

**THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH WOMEN WHO  
KILL AN ABUSIVE INTIMATE PARTNER WITHIN A CULTURAL  
CONTEXT**

by

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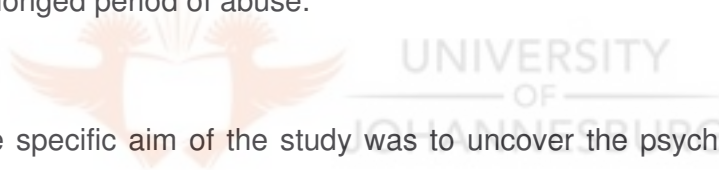


To Llewellyn & Reuben



## Summary

Domestic abuse is a global and growing problem (World Health Organization WHO, 2002). The extent and magnitude, as well as effects of domestic abuse are, however, underreported especially within South Africa (Prinsloo, 2007). Awareness has been raised by initiatives such as Sixteen Days of Activism on Violence Against Women campaigns driven by POWA (People Opposed to Women Abuse), yet the rates of abuse stay alarming. In light of the occurrence of abuse as well as the limited resources available, some women kill an intimate partner after a prolonged period of abuse.



The specific aim of the study was to uncover the psychological factors that contribute or are associated with the killing of an abusive partner by women. This was done by using multiple case studies and unstructured interviews. Participants were sourced from the Department of Correctional Service in the Western Cape Province. The participants utilised for the research included three women who killed their abusive intimate partner, and who were incarcerated at Pollsmoor Correctional Facility at the time of the interview. In-depth interviews were conducted and the data was analysed in order to derive themes. Once the themes were established, results were compared to relevant research in the field as a means to establish the psychological factors associated with women who kill an abusive intimate male partner.

The results indicated that certain primary psychological factors present in the sample group of interviewed women namely: development of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, experiences of coercive control, inter-relational conflict and substance abuse. Secondary themes or factors found included cultural perceptions and a lack of resources.

From the results obtained, a conclusion was made that women who kill an abusive intimate male partner, are often compelled to do so due to underlying factors and as a means of survival. Furthermore, culture appears to have a prominent influence as it informs the manner and acceptable means to deal with domestic abuse.

Although the research contributes to the pool of knowledge regarding women who kill an abusive intimate male partner in South Africa, more is needed especially in the development of intervention programs and support.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Orientation, Motivation and Aim

### Of the Study

*If we study the lives of great men and women carefully and unemotionally we find that invariably, greatness was developed, tested and revealed through the darker periods of their lives. One of the tributaries of the river of greatness is always the stream of adversity.*

*Cavelt Roberts*

#### **1.1 Orientation and Motivation**

Research in the domain of domestic abuse seems to be plentiful; however it is limited in terms of focussing on the victims themselves (Nangolo & Peltzer, 2003). Furthermore, it appears that the extent and magnitude, as well as effects of domestic abuse are underreported, especially within South Africa (Prinsloo, 2007). Although not all women who are subjected to domestic abuse become homicide offenders, some do resort to murderous measures after a prolonged period of exposure to abuse. While various researches have been conducted on females who kill an abusive partner (Jensen, 2001; Lund & Smorodinsky, 2001) the majority of results are focused on populations residing in the United Kingdom and United States of America. Botha (2006) suggests that research in the field of women who kill an abusive partner is necessary, as findings within South Africa are inadequate and there is a shortfall in empirical data.

The occurrence of domestic abuse and the dynamics surrounding the women who have been subjected to this maltreatment, have gained greater attention in recent years. The main reason for this has been initiatives such as Sixteen Days of Activism on Violence against Women and awareness campaigns driven by People Opposed to Women Abuse (POWA, 2006).

In a keynote address by Premier Direko on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2002, the speaker commented that:

Our record as a nation, on violence against women and children is appalling. For this reason we are called upon to amend our ways and reverse the scourge of gender violence and eradicate these barbaric and chauvinistic tendencies against our mothers, wives, and sisters

Direko, I.W. (22 November, 2002) Keynote address at Seisa Ramabodu Stadium.

Public addresses such as these attempts to highlight the incidence of abuse in South Africa, however, statistics surrounding the episodes of domestic abuse suffered is nonetheless alarming. A study conducted in three provinces found that 26.8% of women in the Eastern Cape, 28.4% of women in Mpumalanga and 19.1% of women in the Northern Province had been physically abused in their lifetimes by a current or ex-partner (Jewkes, 2002).

Statistics released by POWA (People Opposed to Women Abuse) regarding the women seeking assistance by visiting the East Rand and West Rand shelters, during the interlude of January to December 2005 yielded interesting results. Within the population acquiring espousal at the East Rand Shelter, the most frequent presenting problem entailed physical abuse (battery) within the domestic arena. Physical abuse encompassed 84.2%, while emotional abused accumulated to 10.5%. Additionally, in the West Rand shelter, similar findings surfaced as domestic violence accounted for 76.8% of the client population. This amounts to a total of 797 cases, of which 144 women of the abused women received death threats (POWA, 2005).

The incidence of domestic violence is however a global phenomenon. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2002) conducted a study including ten countries and report that as many as 75% of women have fallen victim to domestic abuse (Turchetta & Duncan, 2008).

The US Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999) presented statistics on the percentage of female offenders who have been subjected to domestic abuse. Based on self-reports of victims of violence, women account for about 14 % of all violent offenders, an annual average of about 2.1 million violent female offenders. Nearly 6 in 10 women in state prisons had experienced physical or sexual abuse in the past (Lawrence & Greenfield,1999).

Ironically, the attempts made by domestically abused women; to better their domestic circumstances in terms of abuse are often denied with regards to legal resources. During the period January 2003 to May 2003, the applications for protection orders within the Grahamstown area equalled 444. The protection orders granted totalled 51, indicating that the available measures to avoid domestic abuse in South Africa are limited (The Gender Health and Justice Unit, University of Cape Town).

In 1998 the Domestic Violence Act was implemented in South Africa. This Act attempts to protect women and children from physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse (Pistorius, 2004). The Act states that a protection order can be attained, and thereby the victim is protected in the event of the abuser coming in close proximity of the victim. It thus serves as a temporary measure in order to escape immediate danger. This however, had far reaching consequences. One month after the implementation of the Act, fifteen women who filed for a protection order, were killed by their abusers (Pistorius, 2004). The dichotomy between providing resources and the consequences thereof is notable. The above mentioned, with regards to resources, show a strong correlation with women who stay in abusive relationships (Jensen, 2001). It is clear that leaving an abusive relationship could be detrimental to the victim of domestic abuse and therefore inhibit the escape from the situation (Makofane, 2002).

In addition, the research of Moutl (2005) which was conducted in Khayalitsha, Thohoyandou and Mount Frere indicate that a vast amount of domestically abused women in South Africa prefer informal means of managing the incidences of domestic abuse. The participants reported

distrust in formal structures such as the police and official legal organizations. It appears that the lack of confidence in formal structures as well as the cumulative effect of abuse is central to taking the law in own hands and perpetrating homicide in terms of an abusive intimate partner. Jensen (2001) states that the result of prolonged physical, sexual and emotional abuse often accumulates in feelings of desperation and fear. In addition, a large percentage of domestic homicides perpetrated by females correlate directly with self-preservation and an exhaustion of all other resources.

The focal research question derived from the above mentioned motivation is to investigate the possible psychological factors associated with abused women who kill an abusive partner. The researcher intends to investigate these factors, while taking culture into account. It could therefore be hypothesised that certain psychological factors are present in women who kill an abusive partner, but this behaviour is culturally informed. On the basis of the above mentioned research question, the aims of the study is illuminated.

## **1.2 Aim of the Study**

The specific aim of the study is to uncover the psychological factors that contribute or are associated with the killing of an abusive partner by women.

Furthermore, the research is aimed at highlighting the psychological causes underlining the behaviour of women who kill an abusive intimate partner while taking culture into account. The study will thus set about the exploration of the background and circumstances surrounding the killing of an abusive partner. By doing this it is hoped that light will be shed on the cultural dynamics involved. The cultural dynamics will specifically pertain to the South African context.

The following section will elaborate on the implementation of the study.

### **1.3 Implementation of Study**

The study comprises of a qualitative research approach, and is exploratory in nature. Multiple case studies will be utilized as it provides data on a particular phenomenon which is assembled in order to draw explicit conclusions.

Participants will be sourced from the Department of Correctional Service in the Western Cape Province. The Pollsmoor Correctional Facility is to be utilised in order to gain access to participants and in-depth interviews are to be held. Participation will be voluntary and participants remain anonymous in order to protect their identity.

Subsequently, interviews will be transcribed and analysed in order to determine the themes present in the data collected. A brief definition of the terminology used in the study will follow.

## 1.4 Definition of Constructs

The subsequent section is aimed at giving clarity in terms of the main constructs used in this study.

### 1.4.1 Psychological factors

The *DSM-IV-TR (2000,)* describe psychological factors as one or more psychological or behavioural problems that adversely affect the course or general outcome of the individuals behaviour/mental state or functioning, or significantly increases a persons' risk of an adverse outcome

### 1.4.2 Abuse/Domestic Abuse/Domestic Violence

Many have described abuse and domestic abuse in order to highlight specific characteristics associated with the act of abuse. Domestic abuse seems to comprise of mainly five categories namely: Physical, Emotional, Financial, Sexual and Psychological Abuse (Turchetta & Duncan, 2008). The categories entail the following:

- Physical:

Hitting, slapping, shoving, grabbing or inflicting injury of a physical nature.

- Emotional:

Undermining an individual's self-worth and self-esteem.

- Financial:

Forcing an individual to be financially dependant due to the denial of access to financial resources.

- Sexual:



Attempting to coerce sexual acts without consent.

- Psychological:

Deriving fear by means of threat and intimidation.

The Domestic Violence Act (Act No 116 of 1998) of South Africa includes the above mentioned aspects of abuse. However the Act additionally stipulates that Domestic Abuse furthermore entails harassment, stalking, entering or destroying property of the victim without consent, and actions that could harm the wellbeing of an individual.

#### **1.4.3 Intimate male partner**

An intimate male partner is described as a male who is involved in a relationship with a female. This relationship could constitute a marriage, co-habitation or a romantic relationship without co-habitation.

#### **1.4.4 Cultural context**

Triandis and Suh (2002) describe culture as the values, norms and assumptions that govern a certain group. However, these aspects are closely related to the environment, as the above mentioned informs the perceptions of the environment.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health's Culture and Diagnosis Group, culture can be described as the behaviours, values and meanings that are learned from society. In addition, culture is highly influential in the formation of cognitions, feelings and actions (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). Therefore, taking the definition of culture into account, cultural context will thus refer to

the cultural environment in which the participants find themselves, and which form their perceptions.

## **1.5 Delineation of Chapters**

Chapter One attempts to give an overview of the motivation, orientation and aim of the study while providing descriptions of the core constructs in the study pertaining to the phenomenon of females who kill an abusive male partner.

In Chapter Two the researcher gives an overview of literature relevant to domestic abuse and cultural influences in the formation of perceptions as well as an impression of abused women who perpetrate domestic homicide.

Chapter Three explains that certain aspects are causal in killing of an intimate male partner, by abused women. These possible psychological factors are investigated by means of recent research findings.

In Chapter Four the methodology employed is set out which provides clarity in terms of the methods and strategies utilized to obtain the data.

Chapter Five comprises of the analysis of the interviews. In addition themes and commonalities are stipulated so that general conclusions can be derived. The results are divided in primary and secondary themes.

Chapter Six entails a discussion in terms of the findings. Conclusions are made from the data obtained and supported by literature.

Chapter 7 gives a concluding synopsis of the study. A critical evaluation of the study follows and recommendations are made.

In order to comprehend the phenomenon of women who kill an abusive partner, it is necessary to have an understanding of the general features present in this category of female perpetrated homicide. The subsequent chapter will provide background in terms of recent literature and research.



## Chapter 2

# Abuse, Culture and Female Perpetrated Homicide within the Domestic Context

*The ability to delude yourself may be an important survival tool.*

*Jane Wagner*

Domestic violence seems to be one of the most prolific public health issues facing society (Baird & Solomon, 2006). The effect and enormity of the problem is however underestimated. According to the British Crime Report, (2001) women account for the population group with the highest incidences of abuse which predominantly occur within the domestic context. Hoyle (2008) elaborates by stating that women, who are domestically abused, often deflect from pursuing judicial assistance due to the controlling nature of the relationship with the abuser. A lack of resources or the inability to access available resources seems to play a role in the choice of behaviours taken by abused women. Prinsloo (2007) comments that most abused women within the greater Johannesburg area report that they find law enforcement dissatisfying when complaining about abuse, and prefer to handle matters themselves or ask family members to intervene.

Jensen (2001) illuminates the gender structures that come into play pertaining to battered women. The author explains that male dominance and the subservient nature of females in the domestic sphere prevent help seeking and the utilization of resources. The consequences of leaving the abusive relationship or obtaining a protection order include further

victimization and physical abuse. Reddi (2005) explains that abused women, who ultimately perpetrate homicide in terms of an intimate male partner, often experience a turning point in the abusive relationship. Such turning points seem to embrace aspects of threat to self or a family member.

In order to fully comprehend the effects and magnitude of domestic abuse, a closer investigation is crucial. The specific characteristics, components and tendencies need to be clarified. Furthermore, it is hoped that the subsequent fragment will give insight into the extent of domestic abuse in South Africa and the world. Attention will be given in terms of the features of domestic abuse as well as the cultural influences that shape and form perceptions in this sphere. Lastly, domestic homicide, with particular reference to abused women who kill will be reviewed in order to establish the reasons for evolving from victim to perpetrator.

## **2.1 Domestic Abuse: Incidence, Characteristics and Battered Wife Syndrome.**

### **2.1.1 Incidence of Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse is a global problem, and the number of incidences is growing rapidly (Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts & Garcia-Moreno, 2008). As many as 69 % of women have experienced assault by an intimate male partner, and furthermore these abused women live with physical battery as part of their daily lives (Matud, 2007). In South Africa, statistics on abuse are unclear as many victims do not report on abuse that has taken place and

indistinct records held by the South African Police Service. It is however speculated that one in six women in South Africa are battered by an intimate male partner. Furthermore, 50% of women murdered in South Africa are killed by an abusive male partner (POWA, 2005). Unofficial sources seem to yield more appropriate numbers of abuse, yet many cases are unaccounted (Prinsloo, 2007). Domestic abuse does however have a manner in which it progresses and develops over a period of time, as escalation is often evident (Jewkes, 2002).

### **2.1.2 Characteristics of Domestic Abuse**

Domestic abuse incorporates an array of facets. It is underpinned by a physical act such as aggression. This could include slapping, forced intercourse or sexual coercion. It furthermore entails psychological abuse which could comprise of humiliation, intimidation and isolation. Restriction to attain assistance is often incorporated in the characteristics of domestic abuse (Manga, Pengrid & Peltzer, 2003). The research of Matud (2007) indicates that two aspects must be present for domestic abuse to occur. Firstly, the women are viewed by their cultural group as less empowered than males and physical battery is seen as normal in conflict resolution.

The Harvard Women's Health Watch (2006) states that domestic abuse frequently develops gradually, as facets of verbal insults are utilized in order to deteriorate self-esteem. This escalates as the abuser is in need of power and control. Therefore alternative measures are employed to gain the level

of control needed. Channels such as physical maltreatment, limited social contact, economic deprivation and dependence, and psychological torment are implemented (Ellsberg et. al, 2008). Nangolo and Peltzer (2003) confirm these findings and comment that the most prolific type of abuse perpetrated against women occur within a cohabitating situation, where the female is in a marital or romantic relationship with the perpetrator. Gender inequality is prominent as male dominance is exercised by means of financial power, denial of basic requirements and physical power (Grauwiler, 2007).

Domestic abuse victims seem to display an array of traits and behaviours. Turchetta and Duncan (2008) mention that women who are abused by an intimate male partner often display signs of emotional withdrawal and social isolation. In addition, victims are extremely ashamed of their situation and this is exploited by the perpetrators in order to maintain their position of power. The abused women experience feelings of humiliation and self-condemnation (Mills, 2008). This is moreover evident in South Africa as a study conducted in the Vhembe District concluded that domestically abused women in the Limpopo Province remained silent and did not disclose the abuse as shame was associated with the report of abuse (Manga et al., 2003).

