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THE WALKER 'CYCLE OF VIOLENCE' AND ITS APPLICABILITY TO WIFE BATTERING IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

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A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology.

Johannesburg, 1993

DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts in Clinical Psychology to the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree at any other university.

P Barnett

Patricia Barnett

17/6/93

Date

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To Rodney, Oliver, and Leah

ABSTRACT

The 'cycle of violence' as formulated by Lenore Walker (1979-1991) has become part of the body of generally accepted theoretical literature on wife battering. However, in recent years, this model has generated some controversy and the present study was undertaken to ascertain whether the formulation can be applied to the experiences of South African women. The specific focus of the study was the third stage of the cycle, "loving-contrition". In-depth interviews were conducted with 12 'coloured' shelter residents in order to assess whether the stage of "loving-contrition" was apparent in the reports the women gave of their experiences. The results indicate that the majority of women (58%) experienced "loving-contrition" after first battering incidents but only 25% described it after the worst battering incident. The study suggests that the 'cycle of violence' does not have universal applicability. The interviews were also analysed to examine common themes in the lived experience of the women.

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When the night mask takes center stage
When the overwhelming rage
Takes you over the edge
of human kindness

The sink holes that were once your eyes
pierce their way into my being
and deaden my soul.

I go to the Island of Catatonia
Where the voices of despair cry
This can't be happening
again.
Where the waters of forgetfulness
lap the shores of unconsciousness.

Until I remember the trick
of jumping out of my body
So that I can slip through the crack in the wall
where my soul becomes whole once again.
I wait.
The fury will subside.
I ride the current.
The mask will dissolve and melt back into
your face.

I return to untie the knots in my stomach
to ice the burning of my bruises
To face the aftermask.
The calm after the storm -
A relief.
But my eyes scan the wall
mapping the spot where the crack disappeared.

For I know in the dark corner of my heart
That I will have to make the journey yet
another time.

Anonymous (cited in Browne, 1987, p. 55-56).

INTRODUCTION

There are no reliable statistics on the incidence of wife battering in South Africa. However, attempts to ascertain the extent of this form of abuse (Angless, 1990; Lawrence, 1984) indicate that it is a widespread problem which impacts on the lives of many women in this country. To date, little empirical research has been undertaken in this specific context. The idea for this project emerged from discussions with workers at POWA (People Opposing Woman Abuse), a Johannesburg-based organization mobilized around violence against women. Some counsellors reported that their casework experience indicated that the 'cycle of violence', and specifically, the period of "loving-contrition" as described by Lenore Walker in her book entitled "The Battered Woman" (1979), was not usually apparent in the reports battered women gave of their experiences. It was felt that it would be useful to the organization to base their work upon empirical research in this area.

Walker formulated the model of the 'cycle of violence' from two research studies (1979; 1984b). In the first she interviewed over 120 women from all over the United States as well as in shelters in the United Kingdom. A follow up study of 435 women, in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States, confirmed her initial findings. Walker identified a distinct battering cycle made up of three phases. She describes these as: the "tension-building" stage; the explosion, or "acute battering incident"; and, the calm, loving respite ("loving-contrition"). Walker uses this cycle to explain how women become victimized, how they fall into learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975), and why they do not attempt to leave the abuser. Walker was one of the first psychologists to write on the subject of wife battering and her formulation has become part of the body of generally accepted theoretical literature on the subject. There is the assumption that Walker's model is generally applicable and the formulation is used to inform practice in the area of intervention. In recent years the 'cycle of violence' has generated some controversy, and the present study was undertaken to ascertain whether the concept can be applied to the experiences of South African women, and whether it is a useful model for planning intervention strategies.

The nature of South African society differs greatly from that of the United States and the United Kingdom where Walker's formulation originated. South Africa is a multicultural society that encompasses both First and Third World living standards. Also, the Woman's Movement, which has made inroads into descrimination against women in First World countries, has not influcenced thinking to the same extent in South African. It was posited that attitudes to women may be different in South Africa and this difference could affect attitudes to wife battering. Thus, the primary emphasis of the study lay in assessing the universality of Walker's postulated model, and specifically its applicability in the South African context.

In Johannesburg, the POWA shelter is utilized by women from all 'cultural' groups. However, during the period in which data was collected for this study, the majority of women in the shelter were 'Coloured' and working class, and this population became the focus of the study. Because large demographic studies often lose sight of the experiences of the individual, it was decided that the information could best be obtained through in-depth interviews which would allow the women themselves to be heard. As Walker (1979) points out, it is only through listening to the battered women that it is possible to understand what happens to her and how she is victimized. The aim was to gain information about the individual woman's experience which would be useful for workers in the field. It was also hoped that the information gathered would throw light on the needs of battered women and their children.

The report is divided into four chapters: Chapter One includes a review of the literature on wife battering; Chapter Two sets out the methodology used in the study; Chapter Three presents the results and discussion of the findings in the study; and, Chapter Four presents the conclusions drawn from the research.

CHAPTER ONE

LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. INTRODUCTION

Traditionally the family has been conceptualized as a haven of love, warmth, intimacy and support - a sanctuary in an otherwise hostile world (Killoran, 1984). In recent years, however, it has become apparent that the family is not always a tranquil refuge (Walker, 1979). On the contrary, violent crime is more likely to occur in the home than outside and a woman is more likely to be hit, beaten up, physically injured, or even murdered, by her husband than by a stranger (Gelles, 1976; McLeer, 1988; Walker, 1978). In fact, women are most at risk of murder inside their own homes, and research indicates that most female homicide victims die at the hands of their male partners, usually after a history of wife battering (Wallace, 1986, cited in McGregor, 1990a). However, despite overwhelming evidence to challenge it, the myth of the family as an arena for love and gentleness survives almost totally intact (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

1.2. DEFINING WIFE BATTERING

It is difficult to define exactly what constitutes battering behaviour in the context of wife battering (Straus & Gelles, 1986). For some writers, battering is clearly distinguished from acts that are not injurious physically (Pagelow, 1981; McLeer, 1988). According to this criterion, it has been estimated that between 20% to 25% of adult women in the United States have been physically abused at least once by a male intimate (Stark & Flitcraft, 1988). Walker (1979), however, points out that emotional torture which produces invisible scars can be as abusive as physical blows. Using a definition that takes into account both physical and psychological abuse, she estimates that one in two American women will experience an abusive relationship at some point in her life.

While acknowledging that emotional abuse is no less damaging than physical abuse, the present author has, for the purposes of this study, adopted the following definition: Wife battering is the intentional use of physical force by a man against his intimate cohabiting partner, whether it be her husband, ex-husband, boyfriend or lover (Bograd, 1988; Gelles & Straus, 1979). It is extremely difficult to measure emotional abuse, and it is felt that confining the research to physical abuse provides a more rigorous criterion for inclusion in the study. Walker's (1979) model of the 'cycle of violence' is applicable to both groups, but perhaps somewhat more strongly to physically abused women.

In order to redress some of the inequalities between men and women, there has been a move to eliminate inequalities in the language surrounding battery. Some writers have used gender neutral or egalitarian terms like 'marital violence', 'domestic conflict', 'abusive relationships' or 'spouse assault' rather than wife battering (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). However, these terms obscure the male to female direction of most serious assault and give the false impression of an equal problem for both men and women (Dobash & Dobash, 1981; Russell, 1990). "These terms imply that each marital partner is equally likely to play the part of perpetrator or victim in a violent episode; that the frequency and severity of the physical force used by each is similar; and, that the social meaning and consequences of these acts are the same. None of this is true" (Dobash & Dobash, 1979, p. 11-12). Dobash and Dobash point out that while these terms can assist in overcoming the mental images that contribute to ineqality, they can also obscure the inequalities that do in fact exist.

The terms 'wife battering' and 'wife beating' are, however, also problematic. As Russell (1990) points out, 'battering' conveys the notion of extreme violence, and is appropriate only when the violence is extreme. She cautions that one of the consequences of using a word like 'battery' to apply to all degrees of violence is that less drastic but nevertheless serious experiences can easily be neglected. Russell points out that although 'wife beating' has less extreme connotations, not all violence in marriage can be described as beating. Violent acts such as throwing an object at another person, shoving someone against a wall, throwing her to the floor, or twisting her arm behind her back, cannot be termed beating. The women in the present sample were all subjected to extreme violence. For convenience the terms 'wife battering', and 'wife abuse' will be adopted for this report and used interchangeably.

1.3. THE BATTERED WOMAN SYNDROME

The battered woman syndrome, formulated by Walker, (1983b-1991) is a term encompassing a collection of specific characteristics and effects of abuse on the battered woman (Douglas, 1987). Walker maintains that not all women who are battered suffer from this syndrome, but those who do are less able to respond effectively to the violence. She divides the indicators of battered women syndrome into three major categories: (1) traumatic effects of victimization by violence, (2) learned helplessness, and (3) self-destructive coping responses to the violence. According to Dobash and Dobash (1992), the most important practical benefit of the battered woman syndrome lies in its use in American courts to absolve a woman from responsibility when she injures or kills her batterer.

A major criticism of the syndrome is that it 'clinicalizes' battered women, designating them as pathological (Douglas, 1987). The term 'battered woman syndrome' communicates an implicit but powerful view that battered women are all the same, that they are suffering from

a psychological disability and that this disability prevents them from acting 'normally' (Schneider, 1986, cited in Dobash & Dobash, 1992). It is, therefore, concept that disempowers the women it is designed to protect.

1.4. THE 'BATTERED HUSBAND SYNDROME'

Some writers, (Steinmetz 1977; 1978a; 1978b; Steinmetz & Lucca, 1988; McNeely, 1990; McNeely & Robinson-Simpson, 1987) have argued that husbands and wives are equally likely to be violent and abusive. This view, however, fails to consider, that physical force between adults in the family is overwhelmingly directed at women (Pagelow, 1985b). As Pagelow points out, men are, on average, larger and stronger than women, and can generally do greater physical harm than is done to them; they can non-violently protect themselves from physical harm; or, they can simply leave the premises without being forcibly restrained. Therefore, the vast majority of men are not physically and economically restrained from walking out of the front door if and when their wives become violence.

Also, partners may 'trade panches' but they rarely 'exchange' injuries (Berk, Berk, Loseke & Rauma, 1983). Research has shown that even when both parties are injured in an altercation, the woman's injuries are generally almost three times as severe as the man's (Browne, 1987) as men tend to engage in more dangerous and injurious forms of violence (Margolin, Sibner, & Gleberman, 1988). "To say that men and women reach equality when it comes to marital violence literally adds insult to injury for the group of women who often fear for their lives, who never initiate an attack, but who strike back in elf-defense" (Saunders, 1986, p. 57). So, although it is claimed that the frequencies of violent acts may be approximately the same for husbands and wives, the potential consequences of the violence by wives is considerably less (Margolin et al.). Therefore, reporting the rates of violence by each partner does not give information on the extent of the victimization each suffers (Saunders).

Bograd (1984) and Yllo (1988) assert that the instrument used to validate the 'battered husband syndrome', the Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS), is biased for two reasons. Firstly, it does not take into account the severity of injury sustained. A blow by a female does not typically inflict as much tissue damage as a blow by a male (Claes & Rosenthal, 1990). Secondly, the CTS does not take into account gender differences in response styles, particularly women's tendency to overreport their own aggressive acts and the tendency of husbands to underreport theirs (Browning & Dutton, 1986; Claes & Rosenthal; Margolin, 1987; Walker, 1989b). "The scale does not ask what particular acts were done in self-defense, who initiated the violence, or who was injured" (Kurz, 1989, p. 494).

There are, undoubtedly, many violent wives and some battered husbands, but the proportion of systematically abused husbands compared to abused wives is relatively small, and

certainly the phenomenon does not amount to a 'syndrome' (Pagelow, 1985a). Also, a great deal of violence by women occurs in retaliation or self-defence (Straus, 1980; Saunders, 1986; 1988). "While there are certainly occasional instances of husbands being battered, it is downright pernicious to equate their experiences with those of the enormous number of women who are routinely and severely victimized" (Berk et al., 1983). Thus, the concept of a 'battered husband syndrome', of a magnitude equal to that of battered wives, has been labelled by Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart (1977), a "battered data syndrome".

1.5. THE INCIDENCE OF WIFE BATTERING

Wife battering seems to be found at all socio-economic and economic levels and occurs between couples of all ages (Flynn, 1977). However, because it is a taboo subject, much like rape and sexuality (Rohrbaugh, 1979), there are no reliable statistics regarding the extent of the problem in either North America or Britain (Straus, 1977). Difficulties in estimating rates arise from different definitions as well as from the mask of privacy and from problems with the reliability and accuracy of reports (Klein, 1981). Few offenders are prepared to admit to their crimes, and many women go to great lengths to hide their bruises and the feelings of shame, guilt, and humiliation that go with them. Although wife battering is not limited to a particular social class or ethnic group, the highest reported incidence is among the poor (Hilberman, 1980). As Hilberman points out, this is arguably because poor people are more likely to come to the attention of a public agency, while the privacy of middle- and upper-class women may be protected by personal doctors or attorneys.

It is even more difficult to assess the extent of wife battering in South Africa as marital violence cases are classified by the police as 'general assault' and by welfare agencies as 'marital problem.' (Adam's, 1987). However, Lawrence (1984) found that it was the second highest reported crime in the Mitchells Plain area of Cape Town, and Rape Crisis, a Cape Town-based organization concerned with violence against women, estimates that one in six women in the western Cape is battered (Angless, 1990). In all probability this is a very conservative figure because the majority of cases, as in North America and the United Kingdom, go undetected, unreported, and untreated. Thus although wife battering is clearly an extremely serious problem, it remains largely hidden.

Placing wife battering in its wider sociohistorical context indicates that a woman's place in history has often been at the receiving end of a blow (Dobash & Dobash, 1977). It is difficult to ascertain exactly who first declared that wives could and should be beaten by their husbands or when this practice began. However, "history is littered with references to, and formulas for, beating, clubbing, and kicking them into submission" (Dobash & Dobash, p. 31). Dobash and Dobash conclude that wife battering has existed for centuries as an acceptable and desirable part of a patriarchal family system within a patriarchal society.

What may be more surprising is that much of the ideology which supported the subordination, domination and control of women is still reflected in our culture and social institutions: "Although it is not generally thought to be proper or masculine for a man to hit a woman, this constraint does not strictly apply to the treatment of one's wife" (Dobash & Dobash, 1977, p. 4). In a study of perceptions of sanction by coupled men, Carmody and Williams (1987) concluded that coupled men in the United States think they can get away with hitting their female partners, regardless of whether they have ever personally been involved in wife assault. Thus, wife-beating appears to be considered acceptable by both batterers and non-batterers and is almost viewed as normative. "This perception may result from a shared belief that assaultive behavior is not very objectionable; therefore, nothing of consequence will happen" (p. 36). The expectation that retribution for the behaviour is unlikely, further completes the normative cycle.

1.6. CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH

The frequency and severity of wife abuse differs among communities, and cross-cultural research indicates the importance of societal level influence on wife battering (Campbell, 1992). In a survey of ethnographic data from 90 different societies, Levinson (1989) found that 16 of these societies were relatively free of wife abuse. He discovered that in these societies husband and wives share in domestic decision-making, wives have some control over the fruits of family labour, wives can divorce their husbands as easily as husbands can divorce their wives, men resolve disputes with other men peacefully, and, intervention in wife beating incidents tends to be immediate. Levinson concludes that wife abuse does not occur in societies in which family life is characterized by cooperation, commitment, sharing and, particularly, equality between the sexes, even if individuals live in conditions of extreme stress.

Campbell's (1992) research showed that in societies where there is sanction against battering and sanctuary for battered women, there are low levels or an absence of battering. This is borne out by Kerns (1992) in a study of the Garifuna community in Belize, Central America, where wife battering is virtually unknown. In this community it is easy for women to leave marital relationships, to enter new ones or to remain single. Spouses are left to settle their differences but if a man begins to hit his wife, someone always alerts older kinswomen and neighbours who usually need do nothing more than make known their presence as witnesses to the act. Brown (1992) points out, that although there is supposed disapproval of wife battering in the United State, this does not act as a deterrent, as Americans perceive the sanctions as neither certain nor severe (Carmody & Williams, 1987). This is equally true of the situation in South Africa. Although there is clear provision for prosecution and punishment of those who assault others, the law rarely punishes the offender when he is a husband assaulting his wife (Marcus, 1981).

1.7. RESEARCH FINDINGS ON WIFE BATTERING IN SOUTH AFRICA

Although wife battering is widespread in South African, relatively few studies have been done in this field. The following are some research projects which have attempted to look at the experiences of battered women in this country. Two studies have examined the attitudes of professionals to battered women: Segel (1985) researched the attitudes of social workers; and, Ancer (1989) studied psychologists' attitudes. Segal found that a substantial proportion of professionals endorsed the popularly held belief that battered women are masochistic. Ancer found that many psychologists see individual personality factors, stress levels, and the relationship variables of the couple involved, as the causes of abuse.

