



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

**PROFESIONAL WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF
EMOTIONAL ABUSE WITHIN MARRIAGE
OR COHABITATING RELATIONSHIPS:
A VICTIMOLOGICAL STUDY**

MERLYN BARKHUIZEN

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EMOTIONAL ABUSE WITHIN MARRIAGE
OR COHABITATING RELATIONSHIPS:
A VICTIMOLOGICAL STUDY**

by

MERLYN BARKHUIZEN

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Dedicated to:

My mentor, Professor Ronelle Pretorius

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DEO GLORIA

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TITLE : Professional women as victims of emotional abuse
within marriage or cohabitating relationships:
A victimological study

BY : M Barkhuizen

SUPERVISOR : Professor Ronelle Pretorius

DEPARTMENT : Criminology

DEGREE : Magister Artium

SUMMARY

This study focused on the emotional abuse suffered by victims, who were professional women, within a marriage or a cohabitating relationship. Researcher made use of various sources to obtain data concerning the phenomenon of emotional abuse and its context within domestic violence. Several components of various theoretical perspectives were utilised to design an explanatory model, the Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner, to direct the research and to interpret the data.

Researcher made use of non-probability sampling strategy. All respondents were selected by means of the snowball and purposive sampling methods. The sample consisted of 11 professional women who came from professions that belong to a governing body, such as medical doctors, dentists, psychologists, attorneys, teachers and a veterinarian. The sample consisted of women of various age groups who were in abusive relationships for periods ranging from five to 27 years, therefore providing a wide range within the research sample.

Researcher did case analyses of the different backgrounds of both the victims and their abusers, made possible from information obtained from the respondents during in-depth interviews. This was done in order to reach a holistic understanding of the dynamics within these relationships and the victimisation process throughout the duration of these relationships. Against this background, researcher was better able to analyse and interpret the data obtained from the respondents, with the use of the Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner, and various other authors. A rich and insightful understanding of the phenomenon of emotional abuse within the lives of these professional women was reached.

The research concludes with a number of recommendations for the healing process of the victims of emotional abuse and recommendations for further research. Researcher also makes several conclusions based on findings from the interviews conducted with respondents in this study.

KEY TERMS

Emotional abuse, verbal abuse, non-verbal abuse, professional woman, victim, cohabitation, marriage, domestic violence

TITEL: Professionele vroue as slagoffers van emosionele
teistering in huweliksverband asook
saamwoonverhoudings

DEUR: M Barkhuizen

STUDIELEIER: Professor Ronelle Pretorius

DEPARTEMENT: Kriminologie

GRAAD: Magister Artium

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie sentreer om die nadelige gevolge en trauma wat deur professionele vroue in huweliksverband en in 'n saamwoonverhouding, as gevolg van emosionele teistering en gesinsgeweld, ervaar word. Om die fenomeen van emosionele teistering en gesinsgeweld te kan navors, het die navorser verskeie bronne geraadpleeg om data en inligting te bekom. Verskeie teoretiese perspektiewe is aangewend om die onderskeie teopaslike komponente en elemente van 'n viktimeseringsmodel te ontwikkel. Die verklarende model staan bekend as die Interaktiewe model van die viktimeseringsproses deur 'n emosionele teisterende gesel. Hierdie model is aangewend om die data en inligting te ontleed en die navorsingsbevindinge te interpreter.

Die strategie waarvolgens data versamel is, is gebaseer op 'n nie-waarskynlikheidsprosedure. 'n Steekproef van 11 respondente is ooreenkomstig procedures wat bekend staan as die sneeubalsteekproeftegniek en doelgerigtesteekproeftegniek, geselekteer. Die vroue kom uit verskeie professies, onder meer die van mediese dokters, tandartse, sielkundiges, prokureurs, onderwysers en veertse wat

onderworpe is aan beheerliggame. Die steekproef sluit vroue van varieerende ouderdomme in wat reeds vir periodes van vyf to 27 jaar in emosioneel afbrekende verhoudings betrokke is. Dit bied wye perspektief binne die steekproef.

Om data en inligting oor die agtergrond van beide die slagoffers en hul teisteraars te bekom, is deurtastende onderhoude met die respondente deur die navorser gevoer. Dit was gedoen om die dinamiese wisselwerking van die viktimeseringproses vanuit 'n holistiese oogpunt gedurende die verhoudingstydperk te verstaan. Teen hierdie agtergrond was die navorser in staat om met behulp van die Interaktiewe model van die viktimeseringsproses deur 'n emosionele teisterende gesel, die data en inligting beter te analiseer en te interpreter. Daareenvolgens is 'n ryk en insiggewende insig oor die teistering fenomeen binne die lewens van hierdie professionele vroue bereik.

Die verhandeling word afgesluit met 'n aantal aanbevelings ten opsigte van die helingsproses vir slagoffers van emosionele teistering asook die behoefte aan verdere navorsing. Die navorser kom tot verskeie gevolgtrekkings gebaseer op die bevindings van die onderhoude met respondente in hierdie studie.

SLEUTELWOORDE

Emosionele teistering, verbale teistering, nie-verbale teistering, professionele vrou, slagoffer, saamwoonverhouding, huwelik, gesinsgeweld

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ORIENTATION AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Although emotional abuse is a widespread and common form of violence amongst all cultures, it is seldom recognised as such by victims. According to Loring (1994:1), most victims are convinced that they are at fault and thus do not perceive themselves as abused or victims of interpersonal violence. When and if they do seek therapy, it is usually to deal with suicidal tendencies, intrusive thoughts such as murder, terrified attachment to the abuser which can manifest in learned helplessness, and pervasive feelings of confusion and unreality. Even when victims acknowledge that emotional abuse occurs in their intimate relationship, the depth of the “inner bruises”, emotional pain, and eroded sense of the self, often remains hidden from consciousness. In many cases, somatic problems, such as headaches and stomach ulcers, mask deeper emotional wounds. Emotional abuse can be seen as an integral part of the humiliation inherent in physical battering, and its effects more profound than that of physical battering. Research done with female participants by Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) has shown that many women find emotional abuse difficult to describe or even to talk about it. They often contemplate about its seriousness because, unlike bruises or broken bones, emotional scars cannot be observed.

Emotionally abused women’s biggest problems are that others seldom take their abuse seriously, and dismiss it as “normal” domestic conflict. Society often does not view this form of violence as worthy of “victim” status, and it is thus not seen as serious (Loring, 1994:2). Further research done by Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) indicates that like women who are physically and sexually abused, emotionally abused women demonstrate incredible resilience and inner strength as they successfully balance the everyday demands of life, such as children, a career and a home, with minimal external displays of their inner turmoil. Women generally do whatever they can to end the emotional abuse, whether directly or indirectly, such as trying to avoid, escape or resist their abuser in some way. Women who are emotionally abused often find that their experiences are minimised or misunderstood by those they turn to for help. As a result of many

obstacles, an emotionally abused woman may leave and return to her partner (or abuser) an average of five times, before ending the relationship (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>).

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.2.1 Relevance of the topic

Olin and Tonry (1989:88) state that family members hold the belief that they have the right to influence and control each others behaviour. In modern society, household structure insulates the family from the social constraints of other individuals and groups; dissatisfaction with the conduct of another family member, including the partner, may be compounded by inept or aggressive attempts to change that person's behaviour. Characteristics unique to family life increases the likelihood of abuse, that is, people tend to be more polite, gentle, and approving with strangers of the opposite sex than with their spouses.

Although statistics on emotional abuse in South Africa could not be located, research by Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) shows that in heterosexual relationships most abuse is inflicted upon women by their male partners. Emotional abuse, like physical abuse, is used to control, demean, harm or punish a partner (the victim). The forms of abuse may vary, but the end result is the same – the victim of abuse becomes fearful of her partner and changes her behaviour to appease him. According to this research (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>), more women experience emotional abuse than physical violence. Approximately 35% of all women who are or have been in marital or cohabitating relationships have experienced emotional abuse. In comparison, 29% of women have been physically assaulted by their male partners. This research, further indicates, that the presence of emotional abuse is the largest risk factor and the greatest predictor of physical violence, especially where a woman is constantly degraded and insulted. Emotionally abusive partners can also commit murder or murder suicide and women are most at risk of being killed when they leave their partners. Women themselves can also be suicidal as a result of the emotional abuse. These researchers further postulate

(<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) that most women indicate that emotional abuse, affects them to the same extent, if not more than physical violence. In addition, they report that emotional abuse is responsible for long-term health problems, low self-esteem, depression and anxiety. In one of the studies done by Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>), 72% of the women interviewed, reported that being ridiculed by their abusive partners had the greatest effect on them, followed by threats of violence, and restriction of movement or isolation from family and friends. It was also found that the impact of this on the victim increased with the frequency of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse, similar to other forms of abuse, is based on the need to obtain and maintain power. Furthermore, this research has also shown that being female is the single largest risk factor for being a victim of abuse in heterosexual relationships, a fact that is clearly reflective of women's lower status in many societies. This may be a reflection of why, even professional women, who are presumed to have a higher status and better financial security in society, are also prone to being victims of abuse within heterosexual relationships.

1.2.2 Theoretical significance

An attempt will be made to render an explanation based on existing theory of why the **professional** woman remains in an emotionally abusive relationship, when the assumption by society often is that she has the financial and other means to leave such a relationship sooner than a woman who does not have these means. As this is a multidimensional phenomenon which cannot be explained by a single factor, an eclectic approach will be adopted by using components of theories which are found most suited to the understanding of the topic. After critical evaluation of the theories, it was necessary to build a theoretical model (see Figure 3.6), which best served the purposes of the study. The following theoretical perspectives were utilised:

1.2.2.1 General systems theoretical approach

Violence is considered to be a mutual problem of couples, and that the violence has a specific function within the relationship, for example, it is used to regulate closeness and distance between the couple (Schurink, Snyman & Krugel, 1992:247).

These researchers postulate that such a relationship continues because the interpersonal interactions obtain an explosive momentum but remains stable, which keeps the relationship intact. Loring (1994:63) states that according to systemic theorists, the initial abusive incident is rooted in a pattern learned in the past where after the abuse is maintained and made predictable by a system of developing family rules. The pattern develops and continues because it serves a function, such as maintaining the system. Another application by Loring (1994:64) of the systems perspective (which has particular relevance to the **professional** woman in her relationship) explains abuse in terms of the abuser's sense of inadequacy and the victim's need to feel that her partner is dependent on her. Feeling inferior to his partner (who is described as behaving in an "over adequate" manner), the abuser uses violence to bring the relationship back into equilibrium. The victim accepts the abuse and her powerlessness is accepted by both parties and serves as a security bond between them.

1.2.2.2 Patriarchal dominance perspective

Schurink et al. (1992: 248) state that this approach explains continued victimisation of women within the marital context in terms of a subculture of violence in which these women were raised, as well as the patriarchal system and rigid female sex role socialisation. Feminist-minded researchers such as Loring (1994:68), blame the patriarchal system for the problem because girls are taught to accept male domination and to be helpless, complying, passive and dependent. The patriarchal system can also contribute to the fact that occupational opportunities and earning power of women are limited. This system can force a woman to be dependent upon her husband financially, especially when she has children. Loring (1994:68) is also of the opinion that women have traditionally built their sense of identity and self-worth on activities that involve caring about and giving to others. Being producers and caretakers of people, however, is not always considered to be a valuable activity in Western culture. Society has also had a tendency to discount women's qualities and negate their accomplishments, which could make them vulnerable to emotional abuse. Even before the abuse begins, the foundation has been laid by earlier experiences that can predispose some women to internalise the culture's devaluation

of their self and they do not recognise the treatment they receive from their partners as abuse – they assume that such treatment is acceptable and normal.

1.2.2.3 The cycle of violence and abuse

Based on Lenore Walker's theory on the cycle of violence (Walker, 1980:55), researchers try to explain why some women remain with an abusive partner, even when it becomes clear to them that they should preferably leave the relationship. Walker distinguishes between different phases in the victimisation process. The first phase is characterised by **increasing tension**, leading to the **impact** phase when the abuse or actual battering takes place, followed by the **post-traumatic** phase also described as the "honeymoon phase". During the latter phase, the tie of love between the couple is strengthened when the husband shows regret about his behaviour. As a result of the intermittent, episodic nature of the attacks, followed by sudden alleviation of tension, the bond with the abuser is reinforced. Hope is rekindled that the incidence of violence will not occur again, and therefore the woman decides not to leave her partner. Walker applied the concept of **learned helplessness** in an effort to explain the passive response of women to their victimisation. Incessant stress and the woman's inability to predict or control her partner's violence, can contribute to a state of learned helplessness. According to Stanko (1985:11), this feeling of powerlessness is a common theme throughout women's descriptions of everyday encounters with men who are abusive. Women are thus, unable to predict, and thus unable to control, men's behaviour, or anticipate when it might become abusive.

1.2.3 Methodological statement of the problem

Certain problems with regards to the methodological statement of the problem are anticipated and it is planned that these will be overcome as follows:

1.2.3.1 Definition of concepts

Many different terms for the concept of emotional abuse appears in the academic and popular literature that exists, such as, "emotional battering", "psychological

abuse” and “verbal abuse”. The concept of emotional abuse will be clarified in order to avoid confusion.

This research is focused on the **professional** woman, which will also be demarcated clearly for the purpose of this study. Researcher will, mainly focus on women who are in professions that belong to a governing body, such as medical doctors, dentists, psychologists in private practice, attorneys, advocates, chartered accountants, pharmacists, vets and physiotherapists.

1.2.3.2 Ethical considerations

The respondents will be assured of the confidential nature of the study and will be requested to sign a letter of consent before any interviews are conducted. Due to the sensitivity of the research topic, the researcher will have to develop rapport with the respondents and be sensitive to their emotions. The letter will also explain the general procedure to be followed, the purpose of the study, and inform the respondent of her rights.

The respondents will be dealt with tactfully and with empathy. A second or even third interview will be requested, rather than to continue an interview which the respondent wishes to terminate. Voluntary adult female respondents will take part in the study and therefore researcher does not foresee any ethical problems with regard to their emotional well-being and she shall **not** seek to act in a **therapeutic nature** during or after the interviews.

1.3 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

The following concepts will be described and defined, and an operational definition compiled for each, in order to eliminate ambiguity in the text:

1.3.1 Professional woman

According to the Thesaurus (Collins, 1988:393) professional refers to someone (for purposes of this study, a woman/female) who is adept, competent, efficient,

experienced, expert, finished, masterly, polished, practised, proficient, qualified, skilled, slick, trained, in authority, a specialist, virtuoso and a wizard.

With relevance to the latter, Bauman and Freedman (1982:21-31) in Du Toit (1992:33) are of the opinion that, professions are spread along a continuum, the one point of this continuum containing the well-recognised and high status professions, such as medical doctors and attorneys. On the opposite side of this continuum, one finds the professions which require the least amount of skill, such as security guards, farm workers and domestic workers. The remaining list of professions can be placed somewhere along this continuum depending on the amount of skill and expertise required for their execution. These authors go on to describe the **professional person** as someone who possesses specialised technical skills based on a theoretical foundation, which can be built upon by continual research and which requires formal training at an academic institution. The professional person undergoes a process of professional socialisation during which time, the norms of behaviour which are appropriate for that particular profession, are learned, and eventually become a life-style which manifests into a subculture. Members of certain professions reflect a dedicated and responsible service with regards to a client, and must also maintain ethically correct behaviour towards a client. In addition to this, a profession with a high status, falls within a unique structural framework, characterised by hierarchy and autonomous control over professional behaviour or activities, and is often governed by a body of professionals who have been singled out in their profession.

Relating to this, Reeck (1982:16) in Du Toit (1992:34) states that a professional person is someone who is trained to develop and eventually possesses highly developed skills and knowledge (which are universal), who is bound by specific disciplinary and professional ethics, which are encumbered upon him or her by peers in that profession. The professional person must also satisfy the complex needs of his or her clients, by making decisions which are sometimes potentially dangerous, for example, a medical doctor possesses the knowledge and therefore also the power, to heal or harm a patient.

Nelson (1960:67; 68 & 69) in Du Toit (1992:34), adds to the latter, by stating that, the professional person also possesses personality traits that facilitates his or her

professionalisation process. This is facilitated in turn by the socialisation process a professional person goes through. Some of these characteristics are personal pride (for example, neatness and hygiene), level of intelligence, honesty, integrity, altruism and service orientation.

For the purpose of this study a professional woman is defined as: **A woman who has been practicing her chosen profession for no less than five years (thus has been subjected to the socialisation process within her profession), who possesses specialised skills based on a theoretical foundation, who is bound by disciplinary and professional ethics, and reflects a dedicated and responsible service to her clients. Professions such as medical doctors, dentists, psychologists in private practice, attorneys, advocates, chartered accountants, pharmacists, vets and physiotherapists form the focus of this study but salary demarcation will not be allocated.**

1.3.2 Emotional abuse

According to the research of Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) when people are asked what emotional abuse is, many respond by naming some of the tactics an abusive partner uses, for example putting a woman down, name calling or refusing to talk to her. Even Women's Rights advocates have difficulty finding language to define emotional abuse. Most abused women themselves struggle to define emotional abuse, and do so in the only way they can – through the telling of their experiences. According to this research, most researchers classify any form of abuse that does not fit under the category of physical violence, as emotional abuse. In a broad sense abusive behaviour can include, criticism, humiliation, isolation, threats of abandonment, threats of harm (to the woman, her children, her friends or to her family), exploitation and financial control. However, a description of each of these abusive behaviours on their own does not provide a clear definition. Researchers of Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) also postulate that it is not possible or appropriate to define emotional abuse outside the context of “woman abuse” or “violence against woman”. Most definitions of woman abuse are comprised of two elements, namely:

- Naming the act or acts that are considered to be harmful.
- Recognising that the abuse is perpetrated by one person who has power over the other.

In the case of woman abuse in heterosexual relationships, it is acknowledged that men have power over women as a societal norm (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>). A definition of violence against women or women abuse would therefore be: Any act of verbal or physical force, coercion, or life-threatening deprivation directed at an individual woman or girl against her will that causes physical or psychological harm, humiliation or arbitrary deprivation of liberty that perpetuates female subordination (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>). This is a broad definition of woman abuse and adequately covers the general aspects of this phenomenon.

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:92) attempt to place emotional abuse in its cultural context by stating that cultures may vary in the degree to which women are treated in individualistic or collective ways. According to Durkheim (in Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:92), the individual psyche is in itself a sacred object – an expression of one's place in the social collectivity. What is considered abuse at the individual level is culturally determined, and what is considered abusive in one culture may not be regarded as such in another. Therefore, emotional abuse and specifically verbal aggression must be considered in its cultural context, for example, loud verbal expressions of one's feelings is culturally acceptable in certain Latin and African cultures, and is therefore not considered abusive behaviour, as would be the case in for example, in a more conservative Afrikaans speaking household. This is a very important factor to consider when describing emotional abuse.

One issue not addressed by the latter explanations, is whether a single act constitutes abuse, versus ongoing or repeated acts. While one act has the potential to do serious harm, and should not be minimised, women report in research done by Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) that it is the cumulative effect of repeated acts that ensures the abuser's control over his victim. The woman's subordination is secured when she becomes fearful of future abuse,

and changes her behaviour in order to avoid it. This means that she is not only fearful of physical violence, but other forms of abuse can also cause her to be demeaned, hurt and controlled. Therefore, according to the research done by Statistics Canada (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) there is no difference between woman abuse and emotional abuse. They define emotional abuse as the repeated use of controlling and harmful behaviour by a partner towards a woman. As a result of emotional abuse, a woman lives her life in fear and repeatedly alters her thoughts, feelings, and behaviour and denies her needs, to avoid further abuse.

According to Loring (1994:1), "emotional abuse is an ongoing process in which one individual systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of another. The essential ideas, perceptions, and personality characteristics of the victim are constantly belittled. Eventually the victim begins to experience these aspects of the self as seriously eroded or absent." Tolman (1992:293) characterises emotional abuse as "non-physical abuse", "indirect abuse", "psychological abuse", "psychological aggression", "psychological maltreatment" and "mental or psychological torture".

Further research by Engle (1992) and Evans (1992) (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents.htm>) states that, "abuse is any behaviour that is designed to control and subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation, and verbal or physical assaults. Emotional abuse is therefore any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical in nature. It can include anything from verbal abuse and constant criticism to more subtle tactics, such as intimidation, manipulation, and refusal to ever be pleased". These authors state that emotional abuse is "like brainwashing, in that it systematically wears away at the victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in their own perceptions, and self-concept. Whether it is done by constant berating and belittling, by intimidation, or under the guise of 'guidance', 'teaching', or 'advice', the results are similar. Eventually, the recipient of the abuse loses all sense of self and remnants of personal value. Emotional abuse cuts to the very core of a person, creating scars that may be far deeper and more lasting than physical ones". This research goes a step further by observing that emotional abuse can take place on two levels, namely:

1.3.2.1 Verbal, direct or overt emotional abuse

This form of emotional abuse is openly demeaning and demonstrative towards the victim. Examples of this include name-calling, accusing, blaming, threatening, and ordering. It can also include the harming of pets, children or property in order for a partner to instil fear into his victim, without physically harming her personally (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents.htm>). Stark and Flitcraft (1996:90) define verbal abuse as an actual or threatened attack on another person, whether it be gestures or hostile or provocative language directed toward another person. It can also include distracting comments (statements made that are inappropriate given the context of the communication-situation), jokes and teasing (which are degrading to the recipient), sarcasm (ambiguous in meaning and intent) and cursing which is offensive to the recipient.

1.3.2.2 Non-verbal, indirect or covert emotional abuse

This form of emotional abuse is more subtle and implicit in nature and includes the following: Criticising, advising, offering solutions, analysing and proving under the guise of “helping”. These behaviours may be an attempt to belittle, control or demean rather than help as the underlying judgmental “I know best” tone the abuser takes in these situations is inappropriate and creates unequal footing in relationships. Other examples include rejecting, isolating and denial of emotional responsiveness (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents.htm>). Stark and Flitcraft (1996:100) also include facial expressions (frowns, scowls, eye rolls) and gestures (negative body language such as making a fist).

The above distinction of the two categories of emotional abuse is helpful in determining a general overview of emotional abuse, but does not adequately describe the many different types of emotional abuse and the different conditions under which these may occur. Researcher will further explore the dynamics and types of emotional abuse in Chapter 2, in order to clarify this phenomenon adequately.

For the purposes of this study emotional abuse is defined as: **Emotional abuse is the non-physical abuse of a partner that takes place over a period of time, in which the abuser (male partner) systematically diminishes and destroys the inner self of his victim (female partner) either overtly (verbal and/or direct) or covertly (non-verbal and/or indirect). This is done in order to gain control within the relationship and coerce his victim into subservience (learned helplessness), in order to maintain his control over her behaviour.**

1.3.3 Victim

Schurink et al. (1992: 250) state that Young-Rifai defines the victim as a person adversely affected by any injustice. She suggests that the scope of victimisation should cover all victims of criminal, social and accidental injustices. She argues that people interact with others to fulfil their need for physical well-being and to create meaning in their lives. Using social exchange theory to substantiate her definition, she says that in order to gain fulfilment, this interaction features the maximising of rewards and the minimising of costs. She argues that people expect their relationship with their environment – social or natural – to be characterised by balanced-reciprocity. Furthermore she suggests that an imbalance between individuals and their environment can create a victim.

Kirkwood (1993:135) states that the word “victim” is used both in theoretical analyses of abuse against women as a social phenomenon, and in the way in which individual abused women understand themselves, and in each case the meaning can be extremely different. This author is convinced of the need for a term such as “survivor”, which describes the kind of active, positive action women take to continue functioning within an abusive relationship, or to free themselves from abuse. The word “survivor”, used instead of “victim”, is useful in conveying that abused women are not passive in their experience of abuse, and affirms the strength and skills women develop to survive abuse.

From a theoretical perspective, assigning the status of “victim” to women who have suffered violence, distorts the focus of analysis **away** from the behaviour of those who enact violence and **towards** the behaviour of those who suffer from it. In this

way, use of the word “victim” can be misleading and can place responsibility for violence on the woman. However, the term “victim”, which negatively labels abused women, is often used by women themselves to name the process of victimisation enacted by their abusers. According to Kirkwood (1993:135) the word “victim” was used to convey feelings of losing control over one’s life which occurred as the abuser increased his control within the relationship. In this context the term “victimisation” has the following meaning, “a woman is unable to change the circumstances in which abuse occurs”. Once women progressed outward along the spiral of relationship dynamics and left their abusers, they became aware of some of the behaviour which they were required to adopt in order to cope with abuse and which was part of the unempowered position forced upon them by their partners. From this retrospective viewpoint, the concept of victimisation was useful in a different way. It named the depowering perspectives and behaviours they developed as a response to abuse, but which, once out of their relationships, they had the freedom to change for their own empowerment. Thus, women used words such as “victim” and “martyr” to help illuminate the perspectives they held about themselves as a result of abuse, which persisted after the relationship ended and which they could actively reject or continue to hold. Kirkwood states that their use of these words illustrated the degree to which they had changed their perspectives, and helped to punctuate their disbelief at their former feelings of worthlessness, and experience of victimisation. Women use the terms “victim” and “martyr” to name the unempowering behaviours their partner’s abuse required they adopt and the process of victimisation enacted by their abusers. By naming them, women can then use these names as tools in their movement toward more empowered ways of being, once they are free from abuse (Kirkwood, 1993:136).

For the purposes of this study a victim is defined as follows: **A woman who is subject to emotional abuse by her male partner, whether it is direct or indirect, on a continual basis, for a period of no less than one year.**

1.3.4 Marriage

According to the Thesaurus (Collins, 1988:311) a marriage is an alliance, amalgamation, association, confederation, coupling, link, merger or union between

two individuals. The marriage contract refers to the legal aspects of marriage, specifying rights and duties of the partners and especially the disposition of property in case of death or divorce (Coltrane & Collins, 2001:592).

In accordance with this, Strasser (1998:8) states that a legislature can decide to define marriage and thus states are given some discretion with respect to deciding which marriages they will consider valid. According to South African law, a marriage comes into existence when a man and a woman with legal capacity (over the age of 21) and who are competent to marry after having reached consensus on marrying each other, participate in a prescribed marriage ceremony. This traditional view of marriage is subject to change in accordance with the Bill of Rights, for example, to the effect of further recognition of extra-marital cohabitation, polygamous marriages between blacks in terms of customary law, marriages in terms of Islamic and Hindu custom, as well as gay relationships (Visser & Potgieter, 1998:4).

Hahlo (1985:21) states that marriage is the legally recognised, voluntary union, for life in common of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others, while it lasts. Hahlo distinguishes “marriage”, which may denote either the act or ceremony (wedding) by which the union is recognised, as apposed to the resulting marital relationship (matrimony). Therefore matrimony may exist (partaking in an intimate relationship) without the actual marriage having taken place which correlates with the definition of cohabitation (see paragraph 1.3.5).

For the purposes of this study marriage shall be defined as follows: **A legally binding partnership, entered into consensually, by a heterosexual couple. For the purposes of this study the marriage duration must be for a period of at least one year.**

1.3.5 Cohabitation

Cohabitation is the residence of a couple in a shared household, with mutual sexual access, but without legal sanctions – essentially an informal marriage (Coltrane & Collins, 2001:590).

By contrast Parry (1981:4) is of the opinion that cohabitation can be seen as an informal contract, just as marriage is a formal contract, and each has its own status. The protection of matrimonial law does not extend to those who cohabit, but they can be described as members of a family. The problem with this is, defining the appropriate degree of permanence and stability. While marriage in itself usually creates a family, its existence is no longer regarded, either by courts or by Parliament, as a prerequisite to the creation of a family. Parry (1981:5) further states that the law regards cohabitation and the sharing of lives and a home as the essence of marriage and recognises rights and duties arising from cohabitation within marriage. Parties who cohabit outside marriage do not have the legal responsibilities of a married couple, nor do they have the benefits and burdens of matrimonial law (for example, whether in or out of community of property in South Africa) extended to them. This is because Western social structure is based on marriage, a formal contract giving rise to a particular status. While some laws have been extended to cohabitants, for example in matters of property, domestic violence and death, matrimonial law by its nature is limited to married couples. Parry (1993:5) emphasizes that the terms “common law husband” or “common law wife” are misleading and should not be used to describe cohabitants as their use suggests a legal relationship which does not exist.

For the purposes of this study cohabitation shall be defined as: **A heterosexual couple, living together as husband and wife, without a legally binding contract, for a period of at least one year.**

1.3.6 Domestic violence

Davis, Lurigio and Skogan (1997:54) are of the opinion that there is an ongoing debate over the definition of domestic violence. There has been no consensus of this definition among researchers and lawmakers. Many contend that understanding violence, especially domestic violence, requires attention not only to numbers of physical assaults but also to other harmful behaviours, such as psychological or emotional abuse, economic deprivation, stalking, and threats toward other family members, pets and property. These non-violent, but harmful behaviours may be

antecedents of physical assaults and cannot therefore be excluded from the definition.

Other definitions of domestic violence include only acts that involve physical assault. The definition used in the first national survey of domestic violence (Davis et al., 1997:54) focused mainly on physical violence namely, any act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of causing pain or physical injury to another person. This definition focuses on violence in general. There is however no debate that domestic violence is violence, but defining it in traditional terms such as homicide, rape, aggravated assault, and simple assault provides a basis for comparing and contrasting domestic violence with other types of violence. Davis et al., (1997:54) state that understanding domestic violence requires attention to a variety of interwoven behaviours such as harassment, stalking, intimidation, and threats of violence. It is this diversity of behaviours that gives domestic violence its distinctive quality.

The definition of what constitutes an intimate or domestic relationship has also varied in research, law and policy. Most studies have been limited to married or cohabitating couples, but others include non-cohabitating couples (for example, boyfriend or girlfriend), formerly married couples (for example, separated or divorced) and ex-girlfriends or ex-boyfriends. Whether gay or lesbian relationships qualify as “domestic” is also a matter of controversy. Child abuse and abuse of the elderly are seen by some as separate issues, but can also fall under the umbrella of domestic violence (Davis et al., 1997:55).

Tshiwula (1998:81) states that, violence is the unlawful and negative exercise of physical force or the threat of such force, which includes attitudes and actions leading to emotional and/or spiritual injury. This author further states that, domestic violence is a pattern of assaultive and coercive behaviour including physical, sexual and psychological attacks as well as economic coercion that adults exercise against their partners. What is noteworthy in the above definitions is that they both include coercive behaviour which may be of physical, psychological and emotional nature. In conjunction with the latter, Stark and Flitcraft (1996:129) define violence as the intentional or unintentional occurrence of an act or threat of aggression by one

person or group of persons on another person or group of persons. Violent behaviours include pushing, shoving, slapping, kicking, biting, hitting, hitting with a fist, hitting with an object, beating, use of a weapon, threatening any of these behaviours, or verbal assault or all of the above.

In this study the discussion shall be limited to abuse toward female adult intimate partners by the male adult intimate partner. Domestic violence is defined as: **The repeated use of harmful and destructive behaviour (emotional) between partners in a marital or cohabitating relationship.**

1.4 TERMINOLOGY LIST

As the study progressed and interviews were conducted, terms that appeared to be problematic were included in the terminology list and clarified.

1.4.1 Self-esteem

The degree to which, we see ourselves as important and valuable. Self-esteem is a fundamental belief that, as individuals, we are worthy of respect, love and fair treatment from others. When one's self-esteem is weakened, it is easy to believe that one deserves to be ill treated, that one is a failure, or that one is inherently less valuable than others (Kirkwood, 1993:68).

1.4.2 Loss of identity

Related to a drop in self-esteem is a sense of weakened identity. While esteem pertains to the value a person attributes to herself, identity is based on the knowledge held by a person about their personal characteristics, perspectives and values. Identity, then, in some ways is even more fundamental than esteem. A person can know her identity yet consider it to be low in value, but when her sense of identity weakens it is almost impossible to assess its value (Kirkwood, 1993:69).

1.4.3 Aggression

In general, aggression is the delivery of a negative stimulus by one organism to another with the intent to harm the other and with some expectation that the stimulus will reach its target and have its intended effect. Thus, both intent and outcome are associated with aggression, which makes deciding, what is **verbal aggression** more complicated. It can be generally defined as, a communication intended to cause psychological pain to another person, or a communication perceived as having that intent. The communicative act may be active or passive, and verbal or non-verbal. Examples include name calling or nasty remarks (active and verbal), slamming a door or smashing something (active and non-verbal) and the “silent treatment” or sulking (passive and non-verbal). Slamming a door or throwing an object contains a symbolic threat that can terrify the observer, who may fear that the next object to be used may be herself (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:89-90).

