

**Perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of
Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive
relationships.**

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Declaration

I declare that this research report entitled “Perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women’s choices in abusive relationships.” is my own, unaided work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Community Based Counselling) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed this day of 2011_____ Kim Lindy Serebro _____.

ABSTRACT

This research attempted to gain insight into the perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the abuse of women in heterosexual relationships, in their community. Feminist theory and social constructionism were utilised in order to facilitate in greater insight into the roles of women in Judaism and the manner in which Jewish doctrine and ideology influences women who are abused by their husbands. The research focused on specific principles that are intrinsic to Jewish faith and identity. It also explored Jewish persecution and its influence on the formation and perpetuation of many of the Jewish customs and traditions as a means of preserving or upholding Jewish faith. The sample comprised of nine women who fell within an age range of 25-35 years. Jewish women from Orthodox backgrounds were utilised. A qualitative paradigm was applied in order to gain access to information thereby ensuring that the content obtained was of a more personal nature involving the private perceptions of this study's participants. The following themes were identified from the data and formed the basis upon which the analysis and discussion took place. The themes include: Jewish men treat women according to what men are taught, marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women and the Jewish community is not immune to social ills. The results of the research support the argument that Jewish religious and cultural values appear to influence women's choices in abusive relationships. Furthermore, the roles that women typically assume in Jewish society seemingly perpetuate existing gender stereotypes in relation to women.

Keywords: Jewish, Orthodox, Domestic Violence, Community, Patriarchy, Persecution, Marriage, Divorce, Shalom Bayit.

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DEDICATION

To my brother, your wisdom and strength continue to serve as my inspiration. Forever in my thoughts, that which I achieve I do so in your name. I love and miss you beyond words.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Kenner posits that “tradition is not a bin into which you relegate what you cannot be bothered to examine, but precisely that portion of the past . . . which you have examined scrupulously. You cannot admire, you cannot learn from, you cannot even rebel against what you do not know” (Kenner, 1959, p. 117). In accordance with the supposition, it is difficult to begin to tackle that which remains unseen; abuse in the Orthodox Jewish community remains shrouded in secrecy and in so doing serves to perpetuate an age-old myth that Jews don’t do that. Abuse in the Jewish community mirrors society in general and Jewish families are not immune. The Orthodox Jewish community has only recently acknowledged that religious practice and commitment does not make one immune to suffering from domestic violence. Despite this assumption, the perceptions and experiences of Jewish women have not been adequately addressed. It is seemingly necessary to begin to explore the perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the abuse of women in their community.

Judaism professes to be grounded on principles pertaining to truthfulness and honour; incidents of abuse serve to eliminate the depiction of Jewry as a morally upstanding community who prides itself in its adherence to morality and decency. If religious Jewry is synonymous with integrity and civility acknowledging that abuse occurs within said community serves to taint and tarnish the reputation of a nation who profess to act in accordance with God’s law. The pervasiveness of abuse is often obscured due to the stigmatization that is associated with such an act. Whereas abusive behaviour is generally shrouded in secrecy across communities and society as a whole; attempts at ‘covering up’ amongst the Jewish community specifically serve to evade additional condemnation of Jewry and in so doing protect Jewish identity. The research focused specifically on principles that are fundamental to Jewish faith and identity; many of which facilitate in the portrayal of women as objects. It therefore appeared necessary to utilise feminist theory in order to facilitate in developing greater insight into the perspectives of Jewish women and in so doing create an appropriate platform to address existing constructs of inequality for Jewish women. Therefore, the roles of women in Judaism, in conjunction with Jewish doctrine and ideology assisted in augmenting knowledge of abuse of Jewish women in the Jewish community.

1.2 Research Aims

The aim of this research was to attempt to gain insight into the perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the abuse of women in heterosexual relationships, in their community. Utilising feminist theory, the roles of women were explored as well as the manner in which Jewish doctrine and ideology influences women who are abused by their husbands. In addition, the research focused on specific principles that are intrinsic to Jewish faith and identity. Furthermore, it appeared necessary to remain cognisant of Jewish persecution and its influence on the formation and perpetuation of many of the Jewish customs and traditions as a means of preserving or upholding Jewish faith.

1.3 Rationale

“Silence is tantamount to an admission that there is something very wrong” (Talmudic principle). A perception has been held and cultivated that spousal abuse in the Jewish family is something of a contradiction in terms. Whereas ideals pertaining to family, togetherness and sharing are central to Jewish faith and identity, the notion that Orthodox, Jewish men do not abuse their wives is obviously impossible. The supposition that Jewish men do not abuse their wives would therefore imply that the Jews as a nation are impervious to the realities that constitute being human (Jewish Women International, 2004). Like any other social grouping, Jews are a diverse people; they too have been victims and perpetrators of some horrifying domestic realities. The research suggests that there appears to be very little awareness among men or women regarding this issue; in fact some authors posit that there is general denial that abuse actually occurs in Jewish homes (Graetz, 1998). With the passage of time, certain segments of the community are willing to acknowledge that incidents of abuse do in fact occur however there is still a tendency to attempt to downplay the severity as well as the prevalence of these violent incidents within the Jewish community as a whole. There still appears to be an element of defiance within the community in that certain religious leaders purport that domestic abuse and divorce have not reached epidemic proportions in the Jewish community (Wolpin, 2005). This tendency to minimise the pervasiveness of abuse suggests a need by a community, who for centuries has been subjected to anti-Semitism and persecution, to conceal and keep hidden characteristics that may potentially injure a virtuous reputation that has been carefully built and reconstructed time and time again. Furthermore, by refuting the existence of abuse within the Jewish community serves to culminate in a situation whereby the issue itself is not being adequately addressed.

The myth that Jewish families are immune from abuse allows both Jewish and secular professionals to miss the cues of abuse (Jewish Women International, 2004). “The myth of the happy Jewish family and that Jewish men do not beat their wives is very entrenched, but despite the assertion that Jews are better than other people, family violence has been known throughout Jewish history...” (Graetz, 1998, p. 2). Abuse in the Jewish community emulates society in general and Jewish families are not impervious to this reality. Research suggests that domestic abuse occurs equally throughout the Jewish community in spite of religious belief or practice. One in every four Jewish women will experience some form of abuse during their lifetime (National Resource Centre on Domestic Violence, 2007). Domestic abuse in the Jewish community has no boundaries, it is not confined to any particular relationship type or a specific socio-economic class, all ages and all spectrums of religious and cultural life are affected (Jewish Women International, 2004).

A feminist approach was utilised when conducting this study. Feminist theory attempts to give a voice to those women who have been silenced and to confront and transform women’s subordination to men in all domains (Kitzinger, 2004). Due to the patriarchal undertones of Judaism the perspectives of Jewish women have not been adequately addressed in literature. Both Holy Scripture and Jewish tradition reinforce the notion of the Jewish woman being an appendage to the man in society, a person whose main purpose in life is to reproduce and to ensure the comfort of the man (Reisenberger, 1998). Jewish women have seemingly identified with their traditional roles as care-givers and peace keepers; in fact carrying out these so called wifely duties are deemed necessary for the establishment of a happy and lasting marriage. “She will be delighted to do her husband’s will and treat him like a king” (Wolpin, 2005, p. 47). In accordance with this postulation, social constructionist theory was also utilised to facilitate in greater comprehension of the pervasive social constructs that inform the decision-making process. The perceptions regarding domestic abuse have not been tackled as the topic of spousal abuse itself has to a large extent been overlooked by the community at large. It therefore appears necessary to talk to Jewish women directly in order to gauge their impressions of domestic abuse within the Jewish community and the extent to which the role of religion influences a woman’s decision to leave or remain in an abusive relationship.

1.4 Summary of the Report

This research report explores the perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships. A literature review, presented in Chapter Two, considers the various factors that may directly or indirectly influence a woman's decision to stay or leave an abusive relationship. These factors include:

- The History of the Objectification of Women
- Patriarchy and Judaism
- The Jewish Community in South Africa
- Jewish Persecution
- The Beth Din
- Marriage and Divorce
- Tznius or Modesty
- Shalom Bayit

The research design is qualitative and exploratory in nature. It is informed by the feminist approach to research that is devoted to tackling existing oppressive and discriminatory stereotypes of women (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In addition, it was also necessary to remain cognisant of the principles that encompass social constructionist theory as a multitude of Jewish customs and practices were generated through the interpretation of ancient Jewish texts. As many of these rituals are still practiced today it is perhaps necessary to explore the meanings conveyed by the language utilised in these texts in order to gauge the manner in which these socially constructed phenomenon influence the treatment of women according to Judaism.

A qualitative paradigm was utilised in order to gain access to information thereby ensuring that the content obtained was of a more personal nature involving the private perceptions of this study's participants. The sample comprised of nine married women who fell within an age range of 25 to 35 years. The researcher made use of Jewish women from Orthodox backgrounds; these women were invited to participate in the study, and asked to respond to semi-structured, open-ended questions. The researcher conducted a pilot study of two women in order to assess the efficacy of the interview questions and to make appropriate adjustments where necessary. The potential participants were selected using non-probability, purposive

sampling, based on their research suitability (Cohen & Manion, 1997). The invited participants were married, Jewish females who fell within the specified age bracket. The data was analysed using thematic content analysis. This form of analysis was informed by the procedural steps outlined by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), whereby the researcher became familiar with and immersed in the data in order to have a good understanding of the information. The researcher then induced the major themes from the data, in the attempt to see what themes naturally occurred in the data. The researcher coded the data by categorising the relevant data into the related, emerging themes and sub-themes, elaborating on the themes found, and finally, interpreting and checking the information by using the thematic categories and sub-categories that emerged in the analysis. Through these steps of analysis, main thematic trends were established, discussed and analysed in the results of this study. The following themes were identified from the data and formed the basis upon which the analysis and discussion took place. The themes include: Jewish men treat women according to what men are taught, marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women and the Jewish community is not immune to social ills.

The results of the research support the argument that Jewish religious and cultural values appear to influence women's choices in abusive relationships. Furthermore, the roles that women typically assume in Jewish society seemingly perpetuate existing gender stereotypes in relation to women. Furthermore, it is seemingly necessary to consider the manner in which religiosity is deemed integral to a person's character. Therefore, whereas devout and observant Jews are perceived as being incapable of engaging in abusive behaviour, the less observant are by implication identified as lacking the moral fiber and integrity to refrain from participating in such depravity.

In addition, whereas abuse in society is generally shrouded in an element of secrecy attempts at 'covering up' amongst the Jewish community specifically appears to facilitate in the evasion of additional condemnation of Jewry and in so doing protect Jewish identity. The experience of shame was identified as playing a pivotal role in the concealment of abuse as shame seemingly flourishes in a group context. Concealment of abuse may therefore serve to thwart these 'shameful' feelings as a community abstains from confronting a difficult reality.

Language was identified as having a profound influence of the treatment of women as language was no longer regarded as a completely objective approach to convey meaning but

rather as an instrument of subjectivity which can be utilised to communicate a number of alternative meanings. The Jewish wedding ceremony and divorce proceedings were recognised as enforcing patriarchal sentiments in that wives were depicted as their husbands' properties and the dissolution of an unhappy marriage was largely dependent on a husband's willingness to release his wife from the marriage agreement. Furthermore, adherence to a number of out-dated Jewish laws appears to exacerbate the difficulties experienced by women in a progressive society. The acknowledgement of women as wives and mothers specifically also serves to reinforce feminist sentiments in which women are compelled to assume and adhere to very specific gender roles. This was also evidenced in the implementation of the Jewish principle of Shalom Bayit which by implication is the responsibility of the wife.

The depiction of women as spiritually elevated beings appears to assist religious leaders in rationalising Jewish women's omission and exclusion from prayer. This serves to illustrate an adherence to socially constructed rules, enforced by religious doctrine, in which women and men subscribe to stereotypical roles and modes of behaviour. Furthermore, the emphasis the women place on physical modes of aggression specifically as opposed to verbal and emotional abuse serve to reinforce sentiments that Jewish women are perhaps more accustomed to the degradation that is often noticeable in the verbal and emotional forms of abuse.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Studies of Jewish, Islamic and Christian abused women indicate that religious, gender roles and traditional attitudes within religious communities were experienced as supporting and prolonging the abuse (Levitt & Ware, 2006). This serves to indicate that religious affiliation may exacerbate the incidence of spousal abuse due to the manner in which women are frequently portrayed according to religious doctrine. As the perceptions of Jewish women have not been adequately addressed this study sought to explore the perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding the abuse of women in their community. Abuse in the Jewish community mirrors society in general and Jewish families are not immune. The research focused specifically on principles that are integral to Jewish faith and identity many of which facilitate in the portrayal of women as objects. The perspectives of Jewish women requires thorough exploration, this may foster further inquiry as existing constructs of inequality for Jewish women are slowly identified and addressed. The roles of women in Judaism, in conjunction with Jewish doctrine and ideology will assist in shedding some insight into abuse of Jewish women in the Jewish community.

2.2 Domestic Violence

Various terms are used to characterise the violence between intimate partners. Terms such as spousal abuse, domestic violence, partner violence, intimate partner abuse and battering are all frequently utilised, these terms do not necessarily discern between men and women (Gelles, 1995). However research suggests that 20.4 percent of women in heterosexual relationships, as opposed to only 7 percent of men, are physically assaulted by their intimate partner at some point in their relationship. Therefore, women are almost three times more likely to report being victimised by their boyfriend or spouse (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2001). Early definitions of spouse abuse appeared to focus only on the physical injury a husband perpetrated against his wife however more recent research has broadened this definition to include sexual abuse, marital rape, emotional or psychological abuse as well as coercion. According to the DSM-IV-TR (2000), abusive behaviour can be defined by the severe mistreatment of one individual by another through physical or sexual abuse. Sadock and

Sadock (2007), assert that spousal abuse or domestic violence is defined as physical assault within the home in which one spouse is repeatedly assaulted by the other.

Violence refers to a form of coercion that is implemented in order to force individuals or groups to act in a particular fashion that goes against free will (Swart, 2007). Violence against women is a pervasive and multifaceted problem in South African society. The rates of violence committed against women by men in South Africa are among the highest in the world. In a report published by the South African Research Council (2009) one in four South African men interviewed claimed to have raped a woman at some point. Another South African study conducted revealed that a woman has a one in two chance that she will be raped in her lifetime, in addition one woman is raped every 26 seconds in this country and one in four South African women are in an abusive relationship. Similarly one in four South African adolescent girls have been sexually abused (Human Rights Watch, 2009). It is apparent that violence against women occurs across different cultural, racial and socioeconomic groups, and affects women of all ages. Swart (2007) posits that given the widespread nature of violence against women, this social problem is one that is frequently encountered in many communities. It is often a key factor that undermines individual well-being, family life and community functioning. Violence against women is generally categorised as a form of interpersonal violence. Furthermore, Swart (2007) postulates that most studies have found that almost all perpetrators of violence against women are men. Thus, violence against women differs from more general forms of violence in that it incorporates forms of violence that are specifically gender based. It appears as though gender inequality establishes the social climate within which male violence towards women is viewed. Furthermore, the pervasiveness of inequality may serve to condition the reaction of women to men's coercive or violent behaviour. In essence, violence against women is perceived as a manifestation of unequal and oppressive power relations between the sexes, enforced by the unequal social structure of society as a whole.

It appears necessary to distinguish between the violence against women in contrast to woman abuse. Whereas violence against women is a culmination of a gender-based form of broader societal violence that occurs in both public and private realms, woman abuse is deemed more specifically as a form of violence occurring specifically within intimate heterosexual relationships (Swart, 2007). This distinction emphasises the notion that violence against women occurs in many contexts and within various types of relationships. Currently, the national South African Police Force's (SAPS) statistics does not categorize gender-based

violence within a specific class or category instead all gender-based violence is classified under misnomers of ‘assault with the intention to do grievous bodily harm’, ‘common assault’, and ‘sexual offences’ (South African Police Force, 2009). In addition, The South African Law Commission recently reported that the state rejected the publication of a report on domestic violence in South Africa in the 21st century as the intention of said report was to initiate legislation, and coupled with the existing legislation on domestic violence, the financial implications of report-publication could not be warranted. It therefore appears as though, the intention to downplay and minimise the incidence of violence against women within a South African context occurs at a government level. Traditional attitudes about the appropriate roles for men and women are reinforced by institutional discrimination against women in education, the workplace, politics, and other public arenas. Among these writers lies the argument that gender equality is thought to be best achieved by constructing a society that is free of legally-sanctioned gender and class stratification. Therefore, while there appears to be a level of awareness regarding the issue of gender based violence, the discrepancy between knowledge of the issue in contrast to tackling the issue through proactive intervention is still extremely vast.

In South Africa diverse cultural attitudes also play a massive role in how communities view assault. In socially conservative communities where traditional gender roles are still the norm, culturally defined notions of masculinity serve to greatly influence the beliefs, values and knowledge held by many communities and therefore the norms and patterns of the groups behaviour tend to be attuned to this perspective. Thus knowledge of a community’s cultural milieu is then vital in order to understand the factors that contribute to their situation. According to Jacobs and Dimarsky (1992), while the stigma of seeking therapeutic services has waned for the general population, there is still shame attributed to engaging in therapy by the Orthodox Jewish community, and other minority groups. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007), purport that abuse victims experience shame and humiliation in relation to incidents of abuse. This extends to concern over one’s standing within the larger Jewish community, and concern about how “outsiders” might view the Jewish community upon learning that domestic violence exists. Whereas broader society’s opinions regarding Jewish conduct are seemingly relevant it is perhaps also necessary to explore the extent to which Jewish laws exacerbate abuse in that they may potentially enforce subservience and objectification of women.

While there are sources in *halakha* (Jewish Law) that declare wife beating unlawful, there are others that state otherwise. Rabbinic sources are in general agreement that gratuitous wife-beating is seemingly unlawful and forbidden however the attitude of rabbinic sources toward “bad wives” is sometimes ambivalent (Graetz, 1998). A bad wife is one who does not perform the duties required of her by Jewish law. Therefore spousal abuse is seemingly overlooked when it is carried out for the purpose of chastisement or education (Graetz, 1998). In early 2001, Jewish Women International proposed a long-term global strategy to end domestic abuse in the Jewish community. An International Needs Assessment in conjunction with the Chicagoland Needs Assessment were conducted in the United States of America in order to provide community-relevant insights into the vagaries that are regularly associated with abuse as well as appropriate recommendations as a means of combating the problem (Jewish Women International, 2004). The key findings from both studies provide a greater awareness of spousal abuse in the Jewish community and its impact on families. A number of these key findings will be explored in greater detail.

Jewish women will frequently delay in seeking help or not seek help at all (Jewish Women International, 2004). There are multitudes of factors which influence a woman’s decision to endure the abuse or to attempt to seek help. The shame associated with the abuse, the fear of losing their children in custody battles, the lack of access to financial resources for legal fees represents significant barriers for many women (Jewish Women International, 2004). Both social and psychological obstacles prevent abused women from seeking assistance. Despite the ramifications of inaccessibility to financial support it was noted that abused women were generally more apprehensive about disrupting their family as well as the shame or *shonda* that is so often associated with abused women (Jewish Women International, 2004). Rather than acknowledge abuse, many Jewish women elect rather to conceal the truth. One might argue that Jewish women who elect to cover up spousal abuse are perhaps attempting to protect and preserve their family honour but also safeguard and uphold Jewish identity thereby perpetuating the myth that Jewish men simply do not do that. Jewish women do not usually seek emergency shelter and are therefore left alone to negotiate a system of independent and disconnected programs and services (Jewish Women International, 2004). Victims and survivors are generally more likely to seek help internally, utilising intimate friends and family members or private psychotherapists as a means of support. Rabbis play an important role in speaking out about domestic abuse in the Jewish community and in providing support to the victims of abuse and their families (Jewish Women International,

2004). Although few rabbis actually condone domestic violence, their sometimes less than zealous attempts to condemn it facilitates in the perpetuation of a myth (Silverstein, 2010). The challenges rabbis face when dealing with domestic abuse within their congregations must be addressed. Jewish women are more likely to go to a rabbi for help and guidance if the rabbi has previously spoken out about the issue. However a rabbi who closes his eyes to acts of abuse due to the presence of literature that suggests that so called ‘bad wives’ warrant discipline are seemingly sending out a clear message that in certain contexts, abuse is permissible.

