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Behind closed doors. Listening to the voices of battered women: A Sociological study of spousal abuse in Venda

By

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this mini-dissertation submitted for the degree Masters in Social Science in Sociology at the University of Pretoria is, apart from the assistance acknowledged, my own work and has not been formally submitted to another University for any other degree.

Rendani Tshifhumulo

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Contents

Chapter1: General orientation: Introducing the logic of study

1.1. Problem statement……...1

1.2. Rationale…… 5

1.3. Aims and objectives of the study…… 9

1.4. Method of data collection……... 9

1.5. Ethics……...11

1.6. Layout of the study…… 11

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Introduction……13

2.2 The psychological model…… 14

2.2.1 Individual pychopathology……... 13

2.2.2 Personality dynamics of the batterer……15

2.2.3 Social learning theory……... 17

2.3 The feminist perspective……... 20

2.4 Demographic perspective.....25

2.4.1 Structure of the family as an institution…….27

2.4.2 General system theory……...27

2.4.3 Theories of resources and exchange……...28

2.4.4 Subculture of violence theory…….29

2.5 Theories on human rights and African realities…….. 29

2.5.1 Cultural system explanation……..30

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2.5.2 Society in transition explanations……32

2.5.3 Culture of violence explanations……...34

2.6 Why women stay in abusive relationships……34

2.7 Different types of abuse……44

2.8 Conclusion……47

Chapter 3: Social, historical and community profile: Venda

3.1 Introduction…… 49

3.2 Venda in geographical perspective……..49

3.3 History, politics and cultural traditions……50

3.4 Information on Thohoyandou Victim empowerment program……55

3.4.1 History…….. 55

3.4.2 Domestic violence in South Africa……57

3.5 Conclusion…….. 58

Chapter4: Methodology

4.1. Aim of the empirical investigation……....60

4.2. Planning the research study…….. 61

4.2.1. Basic assumption of qualitative research…….. 61

4.2.2 Criticism that pertains to the method……63

4.3. Subjects…… 64

4.3.1. Sampling…….. 64

4.4. Data gathering procedures…… 65

4.5. Types of questions…… 67

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4.5.1. Focus group……68

4.6. Data analysis……. 70

4.7. Data reduction…….. 70

4.8. Conclusion drawing and verification…… 71

Chapter 5: Findings

Analysis of data

5.1. Introduction……73

5.2. Profile of women interviewed……73

5.3. Key findings of the study……..75

5.3.1. Theme 1: Early experiences plus exposure to violence……. 75

5.3.2. Husbands educational, occupational plus family background……78

5.3.3. Educational level and occupation of abusers……. 79

5.3.4. Previous relationships of the abusers……80

5.3.5 Family history of abusers……81

5.3.6 Mental health……82

5.3.7. Alcohol and substance abuse……. 82

5.3.8. Theme3: Gender, sexuality and power……83

5.3.9 Theme 4: Family networks plus relationships with in-laws……90

5.3.10. Theme 5: Economic insecurities, financial constrains plus need for control……..93

5.3.11. Additional factors……96

5.3.12. Suspicion, insecurities and jealousy……..99

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5.3.13. Theme 7: Conflicting pressure: “What will you eat if the husband gets arrested?”…….. 99

5.3.14. What next, will women leave their abusive husbands? …….. 101

5.3.15 Focus group……103

5.3.16. Summary……..104

Chapter six: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction……106

6.2. Summary of the findings……106

6.3. Recommendations……..110

6.3.1. Information distribution……110

6.3.2. Values regarding life…… 110

6.3.3. Targeting men…… 111

6.3.4. Power sharing…… 111

6.3.5. Economic independence for women……..111

6.3.6. Shelter provision…… 112

6.3.7. Women support in the form of groups……112

6.4. Conclusion…… 113

Bibliography……115

Appendixes

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Abstract

Statistics reveal that there are large numbers of women, including those in marital unions or partnerships, who are enduring violence and abuse. Most of this abuse is at the hands of intimate partners and loved ones. Although arguments suggest that men too suffer abuse, women are the primary victims in the vast majority of cases. Domestic abuse in the South African context does not just involve minor forms of physical assault, but, frequently, serious injury and even death of women. In many cases of familial violence children who witness or are brought into the domain of conflict, suffer deep emotional and physical pain.

The present study sought to develop insight into the factors that lead to the abuse of women in a particular South African locality: Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province. Qualitative methods were used to study the experiences of twenty women who had suffered different degrees of violence in their marriages. All the women live in the area previously demarcated as 'Venda' and reported the abuse of their husbands to the Tshilidzini Trauma Centre in Thohoyandou. The literature review and interviews with members of the South African Police reveals that levels of gender-based violence are very high in the area and that protection orders do not act as effective deterrents. Detailed probing of the circumstances surrounding women's early lives, their relationships and entry into marriage, their struggles within their marriages and their challenges to sustain

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them, their needs to bring up the children and live good lives – revealed a number of primary and secondary factors that could be viewed as contributing to the emergence of violence and the dissolution of their marriages. The *primary factors* that women cited were: extramarital affairs (of their spouses), men's culturally defined need to be the dominant partner in the relationship, men's sense of the 'normality of wife battering', economic constraints of the household and the opportunistic offering of support for a man by his birth family despite knowledge of him abusing his wife (and children). *Secondary factors* that trigger tension, discord and eventually violence include: suspicions that a partner is being unfaithful, feelings of jealousy, and women's financial dependency on men.

These factors illuminate the argument that women, despite changes in the Constitution and the introduction of gender-sensitive protective legislative measures, find themselves disadvantaged by the combined effects of cultural and patriarchal constraints. Their abuse can be explained in terms of men's views that 'disciplining women' is part of the cultural norm. These practices have been culturally transmitted and would require concerted action and unity on the part of women if they have to be addressed and transformed.

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Opsomming

Statistieke bewys dat baie vroue, getroudes sowel as die in ‘n ernstige verhouding, die slagoffers is van annranding en mishandeling. Die meeste van die mishandeling is deur die huweliksmaat of die geliefde. Alhoewel daar bewyse is dat mans ook mishandel word, is vroue die primêre teiken in die meeste gevalle. Huishoudelike mishandeling in Suid-Afrika is nie net gewone fisiese aanrandige nie, maar is soms van so ‘n ernstige aard dat dit baiekeer ernstige fisiese skade en selfs die dood van die vrou tot gevolg het. In baie gevalle van huishoudelike geweld, ontwikkel kinders, wat dit gesien het en selfs daarby betrek is, diep emosionele en fisiese probleme.

Hierdie studie se doel is om insig te gee in die faktore wat lei tot die mishandeling van vroue in ‘n spesifieke lokaliteit in Suid-Afrika naamlik Thohoyandou in die Lipompo Provinsie. Kwalitatiewe metodes is gebruik om die ervaring van twintig vroue, wat verskillende grade van mishandeling in hulle huwelik ondergaan het, te bepaal. Al die vroue in hierdie studie woon in ‘n gebied wat woorheen bekend gestaan het as Venda. Hulle het hierdie mishandeling en aanrandings op hulle, by Tshilidzini Trauma Centre in Thohoyandou aangemeld. Die literatuurstudie en die onderhoud met lede van die Suid-Afrikaanse polisie, het bewys dat die vlakke van geslagsgeoriënteerde aanrandings hoog is in die studiegebied. Hofbevele wat uitgereik word, word nie in ‘n ernstige lig beskou nie, en is ook nie voldoennde nie.

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‘n Indiepte studie van die omstandighede rondom hierdie vroue se lewe voor die huwelik; hulle verhoudinge tot by die huwelik; hulle huwelik; die probleme binne die huwelik en die uitdagings om die probleme te oorkom; die strewe om hulle kinders op te voed, sowel as hulle strewe om ‘n goeie lewe te lei, het verskeie primêre en sekondêre faktore geïdentifiseer wat beskou kan word as bydraende faktore tot die ontstaan van die mishandeling en aanranding en die verbrokkeling van die huwelik. Primêre faktore wat deur die vroue uitgelig is, is die volgende: buite-egtelike verhoudinge deur die man; die kulturele vereiste dat die man die dominante persoon in die huwelik moet wees; die man se persepsie dat dit normaal is om sy vrou aan te rand en te mishandel; ekonomiese faktore, en die steun wat die man van sy familie kry, al is hulle bewus daarvan dat hy sy vrou en kinders mishandel.

Die sekondêre faktore wat bygedra het tot spanning, verbrokkelende verhouding en aanrandig, was die volgende: suspisie dat die man rondloop; jaloesie en die vrou se finansiële afhanklikheid van die man. Hierdie faktore versterk die argument dat vroue, ten spyte van die veranderinge in ons land se grondwet en die daarstelling van geslags-sensitiewe beskermende wette en maatreëls, hulle hul nog steeds bevind in ‘n posisie waar kutuur en patriargie die norm is.

Die aanrandig en mishandeling van die vroue kan verduidelik word in die lig van die man se siening dat dissiplinering van sy vrou deel is van die kultuur. Hierdie praktyke is deur die kultuur oorgedra en vereis duidelike aksies en samewerking van vroue om dit aan te spreek en te verander.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: THE PROBLEM OF SPOUSAL ABUSE IN VENDA, THOHOYANDOU

1.1 Problem Statement

"Violence against wives is 'normal' behaviour that has been accepted and promoted down through the ages. Violence against women in the home is not abnormal or deviant, rather, it is a form of behaviour which has existed for centuries as an acceptable, and indeed, a desirable part of a patriarchal society, and much of the ideology and many of the institutional arrangements which supported patriarchy through the subordination, domination and control of women are still reflected in our culture and our social institutions" (Pagelow, 1984: 277).

Wife battering is a serious problem that affects all societies and social groups. It appears to be rooted in human history and has been pervasive in all societies. Dobash and Dobash (1999: 427) maintain that "history is replete with laws, customs and legends that show that women have been beaten, tortured and killed by their spouses … If abusers were not commended for their actions, their acts were, at the least, ignored." Ammerman and Herson explain that although wife battering is not a new phenomenon, it has only been since the 1970's that this social problem has been viewed in a serious light and thus confronted with greater earnest. In recent years, more cases have been reported to professionals such as the police, lawyers,

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psychologists and social workers than was the case in the past. (Ammerman and Herson, 1990: 32).

Women in South Africa irrespective of race and class have been victims of a deep patriarchal system that teaches men to view women as possessions. Prevailing stereotypes encourage male domination from an early age. As a rule, patriarchal societies promote economic and legal conditions that legitimize wife battering. For example, women are, most often, dependent on men economically. This is because men have been, historically speaking, more privileged in the area of employment and women continue to be afforded fewer opportunities. In most South African rural areas, women's education was not encouraged as it was assumed that a woman's place is in the domestic domain or, more precisely, in the kitchen. Abusive behaviour hence, has to be understood against the background of gendered inequalities and power imbalances.

Men within the families are generally the most powerful and so they use their power to control those less powerful – in other words, women and children. Domesticated women then commonly endure both dependencies on men and social isolation.

The United Nations has referred to domestic abuse as a global epidemic that knows no geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries. All women can be affected regardless of their level of income. Because domestic violence has always been dealt with as 'dirty laundry' to be kept within the house and not to be hung outside for the public to see (Gelles and Loseke, 1993: X), it is very difficult to establish reliable statistics. In

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South Africa there is general consensus among women's organizations and feminist activists that the problem of domestic violence is extremely serious.

The Women's Bureau estimates that approximately one in four women is abused by her partner in South Africa. In the Gauteng (Johannesburg) area, People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) estimates that her partner is abusing one in six women. The Advice Desk of Abused Women, located in Durban, estimates that one in every six women is regularly assaulted by her partner. The Bambanani Centre for Abused Women reports that six out of ten women fall victims of abuse (Levi, 2002). At the same time all women's groups acknowledge that their statistics might, in fact, be underestimations. The statistics for the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program indicates that four to six women report incidences of assault or battering every day. It also seems apparent that cases increase during weekends and public holidays. Approximately 80 domestic violence cases are reported. These cases at their worst lead to the death of victims.

Many factors play a part in inhibiting women from reporting domestic abuse. Cultural attributes and systems are arguably key factors that constrain women, preventing them from reporting abusive relationships and behaviors. Many survivors of domestic violence in rural areas do not seek official help, but rely on informal networks of friends and family (Ramudzuli, 2001: 40).

Fear of social stigma and reprisal from their abusive partners discourage women from reporting domestic violence. Pressure from family members increase the possibility that abused women will opt not to report the case. Indifference and hostility on the

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part of police and judicial authorities make women reluctant to seek help. As Gelles points out “the calling of police is associated with the wife’s occupational status and education” (Gelles, 1994: 118). In this view, educated and workingwomen are more likely to report abuse. Thus, many women living in circumstances of poverty simply do not find the strength to report family members who might be abusing them.

Back and Balker (1989: 20) say “little formal training has been given to police in how to intervene in spouse abuse.” Police generally have been reluctant to get involved in “family” problems for reasons rooted in myth, misogyny, and misinformation, that is, if he beats her and she stays, there are no real victims. Sometimes the police view intervention as too dangerous (Barnett and Laviolette, 1993: 38). At other times domestic abuse has been viewed as a 'private matter' between family members.

According to Gelles (1993: 20) the courts are often mired in mythology about family violence, and consequently the justice system is ineffective in dealing with wife abuse. Previously it was maintained that unless the victim dies, the chances of the court system dealing seriously with the abuse case, was slight (Field, 1973: 225). Pagelow (1984: 37) says: “Against this background women who are abused by their husbands must suffer grave injury in order to press legal charges.” In addition, Ammerman (1990: 10) points out that lawyers still put victims of vicious assaults on the stand and ask both their assailants and the victims what they (that is the victims) might have done to provoke the abuse. Psychopathology, in particular, often tries to examine the victim's complicity in her abuse.

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In South Africa the Domestic Violence Act of 1993 has been introduced to deal effectively with domestic violence, and more specifically women abuse. The aim is to provide assistance to women in abusive situations. It also outlines the procedures of what abused women can do, where to go and who to talk to. Due to the fact that many women are still dying because of violence, one can conclude that the Act has not been effective enough as a means to eradicate the problem. The statistics from Gauteng made available by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation at the University of the Witwatersrand (CSVR) reports: her partner kills one woman every six days in the Gauteng area alone. Around the Thohoyandou area a report from the local police station suggests that at least one woman is killed each week by her partner. The seriousness of the problem means that there is urgency for new analysis to build understandings of what is going on and how the abuse of women in homes can be challenged.

1.2 Rationale

Violence has permeated South Africa's social and cultural life for many years. As Wallace (1996: 3) states: "even defining the term family violence causes debate." Glanz (1997: 9) also maintains that "defining family violence can be problematic." Sometimes the terms 'abuse', 'violence' and 'domestic violence' are used interchangeably. Wife abuse, spouse abuse or what others call domestic violence can also be used to refer to one and the same thing.

Stark and Flitcraft (1996: 124) define domestic violence as "a threat of infliction of physical harm among past and present social partners irrespective of the legal or

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domiciliary stature of the relationship in which domestic violence occurs. Physical and sexual assault may be accompanied by verbal intimidation and abuse, destruction of property, isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support, threats to significant others including children, and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation, telephone, and sources of care and protection". For Wallace, (1996: 3) violence is any act carried out when the intention is to harm or to cause physical pain or injury to the person. Abuse includes those acts of violence that had a high probability to cause injury to others. Violence is measured by physical aggression such as: beating, pushing, kicking, grabbing, hitting, throwing things, slapping, biting, threatening with or using objects like guns and knives to hurt others. For this study a definition by Gelles and Loseke (1993: 189) will be considered as most important. They define *wife abuse* as "an act of damaging physical violence directed toward women by their spouses or partners." This definition is deemed as more appropriate to the objectives of this study because the researcher's intention is to view and analyze only the experiences of women – rather than men – in partnerships or marital unions.

In South Africa, it has only been since 1994 that any real commitment to eradicating spousal abuse has become evident. In this era, the promotion of gender rights, and the Vigorous tackling of the abuse of women and discrimination against women has become more noticeable. At a macro level, the government put in place mechanisms to remove gender inequality and improve female representation in the various sectors of the government. The commission on gender equality, the Office on the Status of Women, the Human Rights commission and the public protector are all examples of established national machinery that could be used to protect women.

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On the 1st of December 1993 the Prevention of Family Violence Act 133 was promulgated. Glanz (1997: 9) states, "this act makes provision for:

- The granting of interdicts in cases of family violence
- An obligation on the part of certain parties to report cases of ill-treatment of children and
- The possibility of convicting husbands of the raped wives."

The judge or magistrate in chambers makes the application for an interdict. The purpose of the interdict is to prevent the other party to the marriage from assaulting the applicant and her dependents. The place where the victim resides is also protected so that the perpetrator cannot enter or approach a part of it. If the respondent breaches the conditions of the interdict, the applicant goes to a peace officer and requests, by means of an affidavit, that the warrant be executed (Glanz, 1997: 9).

The National Institute conducted a pilot study for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO, 2002). They found that it took a sheriff an average of eight days to serve the interdict, which means that women are unprotected during this time. The interdict is only effective once the respondent receives the warrant. NICRO claims that nearly half of women who were granted interdicts were abused again after the interdict had been served. During the time NICRO conducted the pilot study their partners murdered two women, who had been assisted by NICRO Women's Support Centre to obtain interdicts.

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Looking at the facts that many women's support groups and NGO's estimate that one in six women is battered by their partners (Glanz, 1997: 3), the researcher agrees with Masimanyane Women's Support Centre in that "addressing violence against women through reform of legislation and attempting to address the criminal justice is too limited." The constitution of this country, the extensive national machinery together with changes in laws, policies and the programs which have been developed, has not resulted in a change in the level of gender – based violence which South African women experience. (By this I mean that it seems that these measures do not address the cause of the problem they seek to combat).