Due to the frequent incidence of domestic abuse and the gradual nature thereof, many women who are abused endure this maltreatment over a vast period of time. Aspects such as financial dependence and shame maintain their entrapment in the situation. However, the effects of domestic abuse seem to be far reaching. Ellsberg et al. (2008) mention that poor physical

and mental health in abused women is significant and facets such as difficulty to perform certain activities, gynaecological complications, memory loss, depression, anxiety and higher levels of suicide attempts are evident. The cumulative cost estimation for the treatment of battered women totalled £5.4 billion a year within Great Britain in 2004 (Baird & Solomon, 2006). This gives a glimpse of the extent of the effects of domestic abuse.

Symptoms such as headaches, pelvic pain and substance abuse are further associated with the effects of domestic abuse. A positive correlation exists between dysthymic disorder, severe depression and domestic battery (Diaz-Olavarrieta, Ellertson, Paz, Ponce de Leon & Alarcon-Segovia, 2002). In addition to the outcomes of domestic abuse, is the severity of abuse suffered. The degree or level of intensity compares with the types of health problems experienced. Coker et al. (2002) established that physical abuse has a higher impact on women's health than verbal and emotional abuse. Besides a greater propensity to acquire physical injuries, the nature of abuse additionally impacts psychological functioning.

Despite the level of abuse and physical harm faced, certain battered women do not leave the abusive relationship. The reasons for this is often complex and misinterpreted

### **2.1.3 Battered Women Syndrome (BWS)**

Regardless of many years of intense abuse, several women do not terminate relationships which are detrimental to their mental and physical health. Seeking help is not always utilised as a means of coping with the



stressor and alternative measures are taken to manage the abuse. In some cases it results in the murder of the abusive male partner (Rothenberg, 2002).

The term, Battered Women Syndrome, was first used by Walker (1979) and refers to the experiences of abused women who remain in an abusive relationship. Battered Women Syndrome entails a description of a variety of symptoms related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder such as memory loss, intense anxiety and an absence of emotion (Zook, 2004).

Grauwiler (2007) comments that women who stay in abusive relationships do so generally due to two factors. Firstly, they are unsure on the subject of how much violence is tolerable and if their experience of abuse is significant enough to seek help. Secondly, abused women report that the resources available, such as the police and social services, are unreliable. Most women have tried to obtain some form of help but due to the negative experiences, did not pursue this avenue on other occasions. In a research study of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, Ludsin (2003) reports that battered women stay in abusive relationships due to financial and emotional dependence. They feel compelled to stay for the sake of their children and out of intense fear. Furthermore, aspects such as religion, cultural beliefs and physical resources contribute to residing in an abusive relationship (Makofane, 2002). Lower levels of education, social isolation, and pressure from family for abused women to stay in their relationships contribute to the problem (Tshesane, 2001). Battered Women Syndrome gives an indication of the dynamics of the experiences of battered women as well as an explanation for their actions. This has

ensured that the judicial system takes note when confronted by abused women who kill an intimate male partner.

Battered Women Syndrome has often been raised as part of a defence in female perpetrated homicide of an abusive male partner, as well as a means to explain the reasons why abused women do not leave the relationship and why they lost control and killed her partner (Rix, 2001). However, the concept of Battered Women Syndrome is widely debated and although the legitimacy of the existence of the Syndrome is not argued, it is not formally categorised as a psychiatric diagnosis (Reddi, 2005).

In the above it has been brought to the fore that the incidence of abuse is prolific and that domestic abuse is a growing dilemma, particularly in South Africa. Domestic abuse seems to develop gradually, but escalates and amounts to staggering consequences. Physical and psychological damage is evident, and has far reaching effects. Several women remain in the abusive relationships despite the harm suffered and Battered Women Syndrome attempts to give an explanation for this behaviour. Aspects such as fear and limited resources seem to account for residing in the relationship, hence compelling abused women to exploit alternatives.

## **2.2 Female Perpetrated Homicide within the Context of Domestic Abuse**

Women who kill an abusive intimate male partner, after a prolonged period of abuse cannot be studied without cognicance of the domestic

environment. Certain features and characteristics seem to be universally present.

### **2.2.1 Features of Female Perpetrated Homicide of an Abusive Partner within the Domestic Context**

In the South African context, research was conducted in three Gauteng courts. The study examined female perpetrated homicide during the period 1994 to 1998, and found that 52 % of women kill their partner due to abuse. These women mostly killed during an attack on them and six of the 22 women killed while the abuser was asleep or hired a third party (Lundsin & Vetten, 2005). Within South Africa, females who killed an abusive intimate male partner have been able to utilise the concept of Battered Women Syndrome in order to assist in their defence in court. However, although the court acknowledges the impact of abuse, the defendant needs to prove that murdering her partner was the only means of survival (Reddi, 2005).

The tendency of women using alternatives, as apposed to formal help seeking, to manage domestic abuse is a global trend. Diaz-Olavarrieta et al. (2002) found that 50 percent of incarcerated women in Mexico who perpetrated homicide had suffered extreme physical abuse and killed an intimate partner due to the maltreatment endured. Lund and Smorodinsky (2001) concur in their findings that female perpetrated homicide has a significant correlation with long term physical abuse. This illuminates the extent and scope of the effects of domestic abuse and highlights the importance of prevention of abuse.

Female perpetrated homicide of an abusive partner, in most cases, is found to be committed at the private residence shared by the assailant and victim. In 61 % of the cases reported in Australia, females commit homicide while their partner is asleep (Rix, 2001). These are accounted for by the inability of the abused female to overpower or defend themselves. It is seen that the females who perpetrate intimate partner homicide are physically weaker than the average adult female. These females have a higher level of physical vulnerability and this is ascribed by the extended periods of abuse sustained by the abusive partners. The killing of an abusive partner, whilst being asleep, is seen as an apt opportunity to perform the homicide, as they are fully aware of their physical disadvantage (Adinkrah, 2000). Lundsinn and Vetten (2005) state that 20 % of women in South Africa, who killed a partner, did so while the partner was asleep, when they were intoxicated or hired a third party to perform the killing.

In incidences of female perpetrated homicide it is established that self-defence is often the motivation for the killing. Women have reported numerous occurrences of domestic abuse and battering. It appears that many women studied, have disapproving ideas adjacent to law enforcement, as experiences of lack of support and assistance are common. This seems to amplify unequal power relationships and gender dissimilarity (Serran & Firestone, 2004).

## **2.2.2 The impact of Gender Inequality on Female Perpetrated Homicide of an Abusive Partner within the Domestic Context**

According to Jensen (2001) it is of utmost importance to be conscious of gender equality when attempting to comprehend women who commit homicide. It is particularly issues surrounding gender equality in the domestic arena that need to be taken into account. Hamberger (2005) states that the main gender difference in motivation for spousal killings is that males feel a need to exert power, while women kill in self-defence. The researcher mentions that in terms of gender differences in violent relationships, females tend to be victimized predominately in relation to males.

Taking gender into account, it has been shown that intimate partner homicide varies across regions, implying that community has a role to play. Norms and values of gender inequality and male dominance is an integral part of many communities and cultural groups. It is argued that individual motivation for violence and control over females are similarly culturally bound (Gauthier & Bankston, 2004). It appears that in a patriarchal society, males are rewarded for their dominance and this could be ascribed as a reason for the maintenance of physical abuse (Tshesane, 2007).

However, female perpetrated homicide is reduced in communities where divorce and legal resources are freely available and where divorce is accepted by the community. According to Jensen (2001) a lack of support and an increase in isolation heightens the risk for females to engage in lethal violence. Women who are secluded from interaction and support are

left vulnerable and this limits their ability to manage the extremities of abuse. However, many women avoid actions such as divorce as they are aware of the stigmatization thereof. Often culture and religion inform women that a failure in their marriage equates to a failure as women. The abovementioned is typically observed in abused women with a more traditionalist orientation (Makofane, 2002).

Gauthier and Bankston (2004) explain that family composition has an influence on violence and its distribution. In domestic situations where females have more power in terms of finances, the incidence of abuse and female perpetrated killings decrease. The economic power of females erodes the culturally entrenched norms of male dominance, and therefore reduces the likelihood of female submission. With increased economic resources, females are additionally empowered to remove themselves from violent relationships. A further aspect that increases the incidence of abuse and homicide by a male partner is when the family consists of children from previous marriages or partners. Abuse is more prolific towards women who have children from various partners, and are more often killed by the abuser (Nangolo & Peltzer, 2003). As seen above, gender plays a part in the relationship dynamics of abuse. However, gender and the roles assigned to gender are informed by culture (Makofane,2002).

## **2.3 Cultural Aspects Associated with Abuse within the Domestic Context**

Culture and socialisation is delicately interwoven. It informs the manner in which abuse and maltreatment is viewed as well as the means acceptable to manage the abuse (Tshesane, 2001). Gender inequality, as informed by society and cultural norms, have often legitimised spousal battery and abuse. Thus these cultural norms colour perceptions regarding abuse which often disempowers women (Okeveke, 2002). Bent-Goodley (2005) motivates that in order to fully comprehend the dynamics of domestic homicide and inter-gender violence, it is of importance to investigate the impact of culture on the abovementioned. It is argued that methods of obtaining knowledge, have in the past omitted the role of cultural perceptions and values.

### **2.3.1 Cultural Perceptions Regarding Abuse within the Domestic Context**

Amoakohene (2004) investigated the perceptions of domestic violence perpetrated against women in Ghana. It became apparent that 70 % of the sample group had suffered abuse from a partner, with physical abuse being predominant. Sexual abuse and offences are unknown concepts to Ghanaian women, especially offences perpetrated within marriage. The respondents generally explain that women are obligated to satisfy a male partner sexually, and cannot refuse or deny the wishes of her husband.

Rude (1999) reports similar trends. Domestic Abuse in Zambia is particularly gendered and biased. Women are portrayed as provoking violence and thus silence, with regards to violence perpetrated against women, is maintained. The reporting of abuse is perceived as shameful and is avoided at all times (Amoakohene, 2004). Furthermore, the home is construed as an unsafe place and female behaviour is stereotyped. Females are expected to be subservient and face the threat of violence.

Culture seems to create perceptions with regards to the termination of relationships. Makofane (2002) comments that many cultures prevent women from leaving an abuser as it is viewed as shameful and divorcees are stigmatised. In addition to stigmatisation, shame is a component that should not be overlooked. The effect of feelings of shame is profound in maintaining an abusive relationship. Culture dictates the aspects that should be viewed shameful and thus contribute to the problem (Mills, 2008). Furthermore, culture appears to equate the failure of a marriage with the failure as woman. Tshesane (2001) explained that women are further entrapped in abusive relationships due to financial and emotional dependence on males. This dependence is fostered by cultural perceptions that inform women that it is virtuous to be dependant on a male counterpart.

A perception that seems to be prolific is that of women being subordinate in contrast to men being dominant. Okereke (2002) stipulates that cultural perceptions of women are mainly formed with the backdrop of domestic duties. Women are expected to concentrate on domestic tasks as expected of her by a dominant male. If she fails to adhere to the demands of the male, she is physically punished as she is perceived as disrespectful. Koza



(1999) describes that the low status of women is contrasted with male authority and dictates subservience and obedience. Due to the strong adherence to these cultural norms it becomes clear that the abuse suffered by women is legitimised and condoned. Tshesane (2001) agrees with the above and states that these perceptions of women are mainly formed within the family of origin, which in turn is shaped by cultural values.

Makofane (2002) however makes it clear that women themselves contribute to the problem, as they are culturally informed that they are to blame for the abuse suffered. These cultural values are also accentuated by the media. Media reports predominantly focus on the idea that female victims provoke the male perpetrator, and thus a perception is created that women's behaviour is judged and punished by their male counterparts (Rude, 1999). Within the South African context, abused women are more likely to perceive their culture as less tolerant in terms of women being assertive. There appears to be a perception among abused women that it is acceptable for their abusive partner to have other female counterparts, and the beating of a woman is an expression of love (Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana, 2002). This further debilitates the termination of abuse and could impact on the means used to manage abuse.

### **2.3.2 The Relation between Culture, Community and Resources available in terms of Abuse within the Domestic Context**

As mentioned in the preceding section, culture informs the manner in which abuse is perceived as well as the acceptable means of dealing with abuse (Mills, 2008). It is necessary to take the cultural climate into account

when investigating the reporting of abuse, as this might not be an approachable solution for some women (Diaz-Olavarrieta et al., 2002). Thus it could be argued that culture informs the means of dealing with abuse, and therefore has an impact on the manner of problem resolution.

Gondolf and Shestakov (1997) comment that the social and cultural values associated with a community, influences domestic violence and the reaction to being abused. Lack of resources and cultural stereotypes are implied, such as the acceptability of psychical violence and female submission. Fischbach and Herbert (1997) investigates the effect correlations of domestic violence across cultures. The human rights of women across cultural groups are compromised and research results signify that domestic violence, perpetrated against women, is common among a diverse group of cultures. The perceptions of abuse differed in certain cultural spheres, however, the occurrence and brutality seems to be comparable.

Grandin and Lupri (1997) postulate that domestic abuse is more prolific in cultural settings where other forms of violence are accepted within the cultural norms. Therefore implying that there exists a positive correlation between societal aggression and spousal abuse. Kubrin and Weitzer (2003) comment that cultural codes are likely to shape violence in a community. Mention is made that the neighbourhood setting should be taken into consideration, in particular disadvantaged environments. Incidences of violence are often managed or reacted to in an informal manner, as members of disadvantaged communities are dissatisfied with the support received from law enforcement. In poorer communities there appears to be a sub-culture of violence and a lack of structural support.

Makofane (2002) agrees by stating that support available strongly correlates with the chosen behaviours of battered women to resolve domestic abuse, however, regardless of help seeking, the effects of abuse are far reaching.

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

Overall, this chapter explores the contributing factors underlining female perpetrated homicide of an abusive male partner within the domestic arena. In order to conceptualise women who kill an abusive partner, domestic abuse is examined, to highlight the occurrence and characteristics thereof as well as the concept of Battered Women Syndrome. The aspects and features of female perpetrated homicide, in particular the impact of culture is studied, as it informs perceptions on abuse, and the relative resources available. In the chapter that follows, the possible causes contributing to females killing an abusive male partner is investigated.

## Chapter 3

# Psychological Factors Associated with Female Perpetrated Homicide of an Abusive Male Partner within the Domestic Context

*There are wrongs which even the grave does not bury.*

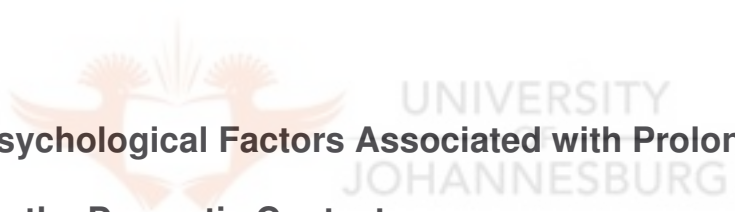
*Harriet Ann Jacobs*

In the prior chapter the impact of culture on the perceptions and outcomes of abuse was highlighted. Coker (2002) specified that the effects of abuse in terms of physical and mental health are severe, regardless of cultural background or community setting. However, with regards to the mental health consequences of domestic abuse, there appears to be a disparity in how mental health and illness is defined. Mental illness, due to the exposure of prolonged abuse, is constructed in a variety of ways within cultural and societal norms (Berkel, Furlong, Hickman & Blue, 2005). Mental illness and psychological distress due to domestic abuse impacts on decision making, and therefore the consequences of abuse could be viewed as possible contributing factors for future behaviour (Grauwiler, 2007).

The major psychological risk factors coupled with prolonged domestic abuse are described by Diaz-Olavarrieta (2002) as comprising of depression and substance abuse. Schumacher, Feldbau-Kohn, Slep and Hayman (2001) suggest that women diagnosed with Axis I disorders and

major depression are more at risk of abuse, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and substance dependence are psychological factors which develop during the course of abuse. In addition, Weizmann-Henelius and Veimerö (2003) report in their study that up to 50 % of women who killed an abusive male partner present with a cluster B personality disorder.

Furthermore, low self-esteem and PTSD have been mentioned as significant risk factors. Kachaeva (2008) reveals that women who killed an abusive male partner, often suffered from PTSD and that prior to the homicide there was a noticeable escalation in the intensity of the abuse. In addition, women who are abused in the domestic context are frequently isolated, very fearful of the abuser and less confident (Turchetta & Duncan, 2008).



### **3.1 Psychological Factors Associated with Prolonged Abuse within the Domestic Context**

As described in Chapter 1, a psychological factor is a cause or aspect that impacts behaviour and mental state. This “cause” could adversely influence functioning and the outcome of the individual’s existence (Sadock & Sadock, 2003). The various psychological factors discussed below comprise of PTSD, Coercive control, Substance Dependence and Conflict resolution.

