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EMOTIONAL ABUSE IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS: ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES AS EXPRESSED IN A THERAPEUTIC SETTING

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SUMMARY

Although the focus of the study was the emotional abuse of women in close relationship, I argue that the patterns and processes in the abusive relationship, the positioning of both players show a close resemblance to abuse and violence on a macro-political scale. When I as a psychotherapist was continuously confronted with an increasing number of female clients relating stories of emotional abuse in close personal relationships, I started questioning the historical context, culture, societal beliefs and time-frame that constructed women to be in such a position. World wide voices are heard questioning the constant abuse of the other, the weaker, the different, and the marginalized, and much has been written about physical abuse, but the question was as to how this macro-phenomenon informs upon the emotional life of the individual woman.

When it comes to abuse in close relationships, the victim usually is the female and not the male partner, which makes abuse a woman's problem. As a result, I was interested in the truths of the woman in the abusive relationship and approached this research from the position of *the other* and not the oppressor. Feminist standpoint theory formed the basis of my epistemological and methodological thinking. This I practically implemented in my choice of method and my approach to interpretation of the research information. I undertook a qualitative study, utilizing descriptive methods to represent the stories of women from emotionally abusive relationships. The research was historical and location-specific, and led to the description of what I termed the Traditional Afrikaans Family and a legitimizing ecology for emotional abuse against women in close relationships.

The experiences collected tell about emotional abuse as relayed by more than forty women in therapy. The data formed the background for the reconstruction and representation of four case

studies and a thematic analysis pertaining to the positioning of both partners in an emotionally abusive relationship. A critical deconstruction of the mechanisms of power, domination, and control are explained. In doing so, emerging patterns in the abusive relationship were noted and described. Of particular interest to psychotherapists will be the description and analysis of the process of emotional abuse as played out in close relationships.

In conclusion, I argued that emotional abuse in close interpersonal relationships is constructed in the interactions between the partners and within a legitimising context that warrants the male to dominate. The abusive behaviour emerges as a result of the patriarchal male wanting to establish or re-establish his dominant position while the female partner attempts to position him as someone that respects her as a person in her own right.

KEY TERMS

Control

Domination

Emotional abuse

Feminism

Feminist standpoint theory

Patriarchy

Patterns of abuse

Positioning in an abusive relationship

Power

Processes of emotional abuse

Thematic analysis

Traditional Afrikaans family

EMOSIONELE TEISTERING IN INTIEME VERHOUDINGE: ONTLEDING VAN DIE ERVARINGE VAN VROUE SOOS WEERGEGEE BINNE DIE TERAPEUTIESE OMGEWING

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OPSOMMING

Die fokus van die studie was die emosionele teistering van vroue binne intieme (nabye) persoonlike verhoudinge. Tog voer ek aan dat die patrone en prosesse van emosionele aftakeling, sowel as die posisionering van beide vennote in die verhouding noue ooreenkoms vertoon met teistering en geweld in 'n breëre makro-politieke speelveld. As psigoterapeut het ek meer en meer bewus geword van die toenemende aantal vrouekliënte met vertellings van emosionele teistering in hulle nabye verhoudings wat my belangstelling rakende die historisiteit, kultuur, tydvak en sosiale oortuiging wat vroue in so 'n posisie in die verhouding konstrueer, geprikkel het. Alhoewel daar wêreldwyd stemme opgaan teen die voortdurende teistering van die ander, die swakkeres, die andersdenkende en die gemarginaliseerdes, en alhoewel daar baie navorsing oor fisiese mishandeling is, word die *hoe* van emosionele teistering in die lewe van die vrou en die wyse waarop dit deur 'n wyer sosiale konteks gekonstrueer word, onbevredigend in die literatuur aangespreek.

Die slagoffer in die emosioneel teisterende verhouding is merendeels die vroulike vennoot en juis daarom word sodanige teistering oor die algemeen gesien as vrouens se probleem. Omdat ek hoofsaaklik belanggestel het in die waarhede van die vrou binne hierdie verhouding, was dit vir my belangrik om die navorsing vanuit die oogpunt van die sogenaamd *ander* te benader en nie vanuit die oogpunt van die onderdrukker nie. In hierdie opsig het ek die Feministiese standpuntteorie gebruik as die epistemologiese en metodologiese onderbou van my studie wat ek dan weerspieël in die keuse van die metode en interpretasie. My navorsingsmetode is dus kwalitatief van aard, daar ek die beskrywende metode wou aanwend in my verteenwoordigende voorstelling van die vertellings van vroue binne emosioneel afbrekende verhoudings. Die navorsing word ook histories en lokaal-spesifiek gerig en gee aanleiding tot 'n beskrywing van

die Tradisionele Afrikaanse Gesin (familie) en die konteks-spesifieke legitimerende ekologie van emosionele teistering teenoor vroue in nabye verhoudings.

Data is verkry oor die beleving van emosionele teistering van meer as veertig vroue soos aan my vertel tydens psigoterapie. Hierdie inligting vorm die basis vir die rekonstruksie en aanbieding van vier gevalstudies en 'n tematiese ontleding van die posisionering van beide vennote in die emosioneel afbrekende verhouding. Dit is opgevolg deur die kritiese dekonstruksie van die meganismes van mag, oorheersing en beheer wat die basis vorm van aftakelende gedrag. Vanuit die dekonstruksie tree patrone te voorskyn in die vroue se beskrywings van emosionele teistering. Vir die psigoterapeut is die belangrikste wat hieruit voortspuit egter die ontleding van die prosesse van emosionele aftakeling in intieme verhoudinge.

Ek kom tot die gevolgtrekking dat emosionele teistering in intieme interpersoonlike verhoudings in die interaksies wat afspeel tussen die twee vennote in die verhouding, gekonstrueer word. Emosionele teistering is die gedrag van 'n patriargale man wat poog om sy posisie van oorheersing te vestig of te hervestig, terwyl sy vroulike vennoot poog om hom te posisioneer as iemand wat haar respekteer en sal behandel as 'n persoon in eie reg.

SLEUTELTERME

Beheer	Emosionele teistering
Feminisme	Feministiese standpuntteorie
Mag	Oorheersing
Patriargie	Patrone van teistering
Posisionering in 'n afbrekende verhouding	Prosesse van emosionele teistering
Tematiese analise	Tradisionele Afrikaanse gesin

PART 1: THE VOICE OF THE RESEARCHER

CHAPTER 1: PREAMBLE AND PURPOSE

...psychology has nothing to say about what women are really like, what they need and what they want, essentially because psychology does not know
Naomi Weisstein (2000, p.185)

It has been my experience that most issues that play themselves out within the parameters of a given society or culture eventually find their way to the consulting rooms of the psychologist. I therefore was increasingly perplexed by the escalation of women stumbled upon within the therapeutic setting, who described a similar-sounding pattern of emotional hurt and abuse. Within the safety of the therapeutic relationship and the empathic listening of a therapist, women were telling the story of the emotional abuse they experienced in close relationships.

Time and again I was confronted with similar-sounding situations and stories, until such time when I found myself anticipating the next incident or occurrence in the client's story. The realization dawned that I was not dealing with randomly occurring behaviour, but a pattern of behaviours and processes that all had something to do with the concept of emotional abuse. The belief grew that these interlinking patterns could be grouped together under an umbrella phenomenon of emotional abuse. Nevertheless, I struggled to understand whether emotional abuse was a separate phenomenon in the true sense of the word, or a branching-off from the patterns and behaviours typically to be found within a relationship fraught with all types of violence. I needed to establish whether the emotional abuse was, above all, a reflection on a violent society.

At social get-togethers, in the papers, and as a therapist I was constantly confronted with situations where women were verbally abused and degraded, emotionally belittled and run-down, and where people turn a blind eye and a deaf ear. Then, and now, the written and electronic media daily overflow with reports on war and violence occurring at the macro level of societies. The occurrences leading up to and following September 11, 2001 in New York, March 11, 2004 in Madrid and July 7, 2005 in London have yet again proven to what extent power games are played out on a global scale. But violence and the misuse of power are no new occurrence and have been with us since the beginning of time as we know it.

The Constitution of South Africa is depicted as one of the most progressive in the world, especially when it comes to the rights and protection of the rights of women and children and yet the history of the 1994 elected African National Congress government in South Africa is internationally acknowledged as one of oppression, and shows the subtleties and sufferings of domination. We have the Commission on Gender Equality and the Women's Charter defining discrimination against women and recommending steps to be taken (Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women: First South African Report, 2005). The progressiveness of the constitution does signal reference to the preceding struggle against oppression and domination but even so, political thought, no matter how progressive or archaic, does not directly reflect the reality of the people's day-to-day experiences.

How else is one to account for the statistical facts that in South Africa a woman is raped every 26 seconds, that one out of four women are in relationships where they are abused, and that every six days a woman is murdered by her partner (People Opposing Women Abuse, 2005). A research project undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council found that 20% of South Africans report violence in their relationships and 57% still physically discipline their children, 33% thereof with a rod or a belt (Dawes, Kafaar, Kropiwnicki, Pather & Richter, 2004). According to Liz Walker (2005) as high as fifty percent of women in South Africa experience some form of domestic violence on a regular basis; either physical, emotional, or financial.

I grew up in a white middle-class, Afrikaans neighbourhood (concepts I will at a later stage come back to) and therefore I cannot speak for women from all races and classes in South Africa. I can only give my version and the versions of the women in the present research, as all truth lies within the historical and social location of the time. Each year in celebrating Women's Day, and especially in celebrating ten years of democracy in South Africa in 2004, I noticed a specific trend in the local Afrikaans newspapers; a trend I take to be more or less the same throughout the country. Firstly, those women who have risen to the occasion and became an active and largely equal political and social force are celebrated. Secondly, there is the call-up to white women who still hover inside a comfort-zone of letting the others or the men do whatever needs to be done (Rabe, 2004). A well-known South African female theologian describes women to have "identities of failure". Rabe quotes an equally well-know historian depicting South African women as having sacrificed their womanhood to the ideal of Afrikaner Nasionalisme (Afrikaans Nationalism), implying a special breed of conservatism and patriarchy.

Rabe calls on women to awaken from their imprisonment within the corsets of their past and the stereotypical beliefs about women.

Thirdly, there is an alleged male political and religious backlash. An Afrikaans newspaper carried a report on a so-called extremist political group (the *Boeremag*) standing trail after an alleged failed attempt to take over government. It was alleged in court by state witnesses against the accused that there were intensions to start a *breeding program* (the word *breeding* was specifically used) in which women would be inseminated by members of their own so-called extremist political group (Du Toit, 2004). It has not ever been proved, however, that the accused people did in fact belong to a group, or that a group such as the so-called “*Boeremag*” in fact existed. This conforms to the typical pattern followed by the abusive husband against the helpless abused wife. In fact, the entire court record of the so-called “*Boeremag* trial” reads like a classic case study of name-calling, family violence and wife-abuse. Also there exists the South African Association of Men, a white middle-class organization which aims to re-establish some of the previously masculine icons and to oppose the threat of feminism (Morrell, 2001).

A letter from a male writer under the title of *Women giving rise to the second fall of humanity* (Krugger, 2004), explains that to argue for women as equals is clearly to promote a ploy of Satan. He accuses women of not learning from their first uprising through Eve, after which they were punished and placed under the guidance of men. Thanks are given to God for those women that know their place at home and in society, neither equal nor above men.

I do believe that the above by no means illustrates the beliefs of the average South-African male. However, historical, stereotypical, and religious traces of the belief that women are worth less than men, and women therefore are subordinate to men, is still subconsciously played out in our households.

On a more intimate and micro level, closer to the concept of emotional abuse, it is said that,

Twenty years ago we began hearing women telling the truth about the physical abuse they were experiencing in their lives. Ten years ago we began hearing women telling the truth about the sexual abuse in their lives. Recently we began hearing women telling the truth about the psychological abuse in their lives. The stories are not new, only the voices and our ability to hear and understand (Chang, 1996, pp.11-12).

The stories that speak for themselves are the stories of the emotional abuse suffered by women in close personal relationships. Scientific studies and the literature on emotional abuse before the 1990's are the exception to the rule (Arias, 1999; Dutton, 1992; Follingstad & DeHart, 2000; Marshall, 1994; Schumacher, Slep & Heyman, 2001; Tolman, 1992). Until fairly recently, psychological research on issues related to any form of abuse in relationships, focused primarily on physical violence. At times, a mere chapter, or at most a few paragraphs, were denoted to non-physical abuse (Bartky, 1990; Braude, 1988; Burstow, 1992; Russell & Hulson, 1992), because also psychology operated from a value system where women were the add-on in studies (Burr, 1995). It was only in the latter part of the 1990s that popular self-help books started off a trend of new titles ranging from verbal abuse (P. Evans, 1993), non-physical abuse (Miller, 1995), invisible wounds (Douglas, 1996), emotional blackmail (Forward, 1997), and stalking (Hirigoyen, 2000), all written by women. In the last five-odd years, the daily news media started waking up to the emotional abuse of women within the inner circles of society, as played out in harassment at work or within close interpersonal relationships.

My interest in close relationships and the occurrence of emotional abuse in these relationships is by no means impartial and dispassionate and was influenced by two distinct life events. Although the one cannot be separated from the other in adding meaning and understanding, I will, for the purpose of relating them, refer to the one as professional and the other as more personal in nature. Firstly, I have been working professionally within a male-dominated environment for more than two decades, and almost exclusively consulted male clients. In the late 1990's I moved into private practice and my clientele changed accordingly. I now saw more female clients, a characteristic of the therapeutic environment often documented (Burstow, 1992; Greenspan, 1983). The stories of emotional abuse in close relationships, as my women clients related them, mystified me. I was bewildered by the number of questions about emotional abuse I was confronted with and the reality that the available literature was unable to answer most of these questions to my satisfaction.

In the second instance, prior to changing my professional environment, I, also opted out of marriage. When asked about the reasons for the divorce, I offhandedly referred to personality differences. I did not speak of my own experiences of emotional abuse. But time and time again, I had to explain the process of emotional abuse, as I then understood it, to clients and support them in finding a better way of going about their lives. It dawned on me that in keeping quiet, I myself was instrumental in the continuing abuse of women in close relationships. By

keeping quiet, I kept an emotional distance, and this rendered me uneasily passive in my approach.

If I am not telling of women's experiences of emotional abuse, I am not taking responsibility, and to me has specific implications.

- The academic world and psychotherapists will go on not being able to recognize the mechanisms used in emotional abuse within relationships (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Chang, 1996; Collier, 1982; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Women will remain ignorant of the games played out in their relationships, because if they cannot name them, they may start thinking that they are imagining it (Collier, 1982; Jagger, 2000; Loring, 1994). As Jones (Jones & Brown, 2000, p.38) states, "Women must share their experiences with each other until they understand, identify, and explicitly state the many psychological techniques or domination in and out of the home". The field of psychology is new to the study of specific women. The first book on the counselling of women was only published only in the 1970s (Worell & Remer, 1992) and I believe that my telling can serve a purpose greater than just in the lives of the few women I touch.
- Society will go on ignoring or even condoning family violence, and more specifically the emotional abuse of women (Brannon, 2002; Chang, 1996; Collier, 1982; Douglas, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Leland-Young & Nelson, 1988).
- Women will go on believing that if they can just be good enough, they will overcome the problems they face. In 1979 already Leonore Walker in her *The Battered Woman*, realized that women will go on being victimized if we leave them to believe that they can find "the right way" (p.xvi). Women's physical battering did not stop after the publication of Walker's work, but physical abuse is more readily recognized and spoken for.
- Women will remain stuck in their sense of misplaced shame.
- Women will continue to keep to a position of the powerless (Myss, 1997) and communicate their powerlessness to society, other women and their girl children, if, out of loyalty to their abuser and not wanting to harm family, children and friends, they keep their stories to themselves.

- As a psychotherapist and researcher, I by implication side with the abuser and by doing so imply that abuse is acceptable.

Yet another reason for not keeping quiet stemmed from my own personal therapeutic style. Developing one's own personal style of therapy within a particular theoretical framework, and the techniques one applies, are part of the responsibility of every psychotherapist. In my own practice I have found aspects such as sharing and constant reflecting – both in private and with the clients – crucial to the successful living of both my clients and myself, a standpoint that can be seen as more feminist in nature. In this way, my own particular style of interacting with clients was instrumental in the decision to make the voices of these specific clients audible, and to have female clients tell of their experiences of emotional abuse in their heterosexual relationships.

Coming to a decision to research emotional abuse was the first step. By rethinking and re-evaluating my own situation and the stories of my clients and by continuous reading, I progressed through a number of phases in trying to make sense of the process of emotional abuse as experienced in close relationships. I went through a phase in which I wanted to lay all the blame on the abuser and consequently found abundant literature citing research that either proved or disproved the abuser's liability. As I am more concerned with women's experiences, I will not here fully review the extensive literature on the male abuser, but I need to share a few conclusions, as many of these have grown into myths with serious implications on the lives of women. Most of the following research has been done on the physically abusive man, and I found myself contemplating whether this would also apply to the emotionally abusive man.

Society attempts to shift the responsibility for the occurrence of abuse in our western culture onto drunkards (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Russel & Hulson, 1992; Walker, 1979) and drug addicts (Saunders, 1992; Walker, 1979). As far as physical abuse is concerned, there seems to be some truth involved in this widely believed premise (Horley, 2002; Russel & Hulson, 1992; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Saunders, 1992). It has also been found, however, that most men who go on alcohol binges or are high-frequency drinkers do not hit their wives (Kantor & Straus, 1987; Wallace, 1996). One can therefore conclude that women are mistaken in their belief that the abuse will stop if they can control their partner's drinking.

The perception exists that only men who are pathologically ill will physically abuse their partners (Collier, 1982). Researchers have found that many batterers exhibit traits that can be described as pathological (Saunders, 1992; Wallace, 1996), but as all pathologically ill men do not abuse their spouses and the majority of physically abusive men do not show evidence of mental disorders (Horley, 2002; Saunders, 1992; Schumacher, et al., 2001), it seems reasonable to deduct that mental illness is not the cause of abuse between intimate partners.

Blaming the abuse on the man's inability to control his aggression is also found to be an unacceptable excuse (Miller, 1995; Saunders, 1992). Evidence of biological determination was overturned by research (Weisstein, 2000). Behaviour is a learned option (Boonzaier & De la Rey, 2004; Dobash & Dobash, 1980) and this choice of abusive behaviour is illustrated by the fact that physically abusive men do not randomly hit out at anyone (Miller, 1995; Walker, 1979). They seldom show their anger in public, they only break the spouse's possessions – and the most prized ones at that – and do not bruise where it will show (Douglas, 1996). Such behaviour, according to Douglas (1996, p.69), proves a "chilling level of control".

The abuser's stress levels are often cited as causing the abuse, but if he is thus stressed, the question remains why the abuse is only directed at his partner (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002). Also, abuse being the result of the abuser not having the necessary coping skills was seen as another myth by Walker (1979) as the abuser solely targets his partner.

I found that society, and particularly women, justify the abuser's behaviour through his so-called terrible childhood. Available research tends to indicate the possibility of an intergenerational transmission of abuse and verbal aggression (Cahn, 1996; Cahn & Lloyds, 1996; Collier, 1982; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Dutton, 1988; Gelles, 1983; NiCarty, 1982; Russel & Hulson, 1992 for further details; Saunders, 1992; Stordeur & Stille, 1989; Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980; Vissing & Baily, 1996; Wallace, 1996; Worell & Remer, 1992). Although Kosberg and Nahmiash (1996) concluded that violent behaviour can be the conscious or unconscious wish for retribution, research has shown that all people coming from bad childhood experiences do not abuse their partners, children or any other (Miller, 1995; NiCarthy, 1982; Schumacher, et al., 2001). Women also suffer terrible childhoods but largely do not turn out being abusive towards their partners.

Research has also proven that, contrary to popular belief, battering and abuse do not only occur in the lower social classes, the uneducated walks of life (Russel & Hulson; 1992; Schumacher, et al, 2001; Walker, 1979) or within certain races (Collier, 1982).

The review of research directed towards finding characteristics common to the abuser, left me with the clear impression that there is a higher incidence of physical batterers or abusers that come from violent homes (Walker, 1979). There are some indications of personality disorder, and a slight indication of higher levels of alcohol consumption, but battering and abuse seems to be a personal choice. Not being able to conclude that the reason for abuse lies within the abuser himself and struggling to have female clients recognize their experiences as emotional abuse, I found myself in a position of questioning the role women played in the process of emotional abuse in their relationships. Although I realized this position could be found extremely offensive, especially within the feminists' ranks, I realized that in this I was a product of my own personal history. Having been reared as a female in a patriarchal society, my own intellectual reasoning is programmed in this way.

In reading about emotional abuse, working with women in emotionally abusive relationships, speaking to women, and socializing with women, I – as well as some scholars, psychotherapists and other people – am often astounded to see intelligent, emotionally competent, assertive, and well-rounded women ensnared, caught up in a process of emotional abuse (Greenspan, 1983; Miller, 1995). I needed to consider the possibility of women contributing to their abuse, making myself vulnerable to criticism for yet again making the woman into the victim, as so often happens. According to common knowledge it is often accepted that the woman is deviant for staying. We have all fallen prey to have this myths obscure our clinical and legal judgment (Saunders, 1992).

Throughout modern research it had been easy to listen to the dominant culture – the male perspective. This point of view clouds scientific disciplines (DuBois, 1983; Burr, 1995). Myths and other beliefs prescribe our understanding of women, and even literature exploits the so called deficiencies of women. I therefore need to refer to a number of perceptions that are relevant to the present study.

Researchers have concluded that a stereotypical conception exists that women need to replay the abuse of their childhoods (Dutton, 1992; Wallace, 1996), but in her study Walker (1979) found that more women had their first encounter with violence in their relationships with their partners. Evidence of intergenerational abuse/aggression has been found in relation to physically abusive relationships (Cahn, 1996; Cahn & Lloyd, 1996; Collier, 1982; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Dutton, 1988; Russel & Hulson, 1992; Saunders, 1992; Vissing & Baily, 1996; Wallace, 1996; Worell & Remer, 1992). Although by having witnessed abuse as a child, these women are placed at a higher risk of becoming a target for abuse in later life (Cahn, 1996), all women abused or having witnessed abuse as children do not end up in an abusive relationship. As Douglas (1996) explains, it is not the woman's childhood that makes the abuser abuse her, but the reasons the abuser finds within himself.

Researchers refer to the oldest and most often utilized myth that all battered and/or emotionally abused women are masochistic (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Collier, 1982; Hirigoyen, 2000; Matlin, 1987; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Society and even therapists reason that if she puts up with it, she must like it (Collier, 1982; Douglas, 1996). Caplan and Gans (1991) researching the Self Defeating Personality Disorder found the myth to be grounded in the ideological bias of white male psychiatrists, and Wilkinson (1997a&b) took it as another example of the ways in which psychology has been damaging women. Although having found no other or previous shown self-punishing behaviour in the woman's history (Hirigoyen, 2000), the myth is still taken to be true within a male dominant society.

The absolute and complete relief which the abused women experiences after leaving the relationship serves as contradiction to masochistic tendencies in the women (Hirigoyen, 2000). Scholars often one-sidedly ask women: What do you get out of the abuse? (Dutton, 1992), thus not addressing the role and characteristics of the perpetrator. I believe this misconception comes from the cultural expectation that all women need to be self-sacrificing and tolerant (Hirigoyen, 2000). Thus, a woman behaving in the selfless manner expected by society, is seen as a good woman, but should she be selfless and then abused, she is seen as a masochist (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). Hirigoyen (2000) also rejects the conception of a pleasurable sadomasochistic relationship between abuser and the abused. The abusive relationship is one of control by the one partner and the inability of the other to stop the abuse.

Women are often accused by society of having provoked the abuse (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Collier, 1982; Douglas, 1996; Hirigoyen, 2000). They reason that she must be looking for it, and she must be doing something wrong, or there is something inherently wrong with her (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Greene & Bogo, 2002). Women retaliate (Rothman & Munson, 1988), because of the never ending victimization by her partner (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Wallace, 1996) and are then accused of provocation. The fact is, however, that her male partner is still in the position to choose his own behaviour (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002; Tolman, 1992).

Douglas (1996, p.39) clearly voices the sentiment of many, "No provocation is justification for violence. Violence is against the law. No woman has to put up with it." The abuser, on the other hand, needs to portray himself as the helpless victim and needs to see himself as only reacting to women's assault (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Tolman, 1992). But it is also true that women do sometimes fall onto abusive behaviour themselves as a means of either defending themselves or having been manipulated into reacting (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Hirigoyen, 2000).

Feminist writers as well as other authors writing about battered women have been cautious to imply psychological symptoms in battered women. This diagnosis was often taken to be a justification for blaming the woman for the abuse (Dutton, 1992). A few non-conclusive studies were attempted to show the presence of pathology in the woman at the receiving end of the abuse (Grinnell, 1988; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Here I am in agreement with Dutton who already in 1988, after his research on women's pre- and post-abuse profiles, concluded that abused women only differ from other women in their post-abuse profiles.

Being a woman myself, I know how easily women tend to accept the blame. The myth that women are to blame is so widely believed that it has become an accepted truism in society. Women have through the years been indoctrinated into believing themselves to be the weaker sex, the powerless, and the helpless. To them the doubt comes easily. Women accept a victim stance in their lives. Miriam Greenspan (1983), writing about women in psychotherapy, refers to women positioning themselves as patient, versus the male expert as therapist. He has the power and she feels like a little girl, being scrutinized and judged, and finds it difficult to be herself. So she feels the anger, questions herself, and then, experiencing the shame, she ends up in a dependent position. Greenspan (1983, p.35) sees the victim as the woman "who has

successfully adapted to a situation of social powerlessness”, and the woman “who sees herself through male eyes” acting against her own best interest. Not intending to blame the victim, the word victim is an emotional, negatively laden word that I do not find acceptable within the context of emotional abuse.

I was therefore faced with the dilemma that, although there were pointers that indicated characteristics in both the abuser and the abused as having some influence on the process of emotional abuse taking place in the relationships, these indicators were neither conclusive nor satisfying. It was through my exploration of the available scholarly literature, newspaper and magazine clippings, social interactions, and especially through the interaction with emotionally abused female clients, that I concluded that emotional abuse seems to be firmly embedded in the culture, the society and the relationships within which it manifests. My thinking was further influenced by reading the works of ecologist Uri Bronfenbrenner. To Bronfenbrenner (1979) behaviour can never be a contentless process. This principle is echoed by the social constructionist standpoint of Vivien Burr (1995) and Kenneth Gergen (2000) in that all knowledge is cultural and historical specific and can only be taken as an observation and description at the specific time (Marecek, 1989; Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Worell & Remer, 1992).

I thus came to the conclusion that abusive behaviour, and consequently the experiences of emotional abuse within close relationships needed to be studied in terms of the processes and interactions occurring between the individuals themselves, as well as their past and present environments. It has to be a study within the applicable systems. Weisstein (2000, p.188) explains:

It has become increasingly clear that, in order to understand why people do what they do, and certainly in order to change what people do, psychologists must turn away from the theory of the casual nature of the inner dynamic, and look to the social context within which individuals live.

Reflection, wanting a better understanding, and aspiring to one’s own growth as a person and therapist, has me continuously searching for new and better answers. But it is also true, as both feminists and social constructionists state, that research is only a beginning, a starting point for further discursive actions or the beginning of further useful exploits. Research is seen as the

beginning of a process of social change (Burr, 1995) and as a therapist working with women who have to deal with incidences of emotional abuse in their close relationships, I embarked on this research project with a number of specific goals and objectives in mind.

To clarify my own intent, I need to point out that the aim of this research project is not to find cause and effect in the abuse of women (Sherif, 1987) or some aspects of the phenomenon that are minimally necessary and sufficient to be seen as defining emotional abuse (Dunham, 1988). The focus is not on the therapeutic approach used or on the therapeutic outcomes thereof. I do not intend to find the final truth as I perceive there to be many constructions of circumstances or truths (Burr, 1995). To the contrary, I aspire to become clearer on the concept of how people do emotional abuse. This I aim to do by having the representations of the stories of these particular women speak for themselves and not fit the stories into pre-conceived ideas (Gilligan, 1987). The objective is to have the reader “feel the moral dilemmas, think with our story instead of about it, and join actively in the decision points” (Art Bochner in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.735).

Finding all experiences situated within the influence spheres of history, society and culture, the challenge is to describe and analyze the ecologies that legitimise the occurrence of emotional abuse. This entails describing the operational systems and the ways in which they interact to culminate in the emotional abuse of women. I will necessarily reflect on my own influence on the research, the influence of my being a woman and taking a feminist standpoint, the influence my own life history, and my own exposure to emotional abuse.

The focus will be on the way in which the woman positions both herself and her partner in the abusive relationship. This entails the construction of the self and the other, as well as any paradoxical constructions to be found. The way in which she positions herself with regards to the therapist/researcher will be taken into consideration, as this could render valuable clues to the identification of processes and patterns taking place within the abusive relationship. In the woman’s positioning of the self and the partner, it is of importance to explore if and in what way the phenomenon of emotional abuse is an experience that is constructed by a particular relationship.

Presuming that the experience of emotional abuse is played out within a particular relationship, the contracts between partners will be studied to show in what way such contracts change over time and are paradoxical in nature. It will be valuable to examine and analyze the existence of

patterns as well as processes occurring in the relationship and in what way the abuse calibrate the relationship or impact on the women themselves.

Noting and describing the interaction between the various processes and the emergence of new processes or systems will be of value. Describing a partially different model for explaining and understanding the processes involved in emotional abuse can be useful and usable in understanding the phenomenon. By describing a different understanding of the occurrence of emotional abuse in close relationships, a different theory of emotional abuse could be put forward (Glaser & Strauss, 1999).

It is impossible to answer to all possible research questions about a specific research subject within the boundaries of a single research project. I can only endeavour to come to a partially new and partially better, historically and culturally located model for understanding of emotional abuse in close relationship. The aim is not to discover the final truth about emotional abuse, but to restart and continue the conversation about the abuse of women, and in so doing enable us to continuously work on challenging the words of Naomi Weisstein with which I started the chapter. By showing the experiences of a number of women, I hope to build new understandings by forming new and different connections. In the words of Harding (2004d, p.260), "science never gets us truth; it always promised something much better than truth claims ... Scientific procedures are supposed to get us claims that are less false than those – and only those – against which they have been tested."

CHAPTER 2: A PHILOSOPHY OF BEING

A Philosophical Stance

As scientists some of us prefer to follow the rules of membership of the specific scientific community we work in and prefer to obediently go about our task of fact-finding in professionally sanctioned ways. For the postmodernist, this foundationalism is one of the epistemological errors of modernism (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Post-modern thinking challenges all scientific thinking. It is deconstructive in nature, as it seeks to distance us from, and make us sceptical about beliefs concerning truth, knowledge, power, the self, and language. Post-modern thinking places knowledge claims within the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender and other affiliations (Creswell, 1998). It makes us question the often-taken-for-granted that has legitimized Western culture (Burstow, 1992; Flax, 2003).

It is also true that we come from a western sociological and psychological tradition of researchers specifically studying other groups such as deviants, the mentally ill, freaks, subcultures, women and coloured groups; all those believed to differ from the norm (Alsop, Fitzsimmons & Lennon, 2002; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Mama, 1987; Schutte, 2000). Psychology has long been a victimology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The norm is set and the research subject is approached from the position of the powerful (Du Bois, 1983; Madriz, 2000; Millman & Kanter, 1987) or the scientific elite (Sherif, 1987); an androcentric or phallogocentric approach (Bograd, 1988; Burstow, 1992; Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Matlin, 1987; Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Worell & Remer, 1992).

Harding (1987a, p.8) states that traditional research was to find answers for men so as to assist the dominant to “pacify, control, exploit, or manipulate women”. Feminism, however, is prominent in questioning these proclaimed truths (Bowles & Klein, 1983b; Marecek, 1989). Feminist psychology was deeply critical of mainstream psychology’s inattention to women’s issues as seen from the standpoint of women and the damage done to women by mainstream psychology is criticized (Kitzinger, 1992; Weisstein, 1971; Wilkinson, 1997b).

I am aware that the ontological stance I assume will influence my thinking and the methods I apply. It will influence the processes I go through, and all interpretations or sense I make from the information obtained. The basic nature of a way of being is significant in determining my philosophical views on all facets of knowledge and the processes of finding knowledge (Mouton & Marais, 1990). I find myself perplexed by the intertwining connections between ontology and epistemology; the boundaries of which are fluent and permeable.

Perhaps this is so because taking action against perceived oppression led to a distinctive feminist ontology, and a distinctive feminist epistemology is the product of exploring a feminist ontology (Stanley, 1990b). My views on being in the world are the product of a feminist stance. I shall therefore briefly point to the general aims of feminist research before detailing my views on being in the world.

Differing from mainstream psychology's opposition to any kind of overt political influences (Kahn & Yoder, 1992; Wilkinson, 1997a&b), feminist research works within the political and philosophical values of the women's movement, and therefore their epistemology and methodology reflect this stance (Brannon, 2002; Burstow, 1992; Collier, 1982; Elworthy, 1996; Peplau & Conrad, 1989). The main driving force in feminist research is the ending of women's oppression (Bartky, 1990; Hartsock, 1996; Klein, 1983; Ricketts, 1989; Westcott, 1983; Wise, 1990a; Worell & Remer, 1992). This is so because according to Mies (1983, pp.123-124) it is only through active involvement in the struggle against the oppression of women that women can "prevent the misuse of their theoretical and methodological innovations for the stabilization of the status quo and for crisis management".

Feminist researchers are committed to break away from the dominant conceptions of knowledge and those psychologies produced by men (Flax, 2003; Gross & Averill, 2003; Harding, 1987a; Hartsock, 2003; Hollway, 1989; Oleson, 2000; Stanley & Wise, 1979, 1990). As feminist research purposely works towards changing women's lives, it is political in nature (Kahn & Yoder, 1992; Ricketts, 1989). Feminist scholars express the need to benefit and empower women through their writings and research (Harding, 1987a; Klein, 1983), having women benefit from new and different understandings of issues they are faced with and empowering them through the growing experience of partaking in the study (Chang, 1996; DeVault, 1999), and therefore making research not only research *for* women, but research *with* women (Bowles & Klein, 1983b; Gottfried, 1996b; Mies, 1983).

Feminist research critically examines the source of the social powers that influence women's lives (Burstow, 1992; Harding, 1987a). Whereas mainstream psychology is criticised for the failure to see power relations as central to social interactions (Kitzinger, 1992; Meyer, 1991; Wilkinson, 1997a), a feminist aim is to examine the connection between knowledge and power, as well as to acknowledge the ever-present dynamics of power in all research interactions (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994; Creswell, 1998). Feminist scholars believe that women should be helped to understand their oppression and should be assisted in finding new and more empowering ways of dealing with oppression (Collier, 1982; Hartsock, 1996; Peplau & Conrad, 1989). They see themselves as accountable (Chang, 1996; Wise 1987), and believe that significant change in women's lives is only possible through change in society (Brannon, 2002; Madriz, 2000).

Feminist research further claims the novelty of studying gender (Creswell, 1998; DeVault, 1999; Hepburn, 2000; Jagger, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Gender is defined as "culturally-determined cognitions, attitudes, and belief systems about females and males" (Worell & Remer, 1992, p.9). The idea of the social construction of femininity and masculinity is explored (Harding, 1987a; Kahn & Yoder, 1989), defining femaleness as referring to biological sex, whereas femininity is connected to being female and the result of social training (Bailey, 2000). Feminist research claims that biological differences are less important than cultural programming (Collier, 1982; Crawford & Marecek, 1992; Ferguson, 1991; Reed, 2000). In a patriarchal society, being different often carries the implication of being depicted as deficient (Kerstan & Bepko, 1990). These so-called deficiencies lead to the societal concept of women-as-problem orientation (Crawford & Marecek, 1992; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991) and so feminists strongly reject the notion that women are inferior to men, and that women's characteristics and personality must be valued as a variation on those of men (Brannon, 2002). They question the subordinate role that women have been manoeuvred into through industrialization (Addelson, 1993; Gerdes, Moore, Ochse & Van Ede, 1988; Huber, 1991).

Feminist researchers aim for the relationship between client and researcher to reflect female values and female ways of relating (Brannon, 2002; Burstow, 1992; Chang, 1996; Oleson, 2000). They claim not to work in dichotomies such as the observed and the observer, thought and feeling, personal and political, objective or passionate and subjective (Madriz, 2000). The focus is on the experience and so feminists consciously use subjectivity as well as their experiences in and out of research as a means towards reaching clarity (Banister, et al., 1994).

Feminist scientific work raised the question of whether women do science differently from the way men do science (Rosser, 1989). Whereas in traditional research different has often meant lesser, feminist epistemology and methodology aim to bring an alternative perspective on science. They motivate for the inclusion of differences as these can add value through an alternative way of seeing to the body of science (Keller, 1989). As a result, feminist research today is rich in diversity (DeVault, 1993; M. Evans, 1983; Gottfried, 1996b; Harding, 1987a; Hepburn, 2000; Stanley & Wise, 1990) and is characterized by continuous and dynamic debate. This diversity is seen as added value. The context and boundaries of feminist research are constantly shifting and changing (Olesen, 1994).

On Being a Feminist

Being a feminist is often simply and naively defined as any person who has high regard for women as human beings and believes that women and men should be regarded equal on a social, political and economical level (Matlin, 1987). In the popular idiom, feminism is reduced solely to women's struggle against male oppression (Bartky, 1990; Elworthy, 1996). I find myself identifying with mainly the no-frills definition of feminism by the psychologist Sue Wilkinson (1997a). She defines feminism as, firstly, placing high value on women and deeming women worthy of study in their own right and secondly, feminism as acknowledging the need for social change where it concerns women.

So am I a feminist? If perceived against the intense and active involvement in the feminist movement by traditional feminists, I might be found lacking. But then again, my own involvement comes with the concentrated involvement in the present study; the knowledge that I cannot be silent and need to be an active agent of change. My own feminist stance was poignantly illustrated to me when I recently spoke up for a friend. Her husband had repeatedly in my presence as well as in broader social situations, violently lashed out at his wife, blaming her, degrading her in public, negating her very worth as a person. In the process of speaking out against her husband, I lost a friend. She was not yet ready to confront the abuse in their relationship, while I lived feminism. This is reminiscent of what Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1993, p.18) mean by saying that "...whatever situation I go into, wherever it is, wherever I go, and whatever I do involves feminism – because that's me. Because that's a part of my everyday interaction with people that I meet each and every day".

Sandra Harding (1987) comments on feminist research, seeing it as the dedication to a specific epistemology; a theoretical commitment that is critical of the historically dominant conceptions of knowledge, a commitment to questioning gender issues, seeing the connection between being and knowing. Also to DeVault (1999), her feminism signifies the belief in feminist views on being and reality, reasoning about knowledge, and following feminist theory.

So, whether I am seen as a feminist will in the end depend on my way of reasoning, my set of beliefs, and whether or not my epistemology fits in with feminist theory and thinking. It will depend on whether feminism can be seen as being the intellectual backdrop to my research (Williams, 1990).

A Historical Diversity

Some standpoint theorists now interchangeably talk about their work as an epistemology and a method of doing research (Harding, 1993). But before explaining feminist epistemology and methodology, a short detour into the historical diversity of feminism and being a feminist in the world is appropriate. Feminism, in the form of an organized political movement, has existed for more than 150 years. The history of feminism and the contributions of the movement have over the years been adequately covered in a wide variety of psychological and sociological textbooks (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). The Second Wave of feminism has its origins in the civil rights movement and the student peace movement in the United States during the 1960s (Bartky, 1990; Brannon, 2002). The latter, especially, was instrumental in the international uprising in women's consciousness against their oppression (Elworthy, 1996). Second Wave feminism brought a significant change in the way women viewed their position in society (NiCarthy, 1982; Poling, 1996; Wallace, 1996).

The international women's movement brought about an upsurge in literature about all aspects of women's lives (Burstow, 1992). These women's studies by academic writers were of an interdisciplinary nature, but also consisted of writings aimed at the general public (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). For many a reader of women's literature, as for myself as a student starting out on post-graduate studies, Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1976, but the first edition in the original French, published in 1949) was one of the first voices that focused on the problems of women, especially in families. De Beauvoir's thinking is often captured in her now famous words "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (De Beauvoir, 1976, p.295).

Then along came, Betty Friedan (1963) and *The Feminine Mystique*. She wrote about American women, kept from growing and developing to capacity, calling it the problem that has no name (Chang, 1996; Friday, 1998; Hurtado, 1989).

Feminist literature gives due recognition to the contributions of these earlier feminists and the subject matter they pursued. One can recall Sandra Bem's 1960's contribution towards the understanding and popularisation of the term androgyny and her description of women's development as restricted by traditional sex roles (Gough, 1998; Worell & Remer, 1992) or Kate Millet's targeting of patriarchy in her 1970 *Sexual Politics* (Alsop, et al., 2002). Carol Gilligan's research on moral judgments and especially her hearing of the *different voices* are widely recognized (Brannon, 2002; Ferguson, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Percy, 1998).

Feminism distinguishes itself by its methodology, on which I shall elaborate in discussing the epistemological perspective of this research. At this moment it is sufficient to point out the contributions of earlier feminist writers in drawing attention to the absence and invisibility of women within different contexts (Chang, 1996; Harding, 1987a; Marecek, 1989; Oleson, 1994). They focused their studies on the sexual exploitation and male control over female sexuality, and attached new and different meaning to the woman's specific life stages and experiences (DeVault, 1999; Gerdes, et al., 1988; Hepburn, 2000; Jagger, 2004; Millman & Kanter, 1987; Peplau & Conrad, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1993).

Different faces to feminism developed. The psychoanalytic feminists focused primarily on the power of the unconscious in shaping behaviour (Percy, 1998) and were represented by authors such as Carol Gilligan, Karen Horney, and Chodorow (Brannon, 2002; Burr, 1995). They find the reason for women's oppression in men's deep emotional need to control women, because of ambivalence toward the mothers who reared them (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004), and the social process of aggressive individualization that is expected of them. This theory of breaking away from mother and the aggression needed to establish oneself as a person is a theory that could have application in the research of the abuse of women.

Liberal feminism believes women generally to be oppressed and discriminated against by the legal system, customs, and tradition (Elworthy, 1996; Jagger, 2004). They see patriarchy and the sexist patterning of institutions as the cause of oppression and discrimination (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Percy, 1998), and work towards the re-patterning of these

institutions and systems. They are predominantly concerned with gender inequality, and claim women and men to be equal on the basis of essential humanity and morality.

Socialist feminism sees the oppression of women as the first, the oldest, and the primary form of oppression, and comes to the conclusion that the differences between women and men are socially and economically constructed (Collier, 1982; Elworthy, 1996; Greenspan, 1983; Willies, 2000). Marxist and radical feminist thinking are maybe the two best-known and most controversial feminist ideologies. Radical feminists believe in the absolute positive value of women and criticize the deliberate and intended oppression of women by the structures and institutions of society, the most fundamental of these being patriarchy and capitalism (See Chang, 1996 for an extensive list of research; French, 1995; Gergen, 2001; Glenn, 1991; Jagger, 2004; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Reed, 2000).

Radical feminism asks for profound personal and political transformation (Bartky, 1990) and vies for the overthrow of patriarchy through the active refusal to collaborate with the structures, institutions and systems held in place by masculine power and the subsequent abuse of power (Alsop, et al., 2003; Percy, 1998; Ware, 2000; Worell & Remer, 1992). They support the struggle of women to regain control over their own bodies (Burstow, 1992; Jagger, 2004) and to separate them from the institutions of men and heterosexuality, some finding a role model in lesbianism (Crow, 2000). Furthermore, radical feminists work for a social change towards feminist values such as wholeness, trust, nurturing and sensuality (Elworthy, 1996), but they also give voice to the anger women experience in recognizing their oppression and the systems that oppress (Collier, 1982).

Third Wave Feminism or Postcolonial Feminism started around the 1980s as a reaction against the persistent whiteness in feminist theory and research in economically privileged Western industrialized societies (Harding, 1993; Jagger, 2000; Oleson, 2000; Sandoval, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1990). This still continues, for example, when the behaviour of women of colour in shelters controlled by white women are not understood because their normal behaviour (such as talking loud, swearing, moving fast and arguing) are seen as different and therefore negative (Haaken & Yragui, 2003). In the same manner, black feminists often equate difference with particularity (Qin, 2004), because some white economically privileged women use difference as a tool to stay in power, “conceptualizing their experiences as normative, and naming women of colour as ‘different’” (Qin, 2004, p.301). White women here take on the patriarchal supremacy

of their fathers, husbands and brothers; white women fooled and used by the dominant gender. Mary Daly (1978) pointed out to what extent patriarchy uses racism to divide and rule. Even Chinese students in host countries are “othered” by the dominant culture because of their being “rare, alien, and poor” (Qin, 2004, p.300), devalued because of being different. The same goes for the widely used Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders seen as “another Western bourgeois attempt to dehumanize human beings, and to silence (potential) forms of protest against oppressive situations” (Richters, 1991, p.137).

But there also are the third wave feminists who pull away from the idea of shared gynocentric identity and concern themselves with the differences found in women. They study differences pertaining to women of colour, lesbian women, and disabled women (Oleson, 2000; Schutte, 2000), and women differing because of race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, culture and their place in history (Narayan, 2000). The focus turns to the knowledge gained from being different within a dominant group; the knowledge of the “outsider within” (Collins, 2004a, p.103). Harding (1993, 1998) cites the value to be found in postcolonial as well as historical, political, and culturally different standpoints. The aim is solidarity and not unity, as a monolithic feminism would lose the valued input of the discursive position thus created. The words of the renowned author Toni Morrison reveal a different being as “there is something inside us that makes us different from other people. It is not like men and it is not like white women” (Sandoval, 2004, p.198).

Women in postcolonial Africa are doing a women’s movement or women’s movements that at times become more radical than those of North America and Europe (Smith, 1996). They take a stand against the intellectual exploitation by the northern donors (Meema, 1992b) and the research models applied by white western feminism (Jagger, 2000). But as elsewhere in the world, the governments of the majority of countries in Africa pay lip service to establishing equality of sex and race. Whereas governments in the region incapacitates woman’s movements by restricting their influence to the women’s political wings of the ruling party (Meema, 1992b), the situation in South Africa started to change with the 1994 elections. However, in sub-Sahara Africa most women still face quadruple oppression: oppression because of their gender, class and ethnicity, as well as through imperialism (Mbilinyi, 1992).

Feminism demands equal rights for women in a male society and this leads to the re-emergence of interest in wife abuse in social scientific and mental health circles (Heise, 1996; O’Leary & Murphy, 1992). Feminism is increasingly focusing on how issues of class, race,

ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion impact on different groups of women (Hurtado, 1989; Narayan, 2000; Narayan & Harding, 2000; Schutte, 2000). I shall focus on how these issues touch on my research in the discussion of epistemology and methodology.

Capitalism as Equal to Oppression

Feminism views the oppression that occurs within a patriarchal system as the cornerstone of women's subordination (Creswell, 1998; Haaken & Yragui, 2003). I myself have no doubt that the interaction between capitalism and patriarchy, as well as each system on its own, has a direct impact on the lives of women. In this, I take a social constructionist's view, in that culture and history, as well as the social, political and economic arrangements thereof, directly impact on the lives of the individual (Burr, 1995). It is not the biases of individuals that oppress women, but the ideology of women's inferiority and the systematic structural oppression of women (Harding, 2004a; Narayan & Harding, 2000).

As women are social beings, the place they occupy in social life and all of their relationships and interactions are influenced and constructed by the systems in which they function (Harding, 1993; Kelly-Gadol, 1987). This domination of women through the interacting systems of capitalism and patriarchy are optimally described in literature (Gergen, 2001; Glenn, 1991; Greenspan, 1983; Hartsock, 2004; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Reed, 2000). Burstow, in her introduction to *Radical Feminist Therapy* (1992, p.viii) states, "Civilization as we know it is based on the violation and domination of subordinates by elites. All women are subordinate".

Feminist theory incorporates many of the principles of the macro-social order found in the Marxian model (Harding, 2004a; Hartsock, 2004a). Those having the power accomplish domination and control by the gendering of both the systems of capitalism and patriarchy, and by the separation of work or production into a private and public realm (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Chafetz, 1991; Chang, 1996; Hare-Mustin, 1992; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Within close relationships, patriarchy benefits through this sexual division of labour, as the woman's unequal position in the employment market keeps her financially dependent on her spouse (Agassi, 1991; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Glenn, 1991; Haaken & Yragui, 2003; Glenn, 1991; O'Connor, 2000), and leaves the man free to go out and conquer the world (Greenspan, 1983; Harding, 1993; Smith, 2004).

The woman's private (home and household) responsibilities marginalize her in the job market, and thus capitalism benefits by being able to employ women against lower wages (Agassi, 1991; Glenn, 1991; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Valian, 1998). Women were believed to be limited by their biology (Hubbard, 1989), but in fact her limitation is social and institutional (Bartky, 1990; Crawford & Marecek, 1992; Hartsock, 2004; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Valian, 2005). The January 2005 incident at the University of Harvard cannot be disregarded as the uttering of merely one person; it shows the deeply-seated biases of institutions and of those running organizations. In a keynote address, president Lawrence Summers attributed the low numbers of women in science to genetics and aptitude, choosing to forget the patriarchal biases in appointing women, and the magnitude of research done that show the opposite to be true (Bombardieri, 2005).

Feminists see the more dominant, the masters, as controlling all crucial resources and thus receiving all profit when it comes to production (Hartsock, 2004; O'Connor, 2000). The production of knowledge is also controlled in the interest of contemporary capitalism (Smith, 1996). The subordinate or subservient, through whom all production occurs, is exploited and excluded, even given the fact that human social life is sustained through them (Hubbard, 1989). Even "women's experiences of sexual harassment on the job and of being hassled in public places are not incidental and insignificant micro events but examples of a power relation in which patriarchy helps police the borders for capital" (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004, p.341).

Feminists have strong views on both capitalism and patriarchy, and as both these processes and systems feature strongly within the worlds of the female clients I see, I find it necessary to further expand on the workings of patriarchy.

Patriarchy spells Oppression

Thus the ideal of the average Western man is a woman who freely accepts his domination, who does not accept his ideas without discussion, but who yields to his arguments, who resists him intelligently and ends by being convinced.
Simone de Beauvoir (1976, p.16)

Patriarchy takes a central position in Western society, constructing hierarchical rule, gender polarity, and sexism, and appointing men to positions of power and control (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Chafetz, 1991; Dickson, 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 1980). Stanley and Wise (1983, p.199) see patriarchy as “an ideology reflected in institutions and negotiated through interactions”. For feminists, patriarchy thus becomes both the structure and the ideology that legitimizes the structure (Chang, 1996), a system of social relations wherein the male has the social power to exploit and control the female (Ferguson, 1991; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Scheman, 2003). It refers to the “dominance of an elite group over all other groups” (French, 1995, p.23), thus Max Weber’s description of patriarchy as a system of *Herrschaft* (Millet, 2000).

Feminists, therefore, take patriarchy as deliberately keeping women subordinate, as well as keeping them from positions of power in institutions (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Chang, 1996; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Denying women the right to the pulpit or the bench takes from them the means and the power to be able to bring about change (Chafetz, 1991; Dobash & Dobash, 1980). The powerful application of patriarchy in the daily lives of women and men will be described in chapter 6 (The Family of Origin) and chapter 7 (The Powerful Voice of Control).

On Being Woman

Selves can only exist in relationship to other selves
George Herbert Mead: Mind, Self and Society

Concepts of Gender

Most theories of gender were developed within the belief of a natural and biological division between women and men and within the female-male dichotomy and male-dominated power structures of a capitalist and patriarchal system (Alsop, et al, 2003; Chang, 1996; Qin, 2004; Weisstein, 1971). Not being either determined by biological sex nor ever entirely independent of it (Brannon, 2002; Ferguson, 1991; Keller, 1989; Millet, 2000; Stoller, 1968), gender is defined as “culturally-determined cognitions, attitudes, and belief systems about females and males” (Worell & Remer, 1992, p.9). Because of this cultural determination, the concepts of femininity and masculinity vary from culture to culture, from society to society, as well as during different historical periods (Brannon, 2002; Harding, 1987a, 1998; Millman & Kanter, 1987). This leaves us with a constructed idea of femininity and masculinity; a cultural, racist, class, ethnical agreement of what must be true (Code, 1993; Harding, 1987a, 1989; Matlin, 1987; Worell & Remer, 1992). Within a capitalist and patriarchal system, females and males are encouraged to conform to the gender norms modelled to them by significant others (Chafetz, 1991). Dominant culture pervasively stereotypes both female and male behaviour through early programming (Bloom, Coburn & Pearlman, 1975; Stanley & Wise, 1993) into a system where gender is always hierarchically organized, with masculinity receiving the highest status (Harding, 1998).

Whether one sees oneself as female or male is determined by one being raised female or male. This was confirmed by the studies done on hermaphrodites with the same-sex diagnosis (Money, 1970; Hampton & Hampton, 1961). Says Weisstein (2000, p.191): “identical behaviour occurs given different physiological states; and different behaviour occurs given an identical physiological starting point”. So boys are trained towards individualization. The boy-child comes to deny the female (Gergen, 2001; Gilligan, 1987; Hartsock, 2004) as he understands that his claim to male privileges is based on his distancing himself from female behaviour (Brannon, 2002; Ferguson, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Kaplan, 1988; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Percy, 1998). He is expected to construct himself as an individual, different from and competitive towards others (Walters, 1988). This brings a hostile and combative

element into being masculine, and so the male incarnates domination and power (Chang, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; French, 1995; Walker, 1979).

Pipher (1995) describes adolescence as the stage where girl-children are taught to stop asking what they want or who they are, and start asking what they can do to please others. This is because the girl is allowed to stay connected to the mother (Brannon, 2002; Gergen, 2001; Gilligan, 1982, 1987; Percy, 1998) and so experiences herself through interaction with others (Ferguson, 1991; Kaplan, 1988). The woman is known, especially within patriarchy's main system of the family (Millet, 2000) only by the identity bestowed on her by others, mostly that of wife, mother, and daughter (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Worell & Remer, 1992). They are the caretakers and the nurturers and so incarnate responsibility (French, 1995). They are the "nameless, undifferentiated, undistinguished, and undistinguishable" (Dobash & Dobash, 1980, p.33).

A Female Sense of Self

We live in a time in which most people believe there is not much inside them, only what teachers, parents, and others have put there
Michell Cassou and Steward Cubley (Cameron, 1997, p.4)

Traditional research refers to the unified subject as an individual woman or man with an ongoing, consistent consciousness and a sense of self. This assumes a stable, knowing self (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Social constructionism, on the other hand, asserts that there is no specific essence to personhood (Burr, 1995; Sampson, 1989). It is argued that a person's being is a product of the social processes to which she was and is exposed (Hartsock, 2004). The social processes referred to embrace historical situatedness as well as race, social class, power, ethnicity, sexuality, and culture (See Qin, 2004 for further references). The view of a socially constructed self is shared by postmodernism and by standpoint theory (Hartsock, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory has been instrumental in grounding the belief of no essential, universal woman (Harding, 1987a, 1998; Marecek, 1989; Stanley & Wise, 1993; Weisstein, 2000) and replacing it with situated woman within specific experiences and knowledge (Oleson, 2000).

It follows that a person is different depending on what she is doing and with whom she is. The self is not an entity within the person (Burr, 1995), but exists within the interaction between

people, embedded in the relationship (Alsop, et al., 2003; Gergen, 2000; Stanley & Wise, 1993). As Sampson (1989, p.4) declares, “society constitutes and inhabits the very core of whatever passes for personhood: each is interpenetrated by its other”. I find Qin’s (2004, p.303) use of the Chinese sense of self defined as “beings in webs-of-relationships” most appropriate. This comes from the Confucian idea that the self is a sharable experience. All people therefore have a number of selves, each is socially constructed and constantly changing (Ferguson, 1991; Harding, 1998; Hartsock, 2004; Hepburn, 1999; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Oleson, 2000). Recent studies of masculinity in South African prisons, mine and rural communities, for example, show the malleability of gender and identity under specific circumstances (Gear, 2005; Reid, 2005). Haraway (2004, p.90) talks about heterogeneous multiplicities, that the “knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and *therefore* able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another” (italics in the original).

The person is brought into being through language (Coyle, 1995; Gavey, 1989; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004), and therefore the self should not be taken as a reality existing outside of social interaction (Parker, 1992). As language is not transparent (Burr, 1995), each person is surrounded by a number of discourses. A discourse is seen as “a system of statements which construct an object” (Parker, 1992, p.5), and therefore there can be different presentations and truths about the self (Burr, 1995). Subjectivity is therefore described as constructed by the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, the person’s sense of self, and the ways of understanding her relations to the world (Weedon, 1987).

As meaning lies within the context of the discourse (Gavey, 1989), it follows that the discourses of society can restrict our identity or use it to society’s ideological advantage (Sampson, 1989; Shields, 1992). For example, the prevailing discourses of femininity can serve to uphold power inequality (Burr, 1995) or western patriarchal society construct a woman’s meaning through the language of the oppressor (DeVault, 1999). Johnston (1973 as cited in Kitzinger, 1989, p.82) thus says, “Identity is what you say you are according to what they say you can be”. The woman then finds her thinking, feeling and experiencing as a self (an identity) bestowed on her by the oppressor (Alsop, et al., 2003; Gilligan, 1987; Harding, 1998; Weisstein, 2000). Even an idea such as the nurturing mother is a social construct and therefore not true of all women or all mothers (Flinders, 2002). But the self can also affect society (Qin, 2004), and as Marilyn French (1981, p.16) says in *The Women’s Room*:

...a silly woman always running for her mirror to see who she is? Mira lived by her mirror as much as the Queen in Snow White. A lot of us did: we absorbed and believed the things people said about us.

The individual takes on a role from the generalized other (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Mead, 1943/1962). Feminist scholars cite the generalized other to be representative of the male-dominated and patriarchal community norms. Therefore, what constitutes a person is the male norm (DuBois, 1983; Greenspan, 1983; Harding, 1987a; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Millman & Kanter, 1987). The individual (the male social actor) sees himself through the eyes of others that are more or less on his level, much like himself (Mead, 1943/1962). Women, to the contrary, learn to see themselves through the eyes of the dominant male. To women, the other is male, foreign and unfamiliar (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Says Nancy Friday (1998, p.6): "I have sought out men's eyes, required their gazes as far back as I can remember. There is nothing like the mystery of an absent father to addict you to the loving gaze of men."

Consequently even women in the position of the significant other – accustomed to, expecting and accepting validation to come from the outside – view and evaluate other women not by their own norms, but through the eyes of men (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Pipher, 1995). Woman is "defined and differentiated with reference to man, and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other" (de Beauvoir, 1976, p.16). As traditional science has looked upon being different as being lesser (Keller, 1989), when a woman measures herself against the generalized other, she finds herself to be less than, or unequal to (DuBois, 1983; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Qin, 2004).

As Greenspan (1983, p.191) indicates, "in a woman-hating culture, it is normal for women to hate themselves", as the self is constructed through society and the meanings of the current discourses. A woman is taught to measure her success as a person through her popularity with others; others defined as those in the dominant position. She experiences acceptance through identifying with the man in her life, either the father or the man she is having a relationship with, and finds it difficult to build her own sense of self (Collier, 1982; Walters, 1988). This explains why women fear losing a relationship. Losing the other, they lose themselves as defined by the other (Gilligan, 1982; Mirkin, 1994b). She is programmed to find a possessive, domineering male partner, who will pave the way to belittlement and will even abuse later in life.

Feminist psychology urges women not to accept only one meaning as defining femaleness (Hepburn, 1999; Wilkinson, 1997a). We can discursively position ourselves; we can accept or resist the object position as addressed by the discourse (Davies & Harré, 1990). In this constructing and reconstructing of the self in interaction (Burr, 1995), language becomes a place of struggle (hooks, 2004) and is it possible to negotiate identity (Davies & Harré, 1990). Therefore, to me, being woman means being aware of the influences that the others in society have had on my thinking, being and doing, but it also means taking the responsibility of accepting or denying this positioning in order to actively construct my further being. Therefore, when I refer to woman or women in this study, I do so because of space limitations and I in no way imply that all women are the same or will be the same (Gottfried, 1996; Marecek, 1989; Peplau & Conrad, 1989). I also realize that there are some differences that most of us share (Hartsock, 2004).

Consciousness and Agency

It is argued that, for most women, there are large discrepancies between their own personal lived and reflected-upon experiences and the social and cultural stereotypes expected of them (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Millman & Kanter, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1993). This inevitably leads to a bifurcated consciousness or double consciousness that makes women knowledgeable in both the ideological processes of society, but also the activities of everyday life (Davis, 1991; Harding, 1993; Marecek, 1989; Mies, 1983; Smith, 1992). This is in agreement with the earlier conclusion by Stanley and Wise (1993) that opts for many feminist consciousnesses without the implication of lower or higher states of consciousness, or false consciousness. Social constructionists also do not view consciousness as an essential, fixed entity. As consciousness is constructed through language, meaning resides in the discourses that surround it (Burr, 1995).

Seeing the way in which a woman's consciousness is different from her experiences, one could then ask in what way women are free to choose their opportunities. Whereas western society underwrites the existential concept that all people are able to follow their own chosen path of development and meaning, they only pay lip service to this concept when it comes to women. The dominant male has a right and duty to compartmentalize his life into individual projects. This gives him the freedom to answer to his own needs while not seeing and hearing the other

(Flinders, 2002; Gilligan, 1987; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Women, on the other hand and because of their subordinate status are not in a position to project their own plans and meaning into the world, they are not in the position to master the world according to their own interests. French (1981, p.86) argues that women “found it easier with him gone (work related). She could adjust her schedule completely to the babies and wasn’t nearly as anxious when they cried.”

Women are programmed to balance their world according to the needs and interest of a variety of others (Collier, 1982). Their time and space are rarely free from interferences, and women’s lives are controlled by the agendas of others (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). If we take agency to mean the ability to choose (Burr, 1995; Davis, 1991; Schutte, 2000) and oppression as the lack of choices, women seem to be bereft of meaningful agency (hooks, 1984). Social constructionism also argues that people are conceptualized through language, and this would imply no agency, but humans have a choice, for example in putting forward a number of selves or positioning themselves. Experiences, for example, are not unquestionable facts, but can be seen as a resource for critical reflection (Stone-Mediatore, 2000). Women’s experience becomes a resource for starting change. Agency thus remains a concept on which scholars differ, but I believe that, although some women’s agency is constricted to the most horrifying degree, agency – like power – is a diffuse, intangible concept; something to either be seized or to slowly work towards, while positioning oneself as one is best able to seize it.

Issues of Body

Many authors have rendered fascinating work on a prehistoric time when the female body was considered powerful and beautiful, admired, and worshipped in all its functions (De Beauvoir, 1976; Elworthy, 1996). A number of happenings negated this view over a period of time. Also the myths of Western culture and Christianity, for example the myth of The Fall, the myths of the harlot and the virgin, and Pandora’s Box (Armstrong, 1986; Clack & Whitcomb, 1997; Ferguson, 1991; Kelly-Gadol, 1987), created the archetype of women being the cause of all human suffering, justifiably placed under the domination of man, and liable to be punished for their sins (Booth, Goldfield & Munaker, 2000; Greenspan, 1983). Thus the dominant male helped to establish the connection between woman, sex and sin (Millet, 2000). Armstrong (1986, p.1) writes about women’s place in Christianity and concludes that it is “in the West alone that women have been hated because they are sexual beings instead of merely being dominated

because they are inferior chattels.” Society has therefore made women into victim through their bodies.

Many authors describe the way in which, since childhood, a woman’s self and self-esteem are closely connected to her body (Brownmiller, 2000; Burstow, 1992; Gergen, 2001; Gilligan, 1982; Greenspan, 1983; Pipher, 1995; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Just as her hips start swelling into womanhood, society shows her magazines pictures of the thinnest of models, leaving her with the message that she does not measure up (Gergen, 2001). Women therefore learn that not only are their sexuality dominated by the male norm, they are also confronted with male-dominated body images (Alsop, et al, 2003; Mirkin, 1994b). Being socially and culturally defined through one’s body makes one into an object (Booth, et al., 2000; Dickson, 2003).

Alsop et al (1992) refers to Simone de Beauvoir’s description of not the woman’s body being the problem, but the way in which she loses agency because of the way in which society views her as a body. Her body therefore becomes an obstacle for further development and living a fulfilled life. Some women, in their eagerness to please and to have the perfect body, find themselves, for example, in the vortex of a bulimic down spiral (Pipher, 1995). Feminists object to the expectation that a woman will undergo breast surgery or shave her legs to fit her man’s liking. They see these actions as damaging and degrading; further objectifying women (Dickson, 2003; Ferguson, 1991; Greenspan, 1983). Thus the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist group (1981, p.6) said,

The heterosexual couple is the basic unit for male supremacy. In it each individual woman comes under the control of an individual man ... In the couple, love and sex are used to obscure the realities of oppression, to prevent women identifying with each other to revolt, and from identifying ‘their’ man as part of the enemy.

Radical feminists strongly object to seeing women as Body, especially a body there to perform subservient and sexual services for men (Alsop, et al, 2003; Booth, et al, 2000; Collier, 1982; French, 1995; Greenspan, 1983; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Some even object to the heterosexual sex act symbolising conventional rape, with the man dominating and taking or possessing the woman (Burstow, 1992). In South Africa studies have shown this concept to be historically informed as, for example, Isak Niehaus (2002) has described rape as an expression of patriarchy. French (1981, p.86) writes that “Coitus was quick and unsatisfactory.

Mira lay back and permitted it. Norm seemed to realize she did not enjoy it; strangely this seemed to please him.”

But within an oppressive system of male dominance, women’s bodies are controlled and exploited as a resource in social production within the macro-social order (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004), serving a purpose in political stratification and parasitism (French, 1995). Sexual pleasure, sexual desire and curiosity can be dangerous for women (Alsop, et al., 1992; Collier, 1982) and they are robbed of an affirmation of their own bodies and sexuality. The female body is a liability; vulnerable to violation (Lips, 1995; Mirkin, 1994b). As a person, the woman is disregarded, leaving her with a profound sense of self-loss and hunger to be recognized as a person (Greenspan, 1983). Should the woman’s body be violated, she experiences an invasion of the self, a direct mutilation and vandalism of her identity (Gergen, 2001).

Conclusion

I start of the conversation on the emotional abuse of women in close relationships by stating my own philosophical stance; my way of being in the world and thinking about the world. I reasoned from a feminist standpoint but also realized there to be a huge diversity in feminist thinking. Before embarking on a more detailed description of epistemology and methodology, I needed to paint the ontological canvas against which to explore issues such as capitalism and oppression, patriarchy and what it means to be a woman within a patriarchal system.

CHAPTER 3: EPISTEMOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY: FEMINIST STANDPOINT THEORY

Sandra Harding (1987a&b), and Stanley and Wise (1990) following in her footsteps, describe epistemology as a theory of knowledge, the study of how and what we can know, epistemology also forming the basis for both methodology and method. But then Stanley and Wise (1990) relate that what they described in their 1983 edition of *Breaking Out* and believed to be epistemology, are referred to by others as methodology. They ascribe these contrasting views to semantic differences and recommend epistemology to be seen as a framework within which knowledge can be constituted and produced, an understanding of reality. Methodology, on the other hand, is described as “a theory and analysis of how research should proceed” (Harding, 1987a, p.2).

Within the scope and space allowed by this dissertation I find it extremely difficult to organize my writing in terms of epistemology and methodology as the interplay and interconnections between the two often spill over all boundaries. Also feminist scholars within standpoint theory write on a high level of philosophical abstraction. I shall therefore not clearly distinguish between epistemology and methodology but rather stay with the natural flow of my reasoning on the different concepts. I briefly start off with a description of feminist standpoint epistemology which informs much of my thinking, and then discuss situated knowledge, deconstructing reality, truth and knowledge, and finding meaning and understanding.

A Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Standpoint theory emerged in the 1970s and 1980s as a feminist critical theory, also defined as a philosophy, an epistemology, a methodology, and a political strategy (Harding, 1993, 2004b; 2004d). Standpoint-critical theory is about the relation between the production of knowledge and practices of power (Harding, 1998; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Above all, standpoint theory is a feminist standpoint in that it focuses on inequality in power relations and aims to understand and oppose all forms of domination (Hartsock, 1996, 2004; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). It was standpoint theory and the voluminous literature flowing from such persons as Sandra Harding, Dorothy Smith, Patricia Hill Collins, Nancy Hartsock, as well as Liz

Stanley and Sue Wise that brought women's consciousness out from under dominant sexist and androcentric ideologies (Harding & Hintikka, 1983; Oleson, 1994, 2000).

Firstly, standpoint theory aims at producing knowledge for marginalized people (Harding, 1998), first and foremost gaining knowledge *for* women (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1983; Gottfried, 1996b; Harding, 1987a, 2004b; Oleson, 2000; Stacey, 1996; Stanley & Wise, 1979, 1990, 1993). The notion of knowledge for women changed over the years to knowledge for marginalized people, as women are marginalized in all forms of domination (Alcoff & Potter, 1993). Secondly, as standpoint theory starts from the lives of those exploited by the domination system, the questions and issues of importance will be those of the subordinate group (Harding, 1998; Marecek, 1989). Standpoint-critical theory produces knowledge to answer the questions of women (Harding, 1998) differently from patriarchal influences and male mentality (Gross & Averill, 2003); questions such as why in every class and race there seem to be violence against women (Harding, 2004b).

Thirdly, the intellectual history of standpoint theory refers back to Hegel's reflections on the master/slave relationship as from the slave's standpoint in contrast to what is seen as the much more distorted view of the master (Harding, 1993, 1998; Pels, 2004). Standpoint critical theory therefore speaks from the particular, historically specific, social locations of women (Jagger, 2004; Harding, 1993, 2004b; Marecek, 1989; Smith, 2004), placing the knower on the same critical plane as the subject (Smith, 1987). In the fourth place, standpoint is something that is achieved (Hartsock, 2003, 2004) by the political struggle of the oppressed and through critical theorizing. This stands in contrast to the prevailing world-view of the dominant ruling group (Jagger, 2004; Pels, 2004). Standpoints are "critically and theoretically constructed discursive position(s)" (Harding, 1998, p.17) and not merely a perspective or point of view (Hartsock, 2004).

But to come to an understanding of feminist standpoint theory, it is essential that some of the principles thereof be examined.

Situated Knowledge: Location, Experience and Multiple Standpoints

It is in the knowledge of the genuine conditions of our lives that we must draw our strength to live and our reason for acting
Simone de Beauvoir

Traditional researchers stated that knowledge of the particular cannot lead to generalized knowledge (Stanley & Wise, 1983) and therefore they opposed any focus on the particular and the specific. Critical standpoint theory opposed this view through focusing on location and experience.

Location has become one of the cornerstones of knowledge within feminist standpoint theory. Standpoint theorists state that a particular experience can only be described and evaluated within a particular location (Bailey, 2000; DeVault, 1999; Harding, 1993; Hartsock, 2003; Longino, 1993; Marecek, 1989). Our being is continuously influenced by our environment as well as the class, race and gender of everyone we interact with (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; DuBois, 1983; Flax, 1983; Haraway, 1988, 2004; Jagger, 2004; Reinharz, 1983; Rose, 1983). Our daily lives are constructed by specific input from our location, where location refers to physical and psychic location as well as time in history.

This concept of situated knowledge as developed by Donna Haraway (1988) opened the way to alternatives, as situated meanings could constantly change depending on the person and the experience (Gee, 1999; Hartsock, 1996). In turning away from the faceless, disembodied subject, standpoint theorists argue for valuing embodied location, the “cultural process by which the physical body becomes a site of culturally ascribed and disputed meanings, experiences, feelings” (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p.197). The female body becomes the site where the natural and the cultural or societal meet (Barker, 2000; Nelson, 1993), and so reality is seen as located in the female body (Hepburn, 1999).

Experience in traditional research meant the analysis of men’s experiences (the experiences of white, western, bourgeois men). Standpoint feminists took a critical stand on the omission and distortion of women’s experiences (Addelson, 1993; DeVault, 1999; Flax, 2003; Harding, 1987a, 1998, 2004b; Jagger, 2004; Millman & Kanter, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1993). They maintained that women’s perspectives were needed as their perspectives and understanding will differ from the biased perspectives of men (Banister, et al., 1994; Haraway, 2004; Harding, 1993; Narayan,

2004; Pels, 2004). Feminist standpoint research generates its questions from the perspective of women's experiences, and therefore made working from the perspectives of the woman's experience probably the most distinctive feature of earlier feminist standpoint research, although it was Humanism that brought us the appreciation of the human experience as unique (Bernard, 2000).

The subject of inquiry in research is women, their reality and their experience, what they spend their everyday lives on (Harding, 1987a, 1998; Jagger, 2004; Madriz, 2000; Mareček, 1989;; Reinhartz, 1983; Smith 1987, 1992, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1979, 1983, 1990, 1993). Dorothy Smith (1987, 1992) in particular concentrates on women's everyday experience as the seat of what is problematic in their lives. She explains that these aspects can only be brought into being through the language of experience and the telling thereof (Smith, 2004b). Earlier critics of standpoint theory attacked this view for meaning a single set of experiences that is shared by all women (Mareček, 1989). Harding (1991, 1993, 2004c), and other standpoint theorists (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Flax, 1983; Haraway, 2004; Hartsock, 2004; Jagger, 2004; Narayan, 2004; Rose, 1983) do not perceive a single woman and a single experience, but reason that the different locations and the different experiences of women are a place from which to start off thought. Harding (2004b, p.7) therefore maintains, in effect, that "the very best human knowledge of the empirical world is grounded in human experience".

It consequently is accepted that, although a woman experiences oppression within the broader culture of oppression and male domination, one cannot accept her experiences of oppression to be the same experience as that of the next woman. Experiences of oppression vary from woman to woman (Flax, 2003; Harding, 2004b; Stanley & Wise, 1993), from culture to culture, and within the power inequalities specific to the situation (Harding, 1998). This concurs with the earlier view held by Stanley and Wise (1983) that different women bring different experiences and standpoints that lead to different knowledges. Ib Ravn's (1991) unity-in-diversity concept; explains it as being able to observe the difference or be different but still part of the whole. Different accounts, perspective and standpoints are generated from different locations, different women and different experiences (Gottfried, 1996b; Haraway, 1988, 2004; Longino, 1993; Nelson, 1993), a movement away from the traditional search for universality in research (Haraway, 2004).

According to Bailey (2000) María Lugones (1987) further built on the notion of multiplicity and developed her concept of “world travellers”, individuals whose identities shift because of their willingness to expose themselves to the differences of the other, to see the other of colour, culture, and sexual orientation. As a white woman one has to become a traitor to one’s privileged position in order to see differently and to develop new habits. World travelling in this sense opens the eyes and leads to self-reflection, and thus evading the vision of the other is no more possible (Bailey, 2000). Harding (1991, p.290) states that “intellectual and political activity is required in using another’s insights to generate one’s own analysis”. Standpoint theory therefore offers “an epistemology of diversity or multiplicity ... of double consciousness or ‘crossover’ identities” (Pels, 2004, p.278). Some postmodernists have found standpoint theory not reconcilable with the concept of difference, but Hartsock (2004) believes that the concept of multiple standpoints brings standpoint theory and postmodernist thinking closer together. Acceptance of the concept of differences launched a feverish debate on the relevance of relativism as will be discussed at a later stage.

Stone-Mediatore (2000) argues that many feminists today find the concept of women’s experience problematic. One of the problems cited is the danger of seeing the ideology as natural through the experience or the telling of the experience (Harding, 1991). Joan Wallach Scott (1991) feels that the problem is that the person who experiences is herself constructed through discursive practices and her telling of the experience re-inscribes already-made assumptions. To my mind, the reliability and validity of the experience as constructed by culture can only be comprehended by placing the experience within the total complicity of the extended location of the experience, which includes culture, society, place, time, and historical background. Even so, culture, society, religion and so forth, is not in itself static, but constantly changing (Narayan, 2000). Most people can cite examples of how the dominant group has, over time, either employed or changed cultural practices to suit their own needs.

Whereas the research questions generated by the dominant group centre only on their position (Harding, 1993, 1998), when one starts out from a specific, objective location such as the experiences of women, one will produce questions important to the specific group (Banister, et al., 1994; Harding, 1998, 2004b&c; Millman & Kanter, 198). The position of the previously marginalized now becomes an important resource (Bailey, 2000; Mies, 1983); a resource utilized to move subordinate groups to the focal point. Post-modern thinking refers to this

concept of locating the marginalized in the centre position in theory and research as decentring (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004).

Studying or viewing from the location of the oppressed yield critical insight into the sexist and androcentric nature of dominant institutions and systems (Addelson, 1993; Gorelick, 1996; Harding, 1987a, 1998, 2004b; Hartsock, 2003; Jagger, 2004; Madriz, 2000; Marecek, 1989; Narayan, 2004; Wylie, 2004). The position of subjugation thus brings epistemic advantage (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Bailey, 2000; Crawford & Marecek, 1989; Flax, 1983; Rose, 1983, 1986). But, research from the vantage point of the subjugated is not, in the words of Haraway (2004, p.88), an “innocent position.” This position will include all the denials, the issues of forgetting and disappearing that are common to the way people usually represent an experience. Harding (1993) therefore states that the research agenda, but not the solutions, can be assembled from marginalized lives. It is through feminist theorizing and feminist political engagement that solutions must be generated (Code, 1993; Flax, 2003; Harding, 1991; Pels, 2004). It is in the finding of new solutions, working towards a re-definition, and re-naming of women’s experiences that the personal becomes intensely political (Wylie, 2004).

Being in the position of what is called the insider, part of the dominant privileged group (be it class, race, sex, colour, culture, society and many more) can be an impediment to developing bifurcated consciousness (Bailey, 2000). It can be a hindrance to seeing other points of view. Although the insider can understand the cultural meanings of the particular society’s practices and will therefore be able to discuss findings in appropriate and understandable language, they might also ignore or be blind to alternative solutions, and might suffer societal pressures in freely expressing their findings (Crocker, 1991). Some insiders are able to, and do, open their minds to the understanding of the marginalized; “traitors” who operate from “traitorous locations” and “identities” (Harding, 1991, pp.288-296). The traitor’s experience cannot be taken to be the same as the outsider-within position, but the insider in the centre can learn from the views of the outsider-within.

Standpoint feminists argue for the advantages of an outsider view (Bailey, 2000). An outsider may find the cultural meanings of the other unfamiliar and may not easily understand it (Crocker, 1991). Members of a minority or marginalized group, on the other hand, can bring a different or distinctive perspective precisely because they are the outsiders (Peplau & Conrad, 1989). Because of an external perspective, they may be able to reveal things that are hidden to

insiders (Crocker, 1991; Daly, 1973). When it comes to oppressed women within a dominant culture, they can see the world the way a man sees it, as well as the way a woman sees it, and they can question prevailing distortions about reality (Marecek, 1989). Thus, the only person in a position to view trans-positionally, says Pels (2004, p.287), is the marginalized person, who can obtain a “small measure of synthesis and objectivity still available in the chronic ‘war of positions’ waged in the social world”.

Feminist work has increasingly focused on the differences in class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and religion (Hurtado, 1989; Narayan & Harding, 2000) and so the outsider-within view has become considered as the most advantageous (Bailey, 2000). Harding’s view of strong objectivity is also applicable in the context of observing the lives of the oppressed from a multi-culturalist standpoint. On the one hand, sensitive observation from the lives and the perspectives of the oppressed is needed, and on the other hand, a critical and theoretical examination in order to reconstitute theory where needed (Cudd, 2000). The vantage point held by the outsider within (Collins, 2004; hooks, 2004) who enjoys “double vision”, resulted in the fact that marginality became a powerful topic in Black feminism (Pels, 2004). As bell hooks (1984, p.vii) says, “living as we did – on the edge – we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside and from the inside out ... we understood both.”

In summary, the question can be asked whether a feminist standpoint or even a hierarchy of standpoints can encompass the diversity of women’s lives (Gottfried, 1996b; Harding, 1989). I take it that each and every experience brings us a step closer to a better understanding; a better view on the reality of women. This forms the opposite of ghettoizing. Experiences of oppression are connected in that each on its own forms patterns and processes that throw light onto the other; each brings a different view of the knowledge of oppression (Gorelick, 1996; Narayan, 2000; Smith, 1987).

Deconstructing Reality

Traditionally, reality was seen as a given (DuBois, 1983). Reality was understood to consist of facts that one could presumably discover by using objective research (Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993). Post-structuralism, to the contrary, held the belief that there is no pre-existent, fixed, or universal structure of reality (Gavey, 1989). For the social constructionist, reality is constructed through the interaction between people (Burr, 1995; Sampson, 1989; Smith, 2004). Reality can

only be conceptualized through discourse (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Spears, 1997) and therefore the reality lies in the stories we tell, with or without the numerous and conflicting discourses surrounding any object.

Standpoint theorists share the belief of no fixed reality (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Smith, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1983). According to Hartsock (2004), some standpoint feminists actually differ from the social constructionist's idea that reality can only be constructed through discourse, as they consider the certainty of women's oppression as substantially real (Stanley & Wise, 1993). They argue for the reality of oppression to pre-exist its naming through language. Rogers and Rogers (1997, p.68) explain that the allegation that there is "nothing outside of text" does not necessarily claim that there is no such thing as reality; reality is only not constructed (Spears, 1997). Within the study of discourses Gee (1999) also maintains that language simultaneously reflects and constructs the reality of the situation and the context of its use. According to Hubbard (2003), we need words to objectify and categorize our sensations so as to be able to place them in relation to one another. To me, this signifies that there is always some interaction between our constructions and our reality.

Reality is named against the backdrop of what society in general has accepted as real (Hubbard, 2003), and so it should not be forgotten or denied that members from diverse groups and different locations inhabit unrelated social worlds and realities (Millman & Kanter, 1987). Those in the dominant position in any situation are sanctioned with the right to name, be it the state or religion or the dominant man (Hubbard, 2003; Shields, 1992), and as reality is constructed by the social environment, women's reality within a capitalist and patriarchal society is informed by a rigidly white male elite.

In being the dominant group, men have the power to define woman's reality (Addelson, 1993; Burstow, 1992; Du Bois, 1983). Says Haggis (1990, p.76), "No one voice can be privileged without risking the slighting of another, a danger sufficiently echoed in the manufactured silence of women's voices in the telling of history". One can therefore deduct that men's interpretation of reality does not embrace the different perspectives of women (Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Millman & Kanter, 1987; Sampson, 1989; Smith, 2004). Nevertheless, Stanley and Wise (1993) argue that no view of reality should be invalidated because there is a number of ways to view reality. Provided that their reality is not used to view our realities, Stanley and Wise will accept reality as multi-dimensional and multi-faceted.

According to Harding (1987), women's experiences serve as a significant indicator of their reality. Reality can be found in the concrete experiences of the oppressed and subordinated (Jagger, 2004; Harding, 1993; Smith, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Feminist standpoint theory is criticized for accepting the reality of women's experiences as not clouded by an ideology and a mystification that would serve the needs of the dominant class (Addelson, 1993; Code, 1993; Pels, 2004). Feminist standpoint theorists stand firm, however, in their belief that starting from the reality of the experiences of the oppressed or the marginalized brings valuable and different perspectives.

Because of the magnitude of perspectives brought by differing experiences as a whole, women's overall representation of reality is seen as less partial and less distorted by relations of power and domination (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Flax, 1983; Harding, 1991, 1993; Rose, 1983, 1986). But, says Jagger (2004), insights about reality gained from the different standpoints of women should be tested in political struggle and should be further developed into an organized representation of reality, free from the distortion brought by considering the dominant man's viewpoint as better than those of women.

Deconstructing Truth and Knowledge

When a subject is highly controversial, one cannot hope to tell the truth. One can only show how one came to hold whatever opinion one does hold
Virginia Woolf: A Room of One's Own

Post-modern thinking and post-structuralist theory reject the idea of ultimate and absolute truth (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gavey, 1989). Truth or objective knowledge is no more thought of as obtained through pure reason after exploring a fixed reality about an essential object (Addelson, 1993; Burr, 1995; Harding, 1998; Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Pels, 2004). Scholars now believe that every theory is a self-fulfilling prophecy of scientists formulating their hypotheses within the context of a certain theory; agreement is built into the process and it therefore cannot tell us anything about truth or reality (Hubbard, 2003). In general, feminists do not believe in truth as spelled out through grand theory or master narratives (DeVault, 1999; Roiser, 1997).

A number of features about truth come to mind. Firstly, truth and knowledge are not neutral but are closely related to power, as the dominant group has the authority to regulate what is socially

interpreted as truth (Gergen & Gergen, 1991; Shields, 1992). In a patriarchal Western society truth tends to be male constructions that support the male dominant position (Gavey, 1989). Says Jane Flax (1987, p.625),

If there is no objective basis for distinguishing between true and false beliefs, then it seems that power alone will determine the outcome of competing truth claims. This is a frightening prospect to those who lack (or are oppressed by) the power of others.

Secondly, because of the dominant group's power to establish and control what is reality and therefore truth, truth continuously change in value. Truth also grows and develops over the course of a person's life and her experiences (Mies, 1978).

Dorothy Smith's metaphor of a multi-dimensional cube in describing truth is well known (Smith, 1987, 1992, 1997). According to Smith, truth is constructed from all the related activities in different locations, as well as from the constantly changing social relations within the system or the organized whole (DeVault, 1999). In the third instance, truth therefore is constituted within historically-specific micro-situations (Spears, 1997). Reality is constructed from the varied experiences of people in different positions within a hierarchy and against the backdrop of a particular society. Therefore, and in the fourth place, truth can only be partial and is more or less distorted by relations of power (Harding, 1991). Standpoint theorists consider these differing and even contradictory understandings and explanations of reality to constitute truth (Stanley & Wise, 1993).

Post-modern thinking embraces multiple truths and so signals a renewed respectability for relativism (Spears, 1997). Relativism means to have a variety of different discourses or perspectives, each seeming to be equally valid (Burr, 1995). Social constructionists reason that truth is what we currently accept from a variety of social constructions, as a way of understanding our continuously changing world (Gergen, 1973). It is in the interest of the more powerful to value some constructions as being more truthful or common-sense than others.

When feminist standpoint theory admits to the truth of one specific standpoint, it indirectly implies the truth of whatever other standpoints there can be (Stanley & Wise, 1990). The existence of differences in standpoints or multiple standpoints do not assume a hierarchical relationship between the different points of view (Stanley & Wise, 1993). For example, although

standpoint theorists explicitly agree on starting out from the experiences of women, the implication is not that they view their own lives as the better or the best point to start from (Harding, 1993). Starting off thought from the life of any oppressed woman is also not the answer. Observation should be done by someone who recognizes the oppression and who, as the outsider-within can have a less distorted view of reality. What is needed is to critically examine a situation within a theoretical understanding of patriarchy and racism, and therefore multiculturalism is seen as a cognitive virtue (Cudd, 2000).

Standpoint theory, on the other hand neither “advocate(s) - nor is it doomed to – relativism” (Harding, 1993, p.61). All social situations and all experiences do not present knowledge claims, nor are they of even value (Cudd, 2000; Gorelick, 1996). Harding (2004c, p.131) reasons that some social situations are “scientifically better” suited than others as situations from which to start knowledge projects. Starting with the experiences of the marginalized, although an epistemological advantaged starting point, does not guarantee optimum objectivity. It presents “only a necessary – not a sufficient – starting point for maximizing objectivity” (Harding, 1993, p.57). To this standpoint, feminist partially located and critically situated knowledge is the alternative to relativism (Haraway, 2004).

For standpoint theorists, relativism does not exclude judgment and critical thinking, nor is the researcher forced to see all knowledge as equally valid just because she stands sceptical (Cudd, 2000; Hepburn, 2000; Nelson, 1993). A situation of “being nowhere while claiming to be everywhere” to the same extent (Haraway, 2004, p.89) is not proclaimed, because claims to knowledge only have meaning within the context of the historical, cultural, and local values and interests (Harding, 1993). To me, women’s experiences provide the initial point of departure, but critical feminist theory and political struggle provide the grounds for deciding which knowledge claims are preferable (Harding, 1991; Pels, 2004). Even then, the claim remains a “reliable account of some part of reality” only (Harding, 2004b, p.10).

In trying to establish truth one should take into consideration, however, that all we see and all we think we see are influenced by our values. As therapist and researcher I cannot separate the facts from my values and no results are therefore value-free (Burr, 1995). Each individual has the responsibility to constantly take note of the position and perspective from which she questions and counters. The concept of value-laden observation is alien to those adhering to

positivist views, as they consider value statements as not verifiable and therefore meaningless (Code, 1993). To me, women's experiences provide only the initial standpoint, but critical feminist theory and political struggle provide the grounds for deciding which knowledge claims are preferable (Harding, 1991; Pels, 2004); any standpoint therefore is considered the "product(s) of someone's or some group's location and choice; hence it is always contestable" (Code, 2000, p.71).

Baudrillard and Jean Francois Lyotard (in Roiser, 1997) argued that, for example, the multiple media images that surround us make it almost impossible to tell what is truth and reality. People bombarded by different and contrasting truths turn to science in want of a rational and objective explanation of reality, truth, and knowledge. If religion or ideology cannot provide the answers, the critical thinking, abstractions, and testability of science must then provide the answers. This does not happen because of three reasons, namely the interplay between power and knowledge, the fact that knowledge is constructed, and the unstable nature of knowledge.

Foucault's views on the inextricably intertwined nature of power and knowledge are well known (Gavey, 1989; Parker, 1989; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Roiser, 1997). As I have explained in writing about reality and truth, those in dominant positions have the power to decide on what constitutes knowledge, and thereby they make the other into a subject to be governed with this knowledge (Cudd, 2000; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Only those discourses accepted as truth by the dominant class is taken as knowledge (Burr, 1995), therefore knowledge is never neutral (Gavey, 1989).

Social construction in effect means that knowledge is the result of our constructing and ordering, inventing, creating, languaging, and constituting processes (Cudd, 2000; Gavey, 1989; Held, 1990). As there is no single standard for deciding what knowledge seems to be more or less true, only local historical claims of knowledge as grounded in experience can be considered true in itself, but cannot have any claims against other truths (Harding, 1993; Harding & Hintikka, 2003). Knowledge-making becomes the product of multiple experiences from diverse groups in different settings (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Madriz, 2000; Pels, 2004).

Knowledge is also seen as inherently unstable, most likely to change (Gavey, 1989) as new knowledge is incorporated, or as needed by the dominant class. Pels (2004, p.274) finds that standpoint theory offer(s) "the most persistently popular rationale for a politics of knowledge

framed by particularist identities and the reclamation of cultural difference". In the same manner, I can associate with the much older perspective of Code (1993, p. 40); advocating for a position where knowledge is always relative to specific situations – always a perspective "on" or a standpoint "in" and one should keep an open and tolerant state of mind.

Finding Meaning and Understanding

Conventional models of interaction are described by sociological theory as equals in power, aware of one another as they pursue projects or meaning (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). But in the event of structural inequality, such as within the patriarchal system, the power vested in the dominant group controls the meaning-giving (Painter & Theron, 2001; Shields, 1992).

Nevertheless, social constructionism takes the idea a step further, as they see meaning as created and co-created within the activities and communication of the individuals (Burr, 1995; Gergen & Gergen, 1991; Gergen, 2000; Gergen, 2001; Schwandt, 2000; Shields, 1992). Meaning does not reside within the person, but rather within the social realm (Hollway, 1989; Painter & Theron, 2001). As Kenneth Gergen (2000, p.145) says, "we remove meaning from the heads of individuals, and locate it within the ways in which we go on together". According to post-modern thinking, meaning is constantly changing because of the change in interaction (Coyle, 1995; Freedman & Combs, 1996).

The change in meaning is constructed through language, as language provides the categories and the concepts for the way people think (Burr, 1995; Coyle, 1995; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). As language provides the means to structure our experiences, language is a pre-condition to meaning. But the meaning attributed is arbitrary, always contestable and changing, always dependent on the context (Gavey, 1989; Painter & Theron, 2001). The French philosopher, Derrida (in Roiser, 1997) set out to deconstruct meaning. Deconstruction refers to a process whereby meaning can indefinitely be taken apart and reconstructed. No interpretation should be considered privileged. Social constructionism therefore proclaims meaning to be produced by reflexivity (Durrheim, 1997) and reflexivity utilized to question the taken-for-granted of the established "regimes of truth" and to create new meanings (Durrheim, 1997, p.181). But the understanding is that we are co-creating and re-

creating meaning by making choices, as we have the power and the ability to change and as we are free to act (Burstow, 1992).

The same principle applies to understanding. Just as meaning is changeable and context-dependent, understanding will also change with changes in situation (Gergen, 1973) and does not rely on a meta-narrative or an over-arching system as, for example, religion (Burr, 1995). Social constructionism sees all understanding as historically and culturally specific (Gergen, 1973). If meaning and understanding is considered situation-specific, and when one takes into account the manner in which particular social and political organizations exercise dominance in claiming truth and knowledge, knowledge-making becomes a political act (Addelson, 1993; Code, 1993). Feminism is often characterized by the coined phrase “personal is political” (Stanley & Wise, 1993, p.62), but the opening-up of opportunities is brought about by perceiving and understanding differently than the existing male-biased perspective (Haraway, 2004; Harding, 1993; Narayan, 2004; Pels, 2004). Asking for a re-defining and re-naming of women’s experiences creates new meaning and understanding, so that the personal becomes intensely political (Wylie, 2004). Feminist scholars look for meaning instead of truth; a “constructive, ongoing process” (Reinharz, 1983, p.183) that assumes no final interpretation, but aims to keep the dialogue flowing.

Conclusion

As I will be working with the stories of women as told in psychotherapy, the concept of discourse comes into play. I have already noted the role played by language in the understanding of reality, truth, and knowledge, and it can therefore be concluded that reality, truth, and knowledge is constructed through discourse (Macleod, 2002; Parker, 1990). This is true for language-in-use or “little d” discourse and “Big D” discourse (Gee, 1999), the latter bringing into play the non-language content of values, beliefs, symbols, times, places, and all the other abstract things that influence and construct meaning (See Gee, 1999 for further details on “little d” and “big D” Discourse). Especially true of the latter, as we have seen, is the way in which the dominant discourse of power, capitalism, and patriarchy cover up their power and gain authority by appealing to common sense and in appearing natural (Gavey, 1989; Parker, 1992).

Change is needed in the lives of the abused women, and although I will not be doing discourse analysis, it will be necessary to deconstruct dominant discourse in order to disrupt the prevailing

taken-for-granted ideas about women in abusive relationships (Burman, 1990; Macleod, 2002; Roiser, 1997). Although I have referred to discourse analysis above, I also mentioned that I will not be using discourse analysis. Thus, in the next chapter, I will describe the method I used in the current research. I will also attend to some important methodological issues that I have not discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 4: FINDING MY OWN METHOD

One of the false Gods of theologians, philosophers and other academics is called Method ... Under patriarchy, Method has wiped out women's questions so totally that even women have not been able to hear and formulate our own questions to meet our own experience.
(Mary Daly, 1973, p.11-12)

Method in research is defined as the particular tools and techniques used to do scientific research (Bernard, 2000; Harding, 1987a; Kelly-Gadol, 1987). Although feminist research is often classified as qualitative (Banister, et al., 1994), no specific method is seen as intrinsic a feminist method as the perspectives that feminist researchers take, differ hugely (Bartky, 1990; Brannon, 2002; DeVault, 1999; Klein, 1983; Mareček, 1989; Worell & Remer, 1992). The immense variety of methods used in feminist research, express the growing and dynamic nature thereof (DuBois, 1983; Madriz, 2000). Examples often cited are, Reinharz's experiential analysis (Reinharz, 1983); surveys and interviews, as in Marxist and ethno-methodological approaches (Smith, 1987; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993) (See DeVault, 1999 for further examples).

Feminist methodology thus, does not specify its own, and/or appropriate research methods or techniques (Stanley & Wise, 1990), but feminist research methods should be distinguished by the unique epistemological and methodological theory that underlies their use (Harding, 1987a; Gergen & Gergen, 2000). Traditionally researchers (men) applied scientific method to answer the questions men asked (Marecek, 1989), giving us their truth and at that only a partial and distorted perspective (Crawford & Marecek, 1989). They did research so as to administer to and manage the lives of the marginalized (their objects of study) and the issues women grappled with were either ignored or added on to those of men (Harding, 1993).

In answering to the questions of women, feminist standpoint adheres to a number of principles in doing research. I will deal with some of these principles in explaining the method I will use. The position on the knower and the known in feminist standpoint research is crucial to all other aspects and therefore needs to be explored first.

The Knower and the Known

Critical feminist standpoint theory rejects the positivist idea of any scientist giving himself (or herself) out as an expert on another's life (Chang, 1996; Greed, 1990; Haggis, 1990; Madriz, 2000; Sherif, 1987; Stanley, 1990b). They reject taking an omnipotent view and doing research from a position of power (Harding, 1993; Stanley & Wise, 1983, 1993) or explaining women's world through a theoretical grand narrative (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Feminist standpoint theory also rejects the idea of dispassionately standing back to study the object (the researched) in order to objectively understand the other (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Code, 1993; DuBois, 1983; Nelson, 1993; Steier, 1991b). The knower and the known "are of the same universe" (Du Bois, 1983, p.111), and the knower should realize herself to be "part of the matrix of what is known" (Wilkinson, 1986b, p.13).

I cannot completely disengage from the influence of theory and my own thinking and philosophical stance. I cannot totally disengage from my own self and the experiences of my own life history, social class, and gender (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b). It is an accepted reality that my specific class, culture, race and gender will have an influence on the research method and findings (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Breakwell, 1995b; Code, 1993; Hollway, 1989). It is a further certainty that my life experiences (Crawford & Marecek, 1989) as well as my motivations, limitations and ignorance shape my understanding of realities (Gorelick, 1996). My intellectual life history, my skills, my education, and my familiarity with theory and methodology must therefore be incorporated, explained, and managed throughout the research (Acker, et al., 1983; Burr, 1995; Greed, 1990; Harding, 1987a, 1989b; Stanley & Wise, 1979, 1993, 1990; Tait, 1990; Westkott, 1983).

As a feminist researcher I am thus located within the centre of the activities in the research (Breakwell, 1995b; Cook & Fonow, 1986; Gergen & Gergen, 1991; Harding, 1987a; Stanley & Wise, 1979, 1983; Steier, 1991b). I participate as a real person and not a disembodied authority (Harding, 1993, 1987a; Pels, 2004; Tait, 1990). My experiences and consciousness as the knower is important (DuBois, 1983; Madriz, 2000). There therefore is a collaboration between the researcher and the researched (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Burr, 1995; Flax, 1983; Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Gergen, 2001; Greed, 1990; Hartsock, 1983, 1987; Rose, 1983, 1986) and the position between "knower and known" in principle become interchangeable (Code, 1993). I am obliged to honestly display my actions. My reasoning and findings are all

the more open and vulnerable (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Research in this way becomes a productive social interaction (Longino, 1993; Stanley, 1990b; Steier, 1991b).

It is assumed that I as a feminist researcher, in rejecting the scientist/person dichotomy will take into account issues of power that rear their heads in the relationship between researcher and researched and within myself (Pels, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1993). Within the traditional method the participant's view was seen as of lesser value than that of the researcher. Within feminist research the object of research becomes subjects in their own right (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1996; Gergen & Gergen, 1991). For if the researched can in principle grasp what the researcher understands, the researched can make up her own mind and not solely rely on the researcher's findings (Stanley, 1990c). Haraway (2004, p.95) explains the object of knowledge being "actor" as well as "agent". Therefore knowledge stands not to be discovered by a powerful authority, but knowledge can be found within the interaction.

The effect of the participants on the researcher is not disregarded (Breakwell, 1995b; Stanley & Wise, 1993). The researcher changes with every new insight as she is taught by her respondent-participants and as she influences them. Not imposing my ideas on the participants, I am actually open to hear what they are telling me (Steier, 1991b). Theory and practice interact and transform all those it interacts with (Gorelick, 1996). Thus feminist standpoint theory advocates for the open admission of all relevant interaction of facts and feelings (Klein, 1983), leading feminist researchers to incorporate also emotion as part of the research experience (Banister, et al., 1994; Stanley & Wise, 1990). Feminist scholars have come to refer to knowers in the plural (Nelson, 1993) implying the participation of an epistemological community in constructing knowledge (Gergen & Gergen, 1991).

Although I personally find this way of reasoning and doing more authentic, it also poses its challenges. As a privileged white woman I cannot speak for the less privileged and coloured, only some of my interpretations and representations will inevitably ring true. Growing up as a woman in a patriarchal traditional culture also influenced my thinking. A personal goal in attempting this research was personal growth but I am not in the best position to judge to what extent it has been accomplished. In having experienced and shaken off an emotionally abusive relationship places me both in the position of the knower and the known, and it becomes easy to stumble over my own ideas, feelings, and thoughts. However, having been there also places

me in the most opportune position to openly reflect and share new and different insights; more than the organizer of the information as described by Chang (1996).

Qualitative Method

The paradigms of research methodology distinguish between quantitative, qualitative and participatory action research (Mouton, 2001). Qualitative research is described as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b, p.3). This description fits the feminist requirement of situated knowledge. The researcher is part of the research and makes the voices of the abused women visible/audible. Thus the qualitative method seems suitable for the research experience I intended. Qualitative research goes by many other names, as for example, field research, ethnographic research, the interpretative approach and the case study method (Mouton, 1988), or discourse analysis, participant observation, ethnography, and action research (Banister et al., 1994) and grounded theory (Dick, 2005).

In being descriptive and unstructured in manner the qualitative method fits my goals of sensitively and intuitively representing the stories of women from emotionally abusive relationships (Breakwell, 1995a; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Karlsson, 1993). Instead of testing hypotheses the intent is openness to all information, and an acceptance that any concept or conclusion can be interpreted in a number of different ways (Mouton & Marais, 1990). Qualitative method is also sensitive to the possibility of emerging and new knowledge. Knowing that assumptions can shape conclusions (Stiehm, 2003), I intend to enter into a reflexive conversation between my assumptions, the stories the women tell and my own philosophical stance, open to challenging all assumptions and changing as I go along.

Furthermore, qualitative research is known to focus on *verstehen* as empathic understanding (Schwandt, 2000). Whereas Weber in his interpretive sociology implicated *verstehen* as utilized from the privileged position of the external observer (Smith, 2004b), feminist research in general and more specifically standpoint critical theory focus on finding meaning and understanding. To me finding meaning and understanding is a process of co-constructing, and this concurs with both qualitative method and feminist standpoint theory seeing the researcher as central to the whole research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b). The research project and therefore also the goals and objectives as pointed out in chapter one, imply a journey towards meaning and

not ultimate truth. Final, absolute, and conclusive understanding exists only for mere seconds until new and fresh information is received. Mouton and Marais (1990) thus state that within meta-theoretical thinking it is generally accepted that scientific conclusions cannot be irrefutably proven by empirical research conclusions.

Feminist standpoint theory and qualitative methods are also a comfortable fit in that qualitative findings are not interpreted in the isolation of the experimental laboratory. The focus is on the *Umwelt* (the external, physical environment) and the *Mitwelt* (the interpersonal relationships studied here). The focus is on the context (Banister, et al., 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991). Although not disregarded, the *Eigenwelt* (the individual's world within herself) receive much less attention. I have explained the central position given to embodied location and situated knowledge within feminist standpoint theory. The main starting point is therefore the experiences of women, the individual woman within her particular situation and embedded by a societal and cultural time frame.

The *verstehen* tradition has often been criticized as being idealist (Bhasher, 1979). Maybe this was in a timeframe when feminist researchers operated from a rather romanticized version of research done only by women with women, or feminist research seen as only qualitative (Banister et al., 1994). Kersti Yllö's 1986 working paper for the National Council on Family Relations Theory and Methodology Workshop held in Detroit was, for example, strongly criticized from within feminist groups. The interview part of the research was seen as feminist but the quantitative part taken to be non-feminist and patriarchal in nature.

Peplau and Conrad (1989), on the other hand, argue that methods based on numbers and statistics can be sensitive to feminist concerns. Feminist research is empirical and the answers often more comprehensive than traditional empirical research (DeVault, 1999). This position can be attained by rigorously and carefully observing and analyzing (Oleson, 1994), starting from the more favourable although not only position of the marginalized. DeVault (1999, p.3) argues the truths of feminist research are "smaller; more tailored, and more intensely pointed truths than the discredited 'truth' or grand theory and master narratives". It is believed that feminists initially recommended qualitative methods as a corrective measure towards the biases implicated by the traditional quantitative methods. In so doing, the idea was to encourage researchers to take into account the entire context of the situation and to be more open and

spontaneous towards changing situations, as well as new and unexpected influences (Peplau & Conrad, 1989).

My Method

Summary of research goals

My ultimate goal with this study has been discussed in chapter 1. I intend to gain a deeper understanding of how people perpetrate emotional abuse, and I shall do so by representing the stories of women who come from emotionally abusive relationships. Giles-Sims (1983, p.2) explains about validating the stories of women in research:

Battered women know what it is like to live with a batterer ... To understand their histories, we must listen to the women tell their own stories. The women's stories present their perspectives on their relationships with battering males and their perceptions of those men. The stories are not unbiased, but the perceptions of the women are important ... To understand why battered women respond as they do, and make decisions when they do, requires knowledge of their perceptions of their own situations.

The aim is to establish whether there is an ecology that legitimizes emotional abuse, and whether the woman or the man, in positioning themselves, constructs such a relationship (Giles-Sims, 1983). A further aim is to analyze textual data to see if any patterns and processes can be determined that can or cannot lead to a model of the *how* of emotional abuse in close relationships. I do not have any preconceived ideas. No hypotheses are formulated, and my approach can be equalled to the case study method (Carpenter, 1999). The aim is an analysis of the data presented to obtain a functional description of the *how* of emotional abuse, to gain an understanding of the qualities of human behaviour in emotionally abusive relationships (Mouton, 1988).

Finding the research participants

In choosing the research participants, the options are to either to enlist new cases or utilize all the available data from clients who I saw in my therapeutic practice. For a number of reasons, I decided to follow the latter. Firstly, because it is known that women cannot name the experience of emotional abuse for what it is (Dutton, 1992; Miller, 1995) and I am unsure if it will be possible to enlist women who will be able and willing to tell their stories. Secondly, I am of the opinion that abused women in practice will find the therapeutic environment safer and therefore tell more than they would if confronted with the unnatural, disconnected, and less safe setting of an interview room (Gergen, 2001). Should I search for women able and willing to tell, I am concerned about their ability to openly tell, either because they are fearful of legal repercussions (Dutton, 1992), or because they are shameful about the abuse or want to protect their loved ones (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Walker, 1979).

I therefore opt to use the case material from clients I saw in my psychotherapy practice. Finding the research cases will entail systematically reading through the files, and therefore the therapy notes on all female clients seen in the period from September, 2001 until September, 2005. All files containing any kind of abusive behaviour, verbal as well as non-verbal, will be seen as case files. I realize that this is an intuitive selection (Condor, 1997) but it is also seen to be the most practical way to assess information from a number of women that come from emotionally abusive relationships.

Finding the data

The plan for assembling the data is deceptively simple. From the case files selected notes will be made of any abusive incident of a verbal or non-verbal sort. As these notes will be based as what can be seen as self-reports of clients, both the advantages and disadvantages of self-reports can influence the data obtained. First of all the client herself has the widest observational base concerning the incidents she relates and her memories thereof. Data thus becomes easily obtainable (Westen & Weisberger, 2004). But this information remains the client's reconstruction of the event (Shields, 1992). Westen and Weisberger (2004) state that the disadvantage of relying on self-reports of people who have had no training in understanding and interpreting behaviour of, is that distortion can occur and defences will come into play.

Within standpoint feminist theory these so-called disadvantages bring the benefits of the knower within, situated knowledge and multiple truths to the fore.

No particular value will be attributed to the given incidents in any other way than noting them down. I do realize that in choosing certain incidents, stories, or anecdotes, I will rely on my therapeutic experiences and literature search as to what seems to be the important issues at that time. It will be impossible, however, to identify all issues involved or to fully disengage from the limitations of one's own subjectivity and knowledge.

I presume that, as the research progresses, new incidents will become available, either through seeing new clients in therapy or by my own sensitized reading and hearing. The intent is, as I did in the past, to also collect anecdotal incidents that occur in my environment; be it conversations overheard or conversations I happened to be part of, clips and discussions taken from newspapers, magazine articles, and daily television shows, or the discussing of ideas with friends and colleagues. In so doing, I will lend an ear to previously seen unscientific insights and ideas (Gergen, 2001), but will also place the research within a specific historical and social milieu. Not working with numbers and statistic, and given the fact that research is a re-awakening experience (Williams, 1990), these will be incorporated in the main body of data. Banister et al. (1994) explain this as the chaos of fluid information that constantly flows in and brings new aspects as part of qualitative research.

I am also to collect collateral evidence and stories from literature, the popular press, and social situations. In this I rely on the social constructionist view that "anything that can be 'read' for meaning can be thought of as being a manifestation of one or more discourses and can be referred to as a 'text' ... everything around us can be considered as 'textual' ..." (Burr, 1995, p.51).

Utilizing the data

I assume that, as is with most qualitative research, the amount of unstructured information thus obtained can be daunting (Breakwell, 1995b; Mouton & Marais, 1990), and I therefore considered a number of options. Firstly, I considered making use of coding or categories (Bernard, 2000; Farran, 1990; Steier, 1991b). Coding will enable me to rely on the themes I identified from literature, and I will be able to fit the data to these categories. As used in

traditional research in psychology, I will break down data into elements to be studied (Sherif, 1987). This at present will not make sense, as I will end up losing precisely the understanding and the meaning I am looking for, or I might even lose the meaning of the relationship between the categories (Hollway, 1982 in Hollway, 1989; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991).

Banister (et al., 1994) wrote that notes that relate the clients' experiences can be utilized in a search for subjective meaning, and if I work from the experiences as the core element that ultimately connects with meaning, the client should be the most reliable witness in telling her experiences; her account being the product of her social domain (Hollway, 1989). This makes sense to me, because rather than fitting people to theory, I will listen to their meanings (Chang, 1996; Steier, 1991b). I will therefore follow this route, and will read and re-read all available data and weigh it in the context of feminist thought (Farran, 1990; Bewley, 1994). In this process, I will analyze the data to find evidence of ecological themes that legitimize emotional abuse as well as recurrent themes (Bernard, 2000; Breakwell, 1995) and contradictions in the accounts (Hepburn, 1999; MacLeod, 2002); themes seen "as abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs" (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p.780) that can be identified. From the social constructionist's concept of positioning, I will endeavour to identify the ways in which the women and the abusers position themselves, and how they abuse emotionally (Burr, 1995; Hepburn, 1999; MacLeod, 2002).

The process of analysis is never linear (MacLeod, 2002), but one moves from incident to incident with the same client, and then to other clients, trying to establish links, comparing all the time. The process can be seen as an interpretive analysis with a back-and-forth movement between that which is strange and that which is familiar, as well as between all other dimensions — a movement between description and interpretation, foreground and background, part and whole (TerreBlanche & Durrheim, 1999). Care will have to be taken in utilizing the notes and making interpretations, in that the notes are only my representations or reconstructions against my particular background, or my translation of what the women told me (Charmaz, 2000; Gergen, 2000; Haraway, 2004). I will have to decide between what is meaningful and what is unimportant, what will be omitted or unspoken, what will be taken for granted (Breakwell, 1995; Farran, 1990; Greed, 1990; Reinhartz, 1983).

A transcript or representation will always, to a certain extent, be an impoverished record (Banister, et al., 1994; DeVault, 1999; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Through the transcription, I want

the reader to hear the same message as I did in hearing the stories originally (MacLeod, 2002). However, it becomes a record of my experience as therapist and I or anyone else may then or later read these testimonies differently (Gorelick, 1996). Cudd (2000) also indicated that, against all possible background assumptions, it is not possible for the researcher or all her peers to recognize all possible assumptions.

There are both advantages and disadvantage of doing the interpretations while occupying an insider position. I will be in a better place to achieve empathic understanding or *Verstehen* than most others. I might also be unaware of some hidden relations of oppression or some contradictions however, because I have not yet found some intellectual distance (Gorelick, 1996). Some experiences may be so familiar that they are difficult to see with a fresh eye (Scott, 1995). But as the units I choose have a profound effect on the results (Stiehm, 2003), I trust that at least the most important themes will at some stage or another be picked up on.

Constructing cases of emotional abuse

I will search all files selected for case studies that will illustrate most of the themes, patterns, and processes identified. The main objective is to illustrate and explain (Stake, 2000), and not to generalize to others (Mouton, 1988). Although I will make use of cases this is not in the true sense in-depth case studies (Creswell, 1998), and therefore generalizations are not possible (Stake, 2000). I will, however, identify and describe themes found in all the other cases by incidents and anecdotes from these cases (and from other data sources) (Breakwell, 1995b). One of the advantages of using case studies – even only partial case studies – is the experiential knowledge gained by the reader. By this transference of ideas and thoughts the reader is assisted in constructing or re-constructing her own knowledge of the phenomenon (Stake, 2000).

Susan Condor (1997) speaks of enlisting the other when the researcher/author grants the participant's voice the space to give testimony. Although I hope to give voice to the multiple of silent voices, I realize that one can never stand completely innocent and dispassionate in deciding which voices I will allow to speak and which will remain silent (Gorelick, 1996; Stake, 2000). As Kenneth Gergen points out, the meaning of text is the author's meaning (2000).

As I work with information obtained from the files of female clients who I saw in my practice, the stories I will represent are neither verbatim scripts, nor video or tape recordings. Rather, they could be considered as narratives. “A narrative is always a story about the past and not the past itself” (Carolyn Ellis in Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p.745), and the aim is to have the stories speak for themselves. I will thus not be representing the actual experiences of the clients, but their reconstructed memories (Shields, 1992), and therefore a reconstruction of a reconstruction. In this regard, I will not use data to prove the stories true or false (Gergen, 2001).

One of the advantages of using case studies – although only partial case studies – is the experiential knowledge gained by the reader. By this transference of ideas and thoughts the reader is assisted in constructing or re-constructing her own knowledge base (Stake, 2000).

Writing up the research findings

In writing the research findings I will concentrate on discussing and illustrating the key themes with direct quotes, anecdotes, the applicable literature and my own thinking (Breakwell, 1995b; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The use of direct quotes from the case material will enable me to illustrate the meanings, leading the reader to an understanding of how the women reconstructed their experiences of emotional abuse in their relationships (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). The goal is to place these within a relevant ecology of relational patterns and behaviours, and to pay attention to the way in which the abuse and the abused use or misuse their position to their advantage (or not).

Research can be seen as a different kind of relationship or a conversation. Therefore, in writing the final text I will aim to adhere to this principle and will aim towards stimulating further conversation and thought. Deconstruction is never complete (MacLeod, 2002). Carpenter (1999) rhetorically asks if her changing thought as she continues her further reading and research will create a problem of validity. She answers this challenge herself in the negative, and in writing up the research findings, I hold fast to her words:

Different and contradictory truths can be told from my data. I merely told one ‘truth’. No other researcher would have worked in the way I worked, would have asked the questions I asked, read the material I read ... No other researcher has the history I

have ... no one else has lived my life and takes my 'baggage' to the analysis. My ratiocination is unique, it encompasses my truth alone, my subjectivity (Carpenter, 1999, p.20).

Writing up the research report also creates some conflict of interest. I will now have to assume the power position of having to define and label the women's experiences from a position that does not easily fit with wanting to equalize positions between the researcher and the researched (Acker et al., 1996). But in reflecting, as in using my own self-awareness as comparison when questioning, relating, and experiencing I will presume some sort of temporary objectification in order to maintain as much as possible this position of equality.

Openness and Reflexivity

The question often arises whether results obtained through the qualitative method and within the openness of principles such as those utilized in feminist standpoint research can be seen as valid and objective. If the traditional codes of standardization and replicability (Banister, et al., 1994) are not utilized and accepted, if there is adherence to a variety of truths (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004), and if it is not necessary to generalize from the particular (the experience), wherein lies the validity?

In trying to establish truth, it is of the essence to take into consideration that all I see and think I see as a researcher in this project are influenced by my values. I cannot separate the facts from my values, and no results can therefore be value-free (Bernard, 2000; Burr, 1995; Code, 1993, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; DuBois, 1983; Gergen, 2000; Kahn & Yoder, 1992; Moulton, 2003; Ravn, 1991; Ricketts, 1989). Mary Gergen (2001, p.23) states that "there is no value-free or unbiased manner in which to report on the nature of the world. What is important is to acknowledge one's standpoint, to declare it, and to respect its centrality in the formation of one's views". Validity and objectivity, therefore, lies in the openness of my standpoint and frame of reference. The reader then has the opportunity to decide for herself where she stands.

Both feminist standpoint and social constructionism consider the knower to be situated within a social hierarchy. The knowledge reflected by the knower cannot be anything else than to a lesser or greater extent influenced by the situatedness of the knower (Code, 2000; Crawford & Marecek, 1989). It is precisely because of the incorporation of the knower in her totality into the

research project, however, that these so-called biases are turned into resources (Oleson 1994). Feminist epistemology finds validity in the researcher's use of methodology, her relationship to the data, and the contextual validity reached (Acker et al., 1996; Banister et al., 1994; Hubbard, 2003).

All information elicited from participants is taken as a valid product of the social context wherein they function (Burr, 1995; DuBois, 1983; Hollway, 1982; Silverman, 2000). Some feminist scholars argue for the attainment of validity by opening up all interpretations to the subject for criticism. As a therapist I find this view difficult to deal with. For example, when a woman describes experiences of emotional abuse, I will label it as such if the client cannot do so on her own. At other times, however, there are some issues in a client's story that I, as the therapist need to leave be until the client can face up to her own truth. Handing over my research findings will place me in a moral predicament, as I fear to violate the client's reality (Acker et al., 1991). I will be hesitant to share all findings with a client who will not gain from the experiences. I will be hesitant to use the client towards bettering my research results (Carpenter, 1999). Facts can be changed, but an interpretation remains just an opinion – open to question at any stage, so why violate the client? The adequacy of interpretation must be tested by returning to theory (Acker et al., 1983).

Does this then render the traditional goal of objectivity obsolete? For post-modernists it does (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b). Peplau and Conrad (1989) argue that science can never be fully objective. Marecek (1989) and Burr (1995) believe that objectivity is an impossible goal when working from the principle of individual experience bringing knowledge.

Far removed from the positivist's notion of objectivity, Harding (1998, p.19) even argues for "stronger objectivity". She states that when those from the dominant structure observe and theorize, they will overlook and not observe relevant issues. In order to bring these invisible issues in the clear, input is needed from the experiences of women. She reasons that "starting thought from women's lives" (Harding, 1998, p.17) will increase objectivity. She further qualifies that the starting thought should not come from any woman's experience. Rather, the starting thought should come from the life and experiences of someone able to recognize and reflect on the nature of oppression as experienced, giving a less distorted interpretation of reality than others (Cudd, 2000). If I therefore agree with the concept that every standpoint is a "critically and theoretically constructed discursive position" (Harding, 1998, p.17), nothing more and

nothing less, there is no need to endlessly debate objectivity and truth. Knowledge can then be utilized, understanding it to be neither universal nor relative, but always partial and responsible, embodied in agents of knowledge that are constantly moving between a diversity of narratives (Mies, 1983; Selgas, 2004; Haraway, 2004).

I therefore find it unnecessary to assert for either objectivity or no objectivity. The value of the results does not lie in finding *the* truth, but in finding *a* truth about these particular women and the processes within which they are operating as well as the systems of which they are part. This will be enough until new data immediately or after some time bring new information leading to a fresh view on this truth. What are expected from the researcher are constant reflexivity and an ethical stance.

Research is a growth experience, but in doing research I also position myself as a knowledge-maker. I therefore have to constantly question my own perceptions and challenge my own self by continuously reflecting upon my approach, my view of the truth, and knowledge and the influence thereof on the results (Banister, et al., 1994; Burr, 1995; Greed, 1990; Olesen, 2000). Thus, through being self-critical, I illustrate a personal investment in the research (Gergen & Gergen, 2000; Spears, 1997). This is all the more true because of my insider position, being both researcher and participant in the meaning making process (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Reflexivity becomes a re-evaluation and a re-validating of shared experiences and leads to a deeper understanding (Williams, 1990).

Reflexivity, meaning constant reflection on one's own positioning, or the "bending back on itself" (Steier, 1991b, p.2), or being conscious of ourselves as we see ourselves in social constructionist terms, also implies that I will take care in not privileging my own reading above that of the researched (Burr, 1995). The ideal will be openness to the multiple voices and standpoints of participants (Gergen & Gergen, 2000), and reflection on the power inequality within the research process is needed (MacLeod, 2002). Reflection also implies, however, that I will grow and will be changed by the process of research (Gergen, 2000; Gergen, 2001). I therefore need to be ready to be part of the process and not part of the problem by, for example, using the unequal power situation to my advantage (Spears, 1997). My experience is not unquestionable but a source of critical reflection (Stone-Mediatore, 2000). Solutions can only be generated by responsible reflexivity, tempered by feminist values and theory. MacLeod (2002) calls the focus back to this inherently political goal of reflexivity. As a researcher, one

has to value both one's own view and that of the researched as only the starting point of a new discussion, and to aim for what Kenneth Gergen (1994, p.414) calls "an invitation to reflexivity".

But the process of reflexivity and sharing my own path can be scary, as I am confronted with seeing myself through the eyes of others (Ibáñez, 1997). My willingness to reflexivity can be met with bland invulnerability (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Aiming to find meaning in the research, I therefore also need to practice reflexivity. Social constructionists find reflexivity of importance as they maintain that meaning is produced by the process of reflexivity (Durrheim, 1997).

Ethics

The researcher has to take responsibility for every aspect of the research project (Acker et al., 1983; Gorelick, 1996). She is accountable to three main audiences (Marshall, 1986). There is her responsibility towards the research community to bring fresh views and understanding. In feminist research, this will also imply a political influence because of the need to utilize research findings in the struggle against any kind of oppression in women's lives. There is also a responsibility towards my own development as a researcher and therapist, and then there is the particularly important responsibility towards the participants.

Responsibility towards the participant can bring ethical conflict (Christians, 2000; Oleson, 1994; Wise, 1990b). I have already discussed the moral conflict experienced in deciding whether to share my interpretations of her story with a particular client. Acker et al. (1996) shares my resistance to sharing interpretations with those who can find it upsetting. The dignity and welfare of the participants are at the forefront in any decision making (Cone & Foster, 1993). On the other hand, Walsh (1989) stands critical of the fact that researchers often do not actively include participants, and biting refers to researchers who relegate participants to merely a source of data.

Furthermore, obtaining data from the files of previous and current clients places me with a moral dilemma. There is no way in which consent can be obtained from previous clients. In her auto-ethnographical writing, Carolyn Ellis advises the researcher to construct scenes and dialogues from the notes taken and to collapse events so as to protect the participants (Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I will follow her advice as well as the recommended directions of the American Psychological Association for Dispensing with Informed Consent when using archival

information (Cone & Foster, 1993). Another option is to change all identifiable information about the client. The main issue for concern needs to be anonymity (Christians, 2000), rather than confidentiality (Barret, 1995; Cone & Foster, 1993). Anonymity is defined as “any condition in which one’s identity is unknown to others”, in contrast to confidentiality having “the characteristic of being kept secret, an intimacy of knowledge, shared by a few who do not divulge it to others” (Banister et al., 1994, p.156). Some researchers make use of misinformation regarding, for example, sex, and ages of children.

I will therefore take care that anonymity is ensured by changing the names, location, and time frames in which a client places an incident, presumably in such a manner as to convey the true meaning of the incident without giving identifiable information. Wise (1987) describes working towards an acceptable risk, ensuring that the participants will not be recognizable to their next door neighbours. Should it then be possible to identify a participant, I do believe that those people were already in the participant’s confidence.

Stacey (1996) states that the greater intimacy and the apparent mutuality of the relationship between researcher and researched can be dangerous to participants in a qualitative study. Believing this to be true I decided to adhere to my primary role of therapist when faced with situations where the researcher in me needed to, for example, delve deeper for more information and the therapist realized a different strategy was necessary for the client. Society still attributes an unequal amount of power to the role of the therapist. As the clients come from abusive situations, their possible sensitivity to oppression and my slight upper hand as a therapist might not be a safe situation to overstep any boundary whatsoever. Although I believe that woman-to-woman sharing is acceptable when following feminist guidelines for psychotherapy, I decided to share on a personal level only in the odd moment with the rarest of woman while busy with the research project.

Conclusion

In the first part of the dissertation you heard the voice of the researcher. I communicated where my interest in emotional abuse started and the further development thereof. I shared the reasons for the research as well as the intended aims of the project. As I believe that the voice of the researcher, her philosophy of being, will be heard throughout the research, I positioned myself and the wholeness of my intellectual and emotional development within my

writing. I will be working within feminist standpoint theory, but will also divert into social constructionism wherever the need arises and whenever I think it suits the means.

There is no particular feminist method and the feminist researcher is relatively uninhibited in her choice of method. I believe that qualitative methods will suit my purpose better when I work towards finding meaning and understanding. For this reason, no hypotheses are formulated. Furthermore, I have shown the reasons why working within a feminist framework makes issues of researcher bias, validity and objectivity irrelevant, but also how ethical issues can bring role-conflict. Qualitative work using the personal therapy notes of a number of women while elaborating on some of the semi-case studies is time consuming, and yet there is no other way. It is also impossible to attend to all the issues relevant to the specific subject of emotional abuse in close relationships.

In the end I will have to decide if the work I have done was worthwhile. Were the voices of women adequately and accurately portrayed? I will have to decide whether, in any way, value was added to our understanding of women in emotionally abusive relationships and how people do abuse. I will have to answer how this knowledge is applicable to change in the lives of women in whatever small way. In this I believe that the voices of the women must be heard first, and then the dialogue will hopefully begin.

PART 2: THE VOICE OF WOMEN EXPERIENCING EMOTIONAL ABUSE

CHAPTER 5: WOMEN'S STORIES

It is difficult to put into words the emotional quality of an abusive relationship. Firstly, there is the undertone of emotional abuse that is constant but is not easily recognized by those on the outside of the relationship (Loring, 1994). Secondly, the abusive incidents are of an intermittent nature. Some are extremely subtle and others crudely overt. The danger one is faced with is that the more overt an abusive incident is, the louder it will speak, threatening to drone out the subtleties of the ongoing emotional abuse that is a constant. In this representation of the clients' stories, I will try and make them translucent, in order for both these aspects of the occurring emotional abuse to show through.

I have chosen to represent in as much detail as possible four case studies as told to me in a therapeutic setting. Overall, they are representative of a large number of the themes found in emotionally abusive relationships, but the magnitude of the situations women face in abusive relationships, is impossible to convey by means of a few case studies. I have assigned familiar names to my clients, their spouses and children although these are not their real names so as to protect their identities. I start with the story of Minette, a young professionally qualified woman, where the emotional abuse actually continued long after her separation from her husband. Then there is the story of Elaine, a young, inexperienced woman who had to find her own way, and Karen, who is still trying to find answers. Berna, as an older woman, had to confront tradition on her journey to a different future. I support the experiences of these women by the findings of other clients seen in my practice, as well as incidences related by friends and associates.

Underneath most of the paragraphs of the representation of the women's stories, I reflect and question. I deconstruct (take apart the texts) the story as a means of stimulating my own thoughts trying to understand and show the way in which the woman and her partner or spouse positioned themselves in the relationship (Burr, 1995). Billig (1995) argued that texts, also those created in close relationships, are constructed by using rhetorical devices, i.e. people attempt to persuade the other of the power of their arguments. I will therefore analyze the texts

to find the justifications that people use. In the margin, I briefly noted the positioning and themes (Discourses and discourses) as they appear. This is mostly an intuitive and interpretative process (Burr, 1995), and I refer to mechanisms of power and control as they emerge. At the end of the chapter, I present a short summary of the positioning, themes, and control mechanisms of the role-players.

Minette¹

A Professional Woman – The Abuse continuing after the Separation

Beware of a man who praises women's liberation: he is about to quit his job
Erica Jong, novelist, poet

<p>Minette is a petite 33-year-old dentist who runs a <u>successful</u> private practice. She married Ian², a 34-year old Sports Administrator, after having known him for almost two years. In coming to therapy the marriage was in its third year. She is the youngest of three children from a "<u>traditional Afrikaans</u>" urban family. Her father is a retired lawyer, and her mother has always been a <u>housewife</u>. She describes the father as a man of <u>principles, strict, conservative, and authoritarian</u>, whereas her mother plays the <u>supportive nurturing role</u>. She has a good relationship with both parents and her siblings. Both academically and in cultural pursuits, she <u>excelled at school</u> and describes herself as a <u>driven and self-motivated person</u>. She enjoys her work, and being <u>successful</u> in her profession is important to her.</p>	<p>Successful Assertive</p>
<p><i>Does her "good relationships" mean that she has always been the "obedient child"? Is there some dependency involved? Could being successful and having stereotypical and traditional role models lead to conflict?</i></p>	<p>Traditional Afrikaans</p> <p>Stereotypical Roles</p>
<p>Minette starts the first session by commenting. "Emotionally I feel totally <u>depleted</u>." Her manner is <u>anxious and depressed</u>. She bursts into tears and silently cries throughout the whole of the session, saying, "If only I can get some</p>	<p>Assertive Successful</p> <p>Positioning Depleted</p>

¹ The name Minette is used as a pseudonym to protect the client's identity.

² Minette's husband is Ian – also a pseudonym.

