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**BATTERED WOMEN SEEKING SOLUTIONS:  
A STUDY OF WOMEN WHO HAVE TAKEN REFUGE AT THE  
RAPE CRISIS SHELTER IN CAPE TOWN**

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The Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life is situated within the Group Social Dynamics of the HSRC. The emphasis in the programme is on the structure and dynamics of family life, the nature of family disorganization and disintegration, and the nature of the changes taking place with regard to family structure and family processes in society. In this report the emphasis is on battered women who decided to leave violent relationships and entered a shelter with a view to starting a new life.

The opinions expressed in the report are those of the authors and should not necessarily be viewed as those of the Main Committee of the Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life.

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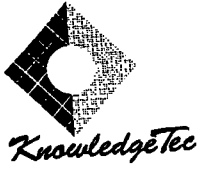
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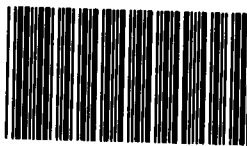


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## **Ekserp**

Die 'Rape Crisis' van Kaapstad se toevlugsoord vir mishandelde ('battered') vroue is sedert die einde van 1985 in werking, en het sedertdien aan 'n groot aantal vroue hulp verleen. Hierdie studie is gebaseer op onderhoude met 21 van die vroue wat daar tuisgegaan het. Dit is 'n kwalitatiewe studie en die doel daarvan was om die probleme te beskryf wat deur die vroue ervaar is in die proses om van die vroueslaner weg te gaan, by die toevlugsoord aan te meld en 'n nuwe lewe te begin.

Ons plaas eerstens die begrip 'vrouemishandeling' binne 'n teoretiese verband en verwys na literatuur en ander studies oor die onderwerp. Daarna word die ontwikkeling van die vroue se verhouding beskryf, asook die mishandelingsproses wat gelei het tot hul besluit om skuiling te soek. Ons ondersoek die informele en formele steunstelsels wat beskikbaar is, en veral die probleme wat binne die bestaande netwerke ondervind word. Die vroue beskou die toevlugsoord as 'n belangrike katalisator ten opsigte van die verandering wat in hulle lewens plaasgevind het.

Hoewel die studie beperk is tot 'n spesifieke steekproef mishandelde vroue, behoort die aanbevelings wyer toepassing te hê. Die vernaamste aanbevelings is die skepping van toevlugsoorde, en van oorbruggings- en beraaddienste, maar veral die noodsaaklikheid daarvan dat mishandeling van hierdie aard deur die samelewing en die reg as 'n misdadig beskou sal word.

## **Abstract**

The Rape Crisis shelter for battered women in Cape Town has been open since the end of 1985. This qualitative study is based on in-depth interviews with 21 women who were past residents of the shelter. The purpose of the study is to document the difficulties the women experienced in the process of separating from the batterer, going to the shelter and starting a new life.

The report initially contextualises battering, then details the development of the women's relationships and the battering that led to their decision to enter the shelter. The informal and formal support networks available to the women and the problems encountered with the networks are explored. The women identify the shelter as a catalyst in the transformation of their lives.

Although the study is limited to a specific sample of battered women, it is believed that the recommendations may have wider application. Key recommendations include the provision of shelters and bridging and counselling services, and fundamentally the social and legal recognition of battering as a crime.

## **Acknowledgements**

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**This report is dedicated to the women who shared their stories with us, helping to break the silence around battering and enabling others to learn from their experiences. The three researchers found working together on this project mutually enjoyable and enriching.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The silence around woman battering was first broken by feminists working in the field of violence against women in Europe and North America in the early 1970s. Inspired by the actions of overseas movements, South African feminists began to mobilise around violence against women in the second half of the 1970s. By 1980 counselling services for rape and sexual assault had been established in four South African cities (Cape Town, Johannesburg, Pietermaritzburg and Durban). People Opposing Women Abuse opened the first shelter for battered women in Johannesburg in 1982, followed by Rape Crisis Cape Town in 1985. Today several predominantly voluntary organisations operating along feminist lines exist in various centres in South Africa. In addition welfare services, health services and academic institutions are addressing the issue of battering. Co-ordinated Action for Battered Women, a network of services, was initiated in 1990 by Rape Crisis and the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders in Cape Town. Other networks of organisations and institutions concerned with the issue of battering are being initiated elsewhere.

In the changed political context since February 1990 women from different political organisations have met to discuss national priorities for a new dispensation for women. Violence against women has emerged as one of the major issues to be addressed. It is hoped that the views of battered women reflected in this report will contribute to formulating policy in this field.

This report contextualises woman battering and focuses on two transition phases in battered women's lives: leaving the batterer and leaving the shelter. Problems encountered by battered women are identified and their solutions for improving the situation are explored.

## CHAPTER 1

### CONTEXTUALISING WOMAN BATTERING

We live in a violent and abusive society, so that in some ways everyone experiences some form of violence; but one of the most pervasive forms of violence used against any individual in South Africa is woman battering. Terms such as 'spouse abuse', 'domestic violence', 'family violence' and 'marital violence' serve to obfuscate the extent to which predominantly women are the victims of violence from men. In this chapter we offer a definition of battering, place battering in the context of contemporary ideologies of marriage and 'the family' and propose an analysis of unequal power relationships.

Woman battering is a difficult phenomenon to define since it covers a wide range of actions and also has a substantial subjective component. Different women may define themselves as battered at different stages during an abusive relationship (Angless 1990:3).

Studies of woman battering show that it occurs along a continuum that ranges from hitting or slapping to femicide.<sup>1</sup> We shall refer to woman battering as 'Any repeated acts of physical or psychological force, or repeated threats thereof, used against a woman by her partner' (Angless 1990:4). The women who participated in this study were in heterosexual relationships and had all been battered by men.

Part of the difficulty in exposing woman battering is its occurrence within an intimate privatised relationship. An American researcher estimates that one out of every two women will be beaten by the man who supposedly loves her (Walker 1985:281). In a study conducted in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, Lawrence (1984) found that woman battering was the second-highest reported crime. Given the hidden nature of battering and the fact that woman battering is very under-reported, official figures are likely to be extremely conservative. After Rape Crisis Cape Town held a phone-in in 1985, they estimated that one in six women in the Western Cape was battered (Angless, Van Zyl & Anderson 1989).

Woman battering needs to be understood within the context of the hierarchy of power relationships in families which gives men authority over women and children. The logical extreme of battering would be death (Russell & Van de Ven 1976:127). In recent times this has extended to entire families being killed.



## **Contemporary ideologies of marriage and 'the family'**

Throughout her life a woman's social status is perceived to be derived from her relative position to a man: as daughter, housewife, wife and mother of 'his' children. The rituals of courtship and intrigues of romance organise the everyday lives of most girls. The anticipation of marriage structures their future: to marry, to marry well and to stay married.

Both women and men enter marriage with different socially created expectations and obligations. Men are expected to be the heads of the household and to be providers and protectors. One of the promises of marriage made to women is a relationship of safety and trust. In a battering relationship that trust is violated since the supposed protector becomes the perpetrator of terror.

Woman battering is a patterned crime where a man may use his socially granted authority and power to subordinate the woman (Van Zyl, Anderson & Buckingham 1990; Hansson 1991). Between actual incidents of violence, threats of violence can be relied upon to coerce the woman into submission. She knows that the man can and will use force but cannot predict when and how it will happen. This places her in a constant state of trepidation and fear of violence.

The modern Western state and its mechanisms of social justice view 'the family' as part of the private arena in which it generally does not interfere. While the state controls and monitors other legal associations, within marriage individual men are granted control over their relations in 'the family' since these relations fall outside the sphere designated as 'public'. The current privatisation of 'the family' endorses men's control over women and consequently battering is inadvertently condoned and remains hidden. Within the private domain of 'the family', women and children may be regarded as men's property, and under their control.

### **Socially induced silence**

While men are expected to be the material providers, women are expected to provide the emotional cohesion in relationships and are held responsible for their success. Voicing 'marital' problems therefore may reflect negatively on women. Women are commonly blamed for being battered and many consequently uphold the privacy of the relationship by remaining silent.

Ideologies of 'the family' pervade most social institutions and encourage the keeping together of 'the family' at all costs. A consequence of this is the serious absence of practical and emotional support for battered women. In Western ideologies, the privatised nature of 'the family' encourages battering

to be seen as an individual problem not warranting social attention. Within the South African criminal justice system battering is not seen as a crime: If a man hits a strange woman, the case will be treated as an assault; when a man assaults his wife, it is seen as a 'domestic affair' for which he is relatively unlikely to be punished. Religious and social welfare systems in South Africa also view woman battering as an individual problem within a particular relationship.

A view promulgated by many social and psychological theories sees women as inherently masochistic (Angless 1990:31ff). Thus individual women are frequently blamed for the occurrence of battering or they are perceived to 'enjoy' it. These views have become popularised and may be internalised by women who then believe the man if he says 'You are asking for it'. Consequently they may not feel free to ask for help.

Recognising that intimate relationships with men may not always be safe for women will seriously undermine the idealised notions of 'the family'. The reification of 'the family' usually results in battered women being labelled the problem and also dissociates battering from the social contexts within which it occurs.

### **Different perspectives on violence against women**

Before feminist explanations for violence against women were voiced, the most prevalent ways of viewing woman battering were from three major perspectives: social psychological (Roy 1977), psychopathological (Strauss, Gelles & Steinmetz 1980) and socio-cultural (Strauss 1973). Within these perspectives battering is attributed to, and explained by, a variety of causes such as social stress, alcohol and drugs, individual pathology of the man, individual pathology of the woman, culture of violence and pathology of families (Pizzey & Shapiro 1982; Van der Hoven 1990).

Many of these approaches excuse the batterer for his violent behaviour (Gelles 1976; Steinmetz 1977) and fail to explain why it is predominantly women who are battered and men who are the perpetrators. Views that focus on individual pathologies serve to absolve society from addressing woman battering as a social problem, while the social perspectives focus on other factors which may highlight the battering, but which are not the cause. All of these tend to ignore the batterer or absolve him from responsibility for his behaviour and his attitude towards women. Views that do not question the assumptions underlying the inherent power imbalance between women and men are unlikely to propose far-reaching or effective mechanisms for stopping battering (Angless 1990; Hanmer & Saunders 1984).

Feminists working with battered women have contributed greatly to the field of knowledge about battering. The 'violence against women' movement has adhered to feminist methodological principles by grounding their theories in battered women's own experiences and perspectives (Hoff 1990; Angless 1990; Lawrence 1984; Schechter 1982). Starting from the women's perspectives these theories contribute psychological and sociological insights into woman battering and place the abuse within the complex context of ongoing relationships.

Walker's (1983) 'cycle of violence' model illustrates the repetitive nature of battering and the psychological dynamics at play. In a study of white battered women conducted in Pretoria in 1984 Van der Hoven (1992) uses this model. It suggests that a battering relationship passes through phases of build-up of tension, actual violent incidents, followed by a remorse/'honeymoon' phase and the eventual build-up of tension again. As with any model there is a danger of over-simplification and over-generalisation, but this model nonetheless remains a useful tool for understanding how some battered women became trapped in a roller coaster of emotional ambiguity.

While Walker's 'cycle of violence' may be used to help some battered women recognise the tension-building phase which may lead to violence, many of them have no way of predicting when the violence will occur. Some battered women live in a constant state of terror, never experiencing a 'honeymoon' phase while others may intermittently be subjected to actual violent incidents. It is important to realise that the batterer has control; his emotional state usually determines the general state of affairs in the home. Women are expected to mediate and facilitate familial relationships, and when a man is abusive, a woman is at risk of becoming hostage to his whims. A battered woman in this situation may experience a sense of entrapment which makes it difficult for her to escape.

Conceptual differentiations between private and public domains have practical consequences for women. Men are positioned as the gatekeepers of the private realm - mediating women's access to the public arena. The practical implications of this for many battered women are that they are cut off from potential sources of assistance and, significantly, that police and social services are often reluctant to intervene on their behalf. Until there is broad recognition that battering is a crime requiring co-ordinated intervention, battered women are likely to remain without adequate sources of redress.

Feminist perspectives were the first to challenge patriarchal social relations in which men have power over women, and to offer an analysis of violence against women in terms of these socially and historically institutionalised relations of power.

## **Need for an analysis of power**

The pervasiveness of battering indicates that it is not a crime sporadically committed by an isolated individual on another, but part of a socially institutionalised system of men's control over women. For this reason psychological explanations are not sufficient, and we have to examine the social reasons underlying woman battering (Hoff 1990).

Men are accorded more power than women in most social spheres, and usually benefit tangibly by this positioning. It is therefore in most men's interests to maintain this gender inequality. One of the ways in which patriarchal dominance is exercised and maintained is through the threat and use of violence.

The variety of forms of violence against women serves to control women and their mobility in many spheres. For example, fear of sexual harassment and/or rape forms part of most women's daily experiences. From an early age girls are taught that they need to shape their lives in order to avoid sexual violence (Bunch 1992). Given the pervasive nature of men's violence towards women, a woman may be in the paradoxical situation of having to rely on the goodwill of one man to protect her from other men.

An adequate analysis of power relations and of the different positions women and men are accorded relative to each other, their unequal access to resources, including social support and services, is lacking in most conventional perspectives about woman battering. To understand women's unequal gender position the home needs to be seen as a significant site of women's oppression. It is also a primary site of men's violence against women. The following can be identified as mechanisms which maintain unequal power and gender relations (Van Zyl 1991; Mies 1987):

1. The appropriation and accumulation of labour and resources by a privileged group. For instance in the home, women's labour and assets may be appropriated by men. Even when women are employed they commonly retain responsibility for the unpaid labour of cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. Batterers may use these role expectations as sources of criticism to undermine women and as excuses for battering.
2. The institutionalisation of power relationships. Unequal gender relationships are institutionalised within marriage. Husbands are mostly regarded as heads of the home, and in some legal codes husbands have marital power and are also the guardians of women and children. This allows batterers to control their wives' ability to make decisions, enter into contracts and engage in the public world.

3. The promulgation of these power relations as normal and immutable. Power relations are further maintained through the structuring of consent; most people are led to believe that the status quo is the 'natural' order of things. Many women internalise their dependencies on men, not recognising that gender relationships can be interdependent. This is significant for those women who believe that they cannot live without a man.
4. The maintenance of the system of privilege by coercion and threats of coercion. Batterers rely heavily on the threat of violence to maintain their position of power. Challenges to this position may also be met by violence.

An analysis of the bases of gender relations is crucial to understand battering and to offer directions for change. An analysis of unequal power relations defines the avenues that are open to changing individual relationships between women and men, and to challenging their perceptions and expectations of each other and of marriage. It will only be possible to prohibit woman battering once precedents for human values that respect femininity and women have been instituted.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE STUDY DESIGN

In this chapter we outline the background to and the design of the study - setting out the scope, the aims and the methods of the research as well as the approach adopted by the researchers. The shelter women<sup>2</sup> who participated in the study will be introduced in Chapter 3.