### **3.1.2 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a Psychological Factor Associated with Prolonged Domestic Abuse**

PTSD is classified as falling into the category of anxiety disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM IV-TR, 2000).

Sadock and Sadock (2003) describe the development of PTSD as experiencing, witnessing or hearing of a traumatic event or stressor. The symptoms involve the encounter of intense fear and helplessness, repeated recalling of events and avoidance of stimuli that could be associated with the trauma. These symptoms significantly impact on functioning in terms of family and occupational responsibilities. Individuals suffering from PTSD frequently feel overwhelmed and can therefore undergo a numbing of responses. Additional symptoms include depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance and a lack of cognitive clarity. Sadock and Sadock (2003) identify several risk factors which could be implied in the development of PTSD namely:


- The experience of childhood trauma
- Borderline, paranoid, dependant or antisocial personality disorder traits
- Inadequate family and peer support systems
- Gender (being female)
- Genetic vulnerability to psychiatric illness
- Life changes which are stressful in nature
- Excessive alcohol intake in the recent past

Despite these factors being present, the experience of a traumatic event is the most profound aspect that relates to women who are abused by an intimate partner. Intense physical and/or emotional torture is described as “the deliberate infliction of severe mental or physical pain or suffering, usually through cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment” (United Nations, 2000). It is, however, clear that domestic violence falls within this category and hence the consequence of abuse should not be minimised.

Fischbach and Herbert (1997) comment on the effect of abuse on the mental health of women, across a variety of cultures. The researchers mention that the impression of a single violent episode can be profound thus indicating the severity of long term exposure to abuse. Fischbach and Herbert (1997) furthermore found that violence perpetrated against women significantly increase low self-esteem, hyper-vigilance and insomnia. Furthermore, abused women are susceptible to psychiatric illnesses such as major depression, alcohol and substance abuse, PTSD and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Smyth, Videen, Burgess and Shults (2004) report on the neurological differences and correlates in women who have committed violent criminal behaviour. A high correlation exists between the experience of traumatic brain injury, loss of consciousness and being convicted of a violent crime. A significant percentage of participants incarcerated for violent crimes, with brain injury, reported spousal abuse and battering. Furthermore, participants with evidence of brain injury additionally proved to have lower levels of cortisol, which could be associated with injury to the

hypothalamus. Distinctly lower levels of cortisol were found in abused women and especially those participants who were diagnosed with PTSD and substance abuse. Stein, Kennedy and Twamley (2002) report similar findings in terms of the effect of battering on neurological functioning. A decrease in frontal sub-cortical functioning is noted which impacts on processing speed and working memory. Furthermore, a strong correlation transpired between diminished neurological functioning and the development of PTSD in domestically abused women. Woods and Winerman (2004) explain that 52 % of the abused participants in their study displayed PTSD symptoms and were clinically diagnosed. The prevalence of PTSD additionally correlates with an increased number of physical and health problems. The cluster of symptoms reveals a high incidence of avoidance behaviour.

The logo of the University of Wollongong is centered in the background. It features a stylized orange bird-like figure with its wings spread, positioned above the text 'UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG' which is rendered in a light grey, sans-serif font.

Beasley, Thompson and Davidson (2003) noted that prolonged exposure to traumatic events has a cumulative effect and therefore impacts the level of coping. This is supported by Dutton (2004) who suggests the possibility of PTSD as a contributing factor in the killing of an abusive partner. Battered women might perceive her abusers behaviour as dangerous and threatening due to flashbacks. Therefore, a real or perceived threat could be present but due to prolonged exposure to abuse and the presence of PTSD, some battered women react in a violent manner. The research conducted by Pico-Alfonso (2005) investigated intimate partner abuse as a predictor of PTSD. A significant positive relationship was found and the researcher illuminates the effects of cumulative trauma. Of particular importance are the high correlation of psychological trauma and the



development of PTSD, as opposed to a lower correlation between physical trauma and the occurrence of PTSD.

Psychological trauma and distress is inflicted by employing coercive tactics which impacts psychological functioning (Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1999). The section that follows explores the impact of coercive control in abusive relationships within the domestic arena.

### **3.1.3 Coercive Control as a Psychological Factor Associated with Prolonged Domestic Abuse**

Ludsin and Vetten (2005) explain that coercive control of battered women involves the destruction of resistance and support mechanisms. Coercive control involves the absolute domination and subjugation of the victim. The victim is continually exposed to psychological battery and it has been known to bring about psychological change. Often the victims comply with the demands of the perpetrator as a means to avoid danger or threat and therefore are frequently seen as accepting of maltreatment.

Biderman (1973) compiled a chart of coercion for Amnesty International. The description of the tactics associated with coercion included: isolation, manipulation of perception, induced exhaustion, threats, occasional indulgence, demonstrating omnipotence, degradation and enforcing trivial demands. The psychological effects of these measures are varied and intense, and comprise of low self-esteem, high levels of anxiety, helplessness and inability to escape. Furthermore a loss of dignity and security as well as an overpowering feeling of fear is present. Ludsin and Vetten (2005) concur and report that abusive men often utilise the

deprivation of sleep and threats to kill the victim. Furthermore, the control of basic daily requirements such as food, medical care and shelter are denied. The women and their children are regularly refused entry to the home, or are chased outdoors where they are subjected to the elements.

McFarlane, Campbell and Watson (2002) uncovered aspects such as stalking and life threats as part of mechanisms of control used by abusive partners. In the study, 54.5 % of the abused women reported that they had been threatened by an abusive intimate partner. The effects of being threatened and constant fear appears to create a sense of continuous hypervigilance (Hoyle, 2008). Gailliot, Schmeichel and Baumeister (2006) explain that the ability to manage the stress associated with death threats relies on the ability to self-regulate. It became apparent that displaying higher levels of self-control enables an individual to more appropriately process perceived death threats. However, managing these thoughts of death and anxieties seem to have a tiring effect on the individual. Therefore, prolonged exposure could deplete coping mechanisms. Miller and Mulligan (2002) report that individuals with an internal locus of control appear less prone to exhibit risk behaviour during life threatening situations. Conversely, when self-preservation is at stake these individuals seem to act in a manner to survive. Additionally persons with a high internal locus of control tended to evaluate possibly dangerous situations more accurately.

From the above, a conclusion can be derived that the effects of coercive control is noticeable. Furthermore, tactics of coercive control such as death threats significantly affects the individual in terms of hyper-vigilance and feelings of constant fear (Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1999). This appears to

correlate with reports that most domestically abused women in South Africa kill the abusive partner in self-defence, after receiving countless threats over a prolonged period (Ludsin, 2003). In addition, many women who killed an abusive intimate partner, report being intoxicated at the time (Hoyle, 2008).

### **3.1.4 Substance Abuse and Intoxication as a Psychological Factor**

#### **Associated with Prolonged Domestic Abuse**

The Harvard Women's Health Watch (2006) report that as many 47.6 % of battered women suffer from Depression, 63.8 % are diagnosed with PTSD, 18.5 % abuse alcohol and 8.9 % use other intoxicating substances. The amount of substance abuse is staggering, and many domestically abused women do not report their dependence when seeking help.

Similarly Jewkes et al. (2002) found that the occurrence of domestic abuse centred on features such as social isolation, marital conflict and alcohol consumption. Furthermore, it was found that female alcohol consumption occurred before and after an abusive incident. Alcohol abuse signifies the events leading to battered women who kill their partners. As many, as 50 % of women who killed an abusive spouse report the abuse of alcohol (Keefe, 1997). It is one of the most important contributing factors in female perpetrated homicide. Serran and Firestone (2004) point out those women who are subjected to severe abuse frequently, resort to alcohol, as a means of coping

Mention is made of the use of substances in women who are domestically abused and that these victims also suffer from chronic diseases. The occurrence of chronic ailments is linked to the use of intoxicating materials, as the usage could lead to liver dysfunction and neurological impairment (Coker et al.,2002). Gauwiler (2007) point out that the use of alcohol in women who are abused prevent help-seeking behaviour. The dependence seems to deter women from taking part in programs as they are struggling with intoxication in addition to the physical battery.

Supportive evidence of this is seen in the research of Diaz-Olavarrieta et al. (2002) and adds to the pool of knowledge and explains that substance abuse and depression are often co-morbid. In addition, it appears that abuse takes place when the male partner and/or female are intoxicated at the time of the battery. The intensity and severity of the abuse escalates when substances are induced. It thus appears that inter-relational conflict and substance use are connected.

### **3.1.5 Inter-relational conflict as a Psychological Factor Associated with Prolonged Domestic Abuse**

Serran and Firestone (2004) comment that intimate partner homicide is predominately typified by relationship difficulties and extreme conflict. Domestic homicide is preceded by conflict, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator. Interpersonal violence, as observed in domestically abusive relationships, appears to be signified by a lack of problem-solving skills and coping mechanisms within these unions.

Furthermore, female homicide offenders report that they are more likely to kill their partners due to exposure to the violent behaviour of the abuser (Turchetta & Duncan, 2008). Coupled with this, is the finding that prior to the homicide, the intensity and frequency of abuse heightens. Hamilton and Sutterfield (1997) concur, that intensification of violence is evident just before or at the time of the homicide. Women, who are continuously victimized and exposed to prolonged periods of abuse, therefore have a statistically higher propensity to become a perpetrator (Serran & Firestone, 2004).

Inter-relational conflict in the domestic context, revolve around male dominance, power and control. The abuse typically results due to the male counterpart suspecting the female of infidelity and sexual relations with other males (Hoyle, 2008). The violence and conflict seems to start early in the development of the relationship and escalates over time. The abuse, as a means to resolve conflict, is seen by the perpetrator as normal and legitimate (Mathud, 2007).

### **3.1.6 Lack of Available Resources and Support as a Psychological Factor Associated with Prolonged Domestic Abuse**

Prinsloo (2007) report on the help seeking behaviours of battered women in South Africa. Statistics in this regard display that only 13.4 % of women seeking formal sources of help, received assistance. The perceptions held by battered women appear to be negative towards formal structures and many report (approximately 70 %) that they prefer to resolve the matter themselves or involve family members.

Female homicide offenders often lack social and legal resources (Serran & Firestone, 2004). Due to the lack of resources, battered women kill a partner as a means of self-preservation and to gain control over a potentially dangerous situation. They are mostly isolated and do not have friends or community resources to assist them. Women commented that they could not seek refuge with family members, as the abuser could harm relatives if they provided shelter for the women (Hamilton & Sutterfield, 1997).

Keefe (1997) indicated that in a sample of 76 domestically abused women, 25 % reported having no social support at all, while 60 % of the women indicated that they had support from only one helpful person. Statements made by the women who were incarcerated after the killing of a partner, point out that they experienced a greater amount of support after being incarcerated than before the crime was committed. Hamilton and Sutterfield (1997) came to the same conclusion. Battered women who killed an abusive partner account that they attempted numerous times to secure their safety by means of the police. They, however, described the police as neither helpful nor supportive.

Battered women in South Africa have the resources to obtain an interdict from the court to manage their domestic situation. However, these women are in need of the police to enforce the interdict. This enforcement seldom occurs, leaving them to utilise alternative means. It thus appears as if support and resources are scarcities where battered women are concerned (Ludsin, 2003).

## 3.2 Chapter Summary

The statistics on domestic abuse are staggering and seems to be escalating (World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002). The effects of abuse seem to be just as alarming, and include aspects such as health and psychological consequences (Diaz-Olavarrieta et al., 2002). This chapter gives explicit information with regards to the psychological factors associated with the experience of domestic abuse by an intimate male partner. The indication of the psychological factors associated with female perpetrated homicide in the context of domestic abuse, is an attempt to explain and motivate the reasons for the killing of an abuser. The psychological factors discussed comprise of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Coercive Control, Substance Abuse, Inter-relational Conflict and the Lack of Resources and Support.

The following chapter sets about the methodological approach taken to obtain data and the analysis thereof.

# Chapter 4

## Research Methodology

*"Though this be madness, yet there is method in 't."*

*Hamlet (Act II, Scene II)*

The research orientation, study design and method are discussed in this chapter. The method utilized in this study comprises of multiple case study. Additionally, the motivation for the use of this method, as well as the descriptions thereof will form part of this chapter. Furthermore, the details with regard to data collection and analysis are explained.

### 4.1 Methodological Orientation

The study was conducted within a qualitative research paradigm. The definition and key aspects of qualitative research is complex and diverse. However, Ritchie and Lewis (2003) indicate that qualitative research is a means whereby the world is turned into a series of representations. It is a naturalistic approach which takes in account the meanings attributed to certain phenomena. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) elaborate on the definition by stating that qualitative research begets the researcher to become a part of the process and world of the participants or phenomena.

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) build on the functions of qualitative research. The following is mentioned in terms of the contextualization of this research paradigm, namely that it is "a way of describing the nature of what exists" (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p.26). Furthermore, it is explaining the reasons for



the existence of phenomena. Qualitative research is an evaluative process whereby phenomena are assessed. Lastly, it performs a generative function to add to the development of theories (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The qualitative researcher strives to employ an interactive collection of analytical practices in order to obtain a complete view of the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Qualitative research has undergone a movement towards more explicit and systematic data analysis and therefore has gained importance within the broader field of social research (Neuman, 2000).

From this conceptualization of qualitative research, the motivation for the qualitative methodological approach in this study is underpinned. The researcher strived to give a clear representation of the women in this study who killed an abusive partner, as well as to add a value in terms of the meaning of this phenomenon. The researcher attempted to uncover psychological factors in order to facilitate an understanding of women who kill their abusers..

## **4.2 Research Design**

The research methodology employed in this study consists of multiple case studies. The case study is defined as a method engaged to “identify a specific form of enquiry” (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster, 2000, p. 2).

Gomm et al. (2000) extends the definition further by commenting on the characteristics of the case study methodology. The essence of the case method is to investigate a relatively small number of cases; however the information gathered identify a variety of features. The focus of the case

study is placed upon the naturalistic occurrence of events, and therefore does not attempt to control the variables. Importance is given to the understanding of the case itself, rather than the generalization thereof .

The type of case study utilized in this research involved the *extended* case study. Gomm et al. (2000, p. 171) describes it as follows:

“This is a further elaboration of the basic study of case material as it deals with a sequence of events, sometimes over a long period, where the same actors are involved in a series of situations in which their structural positions must continuously be re-specified and the flow of actors through different social positions specified.”

Gomm et al. (2000) states that the extended case study functions within complex social situations. It is therefore appropriate to be employed in this study as the phenomena of women who kill their abusive partners can be described as multifaceted and intricate (Jensen, 2001). The psychological factors that cause the behaviour as well as the effect of culture forms an integral part of the research, and therefore the investigation of cues or psychological aspects over a period of time is of importance.

#### **4.2.1 Participants**

The participants utilised to take part in this study comprised of three women who killed an abusive intimate male partner. Participants were sourced through the Department of Correctional Services' Ethics and Research Committee. The Committee suggested the utilisation of participants in the

Pollsmoor Correctional Facility in the Western Cape, where interviews were conducted.

Three participants were employed in order to supply the study with breadth and a broader scope of experiences. The process of selecting these women was underpinned by purposive sampling. The participants were from disadvantage background, as they lived in informal settlements and experienced socio-economic hardships. The ages of the participants ranged between thirty five and forty two, and they had been in an abusive relationship for a minimum of four years. Two participants were Xhosa and one Coloured.

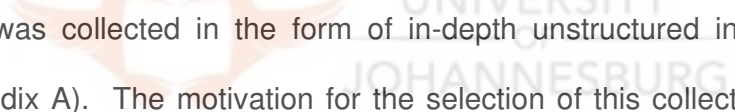
Strydom, Fouchè and Delport (2002) define a sample as a group that has certain characteristics within a greater population, which is considered for inclusion in the study. The sample therefore is an attempt to represent a population in order to understand and explain phenomena. In order to ensure sufficient representation of specific population, it is necessary to select the sample with care.

Within the qualitative paradigm non-probability sampling is used for selecting participants. Therefore “units are deliberately selected to reflect the features of a group within a sample population” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). The goal and basis of the sample is not to be statistically representative of the population, but focus is given to the characteristics of the population. It is this approach which makes non-probability sampling suited for small, in-depth studies (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Therefore the non-probability sampling is used in this study as a small group is utilised

with specific criteria. The criteria for this study entailed gender, namely being a female, and the killing of an abusive male partner. Furthermore participants were selected in terms of serving a sentence or part thereof, thus being incarcerated at the time of data collection.