<p><u>perspective</u> on what's happening to me. I think I've been depressed since Duncan's birth and he's six months old now. I have been on medication, but it doesn't really help. It feels as if I am applying band-aid and not dealing <u>with the real problem</u>. And my <u>husband is no help</u> at all. Even though he's at home while I'm at the practice, he does not help with the baby or around the house at all. Maybe this whole mess is <u>my fault</u> as I'm the one with the depression."</p> <p><i>Depression as result of abuse or individual circumstances or oppression? Why does she position herself as depressed? Does she thereby want the therapist to take on the Expert role? Or the husband? Perspective – wants to reason it out. What is the "real problem"? The denial or the aggression? Why position husband as rendering no help? Accepting the blame or being a "good" girl?</i></p> <p>Although the couple <u>discussed</u> starting a family, her falling pregnant came as a surprise. Ian was <u>upset</u> and reacted by saying the child probably was not even his. He "endlessly" <u>blamed</u> her and threatened her, insisting he will take the baby for a paternity test when born.</p> <p>Duncan was a couple of months old when I had to go back to my practice. He never gave me a good night's rest; crying ten, twenty times a night. Yes, I know Ian was doing a computer course, but still ...</p> <p>Now <u>he has me</u> and the baby <u>sleeping in the lounge</u> because we are <u>disturbing him</u> during the night and he has all this studying to do. This makes me so angry. And then at week-ends <u>he tells me</u> how tired he is and how much <u>he needs to relax</u>.</p> <p><i>What was the contract? Who broke the contract? Blaming because he wants the attention? Is he thus punishing her? "He has me" – Whose voice is she listening to? Why does she put up with this type of behaviour? Is she positioning herself as the "good wife" or "mother"? Issues of domination and control, as well as exploitation and/or physical abuse.</i></p> <p>At six o'clock in the morning I have to take Duncan out in the cold as my mom is helping me out by looking after him. Ian will <u>still be in bed, snoring</u> away, while I ready myself and the baby. Not once does he offer to take Duncan to them later – when it's a bit warmer. <u>Maybe</u> I am stupid. <u>Maybe</u> I am expecting too much.</p> <p><i>Is this "maybe" an indication of self-doubt, acceptance of the blame in being a "good wife" or an indication of dependency? How did she ask for help?</i></p>	<p>Reflection Trying to find answers</p> <p>Denial</p> <p>Positions the husband Contract</p> <p>Does not fully accept the blame</p> <p>Contract? PROCESS Negotiation Blaming Threatening</p> <p>Punishment Forcing</p> <p>Objection?</p> <p>Positioning as Victim</p> <p>Anger</p> <p>Blames partner</p>
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<p>Minette is “<u>uncertain</u>” as to how she is supposed to handle Ian’s lack of employment. Shortly before they got married, he suffered a back injury that prevented him from going back to his previous position. As he was actually considering a change of career <u>they decided</u> that he will take a year off, do a computer course, and then start afresh in the IT-business. But three years along the line he is still doing “yet another” computer course, relentlessly <u>complaining</u> about having to write exams as he knows much more than the lecturers do. He tells everyone how difficult these courses are and that he needs to study every second he can find. She tells a different story. Both her parents and sister are telling her that “this now is too much.” She says,</p> <p>Every time he wants to start on a new course, we have these <u>fight</u>s. I want him to go out and find a job; he wants to do another course. I have been <u>supporting</u> us for close on three years now, and the courses really cost an arm and a leg. So I stall and try and have him see my point of view. He tells me that I do not understand the IT-business, that there’s no work available, and that at his age, he’s not willing to start as an “appy” (apprentice). If I try to further reason with him he starts <u>screaming</u> at me that I’m <u>not really being supportive</u>, “All you ever think about is money. You’re such a <u>stingy bitch!</u> I suppose this is how you keep to your <u>marriage vows</u>. You’re such a money-grabbing bitch.” And in the end I <u>give in</u>. Then I feel all guilty, primarily <u>questioning myself</u>.</p> <p><i>Denial because she fears abandonment and rejection or because a conflict of roles? Is she positioning herself as dependent or the “dutiful, good” daughter? What was the contract? That she will take care of him, that she will comply with his wishes and be the supportive wife? He telling her that she does not “understand” – shifting the blame, cutting her back to her place as woman (“women do not know about things outside of the home”), plays on her guilt and self-doubt. Her not being “supportive” – Is the game that whenever she confronts, he shifts the blame? Asking for nurturance? Name-calling because she is not keeping to the contract of “supporting him”? Plays on her guilt and self-doubt as a “good” woman should take care of her man. “Marriage vows” – referring to the initial contract and blaming her for forsaking the patriarchal expectations. “Giving in” because she wants to be the “good” wife.</i></p>	<p>Victim Contract</p> <p>Role-conflict</p> <p>Self-doubt</p> <p>Emasculating</p> <p>Positioning</p> <p>Discussion Contract Fights Positioning husband</p> <p>Wanting her to go back to contract Blames partner Positioning/ emasculating</p> <p>Contract expectations</p> <p>Emasculating</p> <p>Justification</p> <p>Name-calling Blaming</p> <p>Giving-in</p>
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<p>They negotiate and he volunteers to help her out at the practice with anything computer-related. This started out working well, but soon his promised two days a week turns into two days a month. Still she pays him a retainer and he gets to drive the company car. “He persistently complains about the <u>“idiot personnel I hired and his having to cope with them”</u>. They now do not want him there giving orders anymore. He moans about the guy that does the software, saying he does not know what he’s doing, although there have not been any problems until now. Minette struggles to decide on what is “realistic under the circumstances.” <u>“How much longer must I pay up”</u> and “Am I being unreasonable in expecting him to find a job?” or “How do you (the therapist) know that what he’s blaming me for is not the truth?”</p> <p><i>Does this negotiating mean both parties committed to the deal? “Idiot personnel” – Is he challenging her authority and trying to position himself in the dominant position? Her questions – Rhetorical or is she positioning herself in the “dutiful” position by positioning the therapist as the expert?</i></p> <p>She finds some perspective herself.</p> <p>I think I would have <u>been willing to keep quiet</u> if he made any effort whatsoever to help me with Duncan or the house. He’s at home all day long, but he never as much as washes the dishes or offers to look after the baby while I do dinner. <u>If I ask him to do something</u>, the fighting starts, because how can I not understand the stress he’s under, how much he has to do, how hard he’s been studying that day? Sometimes I <u>try and reason</u> and tell him how difficult my day has been, and how I have to take care of the baby and my practice and still come home and cook dinner, how I <u>need him to help me out</u>, how he needs to bond with the baby. At times I go into this nagging mode, but mostly I end up <u>crying</u>. I wish I can explain how this <u>hurts</u>. I even <u>ask for his forgiveness</u> because I honestly in that moment believe him to be right.</p> <p><i>Did she read the contract as “I will help you and you will support me”? Is she only whining and nagging? Will the “asking” have any effect and if not, why not? Is the “reasoning” her way of saying “please help me”? Why does it have no effect? Asking forgiveness because of the anger she experiences, or to be “dutiful” Challenges him and is silenced. Power play succeeded. She asks, criticizes, reasons, and nags – he shifts the blame – she is beaten down. The power is restored.</i></p>	<p>Emasculating</p> <p>Exploitation</p> <p>Role conflict</p> <p>Positioning himself PROCESS</p> <p>Rhetorical or positioning herself in the dutiful position</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Traditional Positioning</p> <p>PROCESS Justifying</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Dependency Asks support as expected Objects Challenges</p> <p>Nagging</p> <p>Giving-in</p>
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<p>She explains herself to be “<u>cooling off</u>” towards Ian and questions whether she still loves him. She finds their lovemaking intolerable, and says, “I realize that this is going to bring further problems, but I just cannot open up and give my all anymore. How can one trust another human being, if he’s constantly out to hurt you?” In describing their sexual relationships, she explains, “I cannot call it making love, its plain sex. To be honest, <u>I think its rape</u>. He uses me to answer to his physical needs. There’s no cuddling or fore-play or intimacy. And I’m <u>always the guilty party</u>. He asks me: “Why don’t you feel anything, why are you hurting?” <u>Maybe</u> it is all in my head. The gynea explained that it will be better the more sex we have. I feel <u>dirty and used</u>. Sometimes I just cry, but never ever does he stop. He goes on with whatever he’s doing, <u>hurting me more and more</u>.”</p> <p><i>When hurt cannot give freely. Secondary abuse as the male professional does not understand, makes her the guilty party, blames the woman. Violence. Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress</i></p>	<p>Sexual exploitation/ Physical abuse and aggression</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Secondary abuse</p> <p>Punishment Aggression</p>
<p>Sometimes during the day I will reach out and hug him. But then he just stands there, <u>stiff and completely unapproachable</u>, and in the end he will just walk away without saying anything. At times, Ian will <u>not once talk to me</u> for a whole day, or ask me something, or even acknowledge my being there. She describes experiencing <u>no emotional support</u> in the relationship, saying, “<u>If only we could talk</u>. He simply doesn’t speak to me. We’re like two people sharing space. It’s as if he doesn’t care, he’s merely not interested to work things out.” Even when consulting him on run-of-the-mill decisions, he refrains from answering her or discussing the options. Should Minette assert herself and decide by herself, Ian retaliates with, “That’s just like you, always <u>wanting to control</u> everything.” Recently she consulted him about something, and they ended up having a fight, with Ian hitting out, sending his <u>fist through a cupboard</u>. Or she asks him to look after the baby as she wants to quickly slip out and buy bread and milk, but he screams at her. Another fight starts up with him again hitting out. He calls her “<u>a whore</u>” and “a fuckin’ useless mother.”</p> <p><i>Silence and rejection used to regain dominant position. He dictates the relationship – “If you do not do it my way, it’s no way.” Contact - Her needs not met. How will the rejection affect her? Is it true that every time she takes a stand, he turns the tables on her? To what extent are both struggling with traditional role models? Is he handling his own guilt by shifting the blame (“If you do not</i></p>	<p>PROCESS Rejection</p> <p>Punishment No emotional support</p> <p>Contract Emasculating Challenge</p> <p>Assertiveness Justification Name-calling</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Sees her as unfair? Physical aggression Not a good woman</p>

<p><i>have sex with me, you must be a whore”)?</i></p> <p>She describes Ian as always having been <u>extremely jealous</u>. Even before their marriage he scolded her for being “too friendly” with her male patients. When her friends do show up he is rude and afterwards tells her he either doesn’t like them visiting or he criticizes them, implying something to be wrong with her for keeping such company. She remembers, “Like I used to go jogging with this sixty year old friend I had since varsity, but Ian thought we were having an affair. In the end I just stopped jogging.” He <u>didn’t want</u> to visit her family, so she usually <u>excused them</u> from family get-togethers. Minette relates, “In the beginning I used to ask my mom to help me out, but then he’d be so rude that she leaves and he <u>would complain</u>, “You and your family. She has never really liked me””.</p> <p><i>She does x w and y, he shows disdain, she complies, and the dominance is restored. His complaining – asking for nurturance/attention.</i></p> <p>Ian <u>insists</u> that Minette takes him on all shopping trips or if she has her hair cut. He is quite adamant that she has no dress sense, and will <u>not be able to tell</u> the hairdresser what to do. Ian says, “I don’t know how you do it, but <u>you never manage to look nice</u>.” She goes on to say that she sometimes wishes she could explain to others what she was dealing with.</p> <p>If it’s physical abuse or something more tangible, you can tell people and even if they do not really understand it, they are able to see your logic, but this is different. Like at the family barbeque, in front of everybody, he tells you how good you look, and you explode. Now everybody looks at you, thinking you’re gone over the bend. But they do not know about everything that has gone before; how he’s been complaining that you again will not be a proper host, how he’s been criticizing you since you woke up the morning because “you’re so fat” and “your hair’s a mess” and “look at you, a real old hag”.</p> <p><i>The abuse lies in the context of the relationship, and not in the content of the messages.</i></p> <p>Minette tells about Ian’s constant <u>boastfulness</u>.</p> <p>He laughed at me and bragged about his being the intelligent one in the family and that he earned much more than I can ever dream of earning. He</p>	<p>Isolation Assertive</p> <p>Blood line Jealousy versus Possessive- ness</p> <p>Tries to Isolate her</p> <p>Justifying PROCESS</p> <p>Domination Control Possessive</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p> <p>Breaking down self-esteem</p> <p>Narcissism Emasculating</p>
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<p>never once remembered that when we got married I paid off his debt on his car, because he couldn't afford it. After the marriage, he was spending money like it was going out of fashion. When I <u>dared to talk</u> to him about our money situation, <u>he lashed out</u>, "You're just being selfish. You always want everything for yourself. Aren't you ashamed of how you treat me?"</p> <p>"Selfish" – meaning "you do not give me what I need or ask." <i>"Dared to talk" – unequal power/ traditional gender roles/ previous experiences.</i></p>	<p>Positioning himself</p> <p>Positioning herself as Victim Verbal Aggression Selfless support</p>
<p>Minette reasons, "I think something in me changed since the birth of the baby. He's made me see matters differently. Now it's not only me, I have to see to the baby's <u>emotional well-being</u> as well. Even <u>physically</u> it's different. I don't feel that secure with Ian any more. There's the <u>constant</u> bickering, the fighting and the screaming. I see his little body stiffening up – this is not a good place to be." <i>The pattern is constant, continuous.</i></p>	<p>Children: His attention PROCESS</p> <p>Stereotypical expectations</p>
<p>She contemplates getting a divorce, but <u>immediately checks</u> herself, "No, I believe divorce <u>is a sin</u> in the eyes of God. This is not how God intended it to be. Maybe I <u>should be more</u> submissive, more supportive of Ian. The Bible does tell us that the <u>husband is the head</u> of the house and I am not supposed to question that." <i>What is the influence of religious programming?</i></p>	<p>Entrapment by Religion Positions self as obedient Stereotyping</p>
<p>She tries to bring Ian around to see where she is coming from by insisting that he come and see me. In therapy, she gives her reasons as her fear that his aggressive outbursts will escalate in terms of intensity and will become more physical. It also becomes clear that she sees Ian's committing to therapy as <u>proof that he still cares</u>. <i>Needs him to take responsibility for the relationship.</i></p>	
<p>Ian does show up for a session and physically he impresses as the exact opposite of his petite spouse. He is <u>tall, muscular, and overpowering</u>, and speaks in an <u>abrupt, irritable tone of voice</u>. He starts the session off by saying, "<u>She is</u> totally withdrawn. She doesn't want me near her." Asked why he thinks she withdraws, he says: "I think <u>Minette wants me to be as successful as her father</u>. She looks down on me because I haven't got a job. Everyone is</p>	<p>Domination Justifying Stereotypical Afrikaner Positioning</p>

<p>pushing me to find a job, <u>but I know</u> that after getting this diploma, I will be able to pick and choose.” He continues, “I have always been a <u>workaholic</u>, and lately I have really put everything into it. I’m studying, and on top of that I’ve sorted out the computers at the practice. I don’t know what Minette is complaining about, I cannot do more. On a Saturday <u>she even wants</u> me to keep Duncan busy while she takes a bath or reads a magazine. I mean, for heaven’s sake, woman!”</p> <p><i>Men usually do not show up when asked to go and see the therapist. Attempts to gain sympathy from therapist. Blaming her – and thus shifts the attention from him not working. Victim/perpetrator triangle</i></p>	<p>Justifying</p> <p>Victim</p> <p>Positioning the therapist</p>
<p>He changes the subject,</p> <p>You know, <u>she started</u> with all this <u>nonsense</u> on our wedding night. I really don’t know, but to me her reaction looks like that of a woman who has been sexually molested as a child. <u>I hope you know what you’re dealing with</u>. She promised me she will change, but we’re still only having sex once a month or even once every two months. I know she’s tired, so I even help her with Duncan. He wakes up every 30 minutes and I do get up, but he keeps on screaming. <u>He wants his mother</u>. I really don’t know what more she wants. <u>She complains</u> to her parents and never gives them the true story. It’s the same with household duties. <u>She thinks</u> she can throw things around, and then when she comes home the house will be sorted out and dinner will be on the table.</p> <p><i>Women’s things are “nonsense” – stereotypical. He questions the therapist’s abilities; thereby wanting to take control? Destabilization of the subject. Does he blame her for being a “working mom”? Unrealistic – if she does not work, will he then? Influence of sexual rejection? His understanding of gender roles.</i></p>	<p>Justification</p> <p>Blaming</p> <p>Finding excuses</p> <p>Justification</p>
<p>When asked about the incident where he slammed his hand through the door, Ian replies, “Ag, that wasn’t really anything. I just get so frustrated by her constant talking, nagging, wanting me to do more. She just goes on and on. I don’t know ... I’m sure it’s her parents putting her up to all this nonsense. Especially her mother, she never did look me in the eyes.” I tell Ian that I’m a bit worried about him not working as it usually gets harder to find re-employment</p>	<p>Shifting the blame</p> <p>Justification</p> <p>Re-directing attention</p>

<p>the longer one has been out of the job market. The remainder of the session is taken up by his telling me how little we (women?) know about the IT-business, how much effort and commitment it takes, and how difficult the courses are.</p>	
<p>Minette comes to the next therapy session (the third) already having seen a lawyer, and firm in her decision to divorce Ian. He apparently went home after our sessions and reported that I confided in him that she is losing her mind, “Even your psychologist can see how silly you have become.” She rallies on, I know it’s wrong, but I cannot take this any longer.</p>	<p>Conflict, being dutiful</p>
<p>I don’t know how I’m going to face up to society. I mean, just kicking your husband out and saying that he’s not good enough, all because he’s not working.</p>	<p>Positioning Self-doubt Fear: not being “good enough”</p>
<p>Who says it’s not my fault.</p>	
<p>How am I going to cope with Duncan all on my own, especially when he grows up and starts asking questions about why I divorced his Dad? What harm am I doing to my child? How can a mother do this to her child?</p>	<p>Guilt Fought back</p>
<p>This is wrong, I tell you – this is not the moral way I’ve been brought up. How am I going to face going to church again?</p>	<p>Guilt: religion</p>
<p>Who says Ian is not going to change?</p>	<p>Hope remains Guilt</p>
<p>How am I to know if it wasn’t something I did that had him react in such a manner?</p>	<p>Self-doubt</p>
<p>Deep inside I knew his blaming is not even logical and realistic.</p>	
<p>Nevertheless, I’m leaving. I cannot take this any further.</p>	
<p><i>Every woman has her point of no return.</i> <i>Conflict between “right and wrong.”</i> <i>Conflict between the self and the programming of society.</i> <i>Finding own answers.</i></p>	

<p>She informs Ian of her decision to divorce him. He then makes their home unbearable to both mother and child. For days on end he screams at her, he swears at her, he keeps her awake. The baby reacts by sleeping even less. Minette now fears that Ian might lose control and do something to harm her and the baby. “He looks at me and I see the contempt in his eyes, saying, “I will not let you bring up our son to be like your father.””</p>	<p>Escalation of violence</p> <p>Emasculation</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p>
<p>Hearing the threat in his voice, having him threaten to shoot himself previously and having seen his total reckless driving when the baby is in the car, she fears for their safety and decides to temporarily move out of their house; a house registered in her name. An emotional drama ensues, with Ian screaming, “You can go, but you will not take the baby. You can just as well relax, take your medicine, and then realize the stupidity of your decision.” The police, the therapist, and her parents are called. His brother intervenes, and in the end Ian agrees that she and Duncan can temporarily move in with her parents. She is ashamed of the scene that was played out in public, and Ian is fuming with anger. He turns vindictive and the struggle continues over the following two years.</p>	<p>Trying to regain power</p> <p>Fears physical aggression</p> <p>Blaming Threatening</p> <p>Humiliation</p>
<p><i>Aggression used as the last resort to regain power?</i> <i>Power locked into the vindictiveness.</i> <i>Double bind situation – cannot let go. Dependency issues.</i> <i>Why was it necessary to get his permission?</i></p>	
<p>The first couple of weeks after she moved out, the following interplay between the partners ensues:</p>	
<p>Firstly: Ian comes to visit Duncan every afternoon after Minette gets home from work. As he has never really given attention to the baby (and how long can you play with a seven-month old baby, anyway?) these visits are used to taunt Minette. He takes the baby, and as soon as Duncan makes a sound, he hands him back to his mother. Later on, he would either blame Minette when his son cried implying that she was making the then one year old up against his father, or he would hand the child back and spend the rest of the afternoon on his cellphone, but not leaving. If, in the end, she does get a court order to restrict</p>	<p>Domination Aggression</p> <p>Vindictiveness</p> <p>Blaming Working on her guilt</p> <p>Setting her up</p>

<p>his visitation rights, Ian will have reason to tell friends and family that Minette is keeping the baby from him.</p>	
<p><i>Not taking a stand and setting boundaries.</i></p>	
<p>Ian emotionally taunts Minette during these visits, and as she is afraid of his aggressive outbursts, she does not want to leave the baby alone with him. She also does not want to further inconvenience her parents (both polite in handling Ian, but silently seething). During therapy, she bursts into tears, “I sometimes just cannot take this any longer. One moment he’s telling me how he loves me and that he cannot bear to be without me, and the next moment he is screaming, blaming, telling me how selfish I am and that I really must have my mind read. “You are hurting Duncan, you are depriving him of a father and a real home.” Then he has the audacity to invite me for dinner on our wedding anniversary.”</p>	<p>Aggression Fear</p> <p>Confusion Manipulations</p> <p>Bad mother Guilt</p> <p>Anger</p>
<p>Secondly: Minette never talks to his family or gives them her side of the story. This gives Ian the leeway to tell whatever he needs to cover his bases. So he tells them that she’s been sleeping around and later changes this story into her having lesbian relationships.</p>	<p>Shame and failure</p> <p>Justifying</p>
<p><i>Pattern of not taking responsibility? Because of a sense of failure or shame. If a woman is not interested in me, the perfect male, there must sexually be something wrong with her.</i></p>	
<p>Thirdly: Minette finds it difficult to handle the emotional upheaval which she experiences. She struggles to sever the emotional ties with Ian, and says, “I’m so worried about Ian. I think he’s going through a depression and he cannot get his head around the idea of a divorce.” Then there is the guilt, “Maybe I should have understood that he was studying. But I was so tired and had this little baby to take care of.” Or she would lament “Maybe I never did show him enough love” or “Maybe I am stingy” and “Maybe I did spend too much time at the practice and should have been home to make him a cup of coffee while he was studying.” “And then the doubt will come and I will start thinking that maybe it was my fault. I’ll remember him not wanting the baby in the first place, how he had blamed me for falling pregnant and accused me of having another man’s child.” And the fear as she suspects him of having killed her cat when she didn’t</p>	<p>Dependency</p> <p>Stereotypical nurturing role</p> <p>Guilt</p> <p>Self-doubt</p> <p>Self-blame</p> <p>Fear</p> <p>Threat present</p>

<p>comply with his wishes to move back and forcefully withholding things from her that she holds dear. All these feelings culminate when her sister-in-law phones, Ian was walking around holding his pistol to his head, screaming that I was ruining his life and that he's going to blow away his brains. How will I explain a suicide to his family? Everything is my fault.</p>	<p>Accepting the blame Guilt</p>
<p><i>She suffers from the guilt of allegedly not having paid enough attention - I remember him rejecting her advances. Takes two to play this game. Entrapment through the guilt and relational focus?</i></p>	
<p>Fourthly: Ian used the practical situation in a vindictive manner. He refused her access to the house, leaving her with the bare minimum she took the evening she moved out.</p>	<p>Domination Aggression Power</p>
<p>Ian refuses to let me come and fetch the camping cot. It's my sister's and I really need it. Duncan is sleeping even less since we moved out. He's not used to not sleeping in his own surroundings. Ian refuses me to come and get Duncan's clothes and toys, and will not bring them when he comes visiting. I'm not moving back, and he will not force me. What am I supposed to do? Go out and buy the baby a new wardrobe and all new toys?</p>	<p>Positioning self as victim</p>
<p>Ian knows all the right buttons to push. He would constantly phone her, only to scream obscenities in her ears. He would send twenty SMS messages in an hour, calling her "a bitch, a whore, a fucking bad mother." Then she would receive the twenty-first SMS reading, "Love u and good night." Or he would further yell obscenities and then the SMS would follow, "So if I asked u for a night of sex with no strings attached would u say no?" A typical voice mail sounds something like this:</p>	<p>Possessive Bad woman Verbal aggression</p>
<p>You are destroying me and I know you are enjoying every single moment.</p>	<p>Blaming Scapegoating Guilt</p>
<p>You are making my life into a living hell. All blame is laid at your feet and God sees everything.</p>	<p>Victim</p>
<p>For five years I did everything for you, and now you're using Duncan to get back at me.</p>	<p>Victim</p>

<p>You married me only to have a child, but in the end you will eat shit.</p> <p>You're blind if you do not see what you're doing to someone as little as Duncan.</p>	<p>Aggression Bad mother</p>
<p>I wish you find yourself someone new just to realize he has Aids and I want him to waste all your money.</p> <p>You don't deserve to be a mother. This will be on your conscience for the rest of your life.</p>	<p>Wishing ill health</p> <p>Bad mother Guilt and self-doubt</p>
<p><i>Men have had much more practice in the games of power and domination. The need to gain control clearly showed in the abusive communication. He uses and had during their time together used her own guilt feeling as well as her self-doubt against her. He plays a vindictive game of using her gullibility or her wish to have things work out, wanting things to be fair, and confusing her.</i></p>	
<p>He takes her to court saying she owes him a salary. After months of deliberation with legal representatives, forcing Minette to take time off to see to the issue as well as having her pay up thousands in legal fees, their decision favours her. She now comes up with the interesting observation:</p> <p>This is so scary. There actually is no one to fall back on. I only now realize that adult life is no playground. Now there is no man at my side to offer me some sort of safety. I'm on my own, and it's everyone for himself.</p> <p><i>Working on own dependency issues. Can stand on own feet. Re-evaluating gender and position with regards to men.</i></p>	<p>Aggression Vindictive</p> <p>Exploitation</p> <p>Dependency</p>
<p>She now learns that Ian was never found medically unfit after his back injury and that he was actually asked to come back to his previous position. When Minette confronts him he says, "But you don't understand. I did it for you and Duncan. I did it so that you could give your full attention to your practice."</p> <p><i>Conned her.</i></p>	<p>Exploitation Lies</p> <p>Excuses Justification</p>
<p>Minette often communicates her anxiety about taking sole responsibility for the upbringing of Duncan saying, "I'm so scared. Will I be able to really be a good parent to Duncan? Will I say and do the right things?" He knows her self-doubts, and therefore sues for custody of Duncan, saying to her, "You are emotionally unstable." Minette knows this not to be true, and reacts with both</p>	<p>Self-doubt</p> <p>Domination Aggression Vindictiveness</p>

<p>anger and self-doubt.</p> <p>How dare he, how dare he say I never wanted Duncan and that I'm an unfit mother! This after he wanted us to go for paternity tests when I fell pregnant. The cheek! He's the one who never lifted a finger to look after the baby. I remember Duncan having to go to hospital for grommets and I asked Ian to go with. He just picked another fight, "Why must I go with? It is totally unfair of you to expect me to take time off from my studies. You know how busy I am." Or the Saturday I had to go into my practice and at 11:00 he calls. "Where the hell are you? I cannot take this screaming child anymore." I can go on and on. It is 16:45 and I'm on the highway on my way home and he calls me. "Where are you? Come and take this child!"</p> <p>Now (This is now 18 months down the line, and Ian has visitation rights every Sunday at a children's playground) he either does not show for his visits with Duncan or the poor little thing sits playing in the sandpit while Daddy is constantly on the cell phone. Once Duncan was crying about something, so Ian just walked away and got into his car - without saying a word to me. I was sitting at least fifty metres from Duncan. Never once did he ask me about Duncan's development or adjustment to play-school. Never once did he comment when he started walking or about something new he did, or a new word that slipped out. I know what he says is not true, but I'm so scared. Why do I still have this intense emotional reaction whenever he does something to get at me? I cannot understand this.</p> <p><i>He knows her self-doubt and uses it. Trying to prove himself as the dutiful father by degrading her. Power in installing fear. Symptoms of posttraumatic stress?</i></p> <p>The case at the Family Advocate is settled in favour of the mother. The father's visitation rights will only be extended after submitting to therapy and guidance from a counselling psychologist. Ian does not adhere to any of these recommendations.</p> <p><i>He's not interested in either the child or the results. This was a game of control and power.</i></p> <p>When it comes to the financial terms of the divorce settlement he plays the</p>	<p>Anger Helpless</p> <p>Unfairness Fear Positioning him</p> <p>Control by frustration</p> <p>Control through child</p> <p>Dependency PTSD Anxiety</p> <p>Doubts the system</p> <p>Vindictive</p> <p>Helpless Entrapment</p>
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<p>same game. His first claim is for half her practice (saying that he helped her build the practice) as well as other assets. Again and again he makes minimal and unacceptable adjustments, until, out of the blue, Minette’s legal representative receives a reasonable offer and she is willing to settle. Immediately Ian starts another round of blaming and more or less returns to his first offer. Minette says, “It’s nearly two years now and still I haven’t managed to have him evicted from my home. It’s all this court mumbo-jumbo and nobody does what they say. I really don’t know where to turn.” Although after months of negotiating with Ian, she moved into a rented apartment, she refrains from buying new furniture and appliances, as most of what they have belonged to her when they got married. For months she stayed with her parents, but still she paid the bond, the electricity, and the telephone bill. Ian even phones, and instructs her to supply food for their dogs.</p> <p><i>Programmed to be “nice” and to take care.</i></p>	<p>Dependence Guilt</p> <p>Entrapment Exploitation</p> <p>Victim position</p> <p>Bad Mother</p> <p>Crazy making</p> <p>Playing for sympathy</p>
<p>Minette comments, “What a clever way to get back at you as through the divorce settlement.” She at times verbalizes the wish to hurt back. This feeling leads to immense conflict over the financial settlement. Again she struggles with deciding on what is reasonable and realistic, but also the feeling of “Why must I suffer alone? I will get back at him,” only to reign herself in again.</p> <p>There are times when I really wish I can get Ian out of my and my son’s lives. At least then I’ll know Duncan will be safe. There are times when I actually sit and think how to get back at him. I want him to suffer as I did, I want him to feel the pain, I want him to come crawling at me and saying he is sorry and then there are the times that I really need him to say he is sorry. I think it’s because I cannot believe that he wasn’t aware of what he was doing.</p> <p><i>Beginning the process of emotionally freeing herself. An apology will mean that he was the guilty party and will free her of the self-doubt.</i></p>	<p>Depression</p> <p>Frustration</p> <p>Powerless</p> <p>Doubts the system</p>
<p>So Ian calls me, trying to turn the tables on Minette, and says, “She’s taking all my money. She’s absolutely robbing me. This is plain theft. Please talk to Minette – she’s losing it. She’s keeping Duncan from me. You of all people must know how much damage she is doing to my boy.”</p> <p><i>Wants psychologist to take sides – she will again be isolated, losing some support. Ganging up against her as with his family.</i></p>	<p>Victim</p>

<p>Time and again she is confronted with another ploy. Her reactions vary between a deepening depression because of the frustration and a feeling of powerlessness not being able to do anything else to change the situation. “Even if the judge understands some of what’s been going on, he will never be able to understand the full impact thereof.”</p> <p>Minette describes herself at this time and place; separated, but after two years still awaiting a court date to finally bring together Ian’s financial claims, the report of the Family Advocate, and the divorce.</p> <p>It was in finally unpacking the things I did get back from Ian that I remembered the illusion I was living under; the illusion that everything has a place in life. I bought every self-help book I could lay my hand on, hoping, trying to find some answers. I was so naive in believing the fairy tale.</p> <p>I don’t think I will ever be able to trust men again, or ever consider a relationship again. Never, never again (shaking her head). I cannot even imagine myself in a relationship. As for now, I’m in the process of finding a locum for my practice, as I’m leaving for this congress in Germany. So the agency asks me if I would prefer a man or a woman and I have this screaming-feeling of “How, can they even ask!” I will never appoint a man in my practice, never.</p> <p>I recently went on a course, and was so amazed by the reaction of people towards me. People talked to me and supported my input. I actually felt worthwhile again.</p> <p>I sometimes feel like walking out on the morning service at church. How can you believe anything these guys tell you? I sit there and am filled with abomination at the men around me. I feel betrayed.</p> <p>I cannot even pray. It’s more: “Oh God, I do not understand Your ways. I know You are there, but that’s about all.” I do not read books of a spiritual nature anymore. I only see them as the work of people, each with his own opinion, and how are we supposed to know it’s His will and His Word they’re</p>	<p>Loss of trust</p> <p>Regaining self-worth</p> <p>Trust Religion</p>
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<p>writing about.</p> <p><i>Losing trust can also be a symptom of posttraumatic stress.</i></p> <p>I only now realize how dependent I was on Ian. Even before our marriage, I was the one to call and apologize when we had an argument.</p> <p>I wish I can control my reaction better. I get a fright every time I receive an SMS or I see a car similar to Ian's. My mouth goes all dry, and my heart beats so quickly that I have this heavy, cramping feeling on my heart. Or at five to three he calls from the playground asking, "Where's my child?" and I go all whimpering. He informs me that the house telephone bill needs to be paid and my first reaction is that maybe he is right. Maybe I am supposed to pay the bill. It's this feeling of powerlessness in that he's able to manipulate my feelings, my thoughts, and my logic.</p> <p>An old friend recently called, and I realized I should have opened my eyes for the signs even before we were married. I can now remember him never really greeting anyone. He always had something negative to say about everyone, and pushed people away by his abrupt manner. How did I land myself in this mess? I suppose I will one day look back and hang my head in shame. Just after Duncan was born, I first hired a maid to help me out. After two weeks she wanted to leave, because she was afraid of Ian's aggression. I think I heard, but I denied the implications of what she said. I wasn't ready to confront the truth.</p> <p>I remember that just before we were married, I had this conference in America, and he spoiled the whole trip for me by making me feel selfish. I would dutifully phone him, a 3-minute call costing me whatever, and he would be most disagreeable. It spoiled everything for me. Why did I allow him to influence me to that extent? It's my fault for always being so pleasing. I have this "I'm so sorry for taking up space-attitude, sorry to be alive attitude". I allow others to use me.</p> <p>It still hurts every time Ian is supposed to visit and play with Duncan, and he doesn't really pay the child any attention. Why does he do that? Is he never</p>	<p>Dependency Obedience Stereotypical</p> <p>Bonding or symptoms of PTSD</p> <p>Coming to terms Denial Self-blame Pleasing Dutiful Obedient</p> <p>Sense Making Unfairness Victim Self-doubt Self-blame Sense Making</p>
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going to understand how much he hurts people? I think the main issue I am struggling with is how unfair and unjust Ian is and has been. I feel so victimized.

I fall into this trap of blaming myself. How could I have chosen this man as my husband? There must be something seriously wrong with me for having gotten myself in this mess.

The abuse carries on; both in the old relationship and a new one. To Minette Ian says, "You're so scabby you look ill. I can see you are suffering. Are you sure you can manage looking after Duncan on your own?" He brags that his new girlfriend, whom he intends to marry, is even more well-to-do than Minette. But the new girlfriend turns up at her practice, wanting to know the reasons of the pending divorce. The new girlfriend is worried, because after yet another argument she and Ian had, they ended up in his pushing her from the car. She mentions Ian constantly blaming her for being too fat.

Is this the usual pattern in emotional abuse – always finding a new victim?

Although, as a therapist, I believe in brief therapy, Minette has been to regular sessions over the last two years. Not wanting to constantly burden friends and family with the intricate details of the constant happenings between her and her "husband," she sees therapy "as the only place I can just let go, relax, and recuperate."

When asked what she needed from Ian, she replies: "Steadfastness."

When asked about her decision to leave after all that has happened after she moved out, she replies:

I'll do it all over again. This is still the best decision I have ever made!

Elaine³

A Young Woman – Finding her own Way

<p>I only saw Elaine, an unmarried 27 year old lawyer, for two therapy sessions, but her story poignantly illustrates the workings of emotional abuse. She impressed as a <u>highly intelligent, self-assured, and verbal</u> young woman. Starting a new relationship, she found some baggage from a previous relationship resurfacing, and felt she needed to address these issues. She started therapy by saying, “I was in an abusive relationship, and now I have all <u>these hang-ups</u> about men.”</p>	<p>Strong & Successful</p> <p>Assertive Positioning: Problem lies with me</p>
<p><i>This is not your stereotypical passive, submissive woman.</i></p> <p>She related her story as follows: “I was born in Cape Town as the eldest of four girls. My father, although a medical doctor, came from a religious family with more than one brother and uncle being in the ministry. My dad himself was an exceptionally religious and <u>intellectual</u> man. We were always debating everything. Whereas Dad comes from Irish stock, my mom is from an extended, <u>rural Afrikaans family</u>. She has 10 brothers and sisters, and they all are <u>extremely conservative</u> in their outlook on life. I’ve always had these hassles with my mom. I was <u>headstrong</u>, and no matter what she said, I always had to now why. I wanted to go dancing and to her this was a sin.”</p>	<p>Conservative Patriarchal?</p> <p>Programmed assertiveness Cold father?</p> <p>Afrikaans Conservative</p> <p>Assertive Positioning: Headstrong</p>
<p><i>What role will spiritual issues play here? What will the role of the father-figure be? How will she position herself in connection with gender-roles?</i></p>	
<p>When she was sixteen years old, her father was accused of embezzlement, and the family’s world fell apart. The father tried his hand at one or two businesses, but “he trusts too easily” and things never really worked out again. During her last year at school, he was even imprisoned for a couple of months. At that stage, Elaine took on most family <u>responsibilities</u>, as her mother had to start working on a full-time basis. Elaine recalls, “All I can remember was that during this time she used to physically lash out at me for whatever reason. We were</p>	<p>Abandonment</p> <p>Humiliation</p> <p>Resilient</p>

³ Elaine is a pseudonym to protect the client’s identity.

⁴ A pseudonym.

<p>constantly at each other's throats."</p> <p><i>Will there be issues of abandonment? What will be the later influence of her taking responsibility and taking over the nurturing and mother role? Her views on her father and the paradox of him trusting too easily. What will the influence be of "losing" the strong father?</i></p> <p>Elaine talks about school and calls herself "the typical <u>overachiever</u>." She excelled at an academic level and received colours for a number of cultural activities as well. "I was <u>strong-willed</u>, and knew precisely where I was heading, and that was law school. Instead, and because of my dad's mishaps, I ended up doing a one-year secretarial course. I still largely took responsibility for my younger sisters."</p> <p><i>Issues of failure and success? Anger at male abandonment?</i></p> <p>She describes the ensuing emotionally abusive relationship</p> <p>And then I met Quintus⁴ - <u>27 years my senior</u>. I was bowled over by this guy who had seen the world; who had seen and done everything. He previously was in the <u>Special Forces</u>, and had this mysterious link to high-ranking officers in the force. He was such an amazing man, strong-willed and shrewd. An astute businessman, <u>someone I could learn from</u>. He had everything I aspired to in life; a man of action, driven to succeed.</p> <p><i>Is there a theme of an "older man"? What will be the contract? Looking for the "Expert" or confirming self-worth? He is, he has what I want to be and want to have. Comfortable as the "dutiful"? Giving away her power. Stereotypical role of "living through the man if you cannot do it yourself."</i></p> <p>Oh, Quintus was a <u>charmer</u> for sure, and he turned the charm on to me. Looking back, I realize how, as a nineteen year old, I was influenced by this successful businessman lavishing his charm on me. I felt so <u>appreciated, so special</u>; having this older, self-made man taking an interest in me. He had this magnetism; if he walked into a room, people paid attention. What charisma.</p> <p><i>The need for security and nurturance. Is he or will he be able to fulfil this need?</i></p> <p>When we started dating I once met his previous wife. She told me she</p>	<p>Success buys acceptance</p> <p>Not stereotypical Strong-willed</p> <p>Traditional</p> <p>Older man</p> <p>Military</p> <p>Dependency Dutiful</p> <p>He will listen and take care</p> <p>Under his spell Dr. Hyde and</p>
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<p>divorced him because of him emotionally abusing her, and I secretly sneered at her misplaced jealousy.</p> <p><i>Entrapment – handing over power to the other. Women should start telling or will no-one listen?</i></p>	<p>Mr. Clyde</p>
<p>Elaine’s story of entrapment unfolds. He owned more than one IT-company, and she started working for him.</p> <p>Within a couple of months I realized that he was screening all my phone calls - asking the secretary to put all my calls through to him first. When I confronted him, he admitted to it, and said he was doing so because I happened to be his future wife. I was angry and taken aback, but also so flattered.</p> <p><i>By allowing the first act of domination, she gives the permission for future acts. Issues of self-worth to be explored. Plays to her insecurities.</i></p>	<p>Hooking Domination & Control Self-worth affirmed Confrontation Challenges Objects</p>
<p>We started dating, and it was not long afterwards that he sort of made it clear that <u>he did not like me going out</u> with my own friends. I ended up having contact only with my family and losing contact with all my friends. I was so happy I did not notice what was happening. He was constantly on the look-out; to whom was I talking, or was I perhaps flirting with someone. I was frequently accused of flirting, but as I’m such a strong and outgoing personality, <u>I thought that maybe</u> I was coming on too strong. In the end, I was talking to no-one.</p> <p><i>Accepting the blame – culturally programmed or self-esteem issues? Listening to the voice of authority. Being “dutiful,” being the good wife.</i></p>	<p>Domination Entrapment Possessive Obedience</p>
<p>Then he asked me to move in with him and I did – so in love and flattered. He convinced me that I really didn’t have to work. Why don’t I stay at home, do the reading I always wanted to do, do some gardening, laze around at the swimming pool, even start on my studies, and of course I complied. Being the <u>caring person</u> he is, he didn’t want me to do a thing, not even go out and do food shopping – he arranged everything. I didn’t have to cook, he ordered in, but not having to cook also meant I didn’t have to go out shopping. There even were guards at the gates of the security complex with strict orders not to let anyone through. On a cognitive level, I sort of understood this to be</p>	<p>Domination Isolation Hooking Accepting the blame and the authority Sense Making</p>

<p>because of his history in the Special Forces, but, there I was in my little prison, even over time losing contact with my family.</p>	<p>Contract Control and power</p>
<p><i>What was the contract? In what way will he take care?</i></p>	
<p>For months on end I didn't see anyone, but I denied myself the truth, because we were, after all, getting married, and this was a wonderful dream come true.</p>	<p>Hooking Domination Isolation</p>
<p><i>Living the stereotypical dream. Living according to the expectations of society and culture so it must be acceptable and okay.</i></p>	
<p>Elaine explains,</p>	
<p>I always wanted to get married, and I had this picture in my head of how a married woman should act; a demure wife. I wanted to be a good wife. Should I have laughed or talked too loudly at a party or family-do, he would have criticized me for my behaviour not being ladylike. And all I wanted to do was act ladylike. So I ended up as this insipid little mouse.</p>	<p>Stereotypical Roles Accepting his version of the truth Finding excuses</p>
<p><i>Caring behaviour that entraps. Programmed to fit. Being dutiful and obedient.</i></p>	
<p>Then he needed my car because his was being serviced and I never got my car keys back. He urgently had to borrow my cell phone, and unfortunately it fell and was broken. Of course I was promised a new and updated replacement, it just never realized.</p>	<p>Denial Entrapment Domination Possessiveness</p>
<p><i>Doing as asked – dutiful, obedient, good wife. When does one start thinking?</i></p>	
<p>He lavishly spoiled me, bought me expensive presents, and we had such good times. I had all the loving attention a woman could wish for. When I was "good," I had everything. Only later did I realize the price I had to pay.</p>	<p>Stereotypical entrapment Constructing self Self-esteem</p>
<p><i>Manipulations – conning.</i></p>	
<p>She enlightens on the above</p>	
<p>If I perhaps said something he didn't like, he would disappear for a couple of days, leaving me without a car or a cellphone, with no food and no money. So, I didn't say anything, I didn't go anywhere. All I did was make sure that he didn't get cross. I was so young.</p>	<p>Domination Isolation</p>
<p><i>Knows what she fears most. Entrapped by the fear of abandonment?</i></p>	
	<p>Entrapment</p>

<p>I think he <u>wanted</u> to punish me and by disappearing he thought he could show me how dependent I was on him, and in the beginning it really did work. Boy, was I scared!</p>	<p>Stockholm syndrome Fear</p>
<p><i>Fear of abandonment keeps her in line, under his control.</i></p>	<p>Confrontation</p>
<p>I then happened to find out that he had not sent out the wedding invitations. I <u>confronted</u> him and all I can say is that, at that time, being in such an isolated place, his explanations seemed all so reasonable.</p>	<p>Punishment Aggression Abandonment</p>
<p><i>Reasonable because of the isolation</i></p>	<p>Entrapment Stockholm syndrome</p>
<p>Although we had all these especially wonderful times, the realization of what was happening to me slowly dawned. I suffered from depression. I <u>couldn't sleep</u> and I even considered suicide. Every time I <u>wanted to leave, he came</u> with a new gift, "Look what I bought you." At other times, he threatened to kill me should I leave, or he threatened me, saying I will regret it if I leave him. I was so frightened; I knew he had all these contacts.</p>	<p>Punishment works Aggression Fear Threats PROCESS Denial</p>
<p>In the end she only managed to escape with the help of one of her sisters, who smuggled her out in the trunk of a car. Elaine is presently working 12-14 hours a day; managing her day-time job as a secretary, as well as her final year law studies. Quintus found himself a new partner, even younger than Elaine. Elaine comments,</p>	<p>Hooking</p>
<p>They (meaning the abusive men) are so clever. He learnt from me leaving. Now he's getting married and apparently he and his future wife sat down and did some future planning. She owned a duette which her late father had bought her. So they decided that she'll sell her duette and they will use part of the proceeds to buy her an engagement ring – this while he's loaded! She is signing away her independence and she is buying her own ring!</p>	<p></p>
<p><i>Is this finding a new woman a tendency? Same pattern – same contract.</i></p>	<p></p>
<p>Asking her how she kept going, Elaine says,</p>	<p>PATTERN</p>
<p>You go on with your day-to-day life. The abuse occurs, but the rest of your life is good – even fantastic. So you choose to <u>overlook</u> the negative part. I</p>	<p>Denial Naiveté Losing the self</p>

<p>was so naïve ... You just <u>ignore</u> what you do not want to see, until it gets so glaringly obvious. Now thinking back I think it's just like childhood abuse, "because I enjoy it, it doesn't make it less wrong" ... I lost myself in this relationship; in the end it was hell.</p> <p><i>Is entrapment a process?</i></p> <p>Now it's like I was an <u>object</u>; just something he could push around as it pleased him, an object to be used. Sometimes I could feel the cold contempt if I didn't do as expected.</p> <p>Elaine says, "I stayed long after I should have left." I asked her if, in looking back, she finds the reasons why she stayed.</p> <p>I think it's a <u>woman thing</u>. <u>Cultural indoctrination</u> I will call it. We live in a culture dominated by men's ideas. Since day one you are <u>taught how to behave as a girl</u>, especially with regards to "your man." Our culture says, "Stick to your man" and we do. We're trained to please, trained to be the least – always to take the second position when it comes to men.</p> <p>Women <u>work harder</u> at relationships. They are all <u>self-sacrificing</u> – the Bible says so, and therefore it is the right thing to do. I amaze myself; even now in this new relationship I find myself packing him lunch. That's what my mother used to do. I never thought I would be that way.</p> <p>I think I hung in because I love so much. I hung in because it's a woman thing!</p>	<p>Rejection Denigration Fear Aggression</p> <p>Blaming self</p> <p>Stereotypical programming</p> <p>Pleasing Dutiful Obedient</p> <p>Programming Stereotyping</p>
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Karen⁵

Finding the Answers

<p>Karen, 38 years of age and married to Johan⁶, comes into therapy saying: “I’m so <u>scared</u>. I’m so afraid of what might happen. God <u>must please help me</u>, because I don’t know.” The whole first interview is taken up by her uncontrollable crying, <u>describing incidents of emotional abuse</u> directed at her by her spouse, asking: “Why, Heleen, I ask you why, why?”</p> <p><i>Asking for help by positioning as helpless? Positions the therapist as the “Expert” helper. Is the “whining” the only way one can show rage?</i></p>	<p>Fear</p> <p>Positioning self</p> <p>Positioning spouse</p> <p>Sense Making</p>
<p>Karen started therapy about six months after going back to work. She was appointed as a part-time personal assistant to a senior consultant at a financial institution and immediately started receiving well-earned positive feedback. She says: “Nobody at work finds me stupid, and I’ve realized that at work I’m <u>never criticized</u> for my looks or my work, or even my attitude. This really started me thinking and <u>brought another perspective</u> to seeing myself.” She interspersed her story with “I’m not really as ‘stupid’ <u>as I know you might think</u>. I’m really quite okay. People really like me and feel attracted to me because I’m friendly and I joke a lot.”</p> <p><i>Has authority come to mean criticism or that you have to defend yourself? Positioning self - trying to build self-esteem.</i></p>	<p>Breaking the isolation</p> <p>Authority</p> <p>Positioning self</p>
<p>Not realizing the contradiction, she describes Johan, a game farm manager in his middle forties, as being “good” at everything. She says, “You know he has studied and has <u>two degrees</u> and he has such a <u>strong personality</u>. I think <u>my personality</u> also got stronger, otherwise I would have gone completely mad, but <u>I know I should be more submissive.</u>”</p> <p><i>Sings his praise – as women are expected to do. Programming. Being a “good” wife. She growing stronger – is this where the conflict escalated? Or is she rationalizing her behaviour as a “strong personality” is not seen as feminine? If I accept the blame, maybe I’ll divert your anger or rejection.</i></p>	<p>Power warrants voice</p> <p>Domination</p> <p>Stereotypical</p> <p>Challenging?</p>

⁵ Karen is a pseudonym to protect the client’s identity.

⁶ A pseudonym.

⁷ Karen and Johan’s daughter. A pseudonym is used.

<p>Sometimes she breaks out of the submissive role, however, and can then relate,</p> <p>I <u>didn't</u> see the signs, but it <u>already started before</u> our marriage. He first had a go at me for <u>daring to have an opinion</u> that was different from his mother's, and then he started telling me the way <u>he wanted</u> the curtains to be hanged.</p> <p><i>Outwardly accepted the domination – being obedient and dutiful. He positions himself as master of the house.</i></p> <p>He was already indirectly <u>finding fault</u> with my body. There I was, rather flat-chested, and as petite as can be, and he was whistling at any pair of boobs he saw. He had a relationship with this shapely lady before our marriage, and so he would constantly refer to her, not by name, but as the "<u>one with the boobs</u>" or he'll look at me and say "We must have your boobs enlarged."</p> <p><i>Although she told him how she felt, about his behaviour, acceptance is shown in not leaving when he does so again. Not only the domineering, but also the criticism and the fault-finding started early in the relationship. Objectifying women.</i></p> <p>Since the first day of our marriage <u>he decided</u> on everything. He does not, for example, like pictures on the walls or frills on the curtains, and he made it clear that it will not happen in <u>his house</u>.</p> <p>I was going on for 27 when we got married. The moment we were married <u>he changed</u> completely. If he now saw a drop of water on the kitchen floor, he <u>pulled me</u> by the hair <u>and banged my head</u> against the wall, <u>screaming</u>: "Can't you see the water on the floor? Must I constantly show you what to do?"</p> <p><i>Forcing her into subordinate role. Positioning himself as the master in a master/slave relationship.</i></p> <p>Karen <u>denies the physical part</u> of the abuse saying, "He's never really hit me, but I'm so <u>afraid, so scared</u>. I can only say, Please, God help me. I never know what to expect."</p> <p>Apparently there were only <u>two more incidents</u> of similar behaviour, but she</p>	<p>Beginning of relationship</p> <p>Domination & Control</p> <p>Challenges</p> <p>Beginning Critique</p> <p>Domination & Control</p> <p>Physical aggression</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p> <p>Aggression Cold rage Escalating of the physical Threat Anxiety</p> <p>Domination & Control</p>
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<p>says, “I believe Johan to be capable of <u>murder</u>. You can see it in his eyes and he’s as <u>strong as an ox</u> (and about thrice her size). I am <u>not allowed</u> to oppose him or disagree with him. <u>If I differ</u> from him in anything, there will be trouble.” Asking her what she usually does in such situations, she says, “I <u>cry and beg his forgiveness</u>.” Asking her about her views on obedience she says,</p> <p>Of course men <u>expect</u> you to listen. In his eyes a woman is always wrong and he proves it by stating that <u>The Bible</u> tells us to be submissive and listen to our husbands. He never ever wants to hear that he might be wrong.</p> <p>Johan always jokes and says he <u>raised me to fit his hand</u>, so now he can just click his fingers and there we go.</p> <p><i>Even in his size there lies a physical threat. Women programmed to be subordinate to authority. She internalizes the expected submission.</i></p> <p><u>Before the marriage</u> Johan pleaded with Karen “to be the mother of my children.” <u>After the marriage</u>, he said that he wanted her <u>only for himself</u>. But she fell pregnant and suffered a miscarriage. Then he <u>wanted a divorce</u> as he said <u>she could not adapt</u> to having lost the baby, and she cannot give him children. She fell pregnant again and Johan retaliated, “Don’t think because you’re pregnant you can’t do everything or can <u>expect anything from me</u>”. For this reason, she physically did everything in the house until an hour before going into labour. Karen suffered from <u>depression</u> after the birth of all three the children, “as he was constantly saying that he didn’t <u>want them</u>. <u>Nothing made sense</u>.”</p> <p><i>Uses her own desire for having children to entrap her. Miscarriage – did this mean that he saw her as not living up to her obligations? Failed to prove his virility. Taints her happiness and expectancy. Punishes her for lavishing her attention somewhere else. Depression is also the only means she has of getting back at him and showing/ not showing her anger.</i></p> <p>Karen finds it difficult to relate the way in which she was asked to leave her previous work,</p> <p>He would <u>sit outside</u> in the car, and if I were 5 minutes late in coming, he would storm into the offices and <u>demand that I leave</u>. In front of everybody</p>	<p>Physical Threats Challenges</p> <p>Giving-in</p> <p>Patriarchy Religion</p> <p>Needs her only to himself</p> <p>Punishment</p> <p>Depression/ Rejection</p> <p>Confusion Making sense</p> <p>Jealousy Possessive Blaming</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p> <p>Claims her time</p>
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<p>he would <u>scream</u>, “They are using you. This is not fair. You have a husband and children to go to.” Then he would accuse me of <u>flirting</u> with the guys at work saying, “I promise you I will come into your office and smash their heads in.” In the end – after nine years of working at the company – <u>I had to</u> give up my well-paying comfortable job, because the <u>rest of the personnel could not take it anymore</u>. I suppose I <u>didn’t listen</u>. I didn’t give him enough <u>attention</u>. I had <u>four small children</u> to take care of, the maid had left, and I was faced with this entrance exam, a prerequisite for a job I had applied for.</p> <p><i>She submits in the face of abusive communication, verbal aggression, threats, and overt aggression.</i> <i>As she quits, he entraps her in the isolation of home life again.</i> <i>She accepts the blame, tries to understand, denies the anger, and rationalizes her action without weighing his. The blaming was there after the exams as well as before the maid left, but one does not question the voice of authority.</i></p> <p>Since four years ago Johan had from time to time <u>threatened her with divorce</u>. She explains,</p> <p><u>First I thought</u> it was because the children were small and I was studying for my bank exams at the time. Perhaps I <u>didn’t really listen</u> to him or <u>pay him enough attention</u>.</p> <p>Some time previously he said that the moment Louise⁷ finishes her schooling, <u>I can pack my bags and leave</u>. I’m <u>only good enough</u> to look after his children.</p> <p>This past holiday he said: “You <u>do as I say</u>, or you get out.” I’m not a <u>skorrie-morrie (riff-raff)</u> that you can kick out whenever you feel like it. He said he would give me three days and then <u>I would have to go</u> and see a lawyer. <u>Something died</u> in me. Something just <u>went missing</u>. It’s <u>dead inside me</u> as I can still hear his voice, “I don’t need you under the same roof, get out!”</p> <p>If the church didn’t say that <u>divorce was a sin</u>, I would long ago have gone through with it.</p> <p><i>Some self-worth is beginning to kick in.</i></p> <p>Although this was supposed to be couples therapy, I ended up seeing Johan</p>	<p>Aggression Harassment Degrades Guilt Threat implied</p> <p>Entrapment</p> <p>PROCESS</p> <p>Threat Fears rejection</p> <p>Maybe the fault lies with me</p> <p>Rejection to gain control</p> <p>Stereotypical</p> <p>Domination Power</p> <p>Objects Aggression Rejection</p> <p>Murder of the soul</p> <p>Entrapment by religion</p> <p>Positioning himself</p>
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<p>only once after Karen's first interview. He was reluctant, <u>not willing to</u> explore his own responsibility to the relationship, and throughout the interview <u>laid the blame</u> on Karen. He <u>resisted</u> any feedback to the contrary.</p> <p><i>He believes in his male power and in its being stronger than that of the female psychologist. Why listen to anyone or anything if you believe yourself to be in the power seat.</i></p>	<p>Justification Blaming Positioning wife</p>
<p>Johan starts the session with, "<u>I must tell you</u> that I'm a <u>man of the Bible</u>. I believe in facts and approach everything from the perspective of the Bible. The <u>man is head of his home and he looks after his wife</u>. She should be <u>submissive</u> to his authority. From the beginning I told her that when we marry <u>I will be her first priority; I will be number one in her life.</u>"</p> <p><i>Positions himself through The Bible - you cannot have the upper hand because I have the book of all books to back me up, and you cannot argue with that. Warrant voice. Justifying both himself and her submission. Narcissism. Contacting roles.</i></p>	<p>Positioning</p> <p>Justification Domination Entitlement</p>
<p>When asked about his wanting a divorce, he explains,</p> <p>She was working for a banking group and put in way too many hours. Even her <u>own mother</u> said <u>she worked too hard</u>. At that stage, I was still <u>drinking</u>, and it was war between the two of us. <u>She just lost it</u>. Once screamed at me "Just leave me." I <u>never hit her</u> but I did push her around once in a while, but come that Christmas and her whole family were onto my case, saying that I hit her. They said I strangled her, and this after <u>I had paid half of her brother's debt</u>.</p> <p><i>He shifts the blame and softens the issues because society allows him to. Playing for sympathy.</i></p>	<p>Justification Blaming</p> <p>Excuses</p> <p>Benevolent father</p>
<p><u>We went to see a pastoral psychologist and I stopped</u> my drinking, and for a while everything was okay, but then after Louise was born Karen suffered from <u>depression</u>. I was growing all the more calm. I read a lot and spent much <u>time in prayer</u>, but <u>she cannot forgive</u> and let go. I have had enough. <u>If she doesn't drastically change</u>, I am going to go for a divorce.</p> <p><i>Positions self as above blame. Positions wife as having the problem. The threat also implies that the therapist is now supposed to do her work or else it will be her fault and not his. Wants therapist to bite the bait as "all" women do. Crazy making.</i></p>	<p>Justifying self Blaming</p> <p>Playing for sympathy</p>

<p>She's <u>absolutely terrible</u> when it comes to ordinary household duties, <u>even her mother once said</u>, "My child, one cannot live like this." Her cupboards are overflowing. One keeps falling over whatever she is currently busy with. She will leave ten day's clothing lying on the floor in our bedroom. <u>If I talk to her about all this, she's always on the defensive.</u></p>	<p>Stereotypical</p>
<p><i>Finds justification because he's expectations were not met. She did not do as she is supposed to do because society tells her to. Contract not adhered to.</i></p>	
<p>I think Karen <u>feels unworthy</u>. She's so uncertain of herself. She has this low self-esteem problem that she needs to work on. <u>I constantly have to tell her</u> how to organize her own life. This week, for example, I had to tell her to finish up with cleaning out the cupboards in the corridor as she has been at it for ages. She <u>complains</u> about everything she has to do.</p>	<p>Blaming Justification Stereotypical roles</p>
<p><i>Playing for sympathy. Karen answer was, "He does not see me leaving everything and go fetch the children or take the lawnmower in for service. I have no maid, I work half-day and he never lifts a finger. At a stage, all four children were under ten years of age. Positioning self as caring and wife as "lacking" or the "nagging housewife."</i></p>	
<p>So <u>I told her</u>, "If you don't know how to manage the kids, I'll show you. I'll make you a list of all the chores in the house and you will see to it that it's done. I'm sick and tired of the children fighting about whose turn it is to wash the bath." She <u>screamed</u> at me, "I will not have my life regulated by your lists!"</p>	<p>Gaslighting Domination Teacher Authority Blaming</p>
<p><i>Positions him-self as caring and positions the wife to blame, crazy.</i></p>	
<p>Johan continues, "I don't know <u>why she cannot</u> keep the kids under control. I'm a <u>busy man</u> and I need my <u>own quiet time</u>. For example, Saturday-evenings I want to relax so I need no wife or child around, playing, asking questions. They know it's better not to bother me with anything, or even talk to me, on a Saturday-night."</p>	<p>Expert Authority Domination Belittles her Shifting the blame</p>
<p><i>Playing for sympathy. Positions wife as inefficient. Positions him-self as the one of importance. No emotional involvement.</i></p>	
<p>And as he is leaving the office, he turns around and says, "<u>And tell her</u> it's proper for a woman to come and greet her husband when he comes home. I need her to come to the door and greet me when I get back from work.</p>	<p>Entitlement Patriarchal Stereotypical</p>

<p><i>Wanting to establish his power over the therapist.</i></p> <p>As the sessions with Karen continued, further details about abusive situations in the relationship came to light.</p> <p>Karen describes the happenings in their relationship:</p> <p>I try to be <u>perfect</u>. I work <u>like a maid</u>, but still he finds fault. I <u>try</u> and wear my hair the way he likes it, and dress the way he wants me to, but still it's not working. If it's not my breasts being too small, it my waistline getting bigger. I really try.</p> <p><i>Obedient instead of listening to own self. Finds own sense of self. Whose needs are important? If I am good, I will be loved and accepted. Programming. But it is never good enough. This is rejection of the real person.</i></p> <p>All these years I was <u>trying to find</u> what I did wrong, telling myself that there must be something I did to cause this. You try and you try to change, but <u>nothing helps</u>. He asks this and you do so, then he asks thus and again you do as asked, but he always <u>needs something more</u>, something else. It never is good enough.</p> <p><i>Women need to find their own answers. He entraps her in this game by always finding fault. Women have been trained to find the fault within themselves and are then expected to make it right, but in the emotionally abusive relationship this will not happen.</i></p> <p>Johan <u>breaks me down</u>. He even said, "I could long ago have divorced you, but you will <u>never be able to cope</u> on your own. You <u>just don't have</u> it in you." Or he will always walk a <u>few paces in front</u> of me.</p> <p><i>Threat of abandonment because she is found lacking. Abusiveness lies in the gestures and in the emotional rejection of the self of the woman.</i></p> <p>He would sometimes just keep <u>screaming</u> at me until I can't think anymore. He will take <u>no disagreement</u>. In the end I'll <u>plead</u> with him, taking the blame ... anything, as long as I can get him to quiet down. You need to do so <u>for survival</u> sake. Most of the time I'm <u>so scared</u> I will burst into tears and ask for him to <u>forgive me</u>, and if I'm lucky he will calm down. Then he will ask me, "And are you <u>going to listen now</u>?" and I agree, because I'm too scared to say</p>	<p>Positioning self</p> <p>Obedient and dutiful</p> <p>Criticizes</p> <p>Domination Objects?</p> <p>Entrapment</p> <p>Denigrates her Breaks her down</p> <p>Verbal aggression</p>
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<p>no. Sometimes he will later <u>send me some flowers</u>, which I then want to <u>crush</u> petal by petal.</p> <p><i>The fear drives her into submission. Self-preservation. He talks to her as to a child. Threat of physical violence present because of track record. He knows what he is doing – or else why will he send her some flowers. Buying her submission. Tells her what kind of behaviour he expects and what her reward will be either way. Woman denies overt anger.</i></p>	<p>Domination</p> <p>Fear Accepts the blame</p> <p>Anger PROCESS</p>
<p>She tries to explain the undertone of tensions she <u>constantly</u> experiences in the relationship, "<u>How can you explain this?</u> You just <u>know and feel</u> it, and it <u>drives you crazy</u>. And then if you <u>complain or try and show him</u> what it does to you, he <u>denies everything</u>, and <u>you can prove nothing</u>.</p> <p><i>How can one explain something you don't know the words for? One cannot fight another's denial, especially when he has the power.</i></p>	<p>Sense Making</p>
<p>And speaking of affection and the showing of affect, Karen comments,</p> <p>It's like he <u>doesn't care or doesn't love</u> you. He would look at me with this <u>sardonic and malicious grin</u> on his face and say, "You know I love you." He would have this laughing-at-you grin on his face and then he will say, "I love you as much as the sand on the beaches and the stars in the sky." I'm not stupid; I see what he's doing. If I talk to him, saying all I need is a certain amount of respect, and he <u>bursts out laughing</u>. He criticizes me for not showing him enough loving attention, but <u>the moment I do</u>, he picks up a book and starts reading. You do as he asks, and he will always find something else you didn't do to his satisfaction. You cannot win.</p> <p><i>She's repositioning herself. Self-worth is kicking in. Always turning the tables on her.</i></p>	<p>Constant</p> <p>Helpless Frustration</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Positioning husband Rejection Ridicule</p> <p>Aggression</p> <p>Cold contempt Vindictiveness</p>
<p>He says he loves me, but <u>where is the loving</u> behaviour? He <u>never gives you time</u> to state your case... he always leaves the impression that he's <u>never really interested</u> in what you have to say. This is so different from before our marriage when he used to find me such intelligent conversation and he couldn't take his eyes off me. I'm <u>shocked to realize how lonely</u> I've become in my marriage.</p> <p><i>Changing her perspective. Now sees his domination and rejection for what it is. Rationalizes her choice to soften the blow to self.</i></p>	<p>Rejection Contract</p> <p>Sense Making</p>

<p>I think Johan is a coward. His family can say anything about me, and he will never take my side. But I suppose <u>he's only showing his true colours</u>. I should actually realize that he <u>doesn't really care</u> about me.</p> <p><i>Perspective is changing. Coming to terms. Facing the rejection and the misuse. Facing own denial.</i></p>	
<p>He tells everyone that I am in <u>need of treatment</u> and that there is something <u>seriously wrong</u> with me. I would <u>get so angry at him</u> I would <u>rage</u> at him ... <u>wrong way of asking for his love, I suppose</u>.</p> <p><i>Her anger surfaces, but having no power her aggression does not stick. Facing up to own responsibility in the relationship.</i></p>	<p>Crazy Making Anger</p>
<p>I don't know how to ask you this, because I know even <u>sexually The Bible</u> says you're <u>supposed to please</u> your husband, but he is <u>breaking me down</u>. At first I refused, but then he quotes from The Bible, saying a man can do with his wife as he pleases. I <u>feel horrible</u>. He wants me to please myself and then he'll sit on a chair, watching, or he'll want to put a bottle up my vagina and see if I feel anything. He wants to use all these sexual aids. Is it normal? If I don't comply, he says, "<u>Women from the lowest of classes</u> give their husbands more than you do. They give their husbands whatever they need. Their husbands don't need to go to <u>prostitutes</u>." <u>He forces</u> me into whatever position he prefers. If I don't immediately comply, <u>he slaps my face</u>. Now I <u>only complain</u> when my neck hurts. I feel like a <u>human guinea pig</u> that he uses as he pleases. Piece by piece he <u>breaks down my spirit</u>.</p> <p><i>Patriarchal systems programming and entrapping. Abuse by religious prescription. In the end she faces up to a different truth. Denial of self through being submissive. Objectifying wife and aggressive misuse.</i></p>	<p>Sense Making Guilt Religious entrapment Guilt and shame Sexual exploitation Denigrating her Physical aggression Dutiful and obedient Murder of the soul</p>
<p>I feel like the <u>hired help</u> in my own house. I <u>never have this feeling of the house being mine</u>. He <u>gives me no space</u> to, say, put up the curtains of my choice, or a frilly curtain in the bathroom. His always there, always has something to say about whatever I'm doing. To me it feels like he is <u>trying to take over the feminine part</u> of me. He <u>tries to change</u> my whole personality – and this from a guy who <u>wants me to believe</u> that he loves me!</p>	<p>Domination Master Puts her in Blaming</p>

<p><i>Slave and master relationship. As the master, only his needs are of importance. She is suffocating and murdering her own self. She's catching on to his strategy. Less denial.</i></p>	
<p>At first <u>he wasn't satisfied</u> with my shopping. So <u>he gave me</u> R100 a week for fruit and vegetables, but we're five people and I didn't always make it. So I <u>needed to ask</u> him for more money. He used to retaliate with, "<u>You just ask</u> and ask and ask! <u>Where do you think</u> the money comes from? You're so <u>selfish</u>, always expecting something from me. You're such an <u>ungrateful bitch</u>." Now he buys everything. He will buy a box of carrots and either I need to freeze them or they don't keep. Or a box of green beans and <u>I have to spend the whole evening shredding</u> and freezing, long after everyone has gone to sleep. I just cannot manage having to prepare meals from whatever he brings, and if it's finished, there is nothing else. So we end up having porridge and milk for supper more than once a week. I have <u>become so clever</u> in saving money, 20 cents here and there, till in the end I can afford new towels.</p>	<p>Financial exploitation</p> <p>Vindictiveness</p> <p>Responsibility backfires</p>
<p><i>He puts her in a child-like relationship to him. Also master and slave relationship. Aggression and punishment involved. Selfish – true meaning "you did not give me the attention I asked for." Positions himself as justified as she didn't do as well as expected. She cannot rebel, because has been programmed to accept his ruling. Double-bind. Also her dutifully finding ways around the situation speaks of her obedience and her submission to the voice of authority. Women set themselves up for entrapment by their resilience and the strength of their pioneering spirit. Always ready to bear the brunt and find an answer.</i></p>	
<p>Once he was away on work and <u>me and the children</u> had a jolly time. We played around and went to bed late. So on Saturday morning he pitches up while we're washing dishes and joking with one another; laughing and talking, generally having a good time. Without any greeting, his first words are, "I cannot leave you for one second. Look what a <u>bunch of pigs</u> you turn out to be. Just look at the kitchen. <u>Can you people</u> never properly clean up something" ... and on, and on. And he turns around and goes to his study. <u>This is the man</u> who the previous evening told me how much he loves me and misses me and the children. I <u>should have known</u> it was too good to be true.</p>	<p>Jealousy Contract</p> <p>Possessive</p> <p>Master</p>
<p><i>He wants all the attention. He needs to be greeted at the door. Tries to establish his authority by criticizing and domineering. Strategy to bring them back under his control. She's losing her belief in him.</i></p>	

<p>Whenever I <u>help the children</u> with their spelling, <u>he always chips in</u>. Why do I do it this way and not that way? He's whole attitude is one of <u>disdain</u>, <u>disrespect</u>. He just takes over and dominates the whole scene. I think <u>he does it on purpose</u>, because <u>he wants to run the show</u>. I <u>know he's the boss</u>, <u>the Bible</u> tells me so. I <u>feel how I die</u>, piece by piece, but in the <u>end you just try</u> again.</p> <p><i>Angry at her paying attention to the children. Narcissism. He needs to be the most important.</i> <i>Abuse sanctified by the patriarchal church/religion.</i> <i>Again the resilience.</i></p> <p>Our whole family is quite musical, and so we often make music together. Lately I have <u>come to dread</u> these episodes. He usually plays the piano, so he will keep <u>increasing the pace</u>, <u>screaming and criticizing</u> whoever cannot keep up. Or he'll scream at Louise, "Why don't you sing louder? You're so <u>bloody timid</u>. Sing louder" – screaming, screaming. In the end one of the children or I myself will be <u>in tears</u>.</p> <p><i>Children learn from mother ways to appease the father. Submission to authority.</i></p> <p>The change in Karen was slow but steadfast. At the beginning of therapy she cried, "I have grown <u>silent</u>. <u>I do not talk</u> about anything personal anymore," over time she came to the realization that, "<u>I do not</u> want to grow old in this way. I <u>need to start</u> taking care of myself. <u>I will have to say</u> enough is enough and mean it." With unwavering determination she started making <u>changes</u>; changes inconspicuous in their nature. With every step she gained <u>self-respect</u>.</p> <p><i>Changing to "what do I need?"</i> <i>Taking responsibility for self.</i> <i>Changing her behaviour and does not focus on him.</i> <i>Gaining in self-worth.</i></p> <p>Karen and Johan are still married. Although their relationships may not be the best of marriages, it is functional and much less characterized by behaviour patterns that had Karen in the beginning say: "It's dead inside me. I have no feeling left for the father of my children." She has found the inner strength to set boundaries. <u>She has made the decision</u> as to what she needs in life, where she needs to be and her worth as a person. When last seen she said,</p>	<p>Possessive Jealousy</p> <p>Religious entrapment</p> <p>Soul murder</p> <p>Aggression</p> <p>Vindictiveness</p> <p>Name-calling</p> <p>Breaking down self-esteem</p> <p>Sense Making</p> <p>Resilience</p> <p>Assertiveness</p>
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<p>He still goes through life criticizing and giving me the cold shoulder if I do not comply, but <u>I decide what I want or must do</u>.</p> <p>By myself I usually think, "You can do whatever you like, Johan. You're not the only person. <u>If you're not satisfied</u>, you can leave."</p> <p>I'm really <u>not afraid of divorce</u> anymore. <u>I will manage</u>. <u>I will be able to</u> emotionally and physically take care of the children.</p> <p><i>She's back in control of her own life. Not shaken by his strategies for control. No more threatened by the idea of coping on her own/not having a man around. Belief in the self.</i></p>	
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Berna⁸

An Older Woman – Confronting Tradition

<p>Berna, a 48-year old ex-teacher and business-owner comes to see me, saying, "Emotionally I can't take it anymore. I've known him since I was 15 years old ... that makes it 33 years of which the last 18 have been hell." Berna impresses as one of those <u>pillars of the community</u> you find in the <u>Afrikaans</u> culture; <u>strong and efficient</u> – always the first to comply in any events at the local school or church.</p> <p><i>Stereotypical role fulfilment?</i></p> <p>After years of what she describes as "abuse," Berna finally decided to leave Kevin⁹ about six months ago. She flew down to the Natal to visit family, but Kevin suffered a <u>heart attach</u> and pleaded with her to come back. As she herself was riddled with <u>guilt</u> and had both their families <u>blaming</u> her, she returned.</p> <p>At that stage I was rather <u>depressed</u> and thinking that maybe I should go back and help him. Maybe he's also suffering – maybe even more than I</p>	<p>Positioning</p> <p>Traditional Afrikaans</p> <p>Entrapment Selfless nurturer</p> <p>PROCESS</p> <p>Guilt Nurturer Stereotypical</p> <p>Depression</p>
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⁸ A pseudonym to protect the client's identity.