Some studies have attempted to look at the needs of battered women with a view to providing suitable counselling or shelter facilites. In the Cape, Angless (1990), looked at the counselling needs of battered women, while Maconachie, Angless, and Van Zyl (1993) used a population at a rape crisis shelter, to document the difficulties experienced by a woman in the process of separating from a batterer. In the Johannesburg area, a study by Adams (1987) examined the effect of wife battering and marital satisfaction on the marital relationship of Eldorado Park women. Leibowitz (1992) attempted to evaluate the functioning of the POWA shelter, and Alderton and Weiner (1992) explored the perceptions of the women who had made use of this shelter. Most of the research has aimed at ascertaining whether the experiences and needs of South African women differ from those of women overseas.

To date, it would seem that the experiences of battered women in South Africa do not differ significantly from those of their counterparts in North America and the United Kingdom. This, in spite of the differences in living standards between South Africa and First World countries, and considerable differences in the facilities available to battered women. In South Africa there are approximately five shelters country-wide as opposed to 150 shelters in the United Kingdom. The present study will attempt to add to this body of research by assessing the applicability of Walker's (1978-1989b) 'cycle of violence' to the South African context.

Having considered some of the factors involved in demarcating the field of study, and some of the South African research in the area, it seems pertinent to move on to etiological factors.

1.8. THE ETIOLOGY OF WIFE BATTERING

The issue of wife battering raises two important questions about the family: Why is this social group (i.e. the family), that society most often looks to for warmth, intimacy, help, and love, also characterized by cruelty and violence (Straus, 1976a); and, why is the person who is usually considered to be a wife's closest ally also, very often, a physical, perhaps even mortal, threat (Ferraro, 1983). A range of psychological and sociological explanations

have been put forward to explain this phenomenon, the most salient of which are presented below.

1.8.1. The Intra-Individual Explanations

Early attempts to find explanations for these contradictions tended to assume that one or both spouses possessed certain characteristics that made them prone to wife battering. A great deal of the literature has attempted to establish what these characteristics are and to find ways in which batterers differ from non-batterers, and wives who are battered differ from those who are not. The results have been inconclusive. As Dutton (1988) points out, batterers are depicted as both domineering (Caesar, 1986, cited in Dutton; Pizzey, 1974) and unassertive (Dutton & Strachan, 1987; Maiuro, Cahn & Vitaliano, 1986; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981), as pathologically atypical (Faulk, 1974, cited in Dutton, 1988), and as fulfilling normative expectations (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). They have been described as having excessive control needs (Hofeller, 1983) and a greater need for power than maritally distressed but nonassaultive men (Dutton & Strachan, 1987). On the other hand, as Allen, Calsyn, Fehrenback & Benton (1989) point out, they are reported to have dependency conflicts (Davidson, 1978), fear of intimacy (Hofeller, 1983), and lack assertiveness (Dutton & Strachan).

In a review of the literature on the psychological characteristics of wife batterers, Hastings & Hamberger (1988) conclude that many of the features are consistent with the DSM-111 criteria for personality disorders. Among the psychiatric diagnoses applied to male assaulters are antisocial, passive-aggressive, obsessive-compulsive, paranoid, and borderline personality disorder (Faulk, 1973, cited in Dutton & Strachan, 1984; Deschner, 1984). Although wife abuse is not limited to men with personality problems such men do seem to constitute a large proportion of the identified treatment population, especially men with concurrent alcohol problems (Tolman & Bennett, 1990). However, the studies reviewed are all based on men identified through police reports, probation referrals, or women's shelter programs, and batterers who are not identified as such may exhibit different characteristics (Hamberger & Hastings). The overrepresentation of psychopathology in these clinical battering populations does not clearly implicate psychopathology as a causal factor in wife battering (Tolman & Bennett).

Several writers have attempted to formulate typologies of batterers. For example, Elbow (1977) described four sets of clinical observations of wife assaulters. These are the 'controller', who views his wife as an object of control, the 'defender' who overprotects his wife, the 'approval-seeker', who makes excessive demands for approval on his wife to compensate for his poor self-esteem, and the 'incorporator', who needs his wife to validate and define himself. Hanneke, Shields and Mc Call (1981, cited in Dutton, 1988) distinguished between those men who were only violent to their wives, those men who were generally violent, and those who were violent only outside the family. Shields, McCall, and

Hanneken (1988) found that violent husbands appear notably distinct from those violent men who engage in street as well as domestic violence. Other researchers who have attempted to formulate typologies of batterers are Hamberger and Hastings (1986), Dutton (1988), Caesar (1986, cited in Dutton), and Gondolf and Hanneken (1987).

What emerges from the research is that wife batterers do not form a homogenous group and, to date, no personality factors have been identified that consistently distinguish batterers from nonbatterers (Stark & Fliteraft, 1988). It would seem that there are different types of abusers, reflected in their personalities, etiologies of the violent behaviour, and the type of violence perpetrated (Sonkin, 1988). Therefore, to reduce all batterers to one unitary clinical category is to greatly oversimplify the problem. It may also have the effect of removing responsibility from the batterer and placing the blame on his 'pathology' (Bograd, 1984). As Bograd points out, feminist values are clear regarding the allocation of responsibility for wife battering: no woman deserves to be battered; and, men are solely responsible for their actions. However, without absolving men from this responsibility, it is necessary to bear in mind that there are some men for whom this behaviour is a manifestation of deviance or pathology.

The battered wife has also been the subject of a great deal of research. Hotaling & Sugarman (1986), reviewed a series of studies on wife battering in order to identify potential risk markers of husband to wife violence. With the exception of exposure to violence in childhood, no risk marker was found to consistently distinguish victims of wife battering from nonvictims. (The intergenerational transmission of violence will be discussed in 1.8.2.1). Hotaling and Sugarman conclude that there is no evidence that the status a woman occupies, the roles she performs, the behaviour she engages in, her demographic profile, or her personality characteristics, consistently influence her chances of victimization.

Apart from the increased incidence of mental health problems following abuse, reported by Stark and Fliteraft, (1985), studies correlating personality traits with battering fail to establish cause and effect (Stark & Fliteraft, 1988). It would seem that personality and symptomatological differences may be a consequence of battering rather than a cause of it (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). Walker & Browne (1985) point out that many of the outward characteristics that battered women display, such as hypervigilance, lack of trust, or paranoia, resemble symptoms of personality disorder. However, these are adaptive and temporary personality features, understandable for an individual faced with ongoing and unpredictable assaults (Walker, 1983b).

There is, therefore, no empirical evidence of a consistent battered wife personality profile, nor is there evidence that battered wives derive enjoyment from their suffering and thus seek it out (Stark & Fliteraft, 1988; Walker & Browne, 1985). However, 'conventional wisdom' has long held that battered wives, like rape victims, somehow invite abuse (Caplan, 1985).

The implication is that these women are masochistic, that they obtain pleasure out of suffering (Gingold, 1976). In our industrialized, patriarchal culture, attitudes towards battered wives and rape victims are similar: "Just as the rape victim is supposedly a seductive temptress who asked for what she got, the abused wife has provoked her husband into beating her. Secretly, the woman is supposed to enjoy being beaten, just as the rape victim is accused of relishing violent sex" (p. 52).

Several research studies have found that a substantial proportion of the population still subscribes to the stereotype of battered women as masochistic (Ancer, 1989; Ewing & Moss, 1987; Greenblat, 1985; Segel, 1985) in spite of empirical evidence to the contrary. Thus, Greenblat points out, it is not simply a case of blaming the victim but of blaming the female. As a result, the battered woman may feel that she is responsible for the battering, that if only she were a "good enough wife" the violence would cease. This is in spite of numerous studies which have shown that male violence is for the most part indiscriminate and unpredictable. "Gloria Stenheim likens looking for some predisposition....for abuse to asking, 'What in your background led you to a concentration camp'" (cited in Gondolf and Fisher, 1988, p. 19). It is clear that battered women do not form a homogeneous group. Recognizing the variability among these women helps to reduce stereotypes and forces researchers to abandon the idea that one cause produces battered victims (Follingstad, Brennan, Hause, Polek & Rutledge, 1991).

1.8.2. The 'Situational' Approach (Social-Psychological model)

In attempting to overcome the limitations of the intrapsychic or pathological perspective, some theorists have adopted a broader, 'situational' approach in which the external environmental factors which impact on the family are examined. An attempt is made to determine which of these are instrumental in causing wife battering. There is some evidence that factors such as stress (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 1980), intergenerational transmission of violence (Gayford, 1975), alcohol (Prescott & Letko, 1977), and unemployment (Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz) are implicated in battering behaviour.

1.8.2.1 Family History

Violence in the batterer's family-of-origin is often cited as a predictor of wife battering (Caesar, 1988). According to social learning theory, each individual's behaviour is determined by the social environment; most notably his or her family members (Margolin, Sibner, & Gleberman, 1988). According to Margolin et al., witnessing aggressive models provides opportunities for acquiring and reproducing spontaneous forms of aggression. The wife battering behaviour is seen to be learnt during childhood and then reproduced during adulthood because of two basic propositions of social learning theory. These propositions are that: (1) reinforcement following behaviour increases the probability that the behaviour will be repeated; and, (2) that intermittently reinforced behaviour is most difficult to extinguish (Pagelow, 1981; Walker, 1989a).

Social learning theory suggests that wife battering continues after the first incident because generally, there are no (or insufficient) punishments received, and there may be reinforcements: "For example, some men may experience feelings of increased control and power, and the women may try harder to placate them or to remove all sources of irritation and stress.... anything the men claimed led to the beating in the first place" (Pagelow, 1981, p. 45). The batterer's chief power, according to Walker (1989a) is the seemingly random and variable predictability of his assaultive behaviour.

Research studies on the intergenerational transmission of violence have produced contradictory results, and this theory has come under criticism for an absence of good supportive data (Widom, 1989). Caesar's (1988) comparison of batterers and non-batterers in therapy indicated that batterers were more likely than comparison subjects to have been abused as children and to have witnessed their fathers beating their mothers. This is confirmed by Carter, Stacy and Shupe (1988) who state that the experiences of wife batterers, whether involving neglect, outright abuse, or witnessing parental/sibling abuse, appear to be directly related to the severity of their later adult violence in the family.

However, several studies refute this finding (Bowker, 1983a; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981; Star, 1978). A recent study by Cantrel, Carrico, Franklin and Grubb (1990), found that abuse in a previous generation was not related to abuse between spouses. Stark and Flitcraft (1985) conclude that "for every abuser who has been hit as a youngster, two have not been hit" (p. 168). Gelles and Conte (1990) maintain that, while experiencing violence in one's family of origin is often correlated with later violent behaviour, such experience is not the only determining factor. It would seem that when the intergenerational transmission of violence occurs, it is likely to be the result of a complex set of social and psychological processes.

1.8.2.2 Alcohol

An association between wife batter'ng and alcohol use by the perpetrator has been noted in all of the relevant studies (Hilberman, 1980). Drinking accompanied the violence in 44% of Gelles (1974) study and 93% of Hilberman's study. Drunkenness occurred regularly in 52% of Gayford's (1975) study. However, as Hilberman points out, drunkenness does not always accompany a battering incident and abusers who drink heavily also hit their wives when they are sober. Gelles (1974) hypothesized that wife abusers become intoxicated in order to carry out a violent act. This provides 'time out' during which the assailant is not responsible for his actions.

Kantor and Straus (1987) found that excessive drinking is associated with higher wife abuse rates. However, alcohol use at the time of violence is far from a necessary or sufficient cause for wife abuse "despite the stereotype that all drunks hit their wives or all wife hitting involves drunks" (p.3). A study by Roberts (1988) found that batterers who committed more

serious offences were significantly more likely to have either a drug problem or a dual problem with alcohol and drugs. Tolman and Bennett (1990) maintain that chronic alcohol abuse by the husband, rather than acute intoxication, is a better predictor of battering. It would seem that abusive men with severe alcohol or drug problems are violent more frequently, and inflict more serious injuries on their partners than abusive men who do not have a history of substance abuse (Browne, 1987).

1.8.2.3 Resource Theory

Another argument about conditic as conducive to wife battering uses resource theory as formulated by Goode (1971). Goode explains that the greater the resources a person can command within a social system, the more force he can muster. According to Goode, physical force is but one of several resources that husbands use to exercise influence in the family; money, prestige, and likeability are also key marital resources (Peterson, 1991). The more resources a person can command, the less he will resort to violence (Gelles, 1980). Thus, violence is deployed as a last resort when all other resources are insufficient or lacking. However, as Breines & Gordon (1983) point out, attempts to test this hypothesis have produced mixed results. A study by Allen and Straus (1980) found that men with more resources were less violent while Stark and McEvoy (1970) found the reverse to be true.

In addition, resource theory links an increase in women's resources, including verbal skills, to increased male violence. Wardell, Gillespie, and Leffler (1983) point out that this is just another form of victim blaming. Women are descriminated against in employment, promotions, job titles etc: "Under these circumstances, it would be astounding were researchers to find many of the purportedly wife-dominant or wife-superior families which supposedly drive husbands beserk" (pg. 77). Another criticism of resource theory is levelled by Campbell (1992) whose research indicated that levels of violence did not increase as women increased their economic resources. She suggests that this theory does not explain changes in the frequency or severity of wife-battering at the societal level. It may be explanatory, however, at the individual level.

1.8.2.4 Family Systems Theory

Another 'situational' explanation of wife battering is provided by the family systems approach. This approach assumes: 1) wife battering occurs as a result of an interactiona context characterized by repetitive sequences of transactional behaviour; 2) wife battering occurs in marital systems characterized by certain relationship structures; and, 3) due to circular causality, violence may serve a functional role in maintaining the marital system (Bograd, 1984). However, solely attributing wife battering to dysfunctional interaction patterns can be seen as a way of blaming the abused wife for her victimization (Bograd; Goldner, 1985). Bograd warns that systemic formulations contain "subtle and pernicious biases that inadvertently sanction violence against women or that deflect attention away from the social conditions that may engender battering" (p. 560). She believes that it is

erroneous to conclude that both partners are equally accountable for a violent incident and the terms 'violent couples' or 'battering system' hide the gender specific nature of the battering.

According to the systemic view of the family, changing one part of the family influences change in the entire system (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967, cited in Pressman, 1989). However, writes Pressman, when wife battering takes place, changing the wife's behaviour does not change the husband's violence: "If a wife who is compliant becomes defiant, she will be abused. If a wife who is defiant becomes compliant, she will be abused. Whatever the abused wife does her husband will abuse her" (p. 25). Pressman goes on to say that if one rigidly applies family systems theory to wife battering, one must accept that the wife acts in such a way that will foster, reinforce, or perpetuate the violence. The implication of this is that wife battering is categorized as a 'problem' rather than as a crime. The assumption is that violence is the result of conflict in that particular dyad (McGregor, 1990b) which is improbable in the light of statistics, cited previously, indicating the problem to be widespread.

McGregor (1990b) argues that violence does not necessarily involve conflict. She maintains that a husband's violence against his wife is about an abuse of power; it is not about conflict. Moreover, despite family therapy's claim to have moved beyond 'traditional' therapeutic approaches, it tends to 'psychologize' and privatize what is manifestly a social and political problem (James & McIntyre, 1990). Laing and Esterson (1970) insisted that a systemic conceptualization should never be used to hide or obscure the violent acts of family members. However, this is precisely what it may do.

While the 'situational' approach reveals several factors that appear to contribute to wife battering, it does not tell us why so much violence by men is directed toward a specific target, women, or within a specific context, their home (Schechter, 1982), nor why the direction of battery is so gender-biased. Thus, 'situational' theories produce contradictory information on the etiology of wife battering which limits their scope and universality.

1.8.3. The Macro-Level Explanations (Sociological/Sociocultural Explanations)

In an attempt to find explanations for why violence is directed towards wives, some theorists have taken a macro-level approach to wife battering. Sociocultural explanations examine historical, legal, cultural and political factors that contribute to wife abuse (Margolin et al., 1988). There are two main theoretical approaches that fall under this heading: the general social orientation which analyses wife battering in the context of general violence in society (eg. Goode, 1971; O'Brien, 1971; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980); and, the feminist orientation (e.g. Dobash & Dobash, 1977-1992; Klein, 1979; Walker, 1979-1992) which analyses wife battering in the social, political and economic context of sexism. Both these approaches agree that socialization plays a major role in producing the battering situation,

but there is disagreement over which socialization process is the problem: socialization to violence; or, socialization to sex roles (Romero, 1985).

1.8.3.1. The General Violence Explanation

The former of these two perspectives has been referred to by McGrath (1979) as the "violence is as American as apple pie" approach (p. 17). This perspective views wife battering as an extension of the violence that pervades society. The use of violence in society is largely condoned as a problem-solving device in education, discipline, sports, the media, toys and in the choice of role-models (Pagelow, 1985b). It is also tolerated within the family in the form of physical punishment of children. This teaches that it is acceptable: to hit people you love; for powerful people to hit less powerful people; and, to use hitting to achieve some end or goal (Gelles, 1987). The family is, therefore, seen as a training ground for violent behaviour (Gelles, 1974).

