WIFE BATTERING: AN EXPLORATION OF THE ABUSE OF AFRICAN WOMEN IN JOHANNESBURG

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My deepest thanks to my parents for a life-time of love and laughter. My wife, Peace, and my son Katlego who makes my life complete and great.

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SUMMARY

Wife battering is one of the most pervasive forms of violence used against any individual in south Africa. The problem of battered women only came into the limelight in the early 1970's in the United States, its progression into public awareness corresponding with the growth of the women's movement. In South Africa, concern about wife battering started in the early 1980's. Inspired by the actions of overseas movements, South African feminists began to mobilise around violence against women. People Opposing Women Abuse opened the first shelter for battered women in Johannesburg in the eighties, followed by Rape crises in Cape Town.

This study is anchored by a commitment to document battered women's experiences of marital violence in order that appropriate actions may be taken to ameliorate their situations. In undertaking this research, the intention is to learn from battered women about the context of their daily lives, exploring their educational and employment statuses, to describe the development and nature of their relationships with men who abuse them, establish the type of abuse they experience, and most importantly, to find out why they stay in such relationships.

Data for this study is derived from questionnaires with fourteen abused women from two shelters (People Opposing Women Abuse, and NISSA Institute for Women Development). Finding these respondents was very difficult because of the sensitive nature of the topic.
Frequency distributions and group data have been used to analyse data. The frequency distribution is a listing of the periodicity with which each score occurs. For variables with possible scores like age, the data has been grouped into categories and the frequency of scores within each category presented.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

South Africans live in a particularly violent and abusive society, so that in some ways, everyone experiences some form of violence. McKendrick and Hoffman (1990: 38) demonstrate this clearly when they argue as follows:

"By being a part of society, the lives of all are touched and tarnished by violence; perpetrating it, legally or illegally; being a victim of it, directly or indirectly; and being a witness to it, first hand or via the media".

Furthermore they argue that members of the society promote, stimulate, encourage, and even reward violent behaviour so much that violence is accepted as an ordinary, and legitimate solution to conflict (McKendrick and Hoffman 1990: 38).

In South Africa, especially in the aftermath of the Soweto uprising, harsh disrespect for human well-being has been embedded in the structure of practices which govern human relations. Increasingly, conditions of structural violence and oppression have given rise to multiple forms of reactive violence and resistance and these in turn have produced responses of repressive violence, so that the spiral of violence has intensified.
There is a link between broader societal violence and violence in the family. The family is not randomly violent and certain members experience more abuse than others. Most victims of adult family violence are women.

Why women are the primary and consistent targets of domestic violence between adults, can among others, be explained in terms of the patriarchal structuring of gender relationships in a number of societies. The subordinate status of women in these societies is encoded in a variety of linguistic, legal, institutional and economic practices. Women in these societies experience inequality in relation to men which is supported by a complex ideological framework in which ideas of masculinity and femininity are constructed. Within this ideological framework, men are seen as enlightened, strong-minded, decisive, and independent. Women by contrast, are considered inferior, weak, and passive. These traditional stereotypes of femininity based on the hierarchy of power vested in males may legitimize wife battering and set the stage for violence in marriages. It is their capacity as wives within the patriarchal system which make some women the obvious targets of domestic abuse (McKendrick and Hoffman 1990: 255).

Battered women fail to attract the same amount of attention or sympathy as do abused children because of the belief either that they provoke the attack, or that they like being abused if they did not leave after the first attack. Wives thus seem to bear the brunt of "victim blaming". This is because other members of society cannot believe that a woman can be trapped in a violent relationship with no place to go to.
The problem of abused women only came into the limelight in the early 1970's in the United States, its progress towards public awareness corresponding with the growth of the women's movement. It was not until the early 1970's that American women and their supporters began to demand help and protection for women beaten by their husbands. In South Africa, concern about wife abuse started in the early 1980's. Inspired by the actions of overseas movements, South African feminists began to mobilise around violence against women. People Opposing Women Abuse opened the first shelter for battered women in Johannesburg in the eighties, followed by Rape Crises in Cape Town a few years later.

At the time of undertaking this study, there is growing concern in South Africa about various forms of family violence. Since the early eighties, there has been a proliferation of excellent articles and books addressing topics like child abuse and family murder. However, despite the prevalence of the abuse of women by their male partners, this subject has not received the same attention afforded other forms of family violence. People are generally hesitant and/or unwilling to become involved in wife abuse as this is dismissed as a private affair, mere domestic disturbance, or maintaining discipline. Often the victims help to keep this "disgrace" secret, with the result that wife battering is ignored by society and seldom feature as a theme of scientific research (McKendrick and Hoffman 1990: 251). Gelles (1979: 13) accuses social scientists of "selective inattention" and Colvin (1982: 3) makes the following valid observation;
"Despite evidence from a historical perspective that wife battering is common, academics have been slow to undertake studies in this field".

Wife battering is one of the most pervasive forms of violence used against any individual in South Africa. Although members of the society have always been aware of the abuse of women by their husbands, it is nevertheless striking to note that:

- Scientists have only recently started paying attention to the abuse of women.

- Ignorance and uncertainty prevail in relation to the prevention of wife battering and assistance to both victims and perpetrators.

- Much ignorance and numerous misconceptions and stereotypes exist with regard to the abuse of women.

- People are often unwilling to render assistance to victims of wife battering.

Research on wife abuse in South Africa lies fallow. More research still has to be conducted in this respect. Besides a small number of popular articles in magazines and newspapers, the following local research reports on women abuses were the only ones that could be traced.

- Pinto (1981) examined the attitude of a number of English medical doctors in the Johannesburg area towards wife battering. This study
found that the doctors were aware of the high incidence of wife battering, but their view of the phenomenon reflected the same attitudes, stereotypes, and myths about wife battering as those supported by the general public. In their opinion, wife battering was something that occurred in the lower classes; and it was the result of mental disturbance and provocation by the wife.

-Pretorius (1984) conducted an empirical investigation of the victims of serious assaults in marital context from a criminological point of view in Pretoria. The serious cases in her investigation included numerous women who had miscarriages and/or suffered permanent organ damage, blindness, deafness, liver and kidney injuries. The respondents in this study were white people. The study found that the police, friends, relatives, and bystanders were not prepared to help the victims, and that the offenders and victims came from homes where they as children had witnessed violence between their parents.

-Lawrence (1984) also conducted her investigation into wife battering in Mitchell's Plain from a criminological point of view for an M.A. degree. Her study revealed that in many cases battering had already started before or shortly after the wedding. She also found that victims repeatedly left their husbands for shorter or longer periods and then returned owing to financial need. Furthermore, the study discovered that next to being assaulted in the street, wife battering constituted the second highest figure for violent crimes in Mitchell's Plain for the period 1981/83. The respondents in this study were Coloureds.
Van Der Hoven (1992) enquired into abused women's psychological experiences of violence for a D Phil in Criminology at Unisa. Respondents for this study were derived from Pretorius's (1984) study.

Machonachie, Angless, and Van Zyl (1993) conducted an investigation of social problems facing battered women at two crucial points; when they decide to leave their batterers and when they leave the shelters and re-enter their communities. Their respondents were mainly Coloured with only two Africans and one White woman. They found that battered women confront a maze of problems in their attempt to leave violent relationships.

On the whole, it seems that only a limited amount of research on wife battering has been done in South Africa. Much of this research has focussed mainly on White and Coloured women.

In the light of the above, it is clear that research on the abuse of women by their husbands is necessary. This is particularly urgent among African communities, where in fact very few investigations have been undertaken. The term "African" in this investigation refers to Black people. There is little, if any, scientific knowledge about the way in which this phenomenon manifests itself among the African communities. Research on the abuse of African women still lies untitled.

This study is then anchored by a commitment to document African women's experiences of marital violence in order that appropriate actions may be taken to alter their situation. In undertaking this
study, the intention is to learn from battered African women about the context of their everyday lives, to listen to what women who have resisted battering have to say about what needs to be provided for women in that situation, and from the women's inputs, to make recommendations about services required and potential community intervention to the issue of battering.

The main aim of this study is to **find out why African women remain in abusive relationships**. A particularly alarming aspect of wife battering is that many women choose to remain with their abusive partners, even though they may risk sustaining severe injuries or even being killed. Understanding this decision-making process is crucial to the understanding of wife battering in general.

To place the abuse of African women in their homes by their partners in perspective, chapter two discusses the structure of the African family. By social structure is meant the norms, rules, and practices that govern the relationship between individuals and groups in society (Levinson 1990: 52). The number of people who live together, the nature of their relationship to one another, the rules which govern who marries whom, and the division of power within the family and society are but a few of the elements of the social structure of the African society which could play a role in the occurrence of wife battering.

If certain social-structural features of the African society do not cause wife battering, then they condone it. For example, the unequal distribution of power between African men and women has been institutionalized in the structure of the patriarchal family,
and is supported by the economic and political institutions and belief systems that make such relationships seem natural, or morally justified. The fact that wife battering is more frequent in families where the husband has more power than the wife, supports the assertion that the social structure of the African society tolerates the abuse of women.

In order to understand why wife battering occurs, it is necessary to study the extent to which certain structural features of the African society might influence the frequency and patterning of wife battering. Understanding the structure of the African family would therefore help to explain the cultural, social, and political realities within which the battering of African women occurs.

Chapter three gives an overview of the phenomenon of wife battering. It commences by giving a brief examination of the history of wife battering. This historical background points out how deeply embedded the roots of wife battering are. Then the chapter reviews the myths which surround wife battering. A number of these myths tend to hinder both public recognition of this problem and effective professional practice. The chapter debunks many of these conventional myths. From here, the chapter defines wife battering after which the different types of battering like physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse are discussed. The profile of batterers, the extent of the problem, the social dynamics, and effects of wife battering is also explored. Finally, an examination of the reasons for remaining in abusive relationships concludes this chapter.
Chapter four introduces theories of wife battering. The chapter examines the following theories; firstly, a psychological theory which explains wife battering in terms of the pathological behaviour of the perpetrators and/or victims is discussed. Secondly, the chapter explores the exchange/social control theory which says that husbands are likely to batter their wives when the costs of battering do not outweigh the rewards and mechanisms of social control are absent or weak. The third theory is feminist theory which argues that most societies over the course of their history were male dominated and women were treated as possessions. Given this history and the continued existence of norms that support this value system, feminist theorists say that husbands control their wives and often use violence when necessary to maintain that control. Another theory that is examined in this chapter is the cycle of violence theory which asserts that wife battering occurs in cycles characterized by peaks in violence and periods of calm.

Chapter five focuses on the research design. Here the aims of the study, how respondents were chosen, and how data was collected and analysed are explained. The strengths and weaknesses of the study are also included in this chapter.

Chapter six introduces the women who participated in this study. This chapter provides a broad summary of each respondent's answers. Chapter seven presents the results of the study, and chapter eight is concerned with the interpretation of the results. The final chapter gives a summary of the study and makes recommendations for future research and policy makers.
CHAPTER 2

THE STRUCTURE OF THE AFRICAN FAMILY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The African people belong to the main Negroid group and can be divided into three broad groups on the basis of their geographical distribution, their historical context, and cultural cohesion. The three main groups are; the western, the eastern, and the southern groups, and each group can be further subdivided into a number of subgroups (Winch and Spanier 1974: 62).

The Africans in South Africa belong to the southern group and can be divided into four main groups, each consisting of several smaller groups namely:

- The Nguni, consisting of the Swazi, the Zulu, the Ndebele, and the Xhosas' complex.
- The Sotho, consisting of the Tswana, the Pedi, and the southern Sotho.
- The Venda.
- The Tsonga.

Despite the diversity of cultural patterns between the different groups and subgroups, they also bear a resemblance to each other, and show a marked degree of cultural cohesion, which nevertheless enables one to determine a general, broadly outlined pattern characteristic of family life in African societies.
The following part of this chapter will define the social structure, and describe elements of African family structure that either tolerate or encourage the abuse of women.

2.2. DEFINITION OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Hoernle (1985:90) defines social structure as "a more or less permanent framework of relationships between the members of a community which manifests itself in an ordered group life, with reciprocal rights and duties, privileges and obligations of members, determining behaviour patterns for each individual member towards others, and moulding the feelings, thoughts, and conduct of members according to these patterns".

According to Hoernle (1985:90) this framework of relationships structure is constant compared with the profusion of human lives that circulate through it in the succession of generations. Each new generation finds it there, as an inheritance from untold generations of its predecessors. Yet this framework of social structure is not absolutely rigid or fixed, but is dynamic and capable of variations. The focus will now be on elements of the social structure of the African society.

2.2.1. Elements of social structure

This section examines elements of the social structure of the African family which promote or seem to encourage tolerance for the abuse of women. The following elements and how they contribute to the abuse of women will be discussed; composition of the family,
marriage customs, system of descent, rules of inheritance, and authority patterns.

2.2.1.1. Composition of the family

The dominant family form in traditional African society was the extended family. According to Popenoe (1995:309) an extended family is a family that consists of three or more generations living in the same household. An important dimension of the extended family is that it might be vertical, in a multi-generational link up, or horizontal, when married brothers of the senior agnate join their families to his household.

The extended family should not be confused with a polygamous family, which is made up of plural marriages. The man or woman has more than one wife or husband respectively, and all of them and their children are accommodated in the same household (Nzimande 1987:32). The common form of polygamy is polygyny, where a man has more than one wife, and he visits a number of households, performing the role of husband and father in each household, and in this way binding all these homes into one family (Steyn, Strydom, Viljoen, and Bosman 1987:46). Another form of polygamy is polyandry. It consists of a family of two or more men with one wife, and is not common among societies. In most cases it is a group of brothers who stay with one wife in the same home, but it can also happen that the men are not related at all (Steyn, et al., 1987:46). Regarding this form of family, Murdock (1967:25) remarked, "the polyandrous family occurs so rarely that it might be regarded as an ethnological curiosity".
The extended family affords protection, as well as emotional and economic security. It furnishes care and support for a variety of categories of dependent people. The essence of the extended family lies in the bond between its members. In effect, these particular bonds make the extended family resilient. It continues generation after generation and survives its individual members. This greater continuity gives the extended family a kind of strength and resilience that is rarely found in other family forms. Such resilience helps children socialize into adulthood with a sense of familial stability.

The predominant form of most African families in urban areas is the nuclear family. A nuclear family is a two-generation family group that consists of a couple and their children, living apart from their relatives. This type of family group is small in size, and is characterized by privacy and independence. This small family unit provides economic and emotional support for its members. "However, it should be mentioned that the nuclear family as it exists among the African people, is somewhat different from the 'ideal' nuclear family. It exists in a different form where, apart from the couple and their children, there may be one or more relatives as well" (Nzimande 1987:34).

The nuclear family, operating as an autonomous social unit secluded from other like families, generates the conditions for family violence to occur (Levinson 1990: 54). The first attribute of the nuclear family that is perceived as adding to a high rate of violence is the amount of time family members spend together. The amount of time devoted to communicating with family members
enormously exceeds the amount of time spent interacting with other people and may generate stress. Secondly, the fervency or depth of their involvement with one another is unrivalled. The level of engagement to family interaction is prolonged. A cutting remark made by a family member is likely to have a much bigger impact than the same remark in another setting. The third factor of the nuclear family which adds towards making the family a violence-prone interaction setting is the horde of activities family members are engaged in. Many interactions in the family are naturally conflictual in structure. Whether it involves deciding what television show to watch or what car to buy, there will be both winners and losers in family relations. The final condition in the nuclear family which impels it to be violence prone, is its seclusion from outside help which reduces the degree of social control (Gelles and Straus 1979:42).

The social organization of the nuclear family serves to reduce the potential costs of husbands being violent towards their wives. This is particularly true of the African families which have been eroded of the warmth and support of the traditional extended family, and bereft of social contact and help in times of trouble. Attention is now paid to how power is distributed within the African families.

2.2.1.2. Authority patterns

Families vary in the way authority is distributed within the family. Less common is a matriarchy where power is in the hands of women. In a matriarchy, women conduct ceremonial functions and have considerable property rights and greater authority than men.
Some marital relationships are neither male-dominated nor female-dominated. This pattern of authority is called **egalitarian**. With this new pattern, there is a relatively equal distribution of power and authority between husbands and wives (Nye and Berardo 1973:309). One factor that has promoted this system is industrialization. With industrialization, husbands and wives often have to work outside the family, and in most cases become economically independent of each other. Women's earnings in gainful employment increase their power within the home. Their earning power increases their share in decision-making regarding the allocation of financial resources and extra familial relationships.

If a society expects a male to dominate in decision making, it is referred to as **patriarchal**. Authority patterns in most African families are predominantly passed down through the male line. The father is undoubtedly the head of the family and has complete authority over his children and wife/wives as long as they remain in his household, even afterwards, albeit in lesser degree. As the head of the household, he directs the lives of all his subordinates. He is responsible to the outside world for the actions of the members of his household, protecting them when they are in trouble, and answering for their misdeeds. Respect, deference, and even awe, is often noticeable in the behaviour of his subordinates towards him. Mdluli (1987: 42) expresses this more clearly when he says about the Zulu nation,

> "In the family the man is head. The woman knows that she is not equal to her husband. She addresses the husband as 'father', and by so doing the children also gets a good
example of how to behave. A woman refrains from exchanging words with a man, and if she does, this reflects a bad upbringing on her part”.

