

# **Women coping with psychological abuse: Surviving in the secret world of male partner power and control**

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*“What is to give light must endure burning.”*

Viktor Frankl

# ABSTRACT

The social problem of psychological abuse, independent of physical violence, against women, by their male live-in partner, is a greatly unrecognised crime which is deservedly beginning to receive attention. Although the literature identifies socialisation and cultural norms as key factors in women's coping strategies, knowledge of the specific ways women think and the influence that their socially influenced beliefs have, is underdeveloped.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the coping strategies Pakeha women use in response to being psychologically abused. The sample consists of 12 Pakeha women who have left their male live-in partner no less than one year previously. From the semi-structured, open-ended, in-depth interviews, I uncovered women's experiences of the abuse and their versatile responses over time.

Using a feminist, grounded theory analysis, findings clearly demonstrated the chief influences on the beliefs women held and consequently the choices they made. The four main influences included, (1) their partner's 'power and control' tactics, (2) gender socialisation, (3) the responses from friends, family, acquaintances and institutions and (4) popularly understood definitions of what constitutes and what causes, domestic violence. As the themes were considered, variations in the individual women's beliefs and strategies are discussed. The myth that leaving an abusive partner is the way to end abuse is discredited. Several theories show promise for aiding in the understanding of the women's complex coping processes. These include feminist theory; French and Raven's theory of the five bases of power; face saving entrapment theory; social construction theory; social identity theory; existential theory; relational theory; cognitive social learning theory; Belenky and colleagues' theory of women's ways of knowing, learning and perceiving truth; intergenerational theory of violence; psychoanalytic theory and narrative theory.

The discussion places emphasis on the finding that women lose a sense of themselves as a result of psychological abuse, but following a number of catalysts for change, they experience a new-found inner strength which generates a change in beliefs and strategies. These changes reflect the value of self-care, a determination to pursue their potential and to shake free from the shackles of gender socialisation. These roads were walked in spite of social disapproval, minimal assistance from social institutions and ongoing separation abuse by their ex-partner.

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# CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

“Wives should regard their husbands as they regard the Lord,  
since as Christ is head of the Church ... so is a husband  
the head of his wife; and as the Church submits to Christ,  
so should wives to their husbands.”

*Ephesians 5:21-32*

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the coping strategies of Pākehā women who have left live-in relationships in which their husband or defacto male partner psychologically abused them, but did not also use physical violence.

In this introductory chapter I clarify my justification for studying female victims and I explain my use of the terms wife/partner and husband/partner. I give a definition of psychological abuse and a definition of coping. Then in utmost brevity I give a history of wife abuse as it relates to Pākehā women. Most studies of psychological abuse have been conducted in America and I explain why these studies are relevant to my research on Pākehā women and I offer a reason why caution should also be taken for generalising American findings onto the New Zealand setting.

I present a condensed version of the services available to female victims of domestic violence and give a summary of findings about the institutional response to these women. Most research on psychological abuse has been conducted in conjunction with the study of physical violence. This has meant some details about psychological abuse are missing or have been misrepresented. I set out to disentangle our understanding of psychological abuse from our understanding of physical violence. Next, I detail the tactics of psychological abuse used by husbands and male defacto partners, summarise the effects that psychological abuse have on women and then I examine how women cope with the abuse. Finally, I summarise some gaps in the literature and outline my research questions.

## **Justification for Studying Female Victims**

Evidence from the 1996 Women’s Safety Survey suggested that family violence is very widespread in New Zealand (Morris, 1997) and a survey conducted by Leibrich, Paulin and Ransom (1995) concluded that a considerable degree of New Zealand women are

physically and psychologically abused by their partners. Overseas and New Zealand data suggest that 99% of battered women experience psychological abuse (Stets, 1990 cited in Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995; NiCarthy, 1986; Tolman, 1999; Walker, 1984). International and New Zealand studies show that males are responsible for the abuse 95% of the time (Balzer, 1995; Barnes, Fleming, Johnston, & Toone, 1993).

I do not deny that husbands are victims of abuse, as are males and females within cohabiting homosexual couples and that mutual abuse does occur (Loring, 1994). However, men's use of psychological abuse is usually an indication of dominance and a need to gain power and control (Pence & Paymar, 1993) whereas, women's use of psychological abuse is better predicted by a need to defend themselves (Hirigoyen, 2000; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). No matter how women respond, men's use of 'power and control' tactics continues regardless (Berk, et al., 1983; Burris, 1983; Burt, 1980; Kingbeil & Boyd, 1984; Sinclair, 1985 all cited in Lavoie, Jacob, Hardy, & Martin, 1989).

The feminist view is that psychological abuse perpetrated by men against their female partner occurs because of the power imbalance inherent in husband-wife relationships which is supported by social beliefs (Bowker, 1993; Kirkwood, 1993; Ken McMaster & Swain, 1989). Mutual combat and husband battering labels are a backlash to maintain dominance over women by shifting the attention away from their victimisation (Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Saunders, 1988) which means it is a political power strategy to minimise that the target is disproportionately female (Pence & Other contributors, 1985).

## **Terminology**

### ***Use of Terms Wife/Partner Husband/Partner***

This thesis concentrates on just one form of relationship where psychological abuse occurs in our society. That is the 'abuse against Pākehā women by their male live-in partner'. For convenience, I will use 'wife' and 'female partner' and 'husband and 'male partner' interchangeably throughout this thesis. Though, as Margo Roth (1991)

aptly points out, the term ‘partner’ denies and distorts the reality of unequal power relations in marriage. Further, because this thesis is based on women as victims and males as perpetrators I will use ‘she’ to represent the victim and ‘he’ to indicate the perpetrator.

### ***Definition of Psychological Abuse***

Controversy exists as to whether psychological abuse should be defined by the perpetrator’s behaviours or intention or by the victim’s perception of the effects on her (Follingstad & Dehart, 2000). There is no consensus on the best method to measure psychological abuse and there are no guides about when to consider certain acts as abusive (Marshall, 1994; O’Leary & Jouriles, 1994).

Psychological abuse perpetrated by men against their female partner involves a continuous, systematic, pattern (Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Geffner & Rossman, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994), which occurs on a continuum from covert to overt abuse (Marshall, 1994; Tolman, 1992) and is a one-sided use of ‘power and control’ tactics to win at all costs (Busch, 2001; Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992; Andersen, 1985; Boulette, 1981; Boulette & Andersen, 1985; Dutton & Painter, 1981; Hilberman, 1980; West, 1963 all cited in Foley, 1985; Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995; K. McMaster, 1998; Ken McMaster & Swain, 1989; Romero, 1985 cited in Murphy & Cascardi, 1993; Robertson, 1996, 1999; Robertson & Busch, 1998). The abuser intentionally chooses to use ‘power and control’ tactics (Robertson & Busch, 1998). Winning is achieved by demeaning, undermining and altering the woman’s thoughts, perceptions, feelings, beliefs, values, body and behaviours. Winning is further achieved by limiting the woman’s freedom of movement and choices (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Chang, 1996; Church, 1984; Dobash & Dobash, 1979; Foley, 1985; Geffner & Rossman, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Katz, Arias, & Beach, 2000; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1994, 1996; NiCarthy, 1986; Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993; Tolman, 1989; Walker, 1984). The tactics of psychological abuse and its effects will be discussed later in this chapter.

The 1995 Domestic Violence Act includes a wide range of forms of psychological abuse in its definition and these include, but are not limited to, intimidation, threats,

mind games, damaging property as a way of hurting someone, making threats, allowing a child to see or hear domestic violence, trying to control someone's life by constantly humiliating them, controlling someone's money, time, car or contact with friends as a way of having power over them (Department for Courts, 2001). This new emphasis on psychological abuse parallels an expanding international endeavour to allay this type of abuse (United Nations, 2000).

Many people I meet in my personal and professional life say, "Isn't everyone psychologically abusive sometimes?" Yes many people are. However, for the purpose of this thesis I want to distinguish between my working definition of abuse in a 'normal' relationship and psychological abuse in a relationship where the male endeavours to establish and maintain 'power and control'.

In a 'normal relationship' the person using psychologically abusive behaviours is also willing to learn, change, grow, be vulnerable, work towards equality and mutuality, develop empathy be constructive and to compromise. Both people want to resolve relationship issues. Both people take responsibility for their behaviours.

The most salient points that I wish to note about psychological abuse in a relationship marked by male domination are that it is about '*power and control*'. It is a *pattern* of behaviours used over time. The behaviours are *intended* to dominate and to *win* and be *right* at all costs. The abuser *intentionally chooses* to use those behaviours to achieve his aim, that is, to win. The victim must alter her behaviour and the abuser refuses to alter his. The abuser does *not* want to resolve relationship issues, in other words his attitudes are *destructive*. The abuser has a sense of safety, the victim lives with fear. To win, the victim's self-hood must be *diminished* on all levels. The abuser uses any tactic to achieve their aim. Therefore, many tactics appear to be *contradictory*. The only *constant* is the intention to establish 'power and control'.

### ***Definition of Coping***

Coping with psychological abuse by one's male partner entails cognitive, affective and behavioural processes. Women have to interpret, label and attach meaning to their partner's behaviours and intention and then make decisions about how to respond. These decisions are influenced not only by their own psychological attributes, but also

by the dynamics of the abuse itself, their partner's responses and cultural, social, political, economic and historical factors. Coping with victimisation comprises both constructive and self-destructive processes.

The underlying premise of this thesis is that the beliefs that women adopt, from their socialisation process, about their inferior status in relation to men, plus the social reinforcement of women's lower status, are central to women's coping strategies.

## **The History of Wife Abuse**

It was as recently as the 1970s that it was acknowledged that psychological abuse coexists with physical violence, which means that historical accounts of wife abuse tend not to mention psychological abuse. As mentioned on page 2, 99% of battered women experience psychological abuse. Any accounts of the history of wife abuse refer mainly to physical violence. There is mention of domination, control and non-physical chastisement against wives so a look at the history of wife abuse includes a history of psychological abuse against wives. Female partner abuse prevails over all social classes and ethnicities (Berk, Berk, Loseke & Rauma, 1983; Gelles, 1974, 1976; Hilberman, 1980; Martin, 1976; Steinmetz, 1977 all cited Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Dobash & Dobash, 1979); however, this thesis will only focus on Pākehā culture, that is, people of British and European descent.

Pākehā culture stems from patriarchal Graeco-Roman customs with some Celtic and Judaic influences and strong Christian and capitalist ideological influences (Good, 1989). Patriarchy is said to have begun in Greece between 2500BC and 800BC (Bullough, Shelton, & Slavin, 1988; M. French, 1986). From Classical Greece to the present day men as a group in western cultures have had higher status and women as a group have had lower status. Within marriage, husbands have been given the legal and moral responsibility for wives' actions and the use of physical and psychological force has been acceptable to demand compliance (Good, 1989).

Feminists have challenged the male view throughout history. In 1792 Mary Wollstonecraft wrote a declaration for British women's liberation. She was abused and ridiculed. But more feminists took up her work in the battle to bring a higher morality to politics. Feminists in America, Britain and New Zealand were active in the fight to



outlaw liquor, reform women's restrictive clothing, eliminate prostitution and to extend education to girls (Bullough, Shelton, & Slavin, 1988; Grimshaw, 1972). By 1891 physical assault of wives was legally abolished in Britain (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). However, this law was not transplanted into colonial New Zealand.

British and European settlers brought the above patriarchal legacy to New Zealand and it was reinforced and strengthened by the colonial experience (Good, 1989; Olssen, 1999; Phillips, 1996). It has been noted that men were abusive towards their wives in colonial New Zealand (Olssen, 1999; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993). British women were recruited to New Zealand to be the hardworking men's domestic helpmates and to carry out the then feminist ideology of moral caretakers of the rough, drinking, womanising men (Olssen, 1999; Phillips, 1996). During the Victorian period, sex was a marital duty necessary to produce heirs and sex before marriage was a sin. Any deviance from these identities was demoralised and punished (Good, 1989). Victorians viewed spinsterhood as a major failure (Fletcher, 1989) and New Zealand colonial women wanted to marry because marriage gave entry to the adult world (Olssen, 1999). From the 1830s onwards the temperance movement and the feminist movement in New Zealand challenged the subordinate nature of women. Girls began to have an education, women gained the right to own property and Pākehā women were the first in the world to get the vote. In the 1880s and 1890s women's subordination to their husband was challenged. Women wanted equal partnership (Grimshaw, 1972).

In 2002 New Zealand female culture continues to encompass mixed gender ideals which existed at the end of the 1900s. This includes the notion that women are inferior to men and must serve them (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Hird & Jackson, 1999; B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994) *and* that women have the right to equality.

## **Relevance of American Studies to this Thesis**

Public attention was brought to wife abuse in the early 1970s by British feminists (Avni, 1991). Since then most studies have been of Anglo-American women (Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). Early America had similar laws and social attitudes to those which existed in Europe and Britain. Each state supported husbands' entitlement to control wives and the laws revoking this right were first passed in America and

Britain at the same time in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dobash & Dobash, 1977-78). Additionally, American feminism had a major influence in the women's liberation movement in New Zealand in the 1970s (Coney, 1993). Therefore, it can be taken for granted that American findings have relevance for Pākehā women. But, unlike New Zealand, USA has not ratified the Conference on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (Liddicoat, 1998); hence, caution should be taken when assuming the relevance of American studies for the New Zealand situation.

## Services for Female Victims of Domestic Violence

The second wave of feminism in America and Britain in the 1960s (Avni, 1991) and New Zealand in the 1970s (Brookes, 1999) led to the establishment of shelters for battered women (C. Macdonald, 1993). New Zealand's first women's refuge was established in Christchurch in 1974 (Dann, 1985). There are now 51 refuges in New Zealand run by the National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (NCIWR, 2001). The women's refuge movement has had a major influence on alerting the public, government and social institutions about women's needs (Bradshaw & Moore, 1995; Mahony, 1995). The feminist movement has played a major role in influencing the adoption of legislation to assist the safety and freedom of women who are victims of domestic violence. For a review of the related legislation see Table 1 below.

**Table 1:**  
***Legislation related to female victims of domestic violence***

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Legislation</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Provisions</b>
<i>Domestic Purposes Benefit</i>	Social Security Act	1938	Equivalent of widow's benefit given to women deserted by their husband
	Social Security Act	1964	Liabie Parent Contribution Scheme. Non-custodial parent liable to give financial support to women on domestic purposes benefit
	Social Security Amendment Act	1973	Domestic Purposes Benefit made available to both men and women (McPherson, 1995)

**Table 1 continued ...**

<i>Divorce</i>	Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act	1867	First divorce law. Men could divorce if the wife committed adultery. Women could divorce if their husband committed adultery aggravated by bigamy, sodomy, incest, rape, cruelty or desertion for five years or more
	Family Proceedings Act	1980	No fault divorce (McPherson, 1995)
<i>Property settlement</i>	Matrimonial Property Act	1963	First recognition of non-monetary contributions to marriage, but courts allowed broad discretion in distribution of property (McPherson, 1995)
	Property (Relationships) Amendment Act	2001	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Relationship property will now be divided equally between partners including defacto and same sex partners whose relationship has lasted at least three years and not ended by 1 February 2002</li> <li>2. Women's unpaid work is considered. The court has power to order the family provider to pay women the difference in economic outcome and this extra amount should be paid until the woman has been able to gain employment skills (Ministry of Justice, 2001)</li> </ol>
<i>Domestic Violence Legislation</i>	Domestic Protection Act	1982	First legislation designed to protect women and children from domestic violence. With this was the introduction of non-molestation orders which included penalties for breaching a limited range of tactics of psychological abuse (McPherson, 1995)
	Domestic Violence Act	1995	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Broadens the types of people included in the Act to include married and unmarried couples, same sex couples, children, anyone who shares accommodation and anyone in a close relationship</li> <li>2. Broadens the types of psychological abuse to include everything that can come into that definition</li> <li>3. Protection Orders are now taken out until discharged</li> <li>4. Protection Orders automatically become final after three months</li> <li>5. Protection Orders stay in place if the couple reside together again (Department for Courts, 2001)</li> </ol>

**Table 1 continued ...**

<i>Marital Rape</i>	Crimes Act 1962 (updated to include marital rape)	1985	Crime for a husband to rape his wife
	Crimes Act (updated)	1999	Includes rape by non-physical coercion and a woman's acquiescence does not remove culpability for the rape (New Zealand Government, 1979).

The Domestic Violence Act authorises the provision of state-funded programmes for protected persons including women and children (New Zealand Government, 1995) and many social agencies and individuals have established programmes for abused women and a list of providers is available from the family court domestic violence coordinators. A 1994 New Zealand Law Commission study (HAIP, 2001a) suggested that women lack knowledge about legal rights and processes. A recent New Zealand study found that very few women take the chance to attend programmes because they do not know they exist, are not aware that they are free, have no understanding how a programme could help them or they are so stressed due to separation issues that they are unable to attend (Liddicoat, 2001).

An absolute patriarchy no longer exists, but the hierarchical relationship of husband and wife has not been eliminated. Abusive husbands still assert their antiquated privilege. The problem has not changed, but the attention given to it has broadened (Busch, 2000, 2001; Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Robertson, 1996, 1999; Robertson & Busch, 1998). In spite of the above legislation, the institutional response to female victims of psychological abuse by their male partner is mixed.

## **Institutional Response to Female Partners Who Are Victims of Psychological Abuse**

Historically, women's oppression was supported by institutional practices (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Given this, it is necessary to briefly examine the current institutional response to wife abuse. The 1995 Domestic Violence Act has been judged as the world's most unprecedented legislation in this field (Pritchard, 1998 cited in Simmonds, 1999). The Duluth 'power and control' wheel (see Figure 1 on page 14) underpins the Act (Busch, 2001) and the Act emphasises that the use of physical violence and

psychological abuse is the sole responsibility of the person using it and that victim safety is paramount. Since the introduction of the Act professionals have made significant advances in how they respond to domestic violence (Busch, 2000). However, if people are granted rights in an area there can be a perception that the problem is now resolved, yet this may be remote from the truth (Baylis & Tokeley, 1996). There is a failure to challenge the ingrained sexism that infiltrates social and political institutions (Simmonds, 1999).

New Zealand has mandatory arrest policies (Ministry of Justice, 2000), although arrest still depends on risk to safety, seriousness, length of time since the alleged breach occurred and the effect on other people or circumstances (R. Macdonald, 1996). Because of the insidious nature of psychological abuse, police experience difficulties finding evidence to prosecute and convict offenders (Ministry of Justice, 2000).

Overseas and New Zealand research indicated that police, juries, judges and lawyers use tactics of 'power and control' which collude with the perpetrator (Busch, 2001; Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992; Greene, Raitz, & Lindblad, 1989; Hartley, 2001; Lavoie, Jacob, Hardy, & Martin, 1989; Robertson & Busch, 1998; Simmonds, 1999). Family Court hearings are private (New Zealand Government, 1995). This policy makes use of the 'power and control' tactic called isolation. It prevents the public from learning about women's plight. The less the public know, the more victim blaming there is. But the 2001 New Zealand Law Commission report on battered women recommends that women's refuge advocates be accepted as expert witnesses (NCIWR, 2001). In a paper presented to a Family Law Society Conference in October 2001, Judge Jan Doogue (2001, p. 2) stated that psychological abuse is caused by "unresolved personal issues and underlying dysfunction in family relationships". Judge Doogue reduced the problem of psychological abuse to a personal level. This means blaming the victim and she disregarded the fact that men's use of psychological abuse reflects sociohistorical beliefs and systems which support male dominance over women.

The Domestic Violence Act indicates that when a tactic appears "to be minor or trivial when viewed in isolation or appears unlikely to recur, the court must nevertheless consider whether the behaviour forms part of a pattern of behaviour" (New Zealand Government, 1995, p. 1101). Since this new legislation, judges are now paying much more attention to psychological abuse as a pattern than previously (Busch, 2000;

Robertson, 1999) and psychological abuse comprises a considerable portion of the Family Court's caseload (Doogue, 2001).

Some lawyers have been advising women to give consent to undertakings in place of applying for protection orders. The down side of this is that there is no penalty for a breach of an undertaking, women and children are not eligible for programmes, the abuser does not have to attend a non-violence programme (Busch, 2000) and giving such consent neglects a perpetrator's history of broken promises. However, the 1996 Women's Safety Survey found that lawyers, alongside women's refuge and women's support groups, were the most helpful sources of support.

Doctors also collude with the perpetrator. They do this by not addressing the true cause of women's distress. When female victims of domestic violence go to a doctor, a high percentage of them are given antidepressants and other drugs (Douglas, 1998; Kurz & Stark, 1988; Flaherty, 1996 cited in Robertson, 1999; Stark, Flitcraft, & Frazier, 1979; Bograd, 1982; Kurz, 1987 both cited in Yam, 1995).

The nature of psychological abuse can mean some women's partners either prevent them from leaving or their partner refuses to leave the house. If he also refuses to provide for her and the children financially, women may be forced to go on the Domestic Purposes Benefit (DPB). Work and Income New Zealand (WINZ, 2000) stated that you are in a marriage-like relationship if you are committed to each other emotionally and are financially interdependent which is clearly not the case when a victim is trapped by her unloving, non-providing partner. However, it is WINZ's policy to threaten women in these positions with fraud if they do not pay the money back.

In 1997 the Social Security (Conjugal Status) Amendment Bill was tabled in response to the Court of Appeal decision in *Ruka vs Social Welfare Department* (Brookers NZ Law Partner Databases, 2001). The Bill allows an emergency benefit to be granted to women who are "deprived of the ability to decide whether or how, to escape from the violence..." (Liddicoat, 1997). The woman is then given six months to leave the relationship which demonstrates that WINZ still hold the belief that leaving is a simple matter. Paradoxically, a WINZ staff member told me that in the end, the decision is subjective and WINZ's policy is not to appear to be perceived as assisting women to separate (WINZ, 2001).

Women cannot apply for the DPB in anticipation of leaving a relationship which means they must endure the one week mandatory stand down and wait a further week to be paid (WINZ, 2001). The 1998 statistics show a large earnings gap between men and women regardless of having equal qualifications and being in the same occupations. More women than men receive incomes from the lowest three income quintiles and amongst these low earners are female single parent families (Statistics New Zealand and Ministry of Women's Affairs, 1999).

The Domestic Violence Act states “the person who suffers the abuse is not regarded ... as having allowed the child to see or hear the abuse” (New Zealand Government, 1995). But Child, Youth, and Family (CYF) practices reveal the opposite viewpoint. CYF take children from women who are trapped by abuse and because of this entrapment are not responsible for their children witnessing the women’s abuse (Corbett, 1999 cited in Busch, 2001; Robertson, 1999). CYF request that the woman leave the abuser or lose her children (Robertson, 1999). Participants in the non-Maori women’s programmes I have facilitated at HAIP have been extremely distressed and confused when CYF have removed their children from them for this reason. Contemporary psychological principles demonstrate that the best way to protect abused children is to keep women safe (Magen, Conroy, Hess, Panciera & Simon, 1995; Schechter & Edelson, 1994 both cited in Robertson, 1999) yet, because of the prevalence of separation abuse, women’s safety is further compromised by CYF’s actions.

The Domestic Violence Act 1995 authorises the provision of state-funded programmes for protected persons including women and children (New Zealand Government, 1995) and many social agencies and individuals have established programmes for abused women. A list of providers is available from the family court domestic violence coordinators. The Hamilton Abuse Intervention Project (HAIP) where I facilitate women’s programmes is one provider and educates women in the dynamics of ‘power and control’, assists them to critique victim blaming stereotypes, enables them to see their partner’s abuse in a social context and provides help with detailed safety plans and information about legal and social service practices (Robertson, 1996).

## Disentangling Psychological Abuse from Physical Violence

In the 1970s, among the first to mention psychological abuse as it is used against wives, albeit in the context of their studies of physical violence, were British writers Erin Pizzey (1974) and Emerson and Russell Dobash (1979), Americans Elaine Hilberman and Kit Munson (1977-78) and New Zealander Miriam Jackson (1978 cited in C. Macdonald, 1993). The study of psychological abuse is a newly evolving field and apart from Kathleen Ferraro (1979) and Pat Hoffman (1984) this field did not really begin until the 1990s, especially when it is explored as a discrete form of abuse (Katz & Arias, 1999). There is a paucity of New Zealand research on psychological abuse; hence most of the references I refer to in this section (and throughout the thesis) are American.

The Duluth ‘power and control’ wheel (see Figure 1 on the following page) was introduced in 1993 and has positively transformed our understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence. The Duluth wheel is used in New Zealand to educate professionals, victims and perpetrators about domestic violence has the hub at its centre labelled ‘power and control’ which is the goal of all abusive tactics. Each specific category of tactics is represented between each spoke of the wheel and the rim is what gives it strength and holds it together. This rim is represented by physical and sexual abuse (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

The idea that physical violence reinforces psychological abuse suggests that physical and psychological abuse operate together to establish domination and control (Murphy & Cascardi, 1993), that psychological abuse is effective due to prior physical violence (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Bograd, 1988; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Ganley, 1981 cited in Jacobson & Gottman, 1998; Marshall, 1994, 1996) and that psychological abuse is only a transitory stage leading to physical violence (Murphy & O’Leary, 1989). Yet the average length of marriage in Marti Loring’s (1994) study of women who had been psychologically abused only was 11.2 years which means psychological abuse does not necessarily lead to physical violence. Therefore, it must be noted that psychological abuse can and does commonly occur independent of physical violence (Alexander, 1993; Downs et al., 1993; Sommers & Check, 1987 all cited in Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Dutton & Painter, 1993; Hirigoyen, 2000; Hoffman, 1984; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992;



Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1996; O'Leary & Jouriles, 1994; Shepard & Campbell, 1992).

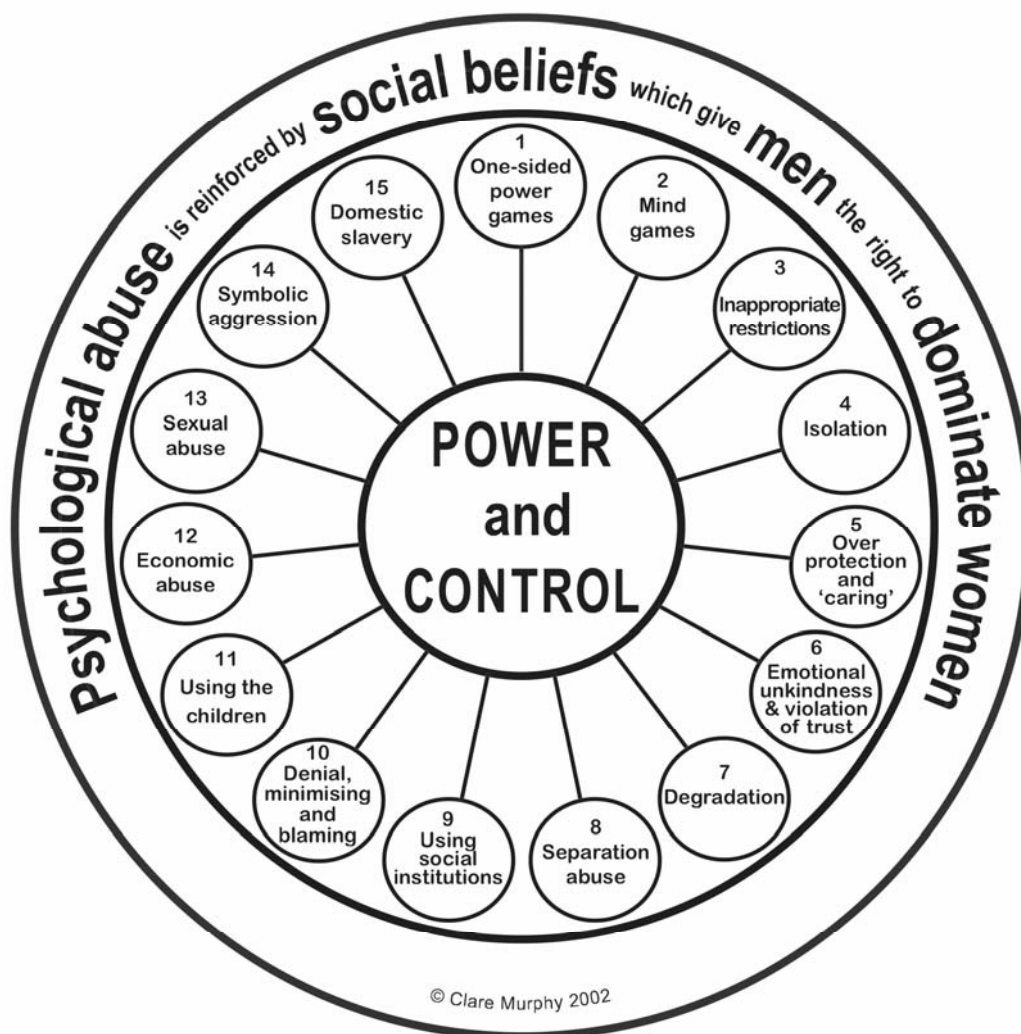
**Figure 1:**  
***Duluth 'power and control' wheel***



Source: Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, 206 West Fourth Street, Duluth, Minnesota 55806, USA. Phone 001-218-722-4134.

Beliefs reinforce behaviours (Beck & Weishaar, 1989; Ellis & Harper, 1961) and accordingly cause an abuser to use 'power and control' tactics (Church, 1984; Family Violence Unit SAPB, 1998; Iles, 1996; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995; K. McMaster, 1998; Stith & Farley, 1993). Therefore, to give psychological abuse credibility, I believe the rim should be labelled 'social beliefs' which would pertain equally well to reinforcing physical violence as well as sexual and psychological abuse. Refer to Figure 2 on the following page for an image of a wheel I adapted to represent psychological abuse, independent of physical violence. For an explanation of the tactics used in each category see the 'Tactics' section on page 18.

**Figure 2:**  
**Psychological abuse 'power and control' wheel – reinforced by social beliefs**



***The Study of Physical Violence Against Wives has Rendered Psychological Abuse as Either Invisible or as Less Important***

Psychological abuse has either been hidden or considered less important than physical violence (Marshall, 1994). Some reasons for this may be the imminent life-threatening nature of physical violence (Tolman, 1992), the emphasis on sensationalising physical violence in the media (HAIP, 2002; Mahoney, 1991). Further, false images and concepts have been portrayed about the nature of psychological abuse and there is a lack of information which defines it for the public (Kirkwood, 1993; McDowell, 1995; Mehrotra, 1999).

The Duluth ‘power and control’ wheel (see figure 1 on page 14) conceals some tactics of psychological abuse (Busch, 2000). For a fuller coverage of psychologically abusive tactics refer to the ‘Tactics’ section on page 18. The terms ‘wife abuse’ and ‘battered woman’ evolved in the 1970s and until the 1990s most research and public attention has been given to physical violence. Although the domestic Violence Act includes psychological abuse in its definition, this information is little known by the public this is a conclusion I have drawn from participants’ comments in the women’s programmes I facilitate at HAIP. Further, as Löscher, Mummendey, Linneweber, & Bornwasser (1984) point out, the concept ‘violence’ forms stereotypical images about what behaviours are involved in violence.

### ***Psychological Abuse is Different to Physical Violence***

When 2,000 New Zealand men from the general population were asked to check a number of tactics of psychological abuse as acceptable or not acceptable, not a single behaviour was disapproved of as objectionable and there was a much greater acceptance of psychological abuse against wives than physical violence (Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995). Marshall (1994) argued that psychological abuse must be addressed in its own right. When doing this, researchers believed psychological abuse occurring on its own has its own unique process of traumatic development, may be different in aetiology and patterns (Loring, 1994) and is a deeper, more central and uniting ingredient in all forms of abuse, aggression and human oppression (Geffner & Rossman, 1998; Kirkwood, 1993; McDowell, 1995).

Valerie Chang (1996) compared the experiences of psychological abuse and physical violence. With psychological abuse there is no visible evidence of abuse, the shift from private to public is avoided, society accepts the abuse and the abuser appears innocent. In contrast, physical violence leaves visible scars, the shift from private to public is necessary because of injury or need for protection, society is more likely to condemn physical violence and the abuser appears guilty.

The psychologically abused victim detaches emotionally before separating, usually does not attempt to reconcile after she ends the relationship and she is hesitant to commit to another one. Victims of physical violence first separate while they are still emotionally

attached, may make many attempts to reconcile and they are optimistic about future relationships (Chang, 1996).

Unlike the cycle of violence which features honeymoon periods and expressions of remorse and willingness to change that Lenore Walker (1979) suggested is common in physically violent relationships, psychologically abusive husbands believe their behaviour is justified, do not attempt to change and the abuse is continuous (Loring & Myers, 1994).

Linda Marshall (1994) claimed that many types of psychological abuse have been neglected as a result of the focus on obvious acts of dominance and aggression and of studying it in the context of conflict, anger and physical violence (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Hudson & McIntosh, 1981; Peterson, 1983 cited in Murphy & Cascardi, 1993; Rodenburg & Fantuzzo, 1993; Shepard & Campbell, 1992; Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985; Tolman, 1989). This has reduced or glossed over the significance of subtle acts of psychological abuse (Marshall, 1994, 1996).

Much early study has been done with fixed questionnaires and the most widely used scale is the conflict tactics scale (Straus, 1979) yet many tactics of 'power and control' are used arbitrarily without a dispute having happened (Shepard & Campbell, 1992). Psychological abuse is about dominance, not about conflict of interest (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). It is distinguished from occasional outbursts of anger by virtue of the intention to establish 'power and control' and by diminishing the victim's selfhood (O'Hearn & Davis, 1997). Marshall (1994; , 1996; , 1999) held that subtle abuse has a greater effect than more obvious tactics.

Overseas studies have found that psychological abuse is experienced as more painful and more damaging than physical violence (Ferraro, 1979; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1996; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993; NiCarthy, 1986; Sackett & Saunders, 1999; Tolman, 1992; Walker, 1979). This was also found in the 1996 New Zealand Women's Safety Survey (Morris, 1997). One reason could be that psychological abuse targets feelings, which has a greater impact on the victim's psychological wellbeing than physical violence (Arias & Pape, 1999). Other studies have found that psychological abuse increases the risk of depression in the

absence of physical violence (Migeot & Lester, 1996; Vitanza et al., 1995; Orava et al., 1996 all cited in Katz & Arias, 1999).

Psychological abuse is of longer duration than physical violence (Geffner & Rossman, 1998). When men stop physically abusing as a result of physical violence treatment programmes, psychological abuse usually continues (Marshall, 1996; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993).

## **Tactics of Psychological Abuse Used by Husbands and Male Defacto Partners**

The 15 categories of ‘power and control’ (depicted in Figure 2 on page 15) which represent psychological abuse are illustrated below. People who have recorded the following tactics include lawyers, academic researchers, people who facilitate men’s non-violence programmes and people who have researched the stories that female victims tell.

### ***1. One-sided Power Games***

What the abuser wants is more important than what his partner wants (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000), he is committed to having his own way at the expense of her rights, beliefs, desires (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Loring, 1994) and mental and physical wellbeing. He is the one who makes the rules (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993); that is, one rule for her, one rule for him. She is not allowed to contradict him (Avni, 1991; Douglas, 1998), he has to have the last word (Avni, 1991; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992) and he knows he is right (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986).

He monopolises her time and energy, demanding her involvement in his interests only (Douglas, 1998; Tolman, 1992), he makes all the big decisions (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993) and he determines how, when and what gets communicated (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). He does most of the receiving (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000) because he perceives her in terms of his own needs and wishes (Douglas, 1998; Loring

& Myers, 1994) and he goes to great lengths to make sure he gets his own way. If one tactic does not work, he changes to a new tactic. What matters to him is not what he does, but what he gains (Hirigoyen, 2000; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Mills, 1985) which is 'power and control' (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Robertson & Busch, 1998).

## **2. *Mind Games***

Mind games involve paradox and contradiction (Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000; Marshall, 1999; NiCarthy, 1986); for example, he tells her what he likes about her then gets upset about the same thing (Douglas, 1998; Marshall, 1999), indicates that if she withdraws he will punish her and if she reaches out he will reject her (Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998); he verbalises something and expresses its opposite non-verbally (Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000). A common tactic is to be charming in public and abusive in private (Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1998) and even blame her for this discrepancy (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). Finally, he uses romantic love as a coercive tool saying that if she loved him she would give him what he wants (Jackson, 2001). No matter what the victim does she cannot win or do it right and she is blocked from clarifying or commenting on conflicting messages (Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998).

The second major mind game is brainwashing (Hirigoyen, 2000) which Teresa Boulette (1981 cited in Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991) has labelled marital brainwashing syndrome. Brainwashing techniques used by husbands include guilt trips (Basile, 1999; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Marshall, 1999; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992), deliberate attempts to confuse, such as hiding objects and telling their partner she is crazy when she cannot find them (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992) and telling her she is imagining things (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). He manipulates her with lies (Hirigoyen, 2000; NiCarthy, 1986; Tolman, 1992) and uses mixed messages, innuendoes, hints, evasion, vagueness and questions all her judgments (Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000).

### ***3. Inappropriate Restrictions***

Inappropriate restrictions include refusing to allow his partner to go out (Church, 1984; Douglas, 1998; Foley, 1985) or to work (Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; NiCarthy, 1986) or making her late for work so often that she loses her job (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). He acts as if she can do what she wants, then becomes upset when she does (Marshall, 1999); he directly or indirectly indicates that she has to ask his permission (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992), discourages her from any interests that he is not part of (Douglas, 1998; Marshall, 1999), intrudes and interrupts her activities (Douglas, 1998; Tolman, 1992) and keeps her from having time for herself (Douglas, 1998; Marshall, 1999). When she is away from him he monitors her whereabouts, demands she account for how she uses her time (Douglas, 1998; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Marshall, 1999; Tolman, 1992) and if she is five minutes late home, he gets angry (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

### ***4. Isolation***

The victim's partner may use outright prohibition or discourage her from seeing family and friends (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Marshall, 1999; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992) or he uses indirect means to make it difficult for her to go somewhere or talk to someone (Douglas, 1998; Marshall, 1999), such as leaving a small amount of petrol in the tank, closely monitoring the number of kilometres she drives (Tolman, 1992) or taking her car keys (NiCarthy, 1986). He may isolate her by moving from town to town (Loring, 1994) or by calling her names if she spends time with women friends; for example, he may accuse her of being a lesbian (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). Foley's (1985) study of New Zealand Army wives found that women felt isolation was the main reason for the severity of abuse.

