Violence Act (1998) which promotes the right to the health and well-being of women in this country. An acknowledgement of woman abuse and its physical, emotional and social toll on women's health is integral to the new South Africa's pursuit of political and economic reform. Women's oppression cannot be overcome solely through constitutional changes, especially since woman abuse reflects power differentials in our society played out in the family. It also reflects male privilege to power and authority to maintain control through the acceptability of abuse (Dangor *et al.*, 1996). Thus, widespread awareness and education is needed to educate both men and women that woman abuse is no longer tolerated in our society. The public needs to be made aware that even though woman abuse is no longer legal and women have access to legal remedies to take steps in sentencing abusers, women are currently still being victimised. According to Moore (1979) like other legal changes, it is intricately interwoven with social and cultural attitudes. The following discussion examines the impact of psychological abuse experienced by women in an abusive relationship.

2.6 THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

Women who have been emotionally and psychologically abused have been through harrowing experiences with their partners. A perusal of the literature reveals that psychological abuse has long-term debilitating effects on a woman's mental and physical health (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

Many authors report that abused women described psychological abuse as the most painful abuse they have experienced. Psychological abuse can lead to suicidal thoughts or actions and has the potential to be permanently damaging (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

The effects of abuse on women include isolation from others, low self-esteem, depression, emotional problems, illness and pain. Women who experience psychological abuse often report feeling helpless, powerless, hurt, guilt, shame, mistrust, anger, humiliation, embarrassment, degradation, fear, sadness and confusion (Ackerman & Pickering; 1995; Moore, 2000; Mullender, 1996). Other symptoms include stress such as lack of sleep, weight loss or gain, ulcers, nervousness, irritability and suicidal ideation (Stanko, 1985). Other results of the

stress induced by the abuse include eating disorders, agoraphobia and alcohol and other substance misuse (Mullender, 1996).

It has been reported that continuous psychological abuse was significantly related to lower self-esteem which contributes to women's feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and hopelessness (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Mullender, 1996). According to Mullender (1996) men's controlling tactics include emotional abuse, that is all the words and actions designed to break the woman's spirit and destroy her self-image and self-esteem. Emotional abuse leaves women feeling demeaned and destroys their self-esteem and self-respect. Women often experience feelings of worthlessness, degradation, humiliation, guilt, shame and self-loathing as a result from the abuse (Levy, 1991). The deleterious effects of psychological abuse on self-esteem and recovery are more protracted and emotionally debilitating than the immediate impact of physical abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Okun, 1986).

Verbal and emotional abuse has been reported to be the most devastating type of power and control (Walker, 1984; Mullender, 1996). The abuser systematically degrades a woman's feelings of self-worth through name-calling, blame, accusations, humiliation, brainwashing and intimidation (Murray, 2000). Women often describe the psychological degradation, fear, and humiliation as constituting the most painful abuse they experienced (Mullender, 1996). This type of emotional abuse has detrimental effects on the woman's self-esteem which in turn, diminishes her ability to cope with the abuse.

According to Kirkwood (1993) women begin to lose confidence in their

perceptions in response to being abused. They then become more vulnerable to the perspectives implied by their partners. This results in feelings of powerlessness, helplessness and increased abuser control (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; NiCarthy, 1986). Men's controlling behaviour over women can feel like madness. It is an intimidation similar to brainwashing since men often encourage women to think that they are incompetent and insane. The abuser implies that the woman is insane whenever she tries to disagree with him. This will be taken as proven if the woman resorts to professional help for emotional or psychological distress that are resultant from the abusers constant undermining (Mullender, 1996). Women may be disbelieved once they have the label of "mentally ill" or any other diagnostic labelling. According to the literature, if an emotionally abused woman does not believe what is being said or does not feel the man is justified in his behaviour, she may not be affected by it. Thus, believability and justifiability seems to be a significant factor regarding the woman's reaction (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). It has been reported that threats of abuse or damage to the woman's property might be the forms of psychological abuse with the most negative effects due to the fear they engender. Jealousy and possessiveness that the woman felt her partner was justified in expressing could lead to anxiety-arousing interrogations by her partner of her actions (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990).

A review of the literature reveals that women are at risk of more serious mental health problems resulting from initial feelings of isolation, low self-esteem and desperation (Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; McGibbon *et al.*, 1989,

cited in Mullender, 1996). These include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide and alcohol and drug abuse (Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001). It has been reported that women suffer from depression and anxiety which contribute to the difficulty in leaving the abusive relationship (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Mullender, 1996; Orava *et al.*, 1996). Women feel depressed, confused, fearful and overwhelmed. Fear naturally causes anxiety, while feeling controlled and powerless often lead to feelings of depression. Suicide and suicidal attempts are also common (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984). The literature shows that abuse is associated with depression and suicide. For some of the women the burden of the unremitting abuse is so great that they take their own lives to attempt to do so (Orava *et al.*, 1996).

The literature indicates that women may or may not require symptomatic relief by prescription medication and other psychiatric intervention (Mullender, 1996). However, it has been argued that although women frequently suffer from symptoms such as headaches, "nerves" or sleeplessness, prescribing medication or referring woman for psychiatric help will not get to the root of the problem. Medication, particularly tranquillisers, are contra-indicated in cases of abuse. One of the reasons being heightened risk of attempted suicide (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

It is significant to note that abused women are often pathologised both by society and the abuser. Feminists argue that another main institution in defining and processing of woman abuse is the medical system. Because of patriarchal

medical ideologies and practices, medical professionals may have difficulty in recognising woman abuse when women go for consultations (Bart & Moran, 1993). This means that instead of the label abused women, women are subjected to diagnostic mislabelling and the various symptomology they present with are frequently not viewed in the context of woman abuse. It has been argued that these actions serve to perpetuate abusive relationships and the medical profession reinforces the patriarchal structure (Bart & Moran, 1993). Kennedy (1992) asserts that women who have been subjected to constant emotional abuse appear flat, devoid of affect, lethargic and listless. This may be misleading to professionals who may expect to see heightened fear or anger. Diagnostic mislabelling results in inappropriate treatment as well as reinforces the woman's perception that she is responsible for the abuse (Herman, 1992; Hoff, 1990; Durra, 1998). It has been argued that much of what is inappropriately diagnosed as psychiatric illness or personality disorder in women, is actually a reaction to the unremitting mental torment (Rosewater, 1988, cited in Mullender, 1996). Diagnostic labelling also has serious consequences for women. Even though her partner is brainwashing her, she may be disbelieved due to the diagnostic labelling. Another serious consequence is that if she is labelled as "unstable", her ability to care for her children will be questioned. She may then risk losing her children if this situation is manipulated by an abusive partner if child care proceedings are involved (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984).

The above findings reveal that psychological and emotional abuse have devastating effects on women's physical and psychological well-being. This

points to the need for a massive educational effort in raising awareness of the problem in both public and professional arenas. At present, little attention had been paid to the area of psychological and emotional abuse in South Africa, and as such, both the public and health professionals may not be equipped with the necessary knowledge and understanding of how to help women. Diagnosing the problem of woman abuse in psychiatric terms also avoids the social ramifications of the women's plight (Hoff, 1990). It has been argued that emotional damage can be survived with appropriate help. Professionals need to have knowledge and awareness of the impact of woman abuse so that they can respond appropriately when abuse is disclosed and be able to offer practical and personal help (Rosewater, 1988, cited in Mullender, 1996). Empowering services for women can have a positive relationship with good mental well-being. Treatment is particularly effective when the woman is involved in an empowering woman's group (Mullender, 1996). Society's goals should be to recognise emotional and psychological abuse and understand the roles of power in abuse. Women need to be informed about alternatives to emotional and psychological abuse, including negotiation, assertiveness and separation (NiCarthy, 1986). The following extract from (McGibbon *et al.*, 1989, p.69, cited in Mullender, 1996, p.116) shows the serious danger and ramifications of emotional abuse going undetected. It also encourages a desire to intervene that may prevent many women from needless suffering.

“men grind women down to a certain extent and then their self-esteem goes. You often only pick this up when it gets to the extreme stage or when a woman is sectioned in a mental health or psychiatric setting. We don’t cater for women in these situations at all.”

2.7 CONCLUSION

The literature covered in this chapter shows that the lack of a clear definition of psychological abuse constitutes a serious impediment to research in this area (O’Hearn & Davis, 1997; Tolman, 1989). The literature reveals that there is considerable debate among social scientists as to the causative explanations for woman abuse. Feminists argue that patriarchy is a social construction and needs to be dismantled in order to bring about gender equality and the demise of woman abuse. The current status of woman abuse in South Africa has also been reviewed. Despite the revision of relevant laws and new policies, woman abuse has reached pandemic proportions. There is a paucity of research in the area of psychological abuse in the South African context. It has been argued that there is a tendency to medicalise the problem of woman abuse and this disregards the woman’s experiences of psychological abuse and its devastating impact. Research in this area is critical especially since it is difficult to recognise and has been reported to have devastating effects on both women’s physical and psychological well-being. It is essential that both the public and health professionals recognise and understand woman abuse and intervene by

educating both men and women in an effort to help women recover from the adverse effects of emotional abuse.



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CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the methodological trends in the social sciences. Since the present study utilises a feminist methodology, a discussion regarding this rationale follows. An overview of the aims, methods and procedures of the present research is also given.

3.2 TRENDS IN METHODOLOGY IN SOCIAL RESEARCH

The logo of the University of the Western Cape is centered on the page. It features a classical building facade with a pediment and several columns. Below the building, the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' is written in a serif font, with 'of the' in a smaller, italicized font.

Traditionally, research has been conceived as the creation of objective knowledge, following scientific method. Research in the social sciences was based on the positivist approach. Positivism is illustrative of “science” with its claims to objectivity and rationality and separates the researcher from the “subjects”. This approach appeared to be the dominant paradigm and emphasises universal laws and empirical observations of cause and effect. The alternative epistemological position, which emerged out of a critique of the positivist scientific method as the only way for understanding human activity, is expressed in the naturalistic or interpretative paradigm (Hammersley, 1993).

In research, the issue of objectivity and subjectivity often leads to the quantity-quality debate within the two opposing epistemological positions. Qualitative

methods start from the perspectives of the participants studied, while quantitative research proceeds from the researcher's ideas and views about the categories which should be the central focus (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Ollenburger & Moore, 1992). Qualitative methods are increasingly used by researchers because they are viewed as being sensitive to women's experiences as well as empowering them in their efforts to bring about change (Hammersley, 1993).

The most salient reason for using qualitative methods is that it offers the opportunity to explore participants' perspectives in their own terms. A qualitative approach is especially appropriate for exploring the views of individuals whose assumptions differ from those of the mainstream culture, and, who therefore, have a particular need to speak and be heard (Reviere, Berkowitz, Carter & Ferguson, 1996).

Many qualitative methods were used as part of a humanist protest in Psychology against the mainstream. Some, such as feminist research, were developed in the 1960s as an alternative approach to those in the mainstream (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Feminist research has had a major impact on qualitative approaches to social research. It has been argued that mainstream theories are inadequate since these models ignore or devalue women's experiences. Feminist theories emerged as a way of addressing these problems of mainstream research. Feminist theories reflect a women-centered account by researching women's experiences. These theories are considered to be "transformative", since they attempt to create an oppression-free world (Banister *et al.*, 1994).

Within a feminist paradigm, alternative approaches are preferred methodologically which can be viewed as harmonising more with the perspective of women, through their expression of personal experiences and understandings. This means it is important to give women a voice in research and to describe and interpret their social realities on the basis of their experience (Acker *et al.*, 1991, cited in Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000).

3.3 FEMINIST METHODOLOGY

Positivism and the notion of the neutral scientist are viewed as male inventions. It has been claimed that traditionally, science was conducted almost exclusively by men and that results to some extent bear the imprint of certain male-tinted assumptions, foci, scientific ideas and methodologies. In the past, traditional mainstream research was seen as a male weapon of oppression and used to justify women's position of inequality which meant that women did not have a "voice" (Ollenburger & Moore, 1992). Feminists have been seeking alternatives to the traditional, hierarchical research relationship which they view as exploitative and a reification of patriarchal power relationships (Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

Feminism is not an homogenous body of knowledge as it is made up of multiple and contesting theories. Feminist frameworks are systems of ideas and conceptual structures that feminists use to explain, justify and guide their actions. A feminist framework is an in-depth analysis of the nature and causes of

women's oppression with suggestions to end it. Feminist theory treats women as central participants in the research process by trying to view the world from the perspective of women in the social world. The ideological goal of feminist research is to correct the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position. Its main objective is to produce a better world for women (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1984; Lather, 1991; Richardson & Robinson, 1993; Romm & Sarakinsky, 1994).

Feminist methodology allows for and values personal voice, is collaborative and fosters transformation. Since the nature of women's worlds are characterised by oppression, feminists often deal with controversial and emotionally laden issues. The main objectives of feminist research are the situations and experiences of women in society. A feminist methodology utilises the application of feminist principles to transcend observations of women's lives by highlighting and analysing social oppression in order to empower women (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Nielsen, 1990).

In a feminist methodological approach, the subjectivity of both the researcher and the subjects studied is central through empathy and personal experience. A close and mutual relationship between researcher and subject is seen as important. Feminist research highlights the understanding of the insiders meaning and has shifted the focus of power from the researcher to the researched. The alienation between the researcher and the researched is avoided. Both the researcher and those researched are active participants in the research relationship and knowledge is viewed as socially and intersubjectively

constructed. There is a pronounced interest in ethics and solidarity. Self-reflection is also an important part of the research process, particularly in qualitative research (Flinders & Mills, 1993).

It has been argued that feminist research can only be conducted using qualitative methods since the sexism of research methods may not only be in the method, but also in the researcher (Ollenburger *et al.*, 1992). Feminists challenged “the objectivity of objectivity” and realised that subjectivity was an integral part of theorising and research (Richardson & Robinson, 1993). It has been argued that the ways in which we theorise a problem affects the way we examine and explore it, which also affects the explanation we give. Thus, it is always worth considering the position of the research with regard to the definition of the problem to be studied and the way the researcher interacts with the material in order to make sense of it (Banister *et al.*, 1994). Given the prior arguments that South Africa is a patriarchal society and in order to provide a context for the experiences of women in emotionally and psychologically abusive relationships, this research utilised a feminist framework which was deemed the most appropriate for this study. The present study utilises a qualitative methodology that follows feminist principles in placing women at the centre of the research process and illuminates women’s experiences by giving them a voice. This methodological approach facilitates the involvement of the women who are active participants in the social construction of knowledge, empowerment and social change.

3.4 AIMS OF THE CURRENT STUDY

The central aim of the study was to explore psychologically abused women's experiences of this abuse. More specific objectives included :

- an investigation of how women perceive psychological abuse;
- how women understand the problem; and
- what women perceive the impact of this abuse is.

3.4.1 Participants

The participants of the study consisted of a sample of eight women that utilised the counselling services of the Catholic Welfare and Development (CWD) counselling center in Elsies River. The CWD is a non-governmental agency that consists of a staff of three women, namely the manager and two other women who have also formerly utilised the agency's services as well as a weekly volunteer. The center offers an array of services ranging from individual counselling, to arranging for abused women and their children to be accommodated in shelters, organising awareness workshops and giving advice on legal matters pertaining to the womens' particular situation.

Some of the women were also ongoing clients at the CWD centre who were receiving counselling prior to the period of data collection. Seven of the eight interviews were conducted in Afrikaans. With regards to other demographics, the ages of the women ranged from 26 to 54. Seven of the participants were black

(referring to the previously disenfranchised majority of South Africans) and one participant was white. Five of the women were employed and three were unemployed. One of the eight women was married and one was unmarried. Four of the women were divorced while two were in the process of obtaining a divorce. All eight participants had children.

3.4.2 Instruments

Given the sensitive nature of the topic, in-depth and semi-structured interviews as a form of qualitative inquiry was utilised in the study to elicit the desired information. Semi-structured interviewing as a more open and flexible tool allows the researcher to record perspectives that are not usually envisaged by researchers. This use of semi-structured interviews allowed for an exploration of a largely unresearched area of women's experiences. Underlying all feminist research is the aim to understand the position and experiences of women that are often ignored or misinterpreted in cultures where information is controlled by men. In meeting the aim of feminist research, this approach utilised methods of approach which allowed that participants' experiences to become visible. This approach also empowers disadvantaged groups by validating and publicising their perspectives (Banister *et al.*, 1994; Kirkwood, 1993).

Demographic information was firstly obtained from the eight participants. The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of seventeen open-ended questions about participants' experiences of psychological abuse which covered

three main areas, namely, how they perceive psychological abuse, how they understood the problem and what they perceived the impact of the abuse is. The interviews were approximately 90 minutes each. Each interview was tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

As the researcher is bilingual, the participants were encouraged to express themselves in either English or Afrikaans. This was advantageous to the process as the women were able to feel comfortable in expressing themselves in the language of their choice. For the purposes of this study, whenever participants preferred to speak Afrikaans, the researcher would translate this in the transcripts.