2.3 A History of the Objectification of Women in Judaism

Many of the responses that condone spousal abuse date back to the Geonic period. The Geonim flourished between the end of the 6th century until the middle of the 11th century in Babylon and Palestine (Graetz, 1998). The Gaon (plural Geonim) was an officer who was elected for his knowledge pertaining to Judaic lore and for his administrative ability. His official duties were similar to those of a chief rabbi today (Graetz, 1998). Rabbi Yehudi Gaon writes:

A wife’s duty is to honour her husband, raise her children, and feed her husband (even from her own hand). She has to wash, cook, grind in accord with what the rabbis have decreed. And when her husband enters the house, she must rise and cannot sit down until he sits, and she should never raise her voice against her husband. Even if he hits her she has to remain silent, because that is how chaste women behave. (Graetz, 1998, p. 96).

Although such sentiments are outdated, it is logical to assume that these opinions, which permitted the maltreatment of women, had the power to influence men’s perceptions regarding the position of women as well as the countless laws that were forged during this time but are still practised today. The language that is utilised in many of these ancient texts facilitates in perpetuating notions of subservience and the objectification of women. “Language and the use of language in stories create meaning” (Corey, 2005, p. 375). Although it is unlikely that present day religious leaders would condone spousal abuse, the persistent adherence of many of the laws and customs that were previously constructed becomes problematic. Silverstein (2010) asserts that Judaism is not a fixed system. It is a living and breathing dialogue between Jews and their ancestors. Therefore, if past attitudes

concerning the treatment of women generate feelings of consternation, it is imperative that individuals grapple with these views and adapt them to what Jews require today in modern society. This suggests that existing constructs of Judaism require some moderation in order to reflect what the appropriate treatment of women would be in a modern day context. If a number of ancient, Jewish laws reflect patriarchal sentiments it is possible to assume that the objectification of women is further enforced.

2.4 Patriarchy and Judaism

In order to fully conceptualise the phenomenon of battering, one must explore patriarchal notions that condone spousal abuse. Millett purports that patriarchal principles refer to situations in which males dominate females as well as elder males who preside over their younger counterparts (Millett, 1971). This suggests that males exert control over all domains (Millett, 1971). However, it is necessary to explore exactly how men remain in command of these systems. According to Millett, this patriarchal status quo is maintained through the use of force (Millett, 1971). Kalmuss and Strauss explain that violence is the ultimate resource utilised by husbands to keep their wives in place (Kalmuss & Strauss, 1982). Judith Hauptman (1998) posits that rabbis upheld patriarchy as the preordained mode of social organisation, as dictated by the *Torah*. In so doing, women's second class subordinate status was perpetuated; equality for women was not actively sought after nor has it been adequately achieved (Hauptman, 1998).

Thorough analysis of Jewish sources reveal that much of what was said that is negative about patriarchy is unfortunately true of Jewish society both past and present (Graetz, 1998). From the very beginning of human existence on earth, the biological advantage of males, in that they were generally perceived as being physically stronger and therefore more formidable, enabled them to affirm and enforce their status as sole and sovereign; women were relegated to play the role of 'the other' (Kaplan, 1993). Consequently, religious and legal codes of law came to treat women with hostility (Kaplan, 1993). One may therefore assert that Judaism is patriarchal in spirit (Graetz, 1998). Although a multitude of Jewish laws attempt to safeguard the rights of women it appears as though Judaism still manages to discriminate and demean them. Patriarchalism is inherent to Judaism and Judaism is influenced by other patriarchal systems (Graetz, 1998). Therefore, while Judaism does not necessarily encourage the battering of women, in fact reference to actual spousal abuse is never discussed; certain texts in the Bible manage to create a metaphor that perceives women as objects of violence (Graetz

1998). Virgin daughters are simply commodities, as disposable as other portable property like concubines or enslaved women (Kaplan, 1993). Women in the Bible are commended when they represent their gender in accordance with approved male perspectives (Kaplan, 1993). Three of King David's wives place themselves at personal risk in order to save the man they love (Kaplan, 1993). Each woman can be seen as having been disempowered in her own existence, her sole importance being made to reside in the degree to which she empowers the more important male to whom she ministers (Kaplan, 1993). In a patriarchal society, if women are perceived as being weak or are of little intrinsic value other than their capacity to reproduce or minister to their husbands, then it becomes easier to utilise women as objects (Graetz, 1998). Thus the objectification of women in Judaism becomes apparent coupled with a need to explore the perspectives of Jewish women and in so doing, provide the previously silenced with a voice.

Feminist theorists are concerned with the lack of research directed specifically towards understanding women's experience (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Up until the 1980's the majority of social science theory had developed through research studies conducted on male participants by male researchers (Squire, 1989). Although women's experiences were taken into account, they were generally explored in relation to observations of male subjects (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Feminists reject the insinuation that universal theories pertaining to human functioning can be derived by focusing solely on men (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Feminist research is currently embroiled in attempting to conduct research that focuses specifically on the experiences of women (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Whereas feminist research elects to tackle the experiences of women, in addition it is simultaneously invested in addressing the subjugation and discrimination of women in society (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). An additional component of feminist ideology is its conceptualisation and resistance to positivist research. Feminist researchers purport that the division between the researcher and the research participants perpetuate patriarchal sentiments in that they attempt to understand the world as a means of controlling and exploiting resources (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Neuman (1997) posits that positivist assumptions reflect a male emphasis on individual rivalry coupled with male attempts to dominate and control the environment. As the perspectives of Jewish women have not been adequately addressed in literature it appears necessary to utilise a feminist approach as a means of gaining insight into the abuse of Jewish women in the Orthodox community. In so

doing, the lives and experiences of these women will be appropriately formulated in their own terms and that which has been largely overlooked will be acknowledged and addressed.

In conjunction with feminist theory, one should also remain cognisant of the principles that encompass social constructionist theory. A multitude of Jewish customs and practices were generated through the interpretation of ancient Jewish texts, as many of these Jewish principles are still practiced today it is perhaps necessary to explore the language utilised in some of the texts in order to gauge the manner in which these socially constructed phenomenon influence the treatment of women according to Judaism. Social constructionism purports that human life as we know it is fundamentally represented through the tool of language and therefore language itself should be the object of evaluation (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). To social constructionists, reality is based on the use of language and is largely a function of the situations in which people live (Corey, 2005). Constructionism does not treat language as if it were impartial and obvious; instead of viewing language as a means of unearthing underlying realities, language actually facilitates in the construction of that reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Therefore, in accordance with this postulation, language is no longer regarded as a completely objective approach to convey meaning but rather as an instrument of subjectivity which can be utilised to communicate a system of meanings. Therefore, every person involved in a situation has a particular perspective on the reality of that situation (Corey, 2005). Social constructs provide a framework through which we can begin to comprehend various objects and practices furthermore, social constructs also enable societies to create an understanding of who we are and how we should behave in relation to these systems (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Many of the fundamental principles and practices that encompass Judaism were constructed through the interpretation of archaic texts by scholars or religious leaders and have been in existence for thousands of centuries. Input of women into the *halakhic* (Jewish law) process is rare, and it is almost always the men who have the authority to make *halakhic* decisions (Graetz, 1998). There is a common misconception that claims that the subordination of women and the patriarchal system under which Jewish women still live began with the Hebrew Bible. However, this is seemingly not the case as the subordination of women and the misogyny that accompanied it were entrenched value systems before the Biblical age, and were incorporated because they were already clearly the accepted norms of that period (Kaplan, 1993). Therefore despite the antiquated nature of many of these religious laws and customs they are still practised today. Women in the Bible are seemingly represented as

fitting a definitive role-one that is established by men (Kaplan, 1993). Therefore, the roles that women assume within Jewish communities are seemingly relevant, particularly within a South African context.

2.5. The Jewish Community in South Africa

The Jewish community in South Africa resembles most other New World Jewish communities (Hellig, 1995). Religiously, the Jewish community has tended to be conservative in practice, exhibiting a strong attachment to tradition, an attachment which has been tempered by pragmatism (Hellig, 1995). Approximately 85 percent of all South African Jewry belong to a congregation that is affiliated to Orthodox Judaism, whereas 10 – 15 percent of Jewry are affiliated to reform or conservative temples (Hellig, 1995). The three major religious branches within Judaism: Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform are roughly differentiated by descending degrees of adherence to traditional Jewish law (Neustein & Leshner, 2008). In recent decades, there has been a lively resurgence of orthodoxy, accompanied by the emergence of new sub-communities that may be termed ultra-orthodox, or more accurately, *haredi* (Hellig, 1995).

The discovery of diamonds in 1867 and gold in 1886 culminated in the industrial revolution; this impacted on South African society as a whole (Hellig, 1995). The gold rush years coupled with severe persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe resulted in large numbers of Eastern European Jews entering into the country. The influx of eastern European Jews in the country irreversibly changed the Jewish community in religious, social and economic terms. Reform or progressive Judaism was established in South Africa in 1933 (Hellig, 1995). Progressive Judaism in South Africa was initially met with bitter hostility from those who resented the intrusion of an apparently schismatic movement (Hellig, 1995). The difference between progressive and orthodox Judaism is that progressive Judaism does not accept the binding nature of *halakha* (Jewish law) in the oral Torah, while for orthodoxy it was revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai with the written Torah (Hellig, 1995). Orthodox Judaism therefore often regards reform or progressive teaching as heretical or assimilationist whereas reform Judaism frequently perceives orthodoxy's stance as fanatical and medieval (Hellig, 1995).

According to Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) each subgroup has a unique history, distinct beliefs, customs, cultural patterns, and way of approaching contemporary society. For example, Modern Orthodox Jews have attempted to merge traditional values and practices with a modern and constantly evolving society. “Black Hat” or “Yeshivish” Jews tend to

tolerate secular culture, but do not encourage acculturation. The Chassidim have attempted to detach themselves from anything that constitutes the secular world such as watching television or going to movies, they typically have a distinct dress and language. In addition, they live in an isolated community, centered on their “Rebbe” (Rabbi), and rarely make any decisions (personal, religious, and social) without first consulting with him. Between Chassidic movements, differences are found in style of dress, philosophical focus, and politics. Whereas each subgroup of Orthodox Jews presents with distinctive differences, a number of similarities are also shared. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) assert that the community is generally centered around the synagogue as the geographic proximity provides a sense of belonging to a large communal family, which resembles their own daily home life. This serves to illustrate the collective existence that is typically assumed by the Jewish sub-communities. Furthermore, gender roles are clearly defined (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2007). Finally, the Torah and the Talmud (oral law) provide stringent guidelines pertaining to aspects of daily living including marriage, divorce, family relationships, sexual behavior, charity, observance of the Sabbath and holidays, and dietary laws (*kashruth*), among others (Margoese, 1998). It is therefore possible to assume that for observant Jews specifically, Judaism profoundly influences all aspects of life and seemingly plays a pivotal role in all areas of functioning. Despite the various sub-groups that comprise Judaism, it is necessary to consider that the majority of South African Jews are affiliated to the Orthodox Jewish community by birth and not according to religious practice specifically. However, regardless of religious fervor, irreligious Jews are still classified as Orthodox due to birth and blood line.

2.6 The Beth Din

The Federation of Synagogues, formed in Johannesburg in 1933, was established as a means of uniting the majority of Orthodox synagogues throughout the country under one governing body (Hellig, 1995). The federation’s responsibilities included: supplying essential services for outlying country synagogues. It also maintained an internationally recognised *Beth Din* (rabbinic court) which upheld Jewish dietary laws, the granting of *gittin* (bills of divorce), the performance of conversions and the settling of disputes.

The rabbinic court or **Beth Din** traces all the way back to Moses. As far back as the third century Babylonia, rabbinic courts have exerted full and uncontested authority over Jewish communal life, in virtually all aspects that constitute Jewish life (Neusner, 1970). To this day,

traditionally observant Jews regard it as a sin, except under clearly defined circumstances, to take their disputes to a non-Jewish court in preference to a Beth Din. As a result, Orthodox Jews often present conflicts involving business, community politics, neighborhood quarrels, or marital disharmony to a rabbinic court for resolution. Given the religious imperative behind them, rabbinic courts have great prestige in Orthodox Jewish communities, and this in turn can blind these communities to the severe limitations under which such courts necessarily labor when dealing with criminal or antisocial conduct (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2007). Rabbinic courts are largely impotent in the implementation of a number of legal practices as they are unable to arrest suspects, compel the production of information or evidence, detain a suspect pending the outcome of a trial, or punish an offender in the event he or she is found guilty. However, as previously stated Orthodox Jews often seek guidance from a rabbinic court before engaging secular authorities (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2007). This leads to a paradox: as rabbinic courts, can do little or nothing to deal with an offender who is convicted. However the aforementioned courts still wield great influence if their verdict favors the accused. This can be evidenced in that victims and potential witnesses alike may be threatened with ostracism or worse if they subsequently take their grievances to the police or testify in a criminal trial (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2007).

2.7 Jewish Persecution

A large part of Jewish history revolves around their struggle to secure political emancipation and civic equality (Siegel, 1980). Thus, Jewish familial structures require interpretation against a backdrop of domination and even cruelty. Throughout their long history, suffering has been the hall-mark of the Jewish people. Driven from their homeland, buffeted from country to country and plagued by persecution, Jews have been rejected and despised (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). These repeated incidents of persecution have had a profound effect on the formation of Jewish identity and ideology. Between 1933 and 1945 the Nazi's successfully annihilated six million Jews; they also systematically eradicated all the Jewish communities of Europe (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). Although millions of Jews perished those who did survive found themselves devoid of family, community, and of course outside a familiar social support system.

Although it is a well-known fact that Holocaust survivors who endured the concentration camps suffered agonising emotional wounds, less well known is how this legacy has also

seeped into the psyches of many of their children. Research into the long-term effects of concentration camp experiences upon survivors eventually culminated in the establishment of the term Survivor Syndrome by William G. Niederland, a foremost psychoanalyst in the field of treating survivors (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). He came to realise that the symptoms affected not only survivors, but their families as well (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). In the post-war world, parents held high hopes for their children. However, these children also encountered feelings of ambivalence by their parents (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). Parents' responses to their children were varied. Some parents were simply unable to invest emotionally in their children whereas others expected their children to act as representatives of reincarnation of those who had been lost (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). The survivor's child was not treated as an individual, but rather as an object or a possession to provide meaning to distraught parents' empty lives (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990).

A vast number of Holocaust survivors grew up in Jewish communities that were strongly orientated towards culture, community and spirituality. It was amidst this structure that they developed a strong sense of belonging, security and identification. Prior to the Holocaust, Jewish families were linked to their extended families, their communities and the entire Jewish nation; these were people with whom they identified and belonged. The Holocaust severed these links until virtually nothing was left (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). In 1974, a Holocaust Survivor Project was established to provide psychological services for survivors and their children. This request for aid had come after community leaders noted an increasing occurrence of family conflicts, marital difficulties, childhood disturbances, and individual mental health crises especially among first and second generation survivors (Siegel, 1980). The Holocaust caused an irreparable rift within the fabric of Jewish society; devoid of family, community and even country Jewish identity was forever altered. Forced to deal with loss on such a profound scale, survivors demonstrated tremendous resilience in attempting to rebuild their lives soon after the war had ended (Cohn-Sherbok, 1990). Many survivors remarried and had children; the Jewish family became synonymous with survival and healing and so began a journey of preservation as a means of perpetuating Jewish faith and identity. Orthodox Jewish communities typically demonstrate a degree of discomfort in relation to public image – this preoccupation is seemingly the result of religious doctrine that makes them responsible, on the basis of their behavior, for the reputation of the God they serve. However, in addition to the standard of morality that is synonymous with the religion, the historically grounded fears that scandal can reinforce anti-Semitism and give enemies of the

Jews an excuse to attack serves to reinforce trepidation experienced in relation to public-image (Neustein & Leshner, 2008). In addition, the observation of many of the principles that are to integral to Judaism facilitated in the establishment of a belief in the common destiny of the Jewish people to survive as a people (Cohn-Sherbok,1990).

2.8 Marriage and divorce

The role demanded of a wife was and is one of selfless dedication to her husband (Kaplan, 1993). Jewish marriage is viewed as a blessing as it enables individuals to overcome loneliness. The Bible indicates that a man who spends his days without a wife, has no joy, no blessings and no good; God seeks to remedy this through the creation of women thereby facilitating in the spiritual union of two souls (Kaplan, 1983). The basic God-created human unit is man and woman, one flesh, completing one another (Lamm, 1991). Man alone, or woman alone constitutes only half of that unit (Lamm, 1991). According to Judaism, marriage is necessary to bring an individual into completion so that he may then achieve his ultimate goals. Each spouse is intended to complete the other, and the two together are seemingly empowered to overcome their inherent inadequacies (Wolpin, 2005).

It is apparent that Judaism places enormous emphasis on the marriage covenant. Despite individual preferences or personal sentiments to remain single; Jewish unions are the expected norm. "One has an identity as a whole person only when one is married" (Twerski, 2004, p. 1). In fact, such unions are regarded as a vital step towards the fulfilment of many of the Jewish laws, and the attainment of true spiritual enlightenment. "While alone, a person cannot achieve his ultimate purpose; it is only the proper helpmate who can bring him to this goal" (Wolpin, 2005, p. 16). In the historic Jewish view, the family and not the synagogue, is deemed the most intrinsic institution that encompasses all aspects of Jewish life and society (Kaplan, 1983). A multitude of acts and experiences that are so typical to Jewish Orthodoxy require a family setting (Kaplan, 1983). Therefore being a "good" Jew requires, in part, the fulfilment of a socially constructed phenomenon which emphasises marriage in order to facilitate in the realisation of spiritual growth and development.

Judaism purports that the ultimate purpose for which each and every human being was created has been decreed in Heaven, but it is on earth that it must be fulfilled, with the help of a proper helpmate (Wolpin, 2005). If God created man, woman, and their marriage relationship; then God is a conscious albeit silent partner in the marriage (Lamm, 1991). *Kinyan* refers to an act in which a person obtains rights of ownership or use of property in

exchange for monetary payment (Graetz, 1998). Although the bride was purchased in biblical times, in the post-biblical era, the betrothal itself was viewed as an act of acquisition (Graetz, 1998). When a woman gets married, the father's property rights are transferred to the husband; the woman essentially "belongs" to her father until her marriage (Graetz, 1998). When she is divorced, the husband renounces his right to his (sexual) use of the property and proclaims that she is now permitted to any man (Graetz, 1998). During the Jewish marriage ceremony, it is the husband who recites the formal declaration of espousal, not the woman (Graetz, 1998). The husband essentially acquires his wife; although she has to agree, at no stage is she presented with an opportunity to articulate her willingness to give herself to him. The woman's position is seemingly inferior to that of her husband in that she belongs to him, and the right of ownership can only be severed if it is the husband's will to do so. "Through marriage, the woman becomes the sacrosanct possession of her husband and she is therefore forbidden to others as a sacred object is forbidden" (Graetz, 1998, p. 69). The word *ba'al* implies ownership as well as lordship; the husband is generally regarded as the master of his house (Graetz, 1998). The use of the word *ba'al* or master creates the impression of subservience in that women are not deemed equal partners; archaic sentiments remain true in that the men are expected to provide whereas women are compelled to become devoted wives and mothers. In Genesis 3:16, God tells the first woman that her husband shall rule over her (Graetz, 1998). This statement gives rise to connotations of ownership or possession; it is interesting to note that this very principle forms the basis of the marriage agreement between a man and a woman.