This is the first follow-up study to examine options available to battered women<sup>3</sup> who have left a shelter in South Africa. The study was a joint project between the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and Rape Crisis Cape Town.<sup>4</sup> It was funded by the Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life (co-ordinated by the HSRC) and Rape Crisis Cape Town. Conducted in Cape Town, the research was undertaken by a team of three women - Mikki van Zyl, a criminologist who was a community worker for Rape Crisis, Teresa Angless, a lecturer in the Department of Social Work at the University of Cape Town and a former shelter worker for Rape Crisis, and Moira Maconachie, a family sociologist and researcher at the HSRC.<sup>5</sup>

The Rape Crisis shelter for battered women in Cape Town was opened in January 1986 and is the largest shelter of its kind in South Africa (providing accommodation for the greatest number of battered women and their children). The other comparable shelters for battered women are run by People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) in Johannesburg and the Salvation Army (with Rape Crisis) in Cape Town.<sup>6</sup> These shelters are distinct in being housed at secret addresses and being run according to feminist principles. For example, the shelter women take part in the decision making and share responsibility for the running of the shelter. The shelters offer both accommodation and a counselling service to battered women and their children. Between January 1986 and December 1990 over 150 women had sought refuge at the Rape Crisis shelter in Cape Town. This study draws on the experiences of 21 battered women, all former residents of the shelter.

#### **Our approach to the research**

This research was approached from a feminist perspective. A qualitative methodology based on case studies of shelter women's lives was used. Bowles and Duelli-Klein (1981:1) describe the central objective of a feminist research approach as action-oriented research that is conducted 'in order to improve the lives of women'. The project was anchored by a shared commitment to document women's knowledge and to give voice to women's

experiences of personal violence in order that appropriate action may be taken to alter their situation. In undertaking this research our intention was to learn from battered women about the context of their everyday lives as women, to listen to what women who have resisted battering have to say about what needs to be provided for women in that situation, and from shared discussions to make recommendations about services and potential community responses to the issue of battering. In its list of research themes the Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life specified 'family violence' as a field that required research. The problem-oriented focus of the programme was able to accommodate our intention to base recommendations for policy on the views of battered women themselves. Rape Crisis Cape Town provides services for battered women and found in the research project an opportunity to obtain feedback. This report will try to meet the objectives of both the Co-operative Research Programme and Rape Crisis. We hope too that the report will encourage others to undertake further research in this area.

### **Aims of the study**

The aims of the study were threefold:

- (1) To describe the key social problems facing battered women at two crucial points: when they decide to leave the batterer and when they leave the shelter and re-enter their community;
- (2) To evaluate how better services for battered women and their children could alleviate these problems;
- (3) To explore the potential for community responses to battering.

### **Methods**

The sample population for the study included every shelter woman who had stayed there between 1986 and the end of 1990 (N=161). Only those women who had stayed in the shelter for a period of more than one week were included in the initial sample. The specification of residence of at least one week was decided on to ensure that all the women included in the sample had lived in the shelter long enough to have attended meetings with other shelter women and to have received counselling from shelter workers and other battered women. Very few women (N=9) had stayed at the shelter for less than a week since it does not operate on an emergency basis. Women receiving a place at the shelter are usually offered accommodation for an initial period of two months.

## **Sampling procedure**

Rape Crisis granted access to the files of all previous shelter residents. On arrival at the shelter women complete an intake form giving basic details (biographic, medical, next of kin, etc.). On leaving the shelter the women complete a release form that usually includes a forwarding address and telephone number.

Other information from counsellors and shelter workers, specifically regarding medical, legal, housing and emotional details, is also documented in the files. The files were numbered sequentially from the first resident onwards, and cases where women had sought refuge more than once were numbered twice on the same file. In other words, a woman who had initially sought refuge in one year would be given a number (say 46) and on her return would be given another number (say 103) and both numbers would appear on her file.

One of the aims of the research was to map the difficulties that the women experienced on leaving the shelter and re-integrating with their community. The shelter had been open for five years and our aim was to draw on the experiences of a range of shelter women, from those who had been back in their community for five years to those who had only recently left the shelter. To ensure that our study covered an adequate time period and that we were able to speak to women at different phases of integration, a decision was taken to try to include an even number of women from each year that the shelter had been operative.

The system of numbering files made it easier for us to organise our sampling procedure for each year. The procedure followed was simple:

- (a) Files were initially grouped into year of intake for each year that the shelter had been operative. This produced five sub-samples (1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990).
- (b) Each file for every year was checked to ensure that the woman concerned had been resident for at least a week. Those who had been resident for less than a week were removed from the sample.
- (c) Files were ordered in sequence for each year. If a woman who had been at the shelter more than once was selected, her file was excluded from later years to ensure that she could not be selected twice.
- (d) Missing file numbers, including those that had been excluded under (b) above, were taken into account in totalling the number of residents for each year. Very few files were missing or contained no contact addresses (N = 6).



- (e) The total number of files for each year was divided to count out and systematically select a set of five files. Five numbers were chosen for each year.
- (f) Addresses and contact phone numbers from the intake and release forms in these files were copied down to enable us to attempt to trace and contact the selected women. The amount of information on each file differed: Some women had provided a lot of information, others just the bare minimum.

Due to the difficulty in tracing all the women on the initial list, a second and a third list were drawn for each year in the same way. (Files selected for the first list were excluded from the second selection, and those selected for the first and second list were excluded from the third selection). The second list included a further five names and the third list an additional three names for each year. Details of the lists are shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: SAMPLING LISTS**

Year	File	Numbers excluded	Numbers included		
			First list N = 25	Second list N = 25	Third list N = 15
1986	00-35 N = 35	16/23/30 N = 3	7/14/21/ 28/35	1/8/17/ 25/33	10/20/32
1987	36-69 N = 33	47 N = 1	42/49/55/ 61/67	37/44/52/ 60/68	46/57/64
1988	70-105 N = 35	75/84/95 N = 3	77/83/90/ 97/103	70/78/86/ 93/101	81/92/102
1989	106-138 N = 32	106/119/ 120/136 N = 4	111/116/ 123/128/ 133	107/113/ 121/127/ 134	115/124/ 135
1990	139-164 N = 26	143/154 N = 2	142/148/ 152/156/ 161	139/145/ 151/157/ 163	144/150/ 158

An attempt was made to trace the women by using the telephone numbers listed on the intake and release forms. These numbers usually included the home number or work number of the woman and the number of a relative or friend who could be contacted. Contacting the women and successfully meeting with them was time consuming and frustrating and reflected the

instability of some of the women's lives and their lack of resources (e.g. telephones, permanent housing, transport). Three of the women were unable to keep the initial appointment that had been made. In one case the batterer punished the woman for participating in the study.<sup>7</sup>

Every attempt was made to reach each woman by phone, but if it was impossible to trace her after a minimum of four telephone contacts (where the researcher felt that contact was imminent, she would carry on trying) or for any other reason<sup>8</sup> then an attempt was made to trace the next woman on the list. Sometimes the women who were reached successfully were able to tell us how to locate other women on the lists, as some of them had stayed in contact with each other after leaving the shelter. A final sample of 21 shelter women was obtained in this way.

**TABLE 2: FINAL SAMPLE**

Year	Numbers contacted
1986	1, 7, 14, 35
1987	37, 42, 60, 67
1988	77, 78, 97, 103
1989	111, 116, 123, 128
1990	139, 142, 144, 145, 156

There are few battered women in South Africa who have had the opportunity of taking refuge at a shelter which provides them with time to review their lives and to start making new lives for themselves and their children. In focusing our research on solutions to the problems faced by women who have been battered, we chose to ask shelter women to share their insights with us. This study is therefore based on a select sample of women and our findings are not readily generalisable. All the shelter women we spoke to had already transformed their relationships with the batterer. We anticipate that the findings of this report will be scrutinised and elaborated on by future researchers working in the field of battering in South Africa.

### **The questionnaire**

The questionnaire was designed to track the women's life-courses and elicit information to reflect the processes of 'rupture and transition' that had

occurred in the lives of the shelter women (Drulhe 1987). The questionnaire includes a series of prompts to some questions that could encourage the women to elaborate on their answers. Using a semi-structured interview schedule ensured that comparable data were obtained from each woman.

When constructing the questionnaire, cognisance was taken of the local context. This included the use of current terminology in the Western Cape. For example, in the Afrikaans version of the questionnaire 'geslaande vroue' and the anglicism 'shelter' are used because this is how the Afrikaans-speaking shelter women refer to themselves and the shelter. The informal form of address 'jy' was used in the questionnaire to reflect our choice of minimising the distance between the researchers and the women. Nonetheless, during the interview the researchers switched to a more formal address when appropriate. A copy of the questionnaire schedule is included as Appendix 2 to the report.

### **Conducting the interviews**

A semi-structured interview was conducted with each woman by one of the three members of the research team between March and May of 1991. The interviews took place either at the Rape Crisis offices in Observatory, at the homes of the women or at an agreed-upon place. Women who were interviewed were given money for transport and lunch. The interviews were taped with the consent of the women. Taping the stories ensured their reproduction in the words of the women.<sup>9</sup> Interviews were conducted in English or Afrikaans. Two women were Xhosa speakers and were interviewed in English.

Since the study was limited to Cape Town and drew its sample from the Rape Crisis shelter, the women interviewed reflect the shelter population, i.e. they were predominantly 'coloured' working-class women. The sampling procedure produced one white woman and two African women. Rape Crisis is presently better advertised and utilised in English and Afrikaans-speaking areas of Cape Town.

In designing the project, we were aware of the ethical considerations involved in researching violence against women. It was considered essential for the interviewers to be trained counsellors in the area of battering. In researching violence against women with the use of in-depth interviews a clear distinction between a research interview and a counselling situation may be impossible. Since memories of abuse will inevitably be re-evoked in the research process, back-up counselling (from the Rape Crisis counselling service) was made available. The research interview provided women with

another opportunity for reflection in a supportive context where the interviewers' position on violence against women and the research agenda were openly acknowledged. This approach to the research allowed rich and textured data to be collected. Every attempt was made to let the shelter women tell their stories in their own way without influence from the interviewer.

## CHAPTER 3

### INTRODUCING THE WOMEN

This chapter initially introduces the shelter women who participated in the study, describing their home situation and their educational and economic resources at the time of the interview. The development of their relationships, including courtship and marriage, with the men who battered them will then be outlined. Most of the women had had relationships with the batterers for an extended period and all but one of the women were married to the men who battered them. The onset of the violence that would finally force them to leave home and seek refuge in the Rape Crisis shelter will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The details about the early years of their relationships are drawn from the interviews (see Appendix 1) and therefore depend on the women's memories of that time.

For a few of the women (N=3) the violence had started before they married the batterer; for most (N=18) it started after they were married. Many of the women said it started soon after they were married and other women identified the violence as beginning around particular events such as pregnancy or the birth of a child.

After three years of being together [1987b]. (Before married)

After being together four years [1990c]. (Before married)

I was married about a year or two years [1989c].

Ons was nie te lank getroud nie, net so 'n paar maande [1988b].

(We weren't married too long, just a couple of months.)

First year of marriage. He changed from the word 'go' [1986a].

Soon after. Three months [1990a].

During the early stages of my son's development [1987c].

After about five years of marriage [1987d].

Sixteen years after [1986c].

It can be difficult for women to leave marriages and relationships in which battering occurs. For a married woman who is battered, the marriage licence may become the man's licence to batter (Dobash & Dobash 1979). Some of the problems that the shelter women experienced in reaching the decision to leave and in actually leaving the batterer are outlined in the next chapter. When battered women decide to escape from their homes they may still find it difficult to do so. This highlights the inadequacies of the services available

to women and underlines some of the darker consequences of a social policy framed by the sanctity of 'the family'.

### **Age**

The youngest woman interviewed was 25 years old and the oldest was 54. Most of the women were between 30 and 40 years old. It is important to recognise that battered women who leave the batterer may do so at different stages of their lives and many will leave him more than once. The younger women's lower frequency of leaving could indicate that they were more hopeful of change or that they were more bound by small children. Not having readily available alternatives, many of the shelter women had remained in battering relationships for years before leaving.

**TABLE 3: AGE**

<b>Age range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
20-29	3
30-39	13
40-49	3
50-59	2

### **Current educational and economic resources**

One of the reasons why the women found it hard to leave was that they had few resources at their command.<sup>10</sup> Low educational status can limit self-esteem and job opportunities, securing and entrenching many women's financial dependence on men and marriage. Marriage tends to be the more important career for women (Delphy 1984). Furthermore, batterers may actively discourage or prohibit their partners from furthering their education.

### **Level of education**

The majority of the women (N = 18) had completed primary school education, and many (N = 16) had gone on to attend some secondary schooling. Most of them (N = 14) did not have a Junior Certificate (Standard 8). Two had matriculated.

**TABLE 4: LEVEL OF EDUCATION**

Level of education	Frequency
Primary schooling only	5
Std 6-7	9
Std 8-9	5
Matric	2

**Occupational status, job training and financial security**

Although most of the women (N=14) were employed, none of them had formal or institutional training (e.g. degree, diploma or certificate qualifications). Those who had any training at all tended to have received on-the-job training for the work that they were currently doing. Most of the women were employed in production work of some sort (N=7); a few were receptionists, assistants or domestic workers.

**TABLE 5: JOB TRAINING AND OCCUPATION**

Job training	Frequency
Formal/institutional	-
Adult education certificate	1
On-the-job/in-house training	11
None	9
Type of occupation	Frequency
Production (clothing, leather, food)	7
Receptionist	2
Sales assistant	2
Domestic work	3
None	7

The majority (N=9) of the women were employed full time. As many as a third (N=7) were not employed and had no independent means of support. Less than a third (N=6) of the women considered that they earned enough to support themselves. Apart from their own earnings, other sources of income included maintenance grants/child support payments (mentioned by five women).

**TABLE 6: OCCUPATIONAL STATUS**

Occupational status	Frequency
Full-time employed	9
Part-time employed	2
Self-employed	1
Casually employed	2
Unemployed	7

**TABLE 7: DO YOU EARN ENOUGH TO SUPPORT YOURSELF?**

Enough income	Frequency
Yes	6
No	8
Source of income	Frequency
Maintenance	5
Own earnings	14

Women who are in on-going battering relationships may find it exceedingly difficult to maintain long-term employment. However, many of the shelter women said that having a job had helped to keep them 'sane'. Paid work may be an important source of affirmation and self-esteem in contrast to their home situation.

### **Children**

All the women had children. The number of children they each had ranged from one to seven. Most women (N = 16) had up to three children. The age of the children ranged from three weeks to 32 years old. Apart from one woman whose only child was in care during the week, all the other women had at least one child living with them.



**TABLE 8: NUMBER OF CHILDREN**

No. of children	Frequency
1	4
2	6
3	6
4	1
5	3
6	-
7	1

**Household size and composition**

None of the women was living alone at the time they were interviewed. The size of the households of the women ranged from two to eight people. While some of the women (N=8) lived only with their children and grandchildren, the majority (N=13) were living in households that included other adult relatives or friends.

**TABLE 9: HOUSEHOLD SIZE**

Size of household	Frequency
1	-
2	1
3	5
4	3
5	3
6	3
7	2
8	2
Unknown	2

**Marriage**

Only one of the women was never married to the batterer. All the others had been married by civil or customary law, or by religious rites. At the time they were interviewed, most of the women had divorced their husbands (N=13) and three had resumed their marriages. Three of the divorcees were still living in the same house as their ex-husbands without resuming their previous relationships. Of the others, seven had entered new relationships since leaving the shelter and one of them had married again.