1.4.4 Social support system

This refers to the interpersonal relationships that individuals maintain with others in which they may feel free to express their own and listen to others’ concerns and provide and receive information, feedback, advice, assistance, comfort, and care (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:134).

1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY

The aims of the study are related to the societal relevance and the theoretical and methodological problems as mentioned in paragraphs 1.2.1, 1.2.2 and 1.2.3. The main aims are to:

- Construct a theoretical model according to which data can be analysed and the phenomenon of emotional abuse can be better understood.
- Investigate the forms of emotional abuse the **professional** woman endures within an abusive relationship.

- To determine **why** professional women remain in emotionally abusive relationships.
- To explore characteristics and personal backgrounds of respondents, to gain an in-depth understanding of their victimisation.
- To determine the effect, emotional abuse by a partner, has on the life of the professional woman.
- The utilisation of the findings of the study in order to make practical recommendations useful to emotionally abused women.
- Recommendations for further research.

1.6 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

1.6.1 Geographical demarcation

The research will be conducted in the Midrand, Centurion and Pretoria areas as these are accessible to researcher.

1.6.2 Sample

A snowball sample of 11 respondents was used for this study with no demarcation as to race, age and social class. Regarding gender and language demarcation, only women were interviewed (due to nature of topic) and interviews were conducted in either Afrikaans or English as these are the languages in which researcher are proficient. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic the researcher preferred not to make use of an interpreter as verbatim quotations could be lost in the process and the interpretation is open to subjectivity by the interpreter which could influence the reliability of the information received. A pilot study was conducted with a sample of two respondents which suited the profile of the professional woman.

1.7 PROGRAMME FOR REMAINDER OF THIS RESEARCH

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW: THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE ON THE PROFESSIONAL WOMAN

This chapter will give an overview of the victimisation of women from biblical times, through the centuries, with specific emphasis on this phenomenon from the late 1940's, when the systematic study of victims and victimisation seriously began. From the study of the available literature on victim phenomena it is clear that both socially conscious citizens (for example, the Feminist Movement, Civil Rights Movement and Children's Rights Movement) and social scientists (for example, criminologists, sociologists and psychologists) were responsible for the heightened interest in victims (Schurink, 1992:5).

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE ON THE VICTIM

A theoretical perspective is the basis for understanding social phenomena. Theory stimulates, simplifies and directs research, so that information can be organised and integrated effectively. Similarly Bailey (1982:39) adds that, without theories, it would be difficult to explain and analyse the complex and multi-faceted dynamics of social reality.

In view of the above the theories as identified in paragraph 1.2.2 will be discussed **critically** and used as a basis to evaluate the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

This chapter will outline the methodology for this study detailing the procedures and techniques of research and data collection.

A qualitative methodology was used, as it could best describe what the victims experienced, how they interpreted their experiences and how they structure the world in which they live (Bailey, 1994:62).

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

In social sciences, nothing speaks for itself and data must be interpreted. Confronted with a large number of impressions, documents, and field notes, the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of data gathered. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002:225) state that the aim of the analysis and interpretation in qualitative research is to attempt to gain insight and understanding into the phenomenon being studied. Bailey (1994:338) asserts that the latter is achieved logically through:

- Systematically ordering and reordering of data.
- Continually trying to classify and categorise data according to similarities and dissimilarities in the study.
- Looking for, and extracting patterns (themes) as well as even universals.

By consolidating field notes, researcher will extract common themes in the data which form a pattern relevant to the topic.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions from the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained during research will be made, and subsequently relevant recommendations made for practice and further research.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL AND LITERATURE OVERVIEW: THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE ON THE PROFESSIONAL WOMAN

2.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

2.1.1 Historical overview of woman abuse with reference to the victim

According to Schurink, Snyman and Krugel (1992:5) the systematic study of victims and victimisation began in the late 1940's. The word **victim** has over the centuries taken on many meanings, as new ideas concerning injury and harm became popular, and as a result a variety of persons were labelled "victims". The authors are of the opinion that the contemporary lay use of the word "victim" reflects not only a great deal of subjectivity, but also embraces many dimensions, situations and people.

Since the 1970's, various social movements have made a number of far-reaching contributions to the plight of victims, especially that of women and children. The Feminist Movement was the most prominent in this regard. It took particular interest in victims of male versus female offences, and viewed these concerns as societal and institutional issues rather than personal problems. It is believed by feminists that men, and especially those who head the Criminal Justice System, not only do not assist victimised women but often oppress them. They believe that offences committed by men against women are reflections of sexism deeply embedded in the culture. They point out that these victims are neglected by society as their helplessness is reinforced because it is not perceived or recognised (Schurink et al., 1992:6)

2.1.2 Historical overview of woman abuse with reference to the patriarchy

Dobash and Dobash (1979:ix) postulate that there are numerous legal, political, economic and ideological support for a husband's authority over his wife. The legal right of a man to use physical force against his wife is no longer explicitly recognised in most Western countries, but the legacy of

patriarchy continues to generate the conditions and relationships that lead to a husband's use of force against his wife. Patriarchal dominance is still supported by a moral order which reinforces the marital hierarchy and makes it difficult for a woman to struggle against this, and other forms of domination and control, because her struggles are considered by most as wrong, immoral, and a violation of the respect and loyalty a wife is supposed to give her husband. The fact that wife abuse is a form of patriarchal dominance is irrefutable in the light of historical evidence.

Dobash and Dobash (1979:31) state that :

A woman's place in history is a long and sad one – sad because of the countless women who have been abused in numerous ways, and long, because the ideologies and institutional practices that made such treatment both possible and justifiable have survived, although somewhat altered from century to century, and been woven into the fabric of our (Western) culture, and are still thriving today .

Legal, historical, literary, and religious writings all contribute to understanding the status of women. This status encompasses the core explanation of why women have become victims of courtship and marital violence. Historically, women rarely had an identity apart from that given to them as wives, mothers, and daughters, and to venture from that identity, was to be discouraged and often punished. Rarely in historical and religious writings, has a woman been named and discussed as an individual, except in terms of her ability or inability to fulfil family obligations. The status of women was not only separate and singular but also subordinate, and this subordination was institutionalised primarily in marriage and the family. Saint Augustine in Dobash and Dobash (1979:32) wrote that in marriage, “a woman ought to serve her husband as unto God, affirming that in nothing hath a woman equal power with a man...affirming that women are to be repressed”. To be a wife meant becoming the property of her husband, taking a secondary position in a marital hierarchy of power and worth, being legally and morally bound to obey the will and wishes of one's husband, and thus, subject to his control even to the point of physical punishment or murder.

Dobash and Dobash (1979:34) conclude that this relationship between women and men has been institutionalised in the structure of the patriarchal family and is supported by the economic and political institutions and by a belief system, including a religious one that makes such relationships seem natural, moral and sacred. This structure and ideology can be seen in the records of early Christianity.

2.1.2.1 The law of God: The roots of patriarchy

In some ways, the early Christians rejected the hierarchies and oppression that the ancient Roman's upheld. They adopted a principle of equality of all people (all souls were equal before God, husband and wife were helpmates). In other ways, they rejected the reforms of later Rome, which had given greater freedom to women and challenged the absolute patriarchy. They then reaffirmed the earlier principles of marital hierarchy and inequality between husband and wife. This contradiction may be best summarised in the later writings of Paul, who wrote that wives were to be subordinate to their husbands and fear them (Dobash & Dobash, 1979:40).

Christian principles have had the most profound influence upon the cultural beliefs and social institutions of Western society. It was the principles of patriarchy and not equality that were taken up by Christians and that have largely prevailed. The Christian account of creation was that woman was created after man (she was a by-product of him) and she was created in response to man's needs. Evidence of this is found in various Biblical references:

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will provide a partner for him" (Genesis 2:18).

And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken from Man" (Genesis 2:22-23).

The New Testament, with all its changes, brought little or no relief to women. Emphasis is placed on her subordination and rightful subjugation to man:

For man did not originally spring from woman, but woman was made out of man; and man was not created for woman's sake, but woman for the sake of man; and therefore it is woman's duty to have a sign of authority on her head, out of regard for the angels. But I wish you to understand that, while every man has Christ for his Head, woman's head is man, (a woman reflects her husband's glory), as Christ's Head is God (1 Corinthians 11:8-9).

A woman must be a learner, listening quietly and with due submission. I do not permit a woman to be a teacher, nor must woman domineer over man; she should be quiet (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Wives, be subject to your husbands as to the Lord; for the man is the head of the woman, just as Christ also is the head of the Church (Ephesians 5:22-23).

According to Dobash and Dobash (1979:43) this religious ideology was translated into the organisation of the church with hierarchies of authority, being God at the helm, followed by the clergy and then the flock. Within the flock, and in accordance with the same hierarchical beliefs, the male head of household was the "Godhead", and his wife and children were the "flock". He was believed to be responsible for them, to have authority over them, and ultimately to control them and keep them in subjection. The Law of God provided a sacred and moral ideology to uphold the existing patriarchal structure of the family.

2.2 LITERATURE OVERVIEW

2.2.1 Introduction

When a relationship is in the early stages, the couple feel connected, committed, and attentive to each other. There is usually very little tension and disagreements. Neither can imagine problems in the relationship. DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998:1), state that this is a reinforcing stage in the development of a relationship, and often results in both partners minimising

the significance and impact of emotionally abusive behaviour. These researchers postulate that emotional abuse in intimate relationships is a serious problem, as it is about **power and control**, not respect and love. They further state that emotional abuse is the umbrella or cornerstone of all types of abuse, including physical and sexual abuse (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998:3). Although emotional, psychological and financial abuse are not criminal behaviours, they are forms of domestic violence and can lead to criminal abuse (Hoge, 2002:2).

2.2.2 Research findings of studies done in Canada

Researchers (Stevens & The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 1996:1) state that only a few studies provide insight about the prevalence of emotional abuse as it is difficult to research. They state the following reasons:

- In comparison to other forms of abuse, its effects have only recently been recognised.
- There are no consistent definitions and it is hard to define.
- It is difficult to detect, assess and substantiate.
- Many cases of emotional abuse go unreported.

In 1995, the Canadian Women's Health studied 1000 women, 15 years of age and over. The findings revealed the following:

- 36 percent had experienced emotional abuse while growing up of whom 43 percent had experienced some form of abuse as children or teenagers; and
- 39 percent reported experiencing emotional abuse in a relationship in the previous five years.

Statistics Canada's 1993 Violence Against Women Survey (Stevens & The National Clearinghouse on Family Violence, 1996:1-7), showed that among married or women that were cohabitating (aged 18 to 65 years), emotional abuse is widespread. The study found that:

- 35 percent of all women surveyed reported that their spouses were emotionally abusive;
- 18 percent of women reported experiencing emotional abuse but not physical abuse in a relationship; and
- 77 percent of women reported emotional abuse in combination with physical abuse.

2.2.3 Emotional abuse

Many researchers question whether emotional abuse is not part of all relationships and whether the behaviours defined as emotional abuse between partners, are not an exaggeration of behaviours that form part of any intimate relationship (Champagne, 1999:2). Another question often raised about emotional abuse is whether it could be more aptly named as "mutual abuse". In the beginning of a relationship, a woman is more likely to defend herself from abuse, and respond in attempt to stop the abuse. This changes over time, when she realises that she cannot stop her partner's abusive behaviour. Women themselves indicate that their own responses may mirror their partner's abuse. Woman who are emotionally abused however, are more likely to admit fault, whereas an abuser is more likely to minimise his behaviour. Champagne (1999: 4) further states that while women are capable of abuse, it is important to look at the dynamics of the relationship, and the outcome of the individual's behaviour. Women report that often their responses will not make the abuser fearful of them, but rather increase the abuse. Once it is established that the woman is in a relationship where she is fearful of her partner and that he has total control over her, her responses are more accurately understood as survival skills.

Clark (2001:1) is of the opinion that emotional abuse does not usually happen in such a way that the target recognises it as abuse. It is many incidents over a period of time. Each incident, isolated, may not be noteworthy to many people, but put together, over time, a pattern emerges. This is a pattern of humiliation, threats, deceit, lies, jokes (for example, jokes about blondes), and disparagement.

Champagne (1999:6) states that emotional abuse involves both verbal and non-verbal communication:

- **Non-verbal** controlling tactics include gestures, expressions, and body movements. A raised eyebrow by an abuser can give a strong message to instil fear, without anyone noticing the intent of the gesture. The “silent treatment” can also be used for hours, days, weeks or even months by the abuser as a form of punishment.

- **Verbal** controlling tactics include the calling of derogatory names by the abusive partner, such as “slut” or “whore”, and told that they are stupid, fat, or ugly on a repeated or daily basis. The abuser draws upon the societal standards set for a woman’s size and appearance (a woman’s value and sexual desirability is based on how slender, feminine and attractive she is). The abusive partner can convince a woman that no other man would want her as she does not measure up to these standards.

Abuse in general, are any number of behaviours that are designed to control and subjugate another human being through the use of fear, humiliation, and verbal or physical assaults. More specifically, emotional abuse is any kind of abuse that is emotional rather than physical in nature. It is like brainwashing in that it systematically wears away at the victim’s self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in their own perceptions, and their perception of self (self-concept). Whether it is done by constant berating and belittling, by intimidation, or under the false pretence of helping, the results are similar. Over time, the recipient of the abuse, loses all sense of self and personal value, as emotional abuse cuts to the core of a person, creating wounds that

may be deeper and last longer than physical ones (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion.htm>).

2.2.3.1 Forms of emotional abuse

Emotional abuse can take many forms:

➤ **Aggressing**

These are behaviours that are generally direct and obvious. Aggressive forms of emotional abuse include name-calling, accusing, blaming, threatening and ordering. The authoritative position the abuser assumes by judging or invalidating the recipient undermines the equality and autonomy that are essential to healthy adult relationships. Knowingly asking inappropriate questions or making comments to evoke an emotional response is also another form of aggressing, as is slandering someone's name, reputation, associations or activities (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion.htm> & <http://www.designedthinking.com/Fear/Abuse/abuse.html>).

Aggressive abuse can also take a more indirect form and may even be disguised as "helping". Criticising, advising, offering solutions, analysing, proving, and questioning another person may be a sincere attempt to help. In some instances however, these behaviours may be an attempt to belittle, control, or demean rather than help. The underlying judgmental "I know best" tone the abuser takes in these situations is inappropriate and creates unequal footing in relationships (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion>).

➤ **Denying**

Denying as a form of emotional abuse has several components, namely:

- **Invalidating** seeks to distort or undermine the recipient's perceptions of their world. Invalidating occurs when the abuser refuses or fails to acknowledge reality. For example, if the victim confronts the abuser about an incident of name calling, the abuser may deny having said anything of the sort. Evans (1999:2) adds that forgetting promises, agreements or previous discussions prevents the victim from talking to the abuser about his behaviour, and blocking and diverting discussions further allows the abuser to avoid discussing things that the victim believes are important.
- **Withholding** is another form of denying. It includes behaviours like refusing to listen, refusing to communicate, and emotionally withdrawing as punishment (the "silent treatment").
- **Countering** occurs when the abuser views the victim as an extension of himself and denies any viewpoints or feelings which differ from his own
(<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion>).

➤ **Minimising**

Minimising is a less extreme form of denial. When minimising, the abuser may not deny that a particular event occurred, but they question the recipient's emotional experience or reaction to an event. Statements such as "you are too sensitive", "you are exaggerating", or "you are blowing this out of proportion" all suggest that the victim's emotions and perceptions are faulty and cannot be trusted.

- **Trivialising** which occurs when the abuser suggests that what the victim has done or communicated is inconsequential or unimportant, is a more subtle form of minimising. Another method is cutting someone off so they are not allowed to speak, thereby



suppressing

self-expression

(<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion>).

Stevens (1996:2) adds the following:

- **Rejecting**

The abuser refuses to acknowledge the victim's presence, value or worth, communicating to the victim that she or he is useless or inferior and devaluing her thoughts and feelings.

- **Terrorising**

The abuser induces terror or extreme fear in a person, coerces the victim by intimidation and by placing or threatening to place a person in an unfit or dangerous environment. An example of terrorising is the stalking of an ex-partner.

- **Corrupting/exploiting**

The abuser socialises a person into accepting ideas or behaviour which oppose legal standards, using a person for advantage or profit and training someone to serve the interests of the abuser, for example, enticing a person into the sex trade.

- **Denying emotional responsiveness**

The abuser fails to provide care in a sensitive and responsive manner, being detached and uninvolved and interacting only when necessary. It also includes ignoring the victim's mental health needs by recognising, for example, that a partner is severely depressed and doing nothing to seek professional help.

In a study done by Kirkwood (1993:46-51), the author found further forms of emotional abuse, namely:

- **Degradation**

Degradation is the perception that, as a human being, one is markedly less valued or even acceptable than others. It is a sense that there is something inherent and essential about oneself that is soiled. Degradation causes feelings of deep pain and shame about oneself. Abusers use vulnerabilities already existing in women, or they exploited those that had been opened as a result of abuse.

- **Fear**

Many women suffer from anxiety over their emotional safety. The threat of destruction, on a psychological rather than a physical level, make emotionally abused women fearful. This results from lack of control over an intangible, insidious process which they could neither name nor see. Because of progressive, uncontrollable change, women experience a “gut” feeling of fear that their emotional safety is under threat. This fear is elicited by abusers who use emotional as well as physical violence to control their partners.

- **Objectification**

Objectification occurs when the behaviour of abusers indicates to women that they are viewed as objects with no inner energy, resources, needs and desires. Objectification can manifest in several ways, namely:

- The abuser demands that the woman changes her external expression of self in order to meet the needs and desires of the abuser, for example, that she wear a certain kind or style of clothing. The denial of the personal individuality which women might express through clothing.

- The abuser manipulates the woman's physical state, for example, he reduces her level of functioning by enforcing the use of tranquillisers, which suppress her expression of self and render her more like an object.
- Acute possessiveness also carries a message of objectification. Jealousy, the restriction of women's social contacts and the invasion of a women's space outside the relationship, all suggest that the woman is the property of her partner. Because one cannot be property without being rendered an object capable of being owned, possessiveness is a form of objectification.

- **Overburden of responsibility**

This component of emotional abuse is one of the most subtle, and women find it difficult to identify it. Overburdening is experienced by women as the expenditure of tremendous energy in the day to day emotional and practical maintenance of their relationships and family, without return of effort or energy from their partners. The husband or partner acts as if he is one of the children, and there is no mutual "give and take" in the relationship. Abusers take little or no responsibility in the relationship. Avoiding responsibility is a subtle form and thus highly insidious type of emotional abuse. Abusers also have explicit expectations that the women will take full responsibility for shared problems and place the blame on the women if the action they took did not meet the requirements of the abuser. Thus not only does the abuser not accept responsibility for his behaviour, but twists it in order to shift responsibility on to the abused woman, which further emotionally undermines her. Women feel overwhelmed by the amount of responsibility that they are manipulated into accepting which can lead to severe depression, and in extreme cases become immobilised and unable to function.

2.2.4 Tactics of emotional abuse used by abuser

Research (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html/emotional>) has shown that emotional abusers use the following tactics, namely to:

- Isolate a woman from her friends, family, cultural or faith community, care providers, and prevent her from having independent activities such as work and further education.
- Act overly jealous or possessive; accuse a woman of having affairs if she talks to another man; coerce her into sexual activity to prove her love.
- Use a woman's disabilities to demean and control her.
- Threaten, intimidate, harass, or punish a woman if she does not comply with her abusive partner's demands.
- Use the children as a form of control.
- Make all of the decisions in the family, withhold information and refuse to consult her about important matters concerning the family.
- Control financial resources, time and space.

Although each woman who has been emotionally abused, experiences it differently, there are many similarities in the ways that an abuser gains and maintains control over his partner. Champagne (1999:6) states that the tactics of woman abuse can be compared to methods used by cults, and those holding political prisoners or hostages. She uses concepts like "monopolisation of perception" which is a form of mind control or psychological brainwashing, and "induced debility" which is the process of wearing a woman's physical constitution down by lack of sleep, improper eating, or overwork. Like hostages, women who are abused have reported that their partners did not allow them any reminders from their previous life,

and were controlled in the form and amount of contact they could have with others, the abuser even used tactics like choosing the information they were allowed to have and see.

Champagne (1999:7) further postulates, that the use of isolation also mirrors that of a hostage-taking situation. When a woman's abusive partner prevents her from having friends, seeing family, or going to independent activities such as work or school, she loses contact with the outside world. Some women have reported how their abuser's constant surveillance sabotaged their efforts to gain more independence, such that they would often stop any activities outside the home that the abuser did not approve of. When an older woman's abusive partner retires, the abuse may escalate as she finds any freedom of movement she had, is gone. Women have also related how their abusive partners made it so uncomfortable for them in social situations that they preferred not to attend situations where they might be embarrassed or humiliated. The abuser may also use more indirect forms of isolation, for example by saying that he wants her to spend all of her free time with him because he loves her so much.

Further demonstrating the effects of abusers who brainwash their intimate partners is the Biderman Chart of Coercion (<http://www.actabuse.com/chartofcoercion.html>), which researchers have adapted, from a report by Amnesty International, depicting the brainwashing of prisoners of war. Abusers who brainwash their intimate partners use methods similar to those of prison guards who recognise that physical control is never easily accomplished without the cooperation of the prisoner. The most effective way to gain that co-operation is through subversive manipulation of the mind and feelings of the victim, who then becomes a psychological, as well as a physical, prisoner. These methods form the core of emotional abuse.

General methods used



purposes

Formatted: English (South Africa)

Isolation

1. Removes victim of all social support (necessary for the ability to resist).

2. Develops an intense concern with self.

3. Makes victim dependent upon interrogator.

Monopolisation of perception

4. Fixes attention upon immediate predicament; fosters introspection.

5. Eliminates stimuli competing with those controlled by the captor.

6. Frustrates all actions not consistent with compliance

Induced debility and exhaustion

7. Weakens mental and physical ability to resist.

Threats

8. Cultivates anxiety and despair.

Occasional indulgences

9. Provides positive motivation for compliance.

Demonstrating omnipotence

10. Suggests futility of resistance.

Enforcing trivial demands

11. Develops habit of compliance.

Degradation

12. Makes cost of resistance appear more damaging to self-esteem than capitulation.

13. Reduces prisoner to "animal level" concerns.

Figure 2.1 Biderman's chart of coercion

Champagne (1999:8) expands on this by explaining how various methods of emotional abuse are used by the abuser on his victim:

- An abuser may cut a woman off from community resources, such as medical and social services. He does this by exploiting any vulnerability that a woman has to ensure that she remains dependent on him, for example the abusive partner of a woman who is ill or has a disability may refuse to assist her with basic needs, leave her in bed or neglect her for long periods of time, and insist that she does not need additional help in the home to take care of her needs.
- Another method used by an abuser to ensure his partner's dependence upon him is through control of financial resources. A woman who is a homemaker may be told she has no right to the family income, and must ask for whatever she needs. Often, women who work outside the home do not have any input into financial decisions and must give their abusive partners all of their income. They also indicate that they may be put on a very tight budget, even if the family income does not warrant it. In many cases women do not even know how much the family income is.
- Some abusers also attempt to control their partner's spirituality or use the doctrines of a church or religion to oppress them. Preventing a woman from being active in her faith and her community may not only deny the woman her spirituality, but also isolate her from sources of support.
- Many abusers use threats to reinforce their control over women. Examples that have been reported are threatening:
 - to leave the relationship;
 - to kill themselves;
 - to kill the woman, her friends, family or children;
 - to harm her pets or farm animals;
 - to leave her without any money; and

- to ensure that she never sees her children again.
- Combined with threats, intimidation tactics are used to instil fear. An abuser will, for example:
 - disconnect the phone;
 - punch holes in walls, doors and furniture;
 - throw objects about;
 - break things that have value to the victim;
 - hover over her in a threatening stance; and
 - shake his fists and/or shout loudly.

When they see some, but not all threats realised, abused women never know which threats will be carried out, making the overall use of threats and intimidation by the abuser, powerful ways of enforcing compliance from his victim.

- When a couple has children in an abusive relationship, the abusive partner may involve them in his control tactics. Some women have reported that abusive partners have attempted to undermine the children's relationship with their mother by belittling her in front of her children or challenging her authority as a parent. Others describe how they have been blamed for any issues involving the children, whether it is problems with their behaviour, school performance or health. These accusations were often made in the presence of both mother and child/children, so that both were subjected to his abuse (Champagne, 1999:8). Hodge (2002:1) adds that in the case of a divorced couple, the abusive partner can continue the abuse by making her feel guilty for breaking up the family and therefore causing the children harm, use the children to relay messages when he sees them, use his visitation rights to harass her or threaten to take the children away. In this way, the emotional abuse continues even if the couple are no longer in an intimate relationship.

- Women who are emotionally abused describe “mind-games” or “crazy-making” tactics, where the abuser may contradict a woman, fabricate stories, deny or minimise his actions, or act inconsistently (be the model husband in front of family and friends and the complete opposite in private. This is often referred to as the “street angel” and the “house devil”). They receive mixed messages from their partners who often minimise accusations of abuse, by insisting that she is delusional, paranoid or mentally ill (Champagne, 1999:8). Forward and Frazier (2000:4) add that abusive expectations, in which unreasonable demands are placed upon the victim where no matter how much she gives, it is never enough, also creates severe mental anguish. The victim is made to feel guilty because she never fulfils the abuser’s needs perfectly.
- Champagne (1999:8) also states that emotional abuse and sexual abuse are intricately linked, as emotional abuse tactics are used to manipulate women into compliance with their abusive partner’s sexual demands. Historically the law reflected the societal norm that it was a woman’s duty to have sex with her husband whenever he wanted it, and she did not have the right to say no. The author postulates that similar beliefs still prevail, and abusive partners use these beliefs to enforce their will upon a woman, whether through subtle or forceful means. Rape within a marriage or cohabitating relationship, was only legally recognised in South Africa as such, as recently as 1993, when the Law on Prevention of Family Violence No. 133, criminalised rape within this context (Klopper, 1994:3). An abuser may say that he wants to have sex because he loves her, and that she must prove her love to him in return. He may accuse her of having sexual relations with someone else, and interrogate her about other men in her life if she refuses. He may also say that he wants to teach her how to be a good sexual partner, and insist that she view and act out pornography to learn how to meet his sexual needs. Abusers can also control women’s sexual health and reproductive choices, by refusing to

engage in safe sex practices, or insisting that she have an abortion. An abuser may also use a woman's infertility to abuse her, by demeaning her, threatening to have an affair, or threatening to divorce her. Many women have reported that it was easier to give in to their abusive partner's sexual demands than be kept up all night or to be punished in other ways for their non-compliance. These same women may even deny being forced into having sex with their partners, because they felt they had eventually consented (Champagne, 1999:8).

2.2.5 Characteristics of the abuser

Recipients of abuse often struggle with feelings of powerlessness, hurt, fear, and anger. Some researchers are of the opinion that, ironically, abusers tend to struggle with these same feelings. Abusers are also likely to have been raised in emotionally abusive environments and they learn to be abusive as a way to cope with their own feelings of powerlessness, hurt, fear, and anger. Consequently, abusers may be attracted to people who see themselves as helpless or who have not learned to value their own feelings, perceptions, or viewpoints. This allows the abuser to feel more secure and in control, and avoid dealing with his own feelings, and self-perceptions (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion.htm>).

Research shows (<http://www.lilaclane.com/relationships/emotional-abuse.html>) that emotionally abusive partners display similar characteristics, to those who are physically abusive. These include:

- He was verbally abused as a child, or witnessed it in his own family.
- He has an explosive temper, triggered by minor frustrations and arguments.
- Abusers are extremely possessive and jealous. They experience an intense desire to control their partners.

- His sense of masculinity depends on the woman's dependency upon him. He feels like a man only if his partner is totally submissive and dependent on him.
- Abusers often have superficial relationships with other people. Their primary, if not exclusive, relationship is with their wife or girlfriend.
- He has low self-esteem.
- He has rigid expectations of marriage (or partnership) and will not compromise. He expects her to behave according to his expectations of what a wife should be like – often the way his parents' marriage was, or the opposite. He demands that she change to accommodate his expectations.
- He has a great capacity for self-deception. He projects the blame for his relationship difficulties onto his partner.
- He may be described as having a dual personality – he is either charming or exceptionally cruel. He is selfish or generous depending on his mood.
- A major characteristic of abusers is their capacity to deceive others. He can be cool, calm, charming and convincing.
- His partner is usually a symbol. The abuser does not relate to his partner as a person in her own right, but as a symbol of a significant other (often his mother). This is especially true when he is angry. He assumes that she is thinking, feeling, or acting like that significant other (<http://www.lilaclane.com/relationships/emotional-abuse.html>).

McChristie (2000:2) is of the opinion that the verbal abuser is quite sensitive to outsiders finding out about the abuse and is very careful to save these scenes for the home environment only. Many verbal abusers are delightful, charming men in public. They treat their spouse or girlfriend

with such respect that people often think they “are the perfect couple”. They save their cruelty for a private audience of one.

Luv (2001:9) has also drawn up a profile of an abuser and adds the following character traits:

- The abuser has an overwhelming need to control his partner, at which anxiety, fear and anger are at the root.
- The abuser has an extreme fear of abandonment and has an exaggerated dependence on his partner. He is unable to tolerate being alone.
- The abuser has distorted views of himself, of his partner and relationships in general.
- The abuser has experienced either admitted or hidden childhood shame (shame brought on by not being allowed to express his feelings without punishment, a lost sense of power, had his sense of autonomy taken from him, or stripped of his dignity and control of his own fate).
- Atypical childhood attachment to his mother, where he had very little interaction with his father, and saw his mother as his only authoritative figure.
- Childhood rejection, parental coldness/indifference, and direct childhood abuses.
- The abuser also has the intense need for constant reaffirmation, feedback, praise and flattery. This results in a man who needs extreme shows of a woman’s affection and proof of her love.

Stacy, Hazlewood and Shupe (1994:54) are of the opinion that male abusers are passive-aggressive. They have tendencies to feel helpless and vulnerable yet enraged if suddenly abandoned by a woman. Many male abusers see the woman as being in control or vying for control over him, thus they have to “show her who’s the boss” with violence. In devaluing their partners (through verbal abuse) the men avoid their own feelings of dependence. When the wife does leave the husband, however, he is thrown into panic, feeling vulnerable and abandoned. He does not understand the emotional damage his violent outbursts have had upon his wife. Her withdrawal, anger, and legal retaliations confuse him. His thoughts and feelings are narcissistic (those around him, particularly his wife, are expected to assist him in maintaining an ideal image of himself, when they fail to do this, he feels betrayed and frightened). The end results are futile attempts (born of emotional dependency) to control her that lead to anger and frustration. For the authors this speaks very clearly to two facts in male-directed psychological abuse. First, the patterns of men’s attempts to control women are indicators of their dependence and desperation. At one level, the men evidently did not trust the women with whom they were intimate, and at a deeper level they were insecure and dependent about their relationships with these women. Second, the majority of abusive men felt confident in the cultural appropriateness of males monitoring and even threatening women (patriarchal dominance). Within their cultural contexts, violence is a strategy for subjugating women, whether by actual blows or by intimidation, with the sole motive being the consequences they hope to achieve, namely dominance.

2.2.6 Legal interventions

Olin and Tonry (1989:317) state that in the past, criminology researchers did not investigate family violence because the prevalent cultural norms and practices did not define it as a problem. Even in the mid and late 1970’s, as evidence accumulated about the high prevalence of family violence, it was still viewed as something different from “real” violence and “real” crime. The criminal justice system during this time was especially resistant to responding

to family violence as criminal violence. Police, prosecutors, and courts regarded violence in the home as a private matter, subject to sanction as a crime only when it resulted in serious injury or death. The training manual published by the International Association of Chiefs of Police (Olin & Tonry, 1989:317), recommended a policy of non-interference, and an informal “stitch rule” that required a wound needing more than a certain number of stitches was needed to justify an arrest.

According to Stevens (1996:6) legal interventions can be made for emotionally abusive behaviour such as the repeated following of the other person or someone known to her or him, for example, children, parents or friends, intimidating or attempting to intimidate, repeatedly communicating, (directly or indirectly), with the other person or someone known to her or him, harassing the other person with telephone calls, besetting or watching the other person’s house or place of work, and/or engaging in threatening conduct directed at the other person or a member of her family is criminal harassment (“stalking”). These behaviours must cause a person to fear for her safety, or for the safety of someone she knows.