Due to the complexities surrounding Jewish betrothal and the implications that the husband occupies a dominant position in the relationship; the procedures for an officially recognised divorce are equally complicated. Jewish divorce must precede remarriage. This is an absolute requirement of Jewish Law. "A civil divorce is not recognised by traditional Jewish courts. The child whose mother did not obtain a Jewish divorce from her former husband may very well be categorised as a *mamzer*" (Lamm, 1991, p. 238). In accordance with Jewish decree, a child's religious standing is determined by the mother. Therefore a woman who elects to remarry without obtaining a divorce that meets the requirements of Jewish law will produce illegitimate or 'bastard' children that are not acknowledged by the Orthodox Jewish community. In Jewish Law a *get* is a divorce document, which is presented by a husband to his wife to effect their divorce. The *get* stipulates that as the wife is no longer a married woman, she is permitted to other men and the laws of adultery no longer apply (Lamm,

1991). The *get* also facilitates in the eradication of many legal rights which a husband holds in regard to his wife in a Jewish marriage (Lamm, 1991).”The prerequisites for a Jewish divorce are the consent of both parties and the husband’s direct authorisation for the writing, witnessing, signing, and transmission of the bill of divorce to his wife” (Lamm, 1991, p. 238). Domestic abuse is not automatic grounds for a Jewish divorce. Therefore, an abused woman whose husband refuses to give her a divorce is considered an *agunah*, a chained or anchored woman (Graetz, 1998). This regularly culminates in situations in which a husband may make demands of his wife in exchange for the *get*. The wife in essence, is held to ransom by her husband. In certain circumstances, a man may completely refuse to grant a *get* thereby ensuring that his wife remains trapped in her marriage. According to Orthodox Judaism, she is now prohibited from remarrying (Lamm, 1991).

2.9 Tznius or Modesty

Tznius is a Hebrew term for a group of laws that relate to modesty. Modesty is the foundation of Jewish values and is one of the fundamental underpinnings of the Jewish family. *Tznius* refers to modesty in dress but also modesty in habits; discreet or quiet speech is encouraged whereas raucous and boisterous behaviour is deemed inappropriate. Lamm (1991) purports that the Jewish concept of *tznius* in all of its varied experiences (such as the veiling of the bride, the covering of the hair and non-exposure of the body) serves to unintentionally enhance the erotic motif more than blatant austere exposure of the body. The physical body was seemingly a paradox to philosophy and religion because the very nature of physicality did not correlate with theoretical modes of thought. Therefore, while the Greek philosophers solved the paradox through aesthetics and glorified the body by exposing it, the Jews attempted to solve the concept by withdrawing or covering up (Lamm, 1991). Commentators explain that when the term is used, it refers to modesty both as a character trait and as a group of laws. It has wide-ranging application, governing such things as dress code and sexual conduct. The laws have translated into an attitude which guides behavior. For example, discussions in public of things sexual or romantic in nature are considered inappropriate (Silverstein, 1995). A recent study found that concerns about modesty inhibit women from speaking up about their personal situations (Ringel and Bina, 2006). Furthermore, In Orthodox Judaism, men and women who are not married to each other and are not immediate blood relatives are not allowed to enter into a secluded situation *yichud* in

a room or in an area that is private. This measure is taken to prevent the possibility of sexual relations which is prohibited outside of marriage. Simply being in a room together alone does not necessarily constitute seclusion. The situation must be private, where no one else is expected to enter. Originally, this prohibition applied only to married women secluded with men other than their husbands, but it was extended to include single women.

2.10 Shalom Bayit

Jews have established an ideal standard for Jewish family life that is manifested in the term *shalom bayit*. The concept of *shalom bayit*, literally translates to peace in the home, it is a key concept in traditional Jewish marriages and is regularly utilised in order to hold marriages together (Wolpin, 2005). *Shalom bayit* denotes completeness, wholeness, and fulfilment (Graetz, 1998). In Jewish culture, a marriage is characteristically described as a “match made in heaven” and is typically characterised by peace, nurturing and respect (Wolpin, 2005). The broad principles that form the basis of *shalom bayit* are generally valuable, particularly when they are implemented into what one would essentially describe as a solid marriage. The love between husband and wife should be such that even if a negative feeling occurs, it should be no more than temporary. It should immediately be eclipsed by their love (Twerski, 2004). However, the value of *shalom bayit* is frequently called upon in order to deny or cover up blatant violations of domestic harmony; *shalom bayit* is therefore regularly invoked as the holy principle; one which essentially overrides individual problems or perceptions for the sake of the institution of marriage (Graetz, 1998). Thus, *halakhic* (Jewish Law) principles can be utilised as a means of condoning wife battery: the wife is regarded as property that is “bought” by her husband. She has certain duties toward her husband, which, if not carried out, will lead her to be considered a “rebellious wife” (Graetz, 1998).

Therefore, this study will explore the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish, women regarding the abuse of women in their community. Feminist theory and social constructionism were utilised in order to critically examine principles that are fundamental to Jewish faith and identity and the extent to which said principles influence the roles of women in Judaism. Greater conceptualisation of Jewish doctrine and ideology will assist in shedding some insight into abuse of Jewish women in the Jewish community.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Question 1: According to Jewish women what is the impact of the religion's intrinsic principles on a woman's reaction to an abusive relationship?

Question 2: What are Jewish women's perceptions regarding the objectification of women in Judaism?

Chapter Three: Research Method

3.1 Research Design

The research design is qualitative and exploratory in nature. It is informed by the feminist approach to research that is devoted to tackling existing oppressive and discriminatory stereotypes of women (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). A qualitative paradigm was utilised in order to gain access to information thereby ensuring that the content obtained was of a more personal nature involving the private perceptions of this study's participants. This approach to research was kept in mind when conducting the study, as it was necessary to consider that there appears to be a lack of research directed specifically towards understanding women's experience (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In this particular study, the perceptions of abuse in the Orthodox Jewish community required exploration thereby providing a platform for these women's voices to be heard. Thematic content analysis falls under the umbrella of the social constructionist approach to research, and was therefore guided by the steps required of this analytical framework. Furthermore, the researcher attempted to identify themes in the data and the relationships that exist between these themes revealing while emphasising the cultural materials from which particular utterances, texts or events have been constructed (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

3.2 Sampling

Due to the wealth of information gleaned from the interviews and the richness of the data collected the researcher determined that a sample of nine married women who fell within an age range of 25 to 35 years would be sufficient. Having been born and raised by Orthodox parents, all of the participants utilised in this study were classified as Orthodox Jews, however they did not necessarily adhere to the religious customs that constitute Orthodox practice. Therefore, questions were asked to assess what Orthodox Judaism means for the

concerned participants thereby creating the opportunity for these women to self-define and enabling the researcher to gauge the participants' religious affiliation. These women were invited to participate in the study, and asked to respond to semi-structured, open-ended questions. Seven participants responded to the advertisement and an additional two participants were accessed by utilising snowball sampling. The researcher conducted a pilot study of two women in order to assess the efficacy of the interview questions and to make appropriate adjustments where necessary. The potential participants were selected using non-probability, purposive sampling, based on their research suitability (Cohen & Manion, 1997). The invited participants were married, Jewish females who fell within the specified age bracket. The stipulation of Orthodox, Jewish women only improved the possibility that the participants utilised were endowed with a more comprehensive understanding of the practices and customs that are so typical to the religion as well as a more meaningful connection to Jewish identity. Certain questions were constructed in order to explore the manner in which participants experience their own Jewishness. The age range facilitated in the acquisition of participants who were more likely to have received a basic level of mainstream education and have therefore been exposed to concepts and opinions that demand greater equality for women. It was thought that educated participants who are more familiar with notions of equality were more likely to communicate honestly about their opinions regarding the objectification of women in Judaism.

3.3 Data Gathering Procedure

An advertisement was placed in the Jewish Report briefly explaining the nature of the study, the sample requirements, as well as relevant contact information for potential participants to initiate contact. As women's perceptions of abuse were being explored, all women who fulfilled the demographic requirements were included; these women may or may not have had experience of abuse themselves nor do they have to know someone who has experienced abuse. The Jewish Report is a community newspaper that is read by both secular and religious Johannesburg Jewry. Potential participants who showed an interest in the study were asked to contact the researcher via phone or e-mail. Potential participants who were still receptive to the process were sent information and consent letters. They were then contacted telephonically in order to schedule a date and time for the interview to take place. Due to the specified interview process that was necessary for this study, anonymity could not be guaranteed however the names of the potential participants were not be utilised in the study. Furthermore, the researcher ensured that the names of people who agreed to be interviewed

were not divulged to anyone. The interview was conducted by arrangement at a mutually agreed upon location.

Semi-structured, open-ended questions were utilised during a one on one interview with each participant that lasted approximately one hour. The questions established for the interview were created in an open-ended format in order to invite as rich and in-depth a response as possible from the potential participants. Certain questions required some modification during the interview process as a means of accumulating more meaningful data. In order to gather in depth information about feelings or experiences, one would do better to plan for an interview that is less structured (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The interviews commenced with a particular line of questioning which aided the researcher in gathering more information about the participants themselves. This also enabled the researcher to establish a more comprehensive understanding of the participant being interviewed. The questions formulated for the interview were informed by the literature gathered for the research. The aim of the questions were to assess whether similar themes, of a similar nature were likely to occur in the participants' answers, thus either supporting or disconfirming previous research findings of a similar nature. The semi- structured interview questions were formulated under the guidelines provided by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) in that the researcher developed an interview schedule in advance, this schedule served as a guide only as the researcher developed a sense of the experiences or feelings that required discussion and exploration. All answers were audio taped recorded with the approval of the participants and were transcribed at a later stage. The researcher will destroy all data, both recorded and transcribed, within a five-year period in order to establish opportunity for publication of the research report.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic content analysis. This form of analysis was informed by the procedural steps outlined by Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), whereby the researcher became familiar with and immersed in the data in order to have a good understanding of the information. The researcher then induced the major themes from the data, in the attempt to see what themes naturally occurred in the data. The researcher coded the data by categorising the relevant data into the related, emerging themes and sub-themes, elaborating on the themes found, and finally, interpreting and checking the information by using the thematic categories and sub-categories that emerged in the analysis. Through these steps of analysis, main thematic trends were established, discussed and analysed in the results

of this study. These are issues regarding the perceptions orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of Jewishness on women's choices in abusive relationships. Thus, the researcher attempted to gain insight into the perceptions of Jewish women regarding the abuse of women in their community.

Thematic content analysis is a form of qualitative analysis. It is a method utilised for analysing data through a process of analysing and reporting the patterns or themes that occur within the data. It “minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Thematic content analysis is a widely used form of qualitative data analysis largely because there is no specific rule regarding how to conduct the analysis. This contributes to the flexibility of the analysis procedure, and thus the appeal. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response of meaning within the data set” (p. 82). The researcher used discretion when deciding what constituted a theme. In order to ascertain whether a theme captured ‘key elements’ of the data set, the researcher needed to consider whether it captured important aspects in relation to the overall research question. Secondly, the researcher needed to specify whether the analysis was going to be inductive or deductive. As the researcher remained open to the possibility that data could emerge from the results of the study that had not been predicted by the predetermined themes or the literature found, the researcher adopted a partially inductive approach. However, as the literature had already been gathered for the report, and the interview schedule was established based on the gathered literature, the approach was also partly deductive, as the data gathered was informed by the literature and clustered accordingly (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thus the analysis of the research was both inductive and deductive. This raises the question of researcher bias. As the researcher was so actively involved in the data collection and analysis, (a characteristic of qualitative thematic analysis), one has to consider that a certain level of bias informed the theme identification and interpretation. This will be discussed further in reflection on the research process.

In order to analyse the research according to the thematic content approach, the researcher adhered to the six procedural steps outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), whereby she: (1)

familiarised and immersed herself in the data; (2) generated initial codes; (3) searched for themes; (4) reviewed the themes; (5) defined and named the themes; and (6) wrote up the report. These steps will now be discussed in greater detail.

Step 1: Immersion in the data

The researcher ensured that she was familiar with the content of the data through a process of 'repeated reading'. The entire data set was read in an active way, through a process of reading and re-reading the questionnaires. The researcher thus immersed herself in the raw data in order to search for meanings and patterns. During this process, important aspects of the data were highlighted and reflected upon.

Step 2: Generation of initial codes

The second phase of analysis involved the production of initial codes from each data set. This initially involved a vertical analysis as each set was analysed individually when considering the possible codes. The data was coded manually and the researcher highlighted potential patterns with coloured pens in order to identify the segments of data. The data extracts were coded and then collated within each code. The process of coding allowed the researcher to organise the data into meaningful groups. The researcher then began to identify potential themes that were starting to emerge within the raw data, as seen in the example below:

Question : "What are your impressions regarding the status of women in Judaism?"

Data Segment: P2: *"I think women are revered. I think men realise that without women what really do they have? They give so much of themselves to their husbands, their family, their house..."*

Coded Theme: Depiction of women as the wife, mother...

Step 3: Searching for themes

Once the data for each respondent had been coded and collated, the third phase of analysis could take place, in which the different codes were sorted into potential themes, and the relevant coded data extracts were collated within the identified themes. The different codes were also reviewed to see if they formed an overarching theme. Through the process of a horizontal analysis, or cross-coding and analysis, the relationships between the codes, themes and sub-themes were considered.

Step 4: Reviewing the themes:

Once the themes had been identified, the fourth phase of analysis occurred, and the themes were reviewed. Some themes were considered to be part of other themes, and others were deleted as they were considered not to be substantive. Horizontal analysis of the data was used to compare themes between participants. Thus the researcher aimed to establish whether certain themes were common to a number of respondents or were idiosyncratic. As such, thematic trends could be established and analysed for discussion

Step 5: Reviewing, defining and naming of themes:

The fifth stage of the process involved a comprehensive analysis and discussion of each specific theme that emerged. Sub-themes were also discussed. The researcher considered in what way each theme and sub-theme fitted into the overall ‘story’ of the data in relation to the research question, thus ensuring that there was no “overlap between the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the end of this stage each theme could be clearly defined and named in order for the reader to have a clear understanding of what the theme includes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Step 6: Written report

Once each theme had been defined and named, the final stage of analysis could take place. Examples and data extracts were provided to highlight the emerging themes and to present a comprehensive argument for the research question. The extracts chosen were considered to be “embedded within an analytic narrative that compellingly illustrates the story that [you] are telling about [your] data, and [your] analytic narrative needs to go *beyond* description of the data, and make an *argument* in relation to the research question” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). The aim was to bring the reader as close to the experiences of the participants as possible, through the implementation of various examples and quotes the reader is afforded the opportunity of developing greater insight into the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women’s choices in abusive relationships, and which factors contributed to and hindered the process (Fossey *et al.*, 2002). Through the steps of analysis delineated above, the main thematic trends of the study were established, discussed and analysed.

3.5 Reflexivity

The research explored Jewish women's perceptions regarding abuse in the Jewish community. Gibson and Swartz (2004) define reflexivity as the act or process of directing critique or understanding back on oneself as a person, a psychologist, or a researcher. The process of reflexivity requires a critical awareness in that it posits that individuals do their work and make life decisions for a range of complex reasons. Therefore, the rationalizations and justifications that are employed by human beings in their decision-making processes will inevitably vary. The researcher sought to be reflexive throughout the research process, however a propensity to engage in the act of reflexivity does not necessarily equate to the appropriate insight and self-awareness that would seemingly facilitate in the conceptualisation of one's underlying personal motivations that inevitably guide behaviour.

My current training as a community-based counselling psychologist has exposed me to a critical mode of thinking and operating in relation to the realities which I am forced to confront. It is seemingly necessary to consider that as an unmarried, Jewish woman myself it would be naive of me not to reflect on my own biases in relation to the research process. Having grown up in a privileged traditional Jewish home, I realise that so much of what I have come to know and understand about my life is in fact a culmination of discourses, socially constructed and geared towards upholding existing "norms". I have been raised with the expectation that I adhere to specific standards. There is an expectation that I marry a Jewish man, preferably a successful professional, that I have children and raise them in accordance with Jewish practice and that income gleaned from my own professional development should be for my own personal use as opposed to a vital contribution to the running of a home. While my own familial structure does not necessarily negate the role of women, it is still interesting to consider the very specific functions that I am expected to adhere to. Therefore, while I cannot profess to have "suffered" as a Jewish woman, nor have I endured the pain and anguish experienced by the victims of abuse; in many respects gender stereotypes continue to feature in my own life and the religion itself constantly informs my choices profoundly influencing the direction which my life takes. Whereas naivety brings with it a sense of comfort; this course coupled with my research specifically has ensured that everything I associate with being a white, Jewish, female in South Africa requires scrutiny and that which I have merely come to accept as 'standard' is perhaps fraught with prejudice and inequality.

It is necessary to recognise that interviews and the subsequent transcription thereof are not impartial tools, but are inevitably influenced by the subjectivity of the researcher. Transcripts comprise both the researcher and said participants' questions and/or comments therefore interviews are classified as conversations with all annotations deemed relevant. Furthermore, the influence of the researcher, her questions, and her comments cannot be discounted as the participants tell their stories and construct their narratives with the awareness of the researcher as audience, and possibly with some thought to the greater audience who may come into contact with the research findings; members of the Jewish community specifically. The interviewed participants communicated specifically to the researcher; their dialogues may have been constructed differently or taken another form if told to another audience.

Reflexive reporting is an important aid to help distinguish the “participants’ voices from that of the researcher in the report, as well as enhancing the permeability of the researcher’s role” which is a necessary task in qualitative, thematic content analysis (Fossey *et al.*, 2002, p.730). The compilation of the literature review prior to data collection resulted in the emergence of significant themes and research trends, thereby influencing the analytic process. In addition, when attempting to assemble the relevant themes from the data, it became necessary to remain cognisant of my own interpretations in relation to the answers provided by the research participants. I had to separate my own beliefs and opinions regarding the topic, in light of my own personal experiences as a Jewish woman having grown up in a Jewish community. I had to ensure that I interpreted the themes from the interviews according to answers from the participants specifically. For example, a number of participants made reference to the experiences of unmarried Jewish women regarding their single status. As an unmarried, Jewish woman I identified strongly with the participants’ reflections and comments. I therefore needed to separate my own emotional responses to the questions from the answers given by the participants when identifying the common themes and trends.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Critical to any research is the principle of transparency, honesty and integrity. This piece of research adhered to strict ethical codes thereby ensuring that the stipulations of confidentiality were rigorously enforced throughout the study.

This research study abided by ethical codes of conduct according to the ethical research guidelines established by the committee for Research on Human Participants (Humanities) of the University of Witwatersrand (Wits) and ethical clearance was obtained by the Human Research Ethics Committee (protocol number: MACC/10/001 IH). Confidentiality of the participants was strictly maintained and ensured throughout all documentation and reporting of the findings of this project. Potential participants in the research were invited to participate in the study and emphasis was placed on the voluntary nature of their participation. All this information was outlined in a detailed letter of explanation to the participants prior to the commencement of the study. They were informed that a summary of the results of the study will be available on request, upon completion of the study.