### The history of the relationship with the batterer

Most of the women had begun 'going out with' the batterer in their late teens. The men were slightly older than they were, but were in a similar age group. The majority of the women married in their mid-twenties, more than half (N = 14) married when they were between 21 and 24 years old. Most of the women were married by civil law (N = 17). A few women were married only by customary law or Muslim rites.

TABLE 10: AGE AT COURTING

Age when 'courting' began	She	He
Under 16 years	1	1
16-21	13	11
22-27	7	6
28-33	-	3

TABLE 11: AGE WHEN MARRIED AND TYPE OF MARRIAGE

Her age when married	Frequency
17 years	1
18	1
21	4
22	2
23	2
24	4
25	1
26	1
27	2
30	2
N/a	1
Type of marriage	Frequency
Civil law	17
Customary law	1
Religious rites	3*
Unknown	1
N/a	1

\*Two by civil law

Most of the women (N = 15) said that they had wanted to get married. The choice of not getting married seldom presents itself to young women because the ideology of marriage is so pervasive in our society.

**TABLE 12: DID SHE WANT TO GET MARRIED?**

Did she want to get married	Frequency
Yes	15
No	3
Unknown	2
N/a	1

The reasons the women gave for getting married include three broad themes: They said they were in love with the man (N=8), they felt they needed to marry and to live with a man (N=3) and they wanted or already had children (N=7).

I thought I was in love. I thought no one else would marry me [1989c].

I loved him with a passion [1989a].

I was in love, but one is stupid at that age [1986d].

For security [1988c].

Ek wil nie getrou het nie, my ouers wou nie hê ons moet nog so saamlewe nie [1987a].

(I did not want to get married, my parents did not want us to go on living together.)

When I got pregnant then I thought I had to get married [1989d].

Sal vir my beter wees as ek met hom trou [1990d].

(It would be better for me if I married him.)

I got married because I had a child and maybe I loved him at that time [1988a].

If I've had one man, I can't look at another one and I have to stay with him [1990c].

Most of the women had been in long-term relationships and the majority (N=17) had been married for over nine years.

**TABLE 13: LENGTH OF TIME TOGETHER**

Length of time together	Frequency
Less than 5 years	1
5-9	3
10-14	6
15-19	7
20-24	1
More than 25	3

In their experience, once the violence had begun, it continued. Battering was not a single event for the women. When asked to explain why the battering occurred, many of the women linked the violence to the man's jealousy, to his drinking or taking drugs, to her working/household duties and to her relationship with the children. Some of the women (N=5) cited alcohol and drugs as reasons for his behaviour: When drunk or on drugs he became a different person, not himself. In the beginning few of the women spoke out about what was happening to them.

Daai tyd is jy so, jy wil nie luister vir ander nie [1987a].

(At that time you behave like that, you don't want to listen to others.)

In die eerste tyd het ek met geeneen gepraat nie. Ek sê maar dit gaan goed [1986b].

(In the beginning I talked to no one. I just said it went well.)

I was very scared. I couldn't speak to people. It was always done behind closed doors [1987d].

I used to lock myself away and hide it. I always tell my family it was this or that. I always had an excuse [1986a].

I say: I still love you, please if I do something wrong tell me straight. You are a man and I am your wife, if I do something wrong you musn't shout at me outside. You must take me inside to the room, you can talk to me ... [1990c].

I was very young, I kept it to myself, I had nowhere to go. I wasn't working because of the baby so I stayed with him because I had nowhere to go, and at that time I loved him and I hoped it would stop [1986d].

I always kept it for myself. The reason I didn't do anything was because I was pregnant and I gave birth to a little girl. And he was - how can I say - he was my support [1988c].

The shelter women's interpretation of the causes of the violence was linked to their response to it happening to them. The women commonly experienced guilt and shame. An initial tolerance of the batterer's behaviour was linked to feelings of self-blame and a desire to keep up pretences about their marriages. Blaming themselves for what was happening allowed the batterers to tell the women that they deserved to be beaten and for the women to feel that the batterers had reason to punish them. Such feelings were often compounded by the women's unsuccessful attempts to leave home, and by a sense of futility.

## CHAPTER 4

### LEAVING HOME

Little acknowledgement is given to the tremendous effort and courage required to leave the batterer. Leaving necessitates that a woman restructures all her material, physical and social relations. It is assumed that battered women have numerous avenues of support; however, scant appreciation is shown for the variety of problems and barriers that women have in accessing any support. Although there could be numerous points of support at any one time, it is rarely supplied in an ongoing current. In this chapter we will explore the obstacles to leaving home, examining both informal and formal social networks used by the women.

#### **Social networks**

Social networks may be described as strands of communication and webs of relationships that link women directly and indirectly to a social environment which may include potential sources of help and support. Networking is a dynamic pattern of interactive processes which may at various times have points of help or hindrance. However, these processes occur within a patriarchal system that gives preference to men's definitions and interpretations of situations, prescribing specific gendered behaviours for women and men. Social networks are broader than social support systems: With regard to battering, social networks on the one hand may offer potential support, but on the other hand may hinder or even become barriers to change.

A woman's partner is supposed to be the most 'natural' source of her support, yet in cases of battering he becomes the source of danger. The most radical shift in perception that must occur is the realisation that her most intimate and supposedly trustworthy relationship has become a dangerous threat. Women need to come to terms with this paradox before they can turn to substitute sources of support. These include formal and informal support systems.

#### **Informal support systems**

The barriers that exist to receiving help from informal sources are created by the privatisation of 'the family' and others' reluctance to 'interfere'. The battering is seldom witnessed or acknowledged by other adults, making it difficult for the woman to get others to appreciate the seriousness of her situation. In addition, ideologies of marriage permeate people's responses,

resulting in a failure to challenge the presumption that battering is unquestionable. Women themselves have internalised these beliefs and they may hold themselves responsible for what happens in the relationship or continue to hope that the batterer may change.

I always thought there was a better person behind it, but eventually I was wrong [1987b].

I had one friend at the time. She gave me strength to leave everything behind me. She said: 'Go and never, never ever come back.' She made me realise that what is happening is no good. I think I always thought ... in a way I almost started believing that this is going to be my life, it's going to be unhappiness and self-sacrificing and that what I want isn't going to be important. I think all my energies were just utilised to this - trying to change this other person and in the process I just forgot all about myself and what I was going through [1987c].

His sister an' them, they all knew ... What hurt me so, is that they saw all these things happening to me, but they always looked for an excuse for him. Like there was something that I wasn't doing right, and I actually believed there was something I wasn't doing, because I tried even harder to please him. But it wasn't me, I never realised until 25 years later. And then I thought, 'No! I've had it' [1989c].

#### (a) Family

Most of the women in this study turned to their extended family first for help. However, this help was circumscribed by the extended family's own social and emotional ties with the woman and the batterer. Different constraints operate at various times. For example, the family's limited resources of money, food and space may be compounded by the woman's personal constraints. Her extended family's tolerance for the tension and potential danger to their own home is limited. Friends also often weigh up the option of wanting to help her with having their own lives interrupted.

My family knew all the time what happened, and they said they could do nothing because I'm a married woman. They always told me: 'We help you now, and tomorrow you go back to your husband.' There was always this problem - that was me. They help me today and for two or three days I stay with them, then he comes and two, three talks with me - there I go [1990a].

Ek het baie weggehardloop. In die nag sit ons somer in die busstop-hokkies of ons het in mense se 'yards' geslaap. Op die ou end was ek na my ma toe, maar dan bring hulle my huis toe [1987a].

(I ran away a lot. At night we would just sit in the bus shelters or we slept in people's yards. In the end, I went to my mother, but they just brought me home.)

You know he came there almost every night to my auntie's place. Coming and going on, and I just make my heart hard I'm not going back to him again. My auntie covered up for me. The first time

someone really covered up for me, and told him if he comes a step nearer to her gate, she will call the police. He had the guts to tell her if she don't let me go, he will go to get the police so that I must come back to him because I'm still his wife. And he depended on them, that I'm still his wife and that I must come out of there. So my auntie said to me, if he goes to the police, they must maar let me go because why, I'm still his wife [1990a].

The woman's extended family may become largely an ineffectual support system once the batterer gets familiar with the woman's escape route and, since he knows where she is, it may no longer be a safe place for her. He may become more daring as he loses respect for her family and their property and his invasion may become more dangerous for them. After she has used her family as a refuge a couple of times, her own guilt or shame for inconveniencing or endangering them may preclude her from seeking safety with them again.

In African customary law, where marriage is seen as a social and economic alliance between families rather than the union of two individuals, wives are the links between the two families. Consequently when problems arise, they are of concern to both sides. It is imperative that a battered woman utilises the formally established procedures if she wants any support from her kin. In these cases, families would fall under 'formal' structures of support.

You know all my family and also his family knows it - I don't want to go to his family, but I know I'm married, I must go to his family to tell them [1990c].

I reported it to my family. They warned him. He said he won't do it again, but of course he carried on. If he won't listen there's nothing they can do. I think they thought maybe I like it [1990e].

#### **(b) Friends and acquaintances**

Batterers frequently isolate women from their peer groups, often leaving them with few friends to turn to for help.

Men take advantage that women keep it private [1990e].

Because of the stigma attached to battering, women may feel ashamed to confide in friends. A fear of gossip makes them keep the battering secret from neighbours and colleagues, thus cutting themselves off from potential sources of support - as well as entrenching the stigma of battering.

I spoke to people, then they would just say 'go to the police'. But sometimes, you also can't talk to people you see, because they sort of ... you know, discuss your things. It is ... how can I say ... it is like a story for them. So they don't sort of help, they just discuss your affairs [1988c].

Even friends who are prepared to offer support may be discouraged by the man's threats and his violence.

A friend came with me to talk with him. He was so rude. He said 'no' he 'won't open the door' because 'we have no words to say'. Then she said: 'But you can't hit your wife like that every time, look her face is blue, her eye's blue. You can't have a person like that.' But when he opened the door, he put the dog after her as well [1989d].

You go to people for help, but then he comes, then they sort of give way. They start getting scared because he demands me out of their place. So it was hopeless me going to people [1988c].

### **(c) Employers**

Some employers of battered women who are fortunate enough to have paid work, lend a range of support: Taking and delivering messages; granting compassionate leave; providing time off to make arrangements; granting financial loans; facilitating referral to formal sources of support; providing safe conduct to and from work; calling the police if he is waiting for her at work. The women in this sample were deeply appreciative of these efforts.

My boss was great. At least I didn't have to worry about being fired too [1987b].

For many women, having a job is a prerequisite for leaving the batterer. Some employers, however, may add further strain to women's attempts at building a new life.

My lawyer phoned about the interdict, but my boss said: 'Friday's a very busy day for us.' So I can't go. So I never got a chance again to go. The lawyer actually gave my boss her phone number, but my boss never gave it to me. And that was the time I lost contact with her (the lawyer) [1990b].

### **Formal support systems**

Besides the fact that very few formal social agencies deal specifically with battering, battered women's isolation can keep them ignorant of available resources. It is frequently difficult for battered women to reach agencies because of a lack of time, money and transport. Moreover, certain social skills are needed to successfully negotiate the morass of procedures and bureaucracy in obtaining official help. Lack of self-confidence resulting from the abuse and, in many cases, years of isolation from the social world, serve to erode many women's ability to utilise these skills. Combined with a lack of familiarity with formal support systems, refusals, rebuffs and endless referrals may result in long delays before receiving help. Unsuccessful attempts at obtaining help may reinforce women's sense of helplessness and isolation,



thereby making future approaches to formal support systems less likely. As mediators of the bureaucracy, employers and counsellors can play an important role.

#### **(a) Religion**

Many battered women turn to their spiritual leaders or church for help, but are likely to be encouraged to remain in their marriages.

I went to the Imam for a divorce. They know my problems, and they said to me they are going to give it to me. ... but they said they must first contact him, because they must notify him, but they never notify him and they never contact him. And whenever I phone they always say to me I must just hold on [1990b].

They pray for me and my husband. If there's something wrong between me or my family, God must talk now. I say to that woman: 'I don't want to sleep with him.' Now that woman say I do wrong things, because it's my husband [1990c].

He even put the Father out ... The Father said he is scared to separate people. He is there to put us back again. He (the husband) swore and all of a sudden the hammer was on the table and the axe was also on the table and the letter from the social worker was also on the table. The Father just looked [1989d].

#### **(b) Welfare**

The South African welfare system makes little provision for helping women who want to make new lives for themselves and their children (Angless 1990). Social benefits are erratic and scarce and arduous to come by. Few specialised social welfare agencies exist to deal with battering in a comprehensive and cohesive manner. As a result, individual social workers are often left feeling helpless, and battered women are referred from one service to another, ultimately having to return home.

Ek sê vir hulle (social workers), dan sê hulle iets vir hom, dan moet ons maar weer saam huis toe - dan gaan dit eers begin [1986b].

(I told them (social workers), then they say something to him, then we go home together again - then it really starts.)

The majority of social workers are women and this limits their authority over violent men and, consequently, the extent of their ability to intervene.

Toe sê die dokter ek moet die social worker sien, ek moet explain hoekom's my liggaam so. ... Sy (social worker) sê sy weet nie wat gaan sy maak nie, want sy praat met hom, en sy praat met hom, en die praat help nie. Sy't haar bes probeer, al gekom tot by die huis, maar hy wil nie hoor nie [1990d].

(Then the doctor said I must see the social worker, I must explain why my body is like this. ... She (social worker) says she doesn't know

what to do, because she talks to him, and talking doesn't help. She's tried her best, even come to the house, but he doesn't want to listen.)

Few social workers are trained to deal with the specific problem of battering. Frequently battering is not the presenting problem (the woman does not name battering as the reason for her visit to the social worker), but is a complicating factor interwoven with other emotional and economic problems. Battered women are frequently referred to social workers by other professionals like doctors, ministers of religion and police officers.

Sometimes I'm bleeding a lot, I can't walk ... Now the doctor ask me why I got hurt. At that time, I'm scared to tell the story about me and my husband. Now always the doctor question me: Did my husband hit me or what? I say 'no' but I know he hit me. The last time, I did tell the doctor the truth. I say, 'Please doctor I'm scared of this man, he gonna hit me or he gonna kill me!' So the doctor say rather I must go to the social worker - I must go to explain to the social worker [1990c].

In spite of the problems within the welfare system, it is one of the most significant avenues for redressing the situation of battering. Despite social work's traditional emphasis on 'keeping the family together', for most of the women in this study it was contact with a social worker that led them to initiate the process of leaving the batterer.

Ek sou vir 'n ander vrou sê, gaan social worker toe, hulle sal vir jou help. Die social worker het vir my uit die vreeslewe weggeneem [1987a].

(I would tell another woman, go to the social workers, they will help you. The social worker took me away from a life of fear.)

The women in this study reported that social workers or counsellors helped them emotionally and facilitated their access to the bureaucracy. It was also the way in which most of the women heard about the shelter.

The thing that helped me the most was seeing the social worker who put me in touch with the shelter [1987b].

But without adequate social and economic resources for welfare provision, the crucial issues of lack of accommodation and finance cannot be addressed.