3.4.3 Procedure



An appointment was made with the manager of the CWD counselling center to obtain authorisation to conduct the study. After stating the general purposes of my need to conduct the study and presenting my proposed research, a lengthy interview ensued and approval was granted to access the women who utilised the counselling services of the CWD. Participants to be interviewed were identified by the manager and staff who gained their consent and provided the researcher with their names. I contacted each selected participant to arrange an appointment with them at a time convenient to them and conducted the interviews at the CWD counselling center. Given the sensitivity of the research topic, in order to build rapport and create a comfortable and safe environment for

the participants, at the commencement of the interview I explained the nature of the study and gave participants the opportunity to ask questions relating to the research or myself. The interviews were tape recorded with the participants' permission. According to Patton (1987) a tape recorder is part of the indispensable equipment of the researcher utilising qualitative methods. Apart from increasing accuracy, it allows the researcher to be more attentive to the participants.

3.5 ANALYSIS

Each tape recorded interview was transcribed verbatim. A qualitative thematic analysis was carried out on the data to gain an understanding of the participants' psychological world. A thematic analysis is a coherent way of organising or reading interview material with regard to specific research questions. These readings are then organised under thematic headings or categories in an attempt to do justice both to the research question as well as the views of the participants (Banister *et al.*, 1994). After conducting each interview, I diarised the process as well as potential themes. After the transcription of the tapes and several readings of the transcriptions and diary entries, central themes were identified and the data were categorised accordingly.

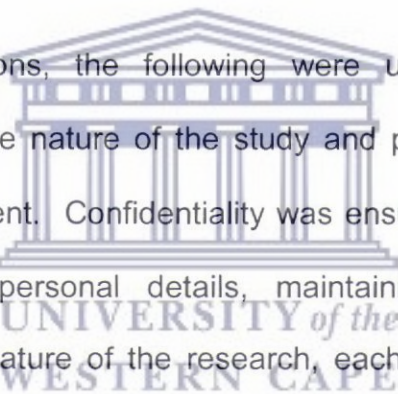
In qualitative research, concepts and constructs are meaningful words that can be analysed in their own right in order to gain a greater understanding of a given concept. Qualitative data are more likely to lead to unexpected findings and help

researchers go beyond initial preconceptions (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Mouton & Marais, 1988). When conducting a thematic analysis, it is important to keep in mind that meaning is not only in the text, but also in our construction and reading of it. Despite the process of selection and interpretation in the preparation of the material, the analysis is inevitably selective and open to multiple interpretations, especially since the researcher brings to the transcript her experience and memory of the interview (Banister *et al.*, 1994).

3.6 ETHICAL APPRAISAL

Leana M. Bopasah

In relation to ethical considerations, the following were undertaken. All participants were fully briefed of the nature of the study and participated on a voluntary basis with informed consent. Confidentiality was ensured through the omission of names and other personal details, maintaining participants' anonymity. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, each participant was given the choice to leave the interviewing process at any point. Arrangements were made with the CWD counsellors for follow-up support in terms of counselling for all participants. Each participant was informed about the post interview counselling. Some of the women indicated that they wanted to utilise these services. The CWD counselling center will be provided with a copy of the thesis on completion which will be accessible to the participants and other women.



3.7 REFLEXIVITY

Consistent with the commitment to reflexivity within feminist research, reflecting on the research process as well as my investment in the current project is essential. The methodology I employed in this study not only allowed the women to discuss their lives in their own voices, it also allowed me, the researcher, to practice the self-reflexivity necessary for revealing my biases as well as the nature of my understandings.

As a student of human behaviour, I have always been fascinated by relationships and always knew that it would be an area I would pursue in my research. As a woman and future psychologist, my motivation for conducting this research is to make a personal contribution to the enhancement of the well-being of women in a traditionally patriarchal South African society. It is my opinion that raising awareness of psychological abuse of women can make a valuable contribution to arresting the scourge of woman abuse and to significantly contribute to the enhancement of the health and well-being of women in post-apartheid South Africa. As we have seen in the previous discussion, woman abuse is a major sociopolitical issue. It reflects and maintains the power that men have over women in society, as well as in their personal relationships. Women abuse is a way in which men are able to control women and maintain their supremacy.

As a researcher, conducting this research is a response to the experiences and needs of women by creating an awareness of the necessity to empower

themselves. My research was also prompted by the need to improve the situation and position of women in our society. This research attempts to illuminate womens' lives by giving them a voice and helping them and other women understand and change their situations. It would provide women with social support and insight and contributes to their healing process.

Despite my success at gaining entry at the CWD counselling center in Elsies River, I found the research process very challenging and insightful. Not being a member of the Elsies River community, I was uncertain about how my presence would be perceived, particularly as a stranger conducting research on such an intimate and sensitive issue. However, I received the cooperation of the staff and it seemed that I had achieved some level of acceptance at the agency.

I attempted to establish a non-exploitative and trusting relationship with the participants. In keeping with feminist goals, given the sensitivity of the topic, and having counselled before, I felt it was extremely important to create a safe and trusting environment for the women. I felt the only way that this could be done was to establish rapport by answering questions about the research and my personal investment in it. This enabled the women to communicate candidly and eager to tell their stories and share their experiences. The womens' stories which illustrated their terrifying accounts of their struggles, pain and hope, left me shocked and dumb-founded, and at the same time I felt such admiration for their strength and courage.

In attempting to interact with the women both on a personal and professional level, it seemed my field of study made the women feel comfortable to ask my

advice after being interviewed. While reading the transcripts of the interviews I had great difficulty in identifying salient themes especially since each and every one seemed so significant to me. Even though the value of a feminist perspective utilising a qualitative methodology lies in its potential for comprehending the participants' experiences of emotional abuse by their male partners, this very virtue raises the possibility of bias in the interpretation and evaluation of the research. This results from the reliance of the research solely on one "instrument", that is the researcher, who often simultaneously acts as theorist, observer, recorder and interpreter (Bergen, 1998).

I feel honoured to have been given the opportunity to work at grass-roots level with the staff of the CWD counselling center and the participants who demonstrated their strength and courage by reliving the pain and trauma of their experiences in the interviews. The staff at the agency also had a great impact on these women's lives. They were passionate about what they did and it showed. To many women they were the only people they could turn to in desperate times. This research has dramatically added to my knowledge on woman abuse in broadening my understanding about power and control in relationships. Conducting this research has made me feel that it had not only made a difference to the lives of the participants, but also to the lives of other women who are experiencing abuse by their partners. The insights learned in this research could be used to assist other women in the future.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented an overview of the theoretical basis of the present research. It also provided the rationale for utilising a feminist methodology, which deems the most suitable when doing an exploratory study and accessing valuable information provided by the women in the study, thus giving them a voice and validating their experiences. The next chapter explores the central themes that emerged in the study.



CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

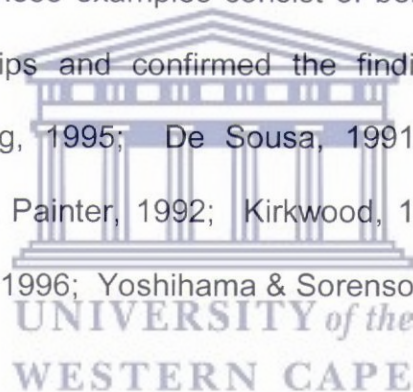
This chapter presents the findings and interpretation of the thematic analysis. It also highlights the similarities and differences of the participants' perception regarding their experience of psychological abuse by their male partners. As the transcriptions are verbatim, the quotes appear with language and grammatical errors. English translations have been provided for all of the Afrikaans quotes. Salient themes are substantiated by relevant literature. Themes will be presented in three main categories, namely, how participants perceive psychological abuse, what they perceive the impact of this abuse is and how they understand the problem. The categories have been separated for analysis and are not rigid and exclusive since many of the themes overlap.

4.2 WOMENS' PERCEPTION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

4.2.1 Difficulty defining emotional or psychological abuse

The literature shows that emotional or psychological abuse is difficult to define and that women themselves sometimes have difficulty defining it (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). It has been argued that reasons for this could be partly that this kind

of abuse is not visible (De Sousa, 1991), there are no “pure” forms of abuse (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995) and because of traditional patterns of socialisation, this behaviour may also be seen as socially acceptable since peoples’ attitudes regarding acceptable male and female behaviours lead to a psychological expectation and acceptance of abuse by men against women (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Levy, 1991; Moore, 1979; Murraray, 2000; Tolman, 1989). Similar findings were made in the present study. Most of the participants seemed to have difficulty defining psychological or emotional abuse, but what is significant is that they could give a description of what it is by providing numerous examples of this kind of abuse. These examples consist of behaviours that are common in controlling relationships and confirmed the findings of previous research (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Mullender, 1996; Murray, 2000; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).



4.2.1.1 Verbal abuse

Literature review

Verbal abuse in the form of hypercritical, demeaning barrages were very common in their relationships. The abusers’ behaviour included berating, belittling, hypercriticism, name-calling, verbal insults, yelling and screaming, threatening, blaming, ridicule and degrading the women, having extramarital affairs and refusing to communicate with the women (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter,

1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Mullender; 1996; Murray, 2000; Orava *et al*, 1996; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). In the following quotations the participants expressed their painful experience of verbal abuse.

Ek het deur baie emosionele “abuse” gegaan in my huwelik. In die agt jaar wat ek getroud was was ek baie afgebreek met woorde, daar was baie verbale “abuse” elke liewe dag en in die proses het dit my baie emosioneel seergemaak. Dit breek basies jou selfbeeld af en jy voel jy beteken niks in die lewe nie. Dit doen baie skade aan jou selfvertroue. Ek het baie baklei daarteen om my selfbeeld en my menswaardigheid te behou... hy het baie maal my so sleg gemaak dat daar was ‘n tyd dat ek baie maal gevoel het ek wil nie meer eet want jy laat my voel asof ek ‘n niks is in die lewe (1). *[I went through a lot of emotional abuse during my marriage. During the eight years of my married life I was put down, there was a lot of verbal abuse every single day and in the process I was emotionally hurt. It basically breaks down your self-image and you feel that you are worthless in life. It does a lot of damage to your self-image. I fought hard to maintain my self-esteem and my dignity... he often insulted me to the extent that there was a time that I often felt that I did not want to eat because you let me feel as though I am worthless (1)].*

In the above scenario, the abuser constantly attacked his partner’s personhood by demeaning, belittling and undermining her self-worth. He did this by constantly verbally assaulting her and treating her like an inferior. Also evident is her struggle to retain her self-confidence in the face of these verbal attacks.

Ek dink dit is ...aftakeling van jou menswees...van jou eie self. ‘n Ander persoon wat vir jou aftakel van jou menswees...dat jy self later nie meer weet wie en wat jy is nie. Hy sal vir my snaakse goed sê. Ek kon dit later net nie meer vat nie. Dit was amper vir hom asof dit lekker was om vir my te tart (*snif*). Dit was lekker vir hom, dan lag hy my uit. Ek kon dit nie vat nie. Dit was lekker vir hom om dinge te sê...en dan lag hy my uit...(pouse) ek kon nie meer nie (6). *[I think its ...breaking down your human dignity...of your own self. Another person who breaks down your human dignity... that you yourself later do not know who and what you are. He will say strange things to me. Later I could not take it anymore. It was almost as if he enjoyed provoking me (sniff). He enjoyed it, then he would laugh at me. I could not take it. He enjoyed saying things to me ...*

and then he would laugh at me... (pause) I could not take it any longer (6)].

This participant describes how her partner verbally abused her by constantly humiliating, taunting and making fun of her. This humiliation and disrespect was an attack on her feelings of self-worth. In both responses, the dehumanisation of the women is clearly evident. These participants were dominated and controlled by their partners who constantly verbally attacked and humiliated them. As discussed previously, abusive relationships are about power and control (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Levy, 1991; Moore, 1979; Murray, 2000). Rigid traditional sex roles accord men more power than women and allow men to dominate women. The participants also described the devastating impact it had on their self-image. This will be discussed at a later stage.

Baie maal het ek hom 'n vraag gevra dan het hy my afgejak... (1). [I often asked him a question, then he would put me down... (1)].

One of the ways an abuser uses to make a woman feel bad about herself is to constantly put his partner down.

As hy my wil afbreek of vir my vloek voor my dogtertjie dan het hy dit gedoen. Ek het nie merke gehad nie, maar die feit dat hy geskree het op my, want net om te skreeu op my glo ek dat dit is ook deel van "abuse". Want jy raak bang, jou kind raak bang. Jou kind raak so bang, dat jou kind hardloop na jou toe en jou kind skree soos 'n besetene en probeer jou klere van jou lyf aftrek. Dit los die kind met 'n gevoel van insekureiteit, dit los jou met 'n gevoel van insekureiteit, want jy weet nooit hoe is die persoon van dag tot dag nie (1). [When he wants to put me down or swears at me in front of my little daughter, he would do so. I did not have marks, but the fact that he screamed at me, because screaming I believe is also part of abuse. Because you become afraid, your child becomes afraid. Your child becomes so afraid that your child runs to you and your

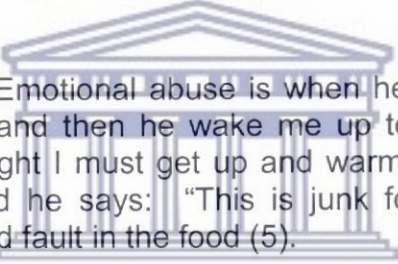
child screams like somebody who is possessed and tries to tear your clothes from your body. It leaves the child with a feeling of insecurity, it leaves you with a feeling of insecurity because you never know how the person is going to be from day to day (1)].

Being berated and yelled at in front of others are common behaviours of the abuser. It is clear that although verbal abuse does not leave visible bruises, it is cruel and scars your soul. A common myth about emotional abuse in our society is that some people believe that unless someone has bruises, a black eye, broken jaw or ribs, they haven't been abused. This participant, however, was able to recognise that even though her partner never left any bruises, she was a victim of emotional abuse. This response shows that the abuser does not always need to raise a fist to obtain power and control over a woman, he may use emotional and psychological strategies to assert his dominance.

Ek was sleg omdat ek baie "boyfriends" gehad het. Ek was gewees uhm daar is nie nog 'n man wat vir jou wil hê nie. En as (*beklemtoon*) jy nou wee' 'n man vat, dan sal hy nie vir jou wil hê nie, want jy is sleg, jy is 'n niks werd. Jy is nie eers vir my werd 'ie. Daai tipe van "emotional abuse" het ek eintlik deurgegaan (4). [*I was bad because I had many boyfriends. I was uhm there is not another man who would want you. And if (emphasise) you take another man again, then he would not want you, because you are bad, you are worthless. You are not even deserving of me. That type of emotional abuse I actually experienced (4)].*

Another common behaviour of an abuser is name-calling, which includes negative and derogatory labels for women. This participant put up with her partner's insulting abuse. He brought up her past relationships to hurt and demean her. He also tried to make her believe that she should be grateful that she had him because another man would not want her because she was

“worthless”. This degradation and disrespect are designed to make her feel emotionally insecure. It is very confusing for the women to be told they are worthless by the same person who claims to love them (Murray, 2000). Common expectations regarding what constitutes “appropriate” behaviour on the part of men and women in relationships contributes greatly to the stereotype that it is complementary for a man to date many women. Since society has different standards for men and women, this very same behaviour on the woman’s part is deemed unacceptable (Levy, 1991). Acting in accordance with these stereotypes about what constitutes appropriate male and female behaviour increase vulnerability to abuse (Murray, 2000).



I was abused emotionally. Emotional abuse is when he comes from his friend early in the morning and then he wake me up to warm his food. Then in the middle of the night I must get up and warm up his food and when you give him his food he says: “This is junk food.” You know there’s always, he always find fault in the food (5).

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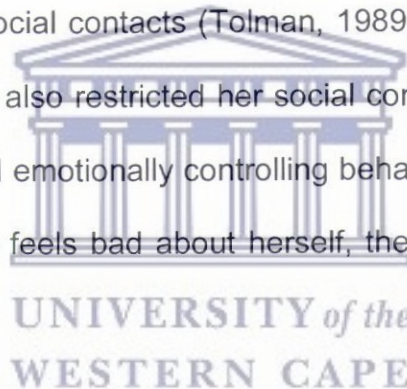
Maak ek kos, dan wil hy nie die kos hê nie. Maak ek nie kos 'ie dan soek hy kos. Of as ek nou kos maak dan moet dit so wees, daai moet so wees, die is nie reg nie, daai is nie reg nie (*sug*). Ek het geweet wat hy eet (*stemtoon verander – hard*). Hy drink nie sop nie want hy is nie siek nie. Nou daai het my afgesit (6). [*Should I prepare food then he would not want it. Should I not prepare food, then he would want food. When I prepare food then it should be like this or like that, this is not right, that is not right (sigh). I knew what he eats (tone of voice changes – loud). He does not eat soup because he is not sick. Now that put me off (6)*].

Rigid traditional sex roles are reflected in these two participants’ relationships. The abuser takes on a role of dominance, demanding their subservience. His needs are met by demanding compliance. No matter what these women did, it was not good enough, which resulted in constant criticism as the abuser was

never pleased (Tolman, 1989). According to Engel (1990) through constantly finding fault, the abuser wears down the ability of the woman to believe she has any worth or ability to think for herself.