One ethical consideration is the fact that the invited participants were being interviewed on a topic that is of a sensitive nature, the subject matter may have invoked potentially negative or distressing reactions. The researcher made available the contact information of Jewish Community Services, a community funded Jewish organisation that offers free counselling by trained social-workers and psychologists. Participants were encouraged to schedule a debriefing session with the organisation if any difficulties were experienced due to the content discussed during the interview process. As the study utilised interviews that were conducted face to face anonymity cannot be applied however confidentiality will be strictly enforced as participants will not be identifiable in the published results. The researcher informed the potential participants that direct quotes from the interviews will be used in order to illustrate particular themes. However the participants were ensured that no identifying information will be included in such quotes. This form of non-disclosure was stipulated in the information letter and discussed in person, ensuring the protection of all participants.

Furthermore participants were assured of the fact that as information obtained is of a confidential and personal nature it will be securely stored and protected for the duration of the project. As their involvement in this study is purely of a voluntary nature, all participants were afforded the opportunity of terminating and withdrawing from the investigation at will.

Chapter Four: Results Section

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the findings on the major themes and sub-themes of the research. Qualitative material in the form of summaries and excerpts from the interviews are used to highlight the participants' responses. All the participants' results are compared to see if there are any thematic commonalities. The findings are presented in an overall summary. In addition, participants are identified by number.

4.2 Description of the Themes and Sub-themes

The main coded themes that arose from the participants in response to the questions are:

- 1) Jewish men treat women according to what men are taught.
- 2) Marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women.
- 3) The Jewish community is not immune to social ills.

These themes were then refined into sub-themes. The first theme refers to "Jewish men treat women according to what men are taught". This gave rise to the following sub-themes, including factors that appear to have influenced the treatment of women according to Jewish practice.

- The Beth Din perpetuates patriarchy.
- Jewish women experience both equality and degradation in their adherence to Jewish laws.
- Rabbinic leaders are integral to the interpretation of Jewish laws.

Within theme 2: "Marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women" the following sub-themes were extrapolated:

- There is power in being a wife and mother.
- There is power in women's omission from prayer.
- Married women are valued as maternal figures.
- Women preserve Shalom Bayit.

Within theme 3 “The Jewish community is not immune to social ills” the following sub-themes emerged:

- We don’t air our dirty laundry.
- Abuse defies notions of Jewish morality

4.3 Theme one: Jewish men treat women according to what men are taught.

The results demonstrate that all nine participants observed the manner in which women are treated to be largely determined by what men are taught in relation to the handling of women. Whereas upbringing is generally influential in terms of the interactions between men and women, religious affiliation in conjunction with its religious leaders have also been implicated in the treatment of women. Therefore subjective analysis of Jewish laws by religious leaders is seemingly a significant contributing factor to the manner in which women are perceived in accordance with Judaism. Religious leaders play a pivotal role in the interpretation of laws and the provision of comprehensive and acceptable explanations of these laws which may serve to elevate the status of women or perhaps perpetuate their degradation. Furthermore, women are reportedly encouraged to either demand equality or to tolerate abhorrent behaviour which is generally communicated by their religious leaders in conjunction with the Beth Din (Jewish governing body).

4.3.1 The Beth Din perpetuates patriarchy

The majority of participants referred to the Beth Din as an antiquated system comprising solely of elderly men who adjudicate in relation to obstacles or grievances that arise between members of the Jewish community. The Beth Din is intended to serve as an impartial institute to facilitate in the arbitration of matters; however participants proposed that they are typically experienced by women as punitive and judgemental particularly in relation to issues pertaining to divorce and marriage whereby preferential treatment of men is stringently enforced. Participants identified that any disparity that exists between men and women in the religion is largely the result of patriarchal sentiments that are strictly adhered to and enforced by the Beth Din. The majority of participants were united when articulating the experience of suffering that is generally associated with any divorce but the manner in which the Beth Din

engages with women specifically was identified by participants as exacerbating an already untenable situation. In addition, they recognised that a woman's capacity to exercise any form of control pertaining to the outcome of her divorce was unlikely when confronted by the Beth Din, as women were described as "having to beg" for emancipation from an unhappy marriage.

The Beth Din is very patriarchal and it's not just patriarchal but old. The Rabbi's that sit on that council and sit on that board are ancient and I've only heard bad things. I haven't heard a single good thing come out of a friend's divorce from a religious point of view. Divorce isn't easy to do which I understand but I think in terms of women in particular, it is more difficult, it's more emotional, it's...you've basically got to go and beg which is demeaning and you're going through this incredibly difficult period anyway and on top of that to have to go and beg a bunch of patriarchal old Rabbi's...who are looking down on you anyway...it's tough. (Participant #4)

The divorce process is extremely unfair to women because the Beth Din's attitude towards women is very harsh and I had that experience myself. (Participant #8)

When my mother wanted a divorce they said 'no, stick with it' and when my father wanted a divorce they immediately gave it to him. (Participant #1)

In addition to this maltreatment that female participants identified in relation to the Beth Din, the resolutions proclaimed by this institution are binding and are therefore upheld and adhered to by religious leaders throughout Jewish communities. Participants generally concurred that rules and regulations decreed by the Beth Din pertained to the Jewish community in its entirety. Participants were unable to identify successful attempts of defiance against the Beth Din, as evidenced in the results couples who attempted to challenge existing Jewish practices were frequently spurned by the orthodox community and the Beth Din in particular. Despite their religious orientation, all of the participants professed to abiding by the religion's doctrine in that their marriages adhered to the traditional and required standards in order to ensure that their nuptial agreement would be recognised by the Beth Din. Therefore, participants recognised the importance of conforming to the stipulations of a traditional, Jewish wedding. Furthermore, despite religious affiliation participants emphasised that any Jewish divorce requires ratification from the Beth Din coupled with the compliance of a husband to grant his wife a 'get'. In accordance with Judaism, failure to obtain Beth Din approval and consent from one's husband during a divorce would seemingly

culminate in a situation in which the woman and man were still classified as a married couple.

In the Jewish religion you are considered married only once you've taken part in the religious side of the ceremony, there's the civil side or legal aspect but you've only married once you've taken part in the spiritual side. Although I consider myself a secular Jew – and I do not follow the majority of the Jewish laws – if I were to get a divorce, I would have to get a divorce through Rabbinat and my husband would have to give me a get. (Participant #7)

Refusing to participate in an orthodox wedding ceremony has implications for the couple in that their nuptials will not be recognised by the Beth Din; this in turn has profound repercussions for children who are born out of the marriage in that they will not be accepted by the Jewish community. One participant referred to an incident in which an Orthodox couple refrained from marrying in accordance with the stipulations of a traditional, Orthodox wedding ceremony. The couple altered the words to the marriage document [ketubah] and recited their own blessings so as to avoid participating in an enactment that portrayed the wife as the newly acquired property of her husband. The participant recognised that as this ceremony did not conform to specific standards of Orthodoxy, the nuptials and the union itself was not recognised by the Beth Din.

My husband's sister got married recently, she and her husband decided to have a reform ceremony – they wrote their own Ketuba and changed the wording of the blessings under the Chuppa-which is not considered legitimate according to the Rabbinat and therefore they are not considered married. The reason they decided not to have a traditional ceremony is because they are opposed to the image of the woman in the ceremony – an object to be bought. (Participant #7)

This suggests that as the resolutions of the Beth Din are binding, individuals who are described as having attempted to implement novel rituals or wording during their marriage ceremony were shunned by the Orthodox community in that their marriage was not recognised according to Orthodox, Jewish law.

4.3.2 Jewish women experience both equality and degradation in their adherence to Jewish laws

All of the participants alluded to the disparities that exist amidst the sub-communities in Jewish society which seemingly inform the manner in which women are treated and the extent to which maltreatment is tolerated. In addition, the participants' affiliation to their religion influenced their perceptions and experiences of the Jewish laws and the extent to which they were prepared to engage meaningfully with the topic. Participants referred to the difficulties that community's experience in general regarding revelation of private information. In addition, participants reflected on religiosity, they agreed that immersion in the Jewish religion and adherence to its laws would inevitably influence a woman's perceptions and opinions regarding the nature and value of the laws.

I don't think any community wants to air out its dirty laundry, as it reflects badly on their entire belief system. However, I do think that transparency or secrecy is very much based on the sub community (secular, modern Orthodox, ultra Orthodox).
(Participant #7)

Therefore, the sub-communities that constitute Jewish society were identified by participants as playing an integral role in the propensity of that particular community to either attempt to address areas of religious consternation or an inclination to attempt to conceal or explain away plaguing problems. Participants proposed that the various sub-communities in Judaism engaged with the concept of abuse somewhat differently.

Although all of the participants were identified as Orthodox Jews by birth, three of the participants described themselves as secular Jews as they do not observe the majority of the religious principles that constitutes Orthodox Judaism. Therefore, while they did appear to adhere to some of the customs and/or traditions they did not perceive themselves as religious, in fact they professed to experience a number of Jewish laws as demeaning and that any observance of these laws was to appease their observant families. Despite their traditional upbringing they expressed their concerns regarding the patriarchal aspects that constitute many of the laws and customs. However, these participants identified fault with the laws themselves as opposed to the manner in which they were treated by their husbands specifically. They proposed that their adherence to any Jewish laws stemmed from their traditional upbringing and not from desire or inclination.

I got married about eight months ago, it never crossed my mind to alter the ceremony in any way. I am aware that in Judaism the woman is not considered man's equal, however I don't believe that is the case in my relationship with my husband. We had a traditional ceremony because it was important for my family and because we didn't really want anything else in particular. Of course I oppose the objectification of women, but I also choose to not look too deeply into the meaning of the wedding rituals. I prefer to relate most aspects of Judaism as tradition and not necessarily part of my life. This is one of the reasons why I call myself a secular Jew. (Participant #7)

Five participants classified themselves as traditional or modern Orthodox Jews. They described feeling a strong affiliation to their religion and their Jewish identity. Therefore, while they demonstrated a readiness to engage with the topic of abuse in the Jewish community, they appeared more protective of the religion's ideology and more inclined to provide explanations for a number of laws. They recognised the discrepancies between the laws which men are compelled to adhere to in contrast to the laws which women generally undertake. However, this variation stems predominantly from what participants referred to as 'higher spiritual plane that women occupy' as opposed to men. Therefore, whereas participants recognised that while many of the laws regarding the treatment of women may appear unjust, this perception is seemingly the result of a lack of understanding or insight into the purposes for the implementation of these laws. Furthermore, participants postulated that the rationalisations provided for the observance of many Jewish laws did not reinforce subordination of women but rather the explanations provided actually elevated the status of women. Therefore, women's exclusion from reading from the Torah [Jewish Bible] for example, was due to a woman's superior spiritual status and not as a result of patriarchy.

In the Jewish religion women are actually considered to be on a higher spiritual plain than men so we aren't required to complete a lot of the customs...from an outsiders perspective it might be perceived as patriarchal or sexist because women aren't allowed to read from the Torah for example but that's not the case, it's more a case of we actually could if we wanted to type of thing but we don't have to because we are on the level that men are trying to get to by completing these acts. (Participant #3)

The thing with Judaism is that women don't necessarily have to keep or do the things that men do because they are on a higher spiritual level, it's not just like a copout or an excuse...men basically have to work more in order to gain the love and trust from

God whereas women already have that instilled in them so they can focus on the home and raising the children. (Participant #5)

Finally, one participant presented as a more devout and strongly affiliated religious Jew, while she did not find fault with any of the laws and customs, many of which she claimed to adhere to, she also emphasised the extent to which many of these laws and customs have positively influenced her relationship and the pivotal role that she plays as a wife and a mother. Participant five described how Jewish women have equal rights to their male counterparts and that their omission from executing certain religious rituals and customs stemmed from man's constant pursuit to reach the level of spiritual enlightenment which woman had seemingly already achieved.

I think in the past it used to be the case where the Jewish women were happy to be the cleaners and the doers and whatever in the house and then the outside perception of that is that they're not equal and they don't have the same rights as Jewish men. The fact of the matter is they have as many rights if not more with less restrictions which just makes it easier and that doesn't mean that they're any more inferior or not allowed to do things or seen as second class citizens; for me personally those restrictions have been put into place in order to facilitate the men to get to that level where women are so if anything it is a credit and a tap on the back for women. (Participant #5)

Therefore, it appears as though the various sub-communities in Judaism engaged with the concept of abuse somewhat differently. Whereas the more secular participants experienced a number of Jewish laws as enforcing sentiments of degradation of women in that patriarchal undertones were identified as constituting many of the laws and customs. The more modern Orthodox participants felt a stronger affiliation to their religion and seemingly appeared more defensive of the religion's philosophy and more content in their adherence to Jewish law. Furthermore, the more religiously inclined participant appeared content with her status; she reinforced previous accounts in which women were described as being spiritually elevated which she experienced as a form of power. It therefore appears as though the participants' religious affiliation profoundly influenced the extent to which they were willing to disclose candid sentiments regarding their impressions of Jewish laws and the extent to which these laws served to either enhance or stifle their existence.

In addition, a number of participants proposed that any inequality that exists regarding the treatment of women in Judaism is likely to be influenced by the observance of outdated laws in modern society. Due to the longevity of Judaism many of its religious customs and practices cause significant tension between that which is expected in accordance with Jewish law and what is actually feasible in a modern society. The majority of the participants reflected on the constraints that the religion places on them; these were described by participants as rigid and unattainable in a constantly evolving and progressive society. Furthermore, participants expressed the manner in which the outdated laws served to enforce archaic sentiments in relation to the treatment of women.

Judaism is rigid and has not and will not be adapted to suit modern day beliefs. Therefore, I assume that there will always be a sense of inequality between men and women.” (Participant #7)

There hasn't been movement with the times in the religion, many of them are living like they did hundreds of years ago but life is so different today it's very difficult to live like that. (Participant #8)

I think you need to update certain you know, laws without compromising the original value of it but we live in a time where it's very different you know to when the laws were written. (Participant #4)

The majority of participants expressed concern regarding the outdated nature of many of the laws; strict adherence to these laws was identified by participants as culminating in significant difficulties for women particularly. Participants referred to the need to revise many of the laws that comprise Judaism in order to facilitate in a better fit with a drastically altered and progressive society. Participants proposed that while modification is appropriate, adjustments are feasible without compromising the “original value” or intended purpose of the law. In accordance with this postulation, amendment to a number of Jewish laws would facilitate in addressing potential issues of inequality. Therefore, laws that were identified by participants as perpetuating notions of injustice for women may then be modernised to tailor fit progressive attitudes and perceptions regarding the treatment of women in a contemporary society.

4.3.3 Rabbinic leaders are integral to the interpretation of Jewish laws

Evidenced in all religious groups, Jewish culture and permitted practice is largely determined by the religion's leaders. Prolonged existence of the Jewish laws coupled with the complexities that arise in the stringent observance of the laws in a modern society frequently requires interpretation and revision by the community's leaders or Rabbis. All of the participants identify the Rabbinic leaders as an integral component in the comprehension and appropriate application of Jewish laws thereby influencing the manner in which women are treated. Participants agree that interpretation of the laws is a somewhat subjective process in that, explanations and validations of many of the laws seemingly differ from Rabbi to Rabbi. Participants acknowledged the subjectivity of religious leaders; in addition they recognise that the composition of addressees is also likely to determine the explanations provided. Female listeners are likely to receive interpretations that elevate the status of women whereas a male audience will be the recipient of rationalisations that promote men.

If you go to a shiur [lesson] that's based on women you're going to get more positive views on what the laws mean to women. If you go to a shiur [lesson] that's more based on the men's side then you are going to feel like the woman's more oppressed so it depends on how you look at the laws. (Participant #4)

Participants were united in their sentiments that religious leaders are consulted for a number of issues that impact upon all areas of life. Therefore, individuals experiencing marital problems will frequently seek counsel from their Rabbi of choice. Participants reflected on the subjectivity of Rabbonim and the likelihood that while one Rabbi may attempt to persuade a woman to remain embroiled in a dysfunctional relationship, another Rabbi is likely to support a woman in her decision to leave.

The first thing you'd do is you'd go to your Rabbi and I know a few Rabbis that would try to talk you out of it, try and talk you into you know talking about it and sorting out the relationship and rather keep the relationship intact for the children or whatever it is and then I know some Rabbis who would say you've got to do what's best for you and what's best for your children and if it's divorce then so be it so I think it depends on the Rabbi. (Participant #4)

In accordance with Jewish orthodoxy, women are not permitted to assume the role of Rabbi; this function is reserved solely for men. A number of Rabbis' wives therefore elect to service

their communities in a number of different ways be it in charity or within a corporate environment. In addition, individual interpretations of laws are frequently evidenced in the lives of the Rabbonim themselves. Participants referred to laws of modesty that compel married, Jewish women to dress modestly; several participants conceded that modest attire is often understood to mean unattractive and outdated however many Rabbis' wives elect to interpret the law of modesty more 'loosely' dressing less demurely and perhaps more fashionably. Participants were generally in agreement regarding the subjective interpretations of Jewish laws and the propensity of religious leaders to understand these laws in accordance with their own value and belief systems.

One of the Rabbi's wives actually works, she consults for us and you know he's not just a small, little shul Rabbi, he's a big shul Rabbi, she wears shorter skirts, not above the knee but she wears stockings and she wears nice shoes and she dresses well you know because she's seeing clients and she's working and she's going into corporate environments, you know she doesn't dress totally tznius [modesty] so there is give and take and she's a Rabbi's wife you know so it's...I think that there is give and take. (Participant #9)

Therefore, participants reflected on the propensity of Jewish people to seek guidance from their Rabbis, furthermore they were united in their sentiments that Rabbonim are approached for advice and instruction for a number of issues that impact upon all areas of life. The subjectivity of the religious leaders was evidenced in that women who seek counsel regarding an unhappy marriage may be directed by one Rabbi to 'stick with it' whereas another Rabbi may support her decision to divorce. In addition, the subjectivity of interpretation was also evidenced by the manner in which the Rabbonim live their lives and the degree to which they elect to adhere to Jewish laws. Laws pertaining to modesty can be utilised to illustrate the subjectivity of interpretation. As evidenced in the above quote, some Rabbis may insist on the modest attire of their wives at all times whereas other equally respected and religious Rabbis are content for their wives to dress demurely but attractively.

4.4 Theme two: "Marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women".

The marital relationship is deemed sacred in accordance with Jewish practice. Notions of power and control are strongly correlated to marriage. Evidenced in a multitude of

relationships, women and men are seemingly vying for respect and recognition for the roles that they assume and the work that they undertake to do. Participants concur that equality in relationships is enforced through the selection of an appropriate partner; the majority of participants agreed that despite the nature and implications of the laws, as individuals they demanded respect in their relationships, the woman is seemingly identified as the person responsible for asserting her control as a means of ensuring that equality is maintained in the relationship. In addition, participants reflected on the propensity of women to lead their men from the back, they suggest that while the husband appears to occupy a more dominant position, the wife in fact is the one pushing him from behind.