### **(c) Medical**

Battered women frequently require medical attention for their injuries. They may return numerous times to the same practitioner for attention without the battering ever being mentioned. With one exception, all the women in the sample had approached a medical practitioner for attention. Some were unable to admit to the battering or felt the doctor did not want to know about it.

Doctor wrote medical reports for the divorce case. I saw the same doctor each time, he never said anything or any advice. He'd just write it again on my card [1989b].

Doctors also take it as a private affair. They don't really like to ask you [1990a].

The extent and severity of injuries suffered by women at the hands of men who supposedly love them are often underestimated. Injuries suffered by the women included physical and mental damage: Treated for nerves - sleeping pills and tranquilisers [1990e]; tried to commit suicide - treatment on drugs and saw a psychologist [1988a]; fainted from shock - stabbed in the neck, referred to social worker [1986b]; had stitches four times - stabbed through neck, stabbed with broken bottle (bottle-neck), glass thrown [1987a]; stitches on forehead, stitches on scalp, fractured ankle [1986a]; swellings, broken eardrum, stitches and broken leg [1986d].

He had been beating me for two hours. He had locked all the doors and I smashed a window to get out. I told the doctor - he asked me what am I going to do about it, and I said 'nothing'. I was thinking 'Where am I going to go with my kids, where is there to go?' [1986d].

The children's doctor (at the hospital) laid a charge (of assault to the child). He went to court, but the lawyer (defence) said 'Oh well he was under the influence of drugs.' He got a R200 fine [1987b].

I was in hospital for two days with my head open, my whole head was open here. But nothing happened, so the case was a nothing [1988d].

I never told the real story to the doctor. The doctor belonged to the same organisation as my husband. The abuse was more mental [1987d].

He gave me this eye you know. He hit me with a panga in my face and my eye popped out and I was rushed to ... this mark here, and here, and here (she showed the scars). Hy't my hier geklap, lat my oog uitspring. (He hit me here, so that my eye popped out). I was rushed to hospital and, you know, I had an op in my eye. And, from that, I can't see; like 10% I can see. I'm semi-blind in my one eye. In my one eye, I can just see 10% ... and he bit off my finger some time ago, you know [1990a].

That was in that week that I left. He hit me on my head with a spanner in two places and on my arm - the nerves are still injured [1988d].

My face was completely deformed ... a whole lot of scratches, deep red scratches all over my face, my breasts and swelling - my eyes - if that's not injury then I don't know, and ribs and back [1987c].

My eerste baba het ek verloor. Dit was stillborn deur sy geslanery [1988b].

(I lost my first baby. It was stillborn because of his hitting.)

The doctor said 'He's going to damage you so badly, you'll end up in a mental institute.' That's what he (batterer) wanted. He used to try to make me look mad, like I'd put something down, then, when I go to look for it, it's gone. And I know for a fact it was there, and then he

says, 'You see, you're going mad.' I put money in my purse and I know for a fact it was there, then he puts it somewhere else and says, 'You're mad.' He wanted custody over the baby. I had to go for observation because he declared me mad [1986a].

**Battered women are often tranquillised to cope with the abusive situation.**

I was on Valium for my nerves, I was starting to be a nervous wreck. I was at Groote Schuur and also for physiotherapy for tension. I was on a smaller yellow tablet before, then they put me on the stronger one, the Valium. It was like a drug that used to calm me [1988c].

He hit me on my head with a concrete slab. It's still swollen and will never go away. And he broke my nose. Nothing came of that case either. This one is where he stabbed me in my hand, and he also stabbed me in the arm twice. And then there's this one. My arms are covered in scars (tied with barbed wire). If I ran away - he used to punish me. He used to punish me and the kids in a lot of ways. He even put a tin on my head and a tin on my daughter's head and then he would shoot at us like target practice. That's when I got an interdict. I told the lawyer everything he was doing to us, that's why I got the interdict, for safety, for life, for me and my kids, but they never even responded [1987b].

#### **(d) Police**

A man's home is usually seen as his territory which may not be trespassed. Married women are commonly regarded as their husband's property, so battering is viewed as a 'domestic affair' to be resolved privately or, alternatively, to be dealt with by the welfare system. Nearly all of the women (N = 19) had appealed to the police for help at some stage. The general refusal to acknowledge that battering is a crime manifested itself in a variety of unhelpful responses from the police. The police may tell a woman that their hands are tied if she is married, thus once women are divorced they may be more likely to receive police protection.

They can't interfere in married life so, after that, I never bothered because I knew I'd be wasting my time [1986d].

I often called them. They wouldn't even come, so then I acted as if I was someone else, and said there's a divorced woman here who's being hit. I knew otherwise they wouldn't come [1989b].

I never used to call the police because I was scared. But then I got wise, because then I thought to myself, 'I can't go through this violence any more'. But when I got to the police, they tell you straight it is domestic affairs, they can't help you. When you are married you can't do anything, but when you are divorced you can, like there is something you can do about it [1988c].

Even if the police do respond, it may take hours for them to arrive after a call has been made because battering is not considered to be a priority.

They come two to three hours later, I could've been dead with my kids. By then he's disappeared [1987b].

He was gone by the time that they came [1986a].

I was hiding under the car ... waiting for the police to come. I called them twice, they never came. I slept out that night, under the man's car [1990a].

Battering is one of the crimes where the police do not act readily in the interests of the victim.

And they don't come, they say it's a domestic problem. 'n Mens moet seker dood lê voor hulle kom [1990a].

(I suppose a person must be dead before they come.)

Die eerste keer het hy my gesteek in my nek, maar niks het daarvan gekom nie. Hulle sê dis 'n huisprobleem [1986b].

(The first time he stabbed me in my neck, but nothing came of it. They say it was a domestic problem.)

The police are supposed to prevent crimes from happening, but they rarely do this in cases of battering. They fail to act even though the perpetrator is known and can be apprehended.

Nooit niks het hulle gedoen nie. 'House problems' sê hulle. Of hulle tel hom net op vir die aand, dan's hy weer los die next oggend. Op die ou end het ek ophou vir hulle geroep [1987a].

(They never did anything. 'Domestic problems' they say. Or they take him into custody just for one night, and then he's free again the following morning. In the end, I stopped calling them.)

Hulle't hom weggevat. As hy terugkom is dit dieselfde [1986c].

(They took him away. When he comes back, it's just the same.)

Sometimes women assume that the police will side with their husbands because they are also men.

I called them so many times, they were really sick and tired of coming. But you know policemen, how they work, hand in hand [1988d].

Now the police say I must go to his family to talk with the family, and also my family. They can talk together [1990c].

The police are often frustrated because women withdraw charges, without appreciating that their inability to provide her with protection places her at increased risk of violence after laying a charge.

All they would do is just come, and you know, give him a warning. Or they take him if he's drunk and just lock him up for the night. But then he comes home and when he comes home, he is in that violent mood because I've locked him up, so now he's taking it out on me, you see [1988c].

I wanted to lay a charge, but they wouldn't let me because they said it was a 'domestic affair'. They took me home and he told them I was mad and that nothing had happened [1987d].

I thought it would make things worse [1990e].

Often the batterer will force the woman to withdraw the charges by actual battering or threats of violence or death threats.

They would give warnings. After they're gone he gets worse, and you must suffer [1988a].

The realisation that the police cannot or will not protect her, may force the woman to re-appraise the situation and withdraw the charges.

I would make a case, but sometimes I would feel sorry and withdraw it, or his mother would bail him out. He just gets a warning or a fine [1987b].

Eenkeer het hy die vensters gebreek en so, toe sê die polisie dat hy's die eienaar van die huis so hulle kan niks maak nie. Ek kan nie 'n saak maak teen die eienaar [1986c].

(Once he broke the windows and so on, then the police said he's the owner of the house, so they can't do anything. I can't make a case against the owner.)

Baie keer dan drop ek dit weer want wie gaan dan werk vir die kinders? Daai tyd ek het altyd gedink aan my kinders [1987a].

(Often, then I drop it because who will work for the kids? At that time I was always thinking of my children.)

Legal punishment for the batterer may have negative consequences for a woman who is emotionally or financially dependent on him. For example fines may need to be paid out of the joint household budget, often leaving her and the children short of money. Finances are also a common source of dispute and a frequent excuse for battering.

Battered women need social recognition that what is happening to them is wrong. They need the police, as representatives of the legal system, to condemn the batterer's actions.

#### **(e) Legal system**

Making use of the few legal avenues that do exist for battered women is often an intimidating, expensive and time-consuming exercise. Two thirds of the women (N = 14) appealed to the legal system for help. Some of the women reported waiting months for divorces to come through and experienced inefficiency in the administering of their divorces, no doubt complicated by their forced and frequent changes of residence. Legal procedures are often not explained to women, making them vulnerable to unnecessary delays in the implementation of the law.

Because battering is not treated as a crime, legal remedies are largely ineffectual. Many batterers soon learn that peace orders and interdicts are token measures, which in the long term do not actually prevent them from

battering further. Before women can truly be said to enjoy full and equal protection under the law, the legal system has to condemn battering in theory and in practice.

Battered women confront a maze of problems in their attempts to leave violent relationships. Dominant attitudes about relationships between women and men, together with the lack of provision of social and economic resources to help women, render protective systems largely ineffectual. The severe housing crisis compounded by economic deprivation seriously affects the extent of support that sympathetic family and friends might be able to lend, and forces many women without independent financial resources to remain in abusive relationships.

Although the primary aim in reporting the battering is for the battering to stop, battered women cannot rely on the protection that citizens are led to expect from the police and the legal system.

Lack of co-ordination between services and the complexity of the problem of battering, which calls into question the very fabric of patriarchal social relations, further inhibit the quality of social networks. In effect, a batterer can succeed in holding the whole social system to ransom.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE SHELTER: MAKING A LIFE FOR MYSELF

The concept of shelters for battered women originated in England in 1972. Since then thousands of shelters have been established throughout Western Europe and North America, resulting in the emergence of an active Battered Women's Movement. This movement which evolved out of the Women's Liberation Movement has served to break the long socially-induced silence surrounding battering (Nicarthy 1989; Schechter 1982). South African shelters have also been established as part of the initiatives of feminist organisations. The first South African shelter for battered women and their children was opened in Johannesburg in 1981 by People Opposing Women Abuse, followed by Rape Crisis Cape Town in 1986. Shelters provide a variety of activities and resources including individual counselling, group work, educational programmes such as assertiveness training and parenting skills.

In exposing the problem of violence against women, the establishment of shelters needs to be seen not as an end in itself, but as a strategy towards the larger goal of ending violence against women (Schechter 1982). It is an indictment of our society that battered women need to lock themselves away to ensure their safety. In the light of this it could be argued that shelters perpetuate the practice of problematising the women. While recognising the need for safe places given the social context, feminist shelters consciously attempt to redress the power relationships between the helper and the helped. For instance shelter women are considered to be responsible residents, not clients or patients. This chapter will explore the impact of the shelter experience on women and their children. It will also detail the problems they face in their transition to a new life.

#### Shelters

Shelters often provide the first viable option in a long escape route from violent relationships.

You know it's very hard to make a decision M, it's very hard. But once you've done it, ... if you make one move, then it goes easily from there on [1990a].

No one had helped before. What I wanted was someone who would let me get away - who could offer me another place [1989b].

I always wanted to leave but didn't know where to go or what will happen to my kids ... so if there was a shelter then, I would have left long ago [1986d].



It is significant that in the case of battering it is the victims who have to disrupt their lives and leave their homes and hard-earned material possessions, while the batterer may remain undisturbed. The batterer's influence over the victim usually extends throughout their shared social environment; the shelter thus provides a unique space into which he cannot impinge.

Just not to see him, just to be away and just not to see him. If I'd stayed with my mommy or my auntie, I'd still see him up and down in the street. Then I think I'd rather go home again [1986a].

Due to the widely held perception that women belong to their husbands, the move to the shelter is often dangerous and terrifying, requiring secret planning.

I just took some clothing and got out of the house that belonged to me. I had to, you know, dodge. I was so scared. There was people with me that covered me. I was so scared he was riding around and he's going to catch me. I had to jump from one taxi and hide around the bus stop and then jump in quickly to another taxi until I came to the Rape Crisis office. I was very scared [1988c].

I started getting my things together, bit by bit unnoticeably. I paid my debts to the neighbours in the street and paid the rent and lights ... On the day, the social worker was waiting down the street. We just grabbed our things and drove off like in a movie. But deep down, I felt very sore to leave all the things I had struggled so hard for, and to know I won't see any of it again. He sold every single thing in that house, and it was all mine. When I came back, the house was empty - not even a curtain or a cup, not a chair to sit on. What a mess, nothing was left [1987b].

For some women, hearing about the shelter kindled an as yet unformulated desire to leave. A specific incident or threat could act as the last straw - precipitating her departure. But this need not be the case as some women in this study left because they realised that the batterer might kill them.

And this night, it was my daughter's birthday and I was baking a cake. And he came to me and we had a fight, and he beat me up that night, you know, he beat me up really. And while I was lying there he came with a bucket of water and threw it in my face and said: 'Wake up, you rubbish' ... I crawled out of the house and I ran away. I went to the police station and they said they could do nothing. And I spent two nights by a friend of mine and then I met this girl who told me about Rape Crisis. She said I must go to 'Coloured Affairs' and I went [1987a].

He hit me in my face once that my nose started bleeding, but he was always very very careful not to hit me where people could see the bruises. I must admit he was thorough ... injured my collar-bone, smashed my mouth up, broke a couple of ribs, you know. It was that

particular case that actually got me out of where I was and into the shelter. It was the ribs [1989a].

Die man van my het my belowe, 'Vanaand gaan jy net sien!' Hy het my heelpad geskel en gekoggel ... toe't ek gedink, 'Oe, dis Vrydag' ... en ek't gedink, 'Voor dit nog gebeur moet ek net wegkom' [1990d].

(This man of mine promised me 'Tonight you will see!' He mocked me and insulted me the whole way ... then I thought, 'Ooh, it's Friday ...' and I thought, 'Before it happens I must just get away.')

I was on the verge of snapping - I would have committed a murder, and I tell you, there would have been no criminal [1987b].

Leaving for the shelter is a step into the unknown, and women can usually take only those things that they can carry with them. Financial and practical affairs like paying accounts and organising school transfers need to be arranged without arousing suspicion.

### Shelter experience

Going to the shelter is usually the first time that the women are not living with family. The women reported that the safe space provided by the shelter enabled them to think about their lives and to begin to make their own decisions. Many said it was the first time in their lives that they had felt independent.

I'd always thought about the children, not myself. I was putting myself first for the first time. There was time to think about myself, and to do what's best for you and what you want to do. I never knew before [1987d].

We women, we are so used to - we think of the house, we think of a husband, we think of the children. Those are the three things that we think of, and we build everything around that. And there is one thing that we forget about and that is ourselves [1988a].

Although the shelter is a large and noisy environment, the women in the study perceived it as extremely peaceful, thus contrasting with the severe tension under which they had been living. Living together exclusively with other women and children fundamentally influenced the way they saw themselves and understood the issue of battering. Significant emotional healing occurred through sharing their experiences.

