

Understanding His Violence
South African Women's Accounts of Intimate Partner Violence
A Discursive Approach

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Abstract

The focus of this study is women experiencing intimate partner violence. The research is based on qualitative methodology, focusing on women's individually perceived reality. By utilising a qualitative in-depth interview we have searched for specific ways in which nine South African women depict and explain violence experienced from their partners. The analysis of the interviews has been conducted within a discursive framework, with the objective to identify specific discourses. We have been interested in investigating what discourses the women draw on when giving meaning to the violence and identify which models of explanation these discourses carry. The data is collected by the authors, as an independent research project.

The nine women that participated in the study were all currently experiencing or had been experiencing intimate partner violence in the recent past. The violence was of a physical, emotional, verbal, financial and/or sexual nature. All women were or had been receiving counselling addressing this violence at the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture and were put in contact with us through their personal counsellors there.

We identified six discourses that the women repeatedly drew on in their understanding of their partner's violence. A commonality found across five of these is the understanding of the violence as based in something outside the perpetrator. We also identified one alternative discourse where responsibility was placed inside the perpetrator. In the women's explanations of the violence, gendered concepts like masculinity and femininity, strongly contributed to the process of understanding or giving meaning to the violence in their lives.

Thank you...

In accordance with our feminist background and views, we would like to shed the limelight onto our superb female supervisors;

Mona-Iren Hauge, our Norwegian supervisor; thank you for your invaluable help and support. Your enthusiasm, belief in our work and persistence helped us to produce something even better. We hope your strive for elegance and glamour is evident in this result!

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Hasseena Parker, at the Trauma Centre / Saartjie Bartman; Without you, these women would not have been heard. Thank you for the help with recruiting them for the study, for giving us access to the experts in the area of intimate partner violence in South Africa.

Our Participants, the main characters of the project; thank you so much! For opening up for us and letting us into your worlds of thoughts and understandings. For talking to us about personal and daunting issues. We are utterly grateful and left in complete awe of your courage and bravery.

And to our patient, hardworking and underpaid boyfriends; thanks for your help! We do expect it, but value and appreciate it non the less!

And last, but not least, we want to thank each other; 1+1 is more than two and this research a hundred times better than having done it without you...

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Preface - Choosing the Field of Gender and Intimate Partner Violence

The choice to study intimate partner violence in South Africa did not occur by chance. We came to South Africa with a Norwegian academic background as well as a Norwegian historical and cultural way of interpreting the world around us. For two years we had the privilege to experience South African society, both as students and as interns in Clinical Psychology. Living in a society not originally 'ours' we experienced being curious about the society, and we found ourselves questioning and wondering about the existing codes. One observation we noted upon quite early in our stay was that we, to a much larger degree than in our home country, became aware of our gender. These experiences ranged from unfamiliar gestures of 'politeness' we were shown because of being women, to more negative experiences of verbal assaults. These observations were intriguing nevertheless, and became a topic of discussion on several occasions. Inspired by these experiences, a growing awareness and interest in gender and women's position in South Africa was aroused. Exploring the field of research on gender and intimate partner violence further motivated us to stay on a path where women and gender perspectives would be our focus. We found an extensive body of research and theories focusing on *men*; why some men become violent. However, there was a remarkable absence of research that focused on women living with violent partners. Inspired by feminist research we decided to explore this subject in further detail. This became our starting point and we realised that we were presented with a possibility to produce a space for some of these women to be heard. Hopefully having conducted this study provides one of a million baby steps that are needed on the long road towards a South African society where women are positioned equally to men.

Oslo, April 17. 2007

Stine Lundgren and Lene Løvlien

1. Introduction

Intimate partner violence is a widespread phenomenon in South African society. Reliable numbers are not easy to obtain, and few large-scale epidemiological studies have been conducted. A provincially representative population based survey that includes three of South Africa's nine provinces indicates that the life-time risk for women experiencing physical violence in a relationship are 26,8 %, 28,4% and 19,1% in the three provinces (Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 1999). This implies that at least one out of four women experiences physical violence from their partner during her life. In the same study 51,4%, 50,0% and 39,6% of the women in the three provinces reported having experienced emotional or financial abuse by current or ex-partner during the year prior to the survey (Jewkes et al., 1999). In another recent study, and the first of its kind in South Africa, employed men in Cape Town were asked about their violence towards women; 42,3% reported having been physically violent towards a female partner in the last ten years (Abrahams, Jewkes, Laubscher & Hoffman, 2006). Furthermore, sexual abuse was reported having been committed by 15,3%. 42,2% reported emotional abuse and 55% reported verbal abuse towards a woman over the last ten years (Abrahams et al., 2006). Other research shows that every six hours a woman is killed by her intimate partner in South Africa (Mathews et al., 2004). This is the highest rate that has ever been reported in the world.

Even though few studies on prevalence have been conducted, they do illustrate the seriousness of the problem of intimate partner violence in South Africa. Intimate partner violence is regarded as an important public health problem (Heise & Garcia-Moreno, 2002, in Abrahams et al. 2006), having major impacts on health, development, equity and social justice (Jewkes et al., 1999). Even though research in this area is increasing, little research has been focusing on the women experiencing intimate partner violence. The individual experience of the woman exposed to violence seems to disappear. The aim of this study is to go behind the numbers and explore this individual experience, to explore how *she* talks about it, understands it, and which affect it has in her life.

In search for this knowledge we interviewed nine women. These women had all experienced violence from their partners; seven of them were still in these relationships at the time, while two had just left their violent partners. The violence experienced was of a physical, sexual,

verbal, emotional and/or financial nature. Through in-depth interviews, they gave us a unique journey into their worlds of understanding and formation of meaning around the violence they experience.

1.1. The outline of the thesis

The first part of this thesis aims at giving a theoretical, methodological and cultural background for the study. Being set in a poor area in South Africa, the context differs strikingly from a Norwegian setting and we find it important to provide the reader with a thorough description of the scene. The theoretical part is a necessary account of our theoretical standpoint; how our key concepts of violence and gender can be understood, and what frameworks we work within. Our scientific starting point is a discursive approach and through the method of discursive analysis we aim to show how different understandings of violence appear as discourses. We see the women's understanding as meaningful, not objective and neutral but creations of meaning through concepts like man versus woman, femininity versus masculinity. In addition to giving a thorough description of our methodological stand point and research tools, the method aims at giving a description of the specific conduction of the study; from early interest in the field and application of ethical approval to the actual interviews, analysis and writing up.

The second part of the thesis is the analysis of the interview material. Here we present six main models of understanding intimate partner violence we identified in these women's accounts and we have conceptualised these as discourses. Our paper ends up in a discussion where we integrate our theoretical concepts with what we find in the material. We attempt to show the reader what consequences the use of specific discourses have on maintaining specific gender positions and the intimate partner violence.

2. Background

In this part we will give a brief introduction to some central characteristics about the South African society and the specific context our participants live in. We believe this is important mainly for two reasons; firstly because the context people live in influence how they create meanings in their lives. Søndergaard (1999) notes that the premises for the reciprocal process

between individuals and culture lies in the context where the individuals live. When born, individuals meet certain conditions in which they have to be actors in, and express their identity through (Søndergaard, 1999). Søndergaard's account highlights the importance of understanding context when trying to understand an individual's narrative; the context creates and directs people's lives, as well as limits them. The second reason for a contextual background in this thesis is the fact that we, as researchers, are not from the same context as the participants. Conducting research in a foreign country brings forth upsides and downsides; our Norwegian view point might make us more able to see phenomena and dynamics that for South Africans have become natural, accepted and even invisible. However, by the same token our Norwegian eyes can mislead us. By not knowing a society's culture and historical background, it can be difficult to see complexities and connections, and to consider phenomena in the contextual reality they actually take place in.

For these two reasons we believe it is important to provide the reader with a section that briefly describes some aspect of the South African society we perceive as having particular importance for our study. This will include four short sections. The first three are a brief glance at apartheid, violence, and patriarchy in South Africa, all three focusing on how these aspects affect social realities. We would like to note here though, that we do not aim to give a fully comprehensive picture of the country's social reality. The last part is about the specific area where most of our participants grew up and live.

2.1. Apartheid and inequality

South Africa has a unique history, which is of huge importance in order to understand this society today. The racially segregated system of apartheid¹ that governed South Africa from 1948 to the early 1990s passed laws that allowed and required discrimination on the basis of skin colour. In terms of the Population Registration Act, people of South Africa were divided into four main groups; Blacks, Coloureds², Asians and Whites. The people's rights and worth

¹ Apartheid means 'separateness' or 'apart-ness' in Afrikaans (the dominant language of the architectures of apartheid) (<http://wikipedia.org/wiki/apartheid>).

² Coloureds were defined in terms of the Population Registration Act as 'those who cannot be defined as either white or African [black]' (Westeren, 1996, Wilson & Ramphela, 1989, in Salo2003). The term coloured refers in a South African context to a heterogeneous group of people who possess some degree of sub-Saharan ancestry, but not enough to be considered Black under South African apartheid law. They are technically mixed race and often possess substantial ancestry from Europe, Indonesia, South India, Ceylon, Madagascar, Mozambique, Mauritius, St. Helena and Southern Africa (<http://wikipedia.org/wiki/coloureds>).

in the society were based on this division, the power being with the minority whites. The fundamental ideology was that some people are worth more than others, hence have more rights than others. One can only imagine the psychological consequences this has for people of all colours, including feelings of inferiority, powerlessness and anger. Beside psychological consequences, it is important for our thesis to note on the more materialistic differences this system created; it resulted in enormous inequalities and deprivation, a result that still has a huge impact on the South African citizens of today. To give an example of the economic inequality, the average black person in South Africa is comparable to the 124th wealthiest nation in the world. In comparison, the average white South African is comparable to the 24th (Villa-Vicencio, 1998, in Hamber, 1999). The differences in living standard are visible and striking, and unemployment and poverty are part of many people's lives.

2.2. South Africa, a 'Culture of Violence'

Both historically and contemporary, South Africa is facing huge problems when it comes to violent crimes. The South African society is frequently described as a 'culture of violence', referring to a society which endorses and accepts violence as a legitimate means to resolve problems and to achieve goals (Vogelman & Simpson, 1990). Apartheid as a system was violent in its structure with its laws on forced removals, restrictions on travel, enforced poverty and reduced access to health, education and welfare facilities (Skinner, 1998). All resistance towards the system was dealt with extremely harshly.

Today, the forms of violence are changing, from 'political' violence to more 'criminal' violence. The South African violence researcher Hamber (1999) emphasizes that there is continuity between the political violence that took place during the apartheid era and the current levels of criminal violence, and that in order to understand the present violence one must understand the past. In this 'culture of violence' violence has become normalised and is influencing all parts of public life; undermining the moral, interpersonal and social fabric of society (Hamber, 1999). As described in the introduction, women are at particular risk for experiencing violence in South Africa. This can be seen in connection with the 'culture of violence', as Graham Simpson (1992) says: 'It is arguable that violence against women has in fact become part of the 'culture of violence' in the wider society, in that it has decreasingly been socially sanctioned' (p. 4).

2.3 Patriarchy

Does the development of inequality between people also make the differences between men and women more significant? We believe so. In South Africa the imbalance in power between men and women is integrated in a societal 'normality'; South Africa is a society highly patriarchal³ in nature (Dangor, Hoff & Scott, 1998). The inequality in power between men and women is found throughout the groups of people in South Africa. Like Vetten (2000) describes it; 'Patriarchy ideology is, perhaps, the one factor unifying all of South Africa's various cultural and ethnic groups' (p.57). Sexism was part of the apartheid ideology (Outwater, Abrahams & Campbell, 2005), and thus it can be claimed that apartheid contributed to the strong stand patriarchy has in South Africa. We believe a patriarchal society with corresponding beliefs are strong contributors to the high rates of intimate partner violence we find in South Africa; men's superiority of power encourage the use of violence in order to maintain authority and control. Intimate partner violence can be seen as a manifestation of male dominance and a means of maintaining the superior position. It is part of the repertoire of strategies to control (Wood & Jewkes, 2001, in Jewkes & Abrahams, 2002). Combined with a high general tolerance for use of violence, this contribution can be assumed to be even stronger. In South Africa, researchers have found violence against women to be regarded as the norm, and in many contexts, even legitimate (Pareeze, Artz & Moul, 2001). For instance, a South African study found that people, including women, to large degree view intimate partner violence as acceptable "if it does not injure or leave a mark" (Wood, 2003, in Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005, p.1811).

Studies confirm our hypothesis of the link between men's use of violence in relationships and their patriarchal beliefs. Graham-Bermann & Brescoll (2000) found this to be valid in their American study and one can assume a similar link in South Africa. As in other patriarchies, research has concluded that in South Africa, there exists a heritage of traditions that entitles men to punish their wives physically (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002, in Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005).

In our study on intimate partner violence, all these factors must be part of our understanding and analysis. It is a challenge to understand intimate partner violence on multiple levels

³ The term patriarchy is generally used to describe societies in which an ideology or structure grants men power and privilege over women (Vetten, 2000).

including apartheid's legacy of a culture of violence, as described above, and the gendered power dynamics in the society (Vetten, 2000).

2.4 Cape Flats

8 of the 9 women we interviewed live on the Cape Flats. Cape Flats refers a vast area about fifteen minutes drive from the city centre of Cape Town. This area was established by the white apartheid regime's Group Area Act of 1950. This act removed citizens by force, with the idea and the goal to create different residential areas for different 'races'. Coloured and black people who were living in 'wrong' areas according to the Act were uprooted from their homes, their houses demolished, and extended families dispersed. Racially segregated communities, often underdeveloped, called townships, were established on the Flats, maintaining the racial hierarchy (Boonzaier, 2001). Steinberg (2004) writes very descriptively about the Flats in his novel/bibliography, 'The Number';

'And so, between 1966 and the early 1980s, tens of thousands of people were wrenched from their lives in the inner city and dumped in the satellites on the edge of town. Extended families were dispersed to all four corners of the Flats, and everybody shared their cramped streets with strangers. The more well-to-do moved into districts of square, free-standing houses: Surry Estate, Ravensmead, Uitig. The poor made their new lives on the crescent-shaped streets and in the squat residential buildings of places like Valhalla Park, Bonteheuwel, Manenberg and Heideveld.' (p. 105).

This is how the Flats developed into many townships. Some occupied by Coloureds, like Mannenberg and Mitchell's Plain, and some by Blacks, like Khayelitsha. Since the end of apartheid, these communities are no longer legally bound by racial restrictions, but history, language, economics and ethnic politics still contribute to homogeneity of local areas. Not surprisingly perhaps, taking its origin and history into consideration, the Cape Flats is facing huge problems today. The unemployment rate is extremely high. The townships are infiltrated by gangs, crime and violence. Alcohol and drug addiction is extremely common. It is the home of most of the city's poorer communities, and also home to most people in Cape Town. The number of people relying on the area is high and the resources very low. It is in this context our study takes place. Most of the women grew up and still live in one of these coloured townships on the Cape Flats. It is within this context the women we interviewed establish meanings in their lives, and make their lives dignified. And it is within this context

we must understand our participants. Pictures from the Mannenberg area is provided in appendix 4 to further illustrate the setting.

3. Theoretical framework

In this section an outline follows of the theoretical framework the study is grounded in. The approach to analysing and exploring the women's understanding of violence is based on a discursive approach. This is a wide and complex field and we find it of essence to clarify within *what* discursive framework the research is executed. Feminist epistemology, which the study is inspired by, is briefly looked at. The section ends off by outlining from what standpoint we have interpreted and worked with intimate partner *violence*, and what consequences working within a discursive framework bring about for the understanding of violence.

3.1. A Discursive Framework

In the exploration and analysis of how the women talk about and understand the violence they are exposed to from their partner, we have used a discursive approach. We have aimed at identifying what discourses they draw on in their explanations of the partner's violence and their models of understanding. The choice of such a methodological framework implies certain premises and concepts.