⁹ A pseudonym for Berna's husband.

¹⁰ Berna and Kevin's first born

¹¹ Berna and Kevin's second born son

<p>myself did. Once or twice it also crossed my mind that this was just another of his ploys to have me come back, but how is one supposed to know? The children, on the other hand, were <u>furious when I went back</u>.</p>	
<p>As could be expected, no sooner was I back and he was on his feet, and we continued as previously – with both the good and the bad elements of our relationship still there. Nothing had changed.</p> <p><i>This first time she gave in to this type of manipulation she gave him the permission to continue.</i> <i>Conflict between traditional nurturing role and own self-preservation.</i></p>	<p>He plays the victim/ dependent PROCESS</p>
<p>As a former language teacher, she was able to stand back and <u>analyze</u> her feelings and the happenings of the past, <u>trying to find some answers</u> in the process. She therefore evaluated their lives and concluded,</p> <p>I think the problems <u>came from his</u> sporadic drinking in the beginning, the affairs he had, the loss of security we suffered as he was twice declared bankrupt, and his <u>inexcusably rude</u> behaviour towards me.</p> <p><i>She has not yet realized that her answer lies not in understanding but in deciding if she can tolerate his behaviour any longer.</i> <i>Analyzing the possible reasons for his behaviour, and denying own responsibility.</i></p>	<p>Excuses Sense Making</p> <p>Challenges</p>
<p>It was only upon meeting Kevin in her sixteenth year and dating him that she and her parents had some differences. Kevin was older and already in his second year at university. She relates the exuberance of tasting some of the freedom Kevin as a student was allowed, and explains how this attracted her. She describes it “as something so different from the <u>conservative enclaves</u> of our town.” Her parents made her promise to finish her higher education, and so she did, “I was only studying to get my degree, so that we could get married. In the end we got married during my second year, and at the end of my third year Barry¹⁰ was due.”</p>	<p>Positioning Contract</p> <p>Special qualities</p>
<p>So we started her story from the beginning. She was born in a small rural town in the North West Province (the formerly called Western Transvaal) where her father was the <u>local pastor</u> and her mother a teacher. She relates a happy and contented childhood,</p> <p>The fact that my mother taught at the same school I was in spelt security to</p>	<p>Patriarchal Stereotype</p> <p>Conservative Religious</p>

<p>me. My dad brought me all the <u>steadfastness</u> I could have wished for. He was extremely <u>strict and conservative</u> in his outlook. My older sister was the one who rebelled. I was good at sports, but academically I wasn't that much interested. Thinking back, I think I should have worked harder. I was popular and excelled as a <u>student leader</u>.</p>	<p>?Strong</p>
<p><i>Elements of strong, self-reliant person.</i></p>	
<p>Berna describes her perceptions of Kevin in the beginning.</p>	<p>Stereotypical Positioning</p>
<p>He entertained me. He made me feel special. To me <u>he knew</u> what he wanted from life. I was so young and inexperienced, and he was the <u>all-knowing wise guy</u>. <u>I so much looked up to him</u>. He shaped my thoughts and my doings. His parents were the most respected and well-to-do in the district. Everyone sort of followed their lead and bowed low when they passed through town. I was totally smitten.</p>	<p>Positioning self</p>
<p><i>The stereotypical message: If you cannot be, marry the one who has proven himself or has the potential to be what you aspire to or that will be able to take care of you.</i></p>	
<p>They started their lives together, and according to Berna, Kevin always had a number of schemes running and “man, did they work out! He bought and sold the one farm and business after the other; always making a huge profit.” Kevin prospered and the profits flowed. Financially they had it made. They moved to Pretoria and bought a brand new home in an up-and-coming Afrikaans suburb, and Berna says, “We were well-to-do and respected in the community.”</p>	<p>Stereotypical gender roles</p> <p>Living the Dream</p>
<p>Eighteen months after Jay¹¹ was born, she went back to work of her own free choice. Teaching Afrikaans and Life Studies at one of the prestigious schools in the area, she enjoyed herself. After a few of years she started her own home-bakery and did so well she started doing it full-time. Then, one after another, Kevin's business schemes <u>started falling through</u>. They suffered huge financial losses, and Berna realized that Kevin had <u>not always been truthful</u> about the extent to which he had been wheeling and dealing. His deals caught up with him, and in the end he was forced to join her as a partner, but still pursued his ventures. Twice he was declared bankrupt. Berna relates,</p>	<p>Lies</p> <p>Manipulations Dr. Hyde and Mr. Clyde</p>
<p>He had these schemes that on two occasions led to bankruptcy, and <u>I had to support the family</u>. At first this was just the way life goes, but then – time and</p>	

<p>again – he went out and put me and the children through financial hardship yet again. I find it so <u>unbelievably insensitive and uncaringly arrogant</u>. He went and lost everything, and I financially pulled us through, working and seeing to it that we had food on the table.</p>	<p>Emasculating</p> <p>Womanly Resilience or Selfless</p>
<p><i>It is acceptable for the wife to be successful in her own home industry but not when his is failing. Is he playing victim or exploiting her? Would she have been less unforgiving if he had validated her efforts?</i></p>	
<p>She tells of three happenings that coincided and led to the final breakdown of the marriage. For the umpteenth time she was supporting the family, paying off his debts and trying to make ends meet,</p>	<p>Supportive Selfless</p> <p>Responsibility back fires</p>
<p>It was between the first and the second bankruptcy that Michelle, my longed-for daughter, was born. He was <u>absolutely ungracious</u> about me being pregnant again. I felt totally <u>unloved and rejected</u>, and so it ended up being a difficult pregnancy. His rejection during the pregnancy – and that while I was paying the bills – hit hard.</p>	<p>PROCESS</p> <p>Rejection His position is threatened</p>
<p><i>Supported as is expected of a “good” wife; as socially expected. Did the unwritten contract state that she will support, “in sickness and in health,” but then he had to validate her or financially support her?</i></p>	
<p>From time to time there always were stories, and looks and sniggering in our group of friends. There was always this uneasy feeling that maybe he was cheating on me. I went through the whole experience of being pregnant and giving birth on my own; there was <u>no sharing</u> and I positively knew he was having an affair.</p>	<p>Rejection</p> <p>Emotional Isolation</p>
<p><i>Rejection of her as a person as well as all her efforts. She was weighed and found wanting and therefore replaced. Objectifying women. He needs to find someone that will place him central to everything.</i></p>	
<p>I asked him about it and he denied. As the rumours escalated I confronted him and again he denied the whole issue. I then confronted them together. They both laughed at me and said they’re going to sue me for blasphemy, and what did I do? I apologized.</p>	<p>Submissive</p> <p>Giving-in</p>
<p><i>Where is own sense of self? Doing as expected - forgiving and therefore being a “good” wife.</i></p>	<p>Obedient Good Wife</p>
<p>Berna describes her experiences during the marriage:</p>	

<p>He treats us like slaves. It's a constant "do this, do that, why didn't you, must I always ask you to". I remember this one time we were moving again because another of all his brilliant business deals had fallen through. The children were still babies and I constantly had to look out for them. I made all the arrangements for the move, I packed, I organized; I did everything. He left for work on the day of the move and came back to the new house after work asking, "And when will dinner be ready?"</p> <p><i>He has probably chosen her because he saw in her the potential that she would obey and would dutifully support him. He chose her because he knew she would, and she wanted to show that she could.</i></p>	<p>Domination Master</p> <p>Extreme Domination</p> <p>Male Entitlement</p> <p>Good wife</p>
<p>Our children really suffered. After writing his final medical exams, my eldest phoned me in tears, "Mom, you know he didn't even phone me. I wrote the biggest exam of my entire life and he didn't even care to find out how things went." In the end he wasn't even interested in attending Barry's graduation. It's such a catch 22; on the one hand you truly believe in staying together to keep the children safe, and on the other hand you are <u>subjecting</u> them to this.</p> <p><i>Narcissistic</i></p>	<p>Starting on the children</p> <p>Entrapped by own "doing good"</p>
<p>In our house Kevin's sport takes priority. Come Saturday and he will watch three rugby games on TV and everything else has to be scheduled accordingly. But it's better now. It was much worst when the children were still small and they had a favourite program coming up or they had to spend the day indoors because it was raining. Dad has to have his private viewing – without any interruptions and without any unnecessary talking.</p>	<p>Narcissism</p> <p>Entitlement</p>
<p>Everything is organized around <u>his preferences</u>; be it birthday parties, shopping, or when to have supper. When the children were young I found myself making <u>excuses</u>, "Ag, you know that's just Daddy's way of doing." He always wants things to be done just the way he likes it. He makes it clear that "he's the man in the house and he will make the decisions." He will openly tell me I'm worthless and that when things go wrong "he will be the one that'll have to sort them out." Bloody hell, he will!</p>	<p>Entitlement</p> <p>Excuses</p> <p>Domination & Control</p>
<p><i>She sets the tone in accepting his demands as reasonable. Authority should be respected and not challenged. He is the master, the expert, the man in the house. She usually only show overt aggression as she begins to break free.</i></p>	<p>Aggression</p>

<p>Some men cannot stand it if someone or something else is important to you as well. Kevin cannot take anything other than himself getting any attention. I had this beautiful Siamese and he knew how much I loved her. He waited for her to scratch something so he could throw this big scene, and in the end he had all the reason in the world to get rid of her.</p>	<p>Jealousy Entitlement Vindictiveness Narcissism</p>
<p>For example, I can never sit still and read for a couple of minutes. You can feel his irritation build up and then he'll find something to scold me about, or he will want some coffee, and if I make some, he'll drink his all on his own, because all of a sudden he now is so busy.</p>	<p>Domination & Control</p>
<p><i>Being dutiful and obedient, she is taken in by his attention-seeking behaviour.</i></p> <p>Kevin would often say that he was only staying with me because of the children. "You're not worthy to be called a woman, maybe because you come from a family of loafers and ne'er-do-wells." I constantly have to hear, "Fuck off" (Vlieg in jou moer). Maybe I'm lucky; only once did he attack me physically.</p>	<p>Verbal Abuse</p>
<p><i>When asked she never mentioned the physical aggression. But is the financial hardship he put his family through not physical abuse as well?</i></p> <p>Having had an anti-depressant prescribed at one time, he persistently asks me, "Do you still take your medication?" Now I know he wanted me to believe there was something wrong with me. He would especially use this in front of the children, wanting to make me into the crazy one. He plays with my head, implying that I do not behave like a normal person, and implying that people who take medication are crazy.</p>	<p>Entrapment Crazy making</p>
<p>He would promise to go with me to a function at the school, but just by the way he turned around I knew that it wasn't going to happen. I think it all began when I started developing an own personality. All of a sudden I wasn't in the "yes, dear" mode any more and he couldn't take that. He brings out the worst in me. <u>I truly hate myself</u> for the things I sometimes say and do.</p>	<p>Domination Gestures Punishment PROCESS</p>
<p><i>If she keeps quiet, she loses respect for herself. If she is aggressive, she questions her own self-worth – because society says women are not supposed to be aggressive.</i></p>	<p>Guilt & Shame</p>

<p>I find it difficult to sexually respond to Kevin. Sometimes, when he wanted to make love, I could still hear his abusive words ringing in my ears, but mostly I think it's because with every major incident another part of your <u>heart sort of splits of</u>. If he feels me <u>pulling away</u>, he would often say, "There are many women out there who will be only too glad to have me as a husband, and will be only too pleased to see to my needs."</p> <p><i>Experiences guilt in pulling away, because she has been trained that one is supposed to submit to one's husband's every wish.</i></p>	<p>Master Domination</p> <p>Sexual Exploitation</p> <p>Naming and Blaming</p>
<p>But it's not the real abusive incidents that happen from time to time that gets at you. It's <u>something that's in the air</u>, you absolutely feel it. But then you're also reminded by the <u>constant flow</u> of his abusive words. You see it in his eyes and in the way he smiles at you. Sometimes there's just nothing when he looks at you, at other times there is mockery or slyness. Kevin can be extremely overt in his rejection but also so cunning that no-one else will notice.</p>	<p>PATTERN</p> <p>Emotional Rejection</p>
<p>I now find myself consciously withdrawing from people, as I have lost all <u>confidence</u> in my own social skills. Strangely enough, I'm okay when in my office and dealing with a client on a one-to-one basis, but out in society, I'm <u>constantly questioning everything I say and do</u>. This whole process has eroded my self-esteem. I find it difficult anywhere to stand up for myself, make decisions, take the initiative.</p>	<p>Isolation</p> <p>Self Doubt</p> <p>Erodes the Self</p>
<p>He's always telling me how <u>selfish</u> I am. I've <u>grown to believe him</u> so much that I cannot again make the decision to pack my bags and leave. If I leave, will that not prove that Kevin is right, and it is my fault because I am so selfish? But, I need to get my act together and leave this relationship. Why am I stalling? Why so unsure of myself? I've tried so hard, I really tried my best ... I think it has a lot to do with the perception of failure as a woman and thus being different from what society actually has brought you up to be. I wanted so much for the marriage to succeed; I wanted the children to have a real home.</p>	<p>Confusion</p> <p>Failure as a Mother/Wife</p>

in a while. He says that I did not know how half the women in Pretoria live. And all this, while at the age of 26 he already had his first Merc, followed by another ten or so, two BMW 740s, bought house after house, bought and lost a farm. He forgets that, for over two years, we lived below the breadline after another bankruptcy, and I had to support the family.

I'm not willing to spend another 40 years, denying and renouncing myself for the sake of an illusion that it might not work out in the end. There's no rose-hued horizon to disappear into. I never ever again want to hear that I'm not in a prison and that I can take my things and leave whenever I want to. That I can go and find myself a weakling and see if I will then be happy and satisfied. I do not need to put up with a cold shoulder on a Saturday morning if I did not offer to make breakfast long after we have both eaten something. I do not need a whole week-end to go to waste over bacon and eggs. I don't need the rebuffs.

I do not want to feel guilty if the dog jumps onto my lap and I'm made to believe that it's not okay. I do not want to hear that I love the dog more than I love him. What a compliment for my level of emotional intelligence.

If I can only come to terms with how I ended up in this position and whether this is what God intended it to be. Maybe then I will get on and start living my life again. Maybe this is life as intended after the Fall.

I'm sick and tired of his deciding which TV channel to switch to, and at what time one can go to bed. Slowly I was turned into a robot by all these irritations – going on with life, automatically – without a life. I'm tired of only existing – never living life. I'm locked up in a fortress in which I'm neither safe nor immune from all the hurt.

I do not know how to be efficient anymore. Everything is turning personal, and I find myself unable to make decisions. I feel threatened and I'm so tired. Every morning it's a battle to get up, make some coffee, bath, get dressed, drive to work, and battle through the day, just to be confronted by the same issues again and again. This is a horizon-less existence. I need to feel carefree again. All this, at the ripe age of forty-eight. It says a lot about one's maturity and one's accountability – doesn't it?

When later I had a call from Berna, she had started a new life and moved away from Pretoria. Although struggling on a financial level, she described herself as being much more at peace and content.

Conclusion

Except for the stories of Minette, Elaine, Karen and Berna, I collected data from another thirty-seven women involved or having been involved in emotionally abusive relationships. These women are listed in Appendix A: All Cases and I use excerpts from their stories to illustrate emerging themes, the ways in which both the women and the men's position of themselves, and in reflecting on identified patterns or processes.

In re-constructing the stories of these four women who I saw in therapy, I hope to have stimulated some thought on the emotional abuse women experience in close relationships. I will continue the conversation in the next chapter, but against the background of some of the themes, positionings and mechanisms I have identified in the stories above.

PART III: RECONSTRUCTING THE ABUSE

CHAPTER 6: THE FAMILY OF ORIGIN

*One individual can succeed in destroying another by a process of emotional abuse
... a virtual murder of the soul ...
Hirigoyen (2000)*

In chapters 1 and 4 I set myself the goal of answering to a number of research questions. One was giving voice to the stories that women tell about their experiences in emotionally abusive relationships. It is easy, however, to hear for example whining and nagging if one does not know the context of the incident, or if one cannot experience the emotional tone of the relationship. I therefore need to situate these incidents of emotional abuse within a historical, societal, and cultural context.

Feminist Standpoint Theory finds capitalism and patriarchy to construct women, their self, and their experiences as subordinate under patriarchal oppression (Harding, 1993, 2004a; Hartsock, 2004; Narayan & Harding, 2000). Although I knew this to be the case, I was still amazed when, within the first few sentences, the women positioned themselves as coming from families that were described as traditional, Afrikaans, conservative, authoritarian, extremely strict, and religious.

Minette (See case study on p.66): ... she comes from a traditional Afrikaans urban family. Her father is a retired lawyer and her mother has always been a housewife. She describes the father as a man of principles, strict, conservative, and authoritarian, whereas her mother plays the supportive nurturing role.

Elaine (See case study on p.84): My father ... came from a religious family with more than one brother and uncle being in the ministry. My dad himself was an exceptionally religious and intellectual man ... my mom is from an extended, rural Afrikaans family ... extremely conservative in their outlook on life.

Berna (See case study on p.101): ...born in a small rural town in the North West Province where her father was the local pastor and her mother a teacher ... He was extremely strict

and conservative in his outlook ... relates the exuberance of tasting some of the freedom ... as something so different from the conservative enclaves of our town.

What I heard and am still hearing from women in emotionally abusive relationships is that there is a tendency for the family of origin to be structured in a specific manner. The description of the family of origin fits what I call the *Traditional Afrikaans Family*. If one accepts that historical and societal placement does impact on a person, then the similarities between the traditional, conservative, and Afrikaans family and patriarchy, and the impact on women need to be considered. Although I did touch on feminist views on patriarchy in chapter 2, I now turn to the historical development of the patriarchal system and the practical implications thereof. I will then discuss the way in which the family of origin informs the positioning of both the emotionally abusive man and the woman caught up in such a relationship.

Practical Patriarchy

*There is a good principle, which has created order, light, and man; and a bad principle
which has created chaos, darkness, and woman
Pythagoras*

Patriarchy is an ideology, an intricate web of beliefs about reality and social life (Chang, 1996; Stanley & Wise, 1983). It is a set of views that supposedly reports the facts, gives a value judgment about what is naturally true, and which is institutionalized as public knowledge, structures for social institutions, and rules according to which people live these truths about themselves (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). Patriarchy, as an ideology, therefore structures the lives of women and men according to a number of beliefs and truths (Scheman, 2003).

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) argued that men are superior and by nature the rulers of women (Chang, 1996; Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Millet, 2000; Spelman, 2003). His views in effect describe social practices in the then Greece and Greek philosophy (Lange, 2003). He chose to see women as biologically inferior and rationally not fully developed. Men were identified with activity and higher elements, women with matter, passivity and the lower elements (Allen, 1997). Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) depicted women as useful possessions, predestined for

service, their sole function being to please men (Clack & Whitcomb, 1997; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Hutchings, 1988; Matlin, 1987).

As such, St Augustine is quoted to say, “woman ought to serve her husband as unto God, affirming that in no thing hath woman equal power with man” (Dobash & Dobash, 1980, p.33). Philo, a Jewish philosopher in the first century after Christ, found grounds for his view on women in the Torah (Allen, 1997). His focus was on womanly obedience in her role as home-maker, whereas men were active and rational in their involvement with the affairs of state. Even the Calvinist John Knox, quoting from the Bible, states the irrefutable inferiority of women (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). In an article by Hurtado (2000), she illustrates how, in male-dominant cultures, women are still dichotomized as good women and bad women depending on how they exercise their sexuality, but being a good woman also means a loyal devotion to and nurturance of the family. Disobedience will bring punishment, with little or no accountability. But there are other cultures where society is depicted as unisex. In the Pacific Island of Bali, for example, the productive and domestic roles are performed by both genders (Geertz, 1973).

Patriarchy as a masculine-dominant ideology is a system of social relations in which the male has the social power to exploit and control the female, and expects women to be subservient and obedient (Chang, 1996; Dickson, 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Ferguson, 1991; French, 1995; Greene & Bogo, 2002; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Scheman, 2003; Schutte, 2000). The surrounding culture and society position women as dutiful and supportive, compliant and respectful on all levels towards authority, men in general and in particular towards their husbands. I will therefore examine the ways in which power, control, and dominance is transferred onto the specific male agent, and the ways in which obedience is played out in the lives of emotionally-abused women.

Collins (1991) explains the transference of ideological beliefs into behaviour in terms of the utilization of the organizational power position. Those in a position to give the orders as well as the order-takers are determined by the historical, cultural and societal order that influence their behaviour in various settings. This is a circular movement with the implication that the more one gives orders, the more one identifies with the position and vice versa.

In the same manner, Dickson (2003) describes the dynamics of domination (mostly referring to dominant cultures) and how the system of patriarchal control permeates society. Domination and control firstly need a dominant group and a lower group that can be dominated (Dickson, 2003; Dutton, 1992). It furthermore is necessary for the dominant group to assume superiority, because it is supposedly God-given or part of the hierarchical, patriarchal ideology (Millet, 2000). The dominant group infers the inferiority of the lower group, and stays in power by superimposing ideas and behaviour on the lower group, thus effectively objectifying and muting them (Burstow, 1992). This is achieved by means of overt or covert aggression and always by a dominant group who is able to find justification for their beliefs and behaviour.

The man's construction of the self in his early differentiation from the mother will program him towards hostility and a combative dualism in his sense of masculinity (Chang, 1996; French, 1995; Hartsock, 2004). He needs to escape the female world of the household and does this by opposition, but as he also needs the female, he can only relate to females by domination. Needing to be self-sufficient and individualistic he experiences fusion as a violent threat (Gilligan, 1982; Hartsock, 2004). The control and dominance, the aggression and hostility will later become apparent as it shows itself in the abusive relationship.

I therefore construe that a society that adheres to the beliefs and customs of patriarchy legitimizes the abuse of women. Patriarchy in South Africa as such depicts a society where most races display extremely high levels of domestic violence despite a political endorsement of gender equality and the rights of women and men (Sideris, 2005). On the other hand, patriarchy cannot be taken as the only factor as patriarchy in different cultures will differ from one another. Dutton (1996) refers to the studies of Sorenson and Telles (1991) and Davis (1992), which found that wife assault rated by a Mexican-born Hispanic sample were less than half of that for a sample of non-Hispanic whites although Hispanic cultures are generally considered to be more patriarchal than the white American culture. But, then again this could be because women in the Hispanic family, different from their position in open society, occupy a dominant position (Burgos-Ocasio, 2000).

The Traditional Afrikaans Family

Traditional implies to be in accordance with the tradition, i.e. beliefs and practices handed down from generation to generation. These beliefs and practices are described as the time-honoured, the conventional, and that which falls within the accepted and well established norms (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000; Geddie, 1968; Wordnet, 2003). Conservative, in effect, means favouring the traditional views and values and usually implies someone averse to change or innovation; actively opposing change (i.e. someone who conserves the traditions). It is often taken to mean a people, or an individual, who believe that they have the power and responsibility to conserve what they believe in and that change is an anomaly to traditional values. Those seen as conservative are often described as “unimaginatively conventional” and having a “bourgeois mentality” (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000; Wordnet, 2003 – quotes taken from the cited references on the World Wide Web).

When taken to the extreme both these concepts describe individuals who, with difficulty if ever, accept or adapt to change. These are the individuals who need their views, values, beliefs and customs to be adhered to as they believe them to be the only, the best, and the truth. Although therefore not applicable to all traditional individuals, the negativity thereof fits in with what is stereotypically believed about the traditional Afrikaner family.

Ever since a Cape-born Dutchman first uttered the words, “*k ben een Africaander*” (I am an *Afrikaner/African*), during the 1707 uprising of local farmers against the then governor of the Cape Colony, Willem Adriaan van der Stel, Afrikaner culture has been characterized by protestant Christianity and conservatism. Traditionally the *Afrikaner* holds firm to what they see as biblical truths and instructions (Kotze, 1968). For example, the belief that the man is the head of the family as in;

1 Peter 3:1

¹..In the same manner, you wives must accept the authority of your husband ...

Ephesians 5: 22-24

²²You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. ²³For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of his body, the church ... ²⁴As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything.

Scripture quotations taken from: Spiritual Renewal Bible (1998), Tyndale House Version.

This truth structures women and men's familial and social lives; especially so in white traditional Afrikaans families. Wordnet (2003), for example, still defines Afrikaans or Afrikaner as belonging or relating to white people.

As in most other patriarchies, the father's word is final. Although he is expected to protect and support his wife (Worell & Remer, 1992), he has the right to discipline anyone who disobeys his wishes (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Walker, 1979; Gerdes et al., 1988; Walker, 1979). So it is that the woman is given away at the altar during marriage (NiCarthy, 1982), taking on her husband's surname, submitting to his will, and nurtures and supports him (Reed, 2000; Van Schalkwyk, 2005). She takes on his social status (Worell & Remer, 1992) and vow to stay subservient "*till death do us part.*" She is expected to set her goal in life primarily as being a good wife and a good mother, and is dependent on her spouse on all levels (Hurtado, 2000).

Historically South Africa's patriarchal culture and society walked two distinguishing paths: that of protestant Christianity and apartheid (Van Zyl Slabbert, 1999). As power and control are imparted to the individual by institutions such as patriarchy and the church (Dobash & Dobash, 1980), it is of the essence to define Afrikaner Christianity as I will later describe the influence thereof in the emotionally abusive relationship. I in no way wish to imply that Afrikaner Christianity is the only institution legitimizing the emotional abuse of women. But, Dobash and Dobash (1980) also highlight the profound influence that Christian principles have and had on the cultural beliefs and social institutions of Western society. Ratliff (2000, p.205) describes the intertwining of the political, social and religious areas of life referring to the notion that "at its not-so-best, religion degenerates into an oppressive rationalization for male supremacy, racial hegemony, and political fanaticism."

Although at present not generally accepted as the societal norm, women of age thirty and above grew up in a society wherein Afrikaner Christianity focused on God's sovereign control and

redemption through the Christian community. Bethel (2005), an internet web page on African Christianity, sees Afrikaner Christianity as working towards a New Jerusalem in South Africa. Afrikaners were seen as an obedient people that fought hard against all hostile forces, trying to prevent these forces from opposing the specific ideal of the chosen people in South Africa (Bethel, 2005). Not only was the sovereignty of God uppermost, but the husband was God's authority in his home. Women's place was equated with Paul's view in the Bible where he wrote to Timothy,

1 Timothy 2:11-15

¹¹Women should listen and learn quietly and submissively. ¹²I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. ¹³For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. ¹⁴And it was the woman, not Adam, who was deceived by Satan, and sin was the result. ¹⁵But women will be saved through childbearing and by continuing to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty.

Scripture quotation taken from: Spiritual Renewal Bible (1998), Tyndale House Version.

Apart from the religious underpinning of the traditional Afrikaner, the stereotypical Afrikaner is also described as one whose beliefs were grounded in the ideology of apartheid. In a society where political polarization is accepted, independent thought, behaviour and belief is seldom tolerated (Van Zyl Slabbert, 1999). All communities exercise power over their members in order for them to conform to the practices and values of the group. The in-group shares special qualities and privileges (Burstow, 1992) and conformity is enforced by threatening expulsion. As the member's sense of identity lies within the group and expulsion is feared, they face the moral dangers of repression and denial of the true self, dogmatism, intellectual dishonesty, elitism and partialism (Jagger, 2000). The women whose stories I represent in this research grew up within the era of apartheid. I doubt that it would be far off to presume that the narrow-minded acceptance of the man or husband's political ideas had an impact on their family situation. Schutte (2000) supports this view in stating that women's role in masculine-dominant cultures is not seen as questioning or creating cultural values. Rather, she is kept in a submissive and passive role by excluding her from critical decision-making both in the political arena and in the home.

Traditional Marriage

*In olden times sacrifices were made at the altar – a custom which is still continued!
Helen Rowland (Hewitt & Hewitt, 2003, p.111)*

In discussing the Traditional Afrikaans Family I focused primarily on the traditional, conservative and protestant heritage and important role played by Christianity in establishing the patriarchal ideology in society. The traditional marriage, furthermore, has been described as a major patriarchal institution (Millet, 2000), and I mentioned above the manner in which many prominent philosophers and religious leaders depicted women in a subordinate position, especially when it came to marriage (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Worell & Remer, 1992). In Western civilization the natural pairing of couples and their cohabitation were legalized through the monogamous marriage. The state wrote the ideology and principles of patriarchy into the law books thus perpetuating the ideology still further (Reed, 2000).

Upon this sanctification of marriage by religious and legal institutions followed the belief that women were specifically raised and trained to fulfil the isolated role of homemaker (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Worell & Remer, 1992). Church as well as state believed in the right of men to dominate and control their wives, and saw this relationship as natural and sacred (Bonvillain, 1995; Okin, 2000). One reason for a man's marriage to a specific woman was to provide him with exclusive rights to her sexual favours, in order to keep the bloodline pure (Collins, 2000; Hurtado, 1989) (- "Thou shalt not adulterate" – compare Exodus 20:14). This explains the dominant man's sometimes inordinate jealousy as well as the pre-occupation with the wife having to be the good woman. Obedience by those naturally inferior was seen as a virtue (Allen, 1997) and should a woman find this order or system unacceptable or stifling, her struggle was construed as "wrong, immoral, and a violation of the respect and loyalty a wife is supposed to give to her husband" (Dobash & Dobash, 1980, p.ix). Marriage thus was burdened with more myths and moral prejudices than modern society would care to acknowledge. I believe that patriarchal myths and the legalisation of patriarchal principles have had a direct impact on the phenomenon of emotional abuse.

Minette, for example, contemplates divorce, but immediately checks herself,

No, I believe divorce is a sin in the eyes of God. This is not how God intended it to be. Maybe I should be more submissive, more supportive of Ian. The Bible does tell us that the husband is the head of the house, and I am not supposed to question that.

The Industrial Revolution further cemented these concepts of family life, much of it relevant even today. Roles and responsibilities are decided according to sex/gender stereotyping. The man is expected to move out into the public sphere of work, separating himself from the domestic sphere where women take on the primary responsibility. Men hold traditional beliefs about women staying at home and taking care of the children and their home (Collins, 2000; Hare-Mustin, 1992; Worell & Remer, 1992). The husband's stereotypical role is one of assuming authority in family decisions (Brannon, 2002; Poling, 1996). His commitment becomes one of financial responsibility, and his goal is to earn enough money to take care of housing, food and clothing (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Friday, 1998). He has to support and defend the private but then also feminized space that their wife and family occupy (Collins, 2000). Thus was born the good provider definition of masculinity.

The wife makes decisions about housework and child-care and is seldom allowed to seek outside employment (Friday, 1998; Matlin, 1987; Worell & Remer, 1992). She is bombarded by society's idea that children will suffer developmental problems if not cared for on a full-time basis by the mother (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). Society proclaims the true woman, and her virtues are held as piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity (Carlson, 1990). Dutifully remaining in the marriage and behaving as a good woman should, she is rewarded by her husband's support and social status (Collins, 2000; Hurtado, 2000; Worell & Remer, 1992). The wife falls into the trap of measuring her worth against how well she performs as a wife and mother, and by not questioning patriarchal society's authority (Brannon, 2002; Poling, 1996; Schutte, 2000). She falls into dutiful obedience and subservience as she has few alternatives to marriage, and because she has been programmed to believe this way to be the only acceptable way (Horley, 2002). As Karen says, "I am not allowed to oppose him or disagree with him. If I differ from him in anything, there will be trouble". Asking her what she usually does in such situations, she says, "I cry and beg his forgiveness." Asking her about her views on obedience she says,

Of course men expect you to listen. In his eyes a woman is always wrong and he proves it by stating that The Bible tells us to be submissive and listen to our husbands. He never ever wants to hear that he might be wrong.

Taking patriarchal sovereignty in the family as the norm when it comes to traditional, conservative families, the stereotypical role played by both father and mother impacts on the way in which both the emotionally abusive man and the woman in such a relationship position themselves. I therefore turn to a discussion of the family of origin and the role that the family play in pre-determining the woman's behaviour in close relationships.

The Traditional Family

The traditional patriarchal family socializes many patterns into taken-for-granted societal systems. For example, it lays the foundation for many hierarchical organizational patterns (Hare-Mustin, 1992), and dictates hierarchy in race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, nation, and social class. The model of parental control through seniority and dependent children is assumed to be the only model (Collins, 2000). As the father's role has the major power to impact on all those in his family, I will start with the impact thereof on specifically his daughter. Whatever the father's role, it is in totality underscored by a patriarchal society. Whatever the father does and says do not stand on its own but is given credence by the power bestowed on him through all the patriarchal institutions under which he and his daughter function (Gee, 1999). The rule of the father never stands on its own; its power lies within the culture and society.

The patriarchal father

Chesler (1972, p.108) saw both marriage and psychotherapy as "re-enactments of a little girl's relation to her father in patriarchal society". Also Greenspan (1983) takes the positioning of the traditional male therapist in the therapeutic relationship as a metaphor for explaining the father's position in relation to his daughter. She states that within patriarchal society Father knows best and thus has the right to define the other's reality and the right to name the problem, always done from the male perspective. Culture, psychology, and even biology give fathers special powers in the eyes of their children's.

Christianity calls God the Father, while other religions and cultural traditions such as Judaism or Islam, also heavily support the status of the father (Bonvillain, 1995; Millet, 2000). Because of his dominant position, the father in the traditional household has the power to create in us belief in the lie of patriarchal society; the belief that all things masculine are better and of greater value than things feminine (Collier, 1982; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Greenspan, 1983). Some people strongly object to Christian values depicted as strictly male oriented. But Peggy Sanday (1981) shows how stories of creation encapsulate something as basic as cultural beliefs when applied to gender status. In societies characterized by egalitarian gender relations the creator tends to be female or a female-male pair. Male-dominated societies see their creator as either male or animal.

Camilla (See Appendix A: All Cases): There was only one way to make a bed and that was dad's way. The table had to be set precisely as he wanted to, and please, no listening to our music as that was called rubbish! If you forgot to pick up the dog's droppings he threatened to shoot your dog.

Father has the authority to make the rules, from *clean your room and be respectful* to *don't do drugs* (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Gerdes et al., 1988), and the authority to decide what is acceptable behaviour for girls (Greenspan, 1983). He has the supreme power to permit and forbid according to his rule (Hare-Mustin, 1992; Walker, 1979). He rules by example, and in our mind creates the way things are, which we come to believe in when still small and dependent children (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Walker, 1979). People tend to stick to rules long after the rules no longer apply. The rules then serve as introjects which continue to dominate their behaviour (Collier, 1982). It often is the highly successful and socially powerful men who make the greatest demands on their daughters (and wives) for compliance. They consider themselves to be of high importance and carry over their social and professional dominance into family life. In the upper class, the father's iron rule is clothed in the benevolence of material affluence (Carter, 1988a).

A client handed me a letter written by a father to his two adolescent daughters. He justified his demands and never once negotiated or checked to see where they stood with regard to his rulings.

I daily find myself in other people's household and I have no doubt in my mind as to the responsibilities and obligations of both children and parents in a family. I therefore want you to rectify and pay attention to the following:

- No friends may visit for longer than half an hour
- No one may smoke without obtaining permission from me first
- On week-ends you may only invite friends if your schoolwork is up to date
- Sunday is a day for the family and you may not go out or invite friends
- The use of the telephone is a privilege and not a right, and you will keep record of all the calls made
- No pocket money will be increased because when a child receives too much pocket money, the child will usually:
 - Want to be out on the streets every night
 - Demand more money without doing something in return
 - Not be willing to do chores when asked
 - Do nothing to earn more pocket money
 - Start smoking

Barnett and LaViolette (1993) also refer to the way in which one's father can determine one's views on femininity. Through interaction with the father, girls learn that anger is not acceptable but that indirect coyness might do the trick (Carter, 1988; Greenspan, 1983). Conformity is rewarded, deviance is punished (Chafetz, 1991), and she learns that it is risky to strike back because disdain or rejection can follow. Girls may therefore lose their authentic self (Pipher, 1995) or lose their voice (Muuss, 1996). A traditional and conservative or a traditional Afrikaner father thus informs stereotypical, sex-appropriate behaviour that reflects patriarchal beliefs and truths about women (Matlin, 1987). Even if the father labels being feminine in the negative sense, this is the truth she will grow up with. Although the daughter might want to be independent, she spends a great deal of energy in trying to win the father's approval, realizing that her worth is determined by men (Carter, 1988; Collier, 1982).

Elaine (See Case study on p.84): I think it's a woman thing. Cultural indoctrination I will call it. We live in a culture dominated by men's ideas. Since day one you are taught how to behave as a girl, especially with regards to your man. Our culture says, "Stick to your

man,” and we do. We’re trained to please, trained to be the least – always to take the second position when it comes to men.

The father also shapes the young woman’s vision of what masculinity is all about. In his position of Father knows best he matches the cultural stereotype of rational, omniscient, powerful masculinity, and he teaches his girl-child what to expect from her male counterparts being either the superhero or the arch-villain (Greenspan, 1983). Masculinity in western culture means to be self-made, self-defined and self-referential (French, 1995), and the girl comes to see it as natural to be reliant on an authoritarian, powerful male figure (Greenspan, 1983). His authoritarianism is excused by society on the grounds that he is very important, very busy, and thus deserving of accommodation by others (Carter, 1988). Daughters of any social class who grow up in families where fathers are physically or emotionally absent for whatever reason, often develop negative and condescending attitudes toward men and shift their energies toward more rewarding family relationships with their mothers or siblings, or they develop a fantasized ideal man forever yearned for and sought after (Friday, 1998; Kaplan, 1988).

Nan (See Appendix A: All Cases): I see a lot of my dad in my husband. My dad was a strong and domineering man. I really admired my dad; he made me feel secure, but my mom was his slave.

Elaine: I idolized my dad.

Hedwig (See Appendix A: All Cases): He was a hardworking farmer, driven and self-motivated. He was an aggressively impatient man.

Beatrice (See Appendix A): He was always criticizing and downing my mother, teaching us what to expect.

The mother in the patriarchal household

You who come of a younger and happier generation may not have heard of her – you may not know what I mean by The Angel in the House. I will describe her as shortly as I can. She was intensely sympathetic. She was immensely charming. She was utterly unselfish. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken, she took the leg; if there was a draft she sat in it – in short she was so constituted that she never had a mind or a wish of her own, but preferred to sympathize always with the minds and wishes of others.
Virginia Woolf, *Professions for Women*

Western society defines women through their capacity to form intimate relationships with men and if she does not do so, she is seen as damaged in some way (Ellis & Murphy, 1994). This is the script she is expected to adhere to. The works of Uri Bronfenbrenner (1979) showed the extent to which role expectations and stereotyping go hand in hand with the expectations having its roots in the higher-order macro-system ideology and institutions. It is concluded that the longer a child, and therefore the later adult, is exposed to the expectations and social pressures of a specific society, the more the child will resemble the model (Shouval, Kav-Venaki, Bronfenbrenner, Devereux & Kiely, 1975). Women (and therefore mothers) are no exception (Matlin, 1987). They are constructed by social, historical and cultural environment since early childhood, and they have internalized the oppression of women by a patriarchal ideology. Women are the lesser in the relationship and are the nurturers in the patriarchal society.

Just as men are socialized to take command and believe that they have the right to authority, women are socialized into accepting this command as natural (Collier, 1982; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Reed, 2000; Walker, 1979). Roles have magic-like power to alter how a person is treated, how she acts, what she does, and even what she thinks and feel (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Muuss, 1996). Women's dutiful acceptance of male authority has come to be accepted as proof of her dependent nature, a finding which I personally object to. I will discuss the issue further in the way that the woman positions herself within the abusive relationship.

A woman often starts out by genuinely caring for husband and family and expressing her nurturing role as prescribed by the cultural scripts. However, should the husband be cold and distant, or should he himself be emotionally abusive in the relationship towards her, she suffers an emotional famine (Greenspan, 1983). Being starved for emotional affection, this woman cannot find the inner love and affection to nurture her children. The daughter seeks nurturance from the powerful father in her life, an emotional nurturance she does not experience from an

apparently weak mother (Greenspan, 1983). But this can become a never-ending spiral as men in western society generally do not learn to nurture, or as an abusive man himself he will not give as needed. The mother, the daughter and later the woman feel frustrated, deprived, and angry. But angry women are not acceptable to society. So the woman sees denial as her only option, and the anger is repressed into compulsive care-taking (Hemfelt, Minirth & Meier, 1989). The previously caring behaviour that was motivated through feelings of affiliation and connectedness now becomes an obligation often coloured by bitterness (Dickson, 2003).

Elaine: All I can remember (of her mother) was that during this time she used to physically lash out at me for whatever reason. We were constantly at each other's throats.

Gerda (See Appendix A): My dad used to constantly criticize my mother, but she never said anything back. Her unselfishness I cannot describe to you.

Hedwig: As a child I saw my mom as friendly and gentle. She was the best at taking care of us. Later I realized that emotionally she was absent.

The mother dominated by a patriarchal ideology, as many women before her, cannot purposively set personal goals and strive to attain these. Her life course and daily time schedules are determined by the agendas of her husband, her wifely duties, and her children (Collier, 1982; Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004). The husband's social independence changes minimally in marriage, but the wife's social life is curtailed by her involvement in her role as wife and mother (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). She believes that the only way to be a real woman is by assuming the role of wife and mother (Worell & Remer, 1992). Reed (2000, p.506) hits home by saying of women's place in the family, "Only three justifications for their existence remain under this system: as breeders, as household janitors, and as buyers of consumer goods for the family".

Elaine: Women work harder at relationships. They are all self-sacrificing – the Bible says so and therefore it's the right thing to do. I amaze myself; even now in this new relationship I find myself packing him lunch. That's what my mother used to do. I never thought I would be that way.

There is a subtle difference in the content of what mothers had previously taught, and some still do teach their daughters, and that which they teach their sons (Walters, 1988). The mother assigns her son household tasks but involve her daughters centrally in the every-day aspects of family life. Hereby she defines her role as intra-familial and that of her children as scripted according to the dominant ideology and stereotypical gender behaviour patterns (Kaplan, 1988). The mother's womanly duties range from household and housekeeping tasks, and she takes responsibility for care-taking activities such as assisting, serving, trying to please, and winning approval. She dutifully attends to vacations and social gatherings, buying clothes and maintaining appearances (Chang, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Ferguson, 1991; Gilligan, 1982; Papp, 1988). Patriarchal society expects the mother to teach her daughter how to be a wife and a mother and the son how to be a man (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993).

The mother in the patriarchal family is responsive, but this does not imply an active role in decision-making and egalitarianism. She has made it her task to be oriented towards the needs of the rest of her family, monitoring, co-ordinating, facilitating and moderating the wishes, needs, and time schedules of those around her. She is nice and tries to keep everyone happy, thus perpetuating the disease of pleasing (Chang, 1996). Everything works better because of mother being there right in the middle of everything and ready to take care. But some mothers find themselves locked into a place, influenced by powers from which they see no escape, more used by others than helping others (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004).

Conclusion

In this chapter I reflected upon the phenomenon of emotional abuse as it is embedded within a specific ecology. My research and the specific environment surrounding the couples playing out emotional abuse in the close relationships can be seen as temporally, culturally and socially specific. This concurs with feminist research which confirms the importance of culture and context in violence against women (Boonzaier, 2004). Patriarchal society and therefore the institutions of patriarchy, such as church, marriage and family life, construct the way in which women and men position themselves within the emotionally abusive relationship.

Patricia Hill Collins, in her article, *It's all in the family: intersections of gender, race, and nation* (2000) argues that family values and other principles attributed to the family (seen as the traditional patriarchal family) are used as political instruments to affirm the naturalness of

government structures and social organization. The traditional family ideal with the father-head, and the good wife-mother with a strict division of labour is depicted: a state-sanctioned, heterosexual marriage that legitimizes family. The power of the traditional family therefore lies in its function as an ideological construction as well as a fundamental social organization (Anderson, 1991).

Firstly, the father's positioning of himself will serve as a role-model for both his daughters and his sons. If the father is traditional and conservative in his outlook, one can assume that he will operate within the conventional, well-established norms of the society and culture in which he finds himself, and that which he believes in. The father will most likely be averse to change, and will presuppose that he has the responsibility and the power to rule his family within the boundaries of what is traditionally expected of him. As political polarization within traditional Afrikaner conservatism further disallows independent thought, he will need to inform conservative and traditional rules.

In a dominant patriarchal ideology the father will enforce himself as the head of the family, and will consider this the will of God. He will expect his word to be taken as law, as he has the legal and moral right to discipline. Above all, he will expect obedience from those over whom he has power. He will expect his woman (wife) to know her place in society and in the family, and he will expect her to submit to his wishes, to nurture and support him in his role as head of the family. His wife, who was raised and programmed within the traditional and conservative society, will unquestionably accept the husband's position as well as her own subsequent submissive positioning within the relationship. Because this is the will of God, defiance is out of the question, and the only moral option is obedience and a dutiful following of the rules. Should she not comply, she will be faced with abandonment and rejection.

Patriarchy enforces conservative and traditional ideas even further. Within the patriarchal tradition, men are superior. They are the order-givers, and can use their power to control, dominate and exploit the female. The woman becomes a useful possession, predestined to serve and please her man. Men have the moral right to attend to things outside the family, and they are entitled to certain privileges within the family. They may therefore expect women to serve, to be subservient, and to attend to the home and children. Obedience and dutiful service are expected within a compliant and respectful mode. Traditionally women have accepted these norms, raised by a patriarchal society to believe this to be the only and the right way. The

wife or the daughter can object, only to be faced with the disdain of society, and only to have control and domination upped to keep her in her place. The son is expected to carry the tradition of the patriarchal male into his future relationships.

Secondly, the patriarchal marriage constructs the female and the male through experiencing the stereotypical positioning of both the father and the mother within the family relationship. Stereotypical beliefs are carried over from the traditional, conservative patriarchal society and culture, and superimposed onto the patriarchal family. All the rights and privileges of the patriarchal male are played out in the marriage and in the family as social entity. Financially taking responsibility as the good provider, the patriarchal husband expects his wife to reciprocate as a true and good woman, dutifully nurturing and caring, obediently following his wishes. The wife can only defy or accept. The position of acceptance is characterized by those who accept under duress, but also those that accept in return for having someone that will take care of them, responsibly seeing to their financial and safety needs. Thus, some women oblige in fear of rejection and losing a secure base.

Through patriarchy, daughters are constructed in a certain manner. They are supposed to dutifully and unquestionably accept the father's rules, as he is the legate of God, and they introjected the father's rules as good and acceptable practice. Because of their age and dependency as children, the daughters find security in the father's position of strength and authority. As children, they cannot risk defying the father's way, because they expect punishment and fear rejection. They come to believe in the authority of the rational omniscient and powerful male, and accept his right to authority and control. Daughters therefore learn to be a good girl and to give-in in order not to risk rejection, abandonment, or punishment. They dutifully accept their submissive positions and obediently comply as instructed. As children, they come to accept the father's power over his expectations.

As children learn by example, they are informed by the mother's stereotypical role within patriarchal society and especially patriarchal marriage. They accept compliance to male expectancy and unreasonable demands. Dutifulness and obedience are further impressed on the daughter by the mother's selflessness and the absence of any personal agenda in the

mother's life. They experience her responsibility, her caring and nurturing, and her centrality in the family as the norm and what they should live up to in their own lives when entering a close relationship in adulthood.

I can understand the strong stand taken by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September, 1995 against cultural and religious justifications for using women (Okin, 2000) seeing the impact thereof in the emotionally abusive relationship.

CHAPTER 7: THE POWERFUL VOICE OF CONTROL

Power is no blessing in itself but when it is employed to protect the innocent
Swift

Just as patriarchy is a main theme in the emotionally abusive relationship, it becomes clear that the themes of patriarchy and power are intricately enmeshed into one another. The discourse of power is a primary and forceful river that flows through feminist theory and research, making its presence felt also in the stories of the women I presented. I shall therefore, in this chapter touch upon the concept of power.

Western society places high value on power and the possession thereof. In most western cultures the possession of power has become both a sign of a healthy and free person, and a characteristic of the majority or the ruling group (Collier, 1982; Miller, 1988). But power, although often sweepingly seen as negative, is emotionally neutral and illusive. There is no objective model of power (Radtke & Stam, 1995).

More about Power

Power is not tangible. The French philosopher, Foucault (in Burr, 1995), saw power not as a possession, as but the effect of discourse. Power is constructed through language and behaviour. Power lies within the dance of Discourse, and it exists in the abstract of the “coordinated pattern of words, deeds, values, beliefs, symbols, tools, objects, times, and places and in the here and now as a performance that is recognizable as just such a coordination” (Gee, 1999, pp.17&19). Power is an abstract to be utilized in whatever manner the user finds appropriate. It can be either a life-giving force or a force that can torture and devastate. Power is a forcefully potent river of energy that can gently flow over the lives of those living on its banks to bring resources and the ability to develop. But it can be a devastating power flooding, killing, and carrying away all in its path. Such is the flow of power – the softly empowering and the dreadfully destructive.

Power is defined as a nation, a group, or a person “having great influence or control over others” or the ability, capacity or authority to control (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 2000). Influence and even control, do not automatically spell misuse or negativity (Miller, 1988) as people have the ability to determine their own actions provided they

consciously take the effort to do so. Therefore, on a macro-level, having power implies the ability or capacity of political, historical, social, cultural, or religious systems to exert power and bestow or delegate the authority to hierarchically lower organizations, systems, groups or individuals (Dickson, 2003; Hurtado, 1989; Shields, 1992). Foucault (in Parker, 1989) defines power as what is spoken as well as who may speak. With regards to the latter Kenneth Gergen (1989) speaks of “warranting voice”, the ways in which people achieve voice through a number of rationales and justifications.

Macro systems: Imparting power through the ideology of patriarchy

Patriarchy cascades power down the ranks of hierarchical rule and appoints men to positions of power and control (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Brannon, 2002; Greene & Bogo, 2002; Shields, 1992). Feminist scholars therefore view power as top-down and oppressive (Davis, 1991). This implies control over women and all the systems of which they are part (Chafetz, 1991), a position against which critical feminists have taken a strong stand (Qin, 2004).

Some men try to hide behind the institutions and make women believe that it is not the particular man that is at fault (O'Connor, 2000). This has been possible because in Foucault's (in Parker, 1989) panopticon concept power becomes separated from the intentions of those who exert power. However, as long as men have the power to create myths such as, for example, women having the most important power – the power of shaping the future generation – men will be in the dominant role (Elworthy, 1996). Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.92) indicated that the “greater the degree of power socially sanctioned for a given role, the greater the tendency for the role occupant to exercise and exploit the power and for those in a subordinate position to respond by increased submission, dependency, and lack of initiative.”

The macro-system has the power to determine the societal and cultural blueprint from which beliefs about sex, patriarchal rulings, what constitutes cultural, political, social, legal, religious, economic, and educational values originate (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Chafetz, 1991; Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Muuss, 1996). But the macro-system also has the power to change the meanings or dominance of any of these so-called blueprints. Third World feminists have irrefutably shown the ways in which the dominant class changes and disregards cultural practices to suit their needs (Narayan, 2000). Subsequently, the dominant class has the power of labelling and can hide the meaning of many showings of control (Burr, 1995; Chafetz, 1991;

O'Connor, 2000). For example, when the male utilizes power, control, and dominance, it is called "manly, brave, strong, paternal, protective, and powerful." The same behaviour in women is negated to showings of "nagging, shrews, bitches, domineering, mean, lesbians, and, of course, unfeminine" (O'Connor, 2000: 177-178).

Jones (Jones & Brown, 2000) argues that an institution such as power or patriarchy cannot be maintained by force alone. It needs those being acted upon to conceive of them selves as in a position congruent to the particular treatment. Domination (in the words of Dickson) or control (the latter being my preference) is thus taken to be a two-way relationship between those that assume control and the hierarchical lower group that accepts the domination (Dickson, 2003). The unquestionable God-given superiority of the hierarchical powerful is just as real as the God-given accepted inferiority of the lower group as was discussed in the previous chapter (Dickson, 2003). Women, through their lack of power, are classified as a minority group (Collier, 1982). The result is that the lower group takes on the imposed ideas, beliefs and behaviours of the controlling group, wherein the former's voice becomes muted (Dickson, 2003).

Foucault (in Burr, 1995), on the other hand, does not see power as the property of the group or institution. He starts from information that constitutes discourse or knowledge. Such knowledge is used by some to control others, while making it seem as if it was in the latter's own interests (Burr, 1995). Spears (1997) refers to a number of scholars who interpret Foucault as saying that institutional power relations reinforce and elicit discourse but also sustain such discourse. He stated, in their words, that knowledge-power cannot be without resistance (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). In my view, however, Foucault focuses on the person who has agency, that is, the person who is able to produce social structures and discourses as well as to resist and change them. Foucault's interest (in Ritzer & Goodman, 2004) lies with the techniques and technologies used by institutions to exert the power. In the process, knowledge and power become intimately intertwined.

Ritzer and Goodman (2004) identify three mechanisms of disciplinary power that Foucault promoted in his writings: hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and examination. The concept of disciplinary power can be applied to power within the emotionally abusive relationship. Taken from the idea of a panopticon where prisoners never knew whether they were watched, power lies in controlling subjects through "disciplinary power" (Burr, 1995). This form of power works because people enter willingly, not realizing that they are being controlled,

seeing their self-monitoring as their own choice and for their own good (Parker, 1989). Komter (1991) describe power in terms of manifest power, latent power and invisible power mechanisms. With latent power conflict is avoided by the less powerful through anticipating the needs and wishes of the more powerful and with invisible power mechanisms their functioning and effect usually escape awareness.

Both these approaches to the concept of power explain why the power is experienced while the victim remains unable to name it for what it is. Those who are watched internalize the prevailing standards and come to monitor and control their behaviour accordingly. They freely submit to the scrutiny of the other and to their own scrutiny (Burr, 1995). Parker (1989) states that power then operates independently of the initial intentions and individuals. This will explain why women who grew up in a system of economic, political, and religious oppression accept this state of affairs, and even the abuse that goes with it, as natural, morally just, and sacred (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). Jones (in Jones & Brown, 2000) moreover refers to the position of slaves and rightly observes that in order for the system to work, the slaves must conceive of themselves as inferior beings. But having no power equals having no agency (Greenspan, 1983) and this situation can only be changed by resistance that brings forward marginalised discourses in order to challenge prevailing knowledge systems (Burr, 1995).

Although women suffer under a dominating and subordinating patriarchal system, not all women are unwilling prey. Some women accept and expect the security, especially the financial security, which adhering to the system brings them. They accept submission to an authoritarian and powerful male and enjoy the status that comes from the dominant male in their lives (Greenspan, 1983). They actively collude in reproducing their own subordination, and in seeing the old order slip away, manipulating their men to live up to the obligations they have towards wife and children. Women claim the protection of the patriarchal system in exchange for submissiveness (Kandiyoti, 1991).

Hierarchical power: Men as the carriers of power

On an individual level, within interpersonal relationships, power implies the ability of one partner or one individual to influence or actually modify the behaviour of the other (Brannon, 2002; Cahn, 1996; Oldersma & Davis, 1991). For feminist scholars power is inevitably linked with control (Davis, 1991). Elworthy (1996, p.4) goes beyond the concept of influencing as she focuses on the use of force, strength, domination, and authority to rule or to use force. She calls this kind of power “domination power”, implying inherent aggressiveness and no sense of collective responsibility. To her, this kind of power is masculine power; power based on male values and male norms. Each time the man engages in supremacist beliefs and behaviours, the oppression becomes personal (O’Connor, 2000).

It may be possible to understand men’s entrapment in such power relations by his position of power and due to the fact that ordinary people are willing to blindly obey an authority figure. The Milgram Experiment to this avail (1963, in Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Weisstein, 1971) is well known. Milgram demonstrated the extent to which people, under the influence of an authority figure, are willing to administer shocks deemed dangerous to human subjects. But, power also means the power and freedom to choose, and therefore it must be accepted that the man freely chooses as he does.

Women Utilizing Power

Using power, in the common sense of the word, for a number of reasons does not come easily and comfortably to women. Society denies power to women. Women growing up within a traditional patriarchal society have not been granted public and personal power. The macro-system constantly bombards them with the message that for women being powerful is equated with being unfeminine (Chang, 1996). Miller (1988) thus argues that some women deny that they want power, as this does not fit in comfortably with society’s expectations. Women are too afraid to use their power, as they fear this might lead to attack and abandonment (Greenspan, 1983). Seeing that women are trained to stand in a connected relationship to others, abandonment threatens an integral part of her being (Miller, 1988).

When confronted with the power ploys within the emotionally abusive relationship, women find it extremely difficult to act on their own behalf (Chang, 1996). They retreat from utilizing their

power, as in any relationship they fear to impinge, limit or down the other. The woman is afraid of acting in her own self-interest because of being taught that this resembles selfishness and inappropriate for a good woman. Even women in high positions fear being accused of selfishness, a concept rare in men in the same positions (Miller, 1988). Should a woman manage to overcome the fear, or accepts that she has power that she can utilize in the relationship, she might still pull back, because in her mind, power equals destructiveness or aggression.

It may seem that women have been more comfortable when using power in the service of others, in the empowering of others, and in using their power to help the growth of another (Miller, 1988). They seldom stand back and acknowledge using power for their own benefit. Women are led to believe that their own self-determination is wrong and immoral, and they should value relationship above all. Because women cannot bear the label of selfishness or being destructively aggressive, they therefore willingly give away their power in favour of their socialised roles in society.

Matlin (1987) refers to research that states that women use more indirect power and are more manipulative in their use of power. They use personal power, such as liking, affection, and approval, versus concrete power. This then stand in sharp contrast to the popular view that male power is all "*bad*" and female power is all "*good*" (Kitzinger, 1992). There is some control in another major strategy used by many muted cultural groups, the strategy of monitoring. From lower down, they vigilantly watch for any change in atmosphere and emotional climate, ensuring emotional, and, at times, physical survival (Dickson, 2003). But this also gives women the opportunity to silently and unobserved organize and orchestrate the behaviour of another as sometimes plays out in the emotionally abusive relationship.

On the other hand, the intuitive healer Caroline Myss (1997) states that an internal concept of power is needed for healing and maintaining health. But a position of powerlessness, a position of having no power or a denial of power will lower self-esteem and eat away at internal energy and emotional resources. Such a position inevitably entraps a woman in an abusive relationship.

Control Equals Abuse

As I have argued previously, power is constructed through behaviour, and the behaviour mechanism that is used, is control (Cahn, 1996; Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Worell & Remer, 1992). Control is part and parcel of both physical and emotional abuse (Lloyd, 1999; Marshall, 1994; Tolman, 1992). Within relationships, control is defined as behaviour resulting in one partner establishing the upper hand on most issues, having his needs met, his rights taken into consideration, and his beliefs and desires adhered to (Brannon, 2002; Miller, 1988; O'Connor, 2000).

The controlling person (the male in 95 percent of cases) uses his power, be it muscle or subtler manipulations, to control his partner (usually the wife) (Miller, 1995). Douglas (1996, p.24) says about this, that “when one partner consistently controls, dominates, or intimidates the other by means of manipulation, punishing, or forceful behaviour, abuse is occurring.” Chang (1996, p.12) defines psychological abuse (emotional abuse) as the “continuous and relentless misuse of power by one person ... in order to create submission in the other person.” She states that “(a)ny non-physical behavior that controls through the use of fear, humiliation, and verbal assaults can be considered psychological abuse.”

Controlling behaviour in the lives of some men becomes the abuse of interpersonal power (Brannon, 2002; Cahn, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Millet, 2000; O'Connor, 2000). Many scholars have concluded that abuse is another form of dominance and/or control (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Hirigoyen, 2000; Jukes, 1999; Miller, 1995; Schumacher et al., 2001). The fact of the matter is that the hierarchical rule of patriarchal society means an unequal distribution of power (Dickson, 2003; Tolman & Edleson, 1989 in Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Tolman, 1992). A man has the power to subordinate and he does (Marshall, 1994; Miller, 1995). “He is the main character, and she the supporting actress; he is the actor (and) she is the acted upon” (Gergen, 2001, p.7).

An exaggerated need to control is often described as an inherent characteristic of the male, because men define their manhood in terms of dominance and control over others (Miller, 1995). I have argued that this is not the case as the behaviour of both women and men are constructed through their culture, history and the society in which they find themselves. If individuals have the ability to either accept a position of power or reject it (Miller, 1988), we need

to answer the question as to why men continue the abuse and whether they consciously do so. Why do men excuse their behaviour as losing control while in effect they are ensuring control? It is most often accepted that men continue to control because they can, and because they have been trained to accept their controlling behaviour as the relationship norm set by patriarchal society (Jukes, 1999). Men have also not learned to control their frustrations and some are just unthinkingly oblivious to issues of control (Miller, 1995).

According to Miller (1995, p.26), women indicate that “emotional abuse begins before he even comes home or before she returns from her job; it begins with the memory; it begins with the dread.” Men maintain control even in their absence or in the absence of abusive behaviour (Dutton, 1992). There are a number of reasons. Firstly, the power to control does not solely lie with the emotionally abusive individual himself, but comes from the total eco-system of patriarchal rules that has infiltrated all aspects of society and works together in keeping women in their place (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). Secondly, without any effort from him self the individual abuser has the control. Usually, however, his control remains because past behaviour and threats from his side stay in effect without his even being present. Dutton (1992) supports Foucault’s concept of disciplinary power as control in the absence of the authority. The control therefore lies in the *Umwelt* as well as in the individual relationship.

Men control and dominate through a number of mechanisms

Scholars of abuse name a magnitude of mechanisms used to control and dominate. In social constructionist terms these can be seen as the discourses that are co-constructed in the process of controlling another person (Gergen, 2000). Edleson and Tolman (1992, p.5) refer to their earlier work in 1989 in which they describe the elements of control used in psychological abuse as verbal intimidation, isolation, and financial manipulation. Miller (1995) names economic abuse, coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, minimizing, denying, and blaming, using children as weapons, and using male privilege as mechanisms of control utilised by men in relationships. Others, such as Douglas (1996), concentrate on elements such as denigration, belittlement, contempt, censorship, and blaming, as expressions of the desire to control. Chang (1996) describes verbal assaults and denigration by criticizing, belittling, demeaning, or deprecating remarks in the presence of others, and name-calling, as well as the use of fear and humiliation, and most researchers imply the utilization of both verbal

and non-verbal mechanisms in their definitions of abuse (Cahn, 1996; Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996).

The control mechanisms mentioned above can be arranged into four largely overlapping categories, namely mechanisms making use of mainly aggressive means, others utilizing domination, and abusive communication, as well as mechanisms of entrapment and exploitation. Mostly, the *modus operandi* for staying in power entails some measure of aggression and violence (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Bloom, et al., 1975). Although the use of abusive aggression is the more overt form of emotional abuse, the softer mechanisms of verbal abuse and isolation can do the most damage, especially when more than one mechanism is utilized within the same act or incident.

Power as translated into violence and aggression

Stephanie Dowrick (in Douglas, 1996, p.15) comments that it is an appalling state of affairs to live in a society where the emotional abuse of women is described as a “terrifying ‘ordinary’ phenomenon.” It is even more inexcusable that in going home, the woman is in jeopardy to be confronted by emotional abuse from a partner who is expected to care about her well-being (Ammerman & Hersen, 1992b; Haaken & Yragui, 2003; Walker, 1979). Research tends to focus on the power inequality in abuse and the misuse of interpersonal power, but sadly, the extremely violent nature of the abuse is not addressed. Marshall (1994) argues for a strong association between violence and abuse, and includes a long list of authors that have shown that violence results in psychological abuse. This is sometimes called environmental abuse, psychological abuse, or battering, psychological torture, confined abuse, maltreatment and social abuse. Nonetheless, it is emotional abuse and demands attention of the research community.

Miller’s (1995) long-standing illustration of the discrepancy that exists between what is taken as serious misdemeanours in society, but ignored when exhibited by a spouse or partner in marriage, is well-known. She mentions the following as obscured forms of abuse that evolve in close relationships:

- *Disorderly conduct*, e.g. behaviour such as yelling, calling obscenities, name-calling, breaking windows, kicking in doors.

- *Harassment*, e.g. as in following her, hiding keys, letting air out of the tyres of her car, isolating her from family or friends, constantly calling her, breaking her favourite things, constantly disapproving of her, being unreasonable in his demands.
- *Menacing in the third degree*, e.g. locking her in a closet, waving a weapon before her, hitting her pet, cutting up her clothes, pretending to hit out at her.
- *Reckless endangerment*, e.g. driving the children without a seat belt, forcing her out of the house at night, not letting her take prescribed medicine, forcing her to drink or to take drugs.

However, because the concept of violence is usually equated only with the resulting physical evidence, it is easy to deny that the above forms of violence is taking place in close relationships, especially emotional abuse (Ammerman & Hersen, 1992b; Collier, 1982; Marshall, 1994; Wise, 1990b). Here the vindictiveness of Minette's husband (See Case study on p.66) easily comes to mind as an example of harassment. Equating emotional abuse with violence requires an understanding of what is meant by the term violence. There is also consideration of the level of tolerance for violent behaviour. Every family seems to have a toleration level for violence. The amount and intensity of violence in one family differs from what is acceptable in another family (Walker, 1979).

Barnett and LaViolette (1993) point to the discrepancy in the way society allows the expression of aggression. Male aggression is permitted and even encouraged, while female aggression is only condoned when defending a loved one. Boys grow up learning to suppress vulnerable and sad feelings. The only strong emotion they are allowed is anger, encompassing the whole range of their emotional experience (Pollack, 1999). Violence is learned behaviour (Dobash & Dobash, 1980), which was found to have the desired effect when it comes to problem-solving (Walker, 1979). Aggression is hostile but violence is mostly instrumental (Jukes, 1999). So it is possible that boys learn to be aggressive by imitating their more aggressive fathers (Matlin, 1987; Moore, 1979b). It is interesting to note that in parent-child relationships, verbal aggression was found to be the most common form of child abuse (Vissing & Baily, 1996). I presume that emotional abuse might not be as rare as previously thought.

Earlier researchers who investigated violence within the boundaries of wife-battering or family violence defined violence as "an act carried out with the intention or perceived intention of physically hurting another person" (Straus, et al., 1989, p.3 as quoted by Sabourin, 1996).