This perspective is critical of theories of battery as individual deviance, including conceptions of female masochism and innate male aggression. However, here the violence inherent in society, rather than the individual, is seen as the cause of wife battering. "This ostensible 'social' interpretation is actually a version of the individual psychopathology model, but instead of sick people we get a sick society" (McGrath, 1979, p. 17). The 'violence is as American as apple pie' argument ignores the fact that violence does not occur randomly in the family. Women (and sometimes children) suffer much more brutally (Schechter, 1982). Also, many batterers are not violent towards anyone except their wives. This perspective ignores the power imbalance that exists within the family, as well as the directionality of the violence. The feminist theorists address this deficit in their explanations of the etiology of wife battering.

1.8.3.2. The Feminist View

The second of the macro-level perspectives, the feminist view, is in essence a critique of patriarchy. Patriarchy refers to "a form of social organization in which the father is recognized as the head of the family" (Websters Dictionary, cited in Russell, 1990, p. 3). A patriarchy can be seen as having two basic components: A structure in which men have more power and privilege than women, and an ideology that legitimizes this arrangement (Smith, 1990). The key elements of the contemporary patriarchal family involve the husband-father as primary breadwinner, and the wife-mother as having primary responsiblity for child-rearing and housework (Russell, 1990). This division of labour and responsibility results in an unequal balance of power based on gender. As the dominant class men have access to important material and symbolic resources and women are devalued as secondary and inferior (Bograd, 1984). Bograd points out that violence, such as rape or battery is the most overt, visible form of control wielded by men over women.

From the feminist perspective, the brutalization of an individual wife by an individual husband is not seen as an individual or 'family' problem. It is simply one manifestation of the system of male domination of women which has existed historically and cross-culturally (Yllo, 1983). Klein (1979) argues that it is not by chance that females are the objects of spouse abuse, rape, pornography, and sexual harassment: "Physical force backs all subordination. Women experience individual violations as one end of the continuum rather than as an anomaly; since they are economically and psychologically ill-equipped to stop it, misogynistic abuse is latently encouraged in a society which formally disapproves of it" (Klein, 1981, p. 65). However, sexism and a patriarchal society are not seen as primary causes, but rather as contexts in which men may choose violence to resolve conflicts (Hoff, 1990).

According to Dobash and Dobash (1977), the patriarchal social and family system, with its accompanying patriarchal ideology, leads to wife battering in the following way. Girls and boys are socialized quite differently from one another into 'gender-appropriate' role behaviors. Sex role socialization - which results in aggressive, dominant, authoritarian men, and passive, dependent, self-sacrificing women - is a powerful mechanism for the creation and maintenance of an ideology that legitimizes men's greater power and resources. Dobash and Dobash point out that from birth, the little girl is subjected to selective and descriminatory training from all those around her. Numerous attempts are made to shape and direct her behavior, to define her conception of herself, and to constrict her estimation of her potential. Women are systematically taught that their personal worth, survival, and autonomy do not depend on effective and creative responses to life situations, but rather on physical beauty and appeal to men. Girls are typically taught to adapt to dominant behaviour, and to suppress angry or aggressive reactions in favour of peace-keeping manoeuvres or persuasion (Walker & Browne, 1985). This has a powerful effect on later interactions.

Men, having been socialized in instrumental and aggressive ways, are likely to use these behaviours in maintaining or enforcing control and domination within the family (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The willingness to use force is coupled with a set of beliefs and standards regarding the appropriate hierarchical relationship between men and women in the family and the rightful authority of husbands over wives. When there is a disagreement, husbands often presume that they have the final say. When they are thwarted they believe they have the right, as well as the power, to use physical force (Greenblat, 1985).

It is generally thought that the family is evolving towards a more democratic or egalitarian structure (Gillespie, 1971). However, the ideological basis of the patriarchal family still centres, to a considerable degree, on the themes of a wife's obedience, respect, loyalty, dependency and sexual fidelity (Smith, 1990). It is when women violate, or are perceived as violating these ideals, and when men cannot maintain their authority by other means, that men tend to beat their wives (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Okun, 1986). As Dobash and Dobash

point out, the relationship between women and men has been institutionalized in the structure of the patriarchal family and is supported by economic and political institutions. It is also supported by a belief system that makes the unequal power structure seem natural, morally just, and sacred. To become a wife means to become the property of a husband, taking a secondary position in a marital hierarchy of power and worth, and thus subject to his control (Dobash & Dobash, 1977).

Relationships vary in their power balance, and research into whether wife battering is more likely in relationships with an asymmetrical power structure has produced contradictory results. Coleman and Straus (1986) found that when conflict occurred in an asymmetrical power structure (the male-dominant and female-dominant types) there was a much greater risk of violence than when conflict occurred among the equalitarian couples. They conclude that equalitarian relationships are able to tolerate more conflict, before violence erupts, than are other power structures. Smith (1990) found that husbands, who in the eyes of their partners espoused a set of beliefs and attitudes supportive of patriarchy, were more likely to have assaulted their wives at some time in the relationship than husbands who did not espouse such beliefs and attitudes. However, Hotaling and Sugarman (1986) reviewed eight studies which examined the relationship between marital violence and sex role equalitarianism, and found that in only two of these were batterers found to hold more traditional sex-role attitudes than non-batterers. They suggest that male dominant attitudes may be so pervasive that it may not be possible to differentiate violent from nonviolent males on this dimension.

Moreover, as Gillespie (1971) points out, differences in marital power are not due to individual resources or personal competence of the individuals, but to the discrimination against women in the larger society. Husbands gain power in marriage as a class, not as individuals, and women are blocked as a class and not as individuals. Gillespie concludes that the equalitarian family as a norm is a myth. Russell (1990) argues that the fundamental problem is not that husbands abuse their power, but that they have so much of it in the first place: "Not everyone who has power in an unbalanced power situation abuses it, but in general, where there is power imbalance, there is abuse" (p. 5).

Dobash and Dobash (1977) found that it was the real or perceived challenges to a man's possession, authority and control which most often led to wife battering: "A late meal, an unironed shirt, a conversation with any man no matter how old or young, all served as 'justifications' for beatings" (p. 438-439). Many of the precipitating factors were innocuous and inexplicable without an understanding of the context of authority, subordination, and control in which they took place. As Dobash and Dobash point out, wife battering occurs in the context of perceived entitlement and institutionalized power asymetry: "Moreover it occurs around recurring themes, especially male sexual jealousy and proprietariness,

expectations of obedience and domestic service, and women's attempts to leave the marital relationship" (p. 83).

1.8.3.3. The 'Humanist' Approach - The Antifeminist Backlash

McNeely & Robinson-Simpson (1987; 1988) maintain that wife battering is not a gender issue but a 'human' issue. They argue that the socially constructed 'ownership' of domestic violence by a single gender group serves to fragment the array of resources needed to address the problem successfully: "It perpetuates the divisiveness so common in our society" (p. 131). McNeely and Robinson-Simpson (1988) maintain that labelling of domestic violence as a 'woman's issue' tends to vilify men simply because they are men and ignores the fact that many men are victimized. They argue that this creates conditions that diminish the involvement of men in solving the problem, and leads to the development of remedies that do not address the full scope of the problem. Neidig (1985) is also critical of the feminist view which he acuses of 'politicizing' wife battering. However, as Pence (1985) points out, "One of the people telling the story.... has a black eye, a cut lip, a swollen face, or smashed teeth and the other has not. It is political to ignore that the gender of the person injured is almost always female" (p. 478). The issue of wife battering clearly is a 'human' issue as McNeely & Robinson-Simpson point out. However, this does not mean that men and women are equally victimized or are equally responsible for the violence. McNeely and Robinson-Simpson and Neidig ignore the fact that battering takes place within a patriarchal society characterized by an imbalance of power based on gender.

1.8.4. A Multi-Deterministic View

Wife battering cannot be satisfactorily explained in terms of individual psychopathology nor as an expression of a violent society, although both of these may contribute to the phenomenon. Each act of violence contains deep cultural and psychological meanings (Breines & Gordon, 1983). Therefore, most investigators have begun to stress a multi-deterministic view which encompasses both sociological and psychological factors (Koslof, 1984). Koslof points out that sociologists correctly indicate that structural circumstances and the sexist power heirarchy between men and women contribute to wife battering. However, at the same time, it is necessary to be aware of the unique psychological make-up of each individual which mediates sociological influences. As a result, in spite of being socialized in a violent and patriarchal society, many men do not resort to wife battering. Also, individual male attitudes towards women in general, and to sex-role sterotypes in particular, do not differentiate abusive men from others (Dutton, 1988; Hotaling & Sugarman. 1986, Campbell, 1992).

Therefore, no act of violence is only the expression of a social or cultural problem, such as poverty or unemployment or male dominance; each is also the personal act of a unique individual (Breines & Gordon, 1983) How male supremacy, class and race domination, and acute social stress inform specific acts of violence requires an analysis of how these

social factors are internalized and transformed into psychic and behavioural processes. The most useful understanding would seem to be one which takes into account the complex interaction between the individual and society and embraces intra-individual, 'situational', and sociological factors. This exploration of the causes of wife battering leads on to a discussion of the effects of battering on the woman.

1.9. THE EFFECTS OF WIFE BATTERING

Wife battering tends to increase in intensity and frequency over time and can have far-reaching physical and psychological consequences for the victim (Walker, 1983b; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; 1984). Physical injuries can include serious wounds, fractured bones, concussion, miscarriage and severe internal injuries that may result in permanent scars, disfigurement and sometimes persistent poor health (Dobash & Dobash, 1977). Many women present with somatic symptoms such as headaches, choking sensations, hyperventilation, asthma, gastrointestinal symptoms, allergic phenomena, and chest, pelvic and back pain. Depression is the single most frequent psychological symptom and there is a high incidence of suicidal behaviour (Hilberman, 1980; Bergman & Brismar, 1991). Some battered wives exhibit a 'paralyzing terror' or numb shock reminiscent of rape trauma syndrome, but different in that the stress is ongoing and the threat of assault ever present.

According to Walker (1991), Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) comes closest to describing the Battered Woman Syndrome, the group of psychological symptoms observed after a woman has experienced repeated physical, sexual, and serious psychological abuse. Walker belives the PTSD diagnosis is useful in that it suggests that the emotional impact of abuse may occur on a continuum with, on one end, a short crisis period with no psychological effect once it is resolved, and on the other serious emotional devastation. Because the trauma is ongoing and the threat of danger always present, Continuous Traumatic Stress, as formulated by Straker (1987), may best describe the condition. Many battered women, like the victims of violence in Straker's study, are exposed to ongoing multiple events which singly would be termed catastrophic in the D.S.M 111-R classification.

Romero (1985) compares the experiences of battered women with those of prisoners of war. Batterers use many techniques documented in the literature on brainwashing such as: imprisonment or confinement; social isolation; beatings; torture; sleep-deprivation; threats of murder or torture; humiliation; and, random and unpredictable leniency (Okun, 1986). Okun points out that the dependency of the women on the batterer is enhanced by these techniques. Follingstad, Neckerman and Vormbrock (1988) maintain that the ongoing vulnerability of battered women to their assaulter may lead to a distortion of reality and behavioural changes similar to those exhibited by kidnap victims, hostages, and military

prisioners. One of these changes may be a "pathological transference" toward the victimizer (Hilberman, 1980, p.1343). This "conjugal terrorism" (Morgan, 1982, cited in Okun, 1986, p. 86) can lead to distorted affective, cognitive, and behavioural responses as a result of the battered wife's single focus on survival (Walker & Browne, 1985) and may affect her help-seeking behaviour.

An unanticipated finding of an early study of violence towards women was that pregnant women appear to be at high risk of violence and abuse (Gelles, 1987). Several writers have found confirmation for this finding (e.g. Flynn, 1977; Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Stacy & Shupe, 1983). Hilberman & Munson found changes in the pattern of violence during pregnancy for most women in their study. There was increased abuse for some, with the pregnant abdomen replacing the face and breasts as the target for battering. Findings about the incidence of abuse during pregnancy have differed considerably. Stacy & Shupe report that 42% of women calling a hotline indicated that they had been physically abused during pregnancy. Walker's (1983b) investigation found that 59% of her sample reported they had been abused during a first pregnancy; 62% during a second pregnancy; 55% during a third pregnancy.

Gelles' (1988) maintains that the previously reported association between pregnancy and husband-to-wife violence is spurious and is a result of another variable, age: "Young women have high rates of pregnancy, and they also experience violence at a relatively high rate" (p. 846). Although the incidence of battering in pregnancy appears to be relatively high, empirical research has yet to establish whether the association is in fact spurious. This leads to a discussion of another form of wife abuse that appears to be widespread - marital rape.

1.10. MARITAL RAPE

Browne (1987) argues that it is a mistake to separate "sexual" from "physical abuse". Marital rape is typically associated with battering and may be seen as one of the most serious forms of violence (Freize, 1983). In fact, battering may be the single most important context for rape (Russell, 1990; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988) and studies of battered women regularly show that anywhere from a third to a half of them are victims of marital sexual assault (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). Russell found that rape by a husband was at least twice as common (14% or 10%) as rape by a stranger (7% or 3%). A study by Freize found that raping husbands were more violent in other ways, both with their wives and people outside the home, than were husband who did not rape. They also found that marital rape was rare in nonviolent marriages. According to Freize, some men appear to be sexually aroused by violent actions and sexual relations may follow battering as a form of reconciliation. However, in most cases, sex is used as a means of subjugating, humiliating, and degrading women and is another manifestation of the general abuse (Finkelhor & Yllo).

There is a common misconception that marital rape is a less traumatic form of rape (Finkelhor & Yllo, 1985). However, victims undergo a variety of emotional and behavioural reactions, some of them severe (Freize, 1983). For example, Shields and Hanneke (1983) found that victims of marital rape were more likely to have low self-esteem and to use alcohol for depression than were women who were battered but not raped. Finkelhor and Yllo point out that a woman raped by her husband has to live with her rapist and is thus vulnerable to repeated sexual assaults. This can leave a woman feeling more powerless and isolated than if she were raped by a stranger. These researchers found that the group of women most vulnerable to marital rape were those leaving, or threatening to leave, the marriage. Separated and divorced women were also vulnerable to rape by their husbands or exhusbands as the rapist often had retaliatory motives.

It is clear from the above that the effects of wife battering can be extremely damaging both physically and psychologically. In view of the humiliation and degradation that characterizes life with an abusing husband, the question, 'Why do they stay?' is often asked in relation to battered women. This question will be examined in the following sections.

1.11. LEARNED HELPLESSNESS

Walker (1978-1989b) conceptualizes a battered woman's reaction, or lack of reaction, to abuse as learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975). According to Walker, learned helplessness does not imply that the victim is actually powerless to effect any change in the situation. It is, however, characterized by a process of learning to believe that nothing one can do will bring about a positive result. The battered wife may, therefore, fail to attempt confrontational or escape behaviours, even when, to an outside observer, these alternatives seem obvious and possible. Learned helplessness involves three major deficits: motivational (apathy), cognitive (difficulties in problem solving), and affective (depression) (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978).

According to Dobash and Dobash (1992), the most important practical benefit claimed for the concepts of learned helplessness and the battered woman syndrome is their use in American courts, where they have been employed to absolve or diminish the responsibility of women who kill violent husbands. However, Dobash and Dobash argue, these concepts emphasize existing orthodox images of women's innate incapacity. Several other writers are also critical of the application of learned helplessness to battered women (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Okun, 1986; Serum, 1981, cited in Okun; Wardell et al., 1983). Okun argues that Walker's theory neglects the social influences, such as economic dependence, that encourage a victim to persist in a violent relationship. Also, what appears to be learned helplessness may be an active inhibition of assertive behaviour in a attempt to de-escalate the violence (Serum, cited in Okun).

Wardell, et al., (1983) point out that most battered women neither feel nor appear helpless about other aspects of their lives. This is confirmed by Gondolf and Fisher (1988) whose research indicated that women do not display the 'victim' characteristics commonly ascribed to battered wives. In fact they present as 'survivors', acting assertively and logically in response to the abuse. Rounsville (1978) found that all the women in his sample had communicated with others about the abuse, and sought help, often repeatedly, from a variety of sources. Moreover, battered women tend to increase their helpseeking in the face of increased violence, rather than decreasing helpseeking as learned helplessness would suggest (Gondolf & Fisher). Gondolf and Fisher maintain that helpseeking is likely to increase as wife abuse, child abuse, and the batterer's antisocial behaviour increases. This appears to be substantiated by several studies (Bowker, 1983a; Pagelow, 1981; Walker, 1984b). In the battering situation, feeling helpless and noticing that one lacks alternatives may be seen as a valid, appropriate, and rational response. Thus the theory of learned helplessness may label as a peculiarity of the battered wife, what is in fact a reasonable response to an unreasonable situation (Gondolf & Fisher).