Historically, the concept of discourse was provided by Foucault;

'We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far they belong to the same discursive formation [...Discourse] is made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical - a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality.' (Foucault, 1972, p. 117, in Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002)

We understand discourses as *the particular way of talking about and understanding aspects of the world that gives and carries meaning for the individual*. The study aims at exploring how the nine women talk about the violence, and how this way of talking gives meaning to their experience. We have been interested in identifying how discourses construct accepted 'truths'

around men's violence. This is in line with social constructionism⁴; the 'truth' existing in society is constructed between people, in their daily interactions in the course of social life (Burr, 1994). From this follows that knowledge and truths always will be just that; socially constructed, contextual and transforming over different epochs in history (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002).

Discourse analytical approaches rest on structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic philosophy which claims that our access to reality always is through language. It is language that creates representations of reality. This is opposed to the view that reality is pre-existing and that our language is a genuine reflection of this. The discursive viewpoint does not imply that reality itself does not exist. Meanings and representations are real, physical objects do exist. The important difference is that reality is given meaning and being understood through discourses (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002). A consequence of this is that one will never experience the world *as it is*; one's experience is always of how persons, situations, objects are *to me*.

No discourse is ever fully established and always in conflict with other discourses that define reality differently. Contradictory and ambiguous discourses will always exist, but struggling for hegemony. At specific times throughout history there will be certain discourses that seem 'natural' and intelligible. Hence, knowledge is, at any time in history, only products of our own ways of categorising. What intimate partner violence 'is' is product of discourses rather than objective facts. Over time, ways of speaking phenomena into existence become legitimate as truth-statements.

3.1.1. Discourses of identity and gender

According to Foucault and discursive theory, the individual is created through discourses (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 1999). This focus on language implies a decentralisation of the individual; no longer does the individual use language to express her/himself, it is rather created through language and becomes a 'medium' for the culture and its language (Kvale, 1992). This means that the individual not exists as a given category, but rather as something that arises in relation to the society and surroundings; what the violent man and the violated

⁴ By using the theoretical concept of social-constructionism we draw on Vivien Burr's (1994) understanding of it. She states that in the last three decades a number of alternative approaches to study human beings as social creatures have appeared, examples of these are 'critical psychology', 'post structuralism' and 'deconstruction' (Burr, 1994). Burr (1994) sees social constructionism as a theoretical orientation which underpins these different approaches.

woman 'are' are results of what society's discourses define them as. Only to a certain extent does this study view the self as a discursive individual though, since it also draws upon the interactionistic position that claims that humans *use* discourses actively as resources. This can for instance be a woman who uses a specific discourse in order to make sense of being violated. This combination of approaches leads to the view that humans are producing discourses as well as being products of them (Phillips & Jørgensen, 2002).

Working within a discursive framework has implications for how gender is viewed. As any magnitude, gender is socially constructed (Haavind, 1994), and not something objective. As we have seen above, knowledge and truth is created by people in interaction. What becomes 'woman' and 'man', depends on the outcome of this negotiation between discourses (Magnusson, 2002). Gender is something people enact or do (West & Zimmerman, 1987), not something they are or own (Baxter, 2003). Still, today's main gender discourses are of male and female as something natural, something inherent that *lead* to the categories and divisions that exist in society. Following this, the woman living in this society will understand herself, her wishes and needs from what is presented as the natural, gender specific qualities around her (Magnusson, 2002). Society's provision of the possibilities and possible ways of being a woman will always be limited – the socially constructed gender can not be created in infinite ways. This has strong implications for women's choice of discourses. Today, notions of femininity are often described in terms of being receptive, caring, emotional, nurturing, passive and submissive. Masculine characteristics on the other hand are concepts of toughness, self-assertiveness and competitiveness (Vetten, 2000). Although male culture is variable, aggressive and violent behaviour are highly valued in many cultures around the world (Dobash & Dobash, 1998).

Researchers with a gender theoretical discursive view point do not necessarily deny a possibility of differences between men and women on a social level. What they do look into is how the categories and hierarchic grouping according to gender is created and maintained, both on a macro level and in interaction between people (Magnusson, 2002).

3.1.2. Discourses as power and exclusion

According to the Foucauldian tradition, discourses are inherently linked with concepts of power (Baxter, 2003). As Foucault has argued; all voices contain and negotiate power relations (Fine, 1992). Not only do discourses create norms and hence are in possession of

power, they also exclude those who do not confirm to the dominant discourse (Foucault, 1980b, in Munch, 1994). In addition to the issue of power in discourses, there is also the issue of power over discourse, or access to discourses (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). Some individuals will be more powerfully positioned than others, or better placed than others and benefit from a more 'privileged position within a combination of dominant discourses' (Baxter, 2003, p.8). One example, and relevant for our study, is the differences in power between men and women. The gender with most power also has most power over which discourses are given validity in a society. For instance, a discourse containing the view that men inherently are stronger than women, is reckoned a more valid and accessible discourse than one saying that women are the stronger sex, through being the ones who give birth as one example. The latter could have been a 'truth', but is not. We believe this clearly has got to do with what truths are more convenient and opportune for the gender in the most powerful position, namely men.

3.1.3. Discourse and violence

A discursive approach to violence has consequences. The fact that we have chosen to name our main focus in this study *violence* involves use of a discourse. In theory we could have chosen any other concept, like *conflict* or *wife-education*. Through the choice of concept or what we chose to name specific phenomena, we give away information about our own discursive understanding (Winstock, Eisikovits & Karnieli-Miller, 2004, in Sørli, 2005). In this thesis we are interested in the women's concepts and terms around their experiences, how they word what is going on in their relationship and how they interpret, give meaning and language to their experiences of violence. We believe these discourses will vary, and some coming across as carrying more status as more valid and sufficient than others. Like Isdal (2000) outlines in his theory; not only do people search for *a* meaning, they search for *the* meaning they can live with. The consequence of this becomes that not only must these women create a meaning to something that is fundamentally wrong (their partner acting violent towards them), they must also find a meaning they can live with.

3.2 Feminist epistemology

There are competing epistemologies, and which epistemology to choose in research is important because it determines how the study will be conducted; it gives way to which questions to investigate, which framework is suitable and how knowledge will be used

(Collins, 2000). Our study reflects influence from feminist thoughts. The feminist critique to existing research is comprehensive, and will not be discussed in great detail. Feminist research is first of all a critique to the dominant masculine conceptions of knowledge (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). It's a reaction to the knowledge stemming from research conducted mostly by male, western, white researchers, within a positivist framework. It has been claimed that this male dominance pervades the themes, paradigms, and epistemologies. As a result of this, it can be argued that women's experiences have been distorted and ignored from what counts as knowledge (Collins, 2000). We believe a change of epistemology is needed to be able to see the world from the view of women; women need to define their own self as women, not through the eyes of men. Hence, our wish to give these women voices and hear their stories is clearly influenced by feminist epistemology. Simultaneously, the choice of research and epistemology also lead to ethical considerations. It can be argued that in order to conduct feminist research and give women a voice, their stories should be presented as unprocessed and autonomous as possible. In this study however, the stories provided by the women are analysed. Some would claim that we through this process have manipulated the material and created a distance between the women and their story. Having been genuinely struck by a wish to pass on the rich material we were given, we still decided to analyse the material in search for knowledge on specific discourses. We believe this is ethical, and also in line with feministic epistemology. According to Fine, it is not the researchers' *use* of these voices that is worrying. Rather it is the failure to articulate how we work and the lack of bravery to actually outline the stories about the ideological and discursive patterns of inequitable power arrangements that should alarm a feminist researcher (Fine, 1992).

3.3 What is violence?

Defining violence is contested and a subject of debate. Finding a definition that works for all situations and for all times is impossible because what violence 'is' is constructed historically, socially and culturally – like every concept according to discursive theory. Violence is not something concrete and objective, but a heterogenic socially constructed concept that varies over cultures, situations and time (Hearn, 1998). Furthermore, violence is closely linked to how we perceive the ones who execute violence and those being exposed to violence (Sørli, 2005). In case of intimate partner violence and our study, categories like gender, masculinity and femininity are of great importance and intertwined with how we understand the violence.

One approach to understanding violence is suggested by Isdal (2000). He views violence as ‘any action directed towards a person, which through being hurtful, frightening or humiliating, makes the person do something against her/his own will or sustain from doing something she/he wants to do’ (Isdal, 2000, p. 36, our translation from Norwegian). This view focuses on violence as something *functional*; behind the violent act is an aim to affect another person. This deviates from other approaches that focus on the intension behind the violent act.

In this study it is the meaning creating aspects of violence we have been interested in; what meaning the woman creates and attaches to her experience of intimate partner violence. Working within a discursive framework, it is the individual understanding of the violence we have wanted to access; how she talks about, labels and gives meaning to the violence. Regardless, in order to access and study these specific ways of talking about phenomena the researcher needs to define her basic research concepts. Haavind (2000) points out the importance of achieving a balance between having a preconception and having an open mind to the material. She highlights that a prior understanding to a phenomenon is not a limiting factor, rather because it is used actively in the analytical process it will contribute to specifying, modifying and rejecting existing knowledge (Haavind, 2000). In this study intimate partner violence has been understood in light of Isdal’s approach to violence above. We regard the violent ‘actions’ to include all hurtful, frightening or humiliating acts of a physical, sexual, financial, emotional and/or psychological character. Furthermore we define ‘partner’ as someone the woman is or have been romantically involved with and someone she lives with or have lived with.

3.3.1. Violence in relationships

Being a phenomenon without a clear and prevailing hegemonic definition, research on violence offers different approaches and understandings. To view violence as single standing episodes or as a whole has been up for debate. According to Isdal and Råkil (2002), violence in a relationship ought to be understood as a pattern or a continuum of acts. All acts of different degrees of severity, but every one of them with the function to hurt, frighten and/or humiliate. Also Lundgren (2004) represents a view where violence in a relationship is analysed and understood as a whole, a process, and not as single standing episodes. This is an understanding of violence which is common amongst feministic oriented researchers. We found this useful and make sense in relation to this study. Drawing on existing research, we

saw it as being highly unlikely that the women's experiences of the violence would be seen as detached, incomprehensible incidents – but rather something that is understood through dynamics between herself and her partner; *processes* that goes on and lead somewhere (e.g. Isdal, 2000; Hydén, 2001).

Viewing violence as a process and not as single standing episodes can also be understood as an inversion of a more, 'traditional', understanding where a 'casual' understanding of violence is applied. In this casual understanding it is the perpetrator's individual psychology that becomes the focus and serves as explanation; he is violent because he is sick, or mad and *deviating*. Lundgren (2004) claims this 'casual understanding' contributes to a fragmentising of the *process* of violence; the violence becomes individualised and private and the link between the 'normal' man and the 'violent' man escapes the scene.

According to feminist theory, men's violence against women becomes invisible and normalised in a patriarchal society. The man's violence becomes the norm, and therefore not identified as a problem. Through normalization women are internalising his violence; his reality becomes hers; through different power- and control strategies, e.g. threats, constraints and physical violence (Lundgren, 2004). This gradual process of normalisation might be connected to deep-rooted, 'normal' gender norms and we believe violence must be seen in the light of *normality*; violence is connected with the existing 'normal' imbalance of power between men and women (Lundgren, 2004). According to this paradigm, violent men are not sick or deviant, but normal and average men that through gender socialising has been *taught* to act violently towards women (Råkil, 2002). Thus, in an understanding of intimate partner violence as gendered violence, power, normality and violence must be seen as connected.

A possible approach opposed to this gendered 'normality' approach is a viewpoint where violence is described as *conflict*. Violence then becomes the result of discord and quarrelling between two *equal* parts. Critiques of this approach claim the systematic differences in power between sexes, and men and women's different position in the violence disappears from the analysis (Lundgren, Westerstrand, Heimer, & Kalliokoski, 2001). Rather, in order to understand violence in intimate relations, it is, according to feminist researchers, inescapable to keep the analysis on power and gender (Kaufman, 1993). In this study we believe a view that approaches violence as 'gendered' is of relevance. We have chosen to incorporate the

concept of gendered violence in our study. We find the concept 'conflict' overlooking essential aspects in being something personal and gender neutral (Yllö, 1993).

Intimate partner violence is an extremely complex phenomenon. The theories outlined above are theories that have inspired us but not dictated us. In exploring the field of intimate partner violence, it has been important to keep an open mind to complexities; some men are violent, but not all. Some poor men hit, but not all. The approach and framework we have chosen as our starting point in this work on understanding the women's accounts is only one path towards understanding. Although this has been our main theoretical framework, we have, in line with a discursive approach, continuously strived to keep our minds open for the women's ways of interpreting and explain the phenomena.

4. Methods

In this part we will outline the methodological understanding this study is based on; what concepts and framework we build on and what analytical tools have helped us in the analysis. There will be a description of the procedure; how the actual study was followed through and how the material given by our participants was analysed. Finally, we give a brief reflection upon our role as researchers, and the ethical questions this brings forth.

4.1. Methodological framework

The methodological framework chosen is naturally the one we believe will be best in giving access to the way the women speak about intimate partner violence. The study aims to identify discourses these women draw on, and how these discourses position them and their violent partners. Further it has been an aim to identify how discourses construct what becomes regarded as natural and accepted 'truths' around men's violence towards women in the South African society. To gain this information it was natural to position the study within the field of qualitative research, which would bring forth in-depth and individual information. More specifically, our research has been influenced by the methodological approach of social constructionism. Of special importance for our study is this approach's focus on the individual's experienced reality and of the society as socially constructed (Burr, 1994). Principally concerned with exploring the process by which people come to describe, explain,

or otherwise account for their world (including themselves) (Gergen, 1985), we found social constructionism of essential value and matching our thoughts behind this study.

Qualitative research stresses that human behaviour cannot be understood separately from context, and thus people must be studied in their cultural and social context (Kvale, 1992). This notion supported our focus on obtaining knowledge about the social context our participants were living in, some of this information is provided in the 'Background' section. In addition, we found this of importance for the choice of conducting qualitative interviews; where the women could participate in their local community, and where the means of study was un-intimidating and as 'familiar' as possible.

4.2. The qualitative interview

There are several ways to conduct qualitative research. In this study we believed the best way to access the woman's experiences and more specifically, their use of discourses, was through conversation and carefully listening to them speak as freely as possible about their lives. The qualitative interview was chosen because of its focus on understanding the world from the individual's point of view. Kvale (1996) describes the qualitative interview as a conversation that has a structure and a purpose, 'a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge' (p.6). In line with Banister et al., (1994) we assumed that face to face interviews would give the participants room to express themselves unrestrictedly in relation to the violence, and use whichever wording they felt comfortable with. This would enable us to identify discourses. Another important strength of using the qualitative interview, in comparison to using methods such as more standardised questionnaires, is that a qualitative interview allows for the exploration of more complicated issues and important themes the participant raise. The interview allowed us to follow up on what is meaningful for the women, to follow their train of thought, and to clarify misunderstandings in questions. The focus was their individual narratives, which are exactly what an interview provides, in comparison to for instance an observational study that to a larger degree provides more 'objective' data (Banister et al., 1994).

We started out by discussing how to formulate questions that would best enable the women to tell us what meaning the violence has in their lives and what affect it has for them as women and mothers. We wanted to create a conversation with the women where their perceptions and

views were our focus. A first draft was created, which after a discussion with our supervisor lead to several changes. These changes included the usage of a less theoretical language, fewer general questions and asking for more concrete examples. The second draft was tested on each other and friends. Again this made us do a few more alterations. The interview ended up consisting of three main parts; one about violence, one about gender roles in South Africa and one about being a mother (appendix 1). All questions had an alternative question if the participant should not understand our wording, and we also included probes on most questions. The aim with the questions however, was to make them function as a guide; we strived to let the interviews be a conversation, but at the same time use many of the questions to ensure important topics were covered.