Violence is equated to aggression of a verbal and non-verbal nature; aggression that shows itself in physical violence, sexual abuse, and the verbal aggression of one person against another. Aggression becomes the language of domination. Aggression is a behaviour mechanism that needs an outside object to be released onto (Dickson, 2003; Toch, 1969) while anger is an internal healthy emotion that can be expressed in a harmless manner (Brannon, 2002; Vissing & Baily, 1996).

I personally prefer the uncluttered definition of Leonard Eron (1987, in Brannon, 2002), a psychologist who spent 30 years on studying aggression. He simply defines aggression as “an act that injures or irritates another person” (Brannon, 2002, p.435). But using others, venting aggression on another, is only possible in situations of inequality and discrimination (Dickson, 2003; Walker, 1979). A number of terms are used to describe verbal aggression, such as verbal abuse, a verbal attack, verbal assault or a coercive response (See Vissing & Baily, 1996 for a number of authors), all in effect referring to verbal aggression as emotional maltreatment or psychological abuse (Chang, 1996; Schumacher, et al., 2001; Straus).

Conclusion

My intention in this chapter was to place the occurrence of emotional abuse within close interpersonal relationships firmly within the context of a patriarchal ideology that utilizes power to dominate and control. The patriarchal system positioned the male partner in the position of power, sanctioned to use all manners of control mechanism. Just as patriarchal power legitimized the male position it legitimized women’s position of inferiority and subordination. How this legitimized positioning plays out in individual relationships, and how the close personal relationship is characterized by emotional abuse, will now be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: THE ABUSER POSITIONING HIMSELF

... there is a connection between ordinary maleness and abusiveness
Jukes (1999, p.7)

In this chapter I will discuss the ways in which the abusive partner in a close relationship positions himself in relation to his spouse. I use the social constructionist term *positioning* as a person's sense of self, the ideas and metaphors of which he forms part and his self-narratives as the totality of his subject positioning. Positioning constrains and shapes what a person does and how he does it (Burr, 1995). Therefore, I start with the abusive man positioning himself within the abusive relationship because the ideology and the institutions of patriarchy have imparted him with the power to exploit, to control and dominate his partner or his spouse. Gee (1999) explicate the concept that implies that more than one Discourse can merge in the same situation, and I see the Discourses or in this case, the themes, of patriarchal rule and power merging through the male abuser's positioning of himself.

Men claim the right to voice because of their superiority and do so by rationales and justifications (Gergen, 1989). This creates an unequal distribution of power wherein he firstly positions himself and his partner and secondly, utilizes a number of control mechanisms through which he maintains his control and thus his power. Subtly disguised in his positioning of himself are aspects of Foucault's disciplinary power (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Elements of hierarchical observation are present as well as the entitlement to examine and make normalizing judgments about the other. To be able to wield power also implies a certain amount of detachment from those to be dominated and controlled (Meyer, 1991). The man, through his positioning of himself as patriarchal male, thus becomes an instrument towards creating and keeping a disciplined society.

Hooking

Ross (2002) writes,

Whenever a friend tells me she's dating an incredible new guy who treats her like a princess, the hairs on the back of my neck prickle ... he bowls you over with his charm, intelligence and caring nature. He worships every inch of you, whispers, "We were meant to be together", and makes you feel you're the luckiest woman alive ... then, gradually things change. He sulks when you go out with your mates, so you

begin staying in; he makes you feel guilty, so you end up doing what he wants and he whips you with small, stinging put-downs ... Eventually, you become a pale shadow of the full, independent woman you were when you met him.

I have found that it is part of the process of therapy for the female client to question and reflect on not only the abusive relationship, but how they themselves ended up in such a negative situation. The abused women often do not realize how they were ensnared or taken captive by the specific positioning of their male partners. Most people respond positive to attentiveness from others and women that end up in emotionally abusive relationships are no different.

Jennifer (See Appendix A): He changed a full 180° after our marriage. Now there was no love shown. We didn't go to church anymore, although he knew how much it meant to me. Socially he changed. Either he didn't want to go out, or he embarrassed us all by his behaviour.

Helen (See Appendix A): I can remember being attracted to my ex-husband because he really listened to me. Women in a patriarchal society are seldom taken seriously and here was this highly intelligent guy that seemed to be really interested in me as an individual; me as a person with my own dreams and needs. As I was eight years his junior I have come to question if being so much younger had an effect on how each of us was positioned in the relationship ... We were students together and he was my soul mate. There was nothing we couldn't talk about. On an emotional level, we had this amazing connection, even after we were married. And then I fell pregnant. It wasn't even unexpected, we planned to have a child, and this was already two years down the line. Now all of a sudden he had to work so hard. He was always busy with either work or sport. We didn't sit and talk any more, except when it was about him, his work, and his interests. Gone was the sharing, and if I complained I was scolded as being immature or childish.

Hooking is an initial and soft approach to establishing domination. The man cunningly and progressively takes on the role of the benevolent teacher showing caring concern; positioning himself as the well-meaning teacher-friend (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Miller, 1995). The control goes unnoticed as it is disguised by the love relationship (Meyer, 1991). The woman is subjected to ongoing advice, disguised as given "for your own good" (Douglas, 1996, p.25;

Forward, 1997). The message is clearly one of “You’re not good enough as you are, so I will teach you how to be better” (Douglas, 1996, p.26). She is expected to do as told at all times and to honour his proposals for her betterment, and if she does not, there is the subtle threat of “Do as you wish, but don’t come crawling back,” or “You know you can’t handle situations such as these.” Women have been conditioned and so believe that those in a lower position are supposed to submit and listen to those higher up in the hierarchy and so she listens (Collins, 1991; Dickson, 2003; Dutton, 1992). The abusers are the puppeteers in the controlling game; their aims disguised by their well-meaning advice, but they see themselves as deeply sincere (Grinnell, 1988).

Helen: I can remember him always willing to give advice on how I should handle a situation at work and as we were in the same business, I in the beginning interpreted this as loving concern; him having only my best interest at heart. Over the years I realized he was only conning me into believing how much he helped and supported me. It only lasted until the next time I asked him to do something or criticized him; then he could throw my not appreciating his loving concern back in my face, and I had no ground to stand on. As I grew as a person and developed as a manager, I did as I thought best, and as I was physically more involved in the business I was in the better position to decide what to do. He reacted with cold anger, physically showing his disgust in me, punishing me by withdrawing. I always just prayed that I’d made the right decision so that he wouldn’t have yet something more to throw in my face.

The same process of hooking plays itself out whenever inexperience meets up with experience. Newcomers to any unfamiliar situations run the risk of becoming entrapped by their ignorance of the system. The young first-time prisoner, for example, is hooked into being the “wife” of the experienced old-timer (Gear, 2005). I can therefore understand Worell and Remer (1992) concluding that, as the above excerpts also show, it is mostly younger women that become entrapped. Although younger women are more at risk, women also latch onto some special ability they see in the man, maybe something they themselves aspire to. This special ability can be security – be it financial or emotional security, success, self-assuredness.

I therefore conclude that the abusive man in the beginning of the relationship already subtly positions himself in the dominant position by using mechanism such as his charm and assuming the role of the caring teacher-friend. He starts out to subtly establish the initial contract with him having the power to control. If she agrees to his terms he has succeeded in his aim to “hook” her into his contract as illustrated in Figure 8-1 (See Appendix B: The Abuser Positioning Himself for further examples).

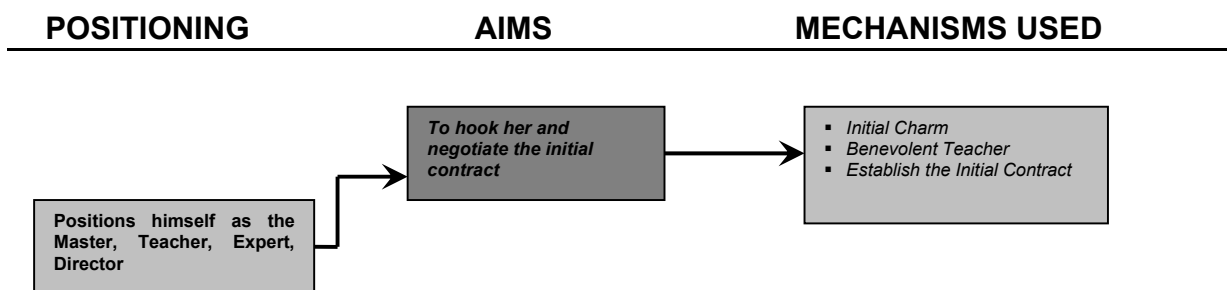


Figure 8-1: Position assumed and mechanisms used by the male partner to “hook” the woman

After the pursuit and winning the woman, having her committed in marriage, the power shifts to the man as the emotionally abusive man “doesn’t take a partner, he takes a hostage” (Douglas, 1996, p.30). The male partner has thus established himself as the one that has the power to say, to label, to be right, and to demand. He will now use the control mechanism of entrapment even further.

Karen (See Case study on p.90): I didn’t see the signs, but it already started before our marriage. He first had a go at me for daring to have an opinion that was different from his mother’s, and the he started telling me the way he wanted the curtains to be hanged.

We can therefore identify a contract that is constructed by the dating couple early on in the relationship. She understands the contract to read:

He will honour and respect me.

He will listen to me as a person.

Because of all his special qualities and abilities he will take care of me.

He’s the Expert so I can relax and know he will take care of me.

The contract he has in mind, however, is one of:

*I will charm and take care of you as long as you do precisely as I want you to.
I have the power over you.*

Domination

Master of his House

Through the traditional, conservative patriarchal family's principle of Herrschaft (Millet, 2000) the husband positions himself in a hierarchical position to his wife (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). He takes being master of all as his birthright (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Millet, 2000). Patriarchal society allows him to see himself as the better person and the more valued in society. The possessions of certain characteristic as valued by patriarchy (be it superiority in mental processes or the experiences that give one the reasons; also described as observation, rationality, intention, passion and moral value) thus automatically warrants male voice, and give him the right to denigrate the other (Gergen 1989). The wife or female partner is positioned lower on the ladder of power.

Karen says,

Of course men expect you to listen. In his eyes a woman is always wrong and he proves it by stating that the Bible tells us to be submissive and listen to our husbands. He never ever wants to hear that he might be in the wrong.

Johan, her husband says,

I must tell you that I'm a man of the Bible. I believe in facts and approach everything from the perspective of the Bible. The man is head of his home and he looks after his wife. She should be submissive to his authority. From the beginning I told her that when we marry I will be her first priority, I will be number one in her life ... I have had enough. If she doesn't drastically change, I am going to go for a divorce.

Whereas we previously had the abusive man positioning himself as the benevolent teacher, he can also position himself as master of his house (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996); at times called the position of the expert (Greenspan, 1983), or the director. He can always fall back on hooking when needed although this process is much more evident in the beginning phases of

the relationship. But, some abusive men's objective of dominating and controlling his partner or spouse are more overt; overt usually only to those who through circumstances or different learning experiences understand the process of abuse or power over being played out. In order to establish his control over and therefore his position of dominance, the abusive man utilizes such mechanisms as positioning himself as master of his house, through extreme possessiveness and isolation, and mechanisms to entrap his spouse (See illustrated in Figure 8-2).

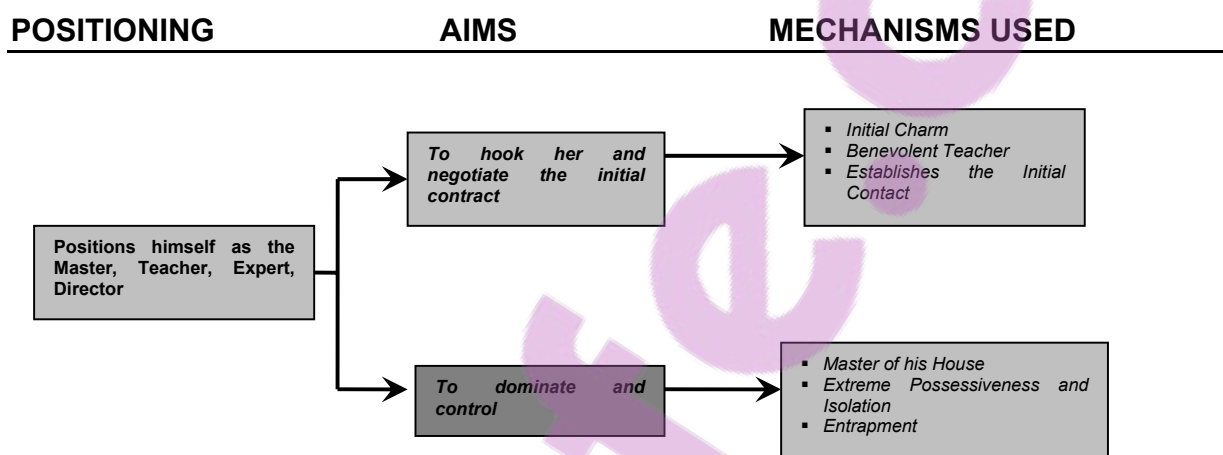


Figure 8-2: Position assumed and mechanisms used by the male partner to dominate and control the woman

More often than not, the hooking action or the more covert signs of domination and control turn to abuse when the man realizes that the partner is committed. The abuse, for example, starts the moment a child is due, because of the contract he has in his mind; the contract reading, "You will constantly be there for me, to serve and help and listen." He realizes (or she has already shown him) that her growing up in a patriarchal society and now her commitment to him indirectly gives him permission to do whatever he likes. Watching his partner's every step is a form of controlling behaviour and possessiveness, a way of keeping himself in the dominating position (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992).

Control, domination, and exploitation are intended and deliberate within an unequal distribution of power (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Reed, 2000). Jones (Jones & Brown, 2000, p.28) descriptively captures the manner and the attitude by which the abusive man positions

himself, saying “(He) may simply lay down the law that, God damn it, her first responsibility is to her family and he will not permit or tolerate something or other. Or if she wants to maintain the marriage she is simply going to have to accommodate herself.”

Beth says: Kobus needs to be right, always. Everything has to be done on his terms. He needs to win. He can drive me crazy when his lawyer friend comes to visit. They will start arguing about something and he will try and bulldoze her as he always does with me.

The man positions himself as head of his family and society, and the law, culture and the church support him (Chang, 1996; Dickson, 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Dutton, 1992; Millet, 2000; O’Conner, 2000). Often he can assume this position of power because of his greater earning power; the greater his income, the more power he has in making decisions (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991). He assumes the central and most important position in the family and everything is organized to accommodate him (Cahn, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002). Emotional abuse tends to escalate when the abuser is at home full-time. He now has more opportunity and time to find fault or extend his power. As he has no outside affirmation of his status, he establishes his power by dominating his home-base (Miller, 1995).

Gerda (See Appendix A): I find that our holidays, when we go out and when we stay at home, what time we have dinner and when the children can play – everything is dominated by his demanding quiet time to study. This also means that he can close the study door and just disappear for hours on end. I just have to keep the children quiet. Sharing family-time is not an option ... I think he will only be satisfied if I do everything and he can sit back and relax. Oh, he will sit in front of the TV, doing absolutely nothing to help out in the house and with the children. As the head of the house he just assumes he can.

In his position as master of the house he demands respect from those sharing his roof (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996). He demands to be taken care of and narcissistically expects that his needs will be taken care of as he assumes them to take prominence (Cahn, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Roloff, 1996). There is a grandiose sense of self-importance in some abusers (Forward, 1997; Hirigoyen, 2000).

Anca, the engineer’s ex-wife (See Appendix A): He never ever took my needs into account. I and mine were never even considered – not even sexually. I used to jokingly

say that it's always his work, then come the golf and the rugby, and if he's not too tired I might stand a change of some time and attention.

The emotionally abusive male expects everything to be done his way, and his way only. He keeps his hand on every aspect of home-life. Barnett and LaViolette (1993) report that most batterers admitted to physically punishing their wives to show her who's the boss. Samantha (See Appendix A) works in the IT industry. She explains how she organized their four year-old son's birthday party, repeatedly asking for input from her husband but being brushed of. On the day of the party, Jack comes home and explodes: "What were you thinking! The cake's a real mess. Why did you invite ... (a couple of their son's play mates). I swear I cannot take you any more! One cannot trust you to do anything the way it's supposed to be done."

It is the second marriage for both Antoinette, a sixty year old psychologist, and her husband, a law professor (See Appendix A). Her son and his wife are arriving from Italy, with Antoinette's first grandchild. Her husband refuses to have them stay in their five bedroom house: "I don't want crying babies in my house anymore. I'm busy and I need my space to continue with my work." What he is actually saying is that she is not honouring the contract of being there solely for him alone.

Heidi (See Appendix A): Nothing has ever been good enough. I was known as an excellent hostess and an exceptional cook, but he would still come home as I was preserving curry beans, and say, "Why don't you phone so and so. I'm sure they can do it better." Or if something went wrong when hosting people, he'd scream at me for being such a bad organizer, although he had done nothing himself.

Furthermore, the emotionally abusive husband further positions himself as master to his slaves and expects them to serve him (Clack & Whitcomb, 1997; Hutchings, 1988; Matlin, 1987). He has the right to demand anything, and his demands often are excessive and endless (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Loring, 1994). His previously lavish attention has turned into the suffocating message of "you do as I say and want, because you're mine" (Dobash & Dobash, 1980, p.85).

Berna (See Case study on p. 101): He treats us like slaves. It's a constant "do this, do that, why didn't you... must I always ask you to?" I remember this one time we were moving again because another of all his brilliant business deals had fallen through. The

children were still babies and I constantly had to look out for them. I made all the arrangements for the move, I packed, I organized, and I did everything. On the day of the move he left for work and after work returned to the new house, asking, “And when will dinner be ready?”

(Further examples illustrating Master of his House can be found in Appendix B: The Abuser Positioning Himself).

Extreme Possessiveness and Isolation

The emotionally abusive man uses extreme possessiveness and isolation to establish and re-establish his control (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Miller, 1995; Jukes, 1999; NiCarthy, 1982; Wallace, 1996). Just as is the case with close neighbourhoods being safer when it comes to interpersonal violence and crime than communities where people are isolated from one another (Haaken & Yragui, 2003), isolation opens the door to abuse. A number of the strategies utilized to isolate women are extremely subtle, and women fear that people will laugh at them in mentioning it; others are much more devious (O'Connor, 2000; Tolman, 1992). Should I describe all the mechanisms used by the emotionally abusive man, I run the risk of side-tracking the reader's attention from the main theme of the abuser positioning himself so as to dominate his spouse. I will therefore briefly refer to the different ways in which the emotionally abusive man can show extreme possessiveness and isolate his spouse and I refer the reader to Appendix B: The Abusive Man Positioning himself for further examples of extreme possessiveness and isolation as taken from the stories of women in emotionally abusive relationship.

He watches her every step (Miller, 1995; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). He steals her time, energy and leisure (Jones in Jones & Brown, 2000) and is supported by a patriarchal society which expects the wife to leave her own interests and serve her husband and the household (Cahn, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1996), isolating her from friends and family (Brannon, 2002; Burstow, 1992; Chang, 1996; Loring, 1994; NiCarthy, 1982; Rosen, 1996; Tolman, 1992; Walker, 1979).

He controls all outside contact by being rude, critical, or threatening when visiting or receiving visitors, family and friends (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Wallace, 1996). He constantly

humiliates and embarrasses her in front of them (Miller, 1995; NiCarthy, 1982). In the end she does not want to risk socializing – a common feature found in abusive relationships (Horley, 2002; Walker, 1979). He often prohibits friends and family from visiting (Tolman, 1992) or forbids her to out visiting. The abusive man may engage in a subtle power struggle with whomever his partner has the best relationship (Rosen, 1996). Being jealous of her spending time with others and reacting on the patriarchal belief that a woman's place is at home, to take care of whatever needs to be taken care of, he also interferes with her friendships (Burstow, 1992; Jukes, 1999; Loring, 1994), by feigning jealousy (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Saunders, 1992). He needs to monitor her whereabouts (Jukes, 1999; Tolman, 1992) and the abusive man also tends to monitor his spouse's work situation (Jukes, 1999; Tolman, 1992). In part he is checking up on his possession, but he is also coercing her to give up her work to return to the safety of their home. He harasses her at work. He may even stalk her, preying and encroaching upon her very existence (Hirigoyen, 2000). Douglas (1996) and Miller (1995) are in agreement that the possessive man who needs all the attention will see to it that his partner is not in a position to actualize her potential. Further education might show her that independence is possible, so he will forbid her to go back to her studies. Another clever way of keeping his wife under his thumb is to get her involved in his business.

The emotionally abusive man can insist that his wife accompanies him to his tennis and rugby matches, or whatever, as he would love to have her at his side. She reads into his insistence a positive showing of his commitment to their relationship. He is in effect side-stepping his own guilt-feelings for not spending time with the family and being involved in his own pursuits; for controlling his spouse into doing whatever pleases him and not going off on some pursuit of her own (Miller, 1995). But, although he manipulates her into accompanying him everywhere he goes, the abusive man, on the other hand, refuses to go to social gatherings at his wife's work (NiCarthy, 1982; Tolman, 1992) or her family. If he knows how much the event means to his wife, he will manipulate her into doing whatever he wishes. She bends over backwards to please the spouse in order to get him to accompany her (Walker, 1979). If the husband does go to the longed-for social outing, he opts to socially humiliate her. He denigrates, embarrasses, or neglects her in public (Chang, 1996), ensuring that next time she would be the one to decline the invitation, and the wished-for isolation is accomplished.

Chang (1996) explains that the possessive husband will often deliberately move or change jobs in order to isolate his spouse. They move and he gets on with the challenges of a new position. She finds herself largely isolated. As she is new to the neighbourhood, her time is taken up by the household and the children, and as she is not allowed to go out and make friends, her husband becomes her only contact with the outside world (Jones in Jones & Brown, 2000).

Some women feel cheated and trapped (Jones in Jones & Brown, 2000; Walker, 1979); a phenomenon often found in the spouses of men in high-powered jobs, careers, or community positions - military wives, corporate wives, politicians' wives, and wives of other prominent men. These women know that whatever they do will reflect on their husband's position (O'Conner, 2000). She is doubly caught up in the system; not only is patriarchal authority constantly looming over her every activity, but now she has the military or corporate system not allowing her the opportunities to pursue whatever she wants (Walker, 1979) or to be a person in own right (O'Conner, 2000). It is typical for the abuse to be kept private out of shame and the realistic knowledge of no-one will believe them; all the more so when the husband is the minister, the CEO, or the commanding officer. This VIP person is seen as being in the position of absolute social power (Walker, 1979).

To a certain extent, the controlling man is condemning his partner in solitary confinement. As Berna would say, "I'm in a fortress where I'm not even safe anymore. I've come to a place where I cannot think for myself anymore." Jones (in Jones & Brown, 2000) places the control via isolation just below that of capital punishment and forced wakefulness; both devastating forms of torture. Some emotionally abusive men literally lock in their wives or take away their cars (Burstow, 1992; Dutton, 1992; NiCarthy, 1982; Wallace, 1996). He explains his actions through his loving care for her and his wish to keep her safe. Other abusive men use intangible locks; they lock their wives in by the threats of what they will do if their wives would go out or walk out of the marriage (Miller, 1995). Abused women are often left at home with no money, or with only a small amount of petrol, so as to restrict her movements (Tolman, 1992). Other women give in to their spouse's plea of staying at home full-time for a diverse number of reasons (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995; NiCarthy, 1982). Some are of the opinion that this is what is expected of them; being the stay-at-home mom, giving their children the best of attention and creating a pleasant environment for their husbands to come home to.

Positioning himself by Mechanisms of Entrapment

Somehow many women are able to maintain themselves in a captured state, but they live a half life or a quarter life or even an nth life. They manage, but may become bitter to the end of their days. They may feel hopeless, and often, like a baby who has cried and cried with no human aid forthcoming, they may become deathly silent, and despairing. Fatigue and resignation follow. The cage is locked.

Women Who Run With the Wolves
Clarissa Pinkola Estés (1992, p.246)

Friday (1998, p.510) describes the way a man's vanity is fed through the beauty of the woman on his arm, but this also causes him to resent her for the power her beauty exerts over him. What better way to control this sexually-tempting woman than to domesticate her, "to de-sexualize her after marriage, encourage her to lengthen her skirts and let her hair go back to its natural colour." The emotionally abusive man uses entrapment strategies, domination, and control, to ensnare the woman into a fatally addictive process (Grinnell, 1988). Through her fear of further emotional and possibly physical abuse or the fear of rejection and abandonment, he forces his spouse into a position of compliance (See Appendix B: The Abusive Man Positioning Himself for more incidences of entrapment as told by the emotionally abused women).

However, in order for entrapment to work, both players need to be committed and involved (Dickson, 2003). The woman is ensnared by the coping or (women call it) survival mechanisms she uses (Horley, 2002; Rosen, 1996). Deceived by the polarities of domination and submission, aggression, and passivity (Cahn, 1996; Chang, 1996), and the societal norms of marriage and divorce (Worell & Remer, 1992), they accept the abuse because their abuser has convinced them of their own worthlessness. The man has entrapped her in this position of being not good enough (Miller, 1995).

The emotionally abusive man uses a number of specific ploys to entrap his partner or spouse. Some of these mechanisms are often ascribed to psychological abuse and therefore needs to be explored further.

Brainwashing: I often hear women say, "I don't think I'm going to take the trouble and read The Da Vinci Code. Henry read it, and he thinks it's a lot of hogwash" or "We never dine out on Sundays. Patrick says it's a day the family should spend at home together" or "John says he knows me and he doesn't think I'll be able to cope with a group of pre-schoolers." The process of entrapment, sometimes on a more intellectual level, sometimes more physical in nature, is often compared to brainwashing. Brainwashing is a process by which

a captor bends the mind of his captives to his will through coercive control, and transforms the other's perceptions to coincide with his own (Miller, 1995). Authors such as NiCarthy (1982), Dutton (1988), Barnett and LaViolette (1993), and Miller (1995) believe that many of the control mechanisms used in emotionally abusive relationships are similar to the coercive techniques used to brainwash political prisoners.

Oriental brainwashing methods were first described by individuals who had been prisoners of war during the Korean War. If American soldiers during this war could be convinced to denounce their country and supply information to the enemy, it is entirely possible to believe that women can also give in and start to believe in the omnipotence of the abuser and do as prescribed by her manipulative partner (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). The emotional abuser similarly uses mechanisms and processes such as isolation, induced debility, monopolization of perceptions, possessiveness, threatening to harm those dear to the victim, degradation, and humiliation. He will, for example, keep her awake night after night by arguing, blaming, needing to sort things out; stealing her energy and breaking down her resistance (Dutton, 1992).

Torture and the Stockholm Syndrome: The similarities between behaviour exhibited by the abuser and the definition of torture given by Amnesty International is pointed out by Leonore Walker (1979) as well as Follingstad and DeHart (2000). In the same manner Dutton (1988), and Barnett and LaViolette (1993) refer to a number of studies claiming similarities between the behaviour exhibited by battered women and the behaviour of hostages as found with the Stockholm Syndrome. The Stockholm Syndrome, first depicted after a 1974 bank robbery in Stockholm where a number of hostages were taken, describes the processes individuals go through as prisoners of war, hostages, or captives. Suffering from isolation, maltreatment, and in fear of their lives, these captives experience feelings of helplessness, and some end up identifying with the captors (Dutton, 1988; Horley, 2002). Because of these feelings or the reality of helplessness, they stay within the physical or emotional area designated to them by the captors, in order to survive (Wallace, 1996).

Keeping in mind the case of Patty Hearst, who after her kidnapping joined the aggressors in their struggle for liberation (Dutton, 1988), brings me a little closer to understanding how women are ensnared in emotionally abusive relationships. There is an astonishing similarity between the actions of the abusive partner, brainwashing and the techniques used in controlling hostages (Described by The Biderman's Chart of Coercion as published by

Amnesty International, in Miller, 1995). Women in emotionally abusive relationships, who need means of survival, may exhibit hostage-like behaviour; behaviour such as praising the abuser, denial, and self-blame (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993).

Schismogenesis or double-bind relationships: The process of schismogenesis or double-bind relationships is another process that is described as entrapping women, but more specifically both partners within an abusive relationship. Complementary schismogenesis is an interaction pattern in which there is constant adjustment by the one partner in response to the other partner (Bateson, 1972; Sabourin, 1996). On the other hand, all committed couples mutually influence one another, and their perception of experiences is influenced by their particular personal and couple-history. I argue for the emotionally abusive relationship not being a double-bind relationship. In the latter, the partners are dependent on one another, and both gain from the experience, whereas in the emotionally abusive relationship, most women do not emotionally gain from the process. It's all take from his side and give from her side.

Berna: He's always telling me how selfish I am. I've so grown to believe him that I cannot make the decision to leave. Maybe that will just again prove my being selfish.

Women can become entrapped by, for example, the conflicting messages of a double-bind relationship (Bateson, 1972). Although I do not describe the emotionally abusive relationship as in essence a double-bind relationship, these conflicting messages imply that, no matter what the woman does, she cannot be right and she cannot win, she will bear the suffering in the relationship and will not gain from it.

Karen: He says he loves me, but where is the loving behaviour?

Berna: He's constantly telling everyone how proud he is of his women, but he still treats us like slaves; breaking one of us down 24-7.

Crazy making: After breaking out of an abusive relationship, women often state that while they were in the relationship they at times doubted their own sanity. However, it is the abusive man who deliberately behaves in a manner that has the woman doubting reality and her own perceptions (Douglas, 1966; Miller, 1995; Tolman, 1992). He consciously engages in behaviour that sends her the message "You're crazy" to psychologically destabilize his partner. Literature and film offer the example of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here the woman

is dominated through physical intimidation, psychological maltreatment, and deprivation. More often the process of driving her crazy is on a much more subconscious level. So the abusive man does not consciously drive the woman crazy, but sends her the message by his controlling and manipulative behaviour (Douglas, 1996). Sometimes the message comes through as blaming, as in “John says he is tired of my moods” (Rose) or “He says I drive him crazy” (Samantha) (See Appendix A for details on Rose and Samantha).

Jennifer’s husband said: In the mental state you’re in, you cannot look after yourself. I ask you, please go and see a minister or a psychologist immediately. You need counselling and help.

To my mind, the whole process of emotional abuse is one of constant mind games and manipulations. There is constant psychological coercion and behaviour which is aimed at oppressing and degrading the other (Andersen, Boulette and Schwartz, 1991). The overtly vindictive and major control mechanism called Gaslighting as found in emotionally abusive relationships, serves as a good example. The term “gaslighting” originated from the film *Gaslight*, wherein a - what was supposed to be a loving - husband attempts to convince his wife that she is crazy, by, for example, hiding possessions, and then convincing her that she had misplaced them (Horley, 2002; Tolman, 1992). Gaslighting is a planned process of convincing a person that she is crazy; a subtle way of undermining the other person’s reality and logic. The husband will lie, manipulate, deny, and blame his partner to confuse her. Or the man will say or ask something, just too vehemently deny all knowledge thereof in the end (Miller, 1995).

Heidi: He would phone my friends, telling them how worried he is about me. Telling them that I’m supposed to be on medication – that mentally I’m not all there. He would tell them things that I am supposed to have said, while I knew full well that this was not true. The irony is that I then started doubting myself.

Manipulative set-ups: Time and again I have women trying to explain to me the way they always end up the culprit, “He turns anything you say against you” or “He’s so clever; no matter what you say, you always end up the guilty party.” Jones (Jones & Brown, 2000) describes how the abuser, after his explosion, turns into the attentive, remorseful partner. He now implores his partner to tell him all she feels and needs, fully knowing the limitations

he placed on the conversation by his aggression. As the woman needs some form of sharing, she falls for his manipulation, so they end up discussing her problem, the abuser again having successfully turned the tables. Forward (1997, p.5&8) describes the mind game of “emotional blackmail”, defined as “a powerful form of manipulation in which people close to us threaten, either directly or indirectly, to punish us if we don’t do what they want.” She analyzes the process of entrapment through the processes of fear, obligation and guilt. The woman is caught up in bewilderment and murky perceptions, while the blackmailer skilfully masks the pressure he applies, so that he can later deny all harmful intent.

Some subtle set-ups are a tactic used by the abusive partner so as to gain control. He will buy her chocolates when she’s on a diet, or will manoeuvre her into a one-down position. He manipulates his partner to behave in a certain manner, only to blame her for precisely this behaviour afterwards (Douglas, 1996). The frustration lies in not knowing the rules, because they are constantly changing (Miller, 1995) and therefore the recipient never seems to be able to get it right. If she does get a grip on reality and confronts him, he either laughs at her or accuses her of overreacting (Tolman, 1992). She is frozen into passivity, so he gently gets her to relax, and then uses her passivity as something else to blame her for. Even police officers answering a distress call are confused and blinded as they find a woman hysterically crying and a calm man who has them believe that they are dealing with just another woman who, “you know women,” is as always exaggerating (Miller, 1995). Being thus confused, the woman becomes all the more dependent on her partner. In the end he has the power and the control to turn to her and say, “Nutty as you are, you’re lucky to have me, or you’d be in the loony bin” (Miller, 1995, p.38).

Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde: The woman who experiences emotional abuse from her partner but sees a different person in his relationships with others (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002) is left seriously confused and doubting her own judgment. People would describe this utterly charming man at the office, most likeable in his everyday social behaviour, even charismatic and pleasant, but in the privacy of his own home or the relationship between him and his wife, he changes his stripes (Douglas, 1996). Miller (1995) relates this behaviour pattern to the age-old tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Authors such as Chang (1996) and Hirigoyen (2000) highlights the degree of narcissistic seduction used by the abusive man.

Gerda: Others see this charming, fantastic guy. When entertaining guests he's always the centre of attention, attending to the food, the flamboyant host, the guy I love and fell in love with. But when we're alone he's always angry. How do you explain this to others? How do you explain it to yourself?

The Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde pattern, the abusive man instantly switching between being a charming and caring man to a cold and abusive one (Douglas, 1996), relates to the control paradigm. As long as the abuser has the control, he can be caring. He is an expert in knowing just how far he can push his partner; immediately turning on the charm to prevent her from leaving (Miller, 1995). This intermittent normal, kind, or ordinary behaviour is what entraps the women. It takes a while before the woman catches on and starts seeing the abusive man for what he is; "charming but phoney" (Chang, 1996, p.56). Catching on to his double role, the woman starts seeing the abusive man as egocentric and narcissistic, one who exploits others to indulge the self, lacking in empathy, and with a disregard for the rights and needs of others (Dutton, 1992).

Exploitation

The male sense of entitlement to a position of dominance, control, and power are often described as the germination site for later emotional abuse (Ferguson, 1991; French, 1995; Kelly-Gadol, 1987; Scheman, 2003). The man believes himself to be better experienced, which supposedly gives him the right to show contempt for those having less power (Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Millet, 2000). Jones (in Jones & Brown, 2000) practically illustrates the abuser's sense of importance in reserving the right to read the paper first, being entitled to the best seat in front of the television, being served first, having the right to sit down and relax with the paper or in front of the television while she has to see to the children, do the washing, do the housework, and make supper. He has the right to exploit and use his partner, as he is in the position of power.

Positioning himself as the one that has the power, the emotionally abusive man sees himself as having the right to dominate. The distance between domination and the controlling nature thereof to the misuse of power are not that sizeable. Domination and control easily flow into

exploitation of the one without the power, the one who does not have the controlling power of patriarchy behind her. In some instances it therefore becomes impossible to distinguish how and where domination differs from exploitation. In Figure 8-3 I intercept this interplay by stating extreme possessiveness and isolation as well as exploitation as mechanisms used to force the woman into a position where she can be exploited by the emotional abuser. The difference lies in the abuser's positioning. He can position himself as the master with the aim to dominate or the exploiter, the latter which to my mind, has the edge in terms of vindictiveness and selfish intent.

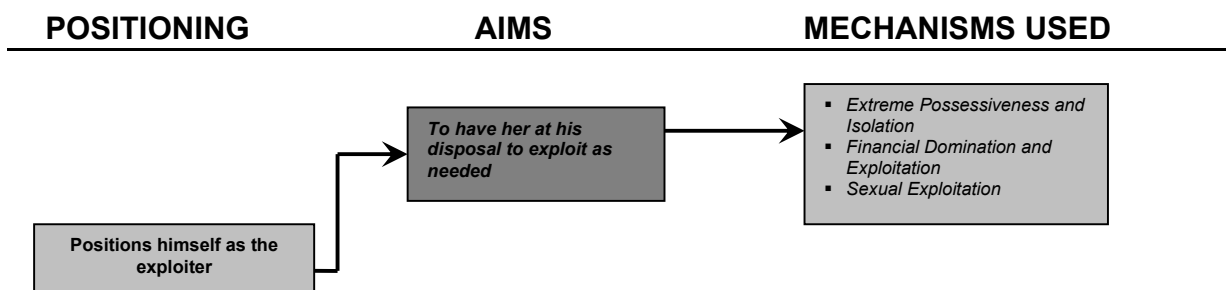


Figure 8-3a: Position assumed and mechanisms used by the male partner to exploit the woman

Financial exploitation

Some abusive men position themselves as dominant by means of their mutual finances (Chafetz, 1991; Douglas, 1996; Dutton, 1992). In a capitalist society, money means power (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991). If one partner is dependent on the other's resources – be it financial or emotional – he/she is vulnerable to control by the person possessing the resources (Burgoyne, 2004; Chang, 1996; Miller, 1995). An uncommonly large number of men in this study were financially exploiting their partners (See Appendix B for further examples of financial exploitation).

Finance becomes just another area in which men have been conditioned into believing that women have no place. These men believe that women know nothing about matters that fall outside the affairs of the home (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). Some abusive men take full control of his wife's wage packet, whereas other wives fall into the trap of earning their own salary only to spend it on their families (Burgoyne, 2004; Walker, 1979). Even when not gainfully employed himself the exploiting man ventures into schemes without consulting his wife, and in the end it is

expected that she will take full responsibility for his financial mishaps (Douglas, 1996; See the case studies of Minette, p.66 and Berna, p.101). Women have been conditioned into emotionally supporting their husbands (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993) which is only a short way away from accepting all financial responsibility. From my experience and from the women in this research I learned of flagrant misuse or misappropriation of funds that lead to extreme financial hardship for the family, but mostly the financial exploitation is much more subtle (Chang, 1996; Miller, 1995; Tolman, 1992).

Samantha: He had this continuous flow of new work opportunities he delved into, chopping and changing, that left us struggling for the better part of our married life. At times this left me to be the major breadwinner.

Some abusive men subtly force their wives into working, even playing into her need for self-development. This relieves him of the full financial responsibility, and should she then complain of either something at work or carrying a double workload, he can reflect it back as being her own choice. When the wife in the end decides to divorce him, he still plays the victim-game in blaming her (Hirigoyen, 2000), saying something to the effect of so “You throw me out without a cent. Selfish as always.”

Jennifer: So he says to me, “I will really appreciate your being on the look-out for a morning-only position. It will help you build your self-image and will show that you are able share the financial responsibility of this family” and this after he was the one that squandered my inheritance.

There are those abusive men who will go out and buy themselves expensive golfing equipment, while the wife struggles to buy a piece of material to make herself a new house frock; bullying his spouse by him applying financial double standards (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995). He leads an extravagant life-style at the expense of his partner, justifying his expensive clothes, the car he drives and the club membership by saying that he needs them to suit his status (Horley, 2002; Walker, 1979). The unequal power base in the family is clearly demonstrated by the distribution of the family income and the privileges it will buy; as the “capacity for income (buys) the privilege of leisure, or at least freedom from household chores” (Blumstein & Schwartz, 1991, p.266). The case study of Karen illustrates her making ends meet with whatever she is given as family budget, while the husband is not in the least perturbed by the situation.

Jennifer: He started all these businesses and asked me to withdraw money from a trust fund my parents had left me. If I resisted, he withheld sex or started on a blaming spree, often blaming me for being so selfish.

Joint checking accounts are kept, under the auspices of finances being a family matter (Dobash & Dobash, 1980), but although the money goes to a joint account, psychologically the entitlement still lies with the earner (and the earner is the man (Burgoyne (2004). Rigid financial control has the abusive man forcing his spouse to explain, in the greatest of detail, what she intends to do with the money she says she needs for household necessities (Dougals, 1996; Horley, 2002; Jukes, 1999; Miller, 1995). The difference here lies in the control and the management of the finances. The mere fact of being paid always implies a drop in status and carries the further implication of an imposed debt or obligation, though the precise terms of repayment are left unspecified (Burgoyne, 2004). These measures impinge on the woman's autonomy, demean her, isolate her, and keep her in a state of financial and childlike dependency. She is denied self-management and self-improvement opportunities (Chang, 1996; Tolman, 1992) for if she "never has a cent, she never has a choice" (Miller, 1995, p.77).

Positioning the woman as financially dependent, she experiences financial entrapment and has the realistic fear of becoming poor on leaving (Tolman, 1992) no matter what the financial status of the family is (Walker, 1979). Some women will fear losing the house she was accustomed to before the divorce, others will fear being in a position where she will have to bargain for lower prices when she cannot afford the medical fees. Feminists emphatically state that there cannot be personal power without financial autonomy (Collier, 1982).

Sexual exploitation

French (1995) cited that the viewpoint that women are bodies and men are minds serves another purpose except for the political stratification and parasitism. It also gives man the spiritual leverage of transcending nature as by asceticism, as soldiers by toughness, or as superior intellects. Transcending sex becomes the highest acclaim and so man scorns women and sex. Therefore the sexual aspects of the relationship do not escape the oppression, the conflicts, and the humiliation found in the emotionally abusive relationship (Basile, 1999; Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995). Whereas sexual abuse was previously described as part of

physical abuse (Dutton, 1992), I find that there are a number of aspects surrounding sexual abuse that are more fitting to emotional abuse.

Berna: I find it difficult to sexually respond to Kevin. Sometimes, when he wanted to make love, I could still hear his abusive words ringing in my ears, but mostly I think it's because with every major incident, another part of your heart sort of splits of.

It has been said that men fear the sexual attraction of women. This can be attributed to men's powerlessness in the face of the power their mother had over them as children (Elworthy, 1996; Gerdes, et al., 1988). Pollack (1999) in his memorable book, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood*, on the other hand, attributes men's fear of women, to them remembering the painful separation from their mothers. Men remember the shame experienced because of the natural need for closeness and nurturing they felt; the embarrassment and feelings of inadequacy experienced when asked to act like a man, and not yet being equipped to be what society expects of them. Rather than going through similar experiences, feeling humiliated and rejected (Papp, 1988, p.203), men avoid dependency, and end up wanting to control their women, to ensure that their mothers' female power will never overwhelm them again.

Women in emotionally abusive relationships are often blamed for not being sexually responsive. The women in the present study reacted by attempting to find the source of the problem in themselves. Seldom do women realize that being sexually cold is a symptom of the relationship being in trouble and that this cannot necessarily be attributed to only their own behaviour within the relationship (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002). I do not find it in any way surprising that a woman loses her sex drive when manipulated into having sex, criticized for her performance as a sexual partner, criticized for everything else, constantly badgered, bullied and punished and, above all, blamed for causing or inherently having a sexual problem.

Heidi's husband James: We're having problems in this relationship, because you're never interested in having sex, you're such a cold and calculating bitch.

The abuser positions him in the sexual arena through the myth of the male sex drive. He uses the misconception that men's sexuality is directly biological and beyond his control as his right to the body to the female of his choice (Alsop, et al, 2003; Hollway, 1984). Sex is demanded as the man's right (Cahn, 1996; Chang, 1996; Dutton, 1992). Men often use women as a fix

(Douglas, 1996). Women are treated as a possession or an object (Ferguson, 1991; Hirigoyen, 2000). A large amount of power can be experienced in the claiming of a woman's body (Horley, 2002). This controlling behaviour is seen as a measure of his maleness, making him feel alive, masterful, and strong (Hine, 1987 in referring to Rubin, 1983; Papp, 1988). This stereotypical behaviour is so ingrained in society, that when asked if a man has the right to have sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent under certain circumstances, 80 per cent of teenagers answered in the affirmative if the couple was married (Pipher, 1995).

Heidi: This is the pattern of our lives. He comes home, and after talking a bit he would start on some work he brought home. On Wednesdays and Saturday mornings he plays his golf and also fits in all his rugby and official sport-related functions and get-togethers. He never spends real time with the family – and, oh yes, he drags us to all the functions. So we never really talk, and if we talk it's about his work and his life, or we'll end with him, as always, telling me were I'm supposed to better myself. We'll go to bed, and the moment I get into bed, he'll brutally start something with my breasts and will demand sex ... At times he was shoving me onto the bed, forcing me down either to listen to him degrading me, or to force intercourse. He would prevent me from leaving the bed or the room and would blame and scold. Worst of all was when he forced himself on me. When I subsequently tried to explain to him that I experience it as rape, he was so genuinely surprised that I started to doubt my own perceptions again. As I grew stronger, I plainly stated that this was rape, and then he laughed at me!

Not only are women in emotionally abusive relationships subjected to forced sex from time to time (Cherry, 1983; Horley, 2002), some abusive men also deny their spouses or partners foreplay or sex (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995).

Rose: After having had this really good sexual relationship, he doesn't pay any attention to me sexually anymore. If I keep my mouth shut and the household runs the way he wants it to, he'll start making sexual overtures again.

Linda (See Appendix A): Whenever he's annoyed about something, he'll push me away.

Sex becomes another way of catering to the man's needs (Alsop, et al., 2003; Cahn, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Miller, 1992), of punishing and humiliating her (Chang, 1996), or

of violently controlling her (Horley, 2002; Kelly, 1990). The most often cited incidence of coercive sex mentioned by women is forced sex after they couple had had a major fight. Usually the fight was intensely bitter and aggressive, with her being criticized, scolded, and degraded, and she is either fuming or bitterly crying because of the injustice. Or she is emotionally spent, feels guilty and is in doubt about herself and the relationship. The psychological pain is described as intense, and then he demands to have sex. Mandy, for example, is contemplating divorce because of years of emotional abuse and Ricus is pulling out all the stops; justifying himself, blaming her for not being submissive and a good wife. He batters her until after midnight, when he has her whimpering, and then he asks for sex (See Appendix A). One cannot slight the sadistic element of the emotionally abusive man's positioning in these examples.

“I am so sorry and I love you so much. I will make it up to you as long as you bring your side. If you have sex with me it will prove that you really care and that you are willing to forgive and go on. Please, let me kiss you and touch you and show you how much I love you.”

Finkelhor and Yllö (1983) describe a range of sexual coercion that occurs within the marital relationship. They refer to the social coercion where the woman engages in sex only to avoid appearing frigid or old-fashioned, but also the interpersonal coercion where she will engage in sex in an effort to stop her spouse's continual beseeching, pleading, and scolding. Some women do give in because they were brought up to believe a number of societal imprinted expectations. They believe that sex is part of their wifely duties (Dutton, 1992; Gavey, 1989) and that their husbands have the right to demand sex from them (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002). They give in out of fear of retaliation (Basile, 1999).

Anca: At first it was Jim (ex-husband) who rejected me sexually. Now I'm in this relationship with Danny and he expects me to sleep with him. I'm not ready yet, but he said it is because we haven't had sex yet. I don't believe in sex outside of marriage, but I gave in. Now I'm guilt-ridden. I'm so ashamed of myself for giving in and for not being strong enough to resist him.

Sexual force can take on a number of other forms. Some emotionally abusive men force women to partake in sexual practices the women do not feel comfortable with. Others force a woman into sex in front of her children or sex with other men or other forms of degrading sexual

behaviour (Horley, 2002). Women in this study relate experiences of having objects inserted into her vagina and anus as well as threats of violence or physical injury during sex (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992). Some abusive men have the women believe that in complying with the man's wishes for unwanted sex or strange sexual acts, the woman proves her devotion to him (Miller, 1995). Karen says she feels extremely uncomfortable with some kinky sex her husband usually suggests,

At first I refused, but Johan said The Bible says I'm supposed to do as my husband expect. He says The Bible says a man can do with his wife as he wishes.

The emotionally abusive man threatens to go elsewhere if she does not live up to his expectations (Douglas, 1996). Refusing his sexual overtures is met with extreme anger and sometimes even rape. He uses the sexual relationship as a brutal and punishing display of his power in the relationship (Hirigoyen, 2000; Horley, 2002; Kelly, 1990).

Kevin: They are many women out there that will be only to glad to have me as a husband and will be only too pleased to see to my needs.

Edwina (See Appendix A): He really hurts me. He is so rough in everything he does. In the end I feel as if I have been raped. This isn't worth my while. I will never ever ask him for sex again or give an indication when I'm interested. This hurt even more than his frequent rejection.

Listening to the sexual experiences of the women in the study, I support other researchers in their preliminary finding that there seems to be a connection between the male spouse or partner's extramarital affairs and emotional or physical abuse (Boonzaier, 2005; Boonzaaier & De la Rey's, 2004; Horley, 2002). An extraordinary large number of the women in the present study complained of their husband's double standards when it comes to marital fidelity as were also found by Jukes (1999); area that needs further investigation. I also concur that one cannot divorce heterosexuality within a dominantly patriarchal environment from the systems of male domination and oppression. Some women have found a role model in lesbianism as a result of the struggle to free themselves from male domination (Crow, 2000). This reaction against heterosexuality forms part of women's struggle to regain control over their own bodies (Alsop, et al., 2003; Burstow, 1992).

Aggression

Although there is a substructure of aggression found in exploitation as shown above, I discuss aggression as a separate mechanisms used by the emotionally abusive man as I value aggression as an integral part of emotional abuse. In Figure 8-3b I therefore illustrate the interplay between the abusive man positioning himself as either exploiter, or using primarily aggressive means or assuming the position of an aggressive exploiter. Taking the more aggressive stance, he uses mechanisms such as threats, abusive communication and non-verbal abusive communication to aggressively control and use his spouse as he pleases.

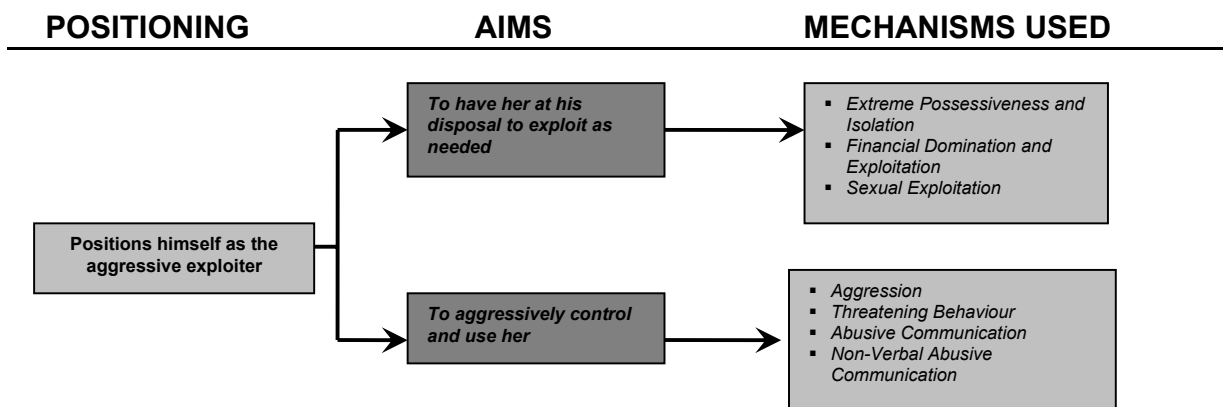


Figure 8-3b: Interplay between assuming the position of exploiter and/or using aggressive means to control and use the female partner

Society and culture have given the husband the right to discipline his wife (Chang, 1996; Millet, 2000), and it is only a small step towards man positioning himself so as to aggressively punish his wife or partner if she does not do as expected and to use further aggressive mechanisms to dominate and control her; to keep her submissive (Brannon, 2002; Douglas, 1996; Forward, 1997; Roloff, 1996). By her inner weakness, Eve destroyed paradise and this punishment for her primal sin is therefore justified in the eyes of society (Clack & Whitcomb, 1997).

The abusive man uses a number of mechanisms to punish his partner or spouse, for example emotional bullying, sulking, silence, and passive resistance (Douglas, 1996), or emotional blackmail (Forward, 1997). Some measures can be dangerous and vindictive, and others are subtly coercive (Douglas, 1996; Roloff, 1996) (See also Appendix B for further examples of aggressive mechanisms used).

Hedwig (See Appendix A): He would sulk and you would try and keep the conversation going. In the end it's just too much and you give up.

In most relationships, aggression surfaces from time to time in the form of, for example, sarcasm or an occasional put-down. But as society frowns upon direct aggressive behaviour, humankind has taken to indirect ways of showing their aggression. Dickson (2003) lists covert and indirect ways of showing aggression, including excessive control, deflation of the other, withholding of information, constant criticisms and taunts, denying the other the right of expression and choice, the withdrawal of vital resources, manipulation, neglect of responsibility, and sabotage. Indirect aggression mainly constitutes emotional abuse, but varies in its intensity, the continuous manner in which it is utilized, and above all, intent. The intent specifies the conscious or subconscious wish to control, emotionally harm, or hurt the victim (Cahn, 1996; Cahn & Lloyd, 1996; Sabourin, 1996; Schumacher et al., 2001; Vissing, & Baily, 1996).

Camilla (See Appendix A): It's always been a stormy marriage; I mean he's always been a difficult person. You can say anything and he'd react with rage. Anything you say has the potential of being used against you, it's just going to boomerang.

I find that the emotionally abusive a seldom shows his aggression in the presence of others as in the following insert:

Beth: He will call me a bitch, a tart, or a whore in front of my female friends.

In only a very small percentage of the women in this study, did their emotionally abusive spouses or partners use uncontrolled rage as a control mechanism (Miller, 1995). The aggression is still controlled to a certain extent, and it seldom, if ever, explodes into physical violence. Timing is important as a sudden unexpected flare-up can have a profound impact. Some of the women describe a low-intensity aggression that is a constant in their lives:

Beth: Kobus can become extremely aggressive in his manner. There's this rage, and extreme and constant irritability.

Gerda: He always is angry ... He stays angry forever.

Threatening behaviour

Threats constitute a further aggressive control mechanism (For further examples see Appendix B). The abusive man can instill fear in the woman, because of his position of authority in society and because violence towards women is not uncommon in western culture (Millet, 2000). Although the majority of men do not go out and commit violent acts against women, women do know that it is possible and that violence against women occurs regularly. This knowledge threatens women. It is also true that once violence has occurred, whether physical or emotional, the implied threat becomes ever-present (Barnett, 1990 in Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Cahn, 1996; Marshall, 1994). The woman believes that she can be next (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002); she believes that if she does not comply, she will be punished (Roloff, 1996).

Karen: I'm so afraid, God help me. I just don't know what to expect. I believe he's capable of murder – I see it in his eyes. I'm so scared. He's so terribly strong – I may never oppose him. If I differ from him in anything, there will be trouble.

Emotional abuse takes its toll, even in the absence of the abusive man, as the abuser preserves a level of control through his implied threats (Dutton, 1992). As Miller (1995, p.26) says, "Women tell me that emotional abuse begins before he even comes home or before she returns from her job; it begins with the memory; it begins with the dread." Hirigoyen (2000) sees threats as always being indirect and veiled, but the abuser ensures that the recipient understands the intended threat in the message sent, behaviour that will fit Forward's (1997) earlier notion of emotional blackmail. The fear it arouses keeps the woman in her place (Douglas, 1996; Marshall, 1994; Roloff, 1996).

Mandy (See Appendix A): Ricus believes in a house being tidy, but with three pre-school children that is a major issue. I find myself constantly tidying the house, keeping it just the way he likes it. Before he gets home from work, I will bath the two youngest and then start tidying again, to have everything ready, clean and tidy, for when he comes. If he phones to say he'll be late, I actually breathe again – then I can go and tidy up after the children have been put to bed.

Camilla: I find myself yelling at the children to keep their rooms tidy even when Chris is not around. What does it matter if their rooms are untidy when they're playing?

The emotionally abusive man uses the coercive technique of threatening to harm her family or her friends. Some abusers utilize the most frightening of all threats for a woman, threatening to harm her children if she does not comply (Miller, 1995). Some scholars describe the subtleties of the clenching of a fist, a look given (Dutton, 1992; Jones [in Jones & Brown, 2000]; O’Conner, 2000), others describe more overt threatening behaviour like verbal threats, using actual force or the threat of using force, or threatening to use guns or knives (Marshall, 1994; Vissing, & Baily, 1996). He threatens to destroy property or to lock her in or out of the house or room. He may threaten to place his partner in a mental institution, to permanently disfigure her (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000), to have an affair, or to humiliate her in public (Douglas, 1996; Tolman, 1992). He threatens to harm or torture the family pets (O’Leary & Murphy, 1992).

Hedwig: He would be walking around in the house with his pistol loaded, swearing and screaming at me. The children were still babies. What was I supposed to think and do? Sometimes I froze. At other times I went into screaming mode myself.

The emotionally abusive man keeps his woman in line through the threat of divorce or abandonment (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Jones & Brown, 2000; Tolman, 1992), either by withdrawing or physically moving out (O’Connor, 2000). To a woman, socialized into believing she has no standing in society without a man, this spells trauma. He threatens to take all the money they have (Barnett, 1990 in Barnett & LaViolette, 1993) or deny her financial support (Burgoyne, 2004). For those women who find themselves financially dependent on men, this is horrifying, because they realize that “Poverty is cruel and prolonged violence” (O’Connor, 2000, p.176).

Alma (See Appendix A): He screamed, “Just remember, if you do not do as I say, I will see to it that you get nothing. Before the settlement I’ll see to it that all property is placed onto my name”. This is so cruel. He wants a divorce while he knows that I’ll be out of work and that I’m totally dependent upon him.

Utilizing verbal mechanisms

Wittgenstein (Gergen, 2000) explains that words come to meaning through their use within a situation or their specific place in the verbal game. Meaning lies within the broader context of actions, as language is “speech acts, that is, actions which accomplish something within the interpersonal world” (Gergen, 2000, p.35). Therefore the subtle abusive messages aimed at his spouse by the abusive man are mostly picked up only by his spouse and not necessarily by those around her (Horley, 2002). Cahn (1996) states that violent and abusive acts and messages to be those that are in violation of the social norms and accepted standards. I do not agree and also Hirigoyen (2000), in agreement with the context-specific concept explained above, states that it is possible to completely destabilize another person by using seemingly harmless words and hints, spiteful allusions, humiliating remarks, inferences, and unspoken suggestions.

Verbal aggression is a primary component of emotional abuse (Schumacher et al., 2001). Some emotionally abusive men will tire out his woman by means of propaganda although the words and meanings differ from culture to culture. He constantly derides her and launches a direct verbal attack on her worth as a person (Chang, 1996), calling her a slut, a bitch, a whore. Sometimes this is done jokingly, but often with the subtle meaning that he sees her as a lesser being who requires his masterful guidance to correct her faults and flaws. The emotionally abusive constantly bombards his spouse with his negative perceptions of her intellectual abilities. He would, for example, say,

Nannette’s husband (See Appendix A): You’re so darn stupid. You’ll never be capable of looking after other people’s kids. I sometimes think that you don’t have it in you to be more than a low-ranking government official.

Some abusive men purposely talk to their partners in the most abstract, dogmatic, and technical language, creating an opportunity to humiliate her when she fails to understand him, so that when she does not understand he has created an opportunity to degrade her (Hirigoyen, 2000).

The abusive man verbally attacks his partner or spouse’s physical abilities (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002; Vissing & Baily, 1996). Rose’s husband says,

You disgust me! Just look at you! You're as fat as a cow and you do nothing about it ... Look at yourself. You're so fucking fat your clothes won't fit you ... Look at your hair. Can't you do something about it? ... You're getting so old. It makes me nauseous to look at you ... You're old and you're fat.

The emotional abuse lies in the emotionally abusive man's negative perception of his wife's civil conduct (see Vissing & Baily (1996) as applicable to child abuse).

Samantha: While on holiday, I had to hear, "You with your fuckin' nose in the air." I felt he was constantly trying to provoke me. He just wanted somebody to scold.

Anca's husband: You're just like you're fuckin' dad. I don't know where you were picked up.

Vissing and Baily (1996) describe the abuser wishing the other ill health or misfortune. Berna's and Karen's husbands say,

Ag, go to hell! That's where you belong ... Just get out.

Go to blazes! ("*Gaan na jou moer!*").

The ploys used in abusive communication are numerous. Although the positioning of the abusive man through his use of abusive communication is important, I will not discuss each of these in detail. I will present a broad overview of the types of abusive communication used while citing further examples in Appendix B).

Deliberate miscommunication: Abusive communication can consist of lies and the refusal to communicate in a direct manner (Vissing & Baily, 1996); described as using a "mix of innuendo and unspoken hints to create a misunderstanding" (Hirigoyen (2000, p.100) Cunningly he shifts gears, deny, blame and bait her with false accusations (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995). He purposefully scrambles the abusive message within the context of other more positive messages, so that initially they are not seen as destructive (Jukes, 1999). He will say something hurtful, but on seeing her reaction, he will retract his words while the original intent stays with her. The abuser side-steps answering her questions directly, or gives vaguely unsettling remarks, and "everything is suggested but never said outright" (Hirigoyen, 2000, p.96). The abusive man can say something verbally and express the

opposite in a non-verbally manner (Rosen, 1996). Picking up on the discrepancies, not knowing what to believe, the woman feels trapped.

Helen: He will constantly find fault with me, 'till I'm close to tears, and then he will comfort me by telling me how good a mother I am.

Jokes and teasing, making fun of and sarcasm: Within a position of unequal power, accompanied by the intent to change the other or pointing out her shortcomings, teasing and joking, sarcasm and making fun of embarrasses and discredits the other (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002). Others in the company hear the joke; she picks up the intended negativity because of the content of their shared history (Hirigoyen, 2000). Since the abusive man is joking, bantering, or being sarcastic, he can invalidate the intended hurtfulness as experienced by his partner; he can belittle or blame her for misinterpreting his intent (Vissing & Baily, 1996).

Helen: If I try and explain to him how I feel, he either doesn't listen, or he laughs off my concerns. In frustration I'll start crying and he'll burst out laughing, saying, "Ah, do we have the sensitivities again today?"

Belittlement, denigration and degradation: The emotionally abusive man resorts to many acts of degradation and humiliation such as insults, name-calling, demeaning and deprecating remarks, put-downs, and critique (Dutton, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; Tolman, 1992). He calls her a slut, a bitch, a whore and some women are never referred to by name. The emotionally abusive man ignores and discredits his wife or partner's achievements and convinces her of her failures (Douglas, 1996). Should his tactics no longer work, the emotionally abusive man does his screaming and name-calling in front of the children; forcing the woman into submission as she sees the distress of the children (Chang, 1996; Miller, 1995).

Minette: Ian was not working at the time. I had to look after the baby and see to my practice, but he was spending money like it was going out of fashion. When I dared to talk to him about our money situation, he would lash out, "You're just being selfish. You always want everything for yourself. Aren't you ashamed of how you treat me?"

Linda: I, Liezel, and Nadine were sitting on the stoep, chatting, when he stormed out. Something again was not to his fancy. He raged and screamed at me, “You bloody incompetent bitch.” That’s a word I often hear, or he calls me a “whore.”

Criticizing: The abusive man criticizes everything: behaviour, opinions, competence, intelligence, appearances (Horley, 2002; Loring, 1994). Most people have enough ego strength to shrug off a few criticisms, but if it comes at you constantly, the cruelty thereof in the long run wears you out (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996). The blatant rejection the woman experiences are even worse than the criticism.

Heidi: He told me that he don’t want me in his official car, because it takes him two weeks to get the smell of my perfume out of his car.

Sylvia (See Appendix A): Nothing I do seem to be right. But he expects me to jump when he tells me to jump. What am I supposed to do?

Utilizing non-verbal mechanisms

It is the subtle but continuous pattern of abusive incidents that cause the most hurt and “overtly coercive compliance tactics” are far less used than milder or socially desirable traits (Marshall, 1994, p.296). O’Connor (2000) therefore concludes of the opinion that most of the power-play that leads to the oppression of women occurs on a non-verbal level. These patterned or ritualized threats of violence are aimed at establishing and maintaining social hierarchies and rankings; another way in which the abusive man positions himself (See further examples in Appendix B).

Silence or the failure to respond: The passive aggressive side of emotional abuse is illustrated by silence and the failure to respond. People find their sense of being through contact and communicating with others (Douglas, 1996). Living with stony silence, withdrawal, hostility, and cold contempt is painful, and women are dehumanised by being found not worthy of communicating to (Chang, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Hirigoyen, 2000; NiCarthy, 1982; Tolman, 1992; Vissing & Baily, 1996). They hear the message, “You are unworthy of my attention” (Douglas, 1996, pp.33-4). As Estés (1992, p.240) explains,

Shunning treats the victim as if she does not exist. It withdraws spiritual concern, love, and other psychic necessities from that person. The idea is to force her to conform, or else to kill her spirituality ... If a woman is shunned, it is almost always because she has done or is about to do something in the wildish range, oftentimes something as simple as expressing a slightly different belief or wearing an unapproved color ...

Gerda: I live in total darkness. He's always angry. The loneliness just gets to me. There was a time where I begged him to talk to me, now I just keep quiet.

Some abusive men do talk to their partners. Usually the problem here lies in the when and how and what he says. The following scenario as described by Jones (Jones & Brown, 2000, p.30) cropped up again and again in my research: "He parries (her) plea for conversation, which he thoroughly understands, until bedtime or near it, and then, exhausted and exasperated, he slaps down his book or papers, or snaps off the TV, or flings his shoe to the floor if he is undressing, and turns to his wife, saying, "Oh, for Christ's sake, what is it you want to talk about?"

Rose: His not there – either physically or emotionally. He doesn't talk. He doesn't share.

Karen's Johan: I'm a busy man and I need my own quite time. Saturday-evenings I want to relax so I need no wife or child around, playing, asking questions. They know it's better not to bother me with anything on a Saturday-night.

Heidi: If we go shopping or even gets out of the car going to church, he always walks ten paces in front of me.

Sulking and Pouting: Sulking and pouting are rather immature and manipulative ways of establishing control; showing one's disdain but refusing to discuss it (Douglas, 1996; Loring, 1994; Vissing & Baily, 1996). Although not overtly aggressive in nature, sulking is a form of retaliation (Jukes, 1999).

Heidi: If he doesn't like what you say or what you did, he would give you the cold shoulder. For weeks on end he would walk around, shoulders drooping, bitter around the mouth. I always felt so ashamed – what did my parents think, what did his colleagues think ... So in the end, you keep quiet about these matters because you are so ashamed.

Sometimes you give in just because you needed to feel comfortable in you own home again, and because you couldn't stand the hurting anymore.

Abandonment: There is a strong interconnection between rejection, silence, failing to respond and abandonment. I am of the opinion that the first three, all taken to the most extreme can be seen as the latter; abandonment and the ultimate abandonment or rejection being that of leaving her or divorcing her. He is constantly telling her "Fuck off, I don't want you in my house" or "Get the hell out of my house. I give you three days and then you're out."

Ina (See Appendix A): Wednesday was my twenty-first birthday and my dad didn't even call me. How can a father say he loves you and this is what he does ... I was in the swimming pool and my dad was standing on the other side. I couldn't breathe and I knew that he knew that, but he didn't help me. I thought this so typical of our relationship. He will never be there for help, he will never stretch out a helping hand, but I'm always afraid when he calls, because he will always try some act of emotionally blackmail on me again.

And some abusive men do disappear:

Elaine: There I was in my little prison and if I said something he didn't like, he disappeared for a couple of days, a couple of weeks, leaving me without a car or a cellphone, no money and no food. So, I didn't say anything, I didn't go anywhere. All I did was make sure that he didn't get cross. When I was good, I had everything; when I was bad ... I think he wanted to punish me and by disappearing the though he could show me how dependent I was on him and in the beginning it really did work. Boy, was I scared!