...or he'll say I'm ugly. I am always with a overall and a little "doekie", you know. Because his girlfriend always looks nice...that words hurt most. The words that he says to you...its emotionally inside you... I meant that was emotional abuse (5).

The above quote illustrates that by demeaning his partner's physical appearance, a man may diminish her belief in her attractiveness to others outside the relationship, thereby assuring his exclusive access to her. Another way of ensuring this was to restrict her social contacts (Tolman, 1989). Her partner not only criticised her appearance, he also restricted her social contacts (this will be discussed later). Her partner used emotionally controlling behaviours in an effort to make her feel insecure. If she feels bad about herself, there is little chance she would leave him.



Hy het my verneder...sommer voor die vriende. Ek het Vrydag aande gaan "ballroom" en dan kom hy met sy werk vriende by die huis: "Kyk daar, so wil sy lyk, kyk hoe lyk sy..." Dan lag hy my uit...dit het aan my beginne vreet...ek kon dit later net nie meer vat nie (*sniff*) (6). [*He humiliated me ... just like that, in front of friends. I went ballroom dancing Friday evenings and then he would get home with friends from work: "Look there, that is how she wants to look, see how she looks..." Then he would laugh at me... it started eating at me... later I could not take it any longer (sniff) (6).*]

As seen above, this participant's partner humiliated, criticised, insulted and ridiculed her in front of his friends. Engel (1990) refers to this form of emotional abuse as character assassination. This form of emotional abuse not only keeps

her on edge, the abuser also manages to sabotage her self-esteem (Murray, 2000). According to the literature, it is not uncommon for women to describe the humiliation and degradation of verbal abuse as the most damaging part of their experience (Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; De Sousa, 1991; Mullender, 1996).

The women's accounts reveal that they were subjected to various kinds of verbal abuse. The literature shows that emotional abuse that included verbal attacks, ridicule, hypercriticism, name-calling and public humiliation, are considered to be more severe forms of psychological and emotional abuse. The function of this type of verbal abuse appears to be one of control. By making the recipient of the ridicule believe she is not worthwhile, she would remain within the power of the psychological abuser (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). The present study confirmed previous findings. The verbal abuse the women suffered was designed to control, subjugate and dominate them. The women's experiences of pain, humiliation and degradation of the verbal abuse was also evident. The negative impact on their self-image will be discussed later. What follows are several other forms emotional and psychological abuse reported by the participants.

4.2.1.2 Isolation

A perusal of the literature reveals that historically, as the husband's property, women were confined to certain parts of the home, isolated, guarded and

restricted from public activity (Moore, 1979). The participants reported that their partners restricted them socially and financially. The literature identifies isolation, either social or financial, as a form of emotional abuse. Restricting and isolating the woman may imply a need for greater control over her (Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).

(i) Social isolation

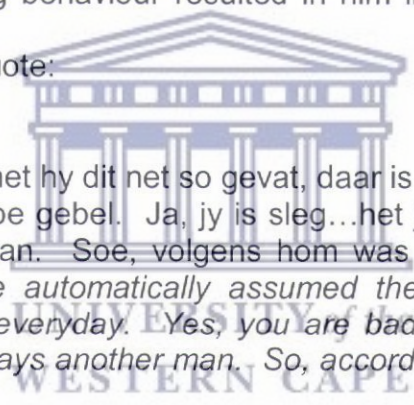
Restricting a woman's social contact is often related to jealousy and possessiveness (Engel, 1990; Follingstad, *et al.*, 1990). It has been reported that the abusive male was jealous of everyone in the woman's life, including her family, friends and pets (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Murray, 2000). Jealousy may result in the abuser controlling his partner's behaviour by restricting her contact with others. Abusers often restrict their partners' contact with friends and family by monitoring their visits, phone calls and letters (Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). This participant reported that her husband limited her outside involvement and monitored her social contacts. He held her accountable for where she went and who she saw by checking her whereabouts with the neighbours.

...or he'll go to the people around me and he'll ask if I went out today...(5).

Abusers devote huge amounts of energy and time toward surveillance of their partners. He may rely on reports from his friends regarding his partner's daily activities (Levy, 1991). The above participant's partner's controlling behaviour

resulted in him isolating her from the outside world. She had limited social contacts because she was not “allowed” to go out. This is a subtle yet effective plan because then she has to give up everything in her life and he is all she has (Murray, 2000).

The abuser may also use phone calls to keep tabs on his partner’s whereabouts or to harass her until he gradually restricts her activities (Levy, 1991). Her partner may interrogate her about strangers and other males with whom she may have contact. He may also accuse her of infidelity (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Murray, 2000). The participant below reported that her partner’s jealous, possessive and controlling behaviour resulted in him interrogating her. This is illustrated in the following quote:



...omdat ek hom gelos het, het hy dit net so gevat, daar is al klaar ‘n ander man... Hy’t elke dag werk toe gebel. Ja, jy is sleg...het jy ‘n anner man, en dit was altyd ‘n anner man. Soe, volgens hom was ek sleg (4). [*... because I had left him, he automatically assumed there was another man... He called to work everyday. Yes, you are bad... do you have another man, and it was always another man. So, according to him, I was bad (4).*]

(ii) Financial isolation

Emotional abuse also consists of behaviours that are controlling, manipulating and threatening to the woman’s economic status and basic needs. It includes denying the woman access to finances as well as failing to provide financially when he is at the means to do so. (Engel, 1990; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). Due to her partner’s economic neglect, she is often financially dependent on him

because she has no money or employment. This is also another way of showing the woman how powerful he is, by controlling the money and not giving her any (De Sousa, 1991). The following responses show how the abuser uses money to undermine the women.

...hy wou nie sy kind onderhou nie en hy wou maak en doen met my net soos hy wil... hy sal sy kind onderhou as ek met hom moet slaap (4).
[...he did not want to support his his child and he wanted to say and do to me what he liked... he will support his child if I sleep with him (4)].

The above participant felt that because she depended on her partner to financially support their child, he took advantage of her. He emotionally blackmailed her as he was prepared to pay maintenance only if she slept with him. It was a constant battle for her to obtain maintenance from him.

...he never worked...when he does work we only get sort of a quarter of that money...little bits. I always use to get the change from his wages. The other monies goes to his girlfriend and the shebeens and I get the change. That change I was so grateful for because I can buy bread for my children. I could never pay my rent, lights were cut...(5).

Alles wat hy gekoop het toe ons getroud was, was syne. Ek het net 'n honderd rand gekry vir elke week se kos. Ek moes net kos gekoop het van daai geld. Ek het vir hom onderbroeke gekoop eenslag, ek het vir hom spray gekoop. "Hoekom koop jy hierdie goed, ek het 'ie hierdie goed nodig 'ie (*hard-dik stem*) (6). [Everything he bought while we were married, was his. I only received one hundred rand for food each week. I had only to buy food from that money. I bought him underpants once, I bought him spray. "Why do you buy these things, I do not need these things" (*loud*) (6)].

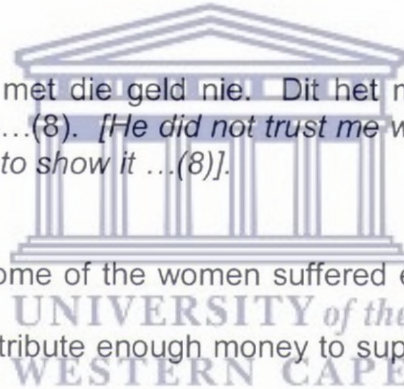
Ek het gewerk by 'n salon toe besluit ek ek gaan voltyds werk en voltyds studeer. En dan maak ek net die jaar klaar. Ek het nou nie geld in die bank nie, iets wat ek op terug kan val nie. Ek moet alles vir hom vra. So hy kon net vir my sê of doen soos hy wil. So hy moes geld gee vir die

kinders, hy moes sorg vir my studies. En hy moed geld gee vir kos. Ek dink dit het hom nie aangestaan nie. Ek het my studies later net gelos (6). *[I worked at a salon when I decided to work and study full-time. And then I would complete the year. I don't have money in the bank now, something which I could fall back on. I need to ask him for everything. So he could say or do to me what he liked. So he had to give me money for the children, he had to pay for my studies. And he must give money for food. I think this did not sit well with him. I later just dropped my studies (6)].*

As seen above, this participant also felt that because she was financially dependent on her partner, he took advantage of her by saying and doing what he liked to her.

Hy is ook nie baie lief vir werk nie...ek was maa' tevrede wat ek kry...(7). *[He also does not like to work... I had to be satisfied with what I got...(7)].*

Hy het nie vir my "getrust" met die geld nie. Dit het my baie seer laat voel...maar ek wil nie uitwys...(8). *[He did not trust me with the money. It hurt me a lot ... but I did not to show it ...(8)].*



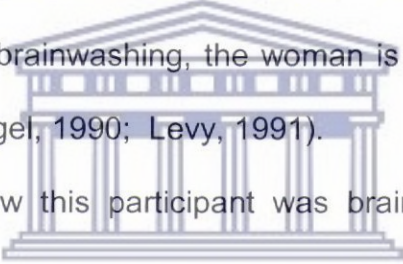
The above quotations show that some of the women suffered economic neglect because their partner's did not contribute enough money to support the family or to run the home even though they were at the means to do so. By placing these social, personal and financial constraints on women's behaviour, abusers are able to control their behaviour. This may be attributed to the power disparity between men and women (Levy, 1991; Moore, 1979). Feminists argue that economic and social processes operate directly and indirectly to support patriarchal domination (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Due to their ascribed status, men have greater access to resources and are in a position to control women. The political, social and economic privileges that men are accorded relative to

women enable them to control women. These responses show that the abusers asserted their dominance by restricting the women. They benefitted from the confinement of the women which reinforced their control of the lives of the women (Bart & Moran, 1993).

4.2.1.3 Brainwashing

Brainwashing was identified as an example of psychological abuse. The literature refers to brainwashing as defining the woman's reality, getting her to question her own perceptions and judgements (De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Mullender, 1996). With successful brainwashing, the woman is more inclined to believe her abuser than herself (Engel, 1990; Levy, 1991).

The following responses show how this participant was brainwashed by her partner.



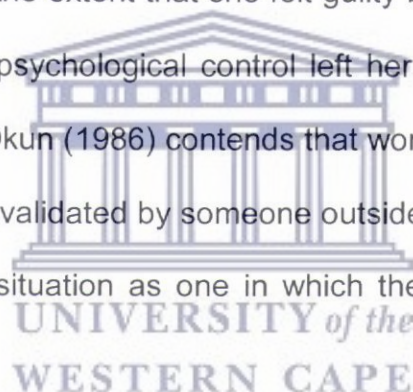
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Hy het baie maal vir my gesê, maar niemand gaan jou glo nie, want jy het geen blou kolle op jou nie, dit het my soms gelaat met 'n gevoel van hulpeloosheid...maar later aan besef ek dit wat hy probeer het in my kop insit is 'n leuen, want al is daar nie merke nie, daar word nog steeds emosioneel waar niemand my hart kan sien nie, daar is baie merke uhm wat niemand kan sien nie want net die feit dat jy klaar iemand afbreek en sleg sê en vertel jy's 'n niks (1). *[He often told me, but nobody would believe you because you have no bruises, it sometimes left me with a feeling of helplessness... but later on I realised what he tried to put into my head is a lie, because even if there are not any bruises, there are still emotional scars where nobody can see my heart, there are many bruises uhm which nobody can see because just the fact that you break somebody down and put somebody down and say you are a nothing (1)].*

My man was nie iemand wat my stukkend geslaan het nie en dit het my baie maal laat skuldig voel so half in die sin soos hy het baie maal vir my gesê, maar niemand gaan jou glo nie, want jy het geen blou kolle op jou nie, dis hoekom ek sê, dit is ook “mind games”, dit is sielkundige “abuse”. Baie mans doen dinge met hulle vrouens wat geen merke los nie want hulle weet uhm dat daar is nie “evidence” nie, maar uhm het hy my probeer om vir my te convince het ek later aan gedink, ja, maar niemand gaan vir my glo nie want daar is nie bewyse nie en dit het my soms gelaat met 'n gevoel van hulpeloosheid (1). *[My husband was not someone who beat me and that often made me feel guilty in the sense as he often said to me, but nobody will believe you, because you have no bruises, that is why I say, it is also mind games, it is psychological abuse. Many men do things to their wives that leave no bruises because they know uhm that there is no evidence, but uhm he tried to convince me that I thought, yes but nobody will believe because there is no evidence and that sometimes left me with a feeling of helplessness (1)].*

Even though only one participant reported being brainwashed by her partner, I included it as a significant theme because it consists of several subthemes. Firstly, the literature reports that this is one of the most powerful and damaging kinds of psychological control (Mullender, 1996; NiCarthy, 1986). Secondly, the literature shows that brainwashing plays a significant role in psychological abuse as it destroys the woman's self-esteem so that she will comply with the abuser's demands and feel that she has no other options besides the abusive relationship (Gamache, 1991). Thirdly, when the woman's self-esteem is lowered, she is more prone to be influenced by the perspectives of her partner, which in turn then reinforces his control over her. Any challenge to his perspectives are met with taunts that she is insane. Fourthly, in the absence of blood or visible injury, people are apt to discount the woman's report of her partner's brutality (Moore, 1979). It has been argued that brainwashing resembles those used on political prisoners where the woman is constantly coerced into believing the perspectives

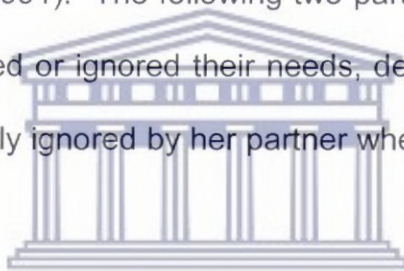
of the abuser. If she challenges him, she is usually told that she is insane (Graham & Rawlings, 1991). In the above quote, the abuser exercised his power over her by using the psychological tactic of brainwashing. By constantly telling her what he wanted her to believe, he tried to control her thoughts, feelings and opinions regarding the psychological abuse she suffered. As mentioned, the most commonly held myth about emotional and psychological abuse is that unless the woman has physical scars, they have not been abused. Her partner's attempts in psychologically controlling the way she thought about this abuse was initially very effective. Brainwashing was used to make her feel insecure and resulted in her doubting herself to the extent that she felt guilty because she had no physical scars. Her partner's psychological control left her with a sense of helplessness about the situation. Okun (1986) contends that women's perception that something is wrong should be validated by someone outside of the situation, in order for them to redefine the situation as one in which they are victims of abuse.



Despite his attempts to successfully brainwash her, she still challenged him. Patriarchal domination is still supported by a moral order which reinforces the marital hierarchy and makes it very difficult for women to challenge this as well as other forms of domination and control because her struggle is perceived as wrong, immoral and a violation of the respect and loyalty a wife is supposed to give to her husband. Despite this, women do continue to challenge their partner's oppression (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

4.2.1.4 Disregarding her needs

Many authors have identified emotionally and psychologically abusive behaviours as those that suggested that women's needs, wishes or feelings were unworthy of consideration (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Murray, 2000; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994). In the following quotes, the legacy of the patriarchal family is still mirrored. It has been reported that in most cultures, the patriarchal family continues to express and generate rules and values that affirm the importance of the males interests in relation to his partner (Gamache, 1991). The following two participants reported that their partners either disregarded or ignored their needs, desires or feelings. The participant below was constantly ignored by her partner when she attempted to discuss anything.



...of ek vra vir hom 'n vraag dan weier hy om die vraag te beantwoord. Dit het my baie seergemaak (1). [“...or I would ask him a question then he would refuse to answer the question. It hurt me a lot (1)].

In the above quote it is evident that her partner was insensitive to her feelings by ignoring her needs and not allowing her to talk to him about how she felt. It also shows how silence can be used as a powerful method of control (De Sousa, 1991; POWA, 2001; Fair Lady, 1999). According to Engel (1990) giving the silent treatment is a form of emotional blackmail.

The next quote illustrates a lack of empathy and consideration from her partner at times when she was sick and while pregnant. This lack of emotional support

from the woman's partner suggests that her needs, wishes or feelings are unworthy of consideration and also reinforces her feelings of helplessness and loneliness (Engel, 1990; De Sousa, 1991; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).

Ek het vir (*name*) gekry die oggend toe moes ek ingaan hospital toe. Hy sê vir my pa my pa moet die kar neem, want hy kom uit die werk uit. Hy gaan nou slaap. Daar was nie baie petrol in nie toe neem ek die taxi. Daar het hulle my gehou. Die aand het ek in pyn gegaan. Daar was niemand. Niemand het geweet, niemand get gevra of kom kyk waa' is ek (6). [*I had (name) the morning I had to go into hospital. He tells my father that he should take the car because he just came from work. He is going to sleep. There was not much petrol in the car so I took the taxi. They kept me there. The evening I got labour pains. There was nobody. Nobody knew, nobody asked or came to see where I was (6)*].