Additionally, he uses underhanded tactics aimed to make her decide she does not want to see people; for example, telling her that her friends or family do not care about her (Marshall, 1999), being rude to visitors, refusing to go to joint social events (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986; Tolman, 1992), telling her that she cares more for her friends and family than for him (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992) and then he points out he is the only one who really understands her (Marshall, 1999).

Another approach is interfering with her relationships (Tolman, 1992); for example, he may attempt to divide and conquer by provoking jealousies and rivalries (Hirigoyen, 2000). Moreover, he may control the flow of information out of the relationship by requiring secrecy (Tolman, 1992) or getting angry or hurt if she talks about the relationship to others (Marshall, 1999). Also, he may control incoming information (Tolman, 1992) including what she reads (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

### ***5. Over-Protection and 'Caring'***

This set of tactics concerns pretending to care and protect his wife. He tries to keep her at home by saying that he worries about her too much when she is away or he tells her she never has to work because he wants to take care of her or he does the shopping so she does not have a reason to go out (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

When she is out, he is suspicious with no basis in fact (Avni, 1991; Douglas, 1998) and is extremely jealous (Douglas, 1998; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985). He takes her to and from work so the men she works with will not get 'ideas', he frequently phones or unexpectedly goes to her work to check up on her (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992) and he harasses her about affairs he imagines she is having (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986).

### ***6. Emotional Unkindness and Violation of Trust***

This category is more about what the abuser neglects to do, than what he actually does (McDowell, 1995). It involves passive omission of the care, respect and support generally expected in relationship. He shows indifference and acts like she does not matter (Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000; Marshall, 1999); for example, he makes TV, the newspaper, other people and his interests seem more important than she is and ignores her when she begins a conversation (Sackett & Saunders, 1999).

He ignores her need for assistance when she is tired, overworked (Sackett & Saunders, 1999) or when she or the children are sick; he refuses to help (Chang, 1995, 1996),



promises to help and then ‘forgets’ (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992) or helps with conditions attached (Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Tolman, 1992).

A male partner who psychologically abuse their wives do not give positive support, they withhold approval and affection (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986) or appreciation comes in the guise of backhanded compliments such as “This is the first good dinner you’ve cooked in months” (Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). He complains about or dismisses her if she is upset or asks for emotional support (NiCarthy, 1986; Sackett & Saunders, 1999) and lacks empathy when she experiences a bereavement (Chang, 1995, 1996). Furthermore, he threatens to divorce or abandon her if he does not get his way (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

Male partners who psychologically abuse use love as a coercive tool (Douglas, 1998; Hird & Jackson, 1999). He exploits his partner’s intimate disclosures such as her weaknesses, past life, vulnerabilities and insecurities and uses them against her (Avni, 1991); he tells her she needs to grow up and join the real world or he acts very cruelly and then says she is too sensitive and cannot take a joke (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

## ***7. Degradation***

The abuser who uses degradation tactics systematically diminishes the victim’s ideas, feelings, perceptions, beliefs (Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1999; NiCarthy, 1986) and criticises her strengths and achievements (Douglas, 1998; Hoffman, 1984; Tolman, 1992). He puts her down, calls her names (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993) uses sarcasm and abusive language (Douglas, 1998; Hirigoyen, 2000), corrects things she says or does (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992) and deprives her of sleep, food (Church, 1984; Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Tolman, 1992) and health care. Additionally, he humiliates and embarrasses her in public (Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Marshall, 1999; NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992).

## **8. Separation Abuse**

Abuse often increases after separation as the abuser attempts to reassert his authority (Busch, 2001; Hart, 1990; Liss & Stahly, 1993 cited in Robertson, 1999; Robertson & Busch, 1998). A history of abuse within the relationship means negotiation for custody and property occurs in a climate of fear so he can utilise 'custody blackmail' which means pushing for custody, even when he does not want the children, to force her to give him other things he wants (Kurz, 1996; Robertson & Busch, 1998) and to diminish her financial resources through endless legal hearings (HAIP, 2001b). Further, visitation of children is accompanied by harassment (Busch, 2000, 2001; Kurz, 1996; Robertson & Busch, 1998).

Stalking campaigns, which William Cupach and Brian Spitzberg (2000) called 'obsessive relational intrusion', include driving by her house, leaving notes on her car windshield, taking photos without consent, warning her that bad things might happen, performing favours without her permission, leaving her unwanted gifts and making unwanted phone calls (Robertson & Busch, 1998).

## **9. Using Social Institutions**

A little researched tactic is using social institutions to justify, support and enforce the abuser's dominance and to obtain acceptance that hierarchy is natural and that those at the bottom cause their own deficiencies (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Men may use non-violence programmes as a tactic of abuse by telling their partner how lucky she is because his abuse is minimal compared with other men in the group (Busch, 2001) and in addition he learns how to use a wider range of tactics (HAIP, 2001b; Robertson & Busch, 1998). He uses battles for custody of children as an arena of psychological abuse (Mahoney, 1991; Robertson & Busch, 1998; Tolman, 1992) and he shows excessive interest in her emotional life and tries to convince her that she needs to see a psychiatrist (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992), then threatens to tell social services that she is an unfit mother if she does not do what he wants (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Some of the ways institutions support men who use psychological abuse against their wives are explored on pages 9 and 119.

## **10. Denial, Minimising, Blaming**

The abuser minimises his abusiveness (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993), tells his partner that their relationship is the best she can hope for (Hoffman, 1984; Straus, 1979) and he uses rationality and reasoning such as reminding her of times he was right and she was wrong (Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1999).

Abusers deny responsibility for their behaviours (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993), blame the victim (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998), twist things around so that it appears she is responsible (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Marshall, 1999; Pence & Paymar, 1993) and when she gives him feedback about his behaviours he picks her personality apart (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Marshall, 1999). Furthermore, the abusive man obstructs change (Hirigoyen, 2000) and warns the victim that if she leaves, he will commit suicide and she will be responsible (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

## **11. Using the Children**

The abuser punishes or deprives the children when he is angry with his partner (NiCarthy, 1986), makes her feel guilty about the children (Pence & Paymar, 1993) and says he would not lose his temper if she kept them quieter (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). Or, he tells her she is incapable of looking after the children (Douglas, 1998; Tolman, 1992), threatens to kidnap them if she leaves him (NiCarthy, 1986), then once separated he uses them to relay messages to her and harasses his partner during visitation (Busch, 2001; Pence & Paymar, 1993).

## **12. Economic Abuse**

Economic abuse involves withholding money and other resources (Basile, 1999; Douglas, 1998; Foley, 1985; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Marshall, 1999; Pence & Paymar, 1993), preventing the woman from getting a job (Pence & Paymar, 1993) and denying her access to bank accounts (Tolman, 1992). If she is allowed money she has to ask permission to have or spend it (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992), then he monitors how much and what she spends it on (Ann Jones

& Schechter, 1992; NiCarthy, 1986) or takes the money away (NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Alternatively, he may give her everything she wants, but constantly remind her that she could not have such a lifestyle without him (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

He may inappropriately use family funds (Marshall, 1999; Tolman, 1992) and force her to bail him out of his financial difficulties (Douglas, 1998)(Douglas, 1998). He may refuse to work (Avni, 1991; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; NiCarthy, 1986) creating extreme financial hardship (Tolman, 1992) and then take money out of his partner's purse or steal her possessions and sell them (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

He excludes her from important financial decisions (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992), will not give her access to information about their financial situation (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Pence & Paymar, 1993) or alternatively he makes her responsible for running the accounts and the budget then demands she give him money for anything he wants, when he wants, over and above the budget (Douglas, 1998). Then he blames her if there is not enough money or, if she gives him money, she has to figure out how to make ends meet (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

### **13. Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse is a form of psychological abuse when it involves non-physical coercion. The sexual abuser expects and demands to have sex when she does not desire it (Church, 1984; Douglas, 1998; Hoffman, 1984; Tolman, 1992), makes her have sex on his terms (Douglas, 1998; Hoffman, 1984; Tolman, 1992) and insists on unwanted and uncomfortable touching (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; NiCarthy, 1986). He begs her to strip when she does not want to (NiCarthy, 1986), insists she dress in a more sexual way than she wants (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; NiCarthy, 1986), manipulates and blackmails her into having sex in return for actions such as giving her a gift or a back rub (Basile, 1999) and pressures her to have sex when she is sick or it endangers her health (NiCarthy, 1986). Further, he will not do what excites her sexually (Douglas, 1998; Sackett & Saunders, 1999), minimises the importance of her feelings about sex and withholds affection (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986).

Moreover, he involves other people against her wishes, he has affairs with other women after agreeing to a monogamous relationship (NiCarthy, 1986), tries to seduce her friends and family members (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992), publicly shows sexual interest in other women (NiCarthy, 1986), makes her perform degrading sexual acts in public (Tolman, 1992), forces her to have sex with others or to watch others (NiCarthy, 1986) and makes sexual jokes about her in front of the children and other people (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

Additionally, he humiliates and criticises her sexuality (Basile, 1999; Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; NiCarthy, 1986), calls her frigid (Basile, 1999) or a whore (NiCarthy, 1986), makes fun of her body (Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992), makes demeaning remarks about women in general (Hoffman, 1984) such as telling anti-woman jokes (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; NiCarthy, 1986), treats women as sex objects (NiCarthy, 1986), and he compares her unfavourably to women in pornographic magazines and videos (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992) and to previous lovers (Douglas, 1998; HAIP, 2001b).

#### ***14. Symbolic Aggression***

Symbolic aggression involves damaging property (Douglas, 1998; Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause, & Polek, 1990; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Pence & Paymar, 1993), abusing pets (Douglas, 1998; NiCarthy, 1986; Pence & Paymar, 1993) or throwing something but not at his partner (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Straus, 1979). It also involves keeping a weapon on view or within reach (Avni, 1991; Pence & Paymar, 1993) and direct or indirect verbal threats to hurt his partner or her family (NiCarthy, 1986) such as, “If you say another word I don’t know what I’m going to do,” concurrent with body language of standing very close to her, clenching his fists (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985) using a patient yet restrained tone of voice, a sigh of disgust or shake of the head in dramatic bewilderment (Hirigoyen, 2000; Loring, 1994; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Furthermore, he may block the door so she cannot leave or he refuses to leave or drives recklessly with his partner in the car (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992).

Symbolic aggression is also based on control that abusers have established through previous acts of psychological abuse, hence a ‘look’, which is seemingly innocent to an

outsider, is understood as a real threat to the victim. For example, when he leaves flowers on her doorstep the police may reject this harassment and say that it is showing love. But to the abuser this police view proves that he can get to his victim any time he wants and that no legal institution can stop him (Robertson & Busch, 1998). He also uses the threat that he will abuse her again as blackmail making her drop legal charges against him (Pence & Paymar, 1993).

## **15. Domestic Slavery**

Asymmetrical responsibility is a major hallmark of domestic slavery (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). He acts like the 'master of the castle' by enforcing rigid sex role expectations (Church, 1984; Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Tolman, 1992); however, she is obliged to carry out her responsibilities and she does so and he is not obliged to carry out his responsibilities and does not necessarily do so. When he wants to go out on his own, he does; she cannot because the children are her responsibility (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). He refuses to take responsibility for finances, household duties and for his own children (Hoffman, 1984; Kirkwood, 1993) and he treats her like a servant (Douglas, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993) by overburdening her with responsibility (Douglas, 1998; Kirkwood, 1993).

## **Effects of Psychological Abuse on Women**

The negative effects experienced by battered wives which were previously attributed to physical violence are now thought to be results of psychological abuse (Engels & Moison, 1994 cited in Follingstad & Dehart, 2000; Marshall, 1994; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993). These effects are outlined below. The purpose of psychological abuse is to diminish the victim's internal and external resources which strengthens the abuser's ability to control and use the victim for his own ends (Douglas, 1998; Shepard & Campbell, 1992). One tactic of psychological abuse can have more than one type of impact; for example, a put-down in front of others may be degrading, may contribute to isolation because the victim may want to avoid similar social situations, may create fear or may be a technique to enforce a frivolous demand (Tolman, 1992).

Sargant (1957 cited in Schwartz, 1991) suggested that the persistent tension, anxiety and the contradictory nature of psychological abuse work by creating physiological changes in the brain and that because relentless abuse results in physical debilitation and mental exhaustion, this leads to greatly heightened suggestibility. Nonetheless, the impact may depend on the context and history of the relationship (Tolman, 1992), friends, relatives, authorities and the culture at large (Murphy & Cascardi, 1993).

Effects of psychological abuse include becoming emotionally beaten down (Douglas, 1998; Marshall, 1996) and female victims experience shame, guilt and anger (Church, 1984; Church & Church, 1984; Douglas, 1998) for something they have not done. They experience sadness (Loring, 1994), depression (Chang, 1996; Church, 1984; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Haines, 1989; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; NiCarthy, 1986), eroded confidence (Church, 1984; Church & Church, 1984; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000) and become insecure, discouraged, increasingly defeated (Douglas & McGregor, 2000) and desperate (Loring, 1994). Further, women experience anxiety (Church, 1984; Walker, 1999 cited in Grigsby & Hartman, 1997), fear, dread (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993) and may develop symptoms of post traumatic stress (Loring, 1994; Tolman, 1992).

When describing their experience of abuse women may dissociate and separate their feelings from their stories (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991). Self-doubt is a major indicator that the abuser's intention has been accomplished (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Hirigoyen, 2000; Loring, 1994; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979), her perceptions become altered (Douglas, 1998; Marshall, 1994), she loses her critical ability (Hirigoyen, 2000) and her belief in her capacities diminishes (Chang, 1996; Marshall, 1994; NiCarthy, 1986; Tolman, 1992).

Moreover, women experience disorientation, confusion and feeling as if they are losing their sanity (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Loring, 1994; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979). They experience memory impairment (Walker, 1999 cited in Grigsby & Hartman, 1997), an inability to concentrate when the perpetrator is nearby (Hirigoyen, 2000) and a lack of awareness of the ways they are being affected (Douglas, 1998; Loring, 1994).

All the above undermines women's sense of power, control and safety (Douglas, 1998; Kirkwood, 1993; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1984), they lose their ability to be self-determining (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998) and they become self-deprecating and very commonly blame themselves (Douglas, 1998; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Loring, 1994; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979).

Women lose self-respect, their self-esteem is weakened (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Kirkwood, 1993; Murphy & Cascardi, 1993; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979, 1984) and they either experience a disconnection from themselves or shrinking of the self, plus a loss of identity (Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; Marshall, 1999). Their subjective reality becomes distorted (Douglas, 1998; Kirkwood, 1993; Marshall, 1999) leading to a feeling of non-existence (Loring, 1994; Sackett & Saunders, 1999).

All the above effects wear women down to a state of physical exhaustion (Chang, 1996; Douglas & McGregor, 2000), decreased control over their physical state (Chang, 1996; Church, 1984; Kirkwood, 1993; Marshall, 1996) and physical symptoms may appear which have no physical basis (Hoffman, 1984).

## **How Women Cope When Their Male Live-In Partner Psychologically Abuses Them**

I defined 'coping' on page 4 of the introduction. One aspect of the definition to note when reading the following literature review is that coping strategies had both detrimental and positive effects for the women. There are very few studies exploring how women cope with psychological abuse, independent of physical violence, perpetrated by their husband or defacto male partner. Not all the literature on psychological abuse records findings about how women cope with it. For the purpose of this section I have created tables depicting the literature which specifically cites how women cope. Where possible, I have endeavoured only to use studies of white women.

A total of 183 women have been studied in five studies in Table 2 on the following page. It is not known how many women Hirigoyen (the sixth study) used to draw her conclusions.



Given this small number of studies, I also researched how women cope with psychological abuse while experiencing physical violence. Table 3 on page 32 summarises nine studies in this category, which researched 396 women plus the unknown number of women referred to in NiCarthy's book.

Thirdly, I researched how women cope with physical violence perpetrated by their male live-in partner when the researcher did not take into account the very probable presence of psychological abuse. I cite these studies because, as mentioned on page 2, it has been found that in 99% of cases, women who experience physical violence also experience psychological abuse. Further, as indicated on page 27, the negative effects experienced by battered wives which were previously attributed to physical violence are now thought to be results of psychological abuse.

I have cited 16 studies in Table 4 on page 34. The total number of battered women studied in this category was 2465. This total does not include the women who were used in comparative groups, or those people who were interviewed who formed part of the battered women's social networks.

The following review of this literature on coping represents research conducted with over 3,000 women in USA, Canada, France and New Zealand. As well as referring to the 31 studies noted in the tables, I will also introduce findings by theoreticians and researchers who have studied in related fields.

**Table 2:*****Coping with psychological abuse (without physical violence) perpetrated by a male live-in partner***

<b>Name</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Population of female victims of psychological abuse</b>	<b>Findings about how women coped</b>
Pat Hoffman	1984	Faculty member counselling department, St Cloud State University. Full time counsellor.	USA In-depth interviews with 25 women who identified themselves as psychologically abused. Obtained through advertisements.	Abuse crept up on the women, they felt shame and believed a 'good woman' could change her man. Self-blame, wished he would die. They left for the children's wellbeing and when they could no longer endure the relationship. They feared entering a new relationship.
Marti Tamm Loring	1994	Assistant Professor, Georgia State University, clinical social worker, sociologist.	USA Interviewed 37 emotionally abused women who murdered their partner. Drew on her clinical work..	Two frequently mentioned themes (a) fear of losing the partner and (b) failed attempts to gain validation and affirmation just prior to the murder.
Valerie Nash Chang	1996	Associate Professor, Indiana School of Social Work. Has practised psychology for 25 years and has been actively involved in training psychotherapists	USA In-depth interviews with 16 women. Obtained from social agencies. Findings critiqued by some of the interviewees and several professionals.	Coping strategies influenced by gender socialisation. His domination perceived as strength, women believed he knew best and it was her job to satisfy him. Women tried hard to do so. Once they realised he could never be satisfied women started to modify the meanings they gave to their experience. Some of the women believed it would have been easier to make sense of the abuse if they were hit.
Kay Douglas	1998	Since 1980: Social worker, psychotherapist, group facilitator on domestic abuse programme.	NZ 50 women. In-depth interviews.	Compliance, anticipating his needs, frequent crying, loss of self, shame, fear, guilt, deceit, silence, desperation to escape, abuse of food, alcohol and drugs, shame, changing herself. Desire to commit suicide or to kill him. Determination not to give up.
Kay Douglas & Kim McGregor	2000	Douglas: As above. McGregor: Med(Hons). Therapist working with survivors of interpersonal violence since mid 1980s..	NZ 55 Women (as well as being abused by male live-in partner, also abused by siblings, children, neighbours and at work) In-depth interviews.	Denial, failing to see his behaviour for what it is, self-blame, holding onto hope for too long, making excuses for his behaviour, trying too hard, becoming silenced.
Marie-France Hirigoyen	2000	Psychiatrist, psychoanalyst, family therapist.	France. Case histories from her clinical practice.	Withdrawal, confusion, doubt, stress, isolation, attempt to save him. Submit and accept abuse and/or rebel and fight it.

**Table 3:**  
***Coping with psychological abuse in conjunction with physical violence perpetrated by a male live-in partner***

Name	Year	Qualifications	Population of female victims of psychological abuse and physical violence	Findings about how women coped
Ginny NiCarthy	1986	Founder and director of the Abused Women's Network, Seattle. Leader of groups for abused women since 1976. Book read for corrective feedback by victims and professionals.	USA Abused Women's Network, New Beginnings Shelter for Battered Women, Seattle YWCA.	Guilt, self-blame, desire to preserve family life and to ensure the father was not deprived of his children. Psychological abuse was difficult to identify.
Tracy Herbert, Roxane Silver & John Ellard	1991	Department of Psychology, University of California, Program in Social Ecology, University of California & Department of Psychology, University of Calgary.	Canada. 130 women who remained in relationship volunteered in response to public service announcements. Women answered questionnaires.	Those who remained with partners perceived their relationship in a positive light and this is unrelated to whether or not they had left in the past and was unrelated to the frequency or severity of physical abuse. The more verbal abuse there was the more likely women would leave.
Ann Jones & Susan Schechter	1992	Both women have worked extensively with female victims of domestic violence for 20 years. Their book was read for critical feedback by professionals in the field of domestic violence.	USA 50 women were interviewed over five years. They were in various stages of relationship.	Women believed they were responsible for making the relationship work. They experienced fear, shame, self-blame and spent a great deal of time trying to work out what was best for themselves and their family. They resisted his demands, asserted themselves. They searched for the cause of his behaviours drawing on all traditional theories of male abuse.
Catherine Kirkwood	1993	PhD. Facilitates groups for abused and formerly abused women.	In depth interviews with 11 women from UK and 19 women from USA (25 white) exploring their experiences after leaving their partner.	Loss of confidence in own perspectives and loss of ability to meet own needs and beliefs. When started to question the overwhelming feeling of undeniable changes, they began tapping into a personal source of energy, such as anger or fear, accompanied by the need to preserve themselves or their children and they used this energy to leave.

**Table 3 continued ...**

Marilyn Merritt-Gray & Judith Wuest	1995	Faculty of Nursing, University of New Brunswick..	Canada. Feminist grounded theory interviewed 13 rural survivors of wife abuse.	From the beginning the women counteracted abuse by relinquishing parts of the self, minimising abuse and fortifying their defences. Affirmed by experiences outside the relationship discovered new dimensions of themselves. Clearly held onto some aspects of self .
Lora Lempert	1996	Department of Behavioural Sciences, University of Michigan-Dearborn.	USA In-depth interviews with 32 women from support groups associated with a women's shelter. Utilised grounded theory.	Women made strategic decisions to silence themselves, acquiesce while continuing to harbour alternative interpretations. They maintained some "distinctive internal definitions of self". Continuing to seek and create new coping strategies strengthened their own agency.
Stephanie Woods	1999	The University of Akron.	USA 53 abused women compared with 52 non-abused women completed self-report measures.	Women with low self-esteem from both groups had higher levels of belief in gender-based social norms regarding how women should maintain relationships. Women who had been abused had higher levels of externalised self-perception, self-sacrifice, silence and disconnection. Coping influenced by gender socialisation.
Ileana Arias & Karen Pape	1999	The University of Georgia.	USA 68 women residing in shelters.	Psychological abuse significant predictor of PTSD and intention to permanently leave. Incorporate denigration into self-concept. Those who focussed on positive aspects more likely to develop PTSD. the most psychologically strong women intended to disengage from the relationship more so than women severely affected psychologically.
Julia Wood	2001	Department of Communication Studies, University of North Carolina.	USA In-depth interviews with 20 women.	Women relied on gender and romance narratives to inform their coping strategies. These narratives legitimised domestic violence.

**Table 4:**  
***Coping with physical violence (when psychological abuse has not been taken into account by researcher) perpetrated by a male live-in partner***

Name	Year	Qualifications	Population of female victims of physical violence	Findings about how women coped
Kathleen Ferraro & John Johnson	1983	Centre for the Study of Justice, Arizona State University. Involved in domestic violence field since the early 1970s.	USA. Two year observation of 120 women (78% white) in a shelter.	Six techniques of neutralisation were examined: appeal to the salvation ethic, denial of injury, denial of victimiser, denial of victimisation, denial of options and appeal to higher loyalties. Six catalysts for redefining the abuse: a change in the level of violence, a change in resources, a change in the relationship, despair, a change in the visibility of violence and external definitions of the relationship.
Michael Strube & Linda Barbour	1983	Department of Psychology, Washington University, St Louis & Department of Psychology, University of Utah.	USA 98 women (84 white) who had contacted a counselling agency.	High Economic dependence and high levels of commitment were significantly and independently related to decisions to stay.
Michael Strube & Linda Barbour	1984	Department of Psychology, Washington University, St Louis & Department of Psychology, University of Utah.	USA 251 women (207 white) who had contacted a counselling agency.	Women who had left were more likely to be employed, to have been in their relationships for a shorter time, to be non-white and to have tried a greater number of coping strategies to alleviate abuse. Women who remained were more likely to be white and stayed because of love, economic hardship, belief the abuser would change and because they had nowhere else to go.
Trudy Mills	1985	Department of Sociology, University of Arizona.	USA 10 women who had recently left their partner with the assistance of a shelter.	The women became involved with the batterer at a time when they were vulnerable. Primary strategy to protect themselves was placating. They sensed no one could or would help and protected the husband. They labelled their partner as sick and focussed on helping him get well. They lost their identity and their observing self, albeit not entirely. They shifted from compliant 'zombies' to actors who gained several insights which allowed them to redefine the violence as unacceptable. Outside sources aided the new perspective.

**Table 4 continued ...**

Dee L. Graham, Edna Rawlings & Nelly Rimini	1988	Graham: Associate Professor of Psychology, University of Cincinnati Rawlings: Professor of Psychology, University of Cincinnati Rimini: Masters in Counselling.	Comparison of experiences of battered women and hostages.	Similarities: Both not passive, both use active survival strategies such as denial, attentiveness to the perpetrator's wants, fondness for him, fear of interferences by authorities, adoption of victimiser's perspective.
Karen Landenburger	1989	PhD, RN. University of Washington School of Nursing.	USA Semistructured open ended interviews with 30 battered and formerly battered women.	Four phase process describing entrapment and recovery from abuse: binding, enduring, disengaging and recovering. The process was cumulative and multidimensional. Highly valued the good times.
Jacquelyn Campbell	1989	PhD, RN. Associate Professor, College of Nursing, Wayne State University, Detroit.	USA 97 battered women cf 96 non-battered women who were also having serious problems in their relationships.	Both groups of women valued the wife-mother role and blamed themselves for relationship problems. Battered women tried more solutions and took more "drastic" action e.g. divorce, sought refuge than non-battered women.
Lee Ann Hoff	1990	Nurse-anthropologist and crisis specialist. Associate Professor, Northeastern University, Boston.	USA In-depth study of nine women and 131 of their social network members over one year.	Coping influenced by gender socialisation: Committed to make marriage work, protect his ego, acceptance of male authority, self-blame and shame for marriage failure. Self-destructive behaviours and always scheming about how to stop the violence. Social networks confused about how to help or turned a blind eye. Stayed for as long as they did due to economic dependence and the children.
Yvonne Ulrich	1991	Department of Nursing, Wichita State University.	USA Interviewed 51 formerly battered women (94% white) who had been physically abused rural and metropolitan. Women volunteered after advertised through social agencies.	86 reasons for leaving. Categorised under three themes: safety, dependency, personal growth.

**Table 4 continued ...**

Lee Bowker	1993	He is the Dean of the Graduate School and Research, Indiana University of Pennsylvania.	USA In-depth interviews 146 formerly battered women. Later expanded to a national sample of 1,000 battered and formerly battered women using a questionnaire.	Length of time it took to leave reflected abuser's use of domination and lack of support from social institutions, rather than as evidence of women's passivity or helplessness. Women's problems are social not psychological.
Anne Horton & Barry Johnson	1993	Horton: Associate Professor, School of Social Work, Brigham Young University Johnson: Professor, Department of Sociology, Brigham Young University.	USA 185 post-abuse survivors (91% white). Volunteered from public advertisements. Answered questionnaires.	When the abuser is proactive in taking responsibility for his actions abuse can end and relationships can be sustained.
Jacquelyn Campbell, Paul Miller, Mary Cardwell & Ruth Belknap	1994	Campbell: Professor, Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing Miller, Cardwell & Belknap: Wayne State University, College of Nursing.	USA 97 battered women compared with 96 women in problematic relationships. 2 <sup>nd</sup> interview 2 Ω years later 11 of the women in problematic relationships had become battered women (59% white).	Sought help from formal and informal sources. Used violence in self-defence. Leaving was a process over time. Continuum of coping strategies from learned helplessness, minimisation to healthy decision making. Majority of women took creative action to end the violence.
Caryl Rusbult & John Martz	1995	University of North Carolina.	USA 100 women resident in shelters (81% white) structured interviews.	Examined feelings of commitment using Rusbult's Investment Model of Commitment. Feelings of commitment and desire to remain or return to the abuser existed when there were poor financial alternatives, when there were less resources e.g. transport and education level and where there were heavy investments such as being married, having lived together for a long time and the existence of children. Greater commitment existed when there were some positive feelings left for the man. A history of childhood abuse did not necessarily equate to feeling more committed.

**Table 4 continued ...**

Vicki Moss, Carol Pitula PhD, Jacquelyn Campbell PhD & Lois Halstead PhD	1997	All four women are registered nurses. Moss: Viterbo College Pitula: Illinois Masonic Medical Center Campbell: Johns Hopkins University Halstead: Rush University.	USA Semistructured interviews 30 women who had left abusive relationships (50% white). Recruited from women's organisations and college campuses.	Three phase process of leaving: being in, getting out and going on. Women endured abuse until they could relinquish the fantasy of a happy relationship. Seven out of 15 had abuse as a child.
Melanie O'Neill & Patricia Kerig	2000	O'Neill: Department of Psychology, MCP Hahnemann University. Kerig: Department of Psychology, University of North Carolina.	USA 160 women completed ratings of characterological and behavioural self-blame and perceived control and adjustment.	Women who were still in their relationships had higher levels of self-blame and lower levels of perceived control than women who had left.
Andrea Martin, Kathy Berenson, Sascha Griffing, Robert Sage, Lorraine Madry, Lewis Bingham & Beny Primm	2000	Urban Women's Retreat & Urban Resource Institute, New York.	USA 70 shelter residents (primarily African American & Latina) structured interviews.	Women perceived they would return to the abuser when they had unrealistic optimism and selectively focussed on the positive aspects of the relationship. Women who were most adamant that they would not return underestimated the emergence of potential obstacles to staying away.

### ***Coping is Influenced by Gender Socialisation***

Gender socialisation, social status and culturally shared norms, principles, knowledge, symbols, values and beliefs influence the way women cope with love and life (Misra & Gergen, 1993 cited in Beall & Sternberg, 1995; Mellard, 1998). Women internalise the power dynamics enmeshed in gender relations (Hertzberg, 1996). Therefore the options for coping with psychological abuse by their male partner are constrained (Douglas, 1998; Wood, 2001; Woods, 1999). Wife abuse is a social, not a psychological, problem for women (Bowker, 1993), yet the women coping with abuse did not examine the cultural expectations of relationships. Instead, women believed they chose the wrong partner as a consequence of their own shortcomings (Lempert, 1996). Women were caught in a doublebind. They were socialised to serve their partner and silence themselves so if they spoke up when they were abused they were in conflict with cultural norms of authority. Then society condemns women for silencing themselves (Woods, 1999).



Research on how women cope found that, consistent with gender narratives, patterns of domination were often seen as indications of strength (Chang, 1996) and the newness of a relationship was used as a rationale for problems (Landenburger, 1989). Women followed their partner's orders one by one without realising his intentions (Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Loring, 1994) and recognition of abuse crept up on them (Hoffman, 1984). Women denied that their partner was a victimiser and labelled him as sick or stressed (Ferraro, 1983; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hoff, 1990; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997).

### ***Help Seeking***

Often the ability to reframe their partner's behaviours as abuse came from outside perspectives (Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). But, when women sought help from friends, family and social institutions (Bowker, 1993; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997), the responses were often not helpful and gave more support for staying than for leaving (Gondolf, 1988; Kalmus & Straus, 1982; Sullivan, 1991 all cited in Bowker, 1993; Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997; Strube & Barbour, 1984) and supports the male's use of 'power and control' tactics (Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992). The majority of women in Tracy Herbert and colleagues' study (1991) did not seek help as a result of the abuse and all the women in Pat Hoffman's study (1984) had no-one to discuss their perceptions with. Lee Bowker (1993) concluded that the length of time it took women to leave was a result of their partner's domination and lack of support from social institutions.

One strategy women use to cope in New Zealand is to take out a protection order. Of all the ethnic groups who applied for protection orders between 1997 and 1998, 64.6% were Pākehā, 28.5% were Maori and 6.9% were Pacific peoples (Ministry of Justice, 2000). When I was contemplating researching this thesis I thought I would research both Pākehā and Maori women. I spoke about this to Roma Balzer, the Coordinator of HAIP. She suggested that I study Pākehā women only because there is a paucity of understanding in this area. In a more recent Ministry of Justice study, it was found that 92% of applicants were women and over 75% were in a marriage-like partnership with the respondent (Liddicoat, 2001).

Between 1997 and 1998 the grounds given under the applications were physical 42.3%, sexual 3%, psychological 39.4% and child 15.2% (Ministry of Justice, 2000). A more recent Ministry of Justice study found that 82% of applications cited physical abuse and 78% cited psychological abuse (Liddicoat, 2001). These figures show that psychological abuse is as much a problem as physical violence.

### ***Making Sense of the Simultaneity of Love and Abuse***

Several researchers found that women coped with psychological abuse or physical violence perpetrated by their male partner by attempting to fulfill two goals simultaneously. The first goal was to protect themselves from harm and end the abuse and the second goal involved justifying maintaining the relationship (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Horton & Johnson, 1993; Lempert, 1996; Mills, 1985). Kathleen Ferraro and John Johnson (1983) called this the ‘appeal to higher loyalties’ which means placing higher value on marriage and supporting the male way of life than on personal safety. This meant maintaining a sense of trust and commitment in spite of the abuse which led to confusion about what women should expect and accept (Hoffman, 1984).

Women coped by searching for the meaning of the abuse. Attempting to make meaningful sense of a life threatening event is a form of cognitive adaptation (Ferraro, 1988; Mills, 1985) and the meaning women choose determines their course of action (Mehrotra, 1999). The context that made sense for many women was to interpret the relationship so that it was compatible with the culturally approved romance and gender narratives. These narratives state that male domination is characteristic of loving relationships (Blackman, 1989; Denzin, 1984; Jacobson & Gurman, 1986 all cited in Wood, 2001). Caryl Rusbult and John Martz (1995) posited an ‘investment model’ which explained that structural dependence on a relationship was linked to poor alternatives and high investment and that satisfaction level was irrelevant.

Many women defined their abusive partner as a victim. They thought the cause of his behaviours was because he was inferior to them (Mills, 1985) or that his behaviours were a result of stress or sickness (Ferraro, 1983; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hoff, 1990; Mills, 1985; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). Alternatively, some women excused their partner’s behaviours by denying that he was responsible for them and

saying that he did not intend to hurt her and that his behaviours were temporary and beyond his control (Ferraro, 1983; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). Because most women could not believe anyone would hate them for no good reason (Hirigoyen, 2000) they blamed themselves (Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Hoff, 1990; Hoffman, 1984; Loring, 1994; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). Ferraro and Johnson (1983) called this 'denial of victimisation'.

Self-blame led women to apologise and to change themselves (Douglas, 1998; Hoff, 1990; Hoffman, 1984; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1996; Loring, 1994). Because the abuse continued women thought they were doing something wrong so kept trying to get it right (Douglas, 1998; Landenburger, 1989; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). Adhering to the ready-made gender roles women experienced a sense of control which enhanced their perception of future event predictability and avoidability (M. L. O'Neill & Kerig, 2000). It also meant avoiding the social stigma which suggested that divorce is a sign of failure (Chang, 1996; Hoff, 1990; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997).

Women reported feeling responsible for making their relationship work (Lempert, 1996) and that commitment was the greatest barrier to leaving (Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). The more committed a woman is, the more she feels she has to lose, so she may experience cognitive dissonance and be motivated to minimise the abuse (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991). Several researchers found that this desire to be loyal to the man (Ferraro & Johnson, 1983) meant the women overlooked warning signs, covered up the abuse and sought evidence that they were in a mutually loving relationship. They held onto the positives which did exist and hoped that things would improve (Chang, 1996; Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991; Kirkwood, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985; Strube & Barbour, 1984; Wood, 2001). They remained hopeful of such an outcome as long as they had new strategies to try (Lempert, 1996). Women reported that they could not leave until they gave up the dream of having a life long mutually loving relationship (Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997) and that this was the hardest thing to do (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). Many women experienced a sense of losing their identity (Chang, 1996; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985) which prevented them from analysing the situation or using their own moral judgement (Loring, 1994; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995).

Women's socialisation led them to act in accord with the belief that a 'good woman' can change a man (Hoffman, 1984). Women operated by the 'salvation ethic' believing that their partner was basically a good person whose actions stemmed from specific resolvable problems which only she could resolve and that to save him she had to stay (Ferraro, 1983; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983). This concentrated effort to meet his needs (Chang, 1995; 1996; Landenburger, 1989) involved constant worry over how to make things better (Ferraro, 1983). They gave up their own interests to put him first (Chang, 1996). Women reported being highly attuned to their partner's pleasure and displeasure as a strategy to avoid and end abuse which, in keeping with gender socialisation patterns, meant knowing a lot about the abuser and little about themselves (Graham, Rawlings, & Rimini, 1988; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995).

Women believed their husband's view of reality (Chang, 1996) and protected him (Mills, 1985). Perhaps this belief in their partner was borne out of the gender socialisation. Barbara DeGregoria (1987) showed 214 non-abused women vignettes of marital interactions. She compared 30 of the most traditional women with 30 of the least traditional women and found that traditional women rated psychologically abusive behaviours as less abusive and more acceptable than non-traditional women. Sugarman & Frankel (1996 cited in Wood, 2001) replicated these findings in their research.

Michele Bograd (1988) contends that some researchers have ignored the social considerations which imprison women by interpreting coping strategies as 'putting up with' abuse and placating (Landenburger, 1989; Mills, 1985). Such interpretations about women's passivity stem from the plethora of studies in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s which focussed on personal attributes as possible reasons why women did not leave. For example, women were labelled as masochistic, pathological, codependent and helpless (Sault, 1972; Snell et al., 1964 both cited in Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Granello & Beamish, 1998; Blum, 1982; Gabbard & Larson, 1981; Gayford, 1975; Mills, 1984; Rounsville, 1978; Shainess, 1979; Snyder & Ruchtman, 1981; Straus & Gelles, 1986 all cited in Rusbult & Martz, 1995).

