

A Narrative Inquiry into the Experience of a Male Survivor of Domestic Violence

By

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DECLARATION

I herewith declare that “**A NARRATIVE INQUIRY INTO THE EXPERIENCE OF A MALE SURVIVOR OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**” is my own work, and that all sources and quotes used have been indicated and acknowledged through complete references. This dissertation has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at another university.

Marisa du Toit

SUMMARY

This research narrative represents a co-construction of domestic violence focusing on the male victim. The narrative's main aim is to contribute to the body of work that seeks to ensure that the invisible male victims of domestic violence have a voice, and that they are counted. Little research has been undertaken to voice the experiences of male domestic violence victims.

Domestic violence is constructed using a social constructionist perspective and Tom's narrative is elicited and analysed by means of narrative methodology. Tom is a citizen of the United States of America and due to his geographical location a face-to-face interview was not possible. The best means to collect his narrative was through electronic mail (email) which granted Tom and the researcher the opportunity to reflect upon the research process as it unfolded.

The research narrative found some similarities between Tom's experiences and those noted in other published research narratives. Some of these similarities included the minimal extent of physical injuries to Tom, the more prevalent occurrence of psychological abuse and the use of institutional measures to control his behaviour. In contrast to the literature reviewed, Tom reported that his ex-wife was hurt more often during her violent outbursts.

It is recommended that future research includes as many members of the affected family as possible in order to ensure a rich and diverse narrative. In addition, it is suggested that similar research be conducted in a sensitive way and over a short period.

KEY TERMS

Domestic violence, male victim, female perpetrator, substance abuse, interpersonal violence, mutual abuse, narrative, social constructionism



PROLOGUE

I was emotionally abused for YEARS by my soon to be ex wife [sic] (not soon enough). Taken from the checklist on several abuse sites, what did she do? Pretty much everything:

- Track me incessantly
- Read my e-mail
- Read my IM conversations (including confidential work conversations)
- Pilfered through my cellular phone
- Accuse me of being unfaithful (on many occasions)
- Especially when I locked the computer and phone
- Discourage (and prevent) relationships with friends, even co-workers
- Movie night at the office? Never.
- Criticized every damned thing I did, no matter how small; I couldn't even leave a party without having done something wrong in her eyes
- She drank heavily and constantly and was very easily angered in general even when not drinking
- She did not control the family finances, but instead is going to the police to claim that I "stole her identity" (more to follow)
- Humiliated me in front of others (including my own family)
- Physically assaulted me
- Threatened to take away my son (and has so far successfully done so)
- Committed such egregious emotional abuse that I was forced to the brink of suicide
- Forced me to have sex with her against my will

Why didn't I report it? I have no idea - I was so brainwashed into thinking this was a normal relationship, and I honestly didn't know any better. I haven't had a father figure in my life since I was 12 (my father died of colon cancer at the age of 39). Just over 3 years ago I attempted suicide. Had I not sought treatment on my own, my loving spouse (who has a masters degree [sic] in psychoanalysis, to boot) would never have done anything to seek help for me.

An extract from John Doe. (2008). Forum Support and discussion forum: Criminally abusive ex-wife, false allegations, etc, etc, etc. Retrieved from forums/message-view?message_id=69710

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence, whether perpetrated by males or females, is a serious problem. Its effects are far-reaching, influencing not only the victims and perpetrators but also their families (Kashani, Daniel, Dandoy & Holcomb, 1992), friends and communities (Riger, Raja & Camacho, 2002).

Domestic violence is one of the crimes that South Africans consider to be a crime-prevention priority, with many efforts being made to decrease its prevalence and effects. One of the most prominent efforts by the South African government is the institution of the *16 Days of Activism* campaign that runs from 25 November to 10 December each year.

This focus on domestic violence is not unfounded. In its annual report (South African Police Service Strategic Management, 2008), the South African Police Service reported more than 182 500 cases of violence against women (including murder, attempted murder, rape, common assault, assault with grievous bodily harm (GHB) and indecent assault) during the 2007/2008 financial year. An additional 29 000 cases were not completed by the complainant. Of the reported cases, approximately 56% were referred to court with an associated conviction rate of 23%. C. de Kock (personal communication, 19 February 2009) noted that, during the period April to November 2008, more than 15 700 cases of domestic violence were reported in Gauteng.

As part of the International Crime Victim Survey, Prinsloo (2007) found that, in a random sample of 1 500 individuals, there were 85 assault victims, of whom more than 42% were assaulted by a spouse, boyfriend or girlfriend. When comparing males with females, more than 55% of females were assaulted by their spouses or partners, while just fewer than 13% of males were assaulted by their spouses or partners. The study did not record sexual orientation and it cannot therefore be categorically stated that more than 55% of women were assaulted by their male partners. It was found that more victims experienced force (more than 57%) rather than threats (more than 42%). Assault victims who were assaulted by an ex-boyfriend or ex-girlfriend (more than 46%) and an ex-spouse or ex-partner (more than 66%) tended to report their victimisation to the police more often than those being assaulted by their current partner, spouse (more than 27%), boyfriend or girlfriend (more than 16%).

Prinsloo's (2007) study serves to show that women and men are both victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. I chose to include a discussion of this study early in this research narrative in order to clarify that domestic violence is not exclusively experienced as a problem by females. Ang (2005) – a survivor of wife-perpetrated domestic violence himself – asserts that society is blind towards male victims, but that society will immediately defend a wife when her abused husband defends himself against her. He stated that a husband should not retaliate against his abusive wife, because if he did and left a mark on her body, *he* would be accused of domestic violence. From this statement, one can interpret that Ang felt powerless and voiceless in a social world that primarily protects women. This leads to one of my stated goals for this narrative – to give a voice to male victims. This will be discussed in more detail in the section, “Justification, Aim and Objectives of the Study”.

In the remainder of this chapter, the research narrative's origins will be contextualised through stating the research problem and approach, its justification, aims and objectives and the legal definition of domestic violence.

Research Problem

Although domestic violence has generally been categorised as a problem faced by heterosexual females, men can also be victims of domestic violence. Research literature concerning male victimisation is less readily available than that for females. This shortage of literature on the experiences of male domestic violence victims and survivors is a problem that this research narrative seeks to address.

My initial interest in domestic violence peaked during my undergraduate studies when I met two young women who were abused by their boyfriends. My interest has since been piqued into the lesser known and less talked about male victim. The apparent absence of narratives such as Tom's began to trouble me after reading literature regarding wife abuse (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Jewkes, Levin & Penn-Kekana, 2002; Katz, Arias & Beach, 2000; Lehmann & Santilli, 1996; Ray & Gold, 1996). Because little research has been conducted on the experiences of male victims of domestic violence, this research narrative seeks to investigate the experiences of a heterosexual man – Tom – in a violent domestic relationship. I

believe that research narratives such as this have a role to play in the advocacy of the rights of abused men.

During my own journey of discovery, I underwent a process through which I tried to define domestic violence. My construction of domestic violence changed many times, and it will probably continue to change and refine itself for as long as I am in conversation with research literature and narratives such as magazine, newspaper and website articles. In the following section, this process of constructing domestic violence continues.

Research Approach

Many studies of domestic violence are either quantitative studies focussing on the prevalence of domestic violence in the male heterosexual population or a clinical description of the consequences of abuse which allows researchers to take a different approach. This dissertation is a narrative of a man who has moved from being a victim of abuse to becoming an activist for family issues. To interpret his experiences, I chose the research paradigm, social constructionism.

Ponterotto (2002) states that social constructionism is an ontological shift in world view, a focus shifting from objectivity to subjective knowledge. In social constructionist research, Grobler (2007) contends that conformity to one typology (objective truth) is unnecessary because social constructionism sees knowledge generation as a collaborative effort between the researcher and the research participants. Rodriguez (2002) believes that, due to the collaborative nature of the research process, narrative methodology is suited to the process of knowledge generation. However, it is important to note that narrative is not a methodology but rather a way of being in the world.

This dissertation is a research narrative with a specific structure through which we must move to make sense of the narrative. I chose narrative as a companion to social constructionism because narrative is a natural means of human communication that is complimented by the collection of the narrative. In this research narrative, an email interview was the collection process (Czarniawska, 2004).

The interview was a conversation between me and Tom, an American man in his fifties. In the narrative, I elaborate on the experience of Tom in his abusive marriage, as co-constructed by myself.

Constructing Domestic Violence

There are many sources where one can seek the initial foundations for a definition of domestic violence. On my personal journey, my first formal definition of domestic violence was rooted in my first year criminology course. It therefore seemed appropriate that I should find solace in a legal definition.

According to Section 1(viii) of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (Government Gazette, 1998) domestic violence means:

- § Physical abuse
- § Sexual abuse
- § Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse
- § Economic abuse
- § Intimidation
- § Harassment
- § Stalking
- § Damage to property
- § Entry into the complainant's residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence, or
- § Any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or well-being of the complainant.

This definition is very broad and includes a wide range of behaviours comprising more than merely the physical attacks for which most victims of domestic violence seek help. It is important to note that domestic violence is not just physical violence. Rohrbaugh (2006, p. 291) explains that violence is *behaviour* or *action*, while abuse is a *pattern* of demeaning, controlling, intimidating action, including violence, within the context of evolving power and control dynamics of an intimate relationship causing psychological (and often physical) harm. This definition does

not limit the types of abuse that Tom could have experienced during and after his marriage, nor does it limit what is included in his story.

When exploring the different definitions of domestic violence, it soon becomes apparent that there are different terminologies that all refer to domestic violence. In the international literature (Felson & Cares, 2005; Lehmann & Santilli, 1996; Taylor & Pittman, 2005; Walker, 1996), the most common terms for domestic violence are 'spousal abuse' and 'intimate partner abuse'. According to Lehmann and Santilli (1996), *spousal abuse* is defined as the instigation of violence by a partner that is not due to self-defence or mutual combat. *Intimate partner abuse* is defined as any behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in that relationship (World Health Organization, 2007, p. 1). These behaviours include physical aggression, psychological abuse, forced sexual intercourse, or any other controlling behaviour. From these definitions of spousal abuse and intimate partner abuse, it becomes apparent that there are some similarities between these international definitions and the definition provided by the South African Domestic Violence Act.

This similarity in definitions concerns physical violence with the intent to harm, not to retaliate, and it can be physical, psychological or sexual harm inflicted on the victim. However, the term spousal abuse excludes all relational violence outside a marital relationship, and the term intimate partner abuse does not explicitly include financial abuse that can be inflicted on victims.

Based on the shortcomings of the spousal abuse and intimate partner abuse definitions and the apparent strength of the Domestic Violence Act definition, I chose to use the Domestic Violence Act definition to guide my interview with Tom. This definition ensures the inclusion of all the various abusive behaviours that can be experienced in a domestic relationship. I also decided against the international definitions because, in South African research, the most commonly used definition is the Domestic Violence Act. The use of the Domestic Violence Act therefore ensures that there is conformity and it also makes the collection of similar narratives easier for other researchers.

Another important term requiring definition is *domestic relationship*, due to its inclusion in the Domestic Violence Act. It needs to be indicated whether or not there is a domestic relationship between the victim and the perpetrator of violence. If no such relationship exists,

then the incident is classified as common assault which, by definition, occurs between strangers or acquaintances and not between intimate partners.

According to Section 1(vii) of the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998 (p. 4) a domestic relationship means:

A relationship between a complainant and a respondent in any of the following ways:

- § They are or were married to each other, including marriage according to any law, custom or religion
- § They (whether they are of the same or of the opposite sex) live or lived together in a relationship in the nature of marriage, although they are not, or were not, married to each other, or are not able to be married to each other
- § They are the parents of a child or are persons who have or had parental responsibility for that child (whether or not at the same time)
- § They are family members related by consanguinity, affinity or adoption
- § They are or were in an engagement, dating or customary relationship including an actual or perceived romantic, intimate or sexual relationship of any duration, or
- § They share or have recently shared the same residence.

As this definition of domestic relationship indicates, both male and female victims of domestic violence are protected. All kinds of relationship, whether marital, cohabitation, or dating relationships, are included and protected under this Act.

From this discussion, I conclude that the definition of domestic violence includes both male and female victims in heterosexual or homosexual relationships. These relationships are not restricted only to marital relationships but also to all manner of domestic relationships.

Justification, Aim and Objectives of the Study

This narrative's main aim is to contribute to the body of work that seeks to ensure that the invisible male victims of domestic violence have a voice, and that they are counted (Sarantakos, 1999). Male victims of domestic violence have little access to specific services,

and this is mostly due to the fact that people do not acknowledge the occurrence of male partner abuse.

In South Africa, victims of violence and crime have specific rights and responsibilities. Van der Hoven (2001) noted that the South African Department of Justice was involved in drafting a Charter of Rights for Victims of Crime. This charter (Department of Justice and Constitutional Development, n.d.) includes the following rights:

- § To be treated with respect and dignity
- § *To be heard* (author's italics)
- § To offer and to receive information regarding the crime
- § To be protected from intimidation and other dangers to themselves or to their families, and
- § To be compensated by either the state or the offender for their expenses or to restore their rights.

In South Africa, one of the explicitly stated rights of the victim is the right *to be heard*. This right serves to justify this research narrative.

As will be evidenced in Chapter Two, little research has been undertaken in South Africa to voice the experiences of male domestic violence victims. This has led to many professionals not having a working knowledge of male domestic violence victims. As soon as the literature on abused men becomes as prominent as the literature on abused women, appropriate resources can be established and service providers can be sensitised to the experiences of battered men. Tutty (1999) acknowledges that effective treatment and prevention will not be developed until such time as professionals and the general public acknowledge male partner abuse. This research narrative is an attempt to ensure that male partner abuse does become more visible in psychological research, studies, programmes and discussions.

If abused men's experiences remain unacknowledged, an entire clinical population will go unnoticed. According to Renzetti (1992), a clinical population refers to a group of people who seek treatment and present secondary problems, such as depression, that have their origins in their experiences of abuse.

A further major problem is that the curricula for psychology, criminology or social work at most South African universities may only include women abuse, with no mention of male partner

abuse. In this way, men who are abused are marginalised and a large number of professionals are not sensitised to the occurrence of male partner abuse.

When male victims of domestic violence go unnoticed, their children might also be marginalised. Fontes (1999) noted that when abused men do not have a place to go for help or shelter, their children might find themselves in the midst of a raging battle and may well be exposed to negative conflict resolution modelling. Men who choose to leave their abusive wives usually lose custody of their children to their wives. In such situations, the children might themselves become endangered, possibly leading to men staying in the abusive relationship just to protect their children (refer to 'Male as Victim').

Preview of the Research Narrative

With the fundamentals of this research narrative now established, an outline of the remaining part of the narrative follows.

The study consists of five chapters, including this introductory chapter. This chapter describes domestic violence as it will be seen throughout this narrative, and introduces the reader to the process through which my interest in the stories of domestic violence victims or survivors develops. As all research narratives need a justification, aim and objectives, these components of the narrative are introduced to the reader. The writer's aim is to give male victims of domestic violence a voice to enable them to be heard, and thereby indirectly, to stimulate the development of inclusive services where men may also find help.

Chapter Two gives an overview of the different theoretical perspectives of domestic violence. Some of the research on domestic violence is then described, including not only heterosexual males as victims, but also homosexual men and women and heterosexual women. In addition, the narratives concerning gender roles, culture, substance use and HIV/AIDS and domestic violence are also discussed. The final section deals with domestic violence as constructed by social constructionism. Little literature can be found on the subject of the social constructionist view of domestic violence, but some therapeutic principles can be adapted for use in interpreting female-perpetrated domestic violence. This can be seen as an avenue of exploration for future narrative research.

With an established scientific context, the research narrative then describes the specific way in which the narrative will be told. Chapter Three gives an overview of the qualitative research undertaken, an overview of the means by which I tried to recruit narrators, the tool used to elicit narrative, details of how and in which context the narrator told me his story and how I analysed his story. Lastly, I explore the ethical issues that have specific bearing on this research narrative.

Understanding how the story is elicited and then interpreted by myself, I give the pen to Tom in Chapter Four and I use his own words to introduce himself and his family to us. After the introductions, I give a brief overview of Tom's story and then introduce the reader to the themes that were constructed through matching Tom's story with the research literature (Chapter Two).

Chapter Five provides the formal conclusion of the research narrative. I review the process of finding narrators and of eliciting Tom's narrative. In addition to the reflective value of this chapter, it serves as a point of evaluation where I discuss the issues of validity and reliability and their construction for qualitative research. The last activity in this research narrative is to make recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: PERSPECTIVES AND RESEARCH

This chapter provides a review of some of the theoretical perspectives and research on domestic violence. Several theoretical perspectives may be used to guide research on, and to explain, domestic violence. An overview is provided of some of the theoretical perspectives used in researching domestic violence. This is followed by a discussion on previous research findings and how social constructionism constructs domestic violence.

Theoretical Perspectives

“The lens through which society views itself plays a critical role in how it identifies, measures and interprets a social problem, the mechanisms used to disseminate the findings, and the types of programmes developed to address the problem.”

Steinmetz (2007, p. 53)

This section serves as a brief introduction to some of the scientific constructions of domestic violence. Domestic violence can be constructed in many ways and these constructions include both everyday and scientific constructions. A framework of understanding is created for the review of the research that follows.

Some of the theories and perspectives that can explain domestic violence include:

- § Culture of violence theory
- § Ecological theory
- § Evolutionary theory
- § Exchange theory
- § Investment theory
- § Resource theory
- § Marital power theory, and
- § Traumatic bonding theory (Lemkey, n.d.).

For the purpose of this research narrative, I have identified the most prominent theoretical perspectives in domestic violence research as based on other researcher's reviews - social learning theory, feminism, and the biopsychosocial perspective (Anderson & Kras, 2007; Dutton, 2008; Hughes, Stuart, Coop Gordon, & Moore, 2007; McKenry, Julian & Gavazzi, 1995). These three theories and/or perspectives are explored and discussed in the following sections.

Social Learning Theory

Anderson and Kras (2007, p. 103) state that social learning theory focuses on external stimuli in order to deconstruct behaviour in relationship to the response patterns. Aggression is therefore behaviour that is learned, most commonly through the observation of parents or other significant individuals, when the adults behave aggressively towards each other (Anderson & Kras, 2007; Brewster, 2002; Burgess & Roberts, 2002; Dutton, 2008; Lawson, 2003). This learning mechanism is known as modelling, where the child learns behaviour indirectly without directly experiencing the behaviour himself or herself (Anderson & Kras, 2007).

Research by Anderson and Kras (2007), Mignon (1998) and Murrell, Christoff and Henning (2007) has shown that many abusers have witnessed abuse in their family of origin. However, Dutton (2008) believes that observing your sister being abused does not have the same effect as observing your mother being abused. He further believes that observing violence against your mother will more often than not lead to aggressive behaviour acquisition, because violence against a child's mother breaks down the child's security base. According to Brewster (2002), observation cannot singularly explain why violent behaviour is learned, but observation can only lead to a learning of violent behaviour when the observed behaviour is reinforced in some way.

Brewster (2002) and Corvo (2006) noted that reinforcement of violent behaviour occurs through the attainment of desired results. For example, when a perpetrator's partner does not talk to other people, or the victim does anything in his or her power to please the perpetrator, or the absence of negative consequences (e.g. imprisonment). Children are thus taught through the reinforcement of observed violent behaviour that violence is respected and attains the outcome that the perpetrator wanted (Anderson & Kras, 2007).

In addition to reinforcement of observed violent behaviour, a child must also possess certain internal factors (cognitive functions) in order to learn a specific type of behaviour - known as reciprocal determinism - that allows the behaviour to be linked to the response cognitively

(Anderson & Kras, 2007). Reinforcement is more successful when it happens more often and when symbolic reinforcement is also present.

In support of social learning theory, research investigating the intergenerational transmission of violence has found that being exposed to domestic violence in one's family of origin correlates with domestic violence perpetration and victimisation in adulthood (Anderson & Kras, 2007; Brewster, 2002; Hughes et al., 2007; Kyu & Kanai, 2005; Murrell et al., 2007). Murrell et al. (2007) pointed out that:

- § Children can also learn positive attitudes towards violence when a child observes violent behaviour being rewarded
- § Theorists believe that children raised in violent homes learn destructive conflict resolution and communication patterns, and
- § Observing violence in the family of origin creates norms and values of "how, when, and towards whom aggression is appropriate".

Dutton (2008) believes social learning theory to be useful to a point, but feels that it cannot provide explanations of how private behaviour such as cognitions and affective reactions can be learned. As previously discussed, social learning theory requires certain cognitive functions to be in place in order to model behaviour, but it cannot explain how cognitions are developed. In addition to being unable to explain how private behaviours are learned, social learning theory cannot explain the gender differences in perpetration. When a child observes a father using physical force to "resolve" a disagreement with the child's mother with repeated success, it is likely that the child, irrespective of gender, would utilise physical violence in resolving disagreements him or herself. Social learning theory also cannot explain how psychological disorders can contribute to the perpetration of domestic violence, such as personality disorders and substance use disorders.

Social learning theory explains the influence that a child's family can have on the development and establishment of maladaptive behaviours in adulthood. However, the influence of the child's gender on the types of behaviour that are learned is not clearly explained by social learning theory. The feminist theories of domestic violence sought to explain the occurrence of domestic violence based on gender and focussed on males as perpetrators. The following section gives an overview of feminist theories of domestic violence.

Feminist Perspectives

In the 1970s, it was believed that domestic violence was a problem caused by men (Dutton, 2008; McPhail, Busch, Kulkarni & Rice, 2007). McPhail et al. (2007) said that feminist theories explain male-perpetrated domestic violence as the result of men's oppression of women where women are primarily the victims and men the perpetrators. Feminist theory differs from social learning theory in that it seeks to explain male aggressive behaviour through patriarchy and not pure social learning (Archer, 2006; McPhail et al., 2007; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Fox-Genovese (1993) states that feminism is an umbrella term that includes many different types of feminist perspectives such as equality feminists, liberal feminists, black feminists and post-modern feminists, at the centre of which is the desire to improve the position of women.

To quote McPhail et al. (2007, p. 818), feminist theorists believe that "male violence within intimate relationships results from historic and current power differentials that keep women subordinate, primarily through the use of control, including physical, sexual, economic and psychological abuse, comprising tactics of intimidation and isolation". Men are seen as "patriarchal terrorists" (McMurrin & Gilchrist, 2008, p. 108), with abuse being a form of behaviour that is so ingrained into relationships that men are not even conscious of their abusive behaviour towards women (Lipchik, Sirles & Kubicki, 1997). Lipchik et al. (1997) added that the focus of feminism is not just on psychologically disordered men, but those who can be classified as "normal" except for their use of violence. McPhail et al. (2007) countered that, in contrast to their view of men, some feminists see women as powerful, filled with spirit and agency and therefore strive to empower women.

Feminist researchers believe that domestic violence cannot be explained without contextualising it through the use of gender. For example, male perpetrators talk about how their victims threatened their masculinity when they did not respect them, and female victims report that abusers use "normative gender expectations" to justify their abuse (DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007, p. 875). McPhail et al. (2007) found that the type of violence used within a relationship also depends on the gender of the perpetrator. For example, a man will control his female partner's spending and a woman will use her husband's credit cards in such a way that he cannot afford the payments. DeKeseredy and Dragiewicz (2007) believed that feminist perspectives do not focus exclusively on gender as a causal factor but also investigate the

impact of unemployment, globalisation, de-industrialisation, life event stress, intimate relationship status, familial and societal patriarchy, substance use and male peer support.

Due to the development of a dogmatic view of domestic violence through feminism (Hamel, 2007; Lipchik et al., 1997; McMurrin & Gilchrist, 2008), this once-helpful perspective on domestic violence is seen to have become so single-minded that it would ignore all victims of domestic violence who do not fit into the feminist model of domestic violence victimology (Hamel, 2007; Lipchik et al., 1997; McMurrin & Gilchrist, 2008). Researchers such as McMurrin and Gilchrist (2008) believe that the dogmatic feminist view of domestic violence detaches domestic violence research from other factors that might influence violent behaviour (e.g. alcohol abuse). Hamel (2007) added that issues such as poor impulse control and personality factors are seen by some feminist researchers as excuses men use to justify their violent behaviour.

Research (Hamel, 2007; McLäughlin & Rozee, 2001; McPhail et al., 2007) seems to indicate that this perspective does not theoretically explain why domestic violence occurs within homosexual relationships, even though it has been included in programmes and literature, or why women abuse their male partners. However, motivations for using violence in intimate relationships have been investigated by feminists. Some motivations include self-defence, establishing control, expressing frustration or anger, retaliating after being emotionally hurt and feeling unable to express herself in any other way (Hughes et al., 2007). These motivations create a suggestion that violent females are victims who fight back or react violently in order to express feeling hurt or frustrated.

McPhail et al. (2007) propose a new feminist perspective called the Integrative Feminist Model that projects various theoretical components to address the critique levelled against the feminist perspective by other theorists and feminist practitioners. The Integrative Feminist Model includes the following components:

- § Personal issues are political
- § Alternative interventions such as restorative justice should be explored
- § Female perpetrators and male victims should be recognised
- § Policies and institutional responses should be changed
- § Additional explanatory models of domestic violence should be integrated into theory and practice

- § Victim choice and voice should be increased and solutions should be crafted that are personalised, and
- § Feminist analysis of power, and differentials based on gender, class, race, national origin, disability, sexual orientation and age should be undertaken.

The feminist perspective was instrumental in acknowledging the existence of abusive behaviour in relationships and establishing a body of literature that has provided carers with valuable information on how domestic violence is recognisable and how to best assist a victim. However, their initial exclusion of men and homosexual men and women as victims has created much harm to their campaign of victim empowerment. By recognising issues of power within relationships and critically reflecting upon them, all researchers could incorporate some feminist ideas within their research.

The Biopsychosocial Perspective

The biopsychosocial perspective was developed as a reaction against the prevalent bio-reductionism with which traditional psychiatry viewed health and illness (Pilgrim, Kinderman & Tai, 2008). Researchers (McKenry et al., 1995; Pilgrim et al., 2008; Zittel, Lawrence & Wodarski, 2002) explained that the biopsychosocial perspective is an amalgamated research position combining sociological, psychological and biological views to explain behaviour and disease. This perspective argues that causal agencies and significances are both equally important in investigating aetiology of disease and that more than one factor could cause a phenomenon (Pilgrim et al., 2008; Rosenbaum, Geffner & Benjamin, 1997). Zittel et al. (2002, p. 20) said that there is a “mind-body connection in behavioural health and psychology”. The analysis of the mind-body connection was pioneered by psychosomatic studies based on psychotherapy principles.

Pilgrim et al. (2008) and Rosenbaum et al. (1997) advanced that a strength of the biopsychosocial perspective is that a researcher or clinician can investigate the cumulative effects of biological, psychological and social factors when explicating mental disorders or phenomena. This perspective gains further appeal (Pilgrim et al., 2008) because it provides the scientist with assurance regarding the reality of mental disorder and the causality of

phenomena, which lead to such disorders being undeniable and serious issues for politicians, clinicians and other authorities to consider. Zittel et al. (2002) added that the biopsychosocial perspective also allows researchers and practitioners to advance preventative measures to adverse psychological phenomena.

An example of how the biopsychosocial perspective can be utilised in the field of domestic violence is found in the work of Dutton. According to McKenry et al. (1995), Dutton applied an ecologically nested theory of domestic violence that included factors related to genetic sensitivity, physiological arousal, emotional tagging, power issues, neighbourhood influences, employment status and cultural and societal characteristics. Rosenbaum et al. (1997) proposed a biopsychosocial model for relationship violence where aggression is the outcome of a process that involves arousal and breaking through a threshold where cognitive control gives way to automatic responses. The outcome, external behaviour, is mediated by various factors and not all behaviours are therefore violent or aggressive. Refer to Figure 1 for an adapted graphic of the Rosenbaum et al., 1997 model (the blocks represent factors that influence arousal, threshold and behaviour). In addition to the possible health and well-being influences identified by Dutton for domestic violence, Zittel et al. (2002) identified other influences include cognitive outlook, social supports, religious beliefs, cognitive coping styles, lifestyle choices and socioeconomic status.