Daar's nie 'n man nie, daar's nie 'n ge-raas nie, daar's nie 'n ge-blaas nie [1990a].

(There's not a man, there's no rowing, there's no blowing.)

... in die aande onder dik komberse lekker warm geslaap. Mense praat met jou, daar's nie een met jou kwaad nie. Daar's altyd een wat vir jou lag en met jou praat. Daar's nie een wat onbeskof is of katterig is en jou afjak nie. Hulle praat met jou ordentelik. Jy staan op en daar's nie 'n geraas of 'n gevloek of niks nie [1990d].

( ... at night slept warmly under thick blankets. People talk to you, there's no one cross with you. There's always someone laughing at you or talking to you. They talk properly to you. You get up and there's not fighting or cursing or nothing.)

My nag se rus het terugekom. My lewe was gerus. Ek was beskerm. Ek voel ek kom weer terug na mens toe [1986c].

(My night's rest returned. My life was peaceful. I was safe. I felt I became human again.)

I never thought I could talk about deep things that really hurt me, but slowly I thought: 'Well this is my life story' and I told it to them and they accepted me. I used to think I was the only one. I never knew there were others with worse problems than mine [1987b].

I loved being there - being with other women. It was empowering to speak up, to share with other women who'd gone through the same things [1987d].

Al die vrouens saam. Ons sit en gesels oor onself. Die hoekom en die waarom van daar wees - ons het 'n huis, maar kyk waar moet ons nou wees [1986c].

(All the women together. We sit and talk about ourselves. The how and why of being there - we have houses, but look where we are.)

It made me realise, most of all, that a woman, never mind what she does, she doesn't have to be beaten up, which is something I never knew before. Also, that I have got rights, just like any other human being, which, like, I thought, you know, that I'm the woman - I must be the least. I was always like the servant, slave, the underdog. It made me realise I'm my own person [1989c].

## **Children**

The deeply entrenched belief that children need both their parents keeps many women trapped in violent relationships. Children also limit their mother's mobility and access to alternative accommodation. However, children can be affected seriously by living in a family where battering occurs. Practically all the women in this study (N=20) believed that the battering had adversely affected their children. The majority (N=15) also feared that it would have a negative impact on their children's futures.

Although not all children are necessarily assaulted themselves, they are often the targets of emotional abuse. Their loyalties are split between their parents; witnessing the violence towards their mother and living with constant tension and upheaval are likely to have serious emotional consequences (Kaplan, Mfobo & Shrock 1992).

She was one month old when he picked her up by her feet and hit her against the wall, and he was six years old when he had his leg broken in two places from his father kicking him [1987b].

Sometimes before he gonna hit me, then he take M and he choke him in front of me. Then I say, 'Please, please don't do like so, it's your child' [1990c].

You know, they always say (if you leave him) that it's the children who suffer, but I don't believe that. Because if you can see my children's schoolwork from that time and now, it's a big improvement. Even if you suffer financially it's better than having someone who's fighting and swearing all the time. At least you've got peace of mind. You are relaxed, the whole family is relaxed. You don't have tears the whole weekend [1988a].

While many children might miss their father, the safety of the shelter allows them to experience a sense of 'space and freedom - the kind of place where noises are legal'. Violence in a family often precludes children from having normal friendships, an important opportunity for growth offered by the shelter. Through affirming their personal identity as well as their identity as mother, the shelter enables women to relate to their children in a new way.

I had come from being married, I couldn't really make friends because as soon as my husband decided there's something he didn't like in this person, he forced me to stop being friends with them ... so I actually in three months - I made more friends than what I made in four years you know, and the relationships were close [1989a].

Ek het geleer jy kan lewe sonder 'n man. Dit het my en my kinders baie, baie goed gedoen ... vry van vrees - die kinders was vry. Ons kan peace sit, ons kan peace lê [1987a].

(I learnt that you can live without a man. It did me and my kids a world of good ... free of fear - the children were free. We can sit in peace, we can sleep in peace.)

... when I came there I didn't think nothing of myself, I thought I couldn't survive without my husband. Realising that a man isn't everything, you can do without a man, built up my self-esteem. The way they counselled the children too, and they must also think and do things for themselves - Mommy isn't there for everything [1988a].

Being with my children on my own was good ... space to discuss with them the past [1987d].

Although some women may temporarily leave the batterer many times during their relationship, their perception of what is possible and a lack of viable options often force them to return. It seems that shelters, by providing women with a new perception of themselves, may allow the women to initiate the final break. Even if they do return to their homes after the shelter, the relationship with the batterer will most probably have changed.

### **Leaving the shelter**

The Rape Crisis shelter policy is a three-month stay, during which time women are expected to make serious decisions about the status of their relationship.

They often have to organise many practical issues like divorces, jobs, finding accommodation and children's schools. While advice and support are offered in the shelter, women are encouraged to manage their own affairs, although some women leave without matters being concluded.

My husband said that, 'Hulle het jou geleer om te skei' ... (they taught you to get divorced) but they don't tell you to divorce your husband, they don't, they never do. You've got to make up your own mind, what you want to do, it's totally up to you. You can stand on your own two feet, if you want to [1990a].

Leaving the shelter is fraught with ambivalence for many women. There is loss and hope, and fear about stepping back into the world.

And when the time came to leave, oh, I was so sad. I thought, 'This is now back to square one' [1990a].

I worried, 'Will I survive, will I really make it on my own, and will I have the strength to do it?' [1987b].

I think I didn't feel too bad because I had a job and money in my pocket. I also felt stronger in terms of my future relationship with my child's father ... I knew I could never go back to him - I dare not - never did [1987a].

## Problems

The shelter is unfortunately only a temporary respite where women can gather strength before facing life's problems again. These include problems in relation to the batterer, financial problems, a shortage of accommodation and employment, and their own and their children's emotional readjustment.

For many women the shelter symbolises a final strategy in their attempts to 'change him'. Often women who went back to the batterer expected him to have changed (N = 12), and although things might have improved for a while, he commonly reverted to violence. Five of the women had sought refuge at the shelter more than once. In addition to their many other problems, these women had to contend with the loss of hope.

Dit het net vir 'n rukkie bedaar. Ek't gedink kom hy miskien reg sal ek die skei los, maar dit was nie so nie [1987a].

(For a while things calmed down. I thought perhaps if he comes right I'll leave the divorce, but it wasn't so.)

I thought it's really going to work, it's really going to work, but it did not work at all [1986a].

Other women returned home out of necessity, but with a secure knowledge that they themselves had grown stronger. The relationship with the batterer would therefore have to change, either leading to a final break or to an improved situation.

And I told him, I'm now the boss in this house. This house is my house and if you wanna take over here I'm gonna call the police - and I did so, because he started being ... being bossy, you know, because I let him stay on [1990a].

Daar was geen uitweg waar ek kan gaan nie. Ek dink, 'Hier gaan ek terug waar ek afgelos het - ek moet weer met die dronk man in die dronk huis' ... maar toe besluit ek om aparte kamers te hê ... Ek skep op vir hom maar ons eet nie saam nie, dis al wat ek doen [1986c].

(There was no way out, where I could go. I thought, 'Here I'm going back to where I left off - again I must be with this drunk man in this drunk house' ... but then I decided to have separate rooms ... I dish up for him, but we don't eat together, that's all that I do.)

... he would pretend that he was changed. Then I had to pay the rent and things, because the house is mos now in my name. He gave me half .... and I thought it's good he's here to help me with the rent, and if he changes, maybe I'll marry him again. So I gave him a year to change, en nog nie eens 'n jaar nie, toe kom hy maar weer dieselfde uit (and before the year was out, he was back to his old self) [1990a].

He was waiting at home. He was victorious - he felt like he'd won 'cause I came home. I felt, 'Okay, you take the win', but I knew things had changed for me [1986d].

As ek die telefoon optel, is hy op sy nerves. Hy skel nog en so, maar hy't nie weer sy hand opgelig nie - want hy weet [1986c].

(When I pick up the telephone, he's on his nerves. He still scolds and so on, but he hasn't lifted his hand again - because he knows.)

I took the back room for the first few months. Then I decided to postpone the divorce for six months to see if things could work, and they have. He saw me become empowered. If he hit me again, I would leave immediately and let people know ... publicise it first. He knows - he knows that, yes [1987d].

Even though some women do not return to their own homes, their husbands may pursue them, or harass them wherever they are. One woman interviewed for this study fled from the batterer and was re-admitted to the Rape Crisis shelter some months later after a near fatal attack.

If a woman is not with another man, the batterer often assumes a right of access to her space. Ironically due to her vulnerability she may need the presence of a man to act as a barrier to intrusion from other men.

Hy sal miskien inkom met sy maats ... hy het die manier van 'hier is nie mans in die huis nie'. Dit is amper as hy voel hy kan in en uitstap - maak wat hy wil ... ek kan hom nie wegkry uit die huis uit nie. Hy's nie tevrede dat ek is geskei van hom nie. Vir hom is dit so: hy's die man hy kan maak wat hy wil [1988b].

(Perhaps he'll come in with his friends ... he's got this manner of 'there are no men in the house'. It's almost as if he feels he can come and go as he likes - do what he likes ... and I can't get him out of the house. He's not happy that I'm divorced from him. For him it's like this: he's the man and he can do what he likes.)

This area that we are living in now, there's a lot of gangsters ... they know already, me and my two girls are staying alone in that house ... I mean, I am a woman alone with my two children. There's times, you know, that I feel I want to take my husband back in the house so that they can see that there is a husband. But when I take him back, then I'm going to live those same things, to live that same life again, which I don't want to live any more. ... I mean we are still staying in fear - you are staying in fear of your husband, you are staying in fear of gangsters [1988c].

Winning the struggle to get one's own house is no guarantee of a safe life, since communities are not safe for women on their own.

### **Housing**

Throughout the relationship housing and accommodation are major issues. Living with relatives may contribute to stress in the relationship. Lack of accommodation is a major constraint on women who want to leave. On leaving the shelter, housing is also a major hurdle women have to face. Many of the women who are now in their own homes had to move several times before settling.

I struggled two years for a divorce and another two years to get a place for myself and my kids. ... I wanted to give up. I thought, 'Let him have the children, let him have the house, but I kept on fighting' [1986d].

As ons baklei, my kinders staan by die hekkie al because they're so used to us running. Toe ons terugkom (van die shelter) en hulle gaan by die hekkie staan toe sê ek, 'Kom in hierso! Die's my huis' [1990a]. (When we fought, my children would stand at the gate because they were so used to us running. When we returned (from the shelter) and they stood by the gate I said, 'Come inside! This is my house.')

(In the shelter) We used to pray, 'Please God, give us a house.' After I left the shelter I went back to him then I went to my mother's then I got a two-roomed flat then I got this place. ... We went through miserable times, but I thought, 'Julle kan nou maar huil (you can cry now), but I'm doing what is good for me.' And look, it's worth it. I feel like shaking my own hand, because everyone told me, 'You've got a house, go back to your house' ... My father said, 'Gaan terug na jou man toe, jy't 'n huis daar' (go back to your husband, you have a house there.) But I thought, 'Ek gaan nie!' ('I'm not going!') I'm going to make a life for myself - it worked [1988a].

### **Money**

For some women finding a place to stay may involve complicated arrangements which are difficult to make without money. Material independence is a prerequisite for a battered woman to be able to leave the

batterer permanently. The following woman's story illustrates the complexities that she faced:

I say, 'Please, if I can find a place, I don't mind staying in a hokkie (shack), so long as it is without my husband.' ... I got a plot to build a shack but I haven't got enough money to go there ... (One week later) I was not eating on the morning I went there. The man said it was already a week people (squatters) were staying on my plot. So they gave me another plot. I knew someone with materials (in X), but I can't go there because I'm scared of my husband. (Some days later) I thought I could move. I got a plot, I got materials. So I thought I must move that same day. I gave a man R35 to move my things. Now I'm happy I'm moving. I got my house (shack), my child can go to school and I'm working. So now I know I'm staying alone without a man [1990c].

Lack of money was cited as a great source of stress and worry among the women. Those with jobs were constantly scared of losing them or were trying to improve their position.

### **Children**

The serious shortage of child-care facilities adds to battered women's problems and affects their ability to find and keep work, their mobility, their opportunities for socialising and forming new friendships. Where available, child-care facilities are usually expensive. Whether the batterers leave them alone or not, the children make it almost impossible for women to cut all ties with them. The women in this study reported having problems getting them to pay maintenance for the children. Yet some fathers would spoil the children materially with presents, videos and outings in the car, things that many mothers are unable to afford. The mother is commonly left to pay the living expenses which are not usually noticed by children.

He sees them once a week now ... (when) the child can only see the best part of you and therefore starts thinking that you are actually so amazing, because he only sees you for one day. It is like a difference - mummy becomes the tyrant and imposes discipline, and daddy becomes like an escape for one day [1987a].

I can't give my kids what they need ... he takes the kids for weekends in lieu of maintenance, he doesn't want my life to go too well. ... I don't have much money now. I don't have the things he's got. He's got a car, he's got a video, they like those things [1986d].

For many children the fear they have of the batterer persists and they often do not want to see him. Apart from the six women who returned to share a house with the batterer, six of the other mothers said that their children did not want to see their father again.



The children have suffered a lot ... they are very scared of him. Still now, if they see him they run away - 'Lock the doors, lock the windows!' they shout. I told them I'll kill him if he should ever touch us [1987b].

Ons het mos gesê, 'Mammie moenie vir Pappie weer terugvat nie.' ('We told Mummy not to take Daddy back again.') And now that he's gone, they don't even talk about him [1990a].

The shelter experience starts a process of disengagement from a violent relationship and often acts as a point of rupture before the transition to a 'new' life begins. The significance of the shelter lies in breaking the silence and isolation of battered women. The strength and self-confidence, and the perspective that the women gain about battering empowers them to persevere in spite of enormous social, emotional and economic problems.

## CHAPTER 6

### SEEING WITH NEW GLASSES: POSSIBILITIES FOR GROWTH

Women who leave violent relationships behind them undergo a process of transformation on various levels such as perception, status and role. One of the most striking transitions noted in the study was how the women shifted their perceptions of themselves from victims to survivors. This was not stated explicitly, but may be inferred from their reference to battered women as 'they' - implying that they no longer consider themselves to be 'battered women'. In this chapter we explore the women's changing sense of self and their relationships with others. We gauge this by discussing their relationships with men and with children, and from their advice to other battered women.

... having been a battered victim is something gone, far away, past. It is something that will never, ever happen to me again. Nobody will ever lift their hands to me. I think my experience ... which is very, very nightmarish, was - I just drew a lot of strength out of it ... and now I'm equipped. I have a lot of strength to deal with males particularly [1987c].

The transition from victim to survivor occurs through a process of many realisations about themselves in relation to men, the batterer, their children, other women, social institutions and the rest of society. The shelter is important in offering space for reflection on complex and traumatic experiences. Leaving a marriage and making a life as a woman on her own is a choice of enormous significance for any wife, entailing a new orientation to relationships with her children and others.

He is still fighting with me. He seems to spend his life wanting to fight with me. I think it's got a lot to do with me having had the strength to finally leave him [1987c].

Wat moet ek met 'n man maak? My kinders is daar om my liefde te gee. Ek't al die tyd verlang om net met my kinders te sit, lat een vir my tee maak en so. Dit happen nou so [1987a].