In opposition to these theories, Lavoie and colleagues (1989), who researched police attitudes concerning wife abuse, cited research which showed that abuse occurred regardless of women's attitudes (Berk et al., 1983; Burris, 1983; Burt, 1980; Kingbeil & Boyd, 1984; Sinclair, 1985 all cited in Lavoie, Jacob, Hardy, & Martin, 1989). The

masochistic theory has been shown to have no basis as a cause of wife abuse (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991). Studies show that victims generally have no previous self-punishment tendencies, nor do such tendencies show up later (Hirigoyen, 2000). Further, the masochistic concept avoids acknowledging the place that the social status of women has in wife abuse and the actual choices that are available to them (Robertson & Busch, 1998). These theories have infiltrated into public consciousness. Women who attended the HAIP programmes I facilitated had all internalised these concepts and blamed themselves for causing the abuse and for 'putting up with' the abuse. Further, several women told me they had been told by a counsellor that they were codependent. The formulation that taking control is the healthiest way of coping is a man-made concept. Women's 'passive' strategies are often consciously chosen as the best means of ensuring safety. Further, 'passive' strategies are in keeping with the way women have been socialised.

These interpretations imply that women enjoy being abused or that they have psychological deficits and an inability to escape from a painful situation because they lack motivation, have difficulty problem solving and have emotional deficits such as depression (Abramson, Seligman & Teasdale, 1978 cited in Campbell, 1989). It is, therefore, important to note two other socially constructed constraints women had to cope with. Historically, cultural guidance has held that any marriage is better than none for children (Ferraro, 1983). Therefore, a significant reason women stayed was because they believed their children needed their father (Chang, 1996; Hoffman, 1984; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). Paradoxically, women left also to protect their children's wellbeing (Hoffman, 1984; Kirkwood, 1993; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). Lack of financial resources made it more difficult to leave for many women (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982 cited in Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Kirkwood, 1993; Strube & Barbour, 1983).

Women's passive coping behaviours have recently been redefined as active, clearly intelligent, courageous and healthy survival strategies (Gondolf, 1990 cited in Bowker, 1993; Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Hoff, 1990; Lempert, 1996; Loring, 1994). Women have been found to consciously acquiesce while maintaining alternative beliefs (Lempert, 1996).

The following is an insight into some of the more active coping strategies used. Women opposed the pattern of control, negotiated first with themselves then with their partner, pursued activities without informing their partner they had done so and they actively solved problems (Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994). They coped by either avoiding direct honest communication (Graham, Rawlings, & Rimini, 1988) or they asserted themselves (Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992). Sometimes they resorted to abuse as a defence tactic (Hirigoyen, 2000; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). Further, women planned ways to reduce the abuse, they ignored it, reasoned with their partner by explaining to them how abuse felt, provided opportunities for their partner to get help, threatened to call the police (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995) and focussed on other areas of life (Mills, 1985). Some women considered or attempted suicide or homicide (Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997) and yet others wished their partner would die (Hoffman, 1984; Lempert, 1996). Women's vast array of coping processes and these methods occurred while they continued to face challenges of everyday life (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). Given the erosive and collective effects of abuse, it is extraordinary that women could be as creative and irrepressible as they were (Chang, 1996).

### ***Leaving vs Separation Abuse***

The most common question women are asked is "Why don't you just leave?" (Arias & Pape, 1999; Chang, 1996; Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Ferraro, 1983; Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991; Hoff, 1990; Horton & Johnson, 1993; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; Martin et al., 2000; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; NiCarthy, 1986; Rusbult & Martz, 1995; Strube & Barbour, 1983; Ulrich, 1991). The Wellington Violence Intervention Project (VIP) advertising campaign instructs women to "dump him" if he is controlling her (VIP, 2002). This places the burden of resolving wife abuse onto the victim (Herbert, Silver, & Ellard, 1991; Mahoney, 1991). Roma Balzer (1995) preferred to ask the question "What prevents her from leaving?" However, both questions imply that leaving a partner who is abusive is the solution to ending or breaking free from, psychological abuse or physical violence. Lawyers (Busch, 2001; Hart, 1990; Mahoney, 1991) and researchers (Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1989; Ellis & Stuckless, 1992; MacLeod & Cadieux, 1980; Wilson, Johnson & Daly, 1995 all cited in Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Kurz, 1996; Morris, 1997; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997; Robertson, 1999; Russell,

1982) have brought the reality of separation abuse into awareness. Separation abuse demonstrates that leaving is not the answer to ending harassment, manipulation and control by a woman's ex-partner, especially if children are involved. Based on their review of research and their clinical experience Susan Andersen and colleagues (1991) stated that leaving and returning was caused by the woman's partner's separation abuse strategies and her self-blame, guilt and loyalty. Nonetheless, when finally leaving, in spite of continued abuse and serious financial problems, starting over was often a liberating experience (Chang, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993).

Before leaving, women experienced a gradual realisation that they could not satisfy their partner. This led to giving up hope which freed women to focus on changing themselves in preparation for leaving. These changes were based on newly discovering a sense of self-worth (Kirkwood, 1993; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). In spite of losing themselves many women maintained some unique internal aspects of self (Lempert, 1996; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Mills, 1985). Perhaps the continual exploration and use of new coping strategies strengthened their own volition (Lempert, 1996; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997; Ulrich, 1991). Additionally, women bolstered their defences by giving themselves somewhere to think, reflect and problem solve. They enhanced their capability by focussing on parenting, becoming involved in jobs, developing financial independence, making small achievements and making a leaving plan. Any women who had experiences outside the relationship discovered new dimensions of themselves (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995) and these experiences enabled them to identify with women in other situations. Women experienced a sense of an emerging self (Bowker, 1993; Landenburger, 1989) and the core of the coping process for some women was reclaiming the self (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995).

Further turning points included 'waking up', gaining new insights and giving a new explanation to their situation (Chang, 1996; Kirkwood, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Ulrich, 1991). Women questioned the feeling of exhaustion, being confronted with obvious changes in health (Kirkwood, 1993; Ulrich, 1991) and reaching their personal limit (Hoffman, 1984; Ulrich, 1991). Many women left for the purpose of self-preservation (Ulrich, 1991).

Nonetheless, leaving was a process. Women expended a great deal of energy on different strategies before leaving the relationship or before modifying the meanings

they gave to it (Campbell, 1989; Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Chang, 1995, 1996; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hoff, 1990; Horton & Johnson, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Martin et al., 2000; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997; Ulrich, 1991).

The “investment model” suggests that women left when costs outweighed the rewards (Horton & Johnson, 1993; Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Women gained strength each time they left their relationship. Yet temporary leaving and returning has been criticised as pathological (Giles-Sims, 1983 cited in Campbell, 1989; Strube & Barbour, 1983). It has been found that women did not recognise that commitment was a barrier until after they left (Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997), nor did they define their partner’s behaviours as psychological abuse until after leaving (Kirkwood, 1993).

During the process of leaving, women regained their original self-esteem then went beyond that to a higher level (Kelly, 1988 cited in Bowker, 1993) (Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Landenburger, 1989). Lee Bowker described this process as a U-shaped curve indicating that at the bottom of the U a sliver of health was awakened.

## **Gaps in the Literature**

- Little is known about psychological abuse (in the absence of physical violence).
- There is a paucity of information about the influence that internalised social cognitions about women’s roles, rights and worth have on their coping strategies. Nor is much known about the influence that internalised social cognitions about men’s roles, rights and worth have on women’s coping strategies.
- I have found little research about the influence that other people have on women’s coping strategies.
- The literature suggested that women were trapped by external resources and that they lose themselves, experience psychological and physical illness and become



helpless. Yet, the literature gives little explanation about what enables women to leave their abusive partner and recover.

- There is extremely minimal mention in the literature on coping with physical violence or psychological abuse which mentions that separation abuse exists after women leave.

## **Research Questions**

1. How do women perceive psychological abuse? What influence do those perceptions have on their coping strategies?
2. What are women's beliefs about their role as women, worth as women, rights as women? How do those beliefs influence their coping strategies?
3. What are women's beliefs about men's role, men's worth and men's rights? How do those beliefs influence women's coping strategies?
4. What influences do friends, family, colleagues, the public and social and legal institutions have on women's coping strategies?
5. What enables women to leave their psychologically abusive partner?
6. Is leaving their abusive partner the end of the abuse?

## CHAPTER TWO – METHOD

“Therapists and advocates can treat emotional abuse -  
once they recognise it as the powerful form of violence it is.”  
*Marti Tamm Loring (1994, p. 12)*

### Participants

Participants were 12 Pākehā women. I interviewed 11 women and my story is the 12<sup>th</sup>. The criteria used to select participants included that they be Pākehā with no Maori heritage, that they had been married or living in a defacto relationship with a male who psychologically (not physically) abused them and that they had been out of their relationship for a minimum of one year. For the purpose of this study women decided for themselves whether they had been psychologically abused. Several women applied to be part of the research who had also experienced physical violence. In this respect I turned away several women; however, two women participated who had been hit a couple of times. These two women were adamant that they had been psychologically, not physically abused.

The 12 participants ranged in age from 29 to 46. Eleven were born and raised in New Zealand and one in Europe. Nine women had been married and three had lived in a defacto relationship. The length of time living with their partner was between 20 months and 16 years and the women had been out of their relationship for two to eight years. Eight women had children to the man who psychologically abused them, one woman had children prior to the relationship she spoke about in the interview and three women did not have any children. Six women were still experiencing abuse at the time of the follow-up interview and three women continued to live with the fear of potential abuse. (See Table 5 on the following page for further details.)

**Table 5:**  
***Participants' details***

Name	Started living with partner		Married or Defacto?	Number of children	Separated		Length of time lived together	Age at time of interview	Abuse still occurring in 2001?
	Age	Year			Age	Year			
Adriana	21	1988	M	1	27	1994	6 years	34	Yes
Donna	31	1987	M	5 *	39	1995	8 years	44	No <sup>9</sup>
Elizabeth	23	1978	M	4	39	1994	16 years	46	Yes
Elsie	20	1988	M	1	25	1993	5 years	33	No <sup>1</sup>
Heather	28	1998	D	1	29	1999	1 year	30	Yes
Karen	17	1988	D	2	24	1995	7 years	29	Yes
Pauline	19	1983	M	5	33	1997	14 years	37	Yes <sup>6</sup>
Raewyn	27	1985	M	2	39	1997	12 years	43	Yes
Sally	32	1993	M	-	39	1999	7 years	40	No <sup>1</sup>
Susan	18	1983	M	4	31	1996	14 years	36	No <sup>1</sup>
Teresa	28	1994	D	-	29	1996	20 months	33	No <sup>7</sup>
Victoria	23	1986	M	1 <sup>5</sup>	26	1990	3+ years	36	No

*Note:* \*Children from previous relationships.

<sup>9</sup>Separation abuse stopped 2001.

<sup>1</sup>Continues to fear possibility of separation abuse.

<sup>6</sup>Child from future relationship.

<sup>7</sup>Separation abuse stopped 1998.

<sup>6</sup>Ongoing abuse is minor.

## Materials

I placed an information sheet on noticeboards (Appendix 1) and sent a copy of the information sheet to each potential participant, along with a consent form (Appendix 2). The questionnaire I used for the first interview is appended (Appendix 3) as is the follow-up interview questionnaire (Appendix 4). Also appended is the note requesting that the participants read their transcripts (Appendix 5), the note requesting that participants read the findings (Appendix 6) and the letter to professionals requesting they critique the findings and discussion (Appendix 7).

## **Procedure**

### ***Ethical Approval***

Before seeking participants I answered a questionnaire about my proposed research and submitted it to the Psychology Department Ethics Review Committee.

### ***Finding Participants***

Once the research was approved I placed notices on boards in several locations around the city including: Citizens' Advice Bureau, the public libraries, social service agencies, the hospital and the university. (For a full list refer to Appendix 8.) As each potential participant contacted me I checked to see if they met my criteria and, if so, I posted them a consent form and the information sheet. Initially I was going to interview 10 women, but part way through the interview with Heather she was called to attend a meeting with the lawyer to sign affidavits for a court hearing. Heather became fully engaged in a custody battle and was unable to afford the time to complete the interview, so I interviewed one more woman; however, I also kept Heather's story in the research and we managed to meet for a follow-up interview.

### ***Participants' Safety***

In accord with the feminist principle that research should challenge the power imbalance between the researcher and the researched (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). To ensure the psychological safety of the women, I gave them a list of free or cheap counselling services in the city where they could find support if they were distressed by the telling of their story. I added my name to the list telling them that I am also a trained counsellor and have the ability to support people in such circumstances. I asked the women if they would like to meet me in advance of committing to the research and twice arranged to do so with one potential participant who did not turn up either time, so I did not pursue her as a participant. The other women did not take up this opportunity. I assured them that they could withdraw from the study at any time and were not obligated to answer all questions. I gave all the women the option to sign the

consent form in their own time in private, but they all insisted on signing it in front of me at the beginning of the interview.

I assured the women that their personal details would be kept confidential. To ensure this, I gave them the opportunity to choose a pseudonym, I removed or modified identifying details such as the towns they lived in, names of people involved and their type of employment. I gave the women a full copy of their transcript before editing it and I made any corrections they suggested to further guarantee confidentiality. Before mailing the transcripts I asked each woman if the post could pose any risks to confidentiality and they each gave me a safe address to use. Only one woman wanted to choose her own pseudonym, so I chose the rest. At the follow-up interview I checked that the names I had chosen suitably ensured confidentiality. One woman said I had chosen her middle name so gave me an alternative name to use. At the follow-up interview I asked if the women had experienced any misconceptions about the process (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). They all said they thought that everything that happened was what they expected would happen based on the information I gave them at the beginning.

I also asked them if they felt there were any power imbalances between myself as the researcher and themselves as the participants (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Eight women said they did not experience a problem, one said she felt very comfortable with me and one woman believed she had more power because the interviews were conducted at her home, at her invitation and she was the one with the story.

### ***Triangulation***

I employed a triangulated design to increase the trustworthiness and thoroughness of the findings (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). I used four forms of triangulation.

## ***Multiple Participants***

Participants were drawn from multiple contexts in an attempt to research Pākehā women from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, ages and stages of experience (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Murphy & O'Leary, 1994). I drew from my experience as a facilitator on five non-Maori women's programmes at HAIP and information gleaned from participants in the five "Self-esteem and Assertiveness for Women" courses I conducted at community education over the past two years.

## ***Investigator Triangulation***

Although I conducted this research alone, to avoid bias I used direct quotes from interviewees (Murphy & O'Leary, 1994; Reitz, 1999) and I asked the women to ensure the edited version of their story was correct. I gave copies of the findings to the interviewees for feedback, as well as to two professionals, who work with women who have experienced abuse, to talk through and challenge my findings (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). The feedback from one professional said that the headings used in the findings "said it all" and that drawing together various theories of self in the discussion was "much better than attempting to claim 'the truth'." The other professional said that "their stories are remarkably similar indicating that something 'greater' than a relationship/communication/mismatched couple/low self-esteem problem is going on.... a story of systemic abuses which have intent – patriarchal structures/cultures that are based on dominance and oppression."

## ***Theoretical Triangulation***

Feminist researchers believe that multiple realities exist (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Clifford-Walton, 1998), yet there is a paucity of multi-theory studies (Valli, 1982 cited in Reinharz, 1992, p. 249). I used a grounded theory approach to generate patterns, then analysed those themes from various theoretical viewpoints which supported or contradicted the findings (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Glaser, 1992). These included: feminist theory (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997; Yllö, 1993, 1994); cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977); existential theory (Ferraro, 1988; Fromm,

1942; R. May, 1972); psychoanalytic theory (A. Miller, 1979); ultimate resource theory (Allen & Straus, 1980); relational theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991); intergenerational theory of violence theory (G. James, 1999); Belenky and colleagues' (1986) theory of women's ways of knowing, learning and perceiving truth; French and Raven's (1959) theory of the five bases of power; social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986 both cited in Wade & Tavris, 1993); social construction theory (Baker, 2001; Hird & Jackson, 1999; Wood, 2001); self-attitude theory (Kaplan, 1972 cited in D. O'Neill, 1998); culture of violence theory (Straus et al., 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1986 both cited in Lempert, 1996; Bowker, 1984; Smith, 1991; Benedek, 1993; Emde, 1993; Pollard & Whitaker, 1993; Ruppert, 1994; Stordeur & Stille, 1989; Walker, 1986; Whitaker, 1993 all cited in D. O'Neill, 1998); face saving entrapment theory (Brockner & Rubin, 1985).

I chose a qualitative methodology to examine women's lived experiences which is an existential approach emphasising the meanings people apply to their experiences. Existentialism focuses on personal, social, cultural and historical meanings of situations (Ferraro, 1988; Frankl, 1963; Garko, 1999; Reitz, 1999; Stern, 1994). I used open-ended, semi-structured interviews (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Reinharz, 1992) which gave me the flexibility to probe deeply into issues the women raised (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994) and to explore unexpected "rich derailments" (Glaser, 1992). Gaining access to women's thoughts and memories in their own words helps to counter centuries of isolation and silencing of women (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Reinharz, 1992).

Feminists do not accept that there is one truth about reality. They believe that each case study represents a partial view of the world (Clifford-Walton, 1998). Therefore, the goal of this qualitative research was not replicability or generalisability, but specificity. Qualitative research can never be absolutely replicable because participants and social meanings change over time (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Further, although I appended my set of questions, these do not include any extra questions asked of women due to issues which arose spontaneously.

## ***Method Triangulation***

I conducted one-to-one and follow-up interviews with each woman. A follow-up interview was more accurate than a single one (Reinharz, 1992) because I was able to ask if aspects of the women's story had been omitted (Reitz, 1999) and whether I had imposed my voice on their story (Reinharz, 1992). I took the women's corrective feedback into account in the final version of the findings (Reitz, 1999).

Additionally, the follow-up interview gave me the opportunity to ask the women how being a participant had influenced their life, either positively or negatively and whether it sparked change in them (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Clifford-Walton, 1998; Reinhartz, 1992). Three of the women said that being part of the research helped them to start to close that chapter of their life and to feel empowered and stronger. One woman said it validated her journey because it showed how far she had come because she was now counselling women in the same position. One woman said the process was neither positive or negative because she had come to terms with the abuse and another woman said the process had no effect on her because she was still having trouble coming to grips with the notion that she was and is being, abused. She cannot reconcile her partner's words of love, other people's words validating him and liking him and her experience of abuse. A couple of women said that verbalising their story was positive because I was the first person whom they had told their whole story to. One woman felt it was positive because she was able to refer a friend to be part of the research and to know she was helping the cause of women in the future by being part of it.

When reading the transcript four women laughed, cried, became emotional, experienced shock and said reading it did not feel very nice. They thought it was strange seeing it in writing and that it was huge, although what they told me was only a snippet. For the woman who said she dissociated throughout most of her relationship, reading her transcript was like reading someone else's story. One woman said reading her transcript gave her a better perspective because she saw her "whole" story. This helped her to accept what had happened and to move on. Another woman skim read for identifying details only. She did not want to be reminded of the abuse because she was scared she might think she was pathetic and that she might worry that what had happened was not really abusive. Three others also questioned whether the story they told me was true.



Yet another woman showed her daughter because she wanted confirmation that she had got the story right. Her daughter said that every bit was real. Another woman said that after years of minimising, discounting and dismissing her experience it was “mind blowing and emotional” that she could say so much. It made her realise it *did* happen and that it *did* have a huge effect. For all the women, seeing their story in black and white meant there was no hiding it and it made their story more real.

### ***The Interviews***

I created a list of questions and topics I wanted to cover. The interviews did not follow the format of the questionnaire because the complexity of women’s stories cannot be told in linear fashion. Rather, the interview followed a conversational style. This meant women often answered my questions without me having to ask or questions I asked were as a natural consequence of the story the women were telling. Before ending each interview, I checked my questionnaire and asked further questions if any topic had not been fully covered.

The first interviews lasted two to four hours. I gave the women several options of locations where they could be interviewed and asked them to choose somewhere that they felt the safest. As a result, I interviewed six in their own home, four at my home and one at her place of work. One woman led a busy life and asked to have the interview broken into shorter lengths and conducted on two separate occasions. All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were from 16 to 34 single spaced pages.

Before the follow-up interview I posted each woman a copy of her transcript and a copy of the pen portrait for her to give corrective feedback. One woman was unavailable for a follow-up interview and for giving me any feedback. The others gave me feedback when I conducted the follow-up interview. While I was compiling the findings into themes I realised I had not understood some of the things some women had said so I clarified these issues at the follow-up interview. The follow-up interview lasted between 15 and 30 minutes and I recorded the answers on paper. I gave every woman a copy of the findings and asked for feedback over the phone a month later. Six women told me how it felt to read their story intertwined in the findings with the other women’s. They said they were emotionally shaken. At the same time they felt a sense of identity with

the other women, that their experience was validated and that they were relieved that others understood what they had been through.

I pursued the feminist principle of raising the participants' consciousness (Garko, 1999) which is aimed at eradicating female oppression (Reinharz, 1992). I did this by making myself available to answer women's questions about 'power and control' issues at the end of interviews and during impromptu telephone conversations initiated by the women.

Feminist research should endeavour to actualise personal change in the researcher (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994) and this did occur for me. Until beginning this research I had lost myself in dealings with people who were using 'power and control' tactics. This sense of loss crippled my adult development; professionally and personally. Involving myself in the research for this thesis and facilitating women's programmes at HAIP mean that I now easily recognise when someone is using 'power and control' tactics and I am now empowered to sustain my sense of self and stand up for my safety and my rights.

## **Analysis**

### ***Reflexivity***

Following the feminist principle of reflexivity (Clifford-Walton, 1998), I asked myself the same questions as the participants (Reitz, 1999), tape-recorded the answers and included my story in the research (Alison Jones, 1992). Therefore, my account of coping with psychological abuse by my ex-husband has been analysed in the same way as the other 11 stories (Reitz, 1999). Because subjectivity is a valuable resource, I used my personal and professional experience to inform the questions I asked the women and to inform my analysis of their answers (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Reinhartz, 1992). Throughout the research I examined my preconceptions and kept a diary record of my experience (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994; Reitz, 1999).

## ***Grounded Theory***

Grounded theory is a theory rooted in existential reality. Its goal is to develop concepts that represent patterns which are relevant for those involved. Grounded theory requires a need for curiosity and creativity to generate new categories. Such generation alleviates the data from being tainted and constricted by previously known theories and integrates and expands previous findings (Glaser, 1992). I began my research wanting to know what aspects of society influenced women's coping strategies, so I searched for themes to illustrate such influences. When the women raised other issues I asked questions which Glaser (Glaser, 1992) recommended; such as, "What does this mean?", "What is the research truly a study of?" and "What is the dominant concern of the women?" Asking these questions and constantly comparing the women's stories, helped me to avoid the tendency to shape the findings according to preconceived assumptions. Further, when one woman's narrative did not form part of the emerging pattern this was an opportunity to explore the reason for such discrepancy (Glaser, 1992; Murphy & O'Leary, 1994).

I had intended conducting a focus group; however, I reached "saturation" when women kept repeating information which was exhibiting the same pattern (Glaser, 1992). I decided that I had a rich source of information within the 12 stories and further data gathering would have meant going beyond the scope of this thesis and would have made the categories unmanageable (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Instead, the follow-up interviews meant I was able to clarify points already made in the 12 stories, enquire about the impact of being involved in the study and gain feedback about the findings from the women's viewpoint.

## ***Critiquing Who is Speaking***

Although qualitative research allows findings to be grounded in the words of participants, feminist researchers also believe it is vital to analyse whether women's voices are authentic or a product of social oppression or social conformity (Reinharz, 1992). I highlighted contradictions between oppressive and liberal language. Further, most women explain their lives without regard to the sociopolitical context (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997) so where I disagreed with a woman's interpretation, I challenged this taken-for-granted experience in the findings and gave my viewpoint from a political

context. Because members of subordinate groups may lack language to articulate their frustrations they may express them non-verbally; for example, through laughter (Reinharz, 1992). Therefore, I recorded whenever one of the women laughed during the telling of her story.

## CHAPTER THREE – PEN PORTRAITS

“Each and every woman, independent and isolated from other women, makes the same declarations and describes the same behaviours on the part of their batterers.”

*Ellen Pence et al., 1984, p. 478*

The following is a short outline of each of the 12 participants in the study. In each I give a fragment of the women’s experience of psychological abuse perpetrated by their partner. These sketches are written, as told to me, from the women’s perspectives.

### Adriana

Adriana was born in Europe, is a 34 year old single mother of one, works part time as a teacher and is a full time graduate student. She met her New Zealand born partner in Europe where they lived and travelled together for two years in several different countries. They came to New Zealand in 1990 and married a month later. Steven worked as an architect and Adriana had a variety of management and health practitioner positions.

Adriana is the only woman I interviewed who was married to someone who was never abusive throughout their entire marriage; rather, the psychological abuse started after they divorced. Interestingly, though, according to Adriana, Steven’s attitudes and responses to Adriana covertly started to change the moment they arrived in New Zealand. The first obvious difference she noticed was when Steven complained that the house was untidy one day when a colleague visited him at his home office. Steven also became uncomfortable with Adriana’s gregariousness and closed the windows when they were having an argument because he was very much aware of the different social expectations of a married couple. Adriana calls herself a very strong rock who holds tight to her values. Their friends used to say that she “wore the pants” in the relationship. Adriana believed that Steven probably was never abusive because he did not “dare to be” and that she “would have just said goodbye”. Adriana said that it was almost given that this is the way she is and that’s that. Steven did have moods when they lived in Europe, but Adriana “thought this meant he was adapting to his first real winter”. Then one or two years before separating, Steven spent an extravagant amount of money on replacing the fillings in his teeth. He did not consult Adriana about

spending this money which she thought was strange, but she considered that, in the end, any individual spending evened out over time.

In 1994, Adriana and their two year old daughter took a trip to Adriana's home country in Europe. Steven flew to Europe to tell Adriana that he wanted to end the marriage and that he had sold all the matrimonial property and spent most of it and was unemployed. Before Steven returned to New Zealand Adriana suggested that he purchase a ticket so he could return to Europe to see his daughter. He refused. Although Adriana hated New Zealand she really wanted her daughter to have a relationship with her father. To be in the same country to achieve this and as there had been no psychological abuse in their six year relationship, she returned to New Zealand and they began to live separate lives in separate towns.

Since their separation, Adriana has been told by Steven's family that he used to complain that he did not like the fact that she worked and that he did not want her to go back to work after their daughter was born. But during the relationship he supported Adriana and shared responsibilities and in no way made it difficult for her to go to work. He used to complain about her tardy housekeeping and expressed other stereotypical views about what she should have been as a wife. Adriana was always very skinny and during the marriage Steven was very proud of having a slim wife.

Since their divorce in 1996 Steven has engaged in ongoing psychological abuse of both his daughter and Adriana. He has threatened to kill Adriana, has taken her to court several times over custody battles and Adriana is now unable to legally leave the country with her daughter. Steven has breached protection orders twice, has written degrading and humiliating lies in his affidavits about Adriana, her friends and members of his own family who are supportive of Adriana. He has made derogatory remarks about aspects of Adriana which he previously admired such as her slimness and sexuality. He has unsuccessfully tried to turn his family against Adriana, has consistently failed to carry out his parenting responsibilities and the separation abuse is still continuing. Adriana does not want another relationship; having lovers meets her needs and she is immersed in cultivating her career.

## Donna

Donna is a 44 year old single mother who lives on the sickness benefit. Donna has had four relationships in which each partner psychologically abused her. Her three marriages lasted for 7, 6 and 8 years and her fourth relationship was defacto which lasted for three years. By the end of her second marriage, Donna had five sons and she has two still living with her. Donna told me the story of her third relationship with Frank whom she married in 1993 when she was 37.

Before leaving her second husband, Donna worked hard running a child care centre and made a lot of money. When she met Frank she owned two properties, was raising five boys on the DPB and supplementing it with child care work. Frank was 14 years older than Donna, had two disabled arms, one from a childhood viral infection and the other from a recent car accident. Donna was struggling to provide meat for her sons so she took Frank in and cared for him in exchange for meat. After a while they began a relationship during which time he gave Donna two severe beatings. She was never beaten by her two previous husbands, her subsequent defacto partner, nor was she beaten again by Frank after marrying him. Although Donna had been beaten twice, she married to secure her financial investment. Donna was being paid a caregiver's benefit to care for Frank, but when they married the benefit ceased and Frank had to start giving her money. This was the point that the psychological abuse began. After living in Donna's house for nearly six years, Frank came up with the idea that they sell Donna's properties, purchase a farmlet to grow meat for the boys in exchange for Donna caring for Frank and her sons. The sons were to work the farm. Further, Frank said he would pay the mortgage as long as Donna did not have sex with any of his friends. On all counts Donna lived up to her end of the bargain and Frank did not.

Donna put \$50,000 deposit on the farmlet and never saw a cent again throughout her marriage. The rules changed. Their property became Frank's property and instead of being Frank's caregiver, she became his slave. Donna's work load got heavier and heavier and she received less and less for it. The first thing he did was take the car off Donna so she couldn't go anywhere. Everything was about what Frank wanted and what Frank wanted, Frank got. He ate steak three meals a day, gave steak to his friends and Donna's sons were made to eat mince and sausages. One son grubbed 14 acres of land to earn half the amount towards a pair of football boots. There was no conversation.

Donna served Frank meals on a tray wherever he chose to sit, washed him, dressed him and got down on her hands and knees to put his boots on and off. Both Donna and the five boys worked the farm and Donna packed meat.

Donna's only form of enjoyment was working in her garden. However, the pigs escaped three times and each time destroyed her garden. Eventually, Donna became so ill she could no longer work in her garden. Frank showed no sympathy and refused to pay for a gardener. Donna had a suspected cancerous tumour in her back and osteoarthritis, but was still expected to serve all of Frank's needs and was not allowed anyone to help her or he would have them "dealt to." One day Frank's family were visiting and he bent down and put his own boots on and off in front of them. Donna was devastated that she had been so used because she did not know he could manage himself.

Hamish, an ex-prisoner, moved into the house and worked as one of Frank's slaves. When Frank and his mates took trips overseas they visited brothels. Frank would tell Donna about those sexual experiences and experiences with past lovers, even though Donna asked him not to. When they were out, Frank had two women sitting on his knees and Donna was never allowed out of his sight in case she went off with a man.

Frank and Donna were the underworld royalty. Frank was the king and Donna was the queen. Frank told Donna that she was lucky and that if he died she would never be able to re-marry because she had the best, that no-one else could measure up. Donna believed Frank owned her, loved her and that she was lucky. This is partially the reason she stayed so long. As each of Donna's sons began to speak up for themselves Frank kicked them out.

Because Frank was the head, he made the rules so Donna accompanied him where no wife was ever allowed to go. This meant she was privvy to information about their "goings on" so when she left the relationship Frank threatened to hurt her sons if she did not return. She left when Frank had a tantrum and threw her out. This was when she was extremely ill and believed she was dying. For safety she quickly left town with the help of Hamish, Frank's "prison slave". Frank used to tell him about his sex life with Donna so Hamish helped her to leave because he wanted to have sex with her. That was six years ago and Donna risked the threat and moved towns and never returned.



Since then Frank has borrowed excessive amounts of money, their property has been turned into a dump and lost its value and Donna and Frank have been to court several times over the property settlement and he has slandered her. So far Donna has received \$30,000 of her initial \$50,000 deposit and has been lumbered with a tax debt of \$7,000 because Frank used her tax number to run the farmlet. Donna has a \$14,000 debt to WINZ because even though Frank was only providing her with meat when she was his caregiver, WINZ still chose to demand that she pay the DPB back. Currently, Donna has still been unable to get her share of the property and when she left she was not allowed to take any of her possessions.

After Donna separated from Frank she entered a defacto relationship with Hamish. Hamish was psychologically abusive towards Donna and they have now been separated for three years and she has a protection order out against him which he continues to breach and manages to lie his way out of being convicted. Donna is currently training to become a counsellor and wants to work in the domestic violence field.

## **Elizabeth**

Elizabeth is a 46 year old single mother of four and works as a counsellor at a social service agency. Elizabeth and David lived together for two years, then married when Elizabeth was 25. They had four children and their marriage lasted 13 years.

Before she married, Elizabeth worked diligently, saved her money and she owned a brand new car. She sold her car to travel overseas with David and used all her savings to pay for their elaborate wedding. From then on, Elizabeth was totally reliant on David for money. He earned over \$200,000 per year and she was not allowed to work, had no access to or knowledge about, their financial situation and had to account for every cent she spent on groceries. Meanwhile David spent his earnings on extravagant items such as a \$47,000 car. The money, house and car were in both Elizabeth and David's names, but they were "his" possessions and Elizabeth was one more of his possessions. Whenever he wanted anything, she had to drop what she was doing and attend to his needs. For example, he refused to take the house key to work with him so Elizabeth had to always be home at 5.00 pm or at lunch time to let him into the house. If she was late his anger would be explosive. When Elizabeth was out she had to make sure every five

minutes was accounted for because he would interrogate her when she returned. He was cold towards her visitors and was disdainful about any interests that Elizabeth had.

David was charming in public but at home he stomped on Elizabeth's budding creativity. He made derogatory remarks about Elizabeth and was quick to condemn her ideas but later, would adopt them as his own. He was emotionally unkind to Elizabeth; for example, he went overseas on an unnecessary holiday when she was ill and was 37 weeks pregnant with their third child. He also left her in charge of extensive house renovations. David regularly pressured Elizabeth into having sex against her will, compared her to his previous lover, saying that Elizabeth did not measure up and that the only reason he ejaculated quickly was because she was too attractive. David threatened to give Elizabeth "the lead treatment", meaning he would shoot her, if she ever had an affair. When she went through a traumatic time while being counselled about sexual abuse perpetrated by her father when she was a child, David used this as an opportunity to tell her how "bad" she was. David used to tell Elizabeth how lucky she was to have him and that no-one else would want to put up with her. David would never acknowledge that anything he might be doing could be contributing to what was happening in the relationship. That the only reason he agreed to attend counselling was so that he could tell the counsellor what a terrible person Elizabeth was and to get the counsellor to agree with him. When Elizabeth made other efforts to establish 'equality, reciprocal caring and respect', David was disparaging of her attempts and would say she was just doing it to get what she wanted.

For a year before the separation David had agreed that he would leave, but he kept making excuses for not doing so. One excuse being that he could not afford it. Finally, end Elizabeth left. The two have now been separated for seven years. David was extremely angry when Elizabeth left, put her down a lot and undermined her. David told the children their mother did not love them because she had left them. That the possessions she had, she had stolen from them. He also spread the same lies to people around town. Elizabeth stayed at a girlfriend's home but spent 12 hours a day looking after their four children at David's house. Because they slept there she was not entitled to the DPB. When she found rental accommodation, the children visited Elizabeth but they were not allowed to take any toys or change of clothes. Then he employed three teenage girls to care for the house, the garden and the children and took a trespass order out against Elizabeth which cut off her access to her children. Eventually Elizabeth had

her daughters living with her, so she went on the DPB and took odd jobs, but David had the WINZ fraud investigators around checking on Elizabeth's earnings. He did the same when she later had a boyfriend who occasionally stayed the night.

David drew up a matrimonial property agreement and promised that if she signed it the conflict would end and everything would be fine. Although Elizabeth's lawyer advised her not to sign it, she "really wanted to believe" David. She did "not care about the money" she just wanted the conflict to end so signed it and ended up with far less than her share of capital and a small amount of well-used possessions from the house. The conflict did not end, rather it escalated. David retained his business practice, the house and its contents. David has attempted to use the 'system' to deprive Elizabeth custody of the children, to gain a refund on the life insurance he had paid for her and to avoid paying child support. He has regularly taken Elizabeth to mediation, the disputes tribunal, district court and family court hearings which have so far cost Elizabeth \$25,000. Just after the separation Elizabeth had no money to buy the children anything. David agreed to give her \$50 to \$100 a fortnight for the children, but never did. One time she was desperate for money to buy groceries and rang David who hung up on her. So she visited him at work but he refused to give her money and had a trespass order taken out against her. When Elizabeth needed to communicate to David about the children he would hang up on her. So one time when she went around to the house to discuss something he had her arrested for trespassing. Three years later Elizabeth was with a mutual family friend in his car and they were collecting one of her sons from David's property, he had her arrested again.

After a long and bitter custody battle, Elizabeth now has three of the four children living with her. This is also partly because the older boy has begun to speak up for himself and his father has kicked him out. Access orders exist but David refuses to obey them and has the children at his own convenience. The separation abuse is still continuing as Elizabeth attempts to develop her career and mother her children in a hostile environment.

## **Elsie**

Elsie is a 33 year old single mother and is in her first year of an undergraduate university degree. Leon, who was 14 years older than Elsie, dominated, controlled and

possessed her in every way. When they met, Elsie was very career oriented, getting promotions and never wanted to marry anyone. He told her that she was to marry him, kept her away from her family until the wedding was set, took over her car and spent all her money. They married in 1988 when Elsie was 20. During the five years they lived together Leon was a real “control freak”, but he never acknowledged it to himself and would quite often say to people how nice he was.

If Leon found out anything about Elsie he would use it against her whenever he could, as often as he could. He was uncaring, lacked empathy for her feelings, was mean, nasty, called her fat and ugly, degraded her intelligence and behaviours and did not live up to commitments unless they were for his own pleasure. Leon complained about lack of money. If Elsie wanted to spend time with friends, she was never allocated any money, but he spent thousands on his own recreation. Everything they drank, ate and did, including sex, was what he wanted. He would rant and rave, throw something or kick in doors if Elsie said “no”. He did nothing in or outside the house. He was on ACC so spent his time fishing and doing other things he enjoyed. All decisions were made by him for his own benefit and nothing else mattered.