Given this history and the continued existence of norms and laws that support this value system in the African society, husbands continue to control their wives and some often use violence to maintain that authority when necessary. The hierarchical structure of the African society vests power in men, which can inspire some men to dominate and control their female counterparts, and to use whatever means they deem necessary to maintain their power. This could promote violence against women, particularly wives. Borrowing from the conflict theory which postulates that when there is unequal distribution of scarce and valued resources, conflict is inevitable. It could therefore be argued that the unequal distribution of authority in the African society empowers husbands some of whom takes this to legitimize abuse of their wives.

A discussion of the marriage customs of the African family follows.

2.2.1.3. Marriage customs

Among the African people, especially those in the countryside, a person acquires adult status by passing through an initiation rite of passage, but he or she only acquires full adult status when he or she gets married (Winch and Spanier 1974:69). In traditional African families, marriage was arranged between the two families concerned, and the prospective consorts had very little say in the
matter. An important aspect of the traditional marriage was the transfer of goods, usually cattle from the family of the husband to the family of the wife. This practice is known as lobola. "Lobola" was a sign of appreciation by the husband's family to the wife's family for the wife's fecundity potential. The woman enriched the husband's family by the children she gave birth to, and in exchange the husband offered the wife's family "lobola" (Winch and Spanier 1974:69). "Lobola" also served as a form of protection against abuse of women, for if a husband seriously ill-treated his wife, he could lose his "lobola".

In urban African marriages, the transfer of "lobola" still takes place, but the nature and function have changed. Whereas in traditional families, "lobola" was transferred in the form of cattle, in the urban areas, it is money which is transferred from one family to the other. In the urban areas, "lobola" is seen largely as compensation for the expenditure which the parents of the bride have incurred in connection with her education and the loss of financial contributions she would make were she to remain home. The material aspects are emphasized so that gradually, the marriage gets the complexion of a sale and the social function, the exchange of procreational capabilities and the stabilization of the family, slowly decline (Winch and Spanier 1974:73).

Whereas in traditional African families "lobola" served as protection against the abuse of women, its commercial nature in urban areas has had the opposite effect. It has contributed to the abuse of some wives by their husbands. The commercialized nature of "lobola" accentuates a man's self assertiveness and his
determination. It encourages him to "get his money's worth". "Lobola" often leads to wives being treated as property, that the owner has bought and can treat as he wishes (Winch and Spanier 1974:73).

Marriage helps to define and determine who is related to whom. A brief looks at the system of descent follows.

2.2.1.4. System of descent

The rules of descent select from the ever-expanding group of biological kin those with whom relationships are to be maintained. There are two essential ways in which descent is reckoned and they are; bilateral descent and unilateral descent.

Belkin and Goodman (1980:50) define bilateral descent as tracing lineage equally through the father's and mother's line. All relatives on both sides are important. Strictly speaking, the number of kin reckoned in this way is quite large, almost beyond comprehension and certainly beyond mutual obligation. Consequently, the size of the functional kin group is often reduced by restricting it to close relatives who are frequently defined as second cousins (Belkin and Goodman 1980: 54).

In African families, lineage is predominantly traced through the father's side. This system is called patrilineal descent. Leslie and Korman (1989; 48) argue that under patrilineal descent, a person is assigned at birth to a group of kin who are related through the males only. The most important ties are those from
father to son to a grandson. A wife typically marries into her husband's family. Their children then become members of the husband's family but not of the family from which the wife was born. The mother's family is ignored in the patrilineal system.

The system of tracing lineage among the African societies perpetuates the sexual inequality between men and women and thus could contribute to the abuse of women. A wife is expected to adopt her husband's surname and loosen ties with her own family, and this lowers her status and position within the family. Therefore, the system of descent indirectly promotes the inequality which is linked to spousal violence.

Rules of descent reflect the way in which the family establishes a network of reciprocal rights and obligations among its members. Associated with the system of descent are rules of inheritance.

2.2.1.5. Rules of inheritance

Inheritance refers to a preference for male or females or neither in the passing on of economically valuable items (Levinson 1990:73). Through most of human history and around much of the world, inheritance rights have centred on land, dwellings, and the means of production. If such property passes to the heir through males, the rule is said to be patrilineal. If the route is through the females, then it is matrilineal inheritance (Leslie and Korman 1989:49).
The common form of rules governing the inheritance of property in most African societies emphasizes the male line more than the female one. This is because the man is seen as primarily responsible for producing the wealth that is to be distributed at his death.

The inheritance rights of males vary with the birth order. If all sons do not inherit equally, the most likely situation is for the eldest son to inherit all or a disproportionate part of the property. This arrangement is called primogeniture. Alternatively, the youngest son may be preferred to inherit a large part of the property under the ultimogeniture system (Leslie and Korman 1989:49).

Among some African societies, inheritance is also connected with residence. A son who lives with or near his father and works with him is in a strategic position to be the primary beneficiary when the father dies.

The tradition among the African families to let mainly males inherit valuable property and wealth, increases their control over wealth, and this in turn, may create conditions for wife battering to occur. Levinson (1990:73) in his cross-cultural studies of wife battering, found wife abuse to be frequent in societies where men had control of wealth, and had the final say in household decision making. A number of other studies report results relevant to the wealth control-wife beating linkage. Adler (1981), in a study of graduate school couples, found that wife abuse occurred far more in marriages in which the husband dominated in the economic sphere.
Bowker's (1983) study of 146 volunteer couples in Milwaukee provided the same conclusion. These studies, although conducted in America, provide support for the correlation between male control and wife abuse.

2.3. CONCLUSION

This chapter examined a variety of social structural features of the African society in terms of their relationship to wife abuse. The central argument is that certain structural features of the African society can contribute to wife abuse. Changes in the composition of the African family from predominantly extended to predominantly nuclear have reduced the degree of social control on family behaviour, and the potential costs of spouses being violent. The commercialization of "lobola" has lead to some women being treated as property rather than human beings with rights. The system of tracing lineage subordinates the wife to the husband's side of the family, thus promoting inequality which in some cases is linked to wife abuse. When mainly husbands inherit their family's property and wealth, it increases their control and dominance of the economic sphere and other people. Finally, the unequal distribution of power and authority in favour of husbands also increases their control and dominance of their wives.

The significance of understanding the conformation of the African family helps to elucidate the cultural, social, and political actualities within which the abuse of African women occur. The following chapter will look at wife battering, focussing on its definition, types, historical background, social dynamics, myths,
estimates, causes, and effects.
CHAPTER 3

WIFE BATTERING

3.1 INTRODUCTION.

The problem of battered wives only came into the public eye in the early 1970's in the United States, its advancement towards public awareness corresponding with the growth of the women's movement. In South Africa, concern about wife battering surfaced in the mid 1980's, although it did not receive the same attention afforded other forms of family violence. Historically, there has never been any public outcry against this brutality. But now people are discovering that the problem is far more widespread, and horrifying, than it was ever thought to be and that the myths which had earlier justified such violence are untrue (Walker 1979:X).

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the nature of wife battering. It is often the case that people are extremely disparaging and critical about things which they do not fully understand. Hopefully, this chapter will induce more empathy with the victims of this scourge. A brief look at the historical circumstances indicates just how profoundly planted the roots of wife battering are. Wife battering is defined, and the different types of battering examined. Most people want to know what kind of people abuse their wives. It is important therefore to attempt to focus on the profile of abusers. The extent, social dynamics, and the effects are also discussed. The chapter concludes with an examination of why women stay in abusive relationships.
Wife battering has a historical legacy that dates back to ancient times. The next section looks at how deeply rooted the roots of wife battering are.

3.2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF WIFE BATTERING.

Dobash and Dobash (1979: 63) argue that in order to understand wife battering, one must be aware and recognise the centuries’ old heritage of women as the suitable scapegoats of family violence. History is abound with decrees, etiquettes and folktales that show women being persecuted, maimed, and killed by their spouses such that when these acts became public knowledge, if the abusers were not applauded for their actions, their acts were at least ignored. Down through the ages, violence against wives has been accepted and promoted as "normal" behaviour (Pagelow 1984:277).

Poetry and proverbs abound which support the theme of male violence being used to control women. An old English proverb states, "a spaniel, a woman and hickory tree, the more ye beat them the better they are", and a Russian proverb explains, "a wife is not a jug, she will not crack if you hit her ten times". A phrase in one of Tennyson poems says, "Man is the hunter, the woman is his game", and a vaudeville joke quotes,

"When did you stop beating your wife?  
Who said I stopped?" (Langley and Levy 1977:29).
British common law authorised husbands to "chastise" their wives with "any reasonable punishment" (Nicarthy 1982: 117). Blackstone's codification of English common law in 1768 asserted that husbands had the right to "physical punish" an errant wife provided that the stick was no thicker than his thumb, thus the "rule of the thumb" was born. The legacy of the British common law carried over into the United States well into the nineteenth century. In 1824, a Mississippi court set the precedent for allowing corporal punishment of wives by husbands. The precedent held for forty years until the American rule of the thumb was overturned by a North Carolina court (Davidson 1978: 43).

The history of the African society is one in which women have been subjected to unspeakable cruelties. Until recently, women were considered first the property of their fathers and after marriage, the objects of their husbands. African men viewed their wives as their property, and they believed their wives had no right to decide their own fate. Husbands could defile their property, let it run down, get rid of it, or take care of it. However, they treated it. The decision was theirs, and theirs alone.

Family violence is shrouded in myths that tend to hinder public recognition of the problem and effective professional practice. The next section presents and then debunks the myths that have surrounded wife battering.
3.3 MYTHS ABOUT WIFE BATTERING.

The battering of African women, like other crimes of violence, has been shrouded in myths. It is important to refute all the myths surrounding women’s abuse in order to understand fully why battering occurs, how it affects people, and how it can be stopped.

3.3.1. **Battered women constitute only a small percentage of the population**

People hold fast to the myth that wife battering is not common or widespread. They consider wife battering a rare phenomenon because it is hidden, and generally occurs at night, in the home, without witnesses (Sampselle 1992: 4). This perception is enforced by the few official statistics available. Maconachie (1993: 1) says that given the hidden nature of battering and the fact that it is under-reported, official figures are likely to be extremely conservative.

The strong belief that families are places people resort to for help, and the impression that streets carry the greatest risk, makes it difficult for most people to imagine how many individuals and families are caught up in violence in the home (Gelles 1990:13).

3.3.2. **Middle-class women do not get battered as often as lower-class women**

According to Walker (1979:20) most statistics of battering have come from the lower class families. Lower class families are more
likely to come in contact with community agencies and so their problems are more evident. Middle class and upper class women often do not want to make their problems public. They fear social embarrassment and harming their husband's careers (Walker 1979: 21). Most of them presume the respect their husbands have in the community will cast doubt upon the credibility of their battering stories. Violence against women is not restricted by socioeconomic class or other demographic factors. Perpetrators and victims represent all racial groupings, socioeconomic classes and occupations (Strauss, Gelles, and Steinmetz 1980: 19).

3.3.3. Violence and love do not coexist in families

Once people believe that families are violent, they tend to think that the violence occurs all the time. Moreover, the persistent belief is that, if family members are violent, they must not love one another. Violence, while common in many families, is certainly not the only behaviour in the home. It is not only possible, but probable, that abused wives still have strong feelings for their husbands. In fact, most victims of family violence are taught that they deserve the beatings, and thus they have the problem, not the attacker. That violence and love can coexist in a household is perhaps the most insidious aspect of family violence, because people grow up learning that it is acceptable to hit the people they love.
3.3.4. Alcohol and drugs cause wife battering

The "demon rum" explanation for battering is the most popular one, and it raises a number of questions. "Do drugs and alcohol themselves cause people to be violent"? And what is more important, "Would solving the drug or drinking problems eliminate the violence"?

Common sense frequently says "yes" to these questions but research has proved the contrary (Gelles and Cornell 1990:18). If alcohol and drugs were responsible for the battering, then all alcohol and drug abusers would be batterers, and "teetotallers" would not abuse their wives. This however is not the case. The "demon-rum" myth teaches perpetrators that if they do not want to be held responsible for their violence, then they should either drink before they hit or at least say they were drunk.

3.3.5. Battered women deserve to be beaten

The myth that battered women provoke their beating by pushing their men beyond breaking the point is as popular as the "demon rum" one. In a culture where people take sides between the winners and losers, women who are continuously battered are thought to deserve it. "They are seen as too bossy, too insulting, too sloppy, too angry, too obnoxious, too provocative, or too something else" (Walker 1979:28). It is assumed that if only they could change their behaviour, the batterers could regain his self control. The fact remains that no woman deserves to be battered. This myth robs men of responsibility for their actions. It makes them feel
justified in their violent behaviour because it is not their fault, but the victim's. What gets lost in this victims' precipitation ideology is the fact that such violence is not acceptable behaviour. This does not exonerate the victim from the blame, but questions the perpetrator's "right" to lash out.

Battered women are pictured by most people as small, fragile, haggard people who might once have been pretty. They have no job skills, and are economically dependent on their husbands. Furthermore, they are assumed to be poor, to be from minority groups, and their passivity and fearfulness is most emphasised (Sampselle 1992: 6).

Although some battered women are jobless, others are highly competent workers and successful career women. They include doctors, lawyers, corporate executives, nurses, secretaries and others. Some of them are from middle class and high income homes. They are found in all age groups, races, religious groups, educational levels and socioeconomic groups (Walker 1979:18). As far as could be determined, no research has been conducted on the myths of wife abuse in the African society. The following section will attempt to define wife battering.

3.4 DEFINING WIFE BATTERING

Wife battering is a difficult phenomenon to define because it has a subjective component, and covers a wide range of actions (Angless 1990:3). There is no uniform definition of the concept, or clear objective criteria upon which experts have reached agreement.
Giovannoni and Becerra (1979:31) say that the definition of "wife abuse" varies according to social category and profession. Police officers, social workers, physicians, and lawyers have differing views of what constitutes wife abuse. Similarly, the definition of abuse varies by social class, race, and ethnicity (Giovannoni and Becerra 1979:31). The primary definition most researchers have used is physical violence resulting in bodily injury. Other researchers focus on the psychological elements that go with the battering, for instance, the humiliation and the degradation that victims suffer. Some researchers suggest that sexual molestation is central to defining wife battering.

In the end, the difficulties in defining what acts are abusive and what is not, is due to varying cultural and sub cultural views on whether certain behaviour is or is not acceptable. It would be far too complex to have a definition that depends on the situation the behaviour was used in, the size of the offender, the size of the victim, and the reaction of those who observed the behaviour. For that reason, this study will use the definition employed by Walker (1979:1) in her study of a self-volunteered sample of a hundred and twenty battered women in the United States. She defines a battered wife as, "any married woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical, sexual, and/or psychological behaviour by a husband in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights" (Walker 1979: 1). The terms 'battering' and 'abuse' will be used interchangeably throughout the study. The terms 'wife' or 'woman' will be used to denote the female partner whereas the terms 'husband' and 'man' the male partner. The term married women will be used to refer to women who
have been married through customary services (transfer of "lobola")
or civil ceremony (in front of a court official).

Central to much of the literature on battered women, is a wealth of
descriptions about specific forms of abuse. An analysis of the
different types of abuse follows.

3.5 TYPES OF WIFE BATTERING.

To many people, wife battering is narrowly defined as having only
physical implications. In reality, wife battering is any act of
commission that endangers or impairs a person's physical or
emotional health and development. This includes the following:
- Physical abuse which connotes actions such as; being slapped,
kicked, stabbed, pushed or burned.
- Emotional abuse which involves verbal insults, threats,
  belittling comments, and isolation from friends and family.
- Sexual abuse which may include rape and indecent assault.
The following section will focus on these different types of abuse.

3.5.1 Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is a pattern of behaviour directed at reducing a
person's sense of self worth. When achieved, it enhances the power
and control of the perpetrator over the victim (NiCarthy 1986:285). It entails the destruction of the victim's sense of
self-value and engenders in her, the dishonouring and devalued
perspective held by her abuser. Kirkwood (1993:49) identifies
common elements of emotional abuse as; degradation, fear, and objectification.

3.5.1.1. Degradation

Degradation refers to the awareness that, one is not highly regarded and not acceptable to others. It is a sense that there is something natural and essential about oneself that is soiled. Furthermore, it causes feelings of deep pain and sickening shame about oneself (Kirkwood 1993:49).

Degradation involves a variety of behaviours which include forever or repeatedly being told one is dumb, repulsive, sexually inadequate, and incompetent. In addition, there are nonverbal forms of degradation which include being forced, unwillingly to perform certain acts, for example, sexual acts like fellatio.

3.5.1.2. Fear and anxiety

Abused women experience fear and anxiety about their physical and emotional safety, and a sense that their bodies and selves are in danger. The shattering of trust and physical safety that occur with the first assault creates an atmosphere of continual danger, and thus continual anxiety and fear. Fundamental to this constant fear is that victims cannot predict when an attack will occur, its degree and the reason for its occurrence. Walker (1979: 54) says this about the fear experienced by abused women, "Their fear is often so overwhelming that some women express relief in knowing that an attack is about to happen or has begun because the anxiety
of waiting finally ends. The fear and anxiety that arises in response to having little or no control over one's physical safety, is itself emotionally abusive, because it deprives battered women of the opportunity to lead a free and healthy life.

