

CHAPTER 6

THE ROLE OF PREGNANCY IN VIOLENCE

Violence is one of the most brutal ways through which men control and oppress their partners. Biologically, women are generally weaker in terms of physique and strength and are thus likely to be disadvantaged in defending themselves. The injuries which some women sustain as a result of the violence are shocking enough to make one believe that any perpetrator would end their violent behaviour after the first incident. But the story does not end there. A startling discovery in studies on family violence revealed that a number of women were battered during pregnancy (Scutt, 1983: 215). For example research has revealed that 40-60% of battered women experience battering more particularly during pregnancy (McFarlane, 1992: 206). In Australia, a survey on Women's Safety (1996: 8) found that 42% of the women who experienced battering reported that such violence occurred during a pregnancy, and 20% experienced violence for the first time when they were pregnant.

This chapter examines the role which pregnancy plays in the whole issue of family violence. The question was put to the women victims, perpetrators, and service providers. It should be pointed out from the beginning that the research was not conducted among women who were pregnant at the time of the interviews, which could be a limitation, although some of the respondents had been battered during pregnancy. The most interesting part of this study is the failure of some service providers to observe the link between violence and pregnancy, as compared with both the perpetrators and survivors, who admitted to the link. This disparity in perception between those who are

inside the situation and those who provide support services seems to be a consistent feature of this study.

6.1 WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF VIOLENCE DURING PREGNANCY

The women involved in this study were asked if they had suffered any form of violence during the term of their pregnancy. They were further asked to comment in general why men would abuse their pregnant partners. The responses are shown in Table 6.1.

TABLE 6.1: WOMEN'S ACCOUNTS OF VIOLENCE DURING PREGNANCY

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Form of Violence</i> | <i>Factors</i> | <i>General Opinion</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Mpho | Verbal/Physical | Finances/Cleanliness | Confidence/Esteem Vulnerable/Unhappy |
| Neo | None | Not Applicable | History/Anger |
| Tseli | Verbal | Jealousy | Jealousy |
| Thato | Physical | Natural Violent | Don't Know |
| Lerato | Physical | Irresponsibility | Ownership |
| Pinki | None | Not Applicable | Alcohol |
| Sophi | Physical | Anger | Probably Sick |
| Maria | None | Not Applicable | Resentment |
| Renee | None | Not Applicable | No Clue |
| Stephanie | Verbal/Physical | Didn't Care | No Idea |
| Brooke | Physical | Vulnerability | Vulnerability |
| Wendy | Verbal/Physical | Alcohol | Lack Respect/History |

Table 6.1 indicates that about two thirds of women responded to having been abused at the time when they were pregnant. The remaining one third had not experienced any violence during pregnancy. More than half of the women abused during pregnancy had experienced physical violence. Factors associated with violence at that particular time included complaints regarding finances, cleanliness, jealousy, natural violence, irresponsibility, anger, not caring, vulnerability and alcohol. The diversity of

these responses clearly shows that symbolic interaction is at play when a significant number of people who are in the same situation interpret it so differently. It also points to the perpetrating partners' explanations for their violence. There always has to be a reason or an excuse for their behaviour.

In so far as the general opinion on violence and pregnancy was concerned, most women had something to say. In two cases violence during pregnancy was associated with both vulnerability and childhood history. Some mentioned that violence during pregnancy could be linked to jealousy; others mentioned ownership of women, alcohol, resentment, and 'mental' sickness as explanations. Three women could provide no reasons why violence might occur during pregnancy.

Women were asked if they had experienced any violence during pregnancy.

Mpho's partner:

"actually started assaults during the first pregnancy. I was at the stage where I could not do much. I could not work anymore, let alone do much domestic work. I was sick most of the time because of complications. But he just didn't understand. Instead he started complaining about our financial position, cleanliness and all sorts of things. He thought I was just lazy".

Mpho had also been hit in the stomach during that period. Looking at this extract, one could deduce that Mpho's casual employment at the time was an invaluable resource because as soon as she stopped working to carry out her maternity duties, the home became transformed into a battleground. Given the nature of pregnancy, one realises how insensitive her partner was towards her condition. It appears to be a competition between Mpho's condition and him, and he is the loser in the sense that she can no longer maintain the house as clean as she used to; she can no longer wake up in the middle of the night to warm his dinner as he so wishes. In other words, she can no longer do whatever he wants her to because of her pregnancy.

Asked why men would abuse pregnant partners she replied:

“Men who assault their pregnant wives have no confidence in themselves. They lack self-esteem. They take advantage of the situation because pregnant women are more vulnerable. But most important such men are not happy at all within themselves”.

Mpho here brings in three factors related to violence, namely low self-concept, the unhappiness of the perpetrator, and the fragile condition of pregnant women. The important aspect here could be that pregnant women are “more vulnerable” bearing in mind that, as stated earlier, women are always thought of as the vulnerable sex, pregnant or not. The extent of this vulnerability could be in terms of women always needing company in case anything happens. For example, some women do experience things like premature delivery, or some complications that require immediate medical attention, or sometimes they just cannot do things for themselves as they would under normal circumstances. To some men, this might be a sign of a ‘typical nagging wife’, which they cannot tolerate. The vulnerability factor seems to match Mpho’s own experience.

Neo had not experienced any violence during pregnancy. But in general terms she observed:

‘I think it has more to do with their childhood history. Men who batter their wives when they are pregnant have probably witnessed or even experienced violence within their own families. Maybe they have also seen their dad hit their mum while she was expectant. They have a lot of anger which they have kept within themselves for a long time. When they abuse their wives, particularly during pregnancy, they are actually taking out their anger, which they could not do when they were kids’.

There are a few things to note in this extract. Neo mentions that witnessing and/or even experiencing violence as a child contributes to men battering pregnant partners. But then the question still remains: what about men who batter their partners all the time, regardless of their condition? The implication of Neo’s story is that men who are abusive during pregnancy have witnessed parental abuse when their mother was

pregnant, and this is where the Social Learning theory of violence comes in (Lackey and Williams, 1995; Finkelhor et al., 1988; Pagelow, 1981). But what it does not explain then is why some men batter their partners all the time irrespective of their condition. It also does not explain then why some battered women like Neo do not experience violence during pregnancy.

Tseli experienced a lot of verbal abuse when she was pregnant. She argued: “he is jealous of the baby because once a woman gets pregnant she becomes more protective of, and pays more attention to what is growing inside her. This often makes a man feel left out”.

Asked why men in general batter women who are pregnant, she asserted:

“they are probably jealous of other men. Often when women are pregnant it affects their desire for sex. Some men want to have sex any time they want. Therefore their wives’ condition sometimes prevents this, and it makes them angry, especially when they know that their mates are having it all the time”.

This section brings to our attention the role of jealousy in violence. While it would be assumed that any man would be happy to be a father, Tseli makes us aware that it is not necessarily so. Instead there seems to be stiff competition between the man and the foetus. The source of this competition is probably the kind of attention which the woman gives to the new member of the family, to the neglect of the man, who probably used to get whatever he wanted at any time. This jealousy is not only confined to the foetus, but is also sex motivated. The man can no longer have sexual intercourse any time he wants, sometimes as a result of medical advice due to the female partner’s condition. But this seems to create problems. Anger and frustration then, are a better way to describe the man’s feelings. Compared to his friends at that particular time, he probably feels worthless.

Thato related her experience:

“I was subjected to constant physical abuse throughout the marriage. But pregnancy was the worst time for me. I had five miscarriages. Every time I fell pregnant he would target the belly whenever he gets violent. It happened all the time until I realised he didn't want me to have a baby”.

She maintained that her partner was ‘naturally violent’, and she just did not know why any man would abuse a pregnant wife after all. Thato's story is one of those that reveal the nasty role of pregnancy in violence. While she had experienced all sorts of physical abuse, including belting, punching, stabbing and so on, her situation grew worse with pregnancy. For her, that was the time when the attacks were not concentrated anywhere but the stomach. The reader should remember that this is the story of a woman whose bladder/bowel burst when her partner continually jumped on her stomach. This clearly shows the intensity of the resentment that the partner has for the unborn child. While one could ask oneself why she did not leave after the first or second incident, one should also remember that this is the woman who married her partner in order to escape from her unstable home, despite the mixed feelings she had about her relationship at the time. Therefore it could be argued that certain circumstances beyond her control kept her in that kind of a relationship.

Lerato is another woman who moved in with her partner at 18 years of age to escape from her family. She was also subjected to ‘constant abuse’ including when she was pregnant, by both her first and second husbands. With the second husband in particular, she: “was thrown against the walls. At one stage he threw me against the bed. He wanted to go to the pub and I was pleading with him not to go because I didn't want to be left alone. I wanted him to stay at home”.

She further commented that “any man who abuses a pregnant woman thinks women are possessions”.

Given the last statement about possession, one could strongly argue that depending upon what Lerato told her partner about her own family problems, then the partner was in a position to draw a line between how much she means to her family and to him. If the stories were very much against her family, then it was obvious that she was giving herself to the man. She decided on staying together with him even though he had already indicated some possessiveness when they were dating. This is not about blaming the victim but simply to show that some of the circumstances that force people like Lerato and Thato into marriage tend to work against them. We are talking about marriage forced by circumstances in this case. Maybe if these two women were not desperate to leave their family homes, they could have had a chance to assess their relationships over time before rushing into any commitment. In actual fact for Lerato the violence started immediately after her engagement, which indicates the role of the engagement ring. Perhaps it is a case of 'you have my ring then you are my property'.

Pinki had not experienced any personal violence during pregnancy, although she believed that generally, 'it has to do mostly with alcohol'. Sophi was subjected to physical violence during pregnancy with her: "eldest child. I was making him to get up so that he could be ready for work. It just made him very angry. He hit me at the waist and when I fell down he poked me in the bottom with a stick". She believes "men who abuse pregnant women are probably sick".

While there will be no attempt to make unwarranted generalisations in so far as this study is concerned, comparisons between cases will be attempted in some instances. For example, Pinki blames the alcohol for violence during pregnancy. Sophi mentions (indirectly) irresponsibility as a source of her personal experience, but at the same time she comes up with the 'sick' mentality. The three factors are very isolated and are in no way related. However, they can serve to complement one another in enhancing the level

of violence. How can an irresponsible man be labeled as sick? Which factors within his irresponsibility determine his sickness? This is in a way a short cut for women leading to the denial of the problem. Given her own personal experience, one does not see how the 'sick' excuse fits in. Moreover, she does not have the professional credibility to conclude on the state of mind of men who batter their wives during pregnancy.

Maria too, had no personal experience of abuse during her pregnancy. But generally, she argued that: "men who abuse their partners when they are pregnant just don't want the baby. They resent the pregnancy. Sometimes they are jealous of the baby or they are not sure if they are the real father".

Renee had neither experienced violence at that particular time, nor had any idea whatsoever why men do it in general. Stephanie was:

"both verbally and physically abused when (she) was three weeks pregnant. I can't remember having done anything wrong at all. All I know was that he just didn't care. He just wanted to take out his anger and I was the only person around him. It was all so convenient for him".

She had no idea why men become violent particularly at the time when their partners are pregnant.

Brooke's personal experience is a bit different from the rest of the women who had been abused during pregnancy. She noted:

"He had never abused me before until I got pregnant with our second child. I remember he slapped me once, and then he choked me. But most of the time he was destroying property. He smashed furniture, he threw stuff like glasses and so on. I would say he was a lot calmer really. He was more violent towards me when I was not pregnant".

She also commented that: "men who become violent towards pregnant women are actually taking advantage of this stage when women are vulnerable and weak. They know that this is the time when women can't fight back".

She mentioned that the middle of their marriage had stood the test of the time, as a result of her partner's job-related stress and other pressures. The reader should also be reminded that Brooke's husband would not allow her to work because he was a proud man. The implication is that if she went out for paid employment then it would appear as though he was not man enough to take care of his family.

Wendy as well was abused during pregnancy. She attributed alcohol as the source. "He was always drunk whenever he became violent". Asked why men become violent particularly at that time, she argued: "they do it due to a lack of respect for the woman and the unborn child. Most probably they had also been ill-treated and experienced some brutality as children themselves. In fact he was abused as a child".

This particular section is more interesting because we see a woman who is making excuses for her partner's behaviour. First of all, he becomes violent only when he is drunk, and this is related to his childhood history of abuse. As argued earlier, the two are very isolated cases. How does his childhood history connect with his violence? Why does he become violent only when he has been drinking? The alcohol and childhood history do not necessarily justify his actions. Most probably the argument based on the lack of respect for the woman and the unborn child is enough justification. Alcohol and childhood history are just complementary factors.