In South Africa, the Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998, has put in place a number of regulations to provide for the issuing of protection orders with regard to domestic violence and for matters concerned herewith:

- Recognising that domestic violence is a serious evil.
- That there is a high incidence of domestic violence within South African society.
- That victims of domestic violence, are among the most vulnerable members of society.
- That domestic violence takes on many forms.

- That acts of domestic violence may be committed in a wide range of domestic relationships.

- That remedies currently available to the victims of domestic violence have proved to be ineffective.

The Parliament of the Republic of South Africa provide the following definition of **domestic violence** (Domestic Violence Act 116 of 1998), stating that it is:

- physical abuse;
 - sexual abuse;
 - emotional, verbal and psychological abuse;
 - economic abuse;
 - intimidation;
 - harassment;
 - stalking;
 - damage to property;
 - entry into the complainant's residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence; and
 - any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or wellbeing of the complainant.
-
- **Emotional, verbal and psychological abuse** means a pattern of degrading or humiliating conduct towards a complainant, including:
 - repeated insults, ridicule or name calling;
 - repeated threats to cause emotional pain; and
 - the repeated exhibition of obsessive possessiveness or jealousy, which is such as to constitute a serious invasion of the complainant's privacy, liberty, integrity or security.

- **Harassment** means engaging in a pattern of conduct that induces the fear of harm to a complainant including:
 - repeatedly watching, or loitering outside of or near the building or place where the complainant resides, works, carries on business, studies or happens to be;
 - repeatedly making telephone calls or inducing another person to make telephone calls to the complainant, whether or not conversations ensue; and
 - repeatedly sending, delivering or causing the delivery of letters, telegrams, packages, facsimiles, electronic mail or other objects to the complainant.

- **Intimidation** means uttering or conveying a threat, or causing a complainant to receive a threat, which induces fear.

- **Sexual abuse** means any conduct that abuses, humiliates, degrades or otherwise violates the sexual integrity of the complainant.

The Act further provides that any member of the South African Police Service must, at the scene of an incident of domestic violence or as soon thereafter as is reasonably possible, or when the incident of domestic violence is reported render assistance to the complainant as may be required in the circumstances, including assisting or making arrangements for the complainant to find a suitable shelter and to obtain medical treatment. A peace officer may without warrant, arrest any respondent at the scene of an incident of domestic violence whom he or she reasonably suspects of having committed an offence containing an element of violence against a complainant.

2.2.7 Reasons why women stay in emotionally abusive relationships

Research (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling/documents/emotion>) shows that no one intends to be in an abusive relationship, but individuals who were emotionally abused by a parent or other significant person whilst growing up often find themselves in similar situations as an adult. If a parent tended to define his or her children's experiences and emotions, and judge their behaviour, they may not have learned how to set their own standards, develop their own viewpoints and validate their own feelings and perceptions. As a result of this, the controlling stance taken by an emotional abuser may feel familiar or even comfortable to the victim, although it is destructive.

2.2.7.1 Double deception

McChristie (2000:1) states some reasons why some women stay in abusive relationships. During the courtship period, both partners are on their best behaviour. The abuse is slight and intermittent. Since women want to believe the best of their lovers, they overlook obvious emotional abuse. Chemistry adds to the capability women have to overlook the first subtle signs of abuse. Once the couple is married or cohabitating the most serious effects of living in an abusive relationship is the change in self-esteem. As women begin to internalise the criticism and believe it is valid, self-image declines. They start feeling worthless, incompetent and unlovable, which serves to "keep them in place" (McChristie, 2000:2), making leaving even more difficult. They rationalise that if this man loves them, they should be loyal to him. The fact that abusers are quite often charming people when they chose to be, adds to the woman's confusion as this makes her doubt her instincts. This serves to lower her self-confidence even further. Evans (1999:3) adds that often for the emotionally abused woman, there is no other witness to her reality and no one can understand her experiences. Friends and family may see the abuser as a good partner and certainly, he agrees with them, which adds to doubts about her perceptions of the relationship.

2.2.7.2 Attachment

According to Loring (1994:25), disruption of connection is the core of emotional abuse, while the struggle to attach is a distinctive trait of the emotionally abused woman. The typical abuser moves in and out of bonding with the victim, periodically sharing warmth and empathy, then cutting them off with overt and covert abuse. This author further states that because the victim is confused by the intermittent connection, she struggles to regain it, and “clings anxiously” to the abuser. Her harsh self-blame echoes the abuser’s demeaning comments and becomes an internalised shaming mechanism, diminishing self-esteem and eroding the sense of self. Although the victim is usually not explicitly aware of the disconnection, she feels unaccountably sad, isolated, and profoundly lonely.

Furthermore, attachment, which denotes one individual’s struggle to bond with another, is not necessarily a mutual process. A victim of emotional abuse usually continues to seek attachment with an abuser who has withdrawn affection. Hoping to regain the lost affection, she may hold on to him relentlessly. Using withdrawal as a mechanism of control is emotional abandonment. The victim feels betrayed and isolated by the disconnection. As her need for connection grows, her attempts to engage her partner increase in frequency and intensity, and she holds on even more. Although her efforts fail, the trauma of pain and terror leave the victim with no choice but to continue trying to connect with her abusive partner. Attachment, in this sense, is therefore different from connection, which denotes a relationship characterised by each partner’s efforts to empathise with and respond to the other. Loring (1994:26) is of the opinion, that people, who are connected, recognise and respect differences between themselves. Consciously or intuitively, they realise that bonding styles are highly individual. One person’s approach to a close personal relationship may involve frequent exchanges of views, earnest discussions about problems, and open displays of affections and expressions of anger. In contrast, a more reserved person may feel comfortable having fewer conversations and problem-solving sessions, expressing affection privately, and avoiding angry confrontations.

Loring (1994:26) postulates that, when couples attempt to accommodate each other's style of attachment, the more verbal partner will make a conscious effort to cut back on problem-solving discussions, while the less verbal person will strive to open up more often. The author is of the opinion that, in emotional abusive relationships, there is no such respect or attempt to compromise. Instead the abuser ridicules and demeans the victim's style of attachment and other unique forms of relating. His behaviour is limited and is driven by his fear of loss and need to control. He displays little care and consideration for his partner or her feelings, and he ignores one of the essential components of the caring process, which is the striving to obtain knowledge and understanding of the other person, in order to find ways of responding to him or her.

2.2.7.3 Dynamics of interpersonal violence

Urquiza and Timmer (2002:825) state that interpersonal violence is an inherent characteristic of an abusive relationship. It possesses dynamics that involve both the victim and the perpetrator and provides a relational context in which violence takes place. In situations where the victim and the perpetrator have an ongoing relationship, as is the case between couples, relationship dynamics can play an important part in the formation and maintenance of the abusive or violent relationship. For instance, where a man consistently attends to the negative behaviour of his wife or girlfriend and inconsistently attends to the positive behaviour. This perpetuates an essentially negative and coercive relational context. Thus abuse perpetuated by one spouse may be legitimised either through the other's fear, as a symbol of power and control, or as an acceptable method of conflict resolution. Urquiza and Timmer (2002:826) thus argue that in addition to the behaviour, the relational context (the behaviours, cognitions, emotions, and interactions surrounding the violence) is also an essential element of the abusive relationship, which could also serve to explain why it is difficult for the victim to leave such a relationship.

2.2.8 Impact of emotional abuse on the victim

DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1988:1) state that emotional abuse impacts on people in very subtle ways. Over time, it may:

- Erode self-esteem and confidence.
- Damage the victim's sense of hopefulness about life.
- Damage the ability to trust yourself and others.
- Impair the victim's ability to be assertive.
- Increase feelings of fearfulness, anxiety and depression.
- Shatter the victim's belief that the world is a good and safe place.
- Result in nightmares and vivid memories of being abused.
- Leads to social withdrawal, isolation and loneliness.
- Decrease the victim's ability to take care of herself.
- Impair the victim's ability to maintain satisfying relationships with others.
- Leaves the victim vulnerable to further abuse.
- Leaves the victim more vulnerable to becoming abusive.

Stevens (1996:5) adds that emotional abuse can have serious physical and psychological consequences for women, including severe depression, anxiety, persistent headaches, back and limb problems, and stomach problems, all resulting from the long term effects of stress. She further states, that women who are psychologically abused but not physically abused are five times more likely to misuse alcohol than women who have not experienced emotional abuse.

2.2.8.1 Trauma of emotional abuse

Loring (1994:35) states that a vast area of literature has explored the mechanisms and effects of trauma in such areas of human violence as wartime atrocities and child abuse. However psychology and other related professions have not focused on the relationship between trauma and emotional abuse. Nor has it recognised that emotional abuse occurring without physical battering has its own unique process of traumatic

development. The author recognises that the suffering inflicted on victims of emotional abuse is as intense and pervasive as that experienced by other trauma victims, as it can lead to diminished and annihilated sense of self and to the terror that is characteristic of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many symptoms of emotional abuse, for example, nightmares, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, sleep disorders, concentration problems and psychogenic amnesia, are characteristics of PTSD.

This author further states that during PTSD, an individual experiences shocking events that have a powerful impact on the mind. Trauma can result from both natural disasters and from human violence and is a natural reaction to severe shock. An event like rape is shocking because it is unexpected and extremely traumatising. The victim often finds it difficult to believe that it really happened, and may therefore refuse to believe in the reality of the assault. In cases of childhood incest, victims may completely repress knowledge of the abuse and remain unaware of it for years, even while experiencing its traumatic effects.

Victims of emotional assault from an intimate partner experience a similar sense of shock and disbelief after each incident of abuse. Loring (1994:36) is of the opinion that the more accurate term for marital abuse, 'intimate violence', is contradictory, as the essence of intimacy should be gentleness and non-violence. She further states that, like children who live through incest, many adult victims of emotional abuse report feeling shocked and betrayed. The abuser's emotional attacks are experienced as symbolic equivalents of a rape of the self, and are extremely traumatic. The disintegration of the self is a terrifying experience. One is disconnected not only from significant others and the community, but also from one's own identity. The result is a kind of inner death.

2.2.8.2 Diagnosing the trauma of emotional abuse

Post traumatic stress disorder symptoms of emotional abuse (flashbacks, painful memories, nightmares, intrusive imagery, and flooding – when

flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, or painful memories, or a combination of all three, overwhelm the victim's thinking) can increase in their ability to produce trauma by occurring in combination. Certain traumatic responses and patterns of mistreatment are specific to emotional abuse (Loring, 1994:41), namely:

➤ **Ritualistic abuse**

Emotional abuse has a patterned repetition of certain abusive tactics and behaviours. Ritualistic emotional abuse carries this tendency even further. It resembles Satanism and ritual physical abuse in that it is a concerted attack on the victim's sense of self, and it involves enactment of a ritual identifying the victim in some way as evil. Certain especially painful parts of the ritual are repeated often, and therefore cause the victim to experience major flashbacks. These flashbacks and their accompanying exhaustion, confusion, sadness, and fear, leave the victim vulnerable to intrusive thoughts, nightmares, and painful memories as well as repeated experiences of ritualistic abuse. Thus there is a "dual cycle of emotional abuse", in which the ritual and its accompanying terror result in increased susceptibility to intrusive imagery. At the same time, the cycle moves in the opposite direction – the intrusive imagery leads to further exhaustion and confusion, resulting in enhanced vulnerability to the experience of ritualistic emotional abuse. Loring (1994:43) further states that like satanic abuse and cult rituals, the emotional abuser attempts to reform the thoughts of the victim, through fluctuation of assault and leniency, and, an assault on identity. Focusing his torture on the victim's supposedly evil character, he confuses and dissolves her trust in her own senses and assumptions about how the world works. Another crucial aspect of ritualistic emotional abuse, self-betrayal, seriously undermines the victim's sense of self. In cult abuse a victim is often forced to show disrespect towards a religious symbol, similarly the emotional abuse victim is forced to perform abhorrent acts or behaviours that betray her values, for example an abuser might threaten to lock his victim outside the house, naked, unless she engaged in sexual practices that she regards as "shameful and dirty". Some

abusers are more subtle, and use covert forms of abuse, yet the ritualistic pattern of abuse remains the same and is equally as damaging to the victim.

A participant in Loring's study (1994:44) states the following:

I may be a sharp lawyer, but I can't think when this happens. My confusion and some kind of falling apart, actual destruction of what I think of as myself, kick in and there I am, participating in this incredible ritual yet another time. I feel like less of a human being.

➤ **Traumatic bonding**

The loss of self leaves the victim vulnerable to traumatic bonding, a type of attachment that intensifies the loss of selfhood and makes reintegrating the identity even more difficult. Fear and terror render the emotionally abused woman incapable of detaching herself from the relationship with the abuser, for she has no separate and cohesive self to detach. The traumatic bond is an incredibly strong one. The author further states that traumatic bonding in emotional abuse is similar to a form of attachment known as the Stockholm Syndrome, a model based on the paradoxical psychosocial responses of hostages to their captors. It was found that hostages develop a genuine fondness for their captors when the latter use a method of control that alternates terror with kindness. This mixture results in a power of imbalance that renders hostages dependent on their captors for emotional as well as physical needs. This traumatic bonding occurs in an intimate relationship when one partner alternates between positive, kindly responses and negative, abusive reactions. In the "cycle of violence" that occurs with physical battering, both the abuse and the kindness are intermittent. The batterer builds up tension, explodes with violence, and then apologises and is kind during the "honeymoon" period. In emotional abuse, however, traumatic bonding and severe attachment are created by a continued pattern of abuse marked by intermittent warmth and abrupt disconnection. The overall tone of the relationship is abusive and is occasionally relieved by moments of affection and empathy.

A traumatic bond is difficult to break, because emotional abuse victims rarely perceive this ongoing bonding process and its effect on them. When they begin to understand the inconsistency of the warmth in the connection, the rarity of these moments of connection, and the harshness and brutality of the disconnections, they have experienced an important insight. Even then their damaged sense of self prevents them from immediate separation from their abuser. Only when they have developed a more integrated sense of themselves and re-established a connection with other individuals who support them, can they take the next step towards final separation (Loring, 1994:46).

➤ **Somatic symptoms**

Emotionally abused women often suffer from various somatic symptoms that are easily misdiagnosed. Headaches and upper respiratory illnesses are common metaphors for pressure, inner crying, and despair. She states that victims often report aching in various parts of the body that resemble tendonitis or arthritis. Many emotionally abused women also suffer from bladder discomfort and infections (Loring, 1994:47).

➤ **Psychogenic amnesia**

Victims of severe emotional abuse may also suffer from psychogenic amnesia, which is an inability to recall specific aspects of a traumatic event. While most emotional abuse victims recall abusive incidents in vivid and comprehensive detail, some have psychogenic amnesia about an especially terrifying component of the experience. This type of trauma may result from:

- multiple forms of emotional abuse, including death threats;
- the belief that physical and emotional death is imminent; and
- the perception that escape is impossible.

When both emotional and physical abuse are present prior to a murder, it is emotional abuse that most often directly precedes it. The partial loss of memory means that the victim may not recall what happened for periods of time during the murder incident. “The gun went off” is the typical description of a victim who has struck out in terror after being threatened. She may not remember pulling the trigger. Flailing out with a knife or gun is a characteristic response of an emotionally abused woman in a traumatic situation. The flailing may be verbal or physical and is a random series of movements or verbalisations intended as self-defence. They may lead to additional abuse, or result in the abuser’s death (Loring, 1994:55).

2.2.9 Emotional abuse and the control of the abuser

Kirkwood (1993:63) postulates that control by one over another exists when one person has greater influence over the other’s behaviour or perspectives than does that person herself. Emotional control therefore occurs when one loses touch with one’s own wants, needs and perceptions and influenced more by the demands and perspectives of a partner. The author further states that power is the sum total of personal and external resources brought to bear on the exertion of control. Thus, a partner who is abusive uses his own powers of persuasion, his sensitivity to the vulnerabilities of a woman, his physical strength and many more personal resources to enact control. If that partner has access to external resources, such as management of the family income, he can use this to enact further control, such as economic deprivation.

The author further states that the balance of control between women and their abusers can shift. Women can experience either increased or decreased abuser control. This movement can be visualised as a spiral. Both inward and outward directions of movement described in women’s stories include events or dynamics which are similar. Their stories were commonly circular in that, as they spoke chronologically of what had happened, they continually came back to core issues at different stages of the process. Yet, when a woman moves outward along the spiral path, towards decreased abuser

control, she will have a different perspective on the re-emerging issues than when she is held tightly in the centre or is being pulled inward, by establishment of control by the abuser. For example, a woman may describe returning to a relationship with an abuser after a period of separation. She may have regained hope that her partner had changed, and may have returned only to experience the same forms of subtle emotional abuse gradually transforming into physical violence. This progression may, on the surface, seem to mirror what she experienced before she left her partner. She may even feel that she has come full circle and blame herself for what seems like a repeat of the past. However, through the act of leaving, she has gained the knowledge that she can leave. If she stayed in a shelter, or with relatives, she will know that she has support and that she is not alone. All this knowledge, plus her past history with her partner, can give her a different perspective on the progression of abuse, and despite her return, she may not be as close to the centre of the spiral as she was previously. No single shift in position on the spiral lasts for a specific time. The time depends on the nature of the relationship itself, that is, how strongly an abuser maintains control and how many or few resources the woman has available to shift the power imbalance (Kirkwood, 1993:67).

2.2.10 Link between emotional and physical abuse

In Kirkwood (1993:44) a victim of abuse states the following:

I used to say I found the verbal abuse much worse than the physical abuse. Even though the physical abuse was terrible. Because I suppose it was only – only!? God – once, twice a year. It was the constant verbal barracking that used to get me down more than anything. Cause that's how you lose your self-esteem. But the violence is awful, the violence is terrible. I think you've got to take that, though, as part of it. If you're constantly being told you are a useless jerk, to be thumped just...compounds it.

This passage describes the theme which underlies all women's descriptions of physical assault, namely, that there is a fundamental relation between emotional and physical abuse. First, there is a level of abuse which is purely

emotional, that is, “constant verbal barracking”, which has an intense impact on women and their psychological state. Secondly, there is an emotional impact in the enactment of physical abuse, and the sense that this aspect of physical abuse reinforces or “compounds” the impact of abuse enacted on an emotional level. Thirdly, emotional abuse lays the foundation, within the psychological state of an abused woman, for the way in which she interprets the physical violence which is committed by her partner. The author further states that the centrality of the theme of emotional abuse was also evident in the women’s experiences after their relationships had ended, that is, the recovery from emotional abuse was far more integral to the women’s experiences than was recovery from physical abuse (Kirkwood, 1993:45).

Walker (1979:xiv) states that defining wife battering causes problems for those dealing with the syndrome. The primary definition most researchers have used is physical violence resulting in bodily injury. Physical violence also has been the accepted research standard in the area of child abuse. During her research however, she states that she could not ignore pleas of battered women who insisted that psychological abuse was often more harmful than the physical abuse, “I found that both forms of violence exist in battering couples and they cannot be separated, despite the difficulty in documentation. It is relatively easy to count black eyes and broken ribs and assign severity ratings according to medical standards. To measure psychological abuse, the severity must be estimated with both the frequency with which it occurs and the subjective impact it has upon the woman. Most of the women in this project describe incidents involving psychological humiliation and verbal harassment as their **worst battering experiences**, whether or not they had been physically abused”.

According to Martin (1981:50) most professionals believe that physical battles grow out of verbal battles. During fights between intimate partners, each party knows the other well, are aware of the vulnerable spots in their partner’s armour, and can easily resort to below-the-belt comments that are deeply wounding to the other’s self-esteem. When this happens, the quarrel becomes heated, and the potential for physical violence is unleashed.

2.2.10.1 Catalyst hypothesis: Conditions under which coercive communication leads to physical aggression

Felson (in Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:20) defines coercive behaviour as an action taken with the intention of imposing harm on another or forcing compliance. Coercion therefore involves the threatened or real use of negative sanctions to control another's behaviour. Actions typically labelled as aggressive can be grouped into larger categories of threats and punishments. Coercive forms of communication are evident within each of these larger categories. Threats are **expressions** of intent to do harm to another and forecast that the victim will be punished unless she complies. Punishments are **acts** intended to do harm to another. Felson (in Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:21) distinguishes between three types of harm, namely:

- An individual may exert control over another by inflicting physical or emotional pain. Such harm may be achieved through direct bodily contact or by the use of weapons or objects. In some cases, communication is used to induce negative emotional states. For example, individuals who want to control and punish their intimate partners often induce jealousy by exaggerating their attraction to rivals, flirting, or actually going out with others. Although not resulting in physical injury, such emotional states may be accompanied by physiological reactions symptomatic of anger or depression.
- Punishment may be aimed at depriving another of needed resources. This is referred to as strategic need deprivation. For example, relational influence is sometimes exerted by giving a partner the "silent treatment" during which individuals are unresponsive to their partners, ignore their partners, and refuse to do favours until their partners comply to their wishes.
- Coercive partners may try to do social harm by attacking their partner's self-concepts. Communication is a fundamental process by which a person's identity is formed and maintained and, typically communicators

support each other's image or face. But sometimes they engage in insults and criticism that can adversely impact self-image and psychological well-being.

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:21) thus conclude that communication can be a coercive means of achieving relational control. It can forecast impending negative situations or may itself serve as punishment. Because of its punitive nature, coercive communication may prompt physical retaliation and could also play a role in physically violent episodes.

2.2.10.2 Coercive communication and interpersonal violence

Coercive communication as a form of aggression has been variously labelled emotional abuse, negative effect, psychological abuse, psychological aggression, symbolic aggression, verbal aggression and verbal coercion. Generally, research has proved that there is a positive correlation between the frequency of coercive communication and the use of physical aggression. This can be taken as evidence that verbal aggression serves as a catalyst for physical aggression. In effect, verbal aggression can prompt or provoke physically aggressive responses. However, coercive communication has the potential to lead to violence, but does not always do so. There are four conditions under which the catalyst hypothesis can be used to support the argument that verbal aggression may lead to physical aggression (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:22), namely:

- **Face loss** is attacking another person's identity which results in aggressive retaliation aimed at restoring face. Successful physical retaliation against a verbally aggressive person might, clearly establish one's physical dominance, humiliate the attacker, prevent future face attacks and force the aggressor to make amends. Although every insult and threat may be an attack on another's identity, aggressive retaliation occurs only when the loss of face exceeds some threshold. Face loss is most likely to prompt retaliation when it is viewed as illegitimate,

unmitigated, central to the victim's self-concept, public, and when the victim lacks self-control.

- **Desire to control** is the fundamental need that individuals have to control their environment. By doing so, they gain resources that they need. Interpersonal relationships are important sources of social need satisfaction, and control may therefore be a goal of intimate interactions. As relational intimacy increases, there is an increased desire to control a partner's behaviour. Although generally higher than in non-intimate relationships, the degree to which individuals wish to control their intimate partners varies. Control attempts are relatively infrequent until a person's level of control falls below some minimum threshold. Thus, when a person feels out of control, he or she will try to control their environment by using various strategies. In initial attempts, non-coercive strategies may be chosen, for example, reasoning, stating desires and offers of compromise. Individuals would initially avoid verbally aggressive techniques. If initial, non-coercive attempts are met with resistance, some individuals will switch to more coercive tactics. They may use high-pressure tactics (for example, arguing, shouting, threatening to use force, and actually using force) and to express negative emotions (for example, getting angry and demanding compliance) as measures of a last resort to enforce compliance.

The catalyst effect may result from a process by which individuals increase their level of force to overcome the level of resistance. This principle is different from reciprocal behaviour. Instead of matching the degree of force associated with resistance, individuals apply greater pressure as a means of extinguishing further defiance. In the process, the conflict escalates to verbal and eventually physical coercion. The catalyst effect may result from a "battle for control" during which partners try to dominate each other while resisting being dominated. Such power struggles are evident in cases of marital abuse. If individuals are unable to secure compliance, they may shift to more forceful coercive strategies to overcome resistance. If the target is openly defiant or the communicator is

unskilful, then the conflict may escalate to aggression much faster (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:30).

- **Violence potential** constitutes the perceived amount of bodily harm that might be inflicted on another. This is a subjective perception, as in some cases, an individual may appear to be more powerful to others than he or she thinks and in other instances a person may underestimate his or her violence potential. Every person has a degree of potential for violence that can be brought to bear against another. Some individuals, have greater coercive potential than others (they may be physically bigger and more skilled at physical aggression, or have a weapon) and a person's potential for violence may vary with the situation. Because of their greater size, males often possess greater potential than some females. The possession of violence potential may predispose an individual to use it, and when trying to control another, they are prone to turn to physical aggression to overcome resistance. If their aggression results in compliance, then that response is reinforced and may be repeated in future conflicts.

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:31) state that this trend is however not universal. In at least **three** cases violence potential may not be acted on. **First**, the mere perception of violence may be sufficient to force compliance and therefore it is unnecessary to activate it. Thus, violence potential may be sufficiently intimidating to enforce compliance. **Second**, a person's willingness to act on his or her potential for violence may be restrained by the partner's coercive potential. Physical aggression is withheld because there exists a possibility that the partner might retaliate, leave the relationship, call the police, or that the aggressor might be stigmatised by family and friends. **Third**, even if a person has greater violence potential than his or her partner, he or she may be constrained by societal norms about the use of aggression. Males are aware of prohibitions against physically aggressing against weaker individuals. To do so is to lose face. To aggress against an equal, however, is a "fair fight" and to "take on" a stronger individual is perceived to be heroic. The willingness of males to

act on their coercive potential against females varies therefore, with the situation.

- **Anger** which is expressed verbally may increase the likelihood of aggression. Anger however, is not necessarily bad for conflict. It is possible that without anger, a person is insufficiently motivated to confront ongoing problems and a person's muted emotional response to a complaint could be interpreted as indifference to the partner's concerns or as "stonewalling", which may result in resentment and further attacks. Prolonged and uncontrollable anger, however, can be dysfunctional. When a person is unable to control his or her anger, it may be difficult to resolve a dispute. Stark and Flitcraft (1996:33) speculate that although anger and contempt are reciprocated in all couples, those who have no history of physical aggression are able to break the cycle. Although verbally aggressive couples attack each other through the content of their communication, they control and reduce their anger and avoid escalation at a certain point. This ability to control anger is central to reducing the likelihood of physical aggression. Individuals who are adept at emotional control are also less aggressive and less likely to have engaged in criminal behaviour. As a result, the lack of emotional control plays a role in the catalyst effect.

Although the presence of an anger-prone person increases the probability that verbal aggression results in physical aggression, it may not assure it. It is possible that a non-aggressive partner may close off the argument before it escalates to violence. The likelihood of conflict escalation is greater when both partners lack impulse control than when only one does. In such cases, there is no one to close off the dispute before it erupts into violence. The mutual absence of impulse control implies that violence may be initiated by either partner. As a result, there are a greater number of potentially violent interchanges (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:35).

Verbal aggression can block rational problem solving, as it inhibits and interferes with the ability to resolve other conflicts. Instead, it produces

retaliatory aggression. This retaliatory aggression, which is referred to as negative reciprocity, is believed to play a key role in the escalation of verbal aggression into physical aggression, as well as, being damaging in its own right. Negative reciprocity, thus occurs when couples match aversive behaviour with aversive behaviour. From a communications perspective, the dynamic underlying the negative reciprocity may be relational control, which is a process by which the couple attempts to establish their individual and joint rights to define and direct the actions within the relationship. When both partners attempt to direct, and neither submits to the other's attempt at control, a pattern of escalation, similar to negative reciprocity, emerges. Relational control thus explains how behaviour is mutually produced, with one partner's behaviour contingent on the others. The authors postulate that couples who are distressed escalate negative behaviour and withhold positive behaviour and found that distressed couples engage in more negative reciprocity and also perceive more negativity in each other's behaviour. Hence, the presence of verbal aggression impacts the quality of marital life in both direct and indirect ways. Directly, it creates harm to the self-concepts of marital partners, and indirectly, it creates a withholding of support and a lack of positive communication (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:200).

2.2.11 The impact of emotional abuse on the children

2.2.11.1 The intergenerational cycle of patriarchy

Walker (1979:146) states that children learn the messages of their culture in the home, and in a home where the sex roles are stereotyped, sexist attitudes teach little boys and girls, that little boys are stronger than little girls, and that boys deserve the very best as they are the ones that will continue the family name (giving them a higher status in the family). Girls learn to be nurturers and the not-so-hidden message contained in female nurturing behaviour, is that girls must use their energy in supporting boys to achieve success. Thus, it is acceptable for men to coerce women into doing what they want them to do, because men know best. And so, the patriarchal legacy is passed on.

2.2.11.2 The intergenerational cycle of violence

Stevens (1996:4) postulates that children who see or hear their mothers being abused are also victims of emotional abuse. Children who experience these forms of abuse demonstrate higher rates of physical aggressiveness, delinquency and interpersonal problems than other children. Children whose parents are additionally physically abusive are even more likely to experience such difficulties. Growing up in such an environment is terrifying and severely affects a child's psychological and social development. Male children may learn to model their father's behaviour while female children may learn that being abused is a normal part of relationships and that it is to be endured by a woman. This contributes to the intergenerational cycle of violence.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In this chapter some views on the historical development of patriarchy as the root of the victimisation, of women in general, was documented. The different forms of emotional abuse of women, by men were also explored, as well as the effects it has on the victim. This historical and literature overview gives the reader a better understanding of the concept of emotional abuse in general.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES: THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE ON THE VICTIM

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Champagne (1999:2) states that, feminist definitions and research on violence against women initially focused on physical battering. The ground-breaking theory developed by Lenore Walker namely, The “cycle of violence”, attempted to explain the complex dynamics of woman abuse, but included emotional abuse only as part of the “tension building” stage (Walker, 1979:34). Emotional abuse was not addressed as a separate form of abuse, but as a precursor to physical abuse. Academic research on emotional abuse has been difficult, not only due to the absence of a common definition, but also due to a lack of understanding of what constitutes emotional abuse in different cultural and societal contexts.

3.2 CYCLE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

Luv (2001:2) has suggested a similar cycle as that of Lenore Walker’s “Cycle of violence” for emotional abuse, which can also be linked to Walker’s psychosocial theory of learned helplessness. Luv describes the cycle and its phases as follows:

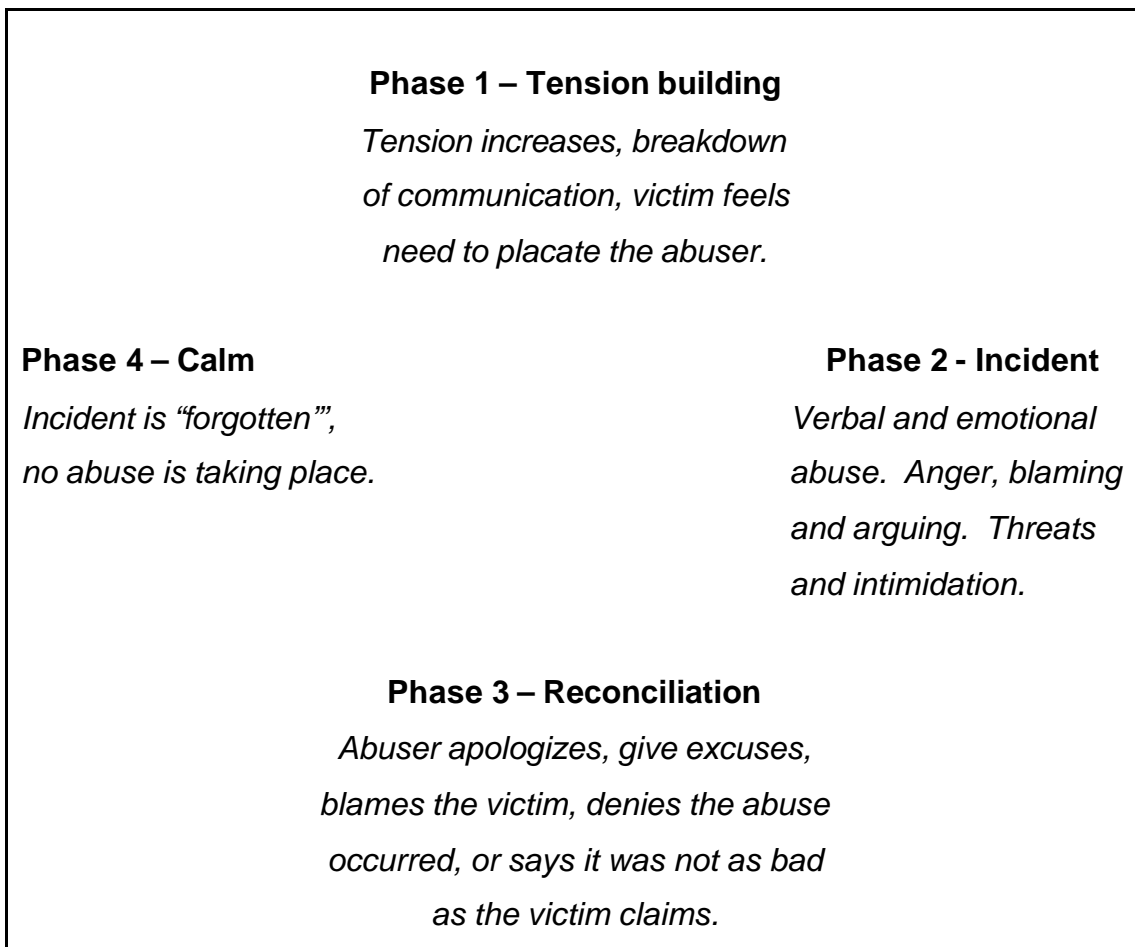


Figure 3.1 Cycle of emotional abuse

➤ **Phase 1**

The abuser becomes overly attached to his wife or girlfriend. This is because he only feels whole within an intimate relationship, because he has no sense of self. When he feels this extreme attachment he begins to fear his need for her. So as not to feel the fear of abandonment and to try to regain any kind of sense of self, he starts his personal vendetta to make her the “Bad girl” (in his mind) (Luv, 2001:4).