3.5.1.3. Objectification

Objectification occurs when the perpetrator's behaviour indicates to the victim that she is viewed as an entity with no inner energy, resources, needs and interests. Kirkwood (1993:51) mentions two ways in which objectification can be described.

One way is when a partner insists that a woman remodels her external expression of self in order to fulfil his needs and desires. For example, the man can insist that a woman dress in a certain style of clothing which befit his idea of how that woman should look. What happens when women are forced to meet these demands is that their appearance, rather than being a personal expression, becomes dictated by the desires of their partners. Inherent in the demand is the refusal of a personal individuality which women might pronounce through appearance. In this sense, women are treated as objects, to be adjusted to meet the needs of their partners (Kirkwood 1993:52).

Secondly, acute possessiveness can carry a message of objectification. Jealousy, the restrictions of women's social contacts and the invasion of their space outside the relationship suggest that women are treated as property of their partners. Because one cannot be property without being rendered an object
capable of being owned, possessiveness is a form of objectification (Kirkwood 1993:52).

In most cases’ women who are subjected to emotional abuse, are also physically abused as well. A brief discussion of physical abuse follows.

3.5.2. Physical abuse

Physical abuse refers to being repeatedly subjected to any forceful behaviour or being forced into involuntary action that may cause pain or injury (Borland 1976: 23). Physical abuse ranges from painful slaps at the one end and homicide at the other end of the continuum. It ranges from minor to major physical assaults. Some examples of the former are: a slap in the face, a smack on the rear end, a pinch on the arm or cheek, a playful punch, and hair pulling. If these behaviours occur regularly, without respect for the woman's well-being, they are abusive. In many cases, these minor attacks quickly escalate into major physical assaults. Having struck a woman, the first time seems to make it easier for the man to do it again. It is as if a taboo is broken and the behaviour, once unleashed, becomes uncontrollable (Borland 1976: 23).

Major physical assaults include: punching all over the body, kicking and stomping; choking to the point of consciousness loss; pushing and throwing across the room, down the stairs, or against objects; twisting or breaking arms; stabbing and mutilation with a variety of objects, including knives and hatchets; and gunshot wounds.
3.5.3. Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse refers to being forced into having sex, or engaging in sex acts one object to (Russell 1982: 43). The most common form of sexual abuse for married women is marital rape. Male sexual aggression inside marriage is an issue that stems from two very serious (predominantly male) problems; male violence, and male sexuality. Wife rape is a manifestation of a male sexuality which is oriented to conquest and domination, and to providing masculinity; which unfortunately is defined in terms of power, superiority, competitiveness, control, and aggression. A "real man" is supposed to get what he wants, when he wants, particularly with his wife, and even more particular, in his sexual relations with her. Groth (1979:178) supports this when he concludes that "men rape their wives to assert power and strength, punish and degrade, prove their virility, overcome their feelings of being unloved, and to set their world in order".

Most men feel that their wives' sexual availability is guaranteed by the marriage licence. Some women who live with men are also under the same misapprehension that their sexuality is barter for economic support. It was only in the mid-1970's in the United States, and 1990's in South Africa that marital rape was effected into law. Until then, no woman raped by her husband could be classified as a rape victim. Traditional marriage vows insured the husband the right to sexual intimacy with his wife whenever he desired, and the wife had an obligation to cooperate. Geis (1980: 1) quotes a British jurist saying,
"But the husband cannot be guilty of rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto the husband which she cannot retract".

Insufficient research has been done on marital rape in South Africa, and especially with regard to African women.

Conventional wisdom depicts the wife-beater as a lower class, beer-drinking, undershirt-wearing brute, who is probably black, on welfare, and living in a teeming ghetto. A brief looks at the profile of men who abuse their wives follows.

3.6. PROFILE OF BATTERERS

Very little scientific research has been done on spouse abusers compared to their victims. The reason is not researcher apathy but rather the difficulties encountered in trying to gather unbiased samples. Most batterers tend to deny their violent acts, minimize their intentions or results, project blame onto the victims, or simply refuse to cooperate. Available reports of abusers were of small, biassed samples, or those obtained indirectly through information from the victims.

Margaret Elbow (1977:115) constructed a typology of wife batterers into four major personality types, and these are;
- **Controlling type** who perceives their wives as objects to be controlled.
- **Low self-esteem type** who perceives their wives as objects to reinforce their sense of self-worth.
- **Ego disintegration type** who has a difficulty differentiating themselves from others and therefore see their wives as part of themselves.
- **Protective type** who protects themselves by harming their wives.

But, one of the most publicized "profiles" comes from Walker (1979:34) whose list includes some of the most commonly noted features of the men and their backgrounds. The commonly noted features of men who abuse their wives are:

**Low self-esteem:** these men feel like "losers" who build dependency relationships with women perceived as "winners", they gain vicarious satisfaction through their wives' accomplishments, but when they feel they are losing control, they achieve a sense of superiority by dominating their wives.

**Emotionally inexpressive:** fear, tenderness, and self-doubt are repressed; and the only emotions they can and do express are anger and jealousy.

**Social isolation:** they have difficulty building and maintaining close, personal ties, so their social relationships are cursory and shallow.
Employment problems: unemployment, underemployment, or job dissatisfaction that not only affects self-esteem, but also introduce serious stresses into interpersonal relationships at all socioeconomic levels are prevalent among wife abusers.

Authoritarian personalities: these people are deferent to higher authorities but frequently scapegoat persons unable to protect or defend themselves.

Moody: wide variations in mood swings; the charming, loving father and husband who suddenly, sometimes with no apparent provocation, reverts to an angry, hostile, and violent man and vice versa (a feature that has been referred to as the "Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde syndrome").

These characteristics may not be sufficient indicators of men who batter. Wife beaters may be indistinguishable from other men except that they use violence to control and dominate their wives. Most studies find that both victims and perpetrators are similar to national statistics on most demographic items, crossing socioeconomic strata, religion, and occupation. Walker (1979:287) says; "As is usually the case with stereotypes, the stereotype of the abusive man just does not fit..... He could be anyone". People taking part in spousal conflicts are of all ages, communities, income levels, races, religions, employment situations, and marital status. In other words, there are no definitive characteristics of the wife beater. The crime of spousal assault and battery knows no social, geographical, economic, or racial barriers.
As far as it could be determined, no research profiling wife batterers among African societies has been done.

The following section looks at the extent of wife battering.

3.7 THE EXTENT OF WIFE BATTERING.

Efforts to better understand the true extent or estimate of wife battering are hampered by inconsistent definitions of the concept. Wife battering is a broad term that includes many forms of behaviour. Because there is no agreement on what constitutes wife battering, it becomes difficult to determine its scope. In addition to this definitional problem, there is the problem of relying on official figures for estimates. Experts on family violence agree that figures based on police and family court records seriously underestimate the actual incidence of wife battering (Maconachie 1993: 1).

Sampselle (1992: 7) estimates wife battering in the United States to range from 1.8-4 million yearly incidents. This means that one in ten American women is abused by the man with whom they live. South Africa is not much different. Welch (1987: 156) reports that South Africa conforms to a general Western trend regarding spouse abuse. In a study conducted in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, Lawrence (1984: 22) found that woman battering was the second highest reported crime. After Rape Crises Cape Town, held a telephone survey, in 1985, they estimated that one in six women in the Western Cape was battered (Maconachie 1993: 1). A national survey by Life Line in South Africa conducted in 1989 reported a
31\% increase in the incidence of calls relating to wife battering (McKendrick and Hoffman 1990:253). Whether this sharp increase indicates an escalation in actual violence, or an increased willingness to report violence is unclear at present. The apparent high incidence suggests that the source of the problem needs to be investigated. Research about the extent of wife abuse in African society lies fallow. Extensive research is needed in this area.

When acts of violence take place between family members, they typically take place in the home. Why is the home the arena of spousal violence, and why are certain spatial locations in the home frequently used as battleground? The following section will investigate the social dynamics of family violence.

3.8 SOCIAL DYNAMICS.

When acts of violence take place between family members, they are likely to take place in the home. The home is a typical setting for violence for a number of reasons. The nuclear family household structure for instance, which is typical of urban-industrial societies, insulates families from social control and assistance in coping with intra-family conflict. Other factors which may lead to violence in the home are the intensity of involvement of family members in interaction and activities at home; the fact that individual activities at home impinge on one another; and the general acceptance that violence between family members is justifiable (Roy 1977:48).
The home is furthermore, the locality of family violence because it is the "backstage" region of family behaviour. Protected by the privacy of one's own walls, there is no need to maintain the presentation of family as harmonious, loving and conflict-free.

Within the home, the kitchen is the typical location of violence. This is because the kitchen is the place where family members routinely congregate, and where most family interaction takes place. It is where family news is exchanged, where children report about their day at school, where the wife relives her day, and the husband discusses what happened at work. Because of the high level of interaction in the kitchen, there is a greater potential of family arguments and conflict arising in this room (Roy 1977: 49).

The second most common location for spousal violence is the living room. Like the kitchen, the living room is the setting for a wide range of family activities. The television, typically situated in the living room, often becomes the focal point of family conflict (Roy 1977:49).

The most lethal room in the house, the place where most conflicts and stress occur is the bedroom. The majority of the conflicts which occur in this room revolve around sex and intimacy. A major reason why the bedroom is a scene of deadly or serious violence is that it is a difficult room to escape from. While a wife can bolt from the kitchen table or leave the living room, escaping from an argument in the bedroom is extremely difficult, considering that one must get up and get dressed. Furthermore, bedroom conflicts typically take place late at night, and there may be no place to go.
As far as it could be established, no research on the spatial dynamics of violence among African couples has been done to date in South Africa. However, it should be pointed out that most African families live in small, and overcrowded houses. Most of their interactions occur in the same rooms; that is, they may cook, eat, and sleep in the same room. So, if conflict erupts, it does so within those rooms. Parents mostly do not have the luxury of quarrelling in their own bedroom, or children avoiding the conflict by fleeing to their rooms.

All forms of wife battering have consequences for the victims. The following section looks at the effect of battering on the victims, their children, and families.

3.9. EFFECTS OF WIFE BATTERING.

There are striking similarities in how the victims of wife battering experience their situation. These effects may extend beyond the victim, and beyond the home. A brief looks at the impact of wife battering on the victims, their children, and families follow.

3.9.1. Effects on the victim

The effect of wife battering on victims has been found in various reports to be remarkably consistent. McKendrick and Hoffman (1990: 262) found battered women often had lower self-esteem, felt guilty
and had a tendency to feel helpless, and developed negative attitudes towards their marriages. A brief examination of some of the effects follows.

3.9.1.1. Low self-esteem

Battered women share a common experience of denigration of self that results in diminished self-esteem. According to Pagelow (1984:81), wives who are battered by their husbands frequently report feelings of worthlessness. When a woman has been told often enough that she is worthless, ugly, stupid, and sexually unsatisfactory, she begins to give the demeaning words credibility, and when she is isolated from others whose care might counterbalance this negative portrait, she comes to accept it as her self-image (Pagelow 1984:81).

How the negative self image develops and comes to be accepted by victims of wife battering can be explained by Charles Horton Cooley's looking-glass self theory. The looking glass is a society, which acts as a mirror in which people observe the reaction of others to their behaviour. People form their beliefs about themselves by the images they see reflected (Popenoe 1995:126). The attitudes of others show them whether they are intelligent or stupid, attractive or repulsive, interesting or boring. If they receive a positive impression, or at least they think they are positive, they form positive self-images and continue to act in ways that bring approval. If they think they receive a negative impression, their self-image is diminished (Pagelow 1984: 82).
3.9.1.2. Loyalty to the batterers

Finkelhor (1981:10) makes reference to the fact that victims of family violence frequently want to go back to these situations, and even try to protect their abusers from outside intervention. Battered women often maintain a rather unbelievable loyalty to their abusers in spite of all the damage that they do. They are continually drawn back to their abusers because they are concerned about the welfare and well-being of the men who beat them (Finkelhor 1981:10). Many battered women admit they never told anyone about the abuse because they feared their abusers might be sent to prison. They do not want to punish their abusers, but they just want them to stop.

These abused women often insist to outsiders that their abusers did not mean to harm them, despite severe injuries and deprivations. Finkelhor (1981:9) sums up this loyalty to abusers this way, "There is a kind of entrapment that stymies battered women. The abuse often goes on over an extended period of time and the victims have difficulty either stopping it, or avoiding it. They often do not try to escape their abusers, in fact, in many instances, they want to go back and go to great lengths to protect him".

3.9.1.3. Shame and helplessness

Battered women have in common a sense of shame and humiliation. They often feel that they are the only ones whose husbands abuse them, therefore it must be their fault somehow (Pagelow 1984:84). They experience feelings of helplessness and entrapment. Once the
women are operating from the belief of helplessness, their perception becomes reality and they become passive, submissive, and helpless. They allow things that appear to them to be out of their control actually to get out of their control. Battered women who feel helpless really believe that they have no influence over events that concern them. They learn to accept battering as a way of life and that they cannot influence its occurrence.

3.9.2. Effects on the children

Violence within the family has a negative effect on the children. Research on intra-familial violence reveals striking correlations between spousal violence and various forms of violence involving children (Sonkin 1987:34). Although some batterers may beat only his wife and not his children, and although one or both parents may attempt to shield the children from the violence, children who witness inter-parental abuse suffer from the exposure to the violence (Sonkin 1987: 34).

Child witnesses to inter-parental conflict, even if not directly assaulted themselves, have an increased risk of developing behavioural and emotional problems. These may include; depression, anxiety, the presence of fears and phobias, insomnia, and enuresis, as well as acting-out such as stealing, truancy, temper tantrums, and aggression.

In addition to the trauma of witnessing spousal abuse, children may themselves be victims of assaults, either directly or indirectly. Children often try to protect the victimized parents and when they
do, their risk of physical injury increases substantially. They may also become targets of either parent's displaced anger, frustration, and helplessness (Sonkin 1987:35).

With the feelings engendered as a result of the violence inflicted upon her, the mother as a traditional caretaker may lose her effectiveness in taking care of the children. Consequently, the children may be neglected (Geller 1982: 76).

3.9.3. Effects on the family

The extended family also suffers the resonance of partner abuse. Members of the extended family are continuously estranged as the abuse intensifies. They may be alienated by the battered woman herself who breaks off from her family and friends in an effort to appease the batterers or in an attempt to camouflage the violence. Extended family members may also pull out from the battered woman because of their feelings of debilitation, frustration, bewilderment and/or because of the batterers's threats, or acts of violence towards them.

As far as could be determined, no research on the effects of wife abuse among African families has been done. The following section examines the decision to stay in abusive relationships with attention being given to the role of psychological factors, fear, and socialization.
3.10. WHY WOMEN STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS.

Probably the most frequently asked question about battered women is why they continue cohabiting with their violent partners. This section attempts to provide an answer to the question of why some abused women decide to put up with the violence and stay in the abusive relationship.

The accounts of women who needed police intervention to be rescued from possible death and then return to their abusive husbands and drop all charges, perplex onlookers and authorities alike. Staying with a person who abuses you makes little sense to most people and as a result little sympathy is shown for the abused wife who does not leave. Instead, the woman is often labelled a masochist. Freud's (1963: 569) definition of masochism is a situation where "gratification is connected with suffering of physical or mental pain at the sexual object", would therefore presume that they derive fulfilment from being abused. The abused woman acts in a way that others believe is counter normative. These people believe that if they were in the same position, they would act differently.

Moore (1989: 21) define the major reasons why a woman stays in an abusive relationship as fear, dependency, and psychological pressures. Fear immobilizes abused women, ruling their actions, their decisions, and their lives in general. The fear is not always for their own safety. Sometimes they also fear for the safety of their abusers; they believe the men will "fall apart or commit suicide" if they leave (NicCarthy 1982: 117). Their fear often extends to their children, whose lives have been threatened by
their fathers, or because they believe the abuser's threats to take the children from them. Their terror may extend beyond their homes; in many cases they do not seek help from friends, neighbours, or their families, because they know their partners' explosive anger can endanger others' lives (Martin 1976: 76).

Martin (1976:77) postulates that one of the reasons why women do not break off abusive relationships is sex-role socialization. This process often makes the woman feel responsible for the outcome of the marriage and the need to be loyal to the marriage. When these feelings are strengthened and reinforced by pressure from professionals, friends, neighbours, and relatives, battered women are likely to perceive themselves as "deviant", rather than the persons who abuse them. Sex-role socialization conditions women to take pride in a good marriage, and they often take full responsibility for a bad one. Their sense of responsibility will lead them to feel ashamed if their marriages fail, and they will try above all else to save face. Abused women are often encouraged to believe that the failure of a marriage represents their failure as women (Martin 1976: 81).

Battered women sometimes remain in abusive relationships because they believe their husbands will change. An abuser is most likely to be sincerely contrite and repentant after he lashes out. Because the man is loved and has many other positive features, the couple is likely to "kiss and make up", both believing that the violence was a freak occurrence that will never happen again, until it does.
3.11. CONCLUSION.