He was jealous and aggressive toward his new-born son and from then there was a huge increase in abuse. He yelled at the baby when it was one week old telling the baby that it had to shut up and not start running the house. And he threatened to kill Elsie’s dog. Elsie was forbidden to speak about the relationship to others. When Leon’s son from his previous marriage moved in, the son and Elsie formed a close relationship. But Leon became angry at both Elsie and his own son claiming that their closeness meant disloyalty to Leon. He was unwelcoming and unfriendly toward anybody Elsie knew. He told visitors that she was not home when she actually was. He he was so rude to family and friends and embarrassed her in front of them that people stopped visiting. Leon blamed Elsie and her dog for all manner of things. It was Elsie’s responsibility as a wife to take the blame for everything including his criminal tendencies.

When Elsie became pregnant in her fifth year of marriage there was a huge escalation of abuse. When Elsie was seven months pregnant Leon told her that she would never be able to live on her own with a baby and that she needed him. One day Elsie was holding the baby and Leon went up to them, stuck his fist within an inch of their faces and said, “You shut the fucking kid up or I’ll shut you up.” So she left the house and never went

back. At that point the baby was 8-12 weeks old. Then Leon started to send flowers and cards, something he had never done before and he kept phoning her and would lie to her. When he stopped paying the mortgage on the house which had dropped heavily in market value, she was left to pay for it, along with other debts. He threatened that he would “get” her and now Elsie lives in fear of bumping into Leon during the duck shooting season. Apart from this, there has been no further abuse since separating eight years ago and he has no contact with his son who is now eight. Elsie has only just gained the courage to begin dating again and is developing her career.

## Heather

Heather is a 30 year old single mother of one, on the DPB. She began a defacto relationship with Luke in 1998 which lasted for 20 months. Heather had been married previously and owned a rental property. When she moved in with Luke he pressured her to sell her property and to marry him. On both counts she refused, but this did not stop the constant insistence. Luke told family and friends they were engaged, but they were not and he gave Heather a ring when she kept explaining to him that she did not want to get married. He believed the world was against them both and kept wanting to move them away from family and friends. Whenever Luke did not get his way he would cry and sulk. Luke was jealous whenever he saw Heather talk to a man and said he would poke the guy’s “fucking eyes out”. He told Heather that she dressed like a whore. One time she applied for a job and he phoned the employer to tell him not to give Heather the position.

Heather became pregnant when she was in the middle of applying for teachers’ college. At that point she knew she wanted to leave Luke so contemplated having an abortion; however, he served High Court papers on her and the hospital to prevent it. From that point on he became more controlling. He called her degrading names, restricted her activities with friends and family and attempted to turn her against them. threaten me with him a lot.

Luke had a friend who was “always beating people up” and almost killed someone. Luke used him to threaten Heather. He would say that he “should be harder on” her and “drag her around the house by her hair” like his friend did to his girlfriend. He told

Heather he was going to send his friend to clean her mother's roof and put poison in her water.

Heather left before the baby was born. Luke stalked Heather, pleading her to move back with him. He made arrangements for his sister and her family to move into his place so he could move to where Heather was living. She refused him entry. Luke insisted on being at the birth against Heather's wishes. He was uncaring and negligent. Heather had stitches at the birth and a few hours later Luke came to the hospital to take her home. Instead of helping Heather, he walked off ahead with the baby and refused to bring the car closer so Heather would not have to walk in the rain or walk any further with her stitches. The abuse escalated into regular use of emotional blackmail to make Heather bring their son to visit him and when she arrived he would go out to the workingmen's club on his own and insist that she stay behind with the child until he returned several hours later. He would turn off the power disengaging the electric gates so that she could not leave. Other times he insisted that she stay overnight so he could see his son in the morning and would not let her take her toilet bag away in an attempt to make sure she returned to stay again. He has threatened to commit suicide because she will not live with him. He is obsessed with Heather. For example, he has grabbed the pram and said, "I know that when I've got our son you won't go far away."

He has harassed her by making scores of phone calls and by following her. He has blamed Heather for the relationship not working by telling her that she was making him behave the way he is and that if she lived with him he would be the same person he was when they first went out. Heather left Luke almost two years ago and is currently going through custody battles. In Heather's view Luke has "fabricated the truth" in his affidavits in his attempts to gain custody of their child. Heather wanted to take out a protection order against Luke but he insisted on signing an undertaking instead which means the police have no right to arrest him when he breaches it. He has breached it by approaching her in the street and also when she drops her son off at supervised access. During these approaches he begs her for greater access to their son, swears at her and cries. Heather has been wanting to move towns but for several months she has not been legally allowed to. Currently most of Heather's time is taken up with mothering and attending to ways she can protect herself and her son from the ongoing abuse.

## Karen

Karen is a 29 year old single mother of two. She works part time as a university tutor and is part way through completing her PhD. Karen moved in with her Maori defacto partner Felix in 1988 when she was 17. They lived together for seven years. Felix was 12 years older than Karen. He and his family explicitly and repeatedly, stated that they placed a lot of emphasis on good family relationships and held an almost spiritual reverence for the man-woman bond, but their actions did not match their words.

Felix was an assistant to a physiotherapist and worked long hours from 5.30 am until midnight six days a week caring for his physically disabled clients. He earned \$600 per week but Karen never saw the money. Felix used to be obsessive about each new philosophy he discovered; he attended personal development weekend workshops and bought into multi-level marketing schemes. Each obsession was short-lived and cost thousands of dollars. Karen was at art school, became a mother of two and later she began a university degree. When the children were born, Karen went onto the DPB because she could not rely on Felix to provide financially. He had a cycle of being abusive and then being very nice. Felix mounted a campaign to undermine Karen's intelligence, self-esteem, achievements, artistic ability organisational skills and education. Felix was caring, polite and helpful to everyone but Karen and their children. He hated it when Karen asked him to do something like fixing a window. But he went around his entire whanau and fixed their windows. His lack of contribution toward the household, fathering and caring about Karen worsened as the relationship went on.

Felix restricted who Karen could see, he degraded her friends and family, stopped her from talking to people about the relationship. He was extremely jealous, would explode unpredictably, smash furniture, make her have sex against her wishes. He refused to use contraception, stating that it was not part of his Maori culture and that sex was for procreating. Yet he would not help during her pregnancies and walked out when each child was born and has refused to take responsibility for his children during and after, the relationship. Any time Karen asked him to help her raise the children he said if she did not like it she could adopt them out. Now, if he spends time with the children, he frisks them for money and uses it to purchase cigarettes and beer. Felix made a "very big deal" out of the small things Karen did; he blamed her for his behaviours and used a new age philosophy telling her that she constructs her own life and that everything he

did was her creation. Karen made the major decisions such as where to live; however, if Felix felt a decision needed to be blocked he did. Felix's mother kept telling Karen to obey her partner and Felix supported his mother.

Felix made very cutting comments when Karen was having fun; he restricted her activities and her use of the car in the guise of protecting her from danger and obsessively monitored everything she did. He would pull a blanket over his head and hum when Karen wanted to communicate. He would always say that Karen was wrong and that the opposite to what she said was true. He appeared to be very caring at times and would listen to Karen attentively, but later would use this intimate knowledge as ammunition to humiliate and degrade her. During one of his jealous fits at a dance party, he grabbed Karen by the arm, pushed her into the car, drove some distance, made her get out, in the middle of a winter's night, wearing high heeled shoes. It took her an hour to walk home.

Karen left the relationship several times. Each time he would follow and finally she would allow him back in so the children could have a father. The final time, Felix was caring in an attempt to get Karen back, but then he became very nasty. For example, he broke into her house and smashed things up. The two have now been separated for six years and Felix continues to be an irresponsible father and to psychologically abuse his children. He says that he cannot have the children because he has no money, has nowhere to live and he refuses to take responsibility for either of those problems. His main reason for having any involvement with the children is so he can see Karen. Karen is apprehensive about having a relationship with any other man and is dedicated to developing her career.

## **Pauline**

Pauline is a 37 year old mother of five, is on the DPB and is training to be a social service worker. Pauline began dating Chris when she was 14 and life absolutely revolved around him. She began living with him at age 19 and they married in 1985 when she was 21. Altogether they were in relationship for 19 years and lived together 14 of those years and had five children. Pauline was a full time mother and Chris insisted that he be the one to earn the money.



During the 18 months Pauline and Chris lived together before marrying he took her for granted, treating her like a slave, but she was allowed to run their finances. However, as soon as they were married Chris took full control of the money. First the control was insidious; for example, as Pauline was about to leave to go shopping Chris would write cheques to pay all the pending bills which were not due for weeks, then hand her the cheque book. Later in the marriage he would hand it to her in overdraft and then he used to take the cheque book to work. At one point, Chris took over the supermarket shopping and gave Pauline no choice about what he purchased.

After her first baby, Pauline had post natal depression and wanted to employ a teenager to help with the housework. Chris refused to allow anyone else to be involved in their relationship and said he would help. Chris contributed well to parenting the first two children helping with bathing, feeding, etc., but after that he dropped his fathering role. Chris was an engineer working shifts. His salary rose from \$55,000 to \$70,000 by the end of the marriage. Pauline wanted him to care for the children during some of his time off so she could work, but he would not allow her to work, nor did he stay home with her and the children because he found that boring. He worked much of his spare time running a business. The rest of his time he helped friends and acquaintances with projects and involved himself with his clubs and hobbies. Because Chris was so helpful and charming to others everyone thought Chris was a fantastic husband.

Chris and Pauline renovated two houses; Pauline stripped the wallpaper and sanded and Chris painted and wallpapered. He was the one who got the praise and he never told anyone about the preparation work that Pauline did. When they purchased their third run-down house Chris refused to renovate it. He always avoided talking about issues, he never raised his voice or got angry. One time Chris did up a car and gave it to her for Christmas and proudly told his mates what he had done. Then he sold it in February without Pauline's consent. For various reasons a car would often not be available for Pauline to drive. For example, Chris would have it off the road for seven months being sanded ready to be repainted.

Pauline had no sexual rights, no right to have judgements or make decisions. He downgraded her individual tastes and one time he accidentally hit Pauline on the head while he was asleep and when she mentioned it to him in the morning he said he wished he had hit her harder. Chris never acknowledged Pauline's abilities which remained

buried until she left the relationship, nor did he acknowledge her thoughts or, her emotions. He never even knew that she had a white tattoo on her hand. If anyone asked Chris about his wife's interests he would say rally cars, soccer and other things which were actually his interests.

As part of her marriage vows, Pauline promised to obey Chris. It was Chris who chose these vows. Chris had sexist attitudes towards all women. When Miss World was on TV he would sit under the TV and look up. He had the attitude that all women are "tits and bums". Pauline and Chris were both leaders of groups of children at Red Cross. It had been Pauline's passion to join but Chris wanted to join too. Pauline rose through the ranks to the highest status and received an award. Chris was on the fundraising committee and refrained from raising money for Pauline's trip to receive the award. After a few years Pauline felt the children were being neglected because of the amount of time spent involved with Red Cross so she had to leave because Chris refused to.

When Pauline got pregnant for the fifth time Chris decided, without discussion with Pauline, that she was to have an abortion, even though he knew that she was anti-abortion. The night he told her this, she experienced hours of pain and had a miscarriage. During these hours, Pauline continued to prepare the four children for bed while Chris spent his time talking to a visitor in the lounge. The next morning Chris dropped Pauline on the steps of accident and emergency then drove away. They went on to have a fifth child. Three months later Pauline had a cancer lump removed from her arm and she was told not to lift anything. Chris brought her home from the hospital, put the baby in her arms to breastfeed and went out, leaving her with the other four children to care for as well. Neglect and indifference were major themes in the way Chris treated Pauline, although Chris had a momentary few weeks of being nice when the fifth baby was born.

When Pauline decided the relationship was over she asked Chris to leave. After leaving, Chris talked to the Chaplain at work and confessed to Pauline that he realised he had been controlling, manipulative, had taken everything over and that Pauline had absolutely nothing that she could call her own. Then all of a sudden after a couple of weeks he returned to his abusive self.

Pauline and Chris have been separated for five years. Chris would not agree to court ordered access arrangements and told the judge that he did not want to have the children because they would interfere with his social life and interests. Chris sees the children only at his convenience. He continues to do shift work and regularly changes his access arrangements at short notice causing Pauline to adhere to an unpredictable schedule. Pauline has dated one man since separating and this man turned out to be even worse in his use of psychological abuse. Pauline is now wary of having further relationships and is concentrating on developing her career.

## **Raewyn**

Raewyn is a 43 year old single mother of two who lives on the DPB and works part time teaching and taking occasional contracts for the Department of Conservation. Raewyn married Brian in 1985 when she was 27 and they lived together in an isolated place in the country for 12 years.

Raewyn spent most of her time alone mothering, gardening and doing the housework. Brian worked as a forestry technician earning the money. In the beginning they did not have a joint account and Raewyn had to endure an aggressive argument each week when she asked for money to pay the bills and feed and clothe the children. Brian would accuse Raewyn of spending too much money, even though what she spent was for the children's necessities. Raewyn had very limited social contact; Brian became angry if she travelled to visit her family and he would try to stop her from doing things she was interested in. Although it was not a spoken rule, Raewyn knew by the fear she experienced that Brian would react aggressively if she did talk about her relationship to others.

Brian did not respect women, including Raewyn and was critical of people in general. His abuse became worse when they had their children. He repeatedly put her down, belittled her interests, sex was about what he wanted, he habitually indicated that she was useless and lazy and that anything she did was unimportant. Brian has a Certificate in Science and Raewyn has a Masters degree in Science and he would demean the work she used to do and blame her if something went missing. In fact, everything was Raewyn's fault because he was perfect.

Brian never listened to Raewyn's opinions and if someone else, particularly a male, had a similar idea to Raewyn's, Brian would think it was great. He hardly ever cuddled Raewyn. He would do his own thing all the time and would make it awkward for Raewyn to do hers and he called her selfish. There was a great deal of pressure to act, think and be like him because his way was the only and right way, even though his behaviours were not always congruent with his philosophies. Sometimes he would hit Raewyn, enough to make her believe he could do damage. But Raewyn considers this insignificant compared with Brian's cycles of horrible moods, verbal aggression and insidious ways of neglecting her, showing indifference and degrading her then suddenly becoming very nice in an attempt to minimise the very negative and critical environment Raewyn lived in.

Brian indicated that his work was more important than anything Raewyn did. When she was teaching he was jealous and the children cried when she left. Brian made it difficult for her to go because he would not attend to the children's emotional needs and blamed her for his inability to do so. He demeaned Raewyn's status as a wife and rubbished the way she parented. If Raewyn wanted a break from the children he was either uncooperative or refused saying that she did nothing anyway. He sulked if he did not get his own way. He criticised the older child and doted on the younger one and when friends came over he would suddenly start being a father.

After Raewyn left Brian they attended counselling and Brian was aggressive towards the counsellor saying that, "She took the children away so I'm giving up my role as a father." In the five years since separating, apart from continually degrading anything that Raewyn does in her personal and professional life, Brian has continued to take very little responsibility for his children, does not live up to his fathering commitments. He told a mutual friend that there was no way he was going to have the children at weekends if it meant making life easy for Raewyn to spend time with her new lover. Currently Brian continues to accuse Raewyn of taking the children and breaking up the family. Raewyn is now dating a caring man and is getting on with her life building her self-employed business.

## **Sally**

Sally is 40, single, teaches adults part time and is a full time graduate student. Sally first met Dylan when she was 28 and they dated for six weeks then Dylan asked her to marry him. But all of a sudden, without saying anything to Sally, he moved towns with his

previous girlfriend. When Sally was 32 she met Dylan again and again he asked her to marry him and they began living together and married three years later in 1996 when Sally was 35. Sally was working as a secretary paying off her debts from studying for her BA degree at university and Dylan was unemployed and immediately began living on Sally's money.

During their seven year relationship Dylan talked incessantly about big business ideas, but did very little to earn money. He pressed Sally to run their finances, but when she had budgeted money to pay for bills he demanded that he be allowed to use it for his own recreational purposes. The occasional time Sally insisted he take responsibility for the finances he neglected to pay the bills. Sally received ACC when she began living with Dylan and he did not allow her to use the money to care for her health, nor pay off her university debts; instead Dylan was insistent that he use it to support his own business and recreational ideas.

Dylan discouraged Sally from furthering her university studies; he would not let her get a job and commanded that they work as a "team" writing books, publishing a magazine and conducting personal development trainings for adults. Dylan's version of team work was that he did what he enjoyed and Sally was to do the rest which meant that Sally did most of the work including all of the "shit" work. All work had to be done in Dylan's time and in Dylan's way. She assisted him with ideas, proofreading and typing his book and when he became a published author he put down her writing ability and excluded Sally when he wrote the acknowledgements. He would constantly grill her for ideas and use them in his books, regular newspaper column and as part of the content of his training and claim the ideas as his own. Sally supported Dylan financially, emotionally, intellectually and attended to all the household duties and survival tasks so Dylan was free to write his books yet he told Sally that any earnings from these belonged to him and him alone. Once any money came in he refused to do further work and went surfing.

Dylan made illogical excuses for not partaking in "women's" work, never kept any of his commitments and when Sally became angry about this he blamed her anger on all the relationship problems. His attitude was that women were emotional and were sex objects. Dylan wanted sex 24 hours a day, seven days a week and preferred sex to doing any work. He would grope at Sally's breasts, bribe her into having sex when she wanted

a massage or a cuddle, coerced her into sexual acts she did not enjoy such as anal sex, pressured her to have sex when she was sick with the flu and compared her unfavourably to previous lovers. He complained that she did not initiate sex and when she did he became nasty saying that she was interrupting his work. Other times that he suddenly appeared to be busy were when they had visitors or guests to stay.

He said Sally's clothes were ugly, told her what to wear, preferred that they dress and think alike. He did not want her to get pregnant because he did not want her breasts to droop and told her that if she did become pregnant she was to have an abortion. Dylan insisted she accompany him to every public talk and training he conducted. Near the end of the relationship she refused to go so he withdrew his already minimal efforts to earn money. Dylan kept Sally from contact with her best friend, told lies about her family and made it extremely uncomfortable for anyone to visit. He had previously been married for ten years and insisted that he knew how to have a relationship and that Sally needed to learn from him. Sally was not allowed to talk about their relationship to anyone.

Dylan neglected Sally's needs and wants, lacked sympathy for her feelings, told her to get over it when she grieved for her Grandmother's death. Dylan refused to acknowledge her birthday, even though each year he promised he would next time. He would not care for her when she was sick. Dylan monopolised the use of the car, returned it late and empty of petrol when Sally had to keep an appointment. At one point, when they owned two cars, Sally was not allowed to use the nice looking one, rather during snow, hail and frost she had to use the car which was full of rust and which had a broken heater. Dylan refused to fix the heater.

The two have been separated for two years, live in different countries and when Sally had a lawyer write to Dylan to ask for the \$3,000 he still owes her, he replied saying that he did not owe any money and that Sally had a mental disorder and needed to examine her character. Apart from this there has been no further abuse and Sally has been having a casual relationship with a caring man who encourages her in developing her career.

## Susan

Susan is a 36 year old single mother of four. She is on ACC and works on a casual basis. She was with her husband for 18 years. They began dating when Susan was 14. They married when Susan became pregnant with their first child; they had three children during their 11 year marriage and a fourth child who was conceived when Anthony raped Susan during one of their separations.

The first two children were caesarian births and Anthony was adamant that the third child should also be born this way because it was more convenient for him. He made many promises but never delivered. Most of their marriage was spent living isolated in the country or living near Anthony's interfering family. Anthony would not allow Susan to educate herself telling her it was a stupid idea and he neglected her emotionally. He put strict constraints on her freedom and attempted to isolate her from friends and family. He called her degrading names, lied, made the major decisions and if any were decided jointly, he did things his way in the end. If he did not get his own way he would ignore Susan or disappear for days or weeks at a time.

Anthony, who was a presser and shearer, seldom worked and if he did, Susan did not always see the money. Sometimes he would disappear for days on end saying he was away working which turned out to be a lie. He took no responsibility for fathering or household duties and he told people that he had a lazy wife. Yet Susan was overburdened with responsibility which included being in charge of the finances. To make ends meet, Susan borrowed money from her parents, worked, at one time went on the DPB and sometimes Anthony's money was contributed. He purchased many household items through hire purchase and repeatedly bought and sold cars at large financial losses. Often they would be heavily in debt and sometimes would be unable to pay for groceries or basic utilities. Yet Anthony always insisted that he have money to go to the pub, purchase a new car or go on a trip to Australia. He decided to buy a house, but made no effort to achieve the goal. Whenever Susan wanted to give up work, Anthony would do something else to put the family into debt. She left him five times and each time he pursued her. He would say that his children had to be with him or he would fight her for custody. The effects of the abuse made Susan take him back each time.

Each time Susan left, Anthony would turn on the charm and pursue Susan relentlessly. During one of their separations Susan went on the DPB and she stayed on it when he moved back in with her because he was not working and because he stopped her from going off the benefit. Later on, WINZ approached Susan to pay back \$23,000 which she is still doing. During the fifth and final break in 1997 Anthony stalked and harassed her. He broke into her house, left a vibrator in the mailbox as a gift to the children. Additionally, he left a suicide note to the children and used the children to blackmail Susan. Anthony cut peep holes into the bathroom and bedroom floors, used a stethoscope to eavesdrop, constantly phoned and visited, has never paid child support and he told everybody that they were still definitely a couple which caused further problems when the WINZ fraud squad investigated.

Anthony and Susan have been separated four years and a year ago he moved to Australia. Since then, apart from neglecting his parental responsibilities, Susan is not experiencing any further abuse, is recovering from a brain injury acquired in a road accident three years ago and is actively looking for a caring partner.

## **Teresa**

Teresa is 33, single and is a full time graduate student. Teresa was 28 when she began living in a defacto relationship with Patrick in 1994 and the relationship lasted 20 months. She had a high public profile job working under Patrick's management and they both earned good money. When they met he was seemingly happily married with a baby but he pursued Teresa relentlessly, yet blamed Teresa for his marriage break up. When Teresa and Patrick separated he pursued her relentlessly again. Because Teresa had not been in a relationship before, Patrick controlled her by insisting that she knew nothing about relationships and he did. Patrick felt threatened by Teresa's professional status and her independence. Patrick believed women in general were not rational, logical and sensible like men and that they were emotionally controlled by their hormones.

While living together Teresa was absolutely not allowed private space. For example, Patrick would sit and look at her while she was reading or resting and if she was home from work he rang several times a day insisting on knowing everything she was doing. He had an attitude of "us" against the world and would tell Teresa that they were the



same, that no-one else understood them, that they were special and different from other people. He would point out negative things about Teresa's family and friends, refused to visit them and get to know them and very strongly tried to prevent her from continuing and developing relationships with them. He sulked if she had contact and insisted that she keep everything about their relationship a secret, saying that he wanted them to be exclusive and separate from the rest of the world.

Teresa was studying drama while living with Patrick and he was dismissive, patronising and belittled what he called her "little hobby". He gave her no encouragement when she said she wanted to go to university. During the course of the relationship and after it ended, he tried to diminish Teresa's professional achievements in insidious ways. He attempted to impair her judgement. If she disagreed with him or said "no" to sex, he would get really angry, nasty and sulk for days. A typical reaction whenever he did not get his own way. He was very often nasty and humiliating, in the guise of jokes, especially to punish Teresa if she was "bad". One "bad" thing he did not like Teresa doing was attending church. He compared her unfavourably to his ex-wife. While living together Patrick put down Teresa's thoughts, then, after separating, they continued working together for eight months he would put down how she looked and acted, was nasty in private and charming while colleagues were around. He used to hide things and suggest that Teresa was going insane when she could not find them.

A couple of times Teresa was scared Patrick was going to hit her and sometimes he would stand over her with his fist clenched and with a face like granite and look at her coldly. He was alcoholic and hid his drinking for a long time. When Teresa found out, he told her that she was the reason he drank, as well as blaming her for many other things. His drinking led him to neglect his son from his previous marriage and he refused to take responsibility for this. He had to have the final decision about everything and regularly ignored Teresa if she had something to say. Alternatively, he might agree to something she said she needed, then would not carry out his commitment. He was always calling her selfish. He lied about her to other people, particularly to their colleagues.

When Teresa threatened to leave, Patrick said he would give up drinking and pretended that he had. When she finally left he was cold and hard and said Teresa was the one who had ruined a perfectly good relationship. After Teresa left, Patrick stalked her. He rang

12 times a day, listened to her phone messages, had a key cut to her house and would put flowers inside, wash the dishes and fold the washing and stole her vibrator. He sat in his car for hours and watched her and her visitors coming and going. He rang her late at night threatening to commit suicide and told her that if he did so it would be her fault. After several months of still working together Teresa was made redundant, something which Patrick initiated. Patrick continued to live in their house for eight months and Teresa continued to pay half the mortgage as well as pay for the rent on her new flat. When Patrick sold the house, Teresa received less than her share.

Teresa has been separated for six years; the separation abuse continued for 18 months and is no longer happening. She is now dating a man, is experiencing the relationship as healthy and she is developing her career.

## **Victoria**

Victoria is 36, works as a psychologist and is a single mother. She was 23 when she began living with Graham in 1986 and they lived together for just over three years.

Graham told Victoria that he separated from his previous wife because she was mentally ill. Graham was infertile and talked a lot about how he wanted to have children and believed that his infertility lessened his manhood. His desire to prove his manhood was the justification he gave for having affairs with other women and he would not take responsibility for anything he perceived to be women's work. Graham thwarted Victoria's growth. She was not allowed to be independent, nor was she allowed to be dependent; she was not allowed to say "no" when Graham demanded money beyond their budget and he did not like the fact that she earned more money than him. Victoria was never confused about how she should behave because she knew that the underlying premise was that she was never to make Graham feel less of a man.

Graham demanded a lot for himself and never for the benefit of the family unit. Victoria was overburdened with responsibility. He wanted new cars and money in his pocket. He wanted Victoria to serve his every need perfectly, including balancing the cheque book, which he rarely contributed to, while refusing to listen to the reality of their financial situation. If he did not get what he wanted, he would have tantrums, disappear for

several days and lose his job causing the debts to mount. They would then pack up and move towns and eventually lived in an isolated farming community.

Their only social activities involved his family and what he wanted to do. They were secluded and isolated as a couple; anyone who visited soon stopped doing so when they saw the dysfunction. Graham often tinkered with the car rendering it immobile. Victoria did not talk about the relationship with others because she feared his moodiness and that tantrums would be a consequence.

He refused to cuddle her, lacked empathy for her feelings and showed extreme indifference when Victoria was sick; for example, she had a severe asthma attack one day and he left her in the ambulance and went to a friend's for a cup of tea. He called Victoria degrading names, picked her personality apart and compared her unfavourably with her sister. If she did not agree with him he would manipulate and twist things to make her doubt herself. She was not allowed to express feelings and, if she did, he said she was either overreacting or misinterpreting. Nothing was open to discussion unless it suited his needs. He walked away when she wanted to talk or he would respond with, "I don't know" over and over.

Graham was a compulsive liar, blamed Victoria for absolutely everything and minimised his abusive behaviours. He refused to take responsibility for his actions, the problems in the marriage and anything else that suited him. It was always his need first, his way first and then maybe he might think about doing something for Victoria. When the couple went to marriage guidance Graham agreed with things the counsellor said, but when they got home he said that what the counsellor said was, "all rubbish and that he was not going to f...ing do that, she doesn't know what she's on about that woman".

When Victoria left the marriage 11 years ago she took a huge debt with her and apart from Graham refusing to assist with the debt, there has been no further abuse. Victoria went on to re-educate herself, develop a new career and have a child (not Graham's) as a single mother.

## CHAPTER FOUR – FINDINGS

“While emotional abusers remain frozen in their rigidity, the victims behave like chameleons: adapting, foreseeing what’s expected of them by the abuser (consciously or unconsciously) and assuming more than their fair share of the blame.”

*Marie-France Hirigoyen (2000, p. 145)*

All 12 women I interviewed mentioned that they were influenced by gender socialisation. In retrospect 11 women said this influence was mainly unconscious and they did not begin to question the detrimental impact it had on them until near the end of their relationship or until after leaving. The 12<sup>th</sup> woman was conscious throughout her relationship of pressure to conform to gender socialisation and she purposefully chose to negotiate alternative behaviours. Unlike the other 11 women, this woman did not experience psychological abuse throughout her relationship, although in retrospect she said the potential was there. Her experience of abuse began after she divorced when her ex-husband threatened to kill her. Throughout the following I will often talk about 11 women and, where fitting, will mention experiences of the 12<sup>th</sup> woman.

Although I have categorised the women’s experiences into themes, caution should be taken in generalising them to all 12 women. Nor can these findings be generalised to all women, or all women who have been abused. Where appropriate I endeavour to state how many women used each style of coping.

### **Socialised to Need a Man and Catch a Man**

#### ***Marriage is the Path to Self-Worth***

When they entered their relationship, each woman was at varying stages of self-development, but only Adriana was certain of herself when she married. Regardless of age, most women did not have a clear sense of themselves as individuals. Elizabeth, Victoria, Susan and Pauline talked about having their life mapped out for them. Whether the women had a career or not before marriage, for Teresa, Susan, Elizabeth, Pauline and Victoria, it was about “waiting for Mr Right (Teresa)”. Elizabeth expressed the plan well:

“I grew up with this idea that I would work for a while then I would get married and I would have children. It never occurred to me that I didn’t have to be married. There was quite a lot of security in the idea of getting married and having children because that’s your life taken care of. You don’t have to make any more decisions, it’s like ‘there it is, that’s what you do’. I can be a wife, I can get up and make the breakfast.”

Three women had to marry because they were past their “due by” date. At age 22, Victoria was “desperate” to marry because she was four or five years older than when her family members usually married. Heather, Karen, Teresa and Sally saw that their partner was wanted by other women; therefore, believed they were a “good catch”. After Heather left her partner, he found another “woman so quickly” so she began to doubt her judgement:

“Maybe I didn’t appreciate his affection. I thought maybe he is a good catch if he can pick someone up just like that. Maybe I was looking at the wrong side of things, maybe he was everything he was saying he was and I just didn’t notice. But then I remember seeing his face yelling and screaming and I think I don’t want that, but then I think he got a woman just like that. He must have some charm that picks up women quite quickly.”

Elizabeth, Victoria, Pauline, Sally and Teresa all believed that remaining single was a failure. Victoria articulated the essence of what each of these women said:

“It was terrible, it was horrific, to be single, aah, no I couldn’t even entertain it, it was just too much to even think about. A failure, unloved, unworthy, no value, don’t bother being here. I think if I never had married him, I probably would have suicided because it just reinforced the belief that I was nothing.”

Eight women were aware that there was something wrong before they got married. For example, they had seen that their partner was nasty, lying, neglectful, did not respect women and that he took her for granted. Nevertheless, Teresa, Victoria and Sally had to get married to prove their worth. Sally, who married at age 32, said:

“I’d finally made it, finally had a sense of worth. The day I wore a wedding ring I felt it in my body, every part of me, as if I had just risen in status. I was so proud to say my name was *Mrs* instead of *Miss*. I felt that people looked at me differently and treated me differently as if they had more respect for me. It gave me a *real* sense of confidence and *certainty* that I now had a place in society.”

And Teresa gave words to something that a further four women framed as issues for themselves:

“It was like an achievement, my mother used to make comments about how no-one would ever want to marry me and it was like, ‘Look, they do, they do, I’ve done it. I’m a real person’ (laughter).”

Nonetheless Teresa, who was in a defacto relationship for 20 months, said that she knew from her experience of the abuse that she “wouldn’t have married him if he asked”.

### ***The Relationship Contract***

All the women believed they had entered a contract and they perceived the contract to be the same regardless of whether it was for marriage or a defacto relationship. Although, Teresa said that she knew she could get out of her defacto relationship because there was less shame in leaving a defacto relationship than there was in leaving a marriage. Heather said it was easier for her to leave a defacto relationship because she had kept her financial and property commitments separate. Here are some examples of what the contract meant to the women:

“I would be the housewife and the mum. Marriage was forever.” (Elizabeth).

“The husband would earn more money than the wife and have ultimate say in where it went. It would be a partnership enjoying time together, not where one completely swallowed the other.” (Victoria).

“The husband is definitely the boss because he was the income earner, but not a big gap between husband and wife.” (Pauline).

“It’s a husband’s right to expect to come home to a cooked meal most of the time, but not to consider that that is all that you do” (Susan).

“The woman had more of a responsibility for the relationship than the man because women were better at relationships.” (Teresa).

And so, with this contract in mind the women entered their live-in, life-long relationship. Adriana’s parents had divorced three times and she was aware that marriage meant “settling myself down” and she would never have hesitated to end her relationship if it was having a negative impact. However, the expected stress of relationships and possible divorce was perceived as less stress than not being able to claim New Zealand citizenship. Hence, Adriana married her defacto partner for official reasons to make life easier while living in New Zealand.

# **Coping With Psychological Abuse**

## ***What is psychological abuse?***

My working definition of psychological abuse perpetrated by men against their female partner is that involves a continuous, systematic pattern which occurs on a continuum from covert to overt forms of abuse. It is a one-sided use of ‘power and control’ tactics to win at all costs. Winning is achieved by demeaning, undermining and altering the woman’s thoughts, perceptions, feelings, beliefs, values, body and behaviours. Winning is further achieved by limiting the woman’s freedom of movement and choices.

The 15 categories of tactics (I outlined examples of each category in the introduction) include one-sided power games, mind games, inappropriate restrictions, isolation, over-protection and ‘caring’, emotional unkindness and violation of trust, degradation, separation abuse, using social institutions, denial, minimising and blaming, using the children, economic abuse, sexual abuse, symbolic aggression and domestic slavery.

## ***Labelling the Men’s Psychologically Abusive Behaviours***

For some women the abuse existed before living together, for others it began or became worse once they joined their material possessions, for yet others it became worse when their first child was born or when they started growing and speaking out.

For Adriana the abuse started after she separated. During Adriana’s first interview she said that she did not experience any abuse during her 6 year relationship. However, after Adriana read the findings which combined the 12 stories, Adriana pointed out several behaviours that Steven had which were similar to those that other women experienced. Adriana said that the abuse was scattered over time and was “not sharp enough to threaten the relationship”. Adriana observed a noticeable change in Steven’s behaviours when they returned to New Zealand after having lived in Europe for two years.

Of the 11 women who felt the impact of psychological abuse during their relationship none of them were aware that they were being abused. It was not until months or years after leaving that they became aware that they had experienced psychological abuse.

When Adriana's ex-husband became abusive after their separation, she knew immediately that his behaviours were wrong and she promptly sought help. Karen said "I knew that I was angry, but I didn't really understand what was happening". Elizabeth and Sally thought it was "weird", Victoria thought it was "bizarre" and Pauline knew that what she was "experiencing wasn't right". Many women echoed Teresa's words, "I didn't notice this until I looked back and realised. It was gradual and insidious and you just slid slowly down the slope".

Without me asking, eight women compared their experience with physical violence. As Teresa said, psychological abuse "was something I knew absolutely nothing about. I thought abuse was hitting". The participants believed that physical violence was the only legitimate reason to leave a relationship. Teresa, Pauline and Victoria specified they would not accept physical violence and Elsie explained why:

"If he'd hit me I would have left, it would have been a really justifiable reason to leave. I did not think psychological abuse was a legitimate reason to leave because you explain it away, you rationalise it and it's not as accepted the way physical abuse is by society. You're just supposed to lump that, you're supposed to put up with it."

They believed that psychological abuse was given little credence by friends, family and society in general. Victoria "just tells people it wasn't particularly pleasant. I could justify it if he beat me. It would give me more credibility".

"I felt that if I started to tell [my sister] things were going wrong that she might think, 'It's about bloody time you faced reality, I have been beaten up all these years, had my head through a wall and look at you.' Because my cousin had experienced physical violence, it was like I was being a bit of a wuss, being a bit selfish. A friend of mine did some volunteer work for the women's refuge and she was physically abused in her marriage and she was pooh poohing emotional abuse." (Pauline).

"The point I got to I would have accepted physical violence as well. I wouldn't have got up and walked out because he'd hit me. Whereas at the very beginning of the relationship I would have. I wished he'd hit me, then I'd have an excuse to leave that other people would believe." (Teresa).

Teresa may have felt that she would have accepted the physical violence because of the level of self-doubt and self-blame she experienced and because the tactics of psychological abuse cause compliance. Donna stated, "Before we were married he ... although this interview is about psychological abuse and it's the psychological abuse that broke me ... he did give me two wicked hidings". Raewyn never sought help for 12 years of psychological abuse but sought help immediately when she was hit.



Raewyn may have appealed for immediate help because as Elizabeth said, “If I had been hit, we all know that being hit is not okay, so if I had been hit it would have called my attention to something being wrong sooner. There is more press about it”. It is interesting that Raewyn also specified “I knew what could happen”. Psychological abuse, however, is little known about or understood:

“We see ads all the time about women’s refuge and the women on the ads have black eyes, but what about the women who’ve just been worn down, do they get to go to women’s refuge? What happens to them?” (Victoria).

The lack of awareness about psychological abuse caused the women to assume they were experiencing ‘normal’ relationship problems. The women could see that there was ‘something wrong’ because of the impact they were experiencing. Heather remarked, “you think that every relationship has to have some problems, it can’t all be smooth”. Elizabeth, Raewyn, Donna, Teresa and Sally also thought it was ‘normal’. Because the abuse was interpreted as ‘normal’, Karen and Raewyn could not distinguish between the constraints of motherhood and the constraints put upon them by their partner’s tactics, as Karen explained:

“It’s difficult to know whether the responsibilities of motherhood isolated me more than he did. I could fight against it while I was still me, but when I was me plus one and me plus two you are a lot more vulnerable and the opportunities are lessened.”