If a woman is happy to be subservient and to listen to what her husband says and does what she's told to do then she's always going to be like that but I think that if you're a strong willed person or able to have a personality of your own then I think it's an equal relationship...so although there is this perception that the women take a back seat and the men are responsible for doing all the important things; if you look at the Torah, a lot of the dominant characters in the Torah are men. The leaders of the Jewish community at the time but the women in the Torah are exceptional women who lead the men from the back like they're pushing the men...basically driving the men to do what they do. (Participant #5)

Therefore, participants generally concurred that while Jewish women were frequently depicted as occupying a less significant role in contrast to their male counterparts, in reality and in their relationships specifically women's roles were perhaps more significant than the men as a man's capacity to succeed is seemingly depended on the extent to which he is supported by his wife.

In contrast, several participants identify the laws that govern the marital relationship as castigatory resulting in the possible disempowerment of women. Laws that pertain to female sexuality specifically were identified by participants as reinforcing the possibility that husbands can and will exert their power and control over their wives. Several participants asserted that the laws that compel women to reserve their beauty and sexuality for their husbands facilitate in the establishment of a power imbalance between a husband and wife in which the man occupies a more dominant position. In accordance with Judaism, observant Orthodox women are obliged to dress modestly; participants expressed feelings of anger and resentment in relation to these particular laws which they perceived as demeaning.

Furthermore, participants suggested that the implementation of said practices inferred that women were constrained by the femininity.

Regarding the issue of female sexuality in orthodoxy, a woman's sexuality must only be for her husband and it just seems to be that it's over protective, it seems that with this kind of power there's a very fine line between control and a set of laws...I feel that women are treated like caged birds, I'm very against covering the hair, the elbows and the knees. I can still recall in my pre-marital religious counselling the lady that was teaching me, it was a hot evening and she took off her jersey and her arms were bare and her husband knocked on the door, the immediately said hang on and panicked to find her jersey to cover her shoulders and elbows because another women is not allowed to see that the husband sees his wife's bare arms, it has to be a private thing. I found that uncomfortable and contrived...it's quite degrading. (Participant #1)

Therefore, several participants experienced the laws which pertain to modesty specifically as a perpetuation of the degradation of women. These participants articulated their feelings of resentment towards the implementation of these laws. They proposed that women were compelled to hide their womanliness as opposed to celebrating their femininity which in turn served to undermine their position within the marital union. The remaining participants postulated that in general women are treated equally to their male counterparts within the confines of the marital bond. These participants emphasised the pivotal role than women play in relation to their husbands. In addition, they identified that 'other' peoples' perceptions regarding the mistreatment of women in Judaism were not always accurate.

People think that Judaism is more pro men than it is women but at the end of the day I think women are the more powerful member in the relationship. (Participant #9)

Therefore participants' opinions diverged regarding the propensity of Jewish women to wield power within the confines of the marital relationship. Whereas several participants perceived the laws that are generally associated with modesty in the marital union as disempowering in that, that which encompasses femininity and womanliness was construed as a tool of manipulation used against men; the remaining participants identified the significant role that women play within a marriage and the extent to which women generally facilitated in the accomplishments of their husbands. These participants argued that while men may appear to occupy a more dominant position in marriage, this was merely an uniformed perception as a man's ability to succeed was reliant on his wife and her continued support.

4.4.1 There is power in being a wife and mother

Despite the differences of opinion regarding the treatment of women according to typical Jewish practice, all of the participants agree that acknowledgement of women and the acquisition of their power occurs through the act of marriage. Therefore, if women are to wield power, this power is generally exerted in relation to a particular domain. Participants reflected on the emphasis that Judaism places on family, in accordance with this postulation, participants concur that women are elevated due to the roles that they assume as the wife and mother; these functions were deemed by participants as empowering. Furthermore, participants concurred that single, Jewish women were often coveted by single, Jewish men in the community as they had the potential to become the wife and mother which inevitably facilitated in the amplification of their status. In addition, participants referred to the demands that the Jewish community placed on women so as to ensure that women execute their designated roles of wife and mother.

Everyone has the potential to be a married woman. Unmarried women are coveted they're treated mostly with respect because they have the ability to be the wife and the mother...they're still intelligent human beings who are out there in the world making a name for themselves but I think when you're talking about Judaism, you're concentrating on, Judaism is concentrating on the family, on having children and raising children in accordance with the Jewish faith and I think it's ultimately...you know you're mother is constantly asking you when are you getting married and when are you having kids and when you have one when's the next one coming so I think it's ultimately about family. (Participant #4)

Several participants acknowledged that while Jewish women were generally compelled to assume the stereotypical roles of wife and mother, these participants expressed experiencing feelings of power in their assumption of these typically feminine roles; therefore cooking for their husbands and being endowed with the capacity to bear children evoked powerful feelings in these participants. They embraced their femininity and defined it as their personal form of domination. One participant identified the powerful feelings that she experiences in relation to having embraced and implemented these conventional, womanly roles however she also grappled to conceptualise why the adherence to these roles evoked these powerful feelings. In addition, this participant struggled to conceptualise why the marital home specifically was deemed her domain-the woman's domain.

I don't think there is anything wrong with the female making dinner for her husband, greeting him at the door, asking him how his day was looking after the children...it makes me feel very powerful and dominant when I welcome my husband home or when I make him dinner or when I'm nurturing and kind to him and I'm very feminine in that sense. Sometimes I feel more dominant at the home because that's my area, it's my domain but at the same time I also question why is that my domain? (Participant #1)

Power dynamics are evidenced in the dissolution of the marital relationship. Adherence to specific religious stipulations is necessary for the execution of an acceptable and binding divorce. Participants referred to the problems that Jewish women generally encounter when attempting to secure a divorce from their husbands in that a permissible and authorised divorce entails a husband consenting to the allocation of a get for his wife. Participants discussed instances in which women were forced to literally beg their husbands for a get which would then facilitate in their emancipation from the marriage. Therefore, whereas the Beth Din was previously identified by participants as enforcing patriarchal sentiments through their treatment of women in divorce proceedings, this was also evidenced in the hierarchy that husbands assume in relation to their wives during divorce proceedings. Participants perceived this prerequisite that a husband must agree to give his wife a get as demeaning and degrading towards women. It is perhaps interesting to consider that as the majority of participants experienced a sense of power in relation to their newly acquired marital status, the dissolution of a marriage was perceived by the majority of participants as the 'stripping' of a woman's power.

Power seems to be the most important element in an abusive relationship – the power of a man over a woman. In a Jewish marriage, a man has a very powerful tool to use against a woman-the power to give her a get or grant her a divorce...Therefore; I assume that a Jewish woman may think of divorce as another battle that is difficult to win. (Participant #7)

Therefore, participants appeared to experience feelings of power in relation to their capacity to assume the roles of wife and mother; furthermore these roles seemingly facilitated in the elevation of a woman's status as women were portrayed as wielding power within a very particular domain. Although several participants embraced these stereotypically feminine roles they also struggled to comprehend why the marital dwelling specifically was construed

as the female's dominion. In contrast, the dissolution of a marital relationship was described by participants as disempowering as women were seemingly powerless to institute divorce proceedings unless the husband had displayed a willingness to grant her a divorce. In accordance with this postulation, the termination of a Jewish marriage was perceived by the majority of participants as the elimination of a woman's power.

4.4.2 There is power in women's omission from prayer

Several of the participants proposed that women are more spiritually elevated than men. These participants referred to women as being endowed with characteristics that seemingly facilitate in spiritual elevation; therefore women are exempt from fulfilling particular laws or customs due to their so-called superior spiritual status. Participants described how women are constantly praying for the welfare of their husbands and children; they share a closer connection with God which frees them from any obligation to fulfil a number of religious acts. These participants experience this 'omission from prayer' as a form of domination over their male counterparts, as their so-called spiritual superiority is experienced as a form of power and supremacy.

The thing with Judaism is that women don't necessarily have to keep or do the things that men do because they are on a higher spiritual level, it's not just a copout or an excuse but that's what happens. Men basically have to work more in order to gain the love and trust from God whereas women already have that instilled in them and they can focus on the home, on raising the children. Obviously being in modern times Jewish women still work and do whatever else they need to...so a woman's role is very important probably more important than a man's role in a Jewish marriage.
(Participant #5)

In addition, several participants disclosed that having been raised in traditional homes; they had never experienced any inclination to undertake laws that were restricted to men specifically. They stressed that women are exempt from performing particular prayers due to their spiritual status; men however are elevated through the act of prayer thereby raising their position. Although participants did not express any inclination to undertake specific religious rituals or customs that are typically performed by men, it is necessary to consider whether

women would in fact be permitted to perform these particular acts within an Orthodox community.

According to the Jewish religion women are actually considered to be on a higher spiritual plain than men and so we actually aren't required to complete a lot of the customs or activities that men are...women aren't expected to lay tefillin and they are not expected to go and read from the Torah and from an outsiders perspective that might be perceived as patriarchal or sexist...it's not the case, it's more a case of we could if we wanted to type of thing but we don't have to because we are on the level that men are trying to get to by completing these acts.(Participant #3)

Therefore, reading from the Torah or laying tefillin were classified by several participants as acts reserved specifically for men. Furthermore, these participants asserted that they had no desire to perform the rituals typically undertaken by men. The execution of religious practices that are characteristically performed by Jewish men felt entirely foreign to these traditional participants who were seemingly satisfied to focus on other responsibilities.

4.4.3 Married women are valued maternal figures

All of the participants were united in their impressions regarding the depiction of women in Judaism. Participants referred to women as the maternal figures, the wives and the mothers. They described these roles as being typically feminine in that they conformed to societies' expectations of women. Furthermore, participants reflected on the motherly connotations that one generally attribute to women in that they are generally portrayed as the person responsible for the well-being of the family and the preservation of a happy home. Furthermore, participants concurred that while Jewish women are seemingly not exempt from pursuing a profession; their roles as wife and mother are emphasised and reportedly prevail over other functions and responsibilities.

I think that the roles that men and women assume in marriages are the roles that society accepts: the man goes out to work and the woman stays at home and raises the children and takes care of the home. The women are not the main characters-they are the wives, the sisters, the daughters-the supporting actors. (Participant #7)

A Jewish woman is depicted as a” a frumpy, fiddler on the roof type you know cloth on the head and in the kitchen working, doing the washing...you know nicely built ladies who have a healthy appetite and who cook and clean and look after the husband. Jewish women are portrayed as the calming effect, the mother, the granny, the beautiful bride, the daughter, the very archetypal female roles. They are represented very much as the spiritual embodiment of a couple the givers of life, the care takers of life, the heart of the home and the back bone of a family. (Participant #1)

In addition, as participants highlighted the significance of family in Judaism; women are perceived as being cherished and appreciated for fulfilling the role of the dutiful wife in conjunction with their capacity to rear children. Participants agreed that unmarried, Jewish women are constantly being pressurised into marriage. Participants indicated that women who elect to remain unmarried are seemingly frowned upon by the Jewish community as Judaism reportedly finds it difficult to embrace women who elect to pursue diverse avenues and opportunities as opposed to fulfilling the roles that are typically reserved for women. Participants referred to the difficulties that unmarried, single, Jewish, women frequently experience within the Jewish community regarding their single status as single women were described by participants as having to justify their position as all women are seemingly compelled to get married and have children.

A Jewish, married woman is far more valuable than a Jewish unmarried woman, particularly in religious orthodoxy. You know there’s a very sad thing when somebody’s like how old is your daughter? She’s 30, is she married? No, she’s not married. Oi not married! It’s almost like an appendage that she needs to have in order to survive. (Participant #1)

Therefore, participants concurred that Jewish women are generally depicted in accordance with what constitutes a typically feminine role; therefore Jewish women enacted what participants perceived as societal norms in their adherence to the adoption of gender specific roles. Furthermore, unmarried, Jewish women were identified by participants as having to endure significant pressure from a community in which marriage, child bearing and child rearing were deemed the expected norm. This in turn raises significant problems for homosexual women in addition to women who are perhaps experience fertility problems and are therefore unable to bear children; in addition to women who may elect to remain

unmarried for the duration of their lives. This becomes problematic as many of the laws that are generally associated with women can only be achieved through marriage and child rearing.

4.4.4 Women preserve Shalom Bayit

The principle of Shalom Bayit was identified by all of the participants as the prevailing belief system that constitutes every Jewish marriage. Five participants experienced the concept of Shalom Bayit as a model that inevitably facilitates in opening channels of communication between the husband and the wife. These participants described the principle of Shalom Bayit as a constructive tool that enforces notions of compromise, cooperation and conciliation within the marital relationship. The five participants also alluded to the enactment of particular roles within the marital relationship which they perceived as facilitating in the preservation of Shalom Bayit. Participants referred to the consequences of adopting specific roles within the marital relationship which seemingly served to foster greater communication and connectivity between partners. In addition, participants acknowledged that couples are encouraged to focus on the needs of their partner specifically and in so doing overlook their own wants and desires. However, participants asserted that in a successful marriage, if an individual focuses specifically on the needs of the partner then everyone will be satisfied.

The literal translation of Shalom Bayit means peace in the home, I was first really introduced to the concept of Shalom Bayit in my marriage lessons so before marriage the couple have to attend lessons on marriage, on what it means to be married and what the individual roles of being a husband and being a wife actually mean. Essentially the way I took the concept was that it aims at always maintaining respect and regard for the other person; it requires open communication and engaging with one another...it's essentially deciding as a couple what values you want to have intrinsic within your home and doing whatever needs to be done to ensure those values are carried out. It's appreciating the other person for what they bring into the relationship and having respect for the other person. It requires not only focusing on your needs but rather focusing on the other person's needs and if each person is focusing on their partner's then everyone's needs are being met and it creates a space of peace, love and harmony. (Participant #3)

However, the remaining four participants professed to experience the principle of Shalom Bayit as stifling. In addition, these women indicated that the implementation of this concept appeared to negate or undermine a wife's needs whereas the needs of her husband were seemingly paramount. Furthermore, the four participants identified the wife as the person responsible for the implementation of said principle. Although the principle of Shalom Bayit is not necessarily construed as something destructive or detrimental to the marital relationship participants reflected on the manner in which this principle was communicated to them during their pre-marital counselling sessions, they stated that the principle was conveyed in such a way that they experienced tremendous pressure in relation to their assumption of the role of a good wife. Participants also indicated that they experienced Shalom Bayit as the responsibility of the woman specifically in that the perception that the marital home is the domain of the wife serves to enforce the understanding that maintaining peace in the home is seemingly the function of the wife as she is reportedly responsibly for all aspects that encompass the marital dwelling.

Keeping the peace at home which is Shalom Bayit is sometimes sacrificing your own happiness, your own desires, your own you know opportunities to be able to keep the status quo at home at a tranquil level. The principles of Shalom Bayit although encouraging and hopefully meant to be positive, can place pressure on the woman. (Participant #1)

When I got married I had to attend two compulsory classes at the Rabbinate. Both focused on the concept of Shalom Bayit. One was a class for women only and focused on Shalom Bayit from the angle of Ta'harat Hamishpacha-purity in the family. The second was for couples and discussed how to achieve Shalom Bayit, which focused on the responsibilities of the man and the wife to build a happy home. Honestly, both classes were torturous. Not because I couldn't or can't relate to the concept, but because I couldn't relate to the simply ridiculous way in which it was relayed. I felt all the focus was placed on the woman; it being her responsibility to maintain Shalom Bayit and making her husband happy. (Participant #7)

Having recently been married I was encouraged by my marriage teaching to keep the peace at home by ensuring that my husband is always well-fed after work, and that he's greeted at the door. There were a lot of things that I was told to adhere to, a lot of behaviours that I could administer to keep Shalom Bayit but I didn't find that this was

reciprocated on the side of the man. Shalom Bayit was particularly to elevate the role of the male and to be as nurturing and as kind and as caring as possible you know to maintain that traditional female role. My mother was encouraged to stay in her marriage even though she was unhappy. So her unhappiness was a price to maintain the Shalom Bayit but when my father wanted a divorce, his unhappiness was sufficient enough to end the togetherness of the household. (Participant #1)

Therefore whereas participants were generally in agreement regarding the relevance of the principle of Shalom Bayit in relation to Jewish marriage specifically they were not united in their opinions regarding the efficacy of this principle. Five participants experience the preservation of Shalom Bayit as a productive tool that is undertaken by both partners in order to bring a couple together; the remaining four participants perceived the principle as repressive in that its maintenance was seemingly construed as the wife's responsibility specifically. These participants proposed that the principle served to coerce women into implementing certain modes of behaviour that generally ensured the contentment of the husband whereas the needs of the women were disregarded.

4.5 Theme three: “The Jewish community is not immune to social ills”

All the participants acknowledged that abuse occurs in the Jewish community. The majority of participants also recognised that the prevalence of abuse within the Jewish community is likely to be equal to that evidenced in other communities. In addition, participants concurred that the social grievances that are experienced by communities as a whole are likely to inflict the Jewish community as well. Religious Jewry were not excluded from this postulation. Although the majority of participants' descriptions of abusive behaviour were very specific in that they perceived abuse in very narrow terms and as a form of physical violence particularly. They were not united in their conceptualisation of what actually constitutes abusive behaviour. The majority of participants referred to 'abuse' in terms of physical acts of violence specifically; three participants identified other forms of behaviour as abusive and made reference to verbal and emotional abuse whereas one participant classified a number of Jewish laws as abusive. Therefore, abusive behaviour was described by the majority of participants as a physical form of aggression as opposed to any other form of intimidating or hostile mode of engaging that culminates in maltreatment and harm.

Every relationship is different, I think you want to aspire to as little conflict and absolutely no physical conflict...you want a peaceful and happy and mutually satisfactory coexistence or partnership. (Participant #6)

You don't often get a person coming out and saying hi, how are you, my name is so and so and I get beaten up by my husband every day. (Participant #3)

One participant made reference to her own experiences in which she was verbally and emotionally abused; this relationship was reported to have culminated in such severe distress that the participant eventually decided to divorce her husband. The participant described the emotional turmoil that she experienced in having to walk away from her marriage.

I know a few women that have been in...not physically abusive relationships but maybe verbally abusive and personally I've been in such a relationship many years ago and it takes hitting rock bottom to even begin to think of divorce or getting out of the relationship. (Participant #4)

Another participant utilised a broader approach in her comprehension of abuse. She identified several laws in Judaism that she perceives as 'abusive'. The participant referred specifically to observant Jewish women's prohibition from singing in public as the female voice is deemed as a provocative instrument. The participant described that although a woman was not subjected to physical harm she nonetheless perceived this exclusion as abusive.

I don't know what abuse is...Jewish orthodox women are not allowed to sing in front of men...the voice is seen to be a provocative instrument used only for your husband but men are allowed to sing in front of anyone. That is abusive to me, in society it's quite conventional to hear a woman sing but in the Jewish orthodoxy it's not allowed. So for me I find that abusive, but it's not physical harm it's not bruises and cuts, it's not even emotional or verbal abuse. (Participant #1)

Several participants referred to frequent acts of spousal infidelity that take place within the Jewish community however; these occurrences were not shrouded in the same level of secrecy that was evidenced in physical abuse. Participants disclosed that betrayal in a marriage seemingly holds greater community appeal than domestic violence. Participants indicated that certain forms of maltreatment are more acceptable than others and do not evoke the same emotional responses as abuse.

The fact of the matter is that when an affair happens the community knows about it straight away kind of thing and it's the talk of the town but you don't thank God hear about any physical kind of abuse within this community. (Participant #5)

No, I haven't heard of instances of physical abuse not really, I'd say more a husband having an affair but that's not physical abuse, it's emotional abuse in a way if you can call that abuse. (Participant #2)

Therefore, the majority of participants referred to abuse as a physical form of aggression specifically. Whereas one participant described her own experiences of verbal and emotional abuse another participant identified several Jewish laws as abusive in that although the woman was not subjected to any physical harm, omission from certain acts such as singing in public was construed by the participant as abusive. Furthermore, several participants identified the prevalence of infidelity in the Jewish community. Although these participants recognised the damage that individuals incur as a result of infidelity, the nature of the injury was seemingly less than that experienced by victims of domestic violence.