(What must I do with a man? My children are there to give me love. All the time I longed just to sit with my kids, let one make tea for me and so on. Now it happens like that.)

#### Relationships

Entering the world as a single woman is not a straightforward choice, made lightly or without ambivalence. Women have to choose between a range of conflicting options, often facing loneliness and a new kind of stigma. Being a

divorced woman may carry social stigma, which can lead to isolation at a time when she may need social contact most.

... and he's crying and he's going to church now, and would love to have me back, and all these things, and I fell for the joke ... and there was no other alternative (gangsters) ... then when he started, I put my foot right down and I chased him out of the house and said to him, 'Well, I have got a place now, and you are not going to take over, I'm not that person any more. I am not going to let you take advantage of me, I am strong now.' So he asked me where did I learn to become so strong [1988c].

And deep down, then you are alone, the only thing that hurts a lot ... the loneliness comes at night-time when you sit and you wonder - and the good times come back into your mind, and thinking, 'What will I do? ... Will I get another husband again?' [1990a].

My friends that I had, it's almost as though they don't trust me because I'm divorced - hulle dink ek gaan hulle man afvat ... I hate being divorced, dis amper of jy 'n tjap op jou kop het (they think I'm going to steal their man ... I hate being divorced, it's almost as if you have a rubber stamp on your head.) I never say I'm divorced ... they can think what they like about the three children [1988a].

Once the women have changed, their relationship with the batterer also changes. But these changes are not necessarily understood or accepted by the batterer. Women learn to redefine their relationships with men with less idealism and clearer demands about shared decision making, having space, communication and their rights.

I learnt a lot ... maybe like living in the shelter, and particularly having met those women talking there, I've found out what I want. I've changed a lot, I think I'm stronger and more aware. I'm awake when it comes to men particularly [1987a].

He lives his life, and I live my life. Actually we have more respect for each other than we had that time [1988a].

I'm very careful. I look for a man to understand me and my work. But I won't live with a man. I want a lot of my own space - I won't let this happen again [1990c].

Some of the women also felt certain that they would never have another relationship with a man.

I've learnt to stand on my own two feet, I've learnt to be confident, and I can do without a man behind me ... I don't need a husband in my life, someone to depend on. I clung to this man, now I can see I can do it myself, I can! You can if you want to. I will never, never run again. Never! [1990a]

Nooit nie! Nie weer nie. Never again - ek het te swaar gehad [1987a]. (Never! Not again! Never again - I suffered too much.)

Men only show their true colours when they've got you [1989b].

## **My own house**

Battering exacts a high price from women's lives - financially, emotionally and physically. The acquisition of something for herself and her children after a long hard struggle is a significant element in a woman's determination to make her new life work.

I've seen things change over the years. I've learnt a lot. I planned it months before the time. I was just waiting for the right moment. I put an advert in the paper (for a room), I arranged everything for the kids: they understood better now they are older. But they had to change schools and travel. It was really tough, but then I got this house in MP through a woman at work. I was very lucky. But at first we didn't have a thing. We slept on the floor, it was cold. But now it's okay - I told them everything will work out [1986d].

I built my house up from scratch, it is all mine, this house is all mine. I'll only marry him (new relationship) if everything stays in my name. I've said to him, 'If you want to marry, it's to me, with nothing, because everything here belongs to my kids' [1987b].

...die's my huis! Ek kry hom uit die huis ... and the kids, you can see how they get - rejoice in their hearts, 'My ma het darem nou vir ons iets geleer. Sy kan op haar eie twee bene nou staan' [1990a].

(... this is my house! I got him out of the house ... and the kids, you can see how they get - rejoice in their hearts - 'My mother has finally taught us something. She can stand on her own two feet.')

## **Advice**

Asking the women what advice they would give their children about relationships tapped certain regrets they had about having entered relationships too soon. Many married because of pregnancy, at the expense of further education and a stronger self-identity. The women finally realised that once hit, battering doesn't stop. Although they remained in violent relationships for many years, in retrospect they would advise others to leave after the first incident of hitting.

Once a man hits you once, he's going to keep on doing it [1987a].

Build up a relationship with someone, but the first time he lays a finger on you, lock him up. It sounds harsh, but it is the advice I would actually give someone [1989a].

If you ever get involved with someone, open your eyes, don't be like Mummy, just grab a man. Look at Mummy! Look after your schoolwork, be someone, open your eyes, don't grab [1990b].

The women strongly expressed the need for their daughters to carefully assess a man - 'jy moet hom goed deurkyk' ('you must check him out properly'). They must beware of men who don't take 'no' for an answer, men who are jealous, possessive or show a lack of respect. From the women's

responses it was clear that they would speak openly and directly to their children about relationships and sex.

As soon as she has a serious relationship she must go on the pill. A baby messes up your entire life. Being a mother is a huge responsibility - a child messed up my life. I always wanted to be a designer and my whole life was messed up for a moment's pleasure. You are quite blinded by puppy love, jy is so verlief (you are so in love), you can't think further than your nose. And after it has happened, then you think this isn't the man you wanted to marry. Only when you are 25 or 26, then you are adult to know what you want. But what did I know about children? My parents never spoke to me about relationships. They knew I had a boyfriend but they never told me. I want my daughter to know what is safe and what is not [1988a].

Don't jump for the first guy you meet, don't fall for the charm. Stay away from someone with a temper, who won't let you have your own say [1987b].

Don't have just one boyfriend early, don't get pregnant and be dependent on a man. Speak up for yourself and be in on the decision making [1987d].

Make sure the guy is into your head, not your body ... make sure the person is going to allow you to be. I think a lot of problems in relationships develop when one person thinks that he or she can end up possessing another person. A lot of fighting is centred around jealousy [1987a].

Growing up with battering shatters children's idealistic perceptions of relationships. Children learn from their mother's experiences, and many children supported their mothers in the process of disengagement from their father. Some women expressed misgivings that their sons would model the batterer's violent behaviour. They hoped their sons would treat women decently, as they wished they had been treated.

(Daughter in Std 9) She'll never ever let a man beat her. At the first kick-off she'll be out or she'll do something about it [1986a].

Actually ... when I ask them of the future, what they want to be, (my eldest one) never includes that she wants to get married. Because men aren't any good and all that. Now I must work out my ways to tell them that all men aren't the same. 'Ek sal nooit trou nie want kyk hoe't Mammie gehardloop.' ('I will never get married, because look how Mummy had to run.') [1988a].

If you've got a wife ... don't abuse her. You wouldn't want to be abused. ... You've got to have someone to share with sometimes, someone you can talk to - sometimes you need a shoulder to cry on, not someone to beat you up [1990a].

On reflection women urge other battered women not to remain silent, to share their problems and to persevere in looking for help. Their own silence served to keep them ignorant of certain rights they actually had. It seems that many

women are trapped by the myth of their dependency on men and are surprised by their own strength at surviving. Realising that they have succeeded in leaving may provide an exhilarating boost of self-confidence.

Leave him! Ooh, I'll tell another woman to leave him. Maybe even like I used to feel, 'I won't exist, I can't, what am I gonna do?' That is the first thing you think of, 'How am I going to struggle financially, because my wages isn't enough.' But I can tell you, you can overcome ... and with my little money. But you can ask my children, we survived ... And you know, the way you feel, you can keep your head up high and you can face the world [1988a].

Battered women are too dependent on their husbands. They are too scared to stand up for their rights. They are too scared to talk. I mean they keep things too much for themselves, they can take a lot [1988c].

Battered women's biggest problem is often not having strength - inner strength - and having been conditioned by society to believe that they should be passive, sensitive and not fight back or change it [1987a].

Their biggest problems are lack of protection from others, financial dependence, lack of accommodation and their notions of love and relationships. Women don't think they can do it, but they can [1986a].

And my advice to another woman is, 'Move!' ... To break away, not all have the courage to do that ... they go back to the same environment and things get worse and worse and then you're paralysed and you can't do anything for yourself any more, then he leaves you, and he takes another woman, and there you sit [1990a].

Things are now happy ... I can walk freely and talk to people about myself. There is quite a difference, quite a lot of difference. Interviewer: 'What is the most different?' The glasses that I am wearing now [1989d].

Rape Crisis Cape Town shelter statistics for 1986-1988 show that women remained with batterers for an average of 10.3 years. Van Zyl's (1988) community study put the figure at 10.6 years.

## CHAPTER 7

### CONCLUSION: SOLUTIONS OFFERED

The variety of solutions offered by the shelter women indicates their multi-dimensional understanding of the issues that face battered women. In the light of the feminist methodology employed in the study, the women's solutions are especially valuable because they are based on their own experiences of their problems. All the women in the study had explored various avenues in their attempts at finding solutions. While a complex psychological process is implicit in extricating oneself from the battering relationship, this process is aided by certain practical resources.

On being asked what had helped them the most, the shelter was cited by all the women (N = 21). The shelter seems to have been a catalyst in enabling them to start breaking their pattern of violence. The shelter breaks the isolation of and silence surrounding battering and places the woman beyond the batterer's sphere of influence. Hence a shelter is a strategic place for battered women to initiate a process which has far-reaching consequences. The significance of the shelter must also be seen in the context of a severe shortage of housing in Cape Town which forces many shelter women to return to the batterer, albeit with changed attitudes. The police come under strong criticism from the shelter women for not protecting battered women and for not regarding battering as a serious crime. The women's attempts to protect themselves and initiate change were frequently frustrated through a tardy and inaccessible legal system. Recommendations are also made for services and community responses to battering.

#### Shelters

In stark contrast to Britain, Europe and Australia, in South Africa there are presently only three shelters catering specifically for battered women and their children. Funding for existing shelters as well as the need for more and better equipped shelters was strongly emphasised. The need for a shelter in each community was also expressed.

The shelter is the perfect thing if you can go. You think positive, get advice and improve your self-image. You can also have time to put money away [1988a].

It's better if shelters are not in the same community as where the woman lives - men will stop women attempting change within their community [1990e].

Shelters ... in different areas, then at least the battered women know they are at a safe place and the husband can't come near them [1990b].

Sometimes a battered woman might need to 'disappear' out of her own community, and access to shelters in other towns was considered important. This would imply a wide network of shelters as has been formed by the Battered Women's Movement in North America and Western Europe. On occasion battered women who have had to leave Cape Town have been transferred to the POWA shelter in Johannesburg and *vice versa*. Unfortunately at the moment there is no co-ordinated network of shelters for battered women in South Africa. Although there is a difference of opinion about the degree of secrecy and the location of shelters, there is a need for emergency shelter as well as interim shelter (such as that provided by the Rape Crisis shelter), and long-term shelter and halfway houses.

Given the severe housing shortage in Cape Town (South Africa), halfway houses where women could live together for longer periods were proposed.

... provide them with a block of flats ... the women can pay ... they could organise for security ... it would be wonderful, so when the one got problems, we are all there to stand for one another. When the one feels hurt, we are there to help or talk, to talk somebody some strength. That is what we did at the shelter - when the one feels a bit depressed or so, we would go and talk some ... confidence in her, trust again - then she will be back to a normal person again [1988c].

The women perceived the transition from a violent relationship to independence as a process in which their time in the shelter comprised one phase. The shelter highlighted the supportive network available amongst and between women. The transition from living in the shelter to living in their communities was often abrupt and difficult, with many of the women starting again from scratch and with little support. This transition could be softened by the provision of bridging services such as state-subsidised halfway houses. These would be an efficient way of addressing battered women and their children's safety, as well as temporarily relieving the accommodation crisis.

## **Housing**

Lack of housing is a fundamental issue in addressing woman battering. Where couples succeed in getting their own house it is usually in the man's name. If the woman is battered and wants to leave the man without losing her home, a lengthy bureaucratic or legal battle usually ensues. Not only does a shortage of housing compound stresses that may precipitate battering, but it often forces a woman back into a battering relationship.



Housing is such a problem, it makes women go back to the batterer [1987b].

Lots of women don't have proper houses, don't have jobs to buy food ... Their husbands don't care about the children who don't have food. If they don't have a house, where must they go? [1990b].

Overcrowded conditions in the homes of family and friends necessitate the provision of safe places in communities (for example, at day hospitals or in church halls) where battered women can seek refuge in emergencies. The shelter women also urged that housing, specifically council housing, should be more accessible to battered women and that they be given a choice of transfer to other areas away from the batterer.

The council should prioritise the allocation of housing for battered women whose lives may be endangered. When women succeed in getting a house, they may need to have initial financial support - apart from their average monthly income.

I had to find a full-time job ... I had to find a flat close to the crèche and I had to come up with double deposit and double the rent. I didn't have much furniture. It was a case of starting from scratch. I didn't have a stove, I didn't have a fridge. We ate out of basically tins for the first few weeks [1989a].

### **Law and the police**

A comprehensive policy about how to deal with 'domestic violence' needs to be developed as a matter of urgency. In places such as Britain, North America and Australasia special police units have been established to deal with violence against women. Policies now include compulsory arrest of the batterer by the police upon receiving a complaint. And in some countries, once women have made a complaint, the responsibility to pursue the matter rests with the legal system (i.e. she cannot drop charges).

The major complaint from the women was that woman battering was not treated as a crime in South Africa. Police had often refused to intervene or protect the women. The police were thought to be more likely to respond to a complaint of battering if the woman was unmarried.

Jy moet eenkeer skei, dan as hy met jou lol kan jy die polieste roep ... dat hy jou nie aanrand nie. Want as jy met hom getroud is, sê hulle vir jou, 'Jy's getroud, gaan saam met hom' [1990d].

(You must get divorced once, then if he worries you you can call the police ... so that he doesn't assault you. Because if you are married to him, they tell you, 'You're married, go with him.')

The South African police are often frustrated by the frequent withdrawal of charges against batterers. The withdrawal of these charges needs to be seen in context: In the absence of other protective measures battered women may find themselves in a position where laying a charge is the only way to get short-term intervention. The situation facing battered women may be improved by specific training for the police on how to deal with battering; readily available peace orders which are carried through by the police; cheaper interdicts which are processed more quickly and which are strictly enforced.

I recommend 100% that if they get a call (about battering), a policewoman must come, because inevitably the woman is so freaked out, that she doesn't want a policeman to touch her ... and inevitably men have this rather superior attitude towards women, like you're a woman and it is going to happen to you, and we're not really interested [1989a].

The legal aid system needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is better able to respond to the needs of abused women. Legal remedies are of little use unless they are practically accessible to women and have the full backing of the justice system and the police force.

For battered women, a divorce is more than a legal document - it alters the way in which they perceive themselves, as well as how society responds to them. Yet for many battered women, instituting divorce proceedings could be a life-threatening situation. In this study it resulted in several of the women (N = 5) having to return to the shelter.

Well I knew that once I'd got to the shelter, he would not be able to touch me. I also knew that being safe like that, I could proceed with the divorce without him threatening me [1989a].

However, divorce is not always a solution, since some of the batterers persisted in harassing their ex-wives.

#### **Advice and counselling services**

Any new welfare policy must seriously address the concerns of women and acknowledge the prevalence of violence against women. A greater number of specialised services which provide a comprehensive range of interventions for battered women need to be established. Existing benefits such as maintenance grants should be reviewed and, for example, the introduction of emergency relief and subsistence grants could be considered. The lack of child-care facilities affects all parents of young children and further severely restricts women's access to resources, services and employment.