Pilgrim et al. (2008) found that a major problem in regard to the utilisation of the biopsychosocial perspective is that some researchers use it to mechanistically explain the causal factors in phenomena without truly interrogating the phenomena themselves. Due to its focus on causality, the biopsychosocial perspective is vulnerable to possibly omitting reflexivity, and reproduces some forms of naïve realism (Pilgrim et al., 2008). Robinson, Keltner, Ward and Ross (1995, p. 407) defined naïve realism as a belief that there is a knowable, changeless and objective reality that can be reliably perceived by any “reasonable and rational” individual free from “self-interest, ideological bias or personal perversity”. Borrel-Carrio, Suchman and Epstein (2004) appeal to practitioners to include more of the patient’s or subject’s subjective perspective into their inquiry from a biopsychosocial perspective, as this can strengthen their efforts to understand and explain phenomena. Pilgrim et al. (2008) maintain that the biopsychosocial perspective is a holistic principle that is a link between psychology and medicine.

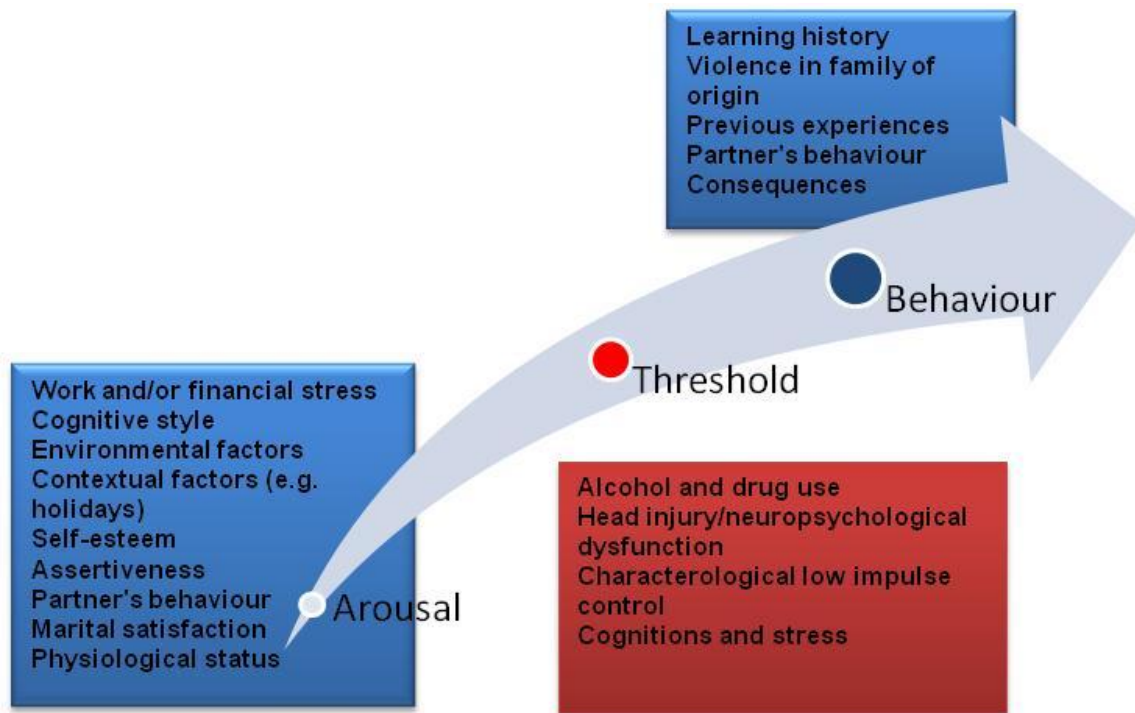


Figure 1: A proposed biopsychosocial model of relationship aggression (Rosenbaum et al., 1997)

Conclusion

All three of the described theoretical views and perspectives hold various strengths and weaknesses. However, Burgess and Roberts (2002, p. 14) importantly noted that “most theories about the causes of family violence are only partial explanations”. Social learning theories explain how aggressive and violent behaviours are learned, but they do not explain how the cognitive schemas that permit perpetrators their behaviour, is learned. Feminist perspectives on domestic violence explain how power imbalances due to gender, finances or race have contributed to the victimisation of women in intimate relationships. However, feminism cannot theoretically explain why domestic violence occurs in homosexual relationships or why women abuse their male partners.

Chermack and Giancola (1997) proposed that the only way in which true progress is to be made in researching the causes of phenomena such as domestic violence is by integrating all the various perspectives and providing a holistic explanation. The biopsychosocial perspective provides the researcher and practitioner with the means to combine any number of

theories and/or factors to explain why perpetrators abuse their victims and how these factors build on each other. It allows for preventative measures to be conceived and implemented through identification of arousal factors and a causal link (to a certain degree). The major danger in utilising the biopsychosocial perspective is a complacent attitude towards critical reflexivity and interrogating the concept of domestic violence. The perspective could also easily ignore the subjective experiences of the perpetrator and the victim of domestic violence and lead to an acceptance of naïve realism.

It is a reality that the scope of a holistic inclusive research endeavour that includes a multi-disciplinary team far exceeds the scope of this study programme. Even more restrictive would be the cost involved in executing such an endeavour. To guide the development of this research narrative, social constructionism was selected as the most appropriate theoretical perspective due to its compatibility with the narrative methodology. Social constructionism allows narrators to explain their experiences using their own language and social construction and does not exclude any explanation, whether it is rooted in the biopsychosocial perspective, social learning theory or feminist perspectives. This perspective will be further discussed in a later section of this chapter.

Research Review

In South Africa, a sub-culture of violence is dominant. According to Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967, P.140), a sub-culture of violence “suggests ... that there is a potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make up the life-style, the socialisation process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions”. This is a legacy of the apartheid years when violence was the norm. Freedom fighters bombed, shot and assaulted their enemies; the security police shot, tortured, bombed and assaulted their enemies. Many youngsters were raised in homes where violence was discussed openly in front of them. Many also grew up witnessing violence inside and outside the home on a daily basis. Jewkes et al. (2002) commented that domestic violence is tolerated in South Africa due to this sub-culture of violence and violence is normalised because it is a common occurrence in childhood.

In spite of this sub-culture, research has focussed primarily on the private domestic reality. Williams (2002) noted that most of the research focuses on the woman as the victim

and very seldom on the man as the victim. In the review of selected research studies, the wider cultural and scientific narrative will be explored as this has an impact on how the victim of abuse understands him or herself.

Before we enter into the socially constructed reality of an abused individual, I feel it appropriate to mention that scientific results are dependent on the methodology that is used by the researcher. Steinmetz (2007, p.55) stated that “across studies of spouse abuse, differences between husbands and wives as victim of the abuse depend on who participated in the study and the questions asked.” This indicates that the choice of respondents, the questions and the epistemological view of the researcher all determine the type of data that is collected. If a feminist researcher designs a qualitative study with male perpetrators as the respondents and uses questions regarding their behaviour towards their female partners, the research may more readily collect information that deals with perpetration rather than victimisation experiences.

In the following sections, the research on domestic violence will be discussed in six sections, namely, Female Victim, Male Victim, Mutually Combative Couples, Homosexual Couples, Gender Roles and Culture, Substance Use in Violent Relationships and HIV/AIDS in Violent Relationships. Because most people believe that women are most commonly abused by their husbands, research on the female as victim will be explored first.

Female as Victim

“And also when, I mean if you say no, he wants to have sex and you say no and then he just does it anyway, you know, that kind of thing [Interviewer: Did it happen often?] Ja, especially when he’s like drugged and stuff like that. And comes in late. [Pause] And wake me up, ja. That wasn’t nice. It leaves you very empty. [Interviewer: Mmm] It actually leaves you with a feeling of being raped.”

Boonzaier and De la Rey (2004, p. 458)

This section explores the research into female victims and male perpetrators. This overview of prevalent studies, will present victim and perpetrator characteristics and the effects of abuse on the victim. Researchers who focus on female victims and male perpetrators usually

hail from the feminist school of thought and believe that domestic violence is a symptom of power relations in society.

According to Oladeji and Adegoke (2008), domestic violence is mostly perpetrated by men, a view also upheld in the popular media (Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). In national surveys conducted in the USA (Reid et al., 2008), 25% to 29% of women reported experiencing some kind of domestic violence during adulthood. When stated another way (Roberts, 2007) - a woman is abused every six seconds in the USA – the extent of the problem becomes all the more apparent. Because the South African Police Service does not have a separate category for domestic violence, the incidence of male perpetrated domestic violence in South Africa is very difficult to determine, .but it is considered to be extremely high (Van der Hoven, 2001).

Haraway (1993) describes female victims as being much like other women. Walker and Browne (in Haraway, 1993), however, suggest that women who are socialised to accept violence against them do not develop self-protection skills. It is also accepted that women coming from homes where women are abused (Haraway, 1993; Mignon, 1998) or where the father abuses the child (Fontes, 1999) are more likely to be abused as adults. Further, women with disabilities are more likely to be abused by their male partners than those without disabilities (Hines, Brown & Dunning, 2007). Another major risk factor for victimisation of women is pregnancy (Roberts, 2007).

The effects of domestic violence are varied and permeate all levels of the individual's life. Female victims are more likely to experience severe physical injury (Belknap & Melton, 2005; Bogart et al., 2005; McHugh, Livingston & Ford, 2005; Reid et al., 2008; Roberts, Auinger & Klein, 2006; WHO, 2007) and emotional problems (Bogart et al., 2005; Reid et al., 2008; Roberts et al., 2006; Taylor & Pittman, 2005; WHO, 2007) that may lead to suicide, suicidal ideation and depression, and sometimes even to the abuse of alcohol and drugs (Roberts et al., 2006; WHO, 2007). In addition, women have problems accessing health care and an increased risk of HIV/AIDS transmission (Bogart et al., 2005). Other psychological effects include anxiety (Taylor & Pittman, 2005; Tutty, 1999), low self-esteem and hopelessness about ending the violence (Dutton, 1995; Jackson, 2005). It is pertinent to note that low self-esteem and feelings of hopelessness serve to keep the victim in the violent relationship (Katz et al., 2000).

Female victims of domestic violence have several ways of coping or enduring the violence they experience, and keeping themselves and their children safe. Some women fight

back, some run away, and others give in to the demands of the abuser to evade the abuse (WHO, 2007). Other coping behaviours identified (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004; Haraway & Hansen, 1993; Tutty, 1999) include minimising the partner's abusive behaviour, justifying the abuse, turning to religious teaching, denial and self-blame.

The question why many women do not leave abusive relationships has been answered in a number of ways. According to Dutton (1995) and McHugh et al. (2005), financial difficulties (due to the restriction of employment by the batterer), inadequate social support, housing problems after leaving the batterer, fear of losing her children, and fear of being hurt or killed by the batterer for leaving, are some of the many reasons why women may stay. In a similar vein, McHugh et al. (2005) noted that women who have invested significant psychological, financial and physical resources into a relationship are highly unlikely to leave.

McHugh (1993) states that research has focussed on three main reasons why women do not leave their abusive partners, - logistical (e.g. money, transport and housing), social (e.g. social isolation, family disapproval, feelings of failure and guilt) and psychological (e.g. learned helplessness). However, she also stresses the importance of the abused women's fears that, should they leave, the abusive partners will threaten their lives or those of their children. The WHO (2002) also notes that women stay with abusive partners in the hope that they may change. In certain milieus, the added barrier of cultural beliefs may also make the life of an unmarried or divorced woman much more difficult.

According to Boonzaier and De la Rey (2004) and McHugh et al. (2005), women's and men's accounts of violence differ, with men focussing more on the function or instrumentality of the violence, and women focussing more on its outcomes. Men also report fewer violent incidents than women (Bell & Naugle, 2007).

Brown and Hendricks (1998) note that abusers and victims of male perpetrated domestic violence share a number of common characteristics. Individuals involved in violent domestic relationships have low self-esteem, violent family backgrounds, traditional and stereotypical beliefs, suffer from denial, engage in self-defeating and unhealthy sexual conduct, are isolated and suffer from stress and stress-related problems.

Gondolf (1993) states that there is no clear-cut difference between batterers and non-batterers and those differences that do exist are not substantial. Batterers do, however, consistently show the same behaviours: over-possessiveness, jealousy, disrespect for women

in general, insecurities covered by bravado and belief in sex-role stereotypes (Oladeji & Adegoke, 2008; Walker, 1996). Felson and Cares (2005) and Ridley and Feldman (2003) note that male batterers are more likely to injure their partners more frequently and to be physically and sexually aggressive. They are also more likely to abuse substances and to have shown early conduct disorder (Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2005). Some batterers were also abused during childhood (Markowitz, 2000; McHugh et al., 2005; Mignon, 1998), most probably by their mothers (Fontes, 1999). Cook (1997) reports that men who saw abusive behaviour in their parents' relationship are almost three times more likely to abuse their partners.

The research on batterers has moved to typologies of batterers. "One conception, based on batterers' behavior [sic] suggests a continuum of sporadic, chronic, antisocial and sociopathic batterers" (Gondolf, 1993, p. 108).

Dutton (1995) states that no two batterers are alike, and proposed a model of three different types of male batterer to describe the general types of behaviour. The three types are the psychopathic batterer, the over-controlled batterer and the cyclical/emotionally volatile batterer.

Psychopathic batterers are cold, showing no remorse or any other emotional reactions. They have a relentless, unrealistic view of the future and a long history of criminal behaviour that includes both violent and non-violent crimes.

The over-controlled batterers are distanced from their feelings and show avoidance and passive aggressiveness during psychological tests. Their anger, usually the result of building frustration about non-related issues, erupts suddenly after they have been angry for long periods of time without expressing it. There are two subtypes: the active type and the passive type. The active man is usually very controlling and the passive type is seen as extremely distant.

The cyclical/emotionally volatile batterers feel either abandonment or engulfment; they are moody, irritable, jealous and irregular. They feel an assemblage of feelings, including rage and jealousy, and they misinterpret and blame their partners, holding them responsible for their feelings and blaming them when they fail to meet their impossibly high standards.

Batterers attribute their violence to a wide array of external stimuli, but never themselves. Many men have attributed their violent behaviour to the behaviour of their partner (e.g. jealousy, poor anger control, emotional instability, inflexible conflict resolution and relationship instability),

stress, self-defence, infidelity, substance use or financial strain (Henning et al., 2005). Oladeji and Adegoke (2008) state that batterers in certain cultural contexts feel that it is their right to “punish” their women. But even though this control over women is culturally sanctioned, abusive men exceed these norms (Oladeji & Adegoke, 2008).

Batterers also respond to their own violent behaviour. In a study conducted by Taylor and Pittman (2005), batterers experienced personal distress and unhappiness and also felt that their families placed a lot of emphasis on independence.

Throughout this presentation of the research into female victims and male perpetrators, it becomes apparent that domestic violence has adverse effects on the victim who usually suffers from depression and in some cases even post-traumatic stress disorder. Women who are abused by their partners have low self-esteem, but their perpetrators also tend to suffer from low self-esteem.

Although it is accepted that women are more often abused than men, researchers have proposed from the early 1970s that men are not only the batterers in relationships but can also be victimised by their female partners (Felson & Cares, 2005; Hines et al., 2007). The next section gives an overview of male victims of unilateral domestic violence.

Male as Victim

“I tried to call the cops but she wouldn’t let me... She beat me up, punched me... She raped me with a dildo... I tried to fight her off, but she was too strong... I was bleeding and she wouldn’t let me get [sic] to the doctor’s [sic].”

Hines et al. (2007, pp.66-67)

Although it is accepted that most domestic violence victims are women, more and more men are now reporting domestic violence being perpetrated against them. These men are not yet as visible as female victims and, although some research has been undertaken with this population, these men have a long and hard fight ahead to become as visible as female victims. This section gives an overview of the research regarding male victims and female perpetrators.

Unfortunately, little research has been undertaken on the prevalence of female perpetrated domestic violence in South Africa. Archer (2006) states that this trend is most apparent internationally, with many statistics and studies dealing only with female victims of domestic violence, implying that males are not victimised by their female domestic partners or wives. Hughes et al. (2007), Mignon (1998) and Steinmetz (2007) observe that the focus on husband battering will draw attention and resources away from wife abuse, and that it might eventually eclipse it. Steinmetz (2007) relates incidents in previous decades where scholars who investigated husband abuse were threatened, their characters publicly attacked and, in one instance when a researcher was invited to speak at a domestic violence conference, the conference received bomb threats. She says that it is ironic that these women would threaten violence, and yet claim that women are incapable of threatening or resorting to violence.

It is believed that husband abuse has been ignored because an abused husband is more stigmatised than an abused wife. Richardson (2005) admits that she and her colleagues conducted a research programme that evidenced female aggression, but they did not pay it much attention due to their resistance against the evidence. Steinmetz (in Mignon, 1998) gives several reasons why this ignorance has happened in the scientific community. She asserts that there was a lack of experimental data, inattention from researchers (also noted by Cook, 1997), more serious and more visible physical injuries to female victims, and males' reluctance to admit to victimisation by female perpetrators.

It is believed that the rate of female perpetrated domestic violence is similar to that of male perpetrated domestic violence internationally (Bell & Naugle, 2007; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2005; Hamel, 2007; Hines et al., 2007; Sarantakos, 1999; Taylor & Pittman, 2005; Tutty, 1999), and that female perpetrators use similar levels of violence as their male counterparts. The reason why official statistics for female perpetrated domestic violence is much lower is believed to be correlated with the fact that abused men tend to report their abuse far less than women, and abused men tend to prosecute their abusers less due to the many obstacles that they face (Cook, 1997).

For example, Sarantakos (1999), in his analysis of data from Australia (most of the data on husband abuse there was gained accidentally), determined that female perpetrated domestic violence was far worse than was initially thought and that men's experiences of abuse have been questioned because of the heavy focus on female victims.

In a study conducted by Bell and Naugle (2007) on a university campus in the USA, they found approximately equal rates of perpetration and victimisation among men and women. This study was a self-report study that has the disadvantage of both genders underreporting their own violent behaviour.

Some studies, however, did not find this symmetry in the perpetration of domestic violence. But these studies, as Felson and Cares (2005) describe, use only measures of more serious and direct forms of violence and aggression. When less serious and indirect forms of violence and aggression are taken into account, gender symmetry in perpetration is once again evidenced (McHugh et al., 2005). Cook (1997) notes that previous research has shown that bodily force is used in less than 20% of domestic violence cases, but that a gun or knife is used as a threat or an actual weapon in more than 60% of abusive episodes. There is, however, little research on the characteristics of male victims and female perpetrators (Mignon, 1998). The following discussion introduces the reader to some of the research.

Male victims of domestic violence share similar characteristics to their female victim counterparts. They have very low self-esteem (Mignon, 1998), high levels of fear (Brown & Hendricks, 1998; Migliaccio, 2002), suffer from depression (Taylor & Pittman, 2005) that might lead to suicide or suicidal ideation (Migliaccio, 2002), and experience high levels of frustration (Tutty, 1999). In addition, men might have feelings of being less than a man (Loring, 1994). Loring (1994) believes that the lack of in-depth research into the male victim is perpetuated by the cultural belief that men cannot be victims. The role of gender conceptions is very important as to why men do not report their abuse (Williams, 2002).

According to Belknap and Melton (2005), Migliaccio (2002), Taylor and Pittman (2005) and Tutty (1999), male victims experience a broader range of abusive behaviour that is not just limited to physical violence. Male victims experience similar controlling (Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2005; Hamel, 2007; Hines et al., 2007) and physically abusive behaviours to female victims (Hines et al., 2007). They also experience events that are unique to being a man. For example, a female partner using institutionalised procedures that are designed to protect female victims (Flinck, Åstedt-Kurki & Paavilainen, 2008; Hines et al., 2007) or accusing their partners or husbands of domestic violence and having them arrested (Hines et al., 2007). Men are also subjected to life-threatening violence (Hines et al., 2007), fearing their partner's aggression and

the potential for their partners to stalk and rape them (Hamel, 2007). An unemployed male partner is at higher risk of being abused by his partner (Hines et al., 2007).

Taylor & Pittman (2005) report that, similar to female victims, male victims experience psychosomatic symptoms, high stress levels and depression. One of the specific consequences experienced by male victims of female perpetrated domestic violence is the internal and external struggle with masculine ideals (Migliaccio, 2002).

Hughes et al. (2007) reported that female abusers are far more likely to use weapons against their partners. The following additional behaviours have been reported by the men in Cook's (1997) study:

- § Throwing things
- § Sleep deprivation
- § Groin attacks, and
- § Biting.

Abused men tend not to retaliate against their perpetrators, even though they have physical size and strength as protective barriers. Reasons put forward in research as to why this happens are that men do not reciprocate due to chivalry (Hamel, 2007; Migliaccio, 2002; Mignon, 1998), that they are scared of future violent retaliation from their partner (Migliaccio, 2002) and that when men do defend themselves they are charged with domestic violence (Hines et al., 2007). One respondent said, "I was just taught that you never hit a woman" (Cook, 1997, p. 47). A common reason given by female college students in America as to why they aggress against their partners is because their partners will not retaliate (Archer, 2006).

While men experience the same consequences of domestic violence as women (Migliaccio, 2002; Taylor & Pittman, 2005; Tutty, 1999), they also experience consequences specific to men. One of these specific male consequences is their internal and external struggle with masculine ideals when he is a victim of female perpetrated domestic violence experiences (Migliaccio, 2002).

Mignon (1998) states that women and men report similar reasons for staying within an abusive relationship. Unemployment or the lack of financial resources can make it difficult for men to leave abusive relationships (Cook, 1997; Migliaccio, 2002; Steinmetz, 2007). Migliaccio (2002) describes how abusive female partners controlled the family funds and used money as a

manipulation tool to get their partners not to leave. Another reason why men will not leave abusive relationships is their children (Cook, 1997; Migliaccio, 2002; Steinmetz, 2007; Tutty, 1999). They fear that without financial means they will not be able to look after their children, that they might lose custody or that their partner might hurt their children. Investments such as children or marriage in the relationship increase the likelihood that men will not leave an abusive relationship (McHugh et al., 2005; Roberts et al., 2006). An abused man is also secondarily victimised by society through public ridicule, whenever they seek help from protective agencies, friends and family members (Hamel, 2007). A further reason why men are not prepared to leave an abusive relationship is because they feel responsible for the failure of their marriage and their family (Cook, 1997).

Men also tend to redefine the violence that they experience at the hands of their partners. This is usually achieved through rationalisation or defending his partner as a good person under a lot of pressure, as a victim of mental instability or of substance abuse (Steinmetz, 2007). Another reason why many men do not leave their abusive partner is because they want to believe that their partner will change and will not be abusive in the future (Steinmetz, 2007).

Many researchers claim that female perpetrators only aggress in response to aggression against them, as part of the battered wife syndrome or in anticipation of violence against them (Belknap & Melton, 2005; Felson & Cares, 2005; Fontes, 1999; Frieze, 2005; Hamel, 2007; Henning, Jones & Holdford, 2003; Hines et al., 2007; McHugh et al., 2005; Ridley & Feldman, 2003; Sarantakos, 1999; Steinmetz, 2007; Tutty, 1999). These reasons for female aggression excuse and make female violence more acceptable (Felson & Cares, 2005). However, Hines et al. (2007, p. 64) cite studies that found that women reported “anger, jealousy, retaliation for emotional hurt, efforts to gain control and dominance, and confusion” as motivations for the use of violence against their male partners. Hamel (2007) notes studies that found women engaging in direct physical aggression when they felt justified and knew that they would remain unidentified.

The female perpetrator relies more heavily on psychological abuse than the male perpetrator. Most men are larger and stronger than their female partners (McHugh et al., 2005; Migliaccio, 2002). Female domestic violence perpetrators are twice as likely to throw something at their victims than male perpetrators and are significantly more likely to hit with an object

(Cook, 1997). Migliaccio (2002) also states that many of the narrators' wives in his research suffered from low self-esteem. The wives also controlled their husbands by making them stop work or stop seeing friends and family. The abuser might also threaten to commit suicide if the partner were to leave. The role of gender conceptions is very important as to why men do not report their abuse (Williams, 2002).

In a self-report study of the characteristics of callers to a male domestic violence helpline, Hines et al. (2007) found that female perpetrators had a high likelihood of having childhood trauma, such as coming from a violent family (Mignon, 1998), having a mental illness or using substances. The male partners of these perpetrators also reported that they have threatened either suicide or homicide. This study's findings are closely related to those of Henning et al. (2003) who studied the mental health histories and current functioning of men and women convicted of domestic violence. In this study, they found that women were more likely than men to have been prescribed psychotropic medication, to show personality dysfunction and to attempt suicide.

In a study to investigate how domestic violence offenders attribute blame of violent episodes, Henning et al. (2005) found that female offenders used minimisation, denial and external attributions to justify the offences that they were arrested for. These women also attributed blame to characteristics that their partners posed. Many of the women felt that their partners were not committed to their relationships, their partners were unfaithful and their partners were insecure in their relationships.

Female perpetrators have a specific reaction towards their own aggressive behaviour. Taylor and Pittman (2005) found that these aggressive women were more distressed in their personal, marital (relational) and interpersonal relationships inside and outside their family and that they perceived their families more negatively than male perpetrators. The women are more often than not exposed to high levels of stress, abuse alcohol and were abused earlier in their life. Women tend to become less violent with age (Frieze, 2005).

When reflecting upon the selected research presented in this section, it becomes apparent that male victims share many of the characteristics of female victims. They also deal with the violence in similar ways to women, and stay in abusive relationships for the same reasons as women. However, men tend to experience different types of violence that are

specific to their gender; for example, attacks to the groin and the use of domestic violence legislation against them by their wives or partners.

Although the main body of existing literature deals with the unidirectionality of abuse, there are some instances of mutual or bi-directional abuse. This phenomenon of mutual abuse is discussed in the following section.

Mutually Combative Couples

In the previous sections, research regarding violence perpetrated by one partner in the relationship was presented. However, there are instances where both partners are both victim and perpetrator during different violent episodes. This section gives an overview of the research concerning couples who were both victim and perpetrator.

Confusion exists regarding the concept of mutually abusive couples and women who aggress against an abusive partner in self-defence. Walker (1996) defines violence in self-defence (or retaliatory violence) as any violence that is perpetrated by a victim of domestic violence when he or she is in fear of his or her life or is being abused by the partner. Mutually abusive couples are so termed in cases where *both* individuals are the victim and perpetrator of abuse (Hamel, 2007; Renzetti, 1992).

For me, there are clear distinctions between these two types of relationship. First, the intention of the violence differs in each situation. In the case of violence as self-defence, the intention is to protect oneself or one's children from the partner. It is a case of "hurt him or her so that he or she can't hurt me". In mutually abusive relationships, there is no such intention. The intention here is purely to overpower and humiliate the other partner. The role of victim and perpetrator moves from partner to partner in different situations (McHugh et al., 2005).

Renzetti (1992) makes a distinction between retaliatory and mutual violence. She defines retaliatory violence as defending oneself, and mutual violence as fighting back. The best predictor of physical aggression towards a partner is the level of violence that the partner employs against the aggressor (Frieze, 2005). According to Frieze (2005), these mutually combative couples employ both psychological and physical aggression, but do not aim to control their partners.

In conclusion, mutually combative couples are those couples where both partners aggress towards each other with the intent to fight and not to defend themselves. The intent of

the violence in mutually combative relationships is to overpower, control and humiliate the other partner.

Domestic violence is not a phenomenon exclusive to heterosexual couples. Homosexual couples also have to deal with violence, whether it is unidirectional or bidirectional. The following section describes domestic violence in homosexual couples.