Wife battering is a social problem that has long been hidden behind the curtain of domestic privacy. Only in the last few decades have people become aware of its tragic consequences. This chapter has explored the sensitive issue of wife battering, beginning with the definition and history of wife battering, showing how societies have tolerated and even condoned it. The chapter then presented the social dynamics of wife battering. Examining the myths surrounding wife battering, it explained why the true extent of the problem cannot be known. The reasons why women are battered and the types of battering were also interrogated with a view towards understanding this phenomenon of wife battering better. The effects of battering on the victims concluded the chapter.

The explanations proposed to account for the existence of wife battering are derived from theories. These theories provide frameworks within which and in terms of which to understand violent marital relationships. The next chapter reviews the following theories of wife battering:

- Psychological theory: which explains wife battering in terms of deviance or pathological behaviour of the perpetrator and/or the victim.

- Exchange/social control theory: which focuses on the whole social situation within which the violence takes place.
- Feminist theory which attacks the unequal distribution of power in the family and the society at large.

- Cycle of violence theory which argues that wife battering occurs in cycles characterized by peaks in violence and periods of calm.
CHAPTER 4

THEORIES OF WIFE BATTERING

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Many students in the social sciences or more specifically in sociology often ask, "Who needs theory? Just give us facts". The assumption is that if all the facts were known, they would speak for themselves, and no theory would be needed. In the absence of adequate facts, an idea may be dismissed as unworthy because it is "only a theory". Some students have also questioned the need to study abstract theories that seem to have, at best, a tenuous relationship to the "real" world (Cuzzort and King 1976: 3).

However, all the facts we need are seldom available. Even if they were, we would still need to interpret them in order to deal with them in the light of our needs and plans. Furthermore, the meaning of facts is rarely self-evident, and we must rely on a variety of theories to help us to evaluate them. A good theory can enhance our understanding of the facts, helping us to explain them, and to make valid predictions from them. This is essential to planning for the future both in our personal lives, and in public policy planning.

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the theories of wife battering. A review of the following theories will be undertaken; Psychological theory, Exchange/social control theory, Feminist theory, and Cycle of violence theory.
4.2. PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES

"They must be sick! only a crazy person would beat a wife like that. Sure, I get mad at my wife but I'm not loonie enough to do what he did, he must be insane" (Laslett 1978: 400).

These are the comments one hears from neighbours, friends, or colleagues at work, but they were not very uncommon among professionals until recently. When they first came into public attention, all types of family violence were initially viewed as rare occurrences engaged in by psychopathological individuals, the most depraved persons who suffered from some sort of "mental illness". Finkelhor (1981: 12) says, "In all cases they were analysed as extremely pathological behaviours. Child beaters were seen as depraved. Wife beaters were seen as alcoholic rogues and psychopaths and were considered to come from only lower class and disorganized families".

Psychopathological explanations of wife battering are therefore based on certain qualities of the individual actor. In these theories, wife battering is approached via the assumption that its causes lie in abnormalities in the perpetrators. Psychopathological theories propose that certain kinds of people are wife batterers; that they are different enough from other people in skills, temperament, personality, life histories, or even physiologically; that they may be identified by some combination of special characteristics. The original idea was that wife batterers are immature, impulsive, dependent, narcissistic, egocentric, demanding
and sadomasochistic. They were assumed to manifest these personality characteristics because they suffered some form of "mental aberration or sickness" (Gelles and Cornell 1990: 111).

Within this approach, one also finds stress laid on the role of alcohol and drugs as "disinhibitors" which release the evident tendencies that exist in humans. Many people, including some battered women, tend to blame the battering incidents on the perpetrator's drinking. For battered women, it is psychologically easier to blame the violence on the batterers drunkeness. Gelles and Strauss (1979:561) challenge these explanations and regard them as falling more within the sphere of conventional wisdom and further suggest that "some men get drunk to give them an excuse to hit their spouses".

Another pronouncement encountered within this approach is that "violence arises out of psychological problems of the victims". One often finds victims blamed when provocation is cited as justification. Research findings demonstrate that battered women have internalized this view to the extent that they feel guilty when their partners assault them (Hilberman 1980: 1339).

Despite early acceptance of the individual psycho pathology model, later trends have been to discount or disconfirm many of its explanatory factors. Recent research has shown that wife batterers cannot be classified into one consistent category of neurosis or psychosis. That wife batterers are no more likely to be psychotic than the general public, and that the types of neurosis they display are so varied and dissimilar that, it is not possible to
make a simple diagnosis in the case of most batterers (Steel and Cornell 1985:95; Hilberman 1980:1336).

Set against the ultra-individual explanations of psychological theories is the attitude that any investigation which attempts to abstract violence from its social setting and concentrate solely on the background and personal characteristics of individuals cannot throw much light on wife battering.

Nevertheless, despite the lack of strong empirical support, this theory remains one of the more popular and widely accepted, and researchers continue to search for specific psychological characteristics of individuals and pathological mental states of wife batterers.

The next theoretical framework expands from the individual pathological level of the psychological theories into a broader social-structural viewpoint.

4.3. SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Social learning theory conceives of violence as learned and reinforced in childhood as a coping response to stress or a method of conflict resolution, and practised into adulthood. In terms of social learning theory, the family is seen as the training ground in violence since it provides examples for imitation and examples of role models which are used by children in their later lives when they develop suitable parental and conjugal roles for themselves (Rosenbaum 1985:462). Since behaviour is learned through imitation,
it follows that when children are exposed to violence on the part of their parents, they themselves will easily resort to violent actions. On these grounds, and supported by a great deal of research, Rosenbaum (1985:468) avers; "There is some evidence, at least in the area of marital violence, that one of the most significant long term effects of exposure to family violence may be the inter generational transmission of such violence". Exposure to family violence may send the message to children that violence within families is normatively and socially acceptable.

Researchers also point to another matter within the context of social learning theory, namely that sex-role inequalities are learned. Traditional sex-role socialization often leads to the justification of violence against women in order to maintain the traditional distribution of power. Gentlemann (1984:118) says in this regard;

"The abuse of women will go on as long as society continues to value dominance in males and submission in females".

Sex-role socialization which teaches dominance/submissiveness also encourages a belief system which is labelled learned helplessness in women. When children are socialized that women are helpless, the message is that "in order to be successful and popular with the boys, it is necessary for girls to give away their power". Such learned helplessness contributes to low self esteem and to exogenous depression, and is suggested as an explanation for psychological paralysis on the part of battered women, leading them to maintain their victims' status (Rosenbaum 1985:460). This
learned helplessness may furthermore deprive women of the ability to develop appropriate skills to escape violence.

Another theory on the social structural level of analysis is the exchange/social control theory which follows below.

4.4. EXCHANGE/ SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY

Exchange and social control theories, which complement each other, will be discussed together in this section. The basic assumption of exchange theory is that human interaction is guided by the pursuit of rewards and avoidance of punishment and cost. In addition, exchange theorists argue that an individual who supplies rewards to another obliges him/her to fulfil an obligation, and thus the second individual must furnish benefits to the first. If reciprocal exchange of rewards is not received, the interaction will be broken (Ritzer 1992:419).

Social control theory on the other hand argues that the existence of mechanisms of social control conditions or limits the actions of people in order to make them want to conform to social norms most of the time.

In applying the exchange/social control theory to wife battering, it can be argued that, husbands are likely to batter their wives when the cost of battering does not outweigh the rewards. There are a number of ways in which the cost of battering may outweigh the rewards. For example, there is the potential that the victim could hit back. Secondly, a violent assault can lead to the arrest and/or
imprisonment of the attacker. Finally, too much violence may lead to a loss of status, and the dissolution of the family.

However, the structural property of the family makes the validity of the proposition (husbands are likely to batter their wives when the cost of battering does not outweigh the rewards) more likely. The normative structure of the society and the family, and the sexual inequality accompanying it, serve to reduce the chances that victims can threaten or inflict harm on the offenders. Women are discouraged to use violence whereas violence from males is tolerated if not condoned, and therefore males can use violence against females without fear of being hit back or blamed by the society (Laslett 1978: 485).

Expanding on the above proposition, it can be said that, the absence of effective social control over family relations decreases the cost of family members being violent to one another. Social control is a means of raising the cost of violent behaviour. Police intervention, criminal charges, imprisonment, and the loss of status are all forms of social control that can raise the cost and lower the rewards of violent behaviour.

This proposition too, is relevant for explaining wife battering. Battered women can turn to outside agencies to redress their grievances, but the private nature of the family reduces the accessibility of outside agencies of social control. Neighbours who report that they overhear incidents of family violence also say that they fear intervening in another person's home. Police, prosecutors, and the courts are reluctant to pursue cases that
involve domestic violence. When these cases are followed up, the courts are faced with the no-win situation of either doing nothing or separating the combatants. Thus, to protect the woman, a judge may view it as an alternative to remove her from the home or divorce. This puts the judicial system in a position of breaking up a family to protect individual members. Because courts typically view this as a drastic step, such court-ordered separations and removals are rare, unless there is stark evidence of repeated grievous injuries (Laslett 1978:487).

The problem with the exchange/social control theory is that, it assumes that people always have infinite choices, which they are always conscious of, and this is not necessarily the case with abused women. Intra familial relations, for instance, are more complex than those studied by the exchange theorists. In some instances, it is not possible or feasible to break off interaction, even if there is no reciprocity. A battered woman who has been threatened with death if she leaves, may remain even if she is not happy in the relationship. Some battered women are not aware of the choices they may have, and those that may be, cannot always execute those choices because of the normative and situational constraints.

Another theoretical perspective that tries to explain wife battering is feminist theory.
4.5. FEMINIST THEORY

Although feminist thought consists of many disciplines and perspectives, a distinct body of analysis concerning wife battering can be identified as feminist. Specifically, feminist analysis has, as its central core, the premise that woman battering is an expression and a mechanism of the institutional oppression of women (Kirkwood 1993: 23). According to this approach, women are systematically and structurally controlled by men within a culture that is designed to meet the needs of and benefit men.

Of the many feminist perspectives on wife battering that have arisen, the focus in this chapter will be on the most prominent one which sees battering as a part of women's oppression within the family. Many feminists have criticised both the ideology and the structure of the "traditional", one-income, heterosexual family (Gittins 1985: 153). The "traditional" ideology is not only unrepresentative of the experiences of many women, but that society is organised such that women who do not conform to the traditional ideology and structures are denied acknowledgement within social institutions (Gittins 1985:153).

A major component of the feminist critique of the institution of marriage and the heterosexual family has been to show the way in which this ideology support and enforces a family structure in which women are oppressed. One illustration of such oppression in the family is wife battering. Thus, in this approach, wife battering is seen as a problem which has developed out of social ideology and structure which enforce the "traditional family".
Gittins (1985: 154) focuses on what "traditional ideas" are about and how such ideas support an institution of patriarchy in which wife battering is a major form of control of women by men. Furthermore, the "family" and women's positions as subordinates, are part of this institution.

Gittins's central thesis is that social and economic processes operate directly or indirectly to support a patriarchal (male dominated) social order and family structure. His main theoretical argument is that patriarchy leads to the subordination of women and causes the historical pattern of systematic violence directed towards women. He further argues that the historical legacy of men's legal ownership of women, along with the laws which specifically give the men the right to "punish" them (women), underlay the social circumstances in which wives were the "appropriate" victims of battering. Evidence for this analysis includes the findings that battering begins, in most cases, only after the couple has been married (Dobash and Dobash 1980: 45).

Since these findings, others have established that police and court records indicate that some abusers believe that they have a legal and moral right to control women to whom they are married (Kirkwood 1993:24). Thus feminists argue that wife battering is a product of a system which was reflected in historical laws about male ownership of women and marriage, as well as current social gender roles and structure which secure the dominance of men over women.

The feminist approach finds the source of wife battering in the society and how it is organized. The major drawback of this theory
is that, it uses but a single factor (patriarchy) to explain violence against women, and single-factor explanations are rarely useful in the social sciences. The next section looks at the cycle of violence theory.

4.6. CYCLE OF VIOLENCE THEORY

Battered women are not continuously abused, nor is their abuse exacted at totally random times. Walker (1979:55) discovered a definite battering cycle that these women go through. Understanding this cycle is important if we are to learn how to stop, or prevent battering incidents. This cycle also helps to explain how battered women become victimized, how they fall into learned helplessness behaviour, and why they do not attempt to escape. The battering cycle appears to have three distinct phases, which vary in both time and intensity for the same couple and between different couples. These phases are, the tension building phase; the explosion and acute battering incident phase; and the calm, loving respite phase (McKendrick and Hoffman 1990:258).

4.6.1. Phase one: Tension building phase

This phase is distinguished by negligible battering incidents. The battered woman may handle these incidents in a variety of ways. She normally tries to calm the batterer through the application of methods that have proved successful before. She may become submissive, disciplined, and may anticipate his every whim, or may stay out of his way. She lets the batterer know that she puts up with his abusive behaviour as legitimately directed towards her. It
is not that she believes she should be ill-treated, rather, she assumes that what she does will prevent his anger from mounting (Walker 1979:55).

Most battered women know that it is only a matter of time before these minor battering incidents escalate. However, using psychological defence mechanisms, they refuse to accept this knowledge as a way of coping. They also deny their fear of the inescapable second phase by making themselves believe they have jurisdiction over the batterer's behaviour. During the early stages, they indeed do have some limited control. However, as the tension builds, the control is quickly lost. Each time a minor battering incident happens, there are residual tension-building effects. The battered women steadily become more angry, even though they may not express it, and any control they may have over the situation fades away. The batterers, encouraged by the apparent enduring accedence of their abusive behaviour, do not try to control themselves (Walker 1979:56).

Many couples are skilful at maintaining this phase at a steady level for long periods of time. Both partners want to avert the acute battering incident. However, extraneous forces often shake up this fragile balance. Women who have been battered over a period of time are conscious of this and go to great lengths to manipulate as many outside influences as possible in order to forestall further battering incidents. They toil to influence the behaviour of other family members towards the batterers. They take the rap for the batterers, apologize for their rude behaviour, and often turn away from loved ones who could help them (Walker 1979:56).
As batterers and battered women become aware of the increasing hostility during the first phase, it becomes more difficult for their coping strategies to work. Each becomes more frenetic and furious. The men step up their domineering smothering and ruthlessness. Their efforts at psychological degradation become more pointed and hurtful, their verbal diatribe longer and more hostile. Minor battering incidents become more common, and the resulting anger last for longer periods of time. The battered women are now unable to bring back the stability as they could earlier in this phase. They are less able to protect themselves against the pain and hurt. Depleted and fatigued from the stress, they usually withdraw more from the batterers, fearing they will unguardedly set off an explosion. The batterers start to move more tyrannically towards battered women as they notice the women's aloofness. The batterers hang around the women, hardly giving them room to breathe on their own. Tension becomes too much, and at last the process fails to respond to any controls. Once the point of inevitability is reached, the next phase, the acute battering phase, will take place (Walker 1979:59).

4.6.2. Phase two: The acute battering phase

Phase two is distinguished by the boisterous release of the tension that has built up during phase one. The absence of control and the major destruction that occur distinguishes the acute battering phase from the minor battering incidents of phase one. This is not to say that those confrontations that occurred in phase one are not dangerous and do not constitute unlawful assaults, but it is the unrestrained nature of battering incidents that marks the
distinction between the two phases.

During phase two, the batterers completely admit the fact that their anger is out of control. Although they may begin by justifying their behaviour to themselves, they end up not understanding what happened. They are so furious that they cannot control their behaviour. They start wanting to teach the women a lesson, not planning to exact any particular damage on the women, and stop when they feel the women have learned their lesson. Unfortunately by now, the women have been gravely punished. When explaining the acute battering phase, batterers concentrate on justifying their behaviour. They often enumerate a great many insignificant aggravations that happened during phase one. The trigger for moving into phase two is rarely battered women's behaviour, rather, it is usually an extraneous force or the internal state of the men (Walker 1979:60).

The conclusion of phase two and progression into the third phase of the battering cycle is often appreciated by both parties. Just as cruelty is associated with phase two, the third phase is identified by excessively warmhearted, charming, and contrite behaviour by the batterers. They know that they have gone too far, and they try to make it up to the battered women. It is during this phase that the battered women's victimization is completed (Walker 1979:61).
4.6.3. Phase three: Kind and loving behaviour phase

The third phase follows immediately on the second and brings with it an unfamiliar spell of tranquillity. The hostility built up in phase one and discharged in phase two is gone. In this phase, the batterers continually act in a kind, pleasant, and loving manner. They are usually regretful of their deeds in the earlier phases, and they communicate their repentance to the battered women. They beg the women's forgiveness and promise them that they will never do it again. Their behaviour is described as indicative of a little boy who has done something wrong, the child caught with his hand in the cookie jar. They confess, when caught in the act, and then cry for forgiveness. The batterers firmly maintain that they will never again harm the women they love, they believe they can restrain themselves from now on. They also believe that they have taught the women a lesson that the women will never again behave in such a manner, and so they will not be tempted to beat them again. They try to persuade everyone concerned that this time they really mean it. They will take action in order to illustrate their genuineness. They will give up drinking, dating other women, or whatever else affects their internal anxiety state (Walker 1979:66).

It is during this stage that battered women convince themselves that the batterers can change. The batterers' reasonableness and their loving behaviour support the victim's belief that the batterers can do what they say they want to do. Their behaviour becomes the women's reinforcement for staying in the relationship. The battered women choose to believe that the behaviour they see during phase three signifies what their men are like. They identify
the good man in phase three with the man they love. The good man is everything they ever wanted in a man. He is seen as dependable and loving. If only he could get help, this is the way he would be all the time. At this point, most battered women will usually drop charges, if any were laid, back down on separation or divorce, and generally try to patch things up until the next acute battering incident (Walker 1979:66).