In general, what this chapter tells us is that for some women (Mpho and Brooke) pregnancy would actually trigger the first episode of physical violence where it had never existed before. The two women's accounts also relate violence to external pressure. This is particularly so when the family is already undergoing some form of stress, especially financial. If the woman had been helping bring in some extra income, the loss of that extra income when she stops work, her inability to perform her domestic duties as a wife, and her inability to satisfy her partner sexually each contribute towards physical violence.

Apart from these, some women also brought in the question of vulnerability. Some men would physically abuse their partners all the time. But pregnancy gives them the upper hand because even if their partner could retaliate at other times, pregnancy is a period when they are not able to do anything. Pregnancy is also the time when women need a lot of emotional support from their partners. They would not want to be left alone in the house. As Lerato told me, often the fights start because the partner wants to go out and spend the night out with the boys at the pub. Sometimes the partner believes the wife is a 'nag' because of her condition. Such men tend to believe that their partner's pregnancy is meant to tie them down. Some also believe that women get themselves pregnant deliberately to trap the man. Maria brought to my attention that even though she did not personally experience violence during pregnancy, she believed that some men even doubt if the baby is really his.

Jealousy was also raised as an issue. Mpho and Tseli mentioned that men get angry when their partner is pregnant because of a lack of that special attention they used to get before. Once the woman gets pregnant the focal area becomes the foetus and no longer the husband. It does not come as a surprise therefore that some men target the woman's belly when they go into their rage. Some women (Mpho and Thato) mention that under normal circumstances their partner's physical violence would extend to the face and other parts of the body, but once pregnant, the man aims at the belly. This indicates some anger that the man has towards what is inside that belly.

I would also attempt to tie the above with the issue of witnessing pre-natal violence. It also goes hand-in-hand with an unhappy childhood. Neo and Wendy mentioned that their partners abused them during pregnancy either because they had witnessed and/or experienced such abuse as children (refer to their stories earlier). Wendy's partner in particular had been sexually abused as a child. So, because they still

have not let go of that condition, the memories are brought back by the way their partner ignores them in favour of the unborn baby. In this case it is jealousy mixed with anger. The woman's pregnancy therefore acts as a catalyst, especially when she is a devoted partner under normal circumstances. Therefore resentment, jealousy and anger are highly associated with physical violence in particular, during pregnancy.

The section that follows deals with the male perpetrators' own accounts of violence during pregnancy.

6.2 PERPETRATORS, VIOLENCE AND PREGNANCY

The male respondents in this study were asked if they had been violent towards their partners during pregnancy. They were also asked to comment on why, in general, men would batter their partners during this particular period. The responses are as shown in

Table 6.2:

TABLE 6.2: PERPETRATORS ACCOUNTS OF THEIR VIOLENCE DURING PREGNANCY

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Form of Violence</i> | <i>Factors</i> | <i>General Opinion</i> |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------|--|
| Tim | Verbal | Provocation | Alcohol/Drugs Jealousy/Macho Suspicion |
| Steve | None | Not Applicable | Provocation |
| Richard | None | Not applicable | Suspicion |
| Jack | Verbal | Strain | Trap/Anger |

As the data in Table 6.2 indicates, Tim and Jack admitted to having abused their partners during pregnancy, while Steve and Richard did not. Tim mentioned provocation

as the source of his violence at the time. Asked how this brought about the violence, he argued:

“we only have rows. But I never actually hit her. Most of the time it starts with minor things; you know, the way she looks at me, she talks to me, she walks and even look at other men. These things do annoy me sometimes, and she knows it, but she just doesn’t stop”.

To a further question regarding why men would generally abuse a pregnant partner, he responded:

“some men would become violent towards pregnant wives because they are drunk at the time, or they are on drugs. Another reason is jealousy. You know, sometimes the man doesn’t think he’s the father. This causes problems until he’s sure that he’s the real father. Again, a man tries to play a big man especially when their mates are around. I’ve seen a lot of that happen among my friends”.

When one actually scrutinises Tim’s reasons for the violence, one realises the weight that he gives to the whole violence episode. For him, the verbal abuse or ‘rows’ as he calls it, is not really violence. As long as he does not ‘actually hit her’, then there is no big deal. But he continues to justify his actions. Probably an important question to ask ourselves would be how Tim expects a pregnant woman to behave. Maybe he is in a position to make a distinction between how his partner looks at him, talks to him, walks, and even looks at other men when she is not pregnant. But looking back at Tim’s story in earlier chapters, we see a man who resented the manner in which his partner dressed because it caused his friends to pay more attention to her. Therefore, one can argue that Tim is the kind of a person who seems to want to dictate how his partner should behave, and regardless of condition his jealousy seems to be responsible for his behaviour.

Other important factors that he mentioned when asked about men in general, are alcohol, drugs, jealousy and trying to be a man. Some of these have been mentioned before in chapter 5, which shows that with pregnancy they probably add more to the tension that already exists. If a man abuses a partner under the influence of alcohol, drugs,

or jealousy when the latter is not pregnant, does it mean they cannot distinguish the pregnancy stage as a rather delicate one? For those men who do not think they are the real fathers, are there no other ways of determining if they are responsible, short of resorting to violence? People could always do blood tests if the man believes he is not the father. Or alternatively, both parties could discuss the possibility of an abortion. Otherwise if the woman disagrees, then it is entirely up to her to keep the child, although it is bound to create conflict if the baby is kept against the man's will. But there is more to this argument of 'not being the real father'. What if the man has already resorted to violence and yet the tests prove him to be the real father? Sometimes some men know the truth but just want to complicate matters. They always want a reason to justify their actions, and there is always a finger to point at. Looking back to chapter 1, Stephanie mentioned opting for an abortion of her second child because the father was denying that the baby was his. She maintained that he was the father. This was often the cause of their fights.

It is also important to note that Jack's story sounds more or less similar to Tim's.

Asked about their relationship when his partner is pregnant, Jack asserted:

"I felt good about being a father. However, we still had a few arguments. But the pregnancy put a lot of strain on the relationship, especially when there were other problems already. But for most of the time she was the one who would start the arguments. She would start complaining about some minor issues and so on".

Jack mentions that even though he liked being a parent, the pregnancy itself brought about more tension in the already tense relationship. He also mentions 'a few arguments' trying to play down the violence involved. A point of observation here is that earlier Jack had mentioned the child from a previous relationship had resulted in 'suspicion and jealousy', which in turn influenced his behaviour. It becomes apparent that the additional pressures of another pregnancy where he is the actual father become too

much. In the excerpt above, he blames the victim for always starting the argument. The fact of the matter is that the relationship is troubled already. Therefore regardless of who starts the arguments, the pregnancy is just a catalyst, and a good excuse too.

When asked to comment on why men would generally abuse pregnant partners, he responded:

“They do it because they feel trapped. Maybe they were not expecting it, or they were not ready to have another child. They are thinking of those sleepless nights. They just feel that the baby is meant to tie them down, and they hate to feel tied down. Basically they are angry at the woman for being pregnant”.

What this passage tells the reader is that some men do not want to be forced into commitment. If a man feels trapped by the pregnancy the implication is that he was not ready to become a father, or husband and so on. Often situations would arise whereby some women would think of other unpleasant ways to try and maintain their relationship. Through getting themselves pregnant intentionally and not telling their male partners immediately would be one way. This is enough to make some men angry. As Jack has already explained, some men in general do not want to stay awake most nights to help with the children especially when they are still very young. They probably prefer to go out for late nights with their friends and come straight into bed without any disturbance, given some of the stories told by women interviewed here. The raising of the children is commonly associated with mothers, so no wonder men do not necessarily feel very responsible.

The last factor of anger raises other questions. Is the man angry because the woman did not tell him about the pregnancy on time? Is he angry because he probably did not want a child as yet? Or is he angry because now the woman can no longer give him all the attention he used to get? The baby now gets the first preference and the man feels inferior. Is he angry because the pregnancy would affect his sexual relationship with the

partner? These are just some of the issues which one can deduce from this passage. There seems to be so many things connected to pregnancy and violence and not just the pregnancy period itself.

While Steve and Richard had not personally abused their partners during pregnancy, they gave their views regarding the question of why men do it. Although they could not give accurate accounts since they had not been personally involved in violence during pregnancy, Steve maintained that: “some women provoke the violence when they are pregnant. They are more nagging and more demanding than when they are normal. For instance, they don’t like a man to go out with mates and so on”.

Richard argued that: “at times it (pregnancy) comes as a shock to the man. Some women hide the pregnancy until very late, and sometimes a man is not sure if the child is his. Most of the women do it because they want to keep the man”.

Generally the types of responses given for violence during pregnancy differ widely between the men and women. Basically for men, women either provoke the violence through their complaints and nagging, or some men become suspicious and do not believe that they are the father. This to a certain extent also takes the reader into the serious problem of a lack of trust between the partners. It portrays some of the unhealthy relationships people get themselves into. For women, nine months of pregnancy is a long time to sacrifice their pleasure (both socially and sexually) to carry a baby just to keep the father. It demonstrates what the desire for intimate relationships does to people.

To sum up, men in this study believe that apart from the woman being a ‘nag’ and provocative, suspicion, jealousy and anger have a lot more to do with violence during pregnancy. The thought that the child might not be theirs will definitely cause problems. Where the relationship was already in turmoil, pregnancy just makes matters even worse. Suspicion of deliberate pregnancy is also reason enough to trigger off a violent episode.

As mentioned earlier it is even worse when such pregnancy is concealed to a late stage. That is when the man begins to think that it was a set up. In a case of an already troubled relationship, not all men would welcome such a surprise at an advanced stage of pregnancy. Instead of making them happy, it shocks, scares and angers them. They end up with all sorts of mixed feelings. But some women do not see it that way. They regard such men as jealous, resentful of the unborn child, and lacking a sense of responsibility. The only way to deal with their shock, they believe, is to become physically violent.

6.3 SERVICE PROVIDERS' VIEWS ON VIOLENCE DURING PREGNANCY

Service providers were asked to comment on the relationship between family violence and pregnancy, and the results are shown in Table 6.3. This question involved issues relating to their encounter with clients who had battered/been battered only during pregnancy; and for those who had been battered all the time. What impact did pregnancy have on the battering process?

TABLE 6.3 : SERVICE PROVIDERS, VIOLENCE AND PREGNANCY

| <i>Service Provider</i> | <i>Form of Violence</i> | <i>Factors</i> | <i>General Opinion</i> |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Cindy | All Forms | Myth | Power |
| Frank | None | Not Applicable | Tension |
| Nancy | Some | Jealousy/Sex | Don't Know |
| Sarah | Some | Suspicion | Vulnerability |
| Group | All Forms | Not Applicable | Power |

The data shows the responses of the service providers pertaining to the relationship between violence and pregnancy. As people who work with both victims and perpetrators of violence, they were further asked if they had observed any period during

pregnancy which they identified as 'risk period' for women. Finally they were asked to comment on why, in general, battering might occur particularly during pregnancy.

Cindy responded that there is no relationship between violence and pregnancy. She argued "this is a myth. Violence occurs at any time". However, she maintained that the main reason for violence occurring is that "men always have power over women". So regardless of what a woman's condition is, violence will occur because men want to exercise their power.

Frank works mainly with male perpetrators of violence. However, the only link he could make was that "pregnancy and the new baby would intensify the tension between the two people". Nancy had not "personally encountered women assaulted during pregnancy and did not have enough experience in this area to comment further".

However, on a general note she:

"would imagine that the reason for violence during pregnancy has to do with jealousy and sexual motivation. The man is probably jealous because the woman now pays more attention to the unborn baby. He is also angry because the woman's condition could affect their sex life".

Sarah, on the other hand, has observed a relationship between pregnancy and violence. As she put it: "the man is not sure if the child is his. Moreover, the woman is in a more vulnerable position and worse still, she cannot do exactly what he wants".

The Group on the other had another story to tell, arguing that:

"we have had women who were pregnant entering our service, and they had been physically abused. They have tended to have had abusive relationships of some form prior to pregnancy. For us the most important point to make is that assault is an abuse of power regardless of condition".

Asked why there was violence during pregnancy, they responded "we are not the experts in causes. We only deal with prevention strategies, safety issues, and the effects".

In theory this might be the case, but in practice it just does not work. The denial or rather a deliberate lack of recognition of violence during pregnancy would not help

eradicate the problem. People have got to realise that family violence is multifaceted and has a lot of factors associated with it. The denial of this association therefore hinders progress in terms of prevention. Prevention is better than cure but at the same time the 'cause' should be the central issue. It should also be noted that some of the factors contributing to this type of violence are more serious than others. For example, one should not equate verbal abuse with hitting a pregnant woman in the stomach and the effects in particular are totally different. Professional service providers should appreciate the distinction, so that they establish the right prevention strategies and safety measures for the right effects.