The participants were united in the perception that the prevalence of domestic abuse is somewhat of an anomaly in that it is seldom referred to in conversation nor is it identified as a prominent problem within the Jewish community specifically. In general, participants were in agreement that they could not accurately comment on the incidence of domestic violence within the community; they proposed that its occurrence is seemingly concealed from the community as a whole.

Abuse definitely does occur, to what extent and the prevalence of it I cannot tell you. I personally am a psychologist so I am exposed to that side of life maybe more than people in other professions so I feel that I may not be as I don't want to say naive or maybe ignorant to the possibility that you know Jews are people too so they are going to have the same stresses of finances, the same stresses of relationship difficulties, maybe substance abuse Jewish people aren't immune to all those life difficulties and so I'm not I'm not in any way under the false impression that abuse doesn't occur and I am not in any way under the false impression that abuse doesn't occur in a religious household. (Participant #3)

Of the nine women interviewed only one participant was under the impression that domestic violence occurs less frequently in the South African Jewish community in relation to other

communities. Whereas abuse was acknowledged to occur in the South African Jewish community it was not recognised as a major problem within this community. In addition, the participant reflected on the propensity of the Jewish community to “sweep things under the carpet” if and when abuse did in fact occur.

I'm not naive and I think a lot of people within the Jewish community are, they think that if you follow the Torah then you follow the letter to the law kind of thing, it definitely exists and it unfortunately it is prevalent maybe not crazy percent wise in South Africa, in Israel it's a huge problem. I visited certain projects in Israel a few years ago, one of which was a shelter for abused orthodox women who come from Gerradi homes and have nowhere to turn, whose husbands abuse them and whose husbands are from, they're not necessarily Rabbis but they study Torah every day and they still come home and abuse their wives. So I think there is a problem within the community especially in Israel. Again, I don't know percentage-wise in South Africa but I think it does exist. I don't think it's one of the major problems in South Africa within Orthodox homes but I think it probably is a problem that rather than get addressed just gets swept under the carpet... (Participant #5)

Due to the lack of knowledge pertaining to the prevalence of domestic violence within the Jewish community, the majority of participants grappled to identify the manner in which abused wives in conjunction with the Jewish community in its entirety would react in response to domestic violence. Therefore, in accordance with the results provided participants agreed that abuse does occur in the Jewish community, in addition participants recognise that the frequency of this behaviour is cloaked in obscurity as participants did not appear able to substantiate their claims that abuse does occur in the community with anecdotes involving Jewish women who had been subjected to physical abuse specifically within the confines of their marital relationship. Only one participant perceived the incidence of domestic violence to be lower than that evidenced in other South African communities; this participant did however recognise that the prevalence of domestic abuse within the Israeli Jewish communities was particularly problematic, especially in the ultra-Orthodox religious community.

4.5.1 We don't air our dirty laundry

Participants were united in their impressions regarding the pervasiveness of domestic violence and the manner in which it is generally concealed due to the stigmatization that is associated with such an act. Participants acknowledged that South African Jewry appeared to downplay the prevalence of abuse within their community. Participants described the propensity of the Jewish community to minimise the incidence of abuse which prevented the problem from being adequately addressed. Furthermore, participants referred to the carefully constructed image of morality that Jews attempt to portray in that 'nice', Jewish, boys are raised to behave in a righteous and respectable way. Participants recognised that until South African Jewry actively tackled the problem, despite the stigma, it would continue unabated. Participants referred to abuse as a defiance of virtuous sentiments which ultimately serves to tarnish an honourable reputation.

Abuse is very stigmatic you know nice Jewish boys don't abuse nice Jewish girls and vice versa and also there's a perception that Jews don't behave like that and until we deal with the stigma we are not going to be able to deal with the problem. There are cases where victims of abuse have been stigmatized, you know I think it goes back to nice Jewish boys who are raised by their parents don't hurt anyone. Nice Jewish girls don't let themselves be hurt. So I think it's because we are a titled community no matter where we are in the world, Jews tend to be close knit cohesive communities and that kind of dark stain on the community is not recognised or tolerated.
(Participant #6)

Therefore, participants agreed that the prevalence of abuse is obscured due to the stigmatization that is associated with such an act. The majority of participants conceded that South African Jewry grappled to recognise the prevalence of abuse within their community. Participants' reported that across communities and society as a whole abuse is always shrouded in secrecy; however the act of concealment amongst the Jewish community specifically serves to evade additional condemnation of Jewry and in so doing uphold identity and safeguard the uniqueness that the Jewish community associates with being a devout Jew.

4.5.2 Abuse defies notions of morality

Evidenced from the results Judaism places tremendous emphasis on the family unit; it is therefore logical to assume that an act of abuse defies that which encompasses family.

Furthermore, all nine participants concurred that the essence of Judaism is premised on principles pertaining to integrity and decency; incidents of abuse seemingly threaten to obliterate the image of morality that has been so carefully constructed by the Jewish community as a whole. The majority of participants reported that religious Jewry specifically is synonymous with honour and civility therefore acknowledging that abuse occurs within this community serves to taint and tarnish a community who profess to act in accordance with God's law. Participants concurred that if individuals elect to live as devout Jews who act in accordance with God's law, it is illogical to assume that one is able to violate another human being and still profess to belong to a community that aligns itself with decency and morality.

I think that why there is always such shock within the community when you hear of a situation where maybe the husband wasn't treating his wife well. I think there's always a lot of shock because there is probably a naïve view that is you're observant and religious it kind of like prevents you from doing that because the whole aim of the religion is to direct you to being the best type of person possible. Nobody wants to know that a religious person who is supposedly following the law is doing something like that. I think there's a need to maintain that idealised view of our community as following the Jewish law and following God's law which would obviously go against any forms of abuse. (Participant #5)

It's hard to acknowledge because to most religious people and to the Rabbis to be Jewish and in a Jewish family is ideal, it's the most idealised form of existence so it's hard to acknowledge and accept that something as ugly as abuse could occur. (Participant #8)

As illustrated by participants, it appears as though Judaism is premised on principles pertaining to integrity and decency; the very notion of abuse completely contradicts the representation of Jewry as a morally upstanding and ethical community. As evidenced across various faiths and convictions, Judaism appears to equate religiosity with honesty and civility; this notion poses a challenge in the conceptualisation of improper behaviour amongst Jewry as individuals who live in accordance with God's law are expected to conform to a specific standard of behaviour. In accordance with the results, it is seemingly difficult for a fervent community to acknowledge and recognise that religious inclination does not exempt individuals from behaving abusively if they elect to do so.

4.6 Summary

Three coded themes emerged from participants' responses to the interviews: Jewish men treat women according to what men are taught; marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women; and the Jewish community is not immune to social ills.

The analysis shows that all of the participants openly acknowledged that the manner in which women are treated depends largely on what men are taught in relation to the handling of women, this suggests that men specifically play a pivotal role in determining the manner in which women are treated. Furthermore, all nine participants agreed that the main contributing factors that influence the treatment of women include the subjective interpretations of Rabbonim (religious leaders) who work in conjunction with the Beth Din (Jewish governing body) in accordance with Jewish law or halakha.

The results illustrate that the participants concur that Jewish women are recognised specifically through the act of marriage. In addition, women are typically depicted as wives and mothers as Judaism places tremendous emphasis on the family unit itself. It appears as though a woman's capacity to wield her power and control requires union with a man. As the marital home was deemed by participants as the wife's domain, it is possible to assume that she exerts her power in that domain specifically. In addition, approximately half of the participants reflected on the spiritual status of women which excuses them from performing specific laws and customs. However, as the majority of participants were raised in traditional homes (modern-Orthodox) they did not perceive their exclusion as demeaning but rather as something that reinforced their status.

All nine participants acknowledge that while domestic violence obviously occurs within the Jewish community, they were not able to recall or identify specific incidents of spousal abuse within the community itself. Therefore, while participants are aware that abuse takes place it is seemingly never discussed and seldom identified. Whereas the majority of participants recognise that the prevalence of domestic violence equals that which is evidenced in any other community, one participant did not recognize spousal abuse as a frequently occurring problem in the South African Jewish community. In addition, the majority of participants understood abuse in terms of physical acts of violence specifically. One participant struggled to comprehend the extent to which the term abuse can be utilised as she experiences a number

of Jewish laws as abusive. Participants concur that the incidence of abuse in the Jewish community is shrouded in secrecy; however this so-called act of concealment serves to evade additional condemnation and stigmatization of Jewry and in so doing facilitates in the protection of identity and the sustenance of a sense of exceptionality that the Jewish community associates with being a devout Jew.

Chapter Five: Discussion Section

5.1 Introduction

This study set out to investigate the perspectives of Orthodox, Jewish, women regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships. The findings suggest that in accordance with the perspectives of Orthodox, women, Jewish religious and cultural values inevitably influence women's choices in abusive relationships as addressed in the literature review which are present to a greater or lesser degree in this sample of Orthodox, Jewish married women who shared their perceptions regarding the religion's impact on women's choices in abusive relationships. The interview schedule was developed to gather information in terms of these related areas. The relationship between the results of this study and the majority of existing literature on Jewish practice and the abuse in the community is discussed below.

5.2 Religiosity does not equate to morality

The Beth Din plays a fundamental role in the development and preservation of Jewish law. Portrayed as an antiquated system comprising solely of elderly men who wield enormous power in relation to the mediation and resolution of matters that are relevant in terms of the Jewish community the Beth Din possesses the authority to exert tremendous power over the community as a whole influencing all aspects of an observant Jew's life. It is perhaps necessary to consider what drives a community to seek direction from a governing body that utilises religious ideology in the execution of resolutions.

Evidenced as far back as the third century Babylonia, rabbinic courts have exerted full and unchallenged authority over Jewish communal life in many areas, as in trade, real estate dealings, marriage and divorce (Neusner, 1970). To this day, traditionally observant Jews regard it as a sin, except under clearly defined circumstances, to take their disputes to a non-Jewish court as opposed to a Beth Din. As a result, Orthodox Jews often present conflicts involving business, community politics, neighborhood quarrels, or marital disharmony to a rabbinic court for resolution (Neustein & Leshner, 2008). In addition however, even the most secular Jews seek counsel with the Beth Din. Judaism adopts a firm stance in relation to

seeking direction from resources outside of the community itself. Participants concur that any tribulations that arise are generally dealt with internally. According to Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) on reaching a verdict of “not guilty” the rabbis who comprise the Beth Din may elect to change their roles from judges to advocates for the accused and in so doing approach secular authorities to urge the dismissal of a criminal charge, which may then serve to perpetuate a cover-up. This serves to illustrate the emphasis that the Beth Din places on tackling matters related to Jewry internally, and the lengths that they will go to so as to ensure that the unpleasant realities that occur in Jewish communities are seldom revealed to anyone outside of that community.

In addition, Jewish people reportedly refrain from seeking therapeutic services for an array of emotional issues. Therefore, it would appear as though while Jewish people are reportedly compelled to appear before the Beth Din in order to facilitate in the resolution of issues however, in conjunction they are seemingly also unlikely to seek out therapeutic interventions as a means to facilitate in problem resolution. Orthodox Jews and other religious minorities tend to under-utilize therapeutic supportive services in general (Cohen and Gereboff, 2004). This serves to exacerbate notions of secrecy as Jewish people are perceived as wanting to conceal problems from the Jewish community as a whole or from other communities in general. Furthermore, dissuading Jews from utilising therapeutic services may culminate in situations whereby Jewish people are emotionally burdened unnecessarily as they are not afforded the opportunity to disclose personal difficulties with a professional in order to create an opportunity to process these difficulties more effectively. Therefore, merely identifying that there is a problem and electing to divulge the specifics of that problem is seemingly frowned upon. Although Jews are frequently encouraged to make use of the services of their religious leaders, it is perhaps necessary to consider the degree to which biases will be evidenced among different religious leaders with diverse opinions.

Problems pertaining to biases are apparent in that different community leaders are likely to have contrasting opinions. In addition, religious affiliation is likely to influence the manner in which you are treated. Devout and observant Jews are perhaps more likely to receive preferential treatment by religious leaders in that their adherence to religious law is perceived as exemplary as it serves to illustrate morality and decency. In contrast, secular Jewry is potentially chastised for failing to abide by religious doctrine which may then be construed as immorality. As evidenced across various faiths and convictions, Judaism appears to equate

religiosity with decency and integrity; this notion poses a challenge in the conceptualisation of improper behaviour amongst Jewry as individuals who live in accordance with God's law are expected to conform to a specific standard of behaviour. It is seemingly difficult for a fervent community to acknowledge and recognise that religious inclination does not exempt individuals from behaving abusively if they elect to do so. Therefore, in accordance with Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) a social constructionist approach will facilitate in developing understanding and experiences that are derived from and contribute to larger discourses. Whereas Jews are seemingly encouraged to seek assistance internally and in so doing perhaps avoid the disclosure of information that may serve to tarnish a community's reputation; this appears to provide an illustration of the social constructs that purport that adherence to religious law equates with morality. Therefore, the devout and the religious are synonymous with kindness and integrity whereas the irreligious are construed as something bad. The tendency to conceal and keep hidden incidents of abuse, particularly within the more fervent communities, serves to perpetuate an age-old myth that Jewish men don't abuse their wives. Individuals who abide by God's laws and commandments are perceived as being morally superior and therefore less inclined to resort to abusive tactics within the confines of their relationships. In contrast the non-believers who are frequently portrayed as the decadent and depraved are perhaps more likely to engage in abusive behaviour. It is perhaps crucial to consider that abuse in the Jewish community mirrors society in general and Jewish, religious families are not immune. It is seemingly necessary to begin to tackle the social construct that equates religiosity with morality. The perpetuation of these existing constructs will facilitate in concealing the incidence of spousal abuse within the Orthodox, Jewish community as it is difficult to begin to tackle that which remains unseen. This calls attention to Kenner's postulation that "you cannot admire, you cannot learn from, you cannot even rebel against what you do not know" (Kenner, 1959, p 117). Therefore, how can we begin to address the complexities of abuse within the Jewish community if we are to believe that Jewish men who adhere to religious doctrine do not abuse their wives.

5.3 Evading shame in the concealment of abuse

Participants recognised that domestic violence occurs within the community; in addition the majority of participants acknowledged that while it is plausible to assume that the prevalence of abuse in the Jewish community is likely to be comparable to what is evidenced in other communities; participants appeared unable to substantiate these claims with stories or

anecdotes, personal or otherwise that accounted for incidents of spousal abuse within their community. Furthermore, participants grappled to identify neither how Jewish women in general would react to an abusive relationship nor how the community would respond to an abusive episode in general. This may provide some insight into the extent to which abuse is concealed within the community as a whole. Judaism is grounded on principles pertaining to truthfulness and honour; incidents of abuse serve to eliminate the depiction of Jewry as a morally upstanding community who prides itself on acting with integrity. The majority of participants report that religious Jewry specifically is synonymous with decency and civility therefore acknowledging that abuse occurs within this community serves to tarnish the reputation of a nation who professes to act in accordance with God's law. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) assert that abusive behavior in an Orthodox household is often seen as quite shocking, contrary to laws which are dearly treasured, and thus, astoundingly confusing. As such, Torah observance and domestic violence are diametrically opposed.

The pervasiveness of abuse is often obscured due to the stigmatization that is associated with such an act. The majority of participants conceded that across communities and society as a whole abuse is generally shrouded in secrecy; however attempts at 'covering up' amongst the Jewish community specifically serves to evade additional condemnation of Jewry and in so doing protect Jewish identity. Bostock *et al* (2009) identifies the necessity of understanding violence against women in a societal and institutional context which normalizes and tolerates violence, particularly violence perpetuated against women by men. It is also important to challenge how gender is constructed in the wider societal context and how that supports men abuse of women. Whereas concealment of abuse behaviour frequently stems from the shame and humiliation that is associated with such as act, it appears necessary to consider why the Orthodox Jewish community specifically attempts to hide abusive behaviour.

Bechtel (1991) proposes that the history of Judeo-Christian biblical interpretation reflects a strong emphasis on the sanction of guilt; however the sanction of shame appears to play a more significant role in Jewish society. Shame is seemingly a different emotional response and sanction, arising out of different psychological forces and functioning in different social constructions from guilt. Traditional Jewish view posits a divinely created universe. In addition, God's plan calls for Jews to live as holy individuals in holy communities in accordance with precepts and rules as explicated in the Bible. Friedman (2004) explains that shame is a powerful operative dynamic in Jewish tradition where individual personal and religious destiny can only be truly fulfilled through membership in the larger units of family,

tribe, and nation. Bechtel (1991) postulates that as a sanction of behaviour shame functions primarily as a means of social control which attempts to repress aggressive or undesirable behaviour. In accordance with Bechtel's sentiments, the shame and humiliation that is synonymous with abuse may hinder its prevalence within the Jewish community; however the indignity and dishonour that is generally experienced by abused women serves as an obstacle for women who may attempt to speak out and seek help.

Shame may also be construed as an important form of domination and manipulation of the social status. Its coercive power is available officially to state or local authorities as a formal sanction (judicial and political shaming) and unofficially to the community as an informal social sanction (social shaming) (Bechtel, 1991). It is effective in a pre dominantly group-oriented social structure. It therefore appears as though the experience of shame flourishes predominantly in a group context. In accordance with this postulation it is possible to assume that the shame that is associated with abuse is perhaps experienced by the community as a whole. In order to avoid the so called shameful feelings, incidents of abuse are concealed from the community and in so doing, the community as a whole is sheltered from confronting the horror and ugliness that Jewish people are not immune to depravity. Furthermore, the act of concealment serves to perpetuate the divide between nations as Jews who reportedly don't abuse their wives are portrayed as a 'devout, morally upstanding community' whereas other communities who are perhaps less inclined to screen the prevalence of abuse are likely to be 'othered'.

Goffman (1963) refers to stigma as an "undesired differentness" in which an individual possesses some imperfect trait which makes him/her inferior and undesirable to others. As evidenced from the results, Judaism appears to emphasise the relevance of family; in addition participants constantly alluded to the importance of community. It is perhaps possible to assume that Judaism places enormous emphasis on the collective. This supposition appears to illustrate the magnitude of individual sacrifice as a means of facilitating the betterment of a group as a whole. Furthermore, Friedman (2004) proposes that the notion of individual salvation is seemingly less dominant in Judaism in contrast to Christianity. Therefore, Judaism appears to focus specifically on the prosperity of the community as a whole as opposed to the success of an individual. In accordance with this premise, Jewish women may feel compelled to sacrifice their own wants or desires for the greater good of her family. In addition, a wife may endure mistreatment in the preservation of Shalom Bayit.