Facial Expressions and Gestures: Some facial expressions that convey a negative message may be easily observed, but it is the unobserved, fleetingly subtle expression on the face of the abuser that conveys the abuse. The meaning of these expressions are found within the abusive nature of the total relationship and everything that went before. The more obvious expressions that convey the negative message are the abusive man's frown, his scowl, sticking out his tongue, rolling his eyes, tics and his lip biting (Vissing, & Baily, 1996). He conveys his aversion and antipathy by crossing his arms across the chest, using hand signals to convey degrading messages such as being mad or banging a fist on the table.

Gerda: He would only so slightly shrink back and you can barely sense him shudder. The humiliation lies in having your partner finding you that repulsive.

Gestures are commonly used to create and maintain social hierarchies (O’Conner, 2000). Gestures of dominance often turn out to be gestures of violence, or gestures containing the threat of violence. The threat lies in knowing the pattern that usually follows; she then knows what he expects or wants even before he angrily glances at her (Chang, 1996; Tolman, 1992). O’Conner’s (2000, p.176) expertly brings the point across in his description: “A husband and wife are at a party. The wife says something that the husband does not want her to say ... He quickly tightens the muscles around his jaw, and gives her a rapid but intense stare. Outsiders don’t notice the interaction, though they may have a vaguely uncomfortable feeling that they are intruding on something private ... If the wife does not respond with submission, she can expect to be punished.”

The threat of further abuse lies in the man” paling or flushing, clenching his fists at his sides or gritting his teeth” and even more subtly, a “slight change of colour on his part, or a slight stiffening of stance.” Others do not even see it, but she knows the signs (Jones in Jones & Brown, 2000, p. 28-9).

Berna: He would promise to go with me, but just by the way he turned around I new that it wasn’t going to happen.

Showing Cold Contempt: Walker (1979) referred to the researchers Eisenberg and Micklow who found 90 percent of batterers in their study to come from the military. So it is of interest that Helen, the wife of a high-ranking military officer, describes behaviour from her spouse that is more fitting to a military training facility or disciplinary institution as to the institution of marriage. Two of the other women in the study had similar experiences; an occurrence that is open to further research.

This cold-blooded communication has a sadistic element to it; sadistic taken to mean “the passion to have absolute and unrestricted control over a living being” (Dowrick in the Foreword to Douglas, 1996, p.16). The wife or partner of an emotionally abusive man can therefore expect to find herself in a position of being controlled and dominated by violence

(Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1996). It can be that the abuser's cold and theoretical approach initially impressed the woman and he gained the intellectual upper hand (Hirigoyen, 2000). The abuser objectifies the victim in order not to be affected by her suffering and so does not see her distress. Needing to gain the upper hand he uses aggression in a cold-blooded, emotionless way (Dickson, 2003; Dutton, 1992).

Karen: How can you explain this, you just know and feel it and it drives you crazy. And then if you complain or try and show him what it does to you, he denies everything and you can prove nothing ... Like he doesn't care or doesn't love you.

Being Vindictive: Women describe their partner's vindictiveness the moment they as women start pulling away from the relationship:

Phoebe (See Appendix A): I cannot believe this! This was not the way both of us were brought up. We come from good farm stock. You know what he did? He actually climbed up the fence of the security complex where I'm staying and stole photos of me having a drink with Martin and getting a massage. We're divorced, for heavens sake! The sent these to my poor unsuspecting parents way down on the farm, wanting to prove that I'm an unfit mother!

He uses others as Scapegoats:

Helen: My sixteen year old wanted to have a tattoo or a belly-ring. We were having this rather pleasant mom-and-daughter discussion about the pros and cons, real nice sort off. I was feeling rather chuffed with myself because I was having her agree that maybe a belly-ring was the better options – seeing that you could later-on remove it with no visible after affects, when he stormed in and demanded to know what's going on. Loud and clear, cold as ice, "I'm the boss and I need to know." On being told, he barked, "What sort of a mother are you!? Do you have no sense of decency?" I only later realized that he was feeling left out, and he was trying the take back the control.

Sabotaging his Partner: The following example shows how the emotionally abusive spouse unconsciously or consciously sets out to sabotage his spouse's commitment to her psychological practice as well as her sense of well-being as a mother. She is faced with a

dilemma; needing the income she had to twice a week, she keeps office hours till late as this is her busiest time. Having two children of pre-school age and not wanting to leave them with alternative care more than is called for, she thought her husband understood the situation:

Helen: We agreed that as there was no rugby practice or the weekly golf match on a Thursday, and because Thursdays was the maid's day off, he would be available to take care of the kids after coming home from work. But every week he seemed to have some sort of work-related crisis - he was in middle management then - I was left to sort out the arrangements. More than once I had to cancel clients – can you imagine having to cancel your clients because your husband didn't stick to his agreement - and nothing helped; no amount of pleading, blaming, bitching, and even crying and begging. I mean he had this terribly important position and he was a responsible man. After a couple of months I just gave up ... I was fighting a losing battle, or so it seemed to me.

Why I didn't leave him to sort out alternative arrangements? I don't know. I think I was made to believe that it was my practice and therefore my responsibility. His was the "important" work, mine was the part-time job. On the one hand, I had to work – we needed the money, but on the other hand I was made to feel guilty for not supporting him and understanding the immense amount of strain he was under. And then also, I was young and still had this nagging feeling that maybe I was supposed to be home and looking after my kids.

Property Violence: Although property violence is not often considered emotionally abusive, it has serious emotional consequences. Behaviour such as punching the walls, breaking down the doors, pounding on tables, breaking objects, destroying treasured possessions, threatening or actually abusing her pet, will severely intimidate the woman (Burstow, 1992; Loring, 1994; Miller, 1995; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Vissing & Baily, 1996).

Mary (See Appendix A): If I did something that Raymond didn't approve of, he would start throwing my things from our room – never caring if something that I truly treasured, broke in the process.

Rejection: The emotionally abusive man can threaten abandonment, but he can also overtly or overtly reject his partner or spouse as a way of keeping her under his control (Tolman,

1992). The emotionally abusive man functions in a narcissistic manner. The way in which he ignores the needs of the woman he is in a relationship with is in effect rejection of her as a person.

Antionette (See Appendix A): Here I am. Struggling to come to terms with my decision to divorce him, constantly asking myself if I did the right thing, feeling so guilty of hurting him, just to find out that he from day one has been seeing this other chicky – I was so shocked.

Anca: He never ever takes my needs into account. He tossed me aside like a used piece of cloth. He never took me and mine into consideration – not even sexually.

There is the theme of rejecting the woman when pregnant, or of the baby itself. The ultimate of this type of rejection is usually denying that the child is his, or accusing his wife of being unfaithful, killing off all her joy. He needs to have his spouse's full attention:

Heidi: He just left me and I went through the whole birthing process alone. And the afterwards he wanted to know why I was crying ... Never once did he touch my belly or anything that you hear other dads do. He never listened for the baby's heartbeat or wanted to see how she was kicking.

The abusive husband rejects his partner by objectifying her; she and others like her are only a way to a means to him (Chang, 1996). The intent is to hurt and to punish her for previously not doing something he wanted her to:

Antoinette: He sees me as this object to do with as he wishes. It really hurts, and will make one careful in trusting another again.

Anca: The self-doubt cuts deep and then even deeper if he rejects you sexually. We grow up believing that men always want sex, so in not wanting me, I felt that there must physically be something terribly wrong with me. He just tossed me aside.

Justification

Positioning inevitably also implies the ways in which a person will justify his own positioning (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1989). The abusive man legitimizes his violent behaviour by excuses and justifications, minimizing, and denying the woman a sense of self (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Wetherell & Potter, 1989). Although some scholars still speculate about whether the abuser consciously decides to go the route of violence, his justifications prove his conscious intent. How can one not be conscious of behaviour and then apply a number of defences to cover oneself? Jukes (1999) shows the abuser as representative of patriarchal society to assume the right to define reasonableness and appropriateness. Only his way is the right way and only he knows the way. He tells the truth – his truth.

The abusive man feels justified in his behaviour because he is of the opinion that his partner or spouse is not sticking to their contract; she should take care of his needs and his needs only. He is justified in punishing her for not living up to his expectations (Chang, 1996). The abuser shows an inability to recognize women as people with minds, needs, wants and desires of their own which are important to them – “living in the bubble” Jukes (1999, p.12) calls it.

Ian, Minette’s husband: I don’t know what Minette’s complaining about, I cannot do more. On a Saturday she even wants me to keep Duncan busy, while she takes a bath or reads a magazine. I mean, for heaven’s sake, woman!

Miller (1995) argues that the abusive man does sometimes rebuke himself, but only long enough to shift the blame. Schwartz (2000) asks why, if the man is sorry, he doesn’t seek help, while Jukes (1999, p.x), a psychologist working with male batterers, says,

Experiences such as this led us ... to a position which is a difficult one for a psychotherapist – put simply it is that “you can never trust an abuser.” This is not to say that they are insincere (although they often are) but that the denial is simply too strong and insidious to assume that you are getting the truth. One simply has to assume the worst, however difficult this is. Positive counter transference may be a very good sign that you are colluding with abuser’s denial and his continuing victimization of his partner.

The emotionally abusive man positions himself as justified through his behavioural acts (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). Justification means that the man will admit making use of violence against his female partner or spouse, but will not accept responsibility for his action. It is intriguing to analyze the manner in which the emotionally abusive man finds excuses in being violent as under precipitating pressures, downgrading the violence of his acts (Wetherell & Potter, 1989). Another strategy is to turn the tables on the woman and present himself as the victim. He blames women and accuses them of provocation (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Edleson & Tolman, 1992; P. Evans, 1993; Walker, 1979). The emotionally abusive man utilizes the myths of patriarchal society to justify his behaviour. In Figure 8-5 I summarize the positioning of the emotionally abusive man as the justified and/or the victim, uses such mechanisms as shifting responsibility, playing victim, seemingly losing control, minimizing and denial to justify his actions.

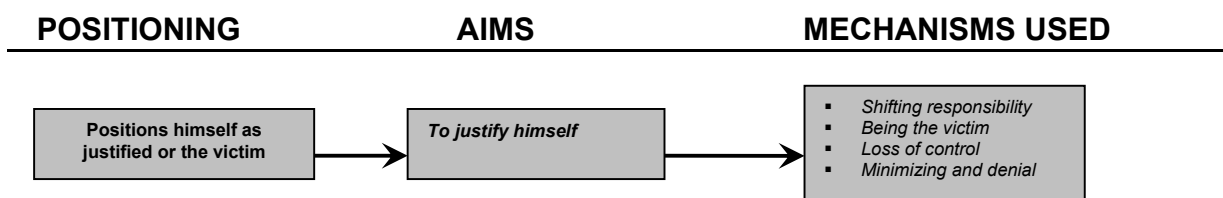


Figure 8-4: Mechanisms used to justify his behaviour through the abuser positioning himself as justified or the victim

Shifting the responsibility

Men internalise the beliefs of society, and therefore blame women for being the cause of men's abusive actions against women and therefore do not take responsibility for their own actions or words (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Walker, 1979). The abusive man positions himself as justified by finding reasons in his spouse or partner's nagging and provocation (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Greene & Bogo, 2002; Hirigoyen, 2000). He finds the excuse for his behaviour by distracting attention away from his behaviour and focusing, for example, on the woman's wrongs. He criticizes her for a number of issues that he finds irritating and unacceptable, often those things that challenge his position of dominance and control (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Chang, 1996), as the accusations of provocation are usually grounded in social myths or excuses (O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Rothman & Munson, 1988;

Wallace, 1996). The abuser legitimizes his behaviour (Jukes, 1999), but he has a choice and to be abusive is the decision he makes (Further examples is to be found in Appendix B).

I have shown the mind games he plays to prove his innocence (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995). He may put up a smokescreen, accusing the partner of the very behaviour he himself indulges in, blocking communication by becoming angry, and baiting her with false accusations, or he will sulk for days, manipulating her to give in to his needs (Dutton, 1992).

Jennifer's husband: I don't care what you tell your family and friends. They haven't been married to you for twelve years. They don't know you as I do. They don't see you when we're together.

Camilla: We were already divorced and I went out on a coffee-date. Believe you me, he stormed in and in front of the children just let go. This was the guy who was having the affairs ...

Heidi: He's been sleeping around and everyone knows about it. I mean this is a small community. Now he screams at me for talking to you, "You're ruining my life with all your stories. You have been gossiping all over town."

Often abusive men imply or blame incompetence on the women to justify their behaviour:

Gustav about Eva (See Appendix A): "I had to tell her to go out and work to get rid of her depression. She had to come to terms with Adele's and my friendship – it was over, and she had to deal with it. You know, I even had to teach her how to cook and sew. Now she wants me to do everything."

Positioning himself as the victim

The abuser justifies himself by presenting himself as the emasculated victim attempting to correct his sense of contested and unstable masculinity (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). This experience has been described as a feeling of "thwarted gender identity; meaning the inability to sustain or properly take up a gendered position resulting in a crisis, real or imagined, of self-representation and/or social evaluation" (Moore, 1994, p.151). Often the feeling arises as the result of the woman not taking up her subject position in relation to him. The male abuser thus

sees himself as justified in using strict and violent measures to force his partner back into her position of emphasized femininity, a position from which he can expect the selfless nurturance that is his due (Connell as cited in Jackson, 2001).

Minette's story is full of examples. Here we have one from Karen's husband, Johan:

She was working for a banking group and put in way to many hours. Even her own mother said she worked too hard. At that stage, I was still drinking, and it was war between the two of us. She just lost it. Once she screamed at me "Just leave me." I never hit her, but I did push her around once in a while, but come that Christmas and her whole family were onto my case, saying that I hit her. They said I strangled her... and this after I had paid half of her brother's debt.

Loss of control

Loss of control is named as a third justification or excuse for his abusive behaviour, mostly again placing the responsibility for his behaviour on the woman (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Jukes, 1999; Schwartz, 2000). The woman allows him to justify and claims that he loses control, because then they do not have to face up to the terrible truth of his consciously hurting them. Women also fall for this justification in believing the abuser to be pathologically out of control, which places them squarely in the victim position (Eisikovits & Buchbinder, 1999). But the theory of loss of control has also been found invalid by research (Saunders, 1992; Weisstein, 2000), as behaviour is still a choice. Jukes (1999) refers to Gottman (1984) as both of them can found that men react differently in conflict with women than when they are in conflict with their fellow men. As male and as a therapist involved in a program for male batterers, Jukes (1999, p.56) is embarrassed by "how easy (it is) to deconstruct ... and show the vast majority of men that they were completely in control at all times."

Minimizing and denial

Men position themselves by minimizing and denying their behaviour (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Edleson & Tolman, 1992; Horley, 2002; Saunders, 1992). They deny the abuse (Jukes, 1999) or minimize the level and the type of the abusive behaviour (Loring, 1994; Wetherell & Potter, 1989). The emotionally abusive male manages this minimizing by arguing that verbal

and emotional abuse are not as hurtful and damaging as physical violence, and again they have a patriarchal society backing them in their belief. They also deny responsibility and the consequences of the abusive behaviour (Jukes, 1999).

Conclusion

Although patriarchy bestows power on the male, not all men misuse their power and not all emotionally abusive men use all or most of the mechanisms in positioning themselves for domination and control. But as my clinical practice is situated within a largely Afrikaans environment, the tentacles of traditional and conservative patriarchy reflected in the positioning of the emotionally abusive male appeared to be deeply ensnared in the stories of the women I saw in therapy. As it is in the nature of having power over someone to progress into exploitation of the other, having the expectation of being served coffee or handed the paper after returning from work easily changes from being spoiled to taking advantage. The emotionally abusive husband or partner malevolently misuses the mechanisms of patriarchal ideology. In this way, he takes the power bestowed on him in his position as male and changes it into mechanisms of control and domination of his spouse or his partner.

Positioning himself as the attentive one (able to take care in the eyes of the woman), the wiser one with special abilities (the omniscient Expert) in the beginning of the relationship, the emotionally abusive male has the expectation that his special position will be honoured. Therefore, the woman is positioned as the lesser being, the one to be controlled and dominated, and the one to serve him and take care of his needs. His position as the master of his house relegates the woman to a position of either obedient and dutiful compliance, or rejection of his demands. What women do with this positioning and how they position themselves will be discussed in the next chapter.

SUMMARY OF ABUSER'S POSITIONING		
POSITIONING	AIMS	MECHANISMS USED
Positions himself as the Master, Teacher, Expert, Director	<i>To hook her and negotiate the initial contract</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Initial Charm</i> ▪ <i>Benevolent Teacher</i> ▪ <i>Establishes the Initial Contract</i>
	<i>To dominate and control</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Master of his House</i> ▪ <i>Extreme Possessiveness and Isolation</i> ▪ <i>Entrapment</i>
Positions himself as the aggressive exploiter	<i>To have her at his disposal to exploit as needed</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Extreme Possessiveness and Isolation</i> ▪ <i>Financial Domination and Exploitation</i> ▪ <i>Sexual Exploitation</i>
	<i>To aggressively control and use</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Aggression</i> ▪ <i>Threatening Behaviour</i> ▪ <i>Abusive Communication</i> ▪ <i>Non-Verbal Abusive Communication</i>
Positions himself as justified or the victim	<i>To justify</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Shifting responsibility</i> ▪ <i>Positioning himself as the victim</i> ▪ <i>Loss of control</i> ▪ <i>Minimizing and denial</i>

Figure 8-5: Summary of abuser's positionings

CHAPTER 9: THE WOMEN'S POSITIONING

The narratives or stories people tell are not dependent on their inner lives. Rather, individual narratives are heavily dependent on the co-actors in the construction of stories (Gergen & Gergen, 1986). An individual can adopt a certain position or attribute position to the other as their part in her story (Burr, 1995). The self differs from moment to moment as subject positions are offered, accepted, claimed, and resisted through the interchange between people (Burr, 1995; Steier, 1991b). Because I am of the opinion that emotional abuse arises within this interchange of meanings, I aim to reconstruct the positions that the abused assume within the emotionally-abusive relationship. But it is by no means possible within the limited space of a single dissertation, to champion all the themes that have and have had an influence on the positioning of the women represented here. As a departure point, I therefore present my reasoning on the positioning of women in the emotionally abusive relationship within the present time and space.

The stereotypical characteristics of not questioning and therefore accepting traditional beliefs and truths were pointed out in the discussion of the Traditional Afrikaans Family. The Traditional Afrikaans Family was also described as patriarchal in orientation. I have shown the manner in which the patriarchal male relies on a number of patriarchal, traditional, and conservative principles in his positioning of the woman. The ideology of patriarchy and the beliefs and truths of the family of origin work together to generally position women in their close relationships; all having as their goal the subordination of women (Chang, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Lengerman & Niebrugge-Brantley, 2004; Millet, 2000).

The previous chapter explained some of the ways in which the emotionally abusive man utilizes domination and control to force his partner or spouse into subservience and compliance. The woman has a number of choices. Some women slip into the prescribed stereotypical roles as they were conditioned to do and seldom if ever query their place in marriage and society. Other women, either not committed to the particular relationship or not driven by the taken-on responsibility to make the relationship work, sever the relationship. As the abusive man often only shows his need for dominance and control after the partner's commitment in marriage, the woman runs the risk of becoming ensnared by her dedication to the relationship and the stereotypical contract to take care of the partner and the relationship. A woman can react by resisting and by rejection of his attempts to position her; while another woman can more or less

willingly accept what is expected of her and slide into a position of denial. The dynamic, assertive woman who marries or commits herself often unwittingly glides into the familiarity of stereotypical gender roles as experienced in childhood. The independent woman therefore does not necessarily make for the independent wife or partner.

The position women assume is often not clear-cut, and one finds the individual woman's positioning a strange mixture. Her position also changes throughout the relationship because of the effect of different life events and the impact of meaningful situations from her environment. Surrounded by the all inclusive systems of a patriarchal society, women are conditioned by imposed fear and anxiety towards positioning themselves within a system that often violently curbs women's agency; a pivotal point in the emergence of emotional abuse in close relationships.

A Position of Fear and Anxiety

Doing Fearfulness

Fear and anger are a woman's two most prominent reactions to violence (Arias, 1999; Dutton, 1992; Greene & Bogo, 2002; Horley, 2002; Tolman, 1992). She has been conditioned to fear abandonment and separation and to believe that she must defer to men to keep from being abandoned. So she lives in fear of losing both the partner and the relationship. For some women, not challenging psychological abuse seems safer than risking separation (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Chang, 1996). The abusive man plays into the woman's fear by isolating her and realizing her aloneness her fear of abandonment is reactivated (Miller, 1995). She falls back into obedient submissiveness. Growing up in a western culture most women are seldom exposed to competition and rising through the fear that comes with any challenge. Not knowing how to face their fear, they are not in a position to build trust in themselves and their own abilities (Dickson, 2003).

Taking into account that women can respond to emotional abuse by severing the relationship or passively slipping into the stereotypical roles expected of women by patriarchal society, I use Figure 9-1 to illustrate how some women in emotionally abusive relationships position themselves as fearful and anxious. Hydén (2005) takes an interesting stand and describes the fear these women experience to be an expression of resistance. The fear implies a reaction to

something she does not want to happen and therefore also implies resistance to the abuser's violence. But her resistance is often without any clear-cut strategy of how to avoid the violence. By assuming a position of fear, women aim for dutiful obedience and thus proving themselves capable. In attempting to do so they utilize mechanisms such as doing fearfulness, anxiety and denial. Some of the mechanisms used to reach the goal of submissive obedience, are utilized to such an extent that they develop into positionings in their own right.

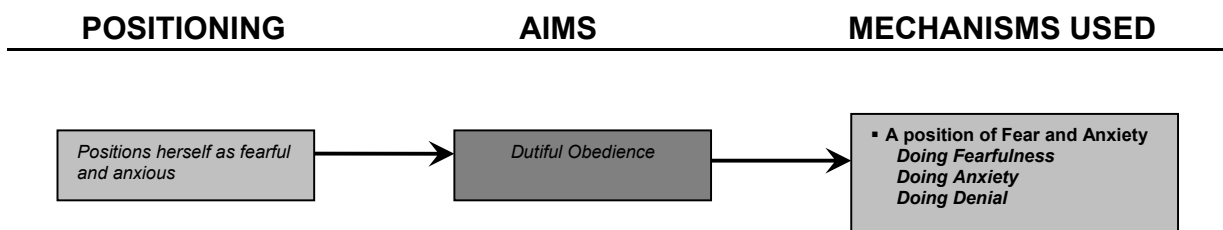


Figure 9-1: Positions herself as fearful and anxious

Some women cope with the fear by denial, others close themselves off, and some try to reason it out. The fear spills over into all areas of the woman's life, becoming a learned and generalized response that entraps the woman. Forward in her book *Emotional Blackmail* (1997, p.11) states that emotional blackmail can only occur when "we let people know they've found our hot buttons and that we'll jump when they push them." Therefore, each time the woman complies she rewards the blackmailer for his actions and she gives in to the fear; she indirectly gives the abuser permission to continue with the abuse. The woman trains the blackmailer by apologizing and reasoning with him, arguing, crying, pleading, and by changing important plans and appointments to suit the blackmailer, by giving in and hoping it will not happen again, and by surrendering.

Secondly, women live in fear as a result of the constant threats of violence from their abusive partners aimed at controlling and dominating them (Horley, 2002; Douglas, 1996; Marshall, 1994). Having already suffered a number of incidents she fearfully anticipates, tries to prevent or cope with the idea of the next outburst looming (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995). On a subconscious level, the emotional trauma she had suffered influences all her life circumstances (Dutton, 1992). Barnett and LaViolette (1993) describe the fear women experience in violent

relationships as a chronic, constant low-level fear. Because the woman never knows what next will trigger the abuse, she is constantly on the alert (Burstow, 1992; Hirigoyen, 2000).

Minette (See Case study on p.66) expresses it as follows:

Hearing the threat in his voice, having him previously threaten to shoot himself, and having seen his total reckless driving when the baby is in the car, she fears for her and the baby's safety and decides to temporarily move out of the house, a house registered in her name.

Her fear becomes embedded in his threats and she fears the emotional impact even more than a possible physical battering (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). Dutton (1992), speaking about physical abuse, indicates that even when a woman says and cognitively believes that the abuser will not hurt her any further, she still behaves in a compliant manner as though she is afraid. I found the same applies to the emotionally abused woman. She becomes immobilized with fear (Horley, 2002; Wallace, 1996). Haaken and Yragui (2003) explain that, in a similar manner, residents of a shelter for abused women still suffered the fear even though their location was kept confidential. The women from the shelters experienced the fear, but could find support in the presence of other women who knew their circumstances. It therefore seems that the fear which an emotionally abused woman suffers in isolation is as bad as the fear she suffers in relation to the abuser.

Doing Anxiety

The woman who submits to the wishes and the needs of the abusive man in the emotionally abusive relationship pays a high price. She can never relax, but is constantly weighing her options. Having taken the submissive stance, she feels that she needs to appease him when he is irritable. She takes the responsibility to distract him and make him feel better (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). She suffers continuous stress (Miller, 1995). Cognitively, she is constantly questioning her safety, feeling vulnerable and exposed (Dutton, 1992). As this pattern persists, her resistance and strength wear down, resulting in one or more of the following: fear (as discussed above), depression, permanent hyper-alertness, panic attacks, or chronic anxiety (Hirigoyen, 2000).

Helen (See Appendix A): It's difficult to describe the feeling you have. I can't say that I'm anxious or afraid, but it's this sort of uneasiness you carry within yourself, never completely sure whether what you did will be okay, never completely relaxed.

Berna (See Case study on p.101): It's not the real abusive incidents that happen from time to time that get at you. It's something that's in the air, you absolutely feel it. But then you're also reminded by the constant flow of his abusive words. You see it in his eyes and in the way he smiles at you. Sometimes there's just nothing when he looks at you, at other times there is mockery or slyness. Kevin can be extremely overt in his rejection, but also so cunning that no-one else will notice.

On the one hand the emotionally abused woman experiences anxiety because of the constant strain of having to cope with the wishes and needs of the abuser. On the other hand the emotional abuser imposes anxiety in the abused women by constantly threatening her (Miller, 1995) (See Appendix B for further examples of threatening behaviour). The woman reacts with fear and anxiety when, for example, overhearing a man raising his voice in similar fashion to the abuser, seeing a movie with a familiar scene or hearing someone tell a related story.

Normally a person will experience anxiety when objectionable thoughts, feelings, and impulses come into awareness. The abused woman experiences anxiety in realizing her fear, but also in realizing her own anger and aggression; the latter rendered unacceptable emotions by society when experienced by a woman. The anxiety is now triggered by the conflict between loving the abuser and experiencing the hostility and even the hatred towards him for the pain he causes (Chang, 1996). Members of families where violence is an everyday occurrence often show generalized anxiety symptoms (Dutton, 1992; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Saunders, 1992).

Some women describe symptoms of a panic disorder (e.g., trembling, shaking, feeling unsteady, exaggerated startle responses, choking and sweating) or a generalized anxiety disorder (e.g., nausea, diarrhoea, dry mouth, and abdominal distress).

Helen: It was more than three years after our divorce that I was a member of a therapeutic support group. I was totally overcome by anxiety the moment the women started telling of their abuse. My whole body started shaking, I was trembling all over. I had this urge just to take my things and run. I felt caged in, afraid ... But it was nearly six

years thereafter that my twenty year-old son still from time to time had dreams featuring his father, dreams so filled with anxiety that they kept him awake for the rest of the night.

The psychological trauma of the abused is not adequately recognized and researched, as much of the violence against women in their homes has previously been seen as normal behaviour. In studying the literature on battered women and posttraumatic stress Saunders (1992), Dutton (1992) and O'Leary and Murphy (1992) found that the symptoms seldom develop into a full-blown Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, but that a large percentage (the number not mentioned) of battered women suffer from symptoms of posttraumatic stress. The current research and relevant literature show that women in emotionally abusive relationships also experience symptoms of posttraumatic stress, as for example, the intrusive symptoms illustrated below (Barnett & LaViolette, Hirigoyen, 2000).

Minette: I can be driving wherever and the moment I see a -champagne-coloured VW Jetta, my mouth goes all dry and my heart beats so fast that I have this heavy, cramping feeling on my heart. This makes me so angry. Why can't I just let go ... ? Why does he still have this influence on me?

Karen (See Case study on p.90): The moment he starts yelling or raising his voice it's like a fist to my stomach ... If things were not going well the children and I would usually go into a sort of panic an hour or so before he is due home, not being able to function properly ... sort of waiting, expecting the next emotional blow-up.

Symptoms of arousal as an element of posttraumatic stress are found in abused women, especially in those who can not act out their anger and rage (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Rothman & Munson, 1988). Avoidance symptoms are also found but are not as easily illustrated (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Hirigoyen, 2000; Saunders, 1992; Worell & Remer, 1992). The abused women do not want to tell or are unable to recall precisely what happened to them, this even in the safe environment of the therapeutic relationship. This can be taken as an indication of avoidance as is found in posttraumatic stress. The women will vaguely tell about the incident, but find themselves unable to recall the full details of the incident (especially when it comes to abuse that has the potential to turn more physical); they deny and minimize the experiences (Dutton, 1992). Part of the avoidance symptoms is the emotional and physical numbing that the women experience, as well as feelings of being detached, estranged, frozen, or blocked in their

responses (Dutton, 1992; Miller, 1995). These feelings are usually ascribed to depression by the professionals they consult with.

I find that some emotionally abused women cannot stop crying, while others will tell you the most gruesome details in a flat, unemotional tone of voice, not showing any emotional turmoil (Dutton, 1992). The experience of fear, anxiety, and pain in the abusive situation becomes so intense that the abused women can dissociate from full consciousness (Dutton, 1988; Walker, 1979), thus “easing pain and providing some protection to the soul” (Hirigoyen, 2000, p.161). Being trained in a number of hypnotic disciplines, I was astounded in hearing an abuser use a technique used especially in hypnotic induction and in public speaking called the “Yes Set” and realizing how persistently and deviously the abuser works on his victim (Hammond, 1990). The abuser forces the abused to answer in the affirmative and skilfully leading her into the trap.

Ricus (See Appendix A for Mandy’s husband): Haven’t I always financially seen to your needs ... haven’t I always been a good father ... isn’t the least I can expect from you some manner of love and support ... some manner of respect ... I really need you to see to it that the children obey me when I ask them to.

The state of anxious hyper-alertness of the abused is similar to the symptoms of hyper-vigilance and heightened suspiciousness as described under the diagnosis of posttraumatic stress (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Dutton, 1992; Hirigoyen, 2000). The abused woman functions within a state of constant alertness, the fear and anxiety grounded in the past occurrences of violence, threats of violence, and the general fear that the violence can occur again (Miller, 1995).

Doing Denial

In the event of an emotionally abusive incident occurring, the woman experiences fear and/or anxiety; prompting her to either deny the occurrence or resists the abusive stance of the man. The women as represented in the present study utilized a number of mechanisms to position themselves in denial of the abuse.

Denial can occur on three levels. Society is the first to deny the high occurrence of emotional abuse and thus makes it harder for the emotionally abused woman to speak up and to be heard.

But professionals, such as social workers, clergy and psychologists also do not always recognize the emotional abuse, and if they do they tend to work within the guidelines of a patriarchal society, negating the experiences of the woman (Burstow, 1992; Ellis & Murphy, 1994). Lastly, the abused woman uses denial as a coping strategy.

Denial by Society, the Helping Professions and the Church

Society ignores and even condones family violence and more specifically the emotional abuse of women by seeing wife abuse as something private and to be dealt with within the family (Brannon, 2002; Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Ellis & Murphy, 1994; Leland-Young & Nelson, 1988; Walker, 1979). The denial is made easy by the fact that emotional abuse leaves no physical evidence (Marshall, 1994), and no tangible signs to show and describe (Ammerman & Hersen, 1992b; Wise, 1990b).

Some women can recall the most intimate details of, for example, the battering incident, but find others recoiling from hearing their stories (Walker, 1979). So instead of validating the abused woman's experiences and help her challenge the abuse, society, friends and family help her to deny her reality (Chang, 1996; Miller, 1995). Even parents forsake their abused daughters when told of the abuse by turning a deaf ear (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). This shames the abused women and she begins to doubt herself. She therefore tries to find a different reality by denying the abuse and grows silently obedient (Hirigoyen, 2000; Miller, 1995). As Estés (1992, p.250) said, "but far more commonly, the woman just goes dead. She doesn't feel good or bad, she just doesn't feel."

As is the case with woman battering, even the helping professions deny and minimize the incidence and the effect of emotional abuse (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Chang, 1996; Collier, 1982). They deny the woman the opportunity to tell because they themselves are not able to emotionally come to terms with the impact and the consequences (Dobash & Dobash, 1980). They want to keep on believing that the family home is a place of safety, symbolizing affection and nurturance, and not society's most violent social institution (Ellis & Murphy, 1994). The professional blindly upholds the principles of the system, not allowing for a different truth as for example that love and power are operant in close relationships, to come through (Davis, 1991; Meyer, 1991).

Barnett and LaViolette (1993) cite Roy's finding that, measured against friends and family, legal and women's groups as well as psychologists, the clergy have the most negative influence when counselling the battered women. In the event of a minister or priest who does not validate the abuse and sends the woman away without support, a severe spiritual crisis erupts in the lives of these women. First she is abused in her home and then the church does the same (Poling, 1996). As we have characterized the protestant Christianity of the Traditional Afrikaans Family, the largely Christian perspectives of western civilization is a predominantly male perspective, that operates on the given of the male as head of the family, and relegates women to the home under the law and the punishing hand of the husband (Clack & Whitcomb, 1997; Dickson, 2003; Hecker, 1910).

Minette: I sometimes feel like walking out on the morning service at church. How can you believe anything these guys tell you? I sit there and I'm filled with abomination at the men around me. I feel betrayed... I cannot even pray. It's more off an "Oh God, I do not understand Your ways. I know You are there", but that's about all. I do not read books of a spiritual nature anymore. I see them as only the work of people, each with his own opinion, and how are we supposed to know it's His will and His Word they're writing about?

But then, in contemplating divorce, her Protestant upbringing entraps her:

No, I believe divorce is a sin in the eyes of God. This is not how God intended it to be. Maybe I should be more submissive, more supportive of Ian. The Bible does tell us that the husband is the head of the house and I am not supposed to question that.

Alternatively, the church authorities entrap the woman,

Eva's pastor tells her (See Appendix A): If you are a real woman, you will go back to Gustav. Give him love and forgiveness.

He further said: The damage brought about by divorce will be much worse than the situation you're in now.

A pastor's wife says to Berna: Support your husband. You cannot be selfish now.

The Woman's Denial

Burstow (1992) and Chang (1996) believe that during the early phases of the emotional abuse, the woman chooses to deny the significance and the horror of the abusive behaviour. The abused woman accomplishes denial in a number of ways. Firstly, she usually is uncomfortable with the term abuse because it seems such a strong word to describe the behaviour of the man she loves, and she rather keeps quiet (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1996). Secondly, and for the same reason, she may deny by minimizing the seriousness of the problem; she denies the malicious nature of the abuse (Hirigoyen, 2000; Horley, 2002). Dianne Schwartz (2000, p.204) describes the denial,

We believe that living in denial will rescue us. We look for our saviour in bed while it actually resides within our soul ... the abuser is behind the walls we have built. We haven't protected ourselves; we've taken refuge with him at our side.

Denial is the abused woman's way of dealing with cognitive dissonance (Douglas, 1996). On the one hand, there is the man who at times is kind, considerate and loving, and on the other hand there is the man who abuses her (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Burstow, 1992; Dobash & Dobash, 1980). She denies that she protects the positive image she has of the abuser (Chang, 1996; Walker, 1979). The woman consequently accepts the abuser's view of reality, and will blame herself for not doing the right things (P. Evans, 1993; Horley, 2002). It is only in realizing these symptoms in herself that the woman will be able to admit that her spouse or partner is not just in a bad mood from time to time, but is an emotional abuser (Miller, 1995).

Although writing about physical assault Schwartz's (2000, p.120) conclusion, I believe, also rings true of emotional abuse.

Somehow, when you're a victim of a violent assault, you still tell yourself afterwards that it wasn't really that bad. It's our way of not facing the truth. But if a stranger had done to us what our abuser had done, we would have called the police ...

As most people do, the abused woman wants to believe in the love of a partner, she wants to believe that the marriage will work and that she will not lose the security it brings (Chang,

1996; Moore, 1979b). So the woman concentrates on the positive and the acceptable in the relationship, and explains away, or denies the negative elements (Douglas, 1996; Horley, 2002; Rosen, 1996). She changes her perception of reality and structures a relationship that she can deal with (Miller, 1995). This strategy brings hope, and it is this hope that allows the emotionally abused woman to deny her partner's unacceptable behaviour (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Burstow, 1992), because "if I remember ... then I'll go crazy and thus couldn't protect myself" (Dutton, 1992, pp.52-3).

Elaine (See Case study on p.84): You must remember that everything isn't bad. Abuse occurs, but the rest of the relationship is working just fine. And if I wanted to leave, he would bring me another present. Women choose to overlook the bad. They naively choose to do so until it's glaringly obvious. I hung in there because I loved so much. Women work harder at relationships, and even our culture says, "Hang in there, stick to your man". And the Bible teaches women about self-sacrifice, it is cultural indoctrination.

The woman denies the situation and her own reality by adapting to the stereotypical role of "emphasized femininity" (Connell in Jackson, 2001). She thinks that in doing everything as expected both by the systems of society and her husband as a representative of the system she will win him over (P. Evans, 1993). Although this appeases the abuser, it also in the long run establishes a degree of power with the woman, and she grows stronger (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). In having more power, the woman shifts into the mothering role which can answer to the abuser's caretaking needs, but not his sexual needs. The latter, as well as the whole process of the woman being the *The Angel in the House* (Woolf, undated), again serves as an emasculating mechanism for the man; something to complain about and a reason for being violent.

At first Karen says:

You know he has studied and has two degrees, and he has such a strong personality. I think my personality also got stronger, otherwise I would have gone completely mad, but I know I should be more submissive.

She tries to be the perfect wife:

I work like a maid, but still he finds fault. I try and wear my hair the way he likes it, and dresses the way he wants me to, but it's still not working. If it's not my breasts being too small, it my waistline getting bigger. I really try.

Denial of Sexual Abuse

Through studies of sexual abuse, rape and physical violence, it is known that women do not tell (Boonzaier, 2005; Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004). They do not tell because "in some instances, rapes literally 'don't exist'" (Cherry, 1983, p.252), because the woman-victim perceives the coercive sexual experience as normal and natural within the unequal power relationship between her and the perpetrator. At the end of 2004 two catholic theologians, Roberta Bereta and Elisabetta Broli, published a book, *It's a Sin Not to Do It* (Jackson, 2004) – the title telling it all. How are women to tell of rape and coercive sexual experiences if their church orders them, telling them that by marriage they are contractually bound to have sexual relations with their spouse? Some women describe experiences of forced sex and other sexual practices, but do not see it as physical abuse. Women have been conditioned into believing sex on demand to be part of their wifely duties (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2004; Dutton, 1992).

Minette: I'm cooling off towards ... find lovemaking intolerable ... I realize that this is going to bring further problems, but I just cannot open up and give my all anymore. How can one trust another human being, if he's constantly out to hurt you? ... I cannot call it making love, its plain sex. To be honest, I think its rape. He uses me to answer to his physical needs. There's no cuddling or fore-play or intimacy. And I'm always the guilty party. ... He'll ask me, "Why don't you feel anything? Why are you hurting?" Maybe it is all in my head. The gynaecologist explained that it will get better the more sex we have. I feel dirty and used. Sometimes I just cry, but never ever does he stop. He goes on with whatever he's doing, hurting me more and more.

But there is also another side to the apparent denial of the abuse. The woman keeps quiet because of the shame of what is happening to her and because they think no-one will believe them or understand the situation they find themselves in. If even in sexual assault cases the outcome hinges on the issue of consent, who will believe the powerful pressure they are submitted to, the emotional coercion they experience.

Karen: I don't know how to ask you this because I know even sexually The Bible says you're suppose to please your husband, but he is breaking me down. At first I refused, but then he quotes from The Bible, saying a man can do with his wife as he pleases. I feel horrible. He wants me to please myself and then he'll sit on a chair, watching, or he'll want to put a bottle up my vagina and see if I feel anything. He wants to use all these sexual aids. Is it normal? If I don't comply, he says, "Women from the lowest of classes give their husbands more than you do. They give their husbands whatever they need. Their husbands don't need to go prostitutes." He forces me into whatever position he prefers. If I don't immediately comply, he slaps my face. Now I only complain when my neck hurts. I feel like a human guinea pig that he uses as he pleases. Piece by piece he breaks down my spirit.

Denial of Physical Abuse

Women do not realize the physical abuse for what it is. Rosen (1996) describes the denial as an avoidance strategy, the woman minimizes the incident, forgets about it, and even denies that the incident is abusive, for example, "he choked me, but not very hard." I found three loosely overlapping categories:

In some cases we do find an escalation to physical abuse. But seemingly the physical abuse was the exception to the rule and the emotional abuse the constant.

Berna: Only once did he attack me physically.

Antoinette (See Appendix A): First there was only the belittlement and then came the humiliation of knowing that he was involved with some-one else. It ended with a situation where he picked up the kettle and without any emotion or saying anything, poured the boiling water over my arm.

Camilla (See Appendix A): I'm going to get an interdict against him. This is the fourth time that he has pushed me around hard handedly. It scares me and I don't want the children to see what he's doing.

Eva: He's been slapping me and he's even spits on and at me when angry.

Then there happen to be those women who do not see the physical pushing around, hair pulling and hard-handed sex as physical abuse and thus do not mention it. Or they will in a matter of fact, offhanded way mention that,

Linda (See Appendix A): He has once or twice slapped me or pushed me around, but you get so used to all these things happening that you see it as the norm. You in a way come to accept it as the way it is supposed to be.

Helen: I sometimes just could not take his verbal attacks or long sermons about all my wrong-doings any more. I would try and excuse myself. But that was like oil on fire. He would forcibly pin me to the chair or bed, jump up and lock the bedroom door before I could reach it. Once or twice – after a heavy abusive argument – I would go and lie down in a different room. He would either come to me and just continue the argument and just go on and on, or he would forcibly drag me back.

The last group consists of cases where physical abuse, has never been an occurrence – even after one or more decades of marriage. My personal feeling is that much of these cases, fall into the second category, but the women either do not realize it or it did not surface as such during the sessions.

Hannah (See Appendix A): I've seen him break down doors, but never has he touched me.

Hedwig (See Appendix A) could only after her divorce say: Al's physical and emotional abuse was the main reason I left him. It all started after the birth of our first daughter and just got worse, especially after Marli was born.

Positions Herself as Depressed

Depression and a number of issues surrounding women doing depression have been the subject matter of a huge amount of publications and research. Although the focus of the present study does not fall on depression, I do take depression to be one of women's answers to the fear and the anxiety experienced. Unable to resist the abuse, the woman denies her reality and survives by covering up. In *Verbal Abuse: Survivors speak out on Relationships and Recovery* P. Evans (1993, p.103) says, "The symptoms of depression are strikingly similar to the symptoms of a spirit dying from abuse." Depression must therefore be redefined as

women's response to the reality of oppression (Collier, 1982; See Ellis & Murphy, 1994 for further references; Greenspan, 1983).

In order to illustrate the manner in which women from emotionally abusive relationships position themselves as depressed, I refer back to the following excerpt from the case study of Minette (See p. 66). Taking this case study as an example, I thus show the emergence of important themes related to women positioning themselves as depressed.

Minette: "Emotionally I feel totally depleted."

In the session her manner is anxious and depressed, and she bursts into tears silently crying throughout the whole of the session, saying, "If only I can get some perspective on what's happening to me. I think I've been depressed since Duncan's birth, and he's six months old now. I have been on medication but it doesn't really help. It feels as if I am applying band-aid and not dealing with the real problem.

- *Emotionally I feel totally depleted*

At some time during the emotionally abusive relationship, the abused woman realizes the reality of her situation and falls into a state of mind often wrongly diagnosed as a depression, or she wrongly sees herself as depressed rather than oppressed (Collier, 1982). I see this as a phase of bereavement. One can understand the feelings of anger, denial, fear and sadness that she experiences, mourning her particular losses. Staying on in the relationship, she mourns the loss of what could have been, her dreams, her positive self, and the freedom to be herself. Deciding to leave, she may mourn the loss of her belief in marriage and love, the loss of her partner, her house, her place in the community, herself as part of a couple, contact with some friends and family (Dutton, 1992). Grinnell (1988) sees women's depression as a form of altruism. As women shy away from hurting the other by anger or leaving, she turns against herself. This stance, which is often depicted as masochistic, is therefore described as a heroic stance instead of a psychiatric disorder.

- *She bursts into tears and silently cries throughout the whole of the session, saying, "If only I can get some perspective on what's happening to me.*

The depression is often caused by the conflicts inherent in the double-bind situation she experiences, Grinnell (1988, p.50) says,

I believe depression ... arises when entropy – “the measure of the capacity to undergo spontaneous change – specified by the relationship” – clashed with the command not to change because change threatens the relationship in which it occurs. Depression is due to be double-bind. This occurs because of entrapment in the command to serve others and the conflict to potentiate while enmeshed in the *Folie* where primary service is to males in relationship.

Minette has come to realize the covert contract of the relationship: that she is expected to care for, nurture, pay attention to, and heed all of her spouse's needs, and that her own needs will not be answered. The depressed state is used to dull the senses in order to allow her to go on. She denies the anger (Greenspan, 1983) and being depressed she cannot find the energy to leave (Douglas, 1996).

- *I think I've been depressed since Duncan's birth and he's six months old now. I have been on medication but it doesn't really help.*

Although bereavement is experienced in the woman as mourning her lost self (and soul and life), one nevertheless cannot deny that in experiencing futility and powerlessness depression often are the end result and the most common complaint of women stuck in abusive relationships (Collier, 1982; Miller, 1995; O'Leary & Murphy, 1992; Saunders, 1992; Walker, 1979). Tolman (1992) refers to Straus, Sweet, and Vissing (1989) who reported preliminary findings indicating that the more verbal abuse a woman experiences from her partner, the more depressed she gets. Having had their confidence eroded, having been dominated and controlled, their emotional and physical resources at a low ebb, women fear that they do not have the inner resources to survive, and so become increasingly immobilized (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1996; Ross, 2002).

Because she feels depressed, angry and distressed, the emotionally abused woman finds that her ability to effectively cope is impaired in a number of roles (Dutton, 1992). They find it difficult to engage in the ordinary social interactions around them. Some battered women are incapacitated to such an extent that they find it difficult to nurture even their children

(Greenspan, 1983) and they complain of losing concentration and are often confused (Hirigoyen, 2000).

- *Maybe this whole mess is my fault as I'm the one with the depression.*

Most people tend to blame themselves if they are unable to find logical explanations for the negativity of others directed at them (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Douglas, 1996). As is generally true of all critique, most blaming remarks will contain some truth. So women in emotionally abusive relationships in particular start questioning and doubting their own actions. They measure themselves against the perfect woman, the perfect mother, lover, and housewife, held up to them by society. The woman fears that if she turns out to be less than perfect, society will find her husband's abusive behaviour acceptable. As she often finds herself to deviate from the norm she begins to see herself as being responsible for her own abuse and she ends up accepting the partner's claim that if only she was "better", everything would be all right (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1996).

The stereotypical myth that women are always to blame becomes internalized in women (Collier, 1982; Dickson, 2003; Dutton, 1992; Grinnell, 1988; Hirigoyen, 2000; Miller, 1995). As strange as it might seem, accepting the abusive partner's blame gives the woman something on which to build a degree of hope – at least now she has something she can do to make things better (Chang, 1996; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Rosen, 1996). Douglas (1996, p.72) explains that, "If we believe we are in some way responsible for the abuse, then we can believe that we have some power to prevent it."

Karen: All these years I was trying to find out what I did wrong, telling myself that there must be something I did that caused this.

As always blaming themselves, some women get caught up in the pattern of "If only I tried harder." Taking all the blame for his abusive acts onto herself, concurring with society, she believes that if she makes the expected changes, everything will work out (Chang, 1996; Walker, 1979). She therefore finds excuses for his abusive behaviour (Walker, 1979, p.170), "He didn't mean it that way, He's tired and stressed out, He's the impatient sort", or the worst one of all, "I should have known better to say or do that."

Karen: I suppose I didn't listen. I didn't give him enough attention. It was just after having lost my job and I had four small children to take care of. The maid had left, and I was faced with this entrance exam, a prerequisite for a job I had applied for.

Doing Passivity

Gavey (1989) reminds us that individuals are not passive. They are active and have a choice as to how they will position themselves in relation to any discourse. Unfortunately this choice is seldom rational. It is consciously and unconsciously informed by one's upbringing and especially by the cultural indoctrinations of the power systems operational at the time. Western society's stereotypical image of femininity implies passivity. Curiously, girl-children are taught to be passive. Since early childhood, the woman is taught that her actions do not make a difference, but when she is abused she is blamed for her not taking action. She is trained to be obedient and not to question, but should the finger point to any aspect that might indicate the misuse of male privilege, the woman is blamed.

Lips (1995) cites the body of research done by Jeanne Block in the 1980s, showing how the then school system taught girl children that their actions and voice will have no effect, no-one will pay them any attention. Maybe this, as well as the already mentioned incapacitating fear, is why Dutton (1988) in dealing with domestic violence, found extreme passivity in the behaviour of the abused women. This was called "traumatic psychological infantilism" (Dutton, 1988, p.95), meaning to lose the ability to function as an independent adult, identifying with the perpetrator and regressing to behaviour such as compliancy and submissiveness. Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment is well known. A simulated prison environment is created with guards being verbally abusive and using all their power resulting in the prisoners becoming docile and passive. Frightening but comprehensible results, but only if it is not made applicable on the female of the species. Should a woman react in a passive manner, she is blamed and shamed for some inherent deficiency (Bernard, 2000).

Some scholars take the intermittent nature of the maltreatment over a period of time as one of the reasons why the abused woman positions herself as passive and unable to assert self-will, resulting in her subjecting herself to the will of the controller (Miller, 1995). Psychological paralysis sets in, caused by a number of issues as explained by the reasons why the women stay (Walker, 1979). I do however postulate that some women in emotionally abusive

relationships practice passivity. I also believe that some women practice passivity as a symptom of their overall depression. On the other hand, I propose that more women in emotionally abusive relationships practice dutiful obedience (as described later in this chapter). Faced with the overwhelming power relations from their spouses, their church, their culture and society of origin they fall into a place of obedient silence, programmed to do as told.

Doing Learned Helplessness

Leonore Walker (1979) was the first to apply Seligman's experiential findings of what he called learned helplessness to women in abusive relationships. The concept as well as the implied powerlessness became popular in explaining women's entrapment in the abusive relationship (Dutton, 1992). In effect, Seligman found that being continuously exposed to violence, creatures (animals) become used to not having the power or not being able to intervene (Estés, 1992; Walker, 1979). He identified the components of learned helplessness as motivational impairment (passivity), intellectual impairment (poor problem-solving ability), and emotional trauma (increased feelings of helplessness, incompetence, frustration, and depression) (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993).

Two kinds of helplessness were described as applying to humans, namely, universal helplessness, where the subject cannot see that her behaviour can have any effect on the outcome (Miller, 1995; Walker, 1979), and personal helplessness when she holds herself responsible for the negative outcome of her behaviour (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). Miller (1995) agrees with Walker in that the emotional abuser holds his woman captive through learned helplessness. The woman, who believes herself powerless against society and against her partner, becomes easily manipulated and entrapped by the man in his hierarchical dominant position (Wallace, 1996). Thus it is reasoned that women do not stay in the abusive relationship because they like being beaten, but because they find it difficult to break away in a society where wife-beating is condoned (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Horley, 2002; Walker, 1979). In wanting to be a good woman, obedient and dutiful, she is unable to break free.

Karen: I find that I cannot function effectively anymore. Everything becomes personal, and I can seldom decide what to do or what not to do. I have no more confidence. When alone with him, I find that there is nothing I can do or say that will hold against all his arguments.

Collier (1982) refers to a number of studies, concluding that powerlessness is learned behaviour. Women believe themselves to be powerless in that their identities are controlled and defined by others, and their feelings, needs, and wants are not seen as important (Greenspan, 1983). Being in a position of not having power relegates a person or a group of individuals to a minority group. Relying on the work of a number of authors, M. A. Dutton (1992) also discusses learned helplessness and futility, but finds learned helplessness not to imply an inherent weakness in the women. Women have been taught that punishment will follow if they do not comply and so they do helplessness (Hurtado, 2000). Qin (2004, p.300) describes how Chinese students in host countries, being “devalued” and “othered” by the dominant culture, find themselves with a devalued sense of self, and experience powerlessness.

The woman in an emotionally abusive relationship experiences helplessness when she realizes that she has used up all the alternatives known to her (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Kosberg & Nahmiash, 1996). The helplessness surfaces as her viable alternatives diminish and she finds herself in a situation where all efforts to either handle the situation or break free are futile. The so-called helplessness of the woman is an adjustment made by the women as they temporarily give in, do not break with tradition, and stay within the boundaries of the female stereotype in a patriarchal society (Chang, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Leland-Young & Nelson, 1988). Women do break free, however, and as the present study shows, there comes a point where they will say no more, this usually being when she sees her children suffering (Giles-Sims, 1983; Miller, 1995; Saunders, 1992). Not yet having reached that particular turning point, she blames and doubts herself.

Walker (1984 in Barnett & LaViolette, 1993) also refers to “learned hopefulness.” The abused woman can then position herself in a place she believes that she has some control in that she will eventually be able to turn the partner’s abuse around. As a therapist one does meet up with whiners, but if these women are to be criticized it is for the hope they carry, for the “little” and “big optimisms” they do (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 9). Hydén (2005) described the women to retain a degree of self-confidence because they see themselves as having a positive impact on others outside of the abusive relationship. This concurs with the description of hope as partly having a sense of agency. Just as Seligman’s learned helplessness harmed society’s perception of women, care should be taken that the swing of the pendulum towards positive psychology do not do just the same, blaming the women for not finding the answers while the

solution lies within society and culture. This is clearly stated by the criticism of a number of writers in the special edition of the *American Psychologist* on positive psychology edited by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000). They are taken on for being positivist (Shapiro, 2001), ethnocentric (Bacigalupe, 2001; Walsh, 2001) and narrowly value-based (Compton, 2001). Powerlessness lies not in the individual, but is an experience when one's self-image is impressed upon one by others – the dominant group or person, i.e. when others decide your needs and your rights (Collier, 1982; Greenspan, 1983).

Doing Tolerance

The most obvious cognitive women experience as a result of emotional abuse is developing a tolerance of cognitive inconsistency (also described as cognitive dissonance), a diminished perception of alternatives or the development of a continuum of tolerance. When confronted with a life-threatening situation or illness, people are able to tolerate much more than they themselves think humanly and morally possible. Only the emotionally abused woman can decide what she regards as acceptable or unacceptable behaviour from her partner or spouse, obviously changing her perception of tolerance as she is confronted with the continuous flow of incidents (Horley, 2002).

The forceful domination, the aggression, and the verbal abuse gradually destroy her essence, her subjectivity. When constantly bombarded with negatives, she starts seeing herself as the being described through his words (Douglas, 1996; Miller, 1995). She becomes an object, and she loses respect for herself (Chang, 1996). Hirigoyen (2000, p.163) says of the abused women that "it is impossible to deny the dramatic consequences of a period in their lives when they were basically reduced to the position of object." Tolerance does not imply making one's peace or passively accept circumstances. Abuse never loses its sting, it never gets any easier, but the woman tolerates the situation, because she needs to survive. Marilyn French (1981, p.56) purports that "survival is an art. It requires the dulling of the mind and the senses, and a delicate attunement to waiting, without insisting on precision about what it is you are waiting for."

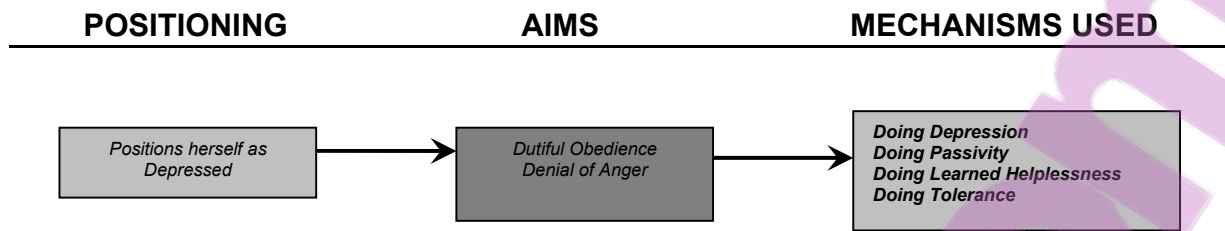


Figure 9-2: Positions herself as depressed

The above figure illustrates the woman hypothetically positioning herself as depressed by using such mechanisms as doing depression, passivity, learned helplessness and tolerance. I have shown the manner in which some women do position themselves as depressed, but I also detailed doing depression as a stereotypical position often attributed to women by a patriarchal society. Society presumes women to be as suits society; expectations often sculptured by the ancient male Christian clergy (Flinders, 2002). The women aims for dutiful obedience as will be described later in this chapter, but by doing depression she finds immobilization and denial of her anger.

Positions Herself as Dependent

In marriage, two people are united and become one. The question is, "Which one?"
Laura Twiggs (2005)

Some women in an abusive relationship may exhibit symptoms of dependency and even co-dependency. If I rely on the ten criteria for co-dependency as indicated by Hemfelt, et al. (1989), no evidence is found that the emotionally abused women in the present study needed to, for example, correct issues that spilled over from a dysfunctional family of origin. The co-dependent is described as driven by the need to control and dominate his partner (stemming from childhood issues; a psychoanalytic theoretical standpoint I do not adhere to). Krestan and Bepko (1990) state that care-taking is often labelled as co-dependency to pathologize and shame the woman. Also Stordeur and Stille (1989) rate the description of women as co-dependent as a symptom of the dominant class's power to label. Characteristic of the co-dependent relationship is the need to recreate the original painful situation in an attempt to right the wrongs of the past (Hemfelt, et al., 1989), with which I cannot concur when it concerns the emotionally abused woman.

Dutton (1988) furthermore reviewed a number of studies suggesting unmet dependency needs in both or one of the partners in the abusive relationship; unmet dependency needs that can lead to mutual need fulfilment between the abuser and the abused. I argue for the woman more entrapped by special features of the abusive relationship, for example, features such as the intermittent nature of the abuse and the power inequality than by her personality attributes (Dutton, 1992; Wallace, 1996). Also working from hostage experiences Dutton and Susan Painter (In Dutton, 1992, p.106) termed the process “traumatic bonding”, defined as “the development of strong emotional ties between two persons where one person intermittently harasses, beats, threatens, abuses, or intimidates the other.” They consider the abused as binding with, and being more dependent on the positive side of the abuser. When abuse then occurs, the woman believes them to be going through a difficult phase and that the relationship will normalize again.

Furthermore, Dutton (1988) and Rosen (1996) argue that the abuser’s need for power is satisfied by the abused person’s dependence on him. I would rather reason that the abuser’s need for power is satisfied by his being able to entrap the woman into the abusive relationship by means of a number of either control and domination strategies or by strategies that entrap and exploit. To Ansello (1996) this means a process of role synchrony, a process kept alive by both parties keeping to their assumed or assigned roles. Especially as one notices how the couple’s sense of bonding increases with their surviving one incident after another (Rosen, 1996), this would seem to make more sense. I therefore argue for entrapment emerging from the relationship between the spouses or the partners, rather than the woman as dependent on her partner.

The above can be summarized as meaning that the unequal distribution of power through hierarchical rule has resulted in a state of affairs where male dominance and their utilization of interpersonal power within families have placed women in a subordinate position and promoted their dependence (Chang, 1996; Collier, 1982; Dickson, 2003; Dobash & Dobash, 1980). According to Bronfenbrenner (1979, p.92),

The greater the degree of power socially sanctioned for a given role, the greater the tendency for the role occupant to exercise and exploit the power and for those in a

subordinate position to respond by increased submission, dependency, and lack of initiative.

Women are so used to labels such as dependent that they, without thinking, label themselves accordingly. For example, Minette sees herself as dependent, but I would want to know how dependent one can be on someone who you yourself support financially, who seldom if ever helps out in the home or with the baby, and who renders no emotional support. I postulate that women have grown so accustomed to these labels and have been conditioned to such an extent that they seldom challenge them.

Women find themselves in a catch-22 position (Collier, 1982). People have dependency needs, but women's needs are often not met because of them being the sole emotional support system of the family (Brannon, 2002). Positioning herself as the nurturer she is nevertheless the one blamed for unhealthy dependency needs (Mirkin, 1994b). Society chooses not to mention male dependency needs as these are usually adequately seen to by his female partner or his spouse (Greenspan, 1983). I therefore construe that many a reproach against women for being dependent stems from her partner's inability to openly acknowledge his own dependency needs or the partner stonewalling her attempt as positioning him as the "giver" instead of the sole "receiver" of support. She is forced into denial, for should she rebel she will be made out to be nagging and all the other names assertive women are often called. French (1981, pp.79-80) summarises this by saying,

Everything Mira's told us about her life shows it to be one long training in humiliation, an education in suppressing the self ... But in fact if you're brainwashed into selflessness, it wouldn't occur to you to do what you wanted to do, you wouldn't even think in such terms. There isn't enough *you* to want.

What society and even health professionals often interpret as the woman positioning herself in a dependent mode, thereby wanting the other to assume the role of the expert, take over responsibility, and take care of her, can mean many different things. A number of tentacles may be pulling her in many different directions. On the surface all these resemble dependency:

- She is tired and depressed
- Self-blame is eating at her

- She has lost confidence and doubts her ability to cope
- She finds herself unable to make a decision for change as this might place her marriage in jeopardy
- She struggles with issues of attachment
- She is struggling with other issues that literature up till now has called dependency.

When it comes to attachment and dependency the abused woman knows there was a time when she and her abusive spouse or partner shared a loving relationship and enjoyed intimacy (Dutton, 1992). Barnett and LaViolette (1993) describe the woman's dilemma as part of an approach-avoidance conflict. The woman has positive feelings for her partner and desires a happy home with her husband and children, but is confronted with his violence. On the one hand there is her love and commitment, and on the other hand there is the abuse and fear. She is increasingly entrapped by a decrease in her self-worth. Also the positive feelings for her spouse do not disappear when the abuse starts. On the positive side, she retains a degree of hope that things will normalize again, or that she can make them better. Cameron (1997), on the other hand quotes from shamanism when she states that when a human loses a vital part of the self and so they try and fill the gap. The abusive relationship therefore both murders the soul of the abused soul but also brings an addiction to the relationship.

Elaine: I stayed long after I should have left. I think it's a woman thing. Cultural indoctrination I will call it ... since day one you are taught how to behave as a girl, especially with regards to 'your man'. Our culture says, 'Stick to your man' and we do. We're trained to please, trained to be the least – always to take the second position when it comes to man.

Edwina (See Appendix A): My eyes have opened, but his a good man, it's only his behaviour that gets me down.

Although I attribute certain aspects of the emotionally abusive relationship to entrapment by the male partner, as well as partly to role-synchronicity and even to traumatic bonding, I cannot subscribe to the concept of co-dependency. Also, if dependency can be ascribed to the emotionally abused woman, I will argue that it is not a dependency on the abuser (except where financial and practical issues are involved), but a woman programmed to find validation from outside herself. She can therefore be described as dependent on validation from the outside

male authority, trapped into a role and position she finds it difficult to escape from (Greenspan, 1983; Mirkin, 1994b). The woman is connected to a source of power outside herself, and the abuser is drawing power from her need for validation. Myss (1997) reasons that the energy circuits of an individual can become so thoroughly connected to an outside object that they no longer have the use of their own reasoning ability, so they surrender their power. Some scholars will reason that this implies dependency, but I find that the emotional entrapment of the woman differs in undertone from that of dependency.

Helen: It is now six years since my divorce. Since moving out, my ex-husband and I have not once had an argument. From time to time, we meet up to discuss practical arrangements concerning the children. Usually, these discussions are quite amicably, as in principle we agree on most issues. We have a cup of coffee, ask about the other's well being, and even share a few jokes with the children if they are present. But when he leaves, I am depleted. I experience a heavy dark fog settling over my conscious mind. I feel like I've recently had an anaesthetic or wrote a most tiring exam paper. In mentioning this to the children, they burst out laughing, "That's precisely why it's so difficult to go and visit. You miss him and know that you should go, but it's just too much."

Positions Herself as Victim

Some researchers see feminist consciousness as a consciousness of victimization as women are encircled by the hostile forces of an oppressive system and so the victim theme becomes society's variation on perceiving woman as masochistic (Kirkwood, 1993). A consciousness of victimization is to know that one has been unjustly treated (Bartky, 1990; LeLand-Young & Nelson, 1988), and the "perennial feeling of being entrapped or powerless" (Greenspan, 1983, p.202). In essence victim-blaming spells disempowerment. It is just another way of blaming women for their own positioning in an emotionally abusive relationship. On the other hand, the word victim also signifies to the survivor the process of winning and of taking back control over her life. Psychologists are trained by a psychiatry where the male knower has labeled women clients and both society and psychology have refrained from questioning this diagnosis (Burstow, 1992). We have grown used to the idea of the woman as problem as already described (Crawford & Marecek, 1992; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991).

Women have been the victims of a dominating and subordinating patriarchal system, but not all women are unwilling victims. Some women do position themselves as victims. Because an ideology, system or an institution such as marriage cannot be maintained by force alone, she conceives of herself as inferior claiming protection from a patriarchal system in exchange for submissiveness in much the same way as slaves conceive their position (Jones in Jones & Brown, 2000). She accepts and expects security, especially the financial security that adhering to the system and her subordination brings (Alcoff, 2000; Kandiyoti, 1991). It appears that the woman in an emotionally abusive relationship prevails by positioning herself as victim, losing much of her resources, but preferring the protection and status gained from staying with the abusive husband (Alcoff, 2000; Bloom, et al., 1975; Hydén, 2005; Kandiyoti, 1991). This positioning could be attributed to a situation where she has no other options available, or because of the immense power imbalance that disempowers her within society as a whole.

Another reason cited for women playing the victim card is having experienced a lack of affection in the family of origin. This lack of affection in the family of origin is taken to make women vulnerable to any show of affection. What is not known is how many women (and men as well) come from dysfunctional or loveless families but are never entrapped by an emotionally abusive relationship. Women try their utmost to find emotional understanding but do not experience reciprocation (Chang, 1996). Men are more comfortable focusing on the rational, linear and cognitive areas. But this can be no excuse for expecting his female partner to take over total emotional responsibility for the family and withdrawing or refraining from rendering support or empathy in times of illness, family crisis or daily needs (Chang, 1996). Being treated as an object, not worthy of any attention, positions a woman as a victim. Not being shown any emotional support victimizes her (Chang, 1996; Dutton, 1992).

Minette: One can really experience that loneliness. Just after our marriage I had to go in to have my wisdom teeth extracted. He plainly stated that he didn't feel up to taking care of me – although he was at home full-time. I had to move back in with my parents.

Berna: Our children really suffered. After writing his final medical exams, my eldest phoned me in tears, 'Mom, you know, he didn't even phone me. I wrote the biggest exam of my entire life and he didn't even care to find out how things went. In the end he wasn't even interested in attending Barry's graduation. It's such a catch-22, on the one hand you truly believe in staying to keep the children safe, and on the other hand you are subjecting them to this.