Looking throughout the responses, at least one pattern emerges. Even though some service providers were reluctant to admit to any relationship between pregnancy and violence, on a general note they do tie the violence to the whole question of power between men and women regardless of a woman's condition. Violence is a result of men abusing the power they have over the women, or that some men want to demonstrate the amount of power they have by abusing their partners. I found this to be in line with what O'Donnell and Craney (1982: 97) describe as 'a community development model' which insists that women who seek assistance from refuges are not necessarily different from other women except the severity of the problems they are dealing with.

The logical extension of the above perspective is that family violence cannot be seen in isolation from other results of sexual inequality, but is simply one of the problems with which many women have to contend. In this way the people who adhere to this model use family violence to highlight women's position in society. As O'Donnell and Craney (1982: 97) have observed, there is a close relationship between family violence and the nature of family power relationships, as has also been pointed out by some service providers in this study. Therefore collectives (those who run feminist refuges in

particular) are seen as one way of breaking down the hierarchical relations under which women live, and to which they have become accustomed.

Another point of observation is the manner in which the Group responded to the question of the causes of violence during pregnancy. What is very clear about their position is that they are not concerned about the 'causes' of battering, and yet this is an important contribution which sociology has made to the study of family violence. The implication is that they only treat the problem from one side, namely, the women who can seek shelter from their services. Otherwise, for them issues of provocation by women, or women who are naturally violent, and who could be physically abused as a result do not exist. A common theme is that men are the perpetrators, and they inflict the pain to show they are macho men, a point that was also raised by one of the men. In actual fact, one could take this as a denial of the problem since this is a problem that involves two people. One would think that in order to handle the situation effectively the two people involved in the violence should also be involved in prevention strategies, safety issues and the effects of violence on the whole family.

Their generalisations about violence and pregnancy also deny the problem. For example, Cindy says any relationship between violence and pregnancy is a myth. The Group talks about a tendency for women who were physically abused during pregnancy to have had abusive relationships before. Obviously, there is a relationship between violence and pregnancy. However, what is not clear is whether or not pregnancy causes wife battering, or whether it is just another factor to be considered. By merely looking back at the case studies of women who participated in this study, not all of them were abused during pregnancy. Again looking back, for some women the violence actually started with their first or second pregnancy. Therefore both Cindy and the Group to an extent seem to contradict the women's experiences of violence and pregnancy.

Some victims and perpetrators attribute violence during pregnancy to alcohol. Some victims also associate violence during that time with childhood history, which is mentioned by neither the perpetrators nor service providers. For men in particular, provocation and suspicion are more common. In terms of comparisons among the three categories of respondents, one could still see a pattern emerging. All associate violence during pregnancy with jealousy, suspicion and anger. This shared perception of the jealousy, suspicion and anger leads one to conclude that the three factors are related.

Therefore from what the data tell us, pregnancy does play a major role in violence. As some of the victims mentioned, even if they were verbally abused before, it was with pregnancy that physical violence started, and the target was the tummy. This indicates that either the partner is angry about the pregnancy, or they are somehow suspicious, and the only way to make their anger known is to try and get rid of what is inside the womb. Vulnerability of pregnant women, anger or resentment and jealousy and suspicion, and alcohol were mentioned more than other factors associated with violence during pregnancy.

Despite the contrary views of some of the service providers regarding violence during pregnancy, it is unequivocal that there is a relationship between violence and pregnancy, such that some battered women are likely to be physically abused during that period.

CHAPTER 7

RESPONSES TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

Battered women have often been considered to show low self-esteem, passivity, shyness, helplessness, self-blaming, complete avoidance of helping services, or delays in the use of medical care (Stark and Flitcraft, 1988: 306). But Dobash et al. (1985: 163) refute this claim. They argue that battered women suffer from severe and persistent violence, that they are hemmed in by social, moral and material forces, that help-seeking is a complex and multi-layered process not necessarily related directly to the severity of a particular violent assault, and that the nature of agency responses plays a direct role in this overall process. This chapter serves to examine the role of agencies, family, friends, police and medical practitioners in handling the violence situation. But most importantly it attempts to show that even though some women may be self-blaming, it is the circumstances that force them to do this. Also, far from avoiding help-seeking, some women are prevented from doing so through fear, or because of the attitude of some of those they seek help from.

As will be shown later in the discussion, some of the women involved in this study mentioned ill-treatment and a lack of sympathy by a number of the people working in service provision, people who are in a position to provide the type of assistance needed by women in a battering situation.

Women were asked about their experiences regarding the responses of the various bodies with which they came in contact, and we now examine their accounts.

7.1 WOMEN'S CONTACTS DURING VIOLENCE

Women were asked if at any time when they were in a violent situation they contacted anybody. The purpose of this question was to determine what role bodies like the family, friends, doctors, social workers, and the police played in handling the violence.

The results are shown in Table 7.1:

TABLE 7.1 WOMEN: VARIOUS RESPONSES TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Family</i> | <i>Friends</i> | <i>Police</i> | <i>Doctor</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Mpho | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | FSS/Court |
| Neo | Yes | Yes | Never | Yes | SW |
| Tseli | Yes | Yes | Yes | N/A | FSS/Refuge |
| Thato | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | SW/LA/Refuge |
| Lerato | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | SW/LL/AA |
| Pinki | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Refuge |
| Sophi | Yes | Yes | No | No | Refuge |
| Maria | Yes | No | Yes | Yes | Ambulance |
| Renee | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Counsellor/Refuge |
| Stephanie | Yes | No | Yes | No | Counsellor/Refuge |
| Brooke | Yes | Yes | No | Yes | Court/Refuge |
| Wendy | Yes | Yes | No | No | SW/Refuge |

Key:

FSS – Family Support Services LL – Life Line
 AA – Al-Anon SW – Social Worker
 LA – Legal Aid Couns – Counsellor

All twelve women interviewed had contacted at least two bodies for help. In terms of community services, all the women had contacted at least one of Family Support Services, Legal Aid, Social Workers, Women's Refuge, Life Line, Al-Anon

or Counsellors, two thirds of them having been to a refuge. Eight of the women had seen the doctor with three needing hospitalisation. Less than half of the women had contacted the police. For all the women at least a member of one of either family knew or had been contacted about the violence. Finally, half of the sample had contacted friends. The responses of these various bodies are dealt with in a case by case manner next.

7.1.1 FAMILY

Except for Mpho, Maria and Stephanie, the rest of the women had contacted members of their own family for help. Neo found her family very helpful as she used to seek safety from them all the time during the assaults. As she put it:

“the assaults were regular. They used to occur even when other people like my friends and relatives were around. But nobody could do anything. To some, it didn’t matter; some relatives were frightened of him as well. People would not interfere out of fear. So I finally resorted to my parents who did nothing except to offer me shelter”.

Tseli as well had contacted her brother regarding her partner’s violent behaviour. She commented that:

“one time I also told my brother about his behaviour. He came over to our place to try and to talk to him. Instead he gave my brother a very different picture. He pretended to be a nice person and my brother was convinced. But the minute he left the arguments start again”.

Thato’s story involves both families:

“His mother and brother knew about the violence, but never did anything to help. However, my sister-in-law was a bit different. She was somehow sympathetic. The first time I sustained severe injuries she came and took me to the hospital with broken bones and wounds as a result of repeated stabbings”.

Apart from her sister-in-law, Thato’s uncle and auntie were very helpful after she was hospitalised due to a serious bladder problem after her partner jumped onto her stomach.

Lerato's situation was rather different. Her parents knew about the violence but "were constantly telling me to make the best out of my marriage". They would not allow her to leave her situation, as that would imply being a failure as a wife. For Pinki, once her partner tried to hit her in the presence of her cousin:

"My cousin tried to come in between and he actually had a fight with him...My sister was always there for me as well anytime I needed assistance. I used to stay with her at times when I left my partner. His auntie knew about the violence and thought I should get out of the situation".

Sophi's mother also used to offer her support in terms of shelter whenever she left her partner. At one stage she even confronted him. In her words "my mum wanted to kill him. She would yell and scream at him". Renee used to stay with her parents every time she left her partner. But she argued that there was not much they could do since the same person also threatened them. Stephanie could not contact any member of her own family because they did not get along (she was adopted). But her partner's father was aware of the situation and he became hard on the son. Brooke left and three times she stayed at her mother's place. She argued that: "mum had never liked him and as such I wouldn't bother her much. I would only tell her that we were having just a few problems. I knew I was going back to him anyway". Wendy was assaulted while her brother was actually around. She asserted: "he hit me in front of my brother, and they fought. My brother punched him on the nose".

The pattern that emerges out of this analysis is that the families of the women in particular were very helpful and understanding towards their situations. With the exception of Lerato, the women received a lot of support from their families. Others like Thato and Stephanie also received support from some of their in-laws. For Brooke even though she went into the relationship knowing that her mother was against it, she was lucky that she was always there for her whenever she left her

partner. The family of origin and relatives are likely to be more supportive towards victims of violence than any other family member, with a few exceptions as already mentioned.

The women who did not contact their families had strong reasons to avoid doing so. Mpho did not personally contact her family members, (although her sister came to know later through the police) because she did not want them involved. However, she maintained that her partner's parents knew about his behaviour, because he became violent on many of the occasions they were present. Not only were they indifferent, but they also complained about her screams. Maria as well did not want to involve anybody, as the cause of her problems was her mother coming to live with them. Nevertheless her mother knew about her situation but could not do anything, especially because Maria was determined to give her marriage a second chance.

7.1.2 FRIENDS

Mpho's friends were not only contacted regarding the violence but sometimes it occurred in front of their eyes. But she argued that she could not bother talking to them because they took sides with him no matter how bad he was. Neo was in a similar situation whereby friends were powerless in terms of action regarding her partner's behaviour. This was out of fear and indifference. Tseli contacted friends from both his and her side. "His mates would not interfere. My own friends did not have much to say even though they felt sorry for me". Thato could not contact any of their friends because "I was not allowed to see anybody. They all knew about what was happening but could not do anything".

Lerato was not allowed to have any friends of her own, except for her

partner's friends. She commented that "his friends would pretend to be sympathetic but used to make sexual advances at me whenever he was not around". Pinki's friends were always on her side, suggesting she should get out of the situation before it was too late. Sophi's friends were advising her in a similar fashion to Pinki's. According to her story: "On a few occasions he abused me in front of our friends. His own friends tried to stop him but he turned and hit them as well. Some even tried to talk him out of his behaviour. My own friends encouraged and convinced me to leave".

Unlike Thato, Maria did not have any friends at all. As she pointed out "I have no friends at all. In fact, we don't have anyone around because he just doesn't want anyone to stay around". Renee, on the contrary, had very understanding friends around her. "They thought he had lost control. They told me to move in with them anytime I wanted to".

Brooke was scared to let anyone know of her situation, although it came out evidently. She mentioned that:

"I was frightened to tell anybody of what was happening in case he found out about whatever I had been saying. He made me believe I was a non-human. He used to chase everyone away and some of our friends were really scared of him. But one time after a beating which left me with a black eye, my girlfriend persuaded me to see the doctor. She couldn't care less about what he would do or say anymore".

Wendy's friends did not approve of her partner's behaviour. She was pushed around twice at a party. Her friends even expressed their concern regarding his behaviour.

There appear to be two types of action, then, on the part of the friends concerned. For some women, friends could only feel sorry for them but out of fear, loyalty to the man, or sheer indifference, they would not interfere directly. For others,

friends could only try and stop the man from immediate violence and even try talking to him about his behaviour. Some of the lucky women would actually receive some advice such as leaving the situation or seeking medical attention if they needed any. But the sole decision to either stay or leave the abusive relationship was with the women, despite any advice they were given.

Where both parties shared friends, either such friends become indifferent to the man's violence, confront him regarding his behaviour, or even to go so far as advising the victim to get out of the situation. Where friends turned a blind eye, some women were left with a feeling of hopelessness because even if they wanted to contact such people they already knew what the reaction would be like. So they just did not bother any more. If they disapproved, either they risked getting into fights with him or their friendship was destroyed. Where a woman's friends were involved, in most cases they tried and gave their friend the advice which they thought was best for her, even if it cost them something to do so.