4.3. Participants

To obtain the knowledge we searched for in the interviews with the women, we formulated three criteria for who could participate in the study. Firstly, the participants had to speak English fluently. The second criterion was that they were or had been experiencing violence from their partner. We defined intimate partner violence in this setting to include all forms of violence; physical, sexual, verbal, financial and emotional. The third criterion we set was that the women had children living with them at the time of the intimate partner violence. This third criterion was important because earlier in the process we were, to a larger degree than this thesis will reflect, interested in how their views on themselves as mothers was influenced by the violence.

Prior to conducting this study we both completed internships in clinical psychology in Cape Town. One of us was based at the Trauma Centre of Violence and Torture (The Trauma Centre). The Trauma Centre is a non governmental organization based in Cape Town. It was launched in 1993 to cater for the mental health needs of ex-political prisoners, returned exiles and other victims of political violence and repression. In response to the changing face of violence and the changing needs of post apartheid South Africa, the Trauma Centre has expanded its services to cater for a broader spectrum of requests (<http://trauma.org.za/vision.html>). One of the newer areas of intervention is counselling offered to women experiencing intimate partner violence. In 2005, 377 women received service from the centre. Meeting these women, and through talking to them, a supplementary understanding of the society's double and contradictory view of intimate partner violence

became clearer. On one side the violence is viewed by ‘everyone’ as wrong and unwanted, on the other side though, the violence is seen as belonging to the private sphere and is thus accepted. This experience contributed to our wish to know more about how the women in this society understand and explain the violence they are experiencing. The participants in this study were recruited at the Trauma Centre, where they all were or had been receiving counselling or help regarding intimate partner violence. The Trauma Centre is based in Woodstock, a suburb close to the city of Cape Town. In addition, an office is situated at the Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (SBC) in Mannenberg. SBC provides women experiencing intimate partner violence in the Mannenberg area, a township in the Cape Flats, with counselling, legal advice etc. There is also a shelter connected to SBC.

The first contact with potential participants was facilitated by the women’s counsellors. Having accepted to be part of the study, one of us then made contact telephonically to plan where and when to meet. Twelve women were asked and were willing to participate in the study. Three of them did not arrive at planned times, and we did not succeed in getting in contact with them again. Altogether we interviewed nine women. The interviews were conducted in the months of May and June, 2006. Eight of the interviews took place at the Trauma Centre’s office at SBC in Mannenberg and one at the Trauma Centre’s head office in Woodstock. The locations were chosen based on what was most convenient for the women. The interviews lasted from 1 hour 22 minutes to 2 hours 10 minutes. Before each interview all participants were given oral and written information about the study and their rights, e.g. their right not to answer questions and the right to withdraw from the study at any time (appendix 2). Further, we also carefully explained the reasons for recording the interview and our confidentiality. In addition to signing the consent letter, a consent letter from the Trauma Centre was signed (appendix 3). As a compensation for their time and travel expenses, each participant was given 50 Rands (approximately equal to 50 NOK). This compensation was introduced in the interview setting, and not when asking for participation. This was done to ensure that the women participated voluntarily, and not because of financial compensation. In a poor area like Mannenberg, R 50 represents much more money than in a Norwegian setting, and it is easy to imagine a situation where women feel compelled to participate based on financial reward. We felt that portraying the women with a possibility of remuneration in beforehand would be a very unfortunate situation border lining on exploitation.

In order to accommodate for negative feelings and anxieties that might have resurfaced during the interview, we arranged for the possibility that the women could meet with their previous counsellors. Some of the women were still in the process of counselling at the centre, and had already made new appointments. None of the women that had terminated therapy felt they needed an appointment.

4.3.1. Introduction of the participants

Nine women participated in this study. Naturally, there is a huge variation in their personalities and stories. However they also have many things in common. First of all they are all coloured or black, and all grew up in townships established by the apartheid government. Except for Jabulile, they are all still staying in a township. Their socioeconomic status differs to a certain degree, but they all belong in the lower socioeconomic aspect, some quite poor and some belonging to the lower middle-class. What the women have in common, and of essence to our study, is that they have experienced intimate partner violence. Except for Edith and Denise, the rest are still living with a violent partner. In the interviews all participants tell us that they have experienced a whole range of violence; physical, emotional, verbal, sexual and financial. The women were all, for reasons related to intimate partner violence, seeking help at the Trauma Centre. This means that the women in our study represent a specific group; they are women who have sought external help in their situation. Table 1 provides a short introduction of each woman in order to outline certain characteristics about them which are of particular importance for the study.

Table 1

Anne (47) married Aron five years ago after having known him for ten years. She has four children from a previous marriage. Anne lives with Aron, her daughters and a granddaughter. According to Anne, Aron was very jealous and controlling early in their relationship. He started to be physically violent a year into their marriage. Anne believes in a future with Aron, but for that to work he must stop his violent behaviour. That is why Anne contacted the SBC about a month ago, and she now has an interdict⁵ against him.

Bernice (33) has been married to Bradley for eleven years. They have been divorced for seven months but are still living together. They have two children, and Bernice also has another son from a previous marriage. Bernice has experienced extreme violence her whole life; from her step-father, her first husband and her second husband. Bradley has been violent towards her from before they married. The violence has been physical, verbal, sexual and emotional. Bernice wants to move away from Bradley, but has no concrete plans.

⁵ A court order prohibiting certain acts, in this setting the intimate partner violence.

Carmen (46) has been married to Carlos for 22 years and together they have four children. She is now in the process of divorcing him. Carlos has been a very violent husband from about six months into the marriage. The violence Carmen has experienced has been verbal, emotional, economical, and physical. The physical violence has been particularly severe; for example she tells us about episodes involving being hit on the head with a brick and Carlos pouring boiling water over her. Carmen is a woman with traditional views on gender, and tells us that experiencing violence is no reason for divorce. It was when Carlos had an affair with another man, she decided to divorce him. She plans to remarry as soon as the divorce is final.

Denise (40) has been married to Dylan for 21 years and they have three children. One month ago, Denise left home and came to SBC Shelter for Women and Children, with her two youngest children. At the time of the interview her oldest daughter and granddaughter still lived with Dylan. Denise is unclear on when Dylan started to act violently towards her. The violence has been both psychological and physical, but it is mainly the psychological aspects that is emphasised in Denise's narratives. The violence has been escalating over the last two years when Dylan has used 'tik'⁶. After she found out about his seventh affair Denise decided it was time to leave.

Edith (30) has been in a relationship with Emmanuel for thirteen years and has been married for two and a half years. Together they have two daughters. Recently Emmanuel moved out of their home. Edith now plans to divorce him, and she wants to start a new life. In the beginning of their relationship, Emmanuel also had several other girlfriends. Edith tells us he was violent towards these women, but not towards her. This changed a few years ago. Since they got married the violence has escalated. Edith has experienced a wide range of violence from her husband; verbal, emotional, physical, sexual and financial.

Frieda (38) and Faizel have been a couple for seventeen years, but married only nine months ago. They have three children (15, 11 and 5). The family lived on the streets until ten years ago. Now the family lives in a 'wendy house'⁷ with Faizel's sister's family and also Frieda's sister and her daughter. This makes them 13 people in a very small house. Faizel was not violent towards Frieda before they got married nine months ago. The last months he has been physically, emotionally, verbally and economically violent towards her. Frieda has started thinking about leaving her husband because of the violent situation.

Grace (34) has been married to Grant for eight years. They have three sons. Grant started to behave violently towards Grace a few months into their marriage. She describes him as a very brutal man, physically, sexually and psychologically. Grace has retaliated to the violence; for instance by burning her husband's legs with boiling water. She has also moved herself and her children into the granny flat of the house to avoid some of the violence and has now filed for divorce.

Hailey (43) and Hendrik have been a couple +/- eight years, living together on and off. They have one child together, and Hailey has one from an earlier marriage. Hendrik started acting violently three or four years back and is physically and psychologically violent. Hailey tells us that Hendrik is a very jealous man, and keeps her isolated from her family and friends. Hailey is the only woman in our sample that states that she is staying with him because she is

⁶ 'Tik' is common name for the addictive narcotic drug Crystal Meth, widely abused in South Africa.

⁷ In a South African context a 'wendy house' refers to a very simple pre-fabricated house, placed in the backyard of the main house.

dependent on him financially. She came to the SBC to have someone to talk to with and to get an interdict against Hendrik.

Jabulile (29) is the only woman in our sample that doesn't live on the Cape Flats. She lives in a Cape suburb. Jabulile and Jabu have been a couple for fourteen years, and have been married for six. They have one son together. Jabu started to act violently towards Jabulile when she was seventeen years old. Since then he has been violent intermittently, mainly physically. Jabulile has no plans of leaving her husband.

4.4. Language

In the interview setting, neither the researchers nor the participants spoke their first language. 8 of the 9 participant's first language is Afrikaans, while Xhosa is the first language of the last participant. Both the researcher's first language is Norwegian. This is a weakness in our study. We believe that it is easier to talk freely and to speak about complex and private matters when speaking your mother tongue. In spite of this acknowledgment, we did not try to recruit participants with English as their first language. This would have forced us to consider a relatively small sample of the South African population; only 8,6% (South African Yearbook, 2006/07). Rather, we set as a criterion that all the participants were fluent in English. In this discussion it must be noted that there is a difference in the use of the term 'second language' between Norway and South Africa. In South Africa it is common to speak more than one language on a daily basis, and English is the main source of communication in many aspects of the South Africa society, e.g. in news papers, TV stations and other parts of social life. Norway in comparison use Norwegian in almost all settings of social life, and a second language is only used occasionally.

4.5. Transcriptions

All the interviews were transcribed. In addition to all the spoken words, all other sounds were noted, e.g. hesitation and laughter. Also periods of silenced were marked. A few times our participants used expressions in their mother tongue when they could not find the exact English expression. These words and expressions were translated for us by a bilingual South African. The transcriptions consist of 497 pages. To ensure anonymity the women's real names are not used. The first participant, her partner and children, are given random names starting with A. The second women, and people in her narrative, names on B and so on.

4.6. Analysis – the analytical process

In our analysis we aimed to explore what constructed truths and understanding our participants had of the violence. We aimed to identify discourses the women drew on when giving words to their experiences, and to see what models of understanding were taken for granted as natural, undisputed and accepted models. In recent times a wide range of research has been developed under the term ‘discourse analysis’ (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). This is a wide and complex field and it becomes of essence to define ones specific position in order to communicate within what framework the research is executed. In this study, our understanding of the concept discursive *analysis*, is the analysis of the patterns that form accounts and narratives. Based on Phillips and Jørgensen (2002) we define this as being the analysis of the patterns that people's utterances follow when they take part in different domains of social life. This approach to discursive analysis differs from others that are perhaps more ‘stringent’ approaches; like speech-act-orientated studies and ‘discourse process’ work on grammars and the like (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). In stead our approach assumes that a discourse is an active constitute of both social and psychological processes.

We started out by analysing each interview in depth and structured each woman’s accounts into three parts of analysis; one concerning her views on the intimate partner violence, the next on her views of gender roles in South Africa, and in the last part; her views on how the violence influences her role as a mother. After this process we both read the actual transcriptions once more, and discussed each corresponding text of analysis to ensure that the analysis had grasped the important aspects from the woman’s accounts. Our next step was to organise the in depth analysis into common themes we found across the women, e.g. ‘perceived reasons for his violence’, ‘reasons for staying’, ‘violence in cycles’, ‘mom’s behaviour after the violence’ and so on. We ended up with eighteen theme documents. At this point we realised that by holding on to the initial idea of dividing our analysis into three main parts (violence, gender and motherhood), we would not allow for any in depth analysis on any of them. With too much information that we would like to explore, the choice of a more narrow approach became difficult; we felt we had accessed so many interesting findings in areas where South African research today is scarce. Also ethical concerns came to mind; having all this information from women whom we had committed to give a voice, surely everything ought to be heard? We decided though to go in the direction our participants had leaded us to. Intimate partner violence was what they spoke most and easiest about. This was

very evident in the transcribed material and this focus enabled us to go deeper into their understanding, experiences and their views on the violence. From the analysis we identified and conceptualised six specific discourses, or specific ways of talking and giving meaning to the violence they were experiencing. We hope and believe the choice of focusing on six discourses does not exclude other aspects of their lives, and that through giving us their 'whole' story we are able to analyse their discourses and accounts more correctly and sensitively.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

Throughout the study, we have had a strong focus on planning and executing in line with ethical guidelines. We have strived to base all considerations and actual conduction of the study in accordance with the Helsinki declaration (<http://etikkom.no/retningslinjer/helsinkideklarasjonen/index.txt.view>). The formal ethical approval to conduct the research was given by the University of Cape Town, Health Sciences Faculty, Research Ethics Committee, the 20th of March 2006 (REC REF: 102/2006). The approval was signed by Dr. M. Blockman, chairperson at HSF Human Ethics.

Besides more practical ethical considerations, (like confidentiality of information, financial compensation etc, already discussed), conducting qualitative research requires transparency also on other, more implicit and intangible ethical aspects. In this study there are several aspects around the relationship between us as researchers and the women interviewed that are of important character. Generally the relationship between the interviewer and the one interviewed is of complicated nature, and it is important to make this relation as transparent as possible. The interviewer is herself the main instrument for obtaining knowledge, and the interviewer should be conscious of the interpersonal dynamics and take them into account in the interview situation (Kvale, 1996). There is a natural imbalance in power between the role as the interviewer and the role as the participant. Just through being the one asking the questions, versus the one answering, an imbalance in power is identified; the person asking is inherently in a more powerful position than the one answering.

Other aspects also play a role in the power relation and might interfere in this particular interviewing setting. Firstly, both researchers are white, the participants coloured or black. As highlighted in the section about background, the difference in power and worth on basis of colours are still influencing the South African society. Being white is still regarded by some,

as some form of superiority. It is impossible to know how valid this is for the nine women we interviewed, but it is still of such importance that it cannot be overlooked. Further, it should be highlighted that we also differ in class; both researchers are from a middleclass Norwegian background, while most of the women interviewed are living under poor circumstances. This leads further to differences in educational background, which again contribute to a situation of power imbalance. These aspects might lead to a sensation in the participants that something is expected; some answers are correct versus wrong and one should strive towards giving what is *expected*. To counteract these potential negative effects we strived to communicate in the initial phase that the participants themselves are the experts on these issues and how grateful we were to have them teach us about their reality.

5. Analysis

Throughout the analysis of the interviews, certain ways of interpreting and explaining the partner's violence became evident; some appearing to be acknowledged as more valid and more 'true' than others. We have identified and conceptualised these ways of understanding and explaining the violence as discourses. In the analysis of these discourses, we pursue to capture what functions the various discourses provide the woman with; what effects and positions they leave her in. And what interpretations and understandings of herself, her partner and the violence the different discourses bring about. In this section we will describe, analyse and discuss the six discourses that appeared most distinctly in the material.

1. 'When he's drunk he's quite a different person'

When talking about how they understand their partner's violence, the women's models of understanding often point towards reasons outside the acting person. A widely used interpretation is that the violence is a result of the man drinking alcohol or using different kinds of drugs. This is an explanation Hailey uses when she talks about Hendrik's violence:

Hailey: Ja, when he is drunk he's quite a different person, all this abusive, he's violent, you see, very aggressive, ooohhh, he's terrible, shhhu, but okay the next day when he is sober and he is like quiet...he is almost like an introvert, man. He doesn't tell about a problem, he doesn't speak out (p. 19).

Hailey explains how alcohol changes Hendrik as a person; when sober he is rather introverted and passive, when drunk he becomes active and violent. We see this transformation in many of the women's accounts; they tell us about how their men change from being 'normal' to violent when being drunk.

We have identified and conceptualised this particular way of understanding and talking about why the violence takes place as a discourse, and have chosen to call it 'the discourse of alcohol and drugs'. This discourse holds the understanding of the violent person as violent because he is influenced by alcohol and/or drugs. Thus, it is not him *as such* who is an inherently violent person, but the alcohol and drugs that are to blame and cause the violent behaviour.