Critics of this theory argue that the third phase of calm and loving respite seldom occurs. They assert that batterers in most cases appear to be without remorse about their actions, except if they risk losing the women. Russell (1982:207) says, "I believe this phase is far from inevitable, and is most likely to occur if the woman leaves her husband or he fears that she will do so, or if she is able to enlist help that gives her more power in their relationship". At this stage, the husband cannot use physical coercion and verbal abuse to try and bring her in line because those are the very tactics that have resulted in her determination to leave. These men are in a least powerful position in relation to their wives for a change, and they try to woo them back. They do not always succeed. When they do, the pattern is frequently repeated, but by no means always successful. Russell (1982:208) also points out that there are women who are too broken by the battering, that for them there is no cycle, only continual abuse.
4.7. CONCLUSION

For many people, the importance of theory is unclear. Theory is necessary in order to gain understanding of phenomena by putting them into perspective; to explain events; and whenever possible to predict events. Theorizing is an attempt to gain a sense of understanding of how and why events occur (Turner 1993:4).

Since it appears, at least at the present time, that no single theory can adequately explain and predict the wide variety of behaviours, actors, and situations involved in wife battering, this chapter has attempted to introduce some of the most popular theories that have offered explanations of this problem.

The psychological model was the first theoretical framework discussed. This theory argues that abusers are different from the rest that they suffer from some form of mental aberration. However, later theories dispute this assertion. Then the chapter progressed to the social structural explanation of the exchange theory which claims that husbands are likely to abuse their wives if the costs do not exceed the benefits. Social learning theory was another theory discussed in this chapter, and according to this theory, wife battering is the result of learning from role models that violence is an acceptable means of redressing problems. The feminist theory explains wife battering in terms of the patriarchal structuring of society. The chapter concluded with a broad discussion of the cycle of violence theory, which argues that wife battering is a cyclical phenomenon, made up of three stages namely; the tension building phase characterised by minor battering
incidents. This is followed by the acute battering stage. The final stage is characterized by loving and contrite behaviour from the perpetrator to the victims.

No research which tested these theories specifically on abused African women could be traced.

Workable and efficient intervention techniques depend heavily on sound theory supported by rigorous empirical research. The following chapter looks at the research design to be employed in this study. It will outline the background to the study, the aims, and the method of research adopted by the researcher. The strengths and limitations of the study will also be discussed.
CHAPTER 5

THE RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The area of violence against African women has long suffered from selective inattention on the part of both society and the research community. At the point of undertaking this study, there is growing concern in South Africa with various forms of family violence. There has been extensive coverage of topics like child abuse and family murder in the press. Despite the prevalence of the abuse of African women by their male partners, this subject is not receiving the same attention afforded other forms of family violence. This relative silence on the topic cultivated interest to undertake this study.

5.2. AIMS OF THE STUDY

This study is anchored by a commitment to document African women's experiences of marital violence in order that appropriate actions may be taken to ameliorate their situation. In undertaking this research, the intention is to learn from battered women about the context of their daily lives, exploring their educational and employment status and their home situations at the time of the interview, to describe the development and nature of their relationship with men who abuse them, the onset and nature of the abuse they experience, and the difficulties they face leaving such relationships.
However, the main aim of this study is, **to find out why abused African women stay in such relationships.** Few issues have posed more of an intellectual puzzle in the literature on domestic violence than that of terminating the assaultive relationship. A particularly alarming aspect of wife battering is that many women choose to remain in their violent relationships, even though they may risk severe injury or death. Understanding this decision process is crucial to the understanding of wife battering in general.

Why would a woman who has been battered by her husband remain with him? This question is one of the most frequently asked by both professionals and lay people in the course of discussions of family violence, and one of the more difficult to answer. The question itself derives from the elementary assumption that any reasonable individual, having been battered by another person would avoid being battered again (or at least avoid the attacker). Unfortunately, the answers to why women remain with their abusive husbands are not as simple as the assumption that underlies the question.

A victim of spouse abuse for seventeen years relates: "After you live so many years, and you wake up one day, and your body has just about had it, you say, 'My God, I just cannot take another punch.' That is what happened to me. I just reached a point where I said, 'No more. Nothing is worth it'. I decided that I would rather struggle and see if I could not make it, so I just got [sic] up and left, and that's been it" (Langley and Levy 1977:111).
The question why abused women stay with their abusers derives from the observation that women reach the decision to leave very often only after an extended history of abuse. Many abused women suffer a series of severe attacks before calling for help. They act when they reach a point at which they cannot take it anymore.

5.3. METHODOLOGY

Data for this study were derived from questionnaires with fourteen abused women from two shelters, and seven shelter representatives who worked with abused women. Shelter representatives were included to give the findings more depth as the number of abused women found, who were prepared to be interviewed, were few. Finding these respondents for this study was very difficult because of the sensitive nature of the topic. Firstly, police stations, church ministers, and social workers around Soweto were contacted, but they could not help for one reason or another. The following organizations were also contacted: Bethany shelter, Women Against Women Abuse, Boitsepo. These organizations did not respond to numerous letters and faxes sent to them. When telephoned, they always promised to call back and never did, so I finally gave up. Then the Centre for Peace Action which runs a shelter for abused women in Eldorado Park was visited, but they also could not help because women who came to their shelter were mostly Coloured and this study is concerned with the abuse of African women. They then referred me to POWA (People Opposing Women Abuse) and NISSA Institute for Women Development which also had such shelters.
At POWA, I was informed that their shelter is a transitional one, that they house a limited number of women at a time and that they do not allow outsiders access to the shelter for anonymity and safety reasons. However, they advised me to leave the questionnaire with them so that a shelter representative could administer it for me after seeking the consent of the women in the shelter. At Nissa as with POWA, they also said that they had few women in their shelter and that they do not allow people access to the shelter or the women there, so they also asked me to leave the questionnaires. So I was forced to abandon my intentions of having in depth interviews with the women and settled for a questionnaire.

Two sets of questionnaires were then designed: One to be filled out by abused women in the shelter and the other by shelter representatives who worked with abused women. The questionnaires were designed to trace the women's life-courses and elicit answers to the question as to why they stayed in abusive relationships, and what problems they encountered leaving such relationships. They also include a series of probes to some questions that could encourage the women to elaborate on their answers. Furthermore, they were used to ensure that comparable data would be obtained from each respondent. The items that were covered in the questionnaires included the following:

- **Personal details:** like age, educational background, and working history of the respondents as these factors might have a bearing on their decision to stay.

- **Relationship with the batterer:** like the development of the relationship, including courtship and marriage, with the men who
battered them was traced.

- **Relationship between the batterer and the children:** whether he was abusing them or not, and what effect it had on them.

- **Nature of the battering incidents:** when the battering started, how they were battered, and what they did about the abuse.

- **Why they stayed:** what were their motives for staying in such relationships and what difficulties were faced by those leaving.

- **The shelter:** how they knew about the shelter, why they went to the shelter, and what they hoped the shelter would do for them.

- **Future possibilities:** how they envisaged life after the shelter and services they thought should be available for battered women.

Although the shelter representatives were asked almost the same questions as the abused women, they had to report on their perceptions or experiences dealing with such women. They were not however victims of abuse per se.

I then met with the shelter representatives who were going to help the women fill out the questionnaire, and thoroughly went through items in the questionnaire and probing questions that could be asked. The questionnaires were filled in at the shelter by the women themselves. The questionnaires were in English, but the women were allowed to use whatever language they felt comfortable with. Fortunately, all the women answered in English.
In researching violence against women, memories of the abuse may be re-evoked in the process, so POWA, and NISSA were asked to provide back up counselling if it were needed. Hopefully the research provided the women with the opportunity to reflect in a supportive context about what they have been through.

5.4 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Before turning to a summary of the results of this study, it is necessary to note the methodological problems inherent in this research. Any conclusions from this study are ultimately limited by the validity of the methods used, and the conduct of future research may profit from an explication of these limitations.

One of the most common problems with research in this area is the selective nature of the samples. This study did not use a random sampling procedure and thus the representativeness of the sample is unknown. The small sample and the unknown representativeness impinge on the generalizability of the findings presented in this study. The study examined women who sought help at the shelters, and these women may differ in important ways from those who never appear at shelters. Furthermore, the fact that I did not have direct and personal access to women and had to use self-administered questionnaires, meant that I was limited to written responses only, could not record spontaneous answers, and had no control over questions that were not answered.

There are, however, strengths in the study. First, this is a unique study. The area of the abuse of African women has long suffered from selective inattention on the part of both society and the research community. While some data have been gathered
on the topic of wife abuse, most of these studies have focussed on other population groups. This study examined the abuse of African women whose voice is missing in research on wife battering. Secondly, the use of self-administered questionnaires meant that the questionnaires could be completed at the respondent's convenience. The respondents could spend more time on them than they might have had an interviewer been present. Furthermore, the questionnaire provided greater assurance of anonymity and the respondents may have been more willing to answer questions.

5.5 ANALYSING DATA

Frequency distributions and grouped data have been used to analyse the data. The frequency distribution is a listing of the frequency with which each score occurs. For variables with many possible scores like age, the data has been grouped into categories and the frequency of scores within each category presented.

The following chapter provides summaries of the respondents' answers to provide background and make it easier to understand the results that will be presented in chapter seven.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENT'S ANSWERS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the women who participated in the study, summarising their responses to the questions asked in this study. A description of their personal situation and their educational and occupational status at the time of the interview will be provided. The development of their relationship with their batterers, the nature of the battering and their reasons for staying in such relationships will also be outlined. A summary of the responses of the shelter representatives who participated in this study will also be provided. Respondents A-N are abused women from the two shelters (POWA and NISSA), and respondents' AA-GG are shelter representatives who took part in this study. The summaries are presented in the past tense to reflect reality at the time of the interview.

6.2. SUMMARY OF THE ABUSED WOMEN'S RESPONSES

RESPONDENT A

1. PERSONAL DETAILS
At the time of the interview, she was twenty eight years old and had one child (a son) who lived with her at the shelter. She had
passed matric and had done a secretarial course. She had worked part time as a receptionist.

2. THE BATTERERS

He was working as a sales representative for a company in Johannesburg. They started dating in May 1989 and four months later got married. She claimed that in the beginning he was loving, kind and caring.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The nature of the abuse was physical and it occurred when she tried to enquire about his staying out. The abuse progressively got worse when she started working because he became jealous of her, especially because she became independent of him.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATION WITH THE CHILDREN

He adored his son and always pampered him. He never abused him.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for seven years because she loved him, did not think there was anything wrong with the abuse, and because she believed there could be no one else who could love her.
6. THE SHELTER

She heard about the shelter from a friend who gave her the telephone numbers of that shelter, and she went there because she was unhappy about her life. She hoped that the shelter would help her regain her self-esteem. The shelter provided her with counselling and helped her to determine what she wanted in life.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her worries about leaving home were the uncertainty about her future and whether she would cope with life alone, and her biggest problem as an abused woman was having to explain the bruises, and marks to her colleagues at work.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She did not think the services available for battered women were enough, and recommended that the Minister of Justice implements new laws that would prevent the abuse of women.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends to find a place for herself, and because she did not have any relatives nearby, she anticipated problems with finding someone to look after her son while she goes to work. She did not know how she was going to deal with this problem. She did not think she was going to have any contact with
her abuser because she felt he would not change, once an abuser, always an abuser. Her advice to other abused women was that they should not sit with their problems but to go out and seek professional help.

RESPONDENT B

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent B was twenty nine years old and also had one child (a son) who lived with her parents in Venda. She studied until standard eight and also trained as a security guard. She was employed as a domestic worker.

2. THE BATTERERS

The batterers was employed as a security guard, but he left that job and started working as a cashier. They met and started dating in November 1991 and got married in 1992. In the beginning he was reserved, loving and caring, but later became abusive.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The abuse started in 1995 after he started drinking and would come back home late. He would beat her when she tried to inquire about his sleeping out. Although he did not always sleep at home, he expected her to always be at home. If she went to visit her friends
and relatives, he would beat her up.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

He had no problems with the kid, and used to ask her brother to bring the child to visit them as the child was staying in Venda.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for seven years before seeking help. She stayed with him because she thought he would change because after each beating he would apologise and promise never to do it again.

6. THE SHELTER

She was referred to the shelter by her employer's friend who worked at POWA. She went to the shelter because she had nowhere else to stay since all her relatives were in Venda. She hoped the shelter would provide her with accommodation and also advise her about her situation.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

She said nothing could compare with the abuse she suffered. Therefore, she was happy to leave. She said she was determined to face any problems she may encounter. Her worst problem as an abused woman was the arguments and the fights they had, and having to take
care of him when he was beaten by the boyfriends and husbands of the women he had been dating.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She said there were a number of places abused women can go to, such as police stations, and social workers but added that it was costly to know about these places. She was unsure as to whether these services were enough. She thought the police should be more sympathetic to abused women.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends looking for a job, and renting a flat. She also intends to go back to school and furthering her studies. She did not intend to have any contact with the abuser because she did not want to repeat the same mistake. Her advice to other abused women was that they should leave while they still had a chance, since their abusers may end up killing them. Furthermore, she said they should talk to someone about their situations.

RESPONDENT C

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

She was twenty seven years old and had two children (a boy and a girl) who lived with her mother. She left school in standard seven
after falling pregnant. She had only worked as a machine operator in a factory manufacturing jerseys.

2. THE BATTERERS

Respondent C's husband was working as a clerk at the Department of Home Affairs and seemed to be dissatisfied with his work. They met in 1988 when she was in standard seven. They got married a year later because she was pregnant. Initially, he was all right helping her with her school work, and as the relationship progressed he became possessive and abusive. Things got worse when they moved in together to a backyard room.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The abuse started when they were still dating and it was mostly physical; slapping, kicking and beating her with fists. The situation got worse when they moved in together, and the source of conflict was his possessiveness.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He loved the children and always played with them and supervised their homework, although he sometimes beat them up when they misbehaved. The respondent was concerned for her children especially the son who was showing aggressive tendencies.
5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for eight years before seeking help because she loved him, and he was the father of her children. She also stayed with him because her mother would not agree if she tried to leave him.

6. THE SHELTER

She learnt about the shelter from a friend and went there because she was tired of the beatings, and for the concern about the children. She hoped the shelter would help her deal with her situation. At the shelter, they gave her advice and the options she could pursue.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest problem as an abused woman was telling people because she thought they would not understand, and the fact that she had no money and thus had to rely on her husband. Her major worries about leaving home were explaining to her mother and children where she was going, and raising money as she did not know what to expect at the shelter.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She did not think that services for battered women were enough and recommended that teaching centres be established to teach women
about issues such as abuse and provide them with skills to empower them.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends going to her mother's place for a while before returning to her husband. She anticipated problems convincing her husband and in-laws that she was right by leaving, but was determined to make them understand. She was going back to the abuser because he was her husband and wanted to work things out. She hoped that her leaving would have changed him. Her advice to other abused women was that they were not alone and therefore should talk to someone who may be able to help them.

RESPONDENT D

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent D was thirty six years old and had two children (a boy and a girl) who stayed in Yeoville. She had passed matric and worked as a cashier, a credit controller and a receptionist.

2. THE BATTERERS

He worked for one company for fifteen years and loved his work very much. He was kind, loving, trustworthy and always cheerful when she met him. He pretended to be a non smoker and drinker, and he made
her very happy.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

He used to sleep out a lot and when questioned about it he would start beating her and accusing her of wanting to choose friends for him. They fought a lot and the source of the problem was his staying out.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He loved his children and had never touched them, although when things were really bad, he verbally abused and swore at his son for trying to help his mother.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for twelve years because she loved him and thought that he would change.

6. THE SHELTER

She learnt about POWA from her sister who thought that it was only for counselling, but was told about the shelter when she arrived there. She went to the shelter because she could not take the abuse anymore and she had realised that he could not change. She hoped the shelter would provide her with the environment where she could
have peace of mind, and the chance to start a new life with her children. The shelter provided her with counselling and an opportunity to share her experiences with others in similar situations.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest worries about leaving home were finding a place to stay for her and the children, leaving her belongings in the house, and whether she would make it without him. Her biggest problem as an abused woman was having to take care of the children alone.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She felt that the services available for battered women were inadequate and that centres where battered women could be taught skills to empower them should be created.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends to find a job and a place to stay. She thought she is going to have problems raising children on her own and starting life anew, but hoped to survive through therapy. She did not intend to go back to the abuser, but would allow him access to the children if he promised to stop abusing her. Her advice to other abused women was that they should try to talk it out with their abusers, failing which they should seek help
from marriage counsellors.

RESPONDENT E

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent E was thirty six years old and had one child (a daughter) who lived with her at the shelter. She completed a secretarial course in 1982, passed matric in 1994, and enrolled for a BComm degree at Vista University. She had been employed as a cleaner, a sales representative and as an assistant helping with filing, photocopying and research.