Recent research on domestic violence concurs that domestic violence is still the order of the day in South Africa (Glanz and Spiegel, 1997). The Thohoyandou area in Limpopo province cannot be excluded from the statistics of regions with the highest rate of 'crimes of passion' and violence in South Africa. Considering the fact that little has been done on the relevant field around Venda, the proposed study will look at factors contributing to wife abuse around the area. Most theory related to the topic comes from western ideas that might not have direct relevance in understanding Venda culture and domestic environments. Franco (1996), Dasinski (1996) and William (1994) mention "more information is needed on the prevalence and incidence of partner violence, and the nature and characteristics of abuse." In an attempt to address this, the study focuses on developing a sociological understanding of factors contributing to wife abuse in Thohoyandou.

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1.3. Aims and objectives of the study

1.*3.1. Main aim*

The main aim of the study is to examine and analyze the central factors contributing to spousal abuse in the Thohoyandou area.

1.3.2. ***Sub-aims***

In examining women's lives in Thohoyandou, this study examines factors that increase women's vulnerability to wife battering and abuse. This includes assessing:

1. The social and economic positions of women and men living in Thohoyandou.
2. The extent to which culturally constructed notions of womanhood and domesticity lead to women's subordination and abuse.

1.3.3 The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the ranges of factors that lead to spousal abuse in the Thohoyandou area?
2. To what extent is domestic violence aggravated by the conditions of social transition?

1.4. Method of data collection

1.4.1. Methodology

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This study is qualitative in nature. The primary focus is on the respondent's perspectives. The researcher set out to understand in detail women's experiences of wife battering. Factors causing wife battering were studied from the subjective perspective of the individuals involved. The study goes beyond description as it aims to explain various phenomena. Rubbin and Babbie (1985: 30) suggest that: "qualitative designs are research methods that emphasize depth and understanding. They tap the deeper meanings of human experience which are not easily reduced to numbers." The researcher has used a range of sources and has probed these "deeper meanings of human experience" to try to get closer to meaningful answers concerning "why" women are being battered?

Twenty women were selected to participate in the study. These participants were selected randomly from the group of women who came to the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program (TVEP) to report on domestic violence. The project was initiated help victims of domestic violence and rape abuse around the Thohoyandou area. The Thohoyandou community-policing forum has also noted the escalating number of death reports from domestic violence and the increase in the number of rape victims. The TVEP is the only project of its kind around Venda and it provides counselling, debriefing, shelter, education and support to victims. Although the project has opened two trauma centres, one at Tshilidzini Hospital and the other at Donald Frazer Hospital, the researcher chose victims attending at Tshilidzini hospital only. Qualitative methods allow for more in-depth study of few cases. This mini-dissertation does not offer generalizable results, but aims to shed more light on a complex and sensitive issue afflicting present-day South Africa.

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1.5. Ethics

The researcher, in this study, conformed to accepted professional practices for doing research. Care was taken to ensure that no person was harmed in the course of the study. The women who were interviewed had already suffered abuse; the researcher therefore was sensitive in asking questions and probing issues. The women were given information on what the researcher was doing and writing up of the data, pseudonyms rather than real names have been used to protect identities of women concerned. The permission for the interviews was requested. Only willing respondents who offered their consent to be interviewed were the subjects for this study. Each respondent signed a consent form (see Appendix1). Questions that the researcher asked were only those that were not likely to cause extreme embarrassment, emotional turmoil and guilt.

1.6. Layout of the study

The study is divided into 6 chapters and they are as follows:

Chapter 1: ***Introduction: The problem of spousal abuse in Venda, Thohoyandou***.
This chapter has introduced the study by outlining the problem statement, rationale, objectives, research questions, ethical considerations and research layout.

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Chapter 2: ***Literature review: Theories, models and arguments on domestic violence***

The chapter focuses on discussions of the theory and general literature in the field. Theories integrated include the sociological, psychological, feminist theories and African theories on domestic violence.

Chapter *3: A social, historical and community profile: Venda.*

This chapter looks at the socio-cultural context of domestic violence in Venda.

Chapter 4: *Research Design*

This chapter focuses on the research design and methods that the researcher used in the study. Methods of data collection and data analysis were elucidated.

Chapter 5*: Analysis of data*

This chapter presents the research data and offers detailed discussion of the themes and the research findings.

Chapter 6: ***Conclusion***

In concluding the study, final analysis and interpretation of the findings is offered. The study findings and recommendations are included.

A bibliography is the last part provided.

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Chapter 2

Literature review: Theories, models and arguments on domestic violence

2.1 Introduction

What other authors say about the subject matter to be studied presents a foundation for further research. This overview addresses different theories of domestic violence. The discussion in this chapter includes comments on psychological theory or the psychopathology of individuals as determining factors of wife battering. These look into the intra-individual level and psychopathology of individuals as determining factors of wife battering. Secondly, the sociological or socio-cultural model is presented. This model offers a macro-level of analysis. A broader analysis takes into account social structures and social institutions, especially the family as an institution where wife battering occurs. The sociological theories to be addressed include general systems theory, resource theory, exchange social control theory and the sub-culture of violence theory. Theories on human rights and African realities were appreciated. The last perspective to be discussed is the feminist approach. It looks at patriarchy and the need for power and control as used by men who abuse women. The last section of the literature looks at the question “why abused women stay with their abusers?”

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2.2 The psychological model

2.2.1 Individual psychopathology

Clinicians, psychiatrists and psychologists developed the first theories of family violence. These people were most likely to come into contact with victims and abusers with easier accessibility than other people in the social and behavioural sciences because of their close associations within the medical field. Their reports and theories expound the medical model. This psychological school of knowledge viewed family violence as rare occurrences engaged in by psychopathological individuals, the most depraved persons who suffer some sort of mental illness. Psychopathology theories propose that certain kinds of people are wife abusers. These people are different from others in skills, temperament, personalities, and life histories and psychologically they may be identified by some combination of special characteristics. They present a wide spread of emotional disorders seen in any clinical population – hysteria, hysterical psychosis, obsessive compulsive neurosis, schizophrenia and so on. Finkelhor (1981, 12) says wife beaters were regarded as alcoholics and psychopaths and were considered to come from lower classes and disorganized families. Viano (1992, 139) argues that “the evidence suggests that as a group, batters have identifiable set of personality characteristics: dependence, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, dissociation from their own feelings, poor impulse control, antisocial tendencies, and hostility towards women.” Psychopathological theorists believe that more attention needs to be paid to the

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personality dynamics of male barterers (Hotaling and Sugerman, 1996; Tolman and Bennett, 1990).

2.2.2 Personality dynamics of batterers

In terms of psychopathological models batterers are extremely dependent on their wives. These are the results of observational study made by practitioners who work with batterers. Batterers use violence and threaten to commit suicide to keep wives with them as the thought of being left alone induces panic and adornment anxiety." Even if they separate or get divorced, it takes time before they can stop harassing and following the victim (Viano, 1992: 141). Batterers also have problems with intimacy. Two empirical studies of clinicians found that there is a difference between batterers and non-batterers. Allen et al. (1989) used FIRO-B, a test to assess needs to associate with people who have control over others. Results indicated that batterers have difficulty expressing affection. Batterers were uncomfortable around others, cautious to initiate and develop relationships that are very close; they in turn selected carefully who got closer to them (Viano, 1992: 141) .In addition clinicians agree that the degree of jealousy and possessiveness exhibited by batterers is pathological. The Paranoia scale of the Minnesota Multiphase personality Inventory was used to test batterers. The batterer's scores were found to be very high compared to non-batterers. Battered women interviewed reported cases of husbands who, driven by jealousy, isolated them from friends and family members (Viano, 1992: 142).

Clinicians say batterers are men who need to control their wives. They feel they must know everything about their wives. They want to control all their wives' decisions, their recreation and their money. They always perceive some dangers in relationships.

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Although they can defend their right they have difficulty in expressing their needs positively. The need for batterers to control others stems from feelings of inadequate close relationships, not necessarily out of a simple need to dominate. Clinicians agree that the excessive need to control exhibited by batterers is related to difficulties with intimate relationships. (Viano, 1992: 142). The result of studies made using the Tennessee self-concept scale and Minnesota Multiphase personality inventory scale shows that batterers experience high levels of unhappiness and dissatisfaction in their lives. At home and even at their work place their self-esteem was found to be low. They also felt powerless in controlling their own lives (Viano, 1992: 143).

There are also arguments about batterers lacking impulse control. They tend to be aggressive over minor issues. For example, they can complain excessively about an unclean shirt or a late meal. Batterers have been found to have a history of aggressive behaviours. Some clinicians oppose the idea of 'lack of impulse control'. Their evidence is based on the fact that batterers tend to direct most of their aggression towards their wives than their co-workers. When they beat their victims they aim where the blows will not show and sometimes stop before killing the victim. Clinicians agree that in general, batterers have serious problems with their expression of anger and often resort to other forms of addiction (Viano, 1992: 144).

Psychotherapists who treat batterers report that very few batterers' express regret after the incident. Others have a high level of denial. They lie and omit important details of the attack. Batterers tend to blame the victim and project the blame on to her. They rationalize their behaviours, which to them is acceptable (Viano, 1992: 144). It may seem contradictory to say that batterers are sometimes nice, humorous, charming and

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sensitive people particularly in situations where there is no intimacy. This is referred to as a Jekyll-Hyde type of personality. Dietton's (1988) empirical study provides evidence for this interpretation. Batterers become violent when they are in intimate relationships and when their sense of control is threatened (Viano, 1992: 144). In their 1988 study, Schuerger and Reigle used a psychological screening inventory that assessed alienation and non-conformity. They found that batterers are pathologically deviant. In the same year, similar findings were reported by Hastings and Hamberger who used Millon clinical Multiatial inventory to assess alienation and non-conformity (Viano, 1992: 147). Psychopathology is reductionism in that it explains the actions of abusers in terms of personal inadequacies and deficiencies. Harmberger and Renzetti (1996: 142) using feminist ideas, say, "Patriarchy does not elicit violence against women in a direct fashion. Rather, it may provide the values and attitudes that personality disordered men can exploit to justify their abuse of women." Some writers criticize the suggestion that batterers are 'not normal'. To them, calling batterers pathological ignores the larger social context in which battering occurs. It also encourages people to pity the batterer and to regard him as not fully responsible for his actions. If batterers are sick, then battering should be rare which not the case is. Finally, focusing on the cause of battering means attention is divert from the main issue, which is the need to end violence (Viano, 1992: 149).

2.2.3 Social learning theory

Stark (1975: 106) defines social learning theory as "an extension of differential association and reinforcement theories, holding that social sources, or people with whom one interacts, are the reinforcements that result in the learning of non-deviant

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and deviant behaviour. The type of behaviour that is most frequently and consistently reinforced by people will be the most often exhibited." The type of behaviours that is constantly and most frequently reinforced by others is the behaviours most often exhibited. Social learning theory has been widely proposed as an explanation of spouse abuse but to a much lesser degree for other types of family violence, although its tenets can provide understanding of interfamily dynamics. For sometime, a popular theory was that humans are instinctively aggressive because of genetic transmittal, then a shift in thinking arose which emphasized that human beings were products of their culture and environment – the old "Nature vs. Nurture" argument. Now most social scientists reject a dichotomy between heredity and environmental influences and believe that there is an interactive effect. This helps explain why some family members are more likely to be abusive than others (Pagelow, 1992: 34).

Men are generally taller, heavier and physically stronger than women (even though very few men possess a "brawny physique" compared to other men); adults are bigger and stronger than children, and adult children are stronger than aged parents. The social learning theory has emerged out of the work by Berkwits, Bandura, Walter, Baron and others during the1960s and 1970s. Social learning theory contributes to the understanding of wife battering. It helps one to understand sex role socialization and 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' gender roles. Social learning theory maintains that aggressive responses such as verbal abuse and physical abuse are learned in similar ways as other forms of complex human behaviours (Stacey et al, 1994: 35). It explains that reinforcement following behaviours increases the possibility of repeating the behaviours again (Pagelow' 1992: 36). Bandura does not say that all persons who are advantaged by "certain biological equipment" are going to be aggressive towards

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those who are, in this respect, the disadvantaged others, but he does say that if initial aggressiveness is successful or unsuccessful, the outcome will determine future behaviours. For example, if a husband does not want to argue anymore about the way he spends his money, he might slap his wife and get her to stop talking about it and then she will be afraid to bring it up later. His action would then be 'successful.'

Another basic proposition of social learning theory is that reinforcement following behaviours increases the probability that the behaviours will be repeated, and another is that intermittently reinforced behaviour is the most difficult to extinguish. In addition to reinforcement, modeling is another important factor for learning, especially for children. Wrightman (1977: 226 – 228) says modeling as when children observe aggressive behaviour will be imitated, particularly if a model performed acts. Goode (1971: 627, 630) says "in this process by which we transform infants into people, inculcating in them values, norms and role habits of the family and society, or more specifically by which children come to accept as right and desirable the family patterns we approve, not only do we use force or threat to socialize our children, we also teach them thereby that force is useful, and we do in-fact train them in the use of force and violence....". Clearly, we become trained in violence from what we observe. As the child watches the fright of his mother when his father is furious, arguments and threats among neighbours, battles with his own siblings serve as a good experience for future aggressive behaviour. Social learning theories produce a useful framework for analyzing future aggressive acts on human nature.

Bandura (1973) maintains that in a variety of psychological tests, children observing aggressive behaviour not only showed they remembered aggressive acts, but they

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closely imitated them, particularly when the acts were performed by a male adult model (Pagelow; 1992: 38). Children who mature in violent homes can become violent adults.

Many authors propose that stereotypic gender role socialization along extremes of 'masculinity' and 'feminity' is an important contributing factor in family violence, particularly wife beating. Straus (1976) writes about cultural norms that legitimize marital violence and discusses "compulsive masculinity" which refers to the requirement that boys and men prove to others that they are "real men" (Pagelow; 1992: 36). This is the power of social learning theory. It clarifies why some people behave in both conforming and deviant ways.

2.3 The feminist perspective

Feminists approach wife battering from a different angle. They address a primary question: why do men beat their wives? Bograd (1988: 13) maintains that "feminists seek to understand why men in general use physical force against their partners and what functions this serves for a society in a given historical context." Feminists focus mostly on the male need for power in patriarchal society. Males use violence to dominate women and to control them. Women abuse makes women dependent on men as men exert power and social control over them.

To feminists patriarchy and patriarchal institutions contribute to wife battering. Patriarchy consists of social system that establishes a shared and interdependence among men that enables, if not requires them to dominate women…under patriarchy some men have more power than others and while all benefit from patriarchy,

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privileges are sharply divided by class and race (Abranovitz, 1989:25). Abusers are viewed as 'normal people' who might subscribe to the social values and norms of society. In male dominated society, women often become their possessions after marriage. To control women, they use power as an acceptable means within patriarchal institutions. As Dobash and Dobash (1979: 24) put it, “men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in western society – aggressiveness, male dominance and female subordination – and they use physical force as a means to enforce the dominance. Feminists focus on the way in which men to dominate women use cultural prescriptions. In considering violence against women, Okun (1986: 100) offers as a central thesis the “economic and social processes” that directly and indirectly support a patriarchal system and ethos. Patriarchy leads to oppression and subordination of women and causes a historical pattern of violence directed toward wives (Hampton et al.; 1993: 13). Hataling (1988: 127) says, “Patriarchal law, religion, philosophy and morality stress the superiority of males and their consequent responsibility and right to control society and the women and children in their own families.” Men’s social stature is linked to their ability to control those around them.

Feminists attempts to not just interpret women's oppression and abuse- but also strive to change women s lives. Gelles and Loseke (1993: 47) say that “social action is the fundamental source of feminist’s insight into domestic violence.” Feminists argue that social expectations regarding masculinity and feminity give relationships their shape. “Our attitudes are socially constructed in life and they create and maintain male power within the family and society.” Male power need to be confronted in radical ways if women's position is to be changed. Data on injury patterns confirm that it is

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women, not men, who sustain injuries in conflicts between males and females in intimate relationships. Brush (1990) in an analysis of data from the National Survey of families and households, found that women were significantly more likely to be injured than were men in disputes involving violent attacks. Feminists claim that major social institutions have long condoned the use of violence by men to control women. The first law in the United States to recognize a husband's right to control his wife with physical force was an 1824 ruling by the Supreme Court of Mississippi permitting the husband to exercise the right of moderate chastisement in cases of great emergency (Browne, 1987: 166). This and similar rulings in Maryland and Massachusetts were based on English Common Law, which gave a husband the 'right to discipline correction' of his wife, although he was supposed to use it in moderation.

Until recent legal reforms were enacted, the "curtain rule" was widely used by the legal system to justify its non-intervention in cases of wife abuse. The law and the nature of marriage have changed dramatically since the early twentieth century. However, feminists claim that these institutions continue to condone violence against women (Gelles & Loseke, 1993: 91) As for marriage; feminists argue that it still institutionalizes the control of wives by husbands through the structure of husband-wife roles. As long as women are responsible for domestic work, childcare, emotional and psychological support, and men's primary duty is that of a provider and revolves around employment, the husband has the more important status and also controls the majority of decisions in the family. It is through such a system, coupled with the acceptance of physical force as means of control, that, in the words of Dobash and Dobash (1979), the wife becomes an "appropriate victim" of physical and psychological abuse. Feminists argue further that it is the use of violence for control

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in marriage, and women's continued economic dependence on their husbands, which makes it difficult for wives to leave violent relationships. This dependence is increased by the lack of adequate childcare and job training, which would enable women to get jobs with which they could support themselves.

Feminist theorists argue that women are victims of male violence. They support their point of view with official crime statistics, data from the criminal justice system and hospitals, interviews with victims of battering and batterers and with historical evidence. Looking at such data, it is clear that women are overwhelmingly the victims of violence. The national crime victimization survey of 1982 in the USA reported that 19% of all violent crimes between spouses were directed at women by husbands or ex-husbands, whereas only 5% were directed at husbands by wives or ex-wives (Gelles and Loseke, 1993: 91).