➤ **Phase 2**

After some time he becomes enraged, insulting her, throwing things, or threatening her, belittling her or using any other overtly abusive tactics. This is the rage release, where he releases his need of her, his fear of abandonment, his feelings of unworthiness and shame. He then feels calm and at peace. His rage is influenced by four factors (Luv, 2001:5), namely:

- He needs to vent his inner raging turmoil in order to feel good once again.
- He fears losing his wife or girlfriend and this fear makes him intensely angry. The more he fears it, the angrier he becomes as he fears his own vulnerability to her, and his helpless need of her.
- The more he feels needy of his wife, the more he depends on her, and the more likely he feels the need to end this dependence on her. His anger can push her away, and he can distance himself from her. Thus the separation abolishes him from having to fear her leaving him. It does not matter to him anymore.
- He has been consistently proven and repeatedly shown from his childhood experiences that an overpowering, authoritative, controlling abusive attitude gets him what he desires.

➤ **Phase 3**

Once he has vented his rage he returns to reality. He realises that his partner is very important to him and that he has done wrong and may lose her and thus becomes apologetic, docile and ashamed of his behaviour. His wife or girlfriend then re-enters the “Good girl” phase (Luv, 2001:5). He behaves in caring ways and promises to cease the abuse and/or to receive counselling. This creates a false sense of hope with the victim that the abuse will not occur again. The woman who is abused often believes that she is responsible for

making the relationship work, so she continues to modify her behaviour with the hope of de-escalating or preventing the abuse. She is at the most vulnerable stage during this time of the cycle. His attentiveness and promises are comforting and make it difficult for her to realise the full impact of his abuse (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998:1).

➤ **Phase 4**

His wife or girlfriend forgives him and the relationship is once again safe and happy. Everything runs smoothly for a period until tension builds, promises are replaced by threats, and the cycle is repeated (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998:2).

3.2.1 Psychosocial theory of learned helplessness

Lenore Walker (1979:43) developed the psychosocial theory of learned helplessness as a psychological rationale to explain why the abused woman becomes a victim and how the process of victimisation is perpetuated to the point of psychological paralysis. This theory is based on social-learning theory and suggests that:

- Man's superior physical strength, and society's message that a woman belongs to a man like property, influences a woman's self-perception.
- Women have learned to believe that they are powerless against men as the learned helplessness theory suggests.

Through research, psychologists attempt to understand how people's perception of their control over events in their lives contribute to the way they think and feel about themselves and their ability to act. Certain principles of learning theory provides a framework for understanding how the abused woman thinks and feels about herself and her situation (Walker, 1979:44).

- **Response-outcome**

Human beings have many voluntary responses which can be changed or modified, depending upon the outcome. If a voluntary response makes a difference in what happens, or operates on the environment in a successful way, the person will tend to repeat that voluntary response. This is the principle of reinforcement. If a person expects that a response she makes is going to produce a certain outcome, and her expectations are met when she makes that response, she may then feel that she has control over that situation. To check whether or not the person has actually had some control over a particular situation, she chooses to make the same response the next time, and if that outcome happens again, she can verify her ability to control it. The person can then choose not to make the response and thus the outcome does not happen. Human beings can therefore decide whether or not to make that voluntary response again, depending on whether or not they want their expectations met. This gives an individual a certain amount of power or control over her life. If, on the other hand, a person expects certain things to occur when making a certain response, and if they do not, she will often look for explanations as to why such expectations did not take place. If a logical explanation cannot be found after a time it is assumed that she has no control over the outcome. In this way, she learns what kind of behaviours in the environment can be controlled and which are beyond ones control (Walker, 1979:45).

- **Loss of voluntary control**

Behaviourists postulate that if an organism experiences situations which cannot be controlled, then the motivations to try to respond to such events when they are repeated will be impaired. Even if later on the organism is able to make appropriate responses which do not control events, the organism will have trouble believing that the responses are under its control and that they really do work. The organism will also have difficulty in learning how to repeat those responses. This results in a disturbance in the organism's emotional

and physical well-being. Both depression and anxiety are characteristics of such behaviour (Walker, 1979:45). Many theories in psychology define clinical depression as a state in which a person holds an exaggerated belief that whatever he or she does, it will not be good enough. Such people also believe that their inadequacies prevent them from controlling their lives effectively. A person who believes that she is helpless to control a situation also may believe that she is not capable enough to do so (Walker, 1979:50).

- **Learned helplessness**

Walker (1979:45) refers to the research of Seligman who hypothesised that dogs subjected to non-contingent negative reinforcement, could learn that their voluntary behaviour had no effect on controlling what happened to them. If such a negative stimulus was repeated, the dog's motivation to respond would decrease. Seligman placed dogs in cages and administered electrical shocks at random and at different intervals. These dogs learned that no matter what response they made, they could not control the shock. At first, the dogs tried to escape through various voluntary movements. When nothing they did, ended the shocks, the dogs ceased any further voluntary activity and became compliant, passive, and submissive. When Seligman tried to change this procedure and teach the dogs that they could escape by crossing to the other side of the cage, the dogs still would not respond. Even when the door was left open and the dogs were shown the way out, they remained passive, refused to leave, and did not avoid the shock. It took repeated dragging of the dogs to the exit to teach them how to respond voluntarily again. The earlier in life the dogs received such treatment, the longer it took to overcome the effects of this learned helplessness. Once they did learn that they could make the voluntary response, their helplessness disappeared.

The learned helplessness theory has three basic components:

- Information about what will happen.

- Thinking or cognitive representation about what will happen (learning, expectation, belief and perception).
- Behaviour toward what does happen.

It is the second or cognitive representation component where the faulty expectation, that response and outcome are independent, occurs. This is the point at which cognitive, motivational, and emotional disturbances originate. The expectation may or may not be accurate. Thus, if the person does have control over response-outcome variables, but believes she does not, the person responds with learned helplessness. If such a person believes that she does have control over a response-outcome contingency, even if she does not, the behaviour is not affected. Therefore, the actual nature of controllability is not as important as the belief, expectation, or cognitive set. Some people will persevere longer than others in trying to exercise control, but they will give up when they really believe the situation is hopeless.

Walker (1979:47) states that once a victim believes that she cannot control what happens to her, it is difficult to believe she can ever influence it, even if later she experiences a favourable outcome. This concept is important for understanding why women do not attempt to free themselves from an abusive relationship. Once the women are operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality and they become passive, submissive and helpless. They allow situations that appear to them to be out of their control actually to get out of their control. The author states that it often seems as if these women were not actually as helpless as they perceived themselves to be. However, their behaviour was determined by their negative cognitive set, or their perceptions of what they could or could not do, not by what actually existed. The abused women's behaviour showed similar characteristics to Seligman's dogs, namely, passive acceptance.

Walker (1979:49) further postulates that helplessness is learned on a relative continuum. There may be different levels of learned helplessness that a woman learns from an interaction of traditional female-role standards set by

societal expectations and individual personality development. The male-female relationship may be a specific area affected by this interactive developmental process. Abused women are most afflicted with feelings of helplessness in their relationships with men. Thus, according to this theory, women with responsible jobs and careers, resort to traditional female-role stereotyped behaviour with their partners, even though such behaviour is not present in other areas of their lives.

3.2.2 Conclusion

The cycle of emotional abuse by Luv (2001:1), which is linked to Lenore Walker's psychosocial theory of learned helplessness, describes and offers an explanation of how a woman falls victim to emotional abuse by her partner and what its eventual effect on her perception of her situation or reality is. It also offers one explanation of why a woman remains in an abusive relationship, even though it might not seem a viable one to the outside world. Walker also comments on sex-role expectations for women in Western society and how this might influence a woman's victimisation even further. Together Luv (2001:1) and Walker (1979:48) offer an in depth look at the cognitive processes and social influences that cause emotional abuse, however the latter is further explored in paragraph 3.3 for a more in depth explanation of this phenomenon.

3.3 PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE

3.3.1 Introduction

Martin (1981:17) is of the opinion that the door, behind which the abused wife is trapped, is the door to the family home. In one sense, the family home is supposed to provide refuge from the outside world, in another, it is a "family factory", designed to perpetuate its own values and to produce two or three replicas of itself as the children in the family marry (whether or not they are ready for, or suited for marriage). The nuclear family, with a man at its head, is the building block of society, and the social, religious, educational, and

economic institutions of society are designed to maintain, support, and strengthen family ties, even if the people involved “cannot stand the sight of each other” (Martin, 1981:18). Until recently, no acceptable alternatives to the nuclear family existed. People who chose to live alone or to share their homes with non-relatives, those who chose to set up a same-sex household, or who married but chose not to have children, were all seen as outcasts, failures or deviants. Although this is changing, the stereotype of the happy harmonious family persists in society. The author further postulates, that compared to this ideal family, most actual families, composed of real people, appear to be tragic failures.

3.3.2 The rise of the patriarchal household

Martin (1981:26) refers to the writings of Friedrich Engels (who first used the term patriarchal dominance with reference to the capitalistic societies of the early 1800's) who speculated that the transition from group marriage and the extended family (as practiced by ancient tribes) to the pairing marriage, commonly referred to as the nuclear family, brought about the overthrow of the 'mother right' and the enforcement of monogamy. As a result of growing population density, complex economic conditions, and the prohibitions established against marriages between relatives, the pairing family gradually became the norm for Western civilisations. The change from polygamy to monogamy had nothing to do with “individual sex love” and according to Martin (1981:27), Engels is of the opinion that the change could only have occurred because women must have longed for the right to chastity, to temporary or permanent marriage with one man only, as a deliverance from the growing complexity of human life, even in ancient times. This trend could not have originated with men, Engels points out, because men have never, even to the present day, dreamed of renouncing the pleasures of polygamy. Women thus sacrificed their power, through monogamous loyalty to her husband, for domestication and protective mating. Through this monogamous loyalty, she became the exclusive property of her protector. Polygamy and infidelity remained men's privileges, but the strictest fidelity was demanded of the woman in order to guarantee and authenticate the new “father right”.

Engels (in Martin, 1981:27) called this development in human relations “the world’s historic defeat of the female sex”.

With the advent of the pairing marriage, the man seized the reins in the home and began viewing the people in the family as units of property that comprised his wealth. The word “family” is derived from the Roman word *familia*, signifying the totality of slaves belonging to an individual. The slave-owner had absolute power of life and death over the human beings who belonged to him. Wives were bought and sold as if they were livestock a custom which originated in ancient Roman times. Prospective husbands paid fathers a “bride-price” for their daughters as ownership was transferred and this arrangement persists in many cultures to this day (for example, “lobolo” which is a custom in many black cultures in South Africa). In some cases the father pays the groom to take his daughter off his hands. Presumably the payment of the dowry is a necessary precaution, since it was viewed that nothing is more worthless in this system than an unmarried daughter passed child-bearing age. If a woman showed any signs of having a will or mind of her own, it seemed only natural that she be beaten as a strong-willed horse might be whipped into submission (Martin, 1981:27). Thus the rise of the patriarchal system allowed a man the right of ownership over the property and people that comprised his household.

3.3.3 The nature of the patriarchy and its maintenance

According to Dobash and Dobash (1979:43) the patriarchy consists of two elements, namely, its structure and its ideology. The structural aspect of the patriarchy is found in the hierarchical organisation of social institutions of social relations, an organisation pattern that by definition puts selected individuals, groups, or classes into positions of power, privilege, and leadership and others to some form of subordination. Access to positions is rarely based upon individual ability but is institutionalised to such an extent that those who are in positions of power and privilege do so either because of some form of ascribed status or because of institutionalised forms of advantage that give them the opportunity to achieve status. It is this

institutionalised nature of the hierarchical structure that predetermines which individuals or groups will prevail and which ones will be subordinate. It is also through such institutionalised differentials that those who obtain power and privilege are able to acquire further power and privilege for themselves and for those they have selected to inherit their positions. The authors also postulate that one of the means by which this order is supported and reinforced has been to insure that women have no legitimate means of changing or managing the institutions that define and maintain their subordination. Confining women in the home and banning them from meaningful positions outside the family, denies them the opportunity to bring about change in their status.

The maintenance of such a hierarchical order, and the continuation of the authority and advantage of the few, is to some extent dependent upon its acceptance by many. It is the patriarchal ideology that serves to reinforce this acceptance. The ideology is supportive of the principle of a hierarchical order, as opposed to an egalitarian one. Dobash and Dobash (1979:44) state that it is a rationalisation for inequality and serves as a means of creating acceptance of subordination by those destined to lower positions. The ideology also insures that controls regulate the complaints of most subordinates. Socialisation into an acceptance of the rightful nature of the order and its inequalities can, allow such inequalities to go unquestioned and unchallenged, or to make challenges seem unnatural or immoral. When the ideology legitimises the order and corrects it, the potential conflict inherent in all hierarchies is more likely to produce conflict within the individual and less likely to emerge as overt resistance. In this respect women in general and wives in particular largely have been denied the means to object effectively against their subordination. The successful socialisation of men and women for their roles within a relationship has provided a mechanism for both the legitimisation and reinforcement of the marital hierarchy.

The history of the patriarchal family (see paragraph 2.1) shows the integration of the family in society and the way in which the family, the church, the economic order, and the state each have influenced and supported one

another in maintaining their own hierarchies. The patriarchal structure of the family and the ideology that supported it were not left unchallenged, but parts of the structure and ideology can be found throughout time to the present date. Modifications can be seen, with the advent of women in male dominated work spheres, but the essence of the patriarchal family and of the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife has not been eliminated. It continues to be the foundation of male supremacy and of the subordination of women in society and in marriage and can thus form the foundation of wife abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979:45).

3.3.4 Behaviour patterns in a system of patriarchy

Stanko (1985:10) states that there are traditional assumptions about women who experience emotional abuse and/or physical violence, these are:

- Some women are alluring, masochistic and provoke the uncontrollable responses of some men.

- Some women are pure and proper, but come across some men who are uncontrollable.

The author further postulates that when society tries to account for women's experiences of male abuse, explanations of it, centre around the naturalness or unnaturalness of such abuse in relation to women's behaviour. As a result, women's experiences of male violence or abuse are described through an understanding of men's behaviour, which is either "typical" (not harmful) or "aberrant" (harmful). If it is considered "typical", men's physical, sexual or emotional aggression towards women is left, to a large extent, unchallenged. For example, the sexual advance by a male professor toward a young female student, the wolf whistle on the street, the man's brushing up against a female secretary's body in the office or the husband's comments about his wife's appearance, are what some people accept as natural expressions of maleness. These expressions are assumed to be non-threatening to women, some would even say, flattering. The vicious rape, the brutal murder of a

women or the physical battering of a partner, are the “aberrant” examples of maleness and are threatening to women. Lines are thus easily drawn between “aberrant” and “typical” types of male behaviour. The “aberrant” behaviour is even labelled as (potentially) criminal behaviour. What becomes lost in this common-sense separation between “aberrant” and “typical” male behaviour is women-defined understanding of what is threatening or what a woman would consider potentially violent. Women who feel violated or intimidated by “typical” male behaviour have no way of specifying how or why “typical” male behaviour seems like “aberrant” male behaviour (Stanko, 1985:10).

Stanko (1985:17) continues to say that women do define instances of male behaviour as abusive, threatening, violent or potentially violent, but because women experience the world through male perceptions of it, they question their own feelings and perceptions of the world. They know that their private and public assessment of their experiences of abuse or violence, are very different. Women also learn to define their worlds and thus their experience as less important than those of men. In the social hierarchy of value, they are less. Women therefore internalise and silence many of their experiences of sexual, physical or emotional abuse. The author further comments that only “bad” girls get hurt. Rather than being exposed as “bad”, women remain silent. As a result, women feel shame, humiliation, and self-blame for men’s aggressive behaviour towards them. Women’s experiences of male aggression are thus welded to male dominance in Western society, which rests upon women’s secondary position.

3.3.5 Sexual terrorism

Davis (1994:41) describes a system called “sexual terrorism”, by which males frighten and thus control and dominate females. It can be compared to political terrorism, in that it is supported by ideology and propaganda. It is indiscriminate and unpredictable, and relies on voluntary compliance, that is, numbers of men who are socialised to maintain the fear, and numbers of women who are often socialised to be victims. The only difference between

political terrorism and sexual terrorism is that society sympathises with the victims of political terrorism and the perpetrators of sexual terrorism. Davis continues to state that, sexual terrorism dictates to some extent how women dress, how they walk, how men are looked at and behaved towards. It dictates where women go at night, what time to leave, even where to park their vehicles and whether to travel alone or not. The point of departure of sexual terrorism is that women are always potential victims and often not safe. It has the effect of keeping women “in their place” and keeping them on guard at all times. In addition, sexual terrorism is what Davis (1994:42) has termed a “protection racket”, because women look to men to protect them from other men. All men benefit from sexual terrorism because it gives them dominance and control over the women in their lives. This is done under the guise of “protection”. However, these “protectors” can be abusive.

3.3.6 The marriage contract

Martin (1981:36) points out that Weitzman, is of the opinion that the marriage contract and the restrictions it imposes on individual rights, have been justified by the state’s interest in maintaining the traditional family structure. The marriage contract is thus the mechanism by which patriarchy is maintained. Martin states that present law continues to uphold the old tradition. The husband is still head of the household and responsible for the support of the family, the wife is still responsible for housework and childcare. The married woman’s loss of identity begins with the loss of her maiden name. She takes her husband’s domicile and becomes his legal dependent. Certain critical assumptions are built into the marriage contract, according to Martin (1981:37), to which both parties subscribe whether they are aware of it or not. These assumptions are that, marriage represents a life time commitment, that monogamy should be enforced, that procreation is an essential element in the marriage relationship, and that a strict division of labour should exist within a family. The exclusiveness and permanence of marriage also means that the wife is permanently available to the husband as a sex partner and can be punished if she is unfaithful (Martin, 1981:38).

3.3.7 Conclusion

Stereotypical beliefs, myths and behaviour about sex roles for women and men, and about what true love is, are often at the root of emotionally abusive behaviour. Women, in many cultures, are often socialised to be accommodating and thus believe that it is their responsibility to care for others at their own expense. Men are often socialised to believe that it is their task to protect women, be in control at all times, and to “call the shots” (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998:2). Further, many young women and men believe that they must be in a relationship to be worthy in society. They believe that they should devote themselves totally to their partner, often to the exclusion of other relationships and interests. Jealousy, possessiveness and sometimes abuse, can be seen as a sign of true love. Believing that any relationship, even an abusive one, is better than no relationship at all, leaves individuals without the support that they need to leave an unhealthy relationship (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998:5).

Lenore Walker (1979: x-xi) in her book, *The battered woman*, states:

I believe that only where there is true equality between males and females can there be a society that is free from violence. Although I believe that aggressiveness is not an innate trait but one which is learned early in life, I do not believe we can eliminate violence from our world without also eliminating discrimination on the basis of sex. My feminist analysis of all violence is that sexism is the real underbelly of human suffering. Men fight with other men to prove that they are not ‘sissies’ like women. Women show passive faces to the world while struggling to keep their lives together without letting men know how strong they really are for fear of hurting their men’s masculine image...Little girls and little boys learn these sex-role expectations through early socialization. Unless we strive for equal power relationships between men and women, women will continue to be victims.

3.4 FAMILY VIOLENCE FROM A COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVE

3.4.1 Introduction

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:2) claim that when violence occurs it is not an isolated event in spouses' lives, but is embedded firmly in the process of interpersonal communication which people use to regulate their daily lives. They state however, that much of the research on family abuse has treated violence as an isolated form of behaviour by concentrating on describing the personality factors and social characteristics of both the abusers and their victims. This approach fails to place violent behaviour, whether physical or emotional abuse, within the broader context of human interaction.

The authors further explain that humans construct their reality and co-ordinate their actions by intentionally using verbal and nonverbal symbols whose meanings are shared by others. Symbols arouse meanings according to commonly shared conventions, for example, customs and norms. Verbal and nonverbal communication is regulated by these social conventions that vary from one culture to another, and that govern, what is appropriate, expected, permissible, or prohibited in specific social contexts. The authors state that "communication competence" refers to the ability to appropriately and effectively use verbal and nonverbal symbols within a given language community, for example, the Afrikaans speaking culture. Appropriate communication avoids the violation of valued social norms, whereas effective communication obtains valued goals and effects. A communication approach views abusive and violent acts as the dark side of communication and the abusers and violators as communicatively incompetent. A communication perspective is therefore useful for examining family relationships because interaction is the core of relationships. It is through communicative action that persons initiate, define, maintain, and terminate their social bonds.

3.4.2 Defining violence and abuse from a communication perspective

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:5) state that many definitions of violence and abuse appear to focus on behaviours that inflict physical and psychological pain, injury, or suffering or both on another person. From a communication perspective, these behaviours are redefined as acts or actions with the intention, from a message sender's point of view or with perceived intention, from a message receiver's point of view. In addition, these actions may be verbal or nonverbal, or both. Because violence appears to involve elements of power and control, a definition of violence should include the ability to impose one's will, wants, needs or desires on another person.

In summary, the abovementioned authors state that, violence or abuse may be defined as the ability to impose one's will on another person through the use of verbal or nonverbal acts, or both, in such a way that violates socially acceptable standards and carried out with intention or the perceived intention of inflicting physical or psychological pain, injury, or suffering, or both. The range of abusive behaviours includes mild forms of verbal intimidations, severe beatings, and violent rapes and homicides. Violence ranges from carefully planned attacks to sudden emotional outbursts inflicting injury on other persons. The description of a communication perspective on domestic violence includes the goals and effects of message behaviours that are intended or perceived as intended. The goals or effects represent the dimensions of communication.

3.4.3 Violence and the dimensions of communication

When applied to the subject of family violence, the **three** dimensions of communication, namely, **instrumental**, **relational**, and **identity**, provide an alternative view from the traditional study of the subject. Such a view reveals how communication functions differently in abusive and non-abusive families (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:8):

3.4.3.1 Family violence as the instrumental dimension of communication

The instrumental dimension of family violence is task accomplishing, goal attaining, or issue resolving. Among other types of behaviour, on the part of the victims, that supposedly precipitate violence, the only distinct pattern is that the behaviour represents the victim's failure or refusal to comply with an abuser's wishes.

Violence may occur in the family because the victim cannot easily end the relationship with the abuser. In society, attempts to leave one's spouse or children may be met with harsh social sanctions. Even ending living arrangements may be complicated for some romantically involved couples. Unable to end companionate, marital, and familial obligations, individuals may become frustrated, angry, and resentful. According to the frustration-aggression hypothesis, when goal attainment is blocked frustration increases and, as a result, persons become more aggressive, increasingly more threatening, and eventually violent. When these feelings and abusive behaviours occur in the privacy of the household, the immediate rewards of using violence to reduce anger or frustration may appear preferable to rational conversation with one's children or partner that would take longer and offer less predictable results. Thus, abusive men who see their wives or children blocking their goals can experience mounting frustration and turn violent to coerce them into compliance (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:8).

3.4.3.2 Family violence as the relationship dimension of communication

The relationship dimension of communication focuses on the degree of commitment to a premarital or marital relationship, love and emotional involvement, jealousy, conflict, influence of friends and relatives, interpersonal trust, separation-break-up-divorce, compatibility, frequency of sex, sexual satisfaction, and balance of power. Regarding this dimension of communication, there are two ways in which it emerges in an abusive family.

First, relationship issues may be the focus of abuse. For example, violence may result from a jealous outrage in which a couple suffers serious conflict over one partner's lack of commitment to their relationship. Second, abuse over non-relationship concerns may have effects on the relationship that were not intended by the abuser. For example, a conflict over instrumental concerns, such as sex, money, or relatives, that ends up in violence, may also result in separation and eventually divorce. Although it may be thought that violence harms relationships, this is not always the case. Violence is sometimes seen by some romantic partners as a sign of love and commitment, and some of these relationships may even be described as satisfying (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:9).

3.4.3.3 Family violence as the identity dimension of communication

The identity dimension of communication includes self-esteem, sexual esteem, a male's manhood or masculinity, a female's womanhood or femininity, impression formation and management, egocentrism, appearing to be in control of others, perceptions of oneself, and traditional stereotypes regarding sex roles. As with the relationship dimension, the identity dimension emerges in abusive families in two ways. First, the identification of issues may be the focus of a serious conflict. For example, questioning a partner's manhood may result in him becoming overly aggressive to prove himself. Second, arguments over instrumental or relationship concerns may have unintended effects on the identities of the combatants, for example, violence resulting from a conflict over a task or relationship issue may make one of the partners appear immature or selfish. Abusers may also use their aggression for ego satisfaction. Stark and Flitcraft (1996:14) compare abusive, with non-abusive husbands, to show that abusers have greater sexual pre-occupation and greater sexual esteem, than non-abusers. They conclude that an egocentric pattern of sexual behaviour appears in the marital relationship of the abuser. Similarly, violence allows the abuser to have an identity as "the one who wears the pants in the house" (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:14). This identity includes an abuser's attempts to appear dominant.

3.4.4 Systems theory and the communication perspective

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:67) state that the family may be viewed as a system of interacting individuals and relationships. It is part of larger systems or supra-systems, and it encompasses individuals and multiple interdependent relationships or sub-systems, for example, marital or sibling sub-systems. Individuals and internal subsystems are locked together by the complex interdependency of mutual needs, communication patterns, commitments, and loyalties. Thus, the family is more than the sum of its parts, and any action by one person or sub-system could affect all other members of the system. In addition, family members rely on each other to balance the tasks of maintaining the family structure (*status quo*) while adapting to internal (developmental) and external (societal) changes.

Communication is inherent to the understanding of family systems theory. Messages are continually being conveyed verbally and nonverbally in an organised process of feedback loops. Negative feedback loops serve to maintain the previously known state or homeostasis. Each communicated action serves to maintain the familiar and thus the predictability of future events and equilibrium is preserved. This view interprets the abusive action as important in maintaining the family's patterns of interaction. Family boundaries with regards to who is "in", and who is "out" of the system, act as barriers to regulate the flow (input and output) of information and resources into and out of the family system or subsystems. In abusive families, boundaries are thought to be overly fluid or overly rigid (too few or too stringent restrictions). Stark and Flitcraft (1996:68) mention that Rosenblatt, argues that societal views and expectations provide a context for permeability, for example, because of generally sexist societal views, women may be granted less privacy in the home than men, resulting in greater frustration and anger. The expectation that the family is a "haven from a heartless world" reinforces the sanctity of the nuclear family unit. In a dysfunctional family, the strong boundary may protect the family as a prison would, and not as a haven would.

3.4.5 Conclusion

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:69) explain family violence from a communicative perspective and researcher found it useful for this study in order to illustrate how interpersonal communication patterns can influence emotional and also physical abuse in a relationship, especially in the context of domestic violence. Communication, whether verbal or non-verbal can cause a variety of behaviours, from mild intimidations to overt violence. These authors explain the latter dynamics in a relationship effectively and successfully link this to the systems theory to further illustrate these dynamics of communication in an intimate relationship context.

3.5 A SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE ON RELATIONSHIPS

3.5.1 Introduction

A system may be described generally as a complex of elements or components directly or indirectly related in a causal network, such that each component is related to at least some others in a more or less stable way within any particular period of time. The components may be relatively simple and stable, or complex and changing. They may vary in only one or two properties or take on many different states. The interrelations between them may be mutual or unidirectional, linear, non-linear or intermittent, and varying in degrees of causal priority. The particular kinds of stable interrelationships of components that become established at any time constitute the particular structure of the system at that time, thus achieving a kind of “whole” with some degree of continuity and boundary (Giles-Sims, 1986:7).

3.5.2 An abusive relationship as a system

Conceptualising the abusive relationship as a system means that one can look at the process of actions and reactions as a continuous causal chain, each reaction becoming in turn a precipitant. A system can also be looked at to find the periods of stability and change, and identify the processes that took

place during different times to produce stability or change. Giles-Sims (1986:9) further explains that systems have boundaries that define where the system begins and ends, and what information or behaviour is an acceptable part of that system. Any behaviour that deviates from the ongoing pattern of behaviour or that challenges the boundaries of the system triggers a response. The nature of the response is governed by how the new behaviour fits the goals of the particular system, or the particular components of the system. Giles-Sims (1986:10) describes this through the use of a case study from his research:

Mark's demand for sex and Jane's compliance had been an established part of their relationship until a specific episode changed the dynamics of the relationship. Mark expected Jane to comply as she had before. This time she said no, and the response was a new behaviour on her part. Mark could have said, "Okay, you have a right to say no if you don't want sex", or he could do as he did and tell her she had no right to say no because she was his 'property'. Because Mark's goal was to maintain his 'property rights', he responded by reasserting his authority instead of accepting Jane's refusal. Even though Jane did not go along with having sex at that point, Mark reasserted his dominance both with verbal and non-verbal abuse. This re-established his pattern of dominance. If he had not rejected Jane's response, this would have been new behaviour to which Jane could have responded according to her own goals, which would mean that the stable pattern of his asserting dominance and her compliance would have changed. The new behaviour would theoretically have set off a chain of reactions and adjustments because the components of the system are related in a mutually causal way.

3.5.3 Positive and negative feedback

Giles-Sims (1986:10) postulates that responses to new behaviour are called feedback because the response conveys information to the first member of the system about how the preceding acts, fractions of information, gestures, or other communications are received. New input into a system represents

deviation from the stabilised, ongoing pattern. Because the new input is different, triggers a response that may discourage or encourage new behaviour. Negative feedback tends to reduce the likelihood that new behaviour will occur again.

In the case of Mark and Jane (see paragraph 3.5.2), Mark's response represented negative feedback to Jane's new behaviour of saying no. His response made it less likely that Jane would say no again, than if he had respected her wish.

Positive feedback tends to support new behaviour. The information conveyed, whether intentionally or not, is that the new behaviour is acceptable or effective within the system. If Mark had responded positively toward Jane's request, she would have been more likely to say no again when the demand for sex did not coincide with her own desire. Positive feedback to new behaviour allows new behaviour into the system and thus promotes change in other parts of the system. Perhaps Jane's saying no would bring about a change in Mark to be more considerate or kind in his approaches to their sexual relationship (Giles-Sims, 1986:10).

3.5.4 Open versus closed systems

Systems that have the same characteristics and the same boundaries over a long period of time remain in static equilibrium. These systems can be called closed because they do not adapt to changes in the outside environment. Boundaries exist between the system and the outside social environment. Sometimes these boundaries are natural phenomena, such as a river between two tribes and at other times the boundaries may be created by system rules. For example, a husband forbids his wife to have contact with certain family members, or friends, that he does not approve of.

No social systems are completely closed. All systems exist on a continuum from open, to closed. At the one end, the system is entirely open to input from the outside. Most social systems are adaptive, and there can be a

gradual change and development over a period of time. The degree of openness or closedness is related to the amount of change in a social system. In general, the more open the system, the more change, and the more closed the system, the more stable the pattern of behaviour and the less the system changes. This concept may help to explain the patterns of wife abuse. In a relatively closed system it can be expected to find highly repetitive patterns of behaviour and a high degree of negative feedback to new behaviour. If the system is relatively open to input from the outside social system, then the impact of social norms that discourage abuse may be felt sooner, and change may occur in that pattern (Giles-Sims, 1986:11).