Breines and Gordon (1983) argue that Walker's proposition regarding learned helplessness has two weaknesses: firstly, research on animals has not been replicated on humans; and, secondly, it relies on an oversimplified model of human learning and personality formation. However, these authors point out, if learned helplessness is understood metaphorically, it does illuminate some aspects of women's victimization. Most women have tried to escape from the abusive relationship and have 'learned' that they cannot do so: "like the dogs, they are in fact in 'cages' constructed of law, poverty, dependent children, lack of child care, and so on" (p. 518). This is compounded by the very real threat of retaliation from the abuser if they attempt to leave.

Many writers have commented on the fact that clinicians dealing with battered women become extremely frustrated and angry with their clients (Pizzey, 1974; Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Walker, 1978). It may be that it is the clinicians who experience the helplessness rather than the women subjects of their research: "If learned helplessness is a valid conception, it is ironically prevalent in the system of helping sources. It is more likely that agency personnel suffer from insufficient resources, options, or authority to make a difference...." (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, p. 22). Considering all the above, it would seem that learned helpless is not particularly useful in explaining why women remain in abusive relationships. The following section will examine some of the other factors that play a part in preventing a woman from leaving a violent husband.

1.12. WHAT FACTORS CONSTRAIN WOMEN FROM LEAVING

"A man left his home and walked down the block to the bus stop. He got into an argument with a stranger and proceeded to hit him several times. When told of

> *this encounter, we ask, Why was he so violent? The man then returned home and got into an argument with his wife. He hit her several times. We ask, Why did she stay?" (Fagan & Wexler, 1987, p. 5).*

Loseke and Cahill (1984) make the point that the question 'why do they stay?' implies that there are battered wives of two basic types: those who leave their husbands and those who do not. It also defines leaving one's mate as the normatively expected response to the experience of battering. A normal marriage dissolution can take as long as four years and may include many attempted reconciliations (Campbell, 1989). However, points out Campbell, a similarly protracted process, including temporary leaving and returning, is often viewed as pathological in battered women. According to Dobash and Dobash (1979), far from helplessly staying with violent men, women engage in a process which the authors refer to as "staying, leaving, and returning" (p. 145). This active process of helpseeking is not static, but reflects the complex pushes and pulls of the numerous personal, social, and material factors that motivate battered women (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

Much debate has centred around the question of why a battered woman stays in a violent marriage. Observers who see a woman remain with or return to an abusive partner may blame her for her victimization because she "keeps going back for more" (Dutton & Painter, 1981; Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991). She may, therefore, be in danger of experiencing victimization both by the abuser and in the form of judgements by others who hear of the abuse. On the surface it would seem that there are several other options open to her; in reality, however, her choices are often extremely limited. Ferraro and Johnson (1983) point out that women make their decisions within a social, economic, and political context which assigns a primary value to the nuclear family and a secondary status to women (Ferraro, 1983).

Because of the high value placed on marriage in our society, a great many women, even those employed outside the home, still adopt the roles of wives and mothers as primary identities (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). They, therefore, have a strong motivation to succeed in their domestic roles. Also, there are enormous pressures, emotionally, economically, socially, morally, and in terms of societal values, for marital relationships to remain intact (McGregor, 1990a). Thus, as McGregor points out, a woman may become trapped by the belief that the relationships within the home are sacrosant and must be saved at all cost. As a result, the negative consequences of staying, that is, the likely repetition of abusive behaviour, must be weighed against the negative consequences of leaving (Waites, 1978). Pagelow (1981) argues that 'traditional ideology', such as commitment to their marriages and to traditional female roles, is an even more powerful inhibitor to assertion or escape from an abusive situation than material restrictions such as income and jobs (Symonds, 1979).

Lack of economic resources, may play an important role in a battered woman's tolerance of abuse (Fields, 1978; Gelles, 1976; Hilberman, 1980; Strube & Barbour, 1983). The sexist economic system, with its inbuilt discrimination against women helps to trap women in violent relationships. They must often make a choice between poverty and a predictable pattern of abusive behaviour (Okun, 1986). If a woman has children she may be coerced into staying because she does not have resources to rear them on her own (Straus, 1980). Occupational discrimination, lack of child-care facilities, and inadequate child support, all coerce women into remaining married even when they are victims of violence (Straus & Hotaling, 1980). New evidence indicates that battered women, if provided with proper resources, will leave their assailants (Davis & Hagen, 1992). Gondolf & Fisher (1988) found that the best predictors of whether a woman would remain away from her abusive partner related to her having the resources to live independently, such as transportation, child care, and a source of income.

The fact that many women confront abuse within a context of emotional bonding to the abuser, also helps to complicate the issue of whether or not to remain within a violent relationship. Many women have invested a great deal in the marriage partnership and are loath to give up the relationship. Herbert et al. (1991) posit that women who remain with abusive partners appear to use cognitive strategies that help them perceive their relationship in a positive light. In order to cope with the extreme stress of the relationship, some women appraise their relationships in a way that minimizes the salience of the abuse. Herbert et al. found that this was in spite of women reporting frequent and severe violence.

It is clear that there are many factors that constrain a woman from leaving a battering relationship. What may compound the problem is the response of the police and other social institutions to which she turns for help (Saunders & Size, 1986). Although studies indicate that arrest is the intervention that is most likely to reduce the chances of a re-occurence of battering (Sherman & Berk, 1984; Berk & Newton, 1985) wife battering is often regarded as a 'domestic' issue and little action is taken by the police. Surveys of battered women who tried to have their partners arrested (Roy, 1977; Langley & Levy, 1977; Emerson, 1979, cited in Sherman & Berk) report that arrest occurred in 10 percent or less of cases (Sherman & Berk, 1984).

The police are generally the first line of involvement with the criminal justice system and if the police fail to respond effectively, this may be the last call made (Soler, 1987). A study by Saunders and Size (1986) found that police officers generally viewed marital violence as criminal and unacceptable but very few saw arrest as the best solution. What emerged from the study was a major difference in perspective between victims and police officers with regard to arrest. Victims want arrest for immediate protection and to force the abuser into treatment. They do not want arrest used as a means to put the abuser in jail. The police,

however, feel they have wasted their time if arrest does not lead to prosecution (Reed, Fischer, Kantor & Karales, 1983, cited in Saunders & Size).

For a police intervention to act as a deterrent, the behaviour in question has to be named as unacceptable and shameful and many violent men do not believe there is anything wrong with what they are doing to their partners (McGregor, 1990b). By arresting the abuser, the police convey the message that wife battering is a crime. McGregor points out that one of the reason a man is not violent to his work colleague is that he knows that this would constitute a criminal offence and bring him shame.

The reaction of apathy or hostility that many women experience when they reach out for help is sometimes referred to as 'secondary injury' (Symonds, 1980, cited in Saunders, Lynch, Grayson & Linz, 1987). "There seems to be a marked reluctance and resistance to accept the innocence or accidental nature of victim behavior. Such reluctance is shown by community responses, police behavior, family reactions, and, suprisingly, by the victims themselves" (Symonds, 1975, p. 19). Symonds posits that this response to victims stems from a basic need for all individuals to find rational explanations for violence. Senseless, irrational, brutal behaviour makes one feel vulnerable and helpless and it is a relief to believe that the victim has done something to contribute to the crime. Thus, women are often left to negotiate with violent men in isolation from systems of support (Dobash & Dobash, 1992).

A study by Fri[illegible]ch and Mackenzie (1991) indicates that a woman's decision to remain in a long-term abusive relationship is, in part, a rational decison based upon the perceived relative rewards and costs of the relationship. These include the size of the investment made in the relationship and the perceived quality of alternatives to the abusive relationship (Rusbult, 1980; 1983; Strube, 1988). Rounsville (1978) found that some women did not leave until the abuse and fear were severe or until the children became involved in the abuse. Once these circumstances prevailed, it did not seem to matter whether there were adequate resources or not: "Given sufficient motivation women, even those with few resources, found a way to leave" (p. 17).

Women are often reluctant to leave or testify against a spouse because of the threat of harm by the husband or because of "roadblocks" they encounter within the criminal justice system (Reed et al., 1983, cited in Saunders & Size, 1986). The threat of harm is usually well-founded. Two thirds of family violence deaths are women killed by their husbands, often at the point of separation, and half of all women homicide victims are killed by current or former partners (Walker, 1989b). Therefore, a battered women has reason to believe the man's threats to kill her if she leaves the relationship.

Men who regard their wives as their property, believe their wives have no right to decide their own fate as long as they still want them: "The runaway wife is like a runaway slave in the eyes of these husbands; runaway slaves were beaten or killed" (Russell, 1990, p. 227).

Therefore, the point of, or even the discussion of, separation is one of the most dangerous times for the wife of a batterer (Browne, 1987). She may be followed, harrassed, and threatened. For many battered women, leaving their husbands and living in constant fear of reprisals or death may seem more intolerable than remaining with him (Browne, 1987). As Hoff (1990) points out, it is not necessary to imprison a battered woman for her to feel isolated and like a prisoner in her own home: "The authority and influence vested in men at all levels of social life plus the possibility of using physical force to exercise power, operate together to obtain a woman's compliance to a violent man's demands" (p. 42). It is not simply a matter of walking out of the door. There are children, to consider, money, housing and personal safety to think about (Hoff).

Loseke and Cahill (1984) point out that even in relationships without violence, marital stability often outlives marital quality. Over time, they posit, marital partners develop an 'attachment' to one another and as a result, each becomes uniquely irreplaceable in the eyes of the other: "Battered women who remain in relationships which outsiders consider costly are not, therefore, particularly unusual or deviant"....The reluctance of battered women to leave can be adequately and commonsensically expressed in the lyrics of a popular song: 'Breaking up is hard to do'" (p. 304). It is clear that many factors play a role in a woman's decision to stay in, or leave an abusive relationship. Lenore Walker (1977-1992) provides an additional explanation for this in the concept of the 'cycle of violence'.

1.13. WALKER'S 'CYCLE OF VIOLENCE'

From two comprehensive studies of battered women, Walker (1979; 1984b) formulated the concept of a battering cycle which occurs within the battering relationship. According to Walker, this cycle helps to explain, amongst other features, how battered women become victimized, how they fall into learned helplessness behaviour, and why they may not attempt to leave the batterer.

The battering cycle was found to have three stages which vary in both time and intensity among couples. Walker (1989b) describes these as follows. The first of the stages is the "tension-building stage". During this time minor battering incidents may occur and many battered women go to great lengths to prevent an escalation of these incidents. Walker maintains that during this stage the woman has some minimum control of the frequency and severity of the abusive incidents. "She can slow them down by trying to give the man what he wants or speed them up by refusing to meet his (sometimes unreasonable) demands" (p. 697). According to Walker, many couples are adept at keeping this first phase at a constant level for long periods of time as both partners want to avoid the acute battering incident.

The second stage is the "acute battering incident" in which there is an uncontrollable discharge of the tensions that have built up in the first stage of the cycle. This stage is generally briefer than the first and third stages but results in the most physical harm. Walker found that there was little a woman could do to prevent the battering at this stage. If she answers back, he becomes angrier; if she remains quiet he also becomes enraged. There is no way the woman can alter the man's battering behaviour by changing her own. Walker maintains that women do not seek help during the period immediately afterwards, unless they require medical attention.

The third stage of "loving contrition" usually follows immediately on the second. This is where the man apologizes and demonstrates charming, loving, and attentive behaviours towards his wife. "It is this third phase that acts as the reinforcer for the woman to remain in the relationship, giving her hope that his 'meanness' will disappear and the 'nice side' will dominate his personality" (Walker, 1981, p. 82). This stage also emphasizes his need, and/or dependence on her which also encourages her to stay. According to Walker, it is at this stage that the woman's victimization becomes complete.

Walker's (1979; 1984b) formulation of the 'cycle of violence' describes the stages as "distinct" and "predictable" and suggests that they represent the experiences of most women. However, in later writing (Walker 1989b), she acknowledges that for some women there is no observable "loving contrition". In these cases reinforcement is seen to come from an absence of tension or violence.

Walker's (1984b) study indicated that in 65% of all cases there was evidence of a "tension-building" phase prior to the violent explosion. In 58% of cases, there was evidence of "loving-contrition" afterwards. This supported the cycle theory of violence in the majority of the violent episodes described by the sample. When the battering incidents were looked at over time, however, the proportions changed. In first incidents, the proportion of cases showing evidence of "tension-building" was 56%, and "loving-contrition" was 69%; by the last incident 71% were preceeded by "tension-building" and only 42% were followed by the "loving-contrition" stage. What tends to occur over time, therefore, is that "tension-building" increases and "loving-contrition" declines.

Walker (1985b) suggests that there is a cost:benefit ratio of abusive to loving behaviours which remain in balance throughout the relationship. She found that the ratio of "tension-building" to "loving-contrition" diverged more sharply for women who had left battering relationships than for those who were still living with the batterer. There is either a decrease in loving behaviours or an increase in abusive ones at the time termination of the relationship is considered. Walker found that women remaining in the relationship reported more positive reinforcement than those who had left. Often the batterer increases the loving behaviours to win her back and increases the violence if he is not successful.

Some researchers are questioning whether the 'cycle of violence' does in fact describe the experiences of the majority of battered women. For example, McGregor (1990a) found that many women survivors of battering report no conflict leading up to the battering incident. Walker maintains that the majority of battered women experience a stage of "loving-contrition". However, looked at chronologically, it is only after the initial battering incident that the majority of women experience this stage of the cycle. Wallker found that 42% of women experienced loving-contrition after the last battering incident. Dobash and Dobash (1984) found some empirical evidence for the existence of an explicit stage of "loving-contrition" following the first violent act, however, there was almost no empirical support for the notion that it continues with subsequent events. This finding was confirmed by discussions with workers at POWA and at Rape Crisis who found that the 'cycle of violence' was seldom clearly present in a battered woman's description of her experiences.

A study by Hoff (1990) indicates that, if the battering cycle exists, the factors involved are far more complex than the psychological aspects identified by Walker, would suggest. According to Hoff, the decision to leave an abusive relationship is a complex process and for each woman the circumstances and events leading to that decision are unique. Among these circumstances are: fear for her children or family; recognition that there is no hope for change; the shock of a particular beating; the horror of being beaten while pregnant. Hoff makes the point that if the battering cycle attempts to explain why women stay, then it could be construed that if this cycle is interrupted, the woman leaves, (i.e. when the man fails to apologize), and this is not the case. In the view of the present author, there is another difficulty with the 'cycle of violence'. If, as Walker suggests, the stage of "loving-contrition" acts as reinforcement it does not seem logical to suggest that the absence of this stage also acts as reinforcement, or certainly as a reinforcer of equivalent strength.

This chapter has covered a range of issues related to wife battery including the incidence of wife battering, etiological factors, the effects of wife battering, and the factors that constrain women from leaving abusive husbands. The major theoretical approaches applicable to the study have also been discussed. Walker's formulation of the 'cycle of violence' has become an accepted part of the theoretical literature on battery and the present study attempts to test this model empirically, to ascertain its applicability in the South African context.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.1 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

To date, relatively little research has been done in the field of wife battering in South Africa and workers must rely on theory generated in North America and the United Kingdom. The present study attempts to add to a growing body of research in this country and to examine whether the experiences of South African women differ from those of women overseas, particularly with regard to the 'cycle of violence' identified by Walker (1979). The ultimate aim is to provide information about the experiences of battered women which may assist workers in the field.

2.2 AIMS OF THE STUDY

(1) Walker (1983b) maintains that the stage of "loving-contrition" acts as reinforcement for a woman to remain in a battering relationship. She suggests that women remaining in battering relationships report more positive reinforcement (loving-contrition) than women who have left the relationship. Walker's concept of the 'cycle of violence' is widely accepted and has been described as "seminal in wife abuse literature" (Segel & Labe, 1990, p.260). However, workers in the field, both at POWA and at Rape Crisis, Cape Town, have questioned whether it is apparent in the majority of battering relationships of the South African women they encounter. The present study aimed to assess whether the majority of women do in fact experience a stage of "loving-contrition".

(2) In addition, it was decided to examine themes in the lived experiences of the women, in order to establish what appear to be common experiences as opposed to those that are unique to individual women.

2.3 METHOD

2.3.1 Subjects

Twelve 'Coloured' women took part in the research study. The sample was taken from women who were resident, or had been resident, in the POWA shelter in Johannesburg. The sample was limited in size because of the small number of women accommodated in the shelter at any one time (a maximum of 6 women and their children). The study took place over an 18 month period. The women's ages ranged from 29 to 46 and the women all had

children. At the time of leaving their husbands, 4 women were married, 3 had been living with their partners, and 6 women were in the process of getting divorced. Six of the women were employed and their salaries ranged from R520 to R1500 per month.

2.3.2 Procedure

Once the subject of the study had been established through discussions with workers at the shelter, a meeting was set up with the POWA members. In this meeting a proposal was submitted which was subsequently accepted by the group. The researcher then met with shelter workers to meet the residents and set up the interviews. The interview times were arranged by the shelter worker, in consultation with the researcher and the participants, and took place at the shelter.