An external explanation

By drawing on the discourse of alcohol and drugs, the women position themselves and their partners somewhere specific. A striking point in this discourse is that the cause of the violence is placed *outside* of the acting person. It is the alcohol and drugs that causes him to be violent and not something in his personality. When being violent then, the man is not really himself. Following logically from this is that if he is not under the influence of drugs or alcohol, he will not act violently towards her.

Discharged from responsibility

By drawing on the discourse of alcohol and drugs the man is placed in a position where he has no responsibility for his violence. Because it is not his personality that causes him to be violent, he is without control and without influence over his own violent actions. This position has important implications for both the man and the woman. When the violence is understood as caused by factors outside the violent man, he cannot be expected to change his behaviour; positioned without agency he has no influence in changing this behaviour either. In this position it becomes unquestionable for the woman to demand or expect him to change his behaviour, simply because he is not in a position to do that. Because of the diffusion of

responsibility, the violence become intangible and can continue without being further questioned.

Through viewing his violence not as part of him and his personality the woman is left in a position where she also frees herself from responsibility; she too becomes relieved from the responsibility for having chosen to keep including this violent man in her and her children's lives. Placing the reason for the violence on the alcohol and drugs, it is not the man she chose that is responsible for the violence, and her choice of man cannot be judged. One way of interpreting this specific positioning is suggested by Hydén (1994). Her starting point is that violence and love is mutually excluding; 'how should I understand that someone who loves me also wants to hurt me?' she asks. Since love is of such importance in peoples' lives, the woman experiencing intimate partner violence have two options; she can either understand the violence as violence and nothing else, and then forsake love, or she can paraphrase the violence into something that can be unified with love (Hydén, 1994). By drawing on the discourse of alcohol and drugs the violence is not understood as violence, but rather as a consequence of a change in behaviour that alcohol and/or drugs cause. Thus, following Hydé's reasoning, the violence is being paraphrased into something that can be unified with love. A consequence of drawing on this discourse might be that feelings of guilt and shame for being in this situation are reduced. And as Hydén (1994) points out; it places the woman in a position where she can live with the violence without losing dignity. To accept responsibility on the other hand, would do the opposite; having *chosen* to live with a violent man leaves no room for placement of responsibility on someone or something else, and as a result, the self-blame could be significant.

A complementary discourse the women could have chosen would be one where the man actually *is* to blame, where his actions are his own, drunk or not. But this position carries other consequences than those following the alcohol/drug discourse. This alternative discourse leaves the violent man in control and as an acting agent. We believe this is far more threatening than holding on to the version where there is something *else* and outside of one's partner that makes him act violently. Explaining violent behaviour as something ones husband is in control of and chooses to expose one to is probably in most cases irreconcilable with a concept of and understanding of him as someone 'loving me'. By drawing on the discourse of alcohol and drugs when talking about the violence the women avoid this position.

‘I want to see if I can get the old Aron back’ - Opening up for change

Drawing on the discourse of alcohol and drugs holds a future potential; a hope for a better, ‘non-violent’ future. From the understanding that a man is changed into something violent by an external source follows the possibility of him being changed back to ‘normal’. When being asked why she stays in a violent relationship, Anne elaborates:

- Anne: When he’s sober, he’s so quiet, he’s so oh! The nicest person! [...] He’s a different person when he’s sober. That’s almost like the person I met... that time. Almost
- Interviewer: So you want to stay because you...
- Anne: I want to see if I can get that old Aron back. If he’s gonna change for the better. I want to give him that chance (p. 44-45).

Throughout the interview, Anne relies heavily on the discourse of him being violent due to alcohol and drugs. Anne tells us she is proud of being an independent woman and that she has made a conscious decision not to be like her mother; who stayed in a relationship although her husband was violent towards her. However, her rejection of staying in a violent relationship does not fit with the life she actually lives with Aron. For instance she tells us about episodes where Aron beats her and chases her around their court yard threatening to kill her. By drawing on the discourse of alcohol and drugs Anne solves this discrepancy in her life; if he could only stay away from alcohol and drugs he would become the person she wants him to be. If on the other, it is Aron that is violent, this would involve difficult decisions from Anne, she would have to make changes and possibly take action in order not to become like her mother. The discourse of alcohol and drugs enables her to avoid this position. It is likely that living with the belief that he can change into a man that doesn’t use violence, somehow is a comfortable position to be in; it avoids the pressure and difficulties about leaving.

The finding that several women reason that their partners can be changed back to ‘normal’, is in line with Jackson’s (2001) research on intimate partner violence. In her research she also found women exposed to violence believing in this potential for change. Furthermore, she found the *women* to be held responsible for this change to take place. With her feminine qualities of love, understanding and caring, the woman is able to transform the violent man back to the initial prince he once was (Jackson, 2001). The interview with Anne seems to show that this is the case for her as well:

- Anne: I have to be strong for my children... If only for her... But I mean, for Aron as well. For him as well.
- Interviewer: You have to be strong for your husband?
- Anne: I need for him to change. And in order to change him I need to change my way of thinking.. It's for my family.. So that we can be strong again. A family as a home (p. 18).

This quote points towards how the female and wife-role in South Africa is defined; even as the receiver of violence, it is the wife that should change and bend her life to fit better with her husband's problems and situation, in order for him to change. With her female character of love and care, she can help him overcome the violence (Towns & Adams, 2000).

Joint Project

As mentioned earlier, the violence is paraphrased into a consequence of his drinking and drugging through the discourse of alcohol and drugs. This paraphrasing is in the interest of both the violent man and the exposed woman; if they both want to continue the relationship, a joint project, a common understanding of the violence is essential. It becomes a joint project to neutralise the violence. This strategy enhances the possibility of integrating the violent act as a marital act (Hydén, 1994). The neutralising is often initiated from the man, and the purpose is to dissociate him from the violent acts. One path towards this neutralisation is through redefining; either by the man or the woman or both until the act 'dissolves' (Hydén, 1994). Through the discourse of alcohol and drugs one might say such a process takes place; the violence is redefined into unfortunate consequence of his drinking and/or use of drugs. That their partners contribute to this neutralization seems evident from the women's narratives, but as a caution regarding the analysis it should be mentioned that we do not have first hand information confirming this phenomenon from the husbands. An example is found in Anne's interview. She tells us about her husband changing from being 'quiet' and 'the nicest person' (p.44) when sober to become 'completely' changed when drunk (p.8). According to Anne, Aron agrees; it is the alcohol that makes him do things:

- Interviewer: Does he always have an explanation for you, the day after, for why he was violent? What you had done wrong?
- Anne: He always say he was too drunk, he can't remember! (p.30)

So like Anne, Aron blames the alcohol. From his statement of being 'too drunk' a logical consequence follows of not being accountable for what actions were committed. This is further supported through his claim of not being able to remember. 'Not remembering' asks for no excuse and remorse. It also does not request an explanation and understanding. Through this paraphrasing the violence vanishes and becomes neutral. Standing on common ground like this, the project becomes 'theirs' and the violence has disappeared; Anne and Aron don't even need to mention the term 'violence'. The alcohol and drugs are the problem, not the violence.

This joint project can also be seen in their statements about their future;

Anne: [...] And he is a good man. He is a good man. It's only the liquor that change him. Completely. But we are working on it. And with the help of, with help, Iwe are getting better. Step by step, but we are getting there I can see the changes since I have come to Saartjie Baartman. They've helped me a lot. [...] (p.8)

And from Aron's side;

Anne: Yes he say.. No he say, I can stop drinking, I'm not an alcoholic, I can control my drinking. [...] (p. 30-31)

They both agree that the problem is the drinking / the liquor. For Anne, the violence has become their joint project; they are working on it together.

'To show a blind eye' – the female position

Not one of the women in our sample comes across as questioning her man's drinking as a *choice*. 'If the alcohol and the drugs change him so excessively, why not stop the intoxication?' could be a logical question. There are off course big issues concerning dependency and alcoholism, but the fact that none of the women even questions why he does not choose to stop the intoxication is striking. Instead, the discourse of alcohol and drugs is put forth as the truth and the explanation, not eliciting new questions and thoughts. We believe this tells us something important about these women's role and place in society; as the subservient and non-questioning. Questioning ones husband does not fit this picture. To fulfil the female gender role in South Africa you are taught not to question your position in life; men make the rules, women obey. From this follows that women should accept and take

everything their husbands do, and not challenge and demand. They are expected to 'show a blind eye' like Carmen tells us:

Carmen: [...] Because he's my boyfriend, my husband and whatever he does it's just to show a blind eye. (p.3)

Carmen points out the accepting and inferior position she as a wife is in; whatever a husband does, you should, as his wife, accept it. This says something about how far the use of a discourse of alcohol and drugs is from a situation where the violated wife demands action and expectance of responsibility from her husband. Not only would this require Carmen to challenge her husband, it would also involve her challenging an entire culture.

In addition to saying something important about the female position, we also believe the discourse of alcohol and drugs tells us how accessible and manifested such a discourse is for the women, and the valid and strong position it has in this particular culture. It seems to be a well established and widespread 'truth' that alcohol and drugs change a person's behaviour, often into something less 'you' and with a reduced ability of judgement. Explaining someone's violent behaviour by drawing upon this discourse might be an easy and available 'solution', and might be experienced as more natural and easier to accept for both oneself and others.

2. 'We are like punching bags'

In the second discourse identified, the women describe violent acts as the man's way to deal with problems and frustrations. His violence is seen as an attempt to relieve himself from his frustrations. Frieda is one of the women who understands her husband's violence in this manner:

Interviewer: But why do you think the situation became like this? Why did it start that mothers day?

Frieda: For instance, maybe he's also frustrated nah? Because sometimes he don't have money. (p. 23).

Frieda is suggesting that Faizel becomes frustrated because he is broke. And violence becomes the way he relieves this frustration. This process is also described by Bernice when we ask her if there are any situations where Bradley is more violent:

Bernice: Or even if someone else makes him be mad, and argument with someone else or even with his sister he would come home and he would take it out on us. We are like punching bags. (p. 40)

Bradley's feelings of frustration and anger are explained as stemming from arguments with other people, perhaps even his sister. In Bernice's opinion he deals with these feelings by being violent in another setting; at home, towards his wife and children. She interprets the violent situation, then, to be a consequence of emotions triggered elsewhere. She is comparing herself and the children to 'punching bags'. For men to get frustration out by hitting a punching bag is a stereotypic concept in society; men need a concrete object to take their aggressiveness out on. In Bernice's account, she is seeing herself as having this function for Bradley; to be his human punching bag.

Understanding intimate partner violence as outlet for frustrations is in our opinion a particular way of giving meaning to violence. We have conceptualised this as a discourse, and named it 'the discourse of powerlessness'. The concept 'powerlessness' is chosen because it is our understanding that what these women are describing is a feeling of powerlessness in their men and that violence represents a way to deal with this feeling, a way to regain power. The women differ in their causal explanations of this frustration; to some it is seen to originate in specific external factors, e.g. unemployment or lack of money, others believe it stems from a more general frustration, like feelings of low self-esteem. It can also be a combination of these factors.

'The only way to deal with the issue' - Violence as the only possible response to frustration

The discourse of powerlessness claims that the man utilises violence towards his partner as an outlet for his feelings of frustration. Jabulile explains:

Jabulile: And for him that is the only way out of that which is the only way to deal with the issue.
(p. 24)

According to Jabulile, the only way for her husband to deal with problems is through using violence towards her, he is left with no other choice. Thus the violence is described as something Jabu can't be blamed for, it is the only possible way he can solve his problems. Jabu then, is not seen as an active agent in his violence; what makes him act violently is a factor that is out of his reach, outside his control. Similarly to what was seen in the discourse of alcohol and drugs, we find that the responsibility is being placed outside the person. It is not him, the person that is violent; it is the stress, the anger, the financial situation that is really the problem. This discharge of responsibility carries the same functions in the discourse of powerlessness as illustrated in the discourse of alcohol and drugs; when the responsibility is taken away from the violent man, he cannot be expected to change this violent behaviour. The violence becomes intangible and can continue without being further questioned. The freeing of responsibility carries meaning for the women as well. It confirms that she has not chosen a violent, brutal man, but someone that 'only' struggles to express feelings in other ways. This helps her keep her dignity and self-respect intact.

The aspect of the violent man being exempted from liability and responsibility is a returning issue throughout the discourses that the women draw on in their explanations of their partners' violence. We identify this placement of responsibility *outside* the partner as a main assignment in the women's creation of meaning around the intimate partner violence. Accordingly, the theme of responsibility is something we will revisit when analysing each discourse, exploring it from different angles.

'Men they are not so open as we are' - Powerlessness and masculinity

We find the feelings of powerlessness and subsequent violence being closely linked to masculine characteristics by our participants. This is Jabulile's comment on why his frustration gets released through violence:

Jabulile: But I think it is like with men they are not so open as we are. [...] They just keep quiet and just, and by the time he explodes and you know and that is not nice because we are the victim in the end unfortunately. (p.13)

What Jabulile describes here is a frequent occurring perception of men; when they encounter frustrations they are not able to talk it through. Instead, they need to find other ways of dissolving them, and using their women as punching bags has this effect. The violence is hence made into a natural consequence of how Jabu (and men in general) 'is' and hence it is neither his fault nor something that he can alter. In line with the rest of this model of understanding, this contributes to taking responsibility away from the violent person.

Joint project

Also, the use of the discourse of powerlessness leaves the woman in a position where she can still love her husband and believe that he loves her despite the fact that he is violent towards her. This is in line with Hydèn's (1994) theory described in the discourse of alcohol and drugs. Her main message is that violence and love are mutually excluding, thus in order for the relationship to survive, the violence needs to be paraphrased into a joint project. Jabulile gives an example of how this can be done:

- Jabulile: But I find that he, it's a whole lot of things, he's been busy. Eventually he gets to that point.
- Interviewer: Okay, and then he takes it out..?
- Jabulile: He takes it out. When he takes it out then we must try to unpack and find out why didn't you say anything, you know, why didn't you say anything? (p. 24)

The reason for her husband's violence, Jabulile states, is that he's been busy. He's stressed and has a lot on his mind; eventually he gets to the point where he acts it out by being violent towards her, all in line with the discourse of powerlessness. After a violent situation the process of paraphrasing starts. At this point they can start analysing the situation. What went wrong this time? She will ask him why he didn't say anything, and he can explain about all the stress he has been through lately. Through this process the violence changes form and becomes a joint project they share. By drawing on the discourse of powerlessness when explaining why her husband is violent, the violence in Jabulile's marriage is neutralised, and becomes something she can live with.

A reason for her to stay

Boonzaier (2005a) found the same discourse used by both men and women in her sample when they explained reasons for intimate partner violence. In her study she investigates how South African women and men attribute meaning to the man's perpetration of violence against

his female partner. In general, the results show that also South African men use a variety of linguistic and rhetorical means to normalise their violent behaviour in their relationships. They diminish personal culpability, and use strategies which allow them to maintain positive identities (Boonzaier, 2005a). Her study shows that men and women's understanding and explanation of the violent behaviour were derived from factors that reduced the man's capacity for self-control. And like we find in this study, these factors could be drug and alcohol induced states, loss of control or external stressors (Boonzaier, 2005a). The feeling of powerlessness was utilised by both men and women as justifications for violence, by men as a means to maintain a positive identity, by women to explain why they remain with a violent partner (Boonzaier, 2005b). Also in our study, drawing on the discourse of powerlessness seems to provide the women with a reason to stay.

3. 'Like his parents did it to him, I'm the victim now'

In the process of making sense of her partner's violence, the aspect of *his childhood* appears to be of great importance to the participants. Several of the women who partook in the study interpret their partners' violence as due to witnessing and experiencing violence in their own childhoods. Subsequently this has resulted in their partners resorting to violence as adults.