Dobash and Dobash (1979) see the cause of wife beating and other abuses of the powerless in the family as the hierarchical, patriarchal structure of the family in the social system. Their theory on wife beating borrows from social learning theory, especially in terms of the learning traditional roles: within the context of the patriarchal structure of the family. It also draws from conflict theory, which postulates that when there is unequal distribution of scarce and valued resources, conflict is inevitable. Patriarchy demands that power be vested in men, and that women are to serve in subordinate positions to men. Patriarchal families promote violence against females, especially wives (Dobash and Dobash; 1979).

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Feminist explanation on domestic violence is frequently used in domestic literature in Africa. It is difficult to avoid interpreting domestic violence in Africa in terms of pervasive gender inequality. Almost every traditional African society was patriarchal and a woman's place within these schemes was subordinate. Institutionalization of this inequality remained common in African customary law. The family, the church and variety of institutions condone male dominance and by doing so, reinforce the acceptability of wife battering. These past years saw challenges to patriarchy and it was reflected by actions on the part of Women Rights groups. Whilst stating that men dominate women, globally, and in most social and economic contexts, recent changes have threatened male masculinity. As economies are restructured to absorb women in the labour market, men are beginning to encounter problems. Traditionally, men were able to support women and children. This served as a relevant tool for male dominance and for dependency of women who could not easily leave their abusive partners. As more women are employed outside the home, they have become more independent. Men's traditional roles as breadwinners and providers are now questioned. Men also feel more threatened by working wives who are more independent and who can support themselves.

An increasing number of men are currently experiencing unemployment. When men feels that their power is threatened by workingwomen, sometimes their response is aggressiveness as a means to regain their power. As Elliot argues "…. Unemployment and sub-employment undermine the economic status of individuals and their families and in the view of some authors, have increased poverty, widened the gap between the financially comfortable and the poor and contributed to the growth of an underclass. Further, these employment conditions are widely perceived as threatening the

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traditional organization of masculinity, disrupting expected transitions from dependent childhood to independent adulthood, putting at risk the independence women have achieved through increasing economic activity, challenging the work ethic and undermining everyday understandings of what is fair and just." Unemployment in male disrupts domestic routines, unsettles customary divisions of household labour and generates tension and conflict.

2.4. Demographic perspectives

The core of the sociological perspective is the assumption that social structures affect on shape people's lives and their behaviours. A demographic approach places emphasis on the ways in which factors such as age, sex…….can be studied to make generalizations and predictions regarding particular outcomes. These outcomes can relate to population change, health or even violence. In addition, the structure of social institutions also influences social behaviour. In the case of family violence, the structure of modern family as a social institution influences family violence (Gelles and Loseke; 1993: 31) In noting 'age' younger people are more prone to violence compared to older ones. Thus violence among married couple was found to be highest for those between 18 and 30 years (Gelles and Straus, 1988; Gelles and Steinmets, 1988; US Department of Justice, 1991; Wolfners and Gelles, 1993). Explanations for family violence need to take into account consider issues such as life span development, stages in the family life cycle and human development if explanatory models are to reflect accurately the relationship between age and violence.

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"Data on sex and family violence are somewhat different and controversial" (Gelles and Loseke; 1993: 32). It is indicated that often mothers are the ones who physically abuse and neglect children. Maybe it is caused by the fact that mothers are the ones held responsible for children and their welfare. Generally, in domestic situations, females are more likely to be the victims of male violence. Physically males are stronger compared to females. Feminists also question the existence of male battering although it happens on rare occasions. Data obtained from shelters and other helping agencies suggest that compared to females, males are most often the offenders. Sex is also a factor in the abuse of the elderly as women are likely to be the victims more often than men (Gelles and Loseke; 1993: 32 – 33).

Different forms of abusive relationships whether are wife abuse, child abuse, and elderly abuse tends to occur in all social and economic groups. In a number of studies, people employed in better positions reported violent relationships, as did the less skilled and the unemployed. Abusers can be found in physicians, lawyers, doctors, truck drivers and cleaners. Gelles and Loseke argue that social factors such as income and unemployment are argued to be not relevant in explaining violence (Gelles and Loseke; 1993: 34). A mechanism to explain why family violence is more likely to be found among those who are poor and unemployed or holding low prestige jobs is social stress. People who are poor are said to have high levels of stress compared to those who are rich. Stressful experiences can be a contributory factor to violence and wife battering (Gelles and Loseke; 1993: 34). The data on family violence and race and ethnicity are contradictory. Data in official reports differ on child maltreatment; some reports suggest that blacks have higher rates of child maltreatment when compared to whites and others; Bilingsley (1969) argues that blacks have lower rates

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of maltreatment than do whites. Most official reports in western countries offer data showing that violence towards women is higher among blacks when compared to whites (Goetting, 1989; Hampton, Gelles and Harrop, 1989).

2.4.1. Structure of the family as a social institution

Straus et al (1980) says the family is the society's most violent institution. The likelihood of being a victim of violence at home is higher as compared to being a victim in the hands of a stranger. Gelles and Loseke (1993: 35) maintain, "A comprehensive perspective that explains family violence must consider the attributes of family as a social institution that creates such a high risk of violence." Several characteristics unique to the family as a social group were identified as making the family a violence-prone institution. The irony of these characters is that they were also seen as making the family a warm, supportive and intimate environment (Gelles and Loseke; 1993: 35).

In order to illustrate how the sociological perspective applies and uses the empirical data on proximate correlates of family violence and the unique features of the family as a social institution, sociological theories on family violence are explored.

2.4.2. General systems theory

Murray Straus (1973) and Jean Giles-Sims (1983) developed and applied a social system approach to explain family violence. Here, violence is viewed as a system product rather than as a result of individual pathology. The family operations can

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maintain, escalate, or reduce levels of violence in families. The general system theory describes the process that characterizes the use of violence in family interactions and explains how violence is managed and stabilized. Straus (1973) presents eight propositions to illustrate how general systems theory relates to family violence:

2.4.3. Theories of resources and exchange

The resource theory of family violence assumes that all social systems (including the family) rest to some degree on force or the threat of force. The more resources – social, personal and economic – a person can command, the more force he or she can muster. However, according to Goode (1971), the more resources a person actually has, the less he or she will actually use force in an open manner. Thus a husband who wants to be dominant in the family but has little education, has a job low in prestige and income, and lacks interpersonal skills may choose to use violence to maintain the dominant position (Gelles & Loseke, 1993: 37).

Drawing from exchange theory, violence and abuse are seen to be used when the rewards are higher than the costs. Drawing from social control theories of delinquency, the private nature of the family, the reluctance of social institutions and agencies to intervene – in spite of mandatory child abuse reporting laws – and the low risk of other interventions reduce the costs of abuse and violence. The cultural approval of violence as both expressive and, in the case of disciplining children, instrumental behaviour raises the potential rewards for violence (Gelles & Loseke, 1993: 38).

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2.4.4. Subculture of violence theory

The subculture of violence theory is perhaps the most fully developed and widely applied socio-cultural explanation of violence. This theory asserts that social values and norms provide meaning and direction to violent acts, and thus facilitates or brings about violence in situations specified by these norms and values. Subculture of violence theory explains why some sectors, or subcultures, of society or different societies are more than others, especially when they have cultural rules that legitimate or require violence (Gelles & Loseke, 1993: 38).

Some observers attribute part of the blame for domestic violence, and violence against women in general, to an alleged "culture of violence" in modern Africa within which violence is accepted as a way to resolve disputes, and link this to the colonial heritage, when Africans were treated coercively and violently by their colonizers. This is apparent in South Africa where there has been a dramatic post-apartheid increase in violence directed at women, both domestic violence and rape. (Gelles and Loseke! 993:38).

2.5. Theories on human rights and African realities

Robin Levi (2003: http //www) said, "the historical conditions produced by apartheid exacerbate the situation of battered women in South Africa." Police were relatively untrained to answer distress calls from battered women. Police use to venture to the townships where Africans lived in order to arrest those resisting apartheid. Cynthia Grant Bowman said that by mid-1990's, attention had begun to be paid in most African countries to the wide spread problem of domestic violence. Elizabeth

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Schneider points out that the theoretical ground of domestic violence work has important implications for the remedy.

Bowman explained that most African constitutions and legal systems follow western models based upon individual rights, and most African countries have ratified numerous international covenants that either explicitly or implicitly interprets domestic violence to be a violation of human rights. In African literature, theories about domestic violence based on the assertion of individual human rights are not frequent. There is a potential and potent conflict between basing gender equality upon rights theory, with its notions of individual autonomy, and women's lived experience as relational. The conflict between the language of individual rights and a more relational notion of the self is even more pronounced in the African context. It is not only that women experience themselves as embedded in relationships but also that traditional African societies typically are not based upon the individualism that underlies much of our social thought. In particular, the family and its interests are considered prior to the individual, and a woman status is a subservient one. Thus, for example, her reproductive capacity is considered “owned” by the husband’s lineage after marriage. Randall (1999: hptt //www).

2.5.1 Cultural systems explanations

Another set of causal theories in the emerging African literature emphasizes the power of tradition and norms within African culture as explaining the widespread incidence of domestic violence. Some see this connection as a direct one, arguing that wife battering is regarded as normal within traditional African culture. Other cultural

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explanations are more indirect, pointing, for example, to the uneven distribution of power within traditional African marriages, the impact of polygamy, the acceptance of male promiscuity, the power of the extended family over married couple and the almost universal institution of bride price as underlying the widespread abuse of wives. The payment of the bride price to the wife's family at the time of their marriage makes it difficult for women to leave abusive husbands, unless their families of origin are willing to return the amount paid.

Previous researchers in African countries proved that conflicts usually arise in situations where a wife is seen as challenging their husband's authority and prerogatives by inquiring about his extra-marital involvement. Jealousy was also found to be the "cause" of domestic violence centered on the husband who would not like his wife to have contacts with other men. In traditional African society, a married woman would have minimal contact with men other than her husband, although it is less possible today especially if a woman is working. Traditional-minded men will feel threatened by interaction between their wives and other men, and may act out violently because of that threat, whether imagined or real. Randal (1999: hppt //www)

Reported causes of arguments that escalate to violence are:

(1) Disputes about the husband's traditional economic obligation to his extended family, is often seen as a direct threat to the economic survival of the nuclear household.

(2) Anger over the wife's perceived failure to adequately fulfil the role of a wife within the traditional division of household labour, and

(3) Violence occurs when the wife talkback, that is, fails to conform to the expected behaviour of a wife to be submissive, not to question or argue with her husband,

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and to ask his permission for all her activities. In this way, domestic violence functions as a means of enforcing conformity with the role of a woman within customary society.

Viewed within a cultural context, violence is seen as emerging almost inevitably out of a society that treats women as property, socializes women to be passive, reduces their bargaining power through the institution of polygamy, and soon. Cultural arguments merge with those based on gender inequality. Arguments based on culture are problematic in the African context for many reasons. Culture in Africa varies widely among groups and regions, changes over time, and may be contested even within the same group. Multiple interpretations of tradition exist yet it is invariably those of dominant males within the society that have been taken as authoritative. Randal (1999: hppt//www)

2.5.2. Society in Transition Explanations

Another set of arguments on domestic violence views violence as emerging from the fact that the society is in transition from traditional cultures to a modern, urbanized society. Quarrels are seen as occasioned in many instances by social change and men's sense of threat in the face of it. For example, quarrels erupt because of men's inability in the modern economy to support multiple wives or extended families, women's growing independence as they take "second" jobs and interact with other men, and the difficulty for women to perform household work in the cash economy. These situations might not have arisen if African society remained untouched by the modern world; they seem however almost inevitable in the economic distress and

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social dislocation typical in most of Africa today. Moreover, traditional norms may now fail to control men's behaviour in a variety of ways. One author points to a general weakening of social controls attendant upon migration and urbanization, which have "brought many families and individuals in Africa into situations entirely unknown in traditional life styles, uprooting them out of the context of corporate morality, customs and traditional solidarity."

With increasing urbanization, couples may live far from their families of origin, who traditionally mediated disputes about domestic violence and at least moderated the severity of wife abuse. Family elders may not have the same authority to regulate daily life. In the past, the man controlled household resources, they were seen as collective, to be used for the good of the other members of the family. Now, income and resources have become more individualized (wages, for example, rather than herd of cattle), and the man may see them as his alone. Quarrels over the division of resources among multiple wives can be encompassed by the society – in – transition category as well. In the past, a man was expected to maintain his wives equally, and in the agrarian setting this was often possible. In the modern economy, however, there is often not enough to support just the wife and her children, and polygamy may consist of leaving the first wife in the countryside to fend for herself while going to the city to work in the cash economy, taking a "city wife" as well. Thus when the wife in the village asks for money, her husband reacts with anger because his income is barely enough for his own because they have not produced it cooperatively as would have been in the past. Occasions for violent quarrels multiply because of stress produced by transition to a different economy and system of social relations, because of the widespread poverty in that economy, and because of the sense of threat

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experienced by those whose traditional life, and the well-being that went with that existence, are disappearing (Randal: 1999).

2.5.3. Culture of Violence Explanations

Some observers attribute part of the blame for domestic violence, and violence against women in general, to an alleged “culture of violence” in modern Africa, within which violence is accepted as a way to resolve disputes, and link this to the colonial heritage, when Africans were treated coercively and violently by their colonizers. Lengthycivil wars and the repressive practices of m any post-colonial regimes continue this culture of violence. This is apparent in South Africa, where there has been a dramatic post-Apartheid increase in violence specifically directed at women, including both rape and domestic violence.

Although domestic violence is widespread in e United States, it is never attributed to any general cultural factors. Studies of male batterers instead attempt to explain their violent behaviour in terms of individual psychology or family dysfunction, susceptible to therapeutic intervention.(Randall,1999).

2.6 Why women stay in abusive relationships

2.6.1 ***Learned helplessness***

The theory of learned helplessness can account for the passive behaviour victims of abuse often exhibit. Social psychologist often refers to Martin Seligman when considering ‘learned helplessness’ .He conducted a series of experiments in which

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dogs were placed in one of two types of cages. In the former cage, henceforth referred to as the shock cage, a bell would sound and the experimenters would electrify the entire floor seconds later, shocking the dog regardless of location. The latter cage, however, although similar in every other respect to the shock cage, contained a small area where the experimenters could administer no shock. Seligman observed that while the dog in the latter cage learned to run to the non-electrified area after a series of shocks, the dog in the shock cage gave up trying to escape, even when placed in the latter cage and shown that escape was possible. Seligman concluded that the dogs' initial experience in the uncontrollable shock cage led them to believe that they could not control their future and was responsible for the observed disruptions in behaviour and learning. According to the theory of learned helplessness, a subject placed in an uncontrollable environment will become passive and accept painful stimuli, even though escape is possible and apparent.

Dr. Walker said that battered women's syndrome exhibits two distinct elements: a cycle of violence and symptoms of learned helplessness. A cycle of violence is composed of three phases: the tension building phase, active battering phase and calm loving respite phase. The Ontario Women's Directorate, on their pamphlet, "Let's break the Silence," said: women stay in abusive relationships because they feel trapped; they cannot afford to move out and support themselves and the children. They feel a need to keep a family together, they fear being hurt or killed if they leave, relatives encourage them to stay in relationships, they believe the abuse is their fault, they believe they cannot make it in their own and abusers make promises to never do it again. Pagelow (1984: 306) agrees with the Ontario Women's Directorate as he says that the emotional reasons that abused women share in common, for not leaving the

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abusing spouse includes the following: fear, helplessness, lack of resources, guilt and feeling of failure, dependent children, negative self concepts and societal views. These emotional reasons can be further elaborated upon:

2.6.2. Fear

The most common reason women often stay with abusers after repeated battering is fear. Pagelow (1984: 307) states that many battered women have been told repeatedly that they cannot survive on their own. They begin to fear a future without their batterer.

Ammerman (1990: 115) maintains that such women fear not only for their own safety, but they also fear for the safety of their abusers. Their fears also extend to their children, whose lives have been threatened by their fathers. Kirkwood (1993: 114) states that women describe fear in two general ways, which are day to day tension and anxiety marking a kind of generalized fear, and periods of acute overwhelming fear. The emotional fear of abused women often leads to psychosomatic complaints and may contribute to the development of life-threatening illnesses. This may be one of the reasons why many abused women report a variety of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, stress-induced illnesses and suicidal thoughts (Ammerman, 1990: 116). Browne (1987:110) suggests that when the abuse increases in frequency and severity, three factors influence the women's decision to stay: Practical problems in effecting separation fear of retaliation if they do leave, and the shocked reaction of the victims to abuse.

In his study Browne found that many women in their attempt to leave were found and beaten, or intimidated into returning home. Others were able to succeed in leaving

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their abusive husbands but were still experiencing assaults and threats from the months or even year later. The lack of safe alternatives for women in combination with the men's threats of retaliation if they left and or prior failed escape attempts, convinced most women that they could not escape their partners and survive. Some women though were convinced that leaving their partners and staying in constant fear of reprisal or death seemed more unbearable than remaining despite fears of further harm (Browne, 1987: 115). After examining stories of men and women who killed their partners, Browne concluded that "the abused women's primary fear-that abusers will find them and retaliate against their leaving (Browne, 1987:115)

2.6.3. Helplessness

Abused women turn to stay in an abusive relationship because they see the batterer as all-powerful and believe that they cannot escape. The women feel completely helpless and are so busy surviving that they do not have the energy to think of or plan to escape. Women remain in threatening situations because of power disparities, fear, lack of support, and because there is nowhere else to go if shelters are unknown (Hoff, 1990: 22).