7.1.3 POLICE

Less than half of the women in the study involved the police. Some talked directly with the police, but others could not contact the police out of fear. Relatives called for police intervention in other cases, sometimes because the woman was in a life-threatening state. It is also important to note that some women (Mpho, Tseli, Lerato and Stephanie) involved the police once several incidences of violence had taken place, as will be shown by the accounts later in the text. Others (Neo, Pinki, Sophi, Renee, Brooke and Wendy) would not contact the police at all, out of fear and shame of talking to someone about the violence, out of fear that the assaults would intensify if the police became involved, or as a result of repeated threats of violence if someone

is told.

Mpho had stayed in a violent relationship for more than three years without involving anybody. She described the assaults as regular, “at least once a week”. She had been beaten, hit with items, and stabbed with a knife such that she sustained serious injuries, and even kept in isolation; but still she would not let anyone know. Some of her partner’s family members knew what was going on but just decided to remain indifferent. When she finally rang the police, she told them:

“he was violent and destructive to property. I was worried that he might do something silly. The police took me to my sister’s place and kept a watchout on the flat. They wanted to arrest him on the grounds that I was going to press charges, to which I agreed”.

Tseli was in a violent relationship for about ten years. She was subjected to a lot of verbal abuse, name calling and death threats. She was also punched, smacked and had a knife held at her sometimes. She mentioned that this life of terror went on “approximately twice a week” for the rest of her marriage. She contacted the police when “he threatened to take an overdose. He was also threatening to shoot himself. I told them that he threatened suicide. They came over to look for gun... “. For Thato, she could not personally involve the police out of fear. But “my uncle and auntie involved the police because I was hospitalised. The police arrested him”.

Lerato as well lived in terror in all her three marriages. She called for police intervention after: “he hit me and was threatening to shoot himself. When they came over, the first thing they wanted to know was if I was going to press charges and when I said no they left”.

Maria did not contact the police, but her partner did. This was following physical assaults by Maria in retaliation to constant verbal and emotional abuse. He told the police that she was suffering from a nervous breakdown and they were

convinced that she should agree to go to hospital. Stephanie called in the police after one of their fights:

“I had physically assaulted him in retaliation and he had smashed items all over. There was furniture everywhere. I told them it was a domestic violence situation. Instead they arrested us both for malicious damage. I decided to drop the charges because he already had another to answer to, drugs”.

As the women’s stories clearly indicate, the police were involved as a last resort, sometimes when the women felt they were in a life-threatening situation. There were cases of two women who called in the police because they felt their partners’ lives were in danger, because they threatened to shoot themselves. One woman thought her partner would do something harmful to himself, so she rang the police. We should note also that the police got involved in these cases particularly because the perpetrators posed a danger to themselves from the point of view of the victims. This portrays the position of power that the perpetrators have on their victims. The victims are not necessarily seeking intervention and assistance per se for themselves, but rather for the very same people who have been abusing them over time. Even those women who did not seek intervention by the police had been threatened over time to prevent them from seeking such assistance. This also indicates the power position that the perpetrators wield over their victims.

In other cases, especially Maria’s, we should note the manner in which the police connived with her partner, believing that she was the one who actually had a problem. The fact that they did not give her a chance to explain her situation further explains the police perception of family violence, that ‘a man’s home is his castle’. The same could be said about Stephanie’s situation. Because she too resorted to physical violence, the police in turn arrested her despite her having done that in self-defence. She also later had the charges against her partner dropped because he was

involved in another drug-related charge. But the police could in future use that against her whenever she called them, that she was not serious about her situation, especially when it came to pressing and dropping charges. But when I asked her about dropping the charge she mentioned she did not really see any need since the partner was going to be tried for a rather “serious” offence (her word). This implies that for her the violence was not as serious as the drug charges.

This is further shown in Mpho’s case, whereby the police did arrest but only because she was going to lay charges. The implication is that if she refused, then it would have been a catch 22 situation. The police would have probably just left as they would feel there was no point in intervening, particularly when the victim did not want to take her case further. Lerato’s case is more or less similar. The police were rather interested in establishing if she was prepared to lay any charges, and on realising that she was not opting for that, they simply left without even advising her about the other options and alternatives she had.

7.1.4 MEDICAL DOCTORS

More than half of the women mentioned having been to the doctor’s, at least once as a result of the injuries they sustained. Mpho sought medical attention after severe hitting, beating and having had items thrown at her. The assaults occurred during her first pregnancy, during which she was also hit in the stomach. “I told the doctor that the bruises were a result of domestic violence, and he put it down on paper in case I wanted to build a case”. Neo needed treatment for a “broken finger which had to be x-rayed. I told the doctor I didn’t remember what happened”. Thato was hospitalised several times after sustaining severe to life-threatening injuries:

“Once my sister-in-law took me to the hospital with broken bones and wounds from hitting and repeated stabbings. I told the doctor all sorts of stories, that I

fell over, I fell down the steps, off the bed, ran into the door and so on. He knew my injuries were a result of bashing but wouldn't act unless I told him the truth and asked for further intervention. I was again hospitalised after my bladder burst”.

She suffered this severe damage after her partner had been released from jail, after doing some time for family violence. That was the time when her relatives involved the police and the man was arrested and later charged.

Lerato as well needed hospital treatment. “I was hospitalised with bruises and cracked ribs. I told the doctor that my husband did it. He thought it was a joke. He was not sympathetic at all”. Pinki consulted her doctor due to some bruises. “She thought and advised me to get help and get out of the situation before it was too late. She even referred me to a counsellor”. Maria was taken to the hospital after her partner convinced both the police and the ambulance officers that she was actually suffering from nervous breakdown, after she physically assaulted him. Renee suffered: “a broken nose. It happened around midnight and he wouldn't dare allow me to leave the house. I managed to get out though. I went to my doctor's place and told her that he did it. Instead she put me on depressants and told me to go home”.

Brooke saw the doctor as a result of her friend's efforts:

“I went to the doctor's twice after my girlfriend persuaded me to go. I suffered a black eye as well as a sore throat as a result of choking. The doctor was very angry. She wanted me to get out of the place. She wanted to call the police because she had enough evidence, but I was really scared...in case he found out about what I had been saying”.

In almost all the cases where the doctors were involved, they were prepared to assist the women not only in terms of mending the injuries but also in trying to get them to bring their situation to the law. For example, apart from Lerato and Renee's cases, the rest of the women received advice and referrals from their doctors. However, it is worth noting that the onus was on the women if they wanted to further

involve other bodies such as the police. But otherwise the doctors' hands were tied if the women did not want to disclose the causes of their injuries. Even if the doctors were aware of the situation, their hands were tied and their lips were sealed, as in the case of Thato, who lied deliberately to their doctor about the nature of their injuries.

The doctor did not believe Lerato's story, while Renee was put on medication and told to go home. Both these cases demonstrate indifference on the part of the doctor. There are doctors who are sympathetic to victims of family violence and are even willing to make referrals, but there are some who turn a blind eye to the situation. The reasons for such differences need to be explored in future research in this area.

7.1.5 OTHER SERVICES

All the women in the study had contacted at least a community agency apart from their family, friends, police or doctor. Eight of the women had been at least to a refuge. The Department of Welfare contacted the Women's Refuge on Tseli's behalf after she left her partner. She had this to say about the refuge she had been in: "they offered tremendous support in terms of money, arranging for the kids to attend my husband's funeral (as he ultimately committed suicide). They really offered every assistance possible".

Thato's refuge accommodation was organised by the hospital she was in:

"they wanted to get me a place to go to after being discharged from the hospital. At the time though, the refuge was overcrowded but the staff were very helpful in arranging counselling services. They also helped me apply for social security. The thing is most of the workers had gone through battering. They empathise with others' situation".

With the exception of Stephanie, the other women also found the refuges of great assistance. Pinki found the refuge "a kind of place which women in my situation

need. They offer the best possible type of assistance. They are really good”. Sophi commented on the refuge workers. “They are of great help. They are always there to help whenever they can. Very nice people”. Renee found refuge workers “very good. Some of them are always available whenever anyone wants to talk to them”. Brooke mentioned that “refuge services are great. Workers are very supportive. If I want to cry, I can do it without anyone criticising me or calling me names. I feel quite safe here”. For Wendy, “refuge workers provide a very important and brilliant assistance. They arranged for my transfer from one refuge to the other”. However, as mentioned in chapter 5, Stephanie was least impressed with the refuge she was in. At the time of the interviews the refuge was making arrangements to move her to an alternative place for safety reasons, following repeated obscene telephone calls and constant harassment by her partner. Even though she believed that at the time she was “being treated badly and unfairly”, she still maintained that “some of the workers are very good”.

In Stephanie’s case, the refuge staff in general felt that other residents as well as staff members were in danger because her partner had managed to get hold of their telephone number, and it would not be difficult to trace the location. This was a chicken and egg situation whereby she was being accused of having rung her partner and as such was responsible for giving out the refuge number; and she in turn criticised the refuge for publicly making their telephone number known and the type of messages they left on the answering machine. Each of the parties denied the allegations levelled at them by the other. But all the same, Stephanie was on the receiving end because the refuge was not prepared to keep her any more. Her case was bad enough to allow her to make a clear-cut demarcation among the workers between “some good workers” and “bad ones”.

Apart from this particular case, the women mentioned specific services that their respective refuges provided, as well as general emotional support. The refuges were commended as points of referral and liaison with other services such as Family Support Services, Counselling Services, Social Welfare and so on. These other services, particularly Family Support, were mentioned as “very supportive and of invaluable assistance”. The women’s stories so far point to refuges as being an ideal place for women who are escaping family violence situation.

Two of the women were involved in court cases. Mpho’s partner had been to court before on family violence related charges:

“where he was placed on a good behaviour bond. But his harassment and abuse still continued and he ended up in court again, where he was placed on yet another good behaviour bond. I thought the whole court ruling was a big joke. I lost all the trust I had in the court system. I never wanted to see myself in court again. Never”.

Even though Brooke was scared to let anyone know of her plight, she finally plucked up the courage and fought her partner in court over custody of their children. Contrary to her expectations, the court was an absolute disappointment. The court ruled against her because “the judge didn’t believe that any woman could have a sole right to the kids. He just didn’t believe that I could take care of the kids all by myself”. However, for Thato, her uncle approached the legal services for advice, which resulted in her partner’s prosecution. He ended up in jail.

The implication from the extracts is that with a few exceptions the courts often favour the perpetrators of violence. Mpho’s case is a classic example of a partner who is just placed on a succession of good behaviour bonds despite his failure to honour any of them. It makes one wonder further about when the court would realise the seriousness of the situation and the dangers posed to the woman. Another example of the continued indifference of the court system until such time that

enormous damage has been done is Thato's. Because she ended up with a burst bladder and her internal injuries were so serious that even her doctor did not think she would survive, it was easy for the court to then convict the man and sentence him to jail, because there was enough evidence for them to do so.

Finally, women like Neo, Thato and Lerato had contact with social workers as well. With the exception of Thato, the other women commented on the service as being "very helpful and very supportive". Thato on the other hand talked about a social worker who was organised by the hospital. She mentioned that the person "was very nasty. She told me that I deserved what I got". The woman mentioned that the social worker did not understand why she was still in a violent relationship if it was not that she liked it. This is yet another story of indifference and blaming the victim by a person who is in a position to assist. It could also be attributed to the power position which the social worker as a service provider felt she had on her client, which of course was being abused; or to the general perception that women who are in a battering situation deserve it or like it, that being the reason why they remain in such relationships despite repeated incidences of violence.

The women were further asked what impact their partners' violent behaviour has had on their (women's) lives. They were also asked about how they felt their decision to leave their violent partners has benefited them, and the responses are shown in Table 7.2.

As the data in the table below indicate, women's responses varied widely regarding the type of impact that their partners' violence has had on them. A feeling of strength and low self-esteem were mentioned twice each, hatred, regrets, scared, lack of trust, no more intimacy, feeling of indefinite punishment, too much violence and no impact at all, mentioned in one case each. When it came to the question of

how their decision to leave the abusive situation has helped them, the responses still varied, although there was a pattern emerging. The great majority of women mentioned being independent as a benefit, one woman said she had learnt to be more assertive, another mentioned being more cautious about relationships, one felt a great relief, and finally one said she felt better emotionally.

TABLE 7.2 WOMEN AND VIOLENCE: IMPACT AND BENEFITS

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Impact</i> | <i>Benefit</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Mpho | Strong | Independent |
| Neo | No Trust | Independent |
| Tseli | Punishment | Independent |
| Thato | Scared | Independent |
| Lerato | No Intimacy | Emotionally |
| Pinki | Strong | Independent |
| Sophi | Self-Esteem | Assertive |
| Maria | Self-Esteem | Independent |
| Renee | Too Much | Independent |
| Stephanie | Hatred | Cautious |
| Brooke | Regrets | Independent |
| Wendy | None | Relief |

Mpho mentioned that the violence had made her feel stronger. In terms of relationships, “it all depends upon who you meet. The decision to leave has made me stronger, creative and artistic. It has taught me not to take any more rubbish from anybody”. Neo had been left with a lack of trust in intimate relationships. But having

left the violent situation has made her not go back to her partner again. She believes in getting to know someone well before dating.