The criteria for selection of participants are defined early in the research process in order to make deliberate choices. This however does not imply that bias is present when selecting participants, as the researcher is as objective as possible as the sample needs to be independent in nature (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

### **4.3 Data Collection**



Data was collected in the form of in-depth unstructured interviews (see Appendix A). The motivation for the selection of this collection method is that it provides an in-depth and interactive process. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) refer to this style of interviewing as a “conversation with a purpose”. Further, unstructured interviews provide an opportunity to create depth in data that other methods might not be able to accomplish (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

In-depth unstructured interviews offer an array of advantages within the qualitative paradigm. Ritchie and Lewis (2003) refer to the aspect of active involvement by the researcher in the process of collecting data. Thus, it generates an opportunity to construct the reality of a unique situation. It serves as an exploratory device for investigation of constructs such as culture and value systems.

Due to the unstructured nature of the interviews, open ended questions were utilized. Patton (2002) states that this makes way for the interviewing process to be flexible and the freedom to follow any direction depending on the content of the interview. This method proposes a strategy and tool for accessing the experience of the participant. In conjunction to this, it offers prospects of spontaneity and immediacy. Wengraf (2001) additionally state that the interview method has a personal value in the research process, as face to face contact offers the opportunity to observe body language and expressions.

The depth of the interview is to some extent reliant on the structure as well as the flexibility of the process. Although the process is flexible, the researcher has preconceived ideas or themes that require investigation. The interview will thus be focused around the key topic the researcher has in mind. The in-depth interview functions as tool to investigate aspects of the responses that are below the surface. This is achieved by employing probes and exploration techniques in order to attain the motivation and beliefs underlining answers (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

In-depth interviews also have the generative possibility to gain knowledge on the topic being studied. The participants' own language is used as a means of understanding experiences and therefore adds to data in a natural form. This contributes to the research process and depth of the data, as the nuances of language adds to knowledge gained (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The in-depth unstructured interview was selected in this study as it provides a means to collect data in a flexible and interactive manner. The experiences of the women who killed an abusive intimate partner are paramount and therefore this method grants the researcher an avenue of understanding the values and motivation behind the behaviour. The open ended questions established a way in which the participants could be spontaneous and creative in their construction of the event.

Although the interviews did not follow structured questions, the participants were probed in order to obtain information. Enquiries regarding cultural perceptions and community values were made. In addition, factors such as the events leading to the murder, alcohol intake, help-seeking attempts and available resources were asked about.

The logo of the University of Johannesburg, featuring two stylized human figures in orange and white, with their arms raised and hands joined above an open book. To the right of the logo, the text 'UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG' is displayed in a light grey, sans-serif font, with 'OF' centered between two horizontal lines.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis**

After data was collected, transcription took place in order to transform the data into a manageable unit (see Chapter 5). This was done by the researcher, as the researcher forms part of the process and does not become totally objective.

Data is made into meaningful components by using thematic analysis. Strydom, Fouchè and Delpont (2002) describe data analysis as a creative but also challenging phase of the research process. The process of analysis is explained as identifying themes, recognizing reoccurring ideas and patterns of belief, and linking these aspects together to find and integrative understanding of the phenomenon.

In order to make the data digestible, data was open coded in order to establish patterns and categories. Coding therefore suggests that “data is broken down, conceptualized and put together in a new way...” (Strydom, Fouchè & Delpont, 2002, p. 346). Through coding data is broken down in smaller parts, re-examined and compared with the other interviews in order to establish similarities and differences. Once categories and patterns have been established, themes are derived in order to clarify possible explanations for the phenomenon (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

Themes were arranged according to primary and secondary themes, and descriptions of main and secondary themes were given. The data and themes were synthesized by understanding themes in terms of other empirical studies and relevant theories (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). This is utilized in order to explain and support findings of the current study.

#### **4.5 Ethics Pertaining to the Current Study**

The ethical conduct of the researcher is of importance as it influences the results reported on. Ethical clearance, as well as permission to conduct research within the Department Correctional Services, was granted for the current research by the Department of Correctional Services’ Ethics Committee. In order to maintain a high level of ethical behaviour, all participants were voluntary. Arrangements were made that if the participant needed psychological debriefing after the interviews were conducted, the Correctional Facility Psychologist would assist. Confidentiality was assured and the identity of the participants was not disclosed. The participants were assured that they could disclose what they felt comfortable with and were

not motivated or pressured to disclose information that was fictitious or sensational. The integrity of the participants were protected at all times.

Data was transcribed accurately and correctly to obtain a true reflection of that which is studied. Analysis of the themes present was done while consulting relevant and reliable sources, as to maintain a high quality and meaningful interpretation of results.

## **4.6 Chapter Summary**

An overview of the method to be utilised in order to gather data was discussed. Furthermore, the structure and orientation of the present study was given. The study followed a multiple case study design, while making use of a participant sample of battered women who killed an intimate male partner. The participants were sourced through the Department of Correctional Services and Pollsmoor Correctional Facility was used. Interviews were held and the themes within the interviews were analysed. An overview of the themes present in the interviews follows.



## Chapter 5

### Thematic Analysis

*“Deep vengeance is the daughter of deep silence”.*

*[It., Alta vendetta D'alto silenzio e figlia.]*

*Vittorio Alfieri (La Congiura de' Pazzi (I, 1))*

#### 5.1 Participants

The case study method creates an opportunity for the researcher to investigate the background and history of the participants in order to obtain insight and create depth in the research process. Therefore, the participants are introduced as a means to form a holistic view of the women interviewed.

Three women were interviewed in the Pollsmoor Correctional Facility. They had all been incarcerated due to the killing of an abusive male partner, and interviews are transcribed in the manner in which the participants spoke in order to maintain the integrity of the data.

The first participant interviewed is referred to as J.K. She is a thirty five year old Xhosa woman and had been sentenced for six years, of which she had served five years at the time of the interview. She had been married and in an abusive relationship for eleven years. She had two children within this marriage and the children were eighteen and fourteen at the time. In addition, J.K. had a third child living with her in Pollsmoor, as the child was

under the age of six years. J.K. reports that she fell pregnant after receiving her sentence and that she does not have a relationship with the father of the youngest child. She was in the process of divorcing her husband at the time of the murder. She stabbed her husband to death with a broken bottle.

The second participant is referred to as B.B. who is forty two years of age. She is also a Xhosa woman and had been sentenced for three years, and had served two at the time of the interview. She had a child from a previous relationship and was not married to the person she killed. She was residing in her own home but she was living with the abusive male partner for a period of three years. She stabbed her boyfriend with a knife and he died within forty eight hours thereafter.

Participant three is referred to as M.W. She is a Coloured women and thirty seven years of age. Her sentence entailed three years and at the time of the interviews she had only three months remaining. She was in the marriage and abusive relationship for a period of four years. She has two children from a previous marriage and a child (who was raised by her parents) after she fell pregnant while still in school. She beat her abusive husband with the handle of an axe and he died in the days that followed.

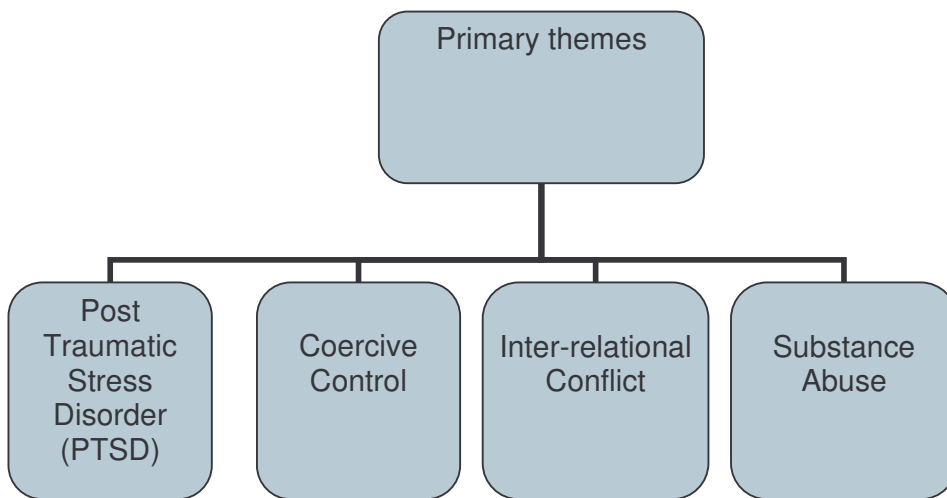
## **5.2 Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis entails the inspection of data in order to obtain insight into the phenomenon studied. It comprises of the breakdown of interviews or data into components to establish meaning. Furthermore, the components found are compared with additional data and literature to draw conclusions (Strydom, Fouchè & Delpont, 2002).

The following section illustrates the themes found in the interviews conducted with women who killed an abusive intimate male partner, within Pollsmoor Correctional Facility. The analysis' primary aim was to uncover psychological factors associated with women who kill an abusive male partner.

In order to obtain the themes present, the interviews were firstly reviewed individually to clarify possible themes. The interviews were then compared to establish whether the specific theme occurred throughout the responses of the sample. Themes were clustered together, and the remainder of the data analysed repeatedly to determine other possible details that refer to a particular theme. Lastly, themes were categorised in primary and secondary themes. Primary, being profound and overwhelming aspects while secondary refers to themes that are not as prominent, yet of importance. The primary themes present included: PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), Coercive Control, Substance Abuse and Inter-relational Conflict. Secondary themes which transpired consisted of Cultural Perceptions and Values as well as Lack of Resources and Support.

## 5.3 Primary Themes Identified



### 5.3.1 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The participants reported varying degrees of traumatic events and experiences with regards to domestic abuse. As noted in previous chapters (see Chapter 3), the experience of prolonged abuse results in the development of PTSD (Pico-Alfonso, 2005). The analysis of the primary theme of PTSD was conducted while consulting the description of PTSD symptomology according to the DSM-IV-R. The symptoms involve the encounter of intense fear and helplessness, repeated recalling of events and avoidance of stimuli that could be associated with the trauma. Individuals suffering from PTSD frequently feel overwhelmed and can therefore undergo a numbing of responses. Additional symptoms include depression, anxiety, hyper-vigilance and a lack of cognitive clarity. (Sadock & Sadock, 2003).

The emergence of PTSD is apparent as the participants comment on feelings of intense fear, nightmares, hyper-vigilance, anxiety and methods to numb the psychological effects of the experience of trauma. The participants did however, display relatively high levels of functioning as they were able to sustain employment and manage household tasks.

#### 5.3.1.1 Nightmares and flashbacks

*“I **dream** of that knife all the time.”* (Interview 2)

*“Alles speel soos ‘n **video** voor my af ek weet nie...ek weet nie.”*  
(Interview 3)

#### 5.3.1.2 Intense fear, anxiety and traumatisation

*“He say if I don’t go he will hit me and **kill me**.”*

*“He also say he will **stab** me again and **kill** my family. I was **scared** of this.”*

*“He said that Sangoma will **kill** me.”*

*“Just he was going to **stab** me. I was **scared** and drunk.”* (Interview 1)

*“He say he will **get me** with the knife. I sit inside because I am **scared** I think he can come in the night. I **don’t sleep**. “*

*“I say I don’t like abuse, he say he will **kill me**.”* (Interview 2)

*“Hy het vir my dae aanmekeer gesê hy **gaan vir my doodmaak**, en daar was ‘n **hammer** in die huis.”*

*“...ek het hom net so gekyk en vir hom gesê: “George maar jy is nou in die ding **om my dood te maak**, ek het gedink jy maak ‘n grappie”. Hy sê “Nee, M.W., as ek jou nie kan hê nie **maak ek jou dood**, ek gun jou vir geen ander man nie.”*

“Ek het geweet daai **byl is vir my**, dis nie om houtjies te kap nie. “

“...ek het elke dag **met vrees gelewe. Elke godelike dag.** Elke dag van George se lewe tot en met sy sterfte. “

“Hy het gesê hy **gaan my met petrol gooi**”

“Hy het twee keer **na my gekap met die byl.**” (Interview 3)

### 5.3.1.3 Helplessness

“Later, I phoned a social worker to **help me** and get the children out of that house. They **never came**. When I phoned again they said they are too busy.”

“I **tried to run** away but he finds me and hit me more. “(Interview 1)

“He say if I tell the peoples he can **kill me** I think he is **coming for me**. I will be **alone** in our place. “ (Interview 2)

“Toe het my man vir my ma en pa gaan sê dat hy vir my gaan doodmaak, ek het **nie geweet wanner dit sal wees nie** en dis hoekom ek **bang** was. Ek het nooit vir my ma-hulle vertel hoekom ek daardeur moet gaan nie, want **as ek met iemand sou praat**, ‘n priester of ‘n evangelis of enige iemand dan sal hulle met hom praat en dan sou hy uitvind ek het met iemand gepraat, en dit sal die **einde van my lewe** beteken.”

“...kon natuurlik iets daaraan doen maar **ek kan nie**, ek kan nie, op daai oomblik kan ek nie want ek is **gedreig met die dood.**”

“Ek het **probeer wegloop** op ‘n slag, maar ek het **nie geslaag** daarin nie. Hy het vir my teen die pad gekry, my opgelaai en ek het net weer pak gekry.”

“Iets doen om my te help om net **weg te kom** van hom af.”

*“Waantoe kan ek hardloop, **ek kan nie ver hardloop nie.**”*

*“Ek het **nie plek om na toe te gaan nie**, as ek van George weggaan het ek **nie werk nie**. Dis seer, dis baie seer. “*

*“...ek kan **niks doen** vir die kind nie, dan word ek geslaan.” (Interview 3)*

#### **5.3.1.4 Experiences of Prolonged Trauma**

*“He gets angry and **stab** me three times. He **hit** me all the time. He will drink beer and **hit** me or sometimes he will just **hit** me.”*

*“When I give the papers to my husband, he **stabbed** me. This was the fourth time he **stabbed** me. He **stabbed** me with a knife. “*

*“Then he started **hitting and stabbing** me.”*

*“...when I came in he **hit me and stabbed** me”*

*“...sometimes he will just **hit me.**”*

*“Then he **hit me**”*

*“Look all these **scars** on my body. “*

*“He **hit me all over** my body. “*

*“Then by December he started **hitting** me.” (Interview 1)*

*“Then I ask for the money he want to **stab** me.”*

*“Just he was going to **stab** me.”*

*“He also try to **stab** me another time with the knife. I run away.”*

*“When I go home he said I have other boyfriend. He **hit** me again”*

*“He **hit me all the time**”*

*“...and my boyfriend used to **hit** me. He hit me because I talk back. I say I don't like abuse”*

*“He wait when I get up and **hit** me.”*

*“He **hit** me when I visit”*

*“When he drink he **hit me a lot.**” (Interview 2)*

*“Um, ek het twee miskrame gehad en dit was as gevolg van die **abuse**. Hy het vir my **baie, baie abuse: sexual, physical, verbal...alles in een.**”*

*“...en die twee miskrame sou sy kinders gewees het maar ek het hulle verloor as gevolg van die **abuse**”*

*“...en het die kind aanskou hoe hy my **sexual abuse.**”*

*“en dan word ek net weer **geslaan en geslaan en geslaan.**”*

*“dan word ek **geslaan**”*

*“Here hoekom, hoekom moet dit gebeur? Ek gaan nie by die huis bly ter wille van hom nie, as ek dan moet **pak kry**, Here dan moet dit maar gebeur, **slaan my** dan nou.”*

*“As ek wakker word dan voel ek tog die **pyn, ek is seer, blou oë, gebreekte arms.**”*

*“Daai mense het my bygestaan en het getuig in die hof oor met watter **blou oë** ek werk toe gekom het. Een keer was my **arm gebreek** maar ek het werk toe gegaan en het gekyk of ek iets met een hand kon doen net om **geld te verdien**” (Interview 3)*



### 5.3.1.5 Lack of Cognitive Clarity

*“They will ask me what happened, but **I can’t remember** how I stabbed him. When I **woke up** I was standing with the bottle and there was a lot of blood.”*

(Interview 1)

*“I run away from that. I run away to the place ... I’m **sitting behind a drum**, after 20 minutes I go back to my place. I sit at my place. I **not remember** how I get the knife and do that thing of stabbing. “*

*“I **didn’t want to** kill him, I was just drunk.” (Interview 2)*

*“Toe **beseft ek** wat het ek gedoen en ek gaan nou tronk toe.”*

*“Ek wou dit **nie gedoen het nie**, ek het **nie beplan** om hom dood te maak **nie**.” (Interview 3)*

From the above it becomes clear that all the participants suffered symptoms associated with PTSD.

### 5.3.2 Coercive Control

The concept of coercive control was established by Biderman’s Chart of Coercion (1973). Therefore, the elements pertaining to coercion such as isolation, manipulation of perception, induced exhaustion; threats, occasional indulgence, demonstrating omnipotence, degradation and enforcing trivial demands illuminate the experiences of the participants. Furthermore, coercive control entails control of basic daily requirements such as food; medical care and shelter and regularly refusal to enter the

home. Many of these features correlate with the symptoms related to PTSD and features of coercive control was present in all the interviews.