As ek eksamens moet skryf nou sit en studeer ek miskien vanaand. As die kind huil dan vat hy die kind en dan moet ek die kind aan die bors hou en sit en leer. As ek nou my verskriklike migrane kopsere het...dit maak my naar...as die kind gehuil het, maak nou nie saak hoe 'n kop pyn ek het...hy vat daai kind en hy kom sit hom hierneer. Die kind moet bors drink en dan moet ek lê met die kind (*stemtoon verhoog*) terwyl my kop pyn. Ek dink dit het ook vir my "emotionally" afgetakel (6). [*When I needed to write exams then I would sit and study in the evening. If the child cries, then he would take the child and then I was compelled to breastfeed the child while studying. When I had excruciating migraines... it makes me nauseous... and if the child cried, it did not matter how severe my headache was... he would bring that child to me. The child had to breastfeed and then I had to lie down with the child (raised tone of voice) while I had a headache. I think it also broke me down emotionally (6)*].

These accounts all point to her partner being insensitive to her feelings by withholding emotional resources at a time when she needed his support the most. According to the literature, emotionally abusive partners insist on attention being focused on their own comfort and convenience and away from the desires of the woman (NiCarthy, 1986). Rigid traditional sex roles are mirrored in this

relationship. His presumed dominance meant that he was in a position of power. He exerted control by putting his needs above hers and expected her compliance. He did not support her at their child's birth, he also expected her fulfill her traditional role of mother and nurturer by expecting her to breastfeed and take care of their child even though she was ill and tried to prepare for exams. When she was admitted to hospital for depression, he packed all his things, including the furniture and left. In this way her emotional needs were ignored since they were not seen as important. Her partner's lack of empathy eventually resulted in her giving up her studies and sacrificing her own ambitions. The literature shows that women commonly reported that abuse occurred when they attempted to act independently. For example, women would be abused when they "started to change" by finding employment or furthering their education or when their partners felt that things did not go their way (Bergen, 1998). The above quote illustrates this. This participant experienced controlling behaviour and no support from her partner when she acted independently by furthering her studies.

4.2.1.5 Infidelity

Some of the participants also reported that their partner's had extramarital affairs. A review of the literature shows that emotional abuse overlaps with sexual abuse through taunts of sexual undesirability, openly taking other partners and voicing negative comparisons (De Sousa, 1991; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Mullender,

1996). These are evidenced in the following quotations:

Hy het met ander vroumense gelol, maar ek het hom elke keer vergiewe...sy was ook nie die eerste een nie...ek het uitgevind dat daar nog ander gewees (2). [*He messed around with other women, but I forgave him everytime... she was also not the first one... I found out that there had been others (2)*].

He was a womaniser. He liked other women. Even the day when we got married that same evening he went out with a girl (*laughs*). Whenever I get pregnant with a child uh then the girlfriend will come saying I am expecting your husband's child...he's got four children outside (5).

Hy het die verhouding weggesteek aan die begin en nou wil hy skei (8). [*He hid the relationship and now he wants a divorce (8)*].

As mentioned, acting in accordance with stereotypes about what constitutes appropriate male and female behaviour dates back many centuries. According to Lerner (1986) the subjugation of women by men historically served as a model for the development of later forms of oppression. Historically, polygamy and infidelity were men's privileges. However, the strictest fidelity was demanded of women who were regarded as their husband's property (Moore, 1979). Due to double standards for men and women, it is seen as socially acceptable for a man to show his sexual prowess and "manly" behaviour, whereas this would be seen as "inappropriate" and "unacceptable" behaviour for women (Levy, 1991).

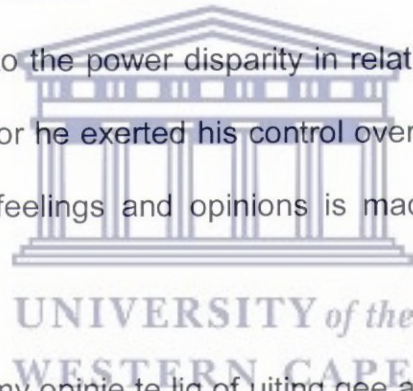
To summarise, expectations regarding what constitutes appropriate behaviour on the part of men and women in relationships contributed to the difficulty women have in identifying emotional abuse, especially since this behaviour is seen as socially acceptable. Historically, men were considered to be superior to women.

This meant that men were awarded power over women. This power takes the form of coercion. In order for men to get women to comply with their wishes, they used psychological tactics and emotionally controlling behaviours. Thus, this constitutes the normative approval of this behaviour which contributes to the difficulty in women recognising that they are actually victims of abuse (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gamache, 1979; Moore, 1979; Murray, 2000; Tolman, 1989). Thus, in this section, the researcher identified emotional abuse through women's responses to it. Emerging themes reveal that the abuser's patterns of domination and control reflect our sexist social structure. The abusers exerted their control over the women by using various psychological tactics. He controls his partners by using verbal abuse, restriction or isolation and threats. Verbal abuse featured strongly in the participants' accounts of their perception of emotional or psychological abuse. These psychological tactics intimidate, humiliate, dominate and control women. It is evident that a central thread in the participants' perception of emotional and psychological abuse by their intimate partners appears to be domination and control. From a feminist perspective, it can be argued that the above relationships mirror the patriarchal values where internalised stereotypes lead men to assert their socially expected role of domination and control over women. The importance of understanding the function and consequences of these behaviours will be discussed under the following category.

4.3 WOMENS' PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL ABUSE

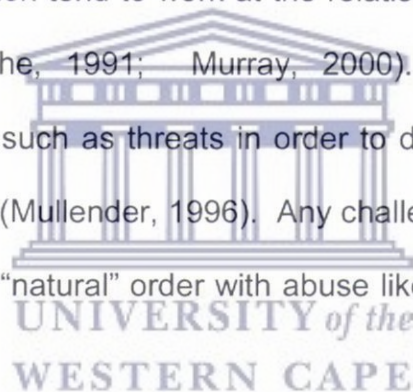
4.3.1 Intimidation

Participants' accounts revealed that the abuser engaged in a variety of acts designed to frighten them. Responses reflect that intimidation served as a reminder to the women that the abuser has the power to enforce his will should she refuse to comply with his demands. This participant reported that threats were often used to demand obedience. Threats serve to control the woman's actions. This once again relates to the power disparity in relationships between men and women. As the dominator he exerted his control over her. The feeling of having "no voice" to express feelings and opinions is made evident in the following response:



Hy wou my nie toelaat om my opinie te lig of uiting gee aan hoe ek voel of uhm basies op te staan vir myself dan wil hy my dreig...hy sou vir my sê, bly stil, dan moes ek dit doen en as ek nie stilgebly het nie het hy amper ontplof in 'n monster. Baie maal wou ek nie stilbly nie want ek het gevoel 'n vrou het ook regte as 'n man. Ek het baie maal "stubborn" geword, ek het hom gewys maar ek gaan nie stilbly nie. Hoekom moet ek stilbly as ek seer het of ek het dinge op my hart of ek wil die probleem oplos (1). *[He would not allow me to raise my opinion or to express how I felt or uhm to basically stand up for myself, then he would threaten me[...he would tell me to be quiet then I had to do it and if I was not quiet, he would almost explode into a monster. Often I did not want to be quiet because if felt a woman also has rights like a man. I often became stubborn, I showed him I would not keep quiet. Why should I keep quiet if I am hurting or have things on my heart or I want to solve the problem (1)].*

The socially awarded power advantages for men result in them asserting their dominance by intimidating women. Men assume that they have a right to require that women obey him (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). This is reflected in the above response which shows that the abuser's objectives were achieved occasionally. Also, pertinent is that she mentions becoming "stubborn" at times refusing to comply with her partner's demands. Her refusal to be compliant could also be indicative of her desperation of wanting to talk about problems she finds distressing and hurtful in their relationship. According to Gamache (1991), female socialisation also leads women to assume responsibility for solving problems in the relationship. Women tend to work at the relationship to fix it but its never good enough (Gamache, 1991; Murray, 2000). Abusers use emotionally controlling behaviours such as threats in order to demonstrate their power and superiority over women (Mullender, 1996). Any challenges to those in power is viewed as a threat to the "natural" order with abuse likely to be used in its defense (Gamache, 1991).



Woman abuse in relationships is reinforced by cultural beliefs that facilitate its occurrence. Historically, it was a woman's duty to tend to her husband's household. If she showed any signs of a will of her own, he was sanctioned by both the church and state to chastise her for this transgression. Women were burned at the stake under many pretexts, including scolding and nagging (Moore, 1979). Abusers use emotionally controlling behaviours to establish or maintain power and control over their partners (Gamache, 1991). Traditional sex roles are reflected in the following quotes. The abuser felt it was his right to control his

partner and her obligation to yield to his wishes. The abuser used his male privilege by treating the woman like his personal slave who catered to his whims.

Ek was baie bang gewees vir hom in die opsig dat baie maal as hy by die huis gekom het, het dit vir my gevoel soos 'n voeltjie in 'n tronk want as hy vir my sou sê, gaan maak tee, moet ek spring, doen dit, dan moes ek dit doen en hy was 'n baie domineerende persoon uhm in die opsig, as jy nie gedoen het wat hy sê nie, dan het hy baie kwaad geraak (1). [*I was very afraid of him in the sense that often when he got home it felt to me as though I were a bird in a cage, because if he would say to me make tea, I had to jump, do this, then I had to do it and he was a very domineering person uhm in the sense that if you did not do what he had said, he would get very angry (1)*].

As my man met my gepraat het, dan het ek gedoen net soos hy vra. As hy sê dat 'n ding so gedoen moet word dan moet 'n ding so gedoen word (2). [*When my husband spoke to me, I did exactly what he wanted. If he said that something should be done in a certain way, then it had to be done in that way*] (2).

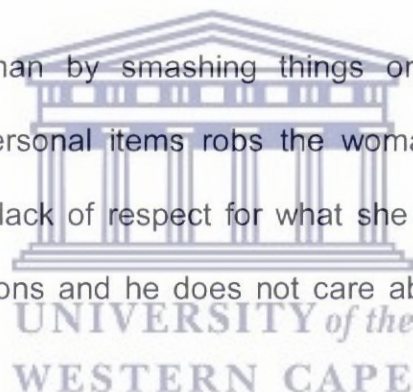
Vir hom was dit... jy moet doen soos ek wil hê jy moet dit doen (6). [*To him it was ... you have to do it in the way I want you to do it (6)*].

The above accounts show that their abusive relationships were influenced by cultural norms that articulated strong beliefs that men had the right to control women. It is evident that the abuser often used intimidation to enforce compliance to his demands. Other powerful ways of forcing women to comply include yelling and screaming, hitting walls, prolonged silence, damage or destruction of objects or property so that the woman lives in a constant state of fear (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Gamache, 1991; Mullender, 1996). These are illustrated in the following quotes:

...dit was 'n baie simple argument...hy het van sy kop afgeraak...toe het hy sy kop teen die deur geslaan...hy het al dinge stukkend gebreek in ons huis waar hy deure stukkend slaan of hy maak homself seer of hy skree en dis nie 'n gewone skree nie, hy skree dat my dogtertjie hardloop na my toe en sy raak bang vir haar pa. Jy kan die dreigemente in sy skree hoor...so het ek geleer oor die jare bly liewerste dan maar stil, moet dan maar nie meer jou opinie gee nie (1). [*...it was a very stupid argument...he was in a rage...then he hit his head against the door...he already broke things in our home where he would break doors or he would hurt himself or he would scream and this is not a normal scream, he screams so that my daughter would run to me and she would be afraid of her father. You can hear the threats in his scream... so I learned over the years to rather keep quiet, rather do not give your opinion anymore (1)*].

I was a dressmaker. I used to dress in nice clothes, especially when I go to church. He tore my clothes up into pieces. And then uhm even throw my whole draw with all my underclothes out (5).

The abuser intimidated the woman by smashing things or destroying her personal property. Destroying personal items robs the woman of something precious to her. It shows a total lack of respect for what she holds dear. He does not care about her possessions and he does not care about her feelings (Murray, 2000).

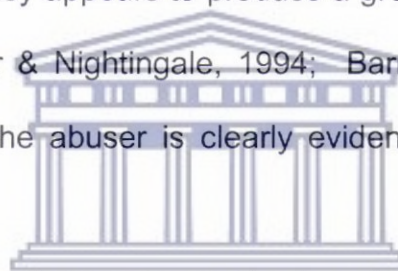


In the above quotations we see that the participants' relationships are characterised by oppression, intimidation and control. The behaviours of the abuser all point to patterns of psychological tactics of control and intimidation in order to maintain power and control in the relationship and get the women to do what he wants. The position of women and men has been historically structured as a hierarchy in which men possessed and controlled women. Historically, it was believed that men had a right to dominate and control women and that women were by their nature subservient to men. Men abused women as an

expression of the unequal status, authority and power in male-female relationships. Abuse was widely accepted as appropriate to mens' superior position (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

4.3.2 Fear

Fear was a recurring theme in the womens' reports. Fear played a significant role in abuse. Its main purpose was to control and trap the woman. Any behaviour that elicits fear is used (Mullender, 1996). Emotional abuse such as verbal outbursts, withdrawal, jealousy appears to produce a great amount of fear in an abusive relationship (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). The participants' fear of the abuser is clearly evident in the following quotes:



...maar die feit dat hy geskree het op my, want net om te skreeu op my glo ek dat dit is ook deel van "abuse". Want jy raak bang, jou kind raak bang. Jou kind raak so bang, dat jou kind hardloop na jou toe en jou kind skree soos 'n besetene en probeer jou kiere van jou lyf affrek. Dit los die kind met 'n gevoel van insekuriteit, dit los jou met 'n gevoel van insekuriteit, want jy weet nooit hoe is die persoon van dag tot dag nie (1). [*...but the fact that he screamed at me, because screaming I believe is also part of abuse. Because you become afraid, your child becomes afraid. Your child becomes so afraid that your child runs to you and your child screams like somebody who is possessed and tries to tear your clothes from your body. It leaves the child with a feeling of insecurity, it leaves you with a feeling of insecurity because you never know how the person is going to be from day to day (1)*].

Engel (1990) asserts that the behaviour of the abuser is often unpredictable. The lack of predictability lends to the fear and stress women experience. They feel that they always need to be prepared for potential abuse (Moore, 1979). The

abuser tried to subjugate and control her. Her partner verbally attacked her, particularly during his anger outbursts. This destroyed her confidence and made her on edge all the time because of his unpredictable behaviour. The unpredictable behaviour of the abuser is also one way of controlling her especially since she was fearful as she did not know when he would have another anger outburst or what would set it off. It is fairly common for abusers to keep the woman constantly on edge by “changing the rules” so that the woman will never know what to expect. When you think he will react one way he will often react just the opposite. This prevents an opportunity for the woman to feel any sense of stability (Gamache, 1991; Murray, 2000). The following participant also expressed how her partner’s unpredictable behaviour kept her on edge all the time.

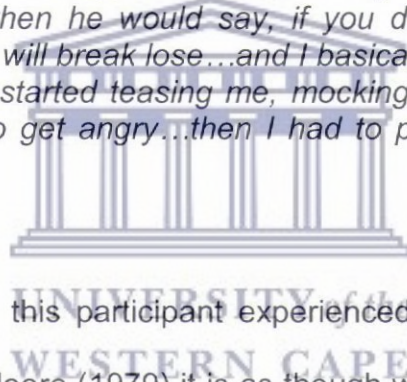
Jy was nooit “at ease” nie. Jy was altyd op jou hoede...jy kon nooit jouself wees nie, kon nie “relax” nie (6). [*You were never at ease. You were always on your guard...you could never be yourself, could not relax (6)*].

The lack of predictability adds to the fear and stress the woman experiences since she always needs to be prepared for potential abuse (Moore, 1979). This leaves her in a constant state of uneasiness since she never knows what she is going to do wrong (Murray, 2000).

Abused women live in a state of constant fear. When she is abused, she may go into emotional shock which is a normal reaction when one is very scared. She may be confused and unable to concentrate on anything around her. Thus,

many people do not understand why the women behave in this manner (De Sousa, 1991). The next quote illustrates the profound impact of fear:

Ek was baie bang...sy dominerendheid en al sy lelike karakter eienskappe. Daai dinge het my so senuweeagtig gemaak, dit het bygedra tot my vergeetagtigheid. Ek kon nie dink nie...dat jy is so gevul met vrees dus asof dit affekteer jou brein en jy gaan in stress in...het hy gesê, maar wat is verkeerd met jou, dat jy absoluut niks (*beklemtoon*) kan onthou wat ek gesê het nie...dan sê hy, as jy nie nou vir my gaan sê wat ek nou gesê het nie, gaan die hel losbreek...en ek het basies geurineer binne in my broek as gevolg van vrees...hy later vir my beginne bespot het, beginne mock het, beginne uitlag het. En dan beginne hy kwaad raak...dan moet ek hom soebat, en ek moet hom smee om net tot bedaring te kom (1). [*I was very afraid...his domineering and all his ugly characteristics. Those things made me so nervous, it contributed to my forgetfulness. I could not think...one is so filled with fear, it is as though it is affecting your brain and you get stressed out...he would say, but what is wrong with you that you can't remember anything...then he would say, if you don't tell me now what I have just said, all hell will break lose...and I basically urinated in my pants due to fear...he later started teasing me, mocking me, laughing at me. And then he started to get angry...then I had to plead with him to calm down (1)*].