Homosexual Couples

"I thought I was going to die. He had his hands around my throat and was squeezing tighter and tighter. I could feel myself blacking out and I tried to fight him off but it was no use. He started to bang my head against the hall mirror. The last thing I remember is feeling something warm pouring down the back of my neck. Then I must have passed out."

Burke (1998, p. 161)

The review of selected research has so far dealt almost exclusively with domestic violence in heterosexual relationships. Domestic violence is, however, also perpetrated in homosexual relationships, including mutually combative couples. This section gives an overview of selected research of domestic violence in homosexual relationships.

Jackson (1998) surmises that little research attention has been given to domestic violence in homosexual couples, largely due to the homophobic nature of society and the often private and secluded lifestyles of homosexual couples. Sullivan and Kuehnle (2007) stated that domestic violence was largely narrated by feminists as a phenomenon only occurring in heterosexual relationships where men were the perpetrators, but that the existence of domestic violence in same-sex relationships was not noted. It is reported in Frieze (2005) that the relatively short duration of homosexual relationships in comparison with heterosexual relationships and the unwillingness of homosexuals to identify their gender orientation further reduce the availability of data. However, in an attempt to legitimise domestic violence in homosexual couples and to lend authenticity to the experiences of victims, activists and researchers, in fighting for the rights of victims and survivors, draw parallels between the victims

and perpetrators of “real” domestic violence and domestic violence in homosexual relationships (Miller, Greene, Causby, White & Lockhart, 2001).

Renzetti (1992) believed that the prevalence estimates for domestic violence in homosexual couples are not considered reliable, while Island and Letellier (1991) noted that the prevalence rates are best-guessed estimates. The possible reason for the inaccurate scientific narration of the prevalence of domestic violence in the homosexual community is largely because domestic violence is underreported (Burke & Owen, 2007). It is estimated that 25% to 30% of all gay men and lesbian woman in intimate relationships are victims of domestic violence (Burke, 1998; Tully, 2001). Burke (1998) notes that the occurrence of domestic violence in homosexual relationships is approximately the same as that for heterosexual relationships. However, lesbians in dating relationships report less violence than heterosexuals (cited in Rohrbaugh, 2006), but it has been stated that lesbian relationships might have higher rates of emotional abuse than heterosexual relationships (McLäughlin & Rozee, 2001).

Morrow and Hawxhurst (1989) indicated that it seems that lesbians are less likely than heterosexual men to beat their partners. But contrary to popular belief, gay men are more likely to be killed by their partner than during homophobic incidents¹ (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007).

The victims of domestic violence in homosexual relationships share similar characteristics to those in abusive heterosexual relationships (Barnes, 1998; Burke, 1998; Renzetti, 1992). Island and Letellier (1991) assert that victims of homosexual domestic violence are more often than not strong and powerful individuals who are very much in control of their own lives. However, they do differ in where they can go for help as there are fewer resources available to these victims (Barnes, 1998). In many USA states, victims of domestic violence have first to admit to criminal acts, sodomy, to prove that they share a domestic relationship, before being able to get help from the police (Barnes, 1998). In some cases, a homosexual domestic violence situation is seen as being a case of quarrelling roommates (Barnes, 1998).

The victims of same-sex domestic violence often have feelings of anger towards their partner (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007); they withdraw from society (Burke, 1998); they are distrustful of others (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Jackson, 1998); they are fearful (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Jackson, 1998); they blame themselves for the violence (Burke,

¹ Homophobic incidents are where heterosexuals attack homosexuals.

1998); they suffer from frustration (Burke, 1998), feelings of powerlessness (Jackson, 1998), and depression (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007) and might have low self-esteem (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Jackson, 1998). Lesbian victims of domestic violence, and who have also been exposed to victimisation during childhood either directly or indirectly, are dependent on their partners either socially or economically and might experience brief dissociative episodes (Jackson, 1998).

Most homosexual victims of domestic violence note that the main reason for their reluctance to report their abuser is that the police display homophobic behaviour towards them (Burke & Owen, 2007; Renzetti, 1992) and homosexual victims fear that the police will not treat them well (Barnes, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007). Another major contributing factor to the low reporting of domestic violence is that, in the gay and lesbian community, relationships are seen as equal and egalitarian, and they thus do not find support from people in their own community (Burke, 1998; Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1989). There is often a lack of knowledge regarding the occurrence of same-sex domestic violence (Burke, 1998). When the batterer is a lesbian, the victim is often not believed because women are perceived to be non-aggressive (Jackson, 1998), which is an obstacle very similar to that which male victims of female batterers have to face. Another reason for not reporting the violence when it occurs between two gay men is that men have been socialised that they should take hardship, bullying and violence “like a man” (Burke & Owen, 2007).

Homosexual victims’ reasons for staying in abusive relationships are much the same as those for heterosexual women. They stay in the relationship because they hope that the partner will change as often promised after an abusive episode (Burke, 1998; Island & Letellier, 1991); they have a strong commitment to the relationship or have invested a lot in the relationship (Renzetti, 1992); they have been isolated from friends and family by the abuser and have nowhere to go for help (Burke, 1998; Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1989); or they do not have the resources required to leave (Burke & Owen, 2007; Island & Letellier, 1991; Renzetti, 1992). Due to the friendships that partners share, they not only lose a partner when confronting the abuse but also a friendship network (Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1989), or they do not have the resources required to leave (Burke & Owen, 2007; Island & Letellier, 1991; Renzetti, 1992). In addition, they may not have the support of friends and family because they are homosexual (Burke, 1998; Morrow & Hawxhurst, 1989). Another reason for staying is the HIV/AIDS status of the individuals within a relationship (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007). This will be discussed

in more detail in the section, HIV/AIDS in Violent Relationships. Renzetti (1992) notes that lesbian victims of domestic violence are much more likely to fight back because of perceived social permission.

According to Burke (1998), Tully (2001) and Sullivan and Kuehnle (2007), the characteristics of violence in homosexual relationships are much the same as those for heterosexual couples, including physical, psychological, spiritual and material abuse. However, it also includes violence specific to homosexual couples, such as heterosexist control, economic control, sexual control and the restriction of one's freedom (Burke, 1998). Heterosexist control or the use of homophobia to control the victim can be defined as threatening the victim into compliance through the threat of "outing" the partner to those who are not aware of his or her sexual preferences (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Rohrbaugh, 2006). Stress in a relationship, defined as internalised homophobia and experiences of discrimination, has been successfully used to predict domestic violence (McHugh et al., 2005). Another more subtle form of abuse is where the abuser withholds medication from a partner who has HIV/AIDS (Burke & Owen, 2007), threatens to disclose his/her status (Burke & Owen, 2007), or plays on the sympathies of the victim when s/he wants to leave (Burke & Owen, 2007). Sullivan and Kuehnle (2007) note that lesbians are also regularly subjected to rape by their partners. An interesting finding in regard to economic abuse in lesbian relationships is that the victim and the perpetrator do not differ in their employment status, and in many cases, the victim earns more income than the perpetrator (Sullivan & Kuehnle, 2007). The pattern of economic dependency in abusive heterosexual relationships is therefore not prevalent in abusive lesbian relationships.

The abusive homosexual is indistinguishable from any other individual (Burke, 1998), but they do share many of the characteristics of heterosexual batterers. Homosexual batterers minimise the use violence (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Island & Letellier, 1991), they deny the use of violence (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Island & Letellier, 1991), they blame the victim for the violence (Burke, 1998; Island & Letellier, 1991), they are often loners (Burke & Owen, 2007), they often have explosive personalities or tempers (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007), they have low self-esteem (Burke, 1998; Island & Letellier, 1991; Tully, 2001), they are dependent on their partners (Burke, 1998; Jackson, 1998; Miller et al., 2001), they lack proper communication skills (Burke, 1998; Tully, 2001) and they experience a lack of control (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Island & Letellier, 1991; Tully, 2001). Island and Letellier (1991) noted that abusers are more likely to have a history of battering and physical violence

including, but not exclusive to, being abused as a child or witnessing abusive behaviour and having a history of substance abuse (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007; Jackson, 1998; Sullivan & Kuehnle, 2007).

It seems to me that in the past, and similar to male heterosexual victims of domestic violence, homosexual victims were largely silenced by feminists, by the homophobic nature of society and by the refusal of homosexuals to acknowledge that their egalitarian relationships also have power imbalances. In my opinion, the silencing of male heterosexual victims of domestic violence by feminists happened because feminists were concerned that the acknowledgement of male victims would decrease the prominence and financial support that female victims of domestic violence enjoy in society.

As with heterosexual domestic violence, the prevalence of domestic violence in homosexual relationships is also very difficult to estimate due to the underreporting of domestic violence. Homosexual victims of domestic violence also share the same characteristics as those of female and male heterosexual victims. However, it has been found that lesbians are less likely to abuse their partners than heterosexual men, that gay men are more likely to be killed by their partners than by a stranger during a homophobic attack and that more emotional and/or psychological aggression is used by lesbian perpetrators than in heterosexual relationships.

On further reflection of the presented research in this section and the previous research regarding female and male victims, it becomes apparent that, no matter what the gender or sexuality of a domestic violence victim, certain characteristics and reactions towards the violence stay the same. This consistency is also found for perpetrators. However, as was found for male victims, there are certain aspects of violent relationships that are only found in abusive homosexual couples. These include the use of homophobia against the partner to control and demean him or her, threatening to “out” the victim if s/he does not conform to the wishes of the perpetrator, and the threat to disclose the victims’ HIV/AIDS status (if it is applicable). It is my opinion that the threat to disclose a partner’s HIV/AIDS status is not specific to homosexual couples, but that they are more open to talk about it than heterosexual couples.

Implicit in the research review, especially in the sections Female as Victim, Male as Victim and Homosexual Couples, is the role of gender and its associated role in domestic violence. In the next section, gender roles and culture are explored.

Gender Roles, Culture and Abuse

Each person is born and socialises within a particular culture and temporal context that influences who he or she will become. Each culture has a specific role it ascribes to males and females, and these roles influence the way people act and the way their actions are perceived. The effects of the roles of both culture and gender are explored in this section, with specific reference to the heterosexual female perpetrator and the heterosexual male victim.

The culture of which an individual is part might influence the way in which domestic violence is defined and what is defined as acceptable. Research has indicated that in cultures where gender empowerment and individualism increases, the number of abused women within the culture decreases and the number of abused men increases (Archer, 2006; Oates, 1998). Archer's (2006) research hypothesised that the higher incidence of male domestic violence victims in western nations is higher due to the higher societal power that women enjoy in these nations.

Oates (1998) notes that language issues can specifically contribute to the help-seeking behaviour of victims. When a victim is not fluent in the language of the helping professional and there is a barrier in communication, the victim would rather return to the abusive relationship. Further, the roles and duties associated with a gender might not be considered domestic violence within one culture, but when someone from a different culture observes the behaviour, it is immediately identified as abuse (Oates, 1998).

The gender of the victim influences how people think about the abusive situation. Behaviour is only labelled as abusive when the behaviour is seen to be atypical for the prescribed gender roles (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005). When the victim is male, people will attribute more blame to the male victim than they would to a female victim (Lehmann & Santilli, 1996; Tutty, 1999). This has implications for victims when they seek help. For example, victims who are blamed by the people helping them may feel alienated, and this might prevent them from seeking help in the future.

Female Perpetrator

As noted from the work of Boonzaier and De la Rey (2004), the traditional focus of the female gender role is one of love, caring, nurturing and obedience. Traditional views on socialisation indicate that females would not behave aggressively (Jackson, 1998; Richardson, 2005). It is thus shocking, even laughable, to many people to hear about a woman who abuses her partner. As mentioned in the section Male as Victim, there was widespread resistance to the concept of female aggression because people ascribe to a stereotypical understanding of femininity and females (Richardson, 2005).

Williams (2002) states that female violence is trivially explained and made superficial through the predominant gender stereotypes for women - pre-menstrual stress (PMS), battered wife syndrome and post-partum depression. People also tend to explain their abuse in terms of retaliation for abuse against them, and when they abuse their children, this is explained as a reaction in response to the violence that they suffer from their partners (Fontes, 1999; Tutty, 1999). Research has also indicated that domestic violence by male perpetrators is more harshly judged than that by female perpetrators and male violence is considered to be more serious (Sorenson & Taylor, 2005).

In a phenomenological study by Flinck, Åstedt-Kurki and Paavilainen (2008), they found that when men hold traditional views of the roles of men and women, they are more prone to violence, but that women with more liberal views on the roles of women, are more prone to violence. Women are more likely to aggress against men when they feel that the aggression is justified and permissible (Fontes, 1999).

Male Victim

The traditional male gender role is that of a strong patriarch. It is thus strange for many of us to consider such a strong patriarch as being emotionally or physically abused. His partner is, after all, usually so much smaller and weaker than himself. If men acknowledge or report being beaten or otherwise abused by their wives or female partners, they are seen to be weak and less than a man (Loring, 1994).

Men from certain traditional cultures will keep quiet when they are abused by their wives or girlfriends to save face in the eyes of other men in the fear of being emasculated (Migliaccio, 2002; Williams, 2002). Research has shown that these fears by men might not be unfounded.

A review by Sorenson and Taylor (2005) showed that male victims are attributed with the blame in an abusive situation.

When a man is abused, the traditional “macho man” façade is attacked and broken down, leading to lower self-esteem (Lehmann & Santilli, 1996). Due to men being culturally accepting of violence, they also tend to minimise and even deny the seriousness or existence of domestic violence perpetrated against them (Cook, 1997). It therefore seems to be an accurate assumption that gender roles and culture play an important role in the silencing of male victims and the empowerment of female perpetrators through either social sanction or the denial of the existence of relational aggression from females.

Although feminism has worked very hard to lay aside traditional gender roles, it seems that some feminists are not willing to lay aside the traditional view of women as being loving and caring when they have to look into the face of a female perpetrator of domestic violence. Some feminists also do not want to ignore the traditional view of men as the one with the power in relationships. Dutton and Nicholls (2005, p. 708) concluded that feminism has worked very hard to try to change gender roles in contemporary society. However, they are unwilling to acknowledge female perpetrated domestic violence because they are afraid that the acknowledgement of women as aggressors towards men will undo all the hard work that they have done to combat domestic violence and that services for female victims will “disappear”.

In the previous sections, readers will have noticed the mention of alcohol and illicit substances and the role that they play in abusive relationships. This role is briefly presented in the next section of selected research.

Substance Abuse in Violent Relationships

Drinking alcohol or using illicit substances to deal with problems or to escape an undesirable reality is not uncommon practice. Alcohol is a large part of the South African culture whereby we have a couple of drinks at a braai, at a party, while watching our favourite sport and even a glass of wine at Sunday lunch. The most common substance abused by South African people is therefore alcohol followed by dagga (South African Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, 2008). It can thus be expected that, in the majority of cases where substances were involved during a domestic violence episode, it will be alcohol.

A major theme throughout this research review has been the impact of illicit substances on the victimisation and perpetration of domestic violence. This section seeks to explore the impact that alcohol and illicit substances have on domestic violence. According to the WHO (2007), alcohol consumption is a major contributor to the incidence of domestic violence and it also increases abuse occurrence and severity. The connections between alcohol and domestic violence are listed:

- § It affects cognitive and physical functioning that reduces self-control and makes the user less capable of adaptive conflict resolution
- § It exacerbates financial difficulties, childcare problems, cheating and other family stressors
- § Experiencing violence in a relationship can lead to alcohol consumption as a way to cope with the violence, and
- § Children whose parents are abusive towards each other exhibit harmful drinking patterns later in life.

In studies reported by Mignon (1998), the majority of women who were abused by their male partners reported that more than 60% of the perpetrators were abusers of alcohol and 20% to 30% indicated that their partners had a drug problem. She also reported that victims also abuse substances, particularly alcohol. Dutton's (1995) research found a positive correlation between abusive personality and alcohol consumption. These results were confirmed by Markowitz (2000), who also noted that drinking is more common among the abusers than the abused. In abusive lesbian relationships, the dependency of the violent partner on the victim is correlated to her use of substances (Sullivan & Kuehnle, 2007).

The WHO (2007) found that 65% of South African women who were abused by their partners reported that their partners usually used alcohol before assaulting them. Van der Hoven (2001), Cook (1997) and Riggs, Caulfield and Street (2000) also noted that alcohol consumption plays a major role in domestic violence incidents. It is thought that alcohol increases the frequency of violent incidents by either decreasing inhibitions or by provoking more violence (Riggs et al., 2000). Riggs et al. (2000) reported that episodes of binge drinking are associated with higher rates of marital violence.

Domestic violence also leads to many victims turning to alcohol or other substances in order to cope with their violent lives (Cook, 1997; Sullivan, Meese, Swan, Mazure & Snow, 2005). In violent lesbian relationships, the victims rationalise and explain their partner's violent behaviour by attributing it to their partner's use of substances (Sullivan & Kuehnle, 2007). When men drink excessively, it increases the women's risk both of perpetrating violence and being victimised (Sullivan et al., 2005).

Men who suffer from diagnosable substance abuse disorders are at higher risk of becoming batterers (Rohrbaugh, 2006). Men diagnosed with substance abuse disorders are also likely to suffer from depression and substance abuse is therefore the most common means for men to deal with depression (Barlow & Durand, 2002). Substance abuse is therefore clearly one of the components that can contribute to violent relationships, whether it is a heterosexual or a homosexual relationship. In the majority of reported cases of domestic violence, the perpetrator has had alcohol prior to the abusive episode. Victims of domestic violence sometimes also use alcohol or illicit substances to cope with the violence and degradation in their lives. However, although the abuse of substances is implicated in the occurrence of domestic violence, no causal link has been established in the research (Mignon, 1998). Many perpetrators use drunkenness as an excuse for their behaviour, as do many victims. According to Burke (1998, p. 168), "voluntary intoxication is merely an excuse to violence, not the cause".

Another theme frequently recounted is that of HIV/AIDS in violent relationships. The following section gives a brief overview of some of the research.

HIV/AIDS in Violent Relationships

HIV/AIDS is a common syndrome in Africa that is little talked about in certain cultures. Because it is considered a taboo subject in many cultures, it is a weapon that can be readily used against a victim, and it lends itself to other means of control and domination. This section gives an overview of some of the themes investigated.

The role of HIV/AIDS infection is more readily mentioned in research material relating to gay or lesbian battering. I found that many perpetrators used their own or their victim's status as a means of control. Some HIV-positive gay men have intentionally infected their partners to prevent them from leaving (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007). Some fake HIV-related illness to guilt the victim into not leaving the relationship or to convince the victim to return to the relationship (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007). Some abusers have withheld their partners'

medication as a means to control them (Burke, 1998; Burke & Owen, 2007). Some have prevented the victim from seeking the necessary medical attention (Burke, 1998). Some have threatened to tell others of the victims' status (Burke, 1998). A major reason why some HIV-positive men refuse to leave their violent gay partners is because they fear to die alone and they believe that, if they leave their partners, they will not be able to find partners who would be able to deal with their HIV status (Burke & Owen, 2007).

It is therefore apparent that an abuser can and probably will use any means to control his or her victim. Due to the stigma ascribed to HIV/AIDS, it is a convenient means to control and dominate a partner. Other aspects of life that abusers could use to control and dominate their partners are their children, other illnesses, substance abuse and mental diseases.

Conclusion

In this chapter, an overview of selected research relating to female victims, male victims, mutually combative couples and homosexual couples has been presented. In addition to the selected research, some of the major themes (gender roles and culture, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS) in this research have been identified. There are many similarities between male and female perpetrators and victims of domestic violence. Both male and female victims have low self-esteem, suffer from depression, experience anger towards their partner and fear for their own and their children's safety, irrespective of their sexuality.

The patterns of abuse suffered by abuse victims are largely the same, but the physiological characteristics of both the perpetrator and the victim do contribute to the type of violence that is more common in relationships. For example, women will mostly abuse their male partners verbally and psychologically, and when they do attack their male partners, it will be largely unexpected attacks or attacks to the groin. It was found that lesbians tend to use more psychological abuse against their partners than heterosexual perpetrators.

Little is known regarding mutually combative couples. I feel that this is largely due to the difficulties that will be encountered in identifying couples where violence is truly mutual. In mutually combative couples, both partners can be identified as being both a perpetrator and a victim. When he or she is the perpetrator, the intent of the violence is not to defend him or herself but to control, demean and hurt the other partner.

Homosexual couples also experience domestic violence but they tend to not report it to the police due to a fear of homophobic reactions. Homophobia is also used by certain abusers as a means of control over their partners and also the threat of “outing” their partners to his or her family. In homosexual relationships, many of the traditional power imbalances such as employment status or income status do not exist and therefore tend to call into question feminist theories regarding domestic violence.

From this overview of selected research of domestic violence, the imbalance of research input into female victims and male perpetrators is painfully obvious. It begs the questions as to whether we do not understand domestic violence in its entirety, and how we as a society will be able to eradicate it. There are various areas of improvement in the field of domestic violence research, and it is my opinion that considerably more research is needed to provide a richer description of the various realities of male, gay and lesbian victims of domestic violence.

Social Constructionism and Domestic Violence

“The complexity of the lives of ordinary people defies tidy concepts.”

Waldman (2006, p. 84)

In order to describe behaviour where males are victims, it is important to first understand the dynamics of an abusive relationship. Such a relationship is constructed between two partners. Each partner provides meaning to their relationship and each tells the story of their relationship to the world in a different way.

This section comprises my construction of social constructionism as well as my construction of domestic violence through a social constructionist perspective.

Socially Constructing the World

Constructionism and constructivism are sometimes confused. Social constructionism focuses on how people construct meaning in relationships, whereas constructivists conceive constructions of meaning as a product of an individual mind (Gergen, 2009; Iverson, Gergen & Fairbanks, 2005). There is no singular view of social constructionism, but rather a myriad of

different dialogues to whom anyone can contribute (Gergen, 2009; Stam, 2001). Zielke (2006, para. 1) summarised social constructionism's view of research inquiry as, "scientific truths are subject to social practice and social conventions, and objectivity is subject to cultural and historical contingency".

Social constructionism holds that *individual* knowledge is not an individual feat but comes from participation by many (Iverson et al., 2005). Scientific knowledge can therefore never be seen as a mirror image of nature (Zielke, 2006) and is also "culturally and historically situated" (Gergen & Hosking, n.d., p. 30). Social constructionism holds that the world does not prescribe what is true because our relationship with the world is dependent on socially malleable conventions (Gergen & Hosking, n.d.).

Social constructionism is influenced by postmodernism in that it led its adherents away from critique towards creativity (Ellingham, 2000; Gergen, 2009). Rorty asserted that human beings do not possess the knowledge of God to decide whether one perspective is more correct than another (Durrheim, 1997). Durrheim explained that the move towards social constructionism in psychology was facilitated because individuals realised that predictive science is partly ineffective in psychology, failing to explain behaviour in its full richness. Durrheim (1997, p. 175) stated that, in sharp contrast to predictive sciences, social constructionism highlights "the social, historical and collective nature of human consciousness".

In social constructionist research, researchers do not oppose other paradigms *per se*, but merely the fact that some paradigms advocate dictatorial truths (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Ellingham (2000) and Gergen (2009) explained that social constructionists believe that objectivity is not possible because research uses specific methodologies and theoretical frameworks to guide the research. The results are therefore bound by those methodologies and theoretical frameworks, and you are also part of a social group that promotes the specific findings or beliefs. According to Iverson et al. (2005), truth is bound by accepted rules or parameters that allow truth to be described. Therefore, a truth can only be accepted as such within a specific system at a specific space and time. Social constructionism focuses on the historical and cultural and not on the natural and scientific (Gergen & Hosking, n.d.). There is no single definition of social constructionism because a definition will render it fixed and stable and ignores its alternative constructions (Aguinaldo, 2004; Burr, 1995).

There are, however, several aspects on which most social constructionists agree. Realities are socially constructed when people are in relationships with each other (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985, 2009; Gergen & Hosking, n.d.). Social constructionism does not deny the existence of reality, but holds that reality is explained from a specific standpoint (Gergen, 2009). According to Gergen (2009), Iverson et al. (2005) and Ellingham (2000), realities are constituted through language. The conversations that we have and the language that we use in those conversations shape the realities that we experience and understand (Gergen, 2009). Constructions are not merely constructed, as they also have some use in their social realm of existence. When a construction is used socially in interactions, they then achieve significance, therefore no construction exists independently from cultural traditions (Gergen, 2009).

Gergen (2009) stated that, through descriptions and explanations, researchers and people in general can change a tradition or grand narrative, or maintain it. However, constructionists also take part in reflexive considerations through which they consider alternatives that fall outside their own tradition of thinking (Burr, 1995).

Burr (1995) summarised social constructionism's tenets as follows: first, that realities are socially constructed; second, that realities are constituted through language; third, that realities are organised and maintained through narrative, and last, that there are no essential truths (Burr, 1995). In order to further explain the last point, Durrheim (1997, p. 177) states that "knowledge cannot represent reality because knowledge is always perspectival [sic]". Gergen, (2009) explained that this does not mean that there are no truths, but only that these truths are not stand-alone truths, but socially constructed between people in relationship.

Some researchers have criticised social constructionism as "some liberal, individualistic and naïve story" through which researchers can create anything that they like (Gergen & Hosking, n.d., p. 30). In Ratner's (2005) view, Gergen's conception of social constructionism promotes cultism and dogmatism because Gergen maintains that truth is social convention. He further creates a picture of Gergen's views as relativist because, according to Ratner (2005), Gergen upholds that there is no truth outside what the group believes. Social constructionism has been criticised that it either assumes realism or is not realist (Stam, 2001).

However, Ratner's (2005) critique of social constructionism does not take into account that social constructionism does not subscribe to ignoring other views of the world, but rather that they see an explanation of the world as situated within a particular context. It is not a case

of “anything goes” and it is definitely not a non-critical perspective of study. As discussed earlier, social constructionists critically assess their own research narratives and the methodology that they use to elicit the stories. They critically question grand narratives, such as men are always considered to be the perpetrators of domestic violence and women the victims, and HIV/AIDS is a medical condition exclusive to homosexual men. Liebrucks (2001) believes that it is possible to maintain a realist position as well as a plurality of perspectives.

However, social constructionism does not discount that people share experiences that have some commonalities (Liebrucks, 2001). Gergen (1985, p. 266) states that social constructionist inquiry “attempts to articulate common forms of understanding as they now exist, as they have existed in prior historical periods, and as they might exist should creative attention be so directed”. When people share the same views on a particular study field, it is a socially constructed view of the world that holds true for that specific set of individuals (Iverson et al., 2005) and when they critically assess their own views, there is room for change in the social construction.

Narrative is the primary means through which realities are organised and maintained (Burr, 1995; Ellingham, 2000). Due to the natural cooperation between social constructionism and language, it seemed fitting to utilise narrative methodologies in this research narrative. Narrative methodology is further explained in Chapter Three.

The following section provides an overview of domestic violence as viewed from a social constructionist perspective.

Explaining Domestic Violence

Due to the nature of social constructionism as a non-exclusive perspective, all research that has been conducted on domestic violence can be used to construct a view of domestic violence. Sundarajan and Spano (2004) explained that when couples enter into a relationship, one could assume that they bring with them various resources, such as behaviours and language, that contribute to the development of an abusive relationship. For further examples of resources within abusive relationships, refer to Chapter Four.

As a survivor of domestic violence, Tom has specific ideas of why it happened to him and what the consequences of his experiences have been. His experiences will be used in

conjunction with the research literature to create a co-construction of domestic violence that other researchers can then critically evaluate and use in their construction of domestic violence.

Victims and perpetrators of domestic violence influence each other's experiences of domestic violence and one can co-construct a shared experience that corresponds on various points, such as a sense of confusion, denial and minimisation of the abuse and hope for the relationship to heal (Sundarajan & Spano, 2004). These identified themes are similar but what may differ is the narrative detail that each person from the abusive relationship uses to construct the relationship with a third party. Narratives from public sources, such as the local "16 Days of Activism" (SouthAfrica.info Reporter, 2005) and research narratives, can also influence how people construct their experiences of an abusive relationship.

Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999, p. 235) assert that "greater power leads to greater influence over defining and framing social issues, women have had greater influence on how sexual and domestic violence is defined and understood by the public and by social scientists". Social scientists and activists focussing on the female victim and female victims being embraced by the general public, both serve as a means of eroding other views of a phenomenon, and therefore silences other voices such as male victims (Iverson et al., 2005). Iverson also asserts that the dominant narrative of domestic violence originating from the feminist perspective focuses on women as victims and silences those victims who are not attacked by men or are not female victims.

It is not just the dominance of a narrative that can guide the construction of experiences, but also the language used to describe a specific phenomenon. For example, some domestic violence research still refers to "women abuse", or when researchers describe perpetrator characteristics or behaviours, they refer to male pronouns – "he", "his". Further, some researchers speak of domestic violence but then only acknowledge female victims within their research narratives (e.g. Kaye, Mirembe, Ekstrom, Bantebya & Johansson, 2005). If the language that we use does not acknowledge men as legitimate victims of domestic violence and women as perpetrators, then we stand the chance of excluding male victims and female perpetrators from future research and assistance (Gergen, 2009).

Knowledge is not an individual feat, but rather it is obtained through a social process through which people co-construct the nature of phenomenon in their experiential world. These

constructions are represented by specific language uses and are essentially reality understood from a specific perspective.

Traditionally, domestic violence has been constructed as a problem faced by women, both through the World Health Organisation's definition of domestic violence (Kaye et al., 2005) and through the researcher's focus on females as the victims of domestic violence (refer to Sundarajan & Spano, 2004, pp. 46-47 for an overview of domestic violence) and males as the perpetrators (Oladeji & Adegoke, 2008). By constructing domestic violence from a social constructionist perspective, it allows narrators - such as Tom - to voice their experience of an abusive relationship without being labelled a false victim.

Conclusion

At this point and time in our journey, we have shared an introduction into domestic violence in which I have established the judicial definition that I used to guide my inquiry into the experiences of men who are abused by their wives or girlfriends. This chapter has provided an overview of some of the theoretical perspectives that have been used in constructing domestic violence. These perspectives have included social learning theory, feminist perspectives and the biopsychosocial perspective. Each of these three perspectives have contributed to the understanding of domestic violence. For instance, social learning theory accentuated the importance of family-of-origin behaviours in adults' abusive relationships. Feminist perspectives highlighted the fact that women's lack of power in society contributed to their status as victims and facilitated their violent oppression. The biopsychosocial perspective showed that single factors in isolation can provide a partial understanding of domestic violence, but that many factors investigated together could provide a more comprehensive understanding.

This chapter also contained some of the available research regarding women as victims, men as victims, mutually combative couples, homosexual couples, the roles of gender roles and culture in domestic violence, the presence of substance abuse and the misuse of HIV/AIDS in domestic violence. The reviewed research showed that many different research narratives influenced social knowledge accumulation about domestic violence and that women do not have exclusive victim status.



Social constructionism is a perspective that focuses on the relational nature of knowledge generation and allows the narrator - such as Tom - to assume a position of knowledgeable co-creator. Domestic violence has, to date, largely been constructed as a women's problem. A social constructionist viewpoint may allow this construction to be expanded also to include men as victims and survivors.

In the following leg of our journey, I will explain how I went about collecting the story, the reasons for my choice of methodology and the ethical issues that had to be considered.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

“These new [qualitative] methods are not for the faint of heart. They demand imagination, courage to face the unknown, flexibility, some creativeness, and a good deal of personal skills in observation, interviewing, and self-examination — some of the same skills, in fact, required for effective counseling [sic].”

Berrios and Lucca (2006, p. 174)

In this section of our journey, we now investigate the method used to extract and interpret the narrative. I did not experience a mammoth struggle within myself to choose whether I would like to design a quantitative or qualitative study, although there were several road signs along the way warning of the inherent difficulties in conducting qualitative research. My research question and my own way of being, always curious to ask another question as answers are found, guided my choice to adopt a qualitative approach.

Although I prefer qualitative methodologies and more subjective theoretical perspectives, I do not subscribe to a Kuhnian view of the science of psychology, in that I do not believe that one paradigm replaces another (Niaz, 2009). I believe that paradigms can complement one another, and in some instances certain methodologies and theoretical perspectives serve to interpret a research question better (Niaz, 2009). Davis and Klopper (2003, p. 73) state that “qualitative research concentrates on the *qualities* (italics added) of human behaviour and the main aim is to understand phenomena in a particular context”.

In this chapter, I will present my understandings of qualitative research, introduce the narrator, Tom, to the reader, and present the means through which Tom and I had our conversation (e-mail) as well as the ethical consideration that I had to keep in mind during my inquiry. The following section provides my view and understanding of qualitative methodology.

Qualitative Research

Before we commence our co-construction of qualitative research, I need to note that the presentation of qualitative research in this section is less than comprehensive. If I attempted to give a comprehensive overview of qualitative research, I could have written several books detailing the various theoretical systems that use qualitative research to answer questions and the various techniques that can be employed while undertaking qualitative research. There are many other aspects that are not specific to this research narrative, and will not be considered.

This research narrative aims to *describe* what a man experiences as a victim of domestic violence and how he is victimised. The goal is thus to reduce the “hows” and “whys” to a brief description that could be used - in collaboration with other research narratives - to *typify* the experiences of victimised men, and not to *explain* the rich experiences of these men (Davis & Klopper, 2003; Gwyter & Possamai-Inesedy, 2009). I felt that the research question as to the experiences of abused men lent itself well towards a qualitative research design because the main method of narrative collection would be through conversation, a very natural form of interpersonal relations (Berrios & Lucca, 2006).

The choice of a quantitative or qualitative research design is guided by the research question to which you seek answers and the epistemology that you as individual researcher feels an affinity towards. However, it is important to choose an epistemology that can describe or explain the research question under investigation. This view is mirrored in Gwyter and Possamai-Inesedy (2009, p. 104), who stated that “[t]he epistemological dog wags the methodological tail, and epistemologies are always grounded within larger social practices”. This means that the epistemology with which a researcher chooses to answer a research question guides the choice of methodology that will be used (Figure 2). All these choices are further situated within a social context with specific practices. Valsiner (2006) gives an example of

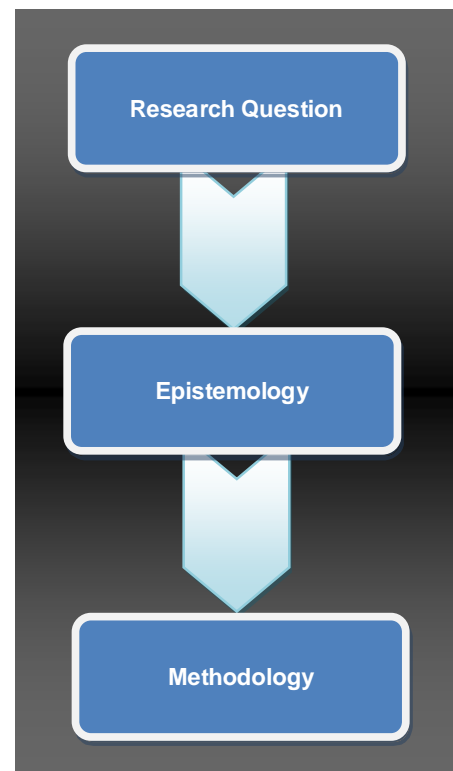


Figure 2: The choice process

how Marxist narratives guided the ideas of Soviet psychology regarding development in the 1920s. The fact that Marxism guided the views of psychology in the former Soviet Union shows how the choice process is situated within the social context.

In the natural process of identifying a research question, I had to choose a methodology that would best answer my research question within my chosen theoretical framework (Niaz, 2009). Within a social constructionist epistemology, a qualitative methodology can be used to answer multiple questions from multiple perspectives in all its complexity (Davis & Klopper, 2003). Due to the difficulties in potentially (and eventually the reality of) finding research participants and the nature of the experience of domestic violence, quantitative methodology would not have answered my questions. I would not have had enough participants to reach statistically sound conclusions, nor would I have been able to describe the experiences of the research participants richly. The nature of the research narrative also strongly lent itself to social constructionism due to the various ways in which domestic violence has been constructed by previous research narratives from a feminist, psychiatric, social-psychological and socio-cultural context.

This explanation of how I chose qualitative methodology was only the start of this process. The next step was to investigate what qualitative methodology is.

To enable myself to cement my choice in qualitative methodology, I first had to understand what qualitative methodology entailed. Davis and Klopper (2003, p. 72) explained that, in qualitative research, the focus of research is placed on a narrators' "perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, feelings and behaviour as well as the meanings and interpretations that they attach to certain situations". This construction of qualitative methodology is congruent with the goal and objective of this research narrative.

However, qualitative methodology is not just one type of methodology, as it includes a myriad of methodologies. Researchers (Berrios & Lucca, 2006; Gwyter & Possamai-Inesedy, 2009) have described qualitative methodology as an overarching description of methodologies that:

- § Provides a holistic and detailed description in the language used by participants who have experienced the grand narrative under investigation
- § Allows the researcher to categorise and portray the narrative in its profundity and wealth as it occurs in its narrative setting

- § Does not have preconceived hypothesis, but develops them in the process of narrative collection and analysis
- § Allows for the use of critical “judgement and wisdom without being limited or bound by predetermined categories” (Berrios & Lucca, 2006, p. 181)
- § Mostly allows categories to emerge from the narratives collected, and
- § Dissipates the mist between researchers and researched.

This description of qualitative methodology as included in the umbrella term has “quite porous definitional borders” (Gwyter & Possamai-Inesedy, 2009, p. 106). This description also fits with the construction of qualitative methodology of Davis and Klopper (2003).

In line with the this construction of qualitative methodology, a researcher who plans to conduct research utilising qualitative methodology should keep in mind that there are multiple realities and truths, that human beings should be studied holistically due to their complexity, and that circular models of causality are of more value than linear models of causality since they include more levels of human complexity (Berrios & Lucca, 2006). Considering the construction of qualitative methodology and the key considerations as put forth by Berrios and Lucca (2006), it becomes apparent that a researcher should choose a methodology that will facilitate the narrative of the narrator and will enable accurate construction of this narrative by the researcher (Gwyter & Possamai-Inesedy, 2009).

Valsiner (2006) commented that methods are the tools through which researchers translate everyday narratives into data to subject them to scientific investigation. The nature of the narrative under investigation is dependent on myself, as researcher, to bring Tom’s voice to the scientific community (Gwyter & Possamai-Inesedy, 2009).

The value of qualitative methodologies lies in the specific description of *what* narrators experience and *how* they experience it (Davis & Klopper, 2003). This closely aligns with the goal and objective of this particular research narrative. Creswell (cited in Davis & Klopper, 2003, p. 76) states that “by letting the voices of the respondents speak, their story is carried through dialogue”, and this further assists in describing what narrators experience and how they experience it in the language particular to the domestic violence narrative.

Due to the in-depth nature of research conducted by means of qualitative methodologies, it usually leads to more research questions than can be explored (Davis & Klopper, 2003). A number of other questions came to my mind during the process of reproducing and interpreting Tom's narrative. Some of these questions are concerned with why men do not want to talk about their experiences, whether other men have similar experiences and whether there is a more culturally dependent type of violence in South Africa. These questions are addressed in Chapter Five.

Similar to research conducted using quantitative methodology, research conducted using qualitative methodology needs interpretation. Without interpretation, researchers open themselves to being pure journalists instead of scientists (Zeno, Friedman, & Arons, 2008). It is very easy to fall into scientific journalism, especially when a narrative becomes unpredictable and surprising (Berrios & Lucca, 2006).

The next step was to find narrators who would be willing to take part in this research narrative. The next section details *where* I found Tom and then *how* we had our conversation.

The Narrator

Searching for a Narrator

The initial intention of this narrative was to investigate the experiences of South African *men* in abusive relationships. There were plenty of people who knew of someone who was abused and I indeed managed to make contact with several men in South Africa, but none ever felt comfortable enough to tell me their stories.

My search for narrators involved many hours on the Internet, searching for support groups or websites that dealt with men who are abused by their partners. It happened that one day I found a Muslim website that featured an article concerning men being abused by their wives. This site also featured several articles concerning the abuse of women. I contacted the author of this site hoping that he might know of a man who had been abused by his wife. To my surprise, this man e-mailed me back saying that he unfortunately cannot give me the contact details of men who have been abused by their wives because he fulfilled the role of a counsellor and therefore would be violating their confidence. He then proceeded to confide that he was abused by his former wife. He did entertain thoughts of telling his story and did tell some of it in

a couple of phone calls and in a lot of his writings that he sent to me. However, he never felt comfortable in telling his story, always being afraid that he would somehow be recognisable to his abuser and her family.

I also contacted South African Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO), asking them if they would consider asking men if they would be willing to tell their story to me. These organisations agreed to help and to refer men to me, but this was a fruitless exercise, perhaps because the men did not have direct contact with me or possibly the additional expense or time deterred them from contacting me. They might have also been afraid of the reaction their story would illicit from me. April Morone, an advocate and volunteer in the field of domestic violence counselling, has shared some of her experiences with male victims of domestic violence with me (personal communication, August 15, 2009). She said that her clients have verbalised their general mistrust in others and their belief that someone else would not believe them. She also said that a lot of men do not talk about their experiences due to the stigma that is attached to being a male domestic violence victim.

While experiencing much frustration in my search for narrators, I decided to place a call for narrators on an international website, hoping that a South African would see it (<http://www.safe4all.org/forums/>). I received many replies from this site, mainly from American men looking for help with custody of their children or divorcing an abusive partner. Most of the men needed to discharge their negative emotions towards their partners. I met Tom through this forum.

Finding Tom

Tom is a 54 year old American who lives in Washington State. He married Lidia in 1976, and they had three children. Tom and Lidia's marriage ended in 1991, with Tom receiving sole custody of the two eldest children and shared custody of their youngest daughter until Lidia passed away².

Tom and I had an e-mail conversation that stretched from 1 January until mid May 2009. Tom had introduced himself by saying that he had been hit by his wife a couple of times and that he is a professional engineer with a good memory. In his first e-mail, he proceeded to

² Pseudonyms are used for Lidia and the children.

relate to me an incident that had stuck in his mind because the incident involved his eldest daughter, Susan. The details of Tom's story are given in more detail in Chapter Four.

The necessity to communicate by e-mail was essential because Tom and I were divided by the Atlantic Ocean. E-mail communication further enabled Tom and I to have a detailed discussion that would not have been possible due to the high costs involved in trans-Atlantic telephone conversations.

The following section details the means through which Tom's narrative was collected.

Collection of the Narrative

In order to co-construct a narrative on domestic violence with Tom, a certain methodology had to be adopted in order to elicit the details of the story. The first section details narrative methodology and then the following section details the process of narrative collection.

Narrative Methodology

Sarbin (in Burr, 1995, p. 134) asserts that:

"human beings impose a structure on their experience, and that this structure is present both in our accounts of ourselves and our experiences that we give to others, and in how we represent those things to ourselves. This structure is a narrative structure; we organise our experience in terms of stories."

But this structure is not just imposed upon experiences, as experiences in themselves are of temporal nature that have implicit order, direction and purpose attributed to them (Barresi & Juckes, 1997). Narratives have a central place in human lives (Carson & Fairburn, 2002) and consist of a beginning, a middle and an end (Richmond, 2002). Due to the narrative nature of life experiences, narrative methodology is naturally suited to the study of any life story (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Chinn, 2002).

People's stories are not constructed within a vacuum. In order to make sense of and attribute meaning to narratives, individuals look towards their own cultural symbols and beliefs (Chinn, 2002). When a story is told to someone, that person's own cultural symbols and beliefs influence the way in which the narrative is critically evaluated (Carson & Fairburn, 2002; Nelson,

McClintock, Perez-Ferguson, Shwaver & Thompson, 2008). Narrative also enables the researcher to look at the whole person and not just that part of a person's life that is under investigation (Carson & Fairburn, 2002; Nelson et al., 2008).

In narrative theory, stories are seen to shape the narrator's reality (Barresi & Juckes, 1997; Corey, 2005; Cortazzi, 1993; Müller, 2000). This assumption illustrates the powerful nature of narratives and the reason why a researcher needs to understand people's narratives. By understanding the constructive function of narratives, change can be affected in the grand narratives of the dominant society, which will then lead to the change in the construction of the individual's narrative through the use of new descriptive language (Müller, 2000; White & Epston, 1990). Montalbano-Phelps (2004) and Nelson et al. (2008) explained that the reflexive nature of narratives necessitates the narrator to think about the various narrative themes and this enables the narrator to change the way he or she views this specific narrative, which can then be changed.

Cortazzi (1993) and Montalbano-Phelps (2004) content that, when people narrate a story about their own experiences of abuse and survival, it encourages and educates the listener and it empowers the narrator. It enables the survivor to have a voice and gives others in the same position the opportunity to learn from the others' experience (Berrios & Lucca, 2006). Narratives are also useful in understanding the personal meanings that experiences have for individuals (Chinn, 2002) and provide the researcher with the opportunity to investigate a phenomenon in depth (Nelson et al., 2008). The narrative explains why certain stories are important and highlights the impact of the grand narrative - of male perpetrators and female victims - on the individual's narrative (Beyer, du Preez, & Eskell-Blokland, 2007; Chinn, 2002). The grand narrative also guides researchers to appreciate why male victims are marginalised in our society.

By narrating their own personal experiences, narrators move their narratives from the private context of the domestic relationship to the public context. This act immediately creates an indirect social network for the narrators, and this can lead to the narrators gaining the help and support that is much needed (Montalbano-Phelps, 2004). The telling of a "hidden" story such as abuse serves to take a "private matter" into the public domain (Aderinto & Nwokocha, n.d.).

The focus of narrative research is shifting from the traditional view of the researcher as the expert to the narrator as the expert (Carson & Fairburn, 2002; Chinn, 2002; Corey, 2005). Narrative provides a means accessible to both researchers and narrators through which real-life problems can be pursued (Carson & Fairburn, 2002). I believe that this is an advantage to the information-generation process due to the relatively low knowledge load in the field of abused men. The researcher listens for exceptions in the narrator's story and not just to the stories of victimisation (Chinn, 2002; Corey, 2005). This enables the researcher to identify how the narrator constructs the meaning of gender and being a male victim (victim is here used in the criminological sense, where a crime is acted upon the victim) in an abusive relationship, although this is not the central focus of the study.

During the construction of this research narrative, the researcher seeks to understand how society's narratives influence the experiences of men being abused by their intimate partners, where these influences come from, and how these influences are socially constructed (Freedman & Combs, 1996). Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999) assert that what is defined as violence is dynamic and changes with the times and with the definitions of phenomenon as defined by those people who are in power. In domestic violence, the most powerful group today (from the perspective of research, funding and legal protection) is women, both internationally and locally in South Africa. This is evidenced through the focus of governments and NGOs on the protection of abused women. Cosgrove (2000) states that the first step in research is to understand the relationship between gender and power before we can develop a methodology to assess that relationship in terms of the violence.

It is, however, important to note that several limitations do exist in the use of narratives in research. White and Epston (1990) note that Bruner has stated that narratives are secondary to the experiences of individuals. When constructed with new language, vocabulary and syntax, they lose some of the original meaning of the experience when it is narrated. They also state that life experience is richer than narrative, and that this richness cannot be completely captured through narrative alone. It is thus important to incorporate non-verbal narrative resources (Chinn, 2002). These non-verbal resources are very difficult to capture in electronic mail interviews, but can be written if the narrator has the means to express his emotion.

Some people use *emoticons* to communicate their feelings to the *reader*. Such emoticons include the smiley J , sad L, the laugh :D or even the acronym LOL, meaning 'laughing out loud'. Tom used emoticons several times during our conversation.

The following section details the process followed to gather Tom's narrative.

The Process

Due to the nature of e-mail communication, semi-structured narrative interviews were chosen as the most appropriate way to gather Tom's narrative. Boonzaier and De la Rey (2004, p. 448) stated, "The interview is flexible, open to change and is only partially guided by the researcher's meaning frame". Much of our conversation was guided by Tom's experiences and the sequence in which he narrated it. This semi-structured interview process is a more comfortable and natural way of interacting with a narrator than a structured interview and it ensures that the narrator feels heard (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). This type of interview also provides the narrator with an opportunity to talk about his/her feelings and experiences in more depth and in their own language (Seale, 2004).

The semi-structured interview also allows the interviewer to take a sensitive approach to the subject matter when it is evident that the narrator is uncomfortable. Guided by the selected research narratives, the following basic themes were explored:

- § The nature of his relationship with his wife
- § How Tom was abused (physical, psychological, financial), and
- § What Tom perceived the effects of abuse were on:
 - § Himself, and
 - § His children.

These themes were adapted to Tom's specific language or metaphor, and every attempt was made to handle the themes sensitively to ensure that Tom did not experience the interview as a threat.

An identified potential drawback to the story-telling stems from the fact that I am a female, as this could have recreated the power politics that can be found in abusive relationships. White and Epston (1990) suggest that interviewers be aware of the fact that the politics of abuse can be replicated in the interview context. They recommend that the power

politics of abusive relationships be discussed and that the similarities of the interviewing relationship be indicated to the narrators. Those responses akin to subjugation should be refuted. The interview should be reconceptualised into an accountable relationship. However, if the narrator does not react towards the researcher in this manner, it will not be necessary to reconceptualise the relational setup.

During our conversation, it never became apparent that Tom viewed himself in a subjugated role in relation to me. Reflecting on this, I should have asked the question how he would have reacted to me had I been an older woman, or a man. Tom describes himself as a man well on the way to healing the wounds of his violent relationship. Tom never deferred to my opinions or beliefs and always stood by his own assessments.

Some people may express concern regarding the legitimacy of e-mail as a credible means of data collection, due to the limited academic inquiry into this method (James, 2007). I must admit that it was a worrying question to me, but I did find research studies that show the value of e-mail and other electronic media as a data collection method. Studies by Byron and Baldrige (2005) show that e-mail communications are often used to transmit information that people would not share in normal face-to-face interactions. James (2007, p. 963) related that others have shown how qualitative methods adapted for use over the Internet can obtain “rich, descriptive data” that can enable a researcher to “understand human experience”.

Byron and Baldrige (2005) note that some researchers, are concerned about the apparent lack of emotions in e-mail communication due to the lack of facial expressions, voice inflections and body language. But the creative spirit of human beings has given rise to emoticons (electronic emotions). People express emotions through the use of typed syntax in messenger programmes or in e-mail (Figure 3). In addition to emoticons, people have also devised ways of typing emotion into their e-mails. For example, typing *LOL* means ‘laughing out loud’, or typing *Blushing*, *Hugs*, or any other emotionally-related action to signify a specific action or emotion. As these examples show, e-mail communication can convey the emotions of the narrator. Byron and Baldrige (2005) found that the expression and perception of emotion in e-mail does indeed take place.

E-mail research not only has potential drawbacks but it also has a major advantage. According to James (2007), research using e-mail as the main methodology has the most important advantage of accessing narrators who would normally be inaccessible through the

use of more traditional methods. This statement corroborated my experience because Tom is a resident of the USA and it would have been near impossible for us to have had such an in-depth conversation using any other means of conversation. In addition to the geographical location of Tom's residence, the difficulty of finding narrators using traditional means made e-mail conversations all the more important.

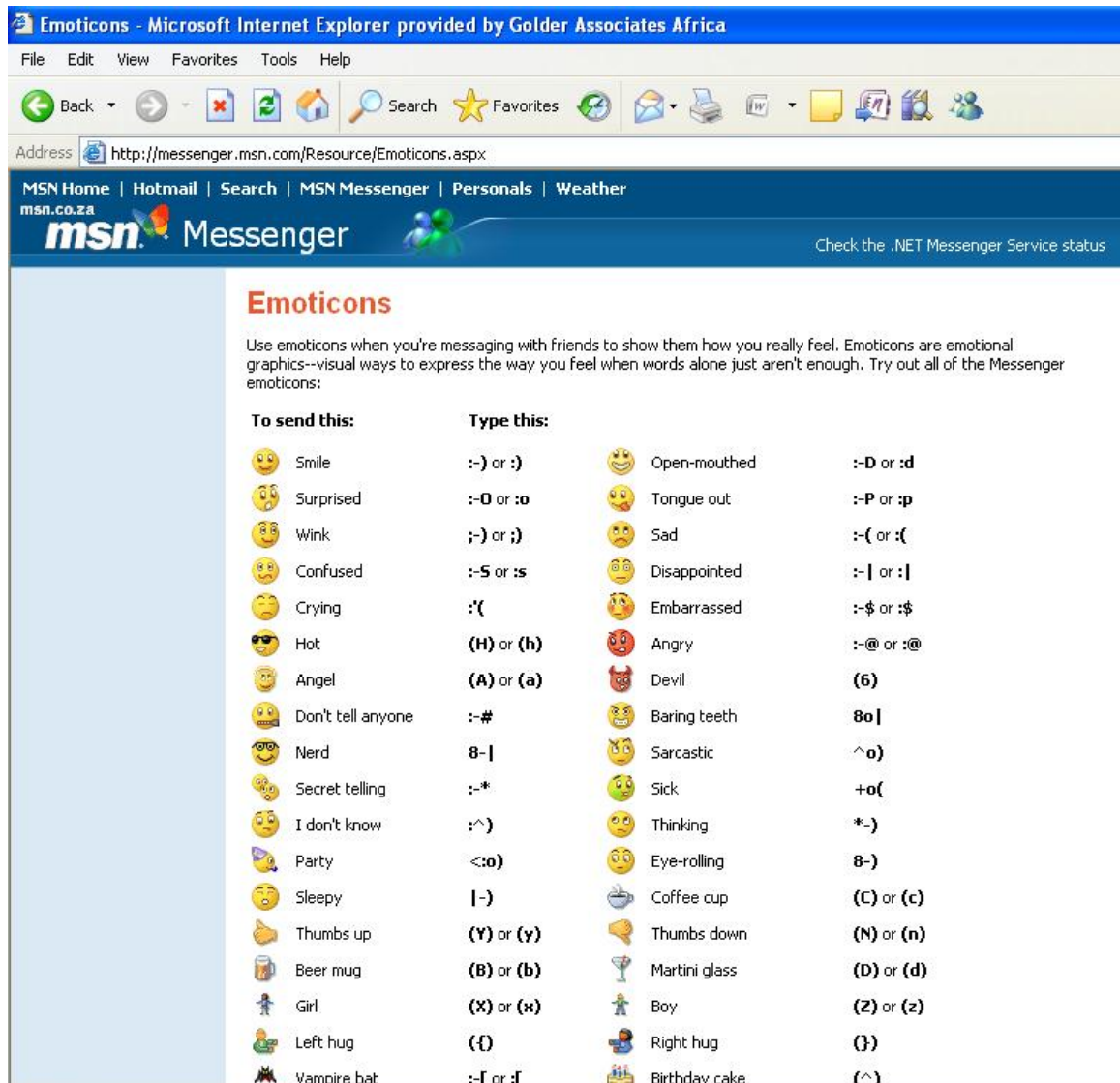


Figure 3: An example of emoticons that can be used with MSM Messenger (<http://messenger.msn.com/Resource/Emoticons.aspx>)

Analysis of the Narrative

After completing the interview, I asked Tom to write a complete reflection of the interview. I asked him to describe how he experienced the interview and what stood out for him during and after the interview. I believe that this additional line of communication helped Tom to divulge potentially embarrassing information that may be difficult to access during the actual conversation. In addition to providing another communication channel, the reflection request served as a means of quality control, ensuring that the constructions that were being assigned to the conversation by myself, were indeed what Tom meant. A more detailed discussion on the evaluation of the process is provided in Chapter Five.