Sometimes abused women hope that abusers will change. His replete of apologies could be very convincing. The hope for change is activated by periodic moments of closeness or other satisfaction.

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2.6.4. Economic reason

The resources that battered women lack the most are economic independence, lack of money and other resources such as shelter. These often prevent women from leaving their abusive relationships. Bat et al (1993: 148) added that abused women cited financial and social dependency as important factors that deter them from leaving their relationships. One implication of leaving a violent relationship may be that the women face economic hardship or poverty. Many researchers have observed that economic dependency is a key factor inhibiting women from leaving their abusive partners.

The probability of staying in the violent relationship is highest for women who are dependent on men financially. If a woman earns no income or little for her to survive with the children she will be hopeless of life outside the marriage (Barinett and Lavilette, 1993: 28). From the survey by Alexander (1993; 247) women were found to stay in violent relationships For the sake of children, economic factors, personal and emotional factors, fear of consequences and religion. Additional factors included the women‘s negative self-concept and the fact that she has no money or anywhere to go.

2.6.5. Guilt and feeling of failure

Women have a belief that the success of their marriages depends entirely on them, and that it is their duty to keep the family together. Women in African culture are encouraged to believe that failure of a marriage represents their failure as women.

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These feelings of guilt and failure that women suffer show that they assume responsibility for the abuse. Their guilt is compounded by what others ask, such as, what did you do to provoke him? (Pagelow; 1984:309). Guilt and feeling of failure are some of the internal factors that operate to keep battered women locked into violent relationships, but factors external to victims also exert a powerful force and limit their alternatives.

2.6.6. Dependent children

Having dependent children is another reason why battered women stay tied to abusive men. If a woman has small children to look after, she may not be able to offer someone to care for them while she works. Often women feel that their children need a father and that leaving the relationship would expose children to great hardships (Hoff; 1990: 33).

Sometimes men really love their children, thus the mothers endure their fear and pain for the sake of children. Socialization sometimes convinces women that an intact home is better for the children than having no father, and that they should sacrifice their own self-interest for their children. Mothers frequently do not decide to leave until they realize that their children are also victims of the violence, directly or indirectly (Pagelow; 1984: 310).

2.6.7. Culture and religious factors

“Honour your husband” “God hates divorce”, “God created the first marriage”

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These are examples of Christian scriptures quoted that can be used to hinder women from leaving their abusive Husbands. People tend to ignore these statements, which are chosen from long scriptures. For example before the statement, 'honour your husband,' men are also instructed to love their wives as Christ loved the church. By abusing their wives the value of the marriage is already degraded.

Wilson (1997:104) agrees that many battered women remain in violent relationships attached to divorce by church members or the desire to protect their spouses and preserve the family unit. Barnet and Laviotte say that because of their belief, the way clergy help battered women can be biased. Mostly women will be told to endure their pain hoping that God will intervene in the situation or the women will be given more strength to cope with the problem. Leaving the husband is strongly discouraged. Makofane says it is difficult for clergy assisting battered wives to encourage them to leave as it can be misinterpreted as an indication that the pastor, who is male, is interested in the woman. This can leads to the pastor losing respect and credibility among congregants. (Makofane, 1999: 144). Traditional roles socialize women to believe that their marriages must work at all costs. Many cultures encourage women to believe that the failure of a marriage symbolizes their failure.

2.6.8 Other factors.

The stigma attached to divorce is also helpful in explaining why some women opt to stay in abusive relationships. In keeping with cultural expectations regarding women's ways of relating, most women spent a great deal of time attempting to understand why the violence occurred and making adaptations to avoid it. These continue to attach an importance to maintaining their relationship with the abuser,

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responding with care and concern, and believed that their husbands will reform. (Browne, 1997:182 and Gelles and *cornell, 1990:79)*

The feeling of hope that the husband will change for the better keep the women with their abuser for a longer period. Women who leave their husbands are also stigmatized by community members and hated by other married women in fear that they will take their husbands. The special name attached to the divorcees in Venda is "mbuyavhuhadzi" and it is often said that they are back to take other women's husbands. Women sometimes doubted if they could make it alone *(*Okun, 1986:192).

There are interventions that directly address the cognitive distortions and barriers to women's effective response to violence and abuse and these includes the following factors: Refraining helps an abused client in the sense that he or she can change the meaning of behaviour by developing a new perspective on it. Positive refraining includes normalizing or legitimizing the battered women's response to violence. The battered women must be helped to identify actual effect to escape or avoid abuse. For example, using separate bedrooms, inviting a relative to stay with them, etc. (Dutton, 1992: 122). The other factor is challenging the minimization and denial. By labelling the behaviour as violent and controlling, it challenges the minimization and denial the battered woman may be experiencing and can enable her to respond more effectively to it. The woman must accept that the behaviour is unacceptable and abusive (Duttton, 1992: 123). Re attribution of responsibility for the violence is also important. Many battered women blame themselves for the abuse they experience. Some do not blame themselves for the occurrence of violence, but hold themselves responsible for changing their partner's behaviour.

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As Gelles says: “Victims tend to be socially isolated, ashamed and show their physical and emotional scars, and unwilling to expose their plight to others. Social isolation is the results of the victim’s internalization of the blame” (Gelles, 1993: 172).

The victim is said to mistakenly agree with the abuser. She thinks she deserve to be abused. Acceptance of personal responsibility is also important. The battered women must be helped to examine their goals and take responsibility of meeting them. Other factors considered by battered women will be for example, that if they leave the batterer might kill them, what will friends say? Maybe the relationship might work, not taking the father from their children, etc. Battered women cannot take control upon their own safety and aspects of their lives (Dutton, 1992: 123). Increasing behavioural skills is important. After leaving abusive relationships, many women learn that they are able to develop or engage in behaviours that they believed were previously enable to do them. It is important that the battered woman distinguish between behavioural, emotional and cognitive barriers to decision making. A woman might believe behaviour barrier prevents her from leaving, but instead she may discover that it is her fear of or her attachment to her partner (Dutton, 1992: 125).

Another focus of intervention is helping the battered woman develop strategies for coping with the after effects of victimization. Concerns include behaviours used in an attempt to cope with the distress. For example, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, aggressive and violent behaviour (other than self-defence) towards children and others. This can be dangerous to children and its negative effects include drug and alcohol addiction, loss of children, etc. Self-nurturance refers to taking care of basic physical and emotional needs. The beginning part will be to identify residual injuries from the

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physical assault. Referral for medical or neuron psychological examination is necessary. The physical well being of battered women includes a focus on nutrition, exercise and sleep. It is important to help battered women to recognize the detrimental effects of caffeine, sugar and highly processed food and the need to eat well. Exercise can benefit a person on anxiety and depression. The battered woman must identify her emotional needs and find way to meet them (Dutton, 1992: 118). Knowledge about battering and its effects need to be increased. Let the abused women see battering as a wide spread problem not only limited to them. Education is necessary on common effects of abuse. This can alleviate fear. Information on legal options available to protect the battered woman is also essential. This includes information about protection orders, the process of criminal prosecution and civil action available to compensate for medical and other costs associated with physical and psychological damage (Dutton, 1992: 119**).** Providing advocacy is important. Law enforcement officers, lawyers, judges, physicians and mental health professionals receive education and training about domestic violence, but such training may be incomplete. It cannot help them deal adequately with domestic problems.

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2.7 Different types of abuse

2.7.1 Physical abuse

Physical abuse is any behaviour that involves the intentional use of one's body against the body of another person in such a way that there is a risk of physical injury (Makofane, 19999: 40). The Domestic Violence Act 116 or 1998 defines physical abuse as any act or threat of any act of physical violence towards the victim. Examples of physical abuse are hitting, shoving, slapping, pinching, biting, or the use of any objects or weapons to injure the next person. It may begin with something minor like an arm being grabbed or a slap on a face until total aggression. The results of physical abuse at its different forms leave physical marks and injury to the woman. Physical abuse and emotional abuse cannot be separated.

2.7.2 Sexual abuse

Wallace (1996: 179) says physical violence is often accompanied by sexual abuse. Forced sex after physical abuse is very common. Although it was once a man's right to have sexual intercourse with his wife, today the law prevents it. Sexual abuse includes the lack of consent, force or threat of force to perform any sexual activity against the person's will. Sexual abuse is a sexual behaviour meant to control, manipulate or degrade another person (Makofane, 1999: 40). Its consequences include humiliation and degrading of the victim with emotional consequences.

2.7.3. Verbal, emotional and psychological abuse

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Emotional abuse includes all acts that contribute to the woman feeling helpless and unable. Emotional abuse includes:

- Verbal dominance: The abused is not allowed to express her opinion, feelings and thoughts, as they carry no weight to the abuser. If she insists, there is a possibility of physical attack.
- Isolation: limiting her access to money, use of car or phone or other normal activities can isolate the victim. She cannot get feedback, as she is isolated from friends and family.
- Guilt: This is a common form of emotional abuse. The abuser blames the victim for aggravating situations that provokes him. The abused ended up accepting the responsibility of the abuse.
- Fear: It happens when the abuser threatens the victim. He may claim to reveal private information to friend and family or threaten to hit her.
- Humiliation: Here the victim is put down in front of friends, family or children. Acts of humiliation destroys self worth of the victim (Wallace, 1996: 181).

Psychological abuse is harder to define compared to other forms of abuse. The aim of this form of abuse is to belittle, demean and control the person. The intensity and range of behaviour includes verbal attacks, harassment, belittling, name calling, making the woman feel bad about playing mind games, humiliating her and deprivation of physical and economic resources (Makofane, 1999: 47).

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The Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998, defines emotional, verbal and psychological abuse as: "A pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a complaint including:

a. Repeated insults, ridicule or name-calling.
b. Repeated threats to cause emotional pain.
c. Repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy, such as to constitute a serious invasion of the complainant's privacy, liberty, integrity or security (Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, 1999: 1555).

2.7.4 Economic abuse

Here the abuser may expect the victim to work and turn her salary over to him. He will control all finances and ensures she never use her funds. This isolates the spouse and denies her opportunities to improve herself.

Makofane (1999: 48) says economic abuse involves denying a woman access to the resources that she is legally and morally entitled. It includes preventing her from working or obtaining an education, taking her entire salary and excluding her from any decision-making regarding finances (Makofane, 1999: 48).

The following criteria constitute economic abuse:

- Failure to pay women maintenance.
- Failure to provide money for household necessity by the abuser.
- When the abuser takes a woman's salary from her.
- When the abuser does not pay rent or bond repayments to try to get the woman evicted from the house.

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- When the abuser sells or destroys furniture or other items of value which belong either in part or entirely to the woman or where the property belongs to a third party, but the woman will be liable for damages (Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, 1999: 141).

Economic abuse can therefore be understood as the denial to a partner of the material resources that she may need. It can include withholding maintenance, placing the victim in a financially precarious position, destroying her property and preventing her from earning a living or bettering her education so as to improve her career capacity (Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre, 1999: 141).

Physical assault is viewed criminal. This also includes sexual abuse and stalking. Emotional, psychological and financial abuses are not regarded as criminal behaviours, but they are forms of domestic violence and can lead to criminal abuse. Anyone can be a victim of these forms of violence . . . young, old, rich, poor, black, white, professional, or unemployed. There is no typical profile of domestic violence. Many socialized beliefs are dysfunctional for women. Chronic exposure to abuse helps to create and shape dysfunctional beliefs in its victims, for example, a woman's belief that being beaten is a symbol of love or that she does not deserve anything better (Dutton, 1992: 124).

2.8.Conclusion

The chapter looked at different theories and information pertaining to domestic abuse. Theories that were discussed in this chapter included the sociological, feminist and psychological theories on violent behaviour. Different types of abuse were

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highlighted, as the scope of domestic abuse is not limited to the physical part. It is clear that there is a connection between physical, sexual and other types of abuses towards women. The next chapter looks at Venda as the area where the study was undertaken.

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Chapter 3

A social, historical and community profile: Venda

3.1. Introduction

This chapter presents some historical background and social insights on Venda. The description is fairly brief as contemporary work in Venda is not extensive and just some literature is offered to enhance understanding of the community and its people. Information on Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program is also included.

3.2. Venda in geographical perspective

Venda lies within the North Eastern part of South Africa. It lies between 22^0 S and 23^0 45 S and 29^0 50 and 31^0 30 and thus lies almost entirely within the tropics. It has a surface area of 6500 km^2. Venda was an Independent Republic from 1979 until 1994 (Jordan, 1997: 4). Venda lies mainly in the tropics and the difference in altitude above sea level has an influence on the climate. The warmest months are from October to February with a cool period from April to August. The winters are generally very mild and frost occurs only in the southern valleys. Venda includes some of the best-watered areas in South Africa. The central and southern regions particularly are well watered with many small perennial rivers and side streams. The vegetation of Venda

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varies from region to region. In the mountain areas, the vegetation is generally dense and natural forests are found in regions that have higher rainfall (Jordan, 1997: 6).

3.3. History, politics plus cultural traditions

The Venda people originally come from the Great Lakes area in Central Africa and the eastern parts of Zaire, known as the land of Zendji. According to legend, a Venda tribe still exists in Zaire today. The Venda people still maintain their distinctive language, traditions and culture (Jordan, 1997: 7).

The Venda people are a homogeneous nation. They live in 27 different areas that fall under the authority of 27 chiefs and two independent headmen. The chiefs do not rule specific tribes, but rather certain areas and the inhabitants of these areas. The Venda people have their own language, Luvenda, their own traditions and culture of which they are very proud. Their national identity is strengthened by the fact that 70 percent of all Venda people live within the boundaries of the Republic of South Africa and have thus experienced relatively little foreign influence (Jordan, 1997: 6). In the early eighteen century a group of Vhasenzi and Vhalemba people, under chief Dimbanyika, crossed the Lipompo in a southern migration. They found their pleasant land in the mountain of the soutpansberg, and established their chief‘s kraal at Dzata, near Nzhelele River. They encountered other clans, who in previous generations, had also made the long journey south from Great Zimbabwe, seeking a new home. By the latter part of the century these scattered people became united under the great Thohoyandou, ‘The head of the elephant’, and the Venda nation came into being.

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The Lipompo Province, in which Thohoyandou is located links South Africa with Sub-Saharan Africa, sharing international borders with three countries: Botswana, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. The province had been designated for “separated black development” during apartheid and is consequently underdeveloped. Nearly 90% of the place is rural. According to census 2001 the total population of Venda area is 1,077 182 than 15 years of age. The unemployment rate in the province is 30.6% in terms of the official definition and 55.8% in terms of the expanded definition (stat SA, 2002:210). The area suffers an acute shortage of facilities.

In Venda one encounters the past at their every turn. There is no more powerful evocation of ancient culture than that expressed through dance. The best known are the tshikona, the malende, the tshigombela, tshifase and domba. The latter is performed at initiation ceremonies. Young girls dance in single file, hands clasping the fore arms of the girl ahead, to the insistent beat of the powerful domba drum. They move in a rhythmic fashion. It is partly named the ‘snake dance’ or ‘python dance’. From time immemorial Venda has been regarded as a spirit world and a great white python of legendary significance is said to live below the waters-believed to be the remnant of the water that covered the earth before creation. It is believed that one of the chiefs, who was also a magician, according to legend could, turn himself into various animals-all the better to watch his people. When he died, his spirit turned into a white lion that prowls the forests and keeps guard over his burial place. Legend also tells of water sprites, ‘the zwidudwane’ who have their home in the lake and many other watery places. They are strange half creatures having only one eye, one arm, one leg’ elusive and to be avoided by humans. It is necessary to appease them by

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offering tributes such as food, ornaments, or the turn of their hair should you happen to cross their residential river or stream.

Witchcraft is closely allied to disease and its treatment. The Venda conception of these ‘anti - social beings’ closely resembles that of the Ba Thonga. The word ‘muloi’ comes from the verb ‘u lowa,’ to bewitch and is applied to these people who are believed to employ magical means to encompass all manner of evil to the detriment of their fellow beings. They destroy property, being disease and misfortune and cause death often entirely without provocation, to satisfy their inherent craving of doing evil. The vhaloi may be of either sex, but are generally women. The male witches have a special name, which is ‘tshivhimbili.’ They are thought to carry on their practices by night, sometimes traveling long distances on the back of the hyena or some other animals, and sending snakes, owls, and particularly ‘turi’(stoat) into the hut of the object of their spite, to bite the unfortunate person or to enter his body in order to cause disease or death. The family of muloi is often feared and suspected as it is possible that the parent will teach her offspring her evil practices. There are two different types of vhaloi, the one who acts subconsciously and is quiet unaware of the fact that she is possessed by this evil genius, and the other who deliberately attempts to encompass the death of her enemy through sympathetic or contagious magic. Various creatures, particularly those to whom the average person has a psychological reaction of dread and disgust, are the special agents of vhaloi. These are the hyenas, crocodiles, owls, all snakes (except the python) and the turi. The unconscious muloi nearly always acts during sleep. (Stayt, 1968:44)

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It is supposed that the evil spirit of the seemingly innocuous individual leaves the body and goes into the world to carry on its evil mission. A hideous monster, one of the instruments of the muloi is left in her place. During the metamorphosis the other inmates of the hut are put into a deep sleep, so that no ordinary person ever sees the disgusting creature that is his bedfellow. Powerful medicine men have seen them engaged in weird happenings that they describe to their clients, thereby increasing their own prestige. Several vhaloi may meet together for a feast, beat drums, eat human flesh and dance, they may wage war on one another, one group trying to steal the corn from the other. Like all other black tribes in Southern Africa, the Vhavenda have own peculiar traditions. Traditionally, the Venda knew the God Raluvhimba or Nwali. He is their Creator and Provider and reveals himself in a flame of fire or speaks with a voice like thunder. Traditionally there is a close relationship between this god and the paramount chief, who is his grandchild ("*muduhulu*"). The Vendas firmly believe in life after death. Already in their earthly life, they accept that human beings are two inseparable units, body and soul. After death, the soul lives on. Apart from good spirits, there are also evil spirits that want to harm people, for example, the mountain spirit, "*zwidudwane*". Venda culture has its own legacy, musical instruments and initiations that can be differentiated from other groups surrounding them. Boys and girls attend separate initiation ceremonies (Jordan, 1987: 10).