Tseli feels that:

“the violence has changed my whole life altogether. The kids still have problems. My daughter still undergoes counselling. We are still waiting for criminal compensation. But my decision to get out has made me feel stronger. I like myself, which is something I never did before. I am more independent for the first time in my life” (her emphasis).

Thato had a more or less similar story. She also mentioned that the effects of the violence “have made me stronger although I was a mess for a long time. I was even scared to walk around alone. I was scared”. Asked about the benefits she has gained by leaving her partner, she mentioned “independence, self-reliance, and being able to cope alone”.

On the contrary, Lerato mentioned that as a result of constant abuse over time, she did not want to be involved in any marriage or any intimate relationships. She believed that was the way not to get hurt again. Unlike Lerato, Pinki has “become very strong. I can’t take any more shits from anybody again. I have actually gained more in terms of independence and strength”. Sophi suffered “low self-esteem. I am afraid of committing myself again...But now if I really want to stick for myself I can. There’s no excuse for any more abuse or hurt again”. Maria also had “very low self-esteem. I feel incapable of doing things for myself”. It should be pointed out that Maria felt that the temporary decision (when she was in hospital and refuge) has helped her to re-assess herself. She mentioned that her dream was “to go back to prove myself” to her husband, in terms of having gained “self-esteem and independence”.

Renee commented that the violence was “just too much for me. I feel independent now”. Stephanie felt: “hatred towards men. I keep worrying if I will

ever meet somebody who cares, someone who won't abuse me, especially in front of my son... I am more careful not to rush into things. I have learnt to look after myself and my son before anybody else”.

Brooke had:

“a lot of regrets. I feel I have wasted a lot of my precious time... Somehow I have become independent. I feel that I have made the right decision to leave, although I have to learn a lot about myself before I can learn about other people. I want to give my kids a proper upbringing”.

Wendy was not affected by her partner's violence to the extent that other women seem to have been affected. She mentioned that “it has not really had devastating effects on me”. She also said, “my life with him was hopeless. I felt incredible relief when I left him”.

For many women who have been in a violence situation, then, life can be a living hell. The impact of the violence had been enormous, resulting in some very difficult feelings. Those ranged from a general fear to regrets. The loss of trust in intimate relationships is another related factor, and some have their self-concept eroded as a result of constant emotional abuse. The tendency is for such women to automatically become like robots, acting at the dictates of their masters when it is convenient for them. But almost all the women in the study mentioned that they had gained more strength as a result of the hardships they endured. This is at times accompanied with in-depth hatred for men, full of regrets in life. But the resultant benefit is that many women who finally escape the violence talk about having gained more in terms of independence, emotionally and otherwise, and assertiveness. They were deprived of these valuable things through their violent relationships.

7.2 PERPETRATOR CONTACT CONCERNING VIOLENCE

The men were asked if they had contacted anyone during violence, and what the responses of those contacted were. The results are shown in Table 7.3

TABLE 7.3. PERPETRATORS: VARIOUS RESPONSES TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Family</i> | <i>Friends</i> | <i>Other</i> |
|-------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Tim | No | Yes | Counsellor |
| Steve | Yes | Yes | None |
| Richard | No | No | Counsellor |
| Jack | No | No | None |

It should be pointed out that the police had been involved as all these men had been placed on probation instead of being sent to prison. Except for Steve, none of the men contacted their family concerning their violence. Tim's fights with his partner were a result of family tensions. He could not even allow his parents to stay in his house because he wanted privacy, never mind telling them about his behaviour. He argued that: "I don't think there's anything wrong with me. What happens in my (his emphasis) house is none of anyone's business. I get violent if I'm pushed to the limit. I am a human being and I can only take so much like any other man". However, he did get through to a counsellor who was organised by the community program he is undergoing. He mentioned that "even counselling does not help because every time anything goes wrong, everyone blames the man". Hence he believed that with this type of attitude there could never be any solution to the problem.

Steve on the contrary used to contact either his mother or uncle whenever he had a fight because he found them very helpful in terms of listening. He mentioned

that they did not condone his violence and thought he was a “low-down” (his words) person, which to me means that he stooped too low to be thought a worthy person. His friends could not discuss the problem with him. Like Tim, he could not come up with any idea regarding a solution because:

“there is no solution at the moment. This type of thing happens in almost all houses due to a lack of self-esteem. Men think low of themselves, that they can’t do as better (Tim’s expression) as others. But for anybody to make a judgement really depends upon how the whole violence started. Sometimes women start it and nobody knows exactly what happens in my house unless they are present at the time”.

So in effect what Steve is saying is that before blaming anybody, especially the perpetrator in this case, outsiders should gather facts first. He believed that jumping to conclusions about who is wrong would not help solve the problem. This probably indicates that trying to deal with family violence from one angle, whether victim or perpetrator, is not an adequate approach.

Richard could not approach anybody except a counsellor who, as in Tim’s case, was recommended by a community program. His mother was the source of the problems between Richard and the girlfriend, and he felt that had it not been for her, they could have tried to work things out. He could not contact his friends because “most of them do exactly as I do”. He saw a counsellor “but I couldn’t understand what she was saying. It didn’t help and it was just a waste of time”. He saw family violence as: “cruel; something which shouldn’t occur under any circumstances. I have no clue why it happens at all, although for single people I think it is due to a lack of trust. Maybe partners need a bit of space, say a couple of hours apart every week”. Like Tim he did not think counselling was of any help.

Apart from the community program he was in, Jack had no family to contact, no friends to talk to because everyone walked out on him because of his violent

behaviour. He mentioned this as having had a big impact on his life. He also mentioned that talking to somebody about the problem, particularly marriage counsellors, was very important. However, he had not seen any counsellor at the time of interviews.

The perpetrators seemed to show some remorse although there were still some excuses for their behaviour. It appears though that if they did not find themselves in a court situation life was normal. For instance, Richard did not see any need to talk to someone who did exactly the same sort of thing. So, the implication therefore is that they only felt bad at the time of interviews due to the circumstances they found themselves in. Another observation was that even for those who contacted somebody, it was only when things were already out of hand, as when the situation had exploded into physical violence resulting in injuries.

7.3 SERVICE PROVIDERS RESPONSE TO FAMILY VIOLENCE

All the service providers who worked with victims and perpetrators involved in this study were asked what finally made their clients come to them. (Jodie could not finish the interviews due to a court case) Their responses are shown in Table 7.4:

TABLE 7.4: REASONS WHY CLIENTS FINALLY SEEK ASSISTANCE

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Reason</i> | <i>Cause of Decision</i> |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Cindy | Violence | Escalation of Violence |
| Frank | Legal Obligation | Extremity of Case |
| Nancy | Dissatisfaction | Strength |
| Sarah | Desperation | Desperation |
| Group | Violence | Specific Violence |

While it is evident from previous chapters that violence is the main reason why victims and perpetrators seek help, the service providers were asked to comment if they also believed that the decision to seek help was related to the incidents/level of violence experienced. As some of the information here has been used in other chapters, at certain stages summaries of the stories will be adopted.

Cindy believed that women in particular seek help from her service because of the violence. She argues that some women realise that their bashing situation cannot continue indefinitely, and sometimes the extension of violence to their children becomes the determining factor. She noted that: “escalation of violence against children in some is important. For others only one incident of physical abuse but a lot of verbal, emotional and/or economic abuse helps them reach the final decision”.

What is important to point out according to Cindy is that violence regardless of whatever form will at some stage determine a woman’s decision to leave the relationship and seek help somewhere.

Frank argued that: “clients seek help because now the law is determining the course of events. Regardless of choice it is their legal obligation to seek help in case things get out of hand. For example, some would rather adhere to this kind of a situation than end up behind bars”. He believed the main reason why clients are finally brought or seek help from his service is because “by circumstances whatever case they are in has reached an extreme”. So in this case we see clients who have little or no choice except to present themselves under the service providers’ microscope.

Nancy believed that clients came to them “because of dissatisfaction with their lives. Often the decision to finally seek help is through referrals from friends, medical practitioners or other community services”. She observed that the decision to finally

act:

“can be due to the incidents of violence but more often women manage to gather enough strength to know that they want something different in life. Sometimes a particular incident will spur them on. For example, abuse against a child, or humiliation in front of strangers”.

While Sarah believed that lack of support is a reason, she also believed that common problems concern clients’ financial and parenting positions. She also mentioned that the clients cannot cope with their situation anymore. The Group mentioned that their clients sought help because they were desperate, afraid, had been advised by the police and other services, family, friends, and the decision that they wanted to live a violence-free life together with their children. They described the variations with which women decided to finally seek help; that even though the violence was the main reason:

“however this is a subjective decision. Some women may undergo horrific brutality (life-threatening assaults) for many (her emphasis) years before seeking help. Other women seek help after one incident of assault. Usually contact with shelter is precipitated by a specific violent event”.

The common theme among the service providers is that most clients had endured a long period of unpleasantness until they became aware that they could not handle the situation anymore. For some, circumstances beyond their control forced them to seek such help, while others were persuaded by others to leave before the situation got out of hand. But what is more important is that clients do eventually seek help about their situation.

The service providers were also asked about the problems they experience in the course of their work, which other agencies they worked with in case of difficulties in coping with the pressures and how those responded to family violence. As it would be a bit difficult to tabulate the responses (due to a lack of consistent patterns) the author has opted to use verbatim quotes.

Cindy responded that:

“most of the time I feel burnt out and stressed. It is not out of a lack of coping that we refer clients, but due to a lack of time. We refer women to Incest Centre, Rape Crisis, Charity Agency, Courts, Health Centre, Hospitals, Child in Risk Unit, Department of Social Security, and Housing. Most of the agencies are very efficient but sometimes we have difficulties with individual workers and not institutions themselves”.

On the other hand, Frank believed that in so far as his work was concerned, “burn out” is significant. Another problem is: “a lack of anonymity particularly in small offices and towns. We act as a focal point for referral to other groups such as women’s resources and psychologists, who I feel, are competent within the limitations within which they have to work”.

Nancy observed that:

“patience and frustration can be issues for workers, while personal safety can be an issue rarely. Often the clients want us to tell them what to do and make their decisions or they believe that we can actually wave a magic wand and make it all better with no work on their part. We use most of the other social services in Dodoma at different times. For example we refer clients to Women’s Refuge and Centre, Open House, Community Health, Department of Community Services, Department of Housing and so on. While all services here do not condone family violence, however, some do not have the same opportunities to impact on it due to the focus of their service”.

Sarah mentioned “patience on my part” as a major problem. However: “we refer clients to Department of Community Services, Housing, Legal Services, Health, Women’s Refuge, Police, Sexual Assault Counsellors, St. Vincent de Paul and so on. They probably handle family violence in much the same way as (us) but not always”.

Finally the Group responded that their problems included:

“getting the various government departments such as Housing, Social security, Police and so on to adhere to their guidelines and laws without being judgmental. (Our) staff liaise regularly with other services in the course of our day to day work, not because of inability to cope, but because another organisation or individual person may offer a service that a client would like to access. Their response to violence depends entirely on how serious each takes the issue of family violence”.

The focus of the analysis here is that even though all service providers acknowledge problems within their work, they also have the option of referring their clients to a number of other community services, depending upon the clients' needs. While some were not necessarily negative about the way referral agencies handled family violence, Cindy was critical about some individual workers within institutions. The Group seemed critical of the manner in which other agencies handled the situation.

With refuges in particular, O'Donnell and Craney (1982: 33) have noted that most have developed workable and often good relations with local institutions such as community health centres. However, in some cases (the Group in particular) relations with the local police have been difficult, although this is an area that is impossible to generalise. Since the Group mentioned difficulties with other government departments adhering to their guidelines, their view seems to correlate with what Hancock (1989: 23) described as the conflict between the various ideological perspectives that women involved in the refuges have. For example, some more active feminist women may feel that their organisation is being used as a 'dumping ground' for government departments, and that women are being 'bandaged up' and encouraged to return to the oppressive situation, as has been demonstrated by some of the women's reports regarding the various responses to family violence. Therefore this could be a reason enough to explain the variations in the manner in which different service providers responded to very similar questions.