Due to the severe impact of fear, this participant experienced a great deal of stress and anxiety. According to Moore (1979) it is as though women dissociate their mind from their body while observing what is happening. This is a psychological mechanism which helps women to cope with the phenomenal amounts of pain she experiences at that particular time. Her paralysing fear resulted in her forgetfulness for which she was often ridiculed by her partner. He then would lash out at her for this perceived wrongdoing. In order to prevent his rage and threats, she would often apologise for her imagined wrong and plead with him to calm down.

It is significant to point out that in the above quotes, the use of psychological

abuse against women is not only a means by which they are controlled and oppressed, but it is also one of the most powerful expressions of patriarchal domination. Men are socialised into aggression and taught that woman abuse is an acceptable means of problemsolving and of demonstrating authority. This makes men sensitive to affronts to their authority (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The above quotes highlight the way in which abusers use a variety of psychological and emotional tactics to instill fear into the women should she refuse to comply. The womens' accounts illustrate that the abuser often became enraged and resorted to anger outbursts in an attempt to control, dominate and manipulate the women. This behaviour often resulted in the women suffering debilitating fear for him. This meant that the women were constantly on edge because they worried that the abuser would get angry. Because she is afraid of his anger, she ensures that he does not get angry by doing what he wants her to do or by modifying her behaviour to please the abuser (De Sousa, 1991). The debilitating fear the women suffered often left the participants with a sense of helplessness.

4.3.3 Helplessness

Feelings of helplessness were commonly expressed relating to the abuser's controlling and emotionally abusive behaviour. An overview of the literature reveals that women experience powerlessness and helplessness as a result of the abusive control (Dobash and Dobash, 1979; NiCarthy, 1986).

The participants' sense of helplessness is illustrated in the following quotes:

...dit het vir my gevoel daar is nie 'n uitkoms in hierdie huwelik nie, niemand kan my werklikwaar help nie...dit het my gelaat met bitterheid in my hart... dit het my baie maal gelos met 'n gevoel van woede dat ek het ook baie maal goed beginne stukkend gooi in my eie huis want ek later dit nie meer kon vat nie...dit het 'n radio wat myne was en 'n strykeiste wat myne was, wat ek dit stukkend gegooi het uit woede uit omdat baie maal het dit vir my gevoel daar is nie 'n uitkomste in hierdie huwelik nie, niemand kan my werklikwaar help nie. Basies was dit 'n manier om uiting te gee aan al my emosionele frustrasie om te sê, maar ek kan nie meer nie, ek wens ek het geweet hoe, uhm hoe om uit hierdie ding uit te kom en dit was vir my 'n manier om uhm my eie goed te gaan stukkend gooi om te wys hoe ek werklikwaar voel, ek voel gebreek sooswat daai radio was heeltemal. Dit het my baie maal gelaat met bitterheid in my hart wat ek gevoel het, maar ek wil vir jou terug seermaak en goed (1). [*...it felt as though there was no escape from this marriage, nobody can really help me... it left me with a feeling of bitterness in my heart... it often left me with a feeling of anger so that I also often threw things into pieces because later I could not take it anymore...I destroyed my radio and iron out of rage as it often felt to me that there is no way out in this marriage, nobody can really help me. Basically it was a way to express my emotional frustration to say, but I cannot anymore, I wish I knew how, uhm how to get out of this thing and it was my way to uhm to break my own things to show how I really felt, I feel broken totally like that radio was. It often left me with bitterness in my heart, but I also want to hurt you (1)*].

The above quote shows that this participant felt a sense of helplessness and bitterness because she thought no-one could help her. Apart from the sense of helplessness this participant felt, she often referred to other feelings such as anger, bitterness, frustration and a general sense of hopelessness about her situation. Most pertinent was her desire to hurt her abuser. The literature shows that retaliation is related to anger and a predominant reaction to abuse (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). This will be discussed in further detail later in the discussion.

In the following quotations the participants expressed an inner turmoil about what to do about the controlling situation. The uncertainty appears to contribute to their sense of helplessness and powerlessness. Several emotional reactions to an emotionally controlling situation seem to be evident.

...party oggende as ek opstaan...dan begin ek net te huil. Dan dink ek uhm, die man wil my nie uitlos nie...ek probeer baie hard maar ek kan hom net nie los nie. Ons was getroud, toe het hy 'n verhouding gehad. Ons het maar nog altyd probeer, ons het nog altyd saamgebly...en uhm ek het nie geweet hoe om uit daai situasie uit te kom nie. Ek weet nie of dit is vir hom of is dit vir my kind, of wat nie, maar ek probeer maar om daar uit te kom, maar ek kan nie...maar hy is my kind se pa...die verhouding wat my kind met haar pa het is 'n baie lifelike verhouding...so, ek sal nie lyk dat hulle twee uitmekaar uit moet gaan, miskien net omdat ek 'n besluit maak...(2). [*...some mornings when I get up... then I just start to cry. Then I think uhm, this man does not want to leave me alone... I try very hard, but I cannot get myself to leave him. When we were married he had an affair. We still tried, we still lived together...and uhm I did not know how to get out of that situation. I do not know whether it was for him or for my child, or what, but I try to get out of it, but I cannot... but he is the father of my child...the relationship that my child has with her father is a lovely one, so I would not like them to be apart because of my decision... (2)*].

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Ek het altyd gedink, uhm, gee hom maar nog 'n kans. Kyk maar of dit gaan uitwerk, omdat ek twee kinders het. Dinge wat tussen my en hom gebeur het, het ek weg gehou van die kinders af. Ek sal dit self "solve"...ek sal 'n uitweg kry (*huilerig in stem*). Dit het nie soseer gegaan net oor my nie, maar oor die kinders, (*huil*)...aan die een kant "tolerate" ek hom vir my kind se "sake". Ek wil hê hy moet die kind onderhou (*snif*)...dan kan hy aangaan met sy lewe. Maar hy wil dit nie so hê nie. Hy sal sy kind onderhou as ek met hom moet slaap (4). [*I always thought, uhm, give him another chance. See if it will work out, because I have two children. Things that happened between him and me, I kept away from the children. I will solve it myself... I will find a way (tearful). It was not actually about me, but about the children (cries)...on the one hand I can tolerate him for my child's sake. I want him to support my child (sniff)...then he can carry on with his life. But he does not want it that way. He will support his child if I sleep with him (4)*].

I usually prayed hard, when will this thing ever end, because I have been praying and praying and praying and nothing happen (5).

Whilst experiencing a sense of helplessness in her abusive relationship, the above participant relied on her faith.

The participant below described a relationship in which her partner attempted to control her behaviour by being verbally and emotionally abusive toward her. The harmful damage it had on her self-esteem is particularly clear. There also seems to be a sense of powerlessness in her account.

Ek het nie meer “geworry” hoe ek lyk’ie. Jy “worry” nie. Ek het doekie gedra...en uh uh net gewies soos jy is. Jy “worry” nie...jy gee nie om nie. Ek wil nie hê dat mansmense my moet dophou nie...“plain” en “simple”...dan kyk hulle nie ‘n mens aan nie (6). *[I did not care how I looked. You do not worry. I wore a scarf...and uh uh was just as I was. You do not worry...you do not care. I do not want other men to watch me...plain and simple...then they don’t look at one (6)].*

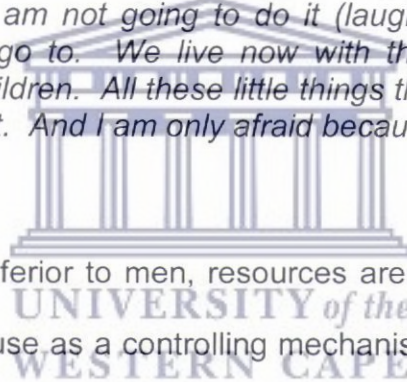
This next participant started to lose confidence in her perceptions in response to being abused emotionally and psychologically by her partner. This resulted in her becoming more vulnerable to the perspectives implied by her partner. Suffering continuous attacks on her self-esteem destroyed her ability to feel good about herself. This resulted in her perceiving herself more helpless and worthless in her own eyes (Gamache, 1991).

Dit maak seer, dus hoekom ek so baie gehuil het. Jy is so senuweeagtig. Jy’t rêrag nie geweet wat om te doen nie. Jy’s so bang om daai persoon uh teleur te stel. Jy is net bang dit is nie die regte ding nie (6). *[It hurts, that is why I cried so much. You are so nervous. You did not really know what to do. You are so afraid to disappoint that person. You are just*

afraid it is not the right thing (6)].

Feelings of helplessness because of the lack of support and resources to assist changes are clearly evident in the following response:

Ek het al gedink aan skei ook...dan dink ek weer terug aan my kinders. Hoe gaan hulle voel...partykeer raak dit hulle skoolwerk...en veral die twee kleintjies is baie geheg aan hulle pa...dan voel ek weer ek gaan dit nie doen nie (*lag*)...dan dink ek weer dan waantoe gaan ek. Ons bly nou by hulle by die skoonma. Waantoe gaan ek met die kinders. Alles dingetjies wat my weer terug hou van die skei af...voor ek dit doen. En ek is net bang daarvoor (7). [*I also thought about divorce...then I think about the children. How will they feel...sometimes it affects their schoolwork...and especially the two little ones are very attached to their father...then I think again I am not going to do it (laugh)...then I would think about where I would go to. We live now with the mother-in-law. Where do I go to with the children. All these little things that hold me back from divorcing...before I do it. And I am only afraid because of that (7)].*



Because women are considered inferior to men, resources are held from them. Feminists argue that the use of abuse as a controlling mechanism in marriage is perpetuated not only through norms about men's rights in marriage, but through women's economic dependence on their husbands. This dependence is increased by the lack of job training which would otherwise enable women to be employable and support themselves. Policy recommendations by feminists suggest that women be made more economically independent in order to give themselves alternatives to abusive relationships (Bart & Moran, 1993).

According to Kirkwood (1993) psychological abuse often makes women feel helpless, powerless, confused and depressed. The same findings were yielded

in the present study. The experience of various psychologically and emotionally abusive behaviours by their partners often left the participants with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness to change their situation. The women's responses showed that their sense of helplessness and powerlessness stemmed from their lack of ability to make decisions due to their partner's controlling behaviour. Other factors include their perceived inability to cope as well as a lack of support and resources to help make changes. A perusal of the literature shows that abuse of a controlling nature might play a significant role in women's feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; De Sousa, 1991). Psychological abuse plays a major part in a controlling relationship as it is intended to destroy the woman's self-esteem so that she will comply with demands and feel she has no other options (Gamache, 1991). If women constantly experience psychological and emotional abuse, their self-esteem is eroded which results in them doubting their own abilities and strengths. Women then perceive the abuser as extremely powerful and believe they cannot escape (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; De Sousa, 1991).

4.3.4 Lack of self-worth

The lack of self-worth the participants experienced as a result of the emotional and psychological abuse was another salient theme that featured prominently in their accounts. Clearly evident in all these accounts is the destructiveness of verbal attacks on the women's self-esteem. The serious damage to your self-esteem as

a result of verbal abuse and other emotionally controlling behaviours are well documented (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Walker, 1979).

...was ek baie afgebreek met woorde, daar was baie verbale "abuse" elke lieue dag en in die proses het dit my baie emosioneel seergemaak...Baie keer wanneer die dinge gebeur het, het ek baie seer gevoel. Ek meen, daar het nie merke gesit nie, maar dit het ook my selfbeeld gebreek. Dit het my ook laat soms voel ek is 'n niks in die lewe (1). [...I went through a lot of emotional abuse...I was put down, there was a lot of verbal abuse every single day and in the process I was emotionally hurt...Often when these things happened, I felt very hurt. I mean, there were not any bruises, but it also broke down my self-esteem. It also sometimes made me feel as though I am a nothing in life (1)].

The pain, humiliation and degradation this participant felt is clearly evident. Also noted is the serious damage continuous verbal assaults had on her self-esteem. Continuous negative messages eventually results in a lack of self-worth. As she started to internalise the criticism and believe it is valid, her self-image sank lower and lower. She started to feel worthless. After all, when someone who knew her so well thinks she is so worthless, then it must be true (Gamache, 1991; Murray, 2000). This participant also spoke about her struggle to retain her human dignity in the face of these attacks. This is not an easy thing to do, especially when your self-esteem is low.

...jy is 'n niks werd. Jy is nie eers vir my werd 'ie (4). [...you are worthless. You are not even deserving of me (4)].

This quote illustrates the degradation, humiliation and disrespect verbal attacks had on the participant's feelings of self-worth. This is particularly powerful when it comes from a person she loves and on whom she feels dependent. It is very confusing for her to be told she is worthless by the same person expressing love for her (Gamache, 1991; Murraray, 2000).

In the beginning you know, I was withdrawn. I think because of the abuse I wasn't confident. I couldn't speak, I was shy (5)

This response shows the devastating impact of controlling and emotionally abusive behaviour and the resultant harm to self-image. Her experiences of emotional abuse resulted in her being shy and withdrawn. It is also significant to note that although the woman's self-esteem is damaged during the experience of abuse, it could be regained once the abuse has been terminated (Smith, 1989, cited in Mullender, 1996).

The findings of the present study confirms previous research findings. An examination of the literature reveals that controlling behaviours and emotional abuse are particularly detrimental to self-esteem. Many authors have reported that abuse took an enormous toll on women's acceptance of themselves (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). Abused women often feel that they are worthless, useless and unimportant. If they are continuously told by the abuser that they are worthless, they eventually start to believe it. This results in them having very low self-esteem (De Sousa, 1991; Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Mullender, 1996). Believing the man or feeling he is justified in his emotional

abuse are also important. Low self esteem could occur if the woman believed the man was justified in controlling and emotionally abusive behaviour. Low self-esteem would be continuously reinforced (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). From a feminist perspective, social power advantages for men mean that they are in a position of power to control. Because the man has more power than the woman, he is then in a position to control her. He may engage in behaviour such as runs her down, ignores her needs and demands her attention. This eventually makes her feel unimportant, useless and erodes her self-confidence (De Sousa, 1991; Kirkwood, 1993).

4.3.5 Depression and other illnesses

Some of the participants expressed feelings of depression and other related symptomology as an impact of the emotional abuse they experienced. As a result of the severity of the abuse, they sought professional help. These feelings resulted in the need for one of the participants to be hospitalised while another was prescribed medication to alleviate symptoms. The following quotes reveal that the impact of emotional abuse on women.

...party oggende as ek opstaan...dan begin ek net te huil. Dan dink ek uhm, die man wil my nie uitlos nie...ek weet nie wat is sy redes hoekom hy my nie wil los nie...ek is baie seer...en uhm dan begin ek net te huil. Ek begin te huil en ek hou op en dan begin ek...(2). [*...some mornings when I get up...then I just start to cry. Then I think uhm, the man does not want to leave me alone...I do not know what his reasons are for not leaving me alone...I hurt very much...and uhm then I just start to cry. I start to cry and I stop and then I start...(2)*].

This participant's feelings of sadness, pain and confusion may be indicative of depression. There also appears to be a sense of helplessness about her situation which may be related to the confusion she feels. This response shows that emotional abuse is particularly detrimental to psychological well-being.

Hy sal vir my snaakse goed sê. Ek kon dit later net nie meer vat nie. Dit was amper vir hom asof dit lekker was om vir my te tart (*sniff*). Dit was lekker vir hom, dan lag hy my uit. Ek kon dit nie vat nie. Dit was lekker vir hom om dinge te sê...en dan lag hy my uit...(pause) ek kon nie meer nie. Ek het siek geraak...as hy met my praat dan huil ek. Ek kon nie ophou huil nie. Seer, dus hoekom ek so baie gehuil 'et. Ek is hospital toe, toe se hulle dis depression. Toe hulle my opneem in die hospital toe vat hy sy goed en toe loop hy. Hy't al sy goed gevat...alles behalwe die stove. Ek was amper soos 'n zombie. Ek het nou gedink as ek nou myself kan dood maak en (pause) hoe gaan ek dit doen en as ek 'it doen wil ek my kinders ook saam vat (6). [*He would say strange things to me. Later I could not take it anymore. It was almost as though he enjoyed mocking me (sniff). He enjoyed it, then he would laugh at me. I could not take it. He enjoyed saying things...and then he laughs at me...(pause) I could not anymore. I became ill...when he spoke to me I would cry. I could not stop crying. Hurt, that is why I cried so much. I went to hospital, then they said it's depression. When they admitted me to hospital, he took his things and he left. He took all his things...everything apart from the stove. I was almost like a zombie. I now thought if I could kill myself and (pause) how will I do it, and if I do it, I want to take my children also with (6)].*

This participant was constantly subjected to emotional abuse by her partner. He controlled her by constantly hurling abuse at her. He often ridiculed and humiliated her. It has been reported in the literature that ridicule and verbal harassment are two of the most destructive forms of emotion abuse. It was found that experiencing emotional abuse such as humiliation contributed to long-term detrimental effects on the woman's psychological health (Follingstad *et al.*,

1990). The above quotation shows that constant verbal abuse eventually resulted in the need for this participant to be hospitalised due to the significant distress of the abuse. Her suicidal ideation indicates the severity of the abuse as well as her sense of hopelessness and helplessness. The literature shows that abuse is closely associated with depression and subsequent suicide (Orava *et al.*, 1996).