It is impossible to consider the intimately associated subjects of medicine and magic except in conjunction with each other. Nearly all the medicinal and herbal treatments depend for their efficacy upon the inclusion of a magical element. In dealing with disease and death the Venda people use to consult "nanga" as some still do. Nanga are consulted on practically every occasion. They possess their set of divinatory dice. On

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the other hand there is ‘mungome’ who must always be consulted after death. Mungome can actually reconstruct the whole scene of tragedy and disclose the identity of the evildoer. Within these two main groups there are a large numbers of specialists, who, while understanding the general principle of their calling, have learnt the specialized treatment of certain diseases or catastrophes, often inheriting the knowledge from a long line of specialists’ ancestors.

Some important specialists are ‘maine’ who sprinkle waters, consecrates weapons, makes new fire and is associated with the earth. The other one is ‘maine vha ulumula’ who is the finder who sucks out with the mouth objects as stones, crystals, lizards, snakes or other similar objects which have been diagnosed as the cause of the disease, ’maine vha tshipengo’, the finder of madness, who deals with case of delirium and insanity, ‘maine vha mbeu’, the finder of seeds and crops. There are many other specialists in eyes, dentistry, love portions, leprosy, etc. Mingome as pure diviners may be fortunetellers or those who discover the identity of the witches. Belief in witchcraft in the area is very high. The 1990s saw the massive burning of witches around the area. The accused were mostly dark, older women and especially those who stay alone. Few men were affected especially those who were suspects of ritual murder. It is hard to prove whether witchcraft exists or not but ritual murder is observable within the area. November 2004, three dead bodies were found around the area and as an indication of ritual murder the bodies were found without some of the body parts. Ritual murderers mostly take private parts, hands, legs, eyes, ears or sometimes the whole head. Murderers believe that these parts are helpful especially if one wants to succeed in a business or to become rich.

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The former capital of Venda is Thohoyandou. It is named after a legendary leader Thohoyandou and it means 'the head of an elephant'. In this town the first organization around the area, Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program was established to deal with issues around domestic abuse.

3.4 Information on Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program (TVEP)

*3.4.**1. History***

The Thohoyandou Community Policing Forum together with the SAPS established the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Program (TVEP) in 1997. The program expanded over the years to include all stakeholders and in January 2002, the Thohoyandou Victim Empowerment Trust was formed. Trustees include a traditional leader, a traditional healer, an MPL, and representatives from the municipality, health, welfare, education, the SAPS, Justice, civil society, Legal Aid and the University.

TVEP is based in the former Venda homeland of the Limpopo Province in the northern part of the country. Rape and sexual violence are common in the Lipompo Province. The TVEP was set up precisely to intervene in such matters. The TVEP structure is made up of a board of trustees, advisors, auditors, executive committee, chief executive officer and facilitators, executive officer, cluster victim support, social services, admin and finance, centre managers social workers, counsellors, debriefers, case monitors, peer educators, etc. Case monitors help sexually abused children to prepare themselves to act as witness in court. They combine compassion with legal expertise to mitigate the frightening effects of the experience on already traumatized youngsters and help them testify to the best of their ability against their abusers. The

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case monitors track sexual abuse and domestic violence cases in files that contain all the necessary documentation before the case is presented. Peer educators conduct public awareness campaigns in the communities on domestic violence and violence against women and children.

TVEP covers the Thulamela municipal district, with a population of ± 90 000. It accommodates one regional and two district hospitals, 48 clinics, 3 Health centre, 7 police stations and satellites, and 500+ crèches, schools and tertiary education facilities. An average of 40 rape survivors per month have been reported to the trauma centre and Tshilidzini hospital since it was opened in September 2001, of which 60% were children who are under16 years of age. As it is the case world wide not all cases are reported. Monthly statistics from TVEP for domestic violence is attached (see appendix 3). Every act of violence against a woman has an impact on at least 3 children.

Realizing that not all cases of domestic violence are reported, it is assumed that many women within the community are still suffering domestic abuse in silence. Culturally, the Venda speaking people will accept physical abuse as part of a discipline to a woman. Every woman who reported on domestic violence was strong enough to challenge cultural beliefs. More women suffer financial, emotional and psychological abuse and helpers will only give attention to physical abuse ignoring other kind of abuse.

The researcher has the firsthand experience of the victims as she was a volunteer at the victim empowerment program. When the centre was opened it was mostly women who reported both cases on physical abuse and rape. With time men were also

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reporting cases but mostly for complaining about unfaithful women, not physical abuse. If one compare the statistics and the area, it is clear that violence is very high within the area. The statistics from the Vhembe district where Venda falls indicates that domestic violence is very high compared to robbery, culpable homicide, burglaries, theft, public violence, rape, kidnapping, abduction and other crimes. (see appendix 4)

3.4.2 Domestic violence in South Africa

Violence against women is prevalent in South Africa, where cultural values and norms serve to condone and reinforce abusive practices against women (Kim and Motsei, 2002: 243). Gender based violence remains the predominant form of abuse in South Africa and following the democratic transition, domestic violence has been placed on the national political agenda as a priority. The Tshwaranang legal Advocacy Centre (1999:111) states that there are no official statistics for domestic violence in South Africa. This is because domestic violence cases are not reported as such but are rather reported as common sexual assault, or assault with the intention of causing grievous bodily harm. Until recently, when the Domestic Act, Act 116 of 1998, was passed, there was no redress for verbal, psychological and emotional abuse and mental rape was not recognized as crime.

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3.5 Conclusion

Historically, the abuse of a wife by her husband not only was socially acceptable, but also was often government sanctioned. Throughout mediaeval times, a husband was able to discipline his wife by corporal punishment. The violent behaviour of the batterer has often been explained by the characteristics of the victim. In other words, what makes a victim susceptible to abuse? Why are some persons targeted for abuse? These questions place a certain amount of blame on the victim. Unfortunately there are unintended victims that are caught in the cycle of violence. These are children who experienced violence in their homes. Later in life they experience emotional problems. An early learning experience has an impact in latter life whether positive or negative. Children who experienced violence are later in life associated with reports of depression, trauma-related symptoms and low self-esteem.

In Venda, wife abuse is common. The Venda husbands have emotionally, physically, psychologically and sexually abused their wives. Some of the parents of abusers still indirectly promote the abusive behaviour of their sons even now. Husbands who love their wives and respect them are labelled as if their wives bewitched them. There is a belief that women who are strong can use medicine to make the husband stupid or to accept women at their every cost. The belief in love potions is still very strong. It is expected that a man who is real must at least punish his wife.

In South Africa one in every five women is being abused by her partner (Western Cape Network on Violence against Women). This statistic sounds shocking, but in fact these crimes are under-reported and are likely to be much higher than that which

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is in the statistics. In the Vhembe District of Venda, From (January 2003 to August 2004) approximately 1420 people reported incidences of domestic violence at local police stations. In this period as many as nineteen women were killed by their husbands. It was a surprise to the researcher to discover that seventy-five men also killed themselves because of domestic problems. For more information refer to the appendixes on "Mirror". This situation could have been prevented if family members, relatives, pastors, NGO's, and other relevant authorities joined hands to work against domestic problems. Major intervention is necessary in order to reduce future occurrences.

Protection orders alone cannot be a solution. Captain and area communication head of far north Limpopo, Captain Mushavhanamadi said in an interview on the 13th September 2004 that protection orders are dangerous to women who obtain them. Many women reported the worst at home after receiving protection orders. He added that many women have recently lost their lives including innocent children even during this era of protection orders. He said that a new plan must be implemented to try and fight domestic problems beside court orders. (See appendix 4).

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CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter the design and procedures of the empirical investigation are outlined. The main aim of the study was to examine factors influencing the incidence of spousal abuse around the Thohoyandou area. In order to accomplish this, the following was done:

- A literature study was undertaken in order to highlight key factors, and get general information pertaining to domestic abuse. Theories helped to guide the

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researcher and give a starting point for interpreting the data, and it also helped to enhance the credibility of the study.

- Qualitative interviews were undertaken to gather data that could be interpreted and analyzed.
- A connection between the literature survey (theoretical part) and the qualitative study (the practical part) was sought.

4.2. Planning the research study

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the method of research chosen for this study was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research simply implies gathering and analysis of extensive narrative data so as to obtain insight into a situation of interest not possible using other types of research (Gay, 1996: 203).

Creswell (1994: 2) defines qualitative research as "... an enquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants and conducted in a natural setting." Lincoln (1994: 2) defines qualitative research as a multi-perspective approach to the social interaction aimed at describing, interpreting and making sense of interacting.

4.2.1 Basic assumptions of qualitative research

- Qualitative research occurs in naturalistic situations. According to Gay (1996: 208), the variables to be studied are examined naturally where they occur, as

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they naturally occur, not in an environment controlled by the researcher. Miles and Hurberman (1994: 7) further state that the main task of the qualitative researcher is to explain ways in which people being studied understand, account for, take action and manage their everyday life situations. If people being studied are removed from their life situation, then there will be distortion of information.

- The qualitative researcher's role is to obtain an overview of the situation under study. It is based on holism, as it is assumed that the whole is more than the sum of its parts. This means that the researcher should pay attention to detail, and try not to eliminate perceptions about the phenomenon to be studied. Mountain and Marais (1988: 204) believe that people perceive reality in different ways, and that these perceptions are significant for understanding a phenomenon in its complexity. Context is therefore very important for understanding the meaning of behaviour in qualitative research. Neuman (1993: 331) states that the meaning of an action or observable behaviour depends to a great extent on the context in which it appears. The idea here is that human nature is complex, and to gain a full understanding of this phenomenon, the perceptions, ideas, beliefs, aspirations and hopes of the people being studied must be taken into consideration.
- In the qualitative study, researchers have to deal with immense amount of data, as they have to collect every detail in the situation being observed or in the interviews. Data gathered is descriptive and reported in words and sometimes in pictures.
- The researcher collects data personally, rather than using what Creswell (1994: 162) calls "some inanimate mechanism." The researcher therefore

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becomes familiar with the subjects' lives and ways of doing things. The researcher is the main data-gathering instrument.

- The qualitative researcher works with a small group of subjects.
- In order for the qualitative researcher to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation, qualitative research makes use of a variety of methods and data collection strategies. This often characterizes it as being a "multi-method." The most common strategies used are participant observation, collection of relevant documents and extensive and informal interviewing (Gay, 1996: 209). This helps in making the results credible or valid. Most analysis of data in qualitative, as already suggested, is detailed description by means of words. According to Miles and Hurberman (1994: 7), "... the words can be assembled, sub-clustered, and broken into semiotic segments. They can be organized to permit the researcher to contrast, compare and analyze." Qualitative researchers interpret data by giving them meaning, translating them or making them understandable. This meaning should begin with the point of view of the people being studied.
- In this study, the researcher places emphasis on the "points of new" of the women being interviewed, as well as their experiences over the years, to gain in-depth understanding of the phenomena of spousal abuse.

4.2.2 Criticism that pertains to the method

Although the qualitative method is widely used the in human sciences, there are some criticisms levelled against it. Some include the following:

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- Because the researcher personally collects data, Miles and Hurberman (1994: 2) state: "... the labour – intensiveness of data collection, frequent data – overload and distinct possibility of research bias" are definitely a problem. This also leads it to being a costly and time-consuming method. The researcher's own preconceived ideas may also interfere with the findings.

According to Gay (1996: 246) another problem is that the results are difficult to analyze, conclusions are highly tentative, and generalizations are minimal or non-existent. Miles and Hurberman (1994: 2) go on to say that the methods of analyzing data in qualitative research are not well formulated. There are very few guidelines for protecting the researcher against self-delusion and presentation of unreliable and invalid conclusions. This makes it difficult to generalize the findings and draw conclusions from qualitative research, and it therefore also makes it difficult to use them for making policies.

However, although there are such shortcomings, qualitative research leads to great understanding of a phenomenon. According to Gay (1996: 246) it also yields an abundance of potentially useful data that would not have been possible using other methods, and the hypothesis generated by such research endeavours are in most instances more valid than those based on theory alone, that is, those that are predetermined beforehand.

4.3. Subjects

4.3.1 Sampling

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In qualitative studies non-probability sampling methods are utilized and, in particular, theoretical or purposive sampling techniques rather than random samples are used. For this study accidental sampling was chosen. Other writers like Bailey (1994: 94), Colling (1990: 270) and Gabor (1993: 62) refer to it as either a convenient or an available or a haphazard sample. Emphasis was placed on collecting individual detailed and in-depth information. Jude et al (1999: 134) say in accidental sampling "we simply reach out and take the cases that are at hand, continuing the process until the sample reaches a designated size." Twenty women were accidentally selected to participate in the study. They made themselves available as they came to report incidences of abuse by their husbands. The process continued until the desired number was realized. De Vos (2002: 201) indicates that any case that happens to cross the researcher's path and that has to do with the studied phenomena should be included until the desired number is obtained. The researcher thus simply "reached out" and took cases at hand, continuing the process until the sample reached its designated size.

This sampling procedure suggests that the findings will not represent the whole population. In this regard, Creswell (1994: 157) states that the intent of qualitative research is not to generalize findings, but to form a unique interpretation of events. The essential aim has been to learn more about abuse, and what shapes and structures it as a historical, cultural and social product.

4.4. Data gathering procedures

For this study semi-structured one-to-one interviews were been chosen as a method for data collection. A focus group interview was also added. Interviewing is the

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predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. People do interviews because they are interested in other people's stories (Seidman, 1998: 1). Stories are the way of knowing. By telling stories it is an essential meaning-making process. People use their microcosm of their consciousness as they tell their stories. All interviews are interact ional events and interviewers are deeply and unavoidably implicated in creating meanings that ostensibly reside within participants. The interviewer and the interviewee are thus actively involved in meaning making work (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995: 3).

Sewell (2001: 1) defines qualitative interview as "attempts to understand the world from the participant's point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences and to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanation." According to Crossly and Vulliamy (1997: 65), the term qualitative research is used to mean research of which the primary purpose is to identify native perspective so as to illuminate a policy issue. The aim of qualitative research is to generate theories and hypothesis from the data that emerge in an attempt to avoid imposition of previous frame of reference on the subjects of the research. The usefulness of the qualitative approach in this study is that it gave the researcher and participants much more flexibility. As participants gave full pictures of their lives, experiences and thoughts, the researcher was able to record them and follow up on avenues not considered previously. DeVos et al (2002: 302) say that "semi-structured interviews are especially suitable where one is particularly interested in the complexity or process, or where an issue is controversial or personal." Pre-determined questions were set on an interview schedule for guidance and not for dictation. Participants were allowed maximum opportunity to tell their story. All interviews were audio taped after permission for this was obtained. These

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recordings were transcribed verbatim. Results were analyzed. In the few cases where the researcher failed to get permission for tape-recording, extensive notes were taken.

4.5. Types of questions

For this research open-ended questions have been used. Open-ended questions are being described by Turney and Robb (1997: 30) as questions where the respondents have control over what they wish to say. These types of questions may result in many variations of answers. These questions can be regarded as free response questions. Open-ended questions give the respondents the opportunity to state answers from their own perspectives. The open-ended questions enable the researcher to explore variables better and obtain some ideas of the spectrum of responses. To reiterate many of the points concerning the value of qualitative interviews, Mahlangu (1987: 90) can be cited:

- There is flexibility because the researcher can probe more specific answers and modify the question if there seems to be misunderstanding on the interviewee's part.
- Even people who cannot read or write can answer interview questions.
- The interviewer can observe the body language and assess the validity of the answers given by the interviewee.
- The interviewer can make sure that all questions are answered.
- The interviewee cannot retract an answer once it has been made and cannot ask someone else to help or even answer on his/her behalf.

Bailey (1997) notes other advantages, for example, the response rate.

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Response rate: The response rate for interviews is better compared to mailed questionnaires. Many people feel confident of their speaking ability as compared to their writing ability.

- Completeness: The interviewer can ensure that all the questions are answered.
- Time of interview: The interviewer can record the exact date, time and place of the interview.
- Greater complexity of questionnaires: A skilled, experienced and well trained interviewer can work with questionnaires so full of skips, charts and graphs, arrows, detailed instruments and various other contingencies that even a well educated respondent would feel hopeless lost or at least intimidated if he or she received it in the mail (Bailey, 1987: 175).

4.6. Focus group

A focus group is a group interview. Instead of interviewing people separately and individually, they are interviewed as a group. According to Gall et al (1996: 301), in this type of interview the researcher addresses questions to a group of participants that have been specifically chosen for that purpose.

The following are some characteristics of a focus group interview:

The researcher and the participants convene to discuss one or more issues.

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- The researcher introduces issues and asks questions and makes sure that all participants take part and no one person dominates.
- The researcher is flexible, ensures relevance and encourages discussion among participants.
- Responses are put on tape recorder and/or recorded by someone other than the researcher. The present researcher put the responses on tape recorder.
- Group members should have the same interests or be involved in the same kind of activity to reduce conflict but should not include friends or relatives (Neuman, 1997: 253).

Botherson and Goldstein (1992: 335) give the following as characteristics of a focus group interview:

- A focus group tries to convey meanings that people construct from shared and individual experiences.
- The design of a focus group interview is emergent and flexible because the researcher builds on continuous analysis that gives rise to the next set of questions to be asked and issues to be discussed.
- The researcher listens, observes and responds analytically, perceptively and with inquiry to what he/she sees.