### 5.3.2.1 Coercive control and threat

*“He say if I don’t go he will **hit me and kill me.**”*

*“He also say he **will stab me again and kill my family.**”*

*“He said that Sangoma **will kill me.**” (Interview 1)*

*“I say I don’t like abuse, he say he **will kill me.**”*

*“He say if I tell the peoples he **can kill me.**” (Interview 2)*

*“... op daai oomblik kan ek nie want ek is **gedreig met die dood.**”*

*“Toe het my man vir my ma en pa gaan sê dat hy vir **my gaan doodmaak...**”*

*“Hy het vir **my dae annemekaar gesê hy gaan vir my doodmaak,** en daar was ‘n hammer in die huis...”*

*“Nee, M.W, as ek jou nie kan hê nie **maak ek jou dood...**” (Interview 3)*

### 5.3.2.2 Negating Basic Needs and Male Monetary Power

*“My Boyfriend take **clothes and money** from me”*

*“...boyfriend come to work he say he’s going to **give me my money** and I wait I wait he **didn’t come to bring my money.**”*

*“He said **he got money but I must wait.** I wait and wait I want to use the flu medicine I **didn’t have money to buy my medicine.** “*

*“Then **I ask for the money** he want to stab me.”*

*“He **look after me with money** sometimes and I must not kill him.”*

*“But I still need him to **give some money** to pay taxi and buy food. He **help me** like that. He say I must love him for that money. “*

*“I **don’t have money** to go to work give me money to go to work.”*

*(Interview 1)*

*“My **geld wat ek verdien** het moes ek net so **vir hom gee**. As daar iets in die **huis op is**, kan ek hom nie gaan vra nie...ek kan nie. Ek moet **wag tot hy besluit om te koop** of net daarsonder klaar kom. Hy het **klere gekoop wat hy besluit het wat ek moet dra**...ek het dit nie gedra nie.” (Interview 3)*

### 5.3.2.3 Refusing Entry in the House

*“I went to my house but they put the **table in front of the door** and I crawled under the table to get in.” (Interview 1)*

*“Ons moes nagte deurgaan, dan was ons in die reën **uitgesluit**. Ons moet **buite staan sonder warm goed**, ek het maar net die kindertjies in my arms toegevou en gesê “Here help my, versag net George se hart” dat hy die deur vir ons kan **oop maak**. Na ‘n lang tyd, as die deur oop gaan, dan gaan ons in en dan word ek net weer geslaan en geslaan en geslaan.”*

*“Hoe moet ek op daai stadium voel, ek wat ‘n ma is. My kind **staan buite en dis koud**, wat kan gebeur met hom. Hy het nie omgee nie, hy’t sy eie **tyd gevat** en die deur gaan oopsluit, oop gemaak dat die **kind kan inkom**...baie ombeskof.” (Interview 3)*

### 5.3.3 Substance Abuse

It is observed that all the participants had abused alcohol as a means to manage their experience of the environment. As mentioned by Hoyle (2008) most domestically abusive relationships are signified by alcohol abuse, by both partners, and frequent intoxication.

*“He will **drink** beer and hit me or sometimes he will just hit me.”*

*“He says he is doing this because he loves you and he will change he does it when he **drinks**, he blames the liquor.”*

*“I **drink** a lot of beer and then I don’t remember all the times he hit me. Look all these scars on my body. When I **drink** I don’t feel these pains.”*

*“Then after I talked to them I started **drinking** a lot every day. I didn’t buy food, I just bought **liquor**. I even put it behind the headboard in the room so that my husband couldn’t drink it. I didn’t want them to **drink** my beer. Then my husband said to me that he got a Sangoma to out something in my **beer** and I was going to go crazy.” (Interview 1)*

*“Yes, because every Saturday we **drink** beer. When he **drink** he hit me a lot. Then I also **drink** for this hitting.”*

*“I only **drink** the Black Label **beer** because the **wine** can make you stink. **Beer** and cigarettes.”*

*“Then I **drink** beer. “*

*“I was scared and **drunk**. When we **drink** he hit me and there is fight. I didn’t want to kill him, I was just **drunk**. “(Interview 2)*

*“Ek het **gedrink**. Die rede hoekom ek baie **gedrink** het is omdat ek gedink het, okay ek gaan dit nie so erg voel as hy vir my slaan nie.”*

*“Ek het geweet, en nie verder gepraat daaroor nie, ek het geweet, hy gaan nou vir hom **dronk drink** en as ek terug kom gaan ek pak kry omdat ek alleen kerk toe gaan.”*

*“...ek het gesien, toe ek by die deur inkom, het ek gesien George is **gedrink**.”*

*“Toe vra ek: George waantoe? ...“ ons gaan **drink**”.”*

*“Ek het **gedrink** en saam met hom gegaan, en in ‘n smokkelhuis gaan sit. En terwyl hy daar sit en **drink**, het ek net gesê: Here asseblief, as dit my laaste dag vandag moet wees, laat dit net nie voor my kinders wees nie.”*

*“George kom ons loop ek is **dronk**. Maar ek het ook in my binneste geweet hy wil my **dronk** maak. Hy will hê ek moet **dronk** wees, dat dit vir hom makliker sal wees om my te kan vermoor.”*

*“Ek het gesê: nee, ek is **dronk** ek will gaan lê, ek moet gaan lê”*

*(Interview 3)*

### **5.3.4 Inter-relational Conflict**

Inter-relational conflict in the domestic context seems to be mainly due to male dominance, power and control over a subservient female. The abuse typically results due to the male counterpart suspecting the female of infidelity and sexual relations with other males (Hoyle, 2008). All participants interviewed reported inter-relational conflict.

*"I did **fight** back"*

*"My husband was very **jealous**. I ask him: "Why are you **jealous** of me, what is the problem of me speaking to that man?". He thinks every man is having an **affair with me**."*

*"He says he is doing this because he **loves** you and he will change he does it when he drinks, he blames the liquor."*

*"I must **cook and clean** the house otherwise he gets angry."*

*"He come closer and say I must **shut up and go clean** the house."  
(Interview 1)*

*"I was **fighting** with my boyfriend always when we were drunk he used to **fight** and hit me."*

*"When we drink he hit me and there is **fight**."*

*"He was **jealous**; he told me "I am **jealous** for you"*

*"He was **jealous**."*

*"My Boyfriend **take** clothes and money from me."*

*"Then I ask for the **money** he want to stab me"*

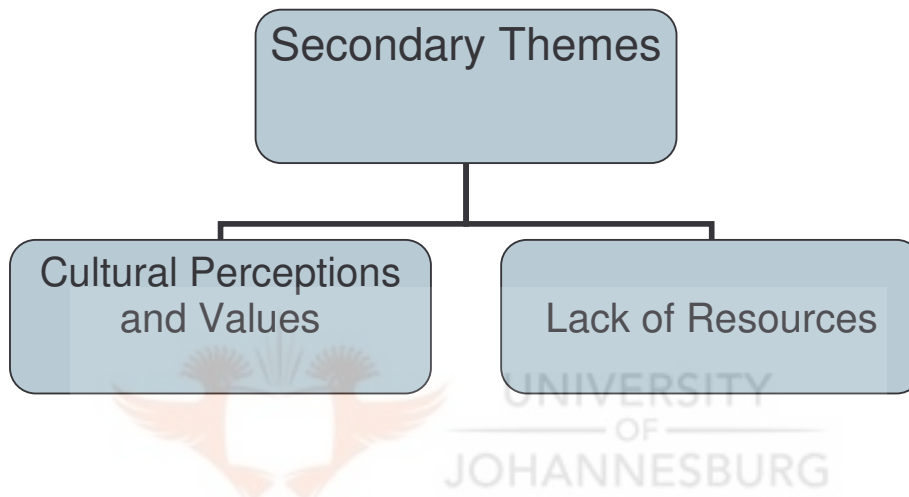
*"But I still need him to give some **money** to pay taxi and buy food."  
(Interview 2)*

*"My geld wat ek verdien het **moes ek net so vir hom gee**. As daar iets in die huis op is, kan ek hom **nie gaan vra nie**...ek kan nie. Ek moet wag tot **hy besluit** om te koop of net daarsonder klaar kom. Hy het klere gekoop wat **hy besluit het wat ek moet dra**...ek het dit nie gedra nie."*

*“Dit het nie gehelp ek praat met hom nie, dan is dit net **beledigings op beledigings**. Ek het my **werk verloor** omdat hy nie wil hê ek moet werk nie. Hy het my **verdink** van my baas, wat nie waar was nie.”*

*“Hy was ‘n baie **jaloerse** man...”* (Interview 3)

## 5.4 Secondary Themes



### 5.4.1 Cultural Perceptions and Values

A perception that seems to be prolific is that of women being subordinate in contrast to men being dominant. Okereke (2002) stipulates that cultural perceptions of women are mainly formed with the backdrop of domestic duties in mind. Women are expected to concentrate on domestic tasks as expected of her by a dominant male. Furthermore, battered women appear to be silenced by abuse. Shame was associated with the report of abuse and therefore disclosure is avoided (Manga, Pengrid & Peltzer, 2003). Cultural norms and shame appears to be related as it prevents many women from leaving such relationships. The effect of feelings of shame is profound in maintaining an abusive relationship. Culture dictates the

aspects that should be viewed shameful and thus contribute to the problem (Mills, 2008).

#### 5.4.1.1 Cultural Perceptions of Domestic Chores and Male Dominance

*(One of the participants reported the following)*

*“He come closer and say I must shut up and **go clean the house.**”*

*“I must **cook and clean** the house otherwise he gets angry.”*

#### 5.4.1.2 Cultural Perceptions Regarding the Tolerance of Abuse and Staying within an Abusive Relationship

*(Two participants reported the following)*

*“She just said **I must stay by this husband.**”*

*“No, only my sister when I told him he said if you do something you must pay. If he hit you, you **must stay by that house.** Even if he not marry me I must not do naughty stuff. I **must work in the house.** I mustn't do the thing to make him angry.”*

#### 5.4.3 Cultural Norms and Shame Associated with Abuse

*(This was confirmed by all participants)*

*“She just said **I must stay by this husband.**” (Interview 1)*

*“...and my sister is married **I don't want to go to my sister's house always.**”*

*“No, only my sister when I told him he said if you do something you must pay. If he hit you, you **must stay by that house.** Even if he not marry me I must not do naughty stuff. I **must work in the house.** I mustn't do the thing to make him angry.”*



*“When I say to stop then he stands outside my house **shouting names** and **bad stuff** about me. My **neighbours come out** and see he is shouting like this. He shout stuff like he will get me and then in the morning when I wake up he is at my house again.”* (Interview 2)

*“**Ek is moeg van mense wat die hele tyd sien ek hardloop weg uit my huis uit.**”* (Interview 3)

#### 5.4.2 Lack of Resources and Support

Serran and Firestone (2004) stated that, females who kill an abusive intimate partner often lack social and legal resources. Due to the lack of resources, women kill a partner as a means of self-preservation and to gain control over a potentially dangerous situation. They are mostly isolated and do not have friends or community resources to assist them.

*“I didn’t, but my father tell my husband I will go to the **police.**”*

*“Then after he stabbed me I did go to the **police** for the stabbing. The **police** did come to the house but they say I must **drop the charges** because he was drunk and didn’t know what he was doing. “*

*“Later, I phoned a **social worker** to help me and get the children out of that house. They **never came**. When I **phoned again** they said they are **too busy.** “*

*“Yes, I tell my mother but we don’t have a good relationship. She **just said I must stay** by this husband. I had good relationship with father not with mother. My mother say **I must do different for this situation**. My father say **I must lay charges.**”*

*“I did speak to them and they say I must **stay there.**”* (Interview 1)

*“No, I **didn’t have a family**,...”*

*“My boyfriend was my **only family**. He say I must **not have friends**. He hit me when I **visit** .”*

*“No, only my sister when I told him he said **if you do something you must pay**. If he hit you, you must **stay by that house**.” (Interview 2)*

*“Ek kon **nie praat met enigeen nie**, of **polisie toe kon gaan nie**. Iets doen **om my te help** om net weg te kom van hom af. Ek het probeer **wegloop** op ‘n slag, maar ek het **nie geslaag** daarin nie.”*

*“Ek het **nie plek om na toe te gaan nie**, as ek van George weggaan het ek **nie werk nie**.”*

*“**Waantoe kan ek hardloop, ek kan nie ver hardloop nie**.” (Interview 3)*

## 5.5 Chapter Summary

The chapter provides an analysis of the themes associated with the psychological factors involved in women who kill an abusive partner. The data, in the form of interviews, yielded two category themes, namely primary and secondary themes. The primary themes consisted of PTSD, Coercive Control, Substance Abuse and Inter-relational Conflict. These themes give insight into the psychological factors involved in female perpetrated homicide within the domestic abuse context. Furthermore, the secondary themes derived encompassed Cultural Perceptions and Values related to abuse, Shame associated with abuse and a Lack of Resources and Support.

The chapter which follows will provide a discussion of the themes found as well as how the results relate to literature and relevant research.



## Chapter 6

### Discussion of Themes

*"That it should come to this!"*

*Hamlet (Act I, Scene II).*

The current study postulated that certain psychological factors are associated with the phenomenon of women who kill an abusive male partner, within the domestic context. In addition to discovering the psychological factors associated with the above mentioned killings, the research aimed at taking culture into account. It was hypothesised that culture, particularly in South Africa, could play a role in the formation of perceptions and therefore have an effect on the behaviour of females who kill an abusive male partner. The data was gathered by means of interviews and thematic analysis utilised to derive meaningful conclusions.

In this chapter, the themes found in this study are discussed as well as how the findings relate to prior research.

#### **6.1 Discussion of Primary Themes**

##### **6.1.1 Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

A compelling theme in the current research is the occurrence of PTSD symptoms. The literature reviewed in previous chapters (see Chapter 2 & 3) support these findings as it appears to be present in most cases of severe

abuse. The current study postulates that the existence of PTSD symptomology is a possible psychological factor associated with the killing of an abusive partner due to certain aspects such as disorganised thoughts, hyper-vigilance, anxiety and intense fear. However, the symptoms are often overlooked as cultural perceptions of the effects of abuse contradict the impact of exposure to prolonged maltreatment (Jewkes et al. 2002).

As seen in the description of symptoms and development of PTSD by Sadock and Sadock (2003) PTSD relates to experiencing, witnessing or hearing of a traumatic event or stressor. The symptoms involve the experience of intense fear and helplessness, repeated recalling of events and avoidance of stimuli that could be associated with the trauma. Furthermore, aspects such as diminished interest in certain activities, inability to recall important details of the trauma, exaggerated startle response and intense psychological distress is included (Friedman, 2006). This was noticeable in the analysis of the interviews that all participants reported symptoms of PTSD. The symptoms included flashbacks, intense anxiety, lack of cognitive clarity and hyper-vigilance to perceived and real threat.

The analysis of the interviews in addition, yielded that all of the participants experienced intense domestic abuse. This included physical, verbal and sexual maltreatment. The participants endured this trauma for prolonged periods of time and in escalating degrees and the domestic abuse commenced shortly after the relationship was formed. The abuse was characterised by intense physical injury such as battery and stabbings.

The effects of such trauma have profound effects, as a single violent episode could produce PTSD (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). Therefore the collective effect of continuous battery results in adverse consequences as Beasley et al. (2003) comment. It is noted that prolonged exposure to traumatic events has a cumulative effect and therefore impacts the level of coping. Friedman (2006) support these findings by stating that the incidence of multiple traumas in domestic abuse is not uncommon and should be taken in account when intervening.

The cumulative exposure of domestic abuse, which is associated with PTSD, is largely related to four aspects. The first being that domestic abuse is characterised by prolonged battery as it is a gradual process which escalates in intensity (The Harvard Women's Health Watch, 2006). Secondly, situational factors come into play. Such aspects include the financial and emotional dependence of battered women in the domestic arena, as well as cultural perceptions that inform women to stay in abusive relationships (Ludsin, 2003). Thirdly, battered women are often fearful of the abuser and have received numerous threats (Turchetta & Duncan, 2008). Lastly, the available resources to battered women around the world, and particularly South Africa, are extremely limited.

The participants in the current study reported staying in the relationships for many years as they feared for their lives and those they hold dear. Additionally, they have sourced numerous avenues to seek help, which did not alleviate their situation. Taken the above into account it can be argued that the exposure to intense domestic abuse, over a prolonged period of time contributes to the development of PTSD in some victims of domestic abuse.