Rose (See Appendix A): Our only son was run over by a car, and although not seriously hurt, was admitted to hospital. John was working really long hours, and although I would have overlooked quite a lot because of this, I'm to this day hurt by the fact that he did absolutely nothing. At that stage, we still had two under ten's at home and I could not drive at night. So here I was trying to keep the baby okay, seeing to the girls at home, doing whatever had to be done at home, trying to as quickly as possible feed and tend to the girl's needs and then again rushing off to hospital. Once or twice he showed up at hospital, making a big fuss – all freshly shaven and bushy tailed. I was so tired and I was so angry ... You come to a place where you think, "Why am I married?" He never even says he loves me or holds me close. I see myself as a very lonely and sad person. I'm so tired of fighting on my own.

Experiencing herself as the victim, the women now blames her partner or spouse. She expresses the belief that men are not to be trusted.

Minette: I don't think I will ever be able to trust men again or ever consider a relationship again. Never, never again (shaking her head). I cannot even imagine myself in a relationship. ...As for now I'm in the process of finding a locum for my practice as I'm leaving for this congress in Germany. So the agency asks me if I would prefer a man or a woman and I have this screaming-feeling of "How, can they even ask!" I will never appoint a man in my practice, never.

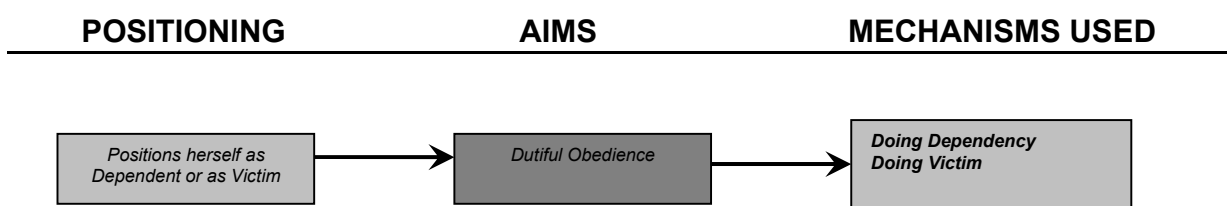


Figure 9-3: Positions herself as dependent and victim

The above figure refers back to Figure 9-1 and 9-2 when depicting the aims of the women's positioning. Although additional or sub-goals emerge with each positioning (depression has a sub-goal immobilization and the denial of her anger; with dependency there is the need for outside validation; and in doing victim she claims security and affection), the overall aim remains what I call dutiful obedience. As with the woman positioning herself as depressed, I have

argued that the assumed positions of dependent and victim largely refer to societal myths and misconceptions.

A Position of Dutiful Obedience

I have thus far illustrated the manner in which society needs to believe and position women as anxious and fearful, depressed, dependent and as victim. Although many of these mechanisms can be seen as negative labelling by a hierarchical society the emotionally abused woman at times utilizes these mechanisms in an attempt to adhere to the script of the good daughter, the good woman and the good wife. But, I am of the opinion that the abused woman actually aims to be dutifully obedient to the expectations of the surrounding society. Her goal of being dutifully obedient takes on the status of a different and new position she assumes. Being dutifully obedient carries the negative implication of the childlike woman, the non-adult woman, the woman not able and not willing to take self-responsibility. Women, on the other hand, are conditioned towards submission, obedience, and doing as told. If it is not the father telling her what to do and how to do it, it is either the systems that surround her, or her husband.

It is because of their patriarchal upbringing that women in emotionally abusive relationships do not see the trap of giving-in for what it is. They dutifully comply because they tend to be stuck in believing this to be their only way of surviving (Horley, 2002). It is difficult to explain the impact of constant and continuous emotional battering. There are endless lists of the control and domination mechanisms (e.g., aggression, control through isolation, abusive communication, threats, rejection, exploitation and entrapment) used to keep the woman subservient and obedient to her male counterpart. Fact of the matter is, women do give in and become dutifully obedient.

Minette: In the beginning I used to ask my mom to help me out, but then he'd be so rude that she leaves and he will complain, "You and your family. She has never really liked me." So mom does not come around any more Like I used to go jogging with this sixty year old friend I had since varsity, but Ian thought we were having an affair. In the end I just stopped jogging At five to three he calls from the playground asking, "Where's my child?" and I go all whimpering He informs me that the house telephone bill needs to be paid (This is after she moved out and he is the only one having use of the telephone) and my first reaction is that maybe he is right. Maybe I am supposed to pay

the bill. It's this feeling of powerlessness in that he's able to manipulate my feelings, my thoughts and my logic.

True to Strümpfer's (2004) model of resilience and against all misconceptions of passivity, dependency and learned helplessness, the abused woman sets goals to overcome and find answers to the abusive situation. But, trained to be subordinate and dutifully obedient, she often has her focus re-directed by the extreme demands of the abuser. The woman takes his criticisms to heart and tries to do as expected only to learn that it will never be enough. This is so because the abuser was never concerned with the issues at hand, but was using them to establish or re-establish his position of domination and control. Listening to Minette her cultural sculpting becomes clear,

I had this conference in America, and he spoiled the whole trip for me by making me feel selfish. I would dutifully phone him, a 3 minute call costing me whatever, and he would be most disagreeable. It spoiled everything for me. Why did I allow him to influence me to that extent? It's my fault for always being so pleasing. I have this "I'm so sorry for taking up space-attitude, sorry to be alive attitude". I allow others to use me. ...I fall into this trap of blaming myself. How could I have chosen this man as my husband? There must be something seriously wrong with me for having got myself in this mess.

The emotionally abused woman attempts engage in resilient behaviour, in other words she attempts to do something to overcome or restructure the relationship (Strümpfer, 1999 & 2004). The stories of the women in the present research show the woman taking on more and more responsibility, always willing to try her best (Kirkwood, 1993). Karen makes do with less and less money to buy food, but she still manages to do whatever it takes to put away money to buy new towels. Her spouse, on the other hand, is working against her and nothing will be good enough. The more she tries, the more she fails. She is entrapped by her own efficiency, her own effectiveness and strength (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Dutton, 1992). Minette feels obligated to take care of Ian, and time and time again she steps in, only to have her efforts exploited. Instead of taking care of her own needs, she says,

I think I would have been willing to keep quiet if he made any effort whatsoever to help me with Duncan or the house. He's at home all day long, but he never as much as washes the dishes or offers to look after the baby while I cook dinner. If I ask him to do something,

the fighting starts ... Sometimes I try and reason and tell him how difficult my day has been, how I have to take care for the baby, my practice and still come home and cook dinner. How I need him to help me out ... At times I go into this nagging mode, but mostly I end up crying. I wish I can explain how this hurts. I even ask for his forgiveness because I honestly in that moment believe him to be right.

At first glance this may again seem like a nagging and dependent woman, willing to accept the situation as long as he's there for her and offers her the security of a man at her side. She positions herself true to the patriarchal script for women; a good wife script that has been superimposed on the good daughter script. She is willing to take all the responsibility for their home and baby as a good wife should. She will settle for next to nothing in the help department because of her own shame for not being able to cope better. But there is also the anger she feels because of her partner not sticking to the male patriarchal contract that he will always come to her aid when needed.

I suggest that because of these women's successes in the outside world, they feel guilty for not being as expected and therefore are trying their utmost to be the best where it matters to society; the home. She takes all responsibility for the abuse into herself and starts to blame herself (Hydén, 2005). She doubts herself and therefore has to try even harder. She also exerts herself because, being self-reliant, she realizes the unfairness of the power inequality or the unfairness of her place in the relationship (Jukes, 1999). Some women have not learned how to take on a situation with a desire to win and to generally take responsibility for their own success in life (Brownmiller, 2000; Crawford & Marecek, 1992). They in effect deny their own self-worth. This reminds me of the *Impostor Phenomenon*, relating that although some women do succeed in public life, they do not internalize their success, and doubting themselves they feel as if they have fooled everyone (Kahn & Yoder, 1989). Why else would they believe everything their spouses or partners throw in their faces (Kirkwood, 1993) or why would Minette constantly question the therapist in terms of "How do you know that I'm telling the truth, that my version is the correct version?"

It is never easy to change. It is even more difficult to go against society, one's own cultural history and the teachings of one's religion. The woman's wanting to do differently is taken as a violation of the sacred nature of matrimony, those rules that tell her to show respect and loyalty although she does not agree; those rules that tell her not to think and not to feel.

A Position of Resisting the Abuse

... men are taught to apologize for their weaknesses, women for their strength
Lois Wyse (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p.1)

Many therapists work from the premise that the woman in an emotionally abusive relationship has a choice regarding her reaction to the abuse. I have shown why and how women choose to deny the abuse and in other instances give in to the abuse. However, women also resist and challenge the abuser. Figure 9-2 I illustrate the women positioning herself as resisting the abuse through mechanisms such as confrontation and resistance, challenging and reflecting. She aims to be a person in her own right; to utilize agency in an interdependent manner.

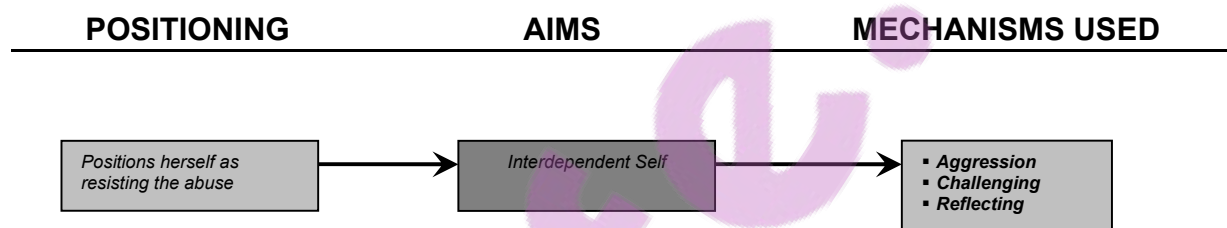


Figure 9-4: Positions herself as resisting the abuse

Working with the female partners of the emotionally abusive relationship, I was astonished by the strength, the resilience, and the clear headedness of most of these women. Greenspan (1983, p.308) in the same manner describes one of her abused clients as “a strikingly powerful woman: she was remarkably smart, physically vital, and quite wilful” in contradiction to the client’s story of “painful and crippling dependence.” Other authors describe these women as strong, confident, and capable (Horley, 2002; NiCarthy, 1982; Schwartz, 2000).

At school, Minette excelled both academically and in cultural pursuits. She describes herself as a driven and self-motivated person. She enjoys her work and to be successful in her profession is important to her. She therefore built a successful practice. Elaine describes herself as having been an over-achiever and strong-willed; “always asking questions” – behaviour that can be described as assertive and challenging. Working full-time and still completing a law degree in four years by means of part-time study through the University of South Africa also spell success and assertiveness. Karen proves her strength when she at the conclusion of therapy

manages to structure a new position for herself within her marriage, and Berna excelled as a student leader and is at a managerial level involved her at her children's school. Even just in glancing over the stories of women included in the study I am impressed by the women's level of qualifications and the occupational positions they hold.

Few women of these women will fit the stereotype of stay-at-home mothers with no alternative options in terms of self-support. I cannot see these women to completely fit under the thumb of the patriarchal conditioned spouse. It is difficult to imagine any of them not raising objections, not opposing a spouse they do not agree with or accepting everything they are told and asked to do. In listening to the women I weighed Leonore Walker's (1979, p.xii) summary that "perhaps violence erupted because women began to make their own decisions to control their lives" and found myself in agreement with Hydén's (2005) argument that the ways in which women oppose and resist violence have been underemphasized and insufficiently examined. The present research renders the following ways in which women resist the abuser and his mechanisms of control and domination.

Aggression: Confrontation and Opposition

Karen: He would tell everyone that I am in need of treatment and that there is something seriously wrong with me. I would get so angry at him I would rage at him ... wrong way of asking for his love, I suppose.

Personally I am extremely cautious when it comes to calling a woman's actions aggressive. Experience has taught that this often boils down to labelling the woman (Bernardez, 1988; Elworthy (1996), whereas it is not uncommon for an individual to retaliate with aggression when being manoeuvred into a corner. When one attempts to describe the woman's behaviour as confrontational much depends on the amount of aggression that accompanies the behaviour. Sometimes the women literally retaliate as a reaction to the frustration of constantly being provoked, not having him take her seriously or change his behaviour and because of the symptomatic arousal as found in a posttraumatic stress reaction to constant abuse (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Dutton, 1992; Miller, 1995; Rothman & Munson, 1988). On the other hand, some women do bicker, nag, constantly blame and pick fights. It will only be possible to determine if this is solely their manner, or retaliation to the abuser's actions, or the abusive man and society labelling her behaviour as aggressive or confrontational mainly

because she does not comply with the prescribed norms of behaving as a subservient woman. Greenspan (1983) has described women's original sin to be not completely surrendering to the male. As Johan, Karen's husband complains, "She screamed at me, 'I will not have my life regulated by your lists!'" or "She is always on the defensive."

Women mostly shy away from fighting back as aggression in women is frowned upon (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Collier, 1982; Hirigoyen, 2000), but women do show anger:

Berna: At first this was just the way life goes, but then – time and again - he went out and put me and the children through financial hardship yet again. I find it so unbelievably insensitive and uncaringly arrogant.

Or,

He will openly tell me I'm worthless and that when things go wrong "he will be the one that'll have to sort them out". Bloody hell, he will!

Some scholars indicate that when women do react in an aggressive fashion, it is mostly in self-defence (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993; Dickson, 2003; See Lloyd, 1999 for a number of researchers). But be it self-defence or retaliation, she is immediately and loudly accused of provocation (Dutton, 1992; Papp, 1988; Rothman & Munson, 1988). It has been said that verbal aggression always seems to be the forerunner to physical abuse (Gelles, 1974; Schumacher et al., 2001). I think it all depends on where one punctuates the incident (Tolman, 1992), as studies done on provocation in particular indicate the reasons men give for being provoked, range from the woman's being too talkative to not talking at all, being pregnant or not being pregnant, being frugal or extravagant, or not being submissive enough (Dobash & Dobash, 1980).

Helen: I remember me and my husband once having this argument, and no matter what I said, he turned it around, making me into the guilty party. I was so frustrated. Just giving-in, I tried to leave the room and he physically held me back. I lost it and repeatedly punched his arms and shoulders. He held up his forearm so that I couldn't get near him and there was this amusement in his eyes – sort of laughing at me. I ended up doing precisely that which I despise so much ... I really turned out of control ... I cannot describe the shame I felt.

Berna: He brings out the worse in me. I behave in a hateful manner.

However, some battered women experience a morbid hatred for the abuser, wishing him dead, wanting to harm him, and seeking retaliation (Dutton, 1992; Hirigoyen, 2000). It was only in April 2004 that South Africa had the landmark acquittal of a woman who allegedly murdered her husband in self-defence after years of physical and emotional abuse. Women who retaliate after years of psychological abuse are doubly riddled by guilt. They see the hatefulness of their partner's abuse and they have to cope with their own inexcusable retaliation.

Minette: There are times when I really wish I can get Ian out of our lives. At least then I'll know that Duncan will be safe. There are times when I actually sit and contemplate how to get back at Ian. I want him to suffer as I did, I want him to feel the pain, I want him to come crawling at me, saying he's sorry. I really need him to apologize, as I cannot believe that he wasn't aware of what he was doing.

Challenging: Being Assertive and Objecting

Minette: Every time he wants to start on a new course, we have these fights. I want him to go out and find a job; he wants to do another course. I have been supporting us for close to three years now, and the courses really cost an arm and a leg. So I stall and try and have him see my point of view.

The author and therapist Adam Jukes (1999) describes the male batterer as having great difficulty in dealing with projections of his nature, or simply with accusations that are not projective. Thus, one can understand Barnett and LaViolette and other author's earlier conclusion regarding the victim's verbal aggression provoking the abuser. Every challenge she presents is seen as a threat to his control and domination (Miller, 1995), and he escalates his abuse to maintain the upper hand. Every time she requests something from him, he labels her actions as nagging or unrealistic. He reacts with as much force as he deems necessary and justifies his behaviour by using her challenging behaviour against her.

In the same manner Dickson (2003, p.54) explains that "any protest is unacceptable, because it constitutes a threat" and "(t)hreats have to be eliminated." The abusive man cannot tolerate such an expression of self-reliance, and he will do anything in his power to subdue her. Much in the same manner Karen says, "If I differ from him in anything, there will be trouble" or "He never

gives you time to state your case, he always leaves the impression that he's never really interested in what you have to say." It therefore does seem that she opposes and tries to reason with her spouse. Often there is blaming and one can imagine these differences developing into a full blown fight with both partners not on their best behaviour.

During therapy Minette complains; she refers back to the "these fights", her constantly trying to reason with her spouse and indicates the number of times she has taken up some of the issues with her spouse. Should Minette, for example, assert herself and decide what to do all by herself, Ian retaliates with, "That's just like you, always wanting to control everything." Minette immediately falls into self-doubt, because women have been socialized into believing that looking after their own interest is an act of selfishness, and that their own self-determination is wrong and immoral (Miller, 1988). French (1981, p.258) purports that "when the cause was yourself, all the guilts rose up. How dare you fight for yourself? It was so selfish." Western culture, and in particular the traditional-conservative culture, is not at ease with women having power and therefore signs of dominance have conveniently been labelled in derogatory terms by the ruling class as illustrated here by Ian's reaction.

Reflecting: Discussion and Reasoning

I have often found the emotionally abused woman to be intelligent and clear-headed. Because of these qualities they consciously deal with life by asking questions, reflecting and are able to evaluate themselves and their situation in psychotherapy. Minette refers to discussing issues with her spouse but these discussions lead to further abuse and oppression from her spouse. She says, for example, "I try and reason with him" or "If I try to further reason with him he starts screaming at me." She also verbalizes the wish "if only we can talk", saying that "If I ask him" some sort of negativity or abuse will follow. Elaine, on the other hand is a highly intelligent and self-assured lawyer. She tells of having had a relationship with her father wherein they constantly discussed issues and in therapy she tends to constantly question, reason and discuss. And Karen says,

All these years I was trying to find what I did wrong, telling myself that there must be something I did to cause this. You try and you try to change, but nothing helps. He asks this and you do so, then he asks thus and again you do as asked, but he always needs something more, something else. It never is good enough.

Women become confused as they do not see the reason behind all the abuse heaped on them (Kirkwood, 1993). The women in this study constantly tried to reason out the “why” as they realized that their interpretation and that of the abuser differ. I argue that in most cases the woman does not intend to nag, pick a fight or confront her spouse. She has been reflecting on the abusive (or any other aspect of the relationship) and she wants to sort things out. She wants to understand in order to be able to better the relationship and she tries to reason with the abuser in the hope that he will understand; Evans (1993) calls this the explaining trap. I personally experience that in this age of warfare and aggression, some women still do not play the game of the survival of the fittest. They intuitively aim to work towards interdependence; seen as the basic law of all life. I recently reread Carol Lee Flinders’ *Rebalancing the World* (2002) in which she reiterates the same idea of working towards the age-old principle of “Belonging.”

But, appraisal is also the first step in building emotional resilience; resiliency defined “as a pattern of psychological activity which consists of a motive to be strong in the face of inordinate demands, the goal-directed behaviour of coping and rebounding, and of accompanying emotions and cognitions” (Strümpfer, 2004). Much has been written about women (as well as men) needing mutual sharing and emotional interdependence in their relationships. Not finding answers and not finding that which she needs from her close relationship the woman is faced with the choice of giving-in and denial or setting some goals as to how to try and remedy the situation or in the last instance when, if and how they should let go of the relationship.

Many emotionally abused women decide to leave the relationship in the end when the threat to her and her children looms too ominous. She decides to leave as and when she realizes that the abuse will never make cognitive sense (Antonovsky, 1987). She realizes that the control of the abusive behaviour lies mainly in the hands of the abuser, and although she can minimize it happening, she does not have the power to have it not happen again. Antonovsky (1987) also refers to finding meaning. Each abused woman who breaks away has her personal and meaning-giving reasons for doing so; many wanting to keep their children safe from the emotional abuse in the intimate or marital relationship. Personal growth is strongly implied. Again this belies the often cited truth of women being passive. More often the women are willing to walk the line for a better life as proven by the fact that more than half of the women in the study were divorced, separated, or had a divorce pending (usually initiated by the woman).

Abused women do in the end reach a situation where they realize that if she desires change, she will have to make the changes in her life. In a recent interview on feminism Gloria Steinem (2005, July) said and I quote her here as it can just as well apply to the woman having to make up her mind to leave the emotionally abusive relationship,

.... if you are part of the wrong group, nothing you do is right anyway! So you might as well do what you f***ing well please, you know! I mean, there's no way of behaving in order to get approval! First of all if you do that, you've given the approver all the power, secondly, it's the nature of being part of the wrong group that you won't be approved, you know, you can't be good enough to be a "good girl"! I would say: it just doesn't work. Because, the most comforting thing is: it just doesn't work! So you might as well do what you want to do, and use your talents and use your head, and point out unfairness.

Conclusion

Contrary to society's appraisal of the woman emotionally abused in a close personal relationship, these women often are strong and resilient women, but they also to a degree still feel the need to answer to the call of a patriarchal society. The totally subservient woman may be used and abused, but as she takes the situation as the way it is supposed to be, she can in a manner adapt. The woman who lends no ear to the expectations and rules of patriarchy frees herself from the need to conform. I do believe that it is the woman caught in the middle who suffers the most. She finds herself in this position through her upbringing in a specific society; a system she experiences as unfair to women, not answering to her needs and lending her no support in her personal growth and development.

In theory the emotionally abused woman has a choice how to live her life, but I have shown her entrapment in the system through a number of mechanisms that operate on a variety of levels. Most of these positionings by the woman are interpreted by her partner or spouse as a threat to his position and he ups his attack to control and dominate. Time and time again, all efforts to independent thought and behaviour are thwarted by the male positioning. All this brings us to the *how* of the emotionally abusive relationships. The processes involved in these relationships will be described in the following chapter.

SUMMARY OF THE WOMEN'S POSITIONING		
POSITIONING	AIMS	MECHANISMS USED
Positions herself as Fearful and anxious	<i>Dutiful Obedience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doing Fearfulness ▪ Doing Anxiety ▪ Doing Denial
Positions herself as Depressed	<i>Dutiful Obedience Denial of Anger</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doing Depression ▪ Doing Passivity ▪ Doing Learned Helplessness ▪ Doing Tolerance
Positions herself as Dependent	<i>Dutiful Obedience Seeks outside Validation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doing Dependency
Positions herself as Victim	<i>Dutiful Obedience Claims Security and Affection</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doing Victim
Positions herself as Resisting the Abuse	<i>Changing the Relationship</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aggression <i>Confrontation and Opposing</i> ▪ Challenging <i>Being Assertive and Objecting</i> ▪ Reflecting <i>Discussion and Reasoning</i>

Figure 9-5: Summary of the Women's Positioning

PART IV: A MODEL OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

CHAPTER 10: MAKING SENSE OUT OF EMOTIONAL ABUSE

One can either see a universe of things interacting with each other or a universe of interacting activities which give rise to things, moment after moment
Dostal (2004)

In attempting to understand emotional abuse I was impressed by the extent to which any experience, and therefore women experiencing emotional abuse within close relationships, is grounded in history, culture, society, and time frame of occurrence. The experience is embedded in the totality of a complex ecological context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Reality therefore becomes a construct of the culture, the history, and the society these women live in. The reality is also constructed through language, and shows in the contracts people negotiate between them in their relationships. The stories of the women coming from emotionally abusive relationships which I collected for this study showed that emotional abuse could not be attributed to the individual woman or man in the relationship alone.

Emotional abuse lies in the space and the interactions between the individuals, and therefore the abuse is constructed by the relationship. In reading and rereading the stories, I realized that these stories gave evidence of the existence of patterns as well as processes within the relationship. In this chapter I consolidated my interpretations of these patterns and processes. First I present a brief discussion of the relevant literature concerning abuse, descriptions thereof, and what had been written about patterns and processes in abuse until the present time. Then I present a model for making sense of emotional abuse in close relationships based on my interpretations of the case studies I analyzed for this project. Although I will, to a certain extent, be repeating myself in the first few paragraphs, I find it necessary to revisit the historical developments concerning issues of abuse before developing a new model of emotional abuse based on the many themes that emerged in this project.

Earlier Theories and Research

Early research conducted on abuse, domestic violence, and wife battering have been vast, systematic, and quantitative (Dutton, 1992; Gelles, 1974, 1987, 1993; Gelles & Cornell, 1985; Gelles & Straus, 1988; Marshall, 1994; O’Leary & Maiuro, 2001; O’Leary & Murphy, 1992; Straus, 1988, 1990; Tolman, 1992; Walker, 1979; Wallace, 1996). Although the psychological aspects of the abuse and the meaning of the abusive incident were considered, the focus was mainly on physical abuse (Dutton, 1992; Tolman, 1992). Dobash and Dobash (1977-78, 1980) saw violence against women as grounded in the patriarchal domination of women, and Dutton (1992) and Tolman (1992) concentrated on the abuser aiming for control of the victim. These authors also seriously considered historical and social elements, but the content of the individual experiences of the women is missing from their results and conclusions.

Lenore Walker (1979) concentrated her studies on the woman involved. She concerned herself mainly with physical battering, but not only described the abuse as the physical actions that lead to bodily harm and injury. Rather, Walker also accentuated the emotional torture found in the abusive situation as well as the whole process of abuse. She saw “a battered woman (as) a woman who is repeatedly subjected to any forceful physical or psychological behaviour by a man in order to coerce her to do something he wants her to do without any concern for her rights” (Walker, 1979, p.xv).

Walker described what she termed the *battered woman syndrome*, and she showed the myths pertaining to women in abusive relationships, the blaming of the woman for her own victimization, and the physical and emotional entrapment not realized by society. She saw abuse as part of learned aggression in a society where sex discrimination abounded, leading to the domination and control of the so-called weaker sex (Walker, 1979; Marshall, 1994). Walker’s main contribution concerning the battering of women was her theory of the cycle of abuse (as I will later discuss when describing the patterns found in the abusive relationship).

The focus gradually shifted to emotional or psychological abuse as a separate entity and the widespread nature of the abuse was accentuated (Loring, 1994; Miller, 1995). Themes were identified that are still present within the phenomenon of emotional abuse; themes such as women and society not recognizing the abuse for what it is, and women searching within themselves for the causes.

Further themes evolved. The concept of emotional abuse as an *ongoing process* started winning field (Loring, 1994). Intermittent patterns were described as presenting in both covert and overt form (Loring, Davic & Myers, 1994), and description of emotional abuse now changed from an isolated incident to a consistent pattern of behaviours whereby the male is using the power bestowed on him by society to demean and control the women (Douglas, 1996; Hirigoyen, 2000; O'Connor, 2000). In the same manner Chang (1996), taking a feminist stance, and others (Horley, 2002; Jukes, 1999; Miller, 1995) placed the emotional abuse of women central to the norms and workings of patriarchal society, and therefore on gender and on stereotyping. The male abuser was described as positioning himself in accordance with patriarchal entitlement and narcissism (Jukes, 1999; Miller, 1995). He showed no respect for women, and he objectified and used them to his advantage (Hirigoyen, 2000).

The impact of the oppression of women within the family structure was now described as the ways in which meaning was constructed in the emotionally abusive relationship (Chang, 1996; Horley, 2002). Loring (1994) took a systemic approach to emotional abuse and considered both partners as contributing to the abusive relationship, not again making women out as solely responsible and an accomplice to the abuse. On the other hand, Loring was well aware of the danger of not taking into account the suffering and the inequality in power facing the victim, as the systemic approach is often accused of doing so.

Kay Douglas (1996, p.16) placed the blame for the emotional abuse solely in the hands of the male partner, stating that "underlying a man's lack of emotional responsibility ... is often sadism. Many men positively and knowingly relish the drama, the tension, the increase in adrenaline that abusing their partner can bring them." Jukes (1999) supported Douglas in her description of sadistic intent, but Miller (1995) did not see this as sadism, as there was no pleasure in inflicting the pain, only the overall need for dominance and control.

The Cycle of Violence Theory

To my knowledge Lenore Walker (1979) was the first to describe a pattern of abuse, calling it the *Cycle of Violence*. The Cycle of Violence Theory (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993) explained why women remained in violent relationships. As with all theories, this theory could only encapsulate part of a truth, a truth as applicable when created within its immediate time and space frame. This truth was accepted and held up as valid and valuable by researchers and

psychologists—all those researchers and psychologists who benefited from describing the woman in the relationships as an unthinking peon in a game of chess.

Walker (1979) described three distinct phases, varying in time and intensity, varying from couple to couple and within the relationship of the same couple.

The Tension-Building Phase

The first phase in the cycle of violence against women was characterized by minor battering incidents (Walker, 1979). The woman usually handled these incidents by trying to calm and placate the abuser through behaviour that previously proved successful. Her coping with the minor incidents was seen as an indication that she accepted the legitimacy of the abuse and in taking some of the responsibility she was branded as an accomplice to the abusive act.

Walker's focus on the woman must be seen as valuable development in the research on abuse in general. Unfortunately, the woman's behaviour was still described in a manner that fell into the traditional trap of, to a certain extent, blaming the woman and thus blaming the victim. There was no reflection on the woman's position of strategic coping, or her valuing relationship-building more than the occurrence of the abusive incidents, or of her challenge and opposition to the abuse. Walker described the woman as denying her anger and accepting the guilt. The woman minimized or excused the incident, because she knew that it could have been worse (Walker, 1979). The woman who positioned herself as expected within traditional patriarchal society was overlooked, and her programmed stance of being dutifully obedient was ignored. Her well-trained positioning of taking responsibility for the emotional continued existence of the relationship therefore went unnoticed. As no one was really listening to the woman, no one paid any attention to the development of the abuse in the relationship (the space) between the abuser and the abused.

In her explanation of the first stage, Walker (1979) described the woman as sinking into powerlessness and helplessness as she realized that nothing she said and did would prevent the next stage of the cycle from occurring. The batterer, believing that he had found passive acceptance for his behaviour, saw no point in further controlling his actions. But each minor incident left residual tension, and as these incidents increased, the psychological interplay continued and escalated, until the tension became unbearable and resulted in an acute

battering incident (Douglas, 1996). Walker (1979) also stated that the batterer knew his behaviour was unacceptable, as was proven by the fact that he did not take the battering out in public. What she did not clearly bring out in the open, however, was the batterer's need to show his power and why he needed to show such a hierarchical need to dominate and control.

The Acute Battering Incident

The acute battering incident, as the second phase in the pattern of woman abuse, was characterized by a discharge of built-up tension, destructiveness, and lack of control. The trigger was often something the woman did or did not do or say (Walker, 1979). The batterer's goal was interpreted as wanting to teach the woman a lesson, and so a rationalization or justification for his behaviour was covertly implied. Likewise, there was nothing the woman could do to stop him—he stopped when he wanted to, when he was emotionally depleted or exhausted. But, most importantly, the relatively less important physical blows suffered during this stage paled in comparison to the woman's emotional experiences of the psychological entrapment that followed, as well as her experiencing of the futility of trying to escape (Walker, 1979).

On the part of the woman, disbelief and dissociation followed, and similar to the reactions suffered by catastrophe victims, she could suffer an emotional collapse after the attack, or she became listless, depressed, and felt helpless further pushing her towards entrapment (Walker, 1979). Again, the unfortunate implication was an implied weakness in the women themselves, not a normal reaction to an abnormal situation as was usually attributed to posttraumatic stress syndrome.

The Phase of Loving Contrite

The final phase in the cycle of violence was characterized by contrite and loving kindness from the man. He begged forgiveness and promised it would never happen again. The woman, caught up in the traditional values of love and marriage, felt responsible for not being able to prevent the violence, or being made to feel guilty by those around her, so she believed and forgave him. Slowly, as the one cycle followed onto another, the woman was filled with contempt for herself as she gave in, time after time (Walker, 1979). Contrary to the

learned helplessness attributed to the woman, nothing was said of women's continual hopefulness. It was as if the millennia of male oppression had cemented women's communal feelings of inferiority. Women were entrapped by their programmed selflessness.

Critique on the Cycle of Violence Theory

To summarize, it could be said that Walker describes interpersonal violence, especially wife battering, as cyclic in nature. Gondolph (1988, in Worell & Remer, 1992) questioned the cycle of violence theory, and found that the batterer showing remorse was the exception to the rule. Dobash and Dobash (1980) agreed, and reasoned that the man acted in an off-hand manner, showed little or no remorse, and was seldom willing to apologize. They further argued that the abusive man did not take responsibility for what was happening in the relationship and stated that after the violent episode, the partners did not reconcile, they "just drift back together again" (Dobash & Dobash, 1980, p.119).

As far as my survey of earlier literature went, Loring (1994) was the only author I came across who did not fully agree with the cyclical pattern described by Walker. In relating what she called psychological abuse, Loring described the abuse escalating in a more linear manner rather than through repeated cycles. Later scholars question Walker's differentiation between the three stages (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Dutton, 1992) as they argue that the honeymoon phase grew shorter over time, and the tension-building and violent phases became longer (Burstow, 1992), or that the tension-building phase increased and intensified and the phase of reconciliation became shorter, less intense, and even ceased to exist (Douglas, 1996). Walker (1979) later described the last phase as more of a cessation of the violence (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993). I presume that what Walker described as the three phases of abuse reminded me of what more recent authors identified as the intermittent nature of abuse (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000; Loring, 1994; Loring et al., 1994; Marshall, 1994).

Most researchers who followed in Walker's footsteps described the abuse as escalating over time (Douglas, 1996; Dutton, 1992; Miller, 1995). They also agreed that abuse was in some way or another, an organized way of relating. Loring (1994) as well as Loring, et al., (1994) stated that a pattern in the emotionally abusive relationship did exist, but rather than being cyclic it was described as linear. Some scholars referred to the abuse as holding those "involved in an established pattern of behaviour" (Barnett & LaViolette, 1993, p.xxii). Chang (1996) then

describes emotional abuse (psychological abuse) as an evolving process involving shifts in both partners and in the relationship, and refers to the changes taking place in both partners as the relationships progress. Some authors describe the stop-and-go process within the abuse as what kept the abused on tenterhooks, never knowing what to expect (Miller, 1995). It was the intermittent nature of the abuse that seemed to be most effective in controlling the abused, the islands of shared positive experiences and feelings that fire the abused woman's hopefulness (Douglas, 1996; Matlin, 1987). The cessation of violence, or the covert abuse juxtaposed with more positive behaviour increased the uncertainty of the abused woman as she questioned the truth of her perceptions (Follingstad & DeHart, 2000).

The Patterns of Emotional Abuse

As I listened to the stories presented in the present project of women that were involved in emotionally abusive relationships, I was able to identify definite patterns to the incidences of emotional abuse. I caution the reader to take these patterns as descriptions of emotional abuse occurring in close relationships and that these cannot be seen as applicable to other situations wherein emotional abuse occurs. These patterns also differed from the concept of common couple violence as they showed a lack of the patterned control seen in physically abusive relationship (Arriaga & Oskamp, 1999b; Greene & Bogo, 2002). Four different patterns of emotional abuse unfolded as typical of the occurrence of emotional abuse in close relationships (See Figure 10-1, p. 231).

Type I: A Pattern of Abusive Incidents

Within the pattern depicted as a Pattern of Abusive Incidents the relationships mostly started off from an atmosphere relatively free of overt and covert abusive incidents, but from time to time high-voltage abusive incidents occurred which sometimes lasted for a few of days. Although there were a few abusive incidents over a particular period of time, the emotional barometer of the relationships could be described as always returning to more or less base line. Unfortunately the abusive incidents carried consequences. Similar to relationships where physical abuse was a factor, once an incident of abuse occurred, the underlying threat of a re-occurrence was always present. The threat not only lingered and had an influence on the

relationship, but with each new incident, the threat escalated, and the entrapment within the relationship grew.

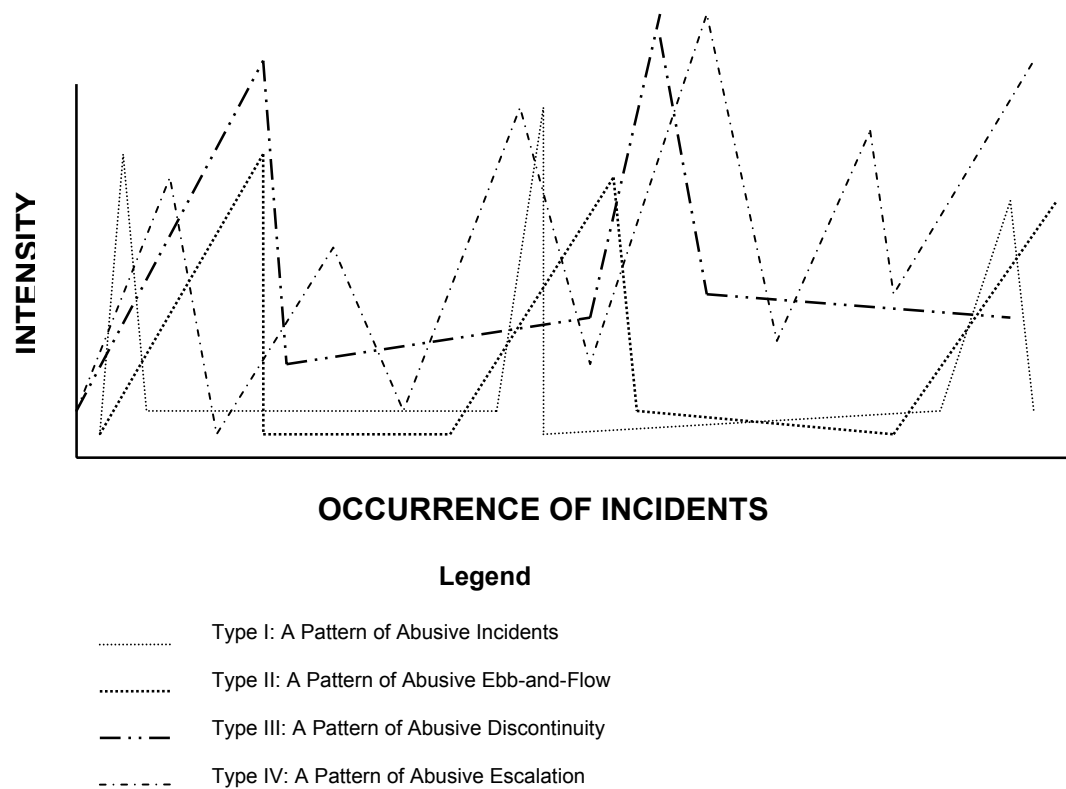


Figure 10-1: Patterns of abuse in close relationships

Within all relationships, a fall-out could occur from time to time. Although the ideal of two adults sorting out and negotiating their differences in a mature fashion would be possible, this did not always reflect reality. The experiences of the women in therapy with me were mostly an argument or quarrel resulting, wherein the degrees of emotional control as well as the abusive nature of the contact hugely differed. It seemed that, because of the low level of emotional upheaval caused by some incidents, the marriage, partnership, or relationship would follow its course. It was only with the occurrence of intensely high-level abusive incidents that the equilibrium of the unity suffered. The psychological pain, self-doubt, and all the other consequences of emotional abuse would now continuously influence the behaviour of the female partners in the relationships and the emotional health of the relationship.

These intermittent abusive incidents did not always turn out to escalate in terms of the intensity of their abusive nature. Whether or not there was an increase would be a further construction of the relationship that depended on the further positioning of both players. This construction in turn depended on influences from outside of the relationship, where one partner either took a different stance, or where both developed as persons and found workable solutions to differences.

In the case of Karin (See Case study on p.90), the intensity of the abuse did increase, which she attributed to her becoming stronger. Strangely enough, her “becoming stronger” had both a negative and a positive outcome. At first, the intensity of the abuse increased, following the abusive process that will shortly be described. But then Karin came for therapy and some changes ensued. She cried out her pain and verbalized her anger, coming to a better understanding of the whole phenomenon of emotional abuse, and thereby rid herself of both her guilt and her self-doubt. She thus grew in making peace with herself, and could weather the abusive incidents that now followed with stoic indifference. With a deadpan expression, she communicated her inner belief that, no matter what Johan did or said, she did not need respond, take it to heart, or allow herself to be hurt. If Karin continued in the same manner, the emotional climate of the relationship would most likely increase in a positive manner, because Johan will still find issues to fight about but Karen will not show the expected reaction, which would defuse the situation.

On the other hand, a couple in couple’s therapy, Mandy and Ricus, would most probably end their relationship in divorce. In this case, Mandy grew through her managerial exposure in her professional life. She started reading, and in general broadened her perspective in life. Ricus, on the other hand, stayed put and still demanded:

I need my wife to be submissive and respectful. I prefer women to be humble and obedient in their demeanour, and I will not allow Mandy to do as she likes. Why can’t she come home and see to dinner ...

In this case, a different abusive pattern emerged.

Type II: A Pattern of Abusive Ebb-and-Flow

In the Pattern of Abusive Ebb-and-Flow, the relationship started out in a similar fashion to the one described above, characterized by the intermittent occurrence of abusive incidents. The incidents started out of from a baseline relatively free from abuse and conflict, to always returning more or less to the base line space in the relationships. There usually followed a time of respite that could last for a couple of days or a longer period, before the tension started building up again. Although this might sound similar to the first pattern described, there was a distinct difference. In the case of a Pattern of Abusive Incidents the periods of “normality” were much longer, to such an extent that there could literally be no incident for a few years. Secondly, whereas in a Pattern of Abusive Incidents these abusive incidents did not include much build up prior to the outburst and could occur suddenly, whereas in the Pattern of Abusive Ebb-and-Flow there was a build-up of tension before the actual outburst. This particular ebb-and-flow constituted the patterning of this kind of abusive relationship.

Berna’s story fits this particular pattern. For twenty odd years she and her spouse had a marriage that an outsider would have seen as relatively happy. What was kept secret was the on and off incidents of extreme emotional abuse that surfaced from time to time.

The last two patterns are characterized as being the most violent.

Type III: A Pattern of Abusive Discontinuity

The Pattern of Abusive Discontinuity closely resembled the cycle of violence as described by Walker (1979). However, the abusive incidents were not cyclic in nature, but rather intermittent, as there was a clear break from the abuse. During these periods of normality, life apparently went on as always, but on an emotional level there was movement. Irrespective of the break in the occurrence of abusive incidents, the woman suffered. On the one hand, she was constantly reminded of what marriage and the love for her spouse/partner means to her, and she sustained herself by hoping for a miracle. However, on the other hand, each new incident escalated the pain she suffered, the doubt and the self-incrimination. Gradually her soul started to die. Sometimes her love for the spouse diminished, but usually the most difficult decision was to actually leave the relationship because of the emotional abuse because she did still love her partner.

The woman also experienced a huge amount of resentment that from time became apparent in either overt or covert form. This resentment would in turn further break down the already shaky relationship. The intensity of the abusive incidents therefore tended to increase, and an increase in occurrence was not unusual. Elaine eloquently explains (See Appendix A),

You go on with your day to day life. The abuse occurs, but the rest of your life is good – even fantastic. So you choose to overlook the negative part. I was so naïve ... You just ignore what you did not want to see, until it gets so glaringly obvious. Now thinking back, I think it's just like childhood abuse, "because I enjoy it doesn't make it less wrong" ... I lost my self in this relationship; in the end it was hell.

Type IV: A Pattern of Abusive Escalation

A Pattern of Abusive Escalation more or less followed the same pattern as the previous. The abuse was intermittent in nature, and there was a gradual increase in both the occurrence of incidents and the intensity of the incidents. But, there never seemed to be a period devoid of tension. Although there was ebb and flow in the level of intensity, the overall barometer of tension was rising. This description of the abusive relationship tallied with Chang's findings in her study of psychologically abusive relationships. Participants in her study described that a break or respite from the abusive behaviour was almost nonexistent (Chang, 1996).

Although this type of abusive relationships would most likely be the first step towards a total break up of the relationship, they did not always end in divorce. In the cases where the participants showed more co-dependency than in the other patterns, the relationship, although high in violence, did seem to lead to some sort of need-fulfilment in both partners. It could also be that in this relationship the woman was practically entrapped because of financial and other reasons, and refused to give-in and give-up.

Summary of the Patterns of Abuse in Close Relationships

I concluded that there were four patterns in the occurrence of emotional abuse within close personal relationships. In the preceding section I described these patterns of emotional abuse in close relationships, keeping in mind that one cannot fit people and relationships into definite categories. Although these patterns described the alternating patterns of abusive incidents, they were done with wide and diffuse brush strokes and were not always helpful to explain the extent of variance found in emotionally abusive relationships. There was a great variety as to the intensity of the abuse and as to the influence of the abuse, as well as when and if there was tension build-up. It did, however, account for the undertone of anxiety and fear and the varying intensity thereof that prevailed in these emotionally abusive relationships.

In some of the emotionally abusive relationships, the intensity and the occurrence of the abusive incidents flattened or even decreased over time. This decrease in intensity and occurrence is attributed to either both players developing and positioning themselves in a more congruent manner or the woman finally giving-in, totally losing herself, and giving herself over to passive tolerance. The increasing emotional abuse in, for example Berna's case (See Case study on p. 101), I took as primarily a result of Kevin's increased drinking and the cumulative effect of the affairs he had, but also again as a result of Berna's steady growth as a woman.

Some scholars have stated that psychological abuse developmentally preceded the physical abuse of women, and that the female partner's psychological aggression usually paved the way for the male partner's physical aggression (Dobash & Dobash, 1980; Schumacher et al., 2001). Although I did find the occasional denial of physical abuse occurring in the emotionally abusive relationships, I could not interpret these as the beginning of a later physically abusive relationship. These cases that I studied also did not all show an increase in intensity over period time that is characteristics of most battering (physically abusive) relationships.

The Processes of Emotional Abuse

As I listened to the stories women told, and as I went back to other authors' description of incidents of abuse, it became clear that there was a definite way in which people perpetrated emotional abuse. This could be described as the processes of emotional abuse, and in this context, I took the concept of process to mean "a particular course of action intended to achieve

a result or a phenomenon marked by gradual changes through a series of stages” (Wordnet, 2003). The Merriam-Webster Medical Dictionary (2002) described a process as “a natural progressively continuing operation or development marked by a series of gradual changes that succeed one another in a relatively fixed way and lead towards a particular result.” A process therefore entails a number/series of bigger or smaller steps or stages that follow one another in a prescribed manner, this leads to a more or less specific result.

Within the process of emotional abuse I therefore concluded that it was a process driven by issues of power and control that aimed at the establishment or re-establishment of power-control relationship between the partners in a close relationship (Chang, 1996; Hirigoyen, 2000; Loring, 1994). Although Horley used of the term “pattern,” her description referred to a process, as she saw abuse as “systematic, patterned behaviour on the part of the abusive man, designed – consciously or subconsciously – to control and dominate ‘his woman’” (Horley, 2002, p.15).

Step by Step through the Process

I have positioned the phenomenon of emotional abuse as far as it applied to the women I represented here, within a culture of traditional, conservative patriarchy, presuming that the processes may be different given different circumstances. Coming from a position of male dominance, the male partner had no scruples about what he wanted. With the powers of all patriarchal systems behind him, he knew that she would take care of his needs simply because she was a woman, and thus he could proceed to graciously win her over. She, on the other hand, saw the charming companion he seemed to be, and thought that, judged by this track record, he would honour her. He listened to her and she believed he would take her needs into consideration as well as take care of her because she looked at him through glasses covered with a stereotypical glaze of a woman’s protection by a male partner.

The unwritten scripts did work out within heterosexual relationships as long as both parties stayed within the lines. When Cudd (2000) describes the hierarchical positioning of the patriarchal male in terms of a father-as-director model, it is assumed that there is equality and therefore no need for competing for resources. Being the strong male, he will unselfishly protect and for this promise of security, she is willing to stand in obedience to his sovereign power. And all is well in marital bliss.

If she now considers him to be unhappy, or if he shows his dissatisfaction in some way, within this stereotypical model she assumes herself to be at fault in some way or another. She therefore adapts and changes until she gets it right. Everything turns out according to plan, because she has attended to his needs and wants (Chang, 1996), and when he is happy, he reciprocates in kind.

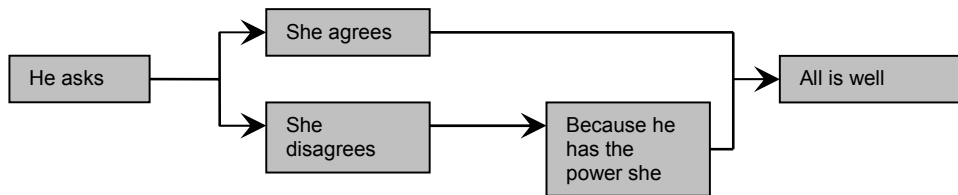


Figure 10-2a: Process in the patriarchal relationship

Should he ask for something and she does not agree, the patriarchal context within society and culture stipulates that he has the last say. So by his upping the power that lies within his position, she retreats back into her place (Illustrated in Figure 10-2a). Should she ask for something he agrees on, he plays the loving husband and unselfishly gives. Should she, on the other hand, ask for something he does not agree with, he has the power to say no. Because of the power of the dominant male, she listens, obeys, and falls into line, and all is well (See Figure 10-2b). But a different scenario plays itself out within the abusive relationship.

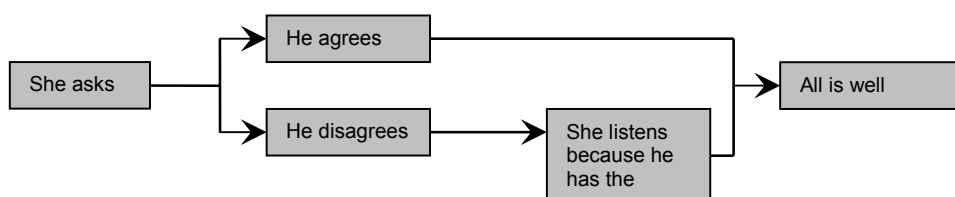


Figure 10-2b: Process in the patriarchal relationship

The overall process of emotional abuse basically stayed the same, but the points of entrance and departure varied. There was something chillingly narcissistic in the manner in which the abuser consciously stalked the victim, confusing her by constantly pressuring her and watching over her, destabilizing her, reproaching her in a vague and fuzzy way so that there was no way

she could reason herself out of it. The intensity, the devious manner in which the entrapment was accomplished made for unsettling and disturbing reading matter (Hirigoyen, 2000).

Diagram of Processes

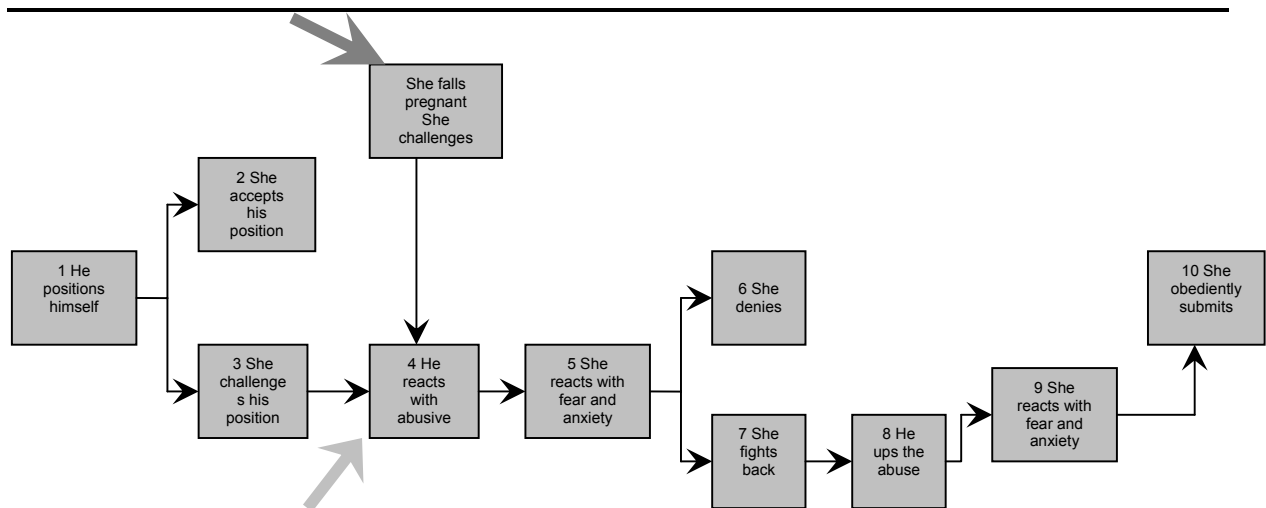


Figure 10-3: Step by step diagram of the processes in emotional abuse

I deduced the step by step process of doing emotional abuse from the stories the abused women told me during psychotherapy (See Figure 10-3). The following table (See Figure 10-4) offers a basic synopsis of the process, but I will explain this in more detail through further examples of the women's experiences of the abusive situation.

The Process of Emotional Abuse

The emotional abuser makes excessive demands, be it sexual or acts of extreme possessiveness, domination, and control. He positions himself (1) using mechanisms of domination and control as described in chapter 8 (The numbers in parenthesis refers to the numbers used in Figure 10-3).

His spouse can now assume one of two positions:

- She can deny her own feelings, perceptions and reality, and accept his positioning of her as the lesser person in the hierarchical relationship (2) (Also see Figure 10-2a&b).
 - She submits to the dominant power that lies within his positioning and assumes a stereotypical position of femaleness; playing strictly according to the stereotypical role prescriptions, and as this is the expected norm, everything turned out peacefully.
 - He has accomplished his goal of having an obedient slave at his beck-and-call.
 - She challenges his position (3). In doing this, she in effect does not keep to the contract of adhering to his wishes and needs.
 - He forcefully manipulates and pushes her back into the position he wants her to be by either using subtle or overt, controlling or violent mechanisms of control (4). He may also pacify her with tokens of giving-in, making some changes, and listening to her needs (O'Connor, 2000) (As, for example, Ian promising to help Minette with the IT-related issues). She accepts the token (or again deny her own self – 6), and all is well, until she realizes she has been manipulated or conned.
 - Subsequently or whenever he again ups his forceful attempts to dominate and control, she might challenge again (7) and the process starts all over again. If he increases the abusive behaviour (8), she reacts with fear and/or anxiety, feels guilty and doubts herself (9). The guilt makes her submit to his wishes the next time he makes a demand, and he accomplishes his goal of having an obedient slave at his beck-and-call (10).
 - She may decide, at a future point, to challenge him again resulting in the process to repeat itself with her experiencing increasing
-

levels of fear and anxiety. As well as self-doubt.

Figure 10-4: The process of emotional abused explained

The Process Model Applied

In the case of Minette, for example, she fell pregnant and Ian feared that her attention would be turned away from him; that he would no longer be the centre of attention. If his wife then either had less energy to bestow on him and his specific needs, or if she re-directed some energy towards the baby (a challenge to his position as the most important person in her life), his worst fears became a reality. He reacted in a controlling and dominant way (4) (The numbers in parenthesis refers to the numbering in Figure 10-3), as he wanted to force her attention back onto him. She only saw his selfishness, but could still give him the attention he asked for. However, by doing so she denied her own feelings and her new-mother exhaustion (6). She also confronted him and resisted his attempts to position her as only there to heed his needs (7). The confrontation made him bring in the cavalry, punishing her and kicking her out of their bedroom (8).

Jukes (1999, p.12) explained the process,

Every abusive attack I have heard about occurs when women, either passively or actively express needs or wants or fail to demonstrate that they are positioned response-ably, waiting, expectant, to their male partner. It is not necessary that female desires be in conflict with men's desires. It is enough that they are expressed. Not being response-ably positioned, waiting expectantly for a male desire, or indeed anticipating it, is expressive of a woman's desire to be subject, agent to her own desire. This is enough to trigger abusive controlling behaviour from a man.

The dance between the abuser's violent behaviour and the abused reacting by either resisting or submitting could become a never-ending pattern (Schwartz, 2000). The abuser could continue to up his control mechanisms, until his spouse or partner turns back and keep to the original contract. Because the emotionally abused woman experiences the abuser as not taking

care of her as contracted, she continuously challenges him. If the abuser does not return to the original contract, the abused woman could give in and give up, or she could in the long run call in her losses and decide to leave. She turns her attention inward and tries to reason out where she was in the wrong, what subjected her to a position of shame and the acceptance that she was to blame. Even if she does not find the fault in herself, she submits to the abuser's positioning in the hope that he will return to the original position of a caring and supportive companion.

Helen's story:

Not only being wife and mother but also a practicing psychologist was very important to me and I tried my utmost to keep up with colleagues, both on an intellectual manner, but also socially. Although Tom was always the first to admit to the relevance of social networking in business, this did not apply to my situation. If I had to attend anything from a conference to a social get-together, he would be ever so kind but piled on the guilt (4); he was working so hard and how could I expect him to attend, and what about the children. Usually he did then attend, but was so critical, aloof and irritable that I stood not change of ever enjoying myself. Furthermore he thus embarrassed me in front of people who meant a lot to me (4). In the end, I stupidly, accepted less and less invitations and so isolated myself (10).

The woman could also enter the process by arguing for more freedom, respect, or equality (Jones in Jones & Brown, 2000, 28-29). Mandy and Ricus were in a constant battle. She challenged Ricus by becoming active in community work. He experienced fear of losing his dominant hold over his spouse and retaliated by a show of force – verbally attacking her – or by gestures reminding her of the other times he verbally denigrated her (4). Fearing him (5), Mandy usually retreated (6) and thus in effect laid the foundations for him using the same ploy again when he experienced her as not complying with his wishes. In fear, she submitted (10) and apologized as if she was to blame, and obediently followed his lead in the hope that peace would be restored.

Mandy: He yanked me into our bedroom and hissed at me, "I am sick and tired of your attitude. You know I want you to be a soft-spoken and submissive wife. I will not tolerate you behaving in this manner. If you do not stop this nonsense immediately, you will force me into taking away your check book."

The male partner can position himself as dominant or dependent in the relationship (O'Connor, 2000), also a process played out between Mandy and Ricus. Ricus constantly manipulated Mandy by pleading with her; subtly forcing her to take the responsibility for their marital strife.

Ricus said,

I will do as you ask me as long as you truly show me your love. I need your love to start working on the issues you want me to. If I do something wrong, I need you to softly correct me in a kind and caring voice.

However, the moment she placed herself in a position which faintly resembled the dominant position he felt was his prerogative, he retaliated with emotional violence, blaming her and calling her names. He entrapped her in a double-bind and then blamed her,

Everything I do, you seem to find fault with. Why are you constantly contradicting my orders? You are not going to tell me what I should do. I know right from wrong and will do as I see fit. I can do without your dyke-manners. Has no-one ever taught you how to be a woman?

Other men tried to play crazy, took to alcohol or developed a depressed stance – forcing the spouse into caring and nurturing behaviour. The woman usually submitted because of fear of having to take sole responsibility. So, in the end, he got what he bargained for in the initial contract; someone to cater to his needs. Some abusive men saw, what they called, the castrating bitch or the victim who refuses to give in as the ultimate challenge (Hirigoyen, 2000). He specifically targeted her because of her capacity to resist authority and pressure. He pursued her for her strong character; he turned into the adoring admirer to win her over, and she submitted in relief that the abuse has subsided. The moment she returned to the appropriate slave mode as expected, he again treated her as a slave-object; there to see to his needs.

Helen: I was always most upset by Tom's going into one of his drooping shoulder stages whenever we did not agree on something. By having everybody questioning me as to why he was so unhappy, I really felt the pressure. I mean it's always either the women's fault, or she has to make it right again ... In the end you just give in and apologize. When it gets up to two weeks and you haven't spoken a word, it just gets too much! In the end you're

just too tired to care – thinking that if you do as he says, you will at least lift some of the pressure, and perhaps you can then figure out what to do. In the meantime, he has long ago already figured it out and won the game.

The abuser also behaved in such a calculated aggressive manner as to deliberately unleash a huge amount of anxiety in his partner (Hirigoyen, 2000). She usually reacted in a defensive manner, giving him the justification for yet another and more intense attack. The abused woman submitted, confused, disorientated, and ashamed by her behaviour. She found herself in the “fog”, similar to that caused by emotional blackmail as described by Forward (1997, p.6).

Mandy: He will just go on and on and on ... I promise you, he will go on blaming, nagging, screaming, reasoning with you, forcing you ... forcing until you cannot take it any more. I remember one time I completely lost it and started screaming, yelling I wasn't really saying anything, I was just bawling ... just making these horrible noises. In the end I ended up curled into a fetus position on the bathroom floor. Now he had something new to taunt me with ... playing games with me to try and drive me crazy.

Berna: I think it all began when I started developing an own personality. All of a sudden I wasn't in the “yes, dear” mode any more, and he couldn't take that. He brings out the worst in me. I truly hate myself for the things I sometimes say and do.

Helen: It would go on right through the night ... mostly because sexually you didn't perform as wanted ... this endless reasoning of his; trying to win you over and force you to understand how wrong you are and that he all along had the right answer; if you'd only have listened to him ... on and on ... and if you wanted to leave, he'd forcefully bring you back to bed. In the end I just stopped listening and answering him, but that really made him angry ... I was so ashamed of myself for being in such a degrading situation ...

In putting forward a model to enhance further understanding of the patterns and processes of emotional abuse, I underscored the power-issues involved through the forcefulness of the man's behaviour and identified the coercive and narcissistic behaviour mechanisms he uses. I also maintained that the abusive man positions himself in a number of positions; all having as goals the domination, control and submission of the woman. No matter how strong and resilient the woman; her agency was effectively curtailed.

Wrapping up

Walker (1979, p.xv) described battering as “any forceful physical or psychological behaviour ... to coerce (her) to do something he wants ... without any concern for her rights.” Straus and Gelles (in Cahn, 1996) even more than Walker accentuated the intentional nature of the abuse and concentrated on the pain and physical damage caused to the woman. They see physical abuse as, “an act carried out with the intention, or the perceived intention, of causing physical pain or injury to another person” (Cahn, 1996, p.467). Tolman (1992, p.292) wasted no words in his definition of what I call emotional abuse, “broadly construed, psychological maltreatment can be any behaviour that is harmful or intended to be harmful to the well-being of a spouse.” The intent of the abuser is illustrated by the aggression, the violence and the abuse. No matter the mechanisms used, harm is always the end result (Cahn, 1996; Marshall, 1994; Tolman, 1992).

In conclusion, I argue that emotional abuse could not be attributed to characteristics of either the female or the male partner in a close relationship. Emotional abuse is constructed in the interactions between the partners. The abusive behaviour emerged as a result of the patriarchal male wanting to establish or re-establish his dominant position, while the female partner vacillates between a position of giving in or denial on the one hand, or challenging and opposing the abuser on the other hand.

PART V: BRINGING THE VOICES TOGETHER

CHAPTER 11: NO ONE IS GOING TO LISTEN—SO QUESTION AND DO!

*I tore myself away from the safe comfort of certainty through my love for truth;
and truth rewarded me*
Simone de Beauvoir

Post-modern thinking means questioning the taken-for-granted truths (Flax, 2003). The postmodern parent teaches her children to question everyone and everything: their parents and teachers, advertisements, and religion. However, when it comes to the general position of women in society the macro-system, society and the individual prefer to go on believing in the dated, grand narratives of truth and of positivist thinking (DeVault, 1999; Roiser, 1997). Some misconceptions about women and their place in society have not changed. Double standards still prevail when it comes to women. Patriarchal society pledges an alliance to equality, but do not accept women as fully equal under all circumstances. The organized church proclaims equal love for women, but keeps them from executive leadership in the church. Men rally for mutual understanding as long as they have the last and final say.

After more than a quarter of a century, we are today still confronted with the same issues of women's abuse in a society in which discrepancies, excuses, and justifications surround women's lives. There were changes after the groundbreaking work of Dobash and Dobash (1977-78, 1980), D.G. Dutton (1988, 2003), M.A. Dutton (1992, 1996), Marshall (1994, 1996), Straus (1988, 1990), Tolman (1992), and Walker (1979). Today, most relatively sophisticated and intelligent individuals know that rape, for example, is not a sexual crime or a crime of passion, but a violent and aggressive transgression against women. In the same manner, people will generally associate power and aggression with most forms of abuse. My objective with the present research was to obtain some clarity on the *how* of emotional abuse.

As a therapist, I am regularly confronted with female clients caught up in the so-called truths of their upbringing. Although a single research project cannot change the way in which society thinks, I am of the opinion that gaining a better or new understanding of the phenomenon of emotional abuse in close relationships will enable me to bring small changes in the lives and experiences of the women whose lives I touch. Therefore the research is *for* women, me included.

I must point out, however, that although I use the word “women” throughout my writing, I do so for the sake of brevity. In no way do I wish to imply that I believe women to be a unified subject with an ongoing, consistent consciousness and sense of the self. There is no stable, knowing self (Harding, 1987a, 1998). Furthermore, the self is a construct of social processes, and therefore constantly changing in nature (Burr, 1995; Ferguson, 1991). My own being therefore is inseparable from my growing up and is constantly being shaped by the social and cultural environment in which I am still functioning as therapist and researcher: white, middle-class, and conservative Afrikaans. But I also hope that my writing, my reflections, and my findings will reflect the developmental path travelled by many like myself. Still, I cannot speak for anyone else but myself, and to a certain extent for the women I represent here.

The aim in this project was to gain further knowledge about the positioning of the individual players. The positioning of the male abuser run parallel with what could be expected from men influenced and conditioned by patriarchy, although some positionings were more prominent. Even though expected, I was surprised by the extent to which the double standards of society were in particular applied to the emotionally abused woman. She was forced into distinctive positions as it suited both society and her dominant and controlling partner; leaving her with the minimum of agency, just to be blamed for doing precisely as expected.

I also aimed to analyze and describe the patterns and processes happening in emotionally abusive relationships. The definite patterns that did emerge differed from the Cycle of Violence Theory. Both these patterns and the portrayed processes of emotional abuse offered a new perspective that can be applied to further a better and new understanding thereof, but can also be utilized in the empowerment of the abused women in psychotherapy.

A Feminist Philosophy Applied

From the beginning of the research I declared my philosophy in science as is in life as feminist in orientation and therefore opened up the possibility to the reader to position herself and take a reflective perspective in order to weigh, evaluate, and find an understanding of her own.

I mostly took a philosophical point of view that resonated with feminist standpoint theory. As a woman working with women, I felt myself comfortable in doing so, as feminism has been at the forefront of questioning the proclaimed truths about women held by Western scientific thinking (Marecek, 1989). Feminism allows a deep and critical point of departure when it comes to the views on women held by an androcentric and phallogocentric traditional psychology. This allowed me to critically analyze the concepts constructed by dominant men within a patriarchal society. As I intended to focus on the positioning of both the players in emotional abuse, the concept of self as a social construction was useful in coming to a new and better understanding of the phenomenon of abuse.

I was not particularly interested in the testing of new hypotheses. I consequently embarked on a qualitative study in order to utilize descriptive methods in representing the stories of women from emotionally abusive relationships. The objective was to be as open as possible to the meanings of the women's stories. Although it is not truly possible and realistic to think that one can effectively "desilence" (M. Gergen, 2001), in other words truly make heard, the voices of women in their present cultures, it is possible to work towards the legitimizing of their experiences and feelings. I therefore underscored the worth implied in every new story told bringing a new perspective to form the "small-scale-situated partial theory" of feminist research (Qin, 2004, p.307).

Working within the framework of feminist standpoint theory presented me with the freedom to intuitively select data from client files; knowing that research cannot be value-free. I therefore relied greatly on my therapeutic experience in scrutinizing available literature to select incidents that seemed relevant to the present study. Such an intuitive data selection is in stark contrast to the empirical data collection of positivist research. However, in doing so I positioned myself in the centre of the research project, realizing the responsibility which this brings in terms of reflection; to try and find my own blind spots and grow personally in the process.