Boonzaier and De la Rey (2004, p. 448) reported that the focus of narrative analysis is to “highlight how individuals construct meaning and identities through narratives”. Analysis of the narrative was based on the categorical-content perspective (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998). They describe the categorical content perspective as having two means of defining content categories. The first way in which a content category is defined is through the use of theories such as Maslow’s theory of self-actualisation. The second method, which I applied in the analysis of Tom’s narrative, is to read through the text in an open manner, and then to define the content categories (codes) that emerge from the reading. After the content categories (codes) have been identified, they are then sorted into categories (themes).

The narrative did not require any transcription as it was already typed. However, before I could start with my analysis, I needed to combine all the e-mails into one document that flowed chronologically. Some editing was also required as Tom asked that his former wife’s, the children’s and his current love interest’s names be changed to protect their privacy. Tom was very kind in that there are pictures included in our conversation as well as emoticons.

According to the categorical content perspective, the researcher reads the narrative several times in order to identify the main themes that are prevalent throughout the narrative (Montalbano-Phelps, 2004). During my reading of the narratives, I first identified keywords to enable me to become more familiar with Tom’s story. This then led to the development of codes specific to his story. A complete list of the codes used is given in Appendix 1. After completing the reading and coding of the narrative, the codes that overlapped were categorised or themed. Themes that were identified include: Angels, Avoidance, Death, Deception, Family,

Future, Kids, Mental health, Present, Reflection, Relationships, Substance abuse problems and Violence. A list of the identified themes is given in Appendix 2.

In order to make the analysis a little easier to manage, I used Atlas.ti 5.0, a software programme that “offers one tools to manage, extract, compare, explore, and reassemble meaningful pieces from large amounts of data” (Thomas Muhr Scientific Software Development, 2004, p. 2). It is with the help of this programme that Tom’s story was interpreted for this research narrative.

Tom was invited to read through my construction of his narrative to ensure that my understanding of his story was consistent with his experience. This invitation was extended in an effort to ensure that consensus was reached on the final narrative (Montalbano-Phelps, 2004). Although the research narrative was sent to Tom, he never reacted towards the content of the narrative.

I also ascertained the reproducibility and stability of the data, as referred to by Weber (1990). This was accomplished by having the data coded by an independent coder (reproducibility) and by recoding the data for a second time myself (stability).

Before the inquiry into Tom’s experience could start, some ethical points needed to be considered. The following section details the ethical matters and the ways in which I dealt with them.

Ethics

According to the Health Professions Council of South Africa (2008), research in the helping professions has a great capability to improve the quality of life of human beings. Several principles are proposed by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) that were directly applicable to this inquiry. These principles are:

- § The principle of autonomy
- § The principle of non-maleficance, and
- § The principle of confidentiality.

Each of these principals was applied to ensure that the inquiry was conducted in an ethical manner.

The following sections detail the various principles and the way in which they were handled during this inquiry.

The Principle of Autonomy

A person who is capable of self-deliberation should be treated with respect in that s/he should be afforded the opportunity to make an informed decision on whether to take part in an inquiry (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2008). Tom's informed consent was gained in written form (Corey, 2005) (Appendix 3). He printed it, filled it in, scanned it and e-mailed it back to me. This ensured that Tom understood the content of the interview and what would be done with the narrative. He knew of his right to withdraw from the interview at any time. Tom was also informed that he had the right to read a summation of the research narrative or any part thereof. Tom was also informed that the e-mail conversation between us would serve as a transcript of our conversation. He consented to the use of the e-mail communications as transcript. He also later agreed that I may use some of the pictures that he sent to me in my research narrative.

The Principle of Non-Maleficance

This principle states that the risks and possible harm to research participants should be minimised (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2008). Due to the physically dangerous and potentially psychologically harmful nature of this research narrative topic, it is imperative to ensure the safety of both the narrator and the researcher (Ellsberg & Heise, 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002). The death of Tom's former wife, Lidia, some years ago eliminated the threat of physical harm and ensured the safety of both Tom and myself. Before the start of the conversation, Tom and I discussed the possibility of his psychological well-being being adversely affected (WHO, 2001). He assured me that if it did become a problem, then he had the resources to alleviate any crisis. He stated that he did see a counsellor during his marriage and divorce from Lidia, and this counsellor remains his preferred counsellor.

Ellsberg and Heise (2002) suggest that the interview ends on a positive note, such as the interviewer commenting on the positive steps the narrator has taken or any other positive coping mechanisms that they have employed. To minimise any possible distress that could be

experienced by Tom, our conversation was also conducted in such a way that the positive steps that Tom has taken were highlighted.

The Principle of Confidentiality

Each research participant who takes part in a research inquiry has the right to have his/her own and his/her family members' identities protected (Health Professions Council of South Africa, 2008). As previously stressed, the privacy and confidentiality of the narrator has to be ensured. Tom wanted his own name to be included in the research narrative as he is an active and vocal activist for family rights and for abused men. However, Tom requested that the names of his children, his former wife and his current love interest be changed to protect their privacy. The transcripts were therefore searched for each of the individual's names and their names were replaced by a pseudonym. The transcripts containing his story will be stored in the Psychology Department of the University of Pretoria for research purposes for a period of five years. This storage process includes both paper and electronic versions of the transcripts. After that period, they will be destroyed. Electronic information, such as transcripts and photographs, will be deleted from the hard drive of my computer after it has been stored at the University. Tom has been informed of this process.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how I chose narrative inquiry to investigate the experiences of an abused man, how I found Tom, the use of narrative methodology to collect Tom's narrative and the use of e-mail instead of a face-to-face interview. Although research by e-mail might not be a conventional form of research, it was the most convenient form of data collection due to the geographical distance between Tom and myself. His story was analysed using the categorical-content perspective.

Now that the means by which the narrative was collected has been detailed, we can move on the core narrative of this research narrative - Tom's story. Chapter Four gives a more detailed picture of who Tom was and now is, and this is followed by the narrative themes of his story.

CHAPTER FOUR: TOM'S PERSONAL NARRATIVE

For any narrative to make sense, the characters need to be developed before the story can be told. This chapter presents Tom's character development as well as the main body of the narrative from which Tom's story can be obtained.

Throughout this chapter, the social constructionist perspective will guide the description and co-construction of Tom's narrative. It will also guide the integration of Tom's narrative with the selected research. The core narratives identified in Chapter Two, namely female as victim, male as victim, mutually combative couples, gender roles, culture and HIV/AIDS served as prior possible core narratives for this description and co-construction.

As was previously explained, Tom is the expert in his own experiences and in sharing his experiences with me, we are co-constructing a new narrative (Burr, 1995).

In the next section, Tom's biographical information is presented. Thereafter his story and the themes identified from his story will be presented, as constructed by myself.

Who is Tom?

Tom is now introduced to the reader. He is the protagonist and without him this particular research narrative would not have been possible. I decided to use several extracts from our email conversation to describe who Tom was and currently is. The reader will notice that these extracts are written in the first person and are direct quotations taken from our communications. This chapter belongs to Tom. This is his voice and his story.

Tom introduced himself to me in the following way: "I am a Professional Engineer, have a very good memory, and remember some of the events. I divorced, got full custody of our three kids; my ex was eventually convicted several times of Contempt of Court (parental alienation), Custodial Interference, and Assault (on the kids)."

"I'm 53, raised on a farm in Iowa, graduated [as a] Fire Protection/Safety Engineering in 84. I now own/operate my own business, modernizing and repairing industrial equipment." Tom and Lidia³ married in 1976 and have three children. They moved house in 1984 after he completed his studies.

He then proceeded to tell me about his children: He has "3 grown kids: Susan⁴, 28, water quality scientist; Martin⁵, Corporal, 27, US Marine Corps; Kathryn⁶, 23, college - registered nursing program. I divorced (Lidia) in 1991, unmarried since, full custody from 1993 on."



Figure 4: Moon rising over Walden Pond (picture from <http://www.news.harvard.edu/.../05.26/14-walden.html>)

He continued to describe the relationships between family members after their divorce: "In 1992, the kids and I moved 60 miles to Olympia, better schools, rural lake house, good place to heal (our Walden Pond). Lidia was living with my former best friend/co-worker, very painful for the kids and me. The kids didn't even want to overnight there."

"One day, Lidia showed up unannounced, wanting help to 'secretly' move to Olympia too. So, we all pitched in and got her settled in an apartment. She met a nice guy and married about 9 months later. They were married about 7 years, lots of conflict and they drifted apart. Lidia got very involved with our youngest, Kathryn, with horses, riding, dressage, rodeo/gaming, etc. Lidia and I reconnected our friendship during 2001-2002. Martin and Susan did not reconnect much but things were thawing out."

"Christmas, 2002, Lidia asked to spend Christmas with us. I didn't want us to be the cause of her divorce so we agreed to do a holiday gathering at her house after the New Year.

³ Not her real name, changed to protect the children.

⁴ Not her real name, changed in consideration of privacy.

⁵ Not his real name, changed in consideration of privacy.

⁶ Not her real name, changed in consideration of privacy.

We did, had a great time. Her husband was a little distant but tolerant. Lidia and I decided to work together on a surprise 21st birthday party for Martin, 1/13/03. On Wednesday morning, 1/8/03, Lidia (RN⁷) stopped to render aid at a car accident. A car failed to stop and struck Lidia, killing her. Her husband was pretty uncooperative and cold, insisted on burying her on Martin's birthday.”

After the conclusion of the divorce, Tom decided that he should go on with his life. The attorney who handled his divorce became a close ally in his future. Tom described his partnership with Lisa as follows: “I and Lisa Scott, attorney, founded the tabs2@yahogroups.com that you accessed, as a direct result of my experience and lack of family law information. We are one of the largest family law networks in the US and have helped a lot of families in trouble. Lisa and I have headed a number of lobbying efforts to change family law, notably the Friendly Parent Act that says nicer divorcing spouses are better parents and get more residential time. So, a lot of good has come from my experience. I continue to be a Family Law activist, lobbying for divorce reform and shared parenting.”

This represents a small fragment of our discussion, with much more to follow in Tom's Story. The sections chosen by me to be part of this introduction reveal the development of the characters and specific questions. The following section represents Tom's story in two sections. The first section, Landmarks, deals with Tom's story as he told it to me and the second section, Narrative Themes, contains the themes that were derived from Tom's story through narrative analysis.

Tom's Story

This section, Landmarks, provides a brief summary of Tom's story, mostly in his own words.

Landmarks

To make the reading of Tom's story easier, it is ordered in several selected subheadings.

First Impressions

Tom and Lidia met in December 1974 at a party while attending college in North Dakota. Tom said it was “love at first sight”. Shortly after meeting each other, they got engaged with the

⁷ Registered Nurse

wedding planned for that fall. They postponed the wedding and broke up when they heard that Lidia had to complete her internship 150 miles away. The break-up did not last very long though, and they got back together and worked through the long-distance relationship. They married in November 1976. Tom described 1976 as a “great year, planning the wedding, shopping for rings, it was like a wonderful movie; only it was real.”

The first signs of trouble were evident ten months later. Lidia had “some sort of an affair” in which she had met a man at the hospital where she had worked as a nurse. Tom’s boss at the bar where he worked found out about the affair and told Lidia to tell Tom, or else he would. She did tell Tom, but told him that they had only kissed once and that she would never do it again. Tom described his feelings about the affair: “I was devastated, but believed her and forgave her. “

Introducing Violence

Although he did forgive her, he still pulled away from Lidia and she got angry more often. At this point, the hitting started. Tom wanted to end the marriage, but Lidia refused.

Tom described a violent incident that occurred soon after the revelation of the affair. He described it as follows: “We had an argument, fairly soon after she told me about her affair. I said my piece and walked away and sat on the couch to read the paper. Lidia was steamed but quiet, I read the paper for a few minutes aware that Lidia was glaring at me. I saw something flying and ducked. Lidia had thrown one of my shoes at me, I ducked and it hit the wall and dented the sheet rock, it would have hit me. If you know, that was in 1977 during the disco era when all of us guys were wearing platform shoes. My shoe that Lidia threw must have had a 2" lift and was very heavy so it would have done some damage“.

After this incident Tom was very worried, but his anxiety was laid to rest by Lidia’s apologies and promises of never throwing anything again. But after this incident, Lidia would usually just shove him or hit him in the back as he retreated from an argument.

The year 1977 was a really difficult time in their marriage and Tom described more incidents. The following paragraphs contain his description of the rest of that year.

“After her affair, the first year of the marriage, the arguments increased in severity and in frequency. They ramped up both ways over the next year. Most would be just angry talk, then shouting and swearing (both of us), by the end of the second year they would escalate into

mutual pushing and shoving maybe once a month. When that happened, I would turn and walk away usually with a parting shove from Lidia if I didn't move fast enough. Lidia would sometimes throw things at me if I refused to continue.”

“Our bedroom was in a loft above with a winding stairway up from the living room. To keep from having things thrown at me and to cool things down, I would go up to the loft. Our agreement was that Lidia would stay out of the loft if I asked for a timeout, which she had been honoring [sic]. A friend had come over once and heard us arguing and suggested to me that a time out was a good way to cool off, think about the issue and discuss it the next day if needed. So a timeout was how we ended our arguments. I was still getting hit in the back or shoved on my way to the loft, though.”

“On a road trip to see her parents in the fall of 1977, while I was driving and Lidia sat next to me, we got into a real bitter argument. I got really mad and hit Lidia with the back of my right hand on her left shoulder. Lidia had not hit me and of course no pushing and shoving, we were driving. I realized then that I was losing control, my anger was getting too extreme and that I might hurt Lidia. I was really upset with myself and the whole series of conflict. One of the very lowest times of my life when I really hated what I had done. We didn't talk the rest of the trip and very little at her parents place. They knew something was very wrong but we never talked about our fights.”

“A few days later I told Lidia that if I ever had to get that mad again I wanted a divorce. I promised to never hit or shove her again, ever. I was ready to break up, Lidia wanted to keep going, to patch it up, that she loved me, etc. The arguments continued and within a couple of months Lidia was shoving, hitting me as I walked away going to the loft. I never did hit Lidia, ever again, and as soon as she would touch me, I would immediately bail out for the loft. Then Lidia started following me up the stairs, shouting and swearing, but not coming past the stair landing half way up into the loft and I would then ignore her.”

“Just before Christmas 1977, we had another argument, she shoved, I bailed, but this time she went past the stair landing right behind me, shoving me on my way up the stairs. I stopped at the top of the stairs, turned around and reminded her that she had agreed not to come into the loft. She pushed into me and I hung on to the railings to keep her on the stairs. She went back down a few steps then turned and charged back up into me. I held my ground and she bounced off me, lost her balance and started falling backward. Lidia spun around and

started taking big steps back down the stairs but when she got to the landing she stepped wrong and badly twisted her right ankle.”

They thought that Lidia had broken her ankle and went to the hospital where she was working at the time. Lidia was diagnosed with a badly sprained ankle. Both Tom and Lidia were very embarrassed by the episode and Lidia did all the explaining because she was afraid that Tom would tell everyone the truth. Tom “had had enough” and wanted to end the marriage. He felt that it would not be that hard to leave her because they did not have children and few assets. Lidia apologised again, they sold their house, quit their jobs and moved to Fargo for a fresh start. The move to Fargo was also linked by Tom to Lidia’s hatred of his boss and his boss’s wife at the bar where he worked.

The move seemed to work, because 1978 and 1979 were great years. Tom and Lidia’s life was filled with fun, they had money and their love life was great. They started talking about having children and, in late 1979, Lidia became pregnant.

A New Lease on Love

Tom said: “We were doing well, recommitted to each other and Susan was born in 1980, we were so happy. Susan was such a fun baby, we really loved parenting her, Lidia’s parents got very close to us, everything was going well. We both had good jobs, saving money, lived in a great apartment, new car, going to college. Then Lidia started having a lot of trouble with her Mom who stuck her nose into everything Lidia did for Susan, literally every day. Her Mom became very intrusive, as did her dad, walking in on us all the time. Lidia really got tense with them a lot and there was a lot of conflict with them. I stayed out of it but Lidia was really having a hard time with them and the pressures of parenting.”

“In late 81 we decided to go to Oklahoma to finish my engineering degree at OK State, where they had a great program. Lidia was pregnant with Martin, middle of the winter, it was a hard trip but we made it and got settled. Lidia was so relieved to get away from the winters and her parents, we both got great jobs and really had some good times again. I got into sailing, Lidia made friends at work and at the apartment we lived at. I found out that she was smoking reefer there, while I was at work. She may have had an affair, I was never sure, but looking back, I’m pretty certain.”

The period between 1981 and May 1984 presented no significant problems. Martin was born in January 1982. While they were living in Oklahoma during 1983 and 1984, Lidia started drinking more wine on a daily basis. "All in all they were very good years." They had normal arguments about how to discipline the children, with Tom characterising himself as stricter than Lidia, whom he describes as permissive.

Dark Clouds

Things changed once more, with the birth of Kathryn in 1985. "Kathryn's birth was very difficult, long hard labor [sic]. Kathryn was very strong and physical and hard to handle from the beginning, she still is, LOL." Lidia had suffered from post-partum depression for several weeks after the birth of the two eldest children, but after Kathryn's birth, it was more severe. "She was depressed for months, fits of rage, did not bond with Kathryn at all. It was a very noticeable change, Lidia gradually pulled away from all of us. She stayed the closest to Martin, he was clearly her favorite [sic]." Lidia did not want to travel any more and stopped doing anything in the house or with the children. Tom took over the domestic caregiver role and Lidia started doing yard work.

Her drinking also started to get worse at this time. Lidia would retreat to the bathroom with her wine at around suppertime, rarely ate and more often than not fell asleep in the bath. Lidia had also enrolled at a college to become a registered nurse, but she found the programme very difficult.

Her relationship with the girls changed dramatically. She became exceptionally stern with them, while maintaining her permissive and lax relationship with Martin. Tom described her interaction with the children and his reaction towards it in the following way: "She would start yelling and swearing, but nothing physical. I always responded by getting the kids and myself out of the house and letting Lidia cool off. I never liked to argue in front of the kids." From the middle of 1985, Tom started to wonder whether Lidia suffered from a mental disorder as she had extreme mood swings.

The relationship between Lidia and the girls had always been strained and Lidia started to fight with Susan when she was about six years old. Tom recalled the following episode: "I remember one day in 1987 when I came home and Lidia was sitting on the couch red-faced and very angry. She said nothing but pointed upstairs. I went upstairs to find that Lidia had tied the vacuum cleaner cord to the door knob of Susan and Kathryn's bedroom so that they couldn't get

out of the room. I untied it; the girls were inside, crying and mad, saying that their Mom was 'crazy'. I never did ask what happened, just took the kids to the Dairy Queen to calm everything down. I remember it well as it was the first time the kids and I talked about Lidia's mental health." After that episode, Lidia told Tom that girls were difficult to raise and that she wished they had just had boys.

Escalation

In 1987, Lidia became more violent. She graduated from college, quit her job at the hospital and went to work for their family doctor. Lidia and the family doctor, Dr. TB, started an affair almost immediately and which only ended two years later in 1989.

Tom described another violent incident that occurred in the fall of 1987. "One Saturday that fall, we had an argument in the kitchen. I disengaged, nothing physical, left the room and went into the family room at the other end of the house, sat down in a tall easy chair that we had and began to read. The chair and I pointed away from the entry door. It was cold so I started a fire in the fireplace and began to read the paper, very peaceful."

"At least 20 minutes after I walked away from her, while reading, Lidia, silently, came up behind me in the chair. I knew nothing until I and the easy chair were falling forward into the fireplace. Lidia had tipped me and the chair over. We had a fireplace screen that I fell into with the chair on top of me. As I tipped forward, I heard a snap, like breaking a stick. As I got up off the floor and pushed the chair off, I turned around and saw Lidia holding her hand."

When Lidia had pushed Tom's chair over, she had overextended one of her fingers and had broken it. Tom took her to hospital where Lidia was diagnosed with a *boxer's break*, a fracture common when one individual punches another. Hospital staff suspected that Lidia had punched Tom, but he had no injuries. Tom explained that she had hurt herself while moving furniture. They had both laughed at his explanation because it was technically true. Tom said: "I realized then that I had to accept and normalize her violence or quit the marriage, which I wasn't ready for." He had hoped that the injury would make Lidia think twice about being violent, but it did not and shoving became more common.

May 1988 stood out as a very important time for Tom. It was Susan's birthday and she was directly exposed to her mother's violence. "On Susan's birthday in May 1988, we gave Susan a 'Barbie Pony Car', a pink plastic mustang convertible for her dolls to ride around in. It

was about 2 feet long and weighed a few pounds. While I sat in a chair in the living room, in front of Susan who was playing with her dolls and saw everything, Lidia came up behind me with the car and hit me over the head with it, breaking it in half. Susan really got upset, screaming angry at Lidia for hurting me and breaking her prized Barbie Car. I remember nothing of this incident or whatever caused it. I do remember the Barbie Car and years later had asked Susan whatever happened to it, when she was older and getting rid of all her Barbie stuff." Susan did not understand why Tom could not remember this incident. He felt that she was almost angry at him for not remembering such a significant episode in her life.

In 1988, Tom and Lidia got more involved in politics. When Tom accidentally found out about her affair with Dr. TB, he distanced himself from her and focussed even more on politics. Tom did not want to reveal to Lidia that he knew of the affair. He had hoped that she would get over it, but Lidia got angry at Tom about all the time he was spending away from her. When Tom went campaigning, he would load the children into the van and then go inside the house to say goodbye to Lidia. As Tom turned to leave the house, Lidia would start shouting and punching him in the back and shoulder.

In July 1989, Lidia had a nervous breakdown, quit her job at Dr. TB's clinic and took to bed for weeks. Tom suspected that the affair had ended. In October the same year, Lidia told Tom about the affair. She painted the picture of a victimised and seduced woman. Dr TB promised that he would get divorced from his wife and marry Lidia, but as soon as the divorce was finalised, he married another woman. But the "good doctor" still wanted Lidia to have his baby "because he loved her".

The rest of the story is "quite amazing". "Lidia asked me if she could carry Dr. TB's baby while married to me, that we would raise the baby as our own and Dr. TB would pay child support and legally adopt the baby and pay it's [sic] bills. Dr. TB had no other kids and wanted an heir. At this point I knew Lidia wasn't rational any longer. I made up some lame excuses and said I couldn't put my heart in a box for a year and raise someone else's child. And what would we have told our own kids? It was all just plain nuts. That's when I realized how distrubed [sic] Lidia was and I was very frightened of her from then on."

During this time, Tom discovered Lidia's use of Pamelor (tricyclic antidepressants) and her abuse of Darvon (pain medication). Her drinking problem had also worsened substantially. They then stopped having wine in the house, only beer for Tom. Lidia had admitted that she

had a drinking problem and was committed to try and stop drinking. However, with all the wine out of the house, Lidia increased her use of Darvon. In the fall of 1989, Lidia started to have more frequent panic attacks and hallucinations.

Finality

Tom described the last affair Lidia had in November 1989 with a boyhood friend, who moved to town and to whom Tom had offered temporary accommodation. It was a big mistake because they began an affair of which Susan became aware and told her father about in December. Tom's response to this event was: "I froze the company bank accounts and got a lawyer. Lidia found out I had done so because she was checking the daily balance of the payroll account and was denied on Friday, December 7th. Lidia came out to the business office and demanded to know if I was divorcing her."

Tom described what happened next: "She pushed her way into my office, I asked her to leave, she wouldn't. I opened the main door, got behind Lidia with my arms out and pushed her with my chest out the door. Lidia picked up a pen and stabbed me in the arm. I kept pushing her, with Lidia bracing her feet and resisting until she was out the door. I closed the door. Lidia came charging back in, I caught the door and Lidia in my arm and in one move pushed her back out, closed the door and locked it."

Tom told his "very upset" secretary that should she hear anything more to call the police and that he would unlock the door as soon as Lidia was gone. He went back to work, signing pay checks when there was a knock at the door. It was the police. Lidia claimed she worked there and that Tom had roughly thrown her out. His employees all said they had never seen her before and that she had been disruptive and shouting. He showed them the stab wound, but the police did not care. He was arrested and thrown into jail for Assault, DV (domestic violence). Tom said that "I should have called the police first, right away, just too embarrassed and mad."

That Monday the charges against Tom were dropped because he defended himself. He also filed for divorce that same day. That was the start of a long, bitter divorce and custody battle. Lidia was ordered into psychological treatment and was awarded joint custody as long as she remained in treatment. However, after 18 months, Lidia refused to continue with the treatment and she and Tom decided that the condition would be dropped if Martin moved in with Tom, Susan would remain in joint custody and Kathryn lived with Lidia. It was during this time

that Tom had moved to Olympia. Lidia had been living with Tom's former best friend, but she had wanted to end the relationship. She also moved to Olympia, met her husband John and stabilised quite a bit, but she started drinking again and taking Darvon.

"Lidia was still violent at times with her new husband and his son, just pushing and shoving, no hitting that I know of. Lidia bad-mouthed me a lot, though, and Susan finally confronted Lidia in front of others. Lidia punched Susan and gave her a black eye. Lidia was arrested, convicted and completed an Anger Management course and had two years probation. To my knowledge Lidia was never violent again until she died in January 2002. But Lidia did have a lot of conflict with the children and her husband over her drinking and drug use over the years."

Death

After Lidia's death, the children had a hard time coming to terms with her death. Tom described each of the children's struggles to me. "Martin joined the Marines at 17, fought at Fallujah, [saw] too much combat and was pretty rattled when he got out in 2005. Nightmares, depression, anxiety, full blown PTSD; and life just didn't seem relevant. He got into treatment, meds, therapy, nothing really helped. Long-time girlfriend had problems, he changed jobs and moved a lot. In 2006 he moved back home with me, got a good job, settled in, and we started sorting out his issues. He got better, threw away the meds, and made some hard choices. Life was fun again, he relaxed, we were busy all the time. 2008, Martin re-enlisted, got to keep his rank, new training, new unit, he loves what he's doing, is in terrific physical condition, he finally feels valuable and included."

"Kathryn spent many years partying. She has enormous energy, but it caught up. 2007, she was just miserable, minimum wage jobs, loser party friends, out of shape, always broke, she was partied out. Martin, Susan, and I worked on her, often, about her future. New Years, stroke of midnight, 2008, she walked out of a party and went home alone. She threw away her cigarettes, gave away all her alcohol, and called me and enrolled in college, started on Jan. 5th, and has been at it hard all year. She is still sober, no smoking, got in shape, lost weight, skin cleared up, different girl. Her long-time boyfriend hasn't changed his slacker, party ways and she is becoming much less tolerant. He says he's going to change, right; she has given him 2009. They love each other, but Kathryn realizes they don't share a vision of the future. Kathryn works for me part-time and we are raising two cows together, along with her horse."

“Susan has always been a hard worker and achiever, many promotions, fast track career. She was tired of renting, wanted more control and predictability, and needed the tax shelter of a home. She has lots of cats and a dog, always had landlord/room-mate issues because she also raises big snakes. So, she decided to buy a house, we spent months looking and financing. She found the perfect house, great price, rundown, very pricey neighborhood [sic], lots of upside, private exclusive country club. She qualified on her income alone and had saved enough down payment. We work together at least a day a week on projects, fences, driveway, wiring, plumbing. Susan wants to learn it all, how to remodel. Susan wanted a chain saw for her birthday, so she could cut down and chop up all the scrub trees in her back yard and dig out the stumps.”

Tom described 2008 as the year that their family really needed. “So it was a breakout year for the kids, the culmination of a lot of hard work. My ‘preaching’ over the years paid off and I feel very validated. Self esteem is a gift you give yourself, but only after you internalize authentic accomplishment. It’s a real kick to see them liking themselves. Never a dull moment.”

The Future

Tom wants his children to be successful in their careers, love life and families. He hopes that he has provided them with the tools that they would need to become even more successful than they are now. As for himself, he is looking for a partner, and he might have found her. He is going to keep looking after himself, eating healthily and exercising.