2. THE BATTERERS

He left school in standard eight and started working in a factory where he was retrenched and later got a job as a waiter in a hotel. They met in 1979 and got on well with each other. They both liked school and enjoyed studying together.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

He abused her physically when she enquired about his coming home late, and when she visited friends and relatives. The other source of conflict was her studies. He did not want her to further her studies.
4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He loved his daughter very much. Initially he would listen to her if she tried to stop them from fighting, but as the fighting intensified, he would also beat her up if she tried to intervene.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for two years because she thought he would change, but he did not.

6. THE SHELTER

She heard about the shelter from a social worker at her daughter's school, and she went to the shelter because she was not working and needed a place to stay. She hoped the shelter would provide her with counselling that would enable her to cope with the abuse she suffered. The shelter provided her with food parcels and they gave her a part-time job.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest worries about leaving home were whether she would be able to find a suitable place for her and her daughter, and she was concerned about how they were going to survive. Her main problem as an abused woman was the effect of the abuse on her daughter.
SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She did not think the services available for battered women were adequate, and felt that they (abused women) needed skills training, projects that would provide them with employment and affordable housing when they leave the shelter. She also advocated for the sensitizing of police personnel dealing with abused women.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she hoped to find an affordable place to rent failing which she would go back to her mother's place. She hoped to continue studying on a part time basis and look for a job. She was going to ask her mother to help her until she gets back on her feet. She did not intend to get back to the abuser but would maintain contact with him for her daughter's sake. Her advice to other abused women was that they should stop pleasing men and in the process endangering their own lives.

RESPONDENT F

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent F was thirty eight years old and had three daughters, two of whom were with her at the shelter and one was at boarding school. She had studied until standard eight when she left school because of financial problems. She had worked as a domestic worker,
a cashier and a tea-lady.

2. THE BATTERERS

Respondent F's husband was not able to hold a job for a long time because of his drinking problem and the last job he had been at a printing company. She met her husband when she was twenty years old and two years later they got married because she was pregnant. Although he drank a lot, he was also kind and loving and she thought he would stop or reduce his drinking when they got married.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The abuse was physical and it occurred whenever she questioned his staying out and not sleeping at home. He would beat her up to such an extent that she would be hospitalized and he would not bother coming and visit her. The beatings got worse after they got married and stayed at his parents' home. There was also the emotional abuse as he would shout at her in front of people.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He claimed to love them but did not maintain them. He did not provide for their school needs nor anything else.
5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for seventeen years because she loved him and hoped that he would change as he always promised.

6. THE SHELTER

She was referred to a shelter by one of the doctors who treated her, and she went there because she realised that her life was becoming unbearable. She hoped that the shelter would enable her to sort out her life. The shelter provided her with a place to rediscover herself, and with counselling.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her concerns about leaving home were the uncertainty about her decision, and the fear that somebody else would replace her and that she would not be allowed to come back. Her biggest problem as an abused woman was that she did not have a good life and that she was getting old and had nothing to show for it.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She thought the services available for battered women were adequate, and she recommended that cheaper accommodation be arranged for battered women when they leave the shelter.
9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends to rent a flat and look after her children. She anticipated financial problems and difficulties raising her children because of lack of support. She intends to divorce her husband because she does not need him anymore in her life, however she would maintain contact with him for the children's sake. Her advice to other women who may be involved in abusive relationships was that they should get out of those relationships.

RESPONDENT G

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent G was thirty nine years old and had a daughter who lived in the United States of America. She studied until standard eight and had a cashier's diploma. She was employed as a tea-lady and did filing for Premier International but was retrenched in 1993. At the time of the interview, she was working as a babysitter.

2. THE BATTERERS

He was unemployed and involved in criminal activities. She met him at her shebeen and they started dating. Initially, things were okay and he was romantic. Problems started when they moved in together and he wanted to control her business.
3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

Once they started living together, he started taking charge of the shebeen business she had, and when they did not make enough money, he blamed her and started beating her. After the battering, he would apologise and promise never to do it again, but to no avail.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

They did not stay with her daughter but she thought if they did, he had abused her as well.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for three years because she loved him and thought he would change.

6. THE SHELTER

She heard about the shelter from a social worker at Baragwanath hospital where she was receiving treatment for her bruises. She went to the shelter because she had no one to turn to, and she went to the shelter because she thought it would offer her safety, security and the chance to pick up the pieces. The shelter provided her with counselling, and has taught her to be independent.
7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her main worry about leaving home was that she did not know what to expect at the shelter, and her biggest problem as an abused woman was having to face people with her scars and bruises, and living in fear.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She felt there was adequate help for battered women, and recommended that they should get bursaries to further their studies.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends to rent a room in Yeoville and continues babysitting until she finds a better job. She did not anticipate any specific problems but would deal with problems as they come. She was not going to have any contact with the abuser, and her advice to other abused women was that they should stay away from their abusers and seek help from professionals. Furthermore, she said they should enrol for self improvement courses.
RESPONDENT H

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent H was thirty four years old and had five children (three girls and two boys). Four of her children were in Zambia and one was staying with her abuser. She matriculated in Zambia and was unemployed.

2. THE BATTERERS

He worked as a driver but had been retrenched, and at the time of the interview, was working part time for his friends. They met in 1993 and a year later they got married. In the beginning, he was loving, exciting and romantic.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The abuse started a year after their arrival in South Africa. He abused her physically, mostly after arguments about his mother who had been interfering in their relationship. Each time she told him how his mother treated her, he would be upset and start beating her. She reported the abuse to the police on a few occasions, but they refused to get involved.
4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

They did not stay with her children who were in Zambia.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for three years because she had nowhere else to go, and initially did not know about the shelter.

6. THE SHELTER

She went to see social workers in Lenasia and they told her about the shelter. She resorted to the shelter out of desperation and she wanted the government to deport her to Zambia. She hoped the shelter would give her a place to stay until she was "on her feet again". The shelter has given her strength, support and hope for the future.

7. DIFFICULTIES AS AN ABUSED WOMAN

Her biggest problem was staying with a man who was frustrated, and who was too proud to admit it when he was wrong. She was not worried about leaving home because she had suffered enough.

8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She said the services available for battered women were enough. She said to encourage battered women to move on with their lives.
Computer and typing courses should be offered.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intended to find a job and completing a computer course. She did not anticipate any problems, but would face them if they arose. She intended to have contact with the abuser for her son's sake. She did not want her son to grow up without his father.

RESPONDENT I

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent I was twenty seven years old and had a daughter who lived in Cape Town. She had matriculated and was working for Imqualife as a clerk.

2. THE BATTERERS

He was employed as a wardrobe driver for a filming company. They met in November 1991, and he abducted her and forced her to stay with him in Mzimhlope hostel. She stayed with him against her will because she was afraid that he would hurt her, and eventually gave in. They ultimately got married in 1995.
3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

He started abusing her in 1991 by kidnapping her and forcing her to stay with him against her will. Soon thereafter, other forms of abuse occurred, for example, he would beat her up and force her to have sex with him.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH CHILDREN

He loved their daughter and had never abused her.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for six years because he had threatened to hunt her down and kill her if she left.

6. THE SHELTER

She had gone to the social workers and they told her about the shelter. She went to the shelter because she felt she would be safe there. She hoped the shelter would enable her to make up her mind and think about her future.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest problem was that she did not enjoy life.
SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She did not respond to questions in this section

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

She did not respond to questions in this section either.

RESPONDENT J

PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent J was twenty six years old and had a son who lived with her parents in Lenasia. She left school in standard seven because she was a "prombie" [sic], and she was working in a hair dressing salon.

THE BATTERERS

He had never worked and always depended on his mother. She was eighteen when they met in 1991 and was very happy. Initially things were okay, until she discovered that he used drugs.

BATTERING INCIDENTS

He abused her physically and mostly as a result of her not giving him money to buy drugs. After beating her, he would force her to
have sexual intercourse with him, and thereafter he would apologise and promise never to do it again.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He had never abused his son, in fact he always tried to please him.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for six years because she loved him and hoped he would change.

6. THE SHELTER

She heard about the shelter from one of her friends, and she went to the shelter because she realised that he would not change. She hoped the shelter would give her the help she needed the most. The shelter has given her support and strength to recognise herself as a human being.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her worry about leaving home was that he would find and kill her.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She did not respond to questions in this section.
9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

She did not answer questions in this section either.

RESPONDENT K

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent K was thirty two years old and had two children (a boy and a girl) who lived with her. She had matriculated, and completed a shorthand and computer course. She had worked for Johannesburg Consolidated Investments for eleven years as a credit controller.

2. THE BATTERERS

At the time of the interview, he had been unemployed for the previous four years, although he had previously worked for Robor steel, Checkers and Westonaria mines. They met in 1989 and things were okay. About two years later, he started drinking and that is when the abuse started as well.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

He drank on a daily basis and when he got home started arguments over petty things like the food not being prepared well. Then he would beat her and throw things at her. He would swear and spit at her sometimes.
4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He sometimes hit their twelve-year-old son who was terrified of him, but he loved their five-year-old daughter and had never abused her.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for fifteen years because after every battering incident he always apologised and promised not to do it again.

6. THE SHELTER

She had heard about the shelter from a friend, and went there because she wanted time to think, and to hear how other women with similar experiences coped. She hoped to be at the shelter would give her an opportunity to think over and sort out her life. The shelter has helped her regain her self esteem, and to express what she thinks without being threatened.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest problems as an abused woman were having to listen to empty promises and lies, the beatings, and adultery. She had no worries about leaving home, but rather how to escape with her children.
8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She felt the services available for battered women were adequate.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, she intends going back to Cape Town where her parents are and look for a job. She did not anticipate much problems except the abuser trying to turn the children against her during his visits. She was going to maintain contact with the abuser for the children's sake. Her advice to other abused women was that they should stop trying to change their abusers and rather focus on themselves.

RESPONDENT L

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent L was twenty four years old and had two children (a boy and a girl). She stayed with one of them and the other was with her mother-in-law. She had studied until standard nine, and had thereafter worked as a saleslady.

2. THE BATTERERS

He was working in the family business selling compost with his father. When she met him, he was a kind and loving person, and she
would do anything for him. Initially, they had stayed with his parents, but went to their home when she got pregnant.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The battering started with minor slaps occasionally, and it progressed to violent beating as time went by. He would hit her so badly that she would be sick the next few days. She would run to her parent's home, and he would come to fetch her and beat her in front of her parents. The situation got so bad that he would stab her with a knife.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

Although he loved his children, when he had used drugs, he would beat her and the children. He used to throw the baby against the wall when he was angry.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for seven years because he had threatened to kill her and her family and burn down their house if she tried to leave him. Secondly, she did not have money and therefore she was dependent on him.
6. THE SHELTER

She heard about the shelter from her aunt who knew about NISSA Institute for Women Development. She went to the shelter because she had nowhere else to go and her situation got so bad that she had to get out of the relationship. She hoped the shelter would help her to regain her self esteem, and to live in peace. The shelter provided her with a place to stay, and it was feeding her and her children.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest worry about leaving home was whether he would carry out his threat of harming her family. She was uncertain about the future, and was worried about who was going to support her and her daughter.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She felt the services available for battered women were adequate.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

She intends to find a job while she is still at the shelter so that when she leaves, she can rent a small place for her and the children. She intends to relocate to a new place and start life afresh without the fear of who is watching over her. She did not
know what kind of problem to anticipate. She would allow the abuser access to the children because he is their father, but other than that she would not have anything to do with him. She said she had given him enough chances to change, but he did not, so she had not believed that he would ever change. Her advice to other abused women was that they should get out of abusive relationships, and to love themselves.

RESPONDENT M

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent M was twenty eight years old and had a son who lived with her at the shelter. She studied until standard eight and was working as a domestic worker.

2. THE BATTERERS

He left school in standard seven and started working as a merchandiser. When they met, he was loving and kind and made her happy.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

He started abusing her when they were still dating. He would beat her after minor arguments. The frequency and intensity of the beatings increased when they moved in together at his parents'
4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He claimed to love his son.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for four years because she loved him and thought that he would change.

6. THE SHELTER

She learnt about the shelter from a friend who told her about POWA. She went to the shelter to have peace of mind, and she hoped the shelter would help her to sort out her life. The shelter helped her to regain her self-esteem and to feel good about herself.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest worry about leaving home was the uncertainty about her future, and whether she would cope on her own. Her problem as an abused woman was having to explain the black eyes and bruises to other people.
8. SERVICES AVAILABLE TO BATTERED WOMEN

She said services available to battered women were not sufficient and recommended that they be given classes on computers, and sewing.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

From the shelter, she intended to find a suitable place for her and her son to stay and then go back to work. She anticipated problems raising her son on her own and was not sure how she was going to deal with this problem. She was not going to have any contact with her abuser because she felt he would never change. Her advice to other abused women was that they should leave their abusers and not hope that their abusers will change.

RESPONDENT N

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent N was thirty one years old and had two children (a boy and a girl) who lived with her at the shelter. She had completed matric and a secretarial course, and was working as a receptionist.

2. THE BATTERERS

The abuser was working as a cashier in one of the large supermarkets. She met him in 1992 and they got married a year
later. In the beginning he was loving and she thought she had found the right person.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The abuse started after they were married when he would start arguments over petty things and then beat her. Often after the beatings he would demand to have sex with her and if she refused, then he would beat her up again. The next day he would apologise and promise never to do it again.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

He had never abused the children.

5. HOW LONG SHE STAYED WITH HIM AND WHY

She stayed with him for seven years because she loved him dearly and always thought that he would change.

6. THE SHELTER

She went to discuss her problem with social workers who referred her to a shelter and she went to the shelter after realising that her abuser is not going to change and she could not take it any more. She hoped the shelter would help her regain her self esteem. The shelter taught her to love herself and had given her courage to
face the future.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Her biggest worry about leaving home was that she did not trust her decision and did not know what to expect.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She thought the services available for battered women were not enough, and that abused women needed classes in knitting, typing, sewing, baking and computer to empower themselves.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

From the shelter she intended to find a place to rent and go back to work. She had no intentions of contacting the abuser because she felt that if she went back he would abuse her again. Her advice to other abused women was that they should move out of those relationships while they still could.

The following section summarises the responses of shelter workers.
6.3. SUMMARY OF SHELTER WORKER'S RESPONSES

RESPONDENT AA

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent AA said they dealt with women of all age groups and that these women normally had about two children who came with their parents to the shelter. She said the abused women had different educational backgrounds, and were normally employed in different jobs.

2. THE BATTERERS

She said batterers were also employed in different occupations. The respondent said abused women used flattering terms like exciting, and wonderful when they described their relationship with their batterers when they first met them.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

She said there were two types of abuse experienced by the women; psychological abuse which entails dirty name calling and complete tearing down of the personality; and physical abuse involving the actual hitting.
4. BATTERERS' S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

She said from the women's stories, the batterers loved their children and never abused them.

5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS AND WHY

The respondent said abused women tended to stay with their abusers for a long time before seeking help. She said they stayed because they loved their abusers and hoped that their abusers would change.

6. THE SHELTER

She said most of the women learned about the shelter from their families and friends, and they came to the shelter because they could not take the abuse any more.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

She said the biggest problem faced by abused women was lack of finances, and that without money there is not much that the women could do. The abused women worried about disrupting their children's education when they leave home.

8. SERVICES FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She said the services available for battered women were not
adequate. The following were required to complement the available services; provision of temporary support and maintenance, a cheaper accommodation, and accessible medical help.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

She said some women after leaving the shelter goes back to their abusers and others try to establish new lives for themselves away from their batterers. They normally have problems with raising their children on their own.

RESPONDENT BB

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent BB said the average age of the abused women they dealt with was thirty and that they normally had children who stayed with them at the shelter. The said majority of the women had not completed matric although they occasionally find those with post-matric qualifications. She said most of them were working or had worked at some point in their lives.

2. THE BATTERERS

She said batterers like victims had different educational background and had also been employed in different occupations.
3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

She said most of the women they dealt with had been abused physically and psychologically.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

She said most of the batterers loved their children and would not harm them.

5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS AND WHY

Most of them stayed between five and ten years before seeking help. They stayed for various reasons like being dependent on their abusers, for their children's sake, and loving their abusers.

6. THE SHELTER

Most of the abused women learned about the shelter from their friends and families, and they came to the shelter because they needed to get away from their abusers and go to an environment where they could think about their future. They came to the shelter hoping to get advice to deal with their problems.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

The respondent said the biggest problem faced by abused women was lack of social support from families and communities, and their
main worry about leaving home was the uncertainty of where they are going.

8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She said the services available for battered women were inadequate and that abused women needed to get speedy divorces, and easy access to restraining orders.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Regarding where the women went to after they left the shelter and what they do, she said most of them do not want to have contact with the shelter therefore they do not know what happens to these women.

RESPONDENT CC

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent CC said the average age of the abused women they dealt with was thirty and that they normally had children who stayed with either the women's parents or the women themselves at the shelter. She said most of them had not complete matric but they did have those with post matric qualifications and that these women were employed in different fields.
2. THE BATTERERS

Majority of the batterers were not able to hold a job for a long time and they move from one job to the next.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

She said the abuse reported by the women they dealt with ranged from minor to major physical assaults, and some women were forced to perform sexual acts against their will. These problems escalated as the relationship progressed.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN

From the women's stories the batterers loved their children and never abused them.

5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS AND WHY

Most of them stayed with their batterers for anything between six and ten years. She said they stayed because they were dependent on their batterers and they had nowhere to go.