Another observation is that service providers did acknowledge problems and that they referred their clients to other agencies. Nancy, Frank, and Sarah admitted that sometimes they could not cope with pressure from their work. But Cindy and the Group, were rather sensitive to the word 'cope'. As they argued, it was not because

they could not cope that sometimes they referred their clients to other agencies, but for other reasons. Looking at their responses one would believe that they saw themselves as experts in their work, and therefore could not allow anybody to think that they could sometimes fail. For instance, Cindy mentioned “a lack of time” as one reason for referral, and the Group mentioned “a client’s decision to use another service as a reason for referral”. Other providers did admit that their work problems required that at some stage they referred clients to other services. We should again note the variations with which different providers responded to the question of their work-related problems and how they went about solving those. It indicates that different agencies have in-built ideologies, and one can tell that even though Cindy and the Group come from different places, they belong to the same school of thought.

This seems to correlate with the manner in which these different groups responded to the whole question of violence and pregnancy. One can think that somewhere along the line some organisations believe they are more professional than others in dealing with family violence situation. This also reflects different perspectives in terms of organisational philosophy.

This chapter has therefore attempted to analyse and discuss the various responses concerning family violence. A common theme seems to be that perpetrators and victims alike finally seek outside intervention because their situation has reached a stage where none of them could cope any more. For example, victims would certainly need assistance in terms of shelter, and money especially when they decide to leave the violent situation. They also need some emotional support to help them come to terms with their circumstances, and also to help them get rid of the societal expectation of a blissful marriage. They do need medical help especially when they have suffered horrific injuries as some of the women’s stories revealed. They

also need police protection if they believe the violent situation has got out of control, and another person's life was in danger.

What we have learnt throughout the chapter is that women in particular exhausted at least one of the services available to them despite some of them living in fear of what their partners' reaction would be if they discovered that the women had been telling other people about their situation. For example, some women sought safety with parents, friends, shelters; others were referred to other services for a more appropriate type of intervention. Agencies like Welfare, Family Support, and Hospitals often referred victims of violence to a Women's Refuge for accommodation purposes, where sometimes they are further referred to other available agencies for other matters. We see a wide network of services that seem to work in an interdependent relationship. But, according to some women, these services are not necessarily 'God-sent' because some experienced hostility (Stephanie because the refuge believed she had given out their number to her partner, also the way the police arrested her when she was actually retaliating in self-defence; Lerato was treated by an unsympathetic doctor), indifference (Maria was going to be sent back to the hospital from where she had escaped, because the refuge believed she was not discharged accordingly, and also the manner in which the police handled her case; the police left Lerato without any advice whatsoever on realising that she was not going to press charges.), and a further victimisation emotionally (Mpho and Brooke were both dissatisfied with the manner in which the courts conducted their affairs) from those people who are supposed to help them deal with their trauma.

The point here is that even if family violence were to become a completely public matter, for some individuals there would still be some indifference and hostility.

Some doctors would still prescribe tranquilizers and ask the patients to go home and

rest. Some social workers would still believe that some women asked for, and therefore deserved their lot and some police officers would want to know first if the woman was ready to lay charges. Some courts would still make a joke out of a woman fighting her partner over custody matters. Some family members would still ask their daughters to make the best out of their marriages and some friends would still turn a blind eye.

Some men as well excused their violence on grounds that outsiders should not just make judgements about what happens between two people. Tim and Steve argued that men go into violence because they had been provoked into it, or had been pushed beyond limits. There is an assumption that violence happens in almost every household, and is therefore purely private. But what these men do not understand is that once a third party intervenes, then their violence is no longer a private matter. It is now an issue for public consumption.

Regarding the issue of the general perception of family violence, excusing perpetrator behaviour is all too common, as the women's responses show. Their violence is excused on grounds of mental sickness, madness, low self-esteem, or men who have a personality problem in general, and are unhappy too. We should also be aware that people who excuse this behaviour are the victims themselves, and also they are not even in a position to determine whether or not perpetrators of violence are 'sick' people. It is just one of those psychological assumptions which attribute violent behaviour to individual pathology.

The next chapter summarises the thesis. It briefly summarises the conclusions of each chapter as well as addressing some of the specific issues raised by women and service providers. It also makes recommendations for future research on family violence.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarises as well as concludes the thesis. The present study has demonstrated that wife battering is no longer held to be strictly a private matter by the majority of people in Australia. Surveys on Community Attitudes to Violence Against Women (1995), and Women's Safety (1996) conducted in the community regarding awareness, changes in government legislation regarding wife battering and, more importantly, the willingness of both the victims and perpetrators to discuss this indicate the dismantling of the walls of silence. The continued prevalence though tells one that there is still more that needs to be done in terms of research focus.

The introductory chapter made the point that, compared to some decades back, family violence has now become an issue of public concern. The author has attempted to put forth some of the reasons why earlier this topic was virtually ignored, reasons linked to the type of research which was being conducted at the time and the way in which researchers themselves viewed the issue. In the 1960s especially, psychological and psychiatric models (Schultz, 1960; Snell et al., 1964) concentrated on the individual psychology of perpetrator and victim respectively. From this point of view, what happens within the family is often found within the personalities of the family members, and is not something that the institution of marriage and the family could be held responsible for. Some of the more recent sociological theories, particularly the structural and the feminist, have shifted from

conceiving violence in terms of pathological individuals towards understanding it rather as a well-patterned type of behaviour, perpetuated by the manner in which society, especially the institution of the family and marriage, has been structured. In other words the roots of family violence can be traced to the way in which society is structured.

The chapter also described the various shifts in the line of inquiry in family violence as well as some specific issues related with each shift. The objective part of the section was meant to provide a brief explanation for the choice of research. In other words, why concentrate on wife-battering when there are other forms of family violence such as husband-bashing, sibling violence, child abuse, elder abuse, infanticide and so on (Gelles and Cornell, 1990: 12)? The manner in which the family as an institution is viewed gives us a starting point when it comes to family violence. On the one hand, the functionalist perspective regards the family as a place that would offer emotional support, love, and caring for its members; on the other, the power/conflict perspective sees the same institution in a different manner. For the latter view, the family has proven to be some kind of a place where oppression, exploitation and harm, conflict and violence particularly against women and children is not only rife but also tolerated by those around us. According to this line of thinking, not only do members of society at large turn a blind eye to violence but they also condone the use of violence. Wife battering is applauded as natural, understandable, tolerable, deserved, the natural order of things, inevitable, women's lot, and part of the price of the marital bargain. As one writer put it "women who attempt to expose or escape it (violence), and social workers and related professionals who attempt to help them or to work with their abusers, will not find it easy because they are swimming against a historical and global tide" (Mullender, 1996: 18). The tide may be

beginning to turn but plenty of women are still drowning. Perhaps it is high time remedies focused on factors that tie women to violent relationships.

Chapter Two explored the available literature on the topic. The chapter discusses the literature and my theoretical framework, which is a combination of patriarchy and male resentment to liberation of women, and external interference in the private domain of the family. Important issues under investigation include male superiority, pregnancy, and the intergenerational transmission of violence. My findings in these areas are meant to fill in the gap within the existing literature or to further support it.

As mentioned in the chapter, we cannot measure the extent of wife battering in Australia, except for using overseas data to make estimates. However, we are able to talk about the nature of and consequences of wife battering particularly on the victims. The literature suggests that victims of battering are masochists, passive, and have a low self-esteem. The cycle of violence has conditioned them to be in a perpetual state of learned helplessness. They also exhibit symptoms of battering syndrome such as anxiety, depression, insomnia, and can be suicidal. Batterers are men with low self-esteem, who as children witnessed their father beating their mother or were themselves beaten. They are traditionalists who believe in male supremacy and the stereotyped masculine sex role in the family. They are pathologically jealous and blame others for their actions.

The responses to battering also leave a lot to be desired. There is enough evidence that the Australian Government has taken positive steps to address wife-battering. Despite this initiative, some segments of society still lag behind, particularly the legal system and police attitudes. Their support of the myth of family privacy and sanctity thrives at the expense of the victims of battering.

Chapter Three addressed some of the methodological issues that have been of great concern to researchers of family violence. While there has been no agreed upon methodology and theory to build on, the field has been approached from different angles, which served as both an advantage as well as a disadvantage. This particular research has also had its own problems that could have to an extent affected the nature of the findings. However, having built on other researchers' line of investigation, the inclusion of both the perpetrators and service providers as well as the victims served as a strength of this methodology. Given the nature of the topic as another limitation, having to interview all the respondents on a personal basis also proved an advantage in terms of probing and making some clarifications where necessary, unlike the case with mailed interviews.

In the process of maturation, family violence research has drawn on the theories and methodologies of a number of other research traditions. According to Finkelhor et al., (1988: 20) criminology has greatly added to family violence research, suggesting techniques for gathering self-reports from abusers about their violent behaviour.

This diversity of the traditions has been part of family violence research strength. Each tradition has brought its own theories and methodologies, and through a process of triangulation a more complete picture of the phenomenon has emerged. But the diversity also poses special problems. Researchers from different traditions do not necessarily speak the same research language. This has led to problems in terms of validity of others' results partly to do with issues like sampling, definitions, access to interviewees, and, most importantly, the relationship between the researcher and providers of services to both the victim and perpetrators of violence. Researchers may

not even have access to each other's work. Thus the diversity may have slowed and stymied the orderly and systematic accretion of knowledge in the field.

Despite these obstacles, family violence has some impressive research accomplishments to boast for its short tenure. At least in three areas (Finkelhor et al., 1988: 25), quite a bit of research has been done:

- A great deal is known about the prevalence of various types of family violence
- There is a fair bit of evidence about risk factors that are associated with family violence
- A substantial body of knowledge exists concerning the consequences of family violence on its victims.

As a result of this, one would suggest that researchers could probably benefit from a multidimensional knowledge on family violence. Because it is so widespread and touches diverse people and many aspects of society, a multifaceted approach with many people working on a number of different fronts in a co-ordinated effort to integrate the accumulated knowledge is probably the only approach that ultimately will be effective.

Otherwise, according to Geffner et al. (1988: 477), "researchers could continue, as we have done for too long, in the isolated manner of the proverbial blind men who evaluated an elephant". My special methodological contribution therefore is the tripartite focus on wife battering. This focus, which has been rare in previous research, is significant, not only in terms of scope, but also in understanding the complexities of wife battering. The substantial differences in perception, attitude and analysis of the three perspectives uncovered in this particular research have implications for policy formulation and should not therefore be underestimated.

Chapter Four discussed the data regarding the nature of family violence. The common types of violence included physical assaults, verbal abuse and threats and emotional/mental abuse. For some of the victims, even though physical assaults were mentioned as the common type of abuse, verbal and emotional abuses are equally as damaging. For example, the use of degrading names, death threats, and threats of suicide could be worse than the act of fighting or hitting. Acts of physical abuse included beating, pulling out hair, pushing, slapping, stabbing with cutlery, punching, choking, having items smashed or thrown at, and dragging. Some of the most dangerous weapons used in some of those acts included knives, glasses, baseball bat, forks, machete and guns. Verbal abuse included arguments and arrogance, while jealousy was mentioned as a typical form of emotional abuse.

The nature of family violence ranged from women believing that they were to blame for their situation to being provoked into becoming angry themselves. In this manner violence no longer becomes a one-way process. Women end up becoming violent in self-defence and out of frustration, which puts them in the same category as the male perpetrators. Women also mentioned low self-esteem and a lack of independence as a consequence of constant abuse. Among some of the worst incidents which some women experienced were life-threatening situations such as burst bladders, threatening to shoot, choking until unconscious, pushing a head against brick walls, punching, bruises and black eyes which, for some, needed medical attention. Maria was told she was suffering from a nervous breakdown by a person who was not even in a professional position to determine that was the case, and this view was tolerated by other agencies which could in effect have done more to determine if the woman was actually suffering from a nervous breakdown. This attitude resembles the psychiatric philosophy that abusive husbands are acting in a

normal manner, while abusive wives are behaving abnormally, so requiring psychiatric care. Scutt (1983: 212) made this point to show the ease with which women are committed to mental institutions, giving a grave warning to women who retaliate with physical violence against a husband who abuses her.

Another observation was that many women experience more than one incident of abuse before they can bring themselves to decide on leaving the violence. They finally leave either because the violence has got out of hand, such as in the case of brutal bashings, or when it extends to the children. One of the women discovered that after years of abusing her, her husband had actually been molesting the children. That was when she finally left. She had also been subjected to a lot of suicide blackmailing before, and as such she did not leave. Another woman had been threatened with a rifle more than once but she still remained in the relationship. This indicates that the nature of family violence transcends just packing and leaving after a single incident of violence. One woman had been choked a couple of times and even had her face almost smashed with a rock. There is more to relationships and violence than what other people outside think should be the case.