Gay (1996: 224) states that in a focus group, subjects share their opinions, and the aim is not directed to debate, argument or consensus, but rather expression of ideas and feelings. In this study the aim of the focus group was merely to elucidate and develop group consensus, to the extent that this was possible, on the primary factors that give

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rise to dissention in domestic environments, particularly in the marital domain. The focus group discussion will not be presented in detail. Just the key points of agreement will be noted at the end of chapter 5.

4.6. Data analysis

In a simplified nutshell, qualitative analysis in qualitative research involves “making sense out of an enormous amount of narrative data” (Gay, 1996: 227). The qualitative researcher ends up with a whole lot of notes and in order to make sense out of them, he/she had to look for patterns, themes and categories to make the synthesis of the data possible.

Another important characteristic of qualitative data analysis is that it is a continuous process. Miles and Hurberman (1994: 12) state that qualitative data analysis “... is a continuous, interactive enterprise. Issues of data reduction, of display and of conclusion drawing, and verification come into figure successively as analysis episodes follow each other.” Thus in order to arrive at meaningful conclusions, there are necessary steps that must be undertaken in dealing with qualitative data.

4.7. Data reduction

Data reduction means the process of selecting, simplifying, focusing, making abstractions and transforming the massive information of written words that appear in notes from observation and interview transcripts (Miles and Hurberman, 1994: 10).

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In this study individual and focus group transcripts were derived. They also had to be reduced. In reducing them into manageable units, the researcher used strategies suggested by Creswell (1994: 155).

- First the researcher got a sense of the whole by reading through entire transcripts. This was done progressively as analysis is a continuous exercise in qualitative research. Some informative sections were highlighted.
- The transcripts were read carefully as meanings and thoughts were assessed.
- After each document had been scrutinized, the topics in the margins were noted. Similar topics were clustered together. The topics then formed columns that were labelled as major topics, unique topics, minor topics and others.
- The most descriptive words were found to the topics, which were then turned into categories. To reduce the list of categories, topics related to each other were also grouped together to form one category. Lines were then drawn between categories to show their relationships, and this further reduced the data.
- The data belonging to each category was assembled and a preliminary analysis was performed.

All this was done on an on-going basis until all the data that came in had been categorized and “saturated” for the purpose of this study.

4.8. Conclusion drawing and verification

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Conclusions in a qualitative study are the insights the researcher believes she has picked up as a result of the intensive effort. The conclusions are there right away, vague at first, then increasingly grounded and explicit. Only until data collection is over can we talk about somewhat final conclusions. This means that as the researcher reduced and displayed information, tentative conclusions were drawn, until data collection was finally over. As already suggested, it is difficult to generalize from the finding of a qualitative study. Emphasis in this study is thus placed on the drawing of key categories or dominant themes.

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CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF DATA

5.1 Introduction

As previous chapters have shown, the problem of spousal abuse persists in Venda and in South Africa as a whole. Abuse can be found in most communities, households and in public places. The literature shows that violence has been accepted as a legitimate and immediate means of settling domestic disputes at schools, and in a variety of social contexts and environments. The problem of spousal abuse is not recent to us; it has been there in ancient times and is universal in all cultures and social groups. This chapter shows that more and more women are beaten and victimized by their husbands. Although it is known that men are sometimes victims of domestic violence, for this study only women are considered because they are the most vulnerable and primary victims compared to men.

5.2 Profile of women interviewed

Table 1: Biographical details of sample of women

	Pseudonyms	Date of interview	Age	Language	Type of Marriage	Duration of marriage

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1	Jackie	21/06/04	40	Luvenda	In community & lobola	21
2	Mavhungu	21/06/04	34	Luvenda	In community & lobola	14
3	Masindi	21/06/04	41	Luvenda	In community & lobola	22
4	Bongani	22/06/04	33	IsiXhosa	In community	11
5	Litshani	22/06/04	36	Luvenda	In community & lobola	9
6	Rambelani	23/06/04	23	Luvenda	In community & lobola	4
7	Ester	23/06/04	39	Luvenda	In community & lobola	19
8	Hangwani	25/06/04	39	Luvenda	In community & lobola	20
9	Suzan	25/06/04	43	Luvenda	In community & lobola	22
10	Khuthadzo	29/06/04	41	Luvenda	In community & lobola	20
11	Madauvhi	29/06/04	40	Luvenda	Lobola	15
12	Elisa	1/07/04	31	Luvenda	In community & lobola	15
13	Maria	1/07/04	37	Luvenda	In community & lobola	17
14	Matamela	2/07/04	26	Luvenda	In community & lobola	8
15	Mavis	2/07/04	44	Sotho	In community & lobola	19
16	Sandani	27/07/04	39	Luvenda	In community & lobola	20
17	Mpfareni	27/07/04	33	Luvenda	In community & lobola	14
18	Ntsieni	28/07/04	33	Luvenda	Lobola	14
19	Rambani	28/07/04	31	Luvenda	In community & lobola	11
20	Johanna	1/08/04	44	Luvenda	Cohabiting	15

Source: (Interview schedules, TVEP study, 2004)

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In this study twenty women were interviewed. Their ages range from twenty-three to forty four. The average age was thirty-three. This indicates that a family nature perspective on spousal abuse was derived from the interviews. Most women seem to have been married at quite young ages and were in their unions for long periods of time. These long periods of time however mask the number of time women left home experienced breakdowns the returned. The home languages of participants were mainly Tshivenda and in addition Isi Xhosa and Sotho. Nearly all participants have been married except for one participant who is cohabiting because she was previously married. The fact that she was married before makes it difficult for her parents to receive lobola for the second time. Lobola or the bride price in the form of money has been paid in all marriages. Seventeen participants had been legally married in 'community of property'.

5.3 Key findings of the study

5.3.1 Theme 1: Early experiences regarding exposure to violence

Abuse at home

Ten of the twenty participants reported that they witnessed abuse as children. The other ten who said they never witnessed abuse said they grew up in either single parent's home or with grandparents. All participants reported that they were not physically abused as children. By witnessing abuse, however, they also became victims of emotional abuse. "I once saw a man beating his wife. He took a spade

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trying to hit his wife. Unfortunately he killed his toddler. I remember seeing the intestines." (Jackie, 21/06/2004v)[1]

"My sister was beaten by her boyfriends at her own house many times in my presence. My mother died when I was three months old. She was killed by my father with an axe in a domestic dispute" (Rambelani 21/06/2004v)

Although the participants mentioned that they were not physically abused, one participant disclosed that she was sexually abused.

"My uncle used to call me to his place. He used to take out his penis and ordered me to rub it. White things will come out of his penis and he will be groaning. The skin on my hands ended up peeling off. (Jackie,21/06/2004v).

Researchers such as Koma (1996:14) state that a person who comes from a violent home is likely to be aggressive and violent as an adult. If a child witnesses violence at home he or she tends to view violence as the normal response to stress. Children 's role models, especially parents, when they relate to each other in a violent way, they teach their children that violent behaviour is acceptable. Abusers were often subjected to corporal punishment by either or both parents, when they were children. Similarly,'victims' learn to endure beating; in this sense coping with violence and humiliations, for many women, become part of the 'normal' way of everyday life.

Abuse at school

In addition to attempting to establish women's experience of abuse in their domestic settings, the researcher also sought to understand women's experience of abuse in

[1] Please note that the 'v' at the end of the vignette implies that the interview was conducted in Venda language and 'e' indicates that the interview was conducted in English language.

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schools. This information is of vital importance as it contributes towards the understanding of men's current behaviour. All participants reported that the teachers physically abused them at school. This is not surprising as corporal punishment was an acceptable method to discipline children.

"Our schoolteachers use to beat us at school. It was not very bad. We thought it was fine" (Masindi, 21/06/2004v).

"Teachers use to beat us severely (Hangwani, 25/06/2004v).

The social learning theory states that children who are exposed to considerable violence are prone to enduring and becoming abusive adults themselves. As Stark (1975:p106) indicates "the type of behaviour that is most frequently and consistently reinforced by the people will be the most exhibited." Wrightman (1977:226-228) mentions that aggressive behaviour as observed by children will be imitated, particularly if acts were performed by a role model." To most children living with parents, their parents become their models. Pagelow (1992: p38) also agrees that children who grew up in violent homes became violent adults. Schools teachers, in deprived environments also become significant role models to boys who learn that to beat girls, and to girls who learnt that men in authority are entitled to beat them.

Carlson (1984:156) says that children who have been exposed to violence learned that violence is a way to resolve conflicts. Although other writers like Breines and Gordon (1983:518) say human processes of learning have been oversimplified, the researcher disagrees in the sense that children are born 'blank'. Children are the product of society, primarily through the agencies of socialization. The language, culture, religion, what they eat and their likes will not differ completely from their parents. The fact that at school participants were physically abused by their teachers who are role models makes it clear that participants were schooled in a 'culture' of

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violence as a way to keep order and to control unwanted behaviour. This leads us to the next theme where the focus is on the historical background of abusers. Questions about husbands, as abusers, were asked and the main details are listed in table 2.

5.3.2 Theme 2: Husbands educational, occupational plus family background

Table 2: Details on spouses

	Educational level	Health status	Occupation	Previous relationship	Previous children	Physical abuse by parents
1	Tertiary	Good	Labour relations officer	Married	3	Yes
2	Tertiary	Very poor	Teacher	Married	4	Yes
3	Standard 10	Good	Police man	Girlfriends	0	No
4	Standard 10	Good	Manager	Girlfriends	3	Yes
5	Standard 10	Good	Fire fighter	Married	5	Not sure
6	Standard 2	Good	Businessman	Married	6	Yes
7	Standard 8	Good	Soldier	Girlfriends	2	Yes
8	Tertiary	Poor	Teacher	None	0	Yes
9	Tertiary	Good	Lecturer	Girlfriends	0	Yes
10	Not educated	Good	Factory worker	None	0	Yes
11	Not educated	Good	Builder	Married	2	Yes
12	Tertiary	Good	Plumber	None	0	Yes
13	Not educated	Good	Security	None	0	Yes
14	Standard 8	Good	Baker	Girlfriends	1	Yes

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15	Standard 10	Good	Builder	Married	2	Not sure
16	Standard 5	Good	Police officer	Girlfriends	1	Yes
17	Tertiary	Good	Technician	Girlfriends	0	Yes
18	Tertiary	Good	Electrician	None	0	Yes
19	Tertiary	Good	Academic	Girlfriends	1	Yes
20	Not educated	Good	Shoe-maker	Married	3	Yes

(Source: Interview schedules, TVEP study 2004)

5.3.4 Educational level and occupation of abusers

All participants said that their husbands are employed. Some of the husbands hold fairly senior positions within the society. Only four participants reported that their husbands are uneducated. Four participants reported that their husbands have completed standard ten. Eight were tertiary educated, and the remaining four had some schooling, standard five, standard eight, and standard two. These findings concur with what Gelles and Loseke (1993:34) say: “Violence and abuse can be found among truck drivers and physicians, labourer and lawyers, the employed and the unemployed, the rich and the poor.” It can be argued that if violent behaviour is found in all types of families, amongst all classes and social groups, then income and employment status are not necessarily determining factors of spousal abuse. This contradicts the claim of many researchers who suggest that domestic violence is shaped by the socio-economic conditions of poverty and unemployment. Many researchers have argued that spousal abuse is more common among lower-socio-economic statuses and racial and ethnic minorities. Perhaps perpetrators use these socio-economic, cultural and racial statuses as an excuse for violence. Other researchers have found that domestic abuse can happen to both educated and to

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uneducated people, rich or poor, a doctor or a driver but stress levels of the poor can, of course, aggravate the situation (Koma,1996:18 and Gelles and Loseke 1993:34).

5.3.5 Previous relationships of the abusers

This question aimed to establish whether abusers had previous relationships and why these relationships probably did not sustain themselves. Seven participants said their husbands were once married. Seven said their husbands use to have steady girl friends. Only five participants said their husbands were not strongly involved in relationships. Twelve participants said their husbands had children in previous relationship before their marriage. Women who said that their husbands did not have children outside of wedlock at the time of their marriages claimed that those husbands now have children from extra-marital affairs. Other women said they only discovered about their husbands previous relationships after marriage when it was too late for them to turn back to reconsider getting married.

“It was in 1990 when I was doing standard nine. An old lady came to my home to propose me. She told me that her brother is a teacher and is looking for a wife to marry. By then I did have a boyfriend who was also interested in me. She convinced me until I accepted. After our wedding I found that the lady was not my husband’s sister. The man was supposed to be her son in law. The man was once married to two other women. He had one child from the first wife and three children from the second wife. After his divorce he proposed the old lady’s daughter. He then used to buy them groceries. A problem arose when he broke the lady’s arm in a fight. The lady ran away and then the man started claiming the money he lost. That is why the lady proposed me for she promised to repay the man by finding him a wife.” This man as

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was the case with a number of the men, whose previous relationships failed, displayed a history of violent behaviour. The previous relationships, particularly when children were involved, meant that the later marriages were affected by the burdens and obligations of the past.

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5.3.6 Family history of abusers

Seventeen participants reported that their husbands grew up in abusive families with abusive parents. Only two participants said they were not sure of their husband's background and one participant said her husband's parents were good people.

"My husband's father was physically aggressive to his wives. He ended up killing my husband's mother and she left four young children. He was then arrested and he died in prison." (Rambelani, 23/06/2004v)

"The day I got married my husband and sister were fighting each other. I was so frightened when I saw my husband carrying an axe running after his sister." (Sandani, 27/06/2004v)

"My husband's father use to beat his wives. When he started beating the first one he ended up beating all the other wives and they will be running around the yard."

Koma (1996:14) suggests that a child who witnesses violence at home tends to view violence as the normal response to stress. When parents relate to each other in a violent way, they teach their children that violence is acceptable. Having established that respondent's husbands have observed their parents engaged in domestic disputes during early years of their childhood, this information is an important source towards understanding current abusive behaviour.

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5.3.7 Mental health

Except for two participants, respondents mentioned that their husbands are mentally healthy. Of the two cases mentioned, only one was a serious case. The husband, who is also a schoolteacher, is drug dependent. When deprived of drugs he becomes uncontrollable and displays aggressive behaviour. He was admitted to a psychiatric ward on many occasions. Feminists will agree with the findings in that they do not see abuse as a result of mental sickness. The fact that nearly all other husbands are 'perfectly normal' is a sign that we cannot just let off the hook batterers by labelling them as psychopathic. There is more to spousal abuse than mental illness or pathology. Social causes for why men find it 'normal' to beat their wives need to be established.

5.3.8 Alcohol and Substance abuse

Ten participants said their husbands do drink alcohol and two of them said their husbands are using marijuana. Ten participants said their husbands do not drink at all. Women agreed that husbands use alcohol and substance abuse as a scapegoat for abusive behaviour. Other writers say alcohol and substance abuse does in some instances trigger aggressive behaviour. It is a fact that alcohol has been identified by many writers as a common feature associated with spousal abuse. Alcohol abuse is significantly associated with physical aggression in both men and women. Heavy drinkers are said to endure severe forms of physical abuse than non-drinkers. But other writers believe alcohol intoxication may function as a rationalization for socially

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undesirable behaviour. The researcher has observed people who were drunk and found that a really drunk person tends to be very weak. She concludes that a person can take a controllable amount of alcohol and then commit acts of abuse if it was his purpose before he was not drinking. If people who don't abuse substances are also abusers of partners then we cannot automatically link physical abuse to alcohol use. Mpfareni mentions: "I know my husband is drinking. But he plans what he wants to do in advance before he starts drinking. He will use alcohol as a scapegoat so that we think he cannot be held responsible for his actions. If he beats me when he is very drunk maybe he will not even remember what he was doing the next day. But I think alcohol can help an abusive somebody to be worse. (Mpfareni, 27/07/2004) Substance abuse thus becomes the convenient scapegoat, but is an insufficient explanation for spousal abuse in itself.

5.3.9 Theme3: Gender, sexuality and power.

Having explored the background's of husbands it is important to look at sexuality and power within the participants' relationships.

Faithfulness and extramarital affairs

All women who participated in the study mentioned that their husbands are unfaithful to them. At the same time it was apparent that husbands did not want their women to be involved in extramarital affairs. Extra marital affairs lead to financial constraints at home and they also increase stress and discord between partners. Many times when husbands are involved in extra-marital affairs they stop displaying any form of respect

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towards their wives. Sometimes they neglect the wife and children in various ways. Children stop respecting parents in turn. For many ‘traditional minded men’, extra-marital affairs, or multiple unions do not seem to be a problem.

In traditional Venda culture a rich man was identified by the number of wives he has. Those men who were poor could not afford paying lobola. Polygamy was a respected practice in most African communities. The practice was acceptable to the extent that older women used to search for suitable girls for their sons and husbands. Although the government now accommodates polygamous marriages this customary practice arguably is in conflict with modern value systems. Modern (especially educated) African women no longer accept the practice of sharing a man. In the cash economy multiple wives means financial constraints and the risk of contracting HIV and AIDS.

Men, however, according to the women respondents appear to want to cling onto these practices that most women find offensive. The women claimed that they don’t want to share their husbands but it is apparent that single women also collaborate with polygamy. Employed men are targets for money. Younger, unmarried women, seem unconcerned that their partners have other wives and partners. However if these women win the men into a marriage they do not condone other affairs outside their marriages. Thus there seems to be contrasting norms for younger unmarried women on the one hand and older married women on the other hand.

“Many times my husband does not come back home. He takes his girlfriends to the mother ‘s place and she approves. One day he came back with a refrigerator. He told me that it is his girlfriend who is working and who bought it for him. One day when

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he was not at home I received a phone call. When I picked it I heard somebody snoring. Then I heard a voice of a lady who said “I have your husband with me today. He is not coming back” (Bongani, 22/06/2004v).