Feminist philosophers and theorists have painstakingly and methodically debated the issues that surround validity, objectivity, subjectivity, the insider/outsider, the knower/known position in research. I hence conducted my research within the postmodernist framework of expecting to find a number of truths and also a number of realities (Spears, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1993). A concern with the positivist notion of only one truth and a hierarchy of truths did not cloud my concept of validity. I therefore needed to read and evaluate the truth of one emotionally abused woman in the study as different and similar to the truth of another emotionally abused woman; drastically different from the truth of the abuser. This particular standpoint offered me the freedom to analyze the ways in which the truths of both the abused and the abuser to a greater or lesser degree differed from those of the dominant class, race, culture, and society.

I did not however, equate multiple truths with relativism, as I took relativism to imply that all truths are equally important. Feminist standpoint theory does not stand for a hierarchy of truths. I thus postulate that the truths unveiled in this project ought to be validated against firstly, feminist critical theory (Harding, 1991; Pels, 2004), and, secondly, against the experiences of these emotionally abused women, and/or the experiences of women as the oppressed or the marginalized (Haraway, 2004; Harding, 1993; Hartsock, 2003). According to feminist standpoint theory, the situated bodily experiences of women, the oppressed or the marginalized are the best place from which to start thinking (Longino, 1993; Marecek, 1989). My focus was to such an extent centred on the emotional experience of the particular women, that I to a lesser degree paid attention to the mind-body-soul connection in being women. Also working from experiences noted in my therapy files did not always open up all the avenues that could be explored. The reliability and validity of the women's experiences were further enhanced by situating these experiences within the wider environment of macro-systems (Jagger, 2004; Smith, 2004). The value of the knowledge, meaning and understanding thus gained, lies in the multiple experiences from a diverse group of women from different settings, each in its own right contributing another piece of knowledge to the other in the process of knowledge-making.

Harding (1987, 1998, 2004b) and other standpoint theorists and writers (Hartsock, 2003; Jagger, 2004; Narayan, 2004; Pels, 2004) argue for the position of the insider within, the oppressed within the oppressive situation, as a valued position in validating new and different truths. Having been in an emotionally abusive relationship myself, I was in a scientifically advantageous position from which I could critically observe the abuser from within the abusive situation, but also critically reflect on the experiences of the abused. However, it was all too

easy, in an attempt to empathically understand the abusive relationship, to be unaware of the hidden and the unspoken in the interactions and the stories. As a feminist researcher I needed to step into a position of constant reflection and needed to become a “world traveller” (Lugones, 1987 as cited by Bailey (2000) in Narayan & Harding, 2000, p. 295); I had to shift identities in the search for new meaning and better understanding.

To a certain degree I missed out on a mutual and valuable source of knowledge-making as I did not attempt to enhance validity by optimizing the interactional construction between the knower and the known. Being first and foremost in the position of therapist to my clients (now also participants and knowers), I was, to a certain degree, in a position of power over the clients ((Pels, 2004; Stanley & Wise, 1993). On an ethical level, I decided that it will not be primarily in the client's interest to share the full impact of my findings with a participant while she was still in psychotherapy. Although I did test some of the findings where therapeutically relevant, none of the knowers had full insight into the final product. I have also lost contact with some former clients who could have given input and the one remaining client, when approached, positioned herself as emotionally not ready to deal with such an experience.

I placed the findings and the research themes within a specific historical timeframe by the more informal collection of incidents from social encounters, from newspapers, popular literature, as well as glossy magazines (Burr, 1995). This constituted my reconstruction of all available data and could be considered an impoverished record of the stories of the emotionally abused women (Charmaz, 2000; K. Gergen, 2000). It was only in retrospect that I realized to what extent I missed out on valuable information. I missed out on some important information because at that specific stage in the therapy, I did not realize the importance thereof, or I did not write down some other information because I was ignorant of the value thereof at the time. Concentrating on women's sharing of their experiences of the concept of love, for example, and especially the ways in which they challenged and resisted the abuse could have added valuable information in empowering women when it comes to any form of abuse. More attention could also have been given to writing down more verbatim information or even recording therapy sessions on audio tape.

In order to present the vast amount of data in an easily accessible format, I organized the experiences of emotionally abused women in the following manner:

- A presentation of four semi case studies.

- Identifying and indicating the ecological themes that legitimized emotional abuse as they emerged.
- Deconstructing the positioning of both the abuser and the abused and critically evaluating the relevant themes found in emotional abuse.
- Mapping the patterns found in doing abuse.
- Critically deconstructing the processes of emotional abuse.
- Synthesising the power mechanisms used in the process of control and domination which represented the *how* of emotional abuse.

Conversing about the Emotionally Abusive Relationship

Postmodern perspectives have challenged the idea that meaning and truth can lie in categories. Truth is now taken to lie within rhetoric and communication. In part one of this text I therefore started on a conversational journey by giving voice to the researcher and therefore my own position in the research. I explained my personal investment and the motivation to find new meaning and understanding for the experiences of emotionally abused women. The reader was introduced to the ways in which my ontological stance resonates with feminist epistemology and methodology, and how this philosophy eventually influenced my choice of method. Representing the voices of the emotionally abused women in the most comprehensive manner possible was the purpose of part two.

Part three of the text continued with the conversation as the positionings of both the abused and the abuser were analyzed and described after these positions were in turn represented as legitimized by the specific conditioning of both the Traditional Afrikaans Family as well as the ideology of patriarchy. This inevitably (in part five) led to a presentation and description of a new and different model of emotional abuse; incorporating the patterns and processes identified as occurring in the abusive relationship. In this final conversation I will endeavour to bring together all the voices in beginning a new conversation that will hopefully not end in the last words of this particular research project.

An Ecology that Legitimizes the Emotional Abuse of Women

Feminism ascribes the abuse of women to the intertwined systems of capitalism and patriarchy (Gergen, 2001; Greenspan, 1983). In going back to the client files I found this to be captured in many of the women's opening remarks. These emotionally abused women depicted their families of origin as stereotypically patriarchal. Patriarchy stood central to all themes found and described; none of the other themes identified can be seen as in any way removed from the influences of patriarchy.

Marilyn French, an active feminist writer and scholar, has the gift of making theory and science a living voice. I therefore, instead of again referring back to the voices of the women in my study, broaden my conversational reach by including the voices of her fictional characters. She, for example, illustrated the influence of growing up in a patriarchal society through the life of Mira, her main character from her late 1970 publication of *The Women's Room*:

Mira:

... things she could not put her finger on, that told her her parent's ideas of being good and her own were not the same. She could not have said why, but her parent's idea of what she should do felt like someone strangling her, stifling her ... "They ask too much. It costs too much." What the cost was, she was not sure; she labeled it "myself" (French, 1981, p.20).

The ideology of patriarchy sets the stage for the possibility of later emotional abuse. My research showed that patriarchy indoctrinates both men and women with a set of expectations which many follow, either unthinkingly or because it suits them to a certain degree. It is shown to what degree patriarchy positions men as superior and the rulers of women, paving the way to the abuse of power through control, domination, and exploitation. The inevitable result is a class of women seen and seeing themselves as inferior, born to serve with womanly obedience. Time and again, this disrespect for women, which leads to the subjugated woman's obedience, was illustrated in the women's stories.

Mira:

The unspoken, unthought-about conditions that made it oppressive had long since been accepted by all of them: that they had not chosen but had been automatically slotted into their lives, and that they were never free to move that she had

given her life over to him just as she had perforce given her life over to her parents (French, 1981, pp. 57, 99).

The second theme that emerged, closely related to patriarchy, is what I termed the *Traditional Afrikaans Family*, a traditional family driven by its construction along patriarchal norms and customs. Two aspects of especially the Traditional Afrikaans Family were found to validate the continued existence of patriarchal norms and beliefs. Firstly, patriarchal beliefs, practices, and customs are validated and accepted as biblical truths. Women (and the patriarchal male) tend to unquestioningly hold to the construct of a number of biblical (I do not call them Christian) and mythical misconceptions about women's position in society and the privacy of her home; relegating women to the "nobodiness" described by Martin Luther King with reference to marginalized people (quoted by Flinders, 2002). Not only do they forget that much of written western religion has been transmitted through culture and language; the latter in metaphoric form (Bonvillain, 1995). Therefore, in not agreeing with any particular belief, the woman is confronted not only by a number of powerful intertwined systems supporting one another, but also faced and threatened by religious extradition and her own overwhelming sense of guilt and shame.

Mira and her husband, Norm (setting the *norm*) had an extremely emotional fall-out. He blamed her for his low grades and used a number of other kinds of blaming behaviour usually found in emotionally abusive relationships. So as her tears subsided, "finally he smiled up at her...and asked her if she weren't hungry. She understood. She rose and made dinner" (French, 1981, p.60).

I found that within the Traditional Afrikaans Family unquestioning obedience was expected from those lesser in hierarchical power. It was the accepted and internalized norm that father knew best. Because male authority was the norm in the macro-system, father's right to rule came from, and was again generalized to all male authority as well as all males, whether deserving thereof or not. The male authority in the home had the right to make the rules and to construct the family's views on both masculinity and femininity. The women's stories I represented in this project showed how obedience was indoctrinated and in what way the narrow and small-minded adherence to extreme stereotypical role-division came from a biased and one-sided interpretation of The Bible. French (1981, p.58) described Mira's reasonings and feelings about being entrapped in a patriarchal system:

She wanted to point out to him the injustice of his attack. But the fact that he felt right in making it, felt that he had legitimate grounds to treat her like a naughty child, overwhelmed her. It was a force against which she could not struggle, for his legitimacy was supported by the outside world, and she knew that (French, 1981, p.58).

In the second instance, and similar to the warrior culture often depicted as the man's world, in South Africa powerful control and domination mechanisms came to be accepted as the norm on the political front; even more so than usual in world business, syndicated crime and international sport. Although I do not imply one typically South African male, it was pointed out that "masculinity and violence have been yoked together in South African history" by historical incidences as colonialism and apartheid (Morrell, 2001, p.12). In the foreword to *Men Behaving Differently* (Reid & Walker, 2005, p.xii) Morrell continued to say, "But in South Africa, there are always other, deeply historically rooted, forces at work." I believe that men from all the races in South Africa have been informed – although in different ways – by the violence of the struggle; a "struggle masculinity" (Reid & Walker, 2005b, p.8) and that the many norms, beliefs, and customs of this patriarchal system have amassed to the extreme in especially the Afrikaans traditional family.

Hereby I do not wish to imply that all patriarchal norms and customs should be experienced as negative. Much can be said for the safety and security which people find within traditional and conservative families; one of the reasons why women hunger to stay within the relationship. It is when behaviour manifestations such as domination and control in their extreme form, become the accepted norm, or women specifically are forcefully entrapped, that it becomes hurtful. Whereas patriarchy normally expects those lower down on the hierarchy to serve, the service expected in the emotionally abusive relationship took on an exploitative flavour. It was shown to what degree domination and control become vindictive in the execution. Whereas the right to give orders is the accepted patriarchal norm, in the emotionally abusive relationship it surfaced as verbal denigration and abusive language. I found the adherence to stereotypical roles to be politically and aggressively enforced, and I therefore postulated that emotional abuse will be a regular occurrence in a society where rigid patriarchal norms are enforced.

Then again, it would have been absurd to conclude that patriarchal rule causes the emotional abuse of women and so my attention was inevitably directed to the concept of unequal power

relations that stands central to feminist writings and philosophy (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004). Patriarchy is seen as utilizing power through the systems of patriarchal rule and as having bestowed power on the individual man. The patriarchal male – no matter what his status in life – determines the rights and the wrongs, the rules and the regulations to adhere to. To me this kind of power thus means power over; masculine or domination power. Therefore power over as seen within the emotionally abusive relationship signified not only coming from the outside, but also as having hierarchical characteristics. Patriarchal society sees women as the lesser in the power relationship. Women mostly experience power of this nature as from the receiving end; especially so in the disciplinary measures taken by those who have the power to dominate. In analyzing the stories of emotional abuse it became apparent how obedience and the fear of abandonment are installed in the young woman and to what extent she adheres to patriarchal norms, never having been in a position to experience anything different.

Mira:

(She) realized that Norm was not the enemy, only the embodiment of the enemy ... She began so see that his authority over her was based on mutual agreement, that it was founded on nothing but air, and that that was why he had to assert it so often in such odd ways ... There was something more, out there, out in the world, something that gave him the power, wasn't there? Or was it just that she feared losing his love ... (French, 1981, p.259).

Gee (1999) writes that establishing one's own power can only be accomplished through human social interactions within a specific relationship. As part of the social goods, power is negotiated within the relationship. In the emotionally abusive relationship those having the power were not willing to relinquish their privileged position. On the other hand, it was also not possible to negotiate for more power from a position of powerlessness. I therefore turned to the specifics of the emotionally abusive conversation.

The Emotionally Abusive Conversation

I have shown the meaning of the experience of emotional abuse, as is all experience, to be grounded in a specific historical, cultural and societal time frame. Ecological context is always multi-layered and complex, and although an understanding thereof was not the main purpose of the study, the experiences of the women involved were also embedded in the political time frame of their growing up and being. Their reality of experiencing emotional abuse in a close relationship became a construct of their history and could have played out differently in different circumstances.

As reality is constructed through language and not informed by the person in isolation, I scrutinized the stories the emotionally abused women presented for the contracts the abused and the abuser negotiated in the abusive relationship. The positioning of both the abused and the abuser were analyzed and described, but it is the space and the interactions between the abused and the abuser that were seen as the conversational construction ground wherefrom the abusive behaviour and abusive relationship emerged. The presented interactions between the partners in the abusive relationship gave evidence of existing patterns as well as processes in emotionally abusive behaviour and therefore formed the abusive interaction.

A person's sense of self, the ideas and metaphors she or he forms part of and their self-narratives construct their subject positioning. This positioning constrains and shapes what they do and do not do. The present study showed that the conversation of abuse between the partners as represented here took place in a setting wherein both players were conditioned by the beliefs, myths, stereotypes and rules of a patriarchal system and unequal power relations. The particular conversation between the later abused and abuser could be initiated by either of the partners, but for the purpose of this conversation I started with the male partner.

The Male Contract

The individual male has a choice in how he appropriates his power. He could choose to be the sovereign, but also the loving, caring, and supportive father. The emotionally abusive man chose to abuse his personal power within his close relationship with his spouse or female partner. He adhered to the dominant themes of sexism and gender inequality generally found under patriarchal rule. Knowing what he wanted (to have his needs on all

levels catered for and that she will do so because she was a woman), and with the power of all patriarchal systems supporting him, he graciously proceeded to win over his woman. The aim of the abuser was to hook the partner or spouse to commit to the relationship. This he accomplished through mechanisms such as initially using charm or playing the Benevolent Teacher. His contract read “I will charm and take care of you as long as you do precisely as I want you to, because I have power over you.”

The Female Contract

Theoretically women have agency. But, the stories of the emotionally abused women presented in this study showed the extent to which their being hooked into the relationship was programmed and predisposed onto them. Growing up in a patriarchal society, they have reaped the benefits of having a strong, reliable, and responsible male take care of their needs and safety. She had bought into the stereotypical role prescriptions and accepted norms as powerfully laid down a patriarchal system firmly supported by Protestant Christian beliefs.

The women were entrapped into the relationship by believing the patriarchal lie of having less say, being worth less and having less sense and they therefore thankfully accepted the man's offer. Because of his initial hooking behaviour the man's offer was seen to imply the idealized promise to be respected and valued and these women did not realize the covert condition of first being of service to the man. She accepted the initial contract to read “He is the Expert so I can relax and know he will take care of me. Because of all his special qualities and abilities he will take care of me. He will honour and respect me. He will listen to me as a person.” She was hooked into the stereotypical role of woman as protected by the stronger man.

The Stereotypical Patriarchal Conversation

The strong male have now supposedly contracted to unselfishly protect his female partner; promising her security. Because of this promise she is willing to stand in obedience to his sovereign power. Any dissatisfaction from his side she attends to and he reciprocates in kind. Should she not attend to his needs or disagrees from him, the patriarchal contract has given him the power of decision making and she retreat back into her place. Whenever the

man wants to he can unselfishly attend to her needs when asked to or he can disagree and say no to her wishes. As he is positioned as the dominant male, she listens and obeys.

Changing into an Abusive Conversation

The stories of emotional abuse told by women I saw in therapy, illustrated how in having hooked the woman, having gained her commitment, the abuser positioned himself as what has been called the position of the Expert (Greenspan, 1983), the Teacher or the Master (Douglas, 1996), the Director (Cudd, 2000), or the Father (Evans, 1993; Greenspan, 1983). He made excessive demands; be it sexual or acts of extreme possessiveness. His domination and control became excessive, intended and deliberate.

Theoretically the woman can adopt position. In meeting up with the excessiveness of the male partner's demands, the women had the choice to stay within stereotypical role prescriptions. She could deny her own feelings, perceptions, and reality, and accept his positioning or she could resist his position and therefore not have kept to the initial contract to adhere to his wishes and needs. But, the emotionally abusive man's demands were endless and he made use of a number of mechanisms to further his absolute control. He needed submission from his partner. The present research showed how women are practically ensnared, entrapped, and tricked; the main ensnaring mechanism being the inequality of power within heterosexual interpersonal relationships (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004). In order to dominate and control the abusive male positioned himself as the master of his household, he used extreme possessiveness and isolation to entrap his partner. He exploited his partner in a financial and sexual manner because he was "entitled to it." He used her and he controlled her by aggressive behaviour, aggressively threatening her, by abusive communication of a verbal and non-verbal manner.

Women submitted in fear; socialized to fear abandonment. From conditioning since birth and from experience women knew, "You break society's rules, and you might even get away with it, but after such success, what return? Forever and forever you would be alone (French, 1981, p.247). The women's stories told of them reacting in fear because of the real or imagined threats the abuser posed, especially in having had to deal with his abuse in the past. Her anxiety levels rose, immobilizing her and leading to a number of posttraumatic

stress-related symptoms. She felt vulnerable and exposed. Dissociation and numbing of feelings occurred at times.

Some abused women chose to deny the abuse, because the wider society condoned and ignored the abuse. Doubting herself, she was forced to question her own reality. The examples of professionals and her church not validating her reality were numerous. She denied her own self, because she could not accept the horror, the vindictiveness, the aggression, and the hurting behaviour of the man she loved. She clung to the hope of finding the right things to do or say; those things that would change the abuser's actions. She tried to be the perfect wife.

Some other emotionally abused women in the present research denied themselves, their feelings, and their reality by doing depression, doing what is seen as dependency and obedience, and by doing victim.

Depression has often been seen as positive proof of woman's inherent human deficiency. As other feminist scholars before me, I found women to suffer depression as a result of the constant nature of the emotional abuse. Much of what often is diagnosed or taken to be depression, can be described as bereavement in the woman losing the self, or losing the one she thought loved her and the one she loves, losing the relationship and all the dreams and ideals embedded in the meaning of the relationship. She denied herself hope in realizing that there remained no other alternatives, as change is unacceptable within the *force majeure* of the dominant male society. She fell into depression as she felt herself failing to right the relationship or to adequately attend to the man's needs. As Mira's thought along the lines of making adjustments, "That is called a tragic flaw, and like guilt, it's very comforting. You can go on believing that there is really is a right way, and you just didn't find it" (French, 1981, p.63).

The abused woman did as was expected; obediently following the directions as given and submitting to the power in the relationship. But, for doing so the woman is often blamed and scorned for being passive. She is trained and socialized to be a certain way, and then has the tables turned on her, and the prescribe way becomes a personality deficit. Some women are more passive than others, as are men, but I strongly argue that the so-called passivity of women is learned behaviour that can be described as dutiful obedience.

Although it is occurring less frequently now, the traditional thinking of Mira and her circle of friends illustrate the emotionally abused women's thinking, "But no one ever suggested that the situation could be changed; not one ever challenged the men's right to demand and control (French (1981, p.102).

The same line of attack is followed in scorning women for acting in a manner taken to reflect learned helplessness. The emotionally abused woman was at times overwhelmed by feelings of powerlessness and did act in a helpless manner, but she was not born inherently less able to find answers and generate solutions. Her helplessness must be seen as a symptom of her alternatives giving out and the incessant nature of the abusive behaviour. As power and love are part of the relationship, it can be that she finds herself in a position where the power, both of the abuser and society backing him, is stronger than her individual strength (Meyer, 1991). Listening to these women, I deduced that in order to survive they temporarily acted in ways that can be described as helpless and tolerant. Unfortunately this can and often did entrap her deeper into the relationship.

Yet another accusation made is that generally women are dependent in nature and therefore also dependent on the abuser or the abusive relationship. This dependency is taken as a reason for her not leaving or fighting the abuser. A dominant male society orders her to submit, be obedient, listen and do as instructed, but then blames her for being dependent. This is so firmly engrained by training that even the professionally successful and assertive Minette in the study looked at herself and labeled her behaviour as being dependent on her spouse (See Case study on p.66). If you do not have the power or the agency, what else can women be, except to be reliant on the other who has the power and the agency; even women's nurturing behaviour is taken as proof of her dependence.

Many a reproach for being dependent stems from the woman's partner's inability to openly acknowledge his own dependency needs or him stonewalling her attempts to position him as the giver instead of the sole receiver of support. She is forced into denial and again I believe what is taken to be dependency is the woman's dutifully obedient answer to the *tour de force* of the dominant male. Reading the stories of the emotionally abused women, I reasoned that, although some abused women and their partners did establish a co-dependency or traumatic bonding, this was not usually the case. To the contrary, the abuser found his satisfaction within the power of ensnaring the abused, of controlling her,

and not in her being dependent on him. But I will submit that the process of abuse could become a way of living, a comfort zone, as Elaine said, "Better the devil you know than the one you don't."

The abused women fell into dutiful obedience, a stance programmed into women by patriarchal society and often labelled childlike. These women were stereotypical feminine in the softness of their tone of voice, and many married young. Continuous emotional battering (the aggression, the threats and control through isolation, the abusive communication, the rejection, exploitation and measures of entrapment), took its toll. Often she chose the role of care-taker over the rejection she would have experienced in going against the expectations of society, her culture and her religion.

But, I - as do other authors - found that the emotionally abused woman did not to completely fit the stereotypical image of the subordinate woman nor the type of woman who would passively accept the abuse. The abused women in this study did resist the abuse, an aspect that even feminist research has been criticized for not sufficiently paying attention to (Hydén's, 2005). I postulate that to a certain extent it was the women's resistance to the abuse, her opposing and challenging behaviour that elicited the abuse. The abuse was constructed in the relationship and I am convinced that a strong contributing factor in the occurrence of emotional abuse is the abuser not wanting (for whatever reason) to allow the woman any agency and the woman on the other hand not being inclined to traditional serfdom.

The women in the present study resisted the mechanisms of abuse as utilized by her emotionally abusive partner in a number of ways. Some followed a more aggressive route in resisting through confrontation, but I cautioned against the labelling of her behaviour as aggressive, solely because it opposed and/or did not suit the preference of her male partner. These women were caught in a double-bind situation. Should she aggressively oppose the abuse, she was blamed for provoking the abuse. On the other hand, did she not react by resistance she would be silently giving the abuser permission to continue in the same manner. I also refute the misconception that the woman's verbal aggression causes the abuse. This conclusion can often only be reached by a different position in punctuating the abusive incident.

Some emotionally abused woman challenged the abuse by asserting herself and objecting to the behaviour of the abuser. I concurred with Jukes (1999) that the male abuser finds any challenge unreasonable and unacceptable. Any request from his female partner the emotionally abusive man interpreted as unrealistic, nagging and needy as it threatened his position of control and domination in the relationship. Some of the abused women positioned themselves as blaming and this served as an even stronger signal for the abusive spouse to up his measures to re-establish control.

Some emotionally abused women reflected on the abuse and tried to reason things out with her partner or spouse; she tried to discuss matters with the abusive male partner. Mostly she was not aiming to be confrontational, but authentically tried to find reason and meaning in the hope of then being able to better the relationship. These women showed strength and resilience in the hope she retained and in the resilient behaviour she utilized. Unfortunately, it was her sticking power that further entrapped her in the abusive relationship. She was willing to do whatever it took to make the relationship work.

I saw most of the women I met up with in the research as by no means weak, helpless, and passive women. These were mostly professional women who to a greater or lesser degree obtained success outside their own home. These women fell victim to emotional abuse precisely because of their resilience and being particularly responsible women they were abused because of their resistance. But, the present research also confirmed that women in emotionally abusive relationships at times and temporarily (although this can last for days up to years) did not always take a stand against their abuse. The reasons were numbered; ranging from fear of the abuser intensifying his abuse, her longing for peace and quiet, struggling with her own sense of what is acceptable, and not having the energy and strength to oppose him any further. The women took on more and more responsibility in an effort to be the good enough wife and in an effort to have some manner of control. However, because of their willingness to take on more and be more responsible, there were so much more they could be blamed for.

Turning back to the emotionally abusive man, it was noted that the moment he experienced any resistance, he aimed to forcefully manipulate and push his woman back into the position he wanted her to be in. He would forcibly up his game - be it subtle or overt, controlling or violent. She would again either submit or resist and the process would start all over again.

This could become a never-ending process because of the continued resistance of the abused woman. If it was not for the resistance of the abused, the abuser would not find it necessary to intensify his mechanisms of control and domination.

The emotionally abusive man used a number of mechanisms to justify his behaviour. I am of the opinion that it is only necessary to justify oneself when one is in some agreement as to having overstepped the boundaries, and therefore I argue that the majority of emotionally abusive men do at some level know what they are doing. The emotionally abusive man cannot admit to the abuse, because losing face or giving in is never a masculine option. The stories of the emotionally abused women showed how he minimizes and denies the abuse. He justified himself by blaming the woman or shifting the responsibility for his abuse onto his partner. He played the emasculated victim or pleaded loss of control. He justified himself because he felt that she was the one not delivering on her contract of being there solely to look after him and his needs.

This process of emotional abuse played itself out in different patterns. The patterns were identified as:

- A Patterns of Abusive Incidents describing a relationship wherein there from time to time occurred high-voltage abusive incidents with the implied threat of always re-occurring.
- A Pattern of Abusive Ebb-and-Flow characterized by the intermittent occurrence of abusive incidents with a period of respite that could last for a couple of days or a longer period, before the tension started building up again.
- A Pattern of Abusive Discontinuity which differed from Walker's (1979) cycle of violence mostly in that the incidents were intermittent rather than cyclic in nature as there was a clear break from the abuse.
- A Pattern of Abusive Escalation, where although intermittent in nature there was a gradual increase in both the occurrence of incidents and the intensity of the incidents.

Although I analyzed and described four different patterns, there was huge variety between these patterns as influenced by a number of factors. I also noted that these patterns seldom escalated into physical abuse. The most important and decisively influential factors in these patterns of emotional abuse were the intermittent nature of the incidents, the intensity of the incidents, and the rate of occurrence thereof.

In Summary

I therefore came to the conclusion that the emotionally abusive behaviour emerged from the positioning of both the abuser and the abused. The phenomenon of emotional abuse in close relationships was constructed through the interactions between the partners. I thus postulate that abusive behaviour emerges as a result of the patriarchal male who wants to establish or re-establish his dominant position, while the female partner vacillates between a position of giving in or denial, or resisting and opposing the abuser in an attempt to position him as someone who respects her as a person in her own right. The emotionally abused women had the choice of continuing to deny the abusiveness of the relationship. She had the choice to accept and adapt to the situation or to continue to resist the abuser and his abuse and have her soul gradually murdered.

Many emotionally abused women did cut their losses and left the abusive man; often finding a better life after the separation or divorce. I found these ex-abused women to have found new answers to the abuse. They reconceptualized their stories and reconstructed themselves and did not allow their past power over them. They were more often than not less inclined to be constrained by societal labelling, guilt and self-blaming (Van Schalkwyk, 2005).

Prologue

Do not believe in what you have heard; do not believe in traditions because they have been handed down for many generations; do not believe anything because it is rumoured and spoken of by many; do not believe merely because the written statement of some old sage is produced; do not believe in conjectures; do not believe merely in the authority of your teachers and elders. After observation and analysis, when it agrees with reason and it is conducive to the good and benefit of one and all, then accept it and live up to it.
Buddha in the Kama Sutra (Abt, 1982, p.134)

No one is going to listen; so question and do – the heading of this chapter sets the tone I want to adapt in my final words. People tend to assume that others will heed their stories, hear, and therefore act when we say or ask. We tend to think that others will listen and respond intelligently if we talk meaning and understanding, but this seldom is the truth.

I can thus take you through each page of the present research and as a therapist show you where it is possible to facilitate change; I can show you the windows of opportunity. But, psychotherapists usually do not follow prescribed programs; they internalize ideas they can work with within the parameters of their own philosophy in life, and then apply the new information where applicable. I therefore intend to leave the reader with only the one message: We need to first question and then do. As therapists I believe we have a responsibility to co-create new realities that make for better living.

It is difficult, even impossible to break from patriarchal rule if you place yourself within the system, but marriage and relationships are private affairs and only social constructions and do not have to be ruled by the state, the church or those of power (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004). If systems are human constructions, the implication is that the human agent has the power to change the system (Ravn, 1991). We as women can take back the power of being born the way we were supposed to be. Our sons and daughters are showing us how. Young women are shunning men and careers; they decide when and if they want children and they rate financial independence crucial. These strong and confident young people are willing to embrace both their female and male side (Keene & Jenson, 1997) without being caught up in issues of “women do not do aggression” or “men do not use moisturizer.” These are young people who see themselves as human beings first before identifying themselves as female or Afrikaans or a lawyer.

There is a number of already done and to be recommend ways in which to attack the systems of patriarchy, to negotiate and manipulate them, and to ignore and handle them. Feminism has taken a stand against oppression and has succeeded in many areas – many of these already taken for granted. Maybe only those women who can look back on a period before the second wave of feminism can truly validate and appreciate the change already accomplished. For many women this has been an intellectual fight that is directed at macro-level issues. Women tend to fight the battle out there and expect the other to change. The time has come to direct the gaze to the inside and ask ourselves where we need to adapt our own way of thinking and especially doing if we want change.

I will never want to take away the love, the sharing, and the warmth from any close relationship. But as a therapist I know that I can be empathically listening and intuitively understanding with one part of my brain while at the same time another part, the therapeutic self, is scientifically

making the necessary calculations, weighing and making decisions. Therefore I believe that while one can enjoy all there is to enjoy in any relationship, there should be a part of one's adult brain that can still run the business of taking care of one own emotional and spiritual health.

To find our own and a new truth women or the abused woman will need to learn about abuse. Women will need to heed the control mechanisms used by the abuser and tear down the myth of the all-powerful father-male. The sharing of experiences brings understanding and the ability to identify the techniques of domination and control women are exposed to. In being emotionally honest, one meets the waves head-on and moves through or over them (Dickson, 2003). This will enable the individual to find her power, to connect with other support systems that will allow her to emerge as an interdependent woman (Keene & Jenson, 1997). Taking sole responsibility for the quality of one's life and taking responsibility for the self is the best point of starting change from. In doing so the woman confronts challenges, seeks solutions and becomes interdependent, autonomous, self-actualizing and self-governing in order to have a strong sense of self which refuses to accept limitations and displays a zest for life (Keene & Jenson, 1997). Women do not need to apologize, reason or argue, cry and plead, change to suit the other. Women do not need to defend their way of life. They have a right to be the way they are. To do anything else will result in losing the self; in losing soul.

The loss of soul is taken to be the gravest verdict to be made in shamanism (Cameron, 1997: 78-79, quoting Jeanne Achterberg). Emotional abuse is often described as a murder of the soul. It therefore comes as no surprise that scholars now start to speak of spiritual abuse. I do not find it strange, but I do find it frightening. Professor Christina Landman, a professor in Theology and Religion at the University of South Africa, describes spiritual abuse as mankind's new weapon of mass destruction. She typifies religion as shameful and a disgrace when it changes the individual to a malfunctioning person by the biased dogma that is abusively heaped onto the individual (Landman, 2004). Although a frightening idea, I realize that it actually is a sign of the marginalized making some progress. If patriarchal rule cannot subdue the voice of women further by the power of the patriarchal systems; then they need to utilize their version of the powers of God or a Higher Power to subordinate them.

So it is said that the Tibetan Buddhists describe three kinds of mind. To them there is the dull mind which has no spiritual interest. There is also the average mind content with dogma and blind faith (Borysenko, 1999). To me this is the type of mind that abuses the other; whether in

attacking their country, their culture and beliefs, or their souls. This is absolutistic thinking that in effects says, “I have seen the light, and there is **no** other path, which is absolutism and fanaticism, whether religious or ideological” (Ravn, 1991, p.111 – italics in the original).

But, according to the Buddhist thinking, there is also a third kind of mind; an inquiring mind that is curious and thinking, and therefore often filled with doubt (Borysenko, 1999). Although many Protestant churches refer to doubt as a human imperfection, I would argue that our survival as a decent human species might just lay right at the core of the inquiring and the doubting mind. It is in re-evaluating one’s reality as it plays out from day to day, measuring reality to experience, that one is able to construct a new and meaningful reality.

I believe that each and every perspective the individual takes is nothing else than a personal perspective on the greater whole and I therefore argue for unity-in-diversity. The argument is for an ethical principle that informs unity of experience in being able to connect to a larger whole that shares one’s views, but also allows for the diversity of “appreciating other paths”, but not the relativist nihilistic idea of “accepting **any** path.” Different paths are still part of the whole (Ravn, 1991, p.111).

We need to step by step, and fact by fact, through all the means at our disposal, to re-create new truths to replace the dominant Discourses of power and patriarchy that have been ruling our lives. We need to reflect on the stereotypical taken-for-granted assumptions about what to see as normal or acceptable so as to not exclude ourselves from new ideas and different paths to follow. Joan Borysenko (1999: 15) quotes a female friend on her return back to her ministry who said:

**Perhaps that is the only true definition of faith.
The belief in a fair and loving Universe,
despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary**

PART VI: LIST OF REFERENCES

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PART VII: APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ALL CASES¹²

CLIENT			SPOUSE/PARTNER			MARITAL STATUS	CHILDREN
NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION		
Annette	44	Housewife	Bertus	48	Geologist	Married	2
Anca	36	Physio-therapist	Danny	38	Engineer	Divorced	2
Antoinette	61	Arts Director Psychologist	Charl	62	Professor of Law	Both second marriage	
Ann	40	Housewife	Rudie	42	Flight captain	Divorce pending	2
Beatrice	40	Manager/ Call centre	Frank	40	Own Business	Married	1
Candice	36	Travel Agent	Robert	33	Own Business	Divorce pending	1
Camilla	44	ICU Nurse	Chris	40	Ex officer: SAPS	Divorced/ Remarried	2
Nettie	48	Housewife	Leon	50	Accountant	Married	2
Cathy	53	Teacher	Nick	54	Farmer	Married	2
Berna¹³	48	Teacher/ own business	Kevin	53	Own business	Divorced, but staying together	4
Elaine	27	Lawyer	Quintus	52	Ex military man IT Company Owner	Left partner	-
Liza	36	Graphic Designer	Martin	35	Security Business	Both divorced/ Living together	-
Edwina	43	Housewife	Charles	45	Insurance Broker	Since Divorced	3
Mary	43	Teacher	Raymond	47	Lawyer	Married	3
Elize	41	PA	Henry	38	Salesman	Divorced	2
Eva	35	Housewife	Gustav	38	Engineer	Divorce pending	2
Joan	33	Sales Manager	Christopher	35	IT	Married	-
Phoebe	36	Artist	David	40	Farmer/ Business	Since Divorced	2
Jennifer	43	Law Student	Derrick	45	Property Market	Second Marriage to	2

¹² All cases where incidences of emotional abuse are experienced on a regular basis

¹³ The case studies re-constructed in chapter 5 for this project are shown in bold.

						both	
Hedwig	36	IT Consultant	Al	38	Farmer	Divorced	2
Hannah	29	Housewife	Rudolph	32	Own Business	Married	2
Heidi	43	Housewife/ Credit controller	James	45	Senior Government Official	Divorced	1
Helen	49	Psychologist	Tom	57	Ex General Military	Divorced	2
Riekie	52	Admin clerk	Ben	57	Pastor	Divorce Pending	3
Linda	25	Professional Athlete	Eddy	24	Unemployed	Living together	-
Beth	30	IT Manager	Kobus	30	Transport Business	Married	-
Gerda	49	Teacher	Gavin	50	Transport Manager	Divorced	3
Matty	34	Marketing	Casper	37	Manager	Married	2
Mandy	48	Housewife Admin Manager	Ricus	49	Motorcar Salesman	Married – She moved out	3
Nan	42	Teacher	Hank	43	Unemployed	Divorced	3
Cloe	42	Teacher	Edwin	38	Broker	Separated	2
Nannette	31	Housewife	Joe	30	Businessman	Married	2
Minette	33	Dentist	Ian	34	Sport Administrator Unemployed	Separated	Duncan
Karen	38	PA	Johan	45	Game farm Manager	Married	3
Nicky	27	Housewife	Clem	32	Business Owner	Partners	-
Pam	56	Lecturer Arts	Peter	60	Retired Teacher	Both second marriage	2
Sylvia	48	SAPS	Sam	50	Farmer	Married	2
Rose	39	Housewife	John	40	Fleet Manager	Both second Marriages	3
Samantha	32	Data Capturing	Jack	34	Broker/ Psychologist	Married	3
Ronelle	40	Teacher – admin in husband's office	Tiaan	42	Engineer	Married	4
Wilma	51	Owner Guest House	Zack	48	Lecturer	Divorced	2
Alma	23	Hairdresser	Lionel	27	Security Business	Married	-
Ina	20	Student				Father abused her mother	

APPENDIX B

THE ABUSER POSITIONING HIMSELF

This appendix is put together from experiences of the emotionally abused women in the main text (See Appendix A for the women's particulars). I could not include all experiences told of, but this will give the reader some additional examples of the incidences described. For obvious reasons I more or less kept to the headings as used in the text.

Hooking

- Most people respond positive to attentiveness from others

Ann: If I had an early flight he would draw me a bath, and take me to the airport. He would always see to it that I had enough to eat – That man really spoiled me. But, then somehow it became controlling

- The benevolent teacher

Joan's husband says: Take some time off, love. I really think you should take the time to think about our future. Maybe you should call in some professional help and first come to terms with yourself and all the things that happened in your childhood. It is your low self-image that's causing you all these guilt-feelings.

Domination

Master of his House

Mary: Raymond says it is his right and his alone to decide what is right.

Ricus, Mandy's husband says: You don't to give in but you know that you should. In the end you will ... You know that I prefer my wife to be soft spoken and submissive. You will not contradict me, ever

Annette: In everything he must be on top. Everything needs to be perfect; perfect meaning the way he wants it.

Joan: Everything changed after we got married. He changed and all of a sudden we had completely different outlooks on everything; love, religion, our social life ...

Mandy: We were just recently married when I asked him to do something while he was chatting away with the family at the pool. He jerked me aside and hissed at me: "I will not have any woman tell me what to do – Do you understand me, woman?"

- More often than not, the hooking action or the more covert signs of domination and control turn to abuse when the man realizes that the partner is committed.

Mary : Everything was just fine until we had the children.

Elize: Our problems started the moment the children moved in with us.

Hedwig: We were married for two years when our son was born. He was a sickly child ... It was a real nightmare. That's when it all started.

- Control, domination, and exploitation are intended and deliberate within an unequal distribution of power.

Mary: He's always so negative. Always finding something to go on about. He walks through the house absolutely looking for something ... There's no oranges or "I'm always your last priority."

- The emotionally abusive male expects everything to be done his way, and his way only. He keeps his hand on every aspect of home-life.

Camilla: He even gets angry if the beds are not made to his liking.

Liza: You always need to explain everything ... He will keep track of the groceries and you will need to explain.

Cathy: Nothing seems to be to his liking. He will always find something to complain about and then he'd say, "Can I never trust you to do something?"

Nettie: He will demand things to be done his way. It was no use trying to explain or wanting to change anything.

Extreme Possessiveness and Isolation

- The emotionally abusive man uses extreme possessiveness and isolation to establish and re-establish his control.

Beatrice: We have no friends left. He either embarrassed them until they do not accept invitations any more or his jealousy has gotten in the way.

Nettie: His possessiveness is just too much. He is so demanding

- He watches her every step. He steals her time, energy and leisure.

Liza: Right though the night he will keep you awake, because of something he does not agree with ... going on and on The moment I want to say something in return, he silences me saying, "I've already heard what you have to say".

Mandy: I'm not allowed to go visit, because it's too far and he's afraid of the crime rate ...

- He controls all outside contact by being rude, critical, or threatening when visiting or receiving visitors, family and friends. He constantly humiliates and embarrasses her in front of them.

Beatrice: He constantly calls me names in front of our friends or says hurtful things to them. He would accuse me of having an affair with some of the men ... right to their faces.

Hedwig: That December we went visiting my family. He was so nasty to my parents that my dad said he did not want to see him again. My dad was so upset by the way he treated the children ... I realized how isolated I have become.

Camilla: He says he has the right to have female friends, but the moment I go and have coffee with an old friend (male), he calls me a whore.

Linda: I was forced not to see any of my friends.

Beth: He can be terribly nasty with my friends. If I receive a SMS I feel like I need to defend myself.

- He needs to monitors her whereabouts.

Edwina: He's always checking up on me. How many calls did you receive?

Liza: He would accuse me of having affairs ... even when I went to work. It makes you feel terrible .. When I commit, I commit

Nettie: Even if I sit and watch an interesting TV program he will unplug the TV. He says I do not need all this stuff

- The controlling man condemns his partner in solitary confinement.

Gerda: He locks all the doors when he leaves ... leaving me without any key.

Anca: I only now realize how alone I've always been. He was not to be found for any talking.

Nettie: It's been months now that he doesn't even talk to me.

Camilla: I think the isolation ... being so alone ... that was the problem.

Liza: One do not immediately realize how isolated you have become. You go to work and share the same work space, he checks on you when you go to Pick'n Pay or have your hair done. He checks your calls ...

Positioning himself by Mechanisms of Entrapment

Antionette: What keeping me from leaving? Finances and not knowing if I will be strong enough to make it on my own.

Beatrice: The abuse comes and goes. It's not an abusive relationship, but abuse in an otherwise good relationship.

- Crazy making:

Edwina: He forces me to take the medication. I think it's his proof to the world out there that there is something seriously wrong with me ... But, I know I get all emotional

Elize: He calls me paranoid or schizophrenic.

Erika's husband tells op slapping her twice this past year: She can get all hysterical.

Linda: I suppose it is my fault. He makes me believe it to be true. He says there's something mentally wrong with me. I don't think my parents will agree.

- Manipulative set-ups.

Ann: His always has a hidden agenda and you never know when and how it will impact on you.

Nettie: Everything you say will some time or another boomerang on you.

Mary: He is constantly moving the goal posts. You can never win.

Beth: There's this selective memory. He will only remember that which suits his needs.

- Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Camilla: He's so different and charming when speaking to others. He even speaks differently to the guy that does our garden. When he talk refers to me, he talks about "This woman".

Edwina: I was in an accident and phoned him at the office. He was so concerned while other people could hear him, just to come and interrogate me at the site.

Exploitation

Financial exploitation

- Some abusive men take full control of his wife's wage packet, whereas other wives fall into the trap of earning their own salary only to spend it on their families.

Cathy: Everything I own I spend on the household needs and the children.

Elize: My money pays for all the day to day expenses. His money is his money to spend on luxuries as he wants to.

- Even when not gainfully employed himself the exploiting man ventures into schemes without consulting with his wife.

Elize: He's had three businesses in the last sixteen years. I have been paying for everything. I've been working day and night to make ends meet and has even taken up making curtains to sell when not at the office.

Jennifer: He will cut himself off from me – even sexually – if I do not pay his debts or if I'm not willing to lend him the money to venture into a new scheme.

- Women have been conditioned into emotionally supporting their husbands.

Candice: What I didn't know is that while I was supporting him financially, he was having this affair.

Linda: We are always fighting about our finances. He believes each must pay his dues, but then we go out and he expects me to pay as he's not been earning anything. If I don't he makes me feel so selfish ... He expects me to help him pay of his debts.

- He keeps rigid financial control.

Mandy: He always leaves me just short to be able to pay for whatever. He needs me to be financially dependent on him.

Sexual exploitation

- Sex is demanded as the man's right.

Ann: He has now twice forced me to have sex when I didn't want to because things wasn't that okay between us .. I felt violated ... This is rape

Gerda: At a later stage he invited other men into the act. He just forced me to go along. If I didn't

- The abusive man having an affair.

Cathy: All of a sudden he's been paying attention to what he wears, he's been on diet and has lost 10 kilo's. He uses after shave – even has a bottle in his car.

Edwina: He says there's no relationships, but I see all the signs ...

Elize: He goes to strip clubs and places where he can pick up women and if I comply or say something he swears at me ... I will not have sex with him suspecting he's been with another woman Boy, now he's having me have it ...

Erika: Three years ago he had this affair and we sorted everything out. I now think he's never broken up with her I think he brought her into our house ... into our bedroom, I could smell her perfume ... I found an earring under our bed ...

Hedwig: I would have never though he was having an affair – I always thought I was at fault when we had these arguments ... then I found that he had pubic lice ... This is to terrible to imagine ...

Heidi: I later found all these slips for restaurants on our living room pelmets.

Riekie: I found the evidence – he even carried her photo in his brief case.

Gerda: He's been having an affair for 18 months now. I didn't know ... I thought he was away on business for the company ...

Aggression

- Society and culture have given the husband the right to discipline his wife, and it is only a small step towards man positioning himself so as to aggressively punish his wife.

Gerda: He would lock me in my room if I said anything he didn't agree with or didn't like.

Antionette: What a terrible bully he turned out to be ... who would have expected it from the professor

Liza: The moment he senses me pulling back, he has a go at me .. aggressively swearing, taunting ...

Nettie: Sometimes the anger just gets at you.

Edwina: Raymond can be so utterly rude and ill-mannered.

Beth: He has this terrible aggressive attitude ... anything will irritate him and he will lash out.

Berna: Ag, you know, that's just Daddy's way of doing.

Samantha: He can be so difficult, so impatient when things go wrong, he's so biting nasty ... He's been so cantankerous towards me, but I know he's only worried about his son being ill.

Antoinette: He believes himself to be justified in his aggression. I've tried discussing it with him, but he's never willing to discuss the issue. How can I just abandon him and book him into a clinic? He's such a proud man ... How will he cope in such a place? How will he feel to be there?

Beatrice: He been under such a lot of pressure the last couple of months, and he's always suffered from depression.

Beth: I can't take the verbal battering of our workers anymore. I'm moving out.

Jennifer: There is this constant aggression – either it's a constant swearing or you can physically feel the aggression.

Karen: He has never really hit me, but I'm so afraid, so scared. I can only say, "Please, God help me." I never know what to expect.

Beth: Sometime I feel that he really hates me. I feel the aggression coming from him. I feel I'm only of use in what I do.

Karen: He came back and me and the children were laughing and talking in the kitchen, generally having a good time. His first words were, "I cannot leave you for one second. Look what a bunch of pigs you turn out to be. Just look at the kitchen. Can you people never properly clean up something?" ... and on, and on.

Minette: He looks at me and I see the contempt in his eyes, "I will not let you bring up our son to be like your father."

Threatening Behaviour

- The emotionally abusive man uses the coercive technique of threatening to harm her family or her friends.

Phoebe: He would phone my mother and father on the farm, threatening them ... swearing at them ... Once he phoned the my folks up ... it was after mid-night on a Saturday and threatened my mother, "I'm going to strangled you all. I will finish you off against the walls that you will see blood and guts gushing against the walls".

Liza: He threatened me, "You will leave with only the clothes on your back. You're the guilty party ..." He would rant and rage ...

Riekie: When the children were still in nappies and I asked him for some help, he would clench his fists and just new it was coming again.

Erika: I wanted to phone for help, but he jerked the phone cables straight out of the wall ... He threatened to shoot himself .. You should have seen the look in their eyes ... and then he threatened to kill us all.

Eva: He threatens to get into his car and just make an end to everything ... He will threaten – in front of the children (11 and 17 years) – to kill himself or one of them, or then he will threaten to kill us all.

Minette: How are you supposed to react if he walks around with a pistol, saying that he's going to blow away his brains because I've ruined his life. If he does do it, how will I explain it to his family? Everything will be my fault.

Jennifer's husband to her children: Your mother sees me as the only parent responsible for bringing money into this family. I visualized my life much different from my life now, having married you mother. I had to sacrifice a lot, because I have a responsibility towards you two. You could both do with some self-examination about your attitude towards me. If you do not change, I will let the matter rest there, but then I will also decide what I will do about my future.

- In some cases we do find an escalation to physical abuse.

Berna: Only once did he attack me physically.

Antoinette: First there was only the belittlement, and then came the humiliation of knowing that he was involved with some-one else. It ended with a situation where he picked up the kettle, and without any emotion or saying anything, poured the boiling water over my arm.

Gerda: The last three years has been the worst. He started to physically hit out at me. So Thursdays we would have this fall-out and Fridays he would get in his bakkie and drive through to our Farm. I was left, too bruised to go out, for the whole week-end, with only the babies as company.

Camilla: I'm going to get an interdict against him. This is the fourth time that he has pushed me around hard-handily. It scares me, and I don't want the children to see what he's doing.

- Women who do not see the physical pushing around, hair pulling, and forced sex as physical abuse, and therefore do not mention it.

Linda: He has once or twice slapped me or pushed me around, but you get so used to all these things that you eventually consider it as the norm. In a way, you come to accept it as the way things should be.

Karen: If there is even the tiniest drop of water on the kitchen floor, he will pull my hair.

Helen: I sometimes just cannot take his verbal attacks or long sermons about all my wrong-doings any more, and then I will try and excuse myself. But that is oil on his fire. He will forcibly pin me to the chair or bed, jump up and close the bedroom door before I can reach it, or lock the door. Once or twice – after a heavily abusive argument – I went and laid down in a different room. He then either came to me and just continued with whatever he wanted to accuse me of, just going on and on, or he'd forcibly drag me back.

Eva: He's been slapping me, and he's even spits on and at me when angry.

- Another group, and by far the largest group of the women in the present research, who, even after years of marriage, deny any occurrence of physical abuse in their relationship.

Hannah: I've seen him break down the door, but never has he touched me.

Hedwig: Although I didn't see it as such when I left Al, emotional abuse and physically pushing me around was the main reason I left him. It all started after the birth of our first daughter and just got worse.

Utilizing verbal mechanisms

Cathy: He is always telling me how old I look. “Just look at you. No fashion sense what so ever. You disgust me.”

Ann’s husband says: You always just f**** up everything.

Karen: He would look at me with this sardonic and malicious grin on his face and say, “You know, I love you.”

- Jokes and teasing, making fun of and sarcasm

Ricus, Mandy’s husband: Ag shame! Do you really think you scare me with you little attitude. Do you really think you can tell me what to do?

Camilla: Whenever he talks to me I hear the irritation or the scorn in his voice.

Helen: I’m always buying you expensive perfume but you hair smells like a wood fire.

Wilma: I come from a well-known French-Huguenot family we are proud of our heritage. He will always poke fun at, “You and the Du Toits” or “Don’t tell me that’s the way the Du Toits do things.”

Karen: If I talk to him and say all I need is a certain amount of respect, he bursts out laughing.

Helen: He would always crack a yoke at my crying when I watch a good movie, or even when I had my babies.

- Belittlement, denigration and degradation

Karen’s Johan: If you don’t know how to manage the kids, I’ll show you. I’ll make you a list of all the chores and the house and you will see to it that it’s done. I’m sick and tired of the children fighting about who has to clean the bathtub.

Samantha’s husband: You’re an icy bitch of a woman.

Elize’s husband: Ag, shurrup. You’re shit and I don’t talk to shit.

Camilla's husband towards the therapist: You two are in cahoots. Precisely what you can expect from some bloody bitches.

Linda's partner: You know you're mad. You need a brain-job. There's something seriously wrong with you.

▪ Criticizing

Helen: Everything the children do seems to be wrong. If they watch TV, it's too much. If they play with the dogs, they're disturbing him. If they're playing with friends, they should be home, doing their homework.

Karen: Our whole family is quite musical, so we often make music together. Lately I myself have started to dread these episodes. He usually plays the piano, so he will keep increasing the pace, screaming at, and criticizing whoever cannot keep up. Or he'll scream at Cindy, "Why don't you sing louder? You're bloody timid. Sing louder" – screaming, screaming. In the end one of the children or I myself will be in tears.

Samantha: He's so negative. Constantly asking, "Why did you ...?" or "Why aren't you...?"

Helen: Oh, Tom is much more sophisticated in his criticizing. We will have this whole conversation that maybe in the beginning will sound to me like analyzing and critically evaluating a situation, but somehow you'll always end up feeling unworthy, not good enough, and definitely not measuring up to his standards.

Karen: I try to be perfect. I work like a maid, but still he finds fault. I try and wear my hair the way he likes it, and I dress the way he wants me to, but it's still not working. If it's not my breasts that are too small, it's my waistline that is getting bigger ... I really try.

Gerda: David is always criticizing me. First this is not to his liking, then that is not to his liking, so I plead for forgiveness. What am I doing wrong?

Heidi: We had constant battles about my appearance. Either I was dressing too "flashy," or he wanted me to cut my hair, or my perfume was too strong.

He comes home just in time to get dressed before our guests – or must I say his guests? – arrive, and then the criticism begins. I've always been a bit of a perfectionist, so this cuts even deeper as I want everything to be perfect. "Did you put out the right glasses? You're so incompetent. You cannot even organize a simple sit-down dinner party." And he hasn't been doing a thing, he didn't make one call or arrange anything.

Nettie: I did the books of the business. He was constantly at my throat – always looking for mistakes. And then – in front of all the other personnel – he would yell, "I can never ask you anything or you'll bugger it up. You're a real good-for-nothing."

Camilla: He seldom speaks to me in such a way that I will not become conscious of the condescending tone of his voice. He constantly has something to criticize me about. He's so irritated by my mere presence.

- Humiliation, cruel statements, and total verbal attack

Alma: ... And then he would spit on me ... I wanted to make love and he turned on me, "You only want my body. Who do you think I am?" I felt so humiliated that I now seldom touch him; now he has something else he can throw in my face.

Edwina: He would always be screaming at me in front of the other office personnel. It's so embarrassing. I'm not only more senior to most of them, but I'm also his wife.

Samantha: I've come to realize that he talks to me worse than he would to our garden boy. He would never even talk to people at the office like that.

Helen: Tom would speak to me in a tone of voice which others would find soft and even caring. But if you know the times I've previously been blamed and humiliated for precisely the same thing, his saying it nicely does not matter any more. It cuts just as deep, because you know what he means. Again you have been found wanting.

Karen's Johan: I would long ago have divorced you if I thought that you could look after yourself. You know how you are.

Heidi: Wherever we go, he's always walking a couple of steps ahead of me. Or we go to this extremely formal do and he will seemingly "forget" to introduce me to people, or he would ignore me while all the other men see to it that their wives have a drink.

Sometimes some other man will see that I get a drink, and even that then becomes humiliating.

Beatrice: It's so embarrassing. I mean we have no friends left. They come and visit and then he'll embarrass me, and them as well, through his jealousy or his bickering. Or he'll start calling me names in front of them. The other day we were boarding our plane on our way to London. Then moment we came to our seats, he loudly proclaimed, "You sit next to that old jitter box" referring to an old lady that was also settling in. I don't want to be there when he's hurting people. It's just too much ... and this all in front of our seven year-old.

Nettie: He will invite people without telling me. Then while we're having this braai, he will totally ignore me, except when he barks an order. These are old friends of ours. I suppose they know him by now, but still, it's so humiliating.

- Bickering, arguing, and quarrelling

Karen: He would keep screaming at me until I couldn't think any more. In the end I would plead with him, take the blame ... anything, as long as I could get him to quiet down.

Beth: I think his attitude is getting me down; the irritation in his voice, the anger ... We're in a constant battle about something. This just keeps going on and on. I sometimes feel so beaten down I don't what to say or do anymore. I constantly feel that I have to defend myself.

Edwina: He so darn smug. Always wanting to have only his opinion heard, and if that doesn't happen, he will discredit the other party.

Helen: He always has the last say. Maybe this comes from being high brass, maybe because he truly is highly intelligent and has the gift of the gab. The problem is that you always know that somewhere along the line he'll catch you and tow you in. You'll know that everything is not completely kosher, but you don't know why.

Karen: He never gives you time to state you case, but leaves the impression that he's not really interested in what you have to say. This is so different from before our marriage,

when he used to find me such intelligent conversation and he couldn't take his eyes off me.

- Cursing

Berna's Kevin: I'm so fuckin' tired of you not listening. When de donder are you going to start giving me some co-operation? It looks like I'm the only fuckin' one in this family who wants to get ahead in life.

Pam: It's like verbal diarrhea. He'll go on and on, swearing and scolding, calling me names.

Gerda: Gavin is always swearing at me. He's always in this mood – aggressive, angry.

Hedwig's Al: You're such a useless mother. You always fuck everything up.

Utilizing non-verbal mechanisms

- Silence or the failure to respond/ Abandonment

Matty: Whenever I want to talk to him, he goes into silent mode ("stilstupe"). It sometimes lasts for up to a month. He would say a word in this period.

Heidi: He never said he loved me or held me ... We would go somewhere and the moment the aides opened the car doors he would be out; walking ten paces in front of me as if he was ashamed of me.

Elize: I had to go in for an emergency operation ... Not once was he there to offer any support.

Matty: I needed to go in for this small operation and all he said was, "See to it that you get the children to school en drive yourself back."

Helen: I had to go in for an operation. He did come and visit, but not once showed any concern or even bothered to talk to me or ask how things were going.

Gerda: It's like I'm living out in the deepest of darkness. He's always angry at something ... ignoring me ... I can't describe the loneliness I feel ...

Beth: Sometimes I think he really hates me ... Why else all this aggression?

Gerda: My mother was visiting us ... If I said anything he didn't like he would stick out his tongue behind her back and taunt me ...

Mary: I had to have the lump in my breast taken out, but he insisted that we stick to his business schedule and still go on holiday first ... The loneliness ...

Helen: The sulking really gets at you. I adore travelling, so once, on an overseas trip with a group of people, I was the belle of the ball; I was really enjoying myself. I was talking and singing along and even organizing special trips for the group. I made the mistake of not sitting demurely next to him, speaking only when spoken to, but leaving his side to go and have a swim or enjoy something with the others. In the end he totally ruined the emotional part of the trip. I can still remember the wonderful places we saw, but I have this dark, heavy blanket covering every experience. He was constantly at me, if I wasn't eager enough in bed, I didn't take his needs into consideration when organizing something (he's an adult, he can speak up), but mostly it was in his manner. He was either sulking or emotionally so distant that the others raised eyebrows, or he sat there looking all forlorn and rejected, and you don't have to speculate who had to answer to the group.

- Being Vindictive

Phoebe: We were going through this custody battle and he had me tested for alcohol and dagga (cannabis). The humiliation!

Beth: He had this slight argument and then he would ignore me in front of every body at the meeting.

- Rejecting the woman when pregnant, or of the baby itself.

Hedwig: After three year I was pregnant with our second child ... When he heard the news, that's when he said "I'm leaving. I've had it with you ..."

Hannah: I went through the whole of the pregnancy and her birth on my own When he saw me and the baby in the delivery room all he said was, "Why are you crying?"

Matty: I lost the baby at four months after he pushed at me and I fell ... With the twins he said they were not his ...

Justification

Ann: He screamed at me, "You're so selfconceited. Everything is just about you, you, you" ... just because I didn't do as he said.

Mary's husband: She never shows any love and never, ever any sexual needs ... and she has this thing about death. When I shot her dog she just lost it.

Camilla's husband: When I needed her, she left me ... She does not act in a responsible manner ... She offers no support what so ever ...

Ann: The more monotone I try and keep my voice, the more he screams and then he will tell everybody how aggressive I can be.

Ann's husband: She kicked a dent in my car ... can you believe this woman.

APPENDIX C

THE WOMEN'S POSITIONING

As stated in Appendix B I appropriated the appendices as a means of giving voice to more experiences of the emotionally abuse women than is possible within the main text (See Appendix A for details about the women). I more or less keep to the headings as in the text for easy access to specific issues.

A Position of Fear and Anxiety

Doing Fearfulness

Linda: Sometimes I really fear for what he will do next.

A number of examples were indicated in Appendix B in describing the emotional abuser's threatening behaviour.

Doing Anxiety

Mandy: It's only when he phones and says that he will be late and I feel the relief was over me that I realize how stressed out I am ... At this time of day I would usually ready the house for his "inspection" when he comes home at night. The strange thing is that he never is such a perfectionist when it comes to his work.

Hannah: It's been a while now that I have suffered from constant stomach aches and muscle spasms.

Matty: I ended up with this ulcer

Riekie: Although I suffered from anxiety attacks I have taken control of my anxiety.

Gerda: You never know when the next eruption is about to occur.

Doing Denial

Beatrice: I cope with the abusiveness of his behaviour by withdrawing into myself. Sometimes I will call him a “pig, pig, pig” in my head. How can you spontaneous if he’s constantly breathing down your neck, calling you a slut, a whore. I block out these incidents.

Cathy: I try my best to live through the children. I’m so totally stuck ... at times I cannot find the energy to go on

Gerda: I decided he will change for the better.

Candice: I had to get an interdict. He tends to get vindictive, but he will not really hurt me ...

Erika: He does not really say it, but he shows that he wants me to leave. He would spit in my face or slap me in my face.

Phoebe: He drove me off the road ...

Camilla: Chris can be such a good husband. It’s only after he took the severance package and really started drinking that he gets offensive and started calling me names. I suppose it’s because of his depression and the pills he’s been taking.

Riekie: I think he’s like this because of his parents. They were divorced when he was only three years old.

Positions Herself as Depressed

- Emotionally I feel totally depleted

Camilla: If he gets so aggressive, it’s like something just died in me.

Beth: Piece by piece something was dying inside me.

Gerda: Maybe I am depressed, but I really miss my children so much.

Helen: It was as if every time we had an argument and it turned ugly, or there was another incident where the abuse again just spilled over me, I went more and more numb. It was as if I could physically feel another part of my heart closing off. Piece by piece, I lost the feeling of being emotionally alive.

Elaine: I don't think I'll ever be able to open up to another man again.

- Maybe this whole mess is my fault as I'm the one with the depression.

Edwina: Of late I've been so emotional. We had a fight, and ten to one it's my fault.

Anca: He would always say that I'm too complicated and philosophical for him and his family.

Heidi: He would tell me that I'm too intense and that I do not let go.

Rose: I have been thinking I've had all the time to think about how I should change so that we can have a better life.

Beatrice: Am I not overreacting? Maybe it is all my fault for not wanting sex

Edwina: Of late I've been so emotional. We had a fight, and ten to one it's my fault.

Doing Passivity

Antionette: I know in the end we will separate, but at this stage I do not have the energy.

Mary: I cannot describe how tired I am.

Beth: I'm trying my best to a-peace him ... trying to do the ironing as he wants me to ...

Doing Learned Helplessness

Anca: After all these years I have grown timid ... I to scared to try anything on my own ...

Mary: He says he's had it with me ... I did everything for this relationship ... it was my sole purpose in life ... I have lost myself

Edwina: He never gives you the opportunity to explain ... he's not even interested in hearing what you have to say or what you think It's terrible living like this

Hannah: I'm still hoping ... I'm still trying to find explanations for his behaviour ... Maybe if I could understand

Beth: I've just lost all hope.

Anca: I don't have confidence any more. Anything I have to decide on is just too much. Just thinking about going to London has me breaking out into cold shivers.

Karen: I don't have a strong enough personality. That's why I allow him to take over.

Anca: He used to tell me how hopeless I was, "You're no good as a mother. Everything you touch, you fuck up." I'm so afraid to go back to work; afraid that I'll not be able to do it. I pray and hope that I won't mess that up as well.

Positions Herself as Dependent

Ann: I felt so safe with him.

Cathy: I need to wait until I'm strong enough .. until I find my feet again.

Ann: I only now realize that he took over my whole life. I don't even know what things cost - He did all our food shopping.

Berna: I don't understand how I can leave him just to turn around 180 degrees and relentlessly return to his old ways. Emotions are treacherous things. They have a way of

deeply burying all the unpleasant and the unmanageable and to show only the yearning to be with someone and feel his presence. But quite soon the bad and the ugly turn up again. Wonderful see-saw ride, hey? And this I do in the ripe age of forty-six. Says a lot for maturity and accountability, don't you say?

Positions Herself as Victim

Beth: He was working from 07:00 till 22:00, so I try and help him. Then we moved into the new house and everything was absolutely filthy. I did everything inside the house and then I took over the garden. If he'll only show some appreciation, but all I get is the abuse and the aggression.

Minette: Ian will at times, for a whole day, not once talk to me, ask me something or even acknowledge me being there If only we could talk. He simply doesn't speak to me. We're like two people sharing space. It's as if he doesn't care, he's merely not interested to work things out.

Ann: I have this feeling of having done everything for the relationship, for him And now he's leaving me. I'm left with the responsibility of the children all on my own – and he gets to go on with his life.

A Position of Dutiful Obedience

Anca: I time and again fall for his manipulations. I'm so stupid ... when am I going to open my eyes ... Maybe it's me, always so pleasing.

Beatrice: How I'm to affect change? I must be more humble I must show him more attention ... because a wife is supposed to be subservient. At home you are supposed to be soft and compliant

Mandy: I just knew I had the choice ... I will either end up in an institution or I had to comply.

Riekie: He was this important and extremely busy CEO. When he came home in the evenings, he was tired, and most evenings he still had some work to do. So for fourteen years I took on everything. I stood by him and supported him. I handled all our financial matters. I totally took care of the children and all their needs. I organized holidays and family gatherings.

Rose: We were new in town, and being English-speaking on the Afrikaans platteland made it difficult to have friends. John was constantly at me, urging me to go out and make friends, as this would help me overcome the loneliness I felt. But it's difficult, and I ended up with only Cathy, my neighbour from across the street, but John disapproved of her. I suppose he was right, because she often would tell me what an asshole he was ... We would be having supper and I would say something to the effect of, "You know what happened to Cathy at the Spar today?" I would then just read the disdain on his face and the iciness in his manner. More than once he lashed out, "How many times have I told you that woman is bad news" or "When are you going to open your eyes and see the scum you're mixing with" or a sarcastic "You're such a dim-wit, mixing with another idiot". But in the end he did win, because the friendship did suffer, and eventually nothing was left.

A Position of Resisting the Abuse

Beatrice: I loved school and academically I excelled. I was head girl and had a number of good friends I love the challenges of my job, learning something new every day.

Beth: I have never failed at anything.

Aggression: Confrontation and Opposition

Lynette: While on holiday, I constantly had to hear, "You with your fuckin' nose in the air." I knew he was trying to provoke me. He just wanted to have somebody he could take it out on, somebody to scold. I would be doing nothing and he would be angry, often

humiliating me in some way or another. He would sommer lock me in my room. Much, much later I started hitting back.

Beatrice: I just block him out ... I call him all these names in my head.

Gerda: I'm so ashamed to say, but there came a time that I just hit back at him.

Challenging: Being Assertive and Objecting

Antionette: I know I'm a control freak .. I do not give in easily.

Reflecting: Discussion and Reasoning

Minette: If only I can get some perspective on what's happening to me.

Nettie: If I try and reason with him he gets terribly annoyed. He accuses me of trying to be the boss.

Antionette: He never wants to talk about his behaviour.

Antoinette: We met up while in training and of course there was this constant "discussions" going on, but once we were married, I didn't dare to try and discuss anything I read with him. Thinking back, I now realize how threatened he was by my development; something that could make me emotionally less reliant on him. He was always saying, "You know, you're the clever one" – but also constantly telling me how stupid I was and complaining about everything I did 'wrong.