3.5.5 The threshold of viability

Systems are interrelated networks which tend to maintain themselves by regulating the amount of stability and change. This regulation takes place through the process of positive and negative feedback. Generally individual systems maintain consistent levels of stability and change over long periods of time. When a crisis occurs, or when there is change in the environment in which the system exists, the internal regulation of the system may be disrupted. To remain viable, systems require some stability and some adaptation. Individual systems may have patterns of behaviour that have become stabilised, and even though patterns of behaviour may be destructive to individuals, for example, patterns of emotional abuse, the system has adapted to those behaviours and is still a viable one. To change behaviour patterns that have become stabilised within the system requires some new input. For example, when emotional abuse has occurred over time on a routine basis, the woman may adapt to the abuse by withdrawal, suppression of feelings, or possibly displacement of her anger onto her children. The system that includes this stable pattern of interaction is unlikely to change without input from some other source that presents some new information. This new information could be some intervention program, a new opportunity, a new supportive friend within the system, or the openness of one member to some new perspective. This could assist the woman in reaching a threshold

of viability and cause her to leave the relationship as the system is no longer a viable one (Giles-Sims, 1986:11).

3.5.6 Systems in a social environment

Families exist as systems within the large socio-cultural system. The family is influenced by social conditions and influences that are larger than that of their social system. Impact from the larger social system can involve immediate changes, for example, the loss of employment, or it can involve more constant and pervasive elements, for example, socially established sex roles, power relations within the socio-cultural system and others. Family behaviour can also influence the larger social system, for example, when families keep violent behaviour strictly private and do not reveal it to friends, physicians or the police then the larger social system will be ignorant of the problem and unequipped to deal with it effectively when it is revealed. If the behaviour is not revealed, the tendency of the larger social system will be to regard it as personal disturbances, for example, delusions or attention seeking. Macro level social conditions are related to patterns of wife abuse. The social environment can produce stress for the family, but the social environment can also provide support. According to Giles-Sims (1986:12) a good social support system is associated with lower rates of violence.

3.5.7 Systems in transition

Because systems are relatively stable over a period of time, transitions require adaptation to many changes. These include the transition to married life, to having a first child, to a divorce, to the “empty-nest” stage of life, to aging, and to death. These critical periods of transition or adjustments indicate that when people are going through transitions they are particularly vulnerable to physical and emotional problems. Studies also indicate that factors such as social support and prior histories of coping with problems affect how people deal with major life transitions. Loss of a relationship is often experienced as loss of part of oneself, and the greater the interdependence of the two people in the relationship, the greater the feelings

of loss. The transition from a relationship with an abusive man may result in the woman facing many new problems. For example, it may be that leaving an abusive husband may raise issues that a woman has not faced before, for example, being a single parent, getting financial support for herself and her children, or dealing with such stigmatising labels as “divorcee”, and seeking to establish a new male-female relationship (Giles-Sims, 1986:14).

3.5.8 Hierarchies of feedback and control

Giles-Sims (1986:15) list **three** different hierarchies, which describe the rules of system transformation, namely:

- **Strata hierarchies** which refer to the level of system analysis. For example, within a family, each member has his or her own intra-psychic system which may include patterns of response learned earlier in the primary family background. In addition, there is an interpersonal system including all members of that system. The number of members may change over time producing changes in that system. The most classic examples of such changes are when a child is born, a family member dies, or a couple divorces. The family system is affected by each member as part of other systems such as extended family systems or employment systems.
- **Temporal/logical hierarchies** refer to the sequence of steps that occur to produce output. If members of the system follow the social norms and expectations that are provided in the system of rules, they can be relatively certain of the output and the response of other members of the system.
- **Hierarchies of feedback and control** refer to the levels at which the feedback operates to monitor the system’s progress toward a goal.
 - **Level 1** is simple feedback, a circular process by which output is subsequently processed as an input.

- **Level 2** can be compared with the thermostat that controls a heating unit. There is a monitoring unit at this level which processes all input to discern if the input is consistent with the goals of the system. In family systems, the goals of the system include rules for appropriate behaviours, established boundaries of interaction, and patterns that have been dominant over time. If new input challenges the goals of the system, corrective action usually occurs. Different systems have different degrees of openness or closeness to new input, but even if the system appears to be very open, corrective action would take place if a member of that system acted in a way inconsistent with the family rules. The rules of the system are not always set by consensus within the system. If one member of the system is more powerful, his or her own personal goals prevail over the goals of the total system. This raises the question of how rules could be changed over time. The first step in that process is the realisation that occurs when corrective action at the second level does not work. In the case of Mark and Jane (see paragraph 3.5.2), his attempt to correct her behaviour when she refused to comply with his wishes, may have worked or not worked to reassert his property rights. If it worked, no change in the system would occur. If it did not work, there is a possibility for change.
- **Level 3** of the feedback control is referred to as morphogenesis. At this level the corrective action has not succeeded at reestablishing equilibrium, and each member of the system may try alternative responses. In the case of a violent couple, this is an important part of establishing a violent pattern. For example, either partner may become more violent, to establish or maintain his or her position of power, and in turn a higher level of violence becomes a part of the family system.
- **Level 4** focuses on the failure of efforts to reestablish control in the home may lead to changes in the structure of the system as a whole. At lower levels, the structure and basic goals of the system have not been challenged. At this level, however, there is the potential for a

different kind of morphogenesis. This level is very important in the histories of abused women.

Once patterns have been established and have been operating for long periods of time, they are extremely resistant to change. The type of change that is possible in more flexible systems that are open to small changes in input, are not usually possible after abuse has occurred for long periods of time.

There are several theoretical implications for the understanding of wife abuse. The first is that different processes may govern change after one incident, than after several incidents. Second, minor corrective mechanisms may not be adequate to stop abuse after it has been established. Minor corrective mechanisms on the part of the man may not be enough to reestablish the family system once a woman has sought outside help. For the family system to continue more fundamental restructuring must occur. This is a difficult task in any established system of behaviour (Giles-Sims, 1986:16).

3.5.9 A systems theory approach to conflict

Conflict may be inevitable in a couple or a family's relationships (Giles-Sims, 1986:21). According to this view, harmony is both the exception and may be more problematic than normal. When two or more people are in close proximity and share common goals and resources, as people do in families, conflict can result from the discrepancy between idealised expectations and the reality of scarce resources and different personal goals. Couples that are married or cohabitating tend to reciprocate conflict, and rejection tends to elicit either emotional appeals or coercive tactics. This suggests that conflict escalates because of the behavioural reciprocity couples display. When one person is rejecting his or her partner, the other person within the system acts in a way to constrain the partner from leaving, in order to maintain the system despite the conflict. Giles-Sims (1986:22) further postulates that, couples that have more conflict tend to let conflict accumulate over time and to use tactics that are person, rather than issue orientated. Couples with less conflict have

shorter conflicts and tend to be more issue oriented. The couples with more conflict were inclined to argue about their relationship more, which indicates how strong the tendency is to try to maintain an on going family system. From a systems theory perspective, the maintenance of the system becomes more important over time than specific conflicts. Marriages that have long-enduring patterns of conflict can also be stable marriages as specific patterns of communication become part of the system of interaction and relatively resistant to change.

The conflict process typically proceeds through several definable stages and the system processes of feedback, controls the nature of the conflict process itself:

➤ **Stage 1 – Pre-competition**

At this stage, the parties have a cooperative relationship or are relatively independent.

➤ **Stage 2 – Competition**

The system changes, due to internal historical dynamics or to events in its environment, so that the parties are in a competitive relationship.

➤ **Stage 3 – Conflict**

The parties verbally abuse each other. What has occurred as competition and conflict has intensified as escalation. Escalation involves not only an increase in mutual punishment but also, in most systems, polarisation. Escalation is a “positive feedback” process in which each event intensifies its own precursors. Besides these reactions, there are other changes in the system brought about by the conflict which intensifies the specific conflict. Positive relationships between the parties are destroyed, the damage of verbal abuse becomes grounds for further arguments, the most conflict-

orientated sub-elements become dominant in each party, and polarisation occurs.

➤ **Stage 4 – Crisis**

In many conflicts there appears to be a special period when a turning point is reached. It is distinguished by a new, intense, and different level of interaction, and it is at this stage that violence is most likely to occur.

➤ **Stage 5 – Resolution/Revolution**

The turning point or period usually means a resolution or a revolution. The resolution can be immediate, or it can be a gradual de-escalation, but in either case, it involves a return to cooperation, or, at least competition. Another possibility is revolution in the sense that the system is drastically restructured.

This model focuses on the processes that shape the natural histories of revolutions, but a similar analysis could be made of the natural histories of conflict between members of a family system. Conflict within a family is a system process that is controlled by the negative and positive feedback mechanisms. Over time, the natural history of the system can be analysed using the same principles of systems theory (Giles-Sims, 1986:24).

3.5.10 Conclusion

A systems analysis of families where emotional abuse occurs requires a method of gathering data on the entire system, including material from only the woman's perspective cannot provide an accurate representation of the whole family system. Giles-Sims (1986:143) states that a systems theory approach that focuses primarily on internal family processes does not emphasise the social conditions, such as the status of women in society, the patterns of economic distribution of resources, the acceptance of violence in society, and the norms for the use of violence in the family, which are also important factors to consider.

Feminists criticise systems theory because it is sometimes used to blame the victim without taking into account the power dynamics of the family or the gendered nature of much of the violence that occurs and that is a systematic explanation to hide individual responsibility and accountability for violent actions (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996:69).

A systems theory explanation is not a unicausal explanation. Individual characteristics represent input into the system. Systems theory explains violence as the product of interdependent causal processes including the pre-existing behaviour patterns of system members and the system processes that lead to stability or change in patterns of behaviour over time. This does not, however, remove any individual from responsibility for his or her own behaviour. What it does is to provide new and important insights into how to deal with the problem of family violence (Giles-Sims, 1986:144).

3.6 INTERACTIONAL MODEL OF THE PROCESS OF VICTIMISATION BY AN EMOTIONALLY ABUSIVE PARTNER

3.6.1 Introduction

For the purposes of this study researcher has integrated components of different theories and ideologies (see paragraphs 3.1 to 3.5) to demonstrate the process of victimisation in an emotionally abusive relationship. These components have been used interactively to rationalise the underlying causes and different stages of the emotionally abusive relationship. This serves as a basis for understanding the dynamics of a partnership, either cohabitating or marital, where emotional abuse takes place, by the male partner against his female counterpart.

3.6.2 Cycle of emotional abuse

The cycle of emotional abuse by Luv (2001:1) is divided into **four** phases which constitutes a cyclic pattern:

During the cycle of emotional abuse, the **first** phase is characterised by the insecurity of the male partner about the fidelity of his female partner. Tension builds between the two partners and healthy communication becomes less while the male partner's frustration mounts. The female partner (the victim) tries to placate the abuser by beckoning to his requests in order to keep the peace.

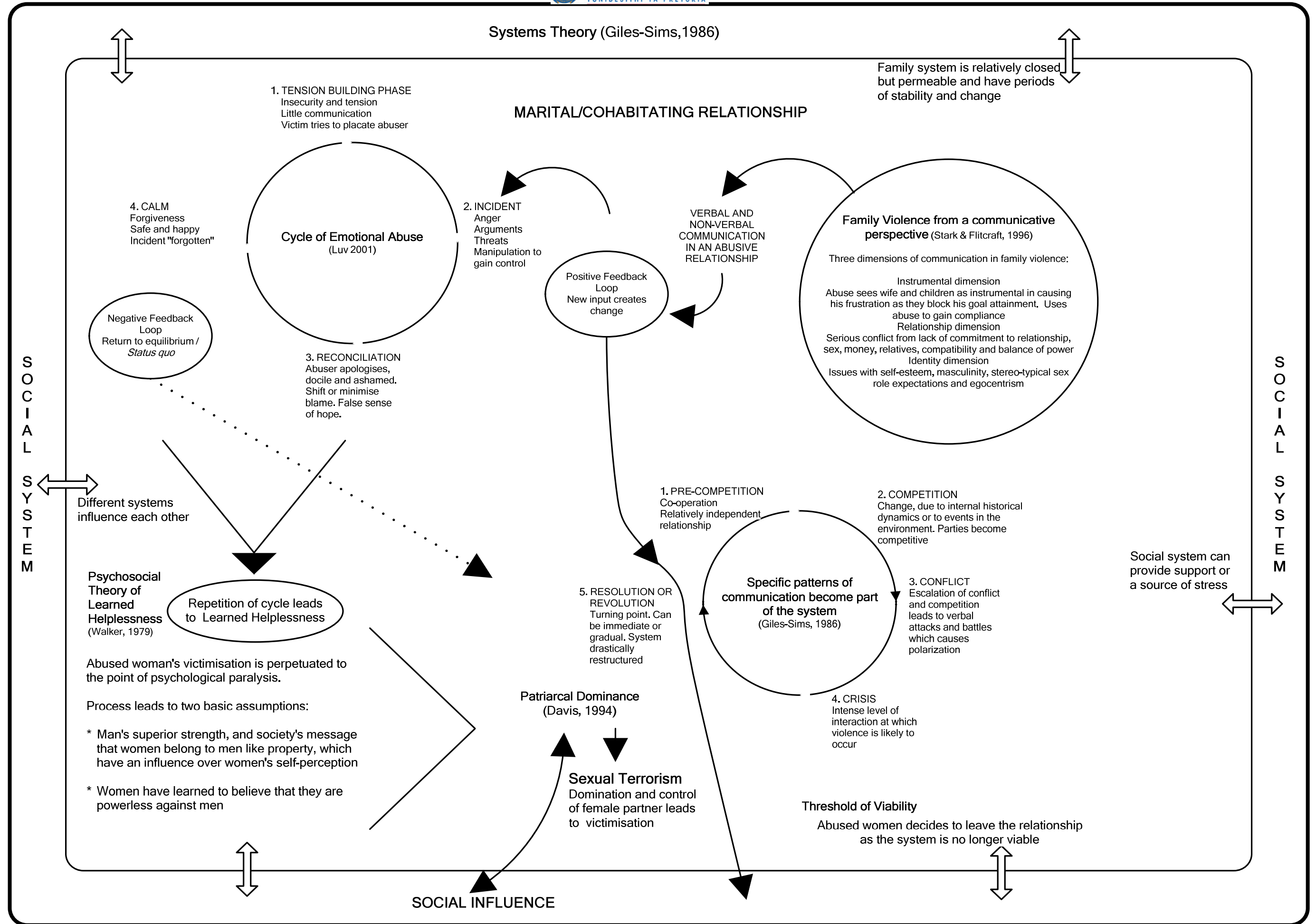
The **second** phase of the cycle of emotional abuse is characterised by anger outbursts of the male partner which results in heated arguments between both partners. These arguments are characterised by threats, intimidation and manipulation by the male partner in order to gain control of his victim.

During the **third** phase of the cycle of emotional abuse the abuser realises what he has done and tries to reconcile with his partner. He apologises for his behaviour and becomes quite docile and shows remorse. He also however manages to shift or minimise the blame for his behaviour in order to implicate his partner in sharing some of the guilt. During this phase the victim develops a false sense of hope that the incident will not reoccur.

The **final** phase of the cycle of emotional abuse is characterised by calmness and overall forgiveness by both partners. They once again feel safe and happy within the relationship and the incident is forgotten.

Repetition of this cycle leads to what Lenore Walker (1979) referred to as, learned helplessness.

Figure 3.6 THE INTERACTIONAL MODEL OF THE PROCESS OF VICTIMISATION BY AN EMOTI



3.6.2.1 Psychosocial theory of learned helplessness

When the abused women's (emotional and/or physical abuse) is perpetuated it leads to a state of psychological paralysis which is characterised by a sense of hopelessness and inability to change the pattern of victimisation. This process of abuse leads to two basic assumptions by its victims:

- A man has superior strength over a woman, and therefore the social response which institutionalises, that women belong to men like property, influences women's self-perception to believe this to be true.
- Therefore, women have learned to believe that they are powerless against men.

These basic assumptions which arise from social influences and the personal perceptions of the victim stem from the ideology of patriarchal dominance, which according to Davis (1994:41), is at the root of female subordination in general.

3.6.3 Patriarchal dominance

Davis (1994:42) has termed female domination and control which leads to the victimisation of women by their male counterparts as "sexual terrorism". He maintains that the abused women's victimisation is supported by ideology and propaganda similar to that of political terrorism. It is indiscriminate and unpredictable and relies on voluntary compliance, that is, men who are socialised to maintain fear, and women who are socialised to be victims. It has the effect of keeping women subordinate and therefore looking to men to protect them. According to Davis (1994:42) men benefit from sexual terrorism as it gives them dominance and control over the women in their lives in the form of protection.

The dominance and control exercised by emotionally abusive men, are a result of specific patterns of verbal and nonverbal communication, which is not

necessarily found in non-abusive relationships or if so, to a much lesser extent than in abusive relationships.

3.6.4 Family violence from a communicative perspective

According to Stark and Flitcraft (1996:70) when violence or abuse occurs, it is not an isolated event in a relationship, but is firmly embedded in the process of interpersonal communication which partners use to regulate their daily lives. In the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner**, researcher has used the **three** dimensions of communication in family violence according to Stark and Flitcraft (1996:70), namely:

- The **instrumental dimension** in which the abuser sees his partner or wife and children as instrumental in causing his frustration within the relationship, as they block his goal attainment, for example, to achieving his career goals because he has family responsibilities. He then uses emotional abuse to gain compliance from his wife or partner, and thus communicates in a fashion to gain this compliance.
- The **relationship dimension** in which serious conflict is caused by lack of commitment to the relationship, sexual needs, financial concerns, relatives, general compatibility of partners and the balance of power within the relationship. These factors can all lead to violent outbursts which can cause serious harm to the relationship.
- The **identity dimension** in which partners have issues with self-esteem, especially on the part of an emotionally abusive male partner who has to prove his 'manliness' by controlling his wife or partner, masculinity issues, stereotypical sex-role expectations and egocentrism.

All three dimensions are factors of verbal and non-verbal communication within an abusive relationship, which can influence family and other social systems.

3.6.5 A systems theory perspective on relationships

According to the systems theory perspective on relationships as postulated by Giles-Sims (1986:10) different systems overlap and flow into and thus influence each other. Therefore the cognitive systems, or intra-psychic systems of individuals influence the family system within which they operate, which in turn can influence the greater social systems with whom they interact. This process also works in reverse, for example, the ideology of patriarchal dominance, which forms part of the social system, which can be supportive or a source of stress, influences both family and individual systems which perpetuates its existence or can lead to its extinction depending on the perceptions of the individuals within these systems. According to Giles-Sims (1986:11) the family system is a relatively closed one but is permeable to outside influences, and thus goes through periods of stability and change. New input into the system usually causes change within the system and maintenance of the *status quo* will ensure its equilibrium. With reference to the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner**, communication takes place within a process of positive (new input which creates change) and negative (return to equilibrium or maintain *status-quo*) feed-back loops, according to the systems theory. This is demonstrated in the cycle of emotional abuse (Luv, 2001:2) at phase two (positive feed-back loop), where the incident of abuse takes place and phase four (negative feed-back loop), where the relationship returns to a state of calm.

Partnerships that have long-enduring patterns of conflict can also be stable as specific patterns of communication become part of the system of interaction and relatively resistant to change. Giles-Sims (1986:11) demonstrates this by postulating that the conflict process goes through several stages and the

system processes of feedback (positive or negative), controls the nature of the conflict process itself:

➤ **Stage 1 - Pre-competition**

This stage is characterised by co-operation between the partners, where they maintain a relatively independent relationship and there is little conflict.

➤ **Stage 2 - Competition**

During the competition stage change occurs, due to internal and historical dynamics within the relationship or due to events in the environment. This results in partners becoming competitive.

➤ **Stage 3 - Conflict**

This stage is characterised by the escalation of conflict and competition. Partners abuse each other verbally which leads to full scale battles and eventually the polarisation of the partners.

➤ **Stage 4 – Crisis**

At the crises stage an intense level of interaction takes place wherein violence is likely to occur. This is the special period in which a turning point is likely to be reached.

➤ **Stage 5 – Resolution/Revolution**

At this stage there is a turning point within the relationship which can take place immediately or gradually depending on the victim's circumstances. At this point the system is drastically restructured.

With reference to the cycle of emotional abuse (see paragraph 3.6.2) the resolution (Stage 5) can be associated with Luv's Phase 4 of "calmness"

where the systems return to equilibrium and is thus maintained and the cycles are likely to be continued. When revolution (Stage 5) takes place and the system is drastically altered (positive feed-back loop) it is likely that the abused woman will have reached what Giles-Sims (1986:12) refers to as the “thresh-hold of viability”. As demonstrated in the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner**, this is the turning point at which the abused woman will decide to leave the relationship as the system (relationship) is no longer a viable one for her.

3.6.6 Conclusion

For the successful execution of this chapter researcher referred to Braithwaite’s (1989: vii) strategy which is to integrate existing theories of crime into a theory which aspires to be more general and of greater explanatory power. He postulates that crime is not a unidimensional construct, therefore a researcher should **not** look for a general theory which can explain all types of crime (Braithwaite, 1989:1).

Researcher also referred to the writings of Williams and McShane (1999:274) who state that, theories do not necessarily compete with each other, but address various levels of explanation. Thus, as long as assumptions are compatible, there is no need to discard one theory to accept another. The authors use an approach called the “fully-integrated model” which borrows concepts from several theories without regard to either assumptions or the general thrust of the theories. These concepts are then put together in a new way to form a comprehensive explanation of the phenomenon being investigated.

In this chapter a number of theories and ideologies were discussed to lay the foundation for this study and the building of an integrated model namely, the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner**. These theoretical contributions of Luv (2001), Walker (1979), Davis (1994), Stark and Flitcraft (1996) and Giles-Sims (1986)

assisted the researcher to understand the way in which emotional abuse develops and manifests in a relationship.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY, PROCEDURES AND TECHNIQUES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the methodology for this study detailing the procedures and techniques of research, data collection and analysis. A **qualitative** methodology was used as this type of research involves the scrutiny of social phenomena. Researchers try to understand social processes in context, while investigating the subjective nature of human life (victims' personal experiences) to enhance their understanding thereof (Esterberg, 2002:2). Lastly, a profile of research participants will be given.

4.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Bailey (1994:34) states that a researcher's methodology determines such factors as how he or she formulates hypotheses and what level of evidence is necessary to make the decision whether or not to accept these hypotheses. Furthermore, Brown (1996:11) states that methodology refers to the techniques or methods that researchers use to learn facts as they attempt to answer the "whys" of crime.

This is a **qualitative study** of a sample of eleven victims (professional women) who suffered emotional abuse within a marriage or cohabitating relationship. As the study is explorative in nature, **qualitative research methods** were used, with the aim of describing and understanding the impact of victimisation on the research participants. According to Patton (1996:22) qualitative data consists of detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviours, and also uses direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts. Researchers that use these methods of qualitative measurement, use raw data from the empirical world. The data is collected as open-ended narrative without attempting to fit program activities or peoples' experiences into predetermined, standardised categories such as the response choices that comprise typical questionnaires or tests. Qualitative data provides **depth** and

detail which emerges through direct quotation and careful description. Aligning himself with the above, Bailey (1994:244) states, “the primary nature of the relationship between the observer and the subjects allows an in-depth study of the whole individual”.

In-depth interviews were held with professional women who are/were victims of emotional abuse within marital or cohabitating relationships to achieve the above successfully.

4.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

Research procedures refer to the different steps and phases in a research project. Because descriptive studies require a representative sample, this method could not be used for the purposes of this study. An explorative study is, therefore, more relevant in the study of unknown phenomena because, like the descriptive study, it focuses on the who, how, what, and why, yet it is not as structured and does not require a representative sample. Exploratory studies usually lead to insight and comprehension rather than the collection of accurate and replicable data and frequently involve the use of in-depth interviews, the analysis of case studies, and the use of informants (Mouton & Marais, 1993:43).

According to Bailey (1994:40), exploratory studies are undertaken primarily for four reasons:

- To satisfy the researcher’s curiosity and desire for a better understanding of a phenomenon.
- To test the feasibility of undertaking a more comprehensive study.
- To develop methods to be used in a more comprehensive study.
- To formulate a problem for more precise investigation, or for developing hypotheses (which is not applicable for this study).

The aim of this study is an exploratory one, as researcher aims to gain insight and understanding into the phenomena of victimisation, by a male partner through the use of emotional abuse directed at his female partner, the professional woman, within a marital or cohabitating relationship. Researcher therefore used the procedures stipulated for an exploratory study, namely, a literature study, consultation with experts, in-depth interviews, as well as observation.

4.3.1 Literature review

De Vos et al., (1998:64) states that a literature review is aimed at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the **nature** and **meaning** of the problem that has been identified. The author stipulates the following functions of a literature review:

- It may reveal that someone has already performed essentially the same research. In this way researcher could determine whether the study is too similar or simply a duplication of previous research.
- It provides a much deeper insight into the dimensions and complexity of the problem being studied.
- A literature study equips the researcher with a comprehensive justification for the steps to follow, as well as with a sense of the importance of the undertaking.

4.3.2 Sampling techniques

Bailey (1994:83) postulates that sampling involves the designation of a population of interest, such as all registered voters in South Africa, subsequent thereto, an attempt should be made to select a subset of some predetermined size out of this, which should represent the entire population. In this way, sampling usually takes place after a research problem has been identified and the most appropriate type of methodology has been formulated.

For this study researcher used non-probability sampling methods as these are not based on probability theory, but are more limited. According to Neuman (1997:204) a researcher uses them either out of ignorance, a lack of time, or in special situations, which is the case with qualitative research. Two forms of non-probability sampling was used, namely, snowball and purposive or judgmental sampling.

4.3.2.1 Snowball sampling technique

According to Neuman (1997:206) snowball sampling, also referred to as “network”, “chain referral” or “reputational” sampling, uses a crucial feature in that each person or unit is connected with another through direct or indirect linkage. This does not mean that each person directly knows, interacts with, or is influenced by every other person in the network. Rather, it means that, taken as a whole, with direct and indirect links, most are within a connected web of linkages. This sampling method uses the snowball analogy – the snowball begins small, but becomes larger as it is rolls down a mountain. It is a multi-stage technique as it begins with one or a few people or cases and spreads out on a basis of links to the initial cases.

4.3.2.2 Purposive or judgmental sampling technique

Neuman (1997:206) states that purposive sampling is an acceptable kind of sampling for special situations. It uses the judgment of an expert in selecting cases or the researcher selects cases with a specific purpose in mind. It is used in exploratory research or in field research and is appropriate in three situations:

- A researcher uses it to select unique cases that are especially informative.
- A researcher may use it to select members of a difficult – to – reach, specialised population.

- A researcher wants to identify particular types of cases for in-depth investigation.

The purpose of these sampling techniques is not to generalise to a larger population but to gain a deeper understanding of different cases.

4.3.2.3 Composition of sample

The sample of this study consisted of eleven **professional** women. Researcher focused on women who are in professions that belong to a governing body, such as medical doctors, dentists, psychologists in private practice, attorneys, advocates, chartered accountants, pharmacists, veterinarians and physiotherapists.

4.3.3 Informal interview schedule

According to Bailey (1994:188) an interview schedule is a data collection method in which one person asks questions to another from a list of topics and/or subtopics within an area of enquiry.

Patton (1986:197) states that the **informal conversational interview** relies entirely on the spontaneous generation of questions in the natural flow of interaction, typically an interview that occurs as part of ongoing participant observation field work. Researcher employed this method during the initial phases of research and literature survey in order to gain a general frame of reference to formulate research questions.

The **general interview guide approach** (Patton, 1986:198) involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins. These issues in the outline need not be dealt with in any particular order, and the actual wording of questions to elicit responses about those issues, is not determined in advance. The interview guide simply serves as a basic checklist during the interview to make sure that all relevant topics are covered. The interview guide presumes that there is common

information that should be obtained from each person interviewed, but not set of standardised questions are written in advance. The interviewer is thus required to adapt both the wording and sequence of questions to specific respondents in the context of the actual interview. Patton (1986:201) further states that the interview guideline provides a framework within which the interviewer would develop questions, sequence those questions, and make decisions about which information to pursue in greater depth.

4.3.4 Composition of the interview schedule

The interview schedule was structured according to the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner** in the following manner (see Figure 3.6):

- The influence of the social system on the relationship, with specific reference to patriarchal dominance and the systems theory.
- The cycle of emotional abuse within the relationship.
- The psychosocial theory of learned helplessness.
- The specific patterns of communication (verbal and non-verbal) within an emotionally abusive relationship.

4.3.5 Interviews

Esterberg (2002:83) has the following opinion regarding interviews, “Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what it is, an awful lot of people do it, and yet behind each closed front door there is a world of secrets”.

According to Neuman (1997:253) the advantages to face-to-face interviews is that they have the highest response rates and permit the longest interview schedules. Interviewers can also observe the participant and the

surroundings and can use non-verbal communication and visual aids. It also allows interviewers to ask all types of complex questions, and can use extensive probes (see paragraph 4.3.5.1). The disadvantages of face-to-face interviews are however that they require training, sometimes extensive travelling, often supervision is needed and costs can be high. Interviewer bias is also greatest in face-to-face interviews. The appearance, tone of voice, question wording and general attitude of the interviewer may affect the respondent.

Patton (1986:28) adds:

The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories. Direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative measurement, revealing respondents' level of emotion, the way in which they have organised their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions. The task for the qualitative methodologist is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about that part of the world about which they are talking.

4.3.5.1 Probing

According to Neuman (1997:257) a probe is a neutral request to clarify an ambiguous answer, to complete an incomplete answer, or to obtain a relevant response. Bailey (1994:189) identifies several functions and characteristics of probing in qualitative research when open-ended questions are used. These are:

- To get the respondent to answer more fully and accurately, or at least to provide a minimally acceptable answer. Probing can thus be used whenever the respondent hesitates in answering, or gives an unclear or incomplete answer, and this does not form part of the interview schedule as each interview will be unique.

- A second function is to structure the respondent's answers and to make sure that all the topics of the research problem are covered and that irrelevant information is reduced.
- Probe questions may be written on the interview schedule in advance in the pre-test phase if it becomes evident that respondents' incomplete answers fall into several predictable categories.
- A specific probe may be written for each category, thus probes are essentially contingency questions to be used only if the respondent answers earlier questions in a certain way.

4.3.5.2 Pilot study

An important principle of ensuring reliability is to use a pretest or pilot version of a measure first. Neuman (1997:141) suggests that the researcher develops one or more draft or preliminary versions of a measure (an interview schedule) and try them before applying the final version in a hypothesis-testing situation.

Researcher used two respondents for the purposes of a pilot study in which the various themes of the informal interview schedule were discussed in an informal manner. The interviews were conducted very successfully and thus researcher decided to include these in the main sample, as the information obtained was in-depth and entirely appropriate for the study.

4.3.5.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

Researchers protect privacy by not disclosing a respondent's identity after information is gathered, this means that they remain nameless and therefore the respondent is unknown or anonymous (Neuman, 1997:452). For the purposes of this study researcher allocated each respondent a number to ensure anonymity.

Confidentiality means that the researcher knows who he or she is interviewing but the researcher holds it in confidence or keeps it secret from the public. The information is not released in a way that permits linking specific individuals to specific responses and is publicly presented only in an aggregate form.

4.4 CASE ANALYSIS

Neuman (1997:29) states that case study research examines many features of a few cases in-depth over a specific period. Cases can be individuals (which was the case for this study), groups, organisations, movements, events, or geographic units. The data is more detailed, varied, and extensive and most involve qualitative data about a few cases. Neuman (1997:351) further states that a case is a social relationship or activity that can be extended beyond the boundaries of the site and have links to other social settings. This can be linked to field research in which a researcher wants to study a small group of people interacting in the present. It is valuable for micro-level or small-group face-to-face interaction (Neuman, 1997:377). For the purposes of this study researcher delved into the backgrounds and situations of only a selected number of cases, to get an in-depth understanding of each one, in order to draw comparisons between the different cases.