“I was from a bakery piece job early in the morning. My youngest child said that daddy has a new wife. He said that the wife slept in my room. I thought the child was just lying. My firstborn daughter then told me that it is true. She told me that my husband arrived with this lady. They were carrying cool drinks and chips. He ordered the kids to go and sleep. I don’t remember my husband buying me a can of coke, not a single day. I could not question his behaviour because he would spill saliva on my face or tell me to leave his house. If not, he will beat me” (Mavhungu, 21/06/2004v).

“My husband was always a jealous person. One day he accused me of having an affair with an old man. I denied it because it was not true. He ended up going to the man ‘s house and claimed four thousand rand as a fine from the old man. This Tuesday we were sleeping. At around 2 o’clock he told me to wake up because we have unfinished business to discuss. He started accusing me of a relationship with a man who is working at Magravhuloni as a security guard. I denied it and he told me I cannot cheat him. He become angry and starts beating me. He took me to a bush were he cut sticks from the tree and he beat me. Afterwards he took me to Magravhuloni. When he reached the entrance he started swearing at the man. The man took a gun and shot my husband dead. I wasn’t expecting anything like that. It happened too quickly. The police then took me to the hospital.” (Rambelani,21/06/2004v). At the time of the interview the woman could hardly walk. Her body was swollen and full of bruises. In another interview,

I learnt the following:

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“My husband’s girlfriend is pregnant. I am so angry. I got the news because one day she phoned on a weekend. I asked my husband who phoned and dropped the phone when the person heard my voice. He pretended that he knew nothing. I insisted until he told me that it is a lady who is pregnant with his child. I cannot be pregnant because I am HIV positive. He brought the disease to our home. I wish the child can just die.”(Bongani, 22/06/2004).

Randal(2003) agrees that the power of tradition and norms within the African culture explains the widespread use of domestic violence. The issue of polygamy and multiple girlfriends can only be understood within the context of African culture. This is a clear symbol of uneven distribution of power between gender and within the communities although a little indirect. If a man can enjoy the benefits of multiple relationships why are women not allowed to enjoy the same benefits? Previous researchers such as Randal (cited in African theories) agree that conflicts usually arise in situations where a wife is seen as challenging her husband ‘s authority and prerogatives by inquiring about his extramarital involvement (Randal, 2003 hppt.www.com).

Women are treated as properties. They are socialized to be passive recipients and their bargaining power is reduced through the institution of polygamy. Religious beliefs are used as a means to ensure obedience on the part of women. Ranges of beliefs that favour men are highlighted to instil submissiveness of those women who might want to challenge men. The Christian bible is frequently quoted for stanzas like God created man in his image not a woman and that a woman was made out of a man‘s rib. A woman is expected to be under the rule of a man.

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The use of power

All participants agreed that their husbands hold power in their relationships. As Bongani said: “Men have power over us. It does not matter if you are working or not. They always want to keep us subordinate”. (Jackie,22/06/2004v). Makofane (1999, 90) say “the recognition of gender socialization as a factor contributing to abuse is important. The focus of gender theory is upon how specific behaviours and roles are given gendered meanings. If we look at the division of labour it has little to do with abilities but more to do with gender meanings. Male domination is central to gender analysis and helps to explain power difference between men and women. This unequal power sharing can also be seen as a factor contributing to spousal abuse. Socialisation, thus, is about training women and men in social and power inequalities.

Letellier (1996: 4) in Hamberger and Renzetti states: “Being a victim of domestic violence is equated with or seen as the natural consequence of being a wife”. Patriarchy and violence marry each other. Its ground can be seen in power relations and theological differences (Makofane, 1999: 91).

Sullivan and Mosher (1990: 227) say: “Traditional patriarchal family structure encourages the subjugation of women to men.”

Love, honour and obey is what is expected of women in their marriages. Care for him, look up to him and do as he wishes – or else… Implied in that vow is the threat of rightful control over those who fail to obey. Control may take the form of coercion. Thus, foundations of wife battering are written into the marriage contract. Thus, the

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struggle of battered women who are beaten by their husbands represents a struggle against structures and ideologies that support wife battering and the oppression of women in their marriages. These ideologies have developed over a long period of time and have become so much a part of the culture that it took hundreds of years before wife beating was uncovered and defined as a social problem about which something should be done. (Dobash and Dobash 1977:403)

A woman onto whom control is exercised becomes fearful. She will try to be submissive and comply with whatever is expected of her to avoid violence. She becomes powerless and cannot control her own life for even if she attempts to resist the abuser's efforts, he continues to coerce and dominate her.

The use of contraceptives

Table 3

	Number of children	Use of contraceptive	Husband approves	Kind of contraceptives
1	2	Yes	Don't tell	Pill
2	3	No	Approve	Sick

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3	4	Yes	Not approve	Injection
4	1	Yes	Approve	Condom
5	3	No	Not approve	---
6	1	Yes	Not approve	Injection
7	4	Yes	Approve	Pill
8	5	Yes	Approve	Pill
9	3	Yes	Approve	Condom
10	5	Unavailable	---	---
11	6	Yes	Approve	Injection
12	2	Yes	Approve	Injection
13	5	No	---	---
14	3	Sometimes	Not approve	Pill
15	6	No	---	---
16	3	Yes	Approve	Injection
17	0	No	Not approve	---
18	3	Yes	Not approve	Injection
19	3	Yes	Approve	Pill
20	6	Womb removed	Use not to approve	---

(Source: Interview Schedules, TVEP study,2004)

The question was aimed at determining whether respondents are using contraceptives as means to control their fertility and whether husbands allow them to use these contraceptives. Out of thirteen participants who use contraception, nine said that their husbands approved of the idea of them using contraceptives. Those women who were not using contraceptives by the time of the interviews have reasons ranging from the

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fact that their husbands are not sleeping at home, except for one participant who is childless and another whose womb had been removed.

“Since last year my husband is not sleeping with me. It is very bad. Why should I use contraceptives for nothing?”(Hangwani, 25/06/2004v)

“My husband does not sleep with me. His girlfriend bewitched him. Sometimes he makes an attempt and then I will menstruate for a whole month. If I tell him there is something wrong he says I have cancer. I tried several doctors and it never worked. The Pap smear’s results say I do not have cancer. A traditional healer helped me. She told me that he must come because he is also sick and the medicine can only work if we are treated together but he refused to go for the treatment. Now for four months we have not been sleeping together.”(Masindi, 21/06/2004,v)

The fact that women opt to use contraceptives although their husbands do not approve symbolizes that they also hold power, or at least attempt to control part of their private lives.

5.3.10 Theme 4: Family networks and relationships with in-laws

Sixteen women reported their relationships with their in-laws as very bad. Nineteen out of twenty couldn’t go and ask for their help when there is a problem. Nineteen of the participants are staying in nuclear families and one participant is from an extended family.

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“My mother in law has never visited my home. I only heard stories from her neighbours that she always takes care of my husband’s girlfriends when they visit her” (Mpfareni, 27/07/2004,v).

“My in-laws and I are on bad terms. I would not even think of getting their help in my life. I remember one day my mother in-law was very sick. I visited her in a hospital. She introduced all people standing around her bed, except the children and myself. The following day she told people that if I continue visiting she will never be well. She said that she hates me so much loudly that everyone in the ward will hear” (Rambani, 29/07/2004v).

“The relationship that we have with his family is very bad. I cannot go and ask them for help or any favour. It is an extended family. My husband is also not on good term with his brothers” (Bongani, 22/06/2004,e).

“I don’t relate well to both my husband’s parents. The problem is that they side with him when he is involved in extramarital affairs. They accuse me of jealousy. One day he was coming home very late. Before I can open the door my father-in-law was swearing at me. He told me that I come from a very poor home and now that his child has made my life better I am boasting. I was so angry because instead he should have been telling his son that as a married man it is wrong to live in that manner” (Suzan, 25/06/2004,v).

Randal (2003) agrees that increasing urbanization coupled with the fact that married couples may live far away from their family of origin might create problems for nuclear families. In traditional families, elders use to mediate disputes that lead to domestic violence. For the women who have experienced severe forms of abuse, the

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familiar support structure has all but disappeared. Family elders in present circumstances do not hold the same authority to regulate daily life in nuclear families. Violence can escalate because of the husband's traditional economic obligation to his extended family, which is now seen as a direct threat to the economic survival of the nuclear household. Women now lack a support system in the event that domestic violence occurs since the extended family has diminished. If she reports it to her own parents they will hardly have the power to intervene as culturally they cannot talk to the son-in-law. On the other hand, the husband's parents often feel threatened by the wife's relationship with his husband. Traditionally, in Venda culture, a man's mother or his brother use to take care of his money and his belongings. If the man was employed far away from home he used to send money through his mother's or his brother's name. Wives never had the power to control the husband's money and his belongings. If, for example, food ran short the wife used to ask the mother-in-law for provisions. As society transforms and a man has to stay with his wife alone in their nuclear family, family members feel that they are losing power and control. The obligation for a man to support his extended kin becomes threatened in the cash economy as the cost of living is high. Extended family members may hate the wife whom they think has taken away their breadwinner. Even if the husband controls his money alone, family members usually suspect that the wife is controlling the money. This multiplies quarrels between in-laws and the wife. The extended families had always been a support structure for new families in the sense that when couples were locked in disputes, they always had somebody to talk to. When people live in isolation they fail to solve their problems. Makofane (1999: 263) agrees that in rural areas, a common practice is that the husband gives or sends his money to his own mother to manage rather than to his wife. In such instances, the husband and the mother are

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subject the woman to double oppression, as she is treated like a child. Such circumstances create tension, disharmony and rivalry among members of the family.

5.3.11 Theme 5: Economic insecurity, financial constraints and the need for control

Insecurity and financial constrains

Questions were asked to determine who made decisions on family financial matters. Economic insecurities within families were explored. Although all participants said their husbands are working, seventeen participants mentioned that their families are in financial difficulties. The fact that these men are not only obliged to support extended families but have children outside of wedlock means that they have many responsibilities to take account of. (refer to Table 2). Extra-marital affairs can also lead to financial constraints looking at the fact that new lovers will expect a lot from these men in terms of food, clothing, and entertainment and sometimes shelter. Women who said they experience financial constraints also said that their husbands have become slaves to cash loans (Matshonise). These schemes give small loans to recipients at very high monthly interest rates to the extent that once a person gets involved they can hardly get out as the debt accumulates significantly. The interest ranges from 35 to 50 percent. It will mean that a person who owes R1000 will have to pay R1500 by the end of the month. When these poor, unemployed women ask for money either for school fees or children's food men become very aggressive and end up abusing them.

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"My children have not paid their school fund since last year. I have now received a letter from the principal informing us to pay the fees. My husband is aware that it is unacceptable for us not to pay as he is a teacher himself. I reported him to the social workers. They asked him to pay us R800.00 for food per month. Now he is threatening to kill me so that I do not eat his money" (Mavhungu, 21/06/2004,v).

"Every month end my husband does not come back home. He receives his salary and goes to girl friends then comes back after two or three days. When he comes back, I will ask for money to use for our groceries. Instead of receiving money I will end up being beaten. I cannot just keep quiet and let my children die of hunger while he is working (Masindi, 21/06/2004v).

"My husband was earning a lot from Telkom. He does not want to help the children and me. He wouldn't mind to buy clothes for his concubines whilst he neglected the children. After his brother lodged a case for maintenance, my husband asked for early retirement so that he will not support us. My firstborn son who is doing grade 12 has tried to commit suicide. It was lucky that when he was attempting to hang himself under a mango tree I wasn't asleep. I heard him saying his last words. Then I rushed outside the house to find him fighting for his life. When I asked my husband for help, he only said "deal with your things and sleep" (Sandani, 26/06/2004,v). During the interview the participant could not stop crying.

All participants said their husbands control income and make decisions on how to use the money they get. Makofane (1999: 263) agrees that "oppressive men are inclined to make unilateral decisions on how money should be utilized disregarding their wives'

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inputs and needs." From the study, women who were given money by their husbands only received less than a thousand rand each. Taking into consideration that some of these husbands are government employees one can say that the money these women and the children are receiving is far too little. The reader must bear in mind that previously it was mentioned that traditionally in the area of study, mothers were financial managers of their sons not wives. It is expected of these men through their socialization process to exclude women on decisions concerning financial issues.

Need for control

The aim of the question was to establish whether women feel in control of their lives or if they feel their lives controlled by their husbands. All participants mentioned that they feel totally controlled by their husbands. Women said that there are imbalances of power in their relationships as their husbands call the shots. The previous part showed how men controlled their finances and never gave their wives a chance to intervene in decision-making processes. The power and control wheel as identified by Gelles and Loseke (1993: 54) connects physical and sexual violence to the hub with a number of "spokes" which includes: minimization and denial, intimidation, isolation, emotional abuse, economic abuse, use of children, threats, and assertion of male privileges. Male dominance within families is part of a wider system of male power. This is never natural or inevitable and occurs at women's cost. "My mother was very sick and I asked to go and visit her. I was told that I am not a doctor so there won't be a need for me to go and see her" (Rambani, 29/07/2004,v).

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"My husband always follows me at my place of work. While busy cleaning my neighbour will call me to tell me that my husband is sitting in the corner of the yard. I don't mind him. So I will continue working as if nothing has happened. I know he just want to find out everything I do" (Sandani, 27/07/2004,v).

Feminists maintain that men are 'power hungry'. They will do anything in their power to keep women in subordinate positions and under their control. Male dominance was previously identified in the religious structures, governmental structures and in culture itself. Men have enjoyed the benefits of higher positions. The fact that most of these women are unemployed or have less financial independence compared to men can contribute as a source of male power and dominance.

5.3.12 Theme 6: Additional factors contributing to abuse

This section was put together to offer further insight into factors contributing to spousal abuse.

Table 4:Examining the transcripts

	Y	N	------	Number of missing

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				Respondents
Lack of respect	15	5		0
Suspicion and jealousy	12	3		5
Misunderstanding	5	1		14
Cultural issues	20	0		0
Insecurities	5	0		15

(Source: Interview schedules, TVEP study, 2004)

Factors in discussion include lack of respect, suspicion and jealousy, misunderstandings, cultural issues and insecurities.

Lack of respect

Participants felt that men do not give them respect even though they expect women to respect them.

“Husbands think we do not have brains. We are not objects. We hate it when they beat us. My husband was always cheating on me. He never respected me. Now he wanted a policy and we were turned down. He then realized that something is wrong. We went for a HIV test. Both of us were found to be HIV-positive. He brought this to us. But now he has impregnated another girl” (Bongani, 22/06/2004,e).

“My husband does not respect me and my parents. Life is very hard for children and me. I felt tired of his behaviour and left to my father‘s place. He followed me and when he arrived he bothered not to greet people at home. He started abusing us verbally saying he knows that Sotho women can make love with their fathers. He told

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me that I came back so that I can sleep with my father. That is why I was forced to come back with him out of fear" (Litshani, 22/06/2004,v).

5.3.12.2 Suspicion, insecurities and jealousy

Respondents also indicated suspicion, insecurities and jealousy as a problem. Four women said their husbands feel insecure because they are younger. One woman said his husband is insecure because they do not have children.

"My husband hates it when I am clean men. (Ester, 23/06/2004,v).

"The fact. If I am clean he accuses me of trying to seduce other that we do not have children together creates insecurities in our relationship" (Mpfareni, 23/06/2004,v).

"My husband also feels insecure because I am younger compared to him" (Mavhungu, 21/06/2004,v).

Misunderstandings and cultural issues

Five participants also mentioned misunderstandings at home as a problem. Lack of good communication and tension created by the fact that men make decisions excluding their wives is also problematic. Men have been socialized to believe that they are heads of families and women must not question what they do. All respondents agreed that cultural issues contribute to spousal abuse. Men have been socialized that they are superior to women and a woman is made for a man. Negative attitudes towards women are promoted culturally to contribute to the prevalence of spousal abuse. Some see this connection as a direct one, arguing that wife battering is regarded as normal behaviour within traditional African culture. Culture arguments

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merge those of gender inequality. Straus (1976) identified a number of cherished cultural standards that not only permit but also encourage husband-to-wife violence. These cultural standards includes: greater authority of men in their culture, male aggressiveness, compulsive masculinity, that is, the notion that aggression positively correlates to maleness and that aggression is not only an acceptable tool for a man but also a way to demonstrate male identity.

5.3.13 Theme 7: Conflicting pressure: "What will you eat if your husband is arrested?"

When abuse occurs, it is normal for a woman to try and get help. Culturally, women use to get a respectable old woman to contact the husband and ask for forgiveness. The issue of who is wrong was not important as it was assumed that a wife is always wrong, and not the husband. From all participants, eight said they sought help from police officers. Seven reported that they approached parents and relatives for help. Six participants opted to consult social workers. Only four participants told their friends. Contact with health professionals was automatic when the abused is severely hurt and in need of medical attention. Those who asked friends for advice, were told they should leave their husbands. Parents took sides with their sons in every way. Social workers encouraged women to get protection orders or maintenance orders. Police advised women to leave or to get help from social workers. Most of these women were not impressed by the kind of advice they got from professionals. Some of the examples given by women are: "social workers said I must send my husband to jail. I was so afraid. At the hospital the doctor told me to report him to the police. But a

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nurse came closer and said to me, what will you eat if your husband is arrested?" (Mavhungu, 21/06/2004,v).

"I also felt pity for my husband. I did fill J88 but I ended up not opening a case. He is the only one working at home" (Hangwani, 25/06/2004,v).

"The police told me that I must learn how to handle a husband. I came back very angry" (Mpfareni, 27/07/2004,v).

"When I was at the hospital the nurse asked me what I will eat if the police arrest my husband." (Gift, 28/07/2004,v).

"When I reached the hospital I was bleeding to death. I was asked my name and I decided to lie. I was ashamed because the previous month I was admitted because of the same cause. It was a shock to me when they came with my real letter. The doctor could not believe it that I was beaten within a month's time again. He told me that I must send my husband to jail where he belongs" (Rambelani, 21/06/2004,v).