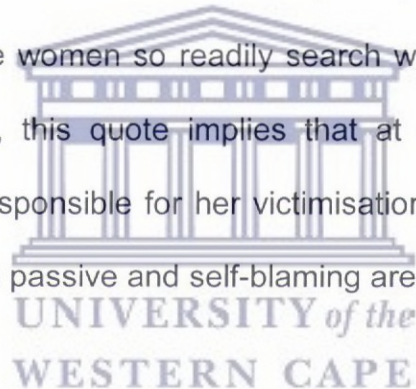
Ek voel baie bedruk partykeer...moedeloos. Ek het baie kopsere gekry. Die kopsere het gemaak dat ek hoog bloeddruk...dit is nou nog so. Ek was by die dokter, toe is dit net so hoog...toe gee hy nou die sterkste pill...(7). *I sometimes feel depressed...despondent. I often had headaches. The headaches resulted in me having high blood pressure...it is still like that. I was at the doctor, then it was as high...then he gave me the strongest pill...(7)].*

This participant reported feelings of depression and other related symptoms as a result of the emotional abuse she suffered. Also, clearly evident in her response are her feelings of despair. The participants' responses show that emotional abuse had a significant impact on their mental health. These findings were similar to literature reviewed for the study (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Mullender, 1996; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Stanko, 1985).

4.3.6 Anger

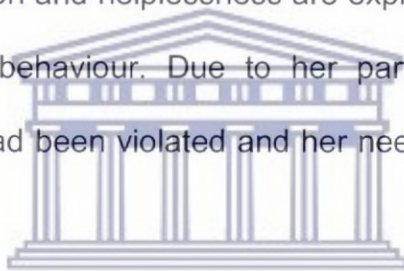
Women respond emotionally to the trauma of abuse in relationships in predictable ways. Victims often react with anger (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989).

The participants felt a sense of anger towards the abuser because of the emotional and psychological abuse they endured. A perusal of the literature shows that traditionally, men have been socialised to direct their anger toward others on the assumption that the source of their stress is other than themselves. Women, however, have been socialised to believe that their troubles and source of stress stem from themselves, their own inadequacies and failures. They are then more likely to direct their anger toward themselves (Sayers, 1982). However, if a woman perceives her distress as social rather than personal in origin, she is likely to attack “outside” sources of her distress (Hoff, 1990). This is illustrated in the following quote which shows that this participant directed her anger at an outside source. Since women so readily search within themselves for the reasons they are abused, this quote implies that at some level this participant felt that she was not responsible for her victimisation. This suggests that traditional images of women as passive and self-blaming are not accurate.



Omdat hy 'n kommunikasie probleem het, het dit misverstande veroorsaak. Dit het woede veroorsaak in my hart, dit het my soms bitter gemaak. Ek het kwaad geraak en het verskriklike woede uitbarstings gehad en hy het bang geraak vir my. Dit het my gelos met eensame, met diep seer wat ek vir geen mens kan beskryf, ek het net gevoel ek is nie werklik getroud nie, en ook met woede dat ek vir hom wil aanrand ...ek het goed begin stukkend gooi want ek kon dit nie meer vat nie...(1). *[Because he had a communication problem, it caused misunderstandings. It caused anger in my heart, it sometimes made me bitter. I became angry and I had terrible anger outbursts and he became afraid of me. That left me with loneliness, with deep hurt which I cannot describe to any person, I just felt I was not really married, and also with rage that I wanted to assault him ...I started throwing things into pieces because I could not take it any longer...(1)].*

This quote shows that the abuse suffered made the participant feel bitter, lonely and hurt. Also, pertinent are feelings of anger toward the abuser which resulted in anger outbursts to the point where he became afraid of her. She expressed wanting to assault her partner who she perceived to be the source of her distress. This challenges commonly held expectations regarding what constitutes appropriate behaviour on the part of men and women in relationships. Men's aggression is seen as socially acceptable while feelings of anger are not suitable for the traditional roles of women. This suggests that traditional images of women as passive, submissive and non-aggressive are inaccurate (Arendse, 1998; Hoff, 1990). Feelings of anger, frustration and helplessness are expressed relating to the abusive partner's controlling behaviour. Due to her partner's controlling behaviour she felt that her rights had been violated and her needs had not been met.



...som tye dan voel ek net dat ek moet sit. Ek kan hom nie dood maak of iets nie. Ek wil net myself besig hou dan kan ek my "mind" afkry van die dinge. En ek is 'n baie bewegige persoon. Ek het al een keer gevoel ek is besig om siek te raak. En uhm toe moet ek praat met myself...dan sal ek met my kind praat of ek sal speel met haar. Maar nou as hy na my toe kom dan sal ek het sit en vir hom kyk. As hy met my praat dan sal ek vir hom antwoord...die man moet weg bly van my af, want ek sal of die man iets aandoen of ek gaan weer na daai vroumens toe en vir haar iets aandoen. Ek gaan of in die tronk beland of ek gaan in die hospital beland (2). [*...sometimes I feel that I need to sit. I cannot kill him or anything. I just want to keep myself busy then I can shut my mind off from the things. And I am a very nervous person. It already happened once that I felt I was busy getting sick. And uhm then I had to talk to myself...then I would speak to my child or I would play with her. But when he would come to me I would only sit and look at him. If he talks to me, then I would answer...the man should stay away from me, because I will either do something to him or I will go again to that woman and do something to her. I will either end up in jail or in hospital (2)*].

This participant felt a sense of anger towards her abusive and controlling partner. Also evident is her attempt to keep busy to ward off uncomfortable and unacceptable feelings of anger towards him. As previously mentioned, women may feel discomfort when experiencing feelings of anger toward the abuser especially since it is not socially desirable for them to do so.

With regard to the negative impact of the abuse they had to endure, the above responses illustrate that the participants felt anger towards their abusive and controlling partner in the relationship. It has been reported that anger is a predominant reaction to abuse. Women often feel angry because of their victimisation (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993).



4.3.7 Resentment

In view of the negative impact of the abuse the women suffered, the responses below indicate the feelings of resentment women felt toward their partners. These feelings seem to be related to the anger toward their controlling relationship. The participant below expressed a feeling of resentment toward her partner even after the relationship had been terminated. The literature shows that a woman will feel anger and resentment towards her abusive partner in the relationship and may continue to feel so even after the relationship had been terminated (Arendse, 1998; Turner & Shapiro, 1986).

Ek is nou nog kwaad vir hom omdat hy nie respek het vir my nie. Ek kan hom tolerate tot op 'n sekere stadium... (4). [*I am still mad at him for having no respect for me. I can tolerate him up to a certain point... (4)*].

...I hated his guts...I couldn't stand him (5).

4.3.8 Change in sense of self

Another salient theme that emerged was the participants' perception of a change in their sense of self, which they attributed to their painful experience of psychological abuse. These responses indicate that the experience of emotional and psychological abuse by their partners impacted on their identity (Bergen, 1998).



Dit het my baie verander (1). [*It has changed me a lot (1)*].

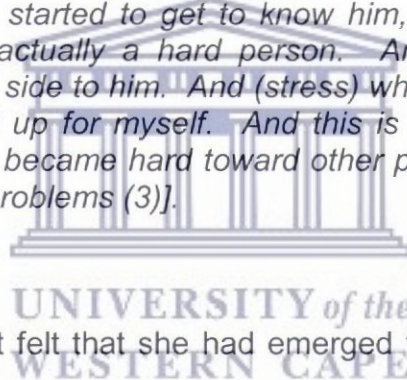
Ek het baie hard geraak. Ek was 'n baie sagte tipe mens. Dit het vir my baie verander...ek is nie meer dieselfde persoon nie. Ek was eers 'n baie lieflike persoon. Ek was baie "joyful", maar nou is ek net by die huis. Ek sal nie meer uitgaan soos eers nie. Ek laat niemand op my kop sit nie behalwe as die persoon probeer vir my reg help. Hy't gesien ek het verander. Ek is al moeg van mense wat op my trap...(2). [*I became very hard. I was a very soft person. It changed me a lot...I am not the same person anymore. I used to be a very lovely person. I was very joyful, but now I am only at home. I will not go out like I used to. I do not let anybody dominate me except if the person tries to correct me. He saw that I had changed. I am tired of people treading on me...(2)*].

Ek het baie seer, ek voel nou niks meer (7). [*I have a lot of hurt, I feel nothing anymore (7)*].

The above responses show that emotional abuse is a devastating type of power and control (Murray 2000). The participants felt that the experience had hardened them.

The two participants below perceived the change positively.

...toe ek hom ontmoet het, toe was ek 'n baie sag geaarde persoon...toe ek vir hom begin leer ken het, het dinge begin verander...want hy was eintlik 'n geharde persoon. En toe ons getroud is, het ek nou die regte deel van hom gesien. En (*stress*) wat hy aan my gedoen het het my eintlik sterk gemaak – om op te staan vir myself. En dit waar ek begin hard word het. Maar ek sal nie sê ek het hard geword vir ander mense nie, want ek kan baie luister na ander mense se probleme (3). [*...when I met him, I was a very soft person...when I started to get to know him, things began to change...because he was actually a hard person. And when we got married, I got to see the real side to him. And (stress) what he did actually made me strong – to stand up for myself. And this is where I became hardened. But I won't say I became hard toward other people, because I can listen to other peoples' problems (3)*].



In the above quote, this participant felt that she had emerged from the abusive experience a stronger person. Her reference to becoming a hardened person seems to be related to becoming more assertive and standing up for herself which she acknowledges as a strength.

In the beginning you know, I was withdrawn. I think because of the abuse I wasn't confident. I couldn't speak, I was shy. At the moment, I feel uh more compassion for the next person that also went through that. Today I (*laughs*) am a new person...and I've got a nice job and I'm quite happy now. I found that inner peace. He respects me and I respect him...it's that kind of relationship we got now (5).

Even though the experience of abuse initially destroyed her self-esteem, this participant became more assertive upon leaving the abusive relationship and seemed to have a positive outlook. It has been reported that the self-esteem of women tends to be damaged for the duration of the abuse. However, women can regain a positive self-image upon leaving the abusive relationship (Smith, 1989, cited in Mullender, 1996). Even though the abuser emotionally and psychologically injured the women, perceiving the change in their sense of self as positive by no means discounts the trauma of the abuse.

4.3.9 Feelings regarding future relationships with men

The literature shows that women were cautious and weary of entering into a relationship with another man because of their loss of trust in men (Maconachie *et al.*, 1993). The quotations that follow illustrate the impact of abuse regarding the participants' perception concerning future relationships with men. This constituted the greatest challenge for them, especially since the abusive experience had destroyed their trust in men. Due to the emotional trauma, the women seemed unable to perceive themselves as forming healthy and fulfilling relationships with men in the future.

Ek kan na iemand anders kyk, maar ek stel nie belang nie (2). [*I can look at someone else, but I am not interested (2)*].

Dit het gemaak dat ek hard raak (*snik*). Ek voel niks vir 'n man nie. Al mag dit lyk of ek iets voel vir hom, maar binne in voel ek niks. Dit het my so verander, uhm (*stilte*) 'n man is nie meer vir my belangrik nie want...ek weet nie of ek hom kan glo. So ek lewe nou net vir my kinders. Ek gaan nie uit nie (4). [*It made that I became hard (sniff). I feel nothing for a man. Even if it seems as though I feel something for him, but inside I feel nothing. It has changed me so much, uhm (silence) a man is no longer*]

important, because...I don't know whether I can believe him. So I live only for my children. I don't go out...(4)].

Ek sal nie "all the way" gaan nie...oopmaak en "all the way" gaan nie. Ek kan nie voel nie. Dis amper soos my hart is...my hart is klip...dood (*beklemtoon*). Ek kan nie te veel oopmaak nie, ek wil ook nie, want jy's net bang vir wat gaan weer gebeur...niemand sal my ooit weer seer maak nie. Die mansmense hoef nie te kyk nie. Ek lyk dit eintlik as hulle nie kyk nie. Ek wil nie gesien wees nie (*stemtoon ernstig en hard*). Ek wil net wees soos 'n vlieg teen die muur...(6). [*I won't go all the way...open up and go all the way. I can't feel. It is as if my heart is...my heart is stone...dead (emphasise). I can't open up too much, I also don't want to, because you are just scared for what can happen again...no-one will ever hurt me again. The men don't have to look at me. I like it that they don't look. I don't want to be seen (tone of voice serious and loud). I just want to be like a fly against the wall...(6)].*

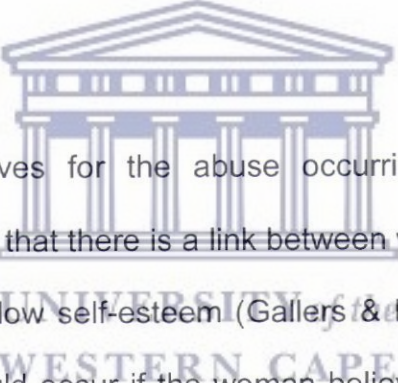
It is important to note that as a woman starts to heal, she may express fear that she cannot trust herself to recognise a potentially abusive partners. It is thus crucial to educate women in counselling or therapy about the characteristics of healthy relationships in order to avoid abusive relationships. This will also empower women in future relationships (Graham & Rawlings, 1991).

In summary, what emerges from these accounts is the devastating impact of emotional and psychological abuse due to domination and control by their partners. It is clearly evident that repeated emotional abuse and the frequent use psychological tactics results in tremendous trauma and has debilitating effects on the woman's psychological health. These findings have also been mirrored in the literature. These experiences described by women illustrate the actions taken by abusers to establish their control in the relationship in an effort to demonstrate his power and superiority over them. These accounts also highlight the social power advantages for males which means that they are in a position of

power to maintain control and therefore are more likely to perpetuate abuse. Even though the practice of woman abuse is no longer recognised, the legacy of the patriarchy is evident in the numerous legal, political, economic and ideological supports for mens authority over women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). In the next section, the womens' understanding of the problem is further explored.

4.4 HOW WOMEN UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM

4.4.1 Attribution of blame



The participants blamed themselves for the abuse occurring to them. An investigation of the literature shows that there is a link between women accepting responsibility for victimisation and low self-esteem (Gallers & Lawrence, 1991). As mentioned, low self esteem could occur if the woman believed the man was justified in his controlling and emotionally abusive behaviour. Low self-esteem would thus be continuously reinforced (Follingstad *et al.*, 1990). With this massive loss of self-esteem reported by the participants, it is easy to understand why they blamed themselves for the abuse. It is also significant to point out that abusers are adept at convincing the woman that the abuse is her fault and that she is responsible for what has happened (De Sousa, 1991; Moore, 1979). Abusers refuse to accept responsibility for their actions by blaming their victims for the abuse (Gamache, 1991). Feminists' dispute accounts that suggest that

women provoke abusive behaviour towards them. They argue that blaming the victim is a way of failing to take the totality of abuse towards women seriously and the responsibility of the man is denied and obscured (Richardson & Robinson, 1993).

...ek het op 'n stadium skuldig gevoel, maar nou blameer ek myself vir geen van sy daade nie want ek voel elke mens is verantwoordelik vir sy daade en dit wat jy doen jy kan nie 'n ander mens blameer vir jou foute nie (1). [*...there was a time when I blamed myself, but now I do not blame myself for any of his deeds because I feel each person is responsible for his deeds and you cannot blame another person for your faults (1)*].

Aan die begin het ek myself blameer. Ek het gedink dit is seksueel...miskien gaan dit daarom...miskien het ek nie vir hom seks...soos hy dit wil hê nie. Ek het eers begin fout kyk in my (2). [*In the beginning I blamed myself. I thought it was sexual...maybe it was about that...maybe I did not give him sex...as he wanted it. I initially started to look for fault within myself (2)*].

Ek het myself blameer. Ek het baie gelees en baie geleer en baie begin oor dinge gesels. Toe besef ek dat dit is nie my skuld nie. In die eerste plek moet 'n man respek het vir jou. Ek het beginne die dinge besef (4). [*I blamed myself. I read a lot and learned a lot and I started to talk a lot about things. Then I realised it was not my fault. In the first place a man should have respect for you. I started to realise these things (4)*].

Sometimes I used to blame myself. Maybe I don't give him enough sex or I don't give him enough love. But I was always there, the woman with the apron on, with the "doekie" on. Cooking his food, cleaning the house and see that all his clothes are nicely ironed. And yet I blamed myself. Only afterwards I realised...I'm not to blame. He is the one to blame (5).