Therefore, the possibility to develop PTSD is heightened. Furthermore, the existence of PTSD (see section 6.1.3) in battered women could be associated with the behaviour of women who kill an abusive male intimate partner. This is supported by Kachaeva (2008) who reveals that women who killed an abusive male partner, in most cases suffer from PTSD.

As mentioned above, domestic abuse appears to develop gradually and the abuser is able to entrap women to stay within the relationship. The entrapment is however, constructed by utilising methods such as coercive control.

### **6.1.2 Coercive Control**

In addition to PTSD, the experience of coercive measures came to the fore in the themes obtained. Coercive control entails the use of certain tactics to exert power over a victim. These strategies comprise of absolute domination and subjugation of the victim, psychological battery, deprivation of sleep and threats to kill the victim while she is asleep, torture, threat to kill the victim, provoke anxiety and create total isolation. Exposure to the above mentioned devices could bring about psychological change (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005).

The participants interviewed reported being subjected to social isolation, being incessantly threatened and exposed to methods of psychological torment. Participants were dominated and experienced shame, anxiety provoking situations and attempts to end their life. The women interviewed seem to have familiarity of this over a number of years. Threats to kill their children, to end their lives, refusal to food, medical attention and shelter, emotional exploitation and physical torment were the strategies inflicted

upon the victims.

Coker et al. (2002) specify that the effects of abuse in terms of physical and mental health are severe, regardless of cultural background or community. Therefore, the effects of abuse and in particular coercive control are undeniable. Such effects are reported on by Gailliot et al. (2006) explain that the ability to manage a stressful situation relies on the coping strategies of the individual. However, the exposure to prolonged stressors diminishes the ability to cope with anxiety and trauma. Beasley et al. (2003) comment on the relationship between life stress and psychological health. Coping style and hardiness is found to be directly associated with the development of mental illness and psychological distress. It is mentioned that the style of coping could be directly linked to the perception of the stressor as well as the manner in which the event is managed.

From the interviews, the conclusion can be made that the participants had experienced coercive control and that they had suffered the effects thereof. Due to the prolonged exposure to coercive tactics the depletion of coping mechanisms can be assumed. Coping mechanisms might have been less constructive (such as alcohol abuse), hence acting in the manner they did. This compares with the findings of McFarlane, Campbell and Watson (2002) that a correlation exists between domestic abuse, death threats and the killing of an abusive partner. The impact of death threats or an attempt to kill the victim is profound. Conversely, when self-preservation is at stake the individuals seem to act in a mode to survive (Miller & Mulligan, 2002).



### 6.1.3 Inter-relational Conflict

Serran and Firestone (2004) comment that intimate partner homicide is predominately typified by relationship difficulties and extreme conflict. Furthermore, Turchetta and Duncan (2008) comment that female homicide offenders report that they are more likely to kill their partners due to exposure to the violent behaviour of the abuser. Women, who are continuously victimized and exposed to prolonged periods of abuse, therefore have a statistically higher propensity to become a perpetrator (Serran & Firestone, 2004).

In addition to relationship difficulties, inter-relational conflict within the domestic environment seems to be characterised by certain aspects. Tshesane (2001) explain that domestic abuse is based on female subordination and intense conflict. Any action by the female that appears to be in contrast with the demands of the dominant male creates tension and discord (Jewkes, 2002). Conflict in these unions revolves around domestic tasks not fulfilled and suspicions of infidelity. Relationship disputes vary in degrees of intensity, however, are often related to female role transgression and mistrust (Okereke, 2002). Nangolo and Peltzer (2003) confirm these findings and mention that within South Africa the most prolific reason for inter-relational conflict and domestic abuse centres on the abuser's accusations that the female does not want to continue a relationship and thoughts of infidelity.

In the interviews analysed the participants mentioned inter-relational conflict as a normative experience. Often the conflict coincided with the abuse of

alcohol and physical battery. Aspects such as suspicion of infidelity and jealousy by the male partners were found throughout. The women interviewed displayed submission towards the dominant male, and not gender role transgressions as seen in previous research.

Thus, the relevance of inter-relational conflict in the occurrence of female perpetrated homicide of an abusive male partner becomes apparent. The escalation of conflict among partners, the submissive nature of the females and alcohol intake combine to form an explosive situation. The conflict appears to reach a point where the participants committed the murders in defence and as a means to survive. The events were thus not planned and the escalation of tension contributed to the behaviours displayed. Due to this, it can be assumed that inter-relational conflict is a psychological factor associated with the killing of an intimate male partner.

### **6.1.3 Substance Abuse**

The relationship between domestic abuse and substance dependence has been noted by numerous researchers (Diaz-Olavarrieta et al., 2002; Coker et al., 2002; Jewkes et al., 2002; Harvard Women's Health Watch, 2006). Furthermore, substance abuse within the domestic context is related to the development of PTSD and various other mental health disorders (Moore et al., 2007). Additionally, a variety of incarcerated women who killed an abusive intimate male partner, report that they were substance dependant during the time of the murder and that they had induced alcohol (Ludsin & Vetten, 2005).

The third prolific theme present in the interviews conducted is that of substance abuse and frequent intoxication. All the participants comment that they had used alcohol extensively and that during conflict with a partner, alcohol had been taken prior to the quarrel. The discord seems to intensify when a substance is involved, which then resulted in physical abuse. The physical injury appeared to be more forceful and extreme when the abuser was intoxicated. In addition, the intake of alcohol by the victims served as a means to numb physical and psychological pain and can thus be described as a means of coping.

Moore et al.(2007) comment that a direct relation exists between intimate partner aggression and the use of substances. As seen in the themes derived in the current research, the intensity and extremity of abuse escalates when the abuser is intoxicated. In addition, female substance dependence seems to correlate with experiences of trauma and abuse. Similarly, the extremity of abuse, in addition, relates to the gravity of dependence and thus substance intake was directly correlated to trauma consequences (Liebschultz et al., 2002). Physical abuse tends to increase the amount of substance intake dramatically and alcohol was ingested rather than other substances within the domestic abuse context. Furthermore, Najavits (2003) and Hamilton and Newman (2007) give an account that women diagnosed with PTSD due to domestic abuse display a significant relationship with alcohol dependence. Morrissey (2005) report similar findings but adds that in conjunction with the substance dependence found in women who are domestically abused, there is a parallel with the development of mental health issues. Within South Africa, comparable findings transpire as physical abuse and alcohol consumption are highly

correlated. The impact of substance abuse during conflict in the domestic setting can impair judgement, cloud the interpretation of cues and reduce inhibitions (Jewkes, 2002).

As mentioned above, the participants reported domestic abuse and subsequent substance dependence and use. This coincides with prior research findings which relate abuse and alcohol intake. Due to the extent of intake and the prolonged period of intoxication it is argued that certain negative consequences are evident. The dependence is due to the abuse suffered, and the intake of alcohol, in turn correlates with mental health disorders such as PTSD. Serran and Firestone (2004) point out those women who are subjected to frequent severe abuse resort to alcohol, as it functions as a coping mechanism. Thus, due to intoxication and underlying disorders, victims have impaired decision-making and coping abilities. The dependence on substances can therefore be described as a factor associated with women who kill an abusive partner.

## **6.2 Secondary themes**

### **6.2.1 Cultural Perceptions related to Domestic Abuse**

The impact of culture as a possible factor associated with the killing of an abusive intimate partner must be acknowledged. Tshesane (2002) accounts that cultural norms and values inform the manner in which domestic abuse is perceived and dealt with. Within the current research, culture refers to Black African culture, as the data obtained made particular reference to the values associated with the Xhosa participants. Within this cultural group, patriarchal structures and female submission seems to be valued.

Information regarding the third participant's cultural orientation was limited, thus putting the focus on Black African Culture.

Women are informed by cultural values that they are to blame for domestic abuse, as they did not show respect to their male partners. Makofane (2002); Faramarzi, Esmailzadeh and Mosavi (2005) concurs by stating that culture emphasis respect and male aggression, thus legitimising domestic abuse. It appears that in a patriarchal society, males are rewarded for their dominance and this could be ascribed as a reason for the maintenance of physical abuse (Gauthier & Bankston, 2004). Rothenberg (2002) states that culture entraps women in abusive relationships as it conditions women to believe that termination and abuse is shameful. This impedes help seeking and intervention. The effects of abuse, such as mental illness and psychological difficulties, are likewise informed by culture and have a limiting outcome in terms of help seeking.

Observing mental health within the context of culture does, however, impact on the manifestation and help seeking behaviour. Taking into account that women who report and seek help in terms of spousal abuse, are often excluded from customary networks and support. Furthermore, the stigmatization of mental illness is a reality in many cultures and thus illustrates that mental illness is exasperated by culture and restricts obtaining treatment (Fischbach & Herbert, 1997). Shame in terms of abuse as well as leaving an abusive relationship is additionally culturally shaped. The victims are orientated to feel great shame in reporting abuse and leaving a partner and if such actions are taken the victims are shunned and rejected (Makofane, 2002; Tshesane, 2002).

The participants report feelings of shame when discussing the abuse with family members and seeking refuge with them. Having to appear in public, while bearing scars created humiliation. The shame of neighbours being aware of the abuse was mentioned. Furthermore, one participant was encouraged by family members to stay with the abuser as it was expected of her. The family members made it known that the abuse was her fault and her actions inflicted this upon her.

As culture informs perceptions surrounding abuse, it in addition, also informs which methods of help seeking are appropriate. Culture thus limits the options available to abused women, making the escape from an abusive relationship difficult. It therefore seems that cultural perceptions influences the possible actions that domestically abused women can take and thus acts as a factor associated with women who kill an abusive partner.

### **6.2.2 Lack of Resources and Support**

Beasley et al. (2003) found that women who have access to support networks have the ability to employ enhanced coping mechanisms compared to women who are less supported. However, culture dictates the level of support abused women are entitled to as well as the resources available (Rothenberg, 2002).

According to Jensen (2001) a lack of support and an increase in isolation heightens the risk for females to engage in lethal violence. Women who are

secluded from interaction and support are left vulnerable, which limit their ability to manage the extremities of abuse.

Moe (2004) who argues that culture informs help-seeking, states that the lack of available resources to women in certain cultural groups restricts these women's escape from abusive relationships. Due to the constraints the abused women are forced to utilise alternative measures to provide safety for themselves. The author argues that the above mentioned compel women to criminal behaviour; and therefore female criminality should be viewed in the context of abuse. Messing and Heeren (2004) state that abused women who lack resources and support, often revert to violence out of desperation. Serran and Firestone (2004) agree as they found that female homicide offenders, who killed an abusive partner, state that they had little or no social support. They are mostly isolated and do not have friends or community resources to assist them.

As mentioned in the previous section, reporting abuse is perceived as shameful and is avoided most of the time. In addition, help seeking proved to be ineffective and fruitless (Amoakohene, 2004). In the current study the participants made use of the South African Police Service, social workers, family and friends. All these avenues proved to be unreliable and the formal protection structures, such as police, could not be trusted. Thus, the lack of support due to cultural perceptions and unavailability was a factor that contributed to the course of events and chosen behaviour.

### 6.3 Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined the themes found in the interviews as well as a discussion of the themes in relation to relevant research. The discussion highlighted the psychological factors associated with killing an abusive partner. The following chapter will draw a conclusion and critically evaluate the current study. Furthermore, suggestions for future research will proceed.





## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusions, Critical Evaluation**

#### **And Suggestions.**

##### **7.1 Conclusion**

To conclude, the research conducted included case study method and comprised of participants who were incarcerated due to the killing of an abusive male intimate partner. Three in-depth interviews were conducted and the Pollsmoor Correctional Facility served as a means of accessing the participants. The research was aimed at uncovering possible psychological factors underlining the killing of an abusive partner, while taking culture into account. This was done within the South-African context, as a limited amount of research in the domain of female perpetrated homicide of an abusive male partner locally, exists.

The interviews were transcribed; analysed, interpreted and certain themes were derived. The themes were then compared and discussed at the hand of relevant findings in the field, in order to obtain an understanding of the phenomenon studied. The most prolific themes that came to the fore were that of the presence of PTSD symptoms, exposure to Coercive Control, Inter-relational Conflict and Substance Abuse.

The results indicated that the abused women interviewed presented with symptoms associated with PTSD such as hyper-vigilance, anxiety, intense fear, due to the exposure of prolonged physical trauma. In light of the prolific

occurrence of domestic abuse and the effects of intense trauma, these findings concurred with research regarding the related topic. A state of hyper-vigilance influences the perceptions and cognitions with regards to perceived danger and hence has an impact on actions. It was found that prolonged contact with physical and emotional brutality seems to influence cognitive clarity and psychological well being.

The use of coercive control was encountered on a regular basis, as this is a means by which the abuser dominated the victim. The methods utilised and experienced by the participants, included the deprivation of basic needs, social isolation, physical and emotional torment and continuous threats to end the women's lives. The effects of exposure to coercive control produce psychological change and in some cases the development of pathology. The current study proved that the participants had been subjected to coercive control, and that the consequences thereof (such as intense anxiety, fear and physical exhaustion), could be implicated as a factor which motivated the women to kill the abuser.

Inter-relational conflict was additional to the main themes observed. The relationships tended to be marked by high levels of conflict and this occurred in conjunction with substance abuse. Female subservience was noted as well as the male partners accusing the victims of abuse of infidelity. Jealousy and conflict escalation signified these relationships, which in turn intensified the abuse suffered. The escalation and extremity of the conflict in the relationships seem to have compelled the participants to act in defence.

The use of substances, particularly alcohol was observed. This was utilised by the participants as a means to numb the physical and psychological pain. However, the use of substances can bring about psychological change and impair cognitive abilities. Hence, the intoxication could be associated with the murder as participants reported being intoxicated prior or during the murder.

The secondary themes entail cultural norms and values which colour perceptions with regards to abuse. Within the community setting it appears that male dominance and abuse is condoned and therefore cultural and values of subservience are entrenched. These norms and values appear to entrap women and killing the abuser seems to be the means of escape and self-preservation. Cultural perceptions, in addition, determine the means which are acceptable to the participants when seeking help. The cultural structures dictate the termination of abusive relationships as well as shame associated with it.

Lastly, lack of resources and isolation was observed. The participants pursued several avenues of support. These included formal means (police, social workers etc.) and informal possibilities (family and friends). These proved to be unsuccessful and disappointing. The cultural norms, shame and availability of support and resources were inter-related and the study concluded that the participants killed the abusive partner as an act of desperation.

In summary, domestic abuse is a growing and intensifying problem globally but in particular in South Africa. The abusive relationship is maintained and

women are entrapped by tactics employed by the abuser, situational aspects and cultural norms. These aspects ensure that prolonged abuse takes place with incidences of immense brutality.

## **7.2 Critical Evaluation and Suggestions for Future Research**

A critical assessment of the current research is necessary as it provides insight into potential enhancement and progress in the field of research concerning abuse and the psychological factors associated with the killing of an abusive intimate partner.

The information obtained could be seen as a strength related to this research. The information has depth, as it provides the researcher with an idea of what the participants experienced. This was done in a relatively less intrusive manner, as the participants disclosed information they felt comfortable with. In addition, it provides a broader understanding of a topic which is often perceived as cold and technical. The research provided a glimpse of what the impact of culture is, within South Africa, which few other studies have attained. This could inform preventative and intervention programs in the future.

A possible weakness in the research includes involvement of the researcher in the process, which could be seen as reporting in a biased manner. Furthermore, culture is a wide and varied field thus making the identification and description thereof difficult.

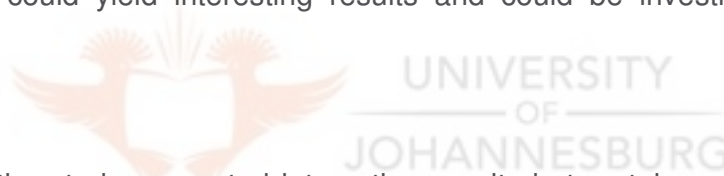
Certain aspects could be improved upon. The first aspect involves the

sample size. The research could benefit from a larger sample of participants which could lead to greater applicability. The interviews conducted presented in-depth information, yet a larger sample could supply breadth in terms of population characteristics.

The methodology could include a quantitative component which might contribute to the diversity of the information obtained. Strategies such as psychometric tests could be incorporated to determine coping mechanisms, clinical PTSD symptomology and personality features.

Thirdly, the component associated with cultural norms and values could be expanded and broadened. Cultural practices and rituals with regards to abuse could yield interesting results and could be investigated in more detail.