6. THE SHELTER

They heard about the shelter from their families and friends although some were referred by social workers. She said they came
to the shelter because they had nowhere else to go and may need a place to stay, and that they hoped the shelter would provide them with advice to deal with their problems.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

The biggest problems faced by abused women were lack of accommodation and this often made them to stay in abusive relationships. She said the main worry of abused women about leaving their homes were that they felt guilty, they felt like they were abandoning their homes.

8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

She said the services available for battered women were not enough and that they needed cheaper accommodation and employment opportunities when they left the shelter.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After leaving the shelter, some women go back to their abusers, their families, and others successfully start a new life.
RESPONDENT DD

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent DD said the abused women they dealt with were from different age groups and that they normally had children who stayed with them at the shelter. Most women had not completed high school and were employed in different jobs.

2. THE BATTERERS

The respondent said most of the batterers were employed in semiskilled jobs. She said the batterers and the women got along well at the beginning of the relationships and shared activities. If there were problems at this stage of the relationship, abused women tended to trivialize them.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The women were abused physically, emotionally, and sometimes sexually, but physical abuse was the predominant form experienced by the women.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

She said the batterers did not abuse the younger children, but as these children grew up, they were abused as well.
5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS AND WHY

She said it was common to have these women staying up to ten years before seeking help. She said most of the women loved their abusers and hoped that their abusers would change. She said what made matters worse was some of the abusers often apologised after the abuse and promised to stop, and abused women believed them.

6. THE SHELTER

Abused women normally learned about the shelter from their friends and families although they were sometimes referred by social workers and they came to the shelter because they wanted to change their situations. They hoped the shelter would enable them to pick up the pieces and start afresh.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Lack of moral support was the major problem experienced by most abused women.

8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR ABUSED WOMEN

The respondent said the following services were available for battered women; safe houses, counselling services, and information centres. However, she felt that these services were not enough, and that more shelters were needed.
9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Some of the women went back to their abusers and tried to patch things up and others went on and terminated the relationships. For the latter group it was not easy starting life anew sometimes without proper accommodation and a job.

RESPONDENT EE

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent EE said the average age of the abused women they dealt with being late twenties and the women normally had children who stayed either with the women's parents or with the women themselves at the shelter. She said the educational background of the women differed and that most of them were working or had worked before.

2. THE BATTERERS

The batterers were mostly employed although there were others who were unemployed. The batterers mostly started abusing the women after marriage when they already stayed together.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The women were abused psychologically, physically, and sexually. They were beaten, degraded, and sometimes forced into sexual
activities.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Most of the abusers did not abuse their children.

5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS AND WHY

Most of the women stayed more than five years with their abusers before seeking help. They stayed because they had been told that they could not succeed without their abusers and they accept and often internalize that.

6. THE SHELTER

The women heard about the shelter from friends and families and they came to the shelter for protection and because they were fed up with the way they have been living. They hoped they would get advice to handle their problems at the shelter.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

Accommodation and finances were major problems faced by abused women. Finding a place to stay may involve complicated arrangements which are difficult to make without money.
8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

The following services are available for battered women: shelters, counselling services, and legal resource centre. However the respondent felt these services were inadequate, and abused women needed police protection.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The respondent said they did not have much contact with the abused women after they left the shelter, so she did not have an idea what they do.

RESPONDENT FF

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent FF said abused women they dealt with are mostly in their twenties and thirties, and they had children who stayed with them at the shelter. She said the women had different educational backgrounds and that some were working and others not.

2. THE BATTERERS

The respondent said the employment background of the abusers differed from unemployed to professionals. She said when the women first met their batterers they got along very well and did a lot of
things together. It was only later in the relationship that the abuse began.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

A lot of the women were abused physically, but the abuse had psychological impact as well.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

She said the batterers did not care about their children, for if they did, they would not abuse their mothers in front of the children. She said some of the abusers even went to the extent of physically abusing their children.

5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS

Most of the women stayed with their abusers between five and ten years before leaving. They stayed that long because they were dependent on their abusers and had nowhere else to go.

6. THE SHELTER

Most of the abused women learned about the shelter from social workers, nurses and doctors who treated them, and came to the shelter because they were tired of the abuse and they wanted to start a new life. When they came to the shelter, they hoped it
would enable them to think about their lives and decide about their future.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

The respondent said the major problem faced by abused women were financial difficulties especially after leaving their abusers.

8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

The respondent felt the services available for battered women were not adequate, and that technical and financial assistance, information centres to educate people about the abuse of women were needed.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

She said most of the abused women do not want to have contact with the shelter after leaving. Therefore, it was difficult to know how they were coping with life.
RESPONDENT GG

1. PERSONAL DETAILS

Respondent GG said most of the abused women they dealt with being in their twenties and thirties and had children who stayed with them at the shelter. She said most of them did not complete matric, and that some were employed and others not.

2. THE BATTERERS

She said most of the batterers were employed although there were those who were not. She said that most of the women started going out with their batterers in their late teens, and most of them were married in their mid twenties. They described their relationships in endearing terms.

3. BATTERING INCIDENTS

The women were mostly abused physically although some degrading and terrifying things were done to them.

4. BATTERERS'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CHILDREN

The respondent said batterers were abusive to the children as well.
5. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAY WITH THEIR ABUSERS AND WHY

She said most of the women stayed less than five years before leaving. Their reasons varied from dependence to loving their abusers.

6. THE SHELTER

The respondent said most of the abused women learned about the shelter from social workers and other professionals, and they came to the shelter mainly for protection.

7. DIFFICULTIES FACED BY ABUSED WOMEN

The difficulty faced by abused women leaving such relationships was that the batterers often pursued and threatened them, and the women were uncertain about their future.

8. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR ABUSED WOMEN

The respondent said the services available for battered women were not enough and that more and better equipped shelters were needed.

9. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

The respondent said when the women leave the shelter it was difficult to contact most of them because since they did not leave any forwarding address, therefore it was difficult to say how they cope.
6.4. CONCLUSION

This chapter introduced the women who participated in this study, and summarised their responses to the questions in the questionnaire. The following chapter presents the results of the study.
CHAPTER 7
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

7.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the study.

7.2. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

It is important to give the biographical details of the respondents so that their background and circumstances can be understood.

7.2.1: The ages of the respondents

Age categories have been collapsed due to the small number of respondents and to make analysis easier.

Table 1: Age of the respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the women interviewed (N=14) were between twenty and forty years old. The youngest woman was twenty four years old and the oldest was thirty-nine. Although all the women were between twenty
and forty years, it is important to recognise that battered women come from all age groups. This was confirmed by the shelter representatives interviewed.

7.2.2: Level of education

An examination of the educational status of the respondents follows.

Table 2: Educational background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Std 0-8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matriculated</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half of the women interviewed (N=7) had matric and the other half (N=7) had not completed standard eight. Shelter representatives spoken to, pointed out that although battered women have different educational backgrounds, the majority had not completed high school. Low educational status can limit self-esteem and job opportunities, securing and entrenching many women's financial dependence on their husbands and marriage. One of the reasons why the women may find it hard to leave is that they have few resources at their command.
7.2.3: Occupational status

The husband's exercises of power of the purse and the force of the fist sometimes coincide in the lives of battered women. The next table reviews the occupational background of the respondents.

Table 3: Working background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORKING BACKGROUND</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Skilled jobs</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled jobs</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the respondents (N=13) were employed, only one was unemployed. Although the majority of the women in this study were employed, often battered women have to terminate their jobs to seek refuge at shelters or to prevent their husbands from tracing them to force them to return home. This can be a serious setback since finding new employment can be difficult.

7.3. THE CHILDREN

Children are often caught up in the violence between their parents. Witnessing such violence, some children may acquire the belief that violence is a legitimate solution to personal problems.
7.3.1: **Number of children**

Table four looks at the number of children the respondents have.

**Table 4: Number of children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF CHILDREN</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One child</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five children</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the respondents (N=14) had children. The number of children ranged from one to five. The deeply entrenched belief that children need both their parents keeps many women trapped in violent relationships. Having children sometimes binds battered women to their abusive husbands. Some of the women interviewed (N=4) stayed with the batterer for so long because of their children. Shelter representatives agreed that often abused women stay in these relationships because of their children.

7.3.2: **Where the children stay**

Having children often compounds the problems of battered women and often limits their choices. Table five examines where children stay when their mothers are at the shelters.
Table 5: Where the children reside

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHERE THE CHILDREN RESIDES</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One in boarding school two others with her</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents' parents</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With respondent at the shelter</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In America</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One with her and the other with mother in-law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four in Zambia and one with the abuser</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the respondents (N=8) had at least one child staying with them at the shelter, and a few (N=4) had their children staying with their parents. Some women turn to their families for help with child care but the families are often ineffectual support systems due to their own constraints (limited resources). Children thus add to battered women's problems, affecting their ability to find and keep work, their mobility, their opportunities for socialising and forming new relationships.

7.4. THE BATTERERS

Batterers are often assumed to be "losers" who build dependency relationships with women who are perceived as "winners". They are seen as having difficulties building and maintaining close personal ties, and to be emotionally inexpressive. Furthermore, they are seen as having employment problems, either they are unemployed or underemployed.
The majority of the batterers (N=11) were employed and mostly in skilled jobs. Employment status has been considered as a possible factor connected with wife battering. Few of the men (N=3) in this study were unemployed, so unemployment does not explain the use of abusive conflict tactics by batterers in this study. This contradicts the popularly held belief that batterers are either unemployed or underemployed which not only affects their self-esteem, but also introduces serious stress into their interpersonal relationships.

7.5. BATTERERS RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR CHILDREN

The majority of the women (N=11) said the batterers loved and adored their children. There were three women who said their husbands did not love their children. Most (N=9) said the batterers never abused their children at all. Only a few (N=4) said their husbands abused their children either physically or psychologically, and one said she was not staying with her daughter but believed that her husband would have abused the daughter as well if she was present.

Although not all children are necessarily assaulted themselves, they are often the targets of emotional abuse. Witnessing the violence towards their mother and living with constant tension and upheaval is likely to have serious emotional consequences for the children. Violence in the family often precludes children from having normal relationships. Their loyalties are often split between their fighting parents.
7.6. HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP

The majority of the women started going out with their batterers in their late teens and early twenties, and most (N=11) described their partners in endearing terms at the start of their relationship. Most of the women (N=8) married their husbands within a year after meeting them. The majority of the women (N=13) wanted to get married. The choice of not getting married seldom presents itself to young women because the ideology of marriage is so pervasive in the African society. Marriage tends to be the more important career for most women (Delphy 1984: 34).

The abuse for most of them (N=9) started after marriage, thus confirming the feminist theory's assertion that abusers believe that they have a moral and legal right to be brutal towards the women they are married to (Kirkwood 1993: 24). All the women were physically abused, although a few (N=4) experienced sexual molestation in addition to the physical assaults, and a few also suffered emotional abuse.

7.7. REASONS FOR THE ABUSE

Work on wife battering has negated the notion that reasons for the abuse can be found in psycho pathology. The following section looks at the reasons for wife battering.
7.7.1. Perceptions of women of the reasons for the abuse

A number of possible causal factors have come to the fore through research but it is important to keep in mind that factors in combination are possibly the best explanations.

Table 6: Causes for the abuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUSES FOR THE ABUSE</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Possessiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning abusers about sleeping out</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration and stress</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moneys to finance his drug dependence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arguments about interference from his mother</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petty arguments after he had been drinking</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to explain why the battering occurred, some of the women (N=5) linked the violence to the men's drinking or taking drugs, thus challenging the assertion that alcohol and drugs do not contribute to wife battering. For these women, the escalation of arguments seems to frequently be associated with the excessive use of alcohol. Caution is required, however, for an association between the two needs not imply causation. Gelles and Cornell (1990: 18) argue that in societies which hold the belief that alcohol releases violent tendencies, the normal rules of social behaviour are loosened when people drink or are believed to be drunk. Violent spouses thus learn that to avoid being held
responsible for their violence, they should drink either prior to hitting or at least say they were drunk (Gelles and Cornell 1990: 18).

Other women (N=5) cited questioning the abusers about sleeping out as the cause. The men's jealousy and possessiveness, frustration and stress were also cited as causes of the abuse. The women's interpretation of the causes of the violence was linked to their responses to it happening to them. They commonly experienced guilt and shame. An initial tolerance of the batterer's behaviour was linked to the feelings of self-blame and desire to keep up pretences about their marriages.

7.8. HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAYED WITH THE ABUSERS

Battered women often stay with their abusers for a long time before seeking outside intervention.

7.8.1. Duration of abusive relationship

Staying with a person who abuses you makes little sense to most people and as a result little sympathy is often shown for the abused wife who does not leave.
Table 7: Duration of abusive relation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOW LONG THE WOMEN STAYED WITH THEIR ABUSERS</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than five years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five - Ten years</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than ten years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the women had been in a long-term relationship and the majority (N=10) had been married for over five years. The shortest period for staying in the relationship was two years, and the longest seventeen years.

Leaving necessitates that a woman restructures all her material, physical, and social relations, and this may compound the difficulty of making such a decision. It is significant to note that in cases of wife battering, it is the victims who have to disrupt their lives and leave their homes and hard-earned material possessions, while the batterers may remain undisturbed.

7.8.2. Reasons for staying

Some battered women decide to put up with the violence and remain with their abusers. Table eight examines some of the reasons battered women stay in abusive relationships.
Table 8: Reasons for staying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHY THEY STAYED</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loved him and thought he would change</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt that no other man would love her</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had no where else to go and depended on him</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He had threatened to kill her if she left</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not specify</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of women (N=10) in this study stayed with their abusers because they loved them and thought their abusers would change, and this confirms that love and violence can co-exist. Others (N=2) stayed because they had nowhere else to go and were dependent on their abusers, and a few (N=2) because the abusers had threatened to kill them if they left.

Little acknowledgement is given to the tremendous effort and courage required to leave the batterer. There are a number of other factors which help explain the women's decision to stay. The exchange model of family relations postulates that the ratio of rewards to punishment is defined subjectively by spouses and is the determining factor in deciding whether to stay married or not. Alternatively, if the rewards (security, material benefits) outweigh the punishment (violence), then a woman may stay in an abusive relationship (Levinson 1989: 15).
Leaving for the shelter is usually a step into the unknown, and the first time that the women will not be living with families. Some women ($N=5$) reported that their biggest worry about leaving home was the uncertainty about what to expect at the shelter, and the fear that they could not make it on their own. This was confirmed by shelter representatives interviewed.

Shelters often provide the first viable option in a long escape route from a violent relationship. Half of the women ($N=7$) in this study heard about the shelter from family and friends, and the other half ($N=7$) from professional people like social workers.

The reasons these women went to the shelter include two main themes; they were tired of the abuse ($N=4$), they had no place to stay and needed a place to decide about their future ($N=6$).

Many women ($N=7$) reported that the safe space provided by the shelter enabled them to rediscover themselves, affirmed their identities as individuals, and allowed them to begin to make their own decisions. These sentiments were also expressed by the shelter representatives when asked what the shelter does for the abused women.

The shelter experience starts a process of disengagement from a violent relationship and often acts as a point of rupture before the transition to a 'new' life begins. The significance of the shelter lies in breaking the silence and isolation of battered
women. The strength and self-confidence, and the perspective that the women gain about battering empowers them to persevere in spite of enormous social, emotional and economic problems.

7.10. SERVICES AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN

Besides the fact that very few formal social agencies deal specifically with battering, battered women's isolation can keep them ignorant of available resources. It is frequently difficult for battered women to reach agencies because of lack of time, money, and transport.

7.10.1. Services available for battered women

An examination of services available for battered women follows.

Table 9: Services for battered women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE FOR BATTERED WOMEN</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support groups for abused women, services for children of abuse women and counselling</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter to recuperate</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not specify</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the women (N=10) in this study said the following services were available for battered women; shelter, support groups for
abused women, services for children, and social workers who provide
counselling. Although some battered women (N=5) felt that services
were adequate, the general consensus was that more should be
provided to support and help battered women. Shelter
representatives interviewed agreed with this. It is often assumed
by the general public that battered women have numerous avenues of
support. However, scant appreciation is shown for the variety of
problems and the barriers that abused women have in accessing any
support. Although there could be numerous points of support at any
one time, it is rarely supplied in an ongoing current.

7.10.2 Additional services required

Services available to battered women are often inadequate.

Table 10: Additional services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT OTHER SERVICES ARE NEEDED</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self empowerment course and bursaries to</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continue with their studies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide cheaper accommodation to abused women when they leave the shelter</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitizing police to deal with abused women and implementing tougher measures to discourage abuse of women</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating employment opportunities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know or did not respond</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
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The majority of women (N=10) in this study felt the following services were needed to complement the already existing ones; self empowerment courses and bursaries for abused women, cheaper accommodation when they leave the shelter, and sensitizing the police who handles cases involving abused women. Retraining opportunities focusing on well-paying, nontraditional jobs should be provided to battered women when they leave the shelters, and police need to be trained in issues of family violence so that they would have a well-developed protocol for use with battered women.