Once rapport was established, an in-depth interview was conducted in accordance with Walker's Battered Woman Syndrome Questionnaire (See Appendix 1 and 2). After completing a short biographical questionnaire, each woman was asked for detailed descriptions of four battering incidents: the first, the second, one of the worst, and the most recent prior to the interview (Walker, 1979; 1983b; 1984b). This approach was adopted in order to conform with Walker's standard procedure and also to allow each participants to give a detailed account of her experiences. This part of the interview was followed by a series of questions drawn from the Walker Questionnaire to ascertain whether or not a period of "loving-contrition" followed each violent incident. Questions about the period of "loving-contrition" were asked formally if this was not mentioned spontaneously in the narrative. The interviews were taped and took, on average, 1½ to 2 hours per subject.

The use of in-depth interviews encouraged rapport and enabled the women to describe their experiences in a comprehensive manner. The use of the tape recorder allowed the researcher to focus on what was being said at the time, and to maintain the richness and spontaneity of the spoken word. Angless (1990) has pointed out that the line between interviewing and counselling is very thin. After the interview, most of the women expressed feelings of relief at having spoken about their experiences.

2.3.3. Data Analysis

Two approaches were adopted in the analysis of the data:

(1) Because of the small size of the sample and the specific nature of the questions, a simple frequency account was carried out in order to ascertain whether or not the stage of "loving-contrition" was in evidence. A frequency count was also used to analyse the answers to appropriate questions as well as to explore some of the themes that arose in the interviews.

(2) A second stage analysis was carried out in the form of content analysis. This was done according to an outline formulated by Spiro and Blythe (1986), which is a modification of one put forward by Krippendorf (1980). The stages are as follows:

(1) Defining the universe

This consisted of transcribed audiotaped interviews.

(2) Categorization

The main category was: indications of attempts at "loving-contrition" by the batterer after the battering incident. "Loving-contrition", according to Walker (1979), is where the batterer knows that he has gone too far and tries to make it up to his partner. He generally behaves in a charming and loving manner, feels sorry for his actions, and conveys this to the battered woman. He may beg her for forgiveness and promise her that he will never do it again.

(3) Unitizing

Words or phrases that indicated loving-contrition were underlined.

(4) Data reduction

During this stage the number of units that fell into the category of "loving-contrition" were counted.

(5) Inference

The text was analysed during this stage in order to ascertain whether or not units, that indicated "loving-contrition", occurred. From this it was possible to infer whether or not the third phase of the Walker 'cycle of violence' had occurred. In addition, the content analysis was extended to investigate the broader range of material that emerged from the interviews.

The combination of qualitative and quantative data provided detailed descriptions of the violent event and, specifically, information about the period following the violence.

For obvious reasons the names of the women and family members have been changed.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The results of this research will be presented together with the discussion. The reason for this is that the study is both quantitative and qualitative, and the results will appear in tabulated as well as in commentary form. It was felt, therefore, that combining results and discussion could best integrate the findings into a coherent whole.

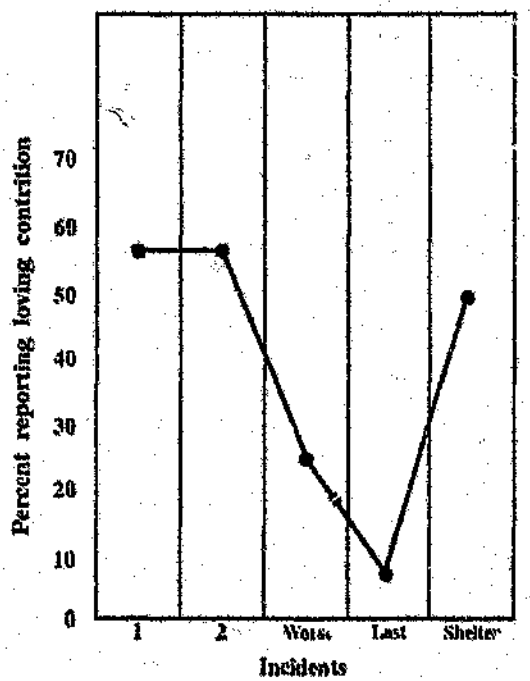
After the key research questions are addressed, the results will be presented in a order broadly following the sequence of events that arise within a battering relationship. Thus, the discussion will begin with The First Battering Incident and move on to discuss Subsequent Violence. Other main headings will include: The Nature of the Violence; The Nature of the Injuries; The Role of Substance Abuse; The Effects of Ongoing Abuse; The Battered Wife as a Possession; Justification for the Violence; Help-seeking; The Response of Helping Networks; Learned Helplessness; Children in the Cross-fire; and, Leaving.

3.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.2.1 The 'Cycle Of Violence'

Walkers's (1984b) finding, that 58% of battered women experience a period of "loving-contrition" following a battering incident, was to some extent, duplicated in the present study. Of the 12 women in the sample, 7 (58%) reported that, at some time in their relationship, their husbands had apologized after an acute battering incident, and attempted to make some form of reparation. The finding that "loving-contrition" declines over time was also borne out in this study. After the Worst Battering Incident, the number of women experiencing "loving-contrition" had fallen to 3 (25%) and, after the Last Battering Incident, to 1 (8%) (See Table 1).

TABLE 1: Changes over time in loving contrition phase for the sample (N = 12)



An examination of "loving-contrition" within individual relationships revealed a great deal of variation. Of the 7 women who experienced this phase of the cycle, 3 reported that the stage became progressively shorter until it was absent just prior to her leaving the relationship. The experiences of the 4 remaining women, of the group of 7 who experienced loving-contrition, varied considerably. For 1 woman the period of "loving-contrition" varied according to the severity of her injuries. The Worst Battering Incident, after which she spent several days in hospital, led to the longest period of "loving-contrition" (about one month). For another woman, the length of the stage was consistent throughout the relationship (about two weeks). In one case there was a period of "loving-contrition" after the First Battering Incident which lasted for a day. After other incidents the husband was extremely angry and would ignore his wife for several weeks. For one woman in the sample, the period lasted until she forgave him:

> *It all depends how cross I am. If I feel it's OK, it's OK. If I keep on being cross, he keeps on being nice.*
>
> Mary

Six women in the sample reported a period of "loving-contrition" after they had left the relationship. The husband then attempted to make reparation in an effort to get them to return.

There were 5 husbands who did not apologize for the abuse and did not attempt to make reparation on any occasion:

> *When he finished (hitting me), he just went to sleep. Then the next morning he still didn't even both to apologize or say nothing.*
>
> Cheryl

> *He never showed me sorry.*
>
> Felicity

> *There was no apology. He always used to say, if he hits me I deserve it.*
>
> Alice

> *With all the assaults he never, ever apologized. He actually showed no remorse.*
>
> Sandra

One husband denied all knowledge of the abuse the following day.

> *He said he never hit me. He said I made it up.*
>
> Poppie

Looked at chronologically, the results indicate that, while "loving-contrition" occurred in the majority of cases after the initial battering incident, it was only apparent in 23% of cases

after the Worst Battering Incident (see Table 1). This would seem to call into question the universality of the 'cycle of violence' within abusive relationships and to confirm the experiences of workers at POWA and Rape Crisis. Women are most likely to seek professional help after severe battering (i.e. a Worst Battering Incident), therefore, the majority of women in contact with shelter workers will not describe "loving-contrition" in reporting their experiences. The results would seem to validate Dobash and Dobash's (1984) view that Walker has built a model of all violent events that corresponds with the behaviour of some abusers after initial assaults, but cannot be generalized to all or even most battering incidents.

Walker (1978-1989b) has posited that loving-contrition acts as reinforcement for the wife and this is one reason why women remain in violent situations. However, the present study indicates that some women, who do not experience "loving-contrition" remain for years with abusing husbands, and some women leave in spite of the abuser's attempts to make reparation. A major criticism of the 'cycle of violence' is that its basis in social learning theory excludes intentionality on the woman's part (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). In this study the interviews revealed that a woman's decision to leave a battering relationship was not simply dependent on the reinforcement of the abuser's behaviour but was based on many complex social and psychological factors that differed for each woman. (This will be discussed more fully later in this chapter). The presence of a period of "loving-contrition" may provide her with some hope that her partner is willing to change, and some evidence that there are positive aspects to the relationship, but it is not the only factor that determines whether or not she will leave.

Walker (1978-1989b) maintains that the 'cycle of violence' helps to explain why women fall into learned helplessness behaviour. However, as will be discussed later, there was little evidence of learned helplessness in the behaviour of the women in the present sample. This is consistent with several other studies (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988; Hoff, 1990). All of these studies used shelter populations (unlike Walker's more diverse sample which was obtained through referral sources and direct advertising) and it is possible that the experiences of women in shelters represent the extreme end of the continuum of abuse and may not be representative of all battered women in regard to help-seeking behaviour.

In a comparison of shelter residents and nonresidents, Hoff (1988), found more help-seeking among shelter residents. However, what emerged from Hoff's research was that, although nonresident battered women had sought less help, they had access to more resources and had experienced less frequent and severe abuse than had the shelter residents. They also tended to come from higher socioeconomic groups. It is likely that the situation in South Africa is somewhat different because shelter facilities in this country are much more limited. At present, there are less than five shelters country-wide. In the POWA shelter, admission

is restricted to six women, and their children, and these women must be able to provide their own food. It is likely, therefore, that they do not represent the most needy, poverty-stricken stratum of the society. However, because they are not 'middle class', in the sense of having access to private resources, they are still deprived of well-resourced support systems.

The following discussion will explore in detail the experiences of the women in the study and examine some of the factors that contributed to their decision to leave the abuser and enter the shelter.

3.2.2 The First Battering Incident

As would be expected, all the participants in the study reacted to the first battering incident with shock and disbelief. The 'precipitating event' for this incident was associated with the husband's possessiveness and/or his expectations of his wife's responsibilities towards him. The violence was usually set off by a perceived or imagined violation of his authority and centred around sexual jealousy, money, and expectations about domestic work and child-rearing. This is in line with several studies on wife battering (e.g. Dobash and Dobash, 1979; 1984; Browne, 1987). As Dobash and Dobash point out, the rationale for the abuse hinges on the belief that a man should not be questioned by his wife, no matter what the reason, and he should be accorded the respect due his superior position and authority. Any perceived, or imagined slight is felt to justify a violent outburst. To the observer, the precipitating events often appear trivial or irrational, particularly in relation to the severity of the punishment that follows.

> *The baby was asleep and I went to visit his mother a block away. The child woke up and screamed but I didn't hear. He came to the flat and just started hitting me. He said, 'She must know that she has mos responsibilities. She has a child'.*
>
> Maria

> *It was on a Friday night and he came to pick me up. I was boarding with another lady. He came into the flat and there was this guy who was also boarding. He thought I was having an affair with this guy. He parks in the veld somewhere and then he asks me a lot of stupid questions like: 'How long have I been having an affair with this guy?', and then he started hitting me.*
>
> Cheryl

> *He came in late and he was drunk and I was watching TV. He said, 'Switch off the TV'. I said, 'No, I'm watching this' and then he started hitting me.*
>
> Leonie

> *We had a fight because he was drunk and I didn't have money for the baby's milk. He started hitting me just because I asked him for milk money. He hit me with his fists and kicked me as well.*
>
> Deirdre

Dobash, Dobash, Wilson & Daly (1992) have pointed out that battering occurs within a particular context of perceived entitlement and insitutionalized asymmetry. This is clearly illustrated in the precipitating events described above. The woman is seen to be a possession of her husband and secondary to him. She is expected to provide him with domestic service and childcare and to acknowledge his authority and superiority. The following description is typical of this attitude:

> *When he came from work, he was just bossy: 'Bring me that; bring me this'. He'll sit in front of the bread bin and he won't even cut one slice of bread. He'll call: 'Come cut me a slice of bread!'. Not even 'please'.*
>
> Leonie

The first battering incident takes place in the context of the woman's bonding to her husband. It was clear from the interviews that, at the time of this event, she loved her partner, was committed to the continuation of the relationship, and did not expect the violence to be repeated. Initially she was forgiving and, when her husband apologized, she believed him to be sincere. She was more likely to believe her husband than to heed the warnings of family members.

> *His family was telling me, 'See what he has done to you. You are going to make it worse by staying with him. While you've got the chance get rid of this man'. But I'd say, 'I love him. I love him. There's nothing I can do'.*
>
> Maria

> *He said he was sorry. He didn't mean to hit me. He just got so cross. He looked and he said he felt very, very sorry and I believed him and he said he loved me and that is why he behaved like that and it won't happen again.*
>
> Cheryl

> *He used to apologize. He'd say, 'I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. It won't happen again'. Whenever he used to have an argument with me he'd go and buy me flowers or a watch or something nice and I suppose because I was young I just used to give in.*
>
> Catherine

3.2.3 'Precipitating Events' for Subsequent Violence: The Indiscriminate Nature of the Violence

The 'precipitant' or pretext for subsequent battering incidents was similar to the first, and once again centred on the husband's jealousy, his expectations regarding his wife's domestic duties, and the allocation of money:

He hit me with a big stick over my head. It was over a torch that got lost out of his wardrobe. He said I took it out of his wardrobe and the more I was trying to explain, the more he got angry and furious.

Alice

One day he wasn't there and his friend came and we were sitting watching TV. When he came home he said I want to jolt with his friend and he started smacking me and knocking me.

Leonie

He didn't come home. He was with his friends and he comes the Monday night. There was no food in the house. Nothing. I talked about it and he started. He hit me again because he said, 'I can do anything I like with you. You must be grateful if I give you anything in this house'.

Deirdre

I came five or ten minutes late so he starts accusing me of having an affair at work with Black people.

Cheryl

When the child did the smallest thing. Maybe the child got a bump on the head because he fell, then [my husband] starts hitting me and telling me that I am careless.

Maria

It was not unusual for a husband to beat his wife for perceived 'infidelity' while flaunting his relationships with other women. The battered woman is in a position in which almost anything she does may be deemed a violation of her wifely duties or a challenge to her husband's authority and thus defined as the cause of the battering she receives (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Many women develop a pattern of trying to second guess their husband's wishes, of "walking on eggshells" to prevent a beating (Hoff, 1990, p. 46).

I tried a lot. I was trying to make the house beautiful and think maybe this will steal his heart. I used to struggle to get things right hoping that one day this man will change.

Felicity.

However, battering incidents are usually indiscriminate and unpredictable and many assaults are not preceeded by verbal argument or conjugal conflict (Gondolf & Fisher 1988; Okun, 1986). It is clear, that factors 'precipitating' an assault are not necessarily the cause of the assault. Often the victim will be attacked no matter what, and the pretext of the assault is not a cause, but rather a matter of expediency to the assailant. This was apparent in the present study where it was not uncommon for women to be woken up in the middle of night

and beaten. In this study 8 women had at least one experience of a battering incident which did not follow an argument or marital conflict. As a result, the woman gradually realized that she was powerless to modify her husband's behaviour by changing her own:

> *He says, 'It's through you that I hit you. Why don't you shut up when I talk to you'. But I always do. I never answer him back. I'm too scared to answer. Even when I do keep my mouth shut then he still insists that the things he says are right. So even if you do keep your mouth shut or if you open it, he hits you.*
>
> Mercia

> *If I answer him he gets cross. If I ignore him he gets cross.*
>
> Leonie

> *I retaliate by using words. If I retaliate I get bashed. When I was passive I still got bashed.*
>
> Sandra

> *If I answer him he gets cross. If I ignore him he gets cross. He was always telling me to get out of his house but when we left he wanted us back.*
>
> Felicity

Battered women find themselves in a double-bind situation in which no matter what they do they "cannot win" (Bateson, Jackson, Haley, & Weakland, 1956). According to Bateson et al., this style of communication in which one injunction is countered by a contradictory second injuction, has the effect of impotizing the receiver. This sense of impotence may help to trap the woman in the abusive relationship. Moreover, she is faced with a second double-bind if she considers leaving. She must choose between remaining in a violent relationship and "venturing into the labyrinths of welfare, homelessness, unemployment and single parenthoood" (Hoff, 1990, p.47). In spite of the frustration of the situation, the women in the present study attempted to please their husbands, took care of their children, and were often the primary wage earner in the household.

3.2.4 The Nature of the Violence

Several researchers (e.g. Eisenberg & Micklow, 1974; Gelles, 1974; Dobash and Dobash 1979) have found that men are likely to use diverse forms of violence against their wives. This was true of the husbands of the present participants. Table 2 shows the different types of physical force used in the sample, and the changes over time. The violence ranged from a slap with an open hand to an attack involving punching, kicking, choking, or assault with a bottle, knife, stick, screwdriver, coat hanger, or panga. One batterer attempted to force his wife to drink rat poison, another attempted to gas his wife and their child in the car, and one husband set fire to his wife's flat when he thought she was in it. The most common form of

attack, as in the Dobash and Dobash (1984) study, involved punching the face and/or body. Usually this involved repeated blows.