Some women gave their partner’s behaviours labels, but still did not consider these to be abusive. For example, Raewyn and Victoria thought he was moody, somewhat like a woman’s menstrual cycle and Victoria and Susan thought he was manipulative and playing mind games. Karen, Pauline and Sally thought their partner was controlling. Karen’s and Sally’s partner complained that they did not initiate sex. Both women then initiated several times and were rejected. They both worked out that his desire for them to initiate was not his bottom-line need and that being in control was. So both women ceased bothering to initiate after the realisation.

### ***Searching for the Cause of Their Partner’s Behaviours***

The women expressed seven possible causes of their partner’s “weird” behaviours which related to the men themselves and an eighth cause which involved self-blame.

First, several women thought their partner had a mental health problem. Four women either directly labelled him with antisocial personality disorder or mentioned that he had traits of that disorder. Other women said there were other flaws in their partner.

Throughout her relationship, Karen's partner "would admit to doing [what he did] and he has done several times and he's been exasperated to know why he's done it, he just can't explain it". Each conversation like this would draw Karen back into wanting to be with Felix. When the relationship was over, Victoria's and Pauline's husband admitted to his abusive behaviours, but Victoria specified, "I don't believe he truly sees and knows what he did". A short time after confessing, Pauline's husband "forgot" his admission and began acting abusively again. In both cases it appeared that the confession was a tactic to get their wives back.

Karen reported that her partner had "been diagnosed as schizophrenic, manic depressive, psychotic, they know there's something wrong with him, but they don't know what it is. None of them can work it out. He's that unpredictable". Raewyn communicated that "a friend told me about serotonin depletion and the symptoms of it seem to fit him". For one to two years before separating, Adriana's husband exhibited "strange behaviours", but they did not pose any difficulty for her. Steven's father had bi-polar disorder and after separating from Steven, Adriana showed her ex-husband a list of symptoms of that disorder which he admitted to experiencing, "but he refused to deal with it". Susan, Heather and Raewyn thought perhaps stress was causing their partner's behaviours and at first Teresa thought her partner "was tired or had an ulcer or a heart condition. I was always encouraging him to go to the doctor because he might be ill. The poor man". Then once she discovered that her partner was actually a secret drinker she assumed alcoholism was the cause of his behaviours. This gave Teresa something to try to fix so she went to the Drug and Alcohol Resource Centre. This helped her:

"to see patterns and it helped me to see that some of the things he was doing were cruel and wrong and were abusive and it wasn't my fault and that I did have a choice and that's how I got up the strength to actually leave was through that support. They said you can't do anything to help him. You can only help yourself which took quite a long time to sink in, but it was the *best* thing I ever did was going to see her. It shifted my perception of what was right and wrong and good and bad then I was able to tell other people what it was. It also made me want to go and study psychology".

On the surface it appeared that Teresa was enlightened, about Patrick's abuse, by her counsellor; nonetheless Teresa still thought alcoholism was the source of Patrick's abusive behaviours and that alcoholism was the problem to be fixed.

Sally, Raewyn, Victoria and Heather mentioned that the second cause of their partner's behaviour was his need to prove his manhood. As Raewyn explained, he did this so "I'd look weak and he'd be strong. I think he liked that". Here is Victoria's version of this explanation:

"I think definitely some of it was about wanting to be a man and not feeling like he was a man because of his perception of what a man was about. A man was about fathering children and he couldn't father children, so; therefore, he wasn't a man. 'I need to prove I'm a man and I can't prove I'm a man by having children, so I can prove I'm a man by going and sleeping with all these other women'."

Jealousy and lack of trust were thought to be the third cause of their partner's behaviours. Donna's, Susan's, Heather's, Karen's and Elizabeth's partner feared they would have sex with other men, so all five women reduced their social activities and contact in any form with men in an attempt to ameliorate their partner's abuse. Sally's husband did not believe she was trustworthy about anything so she spent a lot of energy attempting to prove that she was trustworthy in every way. Teresa and Elsie were close to their stepsons and Heather was close to her nephew which was perceived as disloyalty to their partner so all three women held back from their relationship with these young boys. Adriana's and Raewyn's partner was jealous of their relationship with their children, but both women ignored this and continued to build strong relationships with their children. Perhaps Raewyn felt it was socially acceptable to do so and Adriana already had a clear sense of her own values.

Fourth, Pauline, Raewyn, Karen, Victoria, Elsie and Sally thought their partner's behaviour was caused by a rough childhood. Sally was the only one who did not excuse him for this reason because she believed "he had the psychological tools to make changes, because that was what he wrote his self-help book about and it is what he taught participants in his self-development workshops". Victoria also remarked, "well hold on a minute, he's seen another way to live, so now he must be choosing to live that way".

Five women believed the fifth cause of their partner's behaviour was that he believed he had the right to. They recognised the selective nature of his behaviours; for example, Teresa voiced that "once the relationship ended then he tried to diminish my financial resources, but he didn't try to do that in the course of the relationship because he had a financial interest in maintaining them". When Adriana and Steven returned to New Zealand from Europe she believed that he "slotted back into the New Zealand way of being a husband". For example, he commented on the house being untidy and closed the windows when they were having an argument. After separating, Adriana's in-laws informed her that Steven used to complain that Adriana worked and was not a good housewife. Some women believed their partner had no idea what he was doing. Raewyn insisted "it's subconscious", Susan and Elsie both articulated that he was too "thick" to know what he was doing and Karen commented that her partner believed his behaviours were "all outside his control". This is interesting because Felix was adamant that the effects his behaviours had on Karen were totally under her control. Because men are socialised to be dominant and society endorses abuse to maintain the imbalance of power within marriage (Bograd, 1988; McMaster, 1998) I believe this accounts for the women's conclusion that the men were not conscious about what they were doing.

Sally, Teresa, Victoria and Heather decided that their partner's behaviours were a reflection of his love for them. This sixth cause meant the women thought their partner's behaviours were genuine and unintentional.

"At the time I thought he behaved the way he did because he loved me so much and maybe that that's what people did when they loved each other that much. He didn't want the world encroaching or shining its bright light on anything in the relationship, that it had to be exclusive and separate from the rest of the world. I thought it was quite nice. It meant that you were really special (laughter). Somebody loved you that much." (Teresa).

All 12 women attested their partner blamed them for his behaviours. Ten women internalised this self-blame. Self-blame was the final reason women found as a cause for their partner's behaviours. As Victoria said:

"I internalised that as well, that it was about me, that it became my identity that it was all my fault. I *must* work harder, I must try and avoid doing that in the future, whatever it was. I could never quite put my finger on the elusive thing that I had done, but I'd just try everything to try and stop that happening again."

Adriana and Elsie were the only two who did not blame themselves. Donna expressed that "Never ever once did it occur to me that the tantrums were not my fault, never

once”. Karen believed in the “well it wasn’t all him, we both tangoed away” theory.

Victoria reprimanded herself for being:

“too pushy, I was too angry, that I’d pushed him into something. We went farming because I could see there was a future in that for us as a family and he went along with it, but I don’t think he really wanted to do it, so I’ve always felt guilty that I made him do this and it turned out badly. I didn’t accept him for who he was, I wanted to change him”.

Such self-blame, when taken out of context, brings to mind the concept of the nagging wife who provokes abuse. Therefore, some background is required to understand women’s “non-feminine pushiness”. The reason that Victoria pushed her partner into farming was because when he demanded that he be allowed to buy something such as a stock car and Victoria “did not let him” he would have tantrums, disappear for several days, lose his job, come back and they would move towns. This was a repetitive pattern. This man wanted to spend money that (a) he did not have, (b) he would not take responsibility for earning and (c) his extensive desire to own large priced items meant continually putting Victoria into debt. Further, “he’d start to do reactive behaviours like, he’d drop me off at work and then he’d go cruising the main street of the city we lived in”, so Victoria would feel guilty that maybe she had pushed him too much or offended him and damaged his ego because she was moving on and he was not.

The subordinate status traditionally given to wives by society further caused Victoria to blame herself:

“I wish I hadn’t qualified as a nurse, I wouldn’t have put him in this situation and he wouldn’t have had the tantrum that I earned more money than he. My strengths were weaknesses because of their impact on him.”

Sally, Adriana, Susan, Elsie and Karen verbalised their internal and external resources threatened their partner. The men were threatened by the women’s psychological resources such as intelligence, creativity and their capability in taking responsibility and seeing a project through from start to finish. Sally’s, Adriana’s, Teresa’s and Raewyn’s partner was threatened by their professional standing. Heather’s partner was threatened by her material resources and Victoria’s husband was threatened because she earned more money than he did. Adriana held firm to her psychological and professional resources and Heather held firm to her material resources; however, the abuse continued. The other seven women made adjustments to diminish themselves or to keep quiet about their resources in the hope this would reduce their partner’s reactive behaviours, but the abuse continued.

Every woman noticed that problems arose when their partner felt he was not getting his needs met. For example, Susan and Donna wanted to get an education but decided not to pursue it because they were not home serving their husband's needs. Donna never pursued an education again and Susan managed to achieve the education she wanted during one of the times she left Anthony.

Elizabeth, Sally, Teresa and Donna believed they attracted the abuse because of the "baggage" they brought with them from childhood. Donna mentioned that:

"I actually made a lot of my problems like accepting Frank's terrible behaviour, although like you couldn't do much about Frank because he was just so violent, I made lots of things worse. I thought I loved him, I let him break me."

Donna echoed Elizabeth, Sally and Victoria when she said that:

"as each thing happened I would then bend over backwards, sideways and turn myself inside out to make sure that that never happened again to upset him. I just tried to think sideways and put my brain on super fast to anticipate what might upset him next time to make sure it didn't upset him because it was my fault".

This led the women to adopt the behaviours of what they believed to be a good wife, which I will outline in the next section.

## **Socialised to Serve Their Man**

### ***Good Wives Support Their Partner and Do Not Rock the Boat***

These women knew what a good wife was. Raewyn summed up that a good wife thinks "what their husband is doing is more important than what they're doing". Victoria said she was "a very subservient wife. I believed that this would be the right way to make the marriage work". Therefore, as Elizabeth said, "the fact that I was unhappy was just tough" and Susan apologised to her husband for complaining. Pauline "knew the expectation was not to think and feel too much and just carry on washing nappies and cooking dinner". Donna communicated that she thought her slavery "was forever. I thought that I belonged to him and he could do whatever he liked to me".

When Anthony purchased an expensive car against Susan's wishes, she borrowed money off her father to "pay the car payment because it was going to get repossessed and to pay Anthony's unpaid child support. I'm an absolute idiot". Susan discovered that no money was coming home because Anthony had been drinking at the golf club instead of working. When she found out that he owed a lot of money there she "used the money that we had to pay the bill because we were a family".

### ***Overburdened With Responsibility***

When I asked the participants what they thought their rights were within marriage, two women had never thought about it and four thought, as Victoria did, that they "should accept quite a bit". Even if the relationship started out with the expectation of equal role sharing, Karen spoke for Sally and when she said that "eventually it worked out that I was doing all the girly jobs and he was doing the boy jobs, but then I was doing the girly jobs *and* the boy jobs. I can remember that being very frustrating and having that argument a lot". The responsibility increased over time.

"When we got married my workload just got heavier and heavier and heavier and heavier and heavier. As the years went by I worked my guts out and I got less and less and less and less for it." (Donna).

Sally, Victoria, Karen and Susan were terrified of the debt that their partner's irresponsibility incurred. One strategy was for these women to take charge of the money, but this was an exhausting job. Victoria claimed:

"I was always left in charge of the money, I was always the one that had to say 'no' and of course when I said 'no' he used to get angry. That's why he'd disappear for days, he just wouldn't turn up to work. I would just feel that I needed to work a bit harder and try and avoid that and stop the anger, not to do 'that' - whatever 'that' was."

Susan's husband worked periodically and Karen's partner was a workaholic, but both women had this experience. In Susan's words: "What used to get me was he'd be gone 5-6 days a week working but he wasn't bringing home any money". Both these women went on the DPB as a strategy to survive. Any decision making power the women did have was "very contentious. I'd have to fight for it (Karen)". Teresa, Victoria and Elizabeth described the working day of a superwoman. Here is Elizabeth's version:

“I would get up and I would set the table and put weetbix on his plate, heat the milk up, make the tea, make sure everything was there, make sure his clothes were ironed ready. Then raced home after work and quickly got a meal together.”

Raewyn’s husband said she did nothing all day. Raewyn, who was a mother of two and did all the housework and gardening commented that “there was that *pressure* to be like him. Even physical work, so I would try and work as hard as he did”. She had the same guilt that Pauline, a mother of five, mentioned, “I thought then that I don’t work, I don’t earn, I don’t contribute so I really should do this. That’s why I peeled the wallpaper off. That was my contribution, because he worked, he contributed and I did ‘nothing’”.

Pauline’s and Karen’s partner neglected their family and gave extensive help to people outside the family unit. As Pauline said, this led to comments such as:

“Wow your husband’s so lovely, he’s always doing things for us and now he’s going to take down the swings. You’re a very lucky lady and you’ve got a lovely husband, who will always do things for us, he’s always here and he’s just so nice and you’re so lucky”.

Both Pauline and Karen responded with anger. Pauline got angry at the woman who said this to her and Karen used to get angry at her partner.

Adriana was the only woman who was not used and violated sexually. The other 11 women believed they had no sexual rights and that it was a wife’s duty to service her husband. This is reflected in Teresa’s words: “I thought I was obliged. I thought I was there to make him happy” Victoria said that “it was only ever about him”. Victoria’s words echo all 11 women when she indicated that, “my role as a wife definitely affected my ability to say ‘no’ to sex”, but even if the women said “no”, as Susan told me, “to Anthony ‘no’ means ‘yes’ and, ‘I’ll have it’”. Victoria used the same phrase as Teresa when she said she just wanted “to keep the peace then you do it. Just lie back and think of England. And just get on with it because it’s just not worth the hassle sometimes”.

Victoria declared that “interspersed in the rest of it I had these moments of strength and insightfulness and I’d do things like” the following:

“One day I thought okay honey, you want a little woman, then that’s what you’re going to get. He’d put his cigarette in his mouth and I’d immediately be there with a lighter to light it for him. He’d say where do you want to go next?’ ‘Whatever you want to do darling I’ll do, so you just make up your mind.’ Well by the end of the day (laughter) he said, ‘For God’s sake stop it!’ He didn’t want the opposite. I think what upset him most was that he had to take responsibility for what he did and he never took responsibility.”



## ***Friends, Family and Colleagues Turn a Blind Eye***

The abuse that Teresa experienced at “work was supported by management. The manager was a fundamentalist Christian. He did not act when I complained and he told me it was my fault for getting involved with someone at work. He said I was misinterpreting things because Patrick was so charming”. Elsie and Victoria said “people just started to stay away” and when Raewyn talked “about Brian to some of my friends, they would *never* badmouth their husband, so that was another reason I would stop” talking about it. Friends of Donna’s and Heather’s partner told them these men were abusive to previous partners. During Heather’s relationship, Luke’s mates stood up for Heather over some issues, but did not actively encourage or assist her to leave.

Donna was told:

“Now that you’re married everything will change, you wait and see, you’ll see the real Frank and I just smiled. So what happened is he just put on a big act for my benefit and it used to be an endless source of amusement for the boys because they were just waiting, waiting, waiting to see when the real Frank stepped out. But when he started abusing me nobody would help me. When I was really sick and I needed help, there *was no help*. Anyone that helped me, he would have got them dealt to. When I left Invercargill he put the word out that *nobody* was to talk to me.”

When Elizabeth:

“got married there were things that were going on, no-one said to me, no auntie or other woman took me aside and said, ‘Elizabeth is this what you want to do, why are you marrying this guy?’ No-one fronted up, but I don’t think anyone fronted up because of the system that I was in. There was my parents and their crappy relationship. My mother’s been totally overridden by my father with his angry moods and his tantrums all her life, so there was that as a model. I would say a lot of my parents’ friends were in similar situations. I don’t think there was a model of a good healthy relationship around me when I was growing up. I don’t know whether they didn’t see it or they weren’t prepared to speak up or whether they thought it was none of their business”.

Although Elsie’s “family hated him” they did not intervene. “We’re not a talking family. That made the difference I suppose”. Susan communicated that “anyone who was aware of what was going on never made comments to me throughout the relationship, only after”. Victoria’s “sister said I’ll never come and stay with you again because I couldn’t believe the way he acted”. Victoria would have preferred to have heard “oh my God let me support you and help you”.

Karen’s mother did tell her to “get rid of him” but she disregarded her mother’s comments. Perhaps this was because she:

“grew up with a powerful but tumultuous mother who was mentally ill, drank a lot and would almost celebrate her lack of success with religious fervour. At the end she took a very violent abusive partner and I’d just been through about three years of really bad stuff”.

Further, Karen thought she had “made somewhat better choices”:

“in that I had sought out a person who had a full time job, who seemed to have a good work history, who didn’t drink, who didn’t do drugs, who was from a culture which placed a lot of emphasis on good family relationships”.

The night before Victoria got married her mother said “you know you don’t have to do this”, but Victoria was 22 and desperate to get married to prove her self-worth. When Sally began her relationship with Dylan, a friend told her that a colleague who had previously had a relationship with Dylan had enjoyed sex with him and said he was caring. After Sally left Dylan, the negative half of the story was related to her. Sally was now told that Dylan had also been incredibly needy and dependent on her friend’s colleague. One night Heather’s partner rang “and said he was going to top himself and he was crying and screaming and the phone went quiet”. Heather sought help from her mother-in-law. Later Luke “came back to me and said, ‘don’t ever speak to her again I don’t want you contacting my parents about anything like that, it’s between you and me’”. Heather’s mother-in-law never discussed the issue of Luke threatening to commit suicide with Heather again.

## **Socialised to Keep Their Man**

### ***Family Life Must Be Preserved At All Costs***

Pauline’s, Susan’s and Karen’s in-laws continually interfered in their relationship such that they reinforced or encouraged their partner’s psychological abuse. Karen declared “his mother kept on telling me I have to obey, get it into your head Karen”.

The women blamed themselves for “putting up with the abuse” and, paradoxically, they blamed themselves for wanting to leave the abuse. Susan commented that “everyday he walked all over me. And yet I put up with it didn’t I? I stayed as long as I did because of the children”.

It is interesting that Susan said she “put up with it” because as Elizabeth pointed out there is a lot of social pressure to stay together for the children. Elizabeth and David:

“got a letter from friends saying, ‘Think of your children, there can’t possibly be anything more important. Surely you can have a reconciliation for the sake of your children, there can’t be anything more important than that.’ It was this real guilt trip”.

Whenever Heather, Karen and Susan left their partner they let him back in or moved back with him because as Susan stated “more than anything I do believe that children need to know their father”. Pauline:

“felt really guilty for my children because of the whole religion (Anglican) expectation. I thought ‘what am I going to do to them?’ I was the big bad person because I was going to initiate a separation, I was going to initiate a split of this family. I felt guilty because of what I was going to do to my children, never mind the fact what their father was doing to us all those years. But all of a sudden that wasn’t a part of it, it was *I’m* doing this *I’m* the one to be guilty”.

Victoria, Donna, Elizabeth, Elsie, Pauline and Teresa all believed in preserving family life whether they had children or not. Victoria:

“thought it was us against the world, that as a family unit we would be strong, that we would help each other out. I never expected my husband to be the enemy, I thought my husband would help me fight the enemy”.

Elizabeth declared “it didn’t really matter if it was not very nice for you; it was just tough, you just got on with it”. And when Frank kicked each of Donna’s five sons out she blamed herself saying “I let it happen” even though she “couldn’t stop him”. The women also longed for their:

“vision of us having this little home together and various family members coming to stay and having the family Christmas there. I certainly believed that the couple unit was the most important unit and that all steps should be taken to preserve it and protect it and nurture it”. (Teresa).

### ***Holding onto the Positive***

Raewyn was confused about her “feelings for him, though I think overall I did think he was pretty yuk. They’ve got this ability these sort of men to suddenly become very nice and they suck you in again”. Susan thought it was “far out this is cool” during the weeks that Anthony was “really nice because he would do things for me like cook tea and help out” and Karen commented that when things were going well she had “fuzzy romantic ideas”.

Pauline, Teresa, Victoria and Elizabeth mentioned wanting to have their “*own* family (Teresa)” and their own home on their own “kiwi quarter acre paradise (Teresa)”. Teresa said the desire for a “loving relationship image of two happy people being happy together and looking after each other” was partly driven by wanting to escape an unhappy childhood.

“I didn’t really fit well into my family and hadn’t met their expectations, but it didn’t matter because I had my own thing. I wanted it to be ordinary.” (Teresa).

Karen had “seven years of *fantastic* sex which is another one of the reasons why it took so long to leave”, Sally “stayed in there because he was so affectionate” and Raewyn “had a *very* comfortable life, a beautiful house that we built, beautiful property where I had done so much gardening”. Heather’s and Pauline’s partner showed marked changes in his behaviour compared to when the women began living with him. Both women were waiting for their partner to revert back to his previously caring behaviours and as Pauline said she hoped “that whatever was bugging him or was going wrong, would go away”.

Karen thought Felix had potential because she saw “the love and support and patience that he offered his clients”. Pauline and Teresa thought their partner “had the potential to be a good father”, Teresa thought her partner had potential “professionally” and Heather and Victoria thought there were possibilities to “have had a good life together”,

“and that he could do anything that he wanted to do with the support of a *good* woman behind him (laughter). Which I didn’t think he’d had, I thought his wife had not understood him and treated him badly. I always gave him the benefit of the doubt”. (Teresa).

Susan “thought that once he’s got everything paid up everything’s going to be fine” and Sally thought that if she supported Dylan enough in his self-employment venture “he would settle down and earn money instead of going surfing, drinking and smoking marijuana, but it never happened”. Elizabeth spoke for Raewyn when she said she just hoped “it would all be all right”. Susan:

“was always waiting for the *beautiful* weather to come out, that he would change and everything would turn out how I thought it should. And I always thought something good always comes when something bad has happened”.

Victoria spoke for Teresa when she said she “really *wished* that it was ‘normal’, I really longed for a proper” relationship. Victoria declared that:

“this had been something I’d waited for for a long time and the result was just unbelievable. I deserved better than that. One part of me was like, I don’t deserve this, I deserve better than that and the other part of me was like, just put up with it, you get what you deserve. There was an element of self-fulfilling prophecy that nobody wants you and you’re not good enough and you’re not of any worth, you’re going to a marriage that supports that anyway. But deep down I kind of knew I was better than that”.

## ***Divorce is a Sign of Failure***

Raewyn, Elsie, Victoria, Donna, Elizabeth, Pauline and Teresa believed that divorce was wrong and that it was a sign of failure. This belief was also held for separation from a defacto relationship. Pauline commented that being physically beaten:

“was about the only excuse for divorce I could find in my mind and you didn’t do it because to me the marriage was a promise in the church and apart from all your family and everyone else, you were defying God with divorce”.

Elizabeth, a mother of four, went to couples’ counselling:

“after my second child was born. I remember coming to a point in the counselling session thinking I have to leave him and just couldn’t, just didn’t have the strength, just didn’t know how I would ever do that because when I got married marriage was forever, you married someone and hung in with it and that was the way it was and leaving was just not an option. Realising that I really shouldn’t be there, but just not having the inner resources to leave and thinking ‘well I just have to make this work one way or the other’”.

When Elizabeth enunciated that she lacked “inner resources” I question whether she lacked them personally or because of internalised social cognitions. Elizabeth believed as Teresa also articulated, that it was a woman’s job to make it work. All the women saw their relationship “as a long term commitment, not as a convenience thing” that it was “forever and you have to stick it out” and women do not leave on a whim (Elizabeth”).

Elsie “always hoped that I would leave one day. I started thinking if I put up with it for a year or two maybe I can leave, it won’t look so bad, I would have tried hard”. Teresa succinctly expressed two further reasons why women held tight to their relationship taking sole responsibility for it:

“Because for a long time I thought it was my fault and then once I discovered the drinking and the drinking pattern, I thought that was my fault as well and that I was responsible for it because that was the way he would fling it back at me and that because I was in a relationship with him it

was my duty to help him. It would be wrong to walk away and leave him, that he needed help and that I should be able to help him.”

Victoria was more specific about why she did not want to get divorced:

“I didn’t want to lose face. I wanted to be married, because without my marriage, who was I? I was nothing again and I was worse than nothing because I was a failed wife and that was worse than being a spinster I think, to have been a failed wife, it was just dreadful, to admit to my family that my husband was treating me like he was because by the end of it I truly believed that I was worthless, there was just no point and to leave the marriage would have been to confirm that I was of no worth, I wasn’t even worth keeping as an abused wife. God I’m pleased I’m older, got over that!”

### ***Lack of External Resources***

Elizabeth, Pauline, Raewyn, Karen and Heather “were afraid of the work of being alone with little children”. Elizabeth, Karen, Raewyn and Pauline could not see how they would survive financially. Elizabeth mentioned that she had not worked for quite a long time and Heather and Teresa declared they were too tired to leave. Pauline:

“would read how much houses were and thought to keep my children at school I don’t want to disrupt them too much, so I was looking at renting in the same area. I would cry over the newspaper at night when I looked at the ‘To Let’ section because I thought ‘the benefit was \$200 and something dollars and rent was \$200 and something, I can’t do it’”.

Karen felt she was not ready and “was hoping that I’d have enough time to gather resources”. She felt she “needed a place to go, a purpose and a structure to walk into”. Heather was pregnant and “just couldn’t get away from him. It was just so hard. It’s a big thing to take on on your own as far as having the other person pestering you”. Likewise, Elsie “was just stuck there. I just didn’t know how to leave”.

### ***Keeping up Appearances***

After one failed attempt to get Chris to agree to Pauline receiving help, every time from then on when Pauline was overburdened with responsibility or was too ill to manage, she did not ask for help because she had to be seen to cope. Teresa covered for Patrick’s drunkenness by taking on extra duties at work and Victoria and Susan covered for their partner by doing extra farm work. Adriana, Pauline and Elizabeth experienced pressure to assume a mask of happiness and to conform to what Adriana called “middle class roles of wife and husband status symbols to show off what we have and show off how

we could do things”. Sally only ever talked about the positive aspects of Dylan’s behaviours; for example, “if he was unemployed 99% of the time I would tell people about the 1% of time he spent achieving”. Elizabeth “used to say when we were going to a function, let’s just pretend we get on. We’d go and we’d smile (laughter)”. Adriana did not adhere to the pressure, but had to negotiate her mothering activities everyday. Elizabeth’s words indicated the types of things all three women were told:

“oh but he’s a good provider and you’ve got a lovely house to live in, you’ve got lovely children and what have you got to complain about? You’ve got nothing to complain about”.

Karen, Raewyn, Susan and Pauline were trapped by their beliefs about the possibility of becoming a single mother. They all believed they would experience stigma due to social expectations. Teresa, Victoria, Susan, Elsie and Elizabeth did not tell people about their problems because they were ashamed and, as Teresa stated, she “perceived it as a failure on my part to have a good relationship with a good person, so I didn’t really want to talk about it to friends or family because I felt that they would see me as a failure and that I’d bugged it up”. Victoria echoed Teresa and Raewyn when she said, “I didn’t want to admit that this was my lot. If they saw it I’d have to admit it to myself and I wasn’t ready to admit it to myself. I didn’t want anybody to see us function or dysfunction”. Until the interview, Donna, Elsie and Teresa had continued to keep their story private, Elsie because she believed it was the “biggest mistake out” and Teresa because she still partly believed it was her fault. Elsie commented that “my parents to this day still don’t know what it was like” and Donna told me that “telling you stuff is a revelation. I’ve kept it to myself”. Elizabeth’s father sexually violated her as a child and she confronted him about this while she was married to David. As a result she was rejected by both her parents. This fuelled David’s tactic of degrading Elizabeth by continually telling her she was bad. So she “would get it from him and then I would have it reinforced by them to the point where all that was left for me was ‘well, what’s wrong with me? There must be something wrong with me’”.

## **Socialised to Bolster Male Superiority**

### ***Total Belief in the Male***

Before marrying, Elsie and Adriana believed that getting married meant being “swallowed up”. During their relationship they were the only two women who did not have total belief in the male. The other women had total belief in their partner. Elizabeth conveyed how believing in the male was socially encouraged:

“Over the time that I was with him my self-doubt *grew* even more and more because everything I suggested just got put down. It just proved the patriarchal thing that women are inferior and men *are* superior, they *do* know more, they *are* cleverer.”

Teresa expressed how believing in the man’s superiority was a sign of love:

“It didn’t really worry me at the time because it felt quite nice in a way, like protected, he was right and that I didn’t know as much as he did about things he knew what he was doing. It just confirmed to me that I was a bit incompetent really.”

Raewyn and Pauline were “quite happy” to allow their husband to make decisions because “he seemed to know best”. Heather indicated that she “still hadn’t got back to speaking out for myself” after leaving her previous husband who used “mild psychological abuse” against her so “thought it was better for him to decide”. Both Teresa’s and Sally’s partner had been married before and made these two women believe that he knew more about relationships. Sally said that at age “32 I still had never formulated a future for myself and because he was filled with ideas, I just followed them”. Teresa articulated that Patrick “could present very strong seemingly logical, rational arguments. I thought he must be right so I’d shift my opinions. I started to think that I must be quite thick”.

### ***Being Too Trusting***

Elsie was the only woman who did not trust her husband throughout the entire relationship. Other women began to lose trust over time although Elizabeth, Teresa and Heather still found difficulty giving up that trust after they left. Susan was “completely trusting” when her husband went out to buy a van for their family. She thought she “let him go and do it because I didn’t really want to trade it in”. Susan did not see anything



wrong with the car they already had. Anthony did not buy the van and purchased a car far beyond what their budget could afford. Then Susan reframed this and “thought okay we can afford this”. Susan was adamant that this reframing was not acceptance of his behaviours. Rather, she, like Sally and Victoria, made many attempts to make their husband responsible for the finances even though they did not trust him. Their complaints fell on “deaf ears”. But Victoria indicated that “I never thought he’d hurt me. I didn’t trust him to make the best decisions for the family unit, but I never expected what I got, it never occurred to me”. Sally mentioned being continually astonished by her partner’s lack of responsibility. She commented that trusting him was her “downfall in this marriage, believing in him. It was *my* problem that I trusted him because I would not seem to wake up and realise that he wouldn’t do these things”.

### ***Protecting His Ego***

Teresa said that “it’s your job” to enhance “his status and diminish yours”. As Karen explained, protecting her partner’s ego was one reason women kept the abuse private:

“He didn’t treat anybody else like that and everyone really loved him and I didn’t want to diminish that. There wasn’t any point in me running him down with his friends.”

The above was also the case for Donna. Adriana was “the strong one so shut up because she did not want to overpower him”. Some interviewees reported that protecting the male ego was one reason why they did not “make many achievements after we were married (Victoria)”. Sally “could sense I was increasing his level of low self-esteem by my actions of going ahead with my own business so I held myself back”. Pauline downplayed her achievement of reaching the highest status position in the Red Cross and never displayed her gold badge in public and told people “oh, I can’t be bothered with that”. However, now that Pauline has left her relationship she declared that this achievement was “very important to me now to look back and have that”.

Teresa, Sally and Elizabeth did not want to damage their partner’s career or his professional standing in the community. For this reason Teresa did not take out a trespass order. In her high public profile job Teresa commented that rather than giving up her job to redress the male-female power imbalance she consciously chose to “play the dumb blonde and try and keep a low profile”. Raewyn “used to keep very quiet about having a Masters degree”.

Victoria avowed that “I never let anybody threaten his masculinity and never let anybody put him down”. When friends of Pauline’s and Heather’s did challenge their partner, Pauline articulated that “they were really putting him down” and Heather commented that “they were making him look silly”. Sally, Raewyn and Elizabeth said that friends and family told them throughout their relationship that something was not right, but they ignored the warnings and protected their partner or assumed such warnings had no foundation.

Karen and Susan left their marriage several times and allowed their partner back because they felt sorry for him. Karen commented that when Felix did “admit to his weaknesses I felt more affection for him and pity”. Susan felt sorry for Anthony because “he couldn’t get *his* life together. Any money problems, I fixed”. Teresa felt sorry for her partner because “he had a drinking problem”. Luke used to make Heather feel sorry for him by complaining about having a variety of non-existent diseases. Heather said whenever she tried to leave the relationship he would “start crying and I thought I suppose I just better stay here”.

### ***Silencing Herself***

The women put in a great deal of effort to avoid being abused or to stop it occurring or to “keep the peace”. All 11 women who experienced the impact of psychological abuse during their relationship were isolated due to their partner’s tactics. They either narrowed their range of social contacts or ceased having contact at all. Women also made changes because, as Victoria indicated, the abuser’s tactics “just reinforced everything I believed to be true about myself anyway”. Pauline echoed Donna when she articulated a further reason why women lost themselves: “He just kept me running round in circles, so bloody busy that ‘me’ wasn’t really there”. Acts of self-diminishment were, as Karen stated, “to put me in my place to make sure I was still going to be sitting in the box that he’d made for me. I couldn’t enjoy spontaneity I would withdraw and just choose not to do it, it would be too much bother. I toned myself right down”.

Adriana toned her self down, but for a different reason. In New Zealand Adriana felt pressured, by friends and acquaintances, to be a subservient wife and to mother in a particular way. During her relationship and “afterwards, a lot of people said I was

wearing the pants”. Because of these social expectations and the “obvious difference” in Steven when they returned to New Zealand, Adriana “toned myself down because I was ‘too loud, bolshy and colourful’”. Adriana’s European education was broader than Steven’s New Zealand one so in social situations she would “not show my full depth and breadth of knowledge” because she “did not want to hurt him”.

Karen, Elsie, Raewyn and Sally changed their appearance. Karen and Elsie put on weight. Elsie declared “I was this weight (55 kg) but he said I was really fat so I’d stop eating and then my metabolism got all screwed up”. Adriana was always told she was too skinny so she tried to put on weight. Sally became underweight by 10 kg. Raewyn “used to go around in absolutely *rotten* clothing” and Karen “just frumped around and my hair turned into one big rat’s nest because I never brushed it”. Heather was told she “dressed like a whore” and her “hair was that colour to attract men” so she changed her hair colour and continued to question whether she was looking “tarty”.

Teresa stopped going to church, Pauline changed her political vote. Most of the women lost interests of their own or narrowed the range of activities which were acceptable to their partner. Patrick compared Teresa “to his ex-wife and I responded to that by changing what I did so that it was more like what she had done”. Teresa, Raewyn and Sally felt pressured to become more like their husband so they did.

Elsie, Victoria, Karen, Teresa, Elizabeth, Raewyn and Heather frequently behaved in ways to “keep the peace”, to avoid an argument, to prevent any reaction where “all hell would break loose (Karen)”, to reduce stress and make life “easier” and to reduce the problems to “a smaller scale (Susan)”. When I asked Elsie if she experienced intimidation she phrased it like this:

“kicked the door in, chucked stuff, pinned me up against a wall and yelled at me that way. Enough for me to avoid it like the plague”.

If they knew they would have to face negative consequences, the women would cleverly find different angles to protect themselves as best they could. Here is one of Raewyn’s strategies:

“I would have to go and ask him for the cheque every week to pay for bills. It was always a *big* deal. I used to ask him just as he was leaving so that he wouldn’t have time to blow me up saying, ‘Oh you spend too much money,’ or, ‘*Again* I have to give you a cheque.’ He *hated* me

asking him just as he was leaving but I knew I did it to protect myself because he couldn't take the time to think 'does she deserve this or not?' Or 'damn I can't get stuck into her' or whatever."

Elizabeth, Teresa and Victoria stopped voicing their ideas and Donna and Elsie "kept my opinions, thoughts and feelings to myself".

### ***Loss of Self***

Six women described losing themselves. Karen communicated that she "fought against it but some of it does get in. You just get doubt, confusion, weakness, gradual weakening of your fibre". Pauline "just shelved everything to go with what he was. I absolutely said goodbye to myself" and Donna said that the "more abused I became the less I wanted, the less I thought. It virtually just shut down everything in me. I started thinking I was worthless. You lose yourself". Teresa told me that her "feeling of achievement was diminished. My self-esteem through the relationship just dropped to absolutely zero" and Raewyn commented that she "felt invisible like I didn't exist". Elsie was always afraid to upset her husband so maintained the same strategy throughout her entire relationship. She lived her "life doing exactly what he wanted" and "every time I was placid it was at the expense of me being able to stick up for myself or have a view of my own, so just gradually diminished my freedom until there was nothing left".

Pauline used to dissociate from her feelings and "just go with the flow". Heather said that when Luke "would just go on and on and on" she:

"just had to sit there and listen and I just wanted to walk away because it was getting too much. I wanted to say, 'I'm going I'm just so drained'. He sucked all my energy out, I felt like this little limp thing sitting there wanting to lift everything up and move away. It was a horrible feeling. I'd say, 'Oh yeah do that'. I just gave in all the time. I didn't have the strength, even though you feel like you've got the strength physically you haven't got the strength in your voice to say, 'No, look at it like this,' so your opinion was never heard. It would feel like you had this little thing waving in front of you and he had you in this trance".

All 12 women developed psychological and physical health problems. Teresa, Karen and Sally were sick all the time. Teresa and Sally slept 14 hours a day minimum, had a lot of neck problems and both went on prozac. Sally and Adriana experienced physical pain. Donna and Sally experienced back pain throughout their relationship. Adriana's sleeping pattern had been disturbed. Karen experienced agoraphobia and bulimia. Susan

was a “shaking mess” and she and Adriana had a lot of migraines. Elizabeth’s “platelet count dropped for no apparent reason and the treatment made no difference”. Pauline, Teresa, Sally, Karen and Elizabeth were depressed and Pauline developed glandular fever “but didn’t rest up because I had five children”. Exhaustion was the most frequently cited problem. Victoria explained the process, which was the antithesis of helplessness:

“It was exasperating. ‘I don’t know what you want. I’m not allowed to be independent, but I’m not allowed to be dependent, well what the hell am I supposed to be?’ I didn’t understand what I was supposed to be so that every day I got it wrong. I never got it right. It was always going to be wrong anyway. But I was still supposed to do something. But then when you decide what it is you’re going to do, you don’t want to make that decision because you know it’s going to be wrong or you’re going to be in trouble about it. Right or wrong no longer becomes an issue. It’s about what I do is going to cause chaos or what I do isn’t going to cause chaos. It’s about the impact. What I do could be wrong, it doesn’t matter. If it caused least fuss then it’s okay.”