7.11. FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

Leaving the shelter is fraught with ambivalence for many women. There is loss, hope, and fear about stepping back into the world. Most of the women (N=8) said they were either going to rent a flat or look for affordable accommodation for themselves and their children. A few (N=3) said they were going back to their parents' homes. Most of them (N=6) said they anticipated problems with raising their children without the support of the shelter, and finding employment. When asked how they were going to deal with these problems, some women (N=3) said they would make use of counselling and support from the family. A few (N=4) said they would deal with the problems as they come.

Whether the batterers leave them alone or not, the children often make it impossible for women to cut all ties with them. Some women in this study (N=6) said they were going to have contact with the batterers when they leave the shelter, others (N=6) said they do not want to have anything to do with their batterers.
Asking the women what advice they would give to other abused women tapped certain regrets they had about remaining in abusive relationships. The majority of the women (N=10) strongly urged other battered women to speak out, to share their problems, and to persevere in looking for help. It seems that the women's silence served to keep and trap them in abusive relationships.

7.12. CONCLUSION

Chapter seven provided an overview of the results of the study. The chapter explored the biographical backgrounds of the victims, indicated who the batterers are, and also looked at the reasons for the abuse. The next chapter looks at the interpretation of the results.
CHAPTER 8

INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to address the main research question asked in this study namely, why abused African women remain in such relationships?

WHY WOMEN STAY IN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Some battered women decide to put up with the abuse and stay in the relationship. The next section highlights the major reasons why battered women in this study stayed in abusive relationships.

8.2.1. Economic dependence

Women's economic dependence on their abusers has frequently been put forward as one of the major obstacles preventing them from leaving abusive relationships. The economic problems suffered by battered women are of two types. First, are those caused by specific attack or crises. Second are the long term considerations of how to survive financially if they decide to separate from their abusers. In the short run, the physical damage caused by physical abuse may cost a great deal to repair. There are cases of women spending weeks in hospital, losing their eyesight or incurring
other permanent disabilities. Even an attack requiring considerably less medical attention may require employed wives to lose their pay because of missed days of work while visible signs of their attack heal.

The long-term economic predicament of battered women centre around their survival. Wives most often remain in abusive relationships because they cannot afford to do otherwise. Gelles (1979: 62) argues that the fewer the resources a wife has in her marriage (education, occupational status, access to money), the fewer alternatives she has, the more she becomes trapped in the relationship. Hotaling, Finkelhor, Kirkpatrick, and Strauss (1988: 116) argue that battered women are more likely to terminate abusive relationships with the men who provide fewer material resources, and that the more independent economic resources that battered women have, the more likely they are to dissolve the relationship.

The resource that battered women lack the most is economic independence. Husbands who abuse their wives often keep a tight reign on their wives' actions and money. The last thing in the world they want is for the women to leave them. One way to ensure that is to tightly control all the family finances. Even when the wife is gainfully employed, she may have little or nothing to say about how her contribution is spent. In this study, few women (N=2) stayed because they were dependent on their abusers and had nowhere else to go to. The economic dependence on the abusers was expressed thus by one of the respondents:
"He was the father of my children and besides where could I go, what could I do, how could I support my children".

8.2.2. Fear

"Why does she stay?" usually implies that leaving is the safer alternative for all battered women. This is not necessarily the case. Often the battered woman's fear that her mate will kill her if she tries to leave turns out to be tragically realistic. The question "why does she stay?" also tends to ignore the fact that it is not entirely up to the battered woman whether or not she continues to stay with the batterer. Sometimes batterers will reestablish cohabitation by force. This is done by intruding into the woman's home, by outright abduction, by coercive threats of violence, or by violent (often life-threatening) acts of coercion. In such instances, since there is usually no adequate legal protection for the battered woman, she literally has no realistic choice but to comply with the batterer. Few women in this study (N=2) stayed because their batterers had threatened to kill them if they left. When asked why she stayed, one of the respondents explained;

"Well the reason I stayed with this man was because he threatened to kill me and my family. There many times he almost stabbed my father and threatened..."
to kill my brother and burn the house down".

Fear experienced by battered women is sometimes so overwhelming and at times incapacitating that it clearly surpasses in intensity any traditional description of fear. The fear is so intense that the woman can only surmise that her life is in imminent danger.

Abused women experience fear and anxiety about their physical and emotional safety, and a sense that their bodies and selves are in danger. The shattering of trust and physical safety that occurs with the first assault creates an atmosphere of continual danger, and thus continual fear and anxiety. Fundamental to this constant fear is that victims cannot predict when an attack will occur, its degree, or the reason for its occurrence. This kind of fear is so overwhelming that some women express relief in knowing that an attack is about to happen or has begun because the anxiety of waiting finally ends (Walker 1979: 54). The fear and anxiety that arose in response to having little or no control over one's physical safety deprive battered women of the opportunity to lead a free and healthy life.

Unfortunately, people outside these relationships often do not take seriously enough the woman's concern for her spouse's potential for extreme violence, believing that her fear is merely hysterical exaggeration. Outsiders should understand that if there is anyone who knows the abuser's capability for violence, it is his primary
target. Her fears may be shown later to be unrealistic, but it is far better to exert extreme caution unnecessarily than to make false assumptions. The lives of the victims, their children, and people trying to assist them may be at stake.

8.2.3. Hope that the abusers will change

On being asked "Why they remained in abusive relationships", the majority of women in this study (N=8) cited loving their husbands and hoping that they would change as the reason. Turner (1989:34) opines;

"Battered women live on hope
The hope that one day their abusers will change. Maybe not tomorrow, maybe not next week, next month, next year, but sometimes in the future. Take away their hope, and they have nothing to live for".

Hope that their abusers will change sustains battered women through the many years of constant thwarting, and it inspires their courage to accept their suffering. It allows them to bear the heat and turmoils of their lives. Furthermore, hope allows them to approach life with the enthusiastic expectation that everything will be all right.

Battered women's hope that their abusers will change may be explained by Leonore Walker's cycle of violence theory. During the
third stage of this theory, batterers often beg for forgiveness and promise never to repeat the abuse. These promises to change, reinforce battered women's hope that their batterers can and will change. The battered women believe that they will no longer have to suffer abuse. The batterer's reasonableness during this stage support their belief that batterers can do what they say they want to do. The loving behaviour during this stage reinforces battered women's hope that the violence can be eliminated and their idealized relationship will remain. When asked why she stayed in an abusive relationship, one woman responded;

"I used to love him a lot. I had hoped that things will change for the better. He used to promise that he will change. I used to think that because of the children, he will stop abusing me".

The most serious problem with hope is that it robs battered women of the possible happiness of the present. Hope cast upon them the future that is not yet. They expect to be happy one day, and this expectation causes them to pass over the possible happiness of the present. Hope robs them of their present and drags them into times that do not yet exist.

Godfrey (1987:26) laments this deceitful aspect of hope;

"We do not rest satisfied with the present. The present is never our end."
The future alone is our end. So we never live, but we hope to live, and, as we are always preparing to be happy, it is inevitable we should never be so".

Battered women's hope that their abusers will change, keep them in abusive relationships, and thus rob them of living an abuse free life.

8.2.4. Low self-esteem

Battered women share a common experience of denigration of the self that results in diminished self-esteem. Responding to the question why she stayed in an abusive relationship, one respondent had this to say:

"I was always convinced that if I left him, there will be no man in my life. Without him no other man would love me".

Low self-esteem is the uncomfortable or painful feeling that battered women experience when they think that part of them is defective, bad, incomplete, rotten, or phoney. In addition to making battered women feel defective, low self esteem makes them believe that others can see through them, through their facade, into their defectiveness. Low self-esteem makes them feel hopeless, feel that no matter what they do, they cannot correct their defects.
Battered women over and over hear messages like; "You are not good enough" and "You are so bad". They hear these messages so often, and from people whom they are so dependent on and to whom they are so vulnerable, that they tend to believe them. And so they internalize these messages into their personalities.

The self-fulfilling prophecy theory explains how negative self-evaluations are accepted and how people tend to adopt the characteristics others attribute to them. This theory explains how ideas that are untrue in the beginning tend to produce behaviour that matches the original false ideas. This means that people, and mostly victims of abuse become what they are accused of being.

Battered women who are constantly ridiculed and demeaned, form negative self images and begin to act as they are expected to act; clumsy, stupid, ugly, mean, and so forth. Finkelhor (1981: 7) said this about the effects of labelling on the victims of abuse;

"All forms of family abuse seem to occur in the context of psychological abuse and exploitation, a process victims sometimes describe as 'brainwashing'. Victims are not just exploited or physical injured, but their abusers use their power and family connections to control and manipulate victims' perception of reality as well. This brainwashing that occurs along with the abuse is potent because families are
primary group where most individuals construct reality. Family members often do not have enough contact with other people who can give them countervailing perception about themselves.

8.3. CONCLUSION

One thing is quite clear from the review of research on wife battering; violence in marital relationships is not a one-shot affair but a pattern that endures over a considerable period of time. People may find it understandable why many women remain after the first occurrence of violence. There may be many positive aspects of the relationship the woman feels are worth preserving. If she is abused again, however, many people are inclined to believe that she must be masochistic, unmotivated, or just plain stupid. Because wife battering is a recurrent behaviour, and because the victims are adults and not helpless children, some people have assumed that the solution to marital violence is for the battered women to leave their husbands.

The purpose of this chapter was to address the important question of why African women remain in conjugal relationships which are violent. The investigation uncovered four major reasons which influence women to stay with abusive husbands. Firstly, it was because of lack of economic resources. The second reason was fear that their abusers would harm them. Another reason was hope that
their abusers would change. Lastly, it was because of low self-esteem.

The next chapter gives a summary of this study, and recommends solutions to eradicate or minimize the problem of wife battering.
CHAPTER 9

SUMMARY, POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS AND CONCLUSION

9.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most people subscribe to an image of the family that includes tranquillity, happiness, love between members bound together by blood and/or legal ties, certainty of behaviour, shared norms and values, rituals, and above all safety. Even if their family experiences do not match up to the idealistic image of the family, most people are inclined to believe that they are the exceptions to the rule and that their closest relatives march to a different drummer. Even if they have a family that is less than the cultural ideal, they continue to view the world beyond the family unit as having far more negative features and certainly more danger.

Most people continue to embrace the notion that the family unit represents love, mutual protection, and security, despite the fact that scientists and the media have shown the underside of family life. Ironically, when someone is attacked in public by a stranger, the victim can be more certain of the aid and sympathy of friends, bystanders, and relatives, than had she been assaulted in her own home by a member of the family. The family can be a dangerous place to live in.
Available evidence shows that the family is not randomly violent and that certain families experience more abuse than others. The overwhelming majority of victims of adult family violence seem to be women. Wife abuse in South Africa is a pervasive problem.

9.2. AIMS OF THE STUDY

The main aim of this study is, to find out why African women stay in abusive relationships. Why would a woman who has been abused by her husband remain with him? To many people, it seems clear that something must be "wrong" with any woman who would stay in an obviously dangerous situation, and that no man in his right mind would beat, choke, punch, kick, and maim his wife and frequently the mother of his children. The assumption that the victim would flee from a conjugal attacker overlooks the complex subjective meaning of intra family violence, the nature of the commitment and entrapment to the family as a social group, and the external constraint which limits a woman's ability to seek outside help. This study attempted to provide an answer to the question of why victims of conjugal violence stay with their husbands.

9.3. METHODOLOGY

Information for this study is derived from questionnaires with fourteen abused women and seven shelter representatives who worked with abused women from two shelters in Johannesburg;
Two sets of questionnaires were designed, one to be filled out by abused women in the shelter and the other by shelter representatives who worked with abused women. The questionnaires were designed to trace the women's life-courses and elicit answers to the question as to why they stayed in abusive relationships. The questionnaires were filled in at the shelter by abused women themselves. Frequency distributions and grouped data were used to analyse data.

9.4. FINDINGS

The main aim of this study was to establish why an abused woman stays with an abuser. The investigation uncovered four major factors which influenced women to stay with their abusive husbands. Firstly, this study discovered that the resources women had influenced whether they stayed or left their violent husbands. The economically dependent women remained with abusive husbands. The second factor for staying was fear. Fear restricts battered women's lives. It immobilizes them, ruling their actions, and their lives. The least common reason for staying was low self-esteem. One of the respondents had stayed because she thought that no man would love her if she left the abuser.

The majority of the women (N=8) stayed because they loved their husbands and hoped that they would change. Hope that their abusers will change sustained battered women through the many
years of constant fighting, and it inspired their courage to accept their suffering. Hope allowed them to bear the heat and turmoil of their lives. It allowed them to approach life with the enthusiastic expectation that everything will be all right.

9.5. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

It has probably been difficult to read this study because of the sensitive and discomforting topic discussed and because of some strong emotions it aroused. Emotions may have ranged from pity for the victims, anger at the abusers, horror at some acts committed, and outrage that more is not done to prevent the abuse of women. Treatment is necessary to protect the lives and welfare of the victims or potential victims of wife battering. This section attempts to provide solutions to this problem.

There are many recommendations for intervention on behalf of battered wives. One of the most commonly recommended and effective is the establishment and maintainance of shelters for battered women and their children. These shelters provide a safe haven in which battered women can avoid the violence, assess their past and plan their future, and contact community services to explore their options. Battered women need outside assistance in stopping the abuse, and since direct confrontation can accelerate it, they need safety while they decide what to do to prevent further abuse. Shelters offer many other benefits to battered wives besides protection. Depending on the particular
shelter, they may provide assertion and/or parenting training, psychological, and legal counselling, and self-help groups.

Many battered women in this study (N=7) reported that the secure environment provided by the shelter allowed them to rediscover themselves, affirm their identities as individuals, and allowed them to begin to make their own decisions.

Batterers should also be encouraged to undergo treatment or counselling sessions. The customary technique used by most counsellors is to teach the men nonviolent ways of behaving. Furthermore, they should be taught how to translate their anger into words or to take it out on objects rather than people.

Rehabilitated abusers should be used to teach other batterers about the implications of abusing women.

On being asked what other services are needed to help battered women, the majority (N=7) cited self empowerment courses and bursaries to continue their studies. Opening up educational opportunities, including proper career training for battered women would help to empower them, and thus reduce their dependency on their batterers.

Innovation in the police response to wife battering has been cited as a necessity by some battered women (N=2) in this study. Most police units give little effective domestic violence
training to their officers. A comprehensive policy about how to deal with domestic violence needs to be developed as a matter of urgency. It is anticipated that exposure to skilled training will create attitudes that will prepare the police for a more activist role. The police need a working knowledge of the causes of domestic violence, intervention strategies, legal requirements for their actions, and the policies adopted by their own departments. Without such training, the police will continue to be plagued with the uninformed and substandard response characteristic of the past.

A list of numbers that could be useful follows;

**For abuse or threats**
- People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) = 642-4345
- Nissa Institute For Women Development = 854-5804
- Agisanang = 440-1231
- Trauma Clinic for Victims of Violence = 403-5102
- Crises Shelter Service = 854-5804

**Education and employment**
- Women's Leadership and Training Project = 834=4644
- The Small Business Development Corporation = 480-8700
- Gender Commission of Human Rights = (012) 322-4480

**For Legal Advise**
- Legal Resources Centre = 836-9831
- Lawyers for Human Rights = 333-8501
9.6. SUGGESTED RESEARCH

It seems that only a limited amount of research on wife battering has been done in South Africa and whatever research has in fact been conducted, appears to concentrate mostly on Whites. Furthermore, it is clear that not much research on wife battering has been done among Africans. Pretorius (1984:17) notes that most of the research on wife battering seems to have been conducted to obtain advanced academic degrees, and such research reflects the nature of the particular requirements set for those degrees. Furthermore, most investigations also appear to be exploratory and therefore there is a need for follow-up investigation and thorough research of the problem. There is a distinct need for more research on the abuse of African women within the home and the following themes can be used as topics for research:

- The nature and incidence of wife battering among all the population groups in South Africa.

- The relationship between women abuse and rape within marriage.

- The position of power and status roles in families where wife abuse occurs.
The impact of wife battering on the personality development of the victims.

- The relationship between financial and/or housing problems and wife abuse.

9.7. CONCLUSION

One of the most pervasive forms of violence used against any individual in South Africa is wife battering. It is a social problem that has long been hidden behind the curtain of domestic privacy. Only in the last few decades have people become aware of its tragic consequences. Despite the publicity recent television documentaries, newspaper articles, and magazine feature stories have focussed on the bleeding and bruised victims of battering, the extraordinary battering of women cannot be overestimated. Some incidents are more gruesome or more degrading than others, but all of them are terrifying.

To many people, wife battering is narrowly defined as having only physical implications. In reality, wife battering is any act of commission that endangers a person's physical or emotional health and development. This includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.
Battering qualitatively changes the nature of intimate relationships. It has implications for all concerned, the batterer, the victim, their children, their extended family, and their social network. As in other areas of the battering relationship, the family's function is disturbed. The family unit, traditionally considered the cornerstone of most societies, becomes terribly distorted in a violent relationship. Members are seriously damaged, both physically and emotionally.

Aside from wars and riots, violence occurs more frequently among family members than any other social unit. The family is the setting for every form of violence, ranging from slaps to murder.

Contrary to the ideal and myth which depicts a constantly warm and loving family, family relationships can be the breeding ground for both love and hostility (Pagelow 1984: 5).

Battering behaviour must cease. South Africa cannot afford the toll battering takes in our society. Thorough investigation of effective methods to reverse this tragic process needs to be undertaken.
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