4.5 OBSERVATION

According to Bailey (1994:242), observation is the primary technique for collecting data on non-verbal behaviour. Neuman (1997:361) adds to this by saying that a significant part of what researchers do in the field is to pay attention, watch, and listen carefully. They use all their senses and become instruments that absorb all sources of information, for example, they also scrutinise the physical setting to capture its atmosphere. In addition to physical surroundings, the researcher observes the respondents and their actions, noting observable physical characteristics, such as neatness, dress, and hairstyle because they express messages that can affect social

interactions. What respondents do is also significant. The researcher notices where people sit, or stand, the pace at which they walk, and their non-verbal communication, including, gestures, facial expressions, and how they sit or stand. According to Neuman (1997:362) this is how people express social information, feelings, and attitudes which they do not necessarily verbalise.

4.6 SCIENTIFIC VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY OF THE STUDY

Mouton and Marais (1993:79) are of the opinion that the main consideration whether data is valid concerning the process of data collection, is that of reliability. Essentially, this is the requirement, that a valid measuring instrument, i.e. one that captures the meaning of the construct the researcher is interested in, can be applied to different respondents, under different circumstances, and ultimately lead to the same observations. They ask, "Will the same methods used by different researchers and/or at different times produce the same results?" From these definitions it is clear that the reliability of observations or data is influenced by four variables:

- the researcher;
- the respondent;
- the measuring instrument (interview schedule); and
- the circumstances under which the research is conducted.

Neuman (1997:138) warns that reliability and validity are salient in social research because constructs in social theory are often ambiguous, diffuse, and not directly observable. Perfect reliability and validity are virtually impossible to achieve. Rather, they are ideals researchers should strive for.

4.7 TECHNIQUES USED TO ANALYSE DATA

In the social sciences, nothing speaks for itself and the information gathered must be interpreted. Confronted with a large number of impressions, documents, and field notes, the qualitative researcher faces the difficult and challenging task of making sense of data collected. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2002:225) state that the aim of the analysis and interpretation in qualitative research is to attempt to gain insight and understanding into the phenomenon being studied.

Patton (1986:295) states that the focus in analysing qualitative data collected from in-depth interviewing and fieldwork comes from the evaluation questions generated at the beginning of the evaluation process (during the conceptual, question-focusing phase of the evaluation).

Inductive analysis means that the patterns, themes and categories of analysis come from the data. They emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on the data prior to data collection and analysis. The analyst looks for natural variation in the data. Patton (1986:306) proposes two ways of representing the patterns emerging from the analysis of the data:

- the analyst can use the categories developed and articulated in the research done, to organise presentation of particular themes; and/or
- the analyst may also become aware of categories or patterns for which the respondents did not have labels or terms, and the analyst develops terms to describe these inductively generated categories.

Neuman (1997:421) reiterates this view by stating that a qualitative researcher analyses data by organising it into categories on the basis of themes, concepts, or similar features. The researcher examines the relationships among concepts and endeavours to link concepts to each other in terms of a sequence, as oppositional sets, or as sets of similar categories that he or she interweaves into theoretical statements.

4.8 PROFILE OF THE VICTIM RESPONDENTS

The respondents' biographical profiles for this study are as follows:

➤ **Age**

The ages of the eleven respondents ranged from 30 years to 50 years, with the majority being 40 years and younger.

➤ **Marital status**

Ten out of the eleven respondents were married during the course of the emotionally abusive relationship, and one respondent was in a cohabitating relationship. Of the eleven respondents, nine were divorced and the remaining two, separated and in the process of divorce.

Of the eleven respondents, ten married or cohabitated under the age of 25, with two of the marriages being unplanned (as a result of pregnancy). For all the respondents the abusive relationships were their first marriages or cohabitation.

➤ **Length of relationships**

The length of the emotionally abusive relationships ranged from five years to 27 years with the majority of the relationships being more than ten years in duration.

➤ **Children**

In nine of the relationships there were children conceived, the remaining two being childless.

➤ **Educational qualifications of the victim respondents**

All of the respondents had professional degrees and/or post-graduate qualifications.

➤ **Professions**

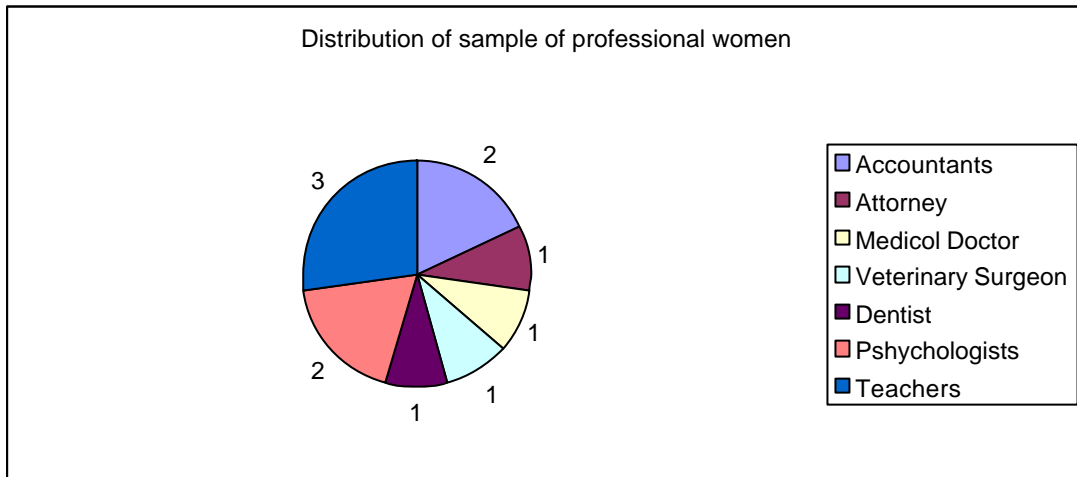


Figure 4.1 Sample of professional women

4.9 CONCLUSION

The research procedures, which were employed to collect the data for this study as well as the profile of the respondents, were discussed in this chapter. Following this in Chapter 5, the analysis and interpretation of the data, which was collected according to the stipulated procedures and techniques, is discussed.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the data obtained qualitatively was analysed and interpreted. The **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner** (see Figure 3.6) was used as a basis for this.

5.2 CASE ANALYSIS

Researcher investigated the different family systems within which both the abusers and the victims were socialised, in order to understand how these systems played a part in their individual cognitive systems and how they were influenced emotionally as a result of their upbringing.

The cases serve as **background** in order to understand the dynamics of the different family systems that were dealt with in this study. The purpose of this was, to assist the researcher and the reader in understanding the victims' experiences in a holistic light.

➤ Respondent A

The respondent was the only child of successful parents, who were respected citizens within their community. She described her childhood as perfect and her parents as being ideal. Their relationship was a very good one and could thus say that her family system was a functional one, with healthy communication patterns throughout her life. This encouraged and enabled her to achieve academic and career success within her own life, as her general philosophy on life was, "What you put in, you will get out – if you give your best and work hard, you will be successful". This was also her expectation for her marriage, other relationships and her work.

She knew her husband basically all her life, from junior school, and testified that he had grown up in a middle class household, where he was one of five

children. However, she added that in her opinion, although his family's financial and social status was middle class, they had lower class norms and values. She also stated that his childhood had been unhappy and that he had been sexually molested as a child by a respected person in the community's son. His family system was relatively dysfunctional, without positive role models in his childhood. He was conceived directly after his mother had lost a child at birth and in the respondent's opinion had not experienced intimate bonding as a child with his mother and as a result did not have a good relationship with her even into adulthood. His father was often absent from home because of work and as a result he did not develop a close relationship with his father either. She added that they had very little contact with his family during their marriage. The respondent and her partner came from very different family systems and thus had very different support and social structures, within which their socialisation took place.

During the first eight years of their marriage, the respondent supported him financially and emotionally whilst he completed his studies and built a very successful business and continued to obtain a doctorate degree in his field of specialisation. His business ventures grew rapidly and he flourished financially from then on. She became pregnant and abandoned her career at which point she reports, their relationship deteriorated dramatically and the emotional abuse he subjected her to became unbearable. He became extremely verbally abusive and neglected her severely during a difficult pregnancy. At this point he also started to have extra-marital relationships which she discovered much later. His behaviour became very erratic during this period. They were divorced when the baby was 15 months old. He testified a few months later that he had made a mistake and wanted to reconcile their relationship, and they remarried ten months later. The second marriage lasted for two years, within which period the emotional abuse he subjected her to continued unabated. He eventually demanded a divorce once more. This however, did not stop the emotional abuse, as he continued the severe verbal abuse and manipulation for control, through their daughter, on a continual basis.

➤ **Respondent B**

The respondent came from a middle class, stable family and had a particularly good relationship with her father and brother. Her parents were happily married for 44 years at the time of the interview, with no serious problems during her childhood. She describes her father as a particularly quiet and gentle man and her brother as “superman”. Her relationship with her mother was also fairly good, but they had experienced some serious disagreements within their relationship. However, despite these disagreements they were close. Her family system could be described as generally happy and functional.

She stated that her partner had been an only child for most of his childhood, as there was a very large age difference between him and his two siblings. The respondent described him as being very spoilt. She stated that, “His parents worshipped the ground he walked on because he was very intelligent and could do no wrong in their eyes”. Alcohol abuse played a very large role in her partner’s family, with both parents drinking heavily, especially his mother. She died in motor vehicle accident as a result of inebriation. These partners thus had different family backgrounds during childhood. They were subjected to fairly different socialisation patterns as there was a serious problem in the male partner’s household because of alcohol abuse which resulted in a lack of good parental role models, attention and physical affection.

They were married very soon after they met and moved far away from family and friends because of his career. He had been offered a good position in a large organisation and had a relatively successful career with them. Later he opened his own consultancy business which he ran successfully. She struggled initially to get her career on the right path, thus the first couple of years together were fairly stressful in this regard. The emotional abuse she was subjected to started early in their marriage and was compounded by the fact that she was isolated from her support system. His refusal to have children, the severe neglect and verbal abuse he subjected her to when he

was at home, finally became unbearable and she left the relationship and obtained a divorce approximately six month later.

➤ Respondent C

This respondent's father died when she was 15 years old, but she stated that her parent's marriage was a very happy one. She described her parents as follows: "My father was a stunning man, the Angel Gabriel. My mother is a bit weak and emotionally dependent. She started drinking heavily after my father's death and I took over the parental role for my younger brother". They also endured substantial financial difficulties after her father's death. She testified that her childhood was, "Happy and normal until my father died, then everything fell apart". Her mother was unable to give her financial assistance to attend university full time after matriculating. She worked full time and completed her studies part time, before entering into her chosen profession. She reports having received very little emotional support from her mother and did not have a very good relationship with her.

Her partner's family she described as patriarchal. Her father-in-law was extremely domineering, cold and autocratic. Her mother-in-law suffered from severe depression as did his other six siblings to various degrees. She recalls that all his siblings were in therapy or on medication for depression for periods during their marriage. Her partner had also suffered from several bouts of depression and developed epilepsy. He was an only child for a large part of his childhood as there was a fairly big age gap between him and his other siblings. She stated that he was very spoiled by his mother, and intimidated by his father. She also did not get along with her father-in-law and describes him as, "rude and very demanding".

Both the respondent and her partner had fairly dysfunctional family systems during childhood, and in the respondent's opinion, experienced emotional problems into adulthood as a result of this. Their relationship was unstable and argumentative from the beginning. His work history was unstable and she had to take most of the responsibility for their child and the household as

she was the bread-winner throughout the marriage. He attempted to study part-time whilst in the forces, but did not complete his degree and thus did not reach his goals with regards to promotions and recognition in his work. He left his stable employment to join a private company. He was retrenched after several months and thereafter attempted several private ventures unsuccessfully. He had several relationships with other women during their marriage and started drinking heavily after their child's birth. The verbal abuse became much worse after this and persisted until they separated. The respondent and her partner were separated and in the process of obtaining a divorce at the time of the interview.

➤ **Respondent D**

The respondent came from a middle class family and was one of two daughters. She states that she received a lot of support, encouragement and intellectual stimulation. She describes her childhood as being happy and well balanced. Her father was in the forces and indoctrinated upon her that wife battering was unacceptable. She reports that her partner did not approve of her family, and felt that they were not of an acceptable social and economic standing, and as a result was cold and distant towards them. Her family was not welcome to visit them during their marriage unless by appointment at his convenience.

She described her partner's family inter-relations as cold with very little and superficial communication. She reported that it was her perception that they were very critical of others and expressed jealousy at the success of others, whether it was financial or career success. He was one of five children, of which only his eldest brother achieved success in his career and when they were at family gatherings all conversation revolved around his brother's success. She recalls that her in-law's stayed with them for very long visits and placed her under a great deal of pressure as she ran her practice from home. They would expect her to prepare three meals per day at their convenience without any consideration for her schedule. They would also

interrupt her work as they saw fit and never offered to help with anything during their stay, which increased her work load greatly.

Her partner had a rare genetic illness and kept this from her until after they were married. Both he and his mother refused to discuss this issue and she later decided not to have children as a result of this which also had a negative impact on their relationship. Communication differed greatly within the family systems of these partners. In her family, communication was encouraged and conversations stimulating, but in his family communication was minimal and superficial.

During their marriage the respondent recalled struggling financially in order to complete her studies before going into practice, as she was expected to contribute greatly to the household whilst paying for her studies as well. Her partner consistently tried to suppress her ambitions and made it as difficult as possible for her to work and study simultaneously. He did this by placing the bulk of the household and financial burdens on her, and by making unnecessary demands on her time. He did this by demanding that meals and household tasks be done according to his specifications, or she would risk his emotional abuse. She recalls that he was never proud of her accomplishments, but rather jealous and verbally abusive whenever she achieved any degree of success. He would negate any achievement she made by saying, "So what! Do you think you are clever now?" She reports that he made no attempts to further his career and could not understand why she had the need to reach very high standards in her chosen profession.

She reached what she called, "my moment of truth", after she had a motor vehicle accident, which was not her fault, but never-the-less left her new vehicle with substantial damage. When her husband reached the accident scene, he did not enquire as to whether she was injured or traumatised, but immediately proceeded to shout at her for "being so stupid" and causing damage to the new car, assuming that the accident had been her fault. She realised that she no longer wanted to endure this man's wrath and shortly after this incident asked him for a divorce. He contested this as far as he

possibly could, and left the marriage with substantial monetary gains at her expense. The process was a long and painful one, but finally after one year he was no longer part of her life. She recalls, “I felt as though the weight of the world had been lifted off my shoulders”.

➤ **Respondent E**

The respondent came from a stable, loving, middle class family. They were very close and her parents were very supportive of her and her brother. Her parents were happily married and very seldom had serious disagreements. She and her brother were also very close. Her mother did not work while they were in school as she felt it her duty to be the main caretaker of her children.

She reported that her partner also came from a middle class family and had one older brother, to whom he was not close. His parents did not have a good marriage and threatened divorce several times. She recalls that his parents had very loud arguments and that their family relations were strained and distant most of the time. She stated, “He couldn’t stand his mother! He called her a bitch many times, but he got along quite well with his father”. She reports that there was a lot of competition between him and his brother as his brother had a university degree and he felt very threatened by that. She reports that he made no attempts to further his career and could not understand why she had the need to reach very high standards in her chosen profession. She states that, “He is very similar to his mother - they look down on others and are both arrogant snobs”. Once they had decided to cohabitate, they had very little contact with his parents during their relationship. The relationship between them and his parents was superficial and uncomfortable at all times.

Family relations for these partners were on opposite sides of the continuum – the partners had very different feelings towards their family members, especially with regards to their mothers and siblings. His relations being cold, distant and unhappy and her relations, warm, loving and happy.

His domination and control was evident from the beginning of their relationship, but the respondent recalls that this was disguised in the form of caring and helping, by constantly telling her what to wear, what food to choose when they were at a restaurant, which friends he found acceptable and thought she should associate with and how she should spend her money. She was very young when they met and did not realise that she was being subjected to emotional abuse. As she pursued her studies, furthered her career and matured she realised that their relationship was not a good one, and she became increasingly unhappy after the birth of their child. Finally, when their child turned three, she approached her parents and they offered that she should “come home”, which gave her the courage to leave the relationship. Her partner made this separation as difficult as he could for her by refusing to pay any form of maintenance towards the costs of their child and subjecting her to severe verbal abuse at every possible opportunity. This continued for approximately two years, before she had the necessary court orders to enforce his financial obligations, and the emotional strength to “stand up to him and fight back”.

➤ **Respondent F**

This respondent was one of five children who grew up on a farm. Because of the distance they had to travel to school, the children had to attend boarding school, which the respondent found very traumatic. She stated that because of financial restraints her mother had to work full time to help support the family, but there were no serious problems within the family unit.

She reported that her partner was one of four children from a wealthy family. The relationship between his parents was not good and she recalls that his father was an alcoholic and his mother very manipulative and the authority figure in the household. He developed a better relationship with his parents in adulthood when his father was rehabilitated.

These partners thus had different family systems and were subjected to fairly different socialisation patterns, as his alcoholic father played a crucial role in the male partner’s household as his influence on his children had a very

negative effect. His father became verbally abusive whilst drinking and she recalls that he was often embarrassed by his father's crude language and behaviour during his childhood.

They were married soon after she completed her studies and although she recalls that they were happy for many years, he always made the decisions regarding the household, financial decisions and regarding the children. After several failed attempts at obtaining promotion at work, he started drinking heavily and abusing her and the children verbally on a continual basis. In her opinion he was very threatened by her success in her work and with her community projects. He made no attempts to obtain a formal qualification, but expected to receive promotions at work without putting in any extra effort to upgrade his skills. She states, "He became a very angry man and always blamed his superiors for his lack of success".

His drinking progressed to the stage where she set an ultimatum before him to stop or she would take the children and leave. He ignored this and continued drinking heavily and subjecting her to emotional abuse, until it became so severe, that she left their family home with the children while he was away, and moved to her father's home temporarily. He victimised her to such an extent during the divorce proceedings that she decided to relocate to another province with her children, and find alternative employment. At this point she feared for her safety and realised that unless she put distance between her and her partner, she and her children would become severely traumatised. This in itself was a very traumatic experience, as she and her children had to leave their support system and everything that was safe and familiar to them, but in retrospect she states, "It was the best thing I could have ever done. My children don't hear anymore screaming and arguments, and I am a different person – more relaxed and a better mother. It will take me a while to get back on my feet financially, but it's definitely worth it!"

➤ **Respondent G**

The respondent and her partner came from similar family systems. They both had alcoholic fathers and strong, dependable mothers, who worked to help support the household and encouraged high standards from the children, academically and in other areas of their lives, for example social and moral standards. In spite of the alcohol abuse in their households, they both experienced their communities as close-knit and supportive, as the church and religion were a central part of their upbringing within the small towns in which they were raised. They both had good relationships with their siblings and with their respective in-laws. His father died of alcohol poisoning shortly after they were married, whilst her father was later rehabilitated. Both partners did not have good role models in their father figures, contrary to very good role models in their mothers.

Whilst she completed her studies successfully, he was unable to pass his first year at university, despite the fact that he had received a bursary from their church and in her opinion had the intellectual ability to complete his studies if he had been dedicated.

The first ten years of their marriage was fairly happy, but the respondent reported that her husband was a workaholic and was very seldom at home and in no way involved with their children's upbringing. In her opinion his behaviour changed dramatically when he and his mother were involved in a motor vehicle accident in which his mother was killed. She suspects that he was driving under the influence of alcohol (the police never investigated this) and that he was unable to forgive himself for the incident. Although he had not been a heavy drinker up to that point, he started drinking heavily after the accident and from this point the emotional abuse became worse with each year of their marriage. His career also suffered greatly as his drinking became worse. After working for a large motor corporation for almost 20 years, he resigned after having an argument with one of his superiors. After that he was unemployed for several months and then he was only able to find temporary positions in two other companies. These positions took him away

from home for extended periods during which time he had several extra-marital affairs. Near the end of their relationship she was forced to obtain a restraining order against him, whilst getting divorced, as he became involved with prostitutes and drugs. He had also had several extra-marital affairs for many years whilst they were married. She was unaware of these as she reports, “I was too busy keeping my business solvent, my children in school and at university, and myself in one piece for their sake, to realise that he was involved with other women”.

➤ **Respondent H**

The respondent was one of five children, of which she had a close relationship with only one brother. She grew up in a very unstable home, with her father changing jobs very often, eventually buying a farm. Her mother was very unhappy about this and living far away from family and friends, caused many problems within the marriage. The children had to attend boarding school and her youngest brother caused many problems by getting into trouble with authorities, for example for petty theft and vandalism from an early age. She recalls that her mother became chronically depressed and had to go for sleep-therapy at a nearby hospital several times, which left her with the burden of taking care of her younger siblings. When she was 17 years old her father sold the farm and left the family. She did not see him again for approximately 18 years again until shortly before his death, when she learned that he had spent the remainder of his life with a widow who had three children of her own. Her mother became progressively more depressed and ultimately committed suicide. She stated, “My childhood was not a happy time, most of the time I did not have parents, but something drove me to make something of my life. Don’t ask me what that is, I suspect just grace from above”.

Her partner came from a broken home and very large family. They were nine children as both his mother and stepfather had children from a first marriage, but he was born from their union. She recalls that his childhood was happy and stable with no serious problems between his parents or siblings.

Because there were no financial constraints all the children were given the opportunity to further their studies after school but he failed the first semester and thereafter left university to work and later joined the army. After having several different positions in large financial institutions he began to study part-time to obtain a formal qualification to further his career, he did however not complete this either. She recalls that he was not ambitious, and always resented her for being the opposite, striving to run a successful practice and achieve a measure of professional success in her career and gain the respect of her colleagues.

Their relationship started off well but deteriorated after the birth of their child. He would disappear from home, sometimes for days at a time, and was very irresponsible with the way he spent money and in his behaviour towards their son. She did not trust that he could take sufficient care of their child when she was not at home. His behaviour became very irrational and abusive. She eventually divorced him when their child was two years old. She later discovered that he was given medication for a mental disorder shortly after their divorce. She was never able to find out what the diagnosis for his illness was.

➤ **Respondent I**

This respondent grew up in a middle class home and had one brother to whom she was not close. She stated that she had a loving relationship with her father but that her mother was very critical and unsupportive of her and favoured her brother. She stated, “I was Hitler’s little girl. My mother was very strict and I was taught from an early age to be a people pleaser. I was not allowed to stand up for my own rights”. Her father developed diabetes and became an alcoholic in her early twenties. He died when she and her partner were in the process of obtaining a divorce, which was very traumatic for her, as she had to cope with the additional stress of the divorce.

Her partner was one of five children. His father died when he was 15 years old and she states that he was not close to his mother or his siblings. The

family was traumatised when his eldest sister was murdered by her husband and the remaining siblings had very little contact with each other after this event. The respondent stated that her partner spoke to his mother in a very rude manner and that he did not like to visit her. Their relationship was cold and distant. She stated, “My mother-in-law did not allow me or her children to develop a close relationship with her – she kept everyone at a distance”. Therefore, both partners had serious problems within their family systems with most of their relationships being dysfunctional.

She had to work very hard to support them during the first years of their marriage as he insisted on using the money that they received as wedding gifts to start his own business, which was eventually liquidated. He started working for a large corporation after this, where he achieved a fair measure of success and earned a good salary. Despite both partners being successful in their careers, their marriage was marked by conflict from the first year. The respondent stated, “It was as if we had no map to work from, neither of us knew what a happy marriage was supposed to be. My only regret is having dragged two innocent children through it”.

This respondent had two extra-marital affairs and her partner one, of which she knew (she suspects that there had been several). She stated that it was because she felt so unloved and unappreciated that she turned to other men for attention and recognition. She stated, “I wanted a man who would treat me like a lady, and speak to me like I was a worthy human being, not his doormat.” She admits that she would have left her husband, for her second lover, but her parents intervened and persuaded her not to leave her marriage and succeeded in making her feel so guilty that she remained in her marriage and ended her extra-marital relationship. Her husband however subjected her to tremendous emotional abuse after this, not even months of intensive therapy could save the marriage after that. They eventually mutually agreed to end the marriage. The respondent was in the process of obtaining a divorce at the time of the interview and was staying with a friend, whilst building a house of her own. Her husband refused to sell the property that they had owned previously, which was worth much more than the small town-

house that she was able to afford. He claimed this as his right as compensation for her infidelity. At the time of the interview she was emotionally too weak to fight him on any legal or financial matters and agreed to the settlement that he had proposed.

➤ **Respondent J**

The respondent came from a middle class household with parents who had been married for 50 years. There was a very large age gap between her and her two siblings, who referred to her as “the brat”. She did not have a very close relationship with them. She recalls that the relationship between her parents was cold with very little physical affection was ever shown in their family. When the respondent fell pregnant at 19 years of age, her parents did not want her to get married, but she saw this as her way out of the family home, as she stated that she was very unhappy at home and wanted to distance herself from it. She made the following remark, “Luckily for me I was blessed with a good brain, and was able to study whilst raising a baby and taking care of my husband. He didn’t like me studying but I was adamant about getting a professional qualification. I suppose I knew in the back of my mind I would have to take care of myself one day”.

The respondent stated that her partner’s parents divorced when he was six years of age. His mother remarried, but he did not have a good relationship with his stepfather. His mother was very strict and domineering and his biological father gentle and quiet. He did not have a close relationship with either parents, but developed a close bond with her parents during their marriage. Neither partners in this case had good family relations or healthy communication with any family members.

They struggled financially as she was only able to do poorly paid, part-time work for the first half of their marriage, as she had to raise a small child and study part-time. She recalls that the emotional abuse she was subjected to was harsh almost from the beginning. He criticised everything she did, her child-rearing abilities, her determination to get a professional qualification and

every part-time job she attempted. He also displayed extreme jealousy and distrust. Nothing she did met with his approval. When she opened her own business, she started gaining more independence, but the emotional abuse she had to endure in her marriage continued unabated, even after the divorce. She stated, “In the beginning I was too young and stupid to realise what was happening to me, later though, I had to bite-the-bullet for my children, because I was completely dependent on him for a very long time. I didn’t have the financial means to take care of myself and my children and he never let a day go by without reminding me what a financial burden we were for him”. He had no formal qualifications and had many different jobs during the time that they were married. She reported that he never achieved any notable career success as he resigned from a position on average every two years as he claimed always having problems with the management of the company he worked for. During the last ten years of their marriage he only took contracting positions, refusing to take permanent positions, as this also allowed him to maintain a fair amount of control over her business in his spare time. She stated, “The last couple of years he would work mornings only, sleep the whole afternoon and go out to drink at night”. His alcohol abuse became a major cause for concern for her and her children. It also caused a great deal of concern for her parents as they became concerned for her and the children’s safety. She further stated, “When we got divorced, he told the lawyer the main reason for his drinking, and our marriage breaking up, was because I was ‘far too ambitious’ for him and he could not handle the pressure the children and I put him under”. He did however, not hesitate, to claim his half of her business as part of the divorce settlement and stayed in a room on the premises for several months during the divorce proceedings in order to ensure he get his “rightful share” which was very traumatic for her. She was eventually able to remove him from the property by appealing to his girlfriend to alter this arrangement she stated, “I had no control over him. He would simply ignore me or start shouting so much that I would just leave the matter, as handling it through the lawyers, would just cost me more money. Eventually I phoned his girlfriend and appealed to her, so she persuaded him to move in with her. Thank goodness the divorce was finalised soon after that. I was so afraid he was going to come back”.

➤ **Respondent K**

The respondent was one of three children who grew up with very abusive parents. Her mother was physically and verbally abusive towards her, and her sister, but “worshipped” their younger brother. She recalls that she and her sister got hidings very often (at least three times a week) and that her mother was very strict and unrealistic in her expectations of them. Her parents divorced after the birth of her youngest brother, but before this, she had to endure sexual abuse from her father from the age of six to 13 years. Her father had raped her several times during this period and at other times fondled her until he became aroused and ejaculated. She said that she was certain that her mother knew about her childhood incest, but that she had always been too afraid to discuss this with her. She stated, “I craved my mother’s affection, but I was used as a weapon against my father. She was constantly comparing my behaviour with his”. She stated that she had no relationship with her father at all and a very superficial relationship with her mother. She said that her father is a very ill man and that his evil will eventually kill him in the form of disease. She is close to her sister who was also molested by their father. Neither of them confronted either parent’s about their childhood experiences. She came from a highly dysfunctional family and carried many emotional problems into adulthood as a result thereof. She left home after school and was able to complete her studies successfully, despite the trauma of her childhood, as she sought therapy once she was distanced from her family home and became very religious. She believes that her strong religious beliefs and the distance from her family home gave her the necessary strength she needed to pursue a professional career.

The respondent reported that her partner was a “dark horse” and would not talk to her about his childhood. He was one of four children. Three were divorced and one was unmarried. She recalls that he stated that his father was, “A typical German, he was very strict and militaristic”. She stated that he treated her in a similar fashion during their marriage and became very secretive about their financial position and his activities. Their financial

matters was completely under his control as her earnings had to be deposited directly in a bank account that was held in his name and upon which she had no signing powers. He motivated this by quoting Bible texts which reinforced that his decisions should be respected as head of the household and that he should make all important decisions. He had a formal qualification and was a religious leader by profession, and according to her, “preaching one thing and living another”. Whenever she needed to buy something she had to give a lengthy motivation for wanting to make the particular purchase, after which he would decide whether such a purchase was justified in his opinion. However, she was not afforded the same consideration when he purchased something, as this would often be done without her knowledge, for example, there was seldom enough in their budget for cheese in a month, but he insisted on driving a luxury four wheel drive vehicle. She said, “I was always kept in the dark about everything and was not allowed to ask too many questions or he would become very angry and say I was being disrespectful towards him. My marriage was full of lies, deceit and abuse behind closed doors - no one knew what he was really like, as he hid behind the church and religion to justify his actions and the abuse”. The respondent was separated from her husband and in the process of divorce at the time of the interview.

5.2.1 Conclusion

The above cases reflect what Giles-Sims (1986:16) says about family patterns – once patterns have been established and have been operating for long periods of time, they are extremely resistant to change. This may offer an explanation for the occurrence of abusive patterns from one generation to the next, which are evident in many of the latter cases.

5.3 CYCLE OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

The cycle of emotional abuse by Luv (2001:1) was relevant to this study as it allowed researcher to interpret the different stages of the cycle of the emotional abuse, the abuser subjects his victim to. It explains various communication and behavioural strategies that take place during the

victimisation process in order for the abuser to gain control, for example, financial or psychological control, over his victim.

5.3.1 Victims' experiences of the cycle of emotional abuse

According to Luv (2001:4) during the cycle of emotional abuse, the **first** phase (see Figure 3.6) is characterised by the insecurity of the male partner about the fidelity of his female partner. The author further postulates that the abuser becomes overly attached to his partner, because he only feels whole within an intimate relationship, as he has no sense of self. Tension builds between the two partners and healthy communication becomes less while the male partner's (the abuser) frustration mounts. The female partner (the victim) tries to placate the abuser by beckoning to his requests in order to keep the peace.

This was relevant to the majority of cases in this study as nine of the respondents reported that their partners were abnormally jealous, and they were often accused of adultery. Respondent J reported that whenever she went out of her home, whether for work or to meet any other responsibilities, her husband would always accuse her of infidelity, even if it was in a joke. She stated that he would usually make snide remarks, such as, "So who did you screw today?" Ironically, only Respondent I admitted to having two extra-marital affairs during the course of her marriage, and the other respondents overwhelmingly stated that this was never a consideration for them. The study also showed that abusers were jealous of the time that their partners spent with others, such as family and friends even if these friends were not of the opposite sex. In the more extreme cases of jealousy, Respondents E, J and K reported being accused of having lesbian affairs with their female friends.

Six of the respondents also reported that their abusers were jealous of their academic or career achievements, of which Respondents D and J received the most severe emotional abuse for this reason. All eleven respondents reported that their abusers did everything in their power to make them feel worthless and incompetent, with the sole purpose of undermining their self-

esteem, especially by voicing their disapproval in the company of family, friends and colleagues (this was often in the form of derogatory jokes, which the victim did not find humorous).

In many cases respondents were of the opinion that this was the basis of their partners' own insecurities as the study showed that only four of the abusers had post-graduate qualifications as opposed to all the respondents in the study, having professional qualifications. Respondent E stated that her abuser verbalised his disapproval by stating, "You are so stupid, you've got this fancy qualification and job, and you still can't bring in a decent salary, what's the use of that?" – yet she was earning more than he was. The latter is supported by Luv (2001:4) as she found that the abuser often has no sense of self and tries to regain this by starting his personal vendetta to make his partner the guilty party for any situation which does not meet his approval.