## **Other Aspects of Herself Emerge Intermittently**

### ***Maintaining a Belief in Herself***

In spite of diminishment of the self, several women spoke of being aware of having their own thoughts, but instead they expressed the thoughts and behaviours they knew their partner would prefer. They did this to “keep him happy” and to avoid a predictable negative backlash.

Elsie, Sally, Raewyn and Pauline all mentioned doing what Elizabeth articulated:

“I had this one conversation going on in my head and this other one that was coming out of my mouth and they didn’t at all add up. There was something of me in there, yeah there must have been, somewhere in me there must have been a part of me that knew that, but it was very kept out.”

Although they were worn down by their partner’s tactics, Karen “had a basic faith that I would be all right and we would survive”, Raewyn “had enough in me to know that it was just him trying to put me down” and Elsie said:

“There was a hard core piece of me that wouldn’t give in when he blamed me and there was only a little tiny piece of me left when I actually left the marriage. In that little piece there was still a drop of belief that I could do better, that I just needed to escape him.”

Elizabeth, Pauline, Sally and Susan conveyed how they came to realise they were not responsible for their partner's behaviours. Elizabeth's husband found her crying in the shower one day and wanted to know what was wrong. Elizabeth told him, "everything, everything's wrong". Then he got "really, really angry" so Elizabeth:

"chided myself for having said that to him because it hurt his feelings and then I stood there and I thought 'how come it's not okay for me to hurt *his* feelings, but it's okay for him to hurt my feelings everyday?' And at that point I thought 'it's not okay'".

One turning point for Susan was when she told her sister "what an idiot she was for not leaving her abusive husband". Susan realised that:

"When I told her she had to do it, I was so unhappy where I was, I decided I'll do it. I was in the same situation, yet I was letting him walk all over me, but I got out and he still walked all over me. I think leaving had something to do with thinking I deserved more than he was giving me."

### ***Asking for Her Needs to be Met***

Donna, Sally, Elizabeth, Heather, Susan, Pauline and Karen mentioned continually asking for their needs to be met and conveyed the frustration of being dismissed. All 11 male partners were determined that only their needs be met in the relationship as was the case for Adriana's husband after they divorced. Sally and Karen would explain to their partner the effect his negligence and abuse were having on them:

"I'd say you've placed this wall around me that people can't get in and I can't get out. All of that energy that was going to be coming out, it bounces back in on me and it's hurting. It's cutting me up because I can't be me anymore. I need to let it out, I need to be who I am." (Karen).

Victoria, Sally, Karen and Heather frequently said "no", although their partner would infrequently take "no" for an answer. Donna, Sally, Pauline, Karen, Susan and Raewyn would argue. But it was a waste of energy because as Karen pointed out "I mean I could bitch and moan at him about stuff and I did, but it didn't stop him from doing shit". So all six women, plus Victoria would get angry, although Pauline would not express anger very often. Elsie and Teresa were afraid of anger and would avoid it at all costs. Sally's and Pauline's husband would not get angry or raise their voices. Sally communicated that:

"he told me that he would leave if I didn't sort out my anger. Because my mother had been a very angry woman I assumed that what he was saying was correct and that my anger *was* the problem in the relationship".

Raewyn, Teresa and Elizabeth resorted to lying about where they had been so they could enjoy some freedom. Teresa attempted to get out of sex by “being sick”. When Victoria’s, Susan’s and Sally’s frustration at not getting their needs met became unbearable they physically attacked their husband. Victoria declared, “I took to him twice. Can I say that? (laughter). I was just beside myself. I just didn’t know what to do”. Victoria explained:

“I grabbed him and pinned him against the wall. I threw the roast across the lounge. I picked it up off the carpet and served it to my mother-in-law for tea (laughter).”

When Anthony insisted that Susan have a caesarian for his convenience she became so enraged at his lack of support she said:

“I was going to stab him with my knitting needle, but I thought no that’ll make a hole so I picked up the scissors and just went (jabbing motion) in his leg.”

When Sally could not make Dylan stop grabbing her breasts she would:

“grab at his penis to show him how degrading and how awful it was and when I would do that all he would do was tell me in no uncertain terms that I wasn’t to do that again and of course, I didn’t, unlike him he would still continue to grab me”.

### ***Pointing Out the logic***

Heather felt “scared” because she “never knew what was truthful and what wasn’t”.

Often she would “confront” her partner with the truth. For example:

“He told people, ‘I laid all those tiles,’ but I’d seen with my own eyes that he hadn’t. I saw the tileman doing it. I said, ‘Look Luke you didn’t actually do those tiles.’ He said, ‘I did.’ I said, ‘You did a little bit over there where the man showed you because you wanted to cut a tile. That’s lying’.”

Elizabeth, Karen, Donna and Sally would look for the logic behind what their partner was saying or doing. For example, when David insisted that Elizabeth be home to greet him at lunchtime and 5.00 pm because he did not have a key, she would suggest:

“‘Take the key.’ ‘Oh no, I don’t want all that stuff jangling around in my pockets.’ ‘Okay well let’s leave a key outside so if you get home you can let yourself in.’ ‘Oh, no, no, no, no people can find keys if you leave it outside. You can’t leave keys outside.’ I did come up with some suggestions but of course I never really thought that they were going to make a difference. I just

made them and knew that nothing was going to come of that and just accepted that I had to be home at 5.00 pm. But it was so mind bogglingly dumb that I would just switch off from it and it would just be like, no just don't go there."

Donna spoke for Sally when she articulated that whenever she pointed out the logic to her husband that "would *absolutely* infuriate him because that would be me being a *smart bitch*".

Sally, Susan, Karen and Victoria would tell their partner the facts about their financial situation and attempt to get their partner to take responsibility. They would explain the reasons why their partner could not spend copious amounts of money because the money was there to pay for bills. All these women's partners turned a deaf ear to the information and insisted on having their needs met, forcing three of the women into extensive debt.

### ***Validation from Friends, Family and Counsellors***

Donna, Sally, Elizabeth and Victoria did not mention receiving support from anyone throughout their relationship. Unlike these four women, Adriana, Heather, Karen, Elsie, Teresa, Pauline, Raewyn and Susan talked about their problems to friends and family in spite of fearing negative reactions from their partner. They were listened to, reassured and accepted. The more potent sources of support came when the women's experience was validated by others, when they received feedback about their competency and when they were encouraged to believe in themselves. Two further sources of active support were when friends supported the women's needs by standing up to their partner and when they were told by others to leave they felt they had received permission. Adriana's in-laws, especially her mother-in-law, were always validating and "extremely positive and supportive" throughout her relationship and have continued to be so during all the separation abuse she had been experiencing.



## ***Rechannelling the Lost Self***

Elizabeth, Raewyn and Pauline rechannelled their lost self by expressing their motherhood and Donna spoke for Raewyn when she said she “poured it back into the garden when I wasn’t doing stuff for him”. Victoria and Teresa escaped the abuse by creating a private space for themselves. Victoria put on headphones and listened to “headbanging music”. Teresa read and slept a lot.

Elizabeth, Susan, Karen and Sally encountered an escalation of abuse as other aspects of themselves emerged. Sally and Karen became determined to do what they wanted and put up with the reactive abuse. Karen kept going to university, Sally kept going to the chiropractor and continued to “plan my education which I then pursued when I left him”.

Raewyn, Elizabeth and Pauline “found” themselves when they enjoyed activities outside the home. One counsellor gave Elizabeth books to read which was “just like wow, my eyes just went wide open and I started to connect with some of this material that I was reading”. Then when Elizabeth attended a parenting course and a course to train as a facilitator to teach other parents and when Pauline was a leader in the Red Cross, Pauline spoke for Elizabeth when she said “I was achieving, that I was good at something”. These two women realised, in the words of Pauline:

“I definitely had more in me, I had something in me, I never thought I had anything in there, I never thought I could really amount to anything, that I could never really have a profession or do anything. I found things within myself that I never realised existed.”

Before Raewyn decided to end the relationship she felt she “had to experience that I had the ability to stand on my own. I had that strength to do it”. Raewyn gathered this strength when:

“we went to Thailand for a couple of years and I just *found* myself there, because I had *time* to myself over there, because we had a housekeeper. I didn’t have to be with the children all the time and I met people. That was probably the biggest thing. *I met people!* And I realised I *was* a social person and that they all *liked* me, they actually liked me. Because being with Brian and in a very negative, critical environment, I think I got to the stage where I thought people didn’t really like me”.

Although Felix and Anthony moved back in with Karen and Susan each time they left, each move meant as Karen said that she felt she “was in a better place, I was in more control”.

## **Emerging from the Inflexible Nature of Gender Socialisation**

### ***Discovering that the Emperor’s Got No Clothes On***

For each woman, the specific events leading to her decision to leave differed, but the first set of turning points involved the discovery that their partner was not the man whom society had promised he would be. One day Heather looked down the drive at Luke’s friends “and thought they looked like creepy guys, like hoods. I thought how did I not see this before? They look quite slippery characters. I thought how on earth did I get wrapped up in this?” The “straw that broke the camel’s back” for Donna was when her husband went overseas he gave the cheque book to Hamish (who Donna called the “prison slave” because he was another man who lived in the house and served Frank) and told Donna she was to ask Hamish for money. This made Donna realise she had absolutely no status as his wife, in contrast to the idea that she was “a lucky girl because she was the queen” of the bikie gang. Karen said there were those shocking moments when she realised she was never going to experience the love, support and family warmth she had expected. The women experienced deep hurt, disappointment and began to detach from their partner. Raewyn spoke for Sally and Susan when she said that slowly she was “doing less and less for him” and Raewyn and Karen used this strategy that Sally mentioned: “I just started to figure ‘how was I going to survive in this relationship without having to involve *him?*’”

The second set of turning points involved the discovery that the interviewee’s partner was not who he said he was. Teresa, Donna, Raewyn, Heather and Sally gave many instances of seeing discrepancies between their partner’s words and behaviours and “thought those two things don’t go together (Heather)”. Sally’s husband suddenly became busy working when she had visitors, yet one of his major forms of abuse was refusal to work. Raewyn’s husband would suddenly become a father when friends visited and yet one of his forms of abuse was to ignore his fathering responsibilities.

Raewyn gave these discrepancies the same label as Donna that “slowly over time I just realised what a con artist he was”. Pauline spoke for Raewyn when she said she realised that following any “honeymoon” phase “he went (clicked her fingers) back to” how he was before. It was as if he had put on a great big act and they realised it was a tactic so they both ceased being deceived by it. Victoria said she just woke “up one day and going, this isn’t bizarre, no, this is actually what it is”. Each time Chris was emotionally unkind and neglected Pauline during extremely stressful times she saw “the real him”.

### ***Letting Go of the Dream***

Most women believed it was a woman’s job to make the relationship work. Donna, Pauline, Sally, Teresa, Victoria, Elsie, Elizabeth and Raewyn all agreed that “as a couple we could overcome anything (Victoria)”. From the way women coped with the psychological abuse it appears that this cognition carried two meanings. First that as a couple they could overcome problems in the outside world. The second meaning, that it is up to both partners to make the relationship work, is inconsistent with the belief that it is a woman’s job to make a relationship work. Over time the women altered their expectations about ever having a mutually caring, respectful, supportive relationship. One strategy was to just ignore their partner. Karen commented that she:

“used to drive around in the car on Sunday drives and look at these houses and get angry and jealous of all these people with so much wealth and security. That he would never ever get his shit together enough to do that. I’ve learned to let go of any sort of middle class expectations of what a father might be and a provider might be”.

Victoria expressed some of the women’s sentiments:

“I tried not to think about it. I just got on with it. Life doesn’t become about trying to resolve anything, life becomes about surviving it. So you don’t try to actively do anything about anything because that just tells you there’s a problem, you don’t need to think about that right now, you just need to survive. If it’s going to cause you distress and upset the house, don’t bother, just survive it. And survive’s usually done by avoiding.”

The women spoke of reaching a number of dead ends. Victoria, Elizabeth and Teresa either tried to get their partner to counselling or succeeded in doing so, but as Victoria’s husband said, that was “all rubbish, I’m not going to f...ing do that”. Victoria spoke for Teresa and Elizabeth when she voiced that “there was absolutely no point”. The women gave up trying. Donna, Pauline, Elsie and one other woman (who did not want to be named) wished that their husband would die.

Elsie, Heather, Karen, Victoria, Susan and Pauline knew they were going to leave for some time. Raewyn and Elizabeth wanted to leave earlier in the relationship but for various reasons did not allow themselves to contemplate it as a reality. Once Victoria:

“realised that this wasn’t going to get any better, that this was my lot, it became, I do what I have to do until I know I can get out. It wasn’t an active hunting for a way out, it was just a passive knowing that one day I would be out, when the time is right I will be gone”.

### ***To Sin is Better than This***

Up until this point the women had struggled with not wanting to experience the ‘sin’ of divorce, the ‘sin’ of being a solo mother and the loss of self-worth of being single.

However, Susan spoke for Karen when she said that her “fear of being labelled with the stigma of solo mother didn’t come into it in the end”. Elsie “felt I had to leave for my son. It wasn’t me doing something for me just to walk away, it was me doing it to save somebody else. I could justify it away from being selfish. By then anything would have been better”. Karen thought, as Elizabeth did, that “it was better to stay together for the kids, but then I thought how could this be good for them and decided if he wasn’t going to make the move then I was going to have to move so I did”. Pauline, who was a Christian, realised that:

“it was better to be sinful and on my own and on the benefit, poor and in disgrace with my family and my in-laws than to put up with what was going on. So I had a shift in thinking. I started to envy people who left their marriage. I started to think that seems better. I finally accepted that whatever I was going to face in the future would be better than now”.

### ***The Ultimate Moment of Leaving***

Raewyn, Adriana and Susan responded to an ultimatum placed on them from the outside. From the moment Steven told Adriana the marriage was over she immediately “started organising the practicalities of living on my own” which included getting an abortion organising further education and setting up employment. Susan told me she “just cried and cried and cried because of all the effort I’d put in and I was getting absolutely nothing back (crying)”. Susan left many times and was unable to shake Anthony from her life. The final time she was able to leave because of “the threat from WINZ fraud squad. I knew I wanted to leave, I hadn’t wanted to be back with him, but

the forcefulness of it". WINZ told Susan that her choice was "to go off the DPB or to get rid of him. For seven years I'd been trying to get rid of him so that's something positive that came out of the WINZ thing". Susan said that the threat of a prison sentence was the only thing that enabled her to finally leave Anthony. Raewyn's husband said:

"You've got to decide whether you're going to leave or not because the children have to start school and when they start school here they have to stay here.' This in fact really made me just suddenly (click of the fingers) go. Luckily my sister was there which gave me a bit of confidence to leave. I said to her, 'Don't go, stay with me until I've left, because I'm scared of him.' So that was lucky."

Donna, Elizabeth, Raewyn, Elsie, Heather, Teresa, Victoria, Sally and Pauline left when they reached the limit of what they would tolerate. Heather, Teresa and Elizabeth just wanted to get away from their partner and did not think about the future. All three signed away some of their rights because of the need to escape and at the follow-up interview Elizabeth and Heather were still experiencing separation abuse. Teresa did not leave because of the abuse, rather it was because of Patrick's alcoholism and lying. Elizabeth and Donna finally left at the point they thought they were going to die. Elizabeth remembers:

"I left the marriage to survive. I was constantly weighing those up. I can't survive within the marriage, I can't survive outside the marriage and one day the balance got tipped and that was it I was out of there."

Raewyn and Elsie left to protect their children. Elsie thought Leon was going to kill her three month old son. At the point Brian began to psychologically abuse his oldest son and favour his youngest son, Raewyn was at her "most *scaredest* and the most I ever wanted to leave was at that point" although she did not leave for another five years until she established an inner strength.

When Heather's partner "started getting nasty when I got pregnant I found it easier to leave; the nastiness affected me more than his crying". "The final straw" for Victoria was when Graham was yet again demanding that he be allowed to purchase a car they could not afford. This was occurring on a day he was supposed to attend a fertility specialist. He had been using his lack of fertility as an excuse for his behaviours, saying he was not a man. Further, Victoria wanted to have a baby and she realised this was yet another case of him demanding what he wanted and then maybe he might consider giving her what she wanted. Victoria and Susan realised they were not going to get

anywhere. Victoria became worn out, Susan needed to save her sanity and could not handle any more of the financial restrictions. Elizabeth “had to get to ‘I just can’t stand this any more’”. Elizabeth echoed several women when she told me of an experience she had with a lawyer when she left:

“There was nothing else left for me to do, I had to do it, but it was an incredibly difficult thing to do, probably one of the most difficult things I have ever done. And I found there was no acknowledgement of how difficult it must have been.”

Karen did not leave “until the resources were there, the direction was set, I had a place to go, somebody to go with” and Sally left a couple of days after the final settlement on the sale of their house.

Teresa’s and Karen’s partner helped them to move. A friend helped Donna. When Teresa and Elizabeth left they stayed with a girlfriend. Donna, Elsie and Raewyn moved in with family. Heather, who was pregnant, “had to sort myself out financially” so moved into the rental property she owned to prepare it for sale. Pauline and Susan decided they were not leaving the house when it was their husband who was causing the problems, so they continued to occupy the matrimonial property. Susan said she “needed the strength” that final time “to fight the things he’s done to me” and to insist that he leave the house. But she had to get the police to help. She also went to the lawyer who took her “to the police to get the trespass order”. Teresa’s mother “started paying the mortgage and then I paid her back once the house had sold”.

## **Broadening Herself in Spite of Ongoing Separation Abuse**

### ***Initial Effects of Leaving***

In the initial stages of leaving, Susan, Raewyn, Pauline and Sally felt immense relief, freedom and bliss. Although Teresa was relieved, she “just slept and wanted to hide and didn’t want to do things”. Teresa “just wanted rid of him” so did not appeal when she received less than her fair share of the property settlement. Most of the women were exhausted. When Elsie left she “felt numb and starved of knowledge”. Victoria “came out feeling absolutely worthless” and Donna “was literally broken for about two years”. Teresa and Victoria explained going through the grief process, as described by Victoria:

“What the hell do I do now? You have to rethink your whole life, all your goals, all your plans, all your hopes for the future have gone. So what the hell does that mean about who you are? I bawled and bawled and bawled. I was really angry with him and how dare he do this to me. I was angry with me, how could I do this to myself? I was angry with my mother, how could she say if I cleaned the house a little bit more it would all be better?”

Elizabeth, Victoria, Heather and Pauline have often wondered if they did everything in their power to make the relationship work and whether they should go back. Victoria continued:

“Then the wanting to go back, well maybe it wasn’t as bad as I remember. Maybe I was overreacting, maybe I could give it one more go because I’m stronger now and I wouldn’t let that happen again. Then you get to the stage of acceptance.”

### ***Separation Abuse***

Raewyn and Teresa later went back to get possessions. Doing so was unpleasant for both women. Teresa’s ex-partner came to the door wearing a g-string which made her feel “quite revolted and a bit unsafe”. Fortunately, Raewyn’s ex-husband “had flatmates around so he couldn’t go too stupid”.

In the initial stages of the final separation, Elsie’s, Heather’s, Susan’s and Teresa’s partner pursued them with gifts and acts of kindness. Elsie threw her gifts in the rubbish. Elizabeth, Susan, Teresa and Heather still held a lingering sense of trust of their partner which diminished as separation abuse escalated. At the time of her follow-up interview, Heather said she kept forgetting that she was being psychologically abused and was still finding it difficult to understand why. She said this confusion partly stems from other people often telling her how nice Luke was, by lawyers minimising the abuse and by remembering that Luke continually professed that he loved her. Donna’s husband threatened to hurt her children if she did not return. Donna thought she was going to die due to health problems and decided she could “not bear the thought of dying in this house, because even in my dying it would have been about him” and although she was aware of Frank’s capabilities of hurting her children, she decided to leave town. Elsie’s husband threatened to shoot her and she “was scared of the gun” when she left him; Raewyn was physically scared of her partner. Karen, Raewyn and Teresa thought their partner was probably close to a mental breakdown.

Heather, Susan and Teresa were stalked by their partner. All three women were terrified. Susan feared Anthony would rape her because he cut holes in her bathroom and bedroom floor and because during a previous separation, he raped her and she became pregnant with their fourth child. Teresa:

“changed the pin number on my telephone, changed the lock, I’d pull all my curtains in the middle of the day so he couldn’t see me. In the kitchen there was a dishwasher space under the bench without a dishwasher in it and I had this *huge* urge for about two months that all I wanted to do was just crawl into that and just be in there because he wouldn’t be able to get me”.

Victoria also wanted to hide. Heather and Susan thought they were imagining things. Eventually it was proven that Anthony was stalking Susan. Heather had intended aborting her baby but Luke served High Court papers on her and the hospital to stop this. Although he did not pursue this, Heather was scared of the power Luke had over her so went on to have the baby and this meant that she was not able to pursue the education she planned. Adriana’s ex-husband threatened to kill her after they divorced. The moment that happened Adriana called the police, the lawyers and took out a trespass order and later a protection order. She “made it as knowable to people who were somewhat involved as possible. I had the telephone right beside my bed. A lot of times I had a friend’s phone number already punched in so I just had to push redial and they knew if it rang it was me”. Steven continued to make demands for Adriana to pay for their daughter’s transport costs to and from the city where he lived, but Adriana never succumbed. Although Adriana continued to be taken to court by Steven she had “been ignoring him for a few years now. He’s not deserving of my attention and energy”.

Eight women in this study had children with their partner. Karen’s, Susan’s, Raewyn’s, Elizabeth’s, Adriana’s, Heather’s and Pauline’s ex-partner continued to use their children to perpetrate ongoing harassment. Elsie was the only woman who had escaped this form of separation abuse. Adriana, Elizabeth, Donna and Heather have spent years and thousands of dollars being taken to court by their ex-partner. For Adriana, Elizabeth and Heather this form of separation abuse was ongoing at the time of the follow-up interview. Victoria’s and Sally’s ex-husband still owed them money at the time of the follow-up interview. Sally’s ex-husband wrote to her lawyer denying responsibility for this, saying that she was mentally ill. Dylan had refused to reply to any of Sally’s attempts to contact him.



Adriana believed her husband did not retaliate immediately because “he knew I could destroy him so he really behaved while he was still in my home in Europe. He knows that my uncle is a lawyer. He was aware of the fact that I went to see him. He’s not that stupid. I was in full control then. Extremely”. Likewise, Elsie believed her husband had no avenue to mess her about because she had moved in with her parents and brothers and one of her brothers had a high status position in society.

### ***Negative Response from Friends, Family and Colleagues***

Some of Sally’s friends did not believe her when she told her about Dylan’s abuse partly because while in the relationship she only spoke about the positive aspects of her relationship and never spoke to anyone about the abuse. Teresa’s colleagues and manager blamed her and told her she was “stupid”. Two friends blamed Raewyn and Donna’s family thought she was an “idiot”. Elizabeth’s parents blame her. Pauline was told by a female friend that she was now a threat to other women. Karen’s grandmother considered her to be a failure because she was a single mother. Teresa, Elizabeth and Pauline lost friends. Elizabeth said this was because she:

“was someone’s wife not because I was who I was and because I was now on my own, living in a not so nice house, without the money and lifestyle that I had before. I didn’t feel that I was anyone that was worth knowing anyway (laughter). I think there were some friends who dropped off because they could see what was happening to me was also going on in their relationships and it was too difficult for them to think if they made the same choice they might end up in the same situation as me. So it was easier for them not to see me. One male friend didn’t want his wife associating with me because at that stage I’d hooked in with someone else and he didn’t approve of that so she wasn’t supposed to see that”.

After separating, friends and family told Karen, Sally, Pauline, Victoria, Susan and Donna about things they used to observe in their relationships which they never mentioned while the women were still with their partner. Susan’s in-laws have written in affidavits that Anthony “was a perfect father”. Susan indicated that “they didn’t see behind the scenes. They only saw the face value which was that I was being a bitch because I was taking the children off him”. At her follow-up interview several months later, Susan told me that her in-laws no longer talk to Anthony because they “have experienced his lies and deception and are disgusted with his abusive behaviour”.

## ***The Public Response***

Raewyn said that for her to leave her husband she “had to feel strong enough to cope with whatever [putdowns] people gave me when I left”. In fact, Karen, Elizabeth and Pauline mentioned experiencing victim blaming by people because they are single mothers. Someone recently said to Karen “this country is being brought to its knees by teenage girls picking duds”. Although Karen thought her two children are better off with “less violence [psychological abuse] in the air” she still had “the belief that it’s not right” to be a single mother so she was “attempting to prove myself, prove that I’m a good mother”. Pauline said she “felt degraded to come into that category” and, like Karen, she overcompensates; for example, Pauline ensures the children go nowhere barefooted. In Elizabeth’s capacity as a counsellor she was regularly told that her single mother clients do not “deserve support and shouldn’t you be supporting them to stay together?” The people who made these comments were those “in relationships and uninformed people I come across in my daily life “.

## ***Institutional Response***

Victoria, Raewyn and Susan attended couples’ counselling after separating. Raewyn’s counsellor “didn’t really respond at all. But I suppose it was the safest thing to do, because Brian was pretty aggressive”. Looking back, Raewyn would have preferred that the counsellors she saw informed her of “what was going on” in her relationship. Susan went to a Christian marriage guidance counsellor who “fully believes that people should stay together” and to a “psychologist who thought I was being mean to Anthony”. All three women also had semi-positive experiences with counsellors.

Sally, Donna, Elizabeth and Raewyn all attended the women’s programme at HAIP and felt they each benefited enormously from the education about the dynamics of ‘power and control’. Susan spoke to the non-Maori women’s coordinator about her situation and was told that Anthony was a pathological liar. Susan said this helped her to realise that he was the “nutter” and not her. Raewyn said that attending HAIP was the only real help she got.

WINZ was supportive of Elsie and Elizabeth and Karen believed they have been “very bloody lucky to live in a country which gives access to the DPB (Karen)”. WINZ mostly paid for Elizabeth and Pauline to train as counsellors. However, while on the benefit Elizabeth has had a lover and worked in odd jobs, both of which were looked upon with suspicion by WINZ after David had the fraud squad investigate. Elizabeth told me:

“WINZ would rather that you were out having sex with a different guy every night than have some person who is taking a bit of an interest in you and giving you a bit of support in your life and maybe possibly starting off a relationship.”

At the follow-up interview Pauline was “fighting WINZ because they want her to pull out of study and get a job”. Adriana, who was studying, was under pressure from WINZ for the same reason. Adriana eloquently points out the problems that a solo mother on a benefit had when she was also dealing with ongoing separation abuse:

“WINZ don’t acknowledge a solo parent who’s trying to study, work and being taken to court and having to pay legal fees and having to spend day after day with lawyers and in court. When I’m earning good money I lose all my benefits of help with childcare, help with legal aid, help with community services card. When I work, my net income is almost lower than when I’m on the benefit, but they look at the gross income.”

Adriana and Elizabeth both broached the topic about the system’s bias towards relieving fathers of the responsibility of paying their fair share of child support. Both women enlightened me to the fact that when on the DPB the government, (via the Inland Revenue Department) not the solo mother, receives the father’s contribution towards the children.<sup>1</sup> Adriana told me that she looked at what is accounted for before a man has to pay for his child:

“When men buy a beautiful big house, a boat, a car or if they have entertainment commitments, they’re allowed all of those expenses before paying child maintenance.”

Elizabeth added the dilemma she had been facing:

“I didn’t have the money to send the kids to camp and he wouldn’t because he said I’m already paying child support [to Inland Revenue]. That’s not helping my kids get to camp.”

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<sup>1</sup> If the father contributes anything over and above the yearly gross level of DPB, the remainder is re-directed to the mother. When the mother works she may make a voluntary agreement with the father of her children. Payments be made direct to the mother or channelled to the mother via the Inland Revenue Department (IRD, 31 January 2002).

Adriana and Susan involved the police in incidents of separation abuse. Adriana said the police were “extremely helpful”. In contrast, when Anthony was stalking Susan, the police would not believe her, did little to assist and acted as if “they did not care”. Susan was the only woman who used women’s refuge and she said, “psychological abuse, they were very much in for that”. They helped Susan to understand why the trespass order she had was useless when Anthony was allowed access to the children. They referred her to a helpful lawyer who organised a protection order immediately.

Susan, Heather and Elizabeth had negative experiences with lawyers. Heather was disappointed that she received poor legal advice from her first lawyer which caused her to be enmeshed in a lengthy custody battle which she believed could have been avoided. Heather’s second lawyer advised her to sign an undertaking instead of a protection order and told her that if she did so the matter would be “settled”. Heather heard the word “settled” and signed. Two years later, at the time of the follow-up interview, Heather was still experiencing separation abuse. Heather’s third and current lawyer told her that “at least she didn’t get hit which made me lighten it a lot and think maybe I was taking it the wrong way”. Susan had to ask her lawyer “for several months” for a protection order, but her lawyer “didn’t think there was anything to worry about”. Susan stayed at women’s refuge for five days because she “felt so unsafe”. Women’s refuge referred her to a “brilliant lawyer” who was educated in the dynamics of domestic violence. Sally, Elsie, Victoria, Donna, Adriana and Pauline also had “brilliant” lawyers. Before Heather’s current helpful lawyer she had two lawyers, one male and one female “who did nothing” and hardly responded to Heather. Elizabeth’s lawyer was “very condescending”. Teresa used the same lawyer as her ex-partner and “got bugged all” when the house sold. However, she did not do anything about it because she “just wanted to get rid of him”. Elsie’s lawyer asked her if she had been abused and she said “no” because the lawyer was a man. However, when she went to WINZ she dealt with a woman who asked the same question and Elsie said “yes” because she was a woman.

Adriana and Elizabeth had negative experiences involving the court appointed psychologists who spent an hour assessing their children and their interaction with their parents. Elizabeth said the psychologist was “patronising” and “very much took the male perspective”. Both women complained that the psychologists’ reports were superficial and that the assessment showed nothing like the reality. In Elizabeth’s case she believed the psychologist was:

“absolutely valuing money over care and David’s standing in the community. David was a professional guy with a good job and a nice suit”.

Adriana, Donna and Elizabeth have spent years being taken to court as part of their partner’s separation abuse. All three women had something negative to say about the Family Court. Heather, Adriana and Donna were “amazed how abusive some of the affidavits were (Adriana)” and Donna was astounded by how her ex-husband was allowed to lie in affidavits and his lawyer was permitted to allow this. Both women commented on the snail pace of the court system. During the six years that Donna had been trying to get her share of the matrimonial property the following type of circumstance would occur:

“The judge would rule ‘right the property has to be sold’ and then Frank would do the, ‘Give me three months, give me three months and I’ll pay you’. The lawyer would say, ‘okay, you’ve got three months’. Then I’d get a letter two weeks later saying ‘go to hell, you’re getting nothing, go away.’ But then I’d have to wait for another year for a court date to come up. It’s a long, long, long process.”

At the time of the follow-up interview Heather’s ex-partner was taking her to court over custody of their son. Much of her time was taken up with dealing with lawyers, supervised access and preparing for court hearings. For this reason Heather was unable to finish her first interview with me. Because Adriana was prohibited from moving from the city, where she lived, with her daughter, as well as from New Zealand, she would:

“have to go to court to be able to move cities or countries. This would pretty much cut a lot of opportunities down because to go to court the turn around is about a year which means I have to support my application with a job, give some reason why I want to move. No-one wants to keep a job or scholarship open for a year. If I just got up and moved overseas, if the country was a signatory to the Hague Convention, the child would be uplifted from the country and be brought back to New Zealand. It definitely curbs my freedom, behaviours and decision making. All I do now and what I’m going to do in the next few years is definitely because of the system and what the system allows me to do easily. Officially I can’t start being free until she’s 18 in another nine years. It’s costing a lot”.

Adriana believed that it was:

“not a good thing that the family court is closed. There’s a lot of lies going on. If it was an open court, it would be diminished in a second. If we could have all these different people to come in, number one to listen to it and number two to give evidence, it wouldn’t have been an issue. I get really angry because the system is saying they are looking at the benefit of the child, but the moment he child has some specific activities such as sport or a musical instrument which is normally Saturday morning and the father is not willing to consider that, the court’s viewpoint is that access should have priority before what the child wants to do”.

Donna felt the court system failed her and she and Adriana believed that the court system favours the male. Elizabeth, Heather and Adriana said that although the court system was supposed to place the child's rights first, all three have experienced that in reality the father's rights come first, then the child and the mother has minimal rights. Elizabeth told me some details about why she agrees with this:

“His solicitor suggested to me that if I was having difficulty with my finances why didn't I sell my house. She didn't suggest to him if he was having difficulty paying his child support that he sell *his* house. I was prepared to fit my work in around looking after my children, but when it was suggested to him that maybe he could adjust *his* work hours to fit in with the children, it was like, 'But I'm a lawyer, I've got to work until 5 o'clock'. That was sacrosanct. I felt that *I* had to *prove* that I'm a worthy mother, whereas his was just taken as, well he's wanting custody of his kids he must be some pretty wonderful guy, someone special, because he wants custody he's a man. I felt like I had *no* rights (crying).”

Heather, Elizabeth and Pauline mentioned that, compared to physical violence, psychological abuse was hard to prove to people, in general, as well as to an institution. Steven had breached the protection order twice, but Adriana had the same problem that Elizabeth described:

“How do you put harassment, one incident of it ... like if a guy hits you you can ring the cops and you can say, 'Hey he's been home and he's hit me'. But if a guy makes a phone call and has a particular tone of voice, how can you go down to the police and say, 'look he's violated the order?' But how the hell do you prove it? How can you say that it is psychological abuse because he is using lawyers to deal with this matter? He is not having the kids again for the holidays, how do you prove that's psychological abuse?”

### ***Recovery is Mixed with Lingering Negative Effects***

Since leaving their relationship, Raewyn, Karen and Sally feel they have “gone from strength to strength”. Victoria took a trip overseas and “was forced to stand up for myself”, Karen found feminism and university and a “reason for being, apart from being a milk factory”. Elsie did a writing course because she was “starved of intellect and I wrote my story down and that freed me a little bit more”. Susan went to work, she “grew” and “can now sleep at night without having to check the doors and the windows”. Although, at her follow-up interview, Susan said that Anthony was coming back to the country in the next few weeks so there was the chance abuse could occur. Elizabeth commented that she had a lot more opportunity to be herself now and if she sees abuse occurring in public:

“I’ll speak up about it, not in a nasty way, but I’ll come to the aid of the person that’s being put down or abused or whatever it is and I think that’s something that I can do to lessen the likelihood of it happening.”

Elsie said she had not had an unhappy day since she left. Karen thought being separated from her abusive partner “is a fantastic experience all round”. Although Teresa’s partner was instrumental in making her redundant from her job after the separation, she believed this was positive “because it prompted me to go to university full time and now I’ve got a degree”. Karen and Adriana will have PhD’s in the next four years and Teresa, Elsie and Sally will finish university degrees at the end of this year. On the day of the follow-up interview with Pauline she said she had just finished her Diploma and started a full time job as a counsellor, so was no longer on the DPB. Donna said she was a “whole person again today”. The physical pain that Donna and Sally experienced in their relationship had either diminished or disappeared completely. Victoria mentioned believing she was “sometimes too strong, too protective” and Elsie thought she was “the most self-conceited person. People say, ‘Do you need a hand?’ And I’ll go, ‘No I’ll do it all by myself’”.

For Adriana, Elizabeth and Pauline, who were financially well off in their relationship, their current financial life was “quite shit really (Pauline)” and they felt very restricted financially. Whereas for Sally, Susan, Victoria and Karen who experienced extreme financial hardship, due to their partner’s irresponsible spending and refusal to contribute very much, they felt financially free and enjoyed the sense of control they had over their money. Because of the financial deprivation Donna experienced she “can live for a very long time without wanting anything and still be happy inside”.

Heather, Raewyn and Elizabeth were sad that their children did not live in a two parent household. Karen stated that there was “a lot of stuff that has not been resolved that I cannot get past six years later”. As mentioned earlier, all the women with children, except Elsie, were experiencing ongoing abuse from their ex-partner. Elizabeth had been saddened that her 16 year old son had become psychologically abusive, so she had been trying to stop this “cycle of abuse”. When the armed offenders’ squad raided Donna’s house a couple of years ago, because one of her sons had “done a robbery”, she reached a:

“turning point. The realisation came to me of my influence on my children’s life. I actually said, ‘Oh my God, what have I done?’ And it was at that point that I was healed from drugs like that. I

started reading my bible, I started listening to the word, I started letting God get in and he started to change my life”.

Teresa, Victoria, Sally, Raewyn, Adriana, Elsie and Pauline mentioned lacking trust in relationships and all, except Adriana, trust their judgement less. Teresa was in a long term successful dating relationship but was:

“still surprised that he doesn’t do these things and I’ll say, ‘thank you, thank you.’ And he’ll say, ‘What, what? It’s just a ‘normal’ thing to do’. I’m sad that two years of learning from someone who’s a bastard, how powerful that is and how it stays with you for such a long time”.

Raewyn had difficulty knowing if her current boyfriend was using psychologically abusive tactics or not. She wondered if she was reading too much into his behaviours and the negative effects they had on her.

At Elsie’s first interview she had:

“just gone out on my date for the first time in eight years. My usual strategy’s been just to say, ‘I’m not here to be picked up go away’. I went through a stage of dressing in really dowdy clothes and I cut my hair really short to keep men away. I had to learn to deal with men again, which was difficult and unpleasant. I don’t like New Zealand men, I think they’re aggressive and selfish”.