Bernice talks of her theory on why Bradley is violent:

- Bernice: Eh, because I don't know actually what happened between him and his father because, uhm, he didn't really talk much about it. Because his father was a violent person.
- Interviewer: Okay, so you think it might have something to do with his upbringing?
- Bernice: Yes. Cause, why, eh, I heard that his father used to beat his mother a lot...in front of him. And, eh, maybe his father did something to him, because he never talked about his father. And still now he doesn't. He would always talk about his mother who is dead, or his sister, but he would never talk about his father. I think something might have happened there. (p. 38)

Bernice raises this issue at an early stage in the interview, without having been asked about her thoughts on why Bradley is violent towards her. Throughout Bernice's accounts, this explanation stands out as her single most 'accepted' reason for why her partner use violence

against her; events in Bradley's childhood now cause him to be violent. If his present violence is caused by him witnessing his father being violent towards his mother or if it stems from being the victim himself is uncertain. What is certain is that his violence originates in something forced upon him at a young age.

One way of interpreting this understanding is through the belief that one's childhood shapes one's actions in adulthood. Based on this belief, witnessing violence as a child will increase the possibility for acting violently as an adult; the child learns through available models and his violence in adulthood is a social reproduction of this. We believe we have identified a specific discourse here, that is repeated throughout our sample; the 'discourse of social heritage'. We have chosen this name based on a similar discourse introduced by the Swedish researcher Nea Mellberg. Mellberg (2004) identified this as one of six main discourses in her meta analysis of discourses used in academic literature, research and (Swedish) governmental views on violence towards women (Mellberg, 2004). On a societal level, the explanation of men's intimate partner violence according to this discourse becomes a *repetition* of behaviour, in certain families (Lundgren, 2004). In our study, we find this discourse also applied on an individual level.

'I think the problem is in his family' - Why use this discourse?

One can argue that in a context with as much violence present as on the Cape Flats, the discourse of social heritage is an accessible discourse. A child being exposed to violence is an every day happenings and also children showing aggressive behaviour towards other children. That there is a link between the two, or a causal relationship, is logic reasoning. That the use of this discourse appears valid and plausible also in relation to ones' own partners' violence is a likely assumption. Still, this does not answer the question why this discourse is chosen above others. Being extensively used in our sample, it becomes essential to question what function the use of this discourse has and how it positions the woman and the man. We have identified three potential aspects tied to the discourse of social heritage where the use of it can serve specific functions in creating meaning.

Responsibility

Similar to the alcohol / drugs- and powerlessness discourse, the discourse of social heritage places the responsibility for the violence someplace *outside* the acting person. He is violent

because he (helplessly) witnessed violence from his own parents. Hence, the violence becomes a consequence of something that was done *to* him. The position that follows is one where rather than being an agent in his violence the partner is left without this responsibility. To be without this agency can lead to a number of positions for the man. One we identified most often in the women's accounts is the 'victim-position'. Being a victim leaves the violent man in a better light and position than his violence originally calls for. Being explained as *helpless* in one's violence paints a much more attractive picture of this person than being a violent acting agent.

The reduction of his responsibility also has consequences for the woman's position; as outlined under the discourse of alcohol and drugs and powerlessness, the woman discharges herself from some responsibility in her choice of partner and life situation. The man she has chosen is a victim rather than a perpetrator. So by placing the guilt and responsibility on Bradley's father, and not Bradley himself, Bernice's husband becomes someone to feel sorry for and *she* becomes someone who cannot be blamed for her choice of partner and father for her children.

Children and victims do no wrong

The discourse of social heritage places the woman in what can be termed a typically feminine position in a patriarchal society; she is left to play the understanding and caring role in his violence. The woman should understand the cause of his behaviour, that it is not his fault and that he needs her empathy and care; this is just a man that has been through a rough time as a child, a man to feel sorry for. Carmen feels sorry for her violent husband. She uses the discourse of social heritage to explain Carlos' violence, often mixed with a distinct 'sorry for' connotation. Here, when explaining a very violent episode:

Carmen: [After telling us about an extremely physically violent episode, where Carlos hit her in the head with a brick, our comment]. He said he's sorry and I take that as a, you see, then I feel sorry for him, actually it's my fault. (p.17)

As we have seen throughout the thesis, responsibility for his violence is a major theme in the women's elaborations. Also in Carmen's account, some of Carlos' responsibility is discharged. And perhaps this is done in an even stronger degree compared to previous

accounts and discourses; Carlos is not only placed in a victim role with no control and responsibility for his violent behaviour, it is also almost like he becomes a little child, and Carmen his mother. Throughout the interviews this change of roles is something we have seen validated by a number of women; she becomes more of a mother to her husband than an equal partner. This position has the consequences that no matter what the partner does to her, she will understand and forgives; children are innocent and need guidance and support in life, not reprimands and demands. As a 'child' Carlos is misbehaving, and as his mother Carmen is forgiving him, over and over. All he has to do is to show remorse.

Women's use of discourses that place couples in a mother-child position is also found in other studies. Boonzaier (2005a), in her qualitative research of violent relationships in Cape Town, found that women adopt this 'mothering' role towards their violent men. The idea of equality between partners is rejected as the relationship takes this form. In addition to the understanding position the discourse brings about in relation to his violence, it also serves as a good explanation for why staying with the violent man; you don't leave you 'child' if it is misbehaving, you stay by it's side, offering the motherly support it needs. The mothering role will also exaggerate the feminine 'duty' of caring, not only as the traditional 'women care for their men', but she will look after her partner in a way she would have looked after her child.

A potential for change

From the understanding of his violence as a consequence of something done to the innocent child, a future potential for change follows; a victim, and especially an 'understood victim' can recover and the bad effects of early experiences neutralised. Denise is one of the women who explains her husband's violence as stemming from his childhood. She tells us how she has tried to counteract the effects of the violence and help Dylan:

Denise: I've realised that Dylan didn't have a , didn't have a good childhood.. And.. He was brought up by a... woman, that.. She drank wine. And as my marriage went on, I have watched Dylan. I've tried to help him. Whenever I see that.. he wasn't able to read, I help him, I teach him how to read. [...] I tried to take him as a brother, I tried to take him as my husband. I tried to help him in any way I can. I was always there for him. Even when he reacted like...wanted to do something that.. a man doesn't do things like that! (p.11)

In every way, Denise has tried to help Dylan overcome what his poor childhood set him up to be. Again, we see how it is the feminine qualities of understanding, caring, helping that this particular understanding of his violence brings out in her. This resembles what Jackson (2001) found in her study of women explaining intimate partner violence. As outlined under the discourse of alcohol and drugs, she found that with the woman's feminine qualities of love, patience, support, understanding and caring, she can transform the violent partner back to his real self, the non-violent self (Jackson, 2001). The potential for change that lies in the discourse of social heritage, also contribute to a more sympathetic position for the violent man; a person able to change, or in the process of changing, cannot possibly be as bad as someone who just *is* violent and bad. Again, the violent man is transformed into someone with whom the woman can more easily defend and explain continued coexistence.

A less deterministic view of heritage – Edith

When drawing on the discourse of social heritage, neither Anne, Bernice nor Carmen reflect upon the possibility of their partners reasoning differently; that they perhaps would have seen the damaging effects of the violence and deciding against it rather than doing exactly the same thing in their relationship. It can be argued though, that this questioning would contain a possible danger of counteracting the initial purpose the discourse of social heritage serves; namely to explain and excuse his violent behaviour. Taking away his excuse would not only cause unwanted and uncomfortable feelings, but would also implicate that this man should know better, that he is to blame and that the woman has chosen a man that *is* violent.

Only two women in our sample express this opposite view. One of these is Edith:

Edith: Maybe he didn't come over of his father, you see. So now he is taking it out on me. So I said 'your mother was a good person, your mother is still a good mother to you. Now do you really think that she also deserve this? Then he can't answer me. So because your mother went through all of this, I must also go? I must suffer now because you suffered?' (p. 32)

Edith is using the discourse of social heritage to *explain* her husband's violent behaviour, but not simultaneously *excusing* his violence. Edith claims that the fact that Emmanuel suffered when he was a child should have taught him not to put other people in that very same situation. Instead of repeating the adult behaviour you grew up with, you can learn from it and behave differently. Thus, Edith is not using this discourse to take responsibility away from Emmanuel, but is rather treating him as an acting agent in his violence; Emmanuel is the one

responsible for his actions, even though they can be explained in terms of his childhood experiences. What is it that enables Edith to use talk about Emmanuel's violence in this way? One possible reason is that Edith at the time of the interview had no need for any excuses for her husband's violence; Emmanuel had moved out of their home and Edith tells us she wants him to stay away. So perhaps Edith does not need reasons for and redefinitions of the violence to make it something that can exist next to love. While many of the women believe their husbands can change, Edith has given up on this hope; she tells us she does not believe in Emmanuel changing. It might therefore not be as imperative for her to find excuses for herself staying, and is thus in a position where she freely can place responsibility on her violent husband.

4. 'The mommy did something wrong that the father didn't like and then he hit her'

In the forth discourse identified, a central aspect is what role the exposed wife plays in the violence. In this understanding the violence is not necessarily only his; the women also play a part in it.

Carmen draws heavily on this model of explanation and tells us straight out that his violence is 'her fault'. When asked if the use of violence is ever legitimate in a relationship she gives us a confusing answer. Given a more concrete example she answers:

Interviewer: I'm thinking of, let me give you an example. Let's say in a marriage and the woman is unfaithful.

Carmen: Unfaithful, ok.

Interviewer: Do you think it's ok to punish her in some way?

Carmen: Ja, ja.

Interviewer: Do you think so?

Carmen: Exactly yeah

Interviewer: Is there other situations where you think it is okay?

Carmen: Yes, when you, eh, okay, when you use someone's money. If you work hard and you take the money and you can't keep account of what you took of anything or what the children get. To have control over you children. In that matter I agree, ja. (p.14)

So according to Carmen, the use of violence is legitimate when the wife is doing something wrong or something the husband dislikes. And if she does, her husband can punish her.

Bernice also tells us that the woman plays a part in the violence. This becomes clear when asked if she talks to her children about the violence they witness at home:

Interviewer: How do you explain the violence to your, to your youngest daughter?

Bernice: Well, uhm, there is sometimes programs on TV, and then I talk to them about violence. And then she would ask me how did it happen. And I say well, the mommy did something wrong that the father didn't like and then he hit her and then he takes it out on the children. (p.49)

Off course Bernice has to give a simplified version to her seven year old daughter. Still, it is striking how she puts the responsibility on the woman that is doing 'something wrong' and not the husband that is the one executing the violence. We have chosen to conceptualize this way of understanding intimate partner violence as 'the discourse of my fault'. In different ways there are actions these women interpret as 'wrongdoings' that irritate and provoke their partners into violence, or they see themselves as 'misbehaving' and deserving punishment.

'Actually it's my fault' - Why use this discourse?

No woman in our sample draws on the discourse of my fault as a single standing explanation to why their partners are violent. Like with all discourses, they are used analogous with others, and sometimes discourses can be contradictory of each other. It is important to understand what position this discourse leaves the women in, and what the discourse supplies them with. We have chosen to organise this section in two parts: First a general section on which position this discourse carries for the women and the men. We have kept this section rather short, and instead have included a section where the two women we believe most clearly represent the use of this discourse; Jabulile and Carmen, are brought forth in more detail.

Like in the previously explored discourses, the discourse of my fault places the responsibility for the violence outside the perpetrator. Perhaps is it even placed further away than what we have already seen, since this discourse does not even look at the violent person; it is a completely different person that is responsible and to blame, namely the partner. As we have

described in the other discourses, one consequence of discharging the man from responsibility is that it frees the exposed women of some responsibility regarding her choice of partner and father for her children. The discourse of my fault, however, carries other consequences. Through the use of the discourse of my fault, the woman is actually the *one* responsible for his violence. If she could change her way of being, and behave as he wants her to, he would not have any reason to act violently towards her. So by drawing on this discourse the women are left in a situation where they themselves are to blame for being in the situation they are in, a position that assumedly involves feelings of self-blame and guilt. On the other hand, this position also carries some sort of agency in the violence. Because the woman through using this discourse takes on responsibility for the violence, she is positioned with some control over the situation. This control over the violent events might be actual or perceived. The logic that follows 'If I elicit the violence' is that 'I can change and the violence will stop'. As human beings we have a need to search for some kind of control in our situation, perceived or real, through concrete actions or ways of understanding reality (Axelsen, 1999). It is highly likely that these women already have a long history of trying to change their lives in every possible way to 'do right' and avoid the partner's anger and violence, it is to change oneself than someone else. And even though their change of behaviour has not changed his violence yet, there will always be a potential for this change to happen. We believe the discourse of my fault is providing these women with some kind of control in a situation where it has been impossible to gain in other ways.

Jabu's violence being balanced out by Jabulile's faults

Jabulile is the woman in our sample that is most apprehensive when it comes to talking about her husband's violence. She is very reluctant to give her theories on why he is violent and tells us this could easily end up being 'unfair'. Still, the discourses she does touch upon are the one of powerlessness (described above) and the one claiming it is her own fault:

Jabulile: I think some of the issues.. I am stubborn, I have to be honest. So, you know. He's got an issue with my attitude. I think that is what happens much. I was just in the mood yesterday, what is happened now, why, who said... [Noise in the background, our comment] And he was like; what happened? What is going wrong? Oh Godness, it's starting again.. You know? (p.14)

According to Jabulile, Jabu's violence is triggered by her difficult personality traits; she is stubborn and has an attitude her husband has issues with. Throughout the interview, Jabulile

keeps coming back to her flaws and mistakes in life; she is not a good mother, she is stubborn and difficult. Her husband on the other hand is described as a good person, illustrated in this quote by depicting him as the ‘good father’:

Jabulile: Cause he’s very supportive, if I should be honest. And his supportiveness...[...] I have never been to my son’s soccer games, maybe twice, ever since he started his soccer. But his daddy is with him. Even his practices he goes. Even if he is working night shift coming back in the morning on Saturday, he sleeps two hours and wake up and go and watches his soccer matches. (p.33)

Based on this she tells us:

Jabulile: I guess then for me it is a compliment that I got a husband that do things, he’s going like I said with the soccer match. (p.41)

Her own ‘faults’ seems to make her as ‘bad’ (or worse) as her husband and not in a position where she can claim that what he does is wrong. On the contrary, she seems to regard herself as lucky to have such a man considering the kind of a person she is herself. Through the use of the discourse of my fault, Jabulile seems to balance out Jabu’s violence with her own faults. His good deeds also seem to be part of this equation and compensating for his violence, and essential for Jabulile to bring forth.

In Jabulile’s account we see how the discourse of my fault puts the violent man in a more favourable position than his violent acts suggest; he is not as bad as his actions could make you believe since they stem from her faults and attitude. The violence is further minimised through *comparing* it to her faults and ways of being. This is similar to findings from Sweden, even though this evidence is regarding discourses used to describe one’s relationship and not only one’s partner. Here, Lundgren and her colleagues found women tending to sketch a more favourable picture of the relationship they are in (Lundgren et al., 2001). In this Swedish study this was explained as the way these women solved the clashing experience between their reality of intimate partner violence and the strong normative concept of how an (equal) relationship is supposed to be. The idea of equality is not as strongly supported in South Africa, but studies show that intimate partner violence over the last decade has received increased recognition as a societal problem (Jewkes et al., 1999). We assume this leads to a strengthening of the norm stating that it is not right to live in a violent relationship, and if you

are, you should leave the violent man. Perhaps minimising the violence and using a discourse where the fault actually is mine represents a way for Jabulile to solve the conflict between a notion of how things ought to be and how her life actually is.

Why is this discourse so important for Jabulile?