*TABLE 2: Types of Physical Force used during Violent Episodes.**

	VIOLENT EPISODE			
	FIRST	SECOND	WORST	LAST
Hit with open hand	1	1	0	0
Punch face and/or body	8	5	4	3
Push/pull into injurious object	2	2	3	2
Kick/knee or butt	5	4	6	6
Attempt to choke	0	0	0	2
Hit with object/weapon	2	4	4	3
Raped	1	2	3	1
Other (tried to gas, dragged along gravel, set fire to home, pulled out hair)	1	3	4	5

**The figures represent the different types of physical force used and not the number of times each type was used.*

Several studies have found that injuries increase in seriousness over time (Walker, 1979; 1983b; 1984b; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; 1984). This was apparent in the present study. However, the level of violence of the first battering event was more severe than that reported by Dobash and Dobash. In the present sample, 1 woman was slapped with a open hand, the majority (8) were punched in the face and body, and 5 of these women were also kicked. All but 1 woman was exposed to persistent and extreme violence. The participants in the present study were referred to the shelter by organizations such as Social Welfare, Coloured Affairs, and FAMSA (Family and Marriage Society of South Africa) and, because of the paucity of shelter facilities for battered women in South Africa, may represent some of the most serious cases.

The one woman in the shelter, who did not experience an increase in the severity of battering, retaliated after the first battering incident by hitting her husband with a broomstick and he did not physically abuse her again. However, he resorted to psychological abuse and to the physical abuse of their children. Several studies (Bowker, 1983a; Fojtik, 1977-1978; Hoff, 1990) suggest that when women attempt to retaliate, the abuse escalates and they are exposed to more brutal retaliatory beatings. Thus, they are forced to abandon this method of defending themselves.

The other women, in the present study, were subjected to a combination of violent acts which increased in intensity over time. The batterers regularly threatened to kill their wives and the women had every reason to take these threats seriously. When asked to describe the worst battering incident, 10 women reported fearing for their lives. The nature of the violence is revealed more clearly in the qualitative data which indicates the variety and severity of the abuse.

I was pregnant with M. We had a spade just next to the cupboard. He was hitting me with fists and kicking me. He had those iron-tipped boots on and he was kicking me and he was hitting me with the spade. He even got the dog to bite me. He prepared Rattex for me and he wanted me to drink it but I refused. He said, 'I'll tell people you committed suicide yourself. I said, 'No, I won't be a coward to do this to my own child. He had it here in my mouth. I was struggling. I said, 'Please I don't want to drink it. I don't want to die now' and I was struggling and struggling. I pushed the cup out of his hand and the Rattex fell out.

Maria

That night he gave me one shot (punch) and I ran out and he ran after me. At the flat there was some gravel there in the parking. He hit me there and I was falling and he pulled me by my legs. You know the gravel and the stones and things and he kicked me and he kicked me.

Deirdre

He said I must get in the car and he drove off and he went to some place, a big veld. When he got there he took this broomstick and started making it sharp. When he finished making it sharp he started poking me in my neck and in my back. I thought he was going to kill me and it's my last day. I started to beg him and I plead with him he mustn't kill me or anything.... Then he started to rape me.

Alice

3.2.4.1 The Point of Separation

In the present study, the point of separation was a particularly dangerous time for the woman and/or her children. Researchers (Browne, 1987; Russell, 1990; Walker, 1989b) have shown that women (and often their children) are most at risk of being murdered by their husbands at this time.

When I was in the shelter he took Alan and put a tie round his neck and wanted to kill the child and himself but Alan screamed and the people came and took Alan away from him.

Edith

After the divorce they gave me the flat because I've got custody of the children.... He moved out but he used to phone me a lot at work, swearing me, telling me what he's going to do to me. He's going to burn me with the flat and all this and that and I didn't take notice. I just dropped the phone every time. He used to come to the flat and he used to smash the windows every weekend. He burned the flat one morning. He thought I was in the flat and he burned the flat. He was sitting and watching how the flat burns from across the street.

Deirdre

He came and talk nice to me, 'Please come home'. So I said, 'No, I'm not ready to come home'... He dragged me and he said, 'Come, you are going home with me' and he started hitting me again but I broke away and I ran up the stairs to my mother and he went away. Then he came back in the morning and this time he had a gun and he was threatening to kill me with a gun because I think he knew by himself that I was serious.

Mary

It is extremely difficult for a woman to follow through on her plans to leave when faced with the abuser's threats to herself and her children. Russell (1990) found that in many cases a woman would stay because of the fanatical determination of her husband not to let her go.

3.2.4.2 Marital Rape

One of the ways in which a batterer may humiliate and degrade his wife is by sexual abuse. Several researchers (Bowker, 1983b; Browne, 1987; Freize, 1983; Russell, 1990; Stark & Flitcraft, 1988) have found that marital rape is often associated with battering. For 3 women in the present study, rape invariably accompanied a battering incident. However, because the women were not specifically asked about sexual abuse, the number of women abused in this way may be higher.

He woke me up and he wanted to have sex with me and I was sleeping with my two children because I thought he wasn't going to come home and he took the little one and went to put him in the other room and my daughter was still in the bed and she woke up. She saw... He actually raped me. He forced himself onto me. I felt I could kill him that day. The next day he did the same thing in front of both children. I felt very miserable.

Cheryl

Raping me was his favourite. I had infections in my tubes and I didn't want to sleep with him so he raped me when he felt like it.

Mary

In much the same way as a wife is expected to provide domestic service and childcare, she is expected to fulfil her husband's sexual needs. The idea that sex is the man's conjugal right is upheld by the law (Segal & Labe, 1990). Thus, if a woman is not prepared to 'do her duty', her husband feels justified in forcing her to do so:

> *After (he raped me) he would say, 'It wouldn't happen this way if you would enjoy it with me', but I couldn't.*
>
> Mary

Because rape in marriage is not considered to be a crime in South Africa, many women do not perceive sexual abuse by their husbands as rape. One woman reported that she realized that she had been raped only after she described her experiences to a social worker.

3.2.4.3 Wife Battering in Pregnancy

Several studies have found that pregnant women are particularly at risk of violence and abuse (Flynn, 1977; Gelles, 1988; Hilberman & Munson, 1978; Stacy & Shupe, 1983). In the present study, 5 women (42%) were abused during pregnancy:

> *I was pregnant. He started kicking me. He says I must just jump when he asks something. He kicked me and I fell and he kicked me up. I fell on the floor and I was out. Nothing happened to my stomach, to the pregnancy.*
>
> Cheryl

> *I was pregnant with Anthea and he wanted a shoe brush and I was washing meat off. My hands were full of meat. I said, 'Look for it in the drawers'. He comes into the kitchen near me and says, 'You say look for it in the drawers. You don't come and give it to me' and then he started kicking me.*
>
> Felicity

> *I was pregnant with Shayda. He hit me and I ran out of the house. He caught me and beat my head on the pavement and pulled out my hair. I don't think I will ever forgive him for that.*
>
> Edith

The present findings are consistent with those of Stacy and Shupe (1983) who found that 42% of women calling a hotline had been battered during pregnancy.

3.2.4.4 Emotional Abuse

All the women in the study reported that abuse was not confined to physical violence. It was aimed at harrassing, humiliating and degrading her at the same time as causing her physical pain:

> *When my mother passed away he said, 'Now your mother is dead there won't be anyone who is going to mess in my life. You must come right now because there*

is nowhere you can run now. It's better that she died'. I was crying. I was washing my windows and tears came out of my face and he said, 'Ha, are you crying for her? She's dead. She's dead. I'm glad she's out of my life'. I was thinking there's no more that I can run to. She used to give me blankets and say, 'Let the kids sleep in that bed and you come and sleep here by me' and I'd sleep there by her and there will be peace because it's, you know, mommy's love.

Felicity

He said, 'You are the one who phoned these people (the Welfare). Go on your knees and say that you swear you didn't phone'. I went on my knees. He said. 'Make an oath and say God can punish you, God can take away any child of us if you know you are not talking the truth. If you don't want to swear, then I know you are the one. If you are talking the truth then God won't punish you'. So I started praying and I also said an oath.... Then we got into bed at about 1 o clock and he said, 'Sweetheart are you really talking the truth'. I said yes and he got aggressive again and started choking me.

Maria

He brought women into the house and slept with them. He walked in with this woman, this girlfriend, and he said I must go and make tea for them and I refused. He got up and started kicking me and he choked me and that night he locked me out and I slept in the car.

Alice

The worst time I got him arrested. When he came out, he was with his friends. He says, 'How do you think this bitch does to me. Did you see any woman that has men arrested. You know what you are...'. We were walking now. There are no houses in Extension 7 and I was following them like a little dog.... Now and then he turns around and he kicks me and he hits me.

Leonie

This complex had opened and it was so full with lots of people and here he comes with his brother and they started beating me in front of everybody. It was so embarrassing. He was driving my father's car and he took the keys and flung them into my face and it was all bruised and swollen and my mother was screaming, 'Please somebody help', but people were scared.

Catherine

The extreme cruelty of these, and earlier, descriptions lends credence to Romero's (1985) view that the experiences of battered women and prisoners of war, or hostages, are similar. The techniques of torture, such as beatings, sleep deprivation, threats of murder or torture, humiliation, random and unpredictable leniency, and social isolation, were all used by the

husbands of the participants in this study. The husband's reluctance to have his wife interact with anyone other than himself and the need for constant knowledge of her whereabouts led to his severely restricting and isolating her.

> *It was on a Friday night. He came home drunk. It was past twelve and I was sleeping already. He had a panga in his hand... and he said, 'What will you do if I chopped you with this?'. So I said, 'Ugh, chop'. Then he really did it. He chopped me here (points to thigh). Two open cuts. When he saw blood... he never used to phone the ambulance or something like that. Now he'd lock the doors because he was afraid that I'll go to the police station. So I couldn't go to hospital and I couldn't get stitches. He locks the doors so I can't get out. Screaming is no use because no one will help you. He takes the phone and puts it in the wardrobe. He locks the wardrobe. Then the next day he goes out. I'm in the house and he takes the keys of the wardrobe so I can't phone the police and I must stay in the house the whole day.*
>
> Mercia

> *I didn't have money. He took all my money from me. No money, no nothing in the house.*
>
> Cheryl

> *I used to sit in that house. You can't even go out even for a walk or maybe to one of your friends. You just have to sit because if he comes and he can't find you there, there's fighting again.*
>
> Leonie

The isolation serves to limit the woman's ability to seek help and makes her more dependent on the batterer (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). It also prevents her receiving support and comfort from friends and family. Women who are unemployed are in a particularly vulnerable position when battered. In the present study, 5 women were unemployed at the time of the abuse, 1 women was employed part-time, and 6 full-time. Although the employed woman had access to additional support structures and was, in principal, more independent financially, she was often forced into giving her entire salary to her husband.

3.2.5 The Nature of the Injuries

Table 3 indicates the types of injuries suffered by the participants in the study. The most common injury was the 'blue eye'. This visible sign of abuse made it embarrassing for a woman to go to work or appear in public and had the effect of restricting and isolating her:

> *He gave me a blue eye in November. He didn't apologize although I had to spend a week away from my class. It affected my son a great deal because he schools with me.*
>
> Sandra

I lost about three jobs because of that man. I used to run away and in the morning when I went to work, he used to wait for me. When you've got blue eyes you feel shy to go to work.

Leonie

My face was... ooh God I thought I was going to die. I thought to myself I'm just waiting for my face to get better then I'm moving out of this.

Mercia

Dobash and Dobash (1987) maintain that, for men, the possession of their wives is not only personally desirable, but also an outward indication that they are truly men. The 'blue eye' is the outward manifestation of the man's power and control over his wife. For the woman, on the other hand, it symbolizes her shame and humiliation. The message, that she is not fulfilling her duties as a wife, is clearly imprinted on her face for all to see.

TABLE 3: Types of injuries resulting from the First, Second, Worst, Last, Violent Episode.*

	FIRST	SECOND	WORST	LAST
Bruises to face and/or body	11	10	11	10
Cuts	1	2	3	4
Hair torn out	1	1	1	1
Knocked unconscious	0	0	2	2

** These figures reflect only the different types of injury, and not the number of times a particular type of injury was received.*

As the violence escalated, the injuries became more life-threatening and the woman often needed medical treatment or even hospitalization:

I fainted and ... I just opened my eyes I was in the ambulance. I stayed in the hospital for about three days or so and the doctors checked for the baby to see if there was any damages or anything. My face was so swollen I couldn't recognize myself in the mirror. My eyes were very narrow.... One day in the hospital my husband and his brother and the sister-in-law came. They were walking up and down past me in the hospital and they didn't even know who I am, where I am. Eventually they asked one of the sisters and she showed them. My sister-in-law was so shocked she started crying.

Maria

In spite of severe injuries, 4 of the women did not receive medical treatment either because they were physically prevented from leaving the house or because they were threatened with reprisals if they did. This was consistent with Dobash and Dobash's (1987) finding.

3.2.6 The Role of Substance Abuse

In the present study, a clear association was found between substance abuse and battering behaviour. In total, 10 batterers were found to abuse substances: 8 abused alcohol; and, 2 combined alcohol with cannabis or Mandrax. In 3 cases the substance abuse was not confined to week-ends and neither was the abuse. However, the majority of women (7) reported that the violence was predictable in that it occurred over week-ends, and particularly on Friday nights when the husband was intoxicated:

> *It was also on a Friday night. He came home drunk. It was already twelve and I was sleeping. He came in and he had a panga in his hand.*
>
> Leonie

> *He came home drunk especially on Fridays and everything would be ready. Food will be cooked. If I ask him to dish up, he won't eat. He will just sit there and after that he will start swearing at me. Then he starts hitting me.*
>
> Mercia

> *Every Friday it was fighting and I began to hate Fridays.*
>
> *He only hit me when he was drunk. He goes into a mood like he's demon-possessed. On Fridays I was so afraid. I used to run to the toilet and listen to his voice. He has got a loud voice. If he's in a bad mood I must run.*
>
> Poppie

This indicates that for the majority of women in the study, there was no evidence of a gradual build up of tension prior to a violent incident, as described by Walker (1984b) and women were beaten over the week-end, regardless of what had taken place between the couple during the week. Walker found that, in 65% of her sample, there was evidence of a "tension-building" phase prior to the violent explosion. Over time the "tension-building" phase became longer and the phase of "loving-contrition", following a battering incident, declined. This was not duplicated in the present study. However, in spite of the association between substance abuse and battering, some women reported that violence could occur even when the husband was not intoxicated. This is consistent with the findings of several other studies (Gayford, 1975; Hilberman, 1980; Kantor & Straus, 1987; Roberts, 1988) which indicate that, while excessive drinking is associated with higher wife abuse rates, alcohol use at the time of violence is far from a necessary condition for abuse.

All the men who apologized to their wives and had used alcohol, blamed the alcohol for the abuse. A typical explanation was: "Look I was drunk and you did ask for it". However, the women were unconvinced by this argument:

> *He said it was because he was drunk but sometimes he hit me when he was sober... I don't blame the drink because sometimes he don't need the drink to go on like that.*
>
> Mary

> *He wasn't drunk. I didn't smell alcohol but when I spoke to him afterwards he said he was drunk.*
>
> Maria

This seems to confirm Gelles' (1974) hypothesis that alcohol can be used by the batterer as an excuse for the violence by providing 'time out' during which he is not responsible for his actions. Several women described the 'Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde' syndrome or, as one woman put it, her husband's "split personality", and the abusive side was invariably associated with alcohol. Martin (1983) posits that the aggressor, his victim, and other family members may tend to blame the alcohol for the violence which makes the violent actions more acceptable. It is extremely difficult for a woman to admit that her husband, whom she loves, is abusing her severely. Initially she can avoid seeing her husband as a wife-beater, thinking of him, instead as a heavy drinker or alcoholic. In spite of the stigma attached to having an alcoholic husband, this is preferably to believing that her husband could consciously and maliciously hurt her.

3.2.7 The Effect of Ongoing Abuse on the Woman's Perception of the Situation

Over time, regardless of whether or not substance abuse was implicated in the abuse, the woman began to realize that the battery was not going to stop. This, together with the realization that she was unable to prevent the violence or to persuade the batterer to change, led to a sense of disillusionment with her husband's promises.

> *I go home and back to square one in two or three weeks. (He'd say): 'You've been bitching that side where you have been staying. The people used to sell you to the guys'. He said, 'You won't get another guy like me that's supporting you so good, buying you this...'. I said, 'What are you buying me?'. After you've hit me then you're sorry and you buy me a little bit of flowers or you buy me this. It is not worthwhile. My life is more worthwhile to me than these things you buy me'.*
>
> Mercia

> *He likes to apologise. He can say he is sorry and 'please forgive me', and then he does it again.*
>
> Cheryl

After, he used to pat and pie me and be the nicest man you can get. He said, 'Promise Sweetheart, I won't hit you again'... He said he took God into his life again and he's repented and the Holy Spirit showed him. So I explained, 'You've been swearing at God and all that, so how did it happen?'. He said, 'No I was drunk that night and please forgive me. I won't go on like that. But then the least mistake he just starts hitting me again. I don't think he regrets it but it took me eleven years to realize that.

Marla

That time he took me in the car to talk things over and try to get me back. He said he loved me. When I think about it now, he couldn't have loved me because he didn't consider me having to stand in front of a class with a blue eye. I was still very much in love with him. I always used to accept him back.