Cwik (1995) posits that research on gender should not be focus specifically on the individual but should attempt to incorporate the various contexts of gender in society, such as marriage and family or community life. Furthermore, feminists believe that abuse as a pattern becomes understandable only through examination of the social context. The cohesiveness of the Jewish community may foster greater community rapport however it may also culminate in anxiety as individual Jews feel constrained by a need to conform to a specific standard of behaviour. Therefore, one of the major contributing factors to family violence among Jews is the Jewish community itself (Cwik, 1995). Judaism appears to highlight the importance of fitting in as opposed to standing out. Concealment of abuse may enable its victims to hide behind a mask or normality. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) purport that victims of abuse are generally acutely aware of the shame and stigma associated with any public sign of 'non-normalcy' in Orthodox families. It appears as though Jewish women may tolerate abuse and endure extreme hardship in order to refrain from disclosing that their personal experiences are anything other than normal and is so doing successfully maintain that façade or normalcy. In addition, shared experience has been identified as a crucial tool for challenging abusive dynamics (Bostock, 2009). As the Jewish community tends to conceal incidents of abuse, women are isolated by their experiences which are likely to intensify feelings of otherness or non-normalcy. Furthermore, if Orthodox women are not successful in fulfilling their perceived roles in Jewish society, they may deem themselves failures as both Jewish wives and mothers. In other words, failure within the family is perceived as personal failure (Cwik, 1995). The scarcity of information pertaining to the experiences and perceptions of Orthodox, Jewish women regarding spousal abuse within the Jewish community itself serves to illustrate the degree to which said information is concealed however it also raises questions as to why individuals in general are so reluctant to explore this area further.

It is perhaps necessary to consider that throughout the duration of this study, difficulties were experienced in attempting to access appropriate literature on the prevalence of abuse within the South African Jewish community specifically. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) recognise that knowledge related to domestic violence in Jewish homes is sparse. There is seemingly a dearth of information pertaining to the experiences of Orthodox, Jewish women. Any information that was utilised was generally compiled by Jewish authors specifically. Most of the writings that address domestic violence in the Jewish community have appeared in popular Jewish magazines (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2007) In fact, a number of the authors elected to stipulate that they were in fact Jews themselves. The history of Jewish

people is riddled with persecution and anti-Semitism. Cwik (1995) postulates that Jews know all too well how the Gentile world uses their misfortunes against them. Based on the supposition, it is possible to assume that persons not affiliated with Judaism are perhaps reluctant to explore the experiences and perceptions of Orthodox, Jewish women specifically in relation to abuse for fear that any investigation and subsequent commentary may be perceived as an additional assault on Jewry thereby perpetuating anti-Semitic sentiments. This serves to illustrate the bias in relation to transparency and candour. It is seemingly possible to purport that Jews are more comfortable being scrutinised by other Jews as opposed to individuals who have no affiliation with the religion. Furthermore, one might assume that Jewish people are more likely to disclose confidential and complex information to other Jewish people in contrast to non-Jewish people as the need to protect and preserve Jewish identity is potentially reduced; however in terms of domestic violence specifically there is seemingly substantial subjectivity regarding what is deemed appropriate or inappropriate to reveal amongst members of the Jewish community as a whole. At this juncture it is necessary to consider the importance of others' recognition of domestic abuse as intolerable and unacceptable. This indicates the necessity of understanding violence against women in a societal and institutional context which normalizes and tolerates violence, particularly violence perpetuated against women by men (Bostock, 2009).

Jewish culture and permitted practice is largely determined by the religion's leaders. All of the participants identify the Rabbinic leaders as an integral component in the comprehension and appropriate application of Jewish laws thereby influencing the manner in which women are treated. Discrepancies in interpretation of laws arise due to the subjectivity of religious leaders as clarification and rationalisation of the laws seemingly differ from Rabbi to Rabbi. Religious leaders were identified by participants as playing an integral role in the interpretation of halakhic principles. According to participants, the interpretation of said laws is an entirely subjective process whereby a wife's endeavours are both supported and encouraged by her Rabbi or in contrast she is castigated for failing to perform the roles that are attributed to being a good wife. Furthermore, religious leaders' understandings are important to the extent that they might increase or limit the support that abuse victims receive (Levitt & Ware, 2006). Therefore, whereas certain Rabbonim may elect to adhere to and uphold socially constructed variables, others may attempt to defy them. Evidenced from the results, a woman's experiences are to some extent dependant on what she has been informed

by her Rabbi. Thus, it is possible to assume that for an observant Jew specifically, her religious leader plays a pivotal role in either fostering equality in the marital relationship or advocating her compliance. Women who are victims of abuse have reported that their religious leaders had influenced them to continue in marriages, which caused them to be subjected to further abuse (Levitt & Ware, 2006). Furthermore, Bostock (2009) recognises the need for the dissemination of effective messages about the unacceptability of domestic abuse in public settings, so that there is an increased awareness of what is mutually respectful behaviour between people in relationships.

Despite the Rabbi's stance, a woman is nevertheless forced to conform to some extent as her role is somehow mediated by her husband, her Rabbi, or both. In accordance with this postulation, Orthodox women specifically, appear to enjoy fewer freedoms than their male counterparts. Be it a secular, traditional or Orthodox Jew, any woman who elects to marry in accordance with the principles of the Jewish faith must agree to be 'bought' by her husband during the marriage ceremony and in so doing consent to become 'his property', a contract that only he can elect to sever (Graetz, 1998). Although religious texts can be seen as progressive and protective of women in the context of their time, often they describe women as a form of property to be bartered and traded (Hawley, 1994). This serves to illustrate how existing social constructs are perpetuated and reinforced through the medium of language. Therefore, while Rabbinic leaders posit that women are required to articulate their agreement or opposition regarding their pending nuptials, the implementation of a word that when translated is taken to mean 'property' reinforces sentiments pertaining to inequality and objectification of women.

5.4 Perpetuating inequality through language

Despite the emphasis that participants placed on the debasement of women evidenced in Jewish divorce proceedings, in general participants did not express any doubts regarding the Jewish marriage ceremony itself. During the Jewish marriage ceremony, it is the husband who recites the formal declaration of espousal, not the woman (Graetz, 1998). Participants recognised that while the husband alone delivers the statement of espousal; the woman is required to communicate her assent to the pending union. The majority of participants did not express any unease at their exclusion from articulating a willingness to give themselves to their husbands through the enunciation of a blessing. Provided with the opportunity to concur

or disagree was seemingly adequate. Only one participant recognised that during the Jewish betrothal, she was in fact agreeing to be 'bought' by her husband. As an Orthodox wedding ceremony is generally conducted in Hebrew only and participant seven indicated that as she was completely fluent in Hebrew it is possible to assume that her fluency facilitated in a more meaningful interpretation of the rituals that are evidenced during an Orthodox, Jewish wedding ceremony. It is perhaps possible to assume that failure to interpret the meaning of the words that constitute a number of the blessings provides a mode of concealment to a potentially destructive statement that when directly translated can be interpreted to mean that having consented to the marital union; the woman has essentially become the property of her husband as the root of the Hebrew word for bridegroom is 'owner' (Levitt & Ware, 2006).

Although it is seemingly necessary to exercise caution in the literal translation of foreign words, it is perhaps also essential to remain cognisant of the complexities that may arise when women are referred to as the property of their husbands. Therefore, by exploring the way gender is constructed by Orthodox Jews and how it is manifested in everyday experiences, the feminist perspective may further help explain why spousal abuse may develop within Orthodox Jewish marriages (Cwik, 1995). In addition, instead of viewing language as a means of unearthing underlying realities, language actually facilitates in the construction of that reality (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Therefore, in accordance with this postulation, language is no longer regarded as a completely objective approach to convey meaning but rather as an instrument of subjectivity which can be utilised to communicate a system of meanings. Therefore, if one agrees with Corey's (2005) sentiment that every person involved in a situation has a particular perspective on the reality of that situation, it is possible to conclude that a statement in which a woman is depicted as her husband's property may facilitate in the subordination and objectification of that woman.

Rabbi Yehudi Gaon writes:

A wife's duty is to honour her husband, raise her children, and feed her husband (even from her own hand). She has to wash, cook, grind in accord with what the rabbis have decreed. And when her husband enters the house, she must rise and cannot sit down until he sits, and she should never raise her voice against her husband. Even if he hits her she has to remain silent, because that is how chaste women behave" (Graetz, 1998, p. 96).

The language that is utilised in many of these ancient texts facilitates in perpetuating notions of subordination and the objectification of women. Levitt and Ware (2006) assert that the way that religious texts are interpreted, and whether the cultural-historical context is considered, may influence the degree to which this approach to women is maintained in modern practice. Evidenced in the results, participants are frequently unaware of the literal translations that constitute a number of the blessings, rendering a woman as the property of her husband serves to reinforce stereotypical depictions of women who are subservient to their male counterparts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Although it is unlikely that present day religious leaders would condone spousal abuse, the persistent adherence of many of the laws and customs that were previously constructed becomes problematic. It appears as though religious text is thought to be divinely inspired yet limited by the need to interpret God's messages as bound within their historical and linguistic contexts. For the more liberal faith traditions, reinterpretation is necessary to make the values described relevant to our modern era (Levitt & Ware, 2006). The implementation of a vast number of Jewish laws and customs create friction between that which is expected in accordance with Jewish law and what is actually feasible in a modern society. The majority of the participants reflected on the constraints that the religion places on them as strict adherence to many of the halakhic principles is not viable in a constantly evolving and progressive society.

Furthermore, the outdated laws seemingly enforce archaic sentiments in relation to the treatment of women which serve to exacerbate stereotypical notions of women. Married women are instructed to dress modestly, to cover their heads and to reserve their sexuality for their husbands only; married women are permitted to work in fact in the ultra-orthodox homes, women are frequently the sole bread winners. Participants emphasised that despite external perceptions, many fervent Jewish women were actively employed however the scope of professional opportunities available is seemingly far more limited for a more religious woman than a woman from a traditional or secular background. The stringency of a number of Jewish laws is likely to culminate in difficulties in terms of career preferences available to women from more religious backgrounds. Lamm (1991) explains that women and men are not permitted to touch unless they are husband and wife nor are they permitted to sit together in a secluded space. Therefore, exploring a career in the medical profession for example creates copious inconveniences. In addition, as evidenced in the results women are not permitted to sing in front of men as the female voice is classified as a provocative instrument; women electing to pursue careers as vocal performers are likely to encounter significant

difficulties in that they are only permitted to perform to a select audience comprising solely of women. In accordance with the results presented, due to the archaic nature of many laws in conjunction with the inflexibility of these laws, women encounter numerous difficulties which are likely to influence on all aspects of a woman's life. Feminist ideology is reaffirmed as work opportunities that are available to women are severely curtailed through their adherence to society's stringent laws (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Furthermore, whereas Jewish women are not necessarily exempt from working, professional development is seemingly not permitted at the expense of family.

5.5 Empowering women through marriage and motherhood

Mohl (2009) asserts that in all Western religions, the deity is given a masculine image and the human prophets and spokesmen, Moses, Christ, and Mohammed, are all male. Where women appear in the Bible, they generally do so in a subordinate and often maternal role. Men represent the general human condition, women the deviation. Ethical and moral responsibility is given to men and expected of them. Their family role, while not forgotten, is not primary to their symbolic function as it is for women. Women are portrayed as the maternal figure, the wife and the mother. Participants reflected on the propensity of Jewish women to juggle roles and in so doing fulfil the commitments associated with the dutiful wife and mother in conjunction with their capacity to work and provide. Therefore, while Jewish women are seemingly not exempt from pursuing a profession; their roles as wife and mother are emphasised and reportedly prevail over other functions and responsibilities. This serves to reinforce stereotypical notions in which women are compelled to undertake particular positions. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) posit that Orthodox Judaism is often criticized for rendering women powerless and subordinate to men.

Furthermore, participants posit that acknowledgement of women and the acquisition of their power occurs through the act of marriage. Alcoff (1988) purports that it is the female anatomy specifically that is the primary constituent of female identity and the source of female essence. Women seemingly appear to yield power in relation to a particular domain. Furthermore, Cwik (1995) explores the way the differences between men and women are constructed; and how these differences are used to perpetuate the power relations between men and women. In addition, participants suggested that this so-called elevation of women stems from their capacity to assume the roles of wife and inevitably mother; these functions

are deemed by participants as empowering. Orthodox women take great pride in their family and community roles; rendering themselves powerful in those areas they find most important (Sweifach & Heft-LaPorte, 2007).

It is somewhat difficult to conceptualise how Jewish Orthodoxy perceives women who elect to focus solely on their professional development. As evidenced in the results, participants' reference to Jewish women related specifically to their adherence to the stereotypical archetypal roles of wife and mother. Although reference was made to career development this was only in conjunction with the more conventional and typically feminine roles. Ruether (1989) posits that patriarchal religions facilitate in perpetuating the subordination of women by subjecting them to continual births throughout their adult lives. Furthermore, Cwik (1995) postulates that Orthodox Judaism is essentially patriarchal in nature and Orthodox Jews are known for having very large families. Orthodox Judaism does not allow for the use of contraception unless pregnancy would place a woman's life in danger, or rabbinical permission is obtained.

Contratto and Rossier (2005) assert that the traditionally female roles of the mother, homemaker and wife should not be associated with self-defeating feelings and that women interested in expanding their roles in society do not need to give up more traditional ones, unless they choose to do so. Although the traditional roles that women typically assume should not be negated in accordance with Judaism, the assumption of these roles is seemingly less of a choice than an expectation. Therefore, while Jewish women may elect to work, it is seldom at the expense of having a family. Sturdivant (1980) asserts that the sex role socialization process for women is the reason why many women are dissatisfied and unhappy as women are generally compelled to adapt to the status quo, which for women means maintaining sex appropriate roles, avoiding conflict, denying anger, and engaging in self-sacrificing behavior. As Judaism prioritises family and women are reportedly elevated due to an inherent propensity to forge unions and bear children, what then of women who elect to pursue other avenues. How does Judaism perceive women who focus solely on their professional development as opposed to seeking out a life-mate? In addition, to what extent does the religion support the wives who abstain from having children or the women who are unable to conceive? Conforming to societies socially constructed portrayal of women as the wife and the mother, Judaism appears to acknowledge women in accordance with very particular roles and functions. If women are in fact elevated and respected for their capacity

to serve as wives as mothers, in contrast one may purport that women are stripped of their status and standing if they fail to adopt these gender specific roles.

Therefore, whereas women's experiences are taken into account, their functions appear to be limited to very particular domains such as child bearing and rearing (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In addition, Butler posits that 'being a man' and this 'being a woman' are internally unstable affairs. They are always beset by ambivalence precisely because there is a cost in every identification, the loss of some other set of identifications, the forcible approximation of a norm one never chooses, a norm that chooses us, but which we occupy, reverse, resignify to the extent that the norm fails to determine us completely (Butler, 1993, pp. 126–127). In accordance with this postulation, it appears as though Jewish women are compelled to assume particular roles and undertake specific functions, this is the expected norm. Non-adherence to said norm is deemed improper and frequently culminates in the spurning of a woman by a community. Furthermore, failure to fulfill one's obligations as the dutiful mother appears to provide sufficient justification for the dissolution of a marriage. Cwik (1995) purports that if a wife does not bear children in a marriage it is considered acceptable grounds for a husband to seek a divorce. Therefore, adherence to the laws of procreation appears to provide husbands with adequate motivation to dominate their wives (Cwik, 1995).

In accordance with this study, the Beth Din is typically experienced by women as punitive and judgemental particularly in relation to issues pertaining to divorce. Cwik (1995) asserts that as marriage is a contract that is initiated by the man, so too must he be the one to initiate its dissolution. Participants perceived the disparities between men and women to be the result of a patriarchal stance that is generally assumed by the Beth Din. The majority of participants identified Jewish divorce proceedings as a perpetuation of inequality and subordination in that women were depicted as having to 'beg' their husbands and the Beth Din for emancipation from an unhappy marriage. In today's world, Jewish men can easily withhold a get in divorce cases, even after a civil divorce has been granted. Moreover, a civil court has no power to require an individual to comply with a religious law (Cwik, 1995). In accordance with this supposition women are not permitted to merely implement civil divorce proceedings to terminate a Jewish marriage, they are compelled to appear before the Beth Din and plead their case in order to have their marital union officially wrapped up thereby creating future opportunities for Jewish marriage. Levitt and Ware (2006) postulate that many

religious leaders express hesitations in relation to divorce as a result of intimate partner violence as divorce sanctioned by their religion could only occur after desertion or infidelity.

Endowed with the capacity to exert power and control over the Jewish community, the attitudes and perceptions of the Beth Din are likely to impinge on the manner in which women are treated. This serves to reinforce feminist sentiments that purports that the experiences of women are inadequately addressed thereby rejecting the implication that universal theories of human suffering can be derived solely from men (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Therefore, in light of these sentiments the hardships that are seemingly experienced by women as a result of resolutions implemented by the Beth Din require scrutiny. In addition, religious leaders' hesitations about divorce are seemingly not caused by ambivalence that abuse is wrong but rather by their interest in maintaining intact marriages; therefore the challenge is how to preserve the institution of marriage while trying to ensure safety of victims (Levitt & Ware, 2006). This has profound implications for women who are seemingly compelled to endure tremendous hardship in order to ensure that the marital union remains unbroken. In addition, observation of the principle of Shalom Bayit may intensify the anguish of Jewish women in that the preservation of a so-called happy and intact home in conjunction with the marital union itself may come at a great personal cost.

The Beth Din influences all aspects of Jewish life, intended to provide objective opinions in the arbitration of matters; they are typically experienced by women as punitive and judgemental. It is necessary to explore the prevailing sentiments of the Beth Din and the extent to which said governing body is experienced as advocating patriarchy through their treatment of women. The results seemingly indicate that participants experience the preservation of inequality through the medium of instruction. Hierarchical structures that reside over communities require greater scrutiny in that their attitudes and perceptions of women may serve to strengthen existing stereotypical sentiments in which women are compelled to assume specific roles and in so doing perpetuate notions of inequality and subordination.

As illustrated in the results, authentication of a Jewish marriage requires ratification from the Beth Din. Authorization can only be achieved through strict adherence to a number of Jewish laws; one such law requires compulsory attendance of lessons in which the couple receives instruction on principles that constitute a solid and fulfilling relationship. Cwik (1995) asserts that Jewish culture holds an ideal standard for Jewish family life known as Shalom Bayit but

the inner workings of the Orthodox Jewish marriage may make such a standard difficult to uphold. Shalom Bayit serves as the foundation for any Jewish marriage. It is identified by participants as a constructive tool that enforces notions of compromise, cooperation and conciliation within the marital relationship. Implementation of this principle may serve to enhance the marital bond; however it may also culminate in subordination and submission. The term Shalom Bayit, directly translated refers to 'peace in the home'. As illustrated by participants and in accordance with Judaism, the marital dwelling is generally perceived as the wife's domain. Judaism purports that the woman is responsible for implementing religion into the home, in addition according to Orthodoxy children assume the religious affiliation of the mother. In accordance with this supposition, Orthodox, Jewish women give birth to Orthodox children. If Jewish women are obliged to assume responsibility for the marital home and everything in it, it possibly serves to enforce the understanding that maintaining peace in the home is seemingly the function of the wife. At this juncture, it is necessary to consider the lengths that wives will go to in order to facilitate in the maintenance of a 'peaceful home' and at whose expense?

This socially constructed phenomenon that portrays the marital dwelling as the responsibility of the woman has seemingly culminated in a situation in which women can somehow be held accountable for the dissolution of a marriage. If the home is deemed the wife's domain than any problems or concerns that arise within that particular domain are by implication, the responsibility of the wife. This supposition places the wife in a tremendously precarious position in that she is held accountable for that which does or does not occur within that dwelling. Furthermore, feminist sentiments become apparent as the woman is compelled to adopt a very specific role within her home and her relationship thereby portraying women's sex role position and status in society (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte (2007) state that there is an expectation that Shalom Bayit will govern interaction between family members; it is an ideal condition that Jews are expected to live up to. This expectation, which is not always lived up to, may cause women to disguise an abusive situation. Furthermore, Rogers (1995) proposes that socialization patterns tend to result in women giving away their power in relationships, often without actually being aware of it. Therefore, women may unconsciously submit to possible power dynamics that are evidenced in the principle of Shalom Bayit in that the wife is made to feel accountable for the modes of interaction that take place in the home. Unhappy dynamics are by implication, the

responsibility of the wife. In addition, Prochaska and Norcross (2007) assert that females are typically expected to be sweet, sensitive and docile whereas males are depicted as being strong, stoic and brave. The depiction of women as meek and mild figures may serve as an impediment for women who are seemingly expected to conduct themselves in a very particular way. Furthermore, Cwik (1995) posits that a woman's power is exercised from within the home, family life, and personal domains, hence "internal" power therefore, feminism might interpret this confinement to the home as subordination to men, and many Jewish feminists have interpreted this division of power as leaving Orthodox Jewish women subordinate in society.