The women felt that advice offices and crisis counselling centres for battered women are needed in each community, and some indicated a

preference for women counsellors. Having been in the shelter and having shared their experiences and having made their own decisions, the women suggested that women's support groups were important.

... group therapy, group discussions. Just women that are going through the same sort of thing getting together. I think that is the best thing to go to, to talk openly about their experiences [1987a].

It was apparent that the shelter women were initially not aware of available services, indicating that existing services should be more extensively advertised and better co-ordinated. Crisis intervention services are available, but would be far more effective if coupled with emergency shelters. Moreover, many services appear to be ill equipped to deal with cases of battering. Where help is available, helping agents need sensitivity to assess a woman's readiness to receive help (Angless 1990:94). By focusing on the battering incident, helping agents often lose sight of the rich and complex texture of a battered woman's life, and become frustrated with her.

Daai tyd wil jy nie hoor nie. Baie het my vertel, maar ek het nie toe belang gestel nie [1987a].

(That time you don't want to listen. Many told me, but then I wasn't interested.)

Services for battered women need to be specialised and workers or professionals should receive specific training to understand the complexity of woman battering.

### **Community responses and public education**

The women felt that battering wasn't taken seriously enough by the public, and that their own communities should take up the issue through local campaigns and initiatives. A prerequisite for creating awareness about woman battering is breaking the silence. This requires a shift in emphasis from problematising battered women, to problematising batterers - which would signify a readiness for communities to confront batterers about their behaviour and attitudes. For example, a suggestion was made that organisations should confront those of their members who batter, a suggestion which could also be applied in the workplace.

The general public needs to be fully informed about the extent and scope of violence against women although this creates discomfort. Battered women ought to be able to rely on their neighbours, friends, family, employers, professionals, religious leaders and the wider community. Wide publicity should be given to heighten general awareness of woman battering and more and detailed documentation is called for. From the women's advice to their

children it may be inferred that sex education and life-skills courses that challenge gender stereotypes and abusive relationships are necessary.

When asked what women could do for themselves and each other, most of the women replied that they need to share their experiences openly with other women. Hence the need for support groups and discussion forums in health settings and welfare agencies. They thought men should also know that women would tell, thereby breaking the silence that has protected men who batter and that has isolated women from each other. In retrospect the shelter women realised that keeping their problems to themselves had helped to keep them entrapped. Their experience in the shelter with other women illustrated the practical assistance and emotional support they could offer each other, thereby helping one another to escape battering relationships.

The women can win. We can win this war with more help and if we stick together [1987b].

## Summary recommendations

### 1. Shelters

- \* greater numbers
- \* accessible and decentralised
- \* better equipped
- \* emergency shelters
- \* co-ordination between shelters

### 2. Bridging services

- \* state-subsidised halfway houses
- \* grants
- \* child care

### 3. Advice and counselling services

- \* crisis counselling
- \* adequate training
- \* networking and co-ordination
- \* improved material benefits

### 4. Housing

- \* more
- \* priority allocations
- \* council transfers

### 5. Police

- \* women's protection units
- \* specialised training
- \* enforcement of law

### 6. Law

- \* effective peace orders
- \* powerful interdicts
- \* improved legal aid
- \* efficient divorce procedures

### 7. Employment

- \* adult education and training
- \* adequate child care
- \* wider employment opportunities for women
- \* access to credit

## Notes

1. Russell and Caputi (1990:35) define 'femicide' as 'Murders of women by men motivated by hatred, contempt, pleasure, or a sense of ownership of women'.
2. A 'shelter woman' refers to any woman who had been a resident in the Rape Crisis Shelter.
3. A 'battered woman' refers to any woman who has experienced physical or psychological abuse by her partner.
4. This project was undertaken in conjunction with a broader project entitled Promoting Personal Safety for Women (jointly co-ordinated by Moira Maconachie and Mikki van Zyl).
5. We acknowledge our privileged position as white South African feminists. In comparison with most women we are fortunate in having had access to schooling and further education, to foreign travel and feminist networks abroad and to the resources that made this research possible. Our collective work in the last few years has centred around working with and sharing knowledge and skills with women. Our commitment to collaborative work inspired us to surmount geographical and time constraints in doing this research.
6. This shelter was opened by POWA in 1981 and provided refuge for 178 women and children between 1984 and 1990 (Alderton & Weiner 1992:9). The POWA shelter was the first of its kind in South Africa. It is important to acknowledge that several other initiatives around the country now exist for approaching the issue of battering. However there is a lack of national co-ordination and there is still a shortage of services for women (Snyman 1992). Insufficient research exists to allow for an assessment of either the scope or adequacy of service provision in the different centres in South Africa.
7. In this case the batterer hit her in order to get the phone number of the interviewer whom he then warned not to interfere with 'his' family. During the phone call the woman escaped, and with the help of the interviewer was re-admitted to the shelter.
8. Some of the women drawn in the sample had left the Cape Town area. For example, one woman had left for Johannesburg and another had gone to the Eastern Cape. It is not uncommon for battered women to leave the area where they had been living in order to begin life again elsewhere, somewhere that the batterer would not be able to locate them. In American literature the movement of battered women from one state to another, using the network of women's shelters as safe houses, has been compared by Ferraro and Johnson (1985) to the underground railroad that was used by slaves escaping the South.

9. In quotations all emphases are those of the women themselves. In order not to lose the emphases and tone of the original speech, we have used bold letters.
10. Although the differences between South African women are marked, figures taken from an examination of the 1985 census reports (Maconachie 1989:84ff) show that adult women (over the age of 20) have little formal schooling beyond Standard 8 (Junior Certificate level). Less than one out of ten adult African women, one out of ten 'coloured' women, two out of ten Asian women and six out of ten adult white women have formal education beyond Standard 8. Furthermore, employed women were shown to be concentrated in three broad sectors of the economy: As service workers (largely domestic workers and cleaners), as clerical and sales workers (largely as general clerks, typists and sales assistants) and as professional workers (largely as teachers and nurses).

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Table 1 Current home context

Int/no.	Age	Marital status	Home lang.	Children: No.	Age	At home	Household: Size	Other members	Area
<b>1986</b>									
86/a	37	Divorced	Eng.	3	17(b) 16(g) 6(b)	Yes No Yes	3	-	Mitchell's Plain
86/b	36	Married	Afr.	4	18(b) 16(b) 10(b) 3(g)	Yes Yes Yes Yes	6	Husband	Manenberg
86/c	45	Divorced	Eng.	3	24(g) 19(b) 16(g)	Yes Yes Yes	6	Ex-husband grandchild	Mitchell's Plain
86/d	37	Divorced	Eng.	3	17(g) 12(b) 8(g)	Yes Yes Yes	4	-	Mitchell's Plain
<b>1987</b>									
87/a	47	Divorced	Afr.	7	29(g) 27(b) 21(g) 16(g) 15(b) 9(b) 6(b)	No Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes Yes	8	Grandchild	Bonteheuwel
87/b	33	Divorced	Afr.	2	10(b) 7(g)	Yes Yes	3	-	Bonteheuwel
87/c	29	Never married	Eng.	1	6(b)	No*	2	Housemate	Woodstock
87/d	38	Married	Eng.	3	16(b) 14(g) 7(g)	Yes Yes Yes	6	Husband stepson	Mitchell's Plain
<b>1988</b>									
88/a	31	Divorced	Eng. & Afr.	3	12(g) 9(b) 6(g)	Yes Yes Yes	4	-	Belhar
88/b	36	Divorced	Afr.	2	10(b) 3wk(b)	Yes Yes	4	Mother	Zonnebloem
88/c	31	Divorced	Eng. & Afr.	2	9(g) 2(g)	Yes Yes	3	-	Valhalla Park

88/d	54	Married (same man)	Eng. & Afr.	5	32(g) 24(g) 22(b) 16(g) 9(b)	No Yes Yes Yes Yes	7	Husband grandchild	Athlone
<b>1989</b>									
89/a	28	Divorced	Eng.	1	4(b)	Yes	3	Ex-husband	Tamboerskloof
89/b	31	Married (different man)	Afr.	3	14(b) 7(b)	Yes Yes	5	Husband	Lavender Hill
89/c	50	Divorced	Eng. & Afr.	5	29(g) 26(b) 24(g) 20(g) 11(b)	No Yes No Yes Yes	5	Ex-husband	Mitchell's Plain
89/d	39	Divorced	Afr.	1	19(g)	Yes	3	Grandchild	Woodstock
<b>1990</b>									
90/a	40	Divorced	Eng.	2	14(g) 10(g)	Yes Yes	5	2 children (adopted)	Steenberg
90/b	25	Married (Muslim)	Afr.	2	7(g) 4(b)	No*** Yes	-	Temporarily living with relatives	Hanover Park
90/c	34	Married	Xhosa	2	9(b) 3(g)	Yes Yes	-	Temporarily staying at N's house	Noordhoek
90/d	35	Married	Afr.	5	18(b) 15(b) 13(g) 9(b) 2(b)	No No No* No** Yes	8	Mother 3 brothers 2 sisters	Ottery
90/e	34	Divorced	Xhosa	1	11(b)	Yes	7	Mother 3 brothers sister-in-law	Guguletu

**Key:**

Int/no.	Interview number
Lang.	Language
Afr.	Afrikaans
Eng.	English
(g)	Girl
(b)	Boy
wk	Weeks
*	In care
**	In foster home
***	In care of relatives

**Table 2 Current educational and economic resources**

Int/no.	Educ.	Employed?	Type of paid work: Current	work: Previous	When	Training done?	Other income	Earn enough?
<b>1986</b>								
86/a	Std 9	Full time	Medical receptionist	Nursing home	1988	O.T.J.	-	Yes
86/b	Std 8	No	N/a	Machinist	1990	None	-	N/a
86/c	Std 4	Full time	Shop assistant	None	N/a	None	-	Yes
86/d	Std 8	Full time	Assistant design co-ordinator	Clerk	-	O.T.J.	-	No
<b>1987</b>								
87/a	Std 4	Casual	Domestic work	None	N/a	None	-	No
87/b	Std 6	Full time	Shop assistant	Learner cutter	1970s	None	M-grant	No
87/c	Matric	Self-employed	Knitting	Data capturing, waitressing, press corps	1988	O.T.J.	-	No
87/d	Std 6	No	N/a	Domestic work, examining shoes	1991	None	-	N/a
<b>1988</b>								
88/a	Std 6	Full time	Machinist	None	N/a	O.T.J.	C-support	Yes
88/b	Std 5	Casual	Sew leather goods	Same	1990	O.T.J.	-	No
88/c	Std 6	No	N/a	Machinist	1987	O.T.J.	M-grant	N/a
88/d	Std 5	No	N/a	Machinist	1964	O.T.J.	-	N/a
<b>1989</b>								
89/a	Matric	Full time	Receptionist (half day), agency for childminders (part time), home industry (baking)	Nursing, town planning, secretarial	1989	Computers (in house) dropped out of nursing	-	No
89/b	Std 7	No	N/a	Despatch, machinist	1989	None	-	N/a

89/c	Std 7	No	None	Paired of stockings	1972	O.T.J.	-	N/a
89/d	Std 7	Full time	Examiner in knitwear	N/a		O.T.J.	-	Yes
<b>1990</b>								
90/a	Std 8	Part time	Domestic work	Machinist	1982	O.T.J	M-grant C-support	Yes
90/b	Std 6	No	N/a	Shampooist	1990	None	-	N/a
90/c	Std 8	Part time	Domestic work	Same	1983	None	-	No
90/d	Sub A	Full time	Cut the heads off chickens	None	N/a	None	-	No
90/e	Std 7	Full time	Supervisor	Char, community work	1981	Communi- nity develop- ment course (A.E.C.)	-	Yes

**Key:**

O.T.J.	On the job
M-grant	Maintenance grant
C-support	Child support
A.E.C.	Adult education course
N/a	Not applicable

Table 3 Relationship development

Int/no.	Age began going out?		Years together	Married? Y/N	Date married	Type of marriage	Wanted to marry?
	She	He					
<b>1986</b>							
86/a	24	23	10	Yes	1980	C	Yes
86/b	16	17	18	Yes	1979	C/M	Yes
86/c	22	22	16	Yes	1970	C	Yes
86/d	18	21	15	Yes	1977	C	Yes
<b>1987</b>							
87/a	14	16	25	Yes	1974	C	No
87/b	16	15	15	Yes	1983	C	No
87/c	22	25	3	No	N/a	N/a	N/a
87/d	18	19	20	Yes	1975	C	Yes
<b>1988</b>							
88/a	16	19	8	Yes	1981	C	No
88/b	22	19	11	Yes	1977	C	Yes
88/c	16	17	13	Yes	1981	C	Yes
88/d	26	28	27	Yes	1964	C	Yes
<b>1989</b>							
89/a	18	24	7/8	Yes	1984	C	Yes
89/b	16	20	11	Yes	1977	C	-
89/c	17	17	36/7	Yes	1964	C/M	Yes
89/d	18	28	17	Yes	1973	C	Yes
<b>1990</b>							
90/a	22	23	16	Yes	1975	C	Yes
90/b	17	16	8	Yes	1984	M	-
90/c	17	33	12	Yes	1987	Cus	Yes
90/d	22	23	12	Yes	1983	C	Yes
90/e	21	21	16	Yes	1981	-	Yes

**Key:**  
 C Civil law  
 M Muslim rites  
 Cus Customary law

**Table 4 The batterer**

Int/no.	Ever employed?	Jobs held	Training done?	Was he different?	Children want to see him?
<b>1986</b>					
86/a	Yes	Mechanic	O.T.J.	Yes	-
86/b	Sometimes	Cleaner	None	Yes	No
86/c	Yes	Packer	None	No	N/a
86/d	Yes	Operator	None	Yes	Yes
<b>1987</b>					
87/a	Yes	Bakery, council, at sea	None	Yes	Yes
87/b	Sometimes	Variety	None	-	No
87/c	Sometimes	Freelance photographer	Photography	No	Yes
87/d	Yes	Painting, air conditioning operator	O.T.J.	Yes	N/a
<b>1988</b>					
88/a	Yes	Plumber	O.T.J.	Yes	Yes
88/b	Yes	Council, fish trawlers	None	No	Yes
88/c	Yes	Police, security, Safmarine	SAP, mechanic, welder	Yes	Yes
88/d	Yes	Police	SAP	Yes	Yes
<b>1989</b>					
89/a	Yes	Clerical work	B.A.	Yes	Yes
89/b	Yes	Labourer	None	Yes	Yes
89/c	Sometimes	Oil rig, ship-building, hosiery	None	Yes	No
89/d	Yes	Hotel waiter	None	No	No
<b>1990</b>					
90/a	Yes	Painter	Painting	No	-
90/b	Yes	Fitter	-	-	-
90/c	No	N/a	-	No	No
90/d	Yes	Construction	None	-	No
90/e	Yes	Petrol attendant	None	Yes	Yes



**Table 5 The battering**

Int/no.	Appeals:				Children: Affected?	Shelter:		New rela- tionship?	
	Police?	Law?	Medical?	Others?		Future?	Months?		Contact?
<b><u>1986</u></b>									
86/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	No
86/b	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Don't know	-	1	No	N/a
86/c	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2	Yes	Yes
86/d	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	No	No
<b><u>1987</u></b>									
87/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	(2x)	Yes	No
87/b	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	Yes	Yes
87/c	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	3	Yes	Yes
87/d	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	Yes	N/a
<b><u>1988</u></b>									
88/a	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	No	No
88/b	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	No	Yes
88/c	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	(2x)	Yes	No
88/d	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	2	No	N/a
<b><u>1989</u></b>									
89/a	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	Yes	No
89/b	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	(2x)	No	Yes
89/c	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	(3x)	Yes	N/a
89/d	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	4	No	No
<b><u>1990</u></b>									
90/a	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	6	Yes	-
90/b	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	-	4	No	No
90/c	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	12	Yes	Yes
90/d	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	3	Yes	No
90/e	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	(2x)	Yes	No

**Key:** (2x) In shelter twice  
(3x) In shelter three times

## **Battered women seeking solutions** ***Geslaande vroue soek oplossings***

### **INTRODUCTION**

In this study we want to find out what battered women can do about their situation. We also want to speak to you because you have been to a shelter. We are interested in knowing why you went there and what has happened to you since leaving.