Sandra

Every time he fights or hits me or rapes me he says, 'I'm sorry, forgive me, and I always forgive him because I knew I still love him. But now I don't feel that same way about him now. When I saw him last Sunday for the first time after 2 months, it was like seeing someone I know, like a friend... not even a friend.

Mary

The woman's perception of the batterer and of the relationship gradually changes. This shift may be brought about by catalysts such as a change in the level of violence, or violence being directed against the children. Her attitude may simply change because the cumulative effects of the abuse are such that she reaches a point where she cannot bear to continue in the relationship. For each woman the factors that contribute to her decision to leave, are different. The following is a description of a situation that was the 'last straw' for one woman, even though the incident did not involve physical violence:

That Friday I came back. I was standing in the rain and had to ask people for money. It was month-end and there was fighting. I was hungry. I didn't eat the whole day at work. I had to stand in the rain... He was drunk, the door was locked and there was no food. I had to struggle to get into the house because it was locked. I didn't say a word. The next day I asked him for taxi fare. He said, 'No' and I went to borrow money to go to work. I greet him nice and say 'Bye, I'll see you tonight' and then I left him.

Deirdre

3.2.8 The Battered Wife as a Possession

Although the viciousness of the abuse would seem to indicate that the abuser does not value his wife, he still regards her as his property and will prevent her leaving him at all cost.

Often the batterer is extremely dependent on his wife and fearful of losing her (Davidson, 1978; Shupe, Stacy & Hazlewood, 1987). If she does leave, he will go to great lengths to find where she is and get her back or, if she will not return, may attempt to kill her. A common response to a wife's decision to leave was, "If I can't have you, then nobody will". As a result, most women were terrified that the husband would find out the address of the shelter and carry out his threats. One woman would not take her children to a nearby park in case her husband happened to see her.

I'm scared he'll carry out the threat of killing us and that has been my fear because he was always threatening to do that. He was always threatening to kill me and the children. He would say, 'If I can't have you, nobody else will have you'. I feel he's capable of doing it.... I'm still scared that he'll do something to my life.

Sandra

He always told me I should never divorce him because if I can take his children away from him, no matter how long it takes him, he will get me and he will kill me so nobody will take us away from him. He always said, 'What God puts together no one can take them away'.

Maria

He's in jail now for two years. At least now I can feel a bit better. My life was a misery. The people at work used to answer the phones and when it's for me they would take a message because they could see when I talk to him I change. He's swearing at me and telling me, 'You'll see tonight, you won't get out of the transport'. I had to watch my back.

Deirdre

3.2.9 Justification for the Violence

3.2.9.1 Blaming the Woman

What emerged very clearly in the present study is that, whether or not he apologized, the batterer did not take responsibility for the violence even if he realized the behaviour was unacceptable. Two husbands did not attempt to explain or justify the abuse but the other 10 husbands blamed their wives.

My husband always said it was my fault. He looks for reasons to fight. Like, I'm sleeping and the children are sleeping. He wakes up the children and when I tell him 'Leave the children', he starts to fight.

Edith

He said, 'You must change your manners, and you mustn't talk back'... He blames me for everything... He says, 'Why don't you keep quiet when I talk'. I said, 'Even if I keep quiet then you still hit me. If I open my mouth then I really get it'. He

says, 'You want to be clever. You want to be the boss in this house. If I say A then you say B or C. That's why I'm hitting you. You can't shut up when I talk'.
Felicity

He said, 'You did ask for it'.
Cheryl

He said he was very angry and when he talks I mustn't answer him back.
Alice

The next day he was sorry but he always blamed me.
Mercia

He said, 'If you hadn't opened your mouth it wouldn't have happened'.
Deirdre

One husband, who hit his wife because his son fell and cut himself, said it was because he was a protective father:

He said he hit me because he didn't want his children to get hurt. He said, 'When a mother is not working she should look after the children so they don't get hurt'.
Maria

On one occasion, the same husband, picked up the baby and threw it to his wife:

I caught him and I cried and I said, 'Now why are you doing this' and he said, 'Ja, if you didn't catch this child I would have killed you'.

One man, who slashed his wife with a panga, said he had not meant to hit her with the sharp side of it.

The husband assumes that his wife is obliged to serve him, and his sense of authority over her is used to justify his violent behaviour and to shift the blame from his actions onto her (Dobash & Dobash, 1984). In the present sample, battering was used to punish or to chastise and was often in response to mundane, reasonable requests. However, these were frequently reframed as 'nagging' which is considered to be ample justification for abuse.

3.2.9.2 The Woman's Perception

Despite of the fact that men deny responsibility for the abuse and blame their wives, the majority of women in the present sample did not consider themselves reponsible for the violence. Hoff (1990) found that, particularly in the early stages of the relationship, women often felt they were to blame for the abuse. She suggests that women have internalized the cultural norm that they are responsible for the success or failure of the relationship.

After the First Battering Incident the women in the present study tried hard to make sense of the violence and went to great lengths to avoid 'provoking' their husbands. However, as the violence escalated and the woman realized that nothing she did could reduce the level of violence, she began to attribute blame for the violence to her husband. The following is a typical response:

> *I used to say, what's wrong with me that he does this.... I would never say I deserved those bashes. I'm extremely domesticated and I did everything for this marriage to work. I'm not a drinker. I'm not a smoker.*
>
> Sandra

What is implied in this statement is that abuse is not justified if a woman is providing appropriate domestic service. However, there is an underlying assumption that violence is justified if she is not. One woman was at pains to explain that she had prepared her husband's food and left it in the oven before she went to visit a relative in hospital. In spite of this she was abused. It is clear from the above that women do absorb the dominant cultural values about marriage, the family, and violence. She may feel that problems in the family reflect badly on her and she may experience shame and guilt about the failure of the relationships (Angless, 1990). This may lead to secrecy about battery.

Even when the woman believed her husband to be to blame for the abuse, it was often compassion for him that prevented her from leaving the relationship.

> *I left home and went to stay with half relatives of him. He came there and he said, 'Please come home. I can't eat, I can't sleep'.*
>
> Mercia

> *In 1985 I already then started filing for divorce... and after every time I was feeling sorry for him.*
>
> Catherine

> *When we were courting I told him I wanted to call the relationship off because I like somebody else. He tried to kill himself. I think I pitied him.*
>
> Sandra

Over time, however, the woman became disillusioned with her husband's promises:

> *Sometimes I think, did I ever love him or did I just feel pity for him. He threatens to kill himself and I feel now if he wants to do so he must do it.*
>
> Mary

> *I got into the car and we drove and he pleaded and he was so suicidal and there was a truck riding next to us and I thought he was going to go with the car under*

the truck. He pleaded and begged and I couldn't bear it and I thought if I had a gun I'd shoot this man.

Cheryl

A woman is socialized to believe that she is a nurturer and protector, and this may help to trap her in an abusive relationship. This socialization enables the batterer to manipulate his wife with threats of suicide. No studies exist of suicide among abusers in South African, however Walker (1979) found that almost 10% of the batterers in her sample committed suicide after their wives left. This lends credence to the woman's perception that her husband will not be able to manage without her.

3.2.10 Help-seeking

Walker's (1978-1989b) application of learned helplessness to battered women would suggest that, as the violence in a relationship escalates and the woman's ability to prevent or control it lessens, help-seeking behaviour should decrease. However, this was not apparent in the present study. On the contrary, as the violence in the relationship escalated so did active help-seeking behaviour (see Table 4). This was consistent with studies by Dobash & Dobash (1979), Gondolf & Fisher (1988), and Hoff (1990). Like the women in Hoff's study, the present participants were constantly concerned with how to stop the battering or to leave the abusive relationship. Walker (1979; 1984b) found that women did not seek help during or directly after a battering incident, but tended to wait for a few days before doing so. A similar finding emerged in a study by Dobash and Dobash (1979). However, in the present study, those women who sought help did so immediately unless they were restricted from doing so by their husbands.

TABLE 4: Third parties contacted by women after violent episodes.

	FIRST %	SECOND	WORST
Parent, other relative	2	2	3
Husband's family	2	1	0
Friend	0	3	2
Doctor	1	0	1
Police	1	0	4
Employer	0	1	1
Lawyer	0	0	1
TOTAL	6 (50%)	7 (58%)	12 (100%)

3.2.10.1 Patterns of Help-seeking

An analysis of the nature and pattern of help-seeking by Dobash and Dobash (1979) showed an increasing number of contacts over time. The same was true of the present sample (See

Table 4). After the First Battering Incident, 6 women approached a third party for help. This number increased to 12 after the Worst Battering Incident. Initially it was friends and family members who were approached. After the first assault 2 women went to their families for help and 2 women approached the husband's family:

> *I told his mother and she did speak to him but still he didn't listen to her.. She said it's his duty to go and work and see that there is food in the house. So he said, ja he will try, but he didn't.*
>
> Deirdre

> *His sister said, 'Everytime he has been hitting you and beating you up and you do nothing about it'. The family kept telling me, 'Leave this man. He is going to kill you', and not my family, his family. His own family.*
>
> Maria

Only 2 women made contact with people outside the family at this early stage (1 woman went to a doctor and 1 called the police). The reluctance to approach 'outsiders' for help, is particularly common after the first battering incident when a woman believes that the violence will not be repeated. She may also conceal the abuse out of a sense of shame, and a fear that other people will blame her for the attack.

There were 4 women who did not seek help after the First Battering Incident.

> *I didn't see nobody except for my neighbours. Nobody came to ask how I was. I was just by myself. I cried a lot. Whenever people asked about my black eye, I used to make excuses. I suggested we go and see a counsellor to get some help but he said I'm so stupid....He asked me to keep quiet and I never mentioned it to anybody. I was frightened to tell anybody because I knew he'd hit me again and he made me believe that if I do tell anybody then he'll leave me and I'll sit with a child without a father.*
>
> Cheryl

> *I'm not someone to talk. I didn't go to my mother and them. I used to hide from them.*
>
> Deirdre

> *I didn't tell my family a word. They would have been shocked. I only divulged that he tried to gas us years afterwards.*
>
> Sandra

> *I was worried they'll say, 'How is this marriage of yours'. Your husband hits you when you are pregnant'.... I was scared because my mother did tell me I shouldn't have got married. I did hide it from them and keep the bright side up. I thought it'll come right before they notice I'm not happy. In the meantime I was struggling.*
>
> Felicity

After the Second Battering Incident the number of women seeking help increased. Seven woman sought help: 3 women approached family members; 3 approached friends; and, 1 woman spoke to her employer. After the Worst Battering Incident all 12 women sought help: 5 women spoke to family or friends; and, 7 women contacted 'outsiders' or formal helping sources. These included the police (4), a doctor (1), an employer (1), a lawyer (1).

The women in the present study appeared more active in helpseeking behaviour than did the women in Walker's (1984b) study. Walker found that after the First Battering Incident 14% sought help, 22% did so after the Second Battering Incident, 31% after the Worst and 49% sought help after the Last Battering Incident. In the present study 50% sought help after the First Incident, 58% after the Second and 100% after the Worst. It is possible that there is some bias in this result in that the present sample consisted entirely of shelter residents whereas Walker's sample did not.

3.2.10.2 Shame and Fear

The need to hide the abuse from friends and family is characteristic of many battered women. This reflects feelings of shame, and fear of retribution. However, in the present study, as the abuse escalated, those women who did not initially seek help, began to do so, first from friends and family and then from formal helping networks. After the Second Battering Incident the number of women who had not sought help had dropped to 2 and after the Worst Battering Incident there was not a single participant who had not sought h

3.2.11. The Response of Helping Networks

3.2.11.1 Informal Helping Networks

For all but one women in the sample, friends and family members provided sanctuary after a battering incident. For 2 women it was the batterer's family who took her in when she left her husband. However, women were often forced to return to the batterer in order to protect the people who had provided assistance.

> *He found out where I was, then he came there and started threatening the people and saying he's going to burn the house down. Then he came and sat on the corner of the street and watched the house. Afterwards I felt so guilty. I was very scared and fear that I brought troubles there. I thought the only way to make them feel safe is to go back to him.*
>
> Mercia

> *I decided to put a divorce and stay with my mother... I was there 3 weeks when he fetched me....I went so I didn't make a lot of troubles because he said he's going to burn my mother's house out, and he's going to make his friend rape that old lady that gets into his business.*
>
> Felicity

Only 1 woman found her family to be unsupportive:

Even thinking about it still hurts me. I didn't have support from my own family. I had to go to a strange person. My family were against me. I'm the one who is suffering and they're just thinking if I leave him where are they going to get money. They could have thought of me. I'm trying hard but I'm still very hurt. The first place to go if you have trouble with your husband is the mommy's place, and I tried to go there and they were banging the door in my face. It feels like I've got no one.

Cheryl

However, for the other women in the study, friends and family were extremely helpful and supportive, attempting to protect the woman from further abuse.

3.2.11.2 Formal Helping Networks

(a) The Police and Criminal Justice Sytem

In general, the police were of assistance where the violence was extreme and the injuries visible. However, the police sometimes misjudged the seriousness of the violence and tended to define it in terms of its outward manifestations.

I went to the policemen and they said, 'You are married. We can't interfere in your marriage'. He wanted to see bruises.

Maria

I went to the police. There was no blood so they couldn't take the case.

Leonie

I went to the police but they wouldn't come out.

Mercia

I went to the doctor. He said I must make a case against my husband. I filled in forms and I took them to the police station. I was waiting for them to let me know but I hear nothing of the case.

Alice

Although the police were prepared to arrest the husband in cases where the woman was badly beaten, they were unable to provide ongoing protection for her. As a result, women were often reluctant to involve the police for fear of retribution from their husbands.

He said, 'The only thing to do is hit you because you're taking me to the White law. You think you're clever. You stay with me here. I will just kill you once... Do you want to die or do you want to live because I don't feel a thing. I can do just what I want with you'.

Felicity

I was always scared to get ... arrested when he hits me because his friends ar ... so many. He always said: 'My friends love me and if something happens in ... house, they'll kill you'. I was always scared.

Mercia

This reluctance to lay a charge against the abuser is understandable in view of the likelihood of the husband's retaliation. Moreover, as Davis (1988) points out, comprehensive social services are not always available and prosecution of the batterer may leave the woman more vulnerable than before, particularly if she is unemployed or if her husband is the primary breadwinner. This is particularly true in South Africa whether social services are extremely limited.

In the present sample, 9 of the men were the primary breadwinners in the family, and, for these women, there was concern about how the family would survive without a husband and father:

I explained to the doctor everthing that had harpened... and he wanted me to lay a charge but I said no because I was afraid if he goes to jail what would I do.

Cheryl

I went to his mother's place. She took me to the police station but I was scared to make a case because he was not working at all. He was drinking and he couldn't hold a job.

Edith

However, in spite of an initial reluctance to call the police and lay a charge against the batterer, women became more desperate over time, and more willing to involve the criminal justice system. For some it was the severity of a particular attack that led them to call the police, for others it was the cumulative effect of the persistent violence and intimidation, and the realization that family and friends were unable to help her end the violence.

The reluctance of the police to act may have dire consequences for the battered woman who returns to an abusive situation. She may then have to face further punishment from the batterer in retaliation for her actions, and the batterer is unlikely to be deterred from violent actions by the possibility of negative consequences. As Soler (1987) points out, if the police fail to respond effectively, it may be the last call made. In an American study of police officers' attitudes to wife battering, Saunders and Size (1986) found that the police did not take wife battering seriously and very few thought that arrest was the best solution. In the present study, the police did take the abuse seriously, but only where there were outward signs of injury. Police officers were then prepared to accompany the woman to her home, in order for her to collect her children and her belongings, and to arrest her husband if this was requested. However, outward signs of injury do not always predict the potential danger

within the relationship, and women without these injuries may return to a potentially life-threatening situation unprotected.

Marsden (1978) points out that most people who act violently have first reflected upon the costs or likely costs of their acts. The abuser is likely to be deterred from violent actions to the extent that he believes they will be unsuccessful. One woman in the present sample found that her husband felt intimidated by shelter workers and this served to protect her from abuse once she left the shelter and separated from her husband:

> *He's scared now and many times I mention R. and them just to make him realize they are still keeping a check on me.*
>
> Catherine

It is clear that the response of the police to wife battering is crucial in protecting the battered woman from her abuser. In the present study, the police played a important role in assisting the woman attempting to separate from her husband. As long as wife battering is regarded as a 'domestic' issue and not a criminal offence, the batterer is unlikely to be deterred from his actions by fear of the resulting consequences.

(b) Helping Professionals

Most women encountered helpful professionals when they approached the Welfare, Coloured Affairs or FAMSA. One women was permitted to spend the night at the home of a psychologist while a place was being arranged at POWA. Only one woman approached a helping agency and did not receive assistance. In general, the response of professionals was helpful which contrasts with the findings in some overseas studies (Dobash & Dobash, 1987; Hoff, 1990; Maynard, 1985). Dobash & Dobash found that social workers were not particularly helpful to battered women unless the children were also being abused. In Hoff's study formal network members were for the most part found to be either negative or indifferent to battered women.