With Tom’s story fresh in our minds, we can now explore the finer details of his narrative and provide some information regarding the prominent themes in his story.

Narrative Themes

This section provides an overview of the various themes identified in Tom’s story. Themes are units of meaning in a story that occur either once or repeatedly and provide the crux(es) of the story. Identifying themes is a process that starts during the literature review, providing the researcher with an idea of what is to be expected during the inquiry. The discussion guide (a set of questions that guides the discussion) is usually constructed on the basis of the literature review. It can therefore be expected that the literature review will not only guide the development of themes, but also (to a certain extent) the themes discussed in conversation.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Analysis of the Narrative, the categorical-content perspective of Lieblich et al. (1998, p. 113) was suggested as the basis of analysis. The perspective is described as a “circular procedure that involves careful reading, suggesting categories, sorting the subtext into categories, generating ideas for additional categories or for refinement of the existing ones, and so on”.

I read the conversational transcript three times, without formally starting to identify codes. The fourth reading was primarily to code the text, but I was not at all happy with the codes, feeling that they were too generalised, so I subsequently recoded the text a second time. I left the coded text alone for a period of time and did not work on it at all. I undertook my sixth reading to see how similar a second coding would be to the first. This process yielded consistent coding that was also similar to the coding of the independent coder. I then proceeded to identify themes in Tom’s story.

The following sections detail the themes identified in Tom’s story. The discussion is currently descriptive and only in the Narrative Themes: Comparison between Research and Experience section in Chapter Five are the similarities and differences in Tom’s story and the research investigated.

Angels

Angels are seen as either supernatural or human beings who change one’s life for the better. For Tom, the angels in his life were those people who helped him, especially during the end of his marriage with Lidia.

The most prominent angel in Tom’s story was his attorney, Lisa. He described her as follows: “I say this with out [sic] reservation that if angels walk the earth, she’s one. Lisa carried me through the darkest moments of my life. I would do anything for her and she is the reason I try to help others, to in some way repay Lisa’s kindness.”

Another source of tremendous help for Tom was his counsellor, Beth. During his sessions with Beth, he opened up to Beth about Lidia’s adultery. Beth asked whether she could perhaps meet with Lidia, which she did. After Beth’s session with Lidia, Beth told Tom that she feared for his safety and the safety of the children and counselled him to leave Lidia. Tom said that “Beth’s warning clearly was the final push and may have saved my life”. Although he never called her an angel outright, it did seem to me that he would label her as an angel.

Although Tom described his experiences with the police as mixed, he did mention that he had received some help from them. As with Beth, he never called the police officers who assisted him angels, but I felt it appropriate to group them under this theme as well, because they had assisted him in his time of need. Tom described a morning when Lidia phoned the police and falsely accused him of threatening her. After talking to Lidia, the responding officer spoke to Tom and assured him that he knew that Lidia was not telling the truth about the threat. He said that she did not act like a person who was really threatened. The concern shown by the officer and his ability to recognise that something was not normal about Lidia was another catalyst in Tom's decision to get out of his relationship with his ex-wife.

Avoidance

Avoidance is a theme present in Tom's story as a means of dealing with negative situations. This was a strategy employed both by Tom and Lidia in their marriage and by the children to deal with their mother's death.

After Lidia's death, Susan tried to avoid dealing with her death by becoming very distant and focussed on her studies. Kathryn tried to avoid thinking about her mother's death by drinking and using drugs. Martin, however, did not seem to attempt to avoid dealing with his mother's death. Like Tom, he visits her grave often, but he attempted to avoid the pain caused by his mother's behaviour and the divorce by joining the Marines at the age of 17. The children's behaviour troubled Tom, but he felt that they have more recently all dealt with their feelings to a certain degree.

After Tom had found out about Lidia's first affair, he started to pull away from her. Tom's boss was instrumental in uncovering Lidia's affair and Lidia did not like the boss very much. Tom resigned from his job and he and Lidia moved to Fargo. Lidia chose physical avoidance of unpleasant situations as this incident indicates. As soon as they moved, things started to improve between Tom and Lidia. Although Tom never said that he resigned his job due to pressure from Lidia, it is a construction that is easily achieved when one reads through Tom's story.

Later, after Susan's birth, Lidia and her mother started quarrelling more. Lidia's mother and father were very intrusive and continuously told Lidia what to do, resulting in much conflict between Lidia and her mother. To avoid conflict, Lidia decided that she and Tom would move away to Oklahoma. Before the more permanent physical avoidance by relocation, Lidia and

Tom had tried to hide when they were home, attempting to avoid Lidia's parents as they would come around to their apartment daily. They would not answer the door and would draw the curtains so that Lidia's parents could not look into their apartment. The tension between Lidia and her parents influenced the quality of Tom and Lidia's relationship and destabilised it in some ways.

When Tom and Lidia had an argument, Tom started to avoid a big blow-up by going to their loft bedroom. Although Lidia did agree to honour the agreement by staying out of the loft, this strategy did not work for very long. After honouring the agreement several times, Lidia started to follow Tom upstairs almost into their bedroom loft where she would continue to scream at him and push and shove.

Tom avoided ending the marriage and chose to accept and normalise her violence. However, he did try to avoid violent situations by distancing himself and getting more involved in politics. He sometimes took the children with him. The physical avoidance was initially limited to other rooms in their house, but Tom realised that this would not keep Lidia from acting violently and he therefore increased the distance between them and added other people to act as a safety buffer.

When the children were young, Tom tried to avoid any conflict. Whenever Lidia started to become angry, he gathered up the children and got out of the house to allow Lidia some time to cool off. He did not like to fight or argue in front of the children.

Lidia had changed the way that Tom perceives everybody. He set boundaries with everyone in an effort to avoid pain and humiliation. He also preached boundaries to his children in an effort to help them avoid similar experiences in their own lives. When he was in a relationship, he and his partner eventually talked about "fighting fair, never going to sleep angry, not using sex as a weapon, no name-calling ever, and that touching in anger is not pardonable" and that this would end their relationship. This is Tom's effort to avoid yet another violent relationship and to protect himself and the children.

Death

Death is the theme associated with sadness and an unsatisfactory, absolute end to the story of Tom and Lidia's marriage for both Tom and the children. Lidia died a sudden and tragic

death a few days before Martin's 21st birthday in 2001. Death had a severe impact on Tom and the children.

It took Tom and his family years to get over the tragic loss of Lidia and to resolve and get over their feelings for her. According to Tom, they had all made peace with the fact that they would never resolve the issues that they had with Lidia. Tom quoted Martin who said this about the death of his mother and the lack of resolution: "We gotta [sic] ride this one out". This could be interpreted as his own sense of powerlessness in the situation, which is mirrored by Tom. And that is why he used this quote as part of his own story.

Tom said about Lidia's death: "Tragic death is really bad when it happens before people can resolve differences and earn forgiveness. So we get haunted by the saddest words there are: What might have been. You spend years trying to rationalise the irrational, beating yourself up with 'what ifs'. Seems like now Lidia is distant enough to not drive our feelings anymore, you get tired of self-pity and anger. We now have emancipated personalities and move on, fully responsible for our own choices and actions." It seemed as if Lidia's death forced her family to make peace with who she was and what she did, that her death made it possible for her family to find themselves again and to flourish. Although, there is a deep sense of regret that Tom conveys in the way that he speaks about Lidia's death and the meaning that it has for his family. It seems as if he regrets the fact that they could not reach a point of peace where everyone had a part in brokering the deal.

Deception

Tom related the many ways in which deception had been part of his life with Lidia. They lied about the violence in their home and Lidia lied about her infidelity which had deeply hurt Tom.

During their marriage Lidia lied and deceived Tom a number of times. The first time was less than a year into the marriage when Lidia had "some sort of an affair" with a man she met while working at the hospital. Lidia did tell Tom about the affair after she was discovered by Tom's boss and it devastated Tom, but he forgave her. Lidia had several affairs which she successfully hid from Tom. One such affair lasted for a couple of years, and even after discovering it, Tom chose not to confront Lidia in the hope that she would return to him and their family.

Tom and Lidia also lied about the injuries they suffered when she attacked Tom. When she sprained her ankle while pushing Tom up the stairs, Lidia told hospital staff that she had tripped on the stairs. Tom would have told the truth but Lidia did not want the truth to be known and therefore told a cover story. When Lidia broke her finger while tipping Tom into the fireplace, Tom explained her boxer's break as being the result of "moving furniture". But Tom felt that they had not just lied to others about her injuries, but that they had lied to themselves as well. In addition to the lies about infidelity and the violence in the home, Lidia also tried to lie to Tom about her prescription medication abuse.

In an attempt to explain her behaviour and to protect herself from condemnation, Lidia had, perhaps, created a victim image with her friends. "Such portrayals as he made me crazy, or Tom/Rocky/Susan/Kathryn/cops pushed me too far, you just can't talk to him, he won't listen, he can [sic] read my thought and I couldn't take it anymore, Tom only understands force, etc.' Then later when she hit Susan, it was 'she called me a bitch, her Dad gave her a smart mouth, her Dad made her hate me, you know what teenage girls are like, they all have smart mouths, etc.' Lidia chronically avoided responsibility and never accepted blame or admitted fault." Rather than admitting her own culpability she would choose to deceive people. Her constructed victim image further humiliated Tom and made it his fault for being victimised.

During their divorce, Lidia used the police to make Tom's life difficult by lying about Tom to the police. Lidia often called the police and made up stories about Tom stalking her. Tom was arrested three times. The first incident occurred a couple of days before Tom had frozen the business' accounts and was arrested for domestic violence. Tom and JW (a boyhood friend) were having breakfast when Lidia started "hollering" at Tom. He told her to leave him alone and to go away. A couple of minutes later, the police knocked on the door and Lidia told them that he had threatened her. "The police talked to JW and he told the truth, that nothing happened. I said the same. The officer believed me but took me aside and wanted to offer some advice. The officer said that he'd had a lot of experience with families in trouble. Also, that when Lidia was talking to him she was shaking scared at first, then when he started asking questions she immediately became calm and composed. He said that normal people can't do that, that there was something wrong with her, and he knew right away there had been no threat because scared people stay scared and upset." This officer was the only officer who had investigated Lidia's claims before arresting Tom, and who Tom told me about.

Lidia did not need Tom to be close to her to accuse him of something. Lidia and JW often fought and one weekend when the children were with Tom, Lidia and JW decided to run away. They loaded JW's car and then Lidia changed her mind, which led to a fight in the driveway. Lidia's neighbours called the police and JW drove off with everything inside the car. Lidia had a broken rib and she tried to blame it on Tom. X-rays showed that the break was just a couple of days old and Tom had been out of the marital home for several weeks. She was cited for contempt because she lied to the judge.

During the divorce proceedings, the judge ordered Tom back into the home, but before he could return, he had to have the home appraised. Lidia took the appraisal report to the police to have Tom arrested. The report showed that Tom had been in the home with the appraiser. Lidia had at that stage not been living in the house because she was ordered out of the home by the court. After the charge was dismissed, Lidia found a second prosecutor and had Tom recharged. This second charge was again dismissed and saw Lidia convicted of malicious prosecution.

All these incidents of malicious prosecution and deception used within the legal system made Tom's life difficult. In addition to the inconvenience and probable humiliation and frustration, Lidia's malicious prosecution also strained Tom's finances.

Family

Tom's dedication to his family was the first thing that caught my attention in our conversation. In Tom's story, his family was the theatre within which the violence was perpetrated, but it was also his saving grace.

Tom's family nearly did not become what it is today. Before he and Lidia had children, they fought regularly, the first episode of infidelity had taken place and Tom decided that he was finished with their relationship. He wanted out because he intended on becoming a father and he was not planning to raise his children around violence. Lidia pleaded with Tom to stay, promising that she would never hurt him again. However, her behaviour did not change.

When they had had all their three children, Lidia's behaviour changed from being the permissive parent to being very strict. She started to pull away from the family, would feel bad about it, show remorse and then she would start spending time with the family. She also asked

Tom to take the children away from home. Tom tried to compensate for this withdrawal by taking on the role of caretaker within the home as well as the primary breadwinner.

Tom's major concern regarding the violence in the family was not necessarily his own pain. To him, the most concerning aspect of family life before the divorce was the impact that the violence had on the children. He says, for example, "So, I'm only distressed about Susan's pain from seeing her Dad get hurt".

For Tom and the children, as a family, 2008 was the best year that they have had in a long time. After the divorce and Lidia's death, it took everyone some time to make peace with their new family. He and the children dealt with Lidia's possessions, keeping only those things that had sentimental value.

Future

During our conversation, I wanted to know what Tom wanted for himself and his children. Although our conversation largely centred on his wishes for himself and the children now, he did mention his wishes for the future while he and Lidia were still married.

Tom was thinking about his own and his family's future throughout his relationship with Lidia. After one of their fights, Tom had told Lidia very clearly that he wanted to have a divorce, he wanted children in future and he did want to raise them in a violent home.

Due to his experiences, Tom has today become involved in advocacy and educational efforts to decrease the effects of violence in families. He says that: "I continue to be a Family Law activist, lobbying for divorce reform and shared parenting". During our conversation, he said that he believes that the overprotection of women in domestic violence causes "some men and all children [to] get harmed. Our activism confronts that and seeks to level the playing field." He also stated that he will "continue my [his] interest in health and fitness".

His wishes for his children's futures are simple. He wants them to find success in career and family and, most of all, to like themselves. "They are good at sharing love and have a lot of coping skills. I hope they make good financial and partner choices and embrace change when it's needed. They will be good parents". His wishes for his children's future show that Tom does not want his children to suffer the hardships that he had in his life with Lidia. He had suffered from his partner's bad financial decisions and her anger, and he did not embrace

change when it was needed. He wants his children to be independent individuals who can make the right decision for themselves.

When we spoke about his future outside his role as an activist, he stated that he hopes to remarry some day. He met someone in mid-June 2009 and they are seeing a lot of each other. In conversations subsequent to the formal ending of our conversation, he has told me that he and his new girlfriend are very happy together and, most important, that she and the children get along very well. On a more personal note, he stated that he wanted our conversation to be a “defining and final conversation”, and that he hopes that he will “transition from participant to narrator to analyzer to spectator.” He does not want his experiences with Lidia to become a bad dream, but he wants to learn more from his experiences and he wants to “find a personal image that is more independent”.

“Kids”

In Tom’s story, his children are very important to him. In his discussion of the violence perpetrated against him before Susan’s birth, he said that he never intended raising children in a violent home. But Lidia promised that she would change, and did, for a while. Today, Tom feels that he should have divorced Lidia before Susan was born, because children are a huge investment in a relationship and it makes it harder to leave (Clark & Pataki, 1995). Tom really wishes that he had acted sooner in divorcing Lidia. His delayed actions “wasted a lot of money, hurt my kids, ruined my business” and created “incredible turmoil”. After the divorce, Tom got full custody of the children until Lidia had received counselling. After some counselling, Tom and Lidia decided that they would change the custody agreement so that Lidia could spend more time with the children.

Even though Lidia exhibited violent behaviour, she and Tom would fight like a normal couple about how to raise the children and he made specific reference to discipline issues. Tom protected his children by removing them from the home as soon as Lidia started her pattern that would eventually lead to a violent outburst. He also described how Lidia had pulled away from everyone in the family and how she had become very strict with the girls, but not Martin. Lidia also started to irk her responsibilities in the home, which Tom took over.

But Tom did not just relate the children’s relationship with the violence, he also told their stories from his perspective. He described his pride of his children in the way that they had overcome the trauma of their mother’s behaviour and death.

Tom is very happy with his children and where they are today, and he described each of them and their accomplishments. “So it was a breakout year for the kids, the culmination of a lot of hard work. My ‘preaching’ over the years paid off and I feel very validated. Self-esteem is a gift you give yourself, but only after you internalize authentic accomplishment. It’s a real kick to see them liking themselves. Never a dull moment.”

Lidia also used the children in her power struggles with Tom. Tom related an incident when he had asked Lidia for child support. Lidia declined to pay any child support and said that “they can all get jobs. I’ll go to jail first.” Tom describes his pride in the children when they all got jobs. “Susan was the oldest at 13 and she started baby-sitting and has worked ever since, so did Martin and Kathryn. At 10, Kathryn sold bait, lemonade, and gas off the dock to the fisherman [sic] in our lake :):).” The emoticons at the end of that sentence are two smileys indicating a great deal of pride.

The facts that the children were exposed to violence and that Lidia did not have a relationship with her children, troubled Tom a lot. Although Tom clearly enjoys being a father very much, his experiences of fatherhood may have been a little harder than most. One can interpret that he would have loved sharing those experiences with Lidia. According to Tom, parenthood is a fulfilling challenge that would have been even better in a partnership. “You make a lot of compromises as a parent. The kids need socialization to interact confidently and to learn how to manage and cope with conflict and criticism. Once they are on their own, they will be encountering others with bad or absent parenting, the rest of their lives, you have to prepare them so they won’t be unduly harmed.”

“Anger management is learned behavior [sic], most effectively from parents. I chose to always show the kids not to hit or even touch in anger. They saw a complete contrast between Lidia and I and they have all chosen non-violence and de-escalation with loved ones. My weakness was not showing them how to effectively set boundaries and then enforce those boundaries. I didn’t learn that about myself until they were mostly grown so I emphasize that at every opportunity now.”

“The hardships were and are enormous. All the effort and support that kids need, even as adults, I have to do it all alone. Just to hear three people call me “Dad” makes it all worthwhile. Kids bring a richness and challenge to life that has no equal. I am dating and the women I have met that never had kids, that are in their 50s now, have very lonely and difficult

lives. I have found that women who have kids are more likely to be married or connected and have more desire to be in a partnership, particularly after the kids are grown. You get used to the compromises that kids force upon you and that ability to compromise makes older women more available for long-term relationships.”

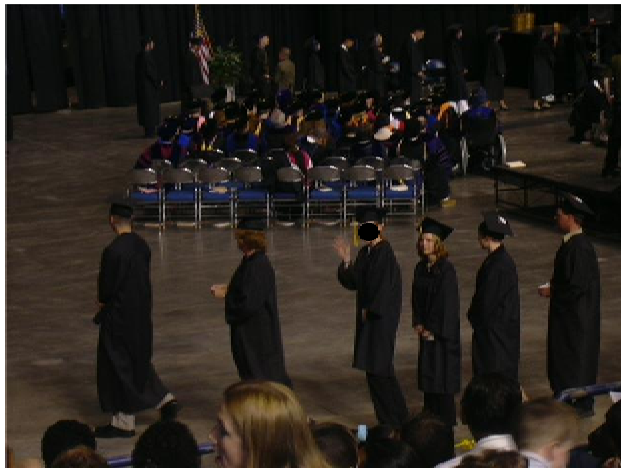


Figure 5: Susan at her graduation

“Having kids forces you into coping skills that you can't get any other way. The joy of their growth and accomplishment has no equal. Seeing Susan, in cap and gown, graduating from the University of Washington, getting a home-made birthday cake, these are untouchable and soaring feelings that are unavailable any other way. That's Susan waving at her UW graduation. That's a 'We-Did-It-I-Love-You' smile, can't get one without kids. BTW [by the way] that

smile is an instant cure for all of life's injuries and bad choices, free booster shots for life just looking at the pic [sic].”

Although Tom has taught his children much about self-image, confidence, love, self-acceptance and healthy relationships, it is palpable that he has learned a lot from the children themselves. Parenthood is a socially accepted partnership between father and mother but, considering the way in which Tom structured his family after his divorce from Lidia, it is as if he had partnerships with each of his children. He invested in each child's development and in turn he learned from them and they provided the light to his life.

Mental Health

Mental health was a theme that was evident in Tom's story when he told me more of Lidia's behaviour. Tom saw Lidia's questionable mental health in the later years of the marriage as an excuse for Lidia's behaviour towards him.

Although Tom knew that Lidia suffered from post partum depression and that she had problems with substance abuse (alcohol and prescription medicine), he also notes that she had

hallucinations and that she was not rational. Lidia's mental health had been worrisome to Tom since 1985. He said: "From mid 85 on I began to wonder if Lidia had some sort of mental disorder because of the extremely sudden mood swings." Throughout the 1980s, there were incidents where she saw things at work or in the grocery store. Tom relates an incident between Lidia and the girls in 1987 when Lidia, in a fit of rage, locked the girls in their bedroom by tying the vacuum cleaner electrical cord to the door. Since that day, the children started calling her "crazy Lidia".

After the end of Lidia's affair with Dr. TB, Lidia had a nervous breakdown. When she finally opened up to Tom regarding the affair, she asked Tom if she could carry a baby for her former lover. This incident concerned Tom regarding the mental wellness of his wife, but he also excuses his own legitimate feelings about this incident as "lame excuses". He says that it is hard for him to be angry at Lidia for "the bad things she did because I believe at many points she was not rational for a number of reasons".

The Present

Although the majority of Tom's story is focussed on the past, he also focuses on the present. He relates a lot about the children's and his own present lives.

Tom says that, thinking back about his and Lidia's relationship, he "feels very blessed to have a few great years sharing such a complete love with someone so warm and talented and caring." The good memories that he has of his relationship with Lidia are his to treasure forever and he continues to benefit from their relationship through having the children in his life.

He had to start over again in many ways because Lidia had harmed so many of his friendships. He is currently friends with one of the men with whom Lidia had an affair and he is building on his friend networks through participating in hiking clubs. Joining the hiking clubs ensures that he meets others with the types of values and attitudes that he appreciates. The clubs also ensure that he has fun while meeting others, and while he is not focussed on finding the next love of his life at the clubs, he would not mind meeting a woman there.

Tom considers the conversation that we had as being the final and definitive conversation regarding his troubles. He says that he feels that he has to cut off the troubled past because he is "worn out and tired" from defining himself by relationship conflict. The process of cutting off from his past is really difficult because people are hungry for advice

regarding troubled relationships. He knows that he has a “hero complex”, as he describes himself, so he always jumps in to come to the rescue and help people. When he now looks for a partner, he focuses on the quality of kindness. He also feels that his own personality has finally developed independently from a partner and that this has led him to improve his personal standards and boundaries.

Although Tom and Lidia’s relationship was stormy, Tom dearly misses some aspects and certain times of their relationship. He said that the type of relationship that he and Lidia had before their problems was something that he misses.

Tom is currently part of a group called tabs2@yahoogroups.com, in which he acts as an activist for family law reform. He feels that women are seen as a protected class by society in regard to domestic violence and because of this special class, many men and children are harmed.

When considering Tom’s story, it seems that he is generally happy with where the children are today. He is still concerned about certain small things, but it does not dominate the way in which he talks about his children. He himself is currently in a blossoming relationship with Cecile⁸ and he is looking forward to the rest of his life. He does acknowledge that there are certain issues that he needs to work on to improve his life.

Reflection

The reflective stance that Tom had throughout our conversation justified a theme on reflections. The remainder of this section explores what reflection is and describes the various points of reflection that were identified in Tom’s story.

Reflection is an action taken by an individual and can be defined as “a thought, idea or opinion formed on a remark made as a result of meditation” or “a consideration of some subject matter, idea or purpose” (Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 2010). The most common behaviour that leads to Tom’s reflections and considerations was the violence that he experienced at Lidia’s hands. Tom reflected on Lidia’s behaviour in terms of her motivations, her justifications and the effect of the violence.

Tom says that Lidia was very good at compartmentalising her behaviour and her relationships. Lidia had justified hitting Tom because they were fighting like “brother and sister”.

⁸ Pseudonym

Tom can also now say, while looking back, that Lidia was more violent when she felt she had the power to get away with her behaviour or when she knew she could hide it from others. “She was so clever, it’s hard for me to agree that she was irrational or intoxicated, being ‘Crazy Lidia’, as the kids would say.” Tom can now see a clear pattern in Lidia’s behaviour of not taking responsibility for her violent behaviour, and she never admitted fault. He also feels that she held the belief that when a man was hit by a woman he “probably had it coming.” He feels that Lidia’s violent outbursts rarely had a specific underlying cause, but were rather fuelled by a generalised rage due to a lack of power and control. Lidia used to hit Tom when he had taken a stand and ended an argument, and Tom believes that, through hitting, she perceived that she regained control and dictated how and when an argument should end.

Although violence was a large part of his reflections, he also reflected on their relationship outside the violent episodes and the end of their marriage. Tom describes how, at the beginning of their marriage, they lived separate lives in the same house. He says that they worked themselves to “exhaustion” and that they did not have the energy to work on their relationship. When he reflects on this, he writes “we were too immature to understand that you have to act out our love, constantly. Relationships are built on ordinary, quiet time together, not the special puffed up events. We stopped watching movies together, going out. We assumed that our love would take care of itself, it didn’t.” Based on his own reflections, Tom states that he and Lidia got married at such a young age, that their lives could have been different if they had been more mature. He also said that, due to his own immaturity, he was “too in-love with Lidia and didn’t really have a separate image. I didn’t exist individually only as a partner to Lidia.”

Tom describes his lack of a separate self-image as probably one of the reasons why he stayed as long as he did within the violent relationship. He says that he hated himself for putting up with Lidia’s behaviour for so long and not protecting himself and the children from her. He says that it took him years to see what he had chosen for himself and the children. “Then, it took a long time to reflect on my strengths and motivations, to figure out what I was good at and emphasize those drivers.” Through this reflective process, he came to the conclusion that, although he failed in his relationship with Lidia, he was successful in all his other relationships in life, from personal relationships with his children, family and friends to his professional relationships.

Tom also describes how he and his and Lidia's friends were fooled by the mask of the perfect couple. He stayed with Lidia through her affairs and her violent behaviour, hoping and believing "that Lidia would wake up, remember her responsibilities, my love for her, and hopefully quit the affair." He believes that counselling was an effort on his part to preserve his self-control and suppress his anger and pain. He did not initially tell his counsellor about Lidia's affair with Dr. TB, because he felt too humiliated.

Tom reflected a lot on Lidia's mental health and his current views on mental health. He feels that she was never her old self after Kathryn's birth and the accompanying post-partum depression. He feels that he cannot blame Lidia for all the things that she did because she was not completely rational at all times. After some consideration, Tom now has much empathy for the mentally ill, first because of the difficulties that they face with their own inability to accept that they have a disease, and second, their families' lack of power to get them the help that they need before they hurt themselves or anyone else.

The lessons that Tom learned through his relationship with Lidia have given rise to his reflections on his current relationships with his children and love interests. In an act of combined reflection, Tom and the children have established new rules for their family. Based on their previous experiences, they decided that "hitting and name calling or even touching-in-anger (my phrase to eliminate wiggle room) would never be allowed in our family again and it never was." They also agreed to fight fair, to say sorry when they were wrong and never to use "I told you so".

In addition to the family's reflection on their interaction with each other, Tom has also had the opportunity to consider what he wants from relationships and what an automatic relationship end is. Tom was disappointed that very few women want to get seriously involved in a relationship. He was also disappointed that women have unrealistic romantic fantasies, that they carry around a lot of responsibilities and that they are looking for short-term relationships. He feels that he had been getting better at spotting dead-ends in relationships and moving on sooner. After considering his frustrations with women, he has realised that he also has to change. He knows that he has to change his "romantic ideals, as most bodies are fading and it seems more important that values and stability is sexy". He now feels that a woman's best quality is kindness and that he will work with every fault, except cruelty and hostility.

Tom has found that he often tended to find himself associated with women who have gone through similar experiences to his own. When he is in a relationship or friendship with such women, he tends to give them advice and direction, although he knows that he should not do so. He says that it is hard not to fall into that role because “so many are hungry for advice and direction to their own troubles, and there I go jumping in to help, my raging ‘hero’ complex, LOL.” The rules that he and the children established are also part of his relationships with women, and he tries to talk to his friends and interests about fighting fair.