Being the woman in our sample with the highest education, most 'advanced' job and perhaps the most modern understanding of society and violence in general we first found the importance of this discourse for Jabulile puzzling. How could it be that she is drawing on this discourse in her understanding of the violence? But perhaps her background is exactly what makes it so important. Perhaps her level of understanding of patriarchy, the different upbringing girls and boys get in South Africa and the consequences this has on adult gender roles leaves her in a position where not many discourses that will 'work' for her; she knows too well that one cannot blame the violence solely on the amounts of alcohol he drinks or a lack of outlet of frustration. The discourse of violence being 'my fault' is perhaps the only solution left for her; the only one she can believe in and the only one that can take away some of the blame and guilt we assume accompanies living in a violent relationship for an educated woman. She knows that even though Jabu might have had a rough childhood or a problem with alcohol, he still has no right to be violent. In addition, this discourse leaves her in a position which does not open for more for more questions from us regarding her husband; she tells us this is about her, and not Jabu. This seems like a position she wants to be in. Jabulile comes across as the most closed woman in our sample and the use of this discourse leaves her in peace and able to stay shut.

Internalising Carlo's punishment - Carmen's account

Carmen is the other women drawing most heavily on the discourse of my fault in our sample. Carmen tells us how her husband blames her for his violent episodes:

- Interviewer: So he doesn't explain his violence at all?
Carmen: Eh, no he don't. But he always blame me.
Interviewer: He blames you?
Carmen: He always blames me, yes.
Interviewer: Does he say that?
Carmen: Ja, whatever it's like everything is wrong, if, if something, lets say for example that he don't go to work. [...] Now he blames me, because he's not working. Whatever he does wrong he blames me. He never blames himself for, for the, for the wrong things

that happens now in our marriage. So the things that happen in our marriage, he always blame, I'm the person he blames. (p.21)

With this extensive blaming it seems like Carlo achieves his goal; Carmen believes him:

Carmen: He said he's sorry and I take that as a, you see, then I feel sorry for him, actually it's my fault. (p.17)

Perhaps it is the combination of his blaming and his apologizing to her after violent episodes that makes her believe that it is in fact her fault. An important finding here is the fact that Carlos' version has become Carmen's. For Carmen, the blame of the violence is internalised, her partner's reality has become the valid one and has been internalised as her own understanding. We find this to be very different from the position Jabulile and her husband are left in when using the same discourse; him in a better light and her in position where she doesn't have to question her relationship. Perhaps the process of internalising the partner's reality that we see in Carmen is strengthened further through what violence in this frame of mind is seen to be; an act of punishment. The logic following 'I am being punished' is 'I must have done something wrong'. This leaves the couple with no need to actually identify the existence of specific wrongdoings and faults; they become real through his very punishment.

To internalise the man's punishment into an understanding where 'I am to blame' says a lot about gender roles and these women's positions in society; his reality is the valid one. This can be seen in relation to what is said earlier in this thesis that some individuals will be more powerfully positioned within discourses than others, and have better access to discourses (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). In Carmen's account, Carlos is the one deciding which discourse should be relevant to her in explaining his violence. This indicates that he is in a more powerful position than her and can dictate which discourse to draw on.

5. 'He's that type of person, aggressive, abusive you see, a natural thing'

Several of the women interpret intimate partner violence to be something that inherently follows being male. They tell us being violent is a natural thing for a man, something that

stems from his innate levels of aggressiveness and something he just 'is'. Hailey describes Hendrik's violence in these terms:

Hailey: But I mean when he had no valid reason for him, he's just being like, I can't explain it's just being him, normal for him to being...he's that type of person, aggressive, abusive you see, a natural thing. (p.26)

In Hailey's account, the violence is understood as something that follows being the 'type of person' Hendrik is; the abuse and aggressiveness is part of him, it is natural for him and part of his personality. So *being* a very aggressive man, it is normal for Hendrik to use violence.

With the same understanding, Hailey paints the contrary picture of what is natural for the female, the receiver of the violence:

Hailey: I'm Libra [noise in the background, our comment] hey, I'm the 22nd, and normally Libra people are very helpful and they will never see if someone suffer, you know what I mean [...] But I think that is part of my nature. To...yeah, that is my nature. That's Libra, very good-hearted people, very caring... (p.18)
[...]

Hailey: [...] And, but normally men, women that are soft-hearted are being abused. [Noise in the background, our comment] That most women that are soft-hearted are being abused. (p.35)

In the same way as men are violent because they are men, women are soft and receivers of the violence because they are women. Hailey tells us she is one of these soft-hearted women, and similar to most women that are soft-hearted she is being abused.

In our sample we found a clear tendency for women to draw on this model of understanding, where violence is 'normal' behaviour for the partners and an expected part of a male repertoire. It is a consequence of something he naturally 'is'; aggressive, angry, powerful and controlling. We identify these as being masculine traits and have consequently chosen to conceptualise this as the discourse of masculinity. By giving a discourse a specific name we use, as everyone in every situation, available discursive knowledge and concepts. The discourse of masculinity could potentially have been named something else, e.g. the discourse of his inherent aggressiveness, the discourse of biology and so on. We have chosen masculinity because we believe this is reflected to a great extent in our sample's

understanding of their husbands' violence, even though they do not use the specific word 'masculinity'.

Natural male aggressor versus natural female receiver - why use this discourse

Viewing violence as something belonging to the male role and his masculinity leaves the violent man in quite a comfortable position; this is his nature, not something he chooses. Hence, there is no responsibility. Furthermore, the discourse of masculinity also leaves the violent man in a 'cemented' position with no demands for change; being something 'natural', the violence becomes *inherent*; you can't change something natural or biological. This is just how he, like any member of the 'man race' is.

The discourse of masculinity positions the woman in the opposite role; as the complimentary feminine version of the aggressive and controlling masculine. Traits that go along with this position are softness, weakness, and being subservient and accessible – for him. Through this, the discourse leaves her in a 'natural' position as the *receiver* of his violence. Like Hailey says; being caring and helpful and soft is 'my nature'. The notion of this innate femininity leaves the woman in a *passive* position with regards to his violence. Being something 'natural' and part of his manhood – the violence becomes something the woman cannot affect, even if she wanted to. Although helpless in this position, it might be that the woman feels some sense of comfort. Being unable to be the instigator of change can perhaps take away some guilt and self-blame, reliving some of the burden of responsibility for remaining in a violent relationship.

Taking this reflection one step further, the passive position then, also has consequences for staying in a violent relationship and for potential thoughts of leaving. If violence is something that is fundamental to being a man, the *staying* and taking it, becomes what the *feminine* complimentary should do. If this is how all men 'are' there is furthermore no point in leaving a violent relationship in search of something better; the next man will be just the same. The passive position, then, demands no action.

Constituting gender through the use of the discourse of masculinity

Hailey's description of herself and Hendrik can be used to illustrate how discourses addressing intimate partner violence serve to *constitute gender*. Norwegian violence researcher Eva Lundgren's theory of intimate partner violence can be of value in this

undertaking. Lundgren claims that intimate partner violence can and should be analysed as a process of gender constitution, where gender is constituted through use of violence. She sees violence as part of the control and power men exert over women and that it is through this control and power, including violence, that women and men define each other and themselves. The masculine ideal being constituted is the strong, powerful, decisive man, the one in control. The feminine womanhood, the complimentary, is the subservient, weak and accessible. An important point here is that men being violent will not violate the traditional view of the strong man in control, even though most societies simultaneously will have developed some concept of violence being wrong. On the contrary, the use of violence can be said to contribute to a fulfilment of society's expectations and the masculine ideal, and therefore be a confirmation (Lundgren, 2004). This is clear in our study; the violent man is not in any way described as being less masculine. On the contrary; he is violent because he is a man. The same finding is applicable for the woman living with this man; her victim role confirms her femininity and the role she is expected to play; the one in need and the one not capable.

Studies conducted in a South African context also suggest that violence might have serious implications on gender positions and prevailing notions on concepts of masculinity and femininity. As referred to earlier, Boonzaier (2005a) conducted a study in Cape Town where she interviewed couples living with intimate partner violence. In her study she explored how the meaning women and men attach to their experiences around intimate partner violence possibly affirms socially constructed norms of gender, violence and relationships. She found that both women and men draw on varied discourses of femininity and masculinity in their narratives. She points out that not only do they construct a gendered self, but also a gendered 'other' in their partners. The construction of these gender roles serve to uphold and maintain their partners' conformity to ideas of traditional gender roles (Boonzaier, 2005a). In this study we find a gendered understanding of violence; he is violent because he is male. We find this supporting both the man and the woman's understanding of the violence (their joint project), as well as supporting the roles they are asked to play that logically follows this understanding; namely the 'natural' soft receiver versus the 'natural' violent aggressor. In other words; on an interpersonal and societal level the discourse of masculinity contributes to maintaining the concept of traditional gender positions.

‘Because he’s my husband, it’s just to show a blind eye’ - masculinity and marriage

Throughout the interviews we found a tendency to talking about and interpret the act of marriage as something carrying a particular meaning regarding violence. We found these specific understandings carrying a lot of information about gender and what is expected of a husband versus what is expected of a wife regarding intimate partner violence. Carmen is one of the women who tell us how one as a wife should endure ones husband’s violence:

Carmen: Like I said, because he’s my boyfriend, my husband and whatever he does it’s just to show a blind eye. (p.3)

So being someone’s wife, one should accept an inferior and passive position. Being the husband on the other hand, allows for the opposite; a superior position, even containing violent behaviour. This was found throughout the interviews; a belief in the ‘fact’ that the institution of marriage justifies certain behaviour, based on the notion that you fulfil different roles as husbands and wives. It is as if marriage confirms and exaggerates the effects we believe we have found to follow the use of the discourse of masculinity; to an even larger degree, the husband is entitled to do with his wife as he pleases, just by being male. And through the same institution the wife is left in the matching position as the inferior who must accept; like Carmen illustrates when telling us how one as a wife should react to violence:

Carmen: [...] Because that was, my husband, I mean I love him for all these years and I took the abuse, the abuse that uhm, and I took everything the accusations, and the insult, I took it, it took all of that. (p. 15-16)

Carmen illustrates the belief that a wife should answer violence with love. The passive, caring, feminine position is hence found again. Carmen even introduces an equation where the *amount* of violence the woman endures *equals* her love for her husband; if you love him you take it, and the more you love the more you take. The consequence of this is a heavy bond to the violent marriage; in stead of eliciting thoughts of leaving, the violence-love equation cements her position. In fact Carmen tells us she would not have come to SBC ‘just’ for the violence (she came for counselling after Carlos had been unfaithful with a man).

That violence is justified through ties of marriage is something we also find when talking to the women about their *expectations* to marriage. For most of them, marriage is understood as something that has the power to *change* the partner. This change is mainly of negative value;

it involves a transformation into something more violent and a position that *entitles* the husband to the use of intimate partner violence. Grace tells us that her partner changed for the worse when he married her:

Interviewer: Ja, were, were he violent to you before you got married?

Grace: No, Grant was quite a gentle type of person, caring, loving, whatever even the first three months of my marriage, after that I don't know what happened. (p.16)

According to Grace, this is an expected change. The way she phrases it; 'even' the first three months of the marriage, he was nice, it is as if these months were something unexpected and a bonus. Frieda also tells us about a partner starting to act violently when married:

Frieda: We were in a relationship for seventeen years, so, ja, ja, only last November, ah, August, the ninth of August we got married. And that's when all this things started. (p.4)

These quotes convey a concept of marriage where the feminine and masculine becomes exaggerated; he is changing into something worse and something violent, she into the opposite. It is like the *right* to the wife becomes complete through the institution of marriage. This right to use violence towards ones wife is something clearly also found in men's accounts of their violence. The Norwegian researchers Råkil and Isdal (2002) find violent men often proclaiming a right to violence supported by thoughts of justice, explicitly or implicitly. Furthermore, these researchers claim that this legitimising of the violence through using these general norms, claiming their *right* to the woman, is illustrating the strong link between a patriarchal society and the right the individual man in this society consider they have to use violence towards their partner (Isdal & Råkil, in Råkil, 2002).

Also in a South African context this is applicable and it is not hard to see why our women choose to use the discourse in their search for meaning regarding their situation. The 'fact' that men 'just are more aggressive than women' and that women and men are supposed to have different roles is heavily supported and accessible in South Africa, and also put into system through institutions like marriage. Having reached a conclusion where ones partner and the life one leads 'just is like this' might be a safe explanation and a secure position to be in for a woman living in intimate partner violence.

6. 'But I mean, you have a mind!'

Throughout the previous five discourses, we have illustrated that the women's accounts of intimate partner violence are principally characterised by referring to external influences. There are some women, however, who understand violence differently. These women see the violent man as a responsible agent. As Denise tells us, when asked why she believes Dylan is violent towards her:

Denise: His father..I think his father was also violent in the house. Because, they have been talking many times about..eh.. his father comes in, is drunk, he also.. takes the whole pot of food out by the door, or he.. all the glasses against the floor. And the mother must run with the kids, and go sleep next door... I think it's round about his childhood.

Interviewer: That he learnt? That's how to deal with problems?

Denise: Maybe. Yes. But I mean, you have a mind! And especially Dylan with someone like me next to you. I've always been there, I've always tried to help him. (p.32)

Denise's explanation of Dylan's violence encompasses some of the reasons seen in earlier discourses, like drugs and his childhood, but she does not account for the violence solely by these external factors, she also places responsibility on Dylan himself. As she puts it: 'you have a mind', in other words; you have a mind to choose to act violently. For Denise, it is not enough to see his violence as a result of a difficult childhood; what it eventually boils down to is that *Dylan* is the one responsible for his violence.

This way of giving meaning to violence is not applied frequently by the women in our sample. Only Edith and Denise explain their husbands' violence as being their own responsibility. Still, we believe that it is an important way of understanding violence, distinctly differing from the external focus and hence essential to explore. We have conceptualised this way of understanding intimate partner violence as 'the discourse of his responsibility'. In this discourse the violent man is seen as an active, responsible agent in his violence. Circumstances around the person are not seen as causes for the violence; no matter how unfortunate their circumstances, ultimately, people have a choice to act violently or not.

External versus internal focus

Before further outlining the discourse of his responsibility we will provide a short summary of the effects and positions that follows the external focus we have seen dominating the discourses described so far. This is in order to show how the discourse of his responsibility contrasts this. We will then provide more specifically what consequences drawing on the discourse of his responsibility have for the women's positioning and interpretations of intimate partner violence. Lastly, a section will outline distinctions between the life situations of the women drawing on this particular discourse and the life situations of those who do not draw on it.

As mentioned, the discourse of his responsibility differs from the other five discourses we have identified in one important aspect. Where an external discourse places reasons for the violence *outside* the acting person, the discourse of his responsibility leaves the responsibility for the violence *within* the acting person. As we have seen, all discourses that externalise the violence, placing responsibility on something that *makes* him violent, stand on common ground in that some responsibility is then taken away from the violent man. Because it is the external factors making him violent, the violence is outside of his control (and is rather blamed on his difficult childhood, alcohol, drugs, his wife, or feelings of powerlessness), and he tends to become the victim rather than the perpetrator in the situation. Furthermore it gives women reasons to stay in the relationship; by changing the external circumstances his violence will stop, and it justifies her choice of a man in life. The use of the discourse of his responsibility, the only 'internal' discourse identified, has quite opposite effects:

'I think you are the problem here' – Reinstating him with agency

By giving one's violent partner agency in his violence, the partner is no longer seen as a victim or a child. Rather, when he is a responsible agent in his own violence; it is his *choice*. Even though both Edith and Denise also draw on other, external discourses to explain and understand their partners' violence, these discourses do not serve the function of a full explanation. Edith says:

Edith: I suggested last year to come for counselling. Because I think you are the problem here. Maybe he didn't come over the abuse of his father, you see. So now he is taking it out on me. So I said your mother was a good person, your mother is still a good mother to you. Now do you really

think that she also deserves this? Then he can't answer me. So because your mother went through all of this, I must also go? I must suffer now because you suffered? But it, no it still doesn't give him the right. (p.32)

Edith is willing to understand that his childhood has had great effect on Emmanuel, but still; it does not give him the right to be violent towards her. We see here that by drawing upon the discourse of his responsibility she is giving him agency in the violence; she tells us that it is *him* who is the problem.