Thus, the study generated interesting results but certain expansions could be made. It is recommended that future research takes the results of the current study into consideration especially where the implementation of intervention is concerned. The role of perceptions and culture is significant and should be taken into account when intervening on a therapeutic level. Furthermore, the current research could be useful within the correctional facilities as it gives a glimpse of the multifaceted layers present in abused women killing a partner. On a national level, it is suggested that the experiences of lack of resources should be addressed as well as the manner in which it is accessible to abused women. Furthermore, the early identification of psychological factors mentioned in the research, should be pursued in order to prevent female perpetrated homicide of abusive

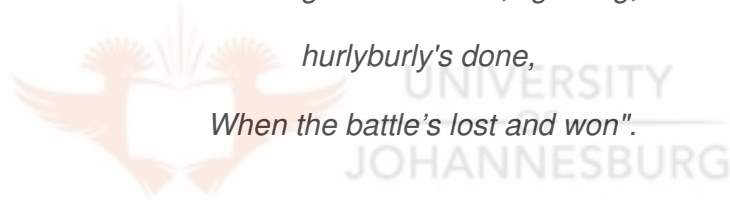


partners.

Thus, the research results gathered implies that the killing of an abusive male partner is influenced by many factors. However, these factors have a profound and extreme impact on domestically abused women. Abused women are often compelled to transform from the victim to the perpetrator due to self-preservation. It is within this light, that one is to realise that the killing of an abusive partner is never simple or uncomplicated.

One aspect, however, is that it starts with domestic abuse. Should the battle against the maltreatment of females not gain more attention?

*"When shall we three meet again in thunder, lightning, or in rain? When the  
hurlyburly's done,  
When the battle's lost and won".*



*Macbeth (Act I, Scene I)*

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## Appendix A

### Interviews of Women Battered Women who killed an Abusive Male Partner, within Pollsmoor Correctional Facility

*(Please note that the interviews were transcribed exactly as the participants conveyed it. The interviews are not grammatically correct but the spoken language of the participants)*

#### **Interview 1:**

**J.K.: 35 years**

My name is J.K. and I am here for murder. I got sentenced to 6 years, but I have served 5 years. I kill my husband. I suspected he had an affair...affair with another lady. He always denied it. On the day of the murder I saw them together. I checked at the house.

I went to my house but they put the table in front of the door and I crawled under the table to get in. I go to the big bedroom. Push the door open and saw the lady naked lying with my husband on the bed. I ask what is going on. My husband get up and start throwing stuff to me. He say I can't ask this thing because he is the husband. He come closer and say I must shut up and go clean the house. He say this sleeping with another lady is his business. He say if I don't go he will hit me and kill me. He get very angry and grab my throat. I saw a bottle, it was a 500 bottle. Don't know it was Coke or what. I broke bottle on my husband's head and stabbed him with the bottle.

While I was busy stabbing the lady scream and I stopped. There was blood all over...the floor everywhere. I didn't think I will kill him...it just happen. I phone the police and my neighbour he also phone police. They asked questions. They took me to the station for detention. Went to court on Monday they gave me R2000 bail. August twenty third 2002...6 years for this murder.

*Did your husband ever abuse you?*

Yes, a lot.

*Do you want to tell me about this?*

In 1991 my cousin's boyfriend came late on Sunday afternoon. I gave him 30 pack of cigarettes. My husband asked why I gave it to him. He gets angry and stab me three times. He hit me all the time. He will drink beer and hit me or sometimes he will just hit me. I must cook and clean the

house otherwise he gets angry. I tried to run away but he finds me and hit me more.

In 1998 I was in process of divorce. My friend help me to get that papers and get away. We were together for eighteen years. We have two children together. My children are eighteen and fourteen now. I speak to them but I am still waiting for them to come visit. When I give the papers to my husband, he stabbed me. This was the fourth time he stabbed me. He stabbed me with a knife.

*Why did you take the abuse?*

He says he is doing this because he loves you and he will change. He does it when he drinks, he blames the liquor. He says I am seeing these other men when I come from work. Then he hit me. I didn't see anybody. I just walk home from work. He also say he will stab me again and kill my family. I was scared of this. When I tell my family he hits me, they say I must stay with him otherwise the people will think I am a bad wife. Just my friend later helped me with the papers of the divorce.

I drank too when he started to fight and hit me. I drink a lot of beer and then I don't remember all the times he hit me. Look all these scars on my body. When I drink I don't feel these pains. He hit me all over my body.

*Was he abusive from the start?*

We meet at a party in 1982 and he asked me to be his girlfriend. About 2 weeks I didn't give him the answer. I was still in school. Then because of the 1985 riots I couldn't go back. I stayed with my family, with my father. This my first time to be in love. In June 1991 we got married. Then by December he started hitting me. I don't know what got to him.

I use to talk to the neighbour that help me with transport. My husband was very jealous. I ask him: "Why are you jealous of me, what is the problem of me speaking to that man?". He thinks every man is having an affair with me. He thinks I am denying it. Then he started hitting and stabbing me.

*Did you tell anybody about this?*

Yes, I tell my mother but we don't have a good relationship. She just said I must stay by this husband. I had good relationship with father not with mother. My mother say I must do different for this situation. My father say I must lay charges. I didn't but my father tell my husband I will go to the police. Then that afternoon when I come back from work I saw the door a little bit open. My husband was behind the door and when I came in he hit me and stabbed me because he said I went to the police. I did fight back. Then after he stabbed me I did go to the police for the stabbing. The police did come to the house but they say I must drop the charges because he was drunk and didn't know what he was doing.

I wasn't scared that he would hurt the children, but the children were scared for me. He'd take the children away but didn't hurt them. Later, I phoned a



social worker to help me and get the children out of that house. They never came. When I phoned again they said they are too busy.

*Your Culture, does it tell you what to do in these types of situations?*

I'm a Xhosa. We believe if you have a problem you must speak to the elders and your family. I did speak to them and they say I must stay there. Also my daddy use to hit my mommy like that, but he stopped when I was eighteen. He also had many affairs. I saw a lot of this so I didn't want to get married. Then after I talked to them I started drinking a lot every day. I didn't buy food, I just bought liquor. I even put it behind the headboard in the room so that my husband couldn't drink it. I didn't want them to drink my beer. Then my husband said to me that he got a Sangoma to out something in my beer and I was going to go crazy. He said that Sangoma will kill me. It didn't happen.

*How do you think the community will treat you once you have been released?*

I don't know. Maybe they have forgotten. But I won't live I there; I will go to the rural area. They will ask me what happened, but I can't remember how I stabbed him. When I woke up I was standing with the bottle and there was a lot of blood. I want to take my kids and live somewhere else. Maybe they will say I got a Sangoma to help me kill my husband. I didn't. I know I must pay for this crime but I am not sorry because I am free of that abuse. I know you shouldn't kill someone.

It is lunch time, I need to go.



## ***Interview 2:***

**B.B. : 42 years**

My name is B.B

I'm here to kill my boyfriend. I have a 2 year sentence left. I stayed in Kayalitsha until 2002. I was fighting with my boyfriend always when we were drunk he used to fight and hit me. At the start I'm working everyday, a char job.

My Boyfriend take clothes and money from me. On the Tuesday I didn't go to work, I come from work because I had the flu. On the Friday (previous) my boyfriend come to work he say he's going to give me my money and I wait I wait he didn't come to bring my money.

I just sent my dear child to go to look for my boyfriend, she didn't find him. I walk to the back I go to look my boyfriend. I found him he was sleeping at our place and he said to me he's coming. He said he got money but I must wait. I wait and wait I want to use the flu medicine I didn't have money to buy my medicine.

Then I ask for the money he want to stab me. I grabbed him and took the knife I stabbed him. I saw the blood in the one room in the mat. When I saw the blood I just cried aloud. The people were coming in. His brother come to me and ask me what are you doing here. I run away from that. I run away to the place ... I'm sitting behind a drum, after 20 minutes I go back to my place. I sit at my place. I not remember how I get the knife and do that thing of stabbing.

Saturday I didn't go to work, cos usually I work everyday and Sunday. I didn't work. Monday when I come from work I hear to my friend my boyfriend is dead

It was late. At something to seven I went to my family I told my family and on Tuesday morning I went to my bosses and I tell my bosses, from there I went to the police station and tell them I kill my boyfriend; and then they look it in a file. They phone to the hospital they couldn't find a person, I said yes I do it you must check it properly, They check it properly they find my boyfriend he's dead.

He died in 48 hours. I went to the court from the court I went to the ...I stayed 11 months. I killed him on 5 June. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of June I went to the court station. The Judge charge me 3 years in Prison.

*Did your boyfriend abuse you?*

A Lot

*Do you want to tell me about that?*

I'm staying at my old place I'm working every day char jobs. Monday to Monday.

In the beginning if I come from work my boyfriend ask me why you come late from work? NO I'm not married to you. If you love me you can marry me you can't ask me like that. You can't ask me now because I'm free; and my boyfriend used to hit me. He hit me because I talk back. I say I don't like abuse, he say he will kill me. And I said if you do like this you can go. And early in the morning he come to my place before I go to work. He wait when I get up and hit me. He say he will stab me if I be like that to him. My boyfriend sometimes get drunk.... I didn't know that, I take him back, the last day I do that I kill my boyfriend, I didn't mean I want to kill.

*How long were you together with your boyfriend?*

It was three years.

*In the three years did you ever go to the police and tell them that he hit you and that he abused you?*

No, because I didn't want my boyfriend to come into the jail because I was in love my boyfriend. Also he tell me he will die if I throw him out. He was jealous. He said he loves me and I can't find other boyfriend. I will be alone in our place.

*Did you tell your family about it?*

No, I didn't have a family, my younger sister and only my sister, and my sister is married. I don't want to go to my sister's house always. My boyfriend was my only family. He say I must not have friends. He hit me when I visit. I must come straight after work.

*And then after it happened what were you feeling?*

I was feeling angry because I didn't mean he was going to die because sometimes when he gets job he helps me too much because I don't really have a family, if I'm sick he can give me money to go to the hospital, if I find I don't have money to buy food he use to give me money. I didn't want to kill him. Just he was going to stab me. I was scared and drunk. When we drink he hit me and there is fight. I didn't want to kill him, I was just drunk.

*Did you know his family?*

Yes.

*How was your relationship with his family?*

His Mama used to love me and her brother used to love me, but the time I do this; because when I fetch the water I pass their house and she would come to the shop past my house, if I'm sitting in front or I'm doing my washing she said you're better because you can do the washing. She said "where is my child" I didn't answer my boyfriend's mother I just went to the back and cry, because I knew I was wrong they say these things to me all the time. They hate me cos I take her son. They don't believe me. They say he didn't hit me or stab me. They will not forgive me.

*If you have to think about what culture you belong to what would you say, what is the culture you belong to?*

I'm Xhosa

*And in your culture do they say something about being abused or killing a partner, is there anything in your culture that says something to you about that?*

No, only my sister when I told him he said if you do something you must pay. If he hit you, you must stay by that house. Even if he not marry me I must not do naughty stuff. I must work in the house. I mustn't do the thing to make him angry. He look after me with money sometimes and I must not

kill him. I am sorry for that thing. She said nobody said I must kill my boyfriend, I must come to the jail.

*She wants you to pay for the crime?*

Yes

*How does it make you feel if she says stuff like that to you?*

She's supposed to do a thing like that because I didn't want to run and go because, I don't know I really don't know. They must say that because I do that thing. I must pay. I say he try to stab me also, but she say that I hurt his family very bad.

*Have you had boyfriends before that hit you?*

Yes.

*Many?*



No only one boyfriend used to hit me, I told him if he do like this can he look another girlfriend.

*And you say you don't have family, where is your family?*

My mother died, I don't have a father they don't know his name, my mother died 2001.

*And then you have your sister?*

Yes.

*And that's the only family you have?*

Yes.

*Does she come and visit you?*

No.

*Do you think things will come better between you and her?*

..... I don't think so it's because of me that we are here. They think I am dirty with that thing. I make to much sad. I must pay.

*On the day of the murder you said you ran away?*

I used to ask the neighbour how is my boyfriend. He said no he is better he nearly die but he's still in life. I hear on Monday, I think he's died on Monday morning, I hear on Monday after work he's die. I went to tell my family, my sister; I wake up early in the morning Tuesday, I go to tell my boss, where I'm working, after that I go to the police station, I tell the police I do this thing like this. I run away cos I'm scared. I think it wasn't me.

*Did somebody take him to the hospital?*

Yes.

*You said that sometimes you guys were drunk, you and your boyfriend. Did you drink a lot?*

Yes, because every Saturday we drink beer. When he drink he hit me a lot. Then I also drink for this hitting. He also try to stab me another time with the knife. I run away. When I go home he said I have other boyfriend. He hit me again. Then I drink beer.

*And you needed him to help you with money?*

Yes, but he didn't work everyday I work everyday, like sometimes if it's raining he didn't work. But I still need him to give some money to pay taxi and buy food. He help me like that. He say I must love him for that money.

*So he helped you a lot?*

Yes he helped me a lot. Yes because sometimes I don't have money, I pay at the end of the month sometime he pay a day, he gets special job. I don't have money to go to work give me money to go to work.

*If you think back to the times he abused you, how did you feel then?*

When I think that thing I get angry, but I also loved him. I tell him not to do that thing. I ask him why he do this thing to me. He say he is drunk and he won't do it again. And then I feel sorry for him. He was jealous, he told me "I am jealous for you". He hit me a lot. He say I must be good girlfriend. He say if I tell the peoples he can kill me. I dream of that knife all the time. I think he is coming for me.

*Was he jealous that you would see other guys?*

I think so because I don't have other friends.

*So were you alone a lot?*

Yes, I work all the time and my only friend is my neighbour. If I don't have cup of sugar I can borrow to my neighbour. Something like that.

*Did your boyfriend hit you from the beginning or not.*

He hit me always when he was drunk. Sometimes I clean my house and I come from work and I cook some food because my madam give me fridge and food. Then I put my food in the fridge and when I come from work I put the food in the oven. Then he comes from work and buys 4 beers sitting to get drunk. Then he comes to our house, and say I am a nice lady and he

wants to come here. Then things change and he hit me. He start to hit me and then he say I must forgive him.

When I say to stop then he stands outside my house shouting names and bad stuff about me. My neighbours come out and see he is shouting like this. He shout stuff like he will get me and then in the morning when I wake up he is at my house again. He say he will get me with the knife. I sit inside because I am scared I think he can come in the night. I don't sleep.

*Was your boyfriend using drugs ?*

No, he just drink the beer and wine. I only drink the Black Label beer because the wine can make you stink. Beer and cigarettes.

*What will happen when you leave prison?*

They will do the ritual. You must wash with that water. You go to the people and tell them what you did, then they can say if you are clean. They must wash this bad thing away. But I will not go back to my place. My boyfriend's mother is old and when she sees me she is going to think about her son. She is old and not well, she doesn't want to see me.

### ***Interview 3:***

**M.W. : 37 years**

Ek het 3 jaar gekry, vir die misdaad wat ek gepleeg het en ek het my man vermoor. Dis nie vir my lekker om daarvoor te praat nie. Ons is getroud in die jaar 2002, hy was 'n lieflike man voor ons getroud was. Twee maande na ons troue het dinge begin verander. Um, ek het twee miskrame gehad en dit was as gevolg van die abuse. Hy het vir my baie, baie abuse: sexual, physical, verbal...alles in een. Ek het twee kinder uit my vorige huwelik, twee seuntjies, my jongste seuntjie Deveroux wat nege jaar nou is, op die stadium wat my man nog geleef het was hy ses jaar oud, en het die kind aanskou hoe hy my sexual abuse. Dit was nie vir my lekker nie. Ek kan nie sê dat ek dit toelaat...kon natuurlik iets daaraan doen maar ek kan nie, ek



kan nie, op daai oomblik kan ek nie want ek is gedreig met die dood. Toe het my man vir my ma en pa gaan sê dat hy vir my gaan doodmaak, ek het nie geweet wannêr dit sal wees nie en dis hoekom ek bang was. Ek het nooit vir my ma-hulle vertel hoekom ek daardeur moet gaan nie, want as ek met iemand sou praat, 'n priester of 'n evangelis of enige iemand dan sal hulle met hom praat en dan sou hy uitvind ek het met iemand gepraat, en dit sal die einde van my lewe beteken.