At the end of our conversation, I asked Tom to reflect on our conversation and to give me some feedback on his own impressions. He said that he and Lidia did love each other very much and that he feels as if our focus on the fighting and negativity skewed their reality. They were happy more often than not, and experienced major episodes of violence on a very irregular basis. They had many good years that led to them having the children.

Due to the time that has passed, Tom feels that Lidia’s decreased impact on his life now allows him hopefully to look at his troubles more objectively. He has already transitioned in his role from a participant to a narrator through the study of his own life experiences. He now wants his transition to progress to analyser and then, finally, to spectator. He hopes that when he reaches the spectator role, he will have a “personal image that is more independent of the troubles.”

Tom not only reflected on our conversation, but he actively sought to reflect upon the documents that he wrote as part of the divorce proceedings. When he went back to his writings for his divorce proceedings, he noted that his writings lacked explanation, they were dampened and offered very little context. The related events were detached from emotion, as if he was taking part in a documentary as the detached, emotionless narrator. He also noted that he did not tell the courts about many of the events that he had told me about, largely due to the fact that his experiences were only completed by some of the stories that the children told him years after the proceedings. The family evaluator wrote that she felt Tom was trying to protect Lidia, but now having the ability to look back at the events, he now knows that he could not remember the events at the time or that he might somehow have blocked them from his memory.

Relationships

Relationships proliferate Tom’s story and are found on many levels. Tom several times implies that people have relationships between themselves and others around them. He himself

had relationships with Lidia, the children, Lidia's mother and dad and his own friends. Relationships can also exist between a person and occurrences. Tom notes two such relationships, namely relationships with violence and relationships with Lidia's affairs.

When Tom and Lidia met in 1974, they only had eyes for each other. They were deeply in love, compatible and best friends. Tom however notes that "our relationship became complex over times". After all the turmoil and pain and then their divorce, Tom and Lidia reconnected their friendship in 2001-2002. The night before she died, Lidia told her best friend – Tom – that she had been sober for a month. Although Tom and Lidia were divorced, she presented Tom as her husband when they travelled together to Kathryn's events or to see Martin in the Marines, without protest from Tom.

The fairy-tale relationship with his best friend is something that Tom misses very much. At the time of our conversation, Tom said that he has not found that same relationship with another partner. He feels that his inability to enforce boundaries was part of his and Lidia's problems, but he thinks that he is now a lot better. Lidia changed the way Tom looks at everyone, and how he defines and maintains relationships.

However, the fairy-tale did not last. Lidia had five affairs during her marriage with Tom. After finding out about the affairs, Tom initially wanted to leave Lidia but she promised every time that she would not do it again. Tom stayed. During Lidia's affair with Dr. TB, Tom found out about the affair and chose not to confront Lidia about it. He rather chose to live with the affair, in the hopes that Lidia would realise her mistake and return to the family. The affair ended when Dr. TB married another woman, and not because Lidia chose to end it. In many respects, this affair and Lidia's breakdown after the affair's end were the final straw for the marriage between Tom and Lidia. Her behaviour and Tom's feelings around it made him reach out for help and go to counselling.

Tom and John, Lidia's new husband, did not have a very good relationship. When Tom and the children spent a belated Christmas celebration with Lidia and John, John was distant towards Tom but he tolerated his presence. After Lidia's death, John was very cold and uncooperative and insisted on burying Lidia on Martin's birthday. John kept most of Lidia's settlement money and forwarded her mail to Tom. He planned on throwing Lidia's things away without Tom and the children's knowledge, but Susan found out. Tom is sure that John suspected that Tom and Lidia had had an affair. Tom never wanted to come between John and

Lidia because he was a great stabiliser for her and this made it easier for Tom to parent the children with her. Tom says that he could never again trust Lidia and therefore never pursued more than friendship.

Friendships with other people did not feature prominently for Tom throughout his story. He did say that his friends were subject to Lidia's approval and that usually he could be friends with men whose wives were friends with Lidia. During Tom's involvement with politics, he made several friends, some of whom he managed to maintain friendships with to this day.

At the time of the divorce, a very important relationship for Tom was the therapeutic relationship with Beth, his counsellor. She was the objective outsider whose professional opinion helped Tom make up his mind about leaving Lidia and, according to him, probably saved his life. The second important relationship, and one that he still has, is his relationship with Lisa, his divorce attorney. Tom told me the story of how he phoned Lisa on the Saturday after being arrested and how she subsequently consulted with him on the Sunday. He felt such a sense of relief because this woman was willing to work so hard on a Sunday - for him.

Tom's described his own relationship with domestic violence when he told me that, when he and Lidia met in 1974, the phrase domestic violence did not exist. Everything that he has learned through his experiences, he passes on as "first generation knowledge". "So, he [sic] activist work we al [sic] are doing is all new and uncharted ground, trying to educate and trying to level the playing field for those in the system." Tom was in a relationship with domestic violence without knowing it, and he is now trying to educate as many people as possible to make sure that no one finds themselves in the same type of relationship.

When Tom and the children formed their own sub-family, they discussed family rules. These rules were established to allow family members to have a fulfilling relationship with each other. He taught the children how to be fair in a relationship and to set boundaries.

Substance Problems

Lidia was a user of reefer (marijuana), alcohol and prescription medication and Tom raised his concern to Lidia regarding her substance use problems several times. According to Tom's story, there is a link between Lidia's substance use and her mental health. There was also a discussion on friendship and substance abuse as well as Kathryn's involvement with substances.

When Tom was a young man, he had smoked marijuana and he admitted to that when he related to me how Lidia had started smoking marijuana while he was at work. It did not worry him much that she was smoking marijuana, but what did concern him was that she was smoking it while she was alone with the Pepsi delivery guy, David. Tom was worried that David's wife would take offence at David and Lidia being alone. I also think that, to some degree, Tom was afraid that Lidia was having an affair with David, possibly wondering why else she would be smoking marijuana with him.

According to Tom, Lidia started using prescription medication in 1985 and her drug of choice at that time was Pamelor (tricyclic antidepressant). Lidia had told Tom that it was a sleeping pill, but he saw her taking the medication three times a day, which disqualified it as a sleeping pill. She lied about her use of antidepressants and Tom assumed that she was abusing this medication due to its possible narcotic affects. Tom also noted that Lidia was taking Vicodin (narcotic pain medication) and drinking quite a lot. Lidia had started her drinking in 1983 when wine was first sold in cardboard boxes. In 1985, Tom noticed that Lidia got tipsy more often after tests while she was studying to become a Registered Nurse. It seems as if he attributes her increased drinking to the fact that she was working while she was studying, especially because she found her course challenging.

Tom describes Lidia's best friend, Bettie, as an enabler for Lidia in her drug use behaviour. Bettie and Lidia went out drinking together and Bettie was the person who set up illegal prescriptions for Lidia to obtain Pamelor and Darvon (pain medication). Lidia ended her friendship with Bettie when she noticed that Bettie's schemes always ended badly. "Bettie eventually self-destructed on drugs and alcohol and left the area."

Alcohol was not just an issue specific to Lidia. In an effort to deal with Lidia's death, Kathryn drank and smoked a lot, and she only quit in 2008. Tom felt that Kathryn's decision to stop was influenced by his own, Susan and Martin's repeated attempts to persuade Kathryn to stop this behaviour. Tom says that "Kathryn quit smoking, got sober, and is studying hard and well on track." Tom is very proud of Kathryn for being sober.

Tom believes that someone who is toxic as a consequence of substance abuse truly does not understand the difference between right and wrong. He feels that substance abuse is a disease and that, if someone receives treatment for his/her disease, s/he is more likely to

behave normally. The disease can be blamed for many of the problems that the sufferers have, and in some cases it becomes easy to predict their behaviour from their disease.

Violence

Tom's first e-mail to me had a line in it that showed what the main topic of conversation would be. He wrote: "I was hit a few times a year by my wife". Tom described emotional violence, violence against his daughter Susan, the effect of violence on the family's members and Lidia's violence against other people. But not all the confrontations between Tom and Lidia were violent. They also had "normal" couple fights over how to raise the children, discipline issues and money. They experienced long periods when there were no violence and fighting was minimal.

Lidia's violent behaviour started about a year into the marriage. Lidia apologised for her violent behaviour, she cried and in the beginning promised not to do it again. Tom's relaying of Lidia's first affair and their subsequent fights seems to indicate that Tom believes that the affair was a catalyst point for the development of the violence in his and Lidia's relationship. When reading this specific account, it leaves one with the question: "Would Lidia have ever become violent if she had never had the affair and Tom never withdrawing from her?" This feeling is reminiscent of the one verbalised by Tom regarding Lidia's death. What if?

Tom describes Lidia's anger as selective anger that could flare up with no aggravation or escalation. Lidia's rage rarely had an underlying specific issue and Tom characterised it as a general rage about her lack of power and control. Because Tom rarely saw the violence coming, it was very difficult for him to protect himself. "Many of the worst events had no talking between us or the verbal conflict had been over for 10 minutes or more, sometimes days or weeks or years."

For many years, Tom and Lidia lied about her injuries to other people, and Tom patched up the walls where Lidia damaged them when throwing things. He did this because he was embarrassed and because he wanted Lidia's appreciation. He got rewarded for his troubles in trying to cover up for Lidia. "Several times afterward she approached me very passionately and we had great love-making after she had been violent and gotten away with it, with my help." Because he never enforced the boundaries against violence, Lidia learned that her behaviour was effective in getting what she wanted.

Tom did not just recall Lidia's violent behaviour and said that he was involved in pushing and shoving during the second year of their marriage. He also admitted that he hit Lidia on one particular occasion. Tom hates what he did that day and considers it one of the lowest days of his life. A few days after the incident, Tom said to Lidia that he would like a divorce if he ever got that mad again. He promised her that he would never hit or shove her again, and he never did.

When Lidia's physical access to Tom was restricted, she found alternative ways to control his life. For example, she made up charges against Tom that he was stalking her, and she succeeded in getting Tom arrested three times (discussed in Deception). The cases were dismissed and, in the end, Lidia was convicted on charges of malicious prosecution. Tom did mention that, when he was arrested, it became apparent that police officers had no training in male domestic violence victims, but he feels that this has now changed.

Lidia minimised and normalised her violent behaviour towards Tom in a way that particularly upset him. She equated their fighting with a fight between siblings, brother and sister. Escalation during a fight, from screaming to hitting, is a means of showing how deeply held an argument's position is. She normalised it by comparing Tom to her brothers and the way that she used to scuffle with her two brothers. This bothered Tom a great deal because he never used to physically fight with his four sisters. This compartmentalisation of behaviour and relationships did not suit Tom and he now feels that Lidia was very good at it. Tom also feels that Lidia was "more violent when she either felt that she had the power to get away with it or could keep it hidden." Lidia saw fighting as a means to obtain power and to reinforce her victim image. She always blamed Tom or the children for her violent outbursts and never accepted personal responsibility.

The violence that Tom experienced was quite contrary to his own personal history. He can be seen as the all-American boy. Very active in sport, he was a linebacker in a semi-professional team and brown belt in Judo, as well as a self-defence teacher. He could not or would not defend himself from the violence. He was embarrassed by being his petit little wife's punch bag. He hated himself after the break-up for not protecting himself or the children. He realised that he had lost his self-esteem and that he had to regain it.

His experiences of violence led Tom to become an activist for family law reform. He was led to become an activist not only by his negative experiences but also by his positive

experience with Lisa. There is another consequence of Tom's experiences that he feels is not as positive as his activism. He said that he had many relationships with women who have also been through abusive relationships, but he does not want to be in a relationship based on "war story" affinity. He says: "That is so hard to do as so many are hungry for advice and direction to their own troubles, and there I go jumping in to help, my raging 'hero' complex, LOL." He usually diminishes his story so as not to fall into the easy conversation and camaraderie.

When Tom and the children founded their own sub-family, they discussed the rules of fighting fair. He wanted to counteract the influence of what the children saw while they were growing up. He verbalised this wish when he says: "If the kids see that, they learn the same things, and the generational cycle of violence continues." He taught the children about boundaries and how to enforce them.

Tom did not have a definition for domestic violence when he was younger and his definition of domestic violence is very much shaped by his own experiences. This definition focuses more on emotional abuse because he feels that this is far more painful. He also feels that the current situation in law, policing and other helping professions where women are overprotected and identified as the only victims of domestic violence, causes a lot of men and children to be harmed.

Although the majority of themes from Tom's story is negative, there are also the positive themes. From his own recounting, Tom can be considered to be a survivor of domestic violence and he has identified several people in his story whom he regards as angels. These "angels" guided him in making his difficult decisions and being there to help him when he needed it. He described his pride at his children's current lives and his dreams and aspirations for his own and the children's futures.

He described his attempts to deal with death and violence by means of avoidance and deception. He described substance abuse as a major contributor to the decline of Lidia's mental health and the way that her probable mental illness contributed to her violent behaviour. He narrated incidents during which the children saw him being hit. Although his family was the theatre for the violent interplay between himself and Lidia, the family remains the most important thing in his life. He reflected on the fact that he might have done more harm than good to himself and the children by staying with Lidia.



Now that the themes from Tom's story are established, it becomes easier to compare Tom's experiences with the research literature (Chapter Two). I will evaluate the differences and similarities in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This chapter introduced the reader to Tom and his story, much of it presented in his own words. In Landmarks, a condensed version of Tom's story in an approximate chronological order was provided to the reader in order to contextualise the analysis that followed. This was not the order in which Tom presented his story during our conversation, but rather a construction of the chronology based on dates mentioned and incidents that were linked to others.

In Narrative Themes, an attempt was made to reorganise Tom's story based on a specific constructionist procedure. Tom's story was read several times, a number of codes were identified and these codes were then grouped into 13 themes. Each of these themes was discussed to provide the reasoning behind the creation of the specific theme.

The next chapter provides an integration between the reviewed literature (Chapter Two) and Tom's story as presented in this chapter. In addition, it contains a reflection on the process of establishing the new research narrative. This research narrative is also evaluated according to certain principles of scientific study and I provide some recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE: INTEGRATION, EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This journey started with the aim of exploring men's experiences at the hands of their abusive wives, and it changed into the story of Tom and Lidia's relationship. This chapter represents the final act in this research narrative, but not by any means the final chapter in Tom's life. The journey has been long and the end is nearly in sight. Meyer and van Ede (2001) commented that, when a person comes to the end of a journey such as life, reflection plays a major role. This chapter is a reflection on Tom's story, the process of storytelling, its validity and reliability. Based on these musings, recommendations are made for future research.

The following section serves as a reflection on Tom's narrative and the research literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. It provides a comparison between Tom's narrative and other research narratives, thereby placing his experiences within a research grand narrative.

Narrative Themes: Comparison between Research and Experience

This section attempts to identify whether some commonalities exist between Tom's story and the stories that have been recorded in the literature review. Although Tom is a victim of abuse at the hands of his wife, the theme of Female as Victim, identified in Chapter Two, will not be excluded. This was to ensure that indications could be obtained as to whether the female and the male experience of violence differ significantly in published research narratives.

The comparison will be conducted under the following headings:

- § Victim's experiences
- § The perpetrator
- § Effects of violence
- § Gender roles, and
- § Substance abuse.

Victims' Experiences

Tom experienced a wide range of behaviours during his marriage with Lidia, and these that can be grouped into themes. Through telling his story, Tom constructed violence, his understanding of retaliation, his and Lidia's choices, construction contexts for behaviours and the effect of emotion on the construction of his story. The following sections give a description of my construction of his constructions.

Constructing Abuse

In *Male as Victim*, it is noted that men tend to experience a wider range of abusive behaviour at the hands of their abusive female partners, and this is not only confined to physical violence (Belknap & Melton, 2005; Migliaccio, 2002; Taylor & Pittman, 2005; Tutty, 1999). Abusive behaviour towards men includes physical, psychological and financial abuse. Men tend to experience more psychological violence in comparison with female victims, largely due to the physiology of both victim and perpetrator. Women are, in most cases, physically smaller and weaker than men and therefore more often choose to use psychological violence in order to achieve control over their partners.

In some instances, abusive women use institutional procedures, designed to safeguard female victims of domestic violence, against their male victims by accusing them of domestic violence and having them arrested. Behaviour reported by male victims includes having objects thrown at them, sleep deprivation, groin attacks and biting. The types of behaviour that male victims tend to be subjected to are related to the fact that they are larger and stronger than their female assailants, which makes overt physical violence more difficult to perpetrate. Female assailants also force their partners to stop working and to stop seeing their friends and family, much like male perpetrators would.

Tom reported that Lidia would hit him in the back as he was walking away from an argument or that she would throw things at him. She used a weapon against Tom only twice (a pen and his platform shoe), but he did not report that she attacked him in the groin area. During their divorce, Lidia also used institutional procedures against Tom, accusing him of threatening and assaulting her and leading to Tom being arrested three times. During our conversation, Tom never reported any other physical injuries to himself, save for the pen-stabbing that he suffered at his office the week before he filed for divorce. Tom did report that Susan was given a black eye from a confrontation with Lidia. However, Lidia sustained injuries when she had

attacked Tom, ascribed to the fact that Tom was larger and stronger than Lidia. In addition, Lidia prevented Tom from having any friends outside her own circle of married female friends.

Although Lidia's behaviour would not seem to be particularly abusive towards Tom and the children (when comparing his story with the stories of abused women), to someone reading through his story, the cyclical nature of her withdrawal from them and her resentment and controlling behaviour are indeed abusive (as described in the construction of domestic violence (Chapter One)). Tom's description of the sporadic and unpredictable violent behaviour that he was subjected to created the picture of him walking on egg shells around Lidia and her temper. It seems that he tried to please Lidia, but to his own and the children's detriment.

To a certain extent, it seemed as if Lidia's unfaithful behaviour had also been directed at hurting Tom. She entered into affairs with three of his friends. These types of liaison inflict the maximum amount of pain because it is a breach in trust by trusted and loved companions. Tom said: "Knowing that the love of my life, my partner and loving companion, had chosen someone else was the greatest pain I ever suffered. Nothing else compares to that, yet it was perfectly legal." During the divorce proceedings, she told the judge that when she married Tom she was a virgin and that Tom was not. In her opinion, her affairs served as adult sex education.

Retaliation

Abused men usually do not retaliate against their female perpetrators, even though they could win the battle because of their physical size and strength. Men usually do not retaliate because of chivalry and/or fear of being charged with domestic violence. In the case of mutually combative couples, both the husband and the wife are perpetrators and victims of the violence (Hamel, 2007; Renzetti, 1992).

Tom never retaliated against Lidia while they were in the midst of a fight. He did, however, slap her once while they were driving. During this altercation, Lidia had not pushed or shoved Tom and he slapped her because he was angry. This incident could, if it had occurred again, have classified Tom and Lidia as a mutually combative couple, but according to Tom, this only happened once. Having played football and practiced Judo, Tom could have retaliated successfully against Lidia because he was a strong man. Tom never explained why he had not retaliated. He did, however, say that he had never entered into physical fights with his four sisters, indicating that violence played no part in his family or origin and therefore not an acceptable means of conflict resolution.

Making the Choice

The question why victims of violence stay within an abusive relationship can be answered in several ways. In *Female as Victim*, it is noted that, when a victim of abuse has invested psychologically, financially and physically in a relationship, it becomes very difficult for him or her to leave the relationship (Dutton, 1995; McHugh et al., 2005). In addition, victims of domestic violence do not leave their abuser because they feel socially isolated, fear that their family would disapprove and they would suffer feelings of failure and guilt (Dutton, 1995). Another documented reason why victims stay in abusive relationships is because they hope that their partner would change (WHO, 2001). Male victims usually stay because they feel that they are responsible for the failure or success of their marriage and their family (Cook, 1997). Men also tend to redefine their partner's violent behaviour by rationalising her behaviour, or by defending her as a good person under a lot of pressure, or a victim of mental problems or of substance abuse (Steinmetz, 2007).

Tom said that he had told Lidia that he wanted to end the relationship the first time they had a violent altercation. Lidia was remorseful and promised never to do it again, Tom wanted to believe her and stayed. When reflecting on it now, Tom believes that he should have left Lidia much earlier, before their children were born. Prior to starting a family, they did not have many assets and it would have been much easier to end the relationship. This confirms that investments shared within a relationship determine whether a victim of abuse will leave or stay within a relationship.

Tom also attributed Lidia's irrational and violent behaviour to her abuse of prescription medication and alcohol. He described her as a good person who experienced a lot of pressure within interpersonal relationships. Tom noted that, during the divorce and custody hearings, an evaluator testified in court that he defended and protected Lidia by not telling the complete truth about her behaviour. Several times during our conversation, I also felt that he was still defending her and certainly continuing to try and minimise the extent of her violent behaviour.

Contextualising Behaviour

Tom notes that Lidia compartmentalised her behaviour to suit herself. She had told Tom that she could hit him because she saw him as a brother and that she and her brothers had fought in the same way. She would contextualise her behaviour in such a way as to favour herself and to minimise or justify her violent outbursts. However, it was not only Lidia who tried

to justify her behaviour. Tom stated that he felt that he had to minimise and normalise Lidia's violent behaviour, or end the marriage, something he was not prepared to do at that stage. He also felt that it was hard to be angry with Lidia because she was not always thinking rationally. He believed that the stress of childbirth and the impact of substance abuse impaired the functioning of her brain and influenced her actions. He also attributed many of the problems he and Lidia had when Susan was a little baby to the pressure that Lidia suffered from the interference of her parents. It seems that even now, after nearly a decade of reflecting on his experiences in their marriage, Tom is still slightly less than willing to truly represent Lidia's behaviour as abusive. He still tries to justify her violence and tries to minimise it by focussing on the fact that he never got hurt during their altercations.

Women who abuse their husbands tend to come from families where violence was present. These women also tend to have a history of mental problems and substance abuse. Similar to male perpetrators, they use minimisation, denial and external attributes to pardon their violent behaviour (Henning et al., 2005). Tom mentions that Lidia told him that her mother had hit her when she was younger. He suspected that she kept hidden much of the hurt and humiliation that she had suffered. Lidia's mother told Tom that she believed that Lidia had been mentally ill since she was a little girl. During the 1980s, Tom started to believe that Lidia was suffering from a mental disorder due to her rapid mood swings. Tom reported that Lidia used prescription medication and also drank a lot of wine. Lidia did disclose to Tom that she had a drinking problem and that she would work very hard to stop drinking. The day before she died in 2002, Lidia proudly told Tom that she had been clean and sober for one month.

Emotional Retelling

Some would argue that the medium through which Tom and I had our discussion could have removed the emotions involved in recollecting his experiences. However, Tom was able to reveal his emotions to me by using emoticons (Figure 3), for example ill comfort (Cook, 1997) when he wrote: "I felt pretty silly asking Susan what happened to her Barbie car, Susan telling me and the both of us staring at each other thinking each other was crazy. LOL." He was also able to convey his pride when he wrote, "...At 10, Kathryn sold bait, lemonade, and gas off the dock to the fisherman in our lake :):)"

Now that a comparison has been drawn between Tom's experiences and the literature review (Chapter Two), the next step will be to compare the effects of the violence as reported by Tom and those identified in the literature review.

Effects of Violence

In *Female as Victim*, one of the effects of violence is low self-esteem and it was also noted that low self-esteem would prevent a victim from leaving a violent relationship (Katz et al., 2000). Mignon (1998) added that women tend to suffer severe physical injuries when they are the victims of domestic violence. Women also experience more severe emotional problems as a consequence of the abuse (Bogart et al., 2005; Reid et al., 2008; WHO, 2007). Taylor and Pittman (2005) said that men experience psychosomatic symptoms and emotional problems but they also struggle with masculine ideals (Migliaccio, 2002).

From Tom's story, it is evident that he did not have a self-image separate from Lidia, which he ascribed to the fact that they had met at such a young age. However, he also said that it took him years after the divorce to develop a strong enough self-image to be able to say no. He felt very angry about the life he had chosen with Lidia and that he did not correct Susan as he should have done when she started calling her Mom "Lidia". He was really disgusted by Lidia's behaviour and he did not care any more that she was hurting herself and destroying her image as a mother. Unlike female victims, Tom did not report any physical injuries he suffered as a consequence of the violence in his home.

The research overview showed that female perpetrators of domestic violence displayed behaviour different to that of male perpetrators. They experience higher levels of distress in their personal, marital and interpersonal relationships, inside and outside of their family (Taylor & Pittman, 2005). These women also tend to perceive their families in a more negative light than male perpetrators (Taylor & Pittman, 2005). From Tom's recounting of Lidia's life, it becomes apparent that her relationships with her parents and her own children were miserable. Her disconnect from her children was explained by post-partum depression. However, her withdrawal as a result of her drinking and ignoring household chores seems to indicate that she experienced her family as a burden, threatening her independence. Lidia and Tom started getting along better after they were divorced and she did not have to act in the mother-role.

The violence that Tom and other victims are subjected to not only has a negative effect on the victims but also forces them to cope with the violence. The next section compares the coping skills identified in the research literature with Tom's specific coping strategies.

Coping with Violence

Female as Victim presents research on the various means of coping with violence. Some coping skills mentioned include running away, minimising their partner's abusive behaviour, justification of the abuse and self-blame. However, in Male as Victim, it is noted that men suffer one consequence of violence that women do not suffer. Abused men suffer from an internal and external struggle of masculine ideals (Migliaccio, 2002).

In an effort to deal with the violence, Tom normalised and minimised what Lidia had done to him. He also blamed himself for allowing the abuse to continue, saying that he allowed Lidia to get what she wanted by being violent. He also stated that he was humiliated by the fact that his small petite wife could hurt and degrade him the way she did.

Seagan (2009, p. 112) states: "narratives describe social conditions in which stigma, rejection and sometimes even humiliation were experienced as direct or indirect results of being perceived and labelled as 'other'". The humiliation that Tom suffered can be linked to his views on gender roles. The next section compares the applicable literature and Tom's experiences in regard to gender roles.

Gender Roles

The concept of gender roles is said to play an important role in the acceptance and non-acceptance of domestic violence. In Gender Roles, Culture and Abuse, women are generally viewed as loving, caring nurturing and obedient and, when they do aggress against a partner, it is most likely due to PMS, battered wife syndrome or post-partum depression. Women will also only aggress against their partners if their partners attack them first. Research also indicates that women holding liberal views on gender roles are prone to act in a violent way (Flinck et al., 2008). Women are more likely to aggress against men when they feel that the aggression can be justified or when it is deemed as permissible (Fontes, 1999).

The one instance in which Tom did hit Lidia, she did not retaliate. Tom stated that Lidia was definitely more violent when she felt that she could get away with it or when she could keep it hidden.

From Tom's story, it became evident that Lidia preferred the traditional macho picture of men. She admired horse ranchers and the "Marlboro Man" for their roughness and strength. She hated men who showed any weakness. Whether or not Lidia held liberal views on the female gender role cannot be said with absolute certainty. However, her behaviour suggested that Lidia did not identify with the traditional female gender role.

The traditional male gender role represents the strong patriarch who provides for and protects his family. As described in *Gender Roles, Culture and Abuse*, Tom was much larger and stronger than his small petite wife. Tom did not tell many people about the abuse that he suffered at the hands of his wife due to the humiliation he suffered. In addition, as was found in the literature review, Tom had a low self-esteem. Whether his low self-esteem was brought about by the fact that he was abused by his partner or whether the self-esteem issues were present before he met Lidia cannot be definitively stated.

Further, the focus of feminism on the plight of female victims of domestic violence makes life difficult for men like Tom. When Lidia initially phoned the police, Tom could see that the police officers were not well-trained in the handling of male victims of domestic violence. However, according to Tom's own account, this aspect has changed.

A large contributing factor to Lidia's violent behaviour was substance abuse. In the next section, the literature review and Tom's story will be compared in regard to substance abuse.

Substance Abuse

The section Substance Abuse in *Violent Relationships*, presents the WHO's (2007) list of connections between domestic violence and alcohol abuse. According to Tom, Lidia's cognitive functioning was impaired by her abuse of alcohol, prescription medication and the stresses of childbirth.