Seven of the respondents also reported that as their abusers' frustration escalated, they would criticise any attempts, that the respondents' would make at work, or in the home, to meet their partners' approval. However, they would keep the peace by limiting verbal retaliation. Eight of the respondents reported being criticised on their appearance, intellect and the characters of their family and friends. All respondents reported that they often avoided confrontation with their abusers, despite being degraded by these criticisms, as they were **afraid** of what the abusers would do when pushed too far. Often severe verbal abuse would follow or the abusers' would take out their frustrations on the children, or even become destructive, by throwing or breaking objects. Respondent A in the study stated that she constantly "walked on egg-shells to keep him happy" and was nervous and anxious most of the time, which summed up the emotions of all the other respondents effectively. They were especially eager to please in the home (with cooking and cleaning) and with sexual gratification – Respondent D reported, "I was so used to doing everything in my power to keep him happy that I eventually felt like a well-trained dog".

The **second** phase (see Figure 3.6) of the cycle of emotional abuse is characterised by anger outbursts of the male partner which results in heated arguments between both partners. These arguments are characterised by threats, intimidation and manipulation by the male partner in order to gain control of his victim.

The current study showed that the **second phase** was a very prominent and destructive phase, which had the most impact on the respondents, as it was in this phase that the emotional abuse was at its worst. Nine of the respondents reported serious and loud verbal arguments during this phase, often accompanied in most cases, by crude cursing from the abuser. All of these respondents also reported that they were called names that were aimed at criticising their intelligence and/or to demoralise them.

In this study it was found that eight of the abusers often excessively consumed alcohol during this phase, especially at social events and sometimes at family gatherings. Respondent C reported, "I was once called 'second-hand goods' at a work function in front of a friend. He was drinking too much, as usual and I felt extremely embarrassed". The implication of such a comment was that she had been the victim of child molestation and did not want her co-workers to know this, in so doing, he insured that she did not speak to anyone else at the event and stayed at his side for fear he would repeat the criticism. Research (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counselling/documents/emotion>) supports the victims experience as it shows that no one intends to be in an abusive relationship, but individuals who were emotionally abused by a parent or other significant person whilst growing up often find themselves in similar situations as an adult. He had thus gained control over her in her own domain, proving his power to manipulate her, as he knew her most intimated secret and could use it as a weapon. In this case the abuser had grown up with an authoritative and abusive father, and the respondent was of the opinion that his behaviour was learned during childhood. Luv (2001:5) supports this in his profile of the emotional abuser and postulates that the abuser has been consistently and repeatedly shown from his childhood experiences that an

overpowering, authoritative, controlling, abusive attitude gets him what he desires.

During this phase seven of the respondents reported that their partners would utter the opinion that no-one else would want them. Respondent E voiced what the others implied by stating, “I was constantly told that I was very lucky that he agreed to marry and take care of me – ‘who would want a divorced woman with a child’ – he always said. It made me feel somehow, abnormal”. Kirkwood (1993:46) supports this by stating that degradation is the perception that, as a human being, one is markedly less valued or even acceptable than others.

Six of the respondents reported that they initially answered back during verbal arguments, but there were only isolated incidents of serious threats of physical retaliation from either party. Most of the respondents who retaliated verbally during arguments reported that they were “punished” for their actions, by being abused verbally to the point where they became silent, for fear of being physically attacked. Respondents B, D and H reported that they were often given the “silent treatment” or denied access to money, or isolated from family and friends. Although alcohol abuse by the male partner was the most dominant during this phase, there were isolated incidents of drug abuse, in the cases of Respondents B and G, as well. This resulted in the escalation of violent outbursts, occasional property damage and/or violence towards pets. Respondent C stated:

Once, when my husband was in ‘one of his moods’ and drunk, he got so angry with me, because I had bought a new mattress without his permission, that he hit my dog with his fist and then poured bubble-bath all over the mattress making it impossible to sleep on.

Respondent K reported that her partner sometimes expressed his anger by being physically abusive towards pets for example, he would often fire his weapon at their defenceless dog in order to terrorise it, when frustrated with her or their child. Luv (2001:5) reiterates that typical behaviour for the abuser

in phase two is marked by severe irrationality. He is likely to become enraged, insulting his partner, throwing things, threatening her, belittling her or using any other overtly abusive tactics.

During the **third phase** (see Figure 3.6) of the cycle of emotional abuse the abuser realises what he has done and tries to reconcile with his partner. He apologises for his behaviour and becomes quite docile and shows remorse. He also however manages to shift or minimise the blame for his behaviour in order to implicate his partner in sharing some of the guilt. During this phase the victim develops a false sense of hope that the incident will not reoccur.

Evidence in the current study, supported by the above, showed that although the abusers sometimes admitted to being wrong during the abusive episodes, they manipulated the situation in all eleven cases, by shifting some of the blame onto the victim after an argument. In eight of the cases respondents reported that their partners took on the role of the victim, by shifting guilt feelings onto them and eventually blaming them directly for the argument. When they tried to defend their position, the abuser would retaliate with an irrational argument as to why he was not really to blame, causing confusion within the victim. Respondent H stated that her abuser always said, "It's because you are such a bitch that I go out and drink, you're a miserable wife!" She would have to drive into dangerous areas at night, with her children, to fetch him from pubs in order to ensure his safety. Six of the respondents stated that they eventually accepted the abuser's accusations and criticisms, and took the blame for the situation, in order to keep the peace. Respondent H reported, "I eventually believed that I was a miserable wife, and a bitch and that I drove him to alcoholism".

DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998:1) state that the woman who is abused often believes that she is responsible for making the relationship work, so she continues to modify her behaviour with the hope of de-escalating or preventing the abuse. These authors also state that the victim is at her most vulnerable during this stage of the cycle, as she often does not realise the full impact of the abuse, or recognise it as emotional abuse at all.

Nine of the respondents in this study however, reported that they did not believe the accusations and criticisms that they were subjected to concerning their achievements and careers, but doubted their abilities regarding motherhood, being a good wife and with regards to certain personal beliefs and values. Respondent C demonstrated this when she said:

When I asked him to come with me to church, thinking it would help our marriage, he called me a 'Jesus freak' and said it was because I was obsessed with my religion that we had no friends left. I started to wonder if he was right. His arguments were so loud and persuasive it was hard not to take them seriously.

According to Luv (2001:6) the **final phase** (see Figure 3.6) of the cycle of emotional abuse is characterised by calmness and overall forgiveness by both partners. They once again feel safe and happy within the relationship and the abusive incidents are forgotten.

During this phase, for the respondents of this study, researcher found that in order to keep the abuser happy and calm, the victim often had to give up certain activities. Nine of the respondents reported that they declined many social invitations and six of the respondents gave up hobbies and other activities in order to dedicate more time and attention to their partner and his needs. Nine of the respondents also ended other relationships, especially friendships, in order to please their partners. Respondent J gave a good example of this when she stated, "I didn't really have any friends as he normally found fault with anyone I would invite over - I even distanced myself from my family, because he preferred it that way. He always said 'no-one needs to know our business'". McChristie (2000:2) is of the opinion that the verbal abuser is quite sensitive to outsiders knowing about the abuse and is very careful to save these scenes for the home environment. All the respondents reported that they would comply with their partner's wishes, because they were afraid to aggravate or hurt his feelings. The two prominent reasons given for the latter was:

- they were afraid of confrontation (repetition of the cycle), and
- they felt it necessary to maintain their partner's superiority, which reinforces Dobash and Dobash's (1979:45) statement that the successful socialisation of men and women for their roles within a relationship has provided a mechanism for both the legitimisation and reinforcement of the marital hierarchy. Respondent J demonstrated this when she reported:

The few times that we went on holiday (when things were going well for him and our relationship was better) we would always have to go to self-catering places at the beach so that he could wind-surf. I never had a say in where we should go on holiday. I ended up working just as hard, because he would demand three meals a day and not help me at all. I kept my mouth shut, because this was such a special time for the children and he could be so nice to everyone.

The latter reflects what DeKeseredy and Schwartz (1998:2) state, in that everything runs smoothly for a period until tension builds, promises are replaced by threats, and the cycle is repeated. It can also be one of the reasons why the victim remains in an abusive relationship, as a repetition of this cycle leads to what Lenore Walker (1979) referred to as learned helplessness. Respondent A voiced this theory when she said:

After hearing that I was a 'nagging-bitch', 'crazy' and 'senile' for so many years, I started to believe this on some level. My self-esteem and self-worth became seriously eroded. I questioned myself constantly and self-doubt about my abilities as a mother, wife and worthy person crept in.

5.4 PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORY OF LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

The assumptions (see paragraph 3.2.1) of the Psychosocial theory of learned helplessness contributes to the understanding of the state of **psychological paralysis** in which the victim of emotional abuse finds herself after repeated episodes of abuse (verbal and non-verbal) which leads to her overall feeling of powerlessness and hopelessness (inability to change the pattern of victimisation). This was an overwhelming characteristic of the respondents in

this study, and thus relevant to the understanding of the emotions the victims experienced during the victimisation process.

5.4.1 Victims' experiences of learned helplessness

Eight of the respondents in this study felt that they were unable to express themselves freely, especially with concerns about the relationship. In all of these cases the victims were repeatedly ignored or dismissed verbally by their abusers when they attempted to explain their feelings. Respondent E stated that when she tried to confront her partner about their problems he would retaliate by stating, "Well I'm not perfect, so stop living in a dream world, this is the way things are, so just accept it!" She eventually gave up trying to discuss her concerns with him as she realised, "I am fighting a losing battle, so why bother even trying to talk to him about how I feel, he doesn't listen anyway". According to Walker (1979:43) this perception stems from women having learned to believe that they are powerless against men. Respondent J reported that towards the end of their marriage, she could only communicate with her partner in the form of letters and she verbalised her feelings as follows:

I felt that it was hopeless trying to have a conversation with him, he would just end up swearing and shouting at me or take his anger out on the children. I didn't want my children to hear his foul language all the time, so I would just shut up and give him a letter a day or two later, when he had cooled off.

Respondents A, B and I were isolated and neglected to such an extent that they felt total hopelessness and became severely depressed. Walker (1979:43) states that this happens when the process of victimisation is perpetuated to the point of psychological paralysis. Further evidence of this was found in the current study as six of the respondents reported being told that they were stupid so many times that they completely withdrew and refrained from voicing any opinions at home. Respondent D verbalised these feelings very well, by saying, "I did not see myself anymore, I was emotionally dead".

All eleven respondents in this study reported that during the relationship they felt trapped and powerless to escape the victimisation. Even though these women were earning above average salaries, seven of them felt that they would not be able to survive financially, especially with regards to their children's needs, if they left the relationship. Their children had become accustomed to certain privileges, for example, being in private schools and being able to partake in various activities, which incurred additional expenses on the household. These respondents did not want to deny their children this lifestyle which they felt was what their children deserved. They all reported that having this responsibility contributed to their emotional exhaustion, which resulted in physical exhaustion and which was aggravated by symptoms such as insomnia and anxiety. They also believed that their partners would not have given them a fair financial settlement, in order to maintain control over their lives. This was found to be a fairly accurate assumption, as in only one of the cases, in researchers opinion, did the victim receive an adequate divorce settlement for her and her child. However, even in this case, the respondent was advised by her attorney to accept the settlement as it was above average in his opinion, although they both knew that she was entitled to considerably more. She was however, so emotionally drained at that stage that she agreed upon the settlement in order to "just get it over and done with". Her attorney also advised her that her partner's irrational behaviour might cause him to withdraw his initial offer and that she and her child would then be "even worse off".

In four of the cases, religious beliefs were the main reason for the victim feeling trapped in her relationship, as Respondent D described so aptly:

I had prayed to God to give me the right man, I believed my ex-husband to be that man. I swore before God and his witnesses that I will stay with him 'till death us do part'. I felt guilty for wanting to leave him and break up our family, so I felt I had no choice but to bear my burden and carry my cross. I believed it was my punishment.

Nine of the respondents in this study said that during, and even after the relationship had ended, they were afraid to make even the most elementary

decisions for themselves, but were especially fearful to make financial decisions. They reported that this was because they were afraid of the consequences if their partner did not approve, as they were consistently told that their decisions were incorrect and of inferior intellect. Respondent J, who had endured the longest relationship in this study said:

For 27 years I was not allowed to make any decisions. After the divorce I went to the bank to open an account for myself and cried like a baby because I was so scared and unsure of myself. His favourite criticism was 'don't even try to make decisions for the business without asking me first. Your decisions are usually totally stupid.

Even though this respondent had been running a business of her own for ten years, her husband had maintained total control of the financial aspects of the business and made all the major decisions. He accomplished this, as he worked in the field of computers and used this as a means to gain control of the business as she was not computer literate to the extent that she could do financial transactions. Research (<http://www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counselling/documents.htm>) indicates that emotional abuse in its implicit and subtle nature can comprise of criticising, advising, offering solutions, analysing and proving under the guise of "helping", with an underlying judgemental "I know best" tone which the abuser uses to create an unequal footing in the relationship. He insured that she did not understand the computer programmes he was using by refusing that she enrol for the necessary computer courses, using the excuse that there were not enough funds available in the business for "extra nonsense" and further stated, "Let me worry about the complicated stuff, you do the rest" which she reported, "made me feel stupid, like I was only good enough to do manual labour, even though I was the one with the professional qualifications and bringing in the business". Respondents A and H further stated, "It's a slow erosion of the self – you don't even realise it. Before you know it you are his puppet, because you'll do anything to keep the peace". Tolman (1992:293) states that the ideas, perceptions, and personality characteristics of the victim are constantly belittled by the abuser. Eventually the victim begins to experience these aspects of the self as seriously eroded or absent. Walker

(1979:45) substantiates this by postulating that the victim of abuse holds an exaggerated belief that whatever she does will not be good enough. This author further states that the victim believes that her inadequacies will prevent her from controlling her life effectively.

Six of the respondents reported that even after their separation or divorce they would still have periods of doubt when they felt that they could not, and did not want to live without the abuser. This is a typical response of learned helplessness as demonstrated by the above quotation from Respondents A and H. They also reported that their guilt feelings about taking their children out of their family home, was the largest contributing factor towards feeling some dependence on the abuser, with self-doubt being the second largest reason for these fears. This self-doubt was fuelled by the abusers constantly reinforcing that they could not survive on their own and that they could not do anything right. Respondent J reported, “I was being told constantly that I was an embarrassment to him and his children. I had very little self-confidence for many years”. Respondent A made the remark, “I feel I cannot cope, where I used to be a person who coped well when I was younger”. Thus, a person who believes that she is helpless in obtaining control of a situation, may also eventually believe that she is not **capable** enough to do so (Walker, 1979:50).

Respondents C, F, G and J are good examples of the nine respondents that stated that they always apologised to others for their partners’ bad behaviour (especially when their partners had been drinking). They were extremely embarrassed in the presence of family, friends and colleagues, and in many cases believed that they had done something to cause it. Respondent H summed this perception up effectively when she stated, “It always ended up being my fault, no matter what happened. You get so used to it, it doesn’t matter anymore”. Walker (1979:47) states that once the abused woman is operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality, and she becomes passive, submissive and even more helpless. This offers an explanation of the apologetic behaviour of the respondents in this study despite the fact that they all had professional qualifications. Kirkwood (1993:51) reiterates by stating that, not only does the abuser not accept

responsibility for his behaviour, but twists it in order to shift responsibility and blame onto his victim, which further emotionally undermines her.

5.5 PATRIARCHAL DOMINANCE

The ideology of patriarchal dominance explains how the partners of the victims in this study were socialised to be dominant over women and in return women were socialised to be subordinate and accept domination by their male counterparts. Specific reference is made to **sexual terrorism** (see paragraph 3.3.5) as this phenomenon explains how men are socialised to maintain fear and women socialised to be victims. Davis (1994:41) describes this system of sexual terrorism, by which males frighten, control and dominate females, as one which is supported by the ideology of patriarchy. It is indiscriminate and unpredictable, and relies on voluntary compliance. Researcher found this particularly useful in understanding the role that society plays in the socialisation process during childhood, which ultimately supports abusive relationships.

5.5.1 Victims' experiences of patriarchal dominance

➤ Patriarchal dominance and financial control

Of the eleven respondents, only four were in a household where the abuser was contributing to household finances on an equal level with the victim, but in **all** of the cases the man had the most, if, not full power over the finances in the relationship. In most of these cases the victims found this acceptable, as they were of the belief that the man is the head of the household although all the women had professional qualifications. Dobash and Dobash (1979:43) state that access to positions of power is rarely based upon individual ability in a system of patriarchy, but is institutionalised to such an extent that those who are in positions of power and privilege do so either because of some form of ascribed status. In most cultures, men are viewed as the head of the household, or because of institutionalised forms of advantage that give them the opportunity to achieve status. Many of the respondents reported that if

they wanted to buy something for themselves it would have to be done with their partner's permission or without his knowledge, as these purchases were always viewed as a waste of money by their partners, even though these purchases were made with funds that **they** had earned. Respondent D demonstrated this when she stated:

I was very fond of buying things for our home, but I would always end up hiding them for a while until he was in a good mood, before showing him. If I dared to buy more than one item at a time, I would bring them out of hiding one at a time over a longer period. I did this because if he thought that I had spent too much money on household items, all hell would break loose!

In five of the cases the respondents stated that their partners had total disregard for the family's welfare and that there was never enough money for their basic needs, but always enough for their partners' desires. In all of the eleven cases the male partner ran up debts and made major purchases without his partner's knowledge or consent. These debts and major purchases ranged from buying or selling the family home, purchasing cars, changing jobs or making decisions regarding the children. All of the respondents felt that these types of decisions were to be made in partnership, as they concerned the whole family. Even though the male partners made these purchases and decisions with money that both partners earned, they had very little, if any concern for their victims' feelings or concerns in this regard.

Respondent K stated that whenever she and her husband bought their monthly groceries (he insisted on accompanying her) she was always restricted from buying anything that he perceived as a "luxury" item. She had to buy strictly from a list which he would control, by ticking-off every item and checking the price. If he perceived a price to be too high in his opinion, she would simply have to return the item to the shelf and do without it, whether she thought it a necessity or not.

Respondent J reported that even though her partner insisted on living in an area known for its expensive housing and he drove a luxury vehicle, she was forced to buy her and her children's clothes from second hand shops and recalls throughout the period of her marriage having to buy the cheapest brands of food and household goods. She was only given an allowance for house-keeping, which she stated, was not enough, most of the time. She recalls, "I cannot remember a time that I was not short of money, or when I didn't have to buy the cheapest of everything". She reported accepting this state of affairs, as her husband's right, as this degree of patriarchal dominance was what she had internalised, through socialisation, in her parental home. As Dobash and Dobash (1979:44) state, "The ideology of patriarchal dominance insures the socialisation into an acceptance of the rightful nature of the order, and its inequalities can allow such inequalities to go unquestioned and unchallenged, or to make challenges seem unnatural or immoral". Even though, in retrospect, she was not comfortable with the situation, she avoided confrontation for fear he would withhold even more funds from her, as a form of punishment, as her fear of him, powerlessness and resulting learned helplessness grew.

Respondent A gave an account of their first few years of marriage. She went into practice and worked very hard in order to bring in enough money to support her husband, whilst he was still studying. She bought him a new luxury vehicle so that he could maintain a certain image, which he felt appropriate for his profession. However, she had to drive an inexpensive, old car and accepted this as his patriarchal right and her duty as a good wife. Martin (1981:27) reiterates this when he stated that the rise of the patriarchal system allowed a man the right of ownership over the property and people (his wife and children) that comprised his household.

➤ **Patriarchal dominance and control of time and space**

Nine respondents in this study found that their partners limited their time, space and general movement, as a means of dominance and control. They reported having check-in times, for example, a certain time to be home from

work, church or other events and had to give an account for any time spent away from home. Respondent J demonstrated this when she stated:

He would always phone to the doctor's rooms, or wherever I happened to have an appointment to check if I was really there. He even timed the visits to family and friends and gave me hell if I wasn't home on time. He saw no reason why I should be in any other place than at home or at work – he couldn't see why I needed time alone.

Champagne (1999:7) in support indicates that some women have reported how their abuser's constant surveillance sabotaged their efforts to gain independence, such that they would often stop activities outside the home that the abuser did not approve of. Seven of the respondents also stated decisions concerning family outings, holidays and future events would be taken mainly by their partners' as the understanding was that these decisions lie with the head of the household.

➤ **Patriarchal dominance and sexual relations**

The study showed that eight of the respondents felt that they were obligated to have sexual relations with their partners whenever their partners demanded it. All of these women were of the opinion that the demands made on them sexually were often strange and made them feel uncomfortable, and revolved only around the abuser's pleasure (involving objects, a third party joining them for intercourse or anal penetration). Seven of the respondents stated that in their opinion the demands for sex that were made on them were excessive. Loring's findings (1994:43) support the above by postulating that the victim of emotional abuse is often forced to perform abhorrent acts or behaviours that betray her values. Respondent G demonstrated this when she reported that her husband would wake her, up to three times a night, to satisfy his sexual needs, and that even though she was often exhausted after working long hours, she felt that it was her duty to oblige him. Seven of the respondents reported that when they had refused to have sexual relations with their partners, they were punished in several ways. Punishment varied from the silent treatment that could last up to several days, five respondents reported

severe verbal attacks and threats of divorce. Although these were isolated incidents, two respondents reported being physically attacked and Respondent C stated that she had been raped three times during her marriage because she had refused to have sex. She said, “If I wouldn’t give him what he wanted, especially when he had been drinking, he would just take it. I remember three times when it really hurt, and you could call it nothing else, but rape!” Martin (1981:37) is of the opinion that the traditional marriage contract still rests on the assumptions that, marriage represents a life time commitment, that monogamy should be enforced, that procreation is an essential element in the marriage relationship, and that a strict division of labour should exist within a family. The exclusiveness and permanence of marriage also means that the wife is permanently available to the husband as a sex partner and can be punished if she is unfaithful or unwilling to oblige to his sexual demands.

In the cases where severe neglect was the dominant form of emotional abuse, the respondents reported that the lack of sexual interest and general physical affection from their partners made them feel inadequate and devalued as wives. These respondents reported that in retrospect, this lack of interest from their partners, further undermined their low self-esteem, as in all of these cases the respondents suspected adultery by their partners.

Nine of the respondents stated that their partners had committed adultery during the marriage, as opposed to one respondent who admitted to committing adultery herself during the relationship. She made the following statement:

I wish I had left him then, but he threatened me so much with the children and said ‘I’ll make sure you leave with nothing’. Even my parents wouldn’t even try and understand – my mother wouldn’t speak to me for months, there was so much pressure on me, so I stayed. I could have been so happy, he was a wonderful man.

➤ **Patriarchal dominance and gender-role expectations**

Evidence of stereotypical gender-role expectations was found in the current study, as eight of the respondents reported that their partners never helped with house work or responsibilities regarding the children. Although all eleven respondents said that they did not receive any help with cooking and cleaning, three of the respondents however did receive some help with the children's upbringing during the marriage, but only at their partner's convenience.

Although six of the respondents voiced the opinion that the man should share **part** of the woman's responsibilities in the home, Respondents B, F, H and I were of the opinion that women and men have specific roles to play, and that this was completely acceptable to them. The remaining Respondents G and J had very stereotypical views on gender roles in the home and society in general, and accepted that all the house work and child-rearing responsibilities were the responsibility of the woman. Respondent I summed this up by saying:

He was the father of my children and the man of the house, I had to respect him. When I told my mother how he treated me she said, 'you can't leave him, he's your husband and the father of your children, who's going to take care of you if you leave?'

Dobash and Dobash (1979:44) are of the opinion that the successful socialisation of men and women for their roles, from one generation to the next, provided a mechanism for both the legitimisation and reinforcement of the marital hierarchy, and by implication patriarchal dominance. They reiterate this by stating that it continues to be the foundation of male supremacy and subordination of women in modern society and in marriage, and can thus form the foundation of wife abuse.

In this study, seven of the respondents stated that their partners' attitudes towards women in general were disrespectful. Four reported that their partner's often made derogatory comments and spoke of women as if they

were objects or symbols and generally displayed very chauvinistic attitudes. Six of the respondents said that their partners treated other women with total disregard, as if their opinions were inferior and not worth listening to. Respondent E recalled a comment that her partner made, when her friend voiced an opinion on purchasing a vehicle, “She’s a woman, why should I listen to her, what the hell does she know?” She added that such rude and disrespectful comments were often typical of the manner in which he spoke to his own mother and to her, creating the impression that he thought women had inferior intelligence and were by their very existence subordinate to men.

➤ **Patriarchal dominance and violence**

Ten of the respondents reported being threatened with physical violence. These threats were either verbal or with the display of a fist or object. Respondent D voiced the general experience of the others when she reported that her partner said, “You can be lucky I only shout at you!” Research (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com.html>) indicates that, the presence of emotional abuse is the largest risk factor and the greatest predictor of physical violence, especially where a woman is constantly degraded and insulted. Four of the respondents also reported that their partners had displayed weapons in a threatening way during arguments, such as a baseball bat and the others, firearms. Although actual physical violence was absent in all of the cases. Most of the respondents reported an eminent threat of being physically attacked by their partners, as a means of inducing fear in their victims. This was done by the abusers in order to maintain dominance and control, which is one of the main motivations for emotional abuse (see paragraph 5.4 with reference to **sexual terrorism**).

Seven of the respondents stated that their partners also damaged property during bouts of anger, these comprising either household objects or the victim’s personal property. Respondent C said that on one occasion when she had refused to have sex with her partner because he had been drinking, he tore up a teddy bear, which he had given her during their courtship, with his bare hands. Five of the respondents reported that their partners had

slammed their fists into doors during bouts of anger. Four respondents stated that their partners had abused their pets in fits of rage, especially when excessive amounts of alcohol had been consumed by the abuser. Respondent J reported that, when she asked him to stop drinking at a family gathering, her husband had taken her dog and bartered him for a bottle of Rum (spirits alcohol) – she never found the dog again. The same abuser took the children’s pet baby chickens, throttled them and tossed them over the fence into a neighbour’s garden in a fit of anger. She stated that this had been extremely traumatic for her and her children, as she had to fabricate a reason (which did not implicate their father and thus protect them from the truth), to explain to her children why their pets had disappeared. Respondent A stated that her ex-husband smashed an expensive laptop computer, while in a rage. He was also a constant threat, just buy losing his temper. This made her and their child fearful of what he was capable of in fits of anger.

5.5.2 Conclusion

In support of the evidence of abuse provided by the respondents in this study Stanko (1985:17) states that women know that their private, and the public’s assessment of their experiences of abuse, are very different. Women learn to define their worlds and thus their experiences as less important than those of men, as they are socialised to be subordinate to their male counterparts. In the social hierarchy of most cultures their needs and views are considered less important than those of men. Women therefore internalise and silence many of their experiences of sexual, physical or emotional abuse, as they perceive that their voices will not be heard.

5.6 FAMILY VIOLENCE FROM A COMMUNICATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Researcher’s assumption that emotional abuse is not an isolated event in a relationship but forms part of the process of interpersonal communication which partners use to regulate their daily lives is supported by the research of Stark and Flitcraft (1996:70). The **three** dimensions of communication in family violence as postulated by these authors explain the various factors that

lead to the frustration of the abuser and ultimately to emotional abuse in the relationship (see Figure 3.6).

5.6.1 Victims' experiences of family violence from a communicative perspective (see Figure 3.6)

The **instrumental dimension** is where the abuser sees his partner, or wife and children as central or instrumental causes for his frustration within the relationship. It is his perception that they block his goal attainment, for example, he is unable to achieve his career goals and blames this on his family responsibilities. He then uses emotional abuse to gain compliance from his wife or partner, and thus communicates in a fashion to gain this compliance. This can be done by, for example, blaming her for his lack of progress at work and thereby ensuring that she feels guilty. She then tries to please him in other ways to alleviate his frustration and regain his approval, and thereby stopping the emotional abuse.

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:8) use the frustration-aggression hypothesis to demonstrate this. They state that when goal attainment is blocked, frustration increases, and, as a result, the abuser becomes more aggressive, increasingly more threatening, and eventually violent. Researcher found evidence of this in most of the cases. Respondent A stated that her partner spent very long hours at work and was always too busy for her or their child. She was forbidden to phone him at work, or enquire when she could expect him home. If she did this, he resorted to severe verbal abuse calling her a, "Nagging bitch, paranoid, crazy or senile". He accused her of wanting to control him, and in her view, did not want the responsibility of a baby. When she confronted him about his total neglect as a husband and father, he became enraged to such an extent that he damaged any property within his reach. She reported that he had broken two cell phones, a lap-top computer and punched a hole in their bedroom door, amongst other things. She recalled becoming very withdrawn and quiet and would do anything to keep him happy for fear that he would divorce her and that her child would see even less of him.

In another case Respondent B said that her partner was obsessed with his work, surfing and his surfing friends, and that nothing was to stand in the way of these. When she was in her early thirties, she wanted to start a family but he refused, saying that this would restrict his lifestyle. As her need for a child grew, as she was often lonely, his frustration grew and this resulted in further verbal abuse, which was made worse when he smoked Marijuana. She later found out that he had seen a doctor without her knowledge and had undergone a vasectomy, thereby ensuring that she would not fall pregnant, and thus enforcing her compliance, not to have children. This came as a great shock and disappointment to her. She was very traumatised and cried a lot during that period of her life, and it intensified her unhappiness even further.

The **relationship dimension** is the area in which serious conflict is caused by lack of commitment to the relationship, sexual needs, financial concerns, relatives, general compatibility of partners and the balance of power within the relationship. These factors can all lead to violent outbursts which can cause serious harm to the relationship. Evidence of this was discussed in detail in paragraphs 5.2, 5.4.1 and 5.5.1.

The **identity dimension** is the area in which partners have issues with self-esteem, especially on the part of an emotionally abusive male partner who has to prove his manliness by controlling his wife or partner, masculinity issues, stereotypical sex-role expectations and egocentrism. Evidence of this was discussed in detail in the previous section which dealt with patriarchal dominance (see paragraph 5.5.1).

Stark and Flitcraft (1996:2) state that a communication approach views abusive behaviour as the dark side of communication and the abusers and violators as **communicatively incompetent**. Researcher found evidence of abusive communication patterns in all of the cases, but which was noteworthy in eight of the cases, were reports that the victims received mixed messages from their abusers which led to confusion within the victim. These confusing messages are summarised as follows:

- The abuser **disciplines** the victim, because he loves her, for example, she must be home from visiting family or friends, at a time that he has stipulated, or she will cause concern. To illustrate this Respondent D reported that because of the nature of her work she was often obligated to attend conferences and workshops that would sometimes keep her away from home over a weekend or late at night. She would have to provide her husband with very specific times of departure and arrival for these occasions, for which he would time her to the minute. If her movements did not coincide with these arrangements he would verbally abuse her upon her arrival at home and then retreat into silence sometimes for days at a time. She would have to provide him with lengthy explanations for her movements and apologise to the point of begging for his forgiveness for “making him worry”. Champagne (1994:4) explains that woman who are emotionally abused are more likely to admit fault, whereas an abuser is more likely to minimise his behaviour. She stated, “I could never dream of staying behind for coffee or a meal after a workshop or conference, the consequences were just too severe”. She found these actions very confusing at times, because he would expect a certain level of income from her, but became abusive if she attended conferences that were essential for her career.

- The woman does not contribute enough financially to the household according to her partner, but when she works he complains that she does not spend enough time at home or with the children. Respondent I, G and J bared witness to this and reported receiving severe verbal abuse concerning negligence of the children and their housekeeping duties, but were expected to bring in good incomes with the minimum working hours. Respondent J reiterated this when she stated:

We would often return home from work at the same time, but he would demand a plate of cooked food immediately or start with his accusations

saying, 'look at this place, it's a pigsty' before I had been given a chance to take care of the household chores.

- The abuser expresses his unhappiness with his partner and being in the relationship, but refuses to leave and/or fights her request for a divorce. Respondent G reported that not even a court order could keep her husband away from her and the children. He insisted that they “belonged” to him, and their home was his property alone, and that no-one would force him to stay away from it. He refused to give her a divorce although he also refused to give up his extra-marital relationships with other women. She had no other alternative but to take legal action against him, as the use of alcohol and drugs caused him to become irrational and dangerous towards the end of their relationship. Stacey, Hazlewood and Shupe (1994:54) are of the opinion that male abusers are passive-aggressive. They have tendencies to feel helpless and vulnerable, yet enraged if abandoned by their victims. Many male abusers see the woman as being in control or vying for control over him, thus they have to “show her who’s the boss” with violence.