In the present study, both formal and informal helping networks played a vital role in supporting and assisting the battered woman. The importance of this help, for a woman attempting to leave an abuser, cannot be overemphasized. As a result, recent research is beginning to focus more on what is wrong with the available interventions than on what is wrong with the woman (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988).

3.2.12 Learned Helplessness

Women are often reluctant to seek help, not only because of the shame associated with violence, but also because patriarchal relationships are based on the belief in trust and loyalty from subordinates (Dobash & Dobash, 1987). To seek outside help is often regarded as a betrayal of the tacit bond of loyalty. In spite of this, the behaviour of the women in the present study was markedly different from traditional notions of women as passive, helpless victims, and learned helplessness cannot appropriately be applied to the women in this

sample. It is clear that the women were extremely resourceful in their attempts to deal with the battering situation, and were active in help-seeking. This is consistent with studies by Bowker (1983a), Pagelow (1981), and Walker (1984b) which indicate that the helpseeking efforts of battered women are substantial (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988). It is clear, however, that in order for a woman to separate from an batterer, she needs help from both formal and informal networks. Where a woman's help-seeking is met with assistance, she is less likely to become trapped within a violent relationship.

Gondolf and Fisher (1988) suggest that symptoms of learned helplessness do not seem to characterize the battered woman, and the symptoms may be temporary manifestations of traumatic shock.

3.2.13 Children in the Crossfire

3.2.13.1 Children as Witnesses

For all the women in the present sample, battering invariably took place in front of the children (See Table 5).

> *He never used to consider the child. He'd kick me in front of her.*
>
> Cheryl

> *Felicity and Sherine came in saying 'please Daddy, don't hit Mommy like that' and he said, 'Go into the f... room and they had to go in crying'.*
>
> Maria

> *He used to hit me and the poor kids were running around screaming. He would abuse me in front of the kids.*
>
> Leonie

> *He punches me and Daniel says, 'But Daddy why are you punching Mommy. She's a woman'. And then he gave a second punch.... So I took Daniel. He was all shocked and white as a sheet.... and we ran across to the neighbours.*
>
> Sandra

In this study, 2 batterers physically abused their children as well as their wives. The other 10 batterers did not physically abuse their children. However, the children often suffered severe emotional abuse as witness to the violence against the mother. The children were often used by the husband as a means of punishing his wife.

> *He knows he can get at me when he turns on Anthea. The Child Welfare got an anonymous call saying he was sexually abusing her. They took her away from me for a whole week.... and when she got home he started swearing at her and she couldn't play with her sister and she couldn't touch anything that her sister had and then he said to her, 'Just leave my child's things alone'... Then the Friday night he started... swearing at me... and he started choking me and I was trying*

to get loose. Anthea came in and he said, 'Just get out. It is through you that all these things are happening'. She went and cried in the bedroom and I couldn't go and comfort her or anything.

Maria

When they see him hitting me they usually cry and they hide themselves in the room crying. Then he'll ask, 'Why are you crying. Are you taking this dirty bitch's part? Are you crying for this dirty thing, this rubbish?'

Felicity

When we had an argument I used to run away a lot. He would talk to the children and say, where was I and with whom. And they said, no I was with Auntie and he said, 'You're lying' and he's start hitting the children with his hand or with a belt. He used to smack them very hard.

Mary

When he went to smoke dagga he went to sleep in the lounge and when he wakes up at 10 o clock, 11 o clock he says, 'I want some tea'. The house is clean but he shouts, 'Why is this here? Pick this up!' And I have to wake every child to tell them they must clean the house.... The one is scrubbing the floor, the other one is washing the fridge. F'...'s screaming at the kids. If I say something he says, 'Keep quiet. Put your mouth in your arse. Keep quiet or I'm going to shut you out of my house'. He can say what he wants. I must shut up.

Felicity

He started hitting the children to get at me. Then I decided to leave.

Poppie

At times, although the violence was not aimed at the children, they were caught in the crossfire: I was busy bathing my second daughter and he insisted, 'You leave this child now and you come and make breakfast'. So I said, 'I've already wet the child's hair. I have to see to her first'.... The next best thing he smashed the mirror and the glass was falling on top of my daughter,... and she was screaming hysterical because she was frightened and she saw his hand bleeding.

Catherine

TABLE 5: Children exposed to Violence.

	FIRST	SECOND	WORST	LAST
Witness to Violence	8	10	9	10
Threatened by Abuser	3	2	1	1
Abused themselves	2	0	1	1

The children were an important factor in the woman's decision to remain with or leave the batterer. This was consistent with a study by Angless (1990) of battered women in Cape Town. She found that women returned to the abuser because there was nowhere for them to go with their children and because they adhered to the belief that the children need a father. In the present study, participants were very concerned about their children and the effect on the children of a break-up in the marriage. Women grow up with the ideology that they are responsible for childcare and that the needs of the children should take priority in their lives.

> *I didn't want my children to grow up without a father so I always protected my marriage. I came from a broken home... so I never wanted to do that.*
>
> Maria

> *I just thought I'll have to be with him because he's my children's father. I should have left him long ago but I had my children and I wasn't working.*
>
> Mary

> *I used to always think about the children and now I think, 'Must I go through all this abuse for the sake of the children'. These ugly remarks and slandering is no good for their sake. They'll think this is the right way of living.*
>
> Sandra

3.2.13.2 Economic Dependence and Children

Because of discrimination against women in the economic sphere, many women remain in abusive relationships rather than expose their children to poverty. The decision to leave the batterer has, therefore, to be weighed up against the loss to the family of the husband's income and the problems associated with single-parent families. This was particularly difficult where the woman was unemployed or working part-time.

> *What I'm worried about is the children. Now it's school holidays but afterwards where will I go, where will I stay. My main problem is about my children. I may have to go back because my children are suffering.*
>
> Poppie

It is clear that consideration for her children played an important role in a woman's decision to remain in or leave an abusive relationship. This was invariably an extremely difficult decision as both leaving and remaining were perceived to have negative consequences for the children.

3.2.14 Leaving

Help-seeking behaviour by battered women is not static, but is a dynamic, evolving process (Dobash & Dobash, 1992). Women make decisions based on their changing circumstances and may leave the relationship for short periods in order to escape the violence. In the present

sample, 2 women left the relationship temporarily after the First Battering Incident. After the Second and Worst Battering Incident 5 women left. For most women, leaving involved careful and surreptitious planning:

> *I'd made arrangements to leave but I didn't tell him. He did tell me the whole day he was going to kill me. He gave me a smack. I had packed all our things and they were at my friend's house.*
>
> Felicity

> *I planned it with his sister. I said to her, 'I don't know how to get away from this guy because I know he won't give me any money because he knows what my plan is'. Now he blames his sister. He says, 'It's through her that we're apart. She put things in your head that you believed'.*
>
> Mercia

There are many reasons why a woman decides to return to a batterer. These included the husband's threat of suicide; his promises to change; the welfare of the children; lack of resources in terms of housing and money; and, fear of reprisals. The pattern of staying, leaving, and returning reflects the complex pushes and pulls of the numerous personal, social, and material factors that motivate the battered woman (Dobash & Dobash 1979).

CHAPTER FOUR

CONCLUSIONS

4.1. MAIN FINDINGS

Walker (1978-1989b) posits that the stage of "loving-contrition" is apparent in the majority of battering relationships and, the present study confirmed that the majority of women do experience a period of "loving-contrition" at some time during the relationship. However, a careful reading of Walker's studies indicates that while "loving-contrition" does occur after initial battering incidents in the majority of cases, it occurs in only a minority of cases after later violent incidents. In spite of this, Walker's formulation is widely accepted as characterizing the pattern of abuse for the majority of battered women. The present study found that only 25% of women experienced "loving-contrition" after the Worst Battering Incident as opposed to the First Battering Incident when 58% of women reported "loving-contrition".

This study suggests that the 'cycle of violence' does not have universal applicability and may only occur in a minority of battering relationships. In those cases where it does exist, the formulation may, as Walker suggests, provide support workers and the women they counsel, with insight into a predictable pattern of abuse. However, most workers in the field are intervening with women after extremely violent incidents and not after initial incidents. The formulation would only apply in a minority of these cases. This finding confirms the experiences of workers at POWA and Rape Crisis which suggest that descriptions of "loving-contrition" are not the norm.

It would seem that the period of "loving-contrition" is just one factor amongst many that contribute to a wife's decision to remain in or leave a battering relationships. These may include the following realizations: (1) that the batterer's behaviour is not going to change; (2) that there is nothing she can do to modify his behaviour; (3) that the violence is ongoing and, in fact, escalating to a point of being life-threatening; (4) that the promises made by the batterer are not to be believed; and (5) that children are being adversely affected by the violence. It is clear, therefore that the model needs to be much more complex and multifactorial.

Underlying the factors mentioned above, and also serving to keep women trapped in abusive relationships, is the ideology that women are nurturers and protectors, responsible for keeping the family together. Also, a woman's disadvantaged position in the economic sphere means that leaving her husband may make her vulnerable to poverty (Segel & Labe, 1990).

This is particularly true in the South Africa context where there are limited social security benefits.

Cross-cultural (e.g. Brown, 1992; Campbell, 1992; Levinson, 1989)research has indicated that the general societal acceptance and tolerance of violence is strongly associated with severe abuse. In the present study it was clear that most men felt justified in abusing their wives. Even those that apologized, blamed their wives for the attack indicating that it is considered acceptable for a man to 'put his wife in her place' if he feels she has provoked him. What was considered to be provocation was anything that questioned the man's control and authority in the relationship. Carmody and Williams (1987) found that men tend to perceive sanction as uncertain. This perception, that assaultive behaviour is not very objectionable and no serious consequences were likely to follow the violence, characterized the perceptions of husbands in this study. The assumption that abuse is justified if women do not fulfil their domestic duties was accepted by both husbands and wives.

What also emerged from the study is that the support of formal and informal helping networks played an important role in enabling women to leave abusive relationships. It would seem that, in the initial stages of abuse, it is because of ideological reasons that women do not leave. However, in the later stages of the relationship it is more likely they are trapped by a lack of viable alternatives, rather than through the 'cycle of violence'. The latter, along with the concepts of learned helplessness and the battered woman syndrome, serves to depict women as helpless, passive victims. The women in the present study were extremely active in help-seeking and this behaviour increased as the violence escalated.

Although a range of common features emerged as salient in the study, what became clear was that, even within a particular socio-economic and cultural group in a shelter, there was a great deal of variation in the women's experiences. This is consistent with American studies (Stark & Fliteraft, 1988; Sonkin, 1988) which indicate that neither battered women nor their batterers form a homogenous group. Each abusive relationship is unique and each woman has different factors to consider in her decision to stay or leave.

4.2. IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERVENTION

Because so many factors conspire to trap women in abusive relationships, intervention needs to take place on many levels. On the macro level it is necessary to address the sociopolitical context which engenders and facilitates wife battering (Segal & Labe, 1990). This includes changes in socialization and gender inequality. Severe sanction clearly acts as a deterrent against battery and severe consequences need to follow the crime.

On the individual level, it is apparent that women require access to formal helping sources such as the police, lawyers, social workers, and psychologists. Equally important, is access

to informal helping resources and a place of sanctuary for women and their children. A shelter can provide this safety, together with an environment which allows women to support each other as they go through the difficult process of separating from a batt-ring husband.

4.3. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

(1) In using a shelter population, there is always the concern that this population is not representative of all battered women. In the Johannesburg area, shelter facilities are severely limited. As a result, women, who do not have any source of income, or do not have a support system comprised of family and/or friends, are excluded from the shelter and were, therefore, excluded from the sample. Thus the results may not be generalizable to the broader population.

(2) Another limitation of the study is the small sample size. This was determined by the limited number of women accommodated in the shelter at any one time. The shelter accommodates women from all cultural groups and it was necessary to confine the research to one grouping in order to avoid extraneous variables. 'Coloured' women were chosen because they made up the majority of women using the shelter at the time of the interviews. Therefore, it is uncertain whether the results can be generalized beyond this particular group as 'Coloured' women have particular views on marriage and heterosexual relationships which may not be typical of other cultural groups. Also, there is a particularly high incidence of alcohol abuse among 'Coloured' men which may contribute to the violence (Epstein, 1973; Rabson, 1965). However, a great deal of the information that emerged from the study is common to all women and is consistent with findings in British and North American studies.

In spite of the small sample size. The use of in-depth interviews and open-ended questions ensured a rich and detailed description of each woman's experience of battery and allowed each woman to tell her own unique story. At the same time, common themes were revealed. The present study, in spite of its limitations, presents the lived experience of battery as described by the women themselves. It is in the women's descriptions of the abuse that the full horror of the experience is revealed.

(3) Interviewer bias can be problematic with qualitative research and this may be another limitation of the study. However, this type of research provides greater flexibility and penetration in exploring complex social processes such as wife battering (Angless, 1990). Nonetheless, the interpretation of the data is necessarily subjective and cannot be used for prediction or inference (Grinell, 1980, in Angless). However, such research may be used to generate hypotheses for more quantitative studies.

(4) A further limitation of the study is that it was necessary to rely on the respondent's recall of events that occurred previously. This is inevitable with research into wife battering where direct observation is impossible. However, while there may be some errors or distortions of events, the traumatic effects these events have on the victims appear to leave a vivid impression (Pagelow, 1981).

In spite of the above, a great deal of information was gathered about the experiences of battered women and much of the information was consistent with research done in North America and the United Kingdom.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

(1) Owing to the time constraints on this research report, the sample size was small. Further research is needed to ascertain whether the results can be replicated using a larger sample. This may be possible through detailed analyses of case records, for example, or interviews with workers in the field.

(2) To date, a great deal of research on battery in South Africa has centred on 'Coloured' women (e.g. Adams, 1987; Angless, 1990; Lawrence. This is because this population tends to make use of available shelter and other helping resources. It would be useful to replicate the present research with women from other cultural groups in South African.

(3) Owing to the accessibility of shelter residents to researchers, a great deal of research has focussed on this population. Further research is needed to ascertain whether or not this population is representative of the broader population of battered women.

(4) The present study examined one stage of Walker's (1979-1992) 'cycle of violence'. Further research could duplicate Walker's study in its entirety in order to assess its applicability in the South African context.

(5) Further research possibilities include: a much needed epidemiological study to assess the extent of wife battering in South African; and, a longitudinal study of the experiences of battered women once they have left the shelter.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is hoped that this study and other research in the field will lead to a greater awareness of the needs of battered women, and to the establishment of more and improved resources for these women and their children.

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APPENDIX 1

WALKER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Date:_____

Let's begin with some information about you.

1. First, when were you born _____(exact year).

2. Right now, what is your marital situation? Are you married, single, living with someone, separated?

1...never married	5...separated
2...living with a man	6...divorced
3...married	7...getting divorced
4...remarried	8...widowed

3. How many children do you have?

_____Total number of children

4. What are their first names and ages?

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

_____ _____ _____

5. Are you currently employed or unemployed?

1...unemployed, not looking for work - eg homemeake, student etc.

2...unemployed, looking for work

3...employed part-time

4...employed full-time

5...other _____

6. What is your current occupation _____

(specific job title)

7. (If employed) what is your current monthly income? _____

APPENDIX 2

INTERVIEWER: You don't need to formally ask each question. You do need to formally ask each question if you do not already know the answer based on the preceeding narrative.

(A) When did this battering happen? What year was it?_____

(B) Did your husband ever apologize or do anything to show he was sorry?

1. no

2. yes_____ IF YES what did he say or do?

(circle all that apply)

1...cried

2...verbal expression of sorrow

3...promised to change, stop drinking etc.

4...promised it would never happen again

5...tried to give help in some way (with housework, kids, etc.)

6...brought gifts, gave you money, took your out etc.

7...sex, romance

8...nicer than usual

9...other _____

_____

_____

(C) About how long after the battering did he act, or say he was sorry?

1...immediately after 4..._____day(s) later

2..._____ hour(s) after 5..._____week(s) later

3...the next morning/day 6..._____month(s) later

(D) How long did the nice or loving period last?

1...less than one hour
2..._____hour(s)
3...less than one day
4..._____day(s)
5...less than one week
6..._____week(s)
7...less than one month
8..._____month(s)

(E) Did the children witness the incident?

1...N/A
2...no
3...yes

(F) Were the children threatened or injured during this incident?

1...N/A
2...no
3...yes, threatened
4...yes, injured

(G) What did you do afterwards?

1...Went off by yourself; cried; withdrew
2...Hid what had happened from others; lied, covered up for him
3...Tried to talk it over with him
4...Told someone else about the battering; asked for advice
5...Sought help from others
6...Started legal action against him (whether or not it was dropped)
7...Left the relationship temporarily (at least overnight)
8...Left the relationship permanently
9...Other

(H) Did he ever justify, rationalize, or explain this battering to you?

1...no
2...yes

IF YES what did he say? (Circle all that apply).

1...because of something you did; you deserved it

2...he was drunk

3...he lost control

4...he doesn't know why; he doesn't remember doing it

5...because of some situation

6...because of someone else (or something you did or said)

7...other_____

_____

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