The WHO (2007) notes that alcohol worsens financial problems, problems in childcare, cheating and other family stressors. Tom does not state that he believes Lidia exacerbated their occasional financial problems or cheated on him as a result of her drinking problem. She did, however, withdraw from taking care of the children and had more foul moods that led to fighting in front of the children.

The WHO (2007) also notes a trend that most parents would worry about. They state that children whose parents are abusive could exhibit harmful drinking patterns later in life. Tom

was extremely concerned about Kathryn's drinking and "drugging" after the death of her mom. Kathryn did, however, stop drinking, abusing drugs and partying from the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve 2008.

Tom did not tell of incidents where Lidia had been drinking before she attacked him. Although Dutton's (1995) research found that a positive correlation exists between abusive personality and alcohol consumption, it would be irresponsible to conclude that Lidia had an abusive personality, as information is lacking regarding her psychological profile.

Tom did not report that he drank too much or abused any kind of substance in order to cope with the violence. However, he did attribute Lidia's behaviour to the degeneration of her brain due to substance abuse, similar to the behaviour displayed by lesbian victims of domestic violence when their partners drink too much.

In this section, a comparison has been drawn between the narrative themes identified in this chapter and the themes identified in the literature review. In several instances, Tom's story showed similarities to the research literature applicable to both male and female victims. Tom experienced less severe physical violence than most female victims would experience, but he experienced more psychological abuse than physical abuse. In certain instances, certain points could be neither confirmed nor denied due to a lack of data.

Reflection

Throughout the process of constructing this narrative, I found myself in a contemplative mood at several points on this journey. My contemplation was largely due to the difficulties I experienced while trying to find a willing narrator. In addition, I also reflected upon the issues both raised by Tom and stated in the literature.

One of my major frustrations during the journey was that I could not find men who were willing to talk about their experiences. Many men reacted to my call for participants, but most of them wanted someone to help them. As soon as they heard that my journey did not end with them getting custody of their children or their female partners in prison, they chose not to continue the journey with me.

A reason that immediately jumps to mind is the fact that most of the men who responded are currently embroiled in a struggle for their own and their children's safety. This primary need

has to be actualised before they can think about something as “unnecessary” as talking to a researcher. Talking to me or any other researcher does not fulfil their safety needs.

In addition to their own immediate safety needs, men might be concerned about their own self-image when they define themselves as victims of female perpetrated domestic violence (Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Baumeister (1995, p. 53) describes a concept in identity formation, termed *self-guides*. Self-guides are constructs that people have defining how they think they should be according to “their own and other people’s standards and expectations”. This self-guide is what might be influencing men not to define themselves as victims of female perpetrated violence. There are well established roles for both men and women in domestic violence and most people consider men as the perpetrators and women as the victims (Steinmetz, 2007).

These self-guides are also informed by cultural expectations of what domestic violence is. Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999, p. 237) stated: “battering is when an out-of-control man relentlessly beats his helpless wife, who is unable to leave him because she is economically and emotionally dependent on him, and she cowers and cries rather than fighting back”. It therefore seems plausible that a man’s self-guide will not allow him to define himself as a victim of female perpetrated crime due to the cultural expectation that only women can be victims of domestic violence.

But Tom did tell his story to me. Why did this happen? Based on Muehlenhard and Kimes (1999) and Baumeister’s (1995) studies, it is very unlikely that any man from any patriarchal society would admit to being a victim of domestic violence. Although Tom is part of a patriarchal society, it was not the characteristics of the society that determined his participation in this research narrative but rather his individual characteristics. He has undergone a transition from victim to survivor and therefore he was aware of the gender and power issues in domestic violence research and advocacy.

Although it seems as if dominant cultural gender expectations had a lot to do with the fact that I did not get as many narrators as I had hoped, it is also the individual’s interaction with these expectations that influence their reaction towards their own experiences. Cultural gender expectations on their own cannot guide a person’s behaviour. A person’s interaction with these expectations eventually guides how they will interact.

Tom's interaction with his own experiences gave rise to several reflections that he had regarding his experiences. One reflection that Tom made was also echoed in the literature. Tom said that "feminism started a very important dialogue on domestic violence. As usual, law maker/enforcers seize on social movements and over-react. They made women a protected class and created a victim status for all women, that is wrong. By over-protecting women, some men and all children get harmed. Our activism confronts that and seeks to level the playing field."

Steinmetz (2007) stated that, if battered husbands are continuously ignored, they will not receive the necessary resources that they need to exit these violent relationships safely. Another consequence of ignoring the victims of female perpetrated domestic violence is that the perpetrators are not able to find help to reduce stress and help them change their own behaviour.

Tom and Steinmetz's (2007) views are very similar to my own. I also believe that females have obtained rights of exclusivity to victim status. The existence of other victims of family violence has been marginalised.

As was mentioned in Chapter Three Collection of the Narrative, concerns have been expressed that e-mail cannot render emotions of the writer accurately. In Chapter Four's "Kids", Tom relates a story of how the children got jobs when Susan was just 13 years old. At the end of the paragraph, he has two smiley faces, like these :) :), indicating his pride and joy over the responsible behaviour that his children showed. The medium of e-mail conversation lends itself well to narrative interviewing as it gives both the interviewer and the interviewee a chance to think before writing a reply and, as Tom showed, allows the interviewee to check his own resources for more information. While he was writing his e-mails, Tom started reflecting on his experiences and wanted to see how re-telling his experiences to me differed from what he told the courts during his divorce.

Reflection was an integral part of the development of this narrative. As mentioned in Chapter Four, Reflection, Tom reflected on a multitude of issues throughout his relationship with Lidia, after their divorce and subsequently after her death. Reflection was not only an activity found in Tom's narrative, but I also found myself reflecting on the process of finding a narrator and on Tom's observations.

Evaluation

In this final part of the research narrative, it is not only important to review the narrative's development reflectively, but also to critically evaluate the research. However, before we start the evaluation of this research narrative, it is important to remember the following observations on qualitative research. Whittmore, Chase and Mandle (2001, p. 524) note that "qualitative research seeks depth over breadth and attempts to learn subtle nuances of life experiences as opposed to aggregate evidence. Qualitative research is contextual and subjective versus generalizable [sic] and objective". This indicates that validity and reliability, normally utilised in quantitative research, is not suitable for qualitative research.

Before we delve into the constructs that provides a research narrative rigour from the qualitative perspective, let us first investigate the criteria of good research from the aspect of quantitative research design. These criteria are reliability and validity.

Reliability is defined as the ability of a measurement instrument or research design to yield the same or consistent results with different subjects or when the design is replicated in similar conditions with other subjects (Trochim, 2001; Winter, 2000), or the stability of findings (Whittmore et al., 2001). Due to the methods of qualitative methodology and not focussing on finding a "singular truth", the construct of reliability does differ somewhat from the definition of reliability that is used in quantitative research.

Validity is the evaluation of the quality of research that is conducted and is usually measured as conclusion validity, internal validity, construct validity and external validity (Trochim, 2001) or the truthfulness of findings (Whittmore et al., 2001). These different types of validity are generally assessed in quantitative research, but it is harder to assess these different types of validity in qualitative research given that the structure of qualitative research differs so much from quantitative research.

A definition of validity quoted by Winter (2000) shows that validity is dependent upon the researcher as well as the belief system with which the researcher is conducting her/his research. Many qualitative researchers have rejected the notion of validity completely and others have adopted other terminology to describe validity from a qualitative perspective (Winter, 2000). Some terminology used to explain validity in qualitative research includes "trustworthiness", "worthy", "relevant", "plausible", "confirmable", "credible", and "representative" (Davis & Klopper, 2003; Whittmore et al., 2001; Winter, 2000). Qualitative research is

concerned with how representative the description of Tom's experiences is compared with other victims of domestic violence, the purpose of the research and the appropriateness of the research process (Winter, 2000).

The following sections explore this research narrative's rigour (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson, & Spiers, 2002) in terms of the identified criteria by Whittmore et al. (2001).

Credibility and Authenticity

According to Whittmore et al. (2001, p. 530), credibility is the effort on the part of the researcher to establish confidence in the "accurate interpretation of the meaning of the data". In other words, does my construction of Tom's story accurately reflect what Tom described? "Authenticity is closely linked to credibility in validity and involves the portrayal of research that reflects the meanings and experiences that are lived and perceived by the participants" (Whittmore et al., 2001, p. 530).

In order to verify credibility and authenticity, Tom was invited during our conversation to read and evaluate my constructions. He was keen to do so at the time, but at the time that Chapter Four was available, he chose not to read through it. In an effort to offset this lack in checking the credibility of my constructions by Tom himself, I asked two psychology students and an anthropologist to review the chapter and check that my constructions were credible and authentic. Comments were received from Pierre Gouws (personal communication, 24 August 2010), Alex Marshall (personal communication, 12 August 2010) and Reinhard Tolken (personal communication, 21 July 2010). Changes were made in line with the suggestions of the reviewers. Figure 6 gives an example of comments received.

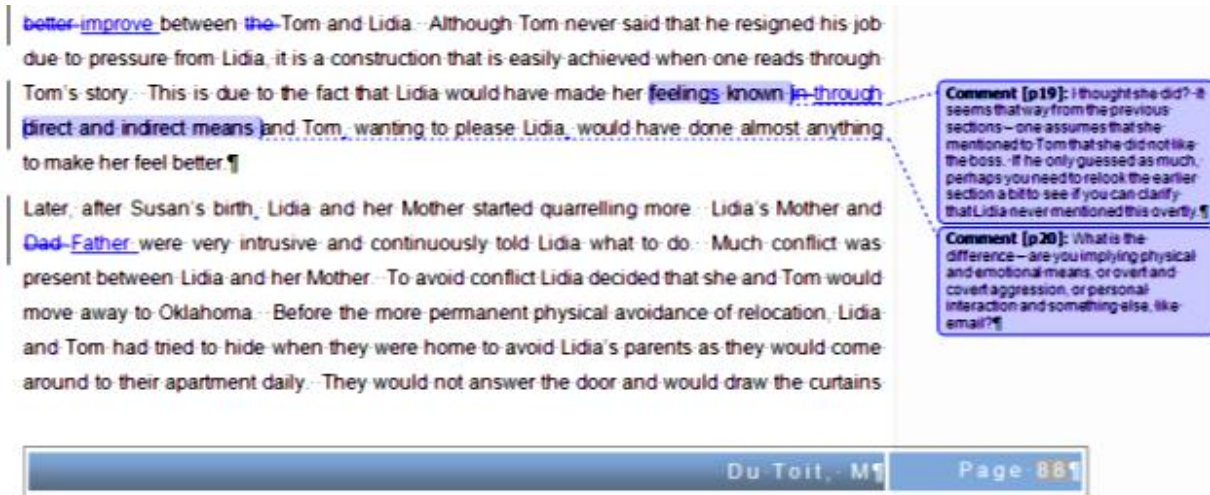


Figure 6: Example of comments received

Criticality and Integrity

These versions of validity are internal researcher characteristics. As a researcher, one has to show critical evaluation throughout the entire research process (Whittmore et al., 2001). Throughout my own research process, I had to ensure that what I was doing was undertaken not only with the results in mind, but also through evaluating my own intentions and motivations. I compared my intended research questions with existing literature. My supervisor was a constant source of help and guidance. External researchers in psychology and anthropology were also consulted to ensure that I always evaluated my research process critically.

To ensure the integrity of my constructions, they were checked both by myself and by other psychology researchers and an anthropologist. In an effort to ensure that I faithfully represented his story without jumping to conclusions, I invited Tom to read through my constructions (Chapter Four), but as mentioned, he chose not to.

For credibility, authenticity, criticality and integrity, it is my opinion that peer review and narrator's review of his/her own story can go a long way to ensure these types of validity (Davis & Klopper, 2003).

Explicitness and Vividness

Explicitness requires an audit trail that details the data that I generated during the research process (Whittmore et al., 2001). In this regard, I was assisted greatly by the software programme ATLAS.ti. After replacing names (an identity safeguard), all the e-mails between myself and Tom were imported as a text file into ATLAS.ti. Using ATLAS.ti, I coded the conversation between myself and Tom and also grouped the codes into various themes. ATLAS.ti enabled me to have an auditable document trail.

Vividness is the ability of research to present a description that can be used for construction and allows readers to understand the context and meanings of the narratives (Whittmore et al., 2001). According to peer reviewers, the description of Tom's story is vivid and the analysis based on the description encapsulates his entire story and captures small nuances.

Creativity and Thoroughness

Creativity can be exhibited through a creative methodology to answer a research question, through flexibility within the process of research, or "imaginative ways of organising, presenting, and analyzing data" (Whittmore et al., 2001, p. 534). As it stands today, this research narrative has changed significantly from the conceptual narrative that I had in mind. I wanted to focus on South African subjects, and had to adapt from face-to-face conversations to an e-mail conversation with a man based in the USA. The original title of this research narrative also had to change. The process for this research narrative was very flexible and it changed and adapted as the work progressed.

Thoroughness refers to the processes of checking data quality and how comprehensive these processes are (Whittmore et al., 2001). After the conclusion of my conversation with Tom, I requested my supervisor to read through the conversation trail between myself and Tom. I have to admit that this was too little too late. A second person's reading of the responses while the conversation was actually flowing could have led to the identification of further points that were not touched on during the conversation. These points could have yielded or led to other data. After reviewing and reflecting upon the process, I identified Tom's family of origin as an area where I would have liked to ask more questions. He gave a small window into his childhood when he said that he and his sisters never physically fought.

Congruence and Sensitivity

“Congruence should be evident between the research question, the method and the findings; between data collection and analysis; between the current study and previous studies; and between the findings and practice” (Whittmore et al., 2001, p. 352). Congruence demands that the researcher be flexible in order to maintain congruence between the various components of research (Morse et al., 2002).

It is my belief that the research question and the method are congruent and that the findings of this research narrative are in turn congruent with the research question and method. The level of congruence between Tom’s story and the story of other men and women documented in other studies is also high. There might be some points of incongruence between Tom’s story and female victims of domestic violence, but this is largely due to the physical characteristics of Tom and the women.

Sensitivity requires research to be sensitive of “human, cultural, and social contexts” (Whittmore et al., 2001, p. 352). Social constructionism allows researchers to let narrators speak in their own voice and to allow them to acknowledge their own cultural context. The focus was not just on the content of Tom’s story but also on the way in which he wrote about his story and how he showed his emotions.

To assess whether I led the conversation in a sensitive and respectful manner, I requested my supervisor to review the e-mail exchange between myself and Tom. She evaluated my responses as understanding and supportive.

What makes the mentioned criteria the most appropriate criteria to evaluate this research narrative? Because the criteria take into account the nature of reality. In qualitative research, there is no singular truth, but numerous realities constructed by many narrators (Seale, 1999).

Although these criteria indicate the general lines of evaluation, there are several methods to evaluate research narratives. The most important means to ensure that a research narrative is credible, authentic, critical and has integrity, and to ensure that it is evaluated in a rigorous manner, is to have the research reviewed by peers (Davis & Klopper, 2003). The primary and most efficient means of checking one’s research narrative for these constructions is to invite the narrator to review the research narrative. A sound research process established during the proposal writing stage will also help to ensure that these criteria can be met.

It is my wish that my research narrative will lead to debate and future research interest. In the following section, I provide some recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

With the end in sight, I can look forward to the future and make some recommendations based on my own experiences. I sincerely hope that more researchers will investigate the experiences of male victims to enable these men to have the necessary resources to help them and their children.

A shortcoming in the data collection procedure during this study was the fact that I was unable to speak to Lidia to get the story of from her point of view. Tom's story was very detailed and he even had the opportunity to go back to court documents where he was asked to relate what happened in his relationship. It would have been very beneficial to have had an opportunity to talk to Lidia to hear how she described the violence from her angle, to see how she explained her behaviour and what she thought the effect of the violence was on the family. It is therefore recommended that future research not only focuses on the experiences of the victim, but includes as many family members as possible to obtain a clearer picture of the violence within the family and its effects on everyone. When including most or all family members, the stories lend themselves to verify each other and may offer different interlocking constructions of the family reality.

By including the entire family, a researcher could potentially confirm the observations made. For example, Tom noted that Lidia's mother hit her when she was a little girl, which could not be confirmed due to Lidia's death. Lidia's motivations for using violence to resolve conflict cannot be explored. Although this recommendation would be valuable for research into female perpetrated domestic violence, it would also be of value in male perpetrated domestic violence as well as within homosexual relationships.

In addition to the above recommendation, it is also strongly recommended that research with survivors of domestic violence be conducted in the shortest possible time. Most survivors would like not to be defined by their previous status as victim. Therefore a prolonged research process tends to allow the survivor to dwell too much on that part of their lives and forces them to look at themselves during that time all over again. This could potentially lead to negative

feelings being raised, and most people tend to try and avoid negative feelings. I believe that this sentiment was raised by Tom when he said “I’m not running away from myself, but really am just, many days, worn out and tired from defining myself by relationship conflict.”

The ideal situation for similar research, unlike my story of a five-month conversation by e-mail, may rather be a short period of face-to-face interviews. The construction of the story then takes place soon after the interviews to allow the narrator to “review” his/her interpreted story. This ensures that the time spent reliving their past and defining themselves by relationship conflict is short-lived. It is my belief that the fact that this story took so long to come to the point where it is today, means that Tom wanted to get on with his life and finish the “final conversation” about his troubles. Unfortunately, it was not a fast journey, but a slow labour of love.

One of my biggest frustrations in finding narrators here in South Africa to tell me their stories was because men were not willing to talk about their experiences. It is recommended that future research makes use of support systems for victims of domestic violence, specifically men.

In a university context, it is recommended that the first line of investigation should examine the incidence of domestic violence, making people aware of the problem and launching awareness campaigns. Once this process is in place, it is my opinion that men at university experiencing domestic violence may be more willing to discuss their experiences. It is important to ensure that their stories are used to improve service delivery for male victims on the specific campus.

It is my wish that this narrative will lead to debate and further research. And similar to Tom, I hope that male victims and their children will receive help to keep themselves safe and to assist them in leaving their abusive spouse or partner. “By over-protecting women, some men and all children get harmed.”

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APPENDIX 1: CODES



Affair

Affair - effect

Alcohol

Apologize

Boundaries

Conflict management

Death

Decisions

Disagreement

Domestic violence means: touch..

Emotions - death

Family - post divorce

Female over protection

Future

Help

I initiated arguments when we ..

Influence of friends

Insight

Kathryn - past

Kathryn & Susan - description

Katryn - past

Katryn - present

Kids - description

Lidia's parents - involvement

Lidia's view of Tom



Lidia - description

Lidia - first love

Lidia - justifying affairs

Lidia - past

Lidia - post divorce

Lidia - response to violence & bad behaviour

Lidia - start of relationship description

Lidia & Dad

Lidia & girls

Lidia & Kathryn

Lidia & Martin

Lidia & Martin & Susan

Lidia & Mom

Lidia & Susan

Male traditional gender role

Martin - past

Martin - present

Mental health

Moving to avoid problems

Negative dynamics

New Husband - Involvement

New husband

Parenting

Past - defining DV

Police & Court



Post divorce

Prescription medicine abuse

Present

Pushing away

Reefer use

Reflection

Relationship - best friends

Relationship - description

Relationship - end

Relationship - post divorce

Relationship - start

Stress

Susan - description

Susan - past

Susan - present

Tom - friends

Tom - past

Tom - personal description

Tom - present

Tom - response to violence & disagreements

Tom - worry about kids

Violence - description

Violence - effect

Violence - emotion

Violence - explaining



Violence - final resolution

We've done lots of info tables



APPENDIX 2: TOM'S THEMES



Code Families

HU: Tom_themesJan

File: [D:\My Documents\Persoonlik\Thesis\Thesis Drafts\01 Januarie
10\Tom_themesJan.hpr5]

Edited by: Super

Date/Time: 2010/03/05 02:42:46 PM

Code Family: Angels

Created: 2010/01/06 11:30:01 AM (Super)

Codes (3): [Help] [Police & Court] [Relationship - end]

Quotation(s): 29

Code Family: Avoidance

Created: 2010/01/06 11:40:01 AM (Super)

Codes (13): [Affair - effect] [Apologize] [Conflict management] [Influence of friends] [Kathryn -
past] [Lidia's parents - involvement] [Lidia - description] [Martin - past] [Moving to avoid
problems] [Pushing away] [Relationship - description] [Susan - past] [Tom - response to
violence & disagreements]

Quotation(s): 111

Code Family: Death

Created: 2010/01/06 08:23:11 AM (Super)

Codes (4): [Death] [Emotions - death] [Kathryn - past] [Lidia - first love]

Quotation(s): 12

Code Family: Deception

Created: 2010/01/06 11:32:25 AM (Super)

Codes (12): [Affair] [Affair - effect] [Lidia - description] [Lidia - post divorce] [New husband] [Police & Court] [Prescription medicine abuse] [Relationship - best friends] [Relationship - description] [Relationship - post divorce] [Violence - effect] [Violence - explaining]

Quotation(s): 137

Code Family: Family

Created: 2010/01/06 08:15:08 AM (Super)

Codes (10): [Family - post divorce] [Lidia's parents - involvement] [Lidia's view of Tom] [Lidia - post divorce] [Lidia - start of relationship description] [Post divorce] [Present] [Pushing away] [Violence - effect] [Violence - final resolution]

Quotation(s): 43

Code Family: Future

Created: 2010/01/06 08:14:45 AM (Super)

Codes (4): [Female over protection] [Future] [Help] [Violence - effect]

Quotation(s): 34

Code Family: Kids

Created: 2010/01/06 07:59:16 AM (Super)

Codes (38): [Alcohol] [Boundaries] [Conflict management] [Disagreement] [Emotions - death] [Kathryn - past] [Kathryn & Susan - description] [Katryn - past] [Katryn - present] [Kids - description] [Lidia's parents - involvement] [Lidia - description] [Lidia - post divorce] [Lidia & girls] [Lidia & Kathryn] [Lidia & Martin] [Lidia & Martin & Susan] [Lidia & Susan] [Martin - past] [Martin - present] [New Husband - Involvement] [New husband] [Parenting] [Police & Court] [Prescription medicine abuse] [Present] [Relationship - description] [Relationship - post divorce] [Susan -

description] [Susan - past] [Susan - present] [Tom - personal description] [Tom - response to violence & disagreements] [Tom - worry about kids] [Violence - description] [Violence - effect] [Violence - emotion] [Violence - final resolution]

Quotation(s): 250

Code Family: Mental health

Created: 2010/01/06 03:04:23 PM (Super)

Codes (7): [Affair] [Affair - effect] [Alcohol] [Lidia & girls] [Lidia & Susan] [Mental health] [Relationship - end]

Quotation(s): 59

Code Family: Present

Created: 2010/01/06 08:23:51 AM (Super)

Codes (13): [Affair] [Female over protection] [Kathryn & Susan - description] [Katryn - present] [Kids - description] [Martin - present] [Past - defining DV] [Present] [Relationship - description] [Susan - description] [Susan - present] [Tom - friends] [Tom - present]

Quotation(s): 77

Code Family: Reflection

Created: 2010/01/06 08:08:57 AM (Super)

Codes (8): [Insight] [Mental health] [Reflection] [Relationship - description] [Tom - personal description] [Violence - emotion] [Violence - explaining] [Violence - final resolution]

Quotation(s): 78

Code Family: Relationships

Created: 2010/01/06 08:00:10 AM (Super)

Codes (50): [Affair] [Affair - effect] [Alcohol] [Apologize] [Boundaries] [Decisions] [Disagreement] [Future] [Help] [Influence of friends] [Kathryn - past] [Kathryn & Susan - description] [Lidia's parents - involvement] [Lidia's view of Tom] [Lidia - description] [Lidia - first love] [Lidia - justifying affairs] [Lidia - post divorce] [Lidia - response to violence & bad behaviour] [Lidia - start of relationship description] [Lidia & Dad] [Lidia & girls] [Lidia & Kathryn] [Lidia & Martin] [Lidia & Mom] [Lidia & Susan] [Male traditional gender role] [Mental health] [Negative dynamics] [New Husband - Involvement] [New husband] [Parenting] [Past - defining DV] [Post divorce] [Prescription medicine abuse] [Present] [Relationship - best friends] [Relationship - description] [Relationship - end] [Relationship - post divorce] [Relationship - start] [Stress] [Tom - friends] [Tom - personal description] [Tom - present] [Tom - response to violence & disagreements] [Tom - worry about kids] [Violence - effect] [Violence - emotion] [Violence - explaining]

Quotation(s): 313

Code Family: Substance problems

Created: 2010/01/06 11:27:37 AM (Super)

Codes (10): [Alcohol] [Influence of friends] [Katryn - present] [Lidia - description] [Lidia - post divorce] [Mental health] [Prescription medicine abuse] [Reefer use] [Relationship - best friends] [Stress]

Quotation(s): 83

Code Family: Violence

Created: 2010/01/06 08:09:41 AM (Super)

Codes (28): [Affair - effect] [Apologize] [Boundaries] [Conflict management] [Disagreement] [Female over protection] [Help] [Lidia - description] [Lidia - justifying affairs] [Lidia - past] [Lidia - response to violence & bad behaviour] [Lidia & Dad] [Lidia & Mom] [Lidia & Susan] [Mental health] [New husband] [Parenting] [Police & Court] [Pushing away] [Relationship - description] [Stress] [Tom - personal description] [Tom - response to violence & disagreements] [Violence -

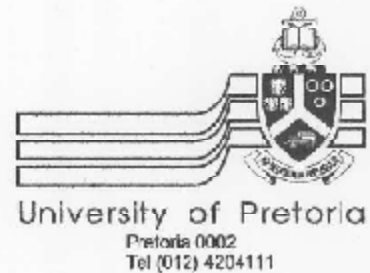


description] [Violence - effect] [Violence - emotion] [Violence - explaining] [Violence - final resolution]

Quotation(s): 238



APPENDIX 3: INFORMED CONSENT



Faculty of Humanities

12/01/2009

The Purpose of the Study

The aim of the research project, in which you are participating, is to investigate the experiences of men in abusive heterosexual relationships. The information gained from your interview will be used for the researcher's Masters Dissertation in Research Psychology.

Your Participation

You will be required to complete the interview with the researcher via email. The length of the interview will be as long as you need to tell your story via email. Thereafter, the researcher requests that you write a letter to her regarding your experiences during the interview, or any other information that you feel is pertinent to understand your experiences. This is voluntary and not a requirement. This is done so that you are free to mention anything that you either forgot or did not feel comfortable talking about during our email conversation. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without offering any explanation or suffering any consequences. You do not need to share any information that you feel uncomfortable disclosing.

It is not anticipated that participating in the study will harm you in any way. However, should you feel the need to talk about anything that arose during the interview, the interview endeavours to find you a counsellor in your area which will assist you with any difficulties.

Confidentiality

The interview will be conducted between you and me, which if you consent to it will be retyped and used as transcriptions which will be used for analysis. The transcripts of the conversation will be stored in a safe place and will be destroyed by means of fire after a period of fifteen years. The transcripts of our conversation will only be identifiable by the pseudonym that you chose (if you choose not to use your name). At no stage will your real name be linked to your pseudonym.

Before you start the interview you will choose how you will be addressed during the interview. At no stage will anyone except the researcher have access to your name or contact details. The researchers will maintain confidentiality within the research team, and the findings from the study will be presented in a report where only the general patterns found in the interviews will be discussed.



Should you have any questions regarding the research study, you can contact me at:

082 564 5695 ,

marisadutoit@hotmail.com

Consent to Participate

I (the participant)...Thomas Burdick...hereby confirm that I have read the information sheet regarding the "A narrative inquiry into the experiences of abused heterosexual men." and understand the nature of the anticipated activities. My participation in the study is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time without offering any explanation or suffering any consequences.

Participant's signature *Thomas Burdick* Date....January 12, 2010...