When explaining his violence through the use of this discourse, the picture drawn is of a much more brutal character than when using external discourses. For example Edith tells us about Emmanuel beating her with a hammer before she goes to work one morning. Drawing upon the discourse of his responsibility simultaneously, which does not excuse him in any way, the portrait of him becomes quite callous. So by using this discourse the violent man is placed in a very unattractive role; the one responsible, the one who chooses to be violent toward his partner.

'He actually made me believe I'm nothing' - Restoration of her dignity

We believe an important consequence of using the discourse of his responsibility is restoration of dignity. Both Denise and Edith have lived with partners that treated them in a very violent and humiliating way. This had great effect on the women's self-worth, as Edith tells us:

Edith: [...] Then he would just come in and start hitting in my face, 'ja you are this you are this' [imitating her husband, our comment], things like that man. And it makes me feel so, he actually made me believe I'm nothing. He made me believe that no-one will ever be interested in me again, because that was even said to me, I'm ugly, I'm this, you see, he was really, getting to me. (p. 29-30)

Edith narrates how Emmanuel broke her down, even making her question her humanness. She felt like nothing, he managed to deprive her of her self-worth and her dignity. We believe drawing on the discourse of his responsibility helps restore this wounded dignity. By placing the responsibility on him, the violence becomes separated from her. It was not her fault; she is not to be blamed for the situation she was in. This restoration of dignity is explained by Holmberg and Enander (2004) in their work where they aim to understand the processes a

woman who is leaving her violent partner goes through. Holmberg and Enander theorize that when living in a violent relationship, it is necessary for women to find excuses for the violence, to understand the violence as something separate from the violent partner in order to make him less responsible. The process of getting back a dignified life starts when the abused woman is starting to describe her partner's earlier excused violence as *violent acts* (Ferraro & Johnsson, 1983, in Holmberg & Enander, 2004). It is in this phase we find Denise and Edith. They are both in the process of leaving, and starting to get back their dignified lives by placing the responsibility of the violence on their husbands.

Edith and Denise have both recently separated from their husbands, and drawing on this discourse might be useful for them in the process of leaving. By telling herself (and others) that this is how he is, we assume she is reminding herself of why it is right for her to leave. Perhaps Denise and Edith, through the action of leaving / living on their own, also finally rid themselves from the burden of responsibility, resulting in the disappearance of the previously ever present need to explain, to themselves and others, why they remained in the relationship.

Why avoid this discourse?

None of the women that still live with the violent partner use the discourse of his responsibility; for these women this discourse might be impossible. Why is this we ask. Hydén's (1994) theory, mentioned earlier, suggests that violence and love are mutually exclusive. Because love is of such importance in people's lives, a woman living with intimate partner violence has two options; paraphrase the violence, or understand the violence as just that; violence, and then forsake love (Hydén, 1994). Women still living in a violent relationship understand the violence according to the first option in this theory; as something other than violence. Women leaving, on the other hand, might already have forsaken his love and can therefore understand his violence as just that; violence.

When drawing on the discourse of his responsibility, the reasons for staying in a violent relationship become few. This is in contrast to the external discourses which open up for these reasons. Also, living with a violent man, with no prospect of change, will assumedly clash with a wish and concept of doing what is best for oneself and ones children; what does it say about you if you choose to stay in a relationship if you believe your man is violent simply because he chooses to? We assume understanding one's reality within this frame is too

anxiety provoking for women living with a violent partner and that placing the responsibility externally provides an understanding that is easier to live with.

The discourse of his responsibility - An unfeminine discourse?

By drawing on the discourse of his responsibility the women represent a non-traditional female gender position. In this discourse she is not the one who understands, forgives and cares no matter what. In the discourse of his responsibility the woman is treating her partner as an equal human being responsible for his own actions. She is also positioning herself within a more equal role to men in general; she has the right to live a dignified life without violence, she has the same worth as everyone else. One could think that in a highly patriarchal society the discourse of his responsibility would not exist or be very difficult to access. That it is identified in our study shows that it is in fact available in this particular society and the mere fact that it is used is of great value. Perhaps the existence of this discourse will contribute to a continued reflection around intimate partner violence? As described earlier in this thesis, a discourse is never fully established, but at specific times it can be so accepted by the members of society that they serve as truths. The discourses that paraphrase violence through the use of external explanations might have such positions in the South African society, but as we have seen in the last section, other competing discourses also exist, such as the discourse of his responsibility.

6. Discussion

Throughout the analysis of the discourses explaining the intimate partner violence, it has become increasingly clear that *gender* is an always present and very important magnitude in the women's understandings. When making sense of and understanding her partner's violence, we see this process happening through gender; through concepts of male, female, masculinity and femininity she understands the violence. Or more precise; through what *society* defines these gendered concepts to contain and to be. We see these concepts working as frameworks, with possibilities and limitations, where the women's explanations, understandings and choice of discourses happen within. This has consequences, and in our study we have seen that gendered roles and gendered concepts have an actual impact on women's understandings of the violent experiences in their lives.

We have also seen how these specific ways of explaining experiences and the use of specific discourses contribute to further upholding and maintaining of the patterns and positions. All discourses explaining violence contains gender aspect, and through statements on what it is to be male, female, masculine and feminine, the existing norms and expectations around these concepts are upheld and preserved. The discourses also maintain roles and patterns where violence become a logic following of these patterns and positions put out by the discourse; by using discourses that understands and normalises violence, the violence becomes logic and natural.

What we will try to show in this last section is how the violence is understood and analysed in gendered ways and through gendered categories that are available in society. And how actual behaviour, e.g. violent acts versus inferior acts, become the belonging repertoire of available actions as a consequence of these understandings.

6.1. Understanding his violence

Throughout the five discourses where the reason for his violence is put somewhere external, we have seen women driven by a wish to *understand* the violence. Their explanations go from the partner having had a bad childhood, to being without a job, to being under the influence of drugs, alcohol and negative friends. This understanding of the violence has widespread and important implications, not only on the individual but also on a societal level.

6.1.1. Understanding - a feminine trait

On the most basic level, when only looking specifically at the actual *understanding*, we see the women positioning themselves within a gendered frame. Through their wish and will to completely understand their partner's violence, we claim all participants position themselves somewhere traditionally *feminine*. In the South African society the notion femininity is someone that understands and cares, that makes sense of his actions where he himself cannot and who finds his reasons (Boonzaier, 2005a). Where the understanding confirms her somewhere traditionally feminine, the male partner is situated in the contrary position; where this is not expected and demanded. This is also a reflection of expectations on gender; making sense and explaining does not belong to the masculine ideal. What fits is the concept of 'having' a woman that does this for you.

6.1.2. *The understanding – a gendered process*

On the next level, analysing *how* the understanding comes about, through what processes, we also find interesting gendered issues. In accordance with Isdal's theory (2000) on how, we as humans, make sense of experience, we find the women's accounts of the violence all being explanations she can live with, something that fits her world. This results in an overall understanding of the partner not being violent because he is evil, mean or bad. Rather, the violence is a reaction to something brought upon him, something he cannot help. We view the way the women solve this process towards a discourse on why he is violent has implications for gender, what it means to be man and woman, what it means to be masculine and feminine.

When exploring why specific external experiences lead to violent behaviour in her partner, this gendered process is identified. The available discourses and understandings have a clear gender dynamic, and clearly different explanations are available for men versus women. A large majority of our nine women have lived and live under the same external influence as their partners. Still, there are great differences in discourses around what make him violent versus her. A good example on this process is found regarding witnessing violence as children. Anne tells us about her husband Aron who has become aggressive and violent in adulthood as a reaction to having witnessed his own father being violent towards his mother. But also Anne experienced a violent father. Still, the effects of this is not analogue; where it 'damaged' Aron, it made Anne reflect and decide that this is something she does not want in her adult life.

Here, we see how these two very different discourses become valid; on basis of what gender the acting agent has. Becoming the one acting-out, fits with the standing current concept of masculinity where dominance, aggression, assertiveness and self-assurance are central (Boonzaier & De La Rey, 2003). For the woman, on the contrary, the available position is the receptive, caring, passive, submissive (Vetten, 2000). Becoming the reflective and understanding female is hence completely in line with society's expectations. And for the woman using the discourses; both positions are taken for granted and regarded as the most natural thing. As are the available practices of behaviour that follow.

The same pattern is found in the discourses of alcohol / drugs and powerlessness; what makes him react violently and aggressively makes her react completely different; with understanding and sensitivity. It is worth mentioning here that we do not wish to contradict and going up against a possibility that there are different ways to react to violence, alcohol, feelings of

powerlessness etc. We acknowledge that boys and girls still are raised as just that; boys *versus* girls, with belonging expectations and roles to play. This has consequences. For instance on reactions to feelings of powerlessness where Axelsen (1990) has theorized that men's reactions are more directed outwards and through acting out (e.g through violence) whereas women become withdrawn and show more 'inferior' behaviour. What is interesting though is how the women use these gender positions as explanations and truths; that he became violent having experienced what he has is only *natural*; this is how men react to those kinds of feelings. Like it is natural for her to react to it with reflections and understanding.

6.1.3 The outcome of the understanding; what is male versus what is female

The discourses explaining his violence are all clearly mirroring available gendered positions; throughout the discourses a picture is painted of the male as the strong, the powerful, the decisive and the one in control. The female on the other hand is portrayed as the one accepting, the weak, accessible, understanding, caring and subservient. We believe the use of these discourses have actual implications for behaviour; through the limited availability of possibilities, she has to become what the discourse set her up to be. And the same goes for him.

Violent because he is masculine – receiver because she is feminine

One discourse that clearly shows the implication discourses have on gender and belonging space for actions is the discourse of masculinity. This discourse explains violence as being part of a masculine repertoire as something that inherently follows being born male; he is violent because he is man. This opens up a repertoire of aggressive behaviour for the male to utilise. Towards a woman he has the *right*. Not only can he be aggressive, he can also be so with 'all fairness' on his side; this is not something he chooses to do, it just happens to belong to the gender he was born with. The discourse of masculinity also calls for a definition and position for the complimentary feminine role; which becomes the receiver. As Hailey tells us; it is 'natural' for her to be the receiver of his violence, being soft-hearted and a woman. Lundgren (2004) writes about this phenomenon as accommodation and fulfilment of society's expectations. She claims being a violent man does not violate society's expectations; he does not become less male, rather he fulfils and acts out the expected role and expected version of masculinity. We believe women exposed to violence also fulfil societal expectations and play her assigned role; through being the receiver, that understands and accepts the violence, she fulfils society's expectation of femininity. Paradoxically, a woman fighting back, leaving,

standing up, question ones position in life, could be claimed to be more un-feminine (Wood, Maforah & Jewkes, 1998), these being actions belonging to an active and in-control repertoire of masculine behaviour.

Responsible because she is woman

Being the emotionally responsible one in a relationship can be claimed to be a feminine attribute, something expected from women in a traditional, patriarchal society. For example Dangor and his colleagues (1998) found South African men and women supporting the notion of women being the responsible for the marriage to succeed. Throughout the study we find *her responsibility* in a variety of aspects, regarding the violence that, paradoxically enough, originates in *him*.

The most striking example is seen in the discourse of my fault where the partner's violence actually is seen as a response to something the recipient does wrong. In this discourse, the woman becomes responsible for his violence. But the aspect of feminine responsibility crops up in many more places, also more subtle. As with *understanding*, just being the one *responsible* for making sense of his violence and explaining it, leaves the woman in a traditionally feminine position. And the responsible woman fulfils these expectations.

Denise tells us about trying to 'help her partner to change'. With her feminine qualities, of love, patient, support and understanding, Dylan can be transformed back to his previous self, as noted by Jackson (2001) in her study on intimate partner violence. Taking on the responsibility to change the violent partner back is in line with traditional positions. She is the one responsible for her marriage's success and hence her partner's well being. The tendency we see in the participants in entering a 'mothering role' for one's partner reflects the same position; his violence is a consequence of something he does not master and it becomes up to her, the 'mother', to understand and guide him back on the right path. In this process, towards recovery, some women even tell us about the responsibility they have in being the object where all anger and aggressiveness can be vented. Both Jabulile and Bernice tell us about being 'punching bags' and 'outlets' for his violence; somewhere he can come with it in order to get relieved and get better. Through taking on the responsible role, the woman does what the feminine should; change ones life and behaviour in order to make him change, feel better and recover from any unfortunate influence.

6.1.4 Understanding through Rephrasing

In the process where the violence is being understood and divided into magnitudes that all makes 'sense', there is a clear potential for the violence to become something else than just violence. We see this in our participants' accounts of the violence, where it stops being just that and rather merges into something 'understandable'. The violence becomes symptoms, reactions, her flaws and mistakes. Furthermore, the violent acts are, given his situation and gender, 'normal' behaviour. In this process, the actual violence disappears and becomes invisible. It is no longer violence.

There is no doubt that it is extremely hard to live with intimate partner violence. We assume one way to make it possible is through rephrasing and understanding the violence in a way where the violence and perpetrator becomes something 'else'; a victim, of a bad childhood, an alcohol problem, a reaction to something hurtful. Like Hydén (1994) theorises; the violence has to be rephrased into something that can exist next to love, in order for the relationship to survive. The process of making the understanding of the violence fit with a survivable reality is an example of normalisation of a phenomenon; a violent acting husband does not fit with the concept of love and marriage, but a violent acting victim of own parents does.

This normalisation of violence contains a strong element of legitimizing; having reached such a thorough and complete understanding of why he is violent, it also becomes ok; given his situation, this violence is only an expression of his pain, his inherent aggression, his problems.

The process of rephrasing the violence also says something about a gender dynamic that has a clear hierarchal structure; it is his reality that becomes hers. It is his reality that is the valid one and the one she must adopt. This has clear implications for the women's access to discourses and understandings; it is his limited reality that is valid; this being him being 'too drunk' or her being 'too irritating' or the violence actually just being 'punishment' for something she did wrong. This leaves the couple with a 'joint project', a common understanding (Hydén, 1994), something that ties them together. But where there can be claimed to be a clear award for him, there is a high price to pay for her. When his reality becomes the only valid one, she is left with a severely limited room for understanding and also for actions; it is within this small space she has to choose explanations and behaviour, to adapt her life to fit with his.

6.2 The Discourse of His Responsibility – a small step towards gender equality?

Two women in our sample draw on discourses that leave the violent man in a more responsible position; the violence is *his*. As outlined earlier, these two women are in different situations from the rest of our participants; they are in the process of leaving their partners. Being in this position, it might be easier to use this specific discourse. Still, the discourse of his responsibility is used nevertheless, and one can wonder if this is a small step towards a situation where more gender neutral discourses also get a place in the South African society.

Being socially constructed magnitudes, one can hypothesise that both the new legislation focusing of gender equality as well as a growing feministic movement (Walker, 2005) will have an impact on gender and the discourses regarding it. Perhaps the very existence of the discourse of his responsibility a reflection of a society in change towards greater equality; where questioning is possible, both of the ruling patriarch and ones position in life as a woman. Questioning does not belong to a traditionally feminine role. The discourse of his responsibility is far off hegemony in the South African society. But through its mere existence it proves that there are competing ways of thinking gender. And even though this discourse is perhaps only available for women in certain situations, it is still out there; available for new women who are living with intimate partner violence trying to make sense of their experiences.

7. Final Reflections

One important finding in this study is how dominant discourses around intimate partner violence create existing ‘truths’ about this violence. These truths have clear gender aspects that are contributing to the manifestation and upholding of traditional gender positions.