At the follow-up interview Elsie told me she was marrying her “foreign boyfriend next Saturday” and she was very happy. Adriana told me at her follow-up interview that she does not intend ever entering a relationship, especially with a New Zealand man. Pauline said she went through a stage of being a “crass cow” and she and Victoria adopted similar defensive strategies to Elsie. Karen spoke for Adriana when she said she was “so obsessed about being in control and financially secure, nobody’s going to take that away from me”.

Because Adriana’s and Elsie’s husband threatened to kill them they both continued to live with fear. Adriana said she was “coping on the outside, but I know what’s on the inside. I know the difference compared with before the abuse”. Karen still felt “fear about doing something wrong”. For example, if her flatmate cursed when he burned what he was cooking, she started “curling up, gets nervous, upset, afraid and wonders what’s going to come bounding back at me”. Victoria and Sally still “hold these fantasies” about getting the money their husband still owed them. Elizabeth thought it had taken her “five years to even come through it”. Teresa said that she still believed



she deserved the abuse and still had “not really accepted the nature of the relationship. I still find it really hard to believe. I still want to know why”.

### ***Looking Back***

Donna, Elizabeth, Pauline, Raewyn, Teresa, Victoria and Susan said that early warning signs of psychological abuse “were *everywhere* (Donna)”, but the women were either unaware of them or did not wish to be aware. Donna remarked that she was “too stupid or uninformed or trusting, to set warning bells off in my brain”. Elizabeth assumed she would not have noticed warning signs because of the low self-esteem she had at the time. However, Victoria “knew before I even married him because of the way I used to feel, but (a) I didn’t want to know because I desperately wanted to be married and (b) it’s about surely not, no surely not, people can’t do that to each other, I must be misunderstanding this”. Raewyn realised that from the beginning “the way he treated me was *weird* and even then he made out that it was all my fault and I really believed him because I was so naive about it, naive about relationships”.

Elizabeth, Teresa, Victoria, Pauline and Sally hypothesised that knowledge and education about psychological abuse would have enabled them to label it earlier. Victoria said that because she was isolated, both environmentally and socially, if there had been something on TV to let her “know that psychological abuse was a problem and that others experienced it, I’d have known that I was not unique and that I could get out”. Elsie and Raewyn imagined that having time to reflect would have facilitated their coping strategies and Karen thought that “a good couple of years away from my home to see what ‘normality’ was” would have been useful for her. Elizabeth surmised that having a better self-esteem would have improved her ability to make more constructive decisions and Sally theorised that she would have benefited if she knew that she “had value as a woman without having to be married”. Elizabeth considered that support from her family could have improved her situation and Teresa wondered, if she had discussed it with people before she started living with Patrick, if that would have saved her from entering the relationship in the first place.

Adriana was the only woman of the 12 who knew immediately that her husband’s abusive behaviour was wrong and she sought immediate assistance. Raewyn went to HAIP for help two weeks before leaving her relationship and had the dynamics of

‘power and control’ explained to her then. The other ten women did not find out until after leaving their relationship that what had happened to them was called psychological abuse. Elizabeth, Sally and Donna had similar experiences when they attended the women’s programme at HAIP. Elizabeth relayed her story:

“I am sitting there and I am thinking (laugh) *this* is what was going on in my *marriage*. I was *devastated* because I hadn’t recognised it. The [Duluth] ‘power and control’ wheel, I just looked at it and I thought well he did that and he did that. Oh my God I was devastated, I couldn’t speak. The first couple of sessions I just cried my eyes out, because this was my marriage. It was then I started to realise what had been going on and the impact that it had had on me and that I was the way I was *now*, not that there was anything wrong with me, but because of what had been happening. That was maybe six months after separating.”

## Advice for Other Women

Some of the women in this study gave advice for women who are presently in a psychologically abusive relationship. Victoria and Adriana advised women to “trust their initial instinct and run the other way”. Adriana professed that women:

“should have it in their range of thoughts and range of possibilities that any partner could change for the worse and that women have no control over how that person will turn out to be. It is possible even if you have no indication whatsoever”.

Teresa and Adriana suggested that women should not put up with it, but should seek help and use the system. Heather recommended that women go straight to women’s refuge so they can be referred to a lawyer who gives them advice which ensures her safety. Susan recommended that “if somebody said to you it looks like there’s a problem, listen to them”. Donna, Pauline, Elsie and Victoria said it was “not cut and dried, you can’t just leave him because it might not be the right time. But if the woman wants to leave she should”. Karen added that she had “no regrets whatsoever about leaving”. Karen and Pauline said there are enormous opportunities out there for sole parents and that if a woman survived a psychologically abusive relationship “she is capable of anything (Karen)”. Teresa added that women need to look around until they find the right support because some friends and family and some professionals may easily interpret psychological abuse in ways which invalidate the victim. Raewyn asserted that when a woman seeks help she should not think that the male’s abusive behaviour is her fault. Elizabeth suggested a woman ask herself questions such as, “What makes you think that what they think is more important than what you think? What makes what he said go?”

Further, five women in this research gave the following advice to women who have left their relationship. Elsie advised that women “should not go back and should not listen to anything their partner said to try and manipulate them into going back”. Donna “just prays that women have the opportunity to go to classes like HAIP provides” and Elizabeth recommended that survivors “take care of themselves and ask themselves what they need and want and if they do not know, find out”.

Additionally, several women in this investigation offered suggestions for social and legal institutions dealing with psychological abuse. Victoria felt she needed something to:

“make me feel better about myself pretty much straight away, because I had nothing to hold onto to get out of the mire. I had nobody to say, ‘This is what you’ve been through and this is why you feel the way you do and this is how you can feel better, that you don’t deserve that and this is not what you are about.’ A course or something like that. But it would have to be put in the right way, because I didn’t feel good enough to go to any course. Just to *hear* that it’s okay to feel this way and that *you* are not an inherently bad person. It’s about your *partner* being screwed”.

Raewyn also talked about the problem of marketing services to women who are being or have been, psychologically abused:

“because there is a *fear* thing, firstly that you made a choice of that man and you think *how wrong could I have been?* And secondly that you’ve been so weak and unaware. Psychologically abused women aren’t out there looking, are they, they’re reclusive”.

Donna, Adriana, Raewyn, Teresa, Karen, Pauline and Sally advanced that girls, women and the public in general should be educated about psychological abuse “because it is really insidious a lot of it”. Pauline wonders though, even if she had had the education, whether “love would have been blind”. Karen, Victoria, Teresa, Donna and Elizabeth believed all members of social and legal agencies should be more caring, supportive and respectful and they “should act on it”. Teresa thought professionals should be educated about the dynamics of psychological abuse because, as Elsie said, “it just isn’t recognised”. Pauline and Teresa suggested there should be agencies geared specially to deal with psychological abuse and it should be made public that they do so because there is a perception that HAIP and women’s refuge is for people who have been physically attacked and a perception that Relationship Services is for couples, not for

individuals. Adriana concluded “it should be so out there that it’s not okay to be put down. The family court should be open”.

## CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

“There is no self-construct independent of the social context;  
there is no self-understanding divorced  
from history and from material conditions.”  
*Brinton Lykes (1989, p. 170)*

The aim of this research was to discover how women perceived psychological abuse and what their beliefs were regarding the role, worth and rights of women and of men. I wanted to know how these perceptions and beliefs influenced their coping strategies. Further, I wanted to discover what influence friends, family, colleagues, the public and social and legal institutions had on their coping strategies. Finally, I aimed to find out what enabled women to leave their psychologically abusive partner and whether leaving resulted in an end to the abuse. As I begin my discussion I want to add two questions which have arisen as a result of the findings. How can women, who have been so oppressed by gender socialisation and psychological abuse, then suddenly emerge from the oppression with very little help from anyone? If women need relationships to develop, why, as single women, have they become stronger now than ever before?

I will break this discussion into three sections: (1) influences on women’s coping strategies including: gender socialisation, responses from family, friends and institutions; discourses on domestic violence and responsibility for psychological abuse and responsibility for the children; (2) women’s individual differences; and (3) women’s emergence from an uncompromising faithfulness to their gender socialisation towards the development of an autonomous self.

It should be noted that the findings from the 12 cases cannot be generalised to all women, nor to all women who have been abused. I analyse the three sections through the lenses of various theories. Firstly, I examine the place gender socialisation has in the women’s coping processes; and I do this from the viewpoints of feminist theory (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997; Yllö, 1993, 1994); French and Raven’s theory (1959) of the five bases of power; face saving entrapment theory (Brockner & Rubin, 1985)(Brockner & Rubin, 1985); social construction theory (Baker, 2001; Hird & Jackson, 1999; Wood, 2001); social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986 both cited in Wade & Tavris, 1993); existential theory (Ferraro, 1988;

Fromm, 1942; R. May, 1972) and relational theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991). In this section I also discuss the place family, friends and institutions have on women's coping processes and the influence that the current popular knowledge about domestic violence has on women's coping strategies.

Women attempted to understand their partner's behaviours by drawing from popularly held beliefs about the causes of male's abusive behaviour. Their conclusions influenced their coping strategies. I cite four theories to explain the women's perceptions. These include: ultimate resource theory (Allen & Straus, 1980); self-attitude theory (Kaplan, 1972 cited in D. O'Neill, 1998); social construction theory (Baker, 2001; Hird & Jackson, 1999; Wood, 2001) and culture of violence theory BEARXX (Bowker, 1993; Lempert, 1996; D. O'Neill, 1998). Additionally, I give evidence from the women's stories to contest the intergenerational theory of violence (G. James, 1999) which depicts women who have had abusive childhoods as being susceptible to adulthood abuse. Further, women 'tolerate' abuse because they have adopted the popularly held belief that children need a father. I will cite research to contest this.

Second, I address the women's individual differences by again using cognitive social learning theory and also Mary Belenky and colleagues' (1986) theory of women's ways of knowing, learning and perceiving truth.

Third, I evaluate the women's evolution from stringent adherence to gender socialisation towards the development of their unique personhood. I examine this through the lenses of cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977); psychoanalytic theory (A. Miller, 1979) and narrative theory (Monk, Winslade, Crocket, & Epston, 1997).

## **Influences on Coping Strategies**

### ***Gender Socialisation***

At the beginning of their relationship most of the women in this study had no clear sense of themselves as individuals; their life was mapped out for them. This included waiting for "Mr Right", competing with other women to get him, getting him by the

right age and making sure they did not get left behind in the stigmatised position of spinsterhood. To ensure the achievement of their goal, to escape a disturbing family of origin or to get married because they had already had sex with their partner, any warning signs of psychological abuse were ignored. Consistent with Julia Wood's research (2001) most of these women used dominant gender and romance narratives as a guideline for composing their life. That 11 women in this research used these narratives was evidenced in the beliefs they voiced.

According to social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1986 cited in Wade & Tavis, 1993) people develop identity based on nationality, occupation, gender and other groupings in society. Women are socialised to orient their identity based on their gender and the belief that their place in the world should be centred around being a wife and mother. They develop a 'collective' self-esteem. Loss of a collective self-esteem effects one's personal self-esteem. Notwithstanding the accomplishments of the feminist movement, social construction theory states that New Zealand women are still being "educated in romance" and that socialisation continues throughout one's life (Baker, 2001; Hird & Jackson, 1999). Like most Pākehā women, the women in this investigation were taught that their self-value depended on "catching a man". Relational theory contends that girls are socialised to establish self-worth through caring for others (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991). Most women in this research had learned to regard men as dominant and women as socially inferior and passive (Douglas, 1998; B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994; Winslade & Smith, 1997). This meant 11 of the 12 women failed to recognise their partner's 'power and control' tactics as abuse and assumed his manoeuvres were fitting. These findings were replicated by the women who participated in each of the five 'Self-esteem and Assertion for Women' courses I have taught over the last two years at community education.

Sheila Fletcher (1989) noted that Victorians viewed spinsterhood as a major failure and over a century later the women in this research had the same fear. The 1950s ethic of marrying to turn oneself into an "honest woman" (H. May, 1992) had not changed for some of the women in this investigation. The women in Trudy Mills' (1985) and Valerie Chang's (1995) studies also entered their relationship at a particularly vulnerable time; for example, feeling unwanted by their parents. Like 11 women in this research they also ignored cues. On the other hand, some of the women in this study and

other studies did not experience any warning (Bowker, 1993; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995).

It is consistent with gender narratives for women to be, or want to be, rescued by a man. Six of the women thought they had entered a traditional contract which stated they would participate in traditionally defined sex roles and have slightly less rights and less say than the man. This desire to escape from the freedom to make one's own decisions is a reality facing many people. The fear of abandonment causes them to choose the easy option, albeit unconsciously, of conforming to socially prescribed norms (Miller, 1986 cited in Fromm, 1942, 1976; Loring, 1994) and causes them to want to find one fixed meaning.

Because the women constructed the meaning of the abuse inflicted by their male partner using culturally endorsed gender narratives they normalised the abuse (Tracy, 1991; Wood, 2001). Fairytales, which are bolstered by modern literature, TV programmes, advice columns, movies and magazines, in which the beautiful needy woman catches a wealthy strong man (Holland & Eisenhart, 1990; Radway, 1991; Meyers, 1997 all cited in Wood, 2001) end with marriage and do not reveal what happens after the wedding except the ending is supposed to be 'happy ever after'. It is the power inequalities enmeshed in these narratives, not gender *per se*, which influences women's coping strategies (Frieze & McHugh, 1992). In accord with this, most women in this study and other studies (Hirigoyen, 2000; Loring, 1994) thought their partner's 'power and control' tactics were a reflection of love for them and caused the women to believe he did not intentionally want to harm them. Most believed that abuse and unhappiness were not reasons to leave, that they had to put up with what they had, that it was their job to make the relationship work. Some felt the need to be seen to be coping.

Some women felt they deserved the abuse; they felt stuck and believed that if they left they would not know what they would do with their life. Some felt lucky to have a man, even if he was abusive and many men told their partner that no-one else would want her anyway. Some of the women felt he "just had power over" them. This interpretation is entirely supported by Julia Wood's (2001) research. Feminists say socially designed gender 'norms' exist to create and maintain male power over their female partners (Kirkwood, 1993; Yllö, 1993), but "in our society, power is disguised as love" (Hird & Jackson, 1999; Tracy, 1991, p. 95). Women therefore are not aware that 'power and



control' will paralyse them (Hirigoyen, 2000). This lack of knowledge has been found in women with traditional sex role attitudes (DeGregoria, 1987) and was confirmed by the 11 women who held varying degrees of traditional sex role attitudes in this investigation.

Many researchers have claimed that women who were being psychologically or physically abused minimised, denied or forgot the importance, seriousness and impact of the abuse (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Chang, 1996; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Ann Jones & Schechter, 1992; Lempert, 1996; Mills, 1985; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). I do not think any of the women in this study engaged in this type of rationalisation. All of them were aware and remained aware of the impact on them. The extensive efforts they employed to attempt to resolve their problem implies they were fully aware that there was a problem, that it was important to resolve it and that their problem was serious. Although most of the women told few people or told no-one at all, about their problem, they did not deny the existence of it to themselves. Their socialisation precluded them from recognising their problem as psychological abuse. This does not mean they denied that it was psychological abuse. None of them specified that they forgot their problems; rather, their lives were organised around their problem which they were unable to ignore or accurately label.

The women were aware that they were censoring their words and behaviours, as was the case in other studies (Lempert, 1996). They continually asked for their needs to be met and explained the effects their partner's behaviours were having. They said "no", expressed anger, argued and some attacked their partner physically. They pointed out the logic behind their partner's behaviours and asked him to get help. In accord with other studies the women worked hard trying to make the relationship work (Douglas, 1998; Landenburger, 1989; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997). According to cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977) efficacy expectations predict the amount of effort and persistence people put into something. The women in this research worked hard since they believed their efforts would have successful outcomes.

These behaviours are the antithesis of women 'tolerating' abuse and these observations add to the accumulating data that women who are psychologically abused are strong

(Campbell, Miller, Cardwell, & Belknap, 1994; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). It has been found that self-blame is correlated with inferior status and paradoxically with perceived sense of control over the situation (M. L. O'Neill & Kerig, 2000). When women blame themselves, they have something concrete with which to attempt to resolve.

They risked expressing themselves in direct conflict with cultural norms that women should silence themselves. Paradoxically, the women also silenced themselves. But that, too, is not suggestive of 'tolerating' abuse. By adolescence, girls learn to stop expressing their authentic selves in relationship (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). In keeping with other studies many of the women in the present inquiry mentioned they had not had the opportunity to define themselves before they married (Zimmerman & Dickerson, 1994 cited in Gilligan, 1982; Jack, 1991; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1996; Loring, 1994; J. B. Miller, 1991b). This finding is consistent with what I was told by participants in the 'Self-esteem and Assertion for Women' courses I teach at community education. Girls are favoured by teachers and praised by parents when they silence their authentic expression (Brown & Gilligan, 1993). Women in this study were encouraged to silence themselves by friends, family, colleagues and social and legal institutions.

Linda Marshall (1994) whose theory about psychological abuse stems from the notion that it results from normal interactions in relationships speculated that if women confront problems directly they may get short-term emotional distress but problems are more likely to be resolved. This most certainly was not the case for the women in this or other research. The conflict tactics scale (Straus, 1979) is the most widely used scale to assess the presence of psychological and physical abuse in relationships. The scale is based on the assumption that abuse occurs in a climate of conflict. Yet many tactics of 'power and control' occurred in this study in spite of the women doing the 'right thing' by serving and pleasing their partner's every need. This is consistent with what Lavoie and colleagues (1989) found while researching police attitudes to domestic violence. One woman in this study blamed herself saying that it "takes two to tango". When the hallmark of psychological abuse is the superior power afforded to males, this popular belief must be demolished. The notion also misses the point that one person benefits and the other is diminished, that one person has no fear and the other lacks a sense of

safety, that one person must alter their behaviour and the other will not change no matter what the cost.

Coping strategies involved attempts at equalising the power imbalance, holding onto the hope that it would be equalised and that the relationship would become 'normal'. Consistent with other research, most of the women in this study changed themselves (Douglas, 1998; Hoff, 1990; Hoffman, 1984; Landenburger, 1989; Lempert, 1996; Loring, 1994). For example, they silenced themselves, gave up their own interests, reduced contact with friends and family and changed their appearance. This was an attempt to achieve the promised 'happy ever after' scenario and they looked for the positive aspects of the relationship which did match the scenario. This is a demonstration of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) or illusory correlation (Hamilton & Sherman, 1989; Millen & Johnson both cited in Wade & Tavris, 1993). When people expect two things to be correlated they overestimate the strength of the actual relationship between them which leads to distortions of reality. Positive aspects the women focussed on included: enjoying good sex, affection, material comforts and telling friends and family of the positive aspects of the relationship. People remember facts that support stereotypes and forget facts that do not substantiate them (Wade & Tavris, 1993) and, as in other studies, these women used the stereotypical 'knight in shining armour' male to guide them (Hird & Jackson, 1999). They believed their partner had potential. Two of the men changed markedly from the helpful charming man the women first met, so those women clung to the hope their partner would revert to the man he once was. Attending to positive behaviours more than psychologically abusive behaviours has been found in other studies (Raymond & Bruschi, 1989 cited in Katz, Arias, & Beach, 2000). This is in keeping with Caryl Rusbult's and John Martz's (1995) 'investment model' which explained women remain with abusive partners because of irretrievable investments which they perceive would be wasted if they leave.

The women in this research made a personal commitment to their partner, a moral commitment to remain together for life. Eleven women had a structural commitment to uphold the social pressure to preserve family life (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999). They said they did not leave on a whim and, in keeping with Valerie Chang's (1996) research, leaving was a wrenching process. Some thought they had made a "big mistake" by committing to their partner and staying for as long as they did. But due to their personal and moral commitment, they had no inner resources to leave. Further, due

to there being few external resources available, they were committed structurally to their relationship. The women tried everything in their power to avoid the shame of divorce and the stigma and financial hardship associated with single motherhood. They felt ashamed to admit they had “picked a dud”, so told few people about their experience. Shame of making their situation public has been noted elsewhere (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993). Keeping the situation private is a form of impression management (Goffman, 1971 cited in Lempert, 1996) used to influence outsiders’ perceptions of the situation in order to maintain a respectable sound identity. I am the only one some of the women have told their story to, which is something Pat Hoffman (1984) experienced in her research. Most of the women said their identity was threatened by the thought of separation. These ramifications are consistent with other research (Hilberman, 1980; Martin, 1976 both cited in Chang, 1995; Ferraro, 1983).

Joel Brockner and Jeffrey Rubin (1985) and their colleagues have conducted a variety of experiments with different populations in order to analyse the causes and consequences of entrapment and escalation of commitment to a negative situation. Brockner, Rubin & Lang (1981 cited in Brockner & Rubin, 1985) found that individuals escalated their commitment to various situations in order to save face. They found that people most concerned with their social image were more likely to become entrapped. All but one of the 12 women in this thesis were concerned about saving face and continued in their relationship until they were willing to, using their own words, “sin” against social norms and face whatever negativity might come their way when they left. Caldwell & O’Reilly (1982 cited in Brockner & Rubin, 1985) found that the more accountable a subject felt for their behaviour having produced negative consequences, the more they used face-saving strategies. Most of the women in this study felt responsible for making their relationship work and worried about being perceived as a “failure”. This made them commit to trying harder to make the relationship work. Brockner & Rubin (1985) found that people who remain committed to a negative situation in order to save face do not change their personal attitude. Rather, they give an alternative public description of their attitude. This theory clarifies the notion that the women in this study said they loved their partner and also said they did not and that they told people about the positive aspects, leaving out details of the negative aspects, of their relationship.

These findings support relational theory which specifies that women are socialised to experience self-worth primarily through attachment (Bergman, 1991; Betcher & Pollack, 1993; Josselson, 1987 all cited in Brown & Gilligan, 1993; Gilligan, 1982; Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991; Knudson-Martin & Mahoney, 1996). Some researchers stated that women stay because they are experiencing strong feelings of love (Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999; Strube & Barbour, 1984). Jacquelyn Campbell (1989, p. 18) suggested this is an “obvious tie to attachment theory” and Donald Dutton and Susan Painter (1993) stated that this is called “traumatic bonding”. However, Gloria Cowan and her colleagues (1998) in their study of the effects that belonging to an inferior group has on women, found that emotional dependence on men was born out of the socially encouraged need for a man to establish a sense of self-worth, not out of the desire to feel love and satisfaction for him. Anytime some participants in this research mentioned that they loved their partner, they qualified this by suggesting that being in a committed relationship ostensibly meant they loved their partner. They told me that they actually hated him or would rather not have been with him, but their fear of appearing a “failure” in the public eye caused them to masquerade as if they were in a loving relationship.

Western culture has taught women to “uphold the superior importance and power of the man” (J. B. Miller, 1991b, p. 18). Many of the women in this study had adopted this belief. They enhanced their partner’s masculine ego by stopping or lessening their achievements and certainly not gloating about them. They protected their partner’s standing in the community by ensuring they appeared lesser than him. One woman was told by friends and family she was ‘wearing the pants’ so she tried not to appear too strong by not voicing her ideas in front of him in public. This desire to protect the husband has been found elsewhere (Mills, 1985).

British women who colonised New Zealand were trained to be the moral caretakers of men (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994; Phillips, 1996) and the coping strategies of most of the women in the present inquiry demonstrated that this moral responsibility still exists in some Pākehā women today. Some women in this research felt they had to fix their partner’s mistakes such as excessive financial spending and irresponsibility. Some felt sorry for him if he feigned illness, if he said he was unable to change and because he seemed so “thick”. Feeling sorry for him was one reason women did not leave and a

reason why some allowed him to return after they had left. Kathleen Ferraro and John Johnson (1983) called these coping strategies the 'salvation ethic'.

Women isolated themselves because they did not want people to find out about their partner's behaviours and did not want to diminish people's view of him. They showed a happy persona in public, they did not let others put him down and, because they wanted to protect him, they ignored anything others said to them about his negative behaviours. A couple of women were embarrassed by their partner's behaviour in public. Anne Beall and Robert Sternberg (1995), stated that 'standing by your man' is defined as socially 'normal' and desirable. These 'norms' determined the way 11 of the women in this research decided to interpret and cope with their partner's behaviours. Consistent with other research (Chang, 1995, 1996; Douglas, 1998; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hoffman, 1984; Kirkwood, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Woods, 1999), the women in this study "bent over backwards" to please their partner, they put him first, were overburdened with responsibility and believed they had to accept their feelings of slavery. Women learn to judge themselves according to their ability to care. Carol Gilligan (1982) called this the 'ethic of responsibility'.

Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger & Jill Tarule (1986) conducted in-depth interviews with 135 women from various walks of life and uncovered five ways of knowing, learning and perceiving truth (see Figure 4 on page 152). Most of the women in this study thought that if they listened to their partner carefully enough they would learn how to do the 'right thing'. Mary Belenky and colleagues called this style of knowing 'received knowledge'. In keeping with this style 11 women in this investigation conformed to the direction of authority.

Most of the women in this exploration believed it was their wifely duty to service their partner sexually whether they wanted to or not. Wife rape was defined as a criminal act in 1985. The Act was updated in 1999 and now includes rape by non-physical coercion; a woman's acquiescence does not remove culpability for the rape (appended in updated statutes New Zealand Government, 1979). Nicola Gavey (1992) stated that heterosexual power involves much invisible coercion in sexual relationships. The 'normality' of male power and the 'normality' of women's submission to that power, makes it appear that women's consent or lack of resistance means they want sex. However, because women perceive that servicing their partner sexually is mandatory they do not have the

language to be able to say “no”. The 11 women who were violated sexually in this inquiry did not mention having any awareness of their sexual legal rights and they all said they acquiesced against their wishes. Women in other studies did not define sexual coercion as abuse because they saw it as their wifely duty (Chang, 1996; Hoff, 1990). One of the questions I asked the women was “did they experience any psychological abuse in relation to sex?” I got the impression as the women revealed (some of them did so reluctantly) their sexually related stories that they were surprised to realise that this aspect of their relationship was included among the tactics of psychological abuse.

Many of the women in this research had total belief in their partner’s viewpoint. The mixture of his psychologically abusive tactics and the women’s socialisation caused them to experience confusion and self-doubt which increased their belief their partner seemed to know better than they did. Of the many theories on power, I believe French and Raven’s five bases of social power provide a perspective which supports why most of the women in this study had total belief in their male partner (J. R. P. French, Jr. & Raven, 1959).

The five bases of power are reward power, legitimate power, referent power, coercive power and expert power. I will explain their relevance for the experiences of the women in this study one by one. The ideal romantic male partner should possess reward power, legitimate power, referent power and expert power. Coercive power fits well with the dominant male/submissive female gender narrative.

Based on these women’s perceptions their partner had the power to reward them. There were the rewards they wanted to receive from each individual man and also the reward they desperately wanted to receive from having the social status of a woman committed to a male partner in a successful relationship. These women conformed so they could receive rewards from both sources. Doing so caused them to like their partner and to like being part of the dream of playing ‘happy families’. This liking gave strength to referent power which meant their partner appeared more attractive to them. The more the women desired to become close to their partner and to belong, the more they conformed to his wishes. Referent power influenced the women to silence themselves and adhere to their partner’s tactics and become similar to their partner.

Because the remnants of the myth that men know more than women still remain in our society (Chang, 1996) this gave credence to the notion that the women's partner had expert power. These women conformed because they respected and trusted their partner and most women believed he knew more than they did.

Although most women in this investigation wanted an equal relationship some of them also believed that it was legitimate for their partner to have more power because he earned the money. Research shows that some women consider the wage a man's property when he is the full time wage earner and she is the full time wife and mother (B. James & Saville-Smith, 1994) and this was the case for many of the women in this research. Six women also associated legitimate power with their partner because he could protect her and, simply, because he was a man. This meant they conformed because they believed they were subordinate. Three women mentioned they were vulnerable because they were much younger than their partner; some mentioned they felt less intelligent and most had less access to money.

Coercive power is based on the woman's expectation that her partner has the legitimate right to punish her if she fails to conform. They expected punishment not only from their partner, but from friends, family, colleagues and strangers. Coercive power resulted in women liking their partner less; however, they had been socialised to conform to the other four styles of power, had low self-worth and had no knowledge that they did not have to submit to coercion. Most of the women grew up with parents who used coercive power and they had not yet shaken off the shackles of their training. The social shame of being a failed wife contributed to their fear of ridicule and rejection.

### ***Responses from Family, Friends and Institutions***

Friends and family saw things happening but many said nothing so most of the women had only their own perspective to rely on. When the participants read their transcripts many of them were shocked at how bad their experience had been. Because they had not previously told their story due to shame or had only told some aspects of it, they had never before had the opportunity to view their experience in its entirety.



The length of time it took the women in this study to leave their relationship ranged from 20 months to 16 years. Lee Bowker (1993) attributed the longer lengths of time it took women in his studies to leave, to a combination of the male's 'power and control' tactics, the lack of institutional support and the fact that there are worse experiences than remaining with an abusive partner. Bowker's (1993) description of worse experiences resembled the experiences women in this study described: fear that their partner would harm her or her family, shame, failure, public stigma and loss of social identity. A few of the women in this investigation mentioned fear prevented them from leaving, but found it difficult to say why, except that they were afraid of raising children on their own. Some participants lost their friends and some did experience social stigma. The stigma experienced included: having their status as solo mother degraded; enduring gossip from false rumours their partner spread; being told their single woman status was now a threat to other women and no longer being invited to social occasions because they were single. Maureen Baker (2001), a New Zealand sociologist, stated that the attitude towards being single is becoming more favourable, but there is still extensive pressure for single people of all ages to marry.

Lack of external resources has been cited as a major reason preventing women from leaving a partner who is abusing them and for 'tolerating' abuse (Balzer, 1995; Bograd, 1988; Bowker, 1993; Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993; Robertson, 1999; Robertson & Busch, 1998; Rusbult & Martz, 1995). Some of them had not worked for a long time and others did not think they would be able to afford to live. This supports other research in domestic violence (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982 cited in Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Robertson, 1999; Strube & Barbour, 1983). Some of the women had large debts which they were already having to cope with by themselves, most of them had children to provide for and a few were leaving very comfortable material lives. However, in the end, all the women said that, despite these external barriers, they recognised they were not surviving by remaining in the relationship and believed they would be better off out of it. This finding is supported by Valerie Chang's (1996) and Catherine Kirkwood's (1993) research. The women in this inquiry found enough financial support to survive, in the initial stages, from family, friends or the government in the form of the DPB.

The 1950s stigma associated with marriage failure (H. May, 1992) obviously is still present today. This is evident, not only in the women's beliefs and coping strategies, but

in the fact that their friends and family gave little encouragement for them to leave, told the women that they were at fault, that they should obey their partner and clean the house more. Some women were told they had nothing to complain about. These comments kept the women's guilt and shame alive and had profound consequences for how they coped, as Kirkwood also noted (1993). Consistent with cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977), social approval for remaining married acts as a reinforcer which guides women's coping strategies.

The men's psychologically abusive tactics, themselves, acted as a force which manipulated women into 'tolerating' the abuse. The fact that friends, family and colleagues blamed the women, stopped visiting when they saw what was going on and, in general, did not mention any abuse they saw until after the women had left also influenced women to 'tolerate' the abuse. The social condoning of abuse by male partners (Gelles & Cornell, 1990; Margolin, Sibner & Gleberman, 1988; Starr, 1988 all cited in Busch, Robertson, & Lapsley, 1992; Leibrich, Paulin, & Ransom, 1995; Ken McMaster & Swain, 1989; D. O'Neill, 1998) further meant some women had no-one to talk to or no-one they trusted or respected. Taken together, there are many reasons beyond women's psychological attributes which cause them to 'tolerate' abuse.

### ***Domestic Violence Discourses***

In the introduction I outlined 15 categories of psychological abuse and gave examples of tactics used within each category (see page 18). All the women in this investigation experienced psychologically abusive tactics from all 15 categories. All except one of the women lacked awareness that they were being abused or that their partner's behaviours were unacceptable. They were all aware that they were experiencing effects but did not know why. They said each isolated incidence of abuse gathered momentum until they "slipped down the slippery slope". These findings are in keeping with those of other studies (Hoffman, 1984; Lempert, 1996; Loring, 1994; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995).

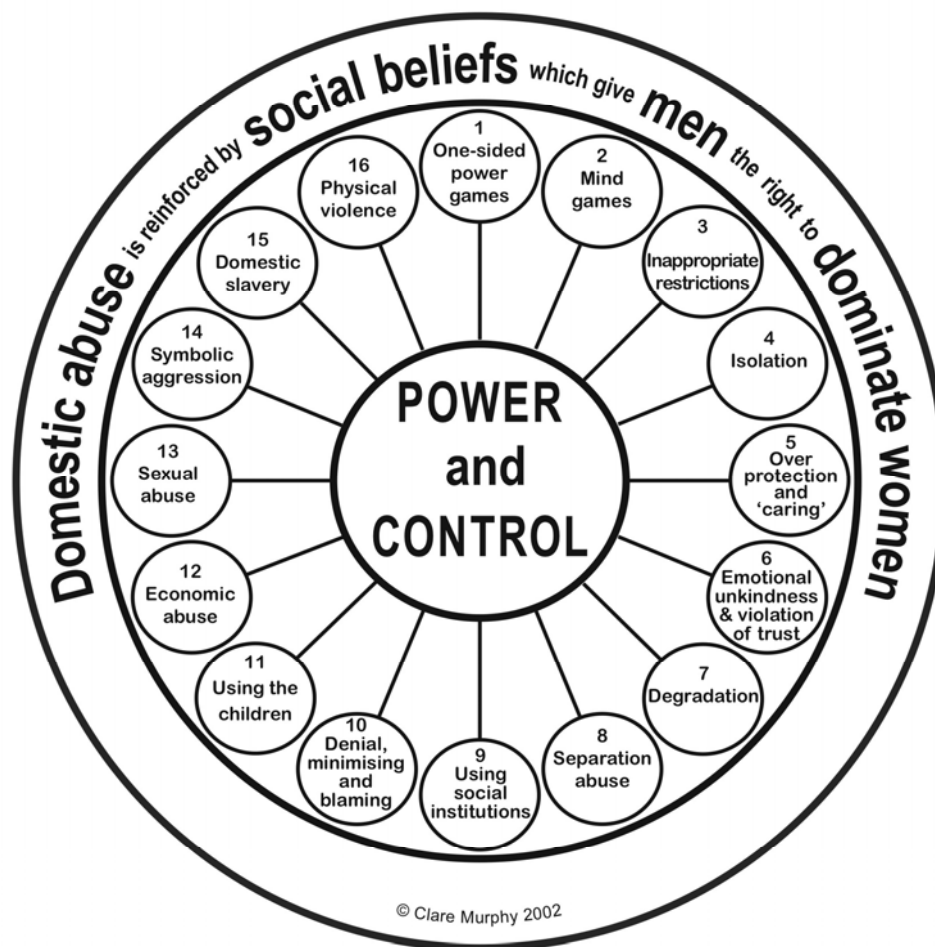
Several women in this research wished they had experienced physical violence because they believed this would have given them a legitimate reason to defend themselves and leave the relationship. Family and friends influenced their perception. At HAIP I looked through the scrap books of media cuttings about domestic violence. I found that the

media emphasised sensational physical violence cases which was also noted by Meeta Mehrotra (1999). Further, social definitions of abuse focus primarily on physical violence (Kirkwood, 1993; Lempert, 1996; McDowell, 1995).

In New Zealand in the 1970s feminist activists made it publicly known that physical violence towards wives existed (Jackson, 1978 cited in C. Macdonald, 1993). The public learned words such as ‘battered women’ and ‘domestic violence’. Uncovering domestic violence and making it public was a positive step forward in the emancipation of women from their inferior status. However, this skewed view of domestic violence continues to be heavily promoted by the women’s refuge movement which disguises the commonality of psychological abuse. For example, the women in this study noticed that the recent TV campaign showed women with bruises on their faces. Their experiences suggested strongly that their abuse was rendered invisible by their lack of knowledge and the lack of understanding by friends, family and colleagues, about psychological abuse. Crucial to naming psychological abuse is educating the public that ‘power and control’ is not legitimate and that women have the right to defend themselves and make the story public.

The Duluth ‘power and control’ wheel (see Figure 1 on page 14) depicts physical violence and sexual abuse as reinforcers of psychological abuse. This means psychological abuse is perceived as an experience which only occurs when physical violence is present. I think a new ‘power and control’ wheel is needed which incorporates physical, sexual and psychological abuse as equal forms of ‘power and control’ all reinforced by social beliefs. For the sake of accurately educating the public, professionals and men and women involved in abusive relationships, a new wheel should be used. I have adapted the psychological abuse wheel I compiled in Figure 2 on page 15 and added a 16<sup>th</sup> spoke to represent physical violence. The sexual abuse spoke would need to include both the physical and psychological forms of sexual abuse. This new wheel is depicted in Figure 3 on the following page.

**Figure 3:**  
**Domestic abuse 'power and control' wheel - includes physical, sexual and psychological abuse - all reinforced by social beliefs**



### ***Responsibility for Psychological Abuse***

#### ***The Abuser***

Eleven women assumed the abuse was 'normal'. This meant they assumed their problems were temporary and could be fixed. Some believed their partner had a mental illness, others thought he was stressed and one man was an alcoholic. It has been consistently found that women who are psychologically or physically abused concluded that their partner was sick (Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998; Hoff, 1990; Mills, 1985; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997; D. O'Neill, 1998; Yllö, 1993). The woman who was living with the alcoholic sought help from a drug and

alcohol centre. Medicalising domestic abuse has its advantages because women feel justified in seeking help (Mills, 1985). Miriam Jackson (1978 cited in C. Macdonald, 1993) was one of the first to bring domestic violence to the attention of the New Zealand public. She stated that alcohol was a major cause of domestic violence. This myth has remained in people's popular belief system. But alcohol and mental illness are not causes of psychological abuse.