The reaction to intimate violence seems to be that the woman should ask the partner what wrong she had done despite knowing very well that she was innocent. Some would normally plead with the man to stop their violence. The response is that the woman is ignored, the situation gets worse, or that she is blamed for being the cause, giving all sorts of reasons to make the woman believe that she is in the wrong. Some are told that they deserve to be abused and the man believes that his actions are justified, while for others sometimes talking helps ease the worsening situation.

Women mentioned the aftermath situation, which is similar to Walker's (1979) honeymoon stage of violence. Once the violence escalates, the fear of losing their

partners warrants an apology from some men. The women are told that the violence is all a result of love, that it would never happen again, he is sorry, he should not have done it, alcohol is to blame, make some material promises, change for a few days and so on. This is actually meant to make the victim reassess her situation and rethink her decision, if she had already made up her mind to leave. But the honeymoon stage is normally short-lived. It just disappears within a matter of days and the stage of tension starts again. For those who do not leave, the cycle goes on indefinitely. Some mentioned that their partners never even apologised like they used to do before, an indication that the man believes that he has the woman under total control.

Among other things, this thesis has attempted to explain why family violence, ignored in the 1960s, has now become a high priority issue. The literature reveals that it is basically the emergence of the Women's Movement that brought about this massive awareness. Even though to some people the issue is still private and the problem of what happens between the two people involved, at least the recognition that it is a social problem has also seen some governments put more funding towards addressing the problem. The increase in number of shelters and other related agencies are a testimony to that. For example, Dobash and Dobash (1992: 63–7) point out that Britain began to originate a nationwide refuge movement as early as 1972.

Apart from this recognition though, family violence still occurs at rates that cause concern. The victims, service providers and perpetrators agree that there are various forms of violence. The common types mentioned by the victims and perpetrators were physical and verbal although the perpetrators seemed to think of verbal abuse as something insignificant. Neither of the groups mentioned economic/financial abuse. Some women mentioned isolation only when it came to the question of who they contacted in the course of their violent situation; the implication

being that they do not necessarily perceive of isolation as abuse. None of them mentioned incest. The point here is that what is necessarily violence for people who provide services is not necessarily violence for either the perpetrators or the victims.

Chapter Five addressed the factors associated with family violence. More than half of the women linked wife-battering to alcohol, combined in some cases with jealousy and other issues such as late nights, gambling, job-related pressures, arguments over families, arguments over friends, provocation and a lack of socialisation. Amongst the things which men mentioned were lack of tidiness, partner's own violent behaviour, how she dresses, families, and that their violence also extended to public places. Service providers saw family violence as self-perpetuating; that witnessing and/or experiencing violence as a child leads to a violent adult. Other reasons are attributed to the manner in which certain institutions handle family violence cases. For example, not only do courts tolerate violent situations but they also condone such behaviour through further victimisation if the victims have to testify.

Other service providers attributed violence to cultural and socio-economic factors. Nancy believed that certain cultures and classes produce men who have lesser skills to communicate. Sarah also believed that certain cultures approve of the use of violence against women, because women are regarded as property and not highly valued. Frank attributed men's violence to some cultural expectations as well as alcohol consumption, especially where high levels of violence are concerned.

There was enough evidence to attribute violence to either witnessing and/or experiencing violence as a child. However, some cases where women had left their partners, violence was the driving force, combined with alcohol and child abuse. For those who returned to their relationships, it was because of hope for change, affection

and promises, children or because the partner had gone off alcohol. Maria also mentioned her wish to return to her partner so that she could prove that she was a good partner, and also because she needed her child to grow in a complete family. For some women, going back did not help improve their situation. Some left for good, some remarried and some were confronted by more violence. The men who were interviewed mentioned that their partners left because of violence, and for two of them their partners still had not come back. They were not even sure if the relationships were going to work at all. The service providers' accounts of why women remained in violent situations varied from the victims and the perpetrators. For them women remain or return to violence for financial reasons, social, emotional and other reasons. For example, women need male company for themselves and children, societal pressures concerning happy marriage, change or because their contact with other services have equipped them to gain some confidence and self-esteem. They go back with the hope that they would master their situation, which does not necessarily happen.

The question of violence during pregnancy was the focus of Chapter Six. While some victims had not personally experienced violence during that period, they were asked to provide a general opinion. As in Chapter Five, the alcohol factor was cited. Others included jealousy, anger, women's vulnerability, lack of self-esteem, and childhood family history. The argument was that men feel anger, resentment and jealousy especially if the women could not do as they wished as a result of their condition. Others argued that men are jealous of the foetus and that pregnancy works against their sexual desires. Some women mentioned that their first experience of violence took place during the first pregnancy. Some told of how they were targeted at the stomach once they became pregnant, clearly showing that the purpose was to

get rid of what was inside the belly. One woman mentioned having suffered five miscarriages through violence.

Perpetrators mentioned that even if they had not attacked their partners during pregnancy, on a general observation, their partners became rather more provocative once pregnant. They argued that some women become too nagging once they get to that stage. Anger and suspicion were also mentioned. Some men felt women used pregnancy as a trap, and did not tell the man well on time about it. Strain was also cited as a reason, especially when the family was already undergoing other forms of stress. At least there appears to be some similarities in the nature of responses, particularly regarding alcohol, suspicion/anger, and jealousy. But McGregor (1990: 39) cautions about the dangers of the popular social construction of violence being caused by or associated with alcohol. She suggests that such construction is dangerous as it focuses attention away from the real problem, that of the belief, conscious or unconscious, in male supremacy, that under certain circumstances a man has a right to be violent.

Some service providers especially those working within women's refuges refused to recognise any link between pregnancy and violence. However, a general feeling was that violence occurs at any time regardless of a woman's condition, and they attributed that to the power relationship that exists within a family setting. Sex-related jealousy, suspicion and the vulnerability of pregnant women were also mentioned by others from different organisations. This is another area where the author felt the refuge workers in particular acted as spokesperson for their clients. Their denial of any relationship between pregnancy and violence and their claim of non-expertise in 'causes' of wife-battering, but rather with 'effects' point to a problem which should not be underestimated. For them to deal with prevention strategies,

safety issues and effects as they claim, requires thorough knowledge and understanding of wife-battering as well as its 'cause'. It is only then that they could assess the effectiveness of whatever intervention and prevention strategies they implemented.

Chapter Seven discussed the data relating to the responses of the various agencies with which the victims and perpetrators came into contact. Women in particular made several contacts through referrals. While not every point of contact proved effective, there were some which were commended for their efficiency and emotional support. Refuges were mentioned as doing a good job in general. The family of origin was also given credit for support emotionally and otherwise. Apart from that some victims complained about indifference and a lack of sympathy from some people they came into contact with. While some medical practitioners were willing and ready to offer any help for women to press charges, some treated women with contempt. For other women the doctors prescribed medication and asked them to go home, a case of "kiss and make-up" as Gelles and Cornell (1990: 45) would say. Either they were mocked or they were told that they deserved what they got by some doctors and social workers. Women who had to go to court also expressed some anger at the way they were treated. Mpho was no stranger to court. She had been to court before on a similar charge and her partner was placed on a good behaviour bond. The second time around the same court put the perpetrator on yet another good behaviour bond regardless of repeated harassment and threats of violence. Brooke mentioned how the judge did not believe she could raise children alone. This shows how those particular judges perceived family violence. The judge in the first case did not see any need for the offender to go to jail for harassing his partner. In the case of Brooke, the judge did not think it was in the best interests of the children to be in the

custody of a battered woman. He believed that the father, regardless of being a perpetrator, had the right to the children as well. Thato experienced more serious attacks after their partners had been released from jail, which indicates a danger such people pose if not monitored.

When it came to the question of the police, women found them very quick to respond, but were helpless if the women refused to press charges. Gelles and Cornell (1990: 125) have noted that some law enforcement officers complained about victims of violence handcuffing the criminal justice system. For example, some officers point to the many instances where battered women fail to press charges against their partners, or withdraw the charges within a few days of the violent incident. This is what happened to some of the women who were involved in this study. Some doctors detected that injuries were a result of violence but were in a helpless situation if the victim did not say so. The police in similar manner were confronted with incidents of reluctance to press charges and withdrawal of charges, which leaves them demoralised.

On a final note, all the parties were asked what they thought about a solution to family violence. Women and service providers mentioned education and changes in the law. For example, public awareness, quicker police intervention, obligatory counselling for perpetrators of violence, societal responsibility and intervention and enforcement of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders, tougher penalties and jailing of offenders. This view is similar to the control model that was discovered by physicians. This involved placing full responsibility for violence with the perpetrator. It also involved arrest of the perpetrator and full criminal prosecution of such a person (Gelles and Cornell, 1990: 45). Men did not have any comment except that to judge family violence in the first instance would be a problem because an outsider does not

know what happens behind closed doors. Some did not have any clue why it happens and could not suggest a solution or could not articulate the whole emotional situation

The bottom line here is that some men believe that whatever happens in their own premises has got nothing to do with the public. In other words, their message is loud and clear: 'A man's home is his castle', which could also lead one to ask 'what about a woman's body'? This could prove to be another interesting topic for further research. For those men who have no idea why family violence occurs, yet they beat up their partners, the assumption is that they do so because it is done. 'My mates do it, everyone else does it and I guess I can do it as well' (Tim commenting on his violent behaviour).

What this thesis has done is to show how common and diverse family violence is. It is worth noting that all sorts of violence occur and some women actually suffer more than one form at a time. The same thing applies to the factors associated with violence. Those who advocate patriarchy concentrate on the existing gender inequalities, but from the stories, without necessarily making over-generalisations, the indication is that no one single factor adequately explains wife battering. This could be further related to any solutions or possible prevention.

The recommendations point towards educating the community, society, public awareness, and that society at large should take responsibility. In other words, institutions such as the law, police, courts, physicians, refuges, men's groups, victims and perpetrators should all work together towards achieving a common goal. As the present study has argued, the problem of research in the field has to do with the different perceptions by different bodies. Those who lived the violence, namely the victims and perpetrators, view the whole issue in a rather different way from how the outsiders (service providers, academic researchers and so on) would see it. While this

is the strength of research based on personal interviews, it still cautions those who are outside to treat it solely for the significant contribution it has made in terms of its qualitative nature. It is also a caution that the phenomenon is more complicated than people other than the ones immediately involved think. What we believe to be valid reasons to make them leave their situation immediately is not how they perceive their lot. This is one reason the question of 'why do they stay' will remain unanswered, especially when we compare our assumptions about their situation and the reality. This study has at least offered some insights into the discrepancies regarding perception of family violence among the victims, perpetrators, and those who believe they are experts in their field of service provision. It has even indicated to a certain extent the clash/conflict of interests involved. What some service providers expect of their clients is not necessarily what happens in reality. In the short-term something works out, but after some time women decide to choose what is best for themselves, basically to try and give their relationship a second chance. This of course is also compounded by other reasons as Chapter Five has shown.

In summary therefore some significant findings of this study include:

- Wife battering reflects male superiority. Women in particular, suggest that men maintain their dominance and superiority through jealousy, isolating women from all contacts, and because they think women are their property. Their power is reflected in the fear some women lived in, like not even wanting anyone to know about the violence.
- Wife battering may be a result of witnessing or experiencing violence as a child
- Wife batterers may also abuse children

- Pregnancy as a potentially vulnerable time for women in relation to family violence. The relationship between wife battering and pregnancy discussed in Chapter 2 is confirmed by my analysis of the empirical data.
- “Learned hopefulness” as a significant factor in the difficulty women experience in leaving violent a relationship. The literature review in Chapter Two stresses that such women remain in abusive relationships because they lack financial independence, have low self-esteem, and are in a state of helplessness. The women in my study make it very clear that hope for change is one factor influencing their decision to leave. Women also remain in abusive relationships for the sake of the children, according to service providers, yet only one woman (Renee) mentioned children as a reason for remaining in a violent relationship.
- Battered women do not co-operate in their own abuse. At the very least, members of their own families or those of their partners know about the violence. It may sometimes be imagined that battered women are in a state of helplessness, are passive, do not tell anyone about their situation, nor seek any assistance. But as this thesis has shown, the women actively do something about their situation.
- Batterers often associate violence with physical acts only
- Batterers explain their violence as a response to their victim’s aggression
- The identification of the power of service providers in dominating the nature of public discussion of family violence in ways which are at odds to a significant extent with the views and needs of service users. These differences are in relation to verbal, social and economic abuse (as opposed to physical abuse), and differences in the perceived significance of alcohol, jealousy and pregnancy. The accounts of the victims and perpetrators in my study point to the theory of deviance disavowal and against treating alcohol as a myth. For them, contrary to

the literature discussed in Chapter Two, alcohol is neither a myth nor an excuse but is real in so far as wife battering is concerned.