Your name will not be written down or used in any way. Please remember that you don't have to answer any question if you don't want to. As we go along please feel free to ask me anything.

### ***INLEIDING***

*In hierdie studie probeer ons vasstel wat geslaande vroue kan doen omtrent hulle situasie. Ons wil ook met jou praat omdat jy alreeds in 'n shelter was. Ons stel belang in waarom jy soontoe gegaan het en wat gebeur het sedert jy weg is.*

*Jou naam sal nêrens neergeskryf word of op enige manier gebruik word nie. Onthou asseblief, jy hoef geen vraag te beantwoord as jy nie wil nie. Voel ook gerus om enige tyd gedurende die onderhoud iets te vra.*

**For office use only**

**Date:**

**Interviewer:**

**Interview number:**

**Year and number:**

**Slegs vir kantoorgebruik**

**Datum:**

**Onderhoudvoerder:**

**Onderhoudnommer:**

**Jaar en nommer:**

### **SECTION 1: PERSONAL DETAILS**

#### ***DEEL 1: PERSOONLIKE BESONDERHEDE***

**I AM GOING TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT YOURSELF FIRST.  
*EK GAAN JOU EERSTENS 'N PAAR PERSOONLIKE BESONDERHEDE VRA.***

1. How old are you? (years)

*Hoe oud is jy? (jare)*

2. Who do you live with at the moment?

*Saam met wie woon jy op die oomblik?*

3. In what area are you living at the moment?

*In watter gebied bly jy op die oomblik?*

4. Are you legally married at the moment?  
Married/divorced/separated/never married  
Is it still the same man?  
Yes/no

*Is jy wettig getroud op die oomblik?  
Getroud/geskei/uitmekaar/nooit getroud  
Is dit nog dieselfde man?  
Ja/nee*

5. Do you have any children of your own?  
Yes/no
- |                         |       |      |
|-------------------------|-------|------|
| How many?               | Girls | Boys |
| How old are they?       | Girls | Boys |
| Where are they staying? |       |      |

*Het jy enige kinders van jou eie?  
Ja/nee*

<i>Hoeveel?</i>	<i>Dogters</i>	<i>Seuns</i>
<i>Hoe oud is hulle?</i>	<i>Dogters</i>	<i>Seuns</i>
<i>Waar bly hulle?</i>		

6. What is your home language?

*Wat is jou huistaal?*

7. How far did you get at school?

*Hoe ver het jy op skool gevorder?*

8. Are you doing any paid work at the moment or are you looking for work?

Working/looking for work/not working

What kind of work do you do?

Do you work full time or part time or occasionally?

Full time/part time/occasionally

Do you make enough money to support yourself and your children?

Yes/no

*Werk jy op die oomblik vir geld of soek jy werk?*

*Werk/soek werk/werk nie*

*Watse soort werk doen jy?*

*Werk jy voltyds of deelyds of somtyds*

*Voltyds/deelyds/somtyds*

*Maak jy genoeg geld om jouself en jou kinders te onderhou?*

*Ja/nee*

9. Have you done any (other) kind of work for money?

Yes/no

What did you do?

How long ago was it? (year)

*Het jy al enige (ander) soort werk gedoen vir geld?*

*Ja/nee*

*Wat het jy gedoen?*

*Hoe lank gelede? (jaar)*

10. Have you ever had any job training?

Yes/no

What did you do?

*Het jy ooit enige werksopleiding gekry?*

*Ja/nee*

*Wat het jy gedoen?*

## **SECTION 2: THE BATTERER**

### **DEEL 2: DIE MAN WAT JOU GESLAAN HET**

NOW I AM GOING TO ASK YOU ABOUT YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE MAN WHO BATTERED YOU.

*NOU WIL EK JOU VRA OOR JOU VERHOUDING MET DIE MAN WAT JOU GESLAAN HET.*

11. How old were you when you started going out with him?

Her age: and how old was he? His age:

*Hoe oud was jy toe jy met hom begin uitgaan?*

*Haar ouderdom: en hoe oud was hy? Sy ouderdom:*

12. Altogether how long were you together? (years) [including your marriage]

*Altesaam hoe lank het julle saamgebly? (jare) [insluitende julle huwelik]*

13. Were you married to him?

Yes/no

Were you married by law or by Muslim rites or by customary law?

Legal/Muslim/customary

When?

Why did you get married?

Family pressure; religion; pressure from him; pregnancy

Did you want to marry him?

Yes/no/don't know

*Was jy met hom getroud?*

*Ja/nee*

*Is julle wettig getroud of deur Moslemreg of op enige tradisionele manier?*

*Wettig/Moslem/tradisionele*

*Wanneer?*

*Hoekom het julle getrou?*

*Familiedruk; geloof; druk van hom; swangerskap*

*Wou jy met hom trou?*

*Ja/nee/weet nie*

14. Did he ever work?  
Yes/no/sometimes  
What kind of work did he do?
- Het hy ooit gewerk?*  
*Ja/nee/somtyds*  
*Watter soort werk het hy gedoen?*

15. Did he do any sort of training?  
Yes/no  
What type of training?
- Het hy enige soort opleiding gehad?*  
*Ja/nee*  
*Watter tipe opleiding?*

**SECTION 3: LEAVING HOME**  
**DEEL 3: WEGGAAN VAN DIE HUIS AF**

I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT THE BATTERING AND WHEN YOU LEFT HOME  
*EK WIL JOU NOU VRA OMTRENT DIE SLANERY EN TOE JY DIE HUIS VERLAAT HET.*

16. When did he start hitting you?  
How often did it happen?
- Wanneer het hy jou begin slaan?*  
*Hoe dikwels het dit gebeur?*
17. What did you do about the hitting?  
**Essential prompts**  
Did you do anything to avoid the beatings?  
Did you ever leave him?  
How many times?  
What made you go back?
- Wat het jy gedoen oor die slanery?*  
*Noodsaaklike vrae*  
*Het jy enige iets gedoen om dit te vermy?*  
*Het jy hom ooit verlaat?*  
*Hoeveel kere?*  
*Wat het jou laat teruggaan?*
18. Did you ever call the police?  
Yes/no  
What happened?
- Het jy ooit die polisie geroep?*  
*Ja/nee*  
*Wat het gebeur?*

19. Did you ever get any legal advice or make a case?

Yes/no

What happened?

*Het jy ooit enige regsadvies gekry of 'n saak gemaak?*

*Ja/nee*

*Wat het gebeur?*

20. Did you ever need any medical help after you were battered?

Yes/no

What happened?

*Het jy ooit mediese hulp gekry nadat jy geslaan is?*

*Ja/nee*

*Wat het gebeur?*

21. Did you talk to anyone (else) about it?

Yes/no

Did you ever go to a social worker?

What did you want them to do?

What did they actually do?

*Het jy met enige iemand (anders) daaroor gepraat?*

*Ja/nee*

*Was jy ooit by 'n maatskaplike werker?*

*Wat wou jy hê hulle moet doen?*

*Wat het hulle gedoen?*

22. What or who helped you the most?

*Wat of wie het jou die meeste gehelp?*

23. What advice would you give to another woman who is being battered?

*Watter raad sou jy vir 'n ander vrou gee wat deur haar man geslaan word?*

**If she has children -**

**As sy kinders het -**

**LET US TALK ABOUT THE CHILDREN**

**KOM ONS PRAAT 'n BIETJIE OOR DIE KINDERS**

24. What was his relationship with the children like?

*Hoe was die man se verhouding met die kinders?*

25. Did the hitting affect them?

Yes/no

Please tell me how?

*Het die slanery hulle geaffekteer?*

*Ja/nee*

*Kan jy vir my sê hoe?*

26. Do you have any fears for their future as a result of this?

Yes/no

What?

*Hou jy enige vrese in vir hulle toekoms as gevolg hiervan?*

*Ja/nee*

*Wat?*

**LET US TALK ABOUT THE SHELTER  
KOM ONS PRAAT OOR DIE SHELTER**

27. How did you hear about the shelter?

*Hoe het jy van die shelter te hore gekom?*

28. What made you decide to go to the shelter?

*Wat het jou laat besluit om soontoe te gaan?*

29. Please tell me all the things you had to organise so you could get yourself (and your children) to the shelter?

*Vertel my asseblief van alles wat jy moes organiseer om jouself (en jou kinders) daar te kry.*

30. What were your biggest worries about going away from home?

*Wat was jou grootste bekommernis oor weggaan van die huis af?*

31. What did you think or hope the shelter would do for you?

*Wat het jy gedink of gehoop die shelter sal vir jou kan doen?*

32. What did it do for you?

*Wat het dit vir jou gedoen?*

33. What was it like being in the shelter?

*Hoe was dit om in die shelter te wees?*

34. How did the children like it?

*Hoe het die kinders daarvan gehou?*

35. How did you explain to people where you were staying?

*Hoe het jy vir die ander mense verduidelik waar jy bly?*

36. What did you have to do before you (and the children) could leave the shelter?

*Wat moes jy alles doen voor jy (en die kinders) die shelter kon verlaat?*

37. What was your biggest worry about leaving the shelter?

*Wat was jou grootste bekommernis omtrent weggaan uit die shelter?*

38. How long were you in the shelter?

(How many times have you been in the shelter?)

*Hoe lank was jy in die shelter?*

*(Hoeveel keer was jy daar?)*

39. Why did you leave the shelter when you did?

*Hoekom is jy toe uit die shelter uit?*

**NOW I AM GOING TO ASK YOU ABOUT WHAT IT WAS LIKE AFTER YOU LEFT THE SHELTER.**

**NOU WIL EK JOU VRA HOE DIT WAS NADAT JY DIE SHELTER VERLAAT HET.**

40. Where did you go to?

**Keep on asking until the present ... and then?**

*Waarnatoe het jy gegaan?*

*Hou aan tot die hede ... en toe?*

41. How did you feel after you left the shelter?

*Hoe het jy gevoel net nadat jy uit die shelter weg is?*

42. Did you miss the other women in the shelter?

*Het jy die ander vroue in die shelter gemis?*

43. Did you have any contact with them?

Yes/no

What?

*Het jy enige kontak met hulle gehad?*

Ja/nee

Wat?

44. How did the children adjust?

*Hoe het die kinders aangepas?*



45. What contact did you have with the batterer?  
How did it happen?  
When?  
Where was he when you came home?

*Watter kontak het jy weer gehad met die man wat jou geslaan het?  
Hoe het dit gebeur?  
Wanneer?  
Waar was hy toe jy by die huis kom?*

46. Was he different from before?  
Yes/no  
How has he changed?

*Was hy anders as vantevore?  
Ja/nee  
Hoe het hy verander?*

47. What is your relationship with him now?

*Watter verhouding het jy nou met hom?*

48. Did the children want to see him?  
Yes/no

What did they say?

*Wou die kinders hom sien?  
Ja/nee  
Wat het hulle gesê?*

49. What kind of contact do they have with him now?

*Watter soort kontak het die kinders nou met hom?*

**LET US TALK ABOUT ANY PROBLEMS YOU HAD.**

**KOM ONS PRAAT 'n BIETJIE OOR ENIGE MOEILIKHEDE WAT JY ONDERVIND HET.**

50. What were your biggest problems after leaving the shelter?  
House; money; divorce; maintenance; children

*Wat was jou grootste probleme nadat jy die shelter verlaat het?  
Huis; geld; egskeiding; toelae; kinders*

51. How did you solve them?

*Hoe het jy hulle opgelos?*

52. Who helped you and what did they do?  
What has helped the most?

*Wie het jou gehelp en wat het hulle gedoen?  
Wat het die meeste gehelp?*

53. How was your money situation?

*Hoe was jou geldelike toestand?*

#### **SECTION 4: POSSIBILITIES**

#### **DEEL 4: MOONTLIKHEDE**

**LET'S TALK ABOUT HOW THINGS ARE NOW.  
LAAT ONS NOU GESELS OOR HOE DINGE NOU STAAN.**

54. Please tell me how things are for you now.

*Vertel my asseblief hoe dinge nou vir jou is.*

55. If she has left the man who battered her, ask:  
Are you in a relationship with anyone else at the moment?  
Yes/no  
Is it different to that one?

*As sy weg is van die man wat haar geslaan het, vra:  
Is jy nou in 'n verhouding met enige iemand anders?  
Ja/nee*

*Is hierdie verhouding anders as daardie een?*

56. If she has children, ask:  
How are the children now?

*As sy kinders het, vra:  
Hoe gaan dit nou met die kinders?*

57. What advice about relationships would you give to your daughter or a young woman?

*Watter raad sou jy aan jou dogter of 'n jong vrou gee in verband met verhoudings?*

58. What advice about relationships would you give to your son or a young man?

*Watter raad sou jy aan jou seun of 'n jong man gee in verband met verhoudings?*

**SECTION 5: STRATEGIES FOR CHANGING THE SITUATION OF BATTERED WOMEN**

**DEEL 5: HOE OM DIE SITUASIE VAN GESLAANDE VROUE TE VERANDER**

NOW WE ARE GOING TO TALK ABOUT WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR BATTERED WOMEN IN GENERAL.

*NOU GAAN ONS PRAAT OOR WAT IN DIE ALGEMEEN GEDOEN KAN WORD VIR GESLAANDE VROUE*

59. What are battered women's biggest problems?

*Wat dink jy is geslaande vroue se grootste probleme?*

60. What services do you think should be available for battered women?

*Watter dienste sou jy sê moet bestaan vir geslaande vroue?*

61. What do you think women can do for themselves and each other?

*Wat dink jy kan vroue vir hulleself en mekaar doen?*

WE HAVE NOW COME TO THE END OF OUR QUESTIONNAIRE. IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SAY OR ASK?

*ONS IS NOU AAN DIE EINDE VAN ONS VRAELYS. IS DAAR NOG IETS WAT JY WIL SÊ OF VRA?*

THANK YOU FOR SHARING YOUR EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS WITH US.  
*DANKIE DAT JY JOU ONDERVINDINGS EN IDEES MET ONS GEDEEL HET.*