In addition, conceptualisation of the principle of Shalom Bayit as the responsibility of the woman may in turn defend incidents of spousal abuse as women are implicated for not adhering to the principle adequately thereby shifting perceptions of who should be held accountable for violence. Levitt and Ware (2006) purport that many religious leaders attributed responsibility for abuse to the victims of intimate partner violence. This places women in a difficult position as they may feel compelled to respond passively to antagonism in their relationships and in their homes. In addition, a woman's behaviour may be utilised to justify her husband's belligerence. This passivity may stem from the propensity to conform to the gender stereotype however the gender label is somehow exacerbated by Shalom Bayit in that the stereotypically kind, gentle and mild mannered woman conducts herself accordingly to keep the other members of her household and the husband particularly, happy.

5.6 Domination versus debasement

Participants propose that women are endowed with characteristics that facilitate in spiritual elevation; they are therefore exempt from fulfilling particular laws or customs due to their so-called superior spiritual status. Participants referred to the close spiritual connection that women share with God; this so-called connectivity seemingly releases women from any obligation relating to the execution of a number of religious acts. The majority of participants emphasised that certain religious practices such as attending synagogue services or reading from the Torah were reserved for men specifically as their omission from said rituals enabled them to focus their attention on family. Women are held responsible for the implementation of religious practice into the children and the home. Participants appeared to experience their 'omission from prayer' as a form of domination over their male counterparts in addition

they appeared satisfied with the rationalisations provided for the aforementioned exclusion. Greenspan (1983) asserts that people who submit to domination bind themselves to self-destructive behaviors and develop “symptoms” that often serves to conceal an enormous amount of rage. These symptoms end up being a woman’s adaptation of anger that allows her to continue to be feminine. Therefore, whereas participants generally appeared content with the status quo of Jewish women it is perhaps possible to assume that they felt compelled to adhere to their typically feminine roles and were therefore unable to articulate the anger that they experience in relation to their social standing within the community. Therefore, women appear to collude with their own oppression and in so doing adapt to the victim role imposed by society therefore perpetuating her oppressed condition (Greenspan, 1983).

Furthermore, participants’ religious affiliation appeared to influence the extent to which certain laws were experienced as perpetuating the subjugation of women. Yadgar (2006) proposes that traditionalist women frequently represent themselves as protecting themselves from the dangers of religiously based patriarchal subordination by the very choosing of traditionalist identity over the more religious and in so doing attempt to preserve what they deem to be the core elements that entitle one to see oneself as essentially Jewish. By doing so, they distance themselves from the seculars, who are viewed as too detached from Jewish tradition and identity. In accordance with this postulation and as evidenced in the results, the majority of participants classified themselves as traditional Jews thereby facilitating in their capacity to insist on equality into their everyday lives but overlook the patriarchal sentiments which are seemingly observed in the adherence to religious practice.

Cwik (1995) purports that the value of observing the Jewish laws lies more with men than women. Several participants emphasised that they had no inclination to fulfil any of the customs historically undertaken by men. This perception serves to reinforce socially constructed sentiments in that the vast majority of Orthodox, married Jewish participants appeared content to execute the roles that are typically assigned to women. Yadgar (2006) asserts that traditionalist women tend to take the position that gladly accepts the fact that Judaism exempts women from certain ritualistic and formal commandments (such as praying in synagogue, the ceremonial reading of a weekly portion of the Torah, and putting on tzitzit and tfilin-rituals that have been heavily contested between feminist Jews and the orthodox rabbinate. Traditionalist women simply do not seek to take these ritual commandments upon themselves. This supposition is further illustrated in that participants acknowledged that

having grown up in traditional Jewish homes, the prospect of carrying out a number of these religious acts felt completely foreign to them and they were both relieved and thankful that in accordance with halakhic principles they were permitted and encouraged to focus their attention elsewhere. In addition, participant 3 proposed that as a Jewish woman, any yearning to participate in customs reserved for men specifically would be granted if an interest was expressed. However, it is perhaps necessary to consider whether such a request would in fact be granted within an Orthodox community.

The implementation of a vast number of Jewish laws and customs creates friction between that which is expected in accordance with Jewish law and what is actually feasible in a modern society. The emergence of progressive sub-communities in Jewish society were established in order to address the viability of archaic halakhic principles in a constantly evolving society, in addition laws that seemingly facilitated in the degradation of women were modified. In accordance with progressive philosophy, there is no discrepancy between the manner in which women and men are treated, furthermore both women and men are compelled to perform the same laws. It appears as though the materialization of progressive sub-communities enabled men and women to participate equally in all aspects of the religion, however Jewish Orthodoxy does not recognise or encourage these progressive movements, in fact reform or progressive enactments are spurned by the orthodox Beth Din. It is perhaps possible to assume that despite participant 3's supposition that Jewish women would be permitted to perform rituals reserved specifically for men, should they express such an interest, as Jewish orthodoxy has seemingly elected to turn its back on progressive ideology such requests are in fact unlikely to be entertained by an orthodox community. This serves to illustrate an adherence to socially constructed rules, enforced by religious doctrine, in which women and men subscribe to stereotypical roles and modes of behaviour. Furthermore, Alcoff (1988) purports that whether women are construed as essentially immoral and irrational or essentially kind and benevolent they are always construed as an essential something inevitably accessible to direct intuited apprehension by males. Therefore, despite the variety of ways in which man has construed a woman's fundamental characteristics, she is always the Object, a conglomeration of attributes to be predicted and controlled along with other natural phenomena. The place of the free-willed subject who can transcend nature's mandates is seemingly reserved exclusively for men. The debasement of women may also be evidenced in the fairly narrow stance that women appear to adopt in the categorisation of domestic abuse. The majority of participants referred to abuse as a physical act of aggression

specifically thereby creating the impression that Jewish women are perhaps more accustomed to the degradation that is often exhibited in the verbal and emotional forms of abuse.

The conceptualisation of what actually constitutes abusive behaviour is somewhat blurred. The majority of participants referred to 'abuse' in terms of physical acts of violence specifically whereas other forms of abusive behaviour were generally not discussed. Therefore, abusive behaviour is seemingly understood by the majority of participants as a physical form of aggression in contrast to other forms of intimidating behaviour that culminates in maltreatment and harm. It is interesting to consider why participants focused specifically on physical acts of aggression as opposed to other forms of ill-treatment. Infidelity was identified as a regular occurrence within the Jewish community however; participants did not classify unfaithfulness in the same category as abuse.

As the majority of participants refrained from mentioning other modes of behaviour that constitutes abuse, it is perhaps possible to assume that due to the power dynamics that are seemingly apparent between men and women, coupled with the community's expectations of women in the assumption of very specific roles serves to enforce gender stereotypes and gender inequality. Therefore, in accordance with this postulation and in accordance with feminist theory women have habituated to being treated unjustly. Having grown up in relatively traditional Jewish homes, it is perhaps possible that Jewish women have become accustomed to more submissive modes of engaging that other, less religiously affiliated women. Participants described the Beth Din as punitive and castigatory in their treatment of women-particularly in relation to divorce proceedings - however, participants abstained from categorising said behaviour as emotionally or verbally abusive. Participants' recognition of abusive behaviour as physical acts of aggression only may serve to illustrate a propensity to tolerate emotional and verbal ill-treatment. The portrayal of the man as the expert and the women as the patient culminates in a situation in which a woman's capacity to exercise her power and influence in relation to others as well as in terms of self is seemingly inferior to that of men (Greenspan, 1983). Jewish women may therefore feel completely disempowered to act in opposition to verbal or emotional maltreatment as they conform to society's expectations that man knows better. Furthermore, Greenspan (1983) suggests that once a woman comes to therapy with the identity of a patient, she has already surrendered the part of herself she will most need in order to help herself: her power as person. Jewish women who are subjected to domestic abuse may experience a similar reaction in that they feel ill-

equipped to tackle said abuse. Greenspan asserts that the idea that the oppression and exploitation women undergo conveniently locates itself within the individual serves to enforce sentiments that neither the workplace nor the social organization of the family requires transformation, but it is the individual woman who needs to be fixed. This serves to reinforce existing sentiments that allows for a pattern that focuses the blame on the victim.

Chapter Six: Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Summary

This research report set out to explore the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships. Furthermore, factors that may serve to either help or hinder a woman's decision to stay or leave an abusive relationship were examined. As the perceptions of Jewish women have not been adequately addressed; this study sought to explore the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish women regarding the abuse of women in their community. The research utilised feminist theory and social constructionism in order to critically examine the principles that are fundamental to Jewish faith and identity; many of which facilitate in the portrayal of women as objects. Examining the perspectives of Jewish women created an appropriate platform to address existing constructs of inequality for Jewish women. The roles of women in Judaism, in conjunction with Jewish doctrine and ideology assisted in shedding some insight into abuse of Jewish women in the Jewish community.

A sample comprising nine Orthodox, Jewish, married women who fell within the 25-35 year age range volunteered to participate in a semi-structured interview in which open-ended questions were utilised to forge a more comprehensive understanding of Jewish women's experiences. Thematic content analysis of the data was undertaken. Three main themes and eleven subthemes emerged as a result of the analysis. The main coded themes were: Preserving inequality through instruction. Marriage precipitates acknowledgement of women and things that happen in every society happen in the Jewish community as well. The data was analysed vertically and horizontally in order to identify the themes that related to each participant individually and recurred between the participants.

The results of the data analysis were discussed in relation to the themes in the literature. The similarities and differences in the responses were analysed in terms of the extent to which the themes supported or challenged the arguments regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships in the literature review.

6.2 Conclusion

The results of the research support the argument that Jewish religious and cultural values appear to influence women's choices in abusive relationships. Furthermore, the roles that women typically assume in Jewish society seemingly perpetuate existing gender stereotypes in relation to women.

It is seemingly necessary to consider the manner in which religiosity is deemed integral to a person's character. Therefore, whereas devout and observant Jews are perceived as being incapable of engaging in abusive behaviour, the less observant are by implication identified as lacking the moral fiber and integrity to refrain from participating in such depravity. In accordance with this study, if one is to assume that Jewish people who adhere to God's laws and commandments never abuse their wives then it is possible to begin to equate religiosity with morality and is so doing perpetuate existing constructs that being a fervent Jew is synonymous with moral superiority.

Furthermore whereas abuse in society is generally shrouded in an element of secrecy; attempts at 'covering up' amongst the Jewish community specifically appears to facilitate in the evasion of additional condemnation of Jewry and in so doing protect Jewish identity. In addition, the experience of shame was identified as playing a pivotal role in the concealment of abuse as shame seemingly flourishes in a group context. In accordance with this postulation it is possible to assume that the shame that is associated with abuse is perhaps experienced by the community as a whole. Concealment may therefore serve to thwart these 'shameful' feelings as a community abstains from confronting a difficult reality.

Language was identified as having a profound influence of the treatment of women as language was no longer regarded as a completely objective approach to convey meaning but rather as an instrument of subjectivity which can be utilised to communicate a number of alternative meanings. The Jewish wedding ceremony and divorce proceedings were recognised as enforcing patriarchal sentiments in that wives were depicted as their husbands' properties and the dissolution of an unhappy marriage was largely dependent on a husband's willingness to release his wife from the marriage agreement. Furthermore, adherence to a number of out-dated Jewish laws appears to exacerbate the difficulties experienced by women in a progressive society. The acknowledgement of women as wives and mothers

specifically also serves to reinforce feminist sentiments in which women are compelled to assume and adhere to very specific gender roles. This was also evidenced in the implementation of the Jewish principle of Shalom Bayit which by implication is the responsibility of the wife.

The depiction of women as spiritually elevated beings appears to assist religious leaders in rationalisations Jewish women's omission and exclusion from prayer. This serves to illustrate an adherence to socially constructed rules, enforced by religious doctrine, in which women and men subscribe to stereotypical roles and modes of behaviour. Furthermore, the emphasis the women place on physical modes of aggression specifically serve to reinforce sentiments that Jewish women are perhaps more accustomed to the degradation that is often noticeable in the verbal and emotional forms of abuse.

6.3 Limitations of the study

Despite the value of this study it is necessary to consider the limitations of a study which serves to constrain its worth. As the majority of the participants self selected to be a part of the study, it is essential to remain cognisant of the biases of these participants in relation to this area of study. It must also be noted that the researcher is herself a Jewish women and is therefore somewhat immersed in the principles and practices that are integral to Judaism. Despite the researcher's attempts at neutrality, complete objectivity cannot be assured. Religious affiliation appeared to influence the willingness of participants to engage meaningfully with the topic. As the majority of participants from this study are from modern orthodox backgrounds they were seemingly less inclined to converse critically in relation to the material discussed. In addition, having been raised in traditional homes themselves, a number of participants have elected to adhere to a number of these laws in their own lives which serves to influence their own relationships. It is therefore possible to assume that participants were generally more reserved in their responses.

Furthermore, the religious orientation of the researcher may have influenced the compliance of participants in revealing candid perceptions and experiences as Jewish women living in the community. On one hand, it is possible to conclude that the religious affiliation of the researcher facilitated in the establishment of open channels of communication in which participants candidly expressed their perceptions and experiences. However, in contrast as the

researcher is herself Jewish, a number of participants may have perceived the study as an 'assault' from a within; the researcher is attempting to defy notions of concealment which may not sit comfortably with participants thereby precipitating in more defensive responses. It is also necessary to consider the dearth of academic research related to the topic; the researcher experienced a degree of difficulty when attempting to substantiate claims with comprehensive literature. Perspectives of Jewish women have not been adequately addressed thereby creating a significant albeit difficult area for research.

6.4 Areas for Future Research

As previously stated and in accordance with feminist theory the perspectives Orthodox, Jewish women have not been adequately addressed; due to the scarcity of information on the subject any research conducted in this area would facilitate is developing some insight into the experiences of Jewish women. Sweifach and Heft-LaPorte purport (2007) that when one elects to work with any unique religious or ethnic group, it is important to utilise culturally sensitive practice strategies. Specific attention must therefore be given to proficiencies and ethnic-sensitive practice strategies that are perceived to lead to successful outcomes. As the researcher is herself Jewish this may have served to foster rapport between the researcher and the participants as they experienced a sense of camaraderie with the researcher however in contrast it may also have created an obstacle in the collection of data as participants may have perceive the investigation as an affront to Judaism. It would therefore be of interest to explore the extent to which the researcher's religious orientation influenced the nature of the responses provided. The utilisation of a non-Jewish researcher in the collection of qualitative data may serve as an interesting basis for comparison.

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Appendix 1

Information Letter

/ /2010

Hello,

My name is Kim Serebro and I am a postgraduate student currently completing a Masters degree in Community-Based Counselling Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. My degree requires that I conduct research and I have chosen to investigate the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish women regarding their perceptions of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships. My research aims to explore women's perceptions regarding domestic abuse in the Jewish community as well as the extent to which Judaism influences women who have been subjected to different forms of abuse.

I would like to request your participation in this study. Your involvement will require an hour long interview on your perceptions regarding the influence of Judaism on abused women in the community. The interviews will comprise a series of questions which have been formulated thereby enabling me to get your opinion regarding the influence of Jewish ideology on women's options in abusive relationships. The content discussed throughout the interview process will be audio tape recorded to facilitate the in the recollection of the material at a later date. The tapes will be kept in a secure location and destroyed once the project has been evaluated.

There are minimal risks for participating in this research however free counselling will be made available by Jewish Community Services on request. Your involvement is voluntary and you are also permitted to withdraw from the study at any time. Please do not provide any information that you consider sensitive or private. I will type out your answers, so that no identifying information will be given to my research supervisor. This will ensure that confidentiality is maintained throughout the research study. Due to the face to face encounter that is necessary for the interview, anonymity is not possible. All the raw data will be destroyed upon completion and evaluation of the research. Relevant quotes from your interview will be included in the research report, in order to illustrate particular themes. However, I will ensure that no identifying information will be included in such quotes. The results may be reported in the form of a journal article. Should you wish to receive it; a summary of the results of the study will be available on request, once the study is completed.

Your assistance is very much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Kim Serebro

MA Community-Based Counselling Psychology Student

Wits University

Contact details: 0836704580 or e-mail at kim.serebro@gmail.com

Lakeasha Sullivan

Research Supervisor

Lakeasha.Sullivan@wits.ac.za

Participant Consent Form

This serves to confirm that I have agreed to participate in a study on the subject of the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish women regarding their perceptions of the influence of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships

I am aware that I may refrain from answering specific questions and am furthermore advised that my involvement in this study is purely voluntary and I may terminate and withdraw from the study should I at any stage become uncomfortable with my involvement in this process.

While I am aware that direct quotes will be used where necessary to best support the information obtained; any information gleaned from the interview process is confidential therefore no identifying information will be used in the transcripts or the research report.

I _____ consent to my interview with Kim Serebro for her study on perceptions of abuse in the Jewish community; I am also aware that direct quotes gleaned from my interview may be included in the final research report.

Signed _____

Appendix 3

Recording Consent Form

This serves to confirm that as I have agreed to participate in a study on the subject of the perspectives of orthodox, Jewish women regarding the perceived effects of Jewish religious and cultural values on women's choices in abusive relationships

I am aware that the content of the interview will be audio tape recorded in order to facilitate the researcher in the recollection of facts.

I understand that:

The tapes and transcripts will not be seen or heard by any person in this organisation at any time, and will only be processed by the researcher.

All tape recordings will be stored in a safe location and destroyed after the research is complete.

I _____ consent to having my interview with Kim Serebro tape recorded thereby facilitating in the recollection of the data at a later stage.

Signed _____

Appendix 4

Interview Schedule:

According to Jewish women what is the impact of the religion's intrinsic principles on a woman's response to an abusive relationship?

- What does being an Orthodox Jew mean for you?
- What does the concept of Shalom Bayit mean for you?
- What is Shalom Bayit's influence on Jewish marriages?
- What are the perceptions of Jewish women regarding divorce (probe for "get")?
- What are your impressions regarding the prevalence of domestic abuse in the Jewish community?
- In your opinion, how does the Jewish community typically respond to incidents of spousal abuse within the community itself (probe for transparency versus secrecy)?
- What are Jewish women's perceptions regarding the viability of divorce in reaction to an abusive relationship?
- How do the principles of Judaism impact on women choices in abusive relationships?

What are Jewish women's perceptions regarding the objectification of women in Judaism?

- What roles do women assume in Jewish marriages?
- What roles do men assume in Jewish marriages?
- How does Judaism perceive the adoption of particular roles within the marital relationship (probe for equality)?
- How are Jewish women portrayed in Jewish literature (probe for objectification)?
- According to Jewish laws and customs, how are women represented (probe for married women)?
- What are your perceptions about the treatment of women according to Jewish practice (probe for married women)?
- What are your impressions regarding the status of women in Judaism (probe for married women)?