8.1 COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Both women and service providers were asked to make some comments and/or recommendations regarding reduction/prevention of family violence. The results are as shown in Table 8.1.

TABLE 8.1 WOMEN'S PERCEPTION OF BATTERERS AND IDEAS FOR A SOLUTION

| <i>Name</i> | <i>Perception of Batterers</i> | <i>Solution</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mpho | Sick | Tough penalty |
| Neo | Sick | Counselling/Understanding |
| Tseli | Awful/Unhappy | Awareness/Laws |
| Thato | Jail | Awareness/Services |
| Lerato | Jail | Education |
| Pinki | Cowards | Tough penalty |
| Sophi | Low | Don't know |
| Maria | Problem | Police |
| Renee | Mad | Tough penalty |
| Stephanie | Hatred | None |
| Brooke | Sick | Awareness/Involvement |
| Wendy | Hatred | Reform |

When asked to comment on how they felt about men who batter their partners, three women mentioned that they are sick, two hated them, another two said they should be locked up. with mad, unhappy, cowards, low, and having a problem mentioned in one case each. Regarding any idea of a solution to the problem, responses included creation of awareness mentioned by three women, tougher penalties such as jailing also mentioned three times, counselling, education, more police involvement and reform mentioned in one case each.

Mpho mentioned that “battering men are sick people. They need psychiatric help”. She suggested that there should be tougher penalties for domestic violence assaults. Similarly, Neo argued that such men “are sick people because they keep doing it over and over again. They just won’t stop”. She recommended that they should be made to undergo counselling. She also believed that “society should be more understanding on the part of the women who are involved in a domestic violence situation”. Tseli regarded violent men as “bad, awful, not happy and very possessive”. She suggested “creating more awareness through the media that women shouldn’t put up with it. We should also have a law against it. For example, it is a crime”.

Thato thought that violent partners should just be locked up. She recommended “a need to apply stiffer jail sentences”. She also believed that making the government more aware of the problem, and establishing more refuges would help. Lerato as well mentioned that “batterers should be locked up. Domestic violence should be treated similarly as violence to a stranger in the street”. She suggested educating women about family violence. She advocated self-respect and strength on the part of women. Pinki conceived of batterers as “cowards”. She further argued that “domestic violence is a problem which the people involved should get away from.

They should think about it and try to solve it...otherwise some tougher laws should be introduced since some people are more violent than others”.

Sophi had “a low opinion of men who batter their partners. She believed that “the problem is so common and widespread that I wouldn’t know where to start. The present remedies such as restraining orders don’t even seem to help. It’s so difficult. I really don’t have any idea”.

Maria thought that such men “have a big problem”. She believed that one solution would be to have the police more involved. Renee referred to violent men as “mad. I feel they should be put away. I just don’t understand why men bash their wives at all in the first place. But my partner is going to spend some time in jail, and this makes me feel good”.

Stephanie hated men who abused their wives. Even though she thought family violence was a big problem, she had no idea of a solution. Brooke regarded violent men as “sick. From my experience, it’s difficult to think of a solution to the problem due to the existing male attitude. My husband believes that whatever he does is right and everyone else is wrong. With this type of attitude it’s not going to be easy”.

Despite her experience, she suggested more community awareness and involvement as alternatives. Wendy felt a lot of anger towards violent men. She attributed the problem to “sexist attitudes which exist in society. Women are undervalued. There’s got to be a change in consciousness”.

A similar question was put to the service providers. They were asked for some suggestions as to what could be done to reduce and/or prevent family violence in general and specifically during pregnancy. Since this question was asking for a personal opinion, I expected the responses to differ widely, which would make it

difficult to present in a tabular form as they in fact differed. However, summaries and some verbatim quotes where appropriate have been used.

Cindy mentioned among other things changing the laws concerning family violence, change in societal attitude which she believes contributes a lot towards violence, educating the whole society about violence, a call for quicker police intervention, and obligatory counselling for violent men. On a general note she observed: “change the bloody society. We do not want power but equality in the end. We women are 55% of the world population and we deserve some recognition”.

In this case, the law, and the structure of society in general seems to be the source of the problem. Cindy argues that the manner in which society is structured means that women are missing out on their fair share even though they form the majority of the world’s population. She is actually treating the whole issue from a global perspective, rather than from the point of view of a particular culture. She is locating the problem within a wider perspective of women’s position within a society and women’s position globally.

Frank believed that provision of the necessary resources particularly for victims of violence is very important. As he put it, “victims should be provided with resources so that they get out of the violent situation. But the more cultures become sophisticated the less violence will evolve. However, domestic violence is a difficult area, but the law is doing a fairly good job”.

It should be pointed out that the rationale behind Frank’s argument is that the extent of family violence has more to do with cultures, that in some cultures, particularly Aboriginal culture, such violence seems to be acceptable. He maintained that the attitude though is changing. We should also be aware that he saw this field as

a very difficult one, and despite all the obstacles he was quite satisfied with the way the law was taking its course. This seemed to be in opposition to what Cindy believed.

Nancy did not have any comments at all regarding this question. Sarah commented that resources should be put into more education on violence:

“Domestic violence is a problem for the whole community. It should not be a responsibility of one or two people, but is a responsibility of all society. As a starting point there should be respect for each other. It is also important that people take responsibility for whatever they do. Society should learn not to blame others, particularly the victims, for whatever happens. I also think there’s too much violence on television”.

Like Cindy, to a certain extent Sarah believed that societies at large should take responsibility for what occurred within. She attacked the ‘blaming the victim’ mentality, which often implied that victims of violence, particularly women, were responsible for their situation. It was either they provoked it, or they liked it, especially if they did not leave immediately. She echoed Cindy’s views about educating people on violence. What is of particular interest is that she brought in the socialisation/learning model of violence, that the media, particularly television contributes to violence. The implication is that some people who see a lot of violence on television would probably become violent. They actually practise what the media preaches.

The Group maintained that there should be “more community education. (We) strongly recommend enforcement of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders even if the couple remain together in the same house. There should also be detection of the signs of violence and early community intervention”.

Looking at the responses regarding reduction and/or possible prevention of family violence, the pattern that emerges is that educating the community is one of the priorities. The feeling in general is that family violence is not only the responsibility of

one ‘mentally sick’ perpetrator or one ‘provocative’ victim, but is rather the responsibility of the whole community. This takes us to the functionalist theory of society, that once such acts like family violence occur, the whole society should check its moral boundaries. The implication is that if something which has been labelled as unacceptable occurs over time with great intensity, then the laws which govern that particular aspect should be reviewed, as is the case of marijuana consumption in some States within Australia. The argument amounts to addressing the question such as ‘what is it about society that makes men turn violent, particularly towards their loved ones?’

The analogy could be taken further: what the service providers are in essence saying is that rather than simply spending time dwelling on the *individual* problem of the couple involved, one should relate matters to the whole structure of society. They advocate a shift from societal perceptions of family violence as a private matter to an acceptance that it is a public concern. In other words, what was once considered “private trouble” should now become a “public issue”, to use Mills’ (1959: 18) terms.

Another concern regards the role of the law in particular. While Frank felt that the law was performing well, Cindy and the Group did not necessarily feel the same way. They saw some deficiencies in the way the law operated despite some changes in the law: for example, the existence of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders as one way of maintaining order. However, despite some of these changes, they are still ineffective resolutions of the problems of family violence. It looks like all aspects of the legal system require a revised approach. This is why some providers call for changes in the law, early detection and intervention by the community, particularly the police, and strong enforcement of restraining orders regardless of whether or not the concerned parties are living under one roof. The final point from these providers’

point of view is that the whole community should undergo some reform. Coorey (1988: 99) too suggests that leaving a violent relationship is not a solution but one of the options. Instead, there should be more focus on numerous efforts to address the power relations between women and men in all aspects of society, if a solution is to be found.

The recommendations regarding a solution seem to form a pattern. A general feeling is that community awareness through education is very important. The women also believe that the law, whether it be through the police, reform or tougher penalties should not only be there in theory but in practice as well. Given some of the women's stories earlier we see perpetrators breaking the rules of their good behaviour bond, police reluctance to make an arrest, perpetrators given lesser jail sentences than what the victims hoped for and when they come out they go back to violate the victim over and over again. The service providers as well share some of these views when it comes to ideas of a solution.

The following are the summaries of the recommendations made by the victims and the perpetrators of wife battering:

- Tougher penalties for offenders
- Obligatory counselling for offenders
- Creating more awareness and understanding through education of society and the community at large
- Reform measures for the legal system
- More police involvement and quicker intervention
- Call for recognition for women
- Provision of the necessary resources to victims
- Mutual respect between spouses

- Offenders should accept responsibility for their behaviour
- Society should stop blaming the victims
- Getting rid of violence on television
- Enforcement of Apprehended Domestic Violence Orders
- Detection of any signs of violence and early community intervention

8.2 SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The methodological problems mentioned earlier add more to the already existing problems associated with family violence research. A general lack of voluntary sources of data, the hostility from some of the victims, and the pervasive overprotectiveness of clientele by some service providers, the continued conflict in ideology between refuge organisations in particular and academic research, and the embedded bureaucratic bungle regarding male sources of data almost made this study impossible. These problems created yet another serious problem of accessing the extreme end of the family violence spectrum, which in turn has implications for interpretation. For example, having refuge and convicted respondents severely limits my interpretation of the data regarding the hypothesis 'violence may be a response to environmental pressures such as unemployment and education'. The data analysed on both the victims and perpetrators point to this, but is not empirically valid as the sources of data are already a skewed category.

From another perspective, the author contends that the gap between how those who lived the experience (victims and perpetrators) and professional service providers explain family violence needs to be addressed. The gap between the empirical evidence from victims and perpetrators and the organisational philosophies

among service providers is great. If this explanatory gap is allowed to widen further, there cannot be an easy solution to the problem of family violence, either in terms of interventions or as an area of academic research. As an example, the issue of violence and pregnancy in this study revealed huge disparities in explanation among the three categories of respondents involved. The victims and perpetrators clearly identified pregnancy as one of the factors that contribute to violence. Some women even mentioned that their first incident of battering occurred the minute they became pregnant. The perpetrators as well suggested that when the relationship is already under stress, pregnancy could act as a catalyst. However, some service providers do not want to distinguish between violence and violence during pregnancy, even though the latter may be violence at its worst. They maintain that once people start to segregate violence into types, then it minimises the problem.

However, the victims and perpetrators clearly view pregnancy as a special risk factor. The issue of how organisational philosophy and practice influence the provision of services clearly needs further attention.

Access to respondents is also another area that should be addressed. Some organisations involved in this research wanted to manage ownership of the problem. This was done by clearly refusing the researcher access to those who lived the violence experience. For some 'professionals' it appears that their ideas about the nature of the battering problem are more valuable than the perceptions and ideas of those involved in the actual incident. The 'ownership' of the problem grants the ability to direct the 'cure'. Thus, the experience of those involved becomes less important than the philosophies of the organisational services to which the victims and perpetrators turn.

To sum up, this study suggests that we should allow problems to drive and direct treatment; philosophy should not direct treatment, intervention and response. In other words, much more work needs to be done on intervention and prevention issues. Australia is doing a lot of work on this area now which is increasingly sophisticated and client driven. For example, a National Committee on Violence Against Women has been formed since 1992 to address issues which include:

- Working with the States and Territories and Federal Governments to share experiences and policy responses on violence against women
- Assisting in the co-ordination and development of policy, programs, legislation and law enforcement on a national basis
- Guiding and formulating and/or commissioning research required for effective policy making and to further community awareness
- Conducting further community education on a national scale and facilitate the co-ordination of community education at a national level
- Seeking to empower women through greater access to information, resources and services
- Monitoring and facilitating the implementation of appropriate recommendations of the National Committee on Violence as they affect women
- Ensuring consultation with community members and groups including women with special needs: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Non-English Speaking Background, rural and isolated women, women with disabilities, young and older women, adult incest survivors and workers with those who have suffered violence (Office of the Status of Women, 1992: 26–7).

This study though has opened other gaps for further research. A study of a similar nature, with empirically unbiased sample would be appropriate on a large scale

to fill in the gaps in this present case. Of more interest would be research on refuges as organisations. I would like to believe that they would make an interesting if not challenging study in themselves.