It is clear that women were dissatisfied by the advice they got from professionals. Domestic abuse was treated as a private matter for a long time. Professionals are not well trained to handle the matter. Makofane (1999: 302) in his study says: "the kind of responses encapsulates the dissatisfaction of the clients and the flaws in the services provided to women who are abused." She also quoted Walker (1979: 227) who states that most battered women viewed the helping professionals including social workers as inadequate.

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5.3.14. What is next? Will women leave their abusive husbands?

This question was posed to gather information on aspects that compel women to stay in abusive or violent relationships. Many writers agree that women do not leave abusive husbands. In this study only one woman decided to leave after she escaped death. Others were planning to stay with their abusive husbands. From the interview it was very clear that women wanted to leave but their choices are very limited. Reasons for these women not to leave their husbands include:

- Economic reasons
- For children's sake
- Fear of being killed by husbands
- Believe they can save the marriage
- No place to go
- Social stigma from community members.

Some respondents expressed their feelings as follows:

"I cannot leave. I have nowhere to stay. There is something binding us together. I am HIV positive and my husband infected me. I will never leave him. He has a medical aid. I need a well balanced diet. My medication is very expensive. Presently I am unemployed and I cannot afford all that" (Bongani, 22/06/2004,e)."I was thinking of leaving but then I realized that my children will suffer. They will not be happy to live without their father. Now I think it is better for me just to stay" (Suzan, 5/06/2004,v).

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"I will never leave my husband. The community members will laugh at me. What will my friends say? We have a house. We depend on him for everything, for he is the breadwinner" (Hangwani, 25/06/2004,v).

"I will love to leave husband. My problem is that I am unemployed. We have three children together who also need to grow in a stable home. I cannot provide for all their needs at this stage. Maintenance is very little and with the little money I cannot buy a house for my children. My brother is married so if I go to his place I will stress his family. I am used to living with a man and I don't want to end up fooling around with someone's husband. Imagine what the community members and all my enemies will say if I go home? His girlfriends will be very happy of their victory so I will not give them the satisfaction. Is not easy, I try to calculate the advantages and the disadvantages of leaving. I am surrounded by sun and fire. (Rambani, 26/07/2004v).

"I feel like leaving but he might kill me. He once killed a man he was suspecting to be in love with his girlfriend long ago. He was jailed and he came back. My husband is a criminal. If I leave he might kill me. He is heartless" (Sandani, 27/07/2004v).

Women's statements do not differ from information given by previous researchers on why abused women stay in their relationships. Pagelow (1984: 306) says emotional reasons that abused women share in common for not leaving abusive husbands includes fear, helplessness, lack of resources, guilt and feelings of failure, dependent children, negative self concepts and social views. Social and economic dependency has been mentioned by Bat et al (1993: 148) as important factors that deter women from leaving their abusive relationships. Without service provisions for women it will be impossible for them to leave. Women need economic empowerment, shelter and security before they can opt to leave their husbands.

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5.3.15. Focus group

The focus group was conducted on the 4th of August 2004. Women who reported abuse attended the session at the police station. At first they were given a chance to watch a part of a Soul City drama where a man was abusing his wife repeatedly until the community intervened. After that they were separated into three groups. In each group they were asked to discuss questions given and afterwards to give the feedback. Questions asked included the following:

- Definition of domestic abuse
- What are contributory factors
- Can we avoid them
- Where can one get help? If staying in an abusive environment
- Experiences

In all three groups it was found that women understood what domestic abuse involves and its definition. Factors mentioned included: physical abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse, verbal abuse and psychological abuse. Ways to abuse as explained involves: beating, biting, shoving, kicking, pushing, the use of objects, strong words that brings embarrassment, lack of respect and withdrawing maintenance. Women said help can be obtained from social workers, priests, NGO's, police, friends and relatives. NGO's were highly appreciated compared to government sectors.

It was found that results obtained from the focus groups as to what women from their own experience think contributes to domestic violence is similar to the interview

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results. The major factors highlighted were extra-marital affairs, financial constraints, lack of respect, breakdown in communication, external factors which includes in-laws and belief that a woman only understands something after being beaten etc. Women were also given a chance to voice out their individual experience on domestic abuse.

5.3.16 Summary

Wife battering is a common and accepted practice in Venda. It is a reality that abuse is prevalent among all age groups and all socio-economic classes. The myth that physical abuse occurs among the poor is therefore discarded. The women who suffer physical abuse are also subjected to other abuses as well. This includes psychological abuse, emotional abuse, financial abuse and verbal abuse. Women have been kicked, punched, beaten by sticks, sjamboks and metal objects. A number of critical themes were drawn out in the course of the data analysis .

The investigation has unravelled that participants observed abuse at home while they were growing up. It cannot be stated that participants were simply attracted to abusive men as they did not have previous violent relationships. The research findings confirm that extra-marital affairs, in-laws interference, culture, socialization, need for control, financial constraints, misunderstandings and poor communication contribute to abuse. Women believe alcohol is only used as an excuse for their husband‘s misbehaviour. It could be argued that polygamy, as recognized by the South African government also elevated men’s on power. Women become jealousy and compete with each other for the attentions and the support of the man as breadwinner. By owning several women, abuse of these women is automatic. Women are forced to

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accept whatever they are told because they might push the men to other women. Findings confirm that women do not want to leave their abusive husbands. The reasons given include economic dependency, fear, helplessness, children and social stigma. In general, the findings seem to be supportive of several theories including those which emphasize patriarchal dominance, African theories on cultural rights and practices, and social theories on socialization plus gender learning.

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CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Introduction

In this study the researcher examined the lives of a small group of women and probed a range of factors influencing abuse in domestic and marital contexts. The literature review was followed by qualitative interviews that sought to understand experiences of abuse in childhood, school years, early stages and later stages of life. In this chapter the findings of the study are summarised, conclusions are drawn and some comments regarding recommendations are also integrated.

6.2 Summary of the findings

Twenty women who had been physically abused by their partners, and who consequently approached the TVEP for help, are the subjects of this study. Most of the respondents, as already suggested in the previous chapter, are mature adults, with ages ranging from 23 years to 44 years. Many of them have been in their marriages for long periods of time and currently find themselves both unhappy with their partners but also highly dependent on them. Their dependency on their partners (financial and otherwise), and resistance to leaving home, can be seen to be central factors aggravating the long-term abuse that many have been enduring. Most of the women interviewed are non-working mothers. Some of them experienced poverty in

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their early lives and, rather than complete schooling, they chose to marry whilst very young in an effort to gain the support of a man (as male breadwinner).

It was saddening to learn about the kinds of violence and abuse that these women witnessed and experienced while growing up. The concept, 'social learning' has relevance here. Straus, Gelles and the Family Violence Research Program suggest that domestic violence is shaped by particular cultural contexts – in many of these contexts violence is viewed as commonplace and thus is 'mandated'. It is for this reason that many of the respondents took a very long time before turning to the TVEP for help. They had considered their husbands to be primary decision makers and saw themselves as 'subordinates' with less power. In reporting their experiences of violence, however, they blame 'culture' for their suffering. They suggest that men use the 'cultural weapon' as an easy way to resolve disputes and to discipline women. Cultural constraints such as beliefs that women must tolerate men's violence, strive to be good wives and do whatever possible to serve their husbands undermine women's sense of autonomy and right to live free of abuse and tension. Family and community pressure lead women to also believe that the woman who runs away from her marriage or who complains about her husband to others is doing something seriously wrong. The fear of social stigma thus keeps women 'culturally bound' to domestic domains. The particular finding of the study, however, is that the key factor introducing domestic discord and threatening the dissolution of a marriage is the problem of extramarital affairs. All respondents mentioned this as a key problem.

How can this finding been explained in sociological terms? The husbands of these women engage in extra-marital relations because they see nothing problematic with

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this kind of practice – it is inherent in the logic of polygamy, a marriage system which they are all familiar with. Some of their fathers had many wives; having many wives was always viewed as a sign of status and well being in African society. The poor could not afford to pay "lobola" or a high bride price. Although urban African communities are embracing the transition to modern lifestyles, the traditional belief that men are entitled to many women remains entrenched by many men. For women, mainly older women, living private existences (in nuclear households) men's right to many women is quite unacceptable. Thus, violence against women and domestic struggles over the acceptability of multiple unions offers a lens, I would argue, into a gendered schism: a misfit between the interpretations of what men and women regard as the boundaries of 'marriage'. This misfit is partly a consequence of a society in transition. Marriages in Venda are struggling between western ideologies of monogamy and African ideals of polygamous unions.

In modern day economies, men can hardly afford maintaining many wives and children. In these circumstances, many relationships increase the possibility of being infected by the deadly virus that causes AIDS. Previously many women meant extra hands to plough in the fields. In traditional extended households women often welcomed younger wives as co-workers and sisters. Today, the 'other wife' is viewed with hostility, as a competitor – as someone usurping both the financial resources and affection of the husband. As noted in the interviews many of the men (who have extra-marital relations) begin to fail to maintain their wives and children. In cases where the women ask for food, money or school fees they risk being beaten.

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In Venda women are often reminded that there are many more women than men in the society. This, together with the fact that men have more power than women, means that men have the advantage of getting as many women as they like. The South African government has attempted to protect the rights of 'other wives' in polygamous units, thus giving men the licence to marry as many wives as their cultural upbringing permits. This forces women into an insecure situation in which they constantly view other women as competitors. At the same time there is a double standard because women themselves are not given this chance to marry as many men as they like. Why is that so? Because it is 'culturally unacceptable' and it does not work in terms of men's interests. Nonetheless, men's constant fears that women are being unfaithful are also a source of suspicion, violence and abuse in partnership.

The fact that the way in which relationships unfold in Venda reveals much competition between women (older and younger, married and unmarried), suggests that women themselves cannot be united on the matter. Most of the women and girls in the area are very poor and come from poor family backgrounds. Younger women, unable to afford good quality lives, become prey to older men who often lie to them and give them money 'in the name of love'. These young girls are sometimes sexually abused, but many can hardly resist engaging in an affair because of the money and the lifestyle they can obtain. Apart from the tensions and conflict centred on extra-marital relationships, other factors contributing to spousal abuse are financial constraints, the interference of the husband's family in the marriage, jealousy, suspicion, insecurities and the need for control by men. All were found to be contributory factors. Spousal abuse is being viewed as serious by the government. The new government has opened its eyes to domestic abuse in all its forms. One of the strategies to eradicate domestic

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violence has been the introduction of the Domestic Violence Act No. 116 of 1998. It came into operation on the 15th of December 1999. Abused women, such as those described, can apply for a protection order from the court – and thus attain short-term relief.

6.3 Recommendations

The researcher has the following general recommendations to make:

6.3.1 Information distribution

More information is needed on protection orders - especially to help men understand what they mean in the context of the domestic environment. The main problem with protection orders is that men often interpret them as violating their private matters and thus seek to deliberately break them. If men do not understand or fear them, they serve to aggravate violence.

6.3.2 Values regarding life

Establishing norms and values at the outset of marriage could prove valuable. Couples entering into a formal marriage might want to agree that marriage restricts 'third person involvement'. Now that the government accepts polygamous marriages it might be worthwhile if two individuals entering a marriage are honest with each other about what kind of a relationship they want. Men must choose clearly before they

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commit whether they want to a customary marriage that allows them to have many wives or a community of property marriage that suggests monogamy.

6.3.3 Targeting men

Campaigns and workshops (on family planning, health, HIV/AIDS etc.) mostly target women and exclude men. Men need to also benefit from such information. This is essential if they are to gain any sense of commitment to household, family and children.

6.3.4 Power sharing

The elimination of patriarchy will be a strong weapon towards ending women abuse. Clearly, given its pervasive nature and dominance, it is not one of those practices that can be outlawed by the state. There should be more activism to challenge male dominance in both public and private spaces. Very little intervention is evident in terms of ‘what goes on in people’s homes’. Unpopular topics such as sharing of chores, cooking and cleaning activities must be brought to public attention.

6.3.5 Economic independence for women

Doors are now open for women to acquire skills and take on all kinds of work. Women should be motivated to break the culture of dependency and see themselves as capable of financial independence, greater autonomy and increased self-esteem. As long as women are still dependent on men, patriarchy will be our enemy.

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6.3.6 Shelter provision

At the point when women are experiencing their worst trauma it can be very hard for women to find a place that freely accommodates them. In a hospital a woman can only be kept as long as she has suffered physical injuries due to physical abuse. After that the hospital cannot keep her even though she is might be afraid to go home. The police, social workers and other helpers keep women for only a few hours – until they open a docket or offer some counselling; after that they often expect victims to return home.

Sometimes a woman may be threatened with death. At times she may be in need to heal the emotional scars she suffered as a result of the abuse. The extended family structure has lost its value in many communities; thus, it can be very hard to find a place to stay for a woman without money. Shelter provision is necessary as it can provide women with a place to stay until they are able to live normal lives again.

6.3.7 Women support in the form of groups

Care groups, as vehicles for health education were quite successful in the 1980s. Groups of domestic violence survivors talked about their experiences and the talking served to empower abused women. The sharing of experiences and helping each other to plan for their future lives can be strong weapons to help women who are unable to cope as individuals – and in isolation.

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6.4 Concluding comments

Domestic violence is a reality for vast numbers of South African women. Violence of this nature transcends race, ethnic origins, age or profession. In many cases, women might not be abused physically, but emotionally. The respondents who took the initiative to report their abuse are a brave minority – most academics and officials believe that very few women in South Africa report abuse endured by marital partners. Many women suffer abuse believing it should not be talked about or that in cultural terms it is part of 'women's lot'. Underreporting is also high amongst well-educated women. Finding solutions should not be solely government responsibility.

People need to join hands to fight the enemy together. In the present study it was found that men's extra-marital affairs were pivotal in the deterioration of relationships and in the triggering of domestic violence. The need to better understand and make sense of cultural dynamics was also suggested, just as the exposure to abuse in childhood and at school was noted. Interestingly, abuse of substance was identified but not rated as of considerable importance. The pressures in households and between spouses, given financial constraints were also clearly recognized. Apart from these, secondary factors were also identified. As the researcher was bringing this dissertation to an end, she listened to a programme on *Radio Phalaphala* (on the 19 November 2004). The programme was on domestic violence, and a group of women were interviewed and asked what they think the factors contributing to domestic violence were. All the women who participated said extra-marital affairs were the major factor – and nothing else. In a sense, that snapshot of women's lives in Venda replicated the key finding of this study. More academic work on the culture of violence, marriage

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and domestic contexts need to be done alongside the institutionalisation of culturally aware and gender-sensitive interventions.

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Appendix 1

FORMAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONSENT

I.…… on this day of .....2004, agree to be interviewed for the MA research project on spousal abuse. I understand that I will be asked questions regarding my experiences and what I think are important factors influencing violence and abuse between partners.

Signed .....

Date .....

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APPENDIX 2

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE STUDY OF SPOUSAL ABUSE IN THOHOYANDOU

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

The respondent will be thanked for agreeing to the interview. It will be emphasized that this study is for university purposes and all information will be treated as strictly confidential. Consent for the interview will be gained.

---

1. Please tell me whether you have any general information about the problem of wife abuse in Thohoyandou?

- Do you know if many women suffer abuse in families in this area?
- If yes, what are some of the main reasons why this is so?

2. I would like to know more about you?

- Where were you born?
- (In which year?)
- Who did you grow up with? (E.g. parents, mother only, grandmother…?)
- How many places did you live in whilst still a child?(probe places and dates)
- Did you ever witness abuse as a child? (Probe.)
- Were you ever abused in the home environment? (Probe.)
- Which schools did you attend?

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- What was the highest standard passed?
- What main difficulties, if any, did you experience whilst at school?
- Did you ever experience abuse at school, or in the vicinity of the school? (Probe.)

3. I would like to understand more about your personal life.

- When did meet your first boyfriend?
- Were there any problems in this relationship?
- Did you ever experience violence in any previous relationship before meeting your spouse?
- When did you meet your husband?
- How old were you at that time?
- Could you tell me about your husband in those early days (Probe: work, his previous relationships/children, his education, his family, his health?)
- Did you have any children at the time that you married?
- How would you describe your 'marriage'? (*Formal* – church, lobola, *informa*l – living together arrangement. If lobola – how much?)
- Could you tell me about the points at which you experienced abuse? What prompted the abuse? (E.g. Why did he abuse you? Was he drunk? Was he unemployed? Were there 'insecurities'?)
- In what ways were you abused?

4. I would like to know more about your marriage and your husband's family.

- Has your husband been faithful in his relationship with you?
- Has your husband ever accused you of being unfaithful?
- Who holds most 'power' in this relationship?
- How many children do you have? What relationship do they have with their father?
- What do you think are factors that aggravate abuse between you and your husband?
- Do you use contraception? If yes, does your husband approve?

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- How do you relate to your husband's family? Can you go to them for help? Is there an extended family system or not?

5. I want to understand more about your role and your husband's role in the family.

- Can you tell me whether you have different responsibilities? In other words, is it his responsibility to earn money and yours to sit at home and keep the children?
- Do you put money together and then decide how it should be spent – or does he decide only?
- Do you think that 'cultural reasons' are important in explaining why men abuse women? (Probe.) Can culture be used to explain your husband's actions?
- What 'insecurities' affect or create your husband's actions?

6. Could you tell me more about your responses to the abuse that you've experienced? Who did you talk to about it? How did they advise you? Did you report it to the police? (Probe.)

7. What do you plan to do now? Are you planning to leave him? If not, why not?

- Is there anything else that you would like me to know?

Thank you very much for answering the questions. I appreciate the time that you have given me. Your answers will be included in my study – but your identity will not be revealed.

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Appendix 3

Statistics for domestic violence from TVEP

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Appendix 4

Statistics From police station (Thohoyandou)

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HEADING PHOTOS

Resent media reports

On

Domestic violence

Around Thohoyandou area

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