Ek het myself (*hard*) blameer. Want as ek die dinge nie toegelaat het nie, dan sal dit nie gebeur het nie. Maar is omdat ek dit toegelaat het dat dit gebeur het. Ek het myself blameer vir die feit dat ek die dinge toegelaat het. As ek dit nie toegelaat het nie, en dit stop gesit het...dan nie soseer

gestop nie...maar as daar 'n mooi understanding was (6). *[I blamed myself (loud). Because if I did not allow these things, then it would not have happened. But it is because I allowed it to happen. I blamed myself for the fact that I allowed these things. If I had not allowed it, and if I had put a stop to it...then not really stopping it...but if there were a good understanding (6)].*

A striking similarity in all the participants' responses is that initially, they searched within themselves for the reasons they were abused. This often resulted in some of the women modifying their behaviour in order to stop or avoid the abuse, however the abuse still continued. Hoff (1990) asserts that the reason for this is that our society condones and excuses woman abuse. Throughout history, patriarchal societies have indoctrinated the notion of women as subordinate to men. Even though women try very hard to please their partners, they were still abused and believed it was their fault. This may be the result of female socialisation which leads women to assume responsibility for solving problems in the relationship (Levy, 1991). The participants in the study later became aware that they did not deserve the emotional abuse in their relationships. They realised that they were not to be blamed for being abused and controlled by their partners. These quotes highlight the way in which the participants challenged the "morality" that forces women to find fault within themselves for their partner's abuse. Women struggle against cultural ideals that still require a woman to submit to any form of treatment that her partner considers appropriate and against the policies and social agencies which sanction her partner's authority and his use of abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

4.4.2 Perceptions regarding relationship with abusive partner

Participants felt that their experiences of emotional abuse had impacted on their relationship. In the following quotes they expressed their perceptions about their controlling relationships:

...as hy my geskenke wou koop, wou ek dit nie gehad het nie want ek het gedink al hierdie dinge probeer jy toesmeer met geskenke. Jy kan vir jou vrou honderd maal bos blomme koop, dit neem nie die innerlike wonde weg nie, dit neem nie die seer weg nie, intendeel, dit neem nie die probleem weg nie...ek seer het of ek het dinge op my hart of ek wil die probleem oplos (1). [*...when he wanted to buy me gifts, I would not want it because I thought that he wanted to disguise all these things with gifts. You can buy your wife a bunch of flowers a hundred times, it does not take the inner wounds away, it does not take the hurt away, on the contrary, it does not take the problem away...I am hurting or have things on my heart or I want to solve the problem (1)*].

Clearly evident in the above responses is that this participant recognised that there was a problem in the relationship. She expressed her hurt and pain and tried to talk to her partner in order to solve the problem. Her efforts to address the problem were in vain as she was ordered into submission and not given a “voice” in the relationship. His reactions to her attempts to solve the problem could be that he never perceived there to be a problem as he may have viewed his behaviour as appropriate. Despite her fear of him, she challenged him so that he could know she was hurting. Also obvious are the traditional sex roles of men and women. Because of his gender he had priority over her needs. When she wanted to speak out, she was intimidated and shown who was in control. As previously mentioned, women have been socialised into traditional roles where

they feel responsible for seeking solutions to problems experienced in the relationship. This may explain the reason why she felt that she wanted to solve the problem in their relationship.

...ek het 'n goeie tyd met hom gehad, en ek het ook 'n baie slegte tyd agter my rug. Hy het nog nie van sy maniere verander nie...hy het nog nooit gewerk aan himself nie, aan sy maniere nie (3). [*...I had a good time with him, and I also had a very bad time behind me. He has not yet changed his ways...he has never worked on himself, on his ways (3)*].

This participant was able to recognise that her partner was responsible for the abuse and that he needed to change.

Ek het besluit hy is nie goed vir my nie. Hy is nie wat ek wil hê in my lewe nie. Hy praat nie oor wat gebeur het nie, maar hy wil net hê dinge moet reg kom. Dit maak baie seer. Ek besef baie dinge nou (*sniff*) wat hy gedoen het aan my was verkeerd. As hy nie respek het vir my nie hoe kan hy lief wees vir my (4). [*I decided he is not good for me. He is not what I want in life. He does not talk about what happened, but he just wants things to come right. It hurts a lot. I realise many things now (sniff) what he did to me were wrong. If he does not respect me, how can he love me (4)*].

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This participant was able to recognise that being in a controlling relationship was not healthy for her. She also mentioned that her partner did not talk about the abuse in the relationship. This may also be attributed to him perceiving his abusive behaviour as socially acceptable and therefore does not recognise that there is a problem. Also, pertinent is that initially she herself did not realise that his abusive and controlling behaviour was unacceptable. As previously discussed, the inability of women to recognise when they are being emotionally

abused and controlled is related to traditional sex roles for men and women, especially since men's controlling and abusive behaviour is seen as socially acceptable. Several authors reported that many women view psychological abuse as "normal" in intimate relationships. It is perceived to be "normal" in that abuse happens so commonly that it is expected or is an accepted way to express love (Engel, 1990; Levy, 1991; Murray, 2000).

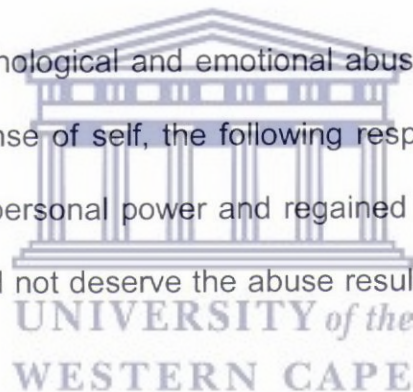
'n Mens laat verskriklike baie dinge toe as jy lief is. En dan op die einde van die dag dan vind jy uit dat jy niks bereik het daarmee nie. Jy het nog meer verloor en dan besluit jy net tot so vêr en nie vêrder nie...dan verstaan hulle nie. Hulle wil nog altyd vir jou "manipulate", hulle wil nog altyd vir jou sê...Ek dink dit is omdat hy min van my gedink het, uh oor ek nie so highly educated is nie...(pause)...omdat ek nie self onderhoudend was nie, want ek was afhanklik van hom...ja status, waarvandaan jy kom. Jy is niks en hulle was bokant jou. Hulle kon jou insê en dit sê en daai sê omdat jy afhanklik was en omdat jy uit (naam van plek) uitkom. Ek dink dit het oek vir my emotionally dit het vir my afgetakel...(6). *[A person allows many terrible things when you are inlove. And at the end of the day you find out that you have not achieved anything by it. You have lost even more and then you decide so far and no further...then they do not understand. They still want to manipulate you, they still want to tell you...I think its because he thought little of me, uh because I was not so highly educated...(pause)...because I was not supporting myself, because I was dependent on him...yes status, where you come from. You are nothing and they are above you. They could say anything to you because you were dependent and because you are from (name of place) I think it also broke me down emotionally...(6)].*

The participant above felt that she allowed the abuse. She attributes her partner's abusive and controlling behaviour to her background, educational status and being financially dependent on him. She felt that her partner treated her inferior because of this. She felt that these factors explained his dominance over her. This is significant as she focuses on herself to locate reasons for his

abuse. From a feminist perspective, her partner's dominating and controlling behaviour is located in him being socially ascribed a role of power because of his gender. Her view is thus still a way of locating the blame for his abusive behaviour within herself. As mentioned, due to socialisation patterns, women assume that their troubles and source of stress stem from themselves, their inadequacies and failures. Thus women readily assume blame after being abused (Hoff, 1990).

4.4.3 Empowerment

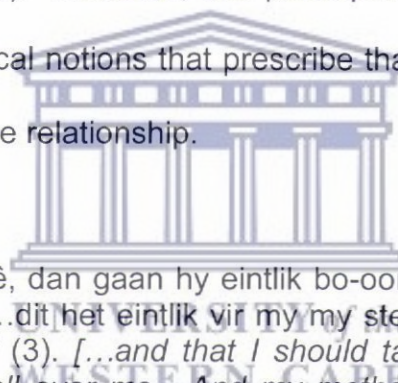
Even though the continuous psychological and emotional abuse experienced by participants impacted on their sense of self, the following responses show how they went about reclaiming their personal power and regained control over their lives. The realisation that they did not deserve the abuse resulted in them being able to stand up for themselves.



...maar deur die jare het ek geleer om op te staan vir myself, het ek vir hom gesê wat hy besig is om te doen is om sy huwelik, homself, sy vrou en sy hele gesin te vernietig...as hy nie gaan ophou met hierdie dinge nie, as hy nie iets doen nie, gaan dit tot verdere gevolge tot 'n egskeiding lei (1). [...but through the years I learned to stand up for myself, I told him that he was destroying his marriage, himself, his wife and his entire family...if he is not going to put a stop to these things, if he is not going to do something, it will lead to further consequences such as a divorce (1)].

The participant above had been in a relationship where she was continuously emotionally and psychologically abused by her partner. He coerced her

psychologically into submission if she attempted to voice her opinion or speak out. She had the strength to give her abuser an ultimatum to mend his ways or accept the resulting consequences of a divorce. She separated from her abuser in the hope that he would get help and change his behaviour. The literature also shows that many abused women feel strong pressure to continue their relationship subsequent to the abuse. This can be attributed to her being socialised into accepting responsibility to help or change her partner. The social expectation is that all women should take primary responsibility to nurture and maintain relationships, especially since their value is measured by their ability to do this (Greene & Chadwick, 1991). However, this participant has also shown that women are challenging historical notions that prescribe that they endure the abuse or even remain in the abusive relationship.



...en dat ek self gaan plat lê, dan gaan hy eintlik bo-oor my trap. En my ma wil nie graag dit hê nie...dit het eintlik vir my my sterkpunt gegee dat ek moet opstaan vir myself (3). [*...and that I should take it lying down, then he will actually tread all over me. And my mother would not want this...it actually gave me my strongpoint that I must stand up for myself (3)*].

This participant demonstrated her strength by not putting up with the abuse and not allowing her partner to walk all over her. She also had the support of her mother who also encouraged her not to accept the abuse from her partner. She had a positive outlook in the sense that she perceived the experience as making her strong enough to stand up for herself. According to Hoff (1990) if women do not perceive themselves as responsible for the abuse, they are likely to mobilise

social sources of available help such as supportive family members. An examination of the literature reveals that a common factor relating to the decision to terminate the relationship is the support of family and friends. If family values are based on upholding the patriarchal system then support from family members would most likely be toward maintaining the relationship (George, 2000; Hoff, 1990; Machonachie *et al.*, 1993).

Ons het opgebreek...omdat hy met my wil maak en doen net soos hy wil. "And I am not gonna tolerate that" (4). [*We broke up...because he said and did whatever he wanted to me. And I am not gonna tolerate that (4)*].

After experiencing continuous psychological and emotional abuse by her partner who manipulated, and controlled her by using various psychological tactics to coerce her into complying with his demands and wishes, this participant decided to end her relationship as she was not going to put up with her abuser's controlling behaviour any longer. Lerner (1986) asserts that in intimate relationships between men and women, the use of abuse is particularly reinforced by sexism, the ideology of male supremacy and superiority. Because of this perceived superiority, men are in a position to oppress women. Patriarchy theory suggests that men in western cultures are socialised to view their partners as their property, even in a non-marital relationship. This means that men are in a position to control women. However, in this study, the participant below realised that she did not need to put up with her partner's abusive control.

I realised that there was help...so I went for my divorce. At the moment, I feel uh more compassion for the next person that also went through that. Today I (*laughs*) am a new person...and I've got a nice job and I'm quite happy now (5).

Whilst being emotionally and psychologically abused by her partner for many years, this participant was not aware of the avenues she could pursue in order to elicit support, particularly since her partner socially restricted her behaviour by continuously monitoring her social contacts. Despite the tremendous trauma she experienced in her controlling relationship, after many years of abuse, she eventually became aware of help through the CWD counselling agency. Today, she is a changed person, much different from the shy withdrawn woman she used to be. She perceives her experience of abuse as having a positive outcome in the sense that it not only made her assertive, but she also has a lot of compassion for women who are in an abusive relationship.

A review of the literature reveals that the opportunity for women to discuss their experiences with one another is invaluable and contributes to developing and maintaining healthy relationships. This also reveals that confronting abusive behaviour and support for survivors are crucial in order to decrease woman abuse (Greene & Chadwick, 1991). For many women, women's counselling agencies are their only source of support. This means that awareness of woman abuse is extremely important so that women realise that they are not alone and that there are alternatives, which is contrary to what the abuser would want them to believe.

Ek kon dit nie vat nie. Toe het ek nou genoeg gehad. Ander tye kon ek 'it nog vat (6). [*I could not take it. So I had had enough. Other times I could still take it (6)*].

Abuse occurs when an imbalance of power exists in a relationship. This imbalance is maintained by behaviour designed to control or exert power over the other through emotionally abusive behaviours which undermines the women's self-esteem and enforces subservience. In the above quote, the participant highlights the damaging psychological consequences of unremitting abuse. Continuous emotional and psychological abuse, particularly in the form of verbal abuse, resulted in her low self-worth and depression, for which she was hospitalised. Her partner's constant denigration, humiliation and ridicule became intolerable.

These accounts reveal the pain and personal price of psychological and emotional abuse. However, despite their traumatic experiences, these participants managed to reclaim their personal power and regain control over their lives. Realising that they were not to blame resulted in identifying their strengths as a positive outcome. These accounts also bear testimony of women's courage and resilience in spite of the profoundly painful experience of psychological abuse. In spite of their vulnerability, they have strengths worthy of recognition. Several of these participants have indicated that abuse is a past, not a current situation for them.

Similar findings were made by George (2000), who postulated that these insights differed from the way in which society and academic literature viewed women in abusive relationships. Instead of focussing on women's strengths and

resilience, she states that the negative aspects are usually highlighted.

4.4.4 Thoughts about solutions for other women

Participants were eager to assist and support other women who were in an abusive relationship by making encouraging comments. It is evident that these women were willing to take responsibility by empowering not only themselves, but also encouraging other women to do the same. Their insights show that emotional abuse can be survived and outgrown with appropriate help (Mullender, 1996).

Dit het my laat beseef ek kan dalk vir ander mense tot nut wees. En die dinge waardeur ek gegaan het, was pynlik, dit was seer, dit was swaar, dit was baie moeilik, dit was 'n lang proses. Maar ek glo, dit was nie vir niks nie. Ek glo op die einde van die dag, kan die Here my weer gebruik om vir iemand anders wat huidiglik deur dit gaan, kan ek iemand van hulp wees en bemoedig deur te sê: Staan op! Moenie toelaat dat jou man op jou trap nie. Moenie toelaat dat jy geabuse word nie. Gaan vir hulp (1). *[It made me realise that I could be a benefit to others. The things that I went through was painful, it was hurtful, it was hard, it was very difficult, it was a long process. But I believe it was not for nothing. I believe that at the end of the day, God can use me to help someone else who is currently going through it and encourage them by saying: Stand up for yourself! Don't allow your partner to walk all over you. Don't allow yourself to be abused. Go for help (1)].*

...om vrouens te help wat in dieselfde situasie is wat ek was...vir hulle probeer uithelp met die dinge wat ek deurgemaak uhm kan hulle ook hulle self daaruit help (3). *[...to help women who are in the same situation that I was in...to try to help them with things that I had experienced uhm they will be able to help themselves (3)].*

I would love all women to be strong. Don't let the man get you down. Be strong and try and do something for yourself, because other people won't

do it. Go for help but don't just sit at home and do nothing. You can better yourself, you don't need to be down there. And just get out of that situation and start life again. You can do it (*laughs*) (5).

4.5 CONCLUSION

The womens' accounts reveal that psychological abuse is a profoundly painful experience that causes considerable psychological trauma. Their controlling relationships reflect the historical tradition of patriarchal rule over women. This seemed to elicit expectations about the man's right to control his partner and her obligation to yield to his wishes (Levy, 1991). The data suggests that the women experienced several forms of emotional and psychological abuse. The theme of power and control was threaded throughout the analysis as an explanation for men's emotionally abusive behaviours. The abuser's behaviour was a way of maintaining control over their partners. The participants expressed various emotional reactions to their experience of psychological abuse. These included powerlessness, hurt, helplessness, fear, anger, depression, humiliation, degradation and low self-worth as a result of their partners' controlling behaviour. The findings of this study show that despite influences of patriarchal values, these women emerged as survivors from their traumatic experiences of abuse.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a synthesis of the research findings reflected in the previous chapter. Salient themes that emerged in the study which were highlighted in the previous chapter, are summarised. Having their voices heard in itself creates awareness and served as an empowering experience to the women. Some of the limitations of this study as well as suggestions for future research are also discussed.

5.1 CENTRAL FINDINGS



Many of the themes have been highlighted by findings in previous literature. With regard to the participants' perception of psychological abuse, they had difficulty defining emotional or psychological abuse, however, they could articulate various examples of this kind of abuse. This finding is supported by data in the literature which attributes this difficulty to psychological abuse being invisible and society's perception that it is less severe than other forms of abuse (Engel, 1990; Murray, 2000). Another finding that contributed to the participants' difficulty in defining this kind of abuse is the tolerance of emotional abuse which constitutes normative approval (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1989). This was viewed as a result of woman abuse being sanctioned for centuries by the church and

legal system. Thus, countless misconceptions exist which trivialise and justify woman abuse (Domestic Violence in South Africa, 1998).

The use of verbal abuse featured strongly in most of the participants' accounts. It was found that the abuser systematically degraded the women's feelings of self-worth through verbal attacks. The abuser also enforced social and financial isolation of their partners. It was found that the use of isolation increases the abuser's control over the women. As other friendship and family ties are broken, the women became emotionally dependent on the abuser. Without other perspectives to help the women make sense of their abusive experiences, the women are more susceptible to the perspectives of the abuser and blame themselves for the abuse (Levy, 1991). Since many of the participants were financially dependent on their partners, they reported that their partners had curtailed family incomes. Since the abusers had greater access to financial resources, they were in a positions to control the women. According to the literature, woman abuse is rooted in the tradition of male supremacy. Because women are considered inferior, resources are withheld from them. Due to women's economic inequality, the economic privileges that men enjoy, relative to women enable them to continue to control women. It has been argued that men benefited from the confinement of women, which in turn, reinforces their control of women's lives (Bart & Moran, 1993).