Respondent K added to this by stating that her husband treated her with tremendous disrespect and subjected her to crude verbal attacks, but insisted to counsellors and other members of their church that he loved her very much and would never agree to a divorce. She stated:

My husband confused me so much – he would treat me like dirt when we were alone, but tell all the parish members that I was a wonderful wife and that we had a beautiful child - that we meant the world to him. Yet the way he spoke to me gave me a clear message that he could not stand to be in my company. I couldn't even repeat the language he used when he spoke to me, it was though he became possessed with demons.

- The abuser has false morals, for example, he expresses his disapproval (condemnation) of gambling to her, as well as to family and friends, but partakes in such activities without their knowledge.

Respondent K reported that her husband disapproved strongly of others who took part in the National Lottery competition, but she would find entry forms in his shirt pockets or in his car. When she confronted him about these he would simply deny purchasing the tickets, although she knew he was being dishonest. This gave her reason to distrust him in other ways as well. This respondent was of the opinion that her husband had strong psychopathic tendencies and that he needed professional help for his irrational behaviour.

5.7 A SYSTEMS THEORY PERSPECTIVE ON RELATIONSHIPS

Researcher used the systems theory (see Figure 3.6) perspective of Giles-Sims, to explain how cognitive or intra-psychic systems of individuals, and the family systems within which they operate, can influence each other and in turn are influenced by greater social systems, with reference to the ideology of patriarchal dominance.

5.7.1 Victims' experiences of the conflict process within the family system

Giles-Sims (1986:11) supports assumptions that family systems go through cycles of stability and change, and explains different stages that the conflict process within a partnership goes through. These could lead to resolution or revolution (see paragraph 3.6.5) which researcher found relevant in understanding why, and how, the victim leaves an abusive relationship and the dynamics that follow her decision. The conflict process will be discussed in terms of the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner** (see Figure 3.6 – **Specific patterns of communication become part of the system**).

Stage 1 - Pre-competition is characterised by co-operation between the partners, where they maintain a relatively independent relationship and there is little conflict. Evidence of this, in the current study, was found between partners, during their courting period before they were married. Respondent

K mentioned that the courting period between her and her partner had also been abusive, as he showed signs of control with regards to her time and space and with the way she spent her money. But, she admitted that, “love is blind, and I was flattered by all the attention and concern, without seeing the red lights flashing”. McChristie’s research (2000:1) supports the latter by stating that during the courtship period, both partners are on their best behaviour. The abuse is slight and intermittent. Since the women want to believe the best of their partners, they overlook obvious emotional abuse. Chemistry adds to the capability women have to overlook the first subtle signs of abuse. The study showed that the courting periods were shorter than two years in eight of the cases, which may be an indication that the victims simply did not know their partners, as well as they thought they did, before entering into marriage or cohabitation. The above case of abusive courtship was also a case where the victim was molested as a child by her father, which could indicate a pattern of learned helplessness as a result of very early victimisation which continued for a number of years. The molestation was left unresolved, as she was afraid of confrontation with her mother and father, until she had therapy during the dissolving of her marriage. Her younger sister had also been molested by their father, but she was in denial and refused to seek therapy in this regard, or confront the matter at all. The respondent reported that this made it even more difficult for her to resolve the matter with her parents as she is of the opinion that it would be easier if she and her sister could address this together and support each other through the pain and fear of confrontation. She reported that the trauma that she experienced during her childhood made her a victim throughout her life and in her marriage, as it made her very vulnerable to abuse of any kind.

Stage 2 - Competition is characterised by **change**. This change takes place due to internal and historical dynamics within the relationship or due to events in the environment. This results in partners becoming competitive. In all of the other ten cases the emotional abuse started shortly after marriage or cohabitation. Respondent B voiced the general experience of the others, when she stated, “He became this whole other person once we were married and the honeymoon was over”. In the cases where there were children born

of the union, the respondents reported that the emotional abuse became even worse and escalated into very violent verbal outbursts once the added responsibilities of a child or children came into the relationship.

In most of the cases the male partners also became more abusive as the women reached higher successes in their careers. Respondent D reported that after she had received her doctorate the emotional abuse became much worse, and she was never permitted to discuss her work or anything related to it, with her partner or in social situations. She reports that he would give her the silent-treatment for days at a time and often she did not know what had angered him and would have to beg him to talk to her again or satisfy his sexual demands before he would engage in conversation with her again. She recalls seeing hatred in his eyes at social events when her friends and family enquired about her career or voiced any form of praise regarding her achievements. She states, “He could never handle my success, and everything just got worse when I got a title. He made me feel guilty for succeeding in my studies and professional career”. Research (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) offers one explanation for the abusers reactions, as emotional abusers, similar to other abusers, base their needs on the obtaining and maintenance of power. When their victims empower themselves, for example, through further studies, they perceive that as a loss of personal power and often become jealous and enraged.

Stage 3 – Conflict. This stage is characterised by the escalation of conflict and competition. Partners abuse each other verbally which leads to full scale battles and eventually the polarisation of the partners. This stage can be compared to the second phase of the cycle of emotional abuse (see paragraph 5.3) when the emotional abuse is at its worst. Five respondents reported that the abuse was triggered if their partners experienced a bad day at work, or became worse with the consumption of alcohol. Six of the respondents stated that, if their partner did not get his own way or he felt irritated by her or the child/children, the abuse would start off with complaints and insults, and escalate to shouting and crude cursing. Five respondents

reported that the abuse would end, with the abusers leaving the house, giving them the silent-treatment, or when they satisfied their abuser's demands.

Stage 4 – Crisis stage is characterised by an intense level of interaction wherein violence, either verbal abuse or even physical violence, is likely to occur. This is the special period in which a turning point is likely to be reached. This crisis stage can be compared to Luv's Phase 2 – Incident, which is discussed in detail in paragraph 5.3.1.

Stage 5 – Resolution/Revolution

At this stage there is a turning point within the relationship which can take place immediately or gradually depending on the victim's circumstances. At this point the system is drastically restructured or conflicts are resolved as the system returns to the *status quo*.

In association with Luv's Phase 4 of **calmness** (see Figure 3.6) where the system returns to equilibrium and is thus maintained, nine respondents reported that at this point they had the urge to rescue their partners from their troubles, either through personal attention, prayer or therapy and thus rescue the relationship so that the situation could return to a state of calmness or the *status quo*. This would coincide with compliance to any demands that their partners would make, thereby reassuring that the cycle would be repeated.

Respondent D stated:

I was his personal nurse, always there to make sure he took his medication, got a plate of cooked food every night and give him any attention that he needed, no matter how busy or under pressure I was, otherwise he would sulk for days or throw a tantrum. I would do anything to keep him happy and calm, because his needs and troubles were always more important or worse than mine (sarcasm).

In seven of the cases the abusers struggled to maintain control of the relationship by manipulating a conflict situation, thus bringing the system back into equilibrium, and preventing the victim from leaving the relationship.

Respondent C described this when she stated, “My husband always played the victim after an argument, which made me feel guilty. He would then end up begging for forgiveness and making promises to stop the arguments and abuse”. The respondents also reported that control was achieved by their partners through financial manipulation, or inflicting guilt feelings by using the children as tools to manipulate the situation. Respondent E reported that her partner would threaten her by saying, “Don’t think you can leave me, I’ll make sure you walk out with nothing. Who will want a woman and a child with nothing?” She stated that he repeated this over and over when she threatened to leave the relationship, and inflicted so much fear and doubt in her, that after a period she believed that he was right. This coincides with what Walker (1979:47) states that once a victim believes that she cannot control what happens to her, it’s difficult to believe she can ever influence it, even if later she experiences a favourable outcome. Once the woman is operating from a belief of helplessness, the perception becomes reality, and they become passive, submissive and helpless.

The **professional women** in this study were asked direct questions, to find out why these women stayed in their abusive relationships. The following reasons were given:

- Most of the respondents who had **children** stated that they remained in their relationships in order not to subject their children to the trauma of separation and divorce and felt strongly that their children should grow up with a father figure in the family home. As Respondent G stated, “I did not want my children to be caught up in the battle of the broken home, and subjected to all the labels that go hand in hand with that”.
- Many of the respondents felt **shame, embarrassment** and **self-blame** for not succeeding at their relationships and felt that separation and divorce was a reflection of failure on their part. For these professional women, who were so successful in their careers, it was inconceivable that they were unable to make a happy home for their families and ultimately admit that the relationship was a failure and leave.

According to Loring (1994:1) most victims are convinced that they are at fault and thus do not perceive themselves as abused, or victims of interpersonal violence. Even when victims acknowledge that emotional abuse occurs in their intimate relationship, the depth of the “inner bruises”, emotional pain, and eroded sense of self, often remains hidden from consciousness. Respondent A voiced this eloquently by saying, “I could not understand why I was not getting out what I was putting in – this was my philosophy for my life and my recipe for success in other areas of my life, but it wasn’t working in my marriage. I couldn’t make it work, no matter how hard I tried. I felt like such a failure”.

- Some respondents gave **financial loss** as a reason for remaining in their abusive relationships. This was especially evident in the relationships where there were children who attended private schools or universities. In almost all of the cases the victims suffered substantial financial losses, but stated that because they had professional careers, and earned good incomes, they were able to recover from these losses to a large extent, or at least maintain lifestyles that were acceptable to themselves. Respondent E voiced what most of the others conveyed during interviews:

I eventually realised that the price I was paying to stay in the relationship was too high. I also realised that eventually my child would end up paying the highest price for my weakness. When I moved out, and returned to my parents home with almost nothing, I realised that the old proverb ‘money can’t buy you happiness’ was true. My daughter would simply go to a public school - not a private one, and play netball, instead of horse-riding, but we would be happy!

- The **lack of emotional strength** and **self-confidence** were also amongst the reasons sited for remaining in an emotionally abusive relationship, as Respondent F stated, “I was so exhausted most of the time, I didn’t have the strength to fight him for a divorce. I knew he would make it a living hell if I tried to leave him”. Research by Engle

and Evans (1992) reflects that emotional abuse is like brainwashing, in that it systematically wears away at the victim's self-confidence, sense of self-worth, trust in their own perceptions, and self-concept.

- Of the less frequent reasons stated for remaining in their relationships some respondents stated the following:
- The **lack** of a good **support system**, in terms of family and friends. Evans (1999:3) adds that often for the emotionally abused woman, there is no other witness to her reality and no one can understand her experiences. Friends and family may see the abuser as a good partner, which adds to doubts about her perceptions on the relationship.
 - Strong **religious convictions** concerning divorce and family values. All of the respondents in this study who were married took their religious vows very seriously.
 - As professional women, with very demanding jobs, they were accustomed to coping with large amounts of **stress** in their daily lives. Research (<http://www.womanabuseprevention.com/html>) indicates that like women who are physically and sexually abused, emotionally abused women demonstrate incredible resilience and inner strength as they successfully balance the everyday demands of life, such as children, a career and a home, with minimal external display of their inner turmoil. Their relationships were part of this daily stress, which they also became accustomed to dealing with, an example of how dysfunction in a system becomes functional for its members. Loring (1994:64) postulates in support that the pattern of emotional abuse develops and continues because it serves a function, such as maintaining the system.

When Revolution (Stage 5) takes place and the system is drastically altered it is likely that the abused woman will have reached what Giles-Sims (1986:12) refers to as the **thresh-hold of viability**. As illustrated in the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner** (see figure 3.6), this is the turning point at which the abused woman will decide to leave the relationship as the system (relationship) is no longer a viable one for her. This point is reached between Stage 4 (Crisis) and Stage 5 (Revolution) as the stages in any cycle do not have rigid, definable boundaries but can overlap.

In this study researcher found that victim's experienced this turning point or thresh-hold of viability for the following reasons:

- Respondents G and I reported that through therapy and supportive friends they received the insight they needed to face the realities of their abusive relationships and how devastating the effect of the abuse was on all parties concerned. The support they received from these sources assisted them in initiating the changes that were needed to leave the dysfunctional family systems that they were in, and become part of a more functional and viable system.

- Respondents C, E, I and K stated that they left the relationship when they finally realised that the dysfunctional and abusive relationships between them and their partner's, had a very negative effect on their children and that staying in such a relationship would probably continue the cycle of abuse into the next generation as this was the only example of a marital and family system that their children would be able to model future behaviour on. Respondent D explained that her son had started showing signs of stress, which manifested in his immune system breaking down, causing lung problems which later led to asthma. It was her opinion that her son's poor health was caused by the stressful situation between her and her partner. Likewise, Respondent K reported that her daughter's school teacher had reported behavioural problems which manifested in excessive

aggressive tendencies in her daughter. Stevens (1996:4) postulates that children who see or hear their mothers being abused are also victims of emotional abuse. Children who experience these forms of abuse demonstrate higher levels of physical aggressiveness, delinquency and interpersonal problems than children who are not exposed.

- Respondents F, J and G reported that the alcohol abuse was a contributing factor to them leaving the relationship, as this led to an increase in emotional abuse. Respondent G stated:

I **had** to leave eventually; I was destroying myself and my children by allowing his behaviour to carry on. My children were afraid of their father – afraid of driving with him in a car because he had been drinking most of the time, and afraid of what he would do to me, when things got really out of hand.

Respondents B and G also felt that their partners' drug abuse was also a contributing factor to them leaving the relationship, as they were both of the opinion that this made their partners' behaviour even more irrational and abusive than under normal circumstances.

- Eight of the respondents said that the emotional abuse that they had to endure became too stressful and led to considerable anxiety. This reached a point where it became too unbearable to endure any longer. Respondent F recalls, "I landed up in hospital for three days. The doctors couldn't understand what had happened to me, everything shut down – I couldn't breathe or walk or talk. My body just gave in. The day I was released from hospital he said to me, 'you will get nowhere in life', and that's when I knew I had to leave, he was destroying me".
- Respondents A and J stated that their partners were the first to leave the relationship and in both cases this was as a result of adultery by their partners. The abuser's decided to leave their marriages to live with their mistresses, however, they wanted to maintain control over

their family's home life and the wives they left, mainly through financial implications and manipulation of the children.

Nine of the respondents reported that the time frame from reaching the threshold of viability and the actual physical departure from the relationship and household, took a period of approximately one year. This proved what Giles-Sims (1986:11) postulates, in that, individual systems may have patterns of behaviour that have become stabilised, and even though patterns of behaviour may be destructive to individuals, especially patterns of emotional abuse, the system has adapted to those behaviours and will still be a viable one. This would offer an explanation of why most of these relationships lasted for the duration of more than ten years and supports the evidence in this study that respondents found it very difficult to leave their relationships even after they realised they were victims of emotional abuse. Many of the respondents in this study only realised with therapy and the advice of family and friends, that they had been subjected to severe emotional abuse by their partners. Respondents I, J and K bore witness to this as all three stated that until a professional counsellor had given their victimisation a name, that is, **emotional abuse**, they had not realised the full extent of its consequences.

Eight of the respondents said that they had very good support systems during this period of change, mostly in the form of family, friends and colleagues, but three respondents reported having received the most support from their church members and ministers. This support was mostly emotional, however, financial assistance, accommodation and childcare support was also given. Respondents A, B, D and E were especially well supported by loving parents, which reiterates that a very good relationship with parents and family ensured greater support, than for example, Respondents F, I and K who did not receive a great amount of support from parents or family, but rather from friends and other sources. Giles-Sims (1986:14) states that because family systems are relatively stable over a period of time, transitions require adaptation to many changes, and thus its members are particularly vulnerable to physical and emotional problems. Factors such as social support and prior

histories of coping with problems affect how people deal with major life transitions. The author further postulates that the loss of a partner is often experienced as loss of part of oneself, and the greater the interdependence of the two people in the relationship, the greater the feelings of loss. The transition from a relationship with an emotionally abusive man may result in the woman facing many new problems, such as taking on financial and household responsibilities she might not have had before.

The nine respondents, who had children reported that their relationships with their abusers remained very stressful, even after the relationships were ended. They stated that the manipulation, control and abuse continued as they were forced to maintain contact with the abusers because they shared children. In six of the cases the children were used overtly as a means of controlling and manipulating the victim on a continual basis. Champagne (1999:8) states that when a couple has children in an abusive relationship, the abusive partner may involve them in this control tactic. Hodge (2002:1) adds that in the case of a divorced couple, the abusive partner can continue the abuse by making her feel guilty for breaking up the family and therefore causing the children harm. The children may be used to relay messages when he sees them, his visitation rights may be used to harass her or he may threaten to take the children away. In this way, the emotional abuse continues even if the couple is no longer in an intimate relationship. Respondents B and D who did not have children in the marriage, were the only respondents in this study who were able to separate themselves from their abusers completely after their divorces were finalised. As Respondent B stated, "I didn't care about the financial loss, all I cared about was getting back my sanity and my life. Luckily I could make a clean break!"

5.8 IMPACT OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE ON THE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

The emotional abuse the professional women in this study were subjected to had an impact on their lives on **three** levels, namely, the **cognitive and**

psychological level, impact on **work**, and **practical** impacts. They are analysed and interpreted below in order of priority:

➤ **Impact on cognitive and physiological level**

Six of the respondents who were in the process of separating from their abusive partners or who had been interviewed shortly after they had been through the trauma of separation, all reported that they were abnormally **forgetful**. This was regarding the placement of objects, for example keys, and certain information which they were unable to memorise no matter how important it was at the time. Ten of the respondents also reported experiencing general **confusion** regarding decisions about the future, for themselves and their children, when they had reached a point where they knew their relationships were over or had to be terminated. Seven of the respondents in this study stated that they had difficulty with **concentration**, at work and at home. All the respondents in this study reported that they had experienced **depression** to varying degrees during their relationships and some had repeated bouts after separation. Seven of these cases were chronic and required medium to long term medication. Almost all of these cases also experienced **anxiety**, and stated that they were constantly nervous and unsure of themselves, three of which had experienced severe anxiety attacks. All the respondents in this study obtained some form of therapy during and after their relationships ended, as a means of coping with their situations, as they all experienced severe post traumatic stress disorder symptoms.

All the respondents in this study stated that they had constantly experienced abnormal **fatigue** and **listlessness** during and even after their relationships ended. Respondent K said, "At times I could sleep for days at a time - I just couldn't get enough sleep". Respondents B, F and H reported **insomnia** as a constant problem in their daily lives. Ten of the respondents stated that they had experienced dramatic changes in their **eating patterns** at various stages during the

relationship, these ranged from excessive weight loss to excessive weight gain. Other physiological symptoms that were reported by some respondents were the **breakdown of immune systems**, which resulted in lung conditions, for example, chronic colds and influenza and even pneumonia. Some suffered **stomach ailments**, for example, ulcers and frequent cramping, while most respondents also reported **muscle spasms** and **headaches** as a result of constant stress. Respondents A and G contracted a **sexually transmitted disease** as a result of her husband's relations with multiple sex partners, which led to extreme trauma and bitterness. Loring (1994:1) supports the above in stating that, in many cases, somatic problems mask deeper emotional wounds, which manifest as headaches and stomach ulcers, to name but a few.

➤ **Impact on work**

The majority of the respondents stated that the emotional abuse that they endured in their personal relationships had an effect on their work, however only Respondents E, G and I experienced this as debilitating for a short period. To varying degrees all respondents reported that their work:

- was an **escape** from their personal problems;
- the one place where they felt **worthy** and **needed**;
- something that allowed them to **achieve goals** – at home, they could do nothing right; and
- was their **anchor** in life.

➤ **Impact on a practical level**

Ten of the respondents stated that they experienced financial losses during and after the dissolution of the relationship, which was very stressful especially in the cases where there were still dependents. This was accompanied by the trauma of uprooting the children from their homes, which

in most cases were large, comfortable ones, to live with relatives and friends temporarily. The victims' also reported that the increase in workload with regards to the children and the household, being single parents, had a profound effect on their lives.

5.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the data, which was obtained by conducting interviews with respondents, was analysed. Interpretation was done against the aims of the study which were formulated in Chapter 1, paragraph 1.5. The findings of this study confirmed the relevance and practical application of the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner** (see Figure 3.6). Research findings of this study formed the basis from which conclusions and recommendations were made in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the impact of emotional abuse on the respondents in this study and the resulting trauma they endured, is assessed in accordance with the aims of the study (see paragraph 1.5). Researcher also investigated the respondents' perceptions of their future and the impact of the emotional abuse on their lives. Conclusions that were made by the respondents concerning their experiences were also documented. Finally, recommendations for the healing process of victims of emotional abuse, as well as those pertaining to further research, are presented in this chapter.

6.2 CONCLUSIONS

6.2.1 Conclusions in connection with the aims of this study

AIM 1: Construct a theoretical model according to which data can be analysed and the phenomenon of emotional abuse can be better understood.

This aim was met successfully as researcher constructed the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an emotionally abusive partner** (see Figure 3.6) and succeeded in analysing the phenomenon of emotional abuse of the professional women, within a marriage or cohabitating relationship who formed the research sample. Analysis and interpretation of the data of this study was done effectively according to the model.

AIM 2: Investigate the forms of emotional abuse the professional woman endures within an abusive relationship.

This aim was achieved by doing an extensive investigation in Chapter 2 on the phenomenon of emotional abuse and its effects. Thereafter researcher drew on the **Interactional model of the process of victimisation by an**

emotionally abusive partner (see Figure 3.6) in order to investigate the abuse the respondents in this study were subjected to, and interpret the experiences of these professional women accordingly. This served to distinguish certain unique characteristics because of their professional status.

AIM 3: To determine why professional women remain in emotionally abusive relationships.

Researcher achieved this aim by asking the respondents in this study, direct questions in this regard. They gave several reasons for remaining in their abusive relationships (see paragraph 5.7.1).

AIM 4: To explore characteristics and personal backgrounds of respondents, to gain an in-depth understanding of their victimisation.

Researcher explored the personal characteristics and backgrounds of each respondent in order to successfully analyse and interpret data in Chapter 5.

AIM 5: To determine the effect, emotional abuse by a partner, has on the life of the professional woman.

Researcher achieved this aim by investigating the **impact** of emotional abuse on three levels, namely, the cognitive and physiological level, impact on work, and finally on a practical level (see paragraph 5.8).

AIM 6: The utilisation of the findings of the study in order to make practical recommendations useful to emotionally abused women.

This is discussed in detail in paragraph 6.3.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.3.1 Healing

Recognising that the victims of emotional abuse as well as their abusers are in need of healing, it is recommended that the following be carried out:

6.3.1.1 Support groups

Support groups for women who are victims of emotional abuse should be encouraged by institutions and therapists that deal with family matters and are in contact with these victims.

➤ Religious institutions

Church and other religious groups can offer support to victims of emotional abuse by offering opportunities for these victims to unite and speak out about their experiences. Once these victims realise that there are other individuals who have been subjected to emotional abuse and who are interested in supporting each other, the road to healing will be easier. This is especially important to those victims who do not have the necessary, or enough family and other support, to help them through the initial adjustment period after a separation or divorce. These religious institutions can circulate pamphlets or make use of any method they chose to encourage these support groups. Many churches also have trauma centres that can assist in assembling such support groups, if they do not already exist.

➤ Trauma centres

Organisations such as Inter Trauma Nexus and Life Line, should offer support to victims of emotional abuse, either through providing therapists on a contact basis or by telephonic support if transport to the centre is a problem for the victim. These therapists should however, receive sufficient training on the nature of emotional abuse and how best to counsel these victims and/or their

children. Trauma centres can also offer group therapy as they are in the ideal positions to set up regular support groups for these victims. These centres can advertise their awareness of this phenomenon and their willingness to help through any means at their disposal, whether through radio talks or newspaper advertisements. These trauma centres can also make doctors and other health care workers aware of these services. They can then put victims in contact with help, as victims of emotional abuse often present with psychosomatic symptoms as discussed in Chapter 5.

6.3.1.2 The criminal justice system

There must be a greater **awareness** by the Criminal Justice System so that women feel free to approach authorities in cases where criminal charges are justified, thus ensuring that emotional abuse is fully recognisable under the Domestic Violence Act.

➤ Police, attorneys and court officials

Police training should include explanations concerning emotional abuse specifically, making it distinguishable from wife battering, so that it is perceived clearly as domestic violence and punishable by law. Once the criminal justice system views emotional abuse in a serious light and gives it the attention it deserves, through media exposure and recognition within its ranks, the healing process begins. The victims of emotional abuse will be given an official voice.

6.3.1.3 Family therapy

Family therapy for victims, their children and the abusers should be encouraged by divorce attorneys and other role players, as often the emotional abuse continues after separation or divorce and victimisation is perpetuated. Thus the cycle of abuse continues relentlessly.

The victims, other family members or their attorneys can suggest family therapy directly to the abusers after the initial trauma of the separation has dissipated. This can be done verbally or in writing, which ever is deemed most appropriate at the time. This family therapy can also include close family members who are intimately involved in the situation, for example, the parents of both the victim and the abuser. This therapy should however be conducted in a controlled environment and led by qualified therapists or counsellors.

6.3.1.4 The media

Actuality programs such as Three Talk on television, radio talk shows, and women's magazines should feature discussions and articles on emotional abuse. This will create an awareness of this issue by bringing to the fore that women should not be victims within their relationships and thus assist in the prevention, treatment and healing process of victims of emotional abuse. It would also spread the necessary awareness amongst our youth, in order to prevent the intergenerational cycle of abuse, and assist the holistic healing process.

6.3.2 Recommendations for further research

6.3.2.1 Intervention programmes

Social workers and psychologists can write intervention programmes for middle and high school students, as awareness campaigns for young girls and boys, to educate them on the phenomenon of emotional abuse and its impacts. This can also be adapted for tertiary education campuses.

Suggested title:

Education programme for middle and high school students: Are you victim of emotional abuse?

6.3.2.2 Male victims

Investigate male victims of emotional abuse, by looking at how their experiences differ, and what the similarities are, to female victims of emotional abuse.

Suggested title:

Male victims of emotional abuse within heterosexual relationships: A victimological study

6.3.2.3 Typologies

Draw up an in-depth profile or typology of the emotional abuser, by looking at psychological characteristics based on various theoretical perspectives. This can also be done for victims of emotional abuse.

Suggested titles:

A typology of the male/female emotional abuser

A typology of the male/female victim of emotional abuse

6.3.2.4 Impact on children

Investigate the impact of emotional abuse, between partners, on their children. A few ethical dilemmas can come to the fore in such an investigation, for example, will the researcher do more harm than good if he or she is not a child psychologist with the necessary skills to work with children, or will the child be unduly traumatised by the research? These and other issues will have to be considered before conducting research with children.

Suggested title:

The impact of emotional abuse between partners on their children: A victimological study

6.3.2.5 Comparative study

Conduct a comparative study between professional women and non-professional women who are victims of emotional abuse, to determine whether their experiences have any significant differences.

Suggested title:

The effect of emotional abuse on professional women versus non-professional women in marriage or cohabitating relationships: A victimological study

6.4 CONCLUSION

Although the majority of the respondents in this study were positive about their futures and still believed that the institution of marriage can be a happy and fulfilling experience, they offered the following advice to others:

- All of the respondents felt that a strong message should be sent to women who are victims of emotional abuse by their partners, that they should leave the relationship if the abuser does not agree to seek therapy and stop the abuse.
- The respondents also felt that girls should be warned about the pitfalls of marrying too young and too soon after meeting a partner. Getting to know someone, and emotional maturity, is crucial for establishing a lasting union.
- In addition, they stated that victims of emotionally abusive relationships should listen to the advice of loved ones, and professionals, who have their best interests at heart. When one is emotionally involved in a

situation it is not always possible to see clearly, as others may be able to, the reality thereof.

- Many of the respondents also felt strongly that the professional woman should under no circumstances terminate her career for an extended period, but should endeavour to maintain her independence within a relationship.
- Several of the respondents also emphasised that before marrying someone, one should look at the familial relationships of a partner with specific reference to his relationship with his mother, as this in their opinion, is often an indicator of how he interacts with women in general, and is often part of his patriarchal heritage.
- Finally, staying in an emotionally abusive relationship, where there are children, can have an extremely negative impact on their socialisation, as well as their emotional and intellectual development. All the respondents in this study stated that victims of abusive relationships should not remain in a relationship for the sake of their children.

The tolerance of domestic violence in one generation encourages its continuation in another generation. Bopp and Vardalis (1987:34) are of the opinion that, since the wife abuser, whether he is a physical or emotional abuser, did not learn to deal with anger appropriately as a child, he handles his frustrations through aggression. The authors continue to say that, the abuser needs to know that it is human to feel anger, but inhumane to release those feelings in an abusive manner towards others. Through awareness and insight (refer to above recommendations 6.3.1) this can be made possible. The authors conclude, “By learning to deal with those emotions through acceptable behaviour, he can gain respect for himself and others. It is another positive step towards developing mutual respect in the husband-wife relationship, where each sees the other as a worthy human being”.

I swore never to be silent whenever or wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides; neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented. – Elie Wiesel

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1 December 2002

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

TITLE: Professional women as victims of emotional abuse within marriage or co-habiting relationships: a victimological study

Respondent number: **Date of interview(s)**.....

SECTION 1

Biographical Information:

- 1.1 Date of birth Age
- 1.2 Home language Afrikaans
 English
 Other Specify language:
- 1.3 Religious affiliation No
 Yes Institution Name:
- 1.4 Marital status of abusive relationship Married
 Co-habiting
- 1.5 Length of emotionally abusive relationship Years
 Months
- 1.6 Were any children part of the relationship No
 Yes Number:
- 1.7 Was your marriage or co-habitation: Planned
 Unplanned (Pregnancy)
- 1.8 What is your highest qualification:
- 1.9 What is your professional designation:

1.10 What was/is your partner's highest qualification:.....

1.11 What was/is his professional designation:.....

1.12 At what age did you marry or co-habitate

1.13 What was your partner's age at the time

1.14 Was it your first marriage or co-habitational relationship Yes
No

1.15 Was it your partner's first marriage or co-habitational relationship
Yes
No

SECTION 2

Discussion questions:

1. Describe your upbringing and family life.
2. Describe your partner's upbringing and family life.
3. Discuss you and your partner's courting history.
4. Discuss your relationship with his family.
5. Discuss his relationship with your family.
6. Describe your individual career paths.
7. Describe the emotional abuse that took place in the relationship.

8. Why did you stay (or still remain) in the relationship?

9. How has the emotional abuse affected your life?

(emotionally/physically/practically)

10. How has the emotional abuse within your relationship affected your children

(if any)?

11. Is there anything that you would like to add?

12. Can I contact you again if I need more information?

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Researcher: Merlyn Barkhuizen
Tel: 072 233 1972

Title of Dissertation: Professional women as victims of emotional abuse within marriage or co-habiting relationships: a victimological study

Purpose of Study: The exploration of the phenomena of Emotional Abuse amongst professional woman in marital or cohabiting relationships in order to make recommendations for helping professions and further academic research.

Procedures: The researcher will be conducting an interview with the help of an interview schedule. The researcher will also make use of a tape recorder to record conversations. The interviews will not be longer than three hours, but may end sooner by natural process or on request of the respondent or researcher, depending on the circumstances.

Risks and Discomforts: The respondent may become tired or feel emotional discomfort at which point a break may be requested or the interview may be postponed to a later date or terminated if so desired. The researcher will make every effort to ensure the comfort and minimize the risks for the respondent.

Benefits: It is the researcher's hope that the respondents partaking in this study will feel the satisfaction of contributing to solving a social problem and facilitating in illuminating the problem for those studying the phenomena, which may help others in the future. The respondent shall also assist in providing insight into the problem, which can stimulate future research, and thus be of even

greater help in the future. On a personal level, it is the hope of the researcher that the respondents will obtain personal satisfaction once they have discussed certain issues with the researcher and thus gaining personal insights that were not gained prior to the interview.

Respondent's Rights: Participation in this study is voluntary and may be withdrawn at any time without negative consequences for the respondent. All information is treated as confidential and anonymity is assured by the researcher. The data shall be destroyed should the respondent wish to withdraw.

The researcher (Merlyn Barkhuizen) and her study leader (Professor Ronelle Pretorius) are the only individuals who will have access to raw data from interviews, and hereby ensure that data will be treated as stipulated above.

Right of Access to Researcher: Respondents are free to contact the researcher at the telephone number as stipulated on this form, at a reasonable hour, in connection with interview particulars, if they so wish.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY.

I, the undersigned, agree to participate in this study voluntarily without duress.

Signed aton this.....day of2003

.....
(Print Name.....)

.....
MERLYN BARKHUIZEN