Maar die twee kinders wat saam met my gebly het, Deveroux en Geronimo. Geronimo is negentien jaar oud. Daai kind het baie dinge saam met my deurgegaan. Ons moes nagte deurgaen, dan was ons in die reën uitgesluit. Ons moet buite staan sonder warm goed, ek het maar net die kindertjies in my arms toegevou en gesê "Here help my, versag net George se hart" dat hy die deur vir ons kan oop maak. Na 'n lang tyd, as die deur oop gaan, dan gaan ons in en dan word ek net weer geslaan en geslaan en geslaan. Die kinders het vir my gevra: "Mammie hoekom, hoekom los jy nie net hierdie man nie". Ek het aan hulle gedink. Ek het nie plek om na toe te gaan nie, as ek van George weggaan het ek nie werk nie. Dis seer, dis baie seer.

My kind het ook probeer wegloop van my af, Geronimo, hy het twee keer sy goed gevat en gesê: "Ek loop nou". Ek sê: "Geronimo waar gaan jy?" "ek gaan na my ouma toe" maar hy kan nie daar bly nie want kinders wat nie daar werk, kan nie daar bly nie.

Ek kan nie in die boorde gaan werk nie, as gevolg van my vel. Ek het 'n vel problem en hy is weg. Laatnag het my kind terug gekom. Ek het opgestaan om hom te gaan haal, toe het hy my terug gedruk in die bed toe ek die deur wou oop maak. Hoe moet ek op daai stadium voel, ek wat 'n ma is? My kind staan buite, dis koud, wat kan gebeur met hom? Hy het nie omgee nie, hy't sy eie tyd gevat en die deur gaan oopsluit, oopgemaak dat die kind kan inkom...baie ombeskof. Die kleintjie, as hy by my in die bed...nie slaap nie, maar Sondag middag het ek gehou daarvan om 'n bietjie te gaan rus, maar dan moet hy die kind gebruik om by ons te lê vir die middag. Ek het die eerste keer nie geweet hoekom hy dit doen nie, want op 'n Sondag

middag is maar net een storie en dit is jy gaan slaap. Dan het hy begin om my te betas, ons moet nou sek hê met mekaar. Die kind is in die bed! Wat moet ek maak, ek is sy ma en ek is kaal, hy moet vir my aanskou. 'n Sesjarige seuntjie. Wat ek maar gedoen het, is om skelmpies my voet te gebruik en die kombors oor die kind gegooi het, dat hy nie alles kom sien nie. My kind het net vir my gesê: "Mammie ek will nie meer by julle slaap nie". En ek het geweet hoekom, ... ek het geweet hoekom. Maar ek kan niks doen... ek kan niks doen vir die kind nie, dan word ek geslaan. My kinders... hy het nou wel nie die kinders geslaan nie maar die dinge wat hy vir hulle gedoen het! Ek weet nie, ek weet nie. Ek weet nie of ek daai man kan vergewe, of ek dit nou kan doen nie.

*Hoekom dink jy, jy moet hom vergewe?*

Ek kan nie so lewe nie, dis nie reg in die Here se oë nie. Ek moet vergewe maar dis op die oomblik swaar om te kan vergewe. Ek kon nie praat met enigiemand nie, of polisie toe kon gaan nie. Iets doen om my te help om net weg te kom van hom af. Ek het probeer weglou op 'n slag, maar ek het nie geslaag daarin nie. Hy het vir my teen die pad gekry, my opgelaai en ek het net weer pak gekry.

Ek het gedrink. Die rede hoekom ek baie gedrink het is omdat ek gedink het, okay ek gaan dit nie so erg voel as hy vir my slaan nie. As ek wakker word dan voel ek tog die pyn, ek is seer, blou oë, gebreekte arms. Die Sondag, op die vierde April, dit was Palm Sondag, toe het ek opgestaan en reg gemaak om kerk toe te gaan. Ek het hom gevra: "George gaan jy saam?" hy't gesê "Nee".

Ek het geweet, en nie verder gepraat daarvoor nie, ek het geweet, hy gaan nou vir hom dronk drink en as ek terug kom gaan ek pak kry omdat ek alleen kerk toe gaan. Hy was 'n baie jaloerse man, maar ek het gedink: Here hoekom, hoekom moet dit gebeur? Ek gaan nie by die huis bly ter wille van hom nie, as ek dan moet pak kry, Here dan moet dit maar gebeur, slaan my dan nou. Voor dit het ek uitgevind George is 'n getroude man. Ek het nie geweet nie.

*Terwyl hy met jou getroud was?*

Ja hy't vir my gelieg, hy het op 'n ander naam getrou. Hy het sy vrou vermoor.

*Jy het dit ook nie geweet nie?*

Nee, ek het dit eers agterna uitgevind. Hy het vir my dae annemekaar gesê hy gaan vir my doodmaak, en daar was 'n hammer in die huis, maar ek het nie geweet dat dit die wapen was waarmee hy sy vrou doodgemaak het nie. Ek het aangegaan en vergeet van die ding. Daai Sondag het ek kerk toe gegaan en ek het gesien, toe ek by die deur inkom het ek gesien George is gedrink. Ek het net gesê: "Here alweer?" ek het ingegaan en hy't na my gegryp en gesê: "Jy wou nie hoor nie, jy loop alleen." Ek het gesê ek het nie geloop nie ek het gery! Ek en die kinders is met die kar weg kerk toe. Hy sê: "Jy loop alleen" en ek sê ek het nie. Ek kon nie eers stry teen daai man nie. Hy het net gesê: "maak klaar". Hy het my weggevat, vir my en die kleintjie. Toe vra ek: "George waantoe?" hy sê "ons gaan drink". Ek het vir my uitgetrek en vir my ander klere aangetrek, ek het na die yskas toe gegaan en vir my ook drank gegooi. Ek het dit elke keer net gedoen, net om op daai oomblik nie die seer wat ek gaan kry te voel nie. Ek het gedrink en saam met hom gegaan, en in 'n smokkelhuis gaan sit. En terwyl hy daar sit en drink, het ek net gesê: "Here asseblief, as dit my laaste dag vandag moet wees, laat dit net nie voor my kinders wees nie". Deveroux het saam gegaan en ek het by die smokkelhuis vir hom gesê, George kom ons loop ek is dronk. Maar ek het ook in my binneste geweet hy wil my dronk maak. Hy will hê ek moet dronk wees, dat dit vir hom makliker sal wees om my te kan vermoor. Maar hy het nie geslaag in dit nie. Ek is huis toe, dit was 'n reënerige dag. Die groot seun van my was nie by die huis nie, en hy het vir my gesê ek moet vuur maak in die kaggel. Ek het gesê: "nee, ek is dronk ek will gaan lê, ek moet gaan lê". Hy't gesê: "Okay, ek gaan self die byl gaan haal om die houtjies fyn te kap". Ek het net daar bly sit in die stoel, ek het net gedink ek gaan nie weghardloop nie. Ek het geweet daai byl is vir my, dis nie om houtjies te kap nie. Waantoe kan ek

hardloop, ek kan nie ver hardloop nie. Ek is moeg van mense wat die hele tyd sien ek hardloop weg uit my huis uit. Ek het vir Deveroux gesê: “Mammie gaan bietjie gaan lê, gaan speel.” Ek wou nie hê my kind moet sien wat gebeur nie. Ek het vir hom ‘n pakkie chips en ‘n lekker gegee en hy is weg na sy maatjies toe. George het net gewag tot hy uit is. Hy het twee keer na my gekap met die byl. Ek het net so gekeer, en die Here was my nog genadig. Ek het net weggekrui die kant toe, ek het hom net so gekyk en vir hom gesê: “George maar jy is nou in die ding om my dood te maak, ek het gedink jy maak ‘n grappie”. Hy sê “Nee, M, as ek jou nie kan hê nie maak ek jou dood, ek gun jou vir geen ander man nie. Dit het by my opgekom: Hy moet nou maar kap!. Die tweede keer is dit asof iets in my opkom en vir my sê moenie dit toelaat nie, spring op en stoot vir hom. En toe hy val het ek die byl gevat by hom. Ek het nie gekap nie, ek het die byl omgedraai, en met die steel kant het ek vir George geslaan en geslaan. Ek wou dit nie gedoen het nie, ek het nie beplan om hom dood te maak nie. Hoekom het hy nie eerder my doodgemaak nie? Ek wou dit nie aan iemand anders gedoen het nie. Ek het die ambulans gebel terwyl hy daar lê, ek het al daai man se ribbes stukkend geslaan in sy lyf ...almal. Sy arm gebreek, sy been gebreek. As ek maar net weer dink, hoekom het ek nie maar weer weggehardloop nie, maar as ek terugkom is dit maar net weer dieselfde. Ek is saam met hom hospital toe, want hy is nie daar op die oomblik dood nie.

Hy het ‘n maand nog gelewe. Ek was nog besig om te slaan toe Geronimo inkom, en hy vra: “Mammie wat doen jy?”. Toe besef ek wat het ek gedoen en ek gaan nou tronk toe. Wat van my kinders en al hierdie dinge kom nou by my. Ek is saam met hom hospital toe, en ek het hom nog die liefde gegee wat ‘n vrou vir haar man moet gee. Ek het nog vir hom moet ingespraak en gesê: “George vergewe vir my”. Daar op die hospitalbed het hy vir my gesê: “Nee, jy moet my vergewe... alles wat ek aan jou gedoen het, asseblief vergewe my”. Ek kon niks sê nie want as ek gesê het George ek vergewe jou dan het ek gelieg. Ek kon nie.

Ek het daar gery en gaan bad en aantrek, en my kinders by my ma gelos want ek wou by hom wees. Ek kon nie meer daar bly, daar waar die kinders

moes skool toe gaan nie. Ek het elke dag gebel, drie , vier keer op 'n dag gebel om te hoor hoe gaan dit. Die dokter het op 'n Sondag oggend vir my gebel, en my gevra of hulle my toestemming kan kry om die wonde skoon te maak waar die pypies in was. Ek het gevra: "Dokter waarom vra jy vir my, jy's 'n dokter, jy weet." Hy't gesê hy moet my toestemming hê en dink aan die man se gesondheid. Daar het ek nog hoop gehad dat hy gaan lewe want dis net wondjies wat hulle moet skoonmaak waar die pypies in was. Nou hoekom sal hy doodgaan daarvan? Maar daai middag drie uur, toe het ek weer gebel en sy toestand het verswak. Ek wil mal raak, want hoekom nou, hoekom moet sy toestand nou verswak. Gaan hulle nou sê ek het die man doodgemaak deur my toestemming te gee? Die wonde moet skoon gemaak word. Dan weet en nie, maar dan is dit mos nie ek nie. Iets moes dan in die teater verkeerd gegaan het, want hoekom? Ek het nie verder gegaan nie, ek het dit net daar gelos. Ek het gesê; "Here ek het nie meer krag om verder met hierdie ding te gaan nie". As dit dan ek was is dit dan so. Die gedagte het by my opgekom, as ek hom nie geslaan het nie sou dit nie gebeur het nie. Toe sy toestand verswak, toe het hulle gebel, die Dinsdag middag. Toe het ek soontoe gegaan en ek het gesê : "Here ek gaan nog my man verloor". Toe ek daar kom het hy daar gelê met watte op sy oë, sy oë was oop. Ek het die dokter gevra nou maar hoekom is daar watte op sy oë. Hy het gesê die rede hoekom daar watte op sy oë is omdat 'n mens se oë word droog. Ek het dit nie verstaan nie. Ek vat dit maar dat hy was besig om te sterf. Hoekom sal sy oë dan droog word as hy dan ...as ek siek is en ek lê daar hoekom sal my oë droog word? Verstaan jy wat ek bedoel, hoekom sit hulle watte op dit lyk asof hy klaar dood is daar. Maar ek het terug gegaan na hom toe en sy hand gevat, ek het gesê: "George as jy my kan hoor druk my hand". Hy't net gelê. Ek het gesê: "George ek het jou lief", toe druk hy my hand. Toe sê ek ek sal mooi kyk na die kinders. Ek wou die Dinsdagaand daar bly maar ek kon nie, want die kinders was nie by my ma nie en was alleen by die huis.

Ek het terug gegaan huis toe, en later het die telefoon gelui en ek het geantwoord en vir die kinders gekyk en gesê: "julle pa is nie daar nie". Die persoon aan die ander kant het gesê Mev W, en ek het gesê: "Ja". "Jou man is 7:20 oorlede" en ek het net 7:10 gebel om te hoor hoe dit gaan. Ek

het van my kop af geraak, hoe gaan ek dan nou vir die kinders sê? Ek het nou wel gesê “julle pa is nie daar nie” toe ek die foon geantwoord het, maar hulle het my nie geglo nie. Ek het net gesê: “Here gee my krag want ek moet nou die boodskap vir die kinders gee”. Ek het vir Deveroux gesê dat George was nou wel nie jou eie pa nie, maar hy is nie meer daar nie. Hy het nie lekker verstaan nie want hy was maar vier jaar oud toe dit gebeur het. Ek het hom opgetel en gesê: “ Mamma sê nou vir jou dat pappa nooit weer gaan terug kom nie, nooit ooit weer nie”. Die kinders het my blameer en gesê ek het die enigste pa wat hulle geken het dood gemaak. Ek het nie...ek het nie. Ek het hom nie vermoor nie. Ek het vir hulle verduidelik dat dit selfverdediging was maar hulle het nie verstaan nie. Hulle wou nie my glo nie...ek het gedink hoe gaan my kinders my glo. Ek het hom nie vermoor nie. Ek het net op daai oomblik gedink: Kry seer soos ek seer kry, maar ek het nie in my gedagtes gedink om hom dood te maak nie. Wie gaan my glo. Net die Here gaan my glo. Ek moes die Saterdag gaan vergifnis vra vir my man se dood by George se familie, maar hulle weet nie wat hy aan my gedoen het nie. Hulle glo net sy kant. Die meisiekind van George se eerste vrou blameer my vir haar pa se dood, maar ek het mos nie geweet nie. Ek het nie bedoel om 'n lewe te neem nie.

Hy het nooit my kinders wettig aangeneem nie, en die twee miskrame sou sy kinders gewees het maar ek het hulle verloor as gevolg van die abuse. Hy het gedreig om die huis af te brand en ek het hom gesmeek dat hy dit net nie moet doen as my kinders by die huis is nie. Ek het gesmeek dat hy net niks aan my kinders doen nie, want hulle het niks met hierdie ding te doen nie. Ek het vir hom gesê; “hoe gaan die kinders oor jou voel as hulle sien dat jy hulle ma uitgebrand het? Hy wou my lewe neem en dalk my twee kinders sin ook. Hy het gesê hy gaan my met petrol gooi...ek het elke dag met vrees gelewe. Elke godelike dag. Elke dag van George se lewe tot en met sy sterfte.

Ek het my huis verkoop oor wat daar gebeur het en ek kon nie in die kamer ingaan nie oor hy daar was. Alles speel soos 'n video voor my af..ek weet nie...ek weet nie.

Ek is toe tronk toe en ek het drie maande oor. Ek dank die Here daarvoor want ek wil by my kinders wees. Hoekom moet my ma na hulle kyk, dis my kinders ek wil daar wees vir hulle. Die kinders gee my ma opdraande. Hulle kry nagmerries en soek vir my maar ek is nie daar nie. Ek wens net dat my ouers en my kinders my kan vergewe, sodat hierdie swaar ding van my skouers kan afgaan. Ek sal aanhou bid en het besef dat ek nog nader aan die Here moet wees.

Hoekom kon George nie besef dat hy nie so moes aangaan nie. Ek het hoeveel keer gevra of hy my lief het. As hy ja sê dan vra ek hoekom hy my dan so behandel...dan kry ek net weer 'n klap of twee. Dit het nie gehelp ek praat met hom nie, dan is dit net beledigings op beledigings. Ek het my werk verloor omdat hy nie wil hê ek moet werk nie. Hy het my verdink van my baas, wat nie waar was nie. Daai mense het my bygestaan en het getuig in die hof oor met watter blou oë ek werk toe gekom het. Een keer was my arm gebreek maar ek het werk toe gegaan en het gekyk of ek iets met een hand kon doen net om geld te verdien. My geld wat ek verdien het moes ek net so vir hom gee. As daar iets in die huis op is, kan ek hom nie gaan vra nie...ek kan nie. Ek moet wag tot hy besluit om te koop of net daarsonder klaar kom. Hy het klere gekoop wat hy besluit het wat ek moet dra...ek het dit nie gedra nie. My kinders se klere was beter as wat myne was.

As ek hier uit kom gaan ek en my kinders by my ma bly. Ek gaan iets bereik want my baas het gesê sodra ek uit is kan ek terug gaan na my werk toe. My baas het nog al hierdie tyd my maandelikse wages uitbetaal. Ek kan hier uitstap en bank toe gaan en my geld gaan trek. As ek hier uit is wil ek die kinders by die skool gaan haal. My ma moenie vir hulle sê ek is uit nie, ek wil net daai gesiggies sien. Dis my storie.