Some participants reported that their partners had disregarded their needs or wishes by showing a lack of empathy when they wanted to discuss their feelings with regard to the relationship. Many authors have reported similar findings that

indicated that the abuser behaved in ways that suggested his partner's needs, wishes and feelings were unworthy of consideration (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Kasian & Painter, 1992; Murray, 2000; Yoshihama & Sorenson, 1994).

Infidelity by their partner was reported by some of the participants. According to Mullender (1996) emotional abuse overlaps with sexual abuse by the abuser openly taking other partners. The roots of this double standard for men and women can be traced to the patriarchal period, where men had the right to kill their partners for committing adultery, which was the very same behaviour he engaged in daily (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Moore, 1979). Due to double standards for men and women, it is seen as socially acceptable for a man to show his sexual prowess and "manly" behaviour, whereas this would be seen as "inappropriate" and "unacceptable" behaviour for women (Levy, 1991).

In view of the participants' perception regarding the impact of psychological abuse, intimidation and fear were salient themes threaded throughout the women's accounts. It was found that abusers employed a variety of emotionally and psychologically controlling behaviours designed to frighten, control and intimidate their partners. Participants reported that their partners used a variety of threats to enforce their demands and gain compliance. A perusal of the literature shows that threats are a way of demonstrating power and superiority over women through the use of emotional abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Bart & Moran, 1993; Engel, 1990; Levy, 1991). Participants also reported that their

partners used fear and coercion to control and manipulate them in order to get what they want. It has been reported that men often instill profound fear in their partners as a means of controlling their actions (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The participants' stories revealed that their relationships were characterised by domination and control. An examination of the literature showed that abusers live up to cultural prescriptions of male dominance and female subordination and use coercion, either physical or psychological, as a means to enforce their dominance (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Bart & Moran, 1993). This includes the use of intimidation and threats of physical abuse, which dominated the participants' accounts. Also, pertinent is that any challenge the participants presented to this perceived authority by their partners were met with threats in order to bring about a desired state of affairs (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

A sense of helplessness pervaded the participants' accounts of emotional and psychological abuse. Levy (1991) asserts that unremitting psychological abuse causes exhaustion, feelings of helplessness and incompetence and is mainly designed to cause women to become more dependent on their partner. It was evident from the womens' descriptions of the humiliation and degradation they endured that the abuser used various controlling tactics such as constant verbal attacks and actions designed to break their spirit and destroy their self-image and self-esteem. These findings are substantiated in the literature which reveals that emotionally controlling behaviours serve to reduce the victims status by lowering the victim's self-concept and self-esteem, thus rendering them more easily controlled by the abuser (Dutton & Golant, 1995, cited in O'Hearn & Davis,

1997). Since the abuser is perceived to be more powerful in this unequal relationship, the women are more susceptible to the perspectives of their abusive partners. Any challenges to their partners' perspectives are met with taunts that the women are insane. The participants' low self-esteem, coupled with the social and financial isolation enforced by their partners, meant that the women were cut off from outside sources of support which reinforced their sense of helplessness about their situations and thus rendered them even more emotionally and financially dependent on their partners. Due to their partners constant undermining, some participants reported that they sought professional help for depression and other related illnesses. A review of the literature shows that psychological abuse has long-term debilitating effects on women's mental and physical health (Ackerman & Pickering, 1995; Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Centre for Health and Gender Equity, 2001; De Sousa, 1991; Engel, 1990; Follingstad *et al.*, 1990; Hoff, 1990; Kirkwood, 1993; Orava *et al.*, 1996; Richardson & Robinson, 1993). Another theme that strongly emerged was the anger and resentment participants felt towards their abusers because of their victimisation. Anger has been reported as a predominant reaction to abuse (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). Some participants reported that they wanted to retaliate by hurting their abuser the way he had hurt them. It would seem that after a long period of ongoing emotional abuse, these participants expressed immense anger, although underlying this anger is the deep hurt and pain they felt about being abused by the very people who claimed to love and care for them. Some participants also reported feeling resentful towards their abusers even

after the abusive relationship had been terminated, while others managed to establish an amiable relationship with their partners after leaving. Another central theme which emerged was the participants' perception of a change in their sense of self which they attributed to their experience of psychological abuse. It has been reported that emotional abuse can be the most devastating type of power and control (Murray, 2000). Due to the severity of the pain and trauma caused by unremitting psychological abuse, some of the participants reported that this experience had somewhat hardened them. Some participants perceived this change as positive in the sense that it had made them more assertive. Also, pertinent is that some participants felt that the experience of emotional abuse had destroyed their trust in men.

With regard to the participants' understanding of the problem of psychological abuse by their partners, it was clear that initially they searched within themselves for the reasons they were abused. This resulted in the participants modifying their behaviour in order to please the abuser in an attempt to avoid further abuse. However, despite their efforts, the abuse was unrelenting. However, later the participants became aware that they did not deserve to be controlled by their partners and realised that they were not responsible. Hoff (1990) contends that it is not surprising that women readily blame themselves for being abused by their partners, especially since men have been socialised to direct their anger toward others, while women have been socialised to seek the source of their distress within themselves and attribute it to their own failures and inadequacies. Another salient theme that emerged from this research is that despite the devastating and

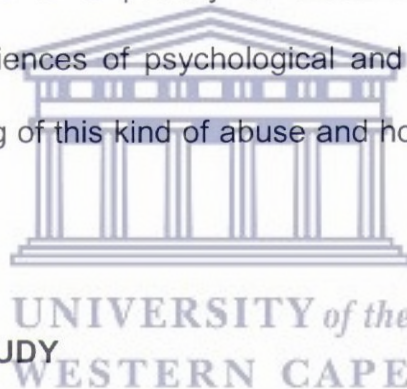
traumatic experience of psychological abuse, these women demonstrated their resilience in coping with the abuse. Most of the participants showed determination and courage by eventually extricating themselves from their abusive relationships and ended their interviews with very encouraging words to other women in similar situations.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE FIELD

This study highlights the traumatic consequences of psychological abuse on women's psychological health. However, the women in the study demonstrated their courage and resilience in coping with the abuse, some even leaving their abusive relationships. These findings also show that psychological abuse can be survived and outgrown with appropriate help. The findings of the present study confirm findings in previous research (Dobash & Dobash, 1979); George, 2000; Hoff, 1990; MacLeod & Saraga, 1988, cited in Richardson & Robinson, 1993). These authors argue that there has been a common misconception of abused women being portrayed as helpless and submissive. It has been reported that instead of focussing on the negative aspects, society and academic literature need to focus on women's strengths and resilience with coping and even leaving their abusive relationships. George (2000) reports that the acknowledgement of the strength of abused women is devalued and silenced in much of the literature. Hoff (1990) also asserts that the concept of "survivor" seems more positive than

that of “victim” and it emphasises womens’ ability to continue with their lives despite their experiences of abuse.

It is reported in the literature that research on the psychological abuse of women by their male partners is a critical matter that has not received much attention (Toman, 1989). Research on psychological abuse has mainly been conducted in relation to physical abuse (Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997). As mentioned, the Constitution and the Domestic Violence Act (1998) emphasises the right to health and well-being. In order to address the health and well-being of women in South Africa, it is imperative that more research in the area of psychological abuse be conducted, especially since there is a paucity of research of this nature. Knowledge about womens’ experiences of psychological and emotional abuse will contribute to our understanding of this kind of abuse and how to help women in controlling relationships.



5.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This section allows for reflection on the areas within the study that presented challenges and difficulties, which may prove useful for future research in this area. This study aimed to explore the experiences of psychological and emotional abuse of women by their male partners. Although the overall aim of this research was achieved as far as possible, the exploration of this topic is not exhaustive.

A great challenge in this area of research is the difficulty in defining what psychological abuse constitutes. This difficulty is exacerbated by the normative approval of psychological and emotional abuse as well as its invisibility. Despite this challenge, women in the study were given the opportunity to talk about their experiences of psychological abuse and expose the men who abuse them.

Another limitation to this research concerns the problem of access to a research sample. My initial intention was to draw women from various organisations or agencies. However, the sample of women in this study came from only one service centre.

5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study and other investigations (Aguilar & Nightingale, 1994; Murray, 2000; O'Hearn & Davis, 1997) suggest that women who are in psychologically abusive relationships may be vulnerable to feelings of lowered self-worth. Qualitative studies could be conducted using larger and more diverse samples to explore womens' experience of psychological abuse.

Future research in this area is imperative particularly since there still appears to be a lack of knowledge. A comprehensive understanding of the psychological factors afflicted by the experience of abuse can be used to assist therapists in helping women extricate themselves from abusive relationships and recover from the adverse effects (Orava *et al*, 1996).

It has been argued that woman abuse in South Africa is largely due to womens'

political status and thus supports the widespread view that patriarchal values continue to undermine women (Dangor *et al.*, 1996). Based on the findings of this research, it is recommended that future research on psychological abuse study in greater detail how gender-role socialisation impact the social construction of psychological abuse. We could benefit from future studies by understanding how both gender contributes to a woman's being susceptible to becoming involved in a psychologically abusive relationship (Marshall, 1996).

5.5 CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reveal that woman abuse is an insidious social problem that seriously impacts womens' psychological health. Even though psychological abuse has this profound impact on womens' psychological health, it is the least recognised form of abuse. Since psychological abuse is invisible, its prevalence and impact is obscured. The unawareness and difficulty in recognising this kind of abuse raises deep concern. This unawareness may reinforce and contribute to the unequal power disparity between men and women, thus maintaining the status quo. The study shows that consciousness-raising about public non-tolerance of woman abuse is imperative. We need to help women recognise it and not put them at greater risk of being abused and thus reduce the incidence of this pervasive problem. Women should also be encouraged to seek help as soon as abuse begins, especially since a prerequisite to creating awareness is to break the silence. Findings also point to the need to educate men to take

responsibility for their actions and need to change their attitudes and behaviour.

The findings of this study support feminist arguments for radical changes in the unequal power relationships that exist between men and women due to traditional patterns of socialisation. The following quotation expresses the sentiment towards which all South Africans should be striving due to our patriarchal history:

“Human behaviour will always be affected by socialisation...but processes of socialisation will be liberating and enriching rather than violent and oppressive when society respects all individuals, considers and treats them equally entitled and is committed to everyone’s full development and participation” (Gill, 1976, cited in Eekelaar & Katz, 1978, p.32).



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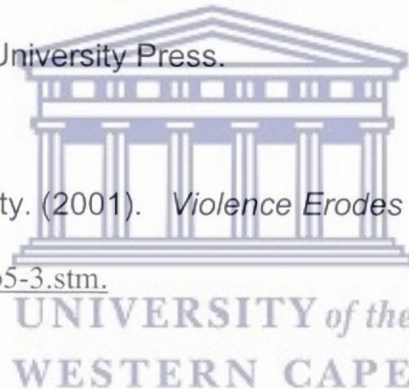
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APPENDIX 1

The experiences of women who encounter emotional or psychological abuse by their male partners

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

My name is Delcia Liedeman. I am a student of Psychology at the University of the Western Cape. I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this research by sharing your experiences of emotional and psychological abuse by your partner. Please feel free to speak in the language of your choice. Please remember that your anonymity is ensured by the omission of your name or any other personal information that you may be identified by. Please note that you are not compelled to answer any questions if you do not wish to and it is your choice to leave this interview at any time should you feel the need to do so. Feel free to ask me any questions about the research or any concerns you may have. The centre will be provided with a copy of my feedback with regard to the interviews I am conducting.

The following questions served as a guide on which the interviews were based. These questions were asked in order to elicit information about the experiences of psychological and emotional abuse of women by their male partners as well as provide information regarding its impact.

The answers to the following questions will be regarded as strictly confidential.

PERSONAL DETAILS

1. How old are you?

Younger than 25 years	25 – 29 years	30 – 34 years	35-39 years	40 – 44 years	45 – 49 years	50 + years
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2. What is your marital status?

Married	Cohabiting	Estranged	Single	Divorced
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3. Do you have any children?

Yes	
No	

Children	How many	Age
Girls		
Boys		



4. Are you currently employed?

Yes	
No	

5. What kind of work do you do?

6. What was your reason for seeking help at the Catholic Welfare and Development Centre (CWD)?

7. I'm wondering whether you have heard the terms emotional or psychological abuse and what it means to you?
8. In what ways has your partner been emotionally or psychologically abusive?
9. How do you feel when you experience this kind of abuse?
10. How do you feel about what your partner has done to you?
11. In your view, why do you think he has abused you?
12. Is there anything that you think you have done to have caused your partner to abuse you?
13. Has this experience changed the way you feel about yourself? In what way has it changed you?
14. Are you still in the abusive relationship?
15. What are your feelings about your relationship with your partner?
16. Do you have any advice for other women who are in this situation?
17. Do you have any other comments or questions that you would like to ask?

Thank you for your time and cooperation. I really appreciate it. Best wishes for the future.

APPENDIX 2

(INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TRANSLATED INTO AFRIKAANS)

ONDERHOUD SKEDULE

My naam is Delcia Liedeman. Ek is 'n student in Sielkunde aan die Wes-Kaap Universiteit. Dankie dat jy die tyd afgestaan het om deel te neem in die navorsing deur jou ervarings te deel oor emosionele and sielkundige mishandeling. Voel asseblief vry om in die taal van u keuse te praat. Onthou asseblief dat al die informasie streng vertroulik is. Vertroulikheid word verseker deur die weglating van jou naam en enige ander persoonlike inligting waarvolgens jy geïdentifiseer sou kon word. Jy is nie verplig om enige vrae te beantwoord nie, indien jy nie wil nie. Jy het ook die keuse om die onderhoud op enige tydstip te verlaat as jy so voel. Voel vry om enige vrae te vra oor die navorsing, of oor enige ander bekommernisse wat jy mag hê, of oor enige iets in die algemeen. Die sentrum sal voorsien word van 'n kopie van my terugvoer aangaande die onderhoude wat ek voer.

Die antwoorde op die volgende vrae sal as streng vertroulik beskou word.

PERSOONLIKE BESONDERHEDE

1. Hoe oud is jy?

Jonger as 25 jaar	25 – 29 jaar	30 – 34 jaar	35-39 jaar	40 – 44 jaar	45 – 49 jaar	50+ jaar
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2. Wat is jou huwelikstatus?

Getroud	Woon saam	Vervreemd	Enkel	Geskei
---------	-----------	-----------	-------	--------

3. Het jy kinders?

Ja	
Nee	



Kinders	Aantal	Ouderdom
Dogters		
Seuns		

4. Werk jy op die oomblik?

Ja	
Nee	

5. Watter soort werk doen jy?

Ek sal nou graag jou wil vra oor jou verhouding

6. Hoekom het jy by die CWD sentrum kom hulp soek?

7. Ek wonder of jy al gehoor het van die terme emosionele of sielkundige mishandeling en wat dit vir jou beteken?
8. Op watter maniere het jou maat jou emosioneel of sielkundig mishandel?
9. Hoe voel jy wanneer jy hierdie soort mishandeling deurmaak?
10. Hoe voel jy oor wat jou maat aan jou gedoen het?
11. Na jou mening, hoekom dink jy het hy jou mishandel?
12. Is daar enige iets wat jy dink jy gedoen het, wat gemaak het dat jou maat jou mishandel het?
13. Het hierdie ondervinding die manier hoe jy oor jouself voel, verander?
14. Is jy nog steeds in hierdie verhouding?
15. Hoe voel jy oor jou verhouding met jou maat?
16. Het jy enige raad vir ander vroue wat in hierdie situasie is?
17. Het jy enige ander kommentaar of vrae?



Dankie vir jou tyd en samewerking. Ek waardeer dit baie. Sterkte vir die toekoms.

APPENDIX 3

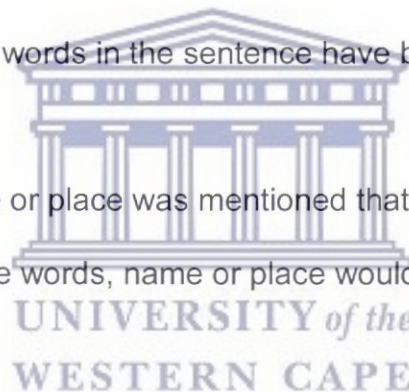
TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. No editing of interviews was undertaken, therefore grammatical errors are evident. This has not been corrected as it represents the original response.

(1-8) Each participant was given a number in brackets which was used throughout the text to identify a specific woman.

... Indicates that words in the sentence have been omitted.

(name/place) When a name or place was mentioned that could identify the participant, the words, name or place would appear in brackets.



() When feelings or silence were expressed, e.g. (laughter) or (silence)

[] indicates explanatory text. If [] appears after an Afrikaans quotation, the translation will appear, for example, in *[italics]*