Anne, Bernice, Carmen and the other six women in our study all draw on discourses that position them being ‘traditionally feminine’. We believe we in this study have shown how the existing gender roles in South Africa and concepts of what it is to be man versus woman, feminine versus masculine has an impact on what discourses are formed and become accessible. Furthermore, through the use of these same discourses, the initial gender positions

become strengthened as they are, with belonging power inequalities. By paraphrasing of the violence, as we have seen in all five 'outside' discourses, violence in a relationship becomes normalised, and can continue to exist within the accepted borders of gender roles. The discourses the women use in the interviews reflect what is taken for granted and accepted in the society. Experiencing violence from your partner is 'just one of these natural things' in life. Like Carmen describes it:

Interviewer: How often would you say that he was abusive to you?

Carmen: You know what, I can't really say, because it was like today, it was nice, the weather is nice today, tomorrow the weather is not nice. (p.18)

The use of a weather metaphor is striking and tells us a lot about how Carmen perceives men's violence towards women in South Africa; something as normal as the weather, difficult to foresee and impossible to change or manipulate, even to escape.

Our choice of research topic has partly been influenced by feminist views on research. Even though there has been more focus around intimate partner violence both in South Africa and other parts of the world over the latest years, the amount of research and knowledge in the field does not come close to reflecting the size of the actual problem. We have written earlier how intimate partner violence is a huge and increasing problem in the South African culture; some surveys show that as many as one in four women experience intimate partner violence during their lives.

To be able to do anything about this problem we believe it is of essence to change some of the 'truths' around intimate partner violence. We believe it is essential to name violence by its real name, namely violence and not something else, like 'abuse' or 'wife battering'. Only when the violence is given its right name can it be looked at and reacted to, on an individual and on a societal level (Isdal, 2000). Of greatest importance is probably giving attention to the problem. Traditionally it has not been an area of particular interest. As our women told us; this is *her* problem. We believe this attitude also is reflected in the relatively little research we find on the area; it has been seen as a female problem. Research topics have traditionally been chosen by and for men, and 'typically female problems' have been overlooked. Our topic of interest was thus not chosen by coincidence. We wanted these women's voices to be heard. As we wrote earlier in this thesis, we believe women are and should be able to define their

own self as women, and not through the eyes of men. We regard this study as a small contribution to this movement, as Lather describes it:

'Very simply, to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the centre of one's inquiry... The overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position' (Lather, 1991, p. 71).

We hope we have done justice in this regard.

As a continuation of this it becomes important to highlight the importance of this research. We believe that in order to do something about the widespread problem of intimate partner violence we need to know what we are dealing with. And in order for this to happen it is not enough to understand the perpetrators. As we have seen in this thesis, what upholds and maintains the phenomenon of intimate partner violence has widespread and deep rooted societal origins. These need to be explored in order to enable *reactions*. As does the actual understanding and experiences of the women actually experiencing the violence

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Appendix

Appendix 1

Interview guide

1. Facts on participant

-I would like to start by getting to know a bit about you. So tell me a bit about yourself, starting for example with where have you grown up. Did you grow up in Cape Town?

Probe: in which part?

Probe: how was it to grow up here?

-Where do you live at the moment? / In which part of Cape Town do you live?

-With whom do you live?

Probe: for how long have you lived with your partner?

Probe: are you co habitants or are you married?

-How old are you, if I may ask?

-For how many years did you go to school?

Probe: finished matric?

-Did you attend any schools or courses after high school? / Do you have any education after matric?

-Do you work?

If yes; what kind of work?

-How many children do you have?

Probe: how old are they?

Probe: do they all live with you?

-is x his/hers/their father?

-You have lived with x for x years now / lived on and off with x for x years now, how many serious relationships would you say you have had in your adult life? / How many men have you been seriously involved with, like living together..?

2. Gender roles and being woman in South Africa

I would like us to talk a bit about the South African society and especially about how men and women are viewed here and how they view / understand each other.

-So could you tell me, are there major differences between men and women?

[Are men and women basically different?]

Probe: how is this seen? Can you give me some examples on this?

-Do you believe there are some things more appropriate and natural for women to be interested in and doing, compared to men? [Are there some things that come more natural for us woman to do and to be interested in?]

Probe: in connection to children for example?

Probe: in relation to work in the home?

Probe: in relation to what kinds of jobs women and men have?

-Could you explain to me what the 'good wife'/partner is supposed to be like in South Africa?

[How is the 'perfect wife' according to the average South African?]

Probe: what are her duties and tasks?

Probe: in connection to their home, husband, children..

-How do you feel you fit in here? [Do you see yourself as close to the picture you described of the good wife/partner in South Africa, or not really?]

Probe: have you lived your life like the average good South African wife/partner?

Probe: is it important for you to be like the good SA wife? Why? Why not?

Probe: Does your partner view you/see you as the good wife?

-What is important to you in a relationship? [What would you like a relationship with a partner to be like?]

Probe: Are there other things?

-I would like to know a bit about your relationship with x. Do you feel that what we just talked about, the things that are important to you in a relationship, is in your relationship with x?

Probes: Is it caring? Close? Loving? Do you see each other much? Do you do things together? Do you talk a lot? Is it helpful?

-Do you feel that your partner respects you? [Does he show you respect?]

Probe: as a person? Who you are

Probe: your opinions and decisions?

Probe: your child rearing / how you raise your children?

Probe: How do you know? Can you give me an example?

3. About the violence

Now, we'll go over to speak a bit about violence,

-tell me, is violence between men and women common in South Africa? [Is domestic violence a widespread thing in South Africa?]

-Do you know many women that experience violence in their relationships?

-Is violence between men and women a common topic in Manenberg/ place x? / is domestic violence something that is spoken about?

Probe: If not, why do you think so; is it too shameful? Secrets?

-I would like to know what you think is abuse. What counts as abuse?

-Are there any situations where it is ok for a man to be violent towards his partner/wife?

Probe; e.g. when unfaithful?

-Statistics show that a much larger amount of men are violent towards their female partners and that less women are abusive to men. Why do you think this is?

Probe: do you think it has anything to do with men and women's different upbringing?

Probe: is violence viewed as being acceptable for men to use towards their wives? And in what circumstances?

Probe: are there inborn differences in men and women, for instance when it comes to aggression?

-You are here because you have experienced violence from your partner. Can you tell me a bit about the violence in your own relationship?

Probe: what kind of violence have you been experiencing? (physical, verbal...)

Probe: when did the violence start?

Probe: what was the first violent act?

Probe: how often is he violent towards you?

-Would you describe x as a man that is violent in general? [Is he generally violent or is the violence concentrated only towards you?]

Probe: is he violent towards other people, like in bars, with friends?

Probe: is he violent towards children?

-Have you experienced violence in other relationships? [Have any earlier relationships in your life been violent?]

Probe: with other men?

Probe: in own upbringing?

- Have you told anyone about the violence? [Who have you confided in?]

Probe: who?

If no, Probe: why not?

Probe: when did you first come to Sartjie Bartman?

Probe: what made you come?

- Does your partner know that you are coming/did come to Sartje Baartman / the Trauma Centre?

NO: what would he do if he knew? / How would he react if he knew?

YES: how does he feel about it?

Probe: Does he feel threatened? Ashamed?

- Why do you think your partner is / was violent?

[Do you have any thoughts of his reasons for being violent?]

Probe: is he angry? Irritated? Is it something you do wrong?

- Is the violence linked to any specific behavior?

[Is there any particular settings in which your partner becomes more violent?]

Probe: Like when he is drinking?

Probe: Using drugs

Probe: Problems at work

-Has the violence always been present in your relationship?

[Was he violent from you started to be together?]

Probe: has there been a change? / When did it change?

- Why do you think the situation became like this, him being violent towards you?

[When thinking back, can you remember any reasons for why he started to act violently towards you?]

Probe: was there a major change in your life situation? (like a pregnancy, losing a job, having to move?)

-Does he explain his violence to you? [Does he tell you why he ##### you?]

IF YES: -How does he explain his violence?

[What does he say to you is his reasons for ##### you?]

Probe: Does he say it's his anger?

Probe: Jealousy?

Probe: Irritated?

Probe: Unhappy with wife/ children?

Probe: External factors like alcohol or losing a job?

-Do you believe him?

[Do you think the explanation he gives you is what he really thinks?]

Probe: or is it just an excuse he uses for himself?

IF NO: Why do you think he is not talking about the violence?

[Do you have any thoughts about why he doesn't explain his violence to you?]

Probe: Ashamed?

Probe: His right? Natural for him?

Probe: You must just accept it?

-Does he apologize? [After he's been violent, does he say that he's sorry?]

Probe: Always? Sometimes?

Does he promise to change?

-How do you think the violence has affected you?

[Has the violence from your partner changed you in any way]

- Do you feel like the same person you were before the violence?
- Has the violence changed your everyday life?
- How you feel about yourself?
- How you feel about your security?

-Do you think the violence from X has affected your relationships with others?

[Any difference in your relationship with others now and before the ##### started?]

- with your family?
- Friends?
- How has it changed? Can you give me some examples?

-Has your child witnessed the violence?

[Have your children ever seen or heard you being #####?]

- Do you see any reactions in your child from this?

[Do you think this has made a difference in your child?]

Probe: Does he/she/they act differently?

Probe: are they more insecure?

Probe: Are they more withdrawn?

Probe: have their school performance dropped?

- Is your partner violent to your children?

[You said your children witness the violence, has he ever been violent to your children as well?]

IF YES

-do you think there is any traits in your child that evokes violence from the (step)father/ your husband/boyfriend?

[Could it be that there is anything about your child that makes x act violently towards him/her/them?]

Probe: (If step child) Is the child a reminder of your earlier relationship?

- Do you talk about the violence with your children?

IF YES:

-How do you explain the violence to your child?

[what do you say to your child after a violent episode that you know he/she has heard/ seen?]

Probe: that it isn't heir fault?

Probe: That x is angry and frustrated with himself?

-What do your children say? Do they express any feelings around this?

Probe: Are they afraid

Probe: Are they angry

IF NO:

-why is it that you don't talk about the violence with your children?

Probe: is it too difficult?

Probe: are you not allowed from x?

Probe: do you find them too young?

-Do you believe that your child will use violence as an adult?

[Do you think your child will be violent in his future romantic relationships?]

Probe: Do you think this has anything to do with what he/she/they have experienced at home?

4. About being a mother

Now we'll talk a bit more about being a mother. I'll start with a general question about being a mother.

- In general, how do you think most people in your society would describe a good mother?

[When people in general think of the term 'a good mother', what do you think they think about]

Probe: What does a good mother do for her children?

Probe: What are her responsibilities?

- Earlier we spoke about the good wife. Is there something that is important to do as a wife that is difficult because one is a mother?

-Over to you, what would you say is a good mother? Do you agree with the more general views?

[In your opinion, what does a good mother do for her children?]

- The same as above?

-Those things you now mentioned, do you feel that you are able to do all these things?

- IF NO: does x prevent you from doing them?

-Over to the father, what does a good father do?

[What should the father do in relation to his children?]

Probe: be responsible economically and pay the bills?

Probe: Other things you can think of?

Probe: Does the father's responsibilities differs from a mothers responsibilities?

-Does x do these things? (as talked about above?)

[does x do these things that a good father does?]

- What do you think your children will say about his father when they grow up?

If he said something about his own father: (You said your husband says about his own father, what do you think your children will say about his father when they grow up?)

- Would you say you are the same mother to your kids when X is around, or are you different when he is around or not?

-I'll mention a few examples of different mother – child interactions and are interested in your experiences in relation to these examples...

- Some mothers hug and hold their children a lot. Some don't. How often do you hug your child?

- How often do you talk about your child to someone?

-if your child was helping you doing the dishes and accidentally broke a glass, how would you react? And x?

-what do you like to do with your child? / can you give me some examples of activities you enjoy doing with your child?

- How do you discipline your child?

Would the discipline of your children been different if X was not violent towards you?

- Do you hit your children?

Probes: Situations? (Feelings and thoughts around this.)

-What do your children do when violence is happening in your home?

Probe: intervene? Go out/go to their room? Scared?

After a violent episode, would you say you do something special to your child?

Probes: Talk to them? Give them extra love? Buy them something? Pretend as nothing happened?

- Can you think of any ways the violence you experience have changed your mothering?

[Do you think your way of being a mother has changed because of the violence?]

If the violence were not in your relationship, do you think your relationship with your children would have been different?

Probe: What would have been different? Can you give an example?

-What are the advantages of staying in the relationship with X for the children?

-What are the disadvantages?

5. Future

We'll now go over to talk a bit about your reasons for staying and your future. (Reasons why you left and how you view the future)

- What are reasons why you stay in the relationship? [Some women living in violent relationships think about leaving. Many are not able to. For you, what are your reasons for still living with x?]

Probe: Are you financially dependant upon him?

Probe: do you stay because you love him?

Probe: do you believe it is the best for you children?

Probe: Are you afraid of leaving him? What might he do?

-what is your goal coming to the SBC / TC?

Probe: To leave?

Probe: To have someone to talk to? To get some help coping?

Probe: Was it someone else that encouraged you?

-if you had a friend in your situation, what advise would you give her?

- Some years in the future, let's say in 20 years time, where do you see your children?

- What do you want for them?
- What do you think they will be doing?

-And let's say 5 years, where do you see yourself?

[How do you think your situation is 5 years from now, 2011 that is]

- In the relationship
- Do you believe some things have changed by then? What?

-The very last question I will ask you is about the service at the Sartjie Bartman Centre, what could the counselors / centre do differently to improve the help you receive?

Appendix 2

CONSENT LETTER

To Whom It May Concern,

This is a consent letter for participating in research conducted by Stine Lundgren and Lene Lovlien. We are both students from the University of Oslo in Norway. We have been in South Africa for two years for study purposes and are now doing research on intimate partner violence and mothering.

We would like to ask you to take part in our study by letting us interview you.

The research is part of our profession oriented degree in clinical psychology. We will not benefit financially in any way from the research. We hope that our research can contribute to a better understanding of intimate partner violence and mothering. We also hope that this study will contribute to a more effective and respectful service for women that come to the Trauma Centre for Survivors of Violence and Torture for counseling.

If you agree to participate in the study one of us will interview you for about two hours. You may choose not to answer certain questions. With your permission we'll record the interviews so that we have an accurate description of the conversation. The tapes will then be transcribed (written out), and if you request a copy of the transcription, I can give you one.

All information gathered will be treated with strict confidentiality and under no circumstances will your name be revealed. If you at any time of the research choose to not participate any longer, you may do so and will not be asked to give an explanation. If you decide to withdraw, the interview already conducted will be destroyed.

As a small compensation for your time and travel, we will give you R50.

If you have any questions about the research please ask us. You can also contact us at 021 465 7373 or at lene@trauma.org.za, or our supervisor Terry-Ann Selikow, at 021 4042183.

If you agree to participate in this study, please sign the form below.

Thank you in advance

Sincerely yours,

Lene Lovlien and Stine Lundgren

.....

I declare that I have read and understood the above and agree to participate in the study.

Name:

Signature:

Appendix 3

Consent letter from the Trauma Centre

Dear Client

The Trauma centre is involved in research on an ongoing basis so that we can ensure that we are meeting the needs of our clients in the best possible way. Your participation may assist us in improving our understanding of violence and trauma, and you would be helping us in our attempt to address violence in our communities.

We may need to telephone you during your attendance here or after you have completed your counselling to establish whether you would be willing to participate in research studies or not. Could you please complete the following section which indicates your willingness to be contacted to participate in research. **All the information provided by you is confidential.**

I _____ WOULD / WOULD NOT

like to be contacted to participate in research.

Signature _____ Date _____

Thank you

Appendix 4



Part of the Mannenberg area.



A typical township dwelling. Mannenberg.



A typical informal business on the Cape Flats.



The Saartjie Baartman Centre.



Security gates, outside SBC.



Inside SBC.