Most of these men, like men in other studies (Robertson & Busch, 1998), did not abuse other people; rather they selected to abuse their female partner. Additionally, they also abuse when they are sober. Feminists do accept that some wife abuse may be related to individual psychology and psychopathology (Bograd, 1988); regardless, such analysis should be done within the context of social beliefs which support male superiority and their right to dominate their female partner. Finally, abusive behaviour is "*always* learned" (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993, p. 115) and the abuser *chooses* to use 'power and control' tactics to achieve dominance (Robertson & Busch, 1998)

A further cause women cited for their partner's behaviours was his rough childhood. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1973, 1977 cited in D. O'Neill, 1998) states that perpetrators of domestic violence learn it from their family of origin. The intergenerational cycle of violence was one of the most dominant sociological theories of the mid 1970s into the 1980s (Kirkwood, 1993) and the women's refuge movement still use 'break the cycle' (NCIWR, 2001) as the mainstay of their advertising campaigns. In keeping with Erich Fromm's (1976) view, a couple of the women in the study believed their partner had seen a new way of behaving and could choose to behave in new ways because they were being nurtured by a new environment. The men chose not to learn from this situation. This finding is replicated in reports from men in HAIP non-violence programmes who abuse. Abusers choose to behave in controlling ways (Robertson & Busch, 1998). Social construction theory states that socialisation occurs throughout the lifespan and that people are influenced by people beyond the family. Social construction theory also states that people are active participants in creating their own destiny (Baker, 2001).

Traditional psychology's 'faulty machine' metaphor causes people to investigate what is broken so it can be repaired and assumes there is one version of the truth (McKenzie & Monk, 1997; Winslade & Smith, 1997). This metaphor has become embedded into

public consciousness as a way of viewing human problems. This may explain why women believed either their partner or themselves had something wrong with them and that the answer lay in either or both of them, changing. From a feminist perspective, the answer lies in changing the social structures which encourage individuals to utilise 'power and control' over those with inferior social standing.

Some women noticed their partner's behaviours resulted because of his struggle to come to terms with feelings of lack within himself and, therefore, he had to prove his manhood. This perspective is in keeping with Kaplan's self-attitude theory (1972 cited in D. O'Neill, 1998). Other women noticed that their higher level of psychological and material resources threatened their partner and caused his abusive behaviours. This view is supported by ultimate resource theory which states that women with more resources than their partner are at risk of being abused (Allen & Straus, 1980; Hornung, McCullough & Sugimoto, 1981 cited in Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Rubenstein, 1982 cited in Hoff, 1990; Straus, 1977 cited in Lempert, 1996). But the women in this investigation who had equal or fewer internal or external resources than their partner were also abused. This is supported by the culture of violence theory which notes that wives from all socioeconomic groups are abused (Straus et al., 1980; Straus & Gelles, 1986 both cited in Lempert, 1996; Bowker, 1984; Smith, 1991; Benedek, 1993; Emde, 1993; Pollard & Whitaker, 1993; Ruppert, 1994; Stordeur & Stille, 1989; Walker, 1986; Whitaker, 1993 all cited in D. O'Neill, 1998).

### ***The Abused***

As is commonly found in other research (Douglas, 1998; Douglas & McGregor, 2000; Grigsby & Hartman, 1997; Hoff, 1990; Hoffman, 1984; Loring, 1994; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979) all but one woman in this study held themselves responsible for their partner's behaviours. In the telling of their story some of the women in this inquiry said they "let him" abuse them, that they "made a lot of my problems". Further, they referred to themselves as an "idiot", "stupid" or "dumb" for using the coping strategies they did. They believed these 'weaknesses' caused them to allow the abuse to happen to them. Linda Marshall (1994) speculated that these self-accusations stem from the fact that many psychologically abusive tactics are covert. Additionally, whether the tactics were overt or subtle, some women who are habitually dependent on external authority for direction accept what they are told and never ask

questions. Mary Belenky and colleagues (1986) called this style of knowing, learning and perceiving truth 'silence' (see Figure 4 on page 152). The women in this study who used this style of learning and knowing felt unable to speak out and protest against abuse and believed that thinking for themselves violated preconceptions of being a 'good woman'. Cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1979, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977) specifies that people operate by their own standards of excellence and goodness. These standards are acquired through past experience and watching what happens to other people. The women in this investigation were comparing their results to the successful relationships they had been socialised to expect.

Women are taught to believe that the male's views are the truth and hers are "flawed" (Chang, 1996) and this was the case for 11 women in this study. Valerie Chang further stated that the pattern of remorse common in physically violent men was non-existent in psychologically abusive men. Similarly, in this inquiry, three men admitted to their abuse, albeit two of them did so just once after their partner left; the other man always admitted to it. Only the man who always admitted to his behaviours expressed remorse.

Of the women in this research who had been abused as children they believed they brought the abuse from their partner onto themselves. Some said they entered a relationship with him to escape a bad childhood. However, it is wrong to assume that women's vulnerability and abusive childhoods attracted them to abuse because non-abused women seek the same relationship values and both sets of women are influenced by social norms (McCall & Shields, 1986; Pressman, 1989; Stordeur & Stille, 1989 all cited in Bograd, 1988; D. O'Neill, 1998; Pence & Paymar, 1993). Some of the women in this research had not been raised in an abusive family. Further, Ellen Pence (1985 cited in Loring, 1994) insisted that women's low self-esteem is a result of psychological abuse, not a cause. The notion that women's individual characteristics cause them to be victims of abuse has been discredited (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986 cited in Robertson & Busch, 1998).

The intergenerational cycle of violence theory suggests that women choose an abusive relationship because they witnessed abuse or were abused as children (Carlson, 1977; Gayford, 1975; Gelles, 1974; Roy, 1977; Straus et al., 1980 all cited in Andersen, Boulette, & Schwartz, 1991; Douglas, 1998; Hilberman & Munson, 1977-78;

Kirkwood, 1993; Loring, 1994; D. O'Neill, 1998; Yllö, 1993). Consistent with this theory, some of the women believed they brought the abuse on themselves because of the abuse they experienced as children and because their parents continued to degrade them through adulthood. Further, they had been socialised to be responsible for making relationships work and, consistent with other studies, all the women's partners blamed them for the problems (Pence & Paymar, 1993). Like women in other studies, the women internalised this blame. In contrast with childhood abuse causing women to be abused as adults, cognitive social learning theory (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977) states that people think about the outcome of their behaviour. The women in this investigation wanted the outcome of their problem to be one of living in a mutually caring relationship for life. When this appeared not to be possible, they wanted the outcome to be one of remaining in the relationship for life, no matter how bad it was. These outcomes are socially reinforced and existed both for the women who were abused as children and for the women who were not. Additionally, women's susceptibility to abuse from generation to generation must account for the fact that family life is a reflection of a social context which legitimates and permits male domination over women (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1993).

### ***Responsibility for the Children***

The women in this research blamed themselves for 'tolerating' the abuse, but immediately followed such a statement with the fact they wanted to leave, but had to stay for the sake of the children. This is consistent with other research (Chang, 1996; Hoffman, 1984; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). A couple of the women "let" their partner return each time they left because they believed their children needed a father. Friends told one woman she should stay for the same reason. Historically, anything other than a nuclear family was perceived as deviant (Greer, 1970; Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1997; Hoffman, 1984); however, researchers are now discovering that divorced families can be positive developmental environments for most children (Hetherington & Stanley-Hagan, 1997) and children show remarkable resilience (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001). A British longitudinal exploration of 14,000 families found that children's adjustment was dependent on variables present before the divorce (Elliott & Richards, 1991 cited in Pritchard, 1998). Some of the women commented that, after they separated, their older boys were showing signs of being psychologically abusive.



Divorce does not create this. Conditions present before the divorce contribute towards it and social beliefs which condone male dominance support it. Children's reactions to divorce depend on their level of understanding, their age and gender and the ways parents handle the situation (Pryor & Rodgers, 2001).

Divorce is not the problem for children; rather ongoing conflict affects parenting practices (Amato, 1993; Simons et al., 1996 both cited in Simons, Lin, Gordon, Conger, & Lorenz, 1999) and most of the women in this research were experiencing ongoing conflict and other forms of separation abuse. One of the forms of separation abuse included their partner using the children as a coercive tool to regain 'power and control' over them. The women experienced lawyers, psychologists, the family court, a social agency used for supervised access and the police supporting this. In her presentation to the Triennial New Zealand Law Society Conference in October 2001, Judge Jan Doogue (2001) suggested that a law change was needed to combat this form of systemic psychological abuse. The more society accepts divorce, the more opportunity children will have to talk freely to friends who understand and the easier it would be for women experiencing psychological abuse to take a stand and be heard.

Separation without previous evident conflict can shock children and reduce their sense of trust (Amato & Booth, 1997 cited in Pritchard, 1998). One of the women mentioned that her children were shocked when she asked her husband to leave because raised voices and arguments had not been part of the abusive tactics. She thought she was protecting her children by never talking to them about her problems.

Further, consistent with other research (Baker, 2001; Hoff, 1990), divorce caused reduced income for the women. Those who were less well off following separation stated that this had a negative effect on their psychological wellbeing and that it was a struggle to find the strength to cope with providing material resources for their children. Again, divorce was not the problem here; rather, it was because women's gender roles narrowed their financial opportunities. Further, their financial opportunities were restricted as a result of their experience of psychological abuse because most of the women were prevented from working, educating themselves and were thrust into debt by their partner's behaviours.

## Women's Individual Differences

Six women thought they had entered a non-traditional contract which meant equal sharing of rights, roles and decision making. Although the women in this study were psychologically abused, many of their issues resembled the experiences of women in non-abusive relationships. For example, a study of couples' intentions regarding division of labour before marriage showed limitations of these initial intentions at a one year follow-up (Koopman-Boyden & Abbott, 1985 cited in Hapgood, 1992).

In accord with this, three of the four women in this inquiry who intended equal role sharing at the beginning of their relationship ended up having to do the traditionally female roles. These three women had to also do both the male and female roles. They argued, pleaded, reasoned, yelled and became aggressive in their attempts to equalise role sharing. Two women from the group of women who expected to engage in traditional gender roles had to also do both the male and female jobs. These two women did not fight it.

Eleven of the women moved through various stages of knowing, learning and perceiving truth. Five styles posited by Belenky et al. (1986) are 'silence', 'received knowledge', 'subjective knowledge', 'procedural knowledge' and 'constructed knowledge' (see Figure 4 on the following page).

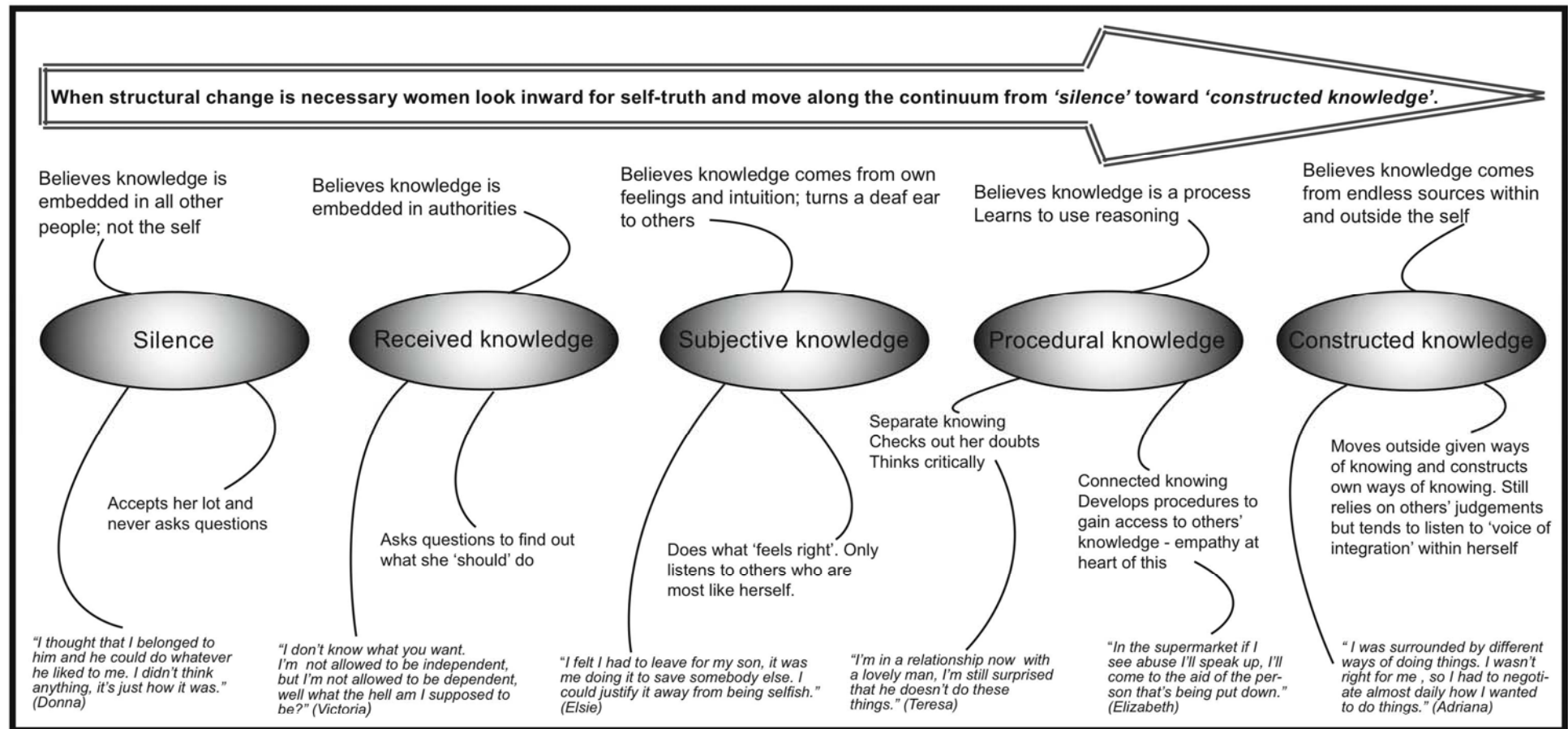
It appeared to me that, at the beginning of their relationship, three women were engaged in the 'silent' form of knowing which meant they believed that knowledge was embedded in all other people and not themselves. They accepted their lot and never asked questions.

Eight women seemed to be engaged in the 'received knowledge' style. They believed knowledge was embedded in authority figures, their partner being one of them. To sort out their confusion about how to behave they asked their partner if he could tell them what to do.

As these 11 women experienced insights they shifted into the 'subjective knowledge' style. They began to believe that knowledge came from their own feelings and intuition

**Figure 4:**

*Women's ways of knowing, learning and perceiving 'truth'*



**Reference:** Mary Belenky, Blythe Clinchy, Nancy Goldberger & Jill Tarule (1986)

and they began to turn a deaf ear to their partner and to anyone pressuring them to adhere to gender socialisation.

The fourth way of knowing posited by Belenky and her colleagues is ‘procedural knowledge’. This style involves procedures for thinking critically and exploring doubts about what is the truth. Thinking critically and doubting is called ‘separate knowing’. In contrast, ‘procedural knowledge’ also entails ‘connected knowing’. This involves developing procedures for understanding others, having empathy and refusing to judge. Procedural knowledge involves finding new ways of learning. Most women began using the critical thinking aspect of this style of knowing after they left their relationship.

Some women in this study felt they were now being selfish or harsh. They doubted whether people who appeared friendly were actually harbouring psychologically abusive tendencies. They set out to learn how to detect if someone was using ‘power and control’ strategies. Some women mentioned having more empathy for any population of victim of any type of abuse.

Also after leaving the women began using the ‘constructed knowledge’ style. They learned to believe that knowledge came from many sources including within and outside themselves. They explored different ways of being in the world and constructed their own value system. I believe the 12<sup>th</sup> woman was immersed in this ‘constructed’ style of knowing from the beginning of her relationship. From the beginning she was able to critique gender narratives, able to observe the social pressure on her to conform to the narratives and she had to “negotiate daily” to organise her life in an alternative way. The fact that she had a different type of consciousness of herself and her rights and she knew what she wanted, compared to the other women, highlights the fact that, even though women’s coping strategies are heavily influenced by gender narratives, these coping styles do not cause them to be victims of psychological abuse.

In the section on “emerging from a socially formed self to a self-determined option” (see following page) I explain the catalysts which aided women in making shifts from one style of knowing to another.

# **Emerging from a Socially Formed Self to a Self-Determined Option**

## ***The Catalysts for a Shift in Perspective***

In the end, the negatives outweighed the positives. Participants believed they had to detach from their partner and after leaving him they remained disconnected from any other live-in relationship with a male in order to develop their potential. This is because they no longer trusted men to have the capacity to be mutually empathic. These conclusions support Valerie Chang's (1996). Kasian and Painter (1992 cited in Katz, Arias, & Beach, 2000) found that women who were being psychologically abused by their boyfriends left dating relationships because of the absence of positive behaviours such as a lack of empathy for their partner, rather than the presence of psychological abuse.

## ***Cognitive Social Learning Theory***

Consistent with other studies (Chang, 1995, 1996; Moss, Pitula, Campbell, & Halstead, 1997; Woods, 1999), despite experiencing a loss of self, the women reported experiencing a slowly emerging discovery that they could not win while they remaining in the relationship, no matter what they did and, that the 'happy ever after' narrative was a lie. The women had a number of realisations and insights which is what occurred for participants in other studies (Mills, 1982 cited in Hoff, 1990; Ulrich, 1991). Once they 'woke up' to the 'real him' they were in a position to choose alternatives. Although most of the women were perceiving through the lens of gender socialisation, their ability to be aware of attacks on the self was still present. Cognitive social learning theory states that people have cognitive and emotional processes called the self-system (Bandura, 1969, 1977; Mischel, 1973 all cited in Monte, 1977). This may explain why the women in this inquiry had the ability to persist in the face of obstacles. The theory specifies that people experience "reciprocal determinism" and that they are interdependent of their environment. This means they exist in a feedback loop whereby their behaviour, expectations and awareness affect the environment and, in turn, the environment affects their behaviour, expectations and awareness. This theory accounts for how the women in this study experienced a series of insights throughout their

relationship. After the women in this research exhausted every socially acceptable option in an attempt to establish the mutually caring, respectful relationship they expected, they did not give up trying to match their values to their behaviours. Instead, they opted to sin against socially defined values and to follow a route dictated by the needs, values and potentialities of other aspects of their self. Cognitive social learning theory provides a rationale for the women's movement along the continuum from being broadly influenced and silenced by gender socialisation towards claiming a voice of their own. None of the abused or non-abused women in Stephanie Woods' (1999) research spoke about their goals or potential. Nor did ten of the women in this research. This makes me question if women's coping strategies are to do with experiencing psychological abuse or would they also occur in a 'normal' relationship because of the heavy influence of gender socialisation. This would warrant future research.

### ***Women's Ways of Knowing***

Belenky and her colleagues (1986) found that giving up one's ready-made socialised identity to create a self-governed identity was not necessarily a conscious decision in the beginning. This was true of most of the women in this investigation though after a period of healing, their choice to remain on their new path became conscious. Initially, upon leaving, they engaged in what Mary Belenky and colleagues called 'subjective knowledge' (see Figure 4 on page 152). They turned a deaf ear to others' voices and were determined to follow their own feelings and intuition. They used minimal reasoning in their decision to walk away from their partner. Because they had not yet realised the power of their own mind, their own judgements felt shaky. When they attended women's programmes at HAIP or social science lectures at university, they were pleased to have their experiences validated. At the point of leaving the relationship it was important for the women to be supported by benign, knowledgeable people so they could learn how to act on behalf of themselves instead of putting others first (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). This highlights the necessity to have social services available to refer women to social agencies whose staff are well educated in the dynamics of psychological abuse.

Belenky and her colleagues (1986) found catalysts for the movement from a narrowly defined self to a broadened sense of self which are consistent with the experiences of women in this investigation. Catalysts included: a new awareness of the problem; the

disintegration in their lives; demands for change because of psychological and physical ill health or, for some, a validating experience.

Kathleen Ferraro and John Johnson (1983) listed a number of catalysts for women's change in perception about the abuse. The first catalyst was a change in the level of violence. Two women in this study urgently wanted out of the relationship when the abuse was directed at their children. The second catalyst was a change in resources. One woman said she was able to leave when a number of resources became available to her. All the women had the possibility of going on the DPB, but the stigma associated with this held them back. All the women had the possibility of going to women's refuge, but all but one did not consider this as an option because they associated women's refuge as a place for victims of physical violence only. The third catalyst was a change in the relationship and an increase in the periods of abuse. This was a catalyst for two of the women. Fourth, despair was a catalyst for five of the women. Fifth, the catalyst for one woman was receiving an external definition of the abuse. Other women who received external definitions ignored them because they could not trust the source of the information and were still adhering to social beliefs about how to be a 'good wife'. The sixth catalyst was a change in the visibility of abuse and this was not the case for any of the women in this research because they misrepresented the abuse as 'normal' relationship problems.

### ***Narrative Theory***

The postmodern narrative approach to therapy (Harker, 1997; McKenzie & Monk, 1997; Winslade & Cotter, 1997) uses 'the story' metaphor to understand the meaning people place on their problems. This metaphor implies that the self is forever in process and consists of several storylines with multiple meanings, as opposed to sets of facts and one ultimate truth. The stories are continually being reviewed or rewritten or new stories are authored. Any problems women are having exist because they have positioned themselves inside a problematic storyline. This concept of self-in-process is consistent with cognitive social learning theory and reflects the experiences of the women in this research. The women in this research were constantly changing. For example, they used coping strategies consistent with their socialisation such as serving their partner. Additionally, many of those same women pushed through the obstacles of gender socialisation and used opposite strategies such as lying when they had been to

visit a friend and ignoring their partner. But in the beginning they tried hard to maintain a fixed identity in line with the dominant gender discourses. The self-in-process view accounts for the miraculous appearance of other aspects of the self and the shift from loss of self to a woman capable of leaving her relationship when she appeared to be at her lowest level of self-esteem.

“The narrative approach is characterised by an unshakeable belief in the incomplete nature of all oppressions” (Winslade & Smith, 1997, p. 184). For the women in this study there were always parts of the self kept separate from the influence of psychological abuse which explained their resourcefulness in being able to shift their focus from the dominant story which led to oppression and begin to build a story of worth founded on salient moments of achievements. In keeping with other research, the more experiences the women in this inquiry had outside the relationship and the more time they had to reflect, the more these experiences acted as a counter balance to the gender narrative (Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995). The shift into a new story accounts for the women feeling stronger than they ever had before.

Catalysts which help people move from a problematic storyline to a more favourable one include: comparing their story with other people’s or other visions they perceive for themselves; receiving positive feedback about one’s competency; become acutely aware of the costs that the problem story is having; looking into the future and questioning how one’s life will unfold should the problematic story continue and having moments of insight. Examples of catalysts for the women in this research included: leaving the relationship temporarily and experiencing nausea at the thought of returning; perceiving a better future for their children; realising that the current situation was not right and experiencing costs to their health beyond a level they were willing to accept.

### ***Psychoanalytic Theory***

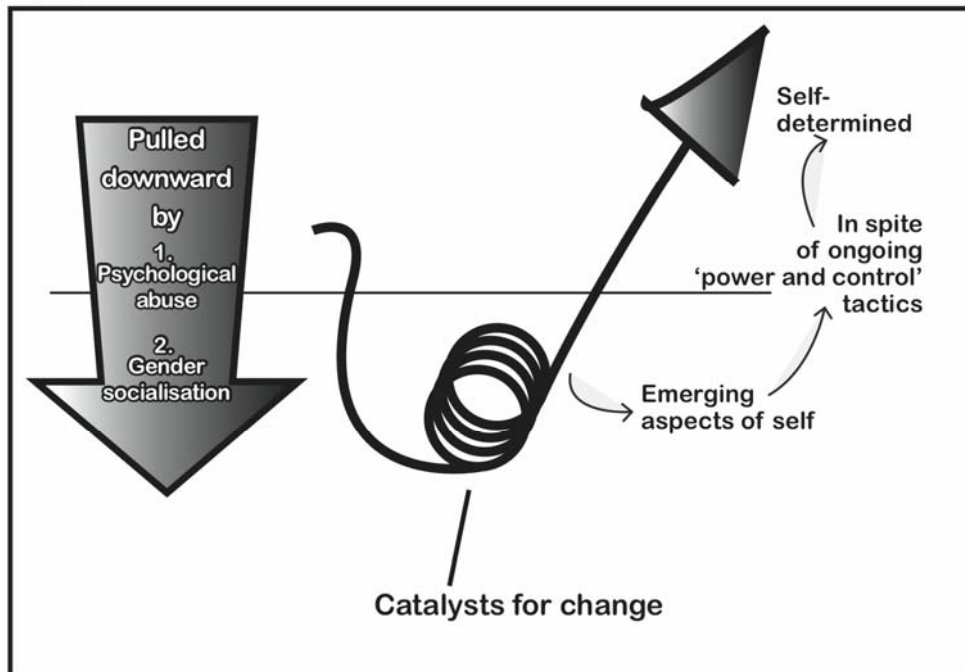
In keeping with research by Marilyn Merritt-Gray & Judith Wuest (1995) and Vicki Moss et al. (1997), giving up the fairytale dream was difficult. But when they did, the women in this study emerged from the oppressive state of having a narrow self-identity and they exhibited an unexpected wealth of vitality. Psychoanalyst, Alice Miller (1979), stated this emergence follows a ‘signal function’. The signal function is the ability to mourn and give up the illusion of the ‘happy ever after’ dream. When the women in this



study experienced spontaneous feelings of deep emotional pain, disappointment, exhaustion, hurt, resentment, shame, confusion, mistrust and sadness these acted as signals which enabled access to their will to choose other directions for themselves.

Consistent with other research (Bowker, 1993; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Mills, 1985), when women in my research reached a point of hopelessness, their dormant health tentatively reemerged. Lee Bowker described this as a U-shaped curve of self-esteem which bottoms out then begins to become stronger. Similar to Bowker's description, I noticed that other aspects of women's selves emerged and then went into hiding on one or more occasions. This non-linear emergence of self supports other research (Landenburger, 1989; Ulrich, 1991). Some of the women told me that their eventual growth in self-esteem, rather than growing back to the level it had been at the beginning of the relationship as indicated by a U-shape, actually grew beyond that and reflected a shape as depicted in Figure 5 below.

**Figure 5:**  
*Emerging self-determination*



Richard Tolman (1992) suggested that a possible reason physical violence has been researched more than psychological abuse is because of its imminent life-threatening nature. Yet, for some of the women in this research, as was the case in Valerie Chang's (1996) study, the shift from gender programming to the emergence of other aspects of

the self was experienced as a survival issue. The women in this study left for the sake of self-preservation at a point when they reached their personal limit psychologically and in two cases when they thought they were going to die. The same was true of women in other studies (Finkelhor, Hotling & Yllö, 1988 cited in Chang, 1995; Hoffman, 1984; Horton & Johnson, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Merritt-Gray & Wuest, 1995; NiCarthy, 1986; Walker, 1979).

At the point of reaching a 'final straw' women in this and the above studies turned to their own resources as a way of saving themselves. Reclaiming the self and recovery were common processes for the women in this investigation as well as in the above studies. I believe that uncertainty results in more creative solutions than certainty and perhaps this is how, consistent with Lee Ann Hoff's findings (1990), the women in this research rebuilt their lives with little formal assistance. Additionally, the women had been fully committed to their relationship in which they had been abused. This quality of strong commitment to something meaningful was carried forward to developing an unconstrained sense of self.

### ***Perceiving a New Version of the Self***

Past research has found that when women adopt feminist attitudes, such as a desire for equality and mutuality, their partner is not willing to change (Acker, Barry & Esseveld, 1981 cited in Blaisure & Allen, 1995). While the inequitable power inherent in male-female relationships continues to exist, Kathleen Ferraro and John Johnson (1983, p. 336) stated that some women "enjoy their freedom too much to consider entering a relationship". This was the experience for the women in this study, after they left, and has resulted in an either/or situation for them. They believed that they had to develop various other meaningful parts of themselves while remaining single or else lose themselves by entering another relationship. Women in other studies also developed an aversion to entering another relationship (Chang, 1995, 1996; Ferraro & Johnson, 1983; Hoffman, 1984). Relational theory (Jordan, Kaplan, Miller, Stiver, & Surrey, 1991) indicates that women need a partner to experience self-worth. The women in this inquiry are proof that this need is changing. These women are experiencing self-worth because of their education, their career and their personal development as single women.

The women talked about their struggle to 'be' themselves in the face of social attitudes pressuring them to revert to traditional gender norms. The existentialist view is that this determination to stand one's ground is a cause of anxiety because the stance can be potentially isolating (R. May, 1961) and many of the women affirmed this was true of their experience. Some of them commented they had become obsessed with being in control of their lives, that they had become 'hard'. This swing from the silent passive female to the opposite extreme is common after people discover their power to 'be' (R. May, 1972; J. B. Miller, 1991a).

Women in this research had been out of their relationship from between two and 11 years. All of the women had matured into a new way of perceiving truth and learning about themselves. They appeared to be engaged in what Mary Belenky and colleagues (1986) called 'constructed knowledge' (see Figure 4 on page 152). These women moved outside given ways of knowing and constructed their own ways of knowing. Rather than relying on a narrow definition of identity, they made connections that integrated knowledge from many sources. They appreciated that truth is complex and that there was no one way to be in the world. At the follow-up interview some of the women, whether they were experiencing separation abuse or not, still felt shaky about their perceptions and were struggling to maintain their ability to construct their own knowledge. This shakiness is the down side of 'constructed knowledge'. On the up side, these women balanced their intellect, creativity, social and practical interests rather than relinquishing any (apart from most choosing not to have a live-in relationship with a man).

## **Summary**

There are many factors which influence the way women cope with psychological abuse. Influences include: being socialised to serve her partner and uphold his superior status; negative responses from family, friends and social and legal institutions; myths about the causes of men's psychologically abusive behaviours; the social value that families should be kept intact for the sake of the children and current discourses on domestic violence.

The Duluth 'power and control' wheel transformed our understanding of the intention underlying psychological abuse, but was designed at a time when physical violence was

the most visible form of abuse. The recognition that psychological abuse is a 'power and control' tactic which exists with, and without, the presence of physical violence causes the Duluth wheel to reduce the importance of psychological abuse. I offered a new 'power and control' wheel to redress this problem.

In spite of the heavy influence of gender socialisation on women's coping strategies, not all women were thus influenced. Each woman was influenced to varying degrees and each woman had her own individual ways of knowing, understanding, learning and coping. Caution should be made to not generalise the findings in this thesis to all women in general. Cognitive social learning theory offered a viewpoint to explain the individual differences in women's coping strategies. Nonetheless, no matter what strategies women used to cope, the psychological abuse beat them *all* down psychologically and physically.

Women were blocked from leaving their relationship because of external barriers such as the stigma of divorce, lack of finances, having nowhere to go, the hardship of being a solo mother, little support and because of the stigma and loneliness associated with being single. They had made a commitment for life and did not leave on a whim. Further, they had been socialised to be moral caretakers of men and to be responsible for making relationships work.

Hence, women tried hard to make their relationship work and when they exhausted all strategies they thought possible, they changed direction. The shift in direction was initiated by a variety of catalysts. There were different catalysts for different women. Nonetheless, the shift in direction was similar for all. Psychoanalytic theory, narrative theory, cognitive social learning theory and Mary Belenky and colleagues' theory about ways women learn explain the types of stimulus required to help women evolve from being strictly influenced by socialisation and to be able to think for themselves.

Following the impetus for change, the women ceased trying to make the relationship work and began to think about the needs of their authentic self. They decided to face imagined and actual isolation and to pursue a path of their own design. In spite of experiencing anything from 20 months to 16 years of psychological abuse in their relationship and ongoing separation abuse for some, the women's sense of inner strength grew beyond anything it had ever been before.

## CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS

“The variant and correlated social, psychological, economic, cultural, traditional and physical conditions are those which make tolerance a means of social control and which must be targeted for change.”

*Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, (1997, p. 18)*

To conclude this thesis, I will note its strengths and limitations and offer ideas for future research. Finally, I will discuss ideas of a practical nature which could be used to reform current practices, policies, attitudes, cultural norms and structures.

### Limitations and Strengths of the Research

A major weakness to be taken into consideration when interpreting these findings is that the participants came to me; therefore, they may have greater personal resources than other women who have been psychologically abused. I came to this conclusion because it was difficult to find participants and many women who did not wish to participate told me they wanted to put their experience behind them.

There are the usual limitations associated with retrospective self-reports and, because of the small sample size, care must be taken not to generalise these findings to all Pākehā women and especially to non-Pākehā women. There was no comparison group to contrast women’s coping strategies; therefore, it is difficult to know whether women’s coping strategies are a result of being psychologically abused or the result of the ‘normal’ gender power imbalance inherent in many relationships.

Participants were recruited from a wide range of locations around the city and this was a strength of the research. Further strengths included that the women decided for themselves if they had been psychologically abused and their collective stories indicated that they experienced aspects of all 15 categories of psychological abuse mentioned in the introduction. A further strength existed in the diversity of women interviewees. They were of different ages, the year and age they entered their relationship differed for each woman and they varied in the number of years of life experience before entering their relationship. Further, there was a wide difference in the level of education they had received about the dynamics of ‘power and control’ since leaving their relationship.

The methods used in this thesis had their strength in that I listened to the voices of the women. Use of grounded theory analysis was based on the women's reality. The semi-structured interview format meant participants were able to focus on what was important to them, and they were able to follow lines of association as their story unravelled. I was able to pursue perspectives raised by the participants. The women were able to speak freely for as long as they wanted. This meant their story unfolded until they felt it came to a natural closure and it gave them time to pursue lines of their story which they had not spoken out loud before. I gave a copy of the findings and discussion to two professionals whose clients included women who have been psychologically abused by their male partner. Feedback suggested the results are indicative of their clients' lived reality.

My personal skills and professional experience are strengths in this thesis. Because I recorded my own story and transcribed it in the same way as the other interviewees' I was able to treat my story as if it was just one other. Because I had the opportunity to voice my story, this prevented me from feeling the need to superimpose my story on my role as researcher and writer. I have extensive interviewing experience and am able to penetrate the surface and have empathy and compassion for the women which made them feel safe. My work with HAIP and self-esteem courses I teach to women fed my research and in turn my research findings fed my work. I observed commonality between the thesis participants' stories and HAIP participants' experiences.

## **Future Research**

Several new directions can be derived from this study. A logical next step would be to further establish whether early warning signs always result in a pattern of psychological abuse. Psychological abuse is a pattern of behaviours which become apparent over time. The behaviours in isolation appear to be behaviours consistent with people in 'normal' relationships. Men from both groups have been socialised to be superior to women. Therefore, the same behaviours could exist in the beginning of a relationship which results in extensive use of 'power and control' tactics as well as in a relationship where the male partner grows and adapts as he learns to live in a mutual relationship.

A study which compared three groups of women could be conducted to further understand the effects psychological abuse has on women's functioning. The three groups could include women who have never been abused and are in relationships organised around equal sharing of roles, women who have never been abused and whose relationships are organised around traditional gender roles and women who are being psychologically abused.

Further exploration of the catalysts which help bring about awareness that women are being psychologically abused would have practical implications for intervention.

Future research to discover personal resources that helped women to reconstruct their sense of self and interventions that helped them to 'find' themselves would add much to the analysis. One helpful element of this research would be to conduct longitudinal studies of women who are being psychologically abused and who remain in their relationship and women who are living with ongoing separation abuse.

The woman who was raised in a European country used the 'constructed' style of knowing and learning from the beginning of her relationship. The 11 New Zealand born women did not develop into this style until after leaving their relationship. The difference highlights the need to conduct an investigation which compares how Pākehā and European women learn to think critically about the society they are raised in. Future research should also examine what happens when anyone 'interferes' in a relationship and takes a stand for the woman who is being psychologically abused.

It would be interesting to research the correlation between competition among women for men and the willingness of women to support women friends when they are being psychologically abused. Understanding why women have few or no people they could turn to for help begs to be researched. Further research should examine why people turn a blind eye and what to do about it. This could include exploring the general public's beliefs about psychological abuse of women by their male partner, beliefs about maintaining privacy in relationships and what would change these beliefs so that women can be assured of support from their community.

I think it is vital to research what narratives are guiding primary school girls to find out what range of potentialities they believe are open to them as adults and measure the

importance they place on marriage compared with other options. It would be important to explore girls' beliefs about the rules, rights, status and opportunities open to wives and husbands. Further, what developmental processes are necessary for Pākehā girls to go through so they can learn to think critically before they enter relationships?

Another important issue that needs to be addressed is to research the beliefs of professionals working in social and legal institutions as a step towards preventing secondary victimisation of women. Among the beliefs which should be examined are what they think about men's and women's rights in domestic violence issues compared with crimes which occur between strangers. When one of the women in this study was forced to be on the DPB, because of the psychologically abusive tactics of her husband, WINZ threatened her with a prison sentence. Yet men in this study who got away with owing their female partner thousands of dollars received no such threat from any social institution. What are the conviction rates of men who embezzle money from strangers compared with men who do the same from their female partner? How do New Zealand's economic and social power structures benefit by channelling less-than-needed resources and support to women being oppressed by their male partner who psychologically abuses them?

Finally, populations other than Pākehā heterosexual women are victims of psychological abuse. Research should be conducted on the socially entrenched narratives and personal resources which influence coping strategies of other populations such as heterosexual male victims, Maori and Pākehā, gay and lesbian victims.

## **Practical Implications**

I believe education is a key in resolving men's entitlement to have 'power and control' over their female partner. The possible education initiatives I mention below could be offered by social agencies, psychologists on contract to the government, media campaigns, school teachers or community initiatives such as Safer Communities Councils. Media campaigns could be sponsored by businesses. Further funding could be raised from lottery proceeds, government funding agencies, City Councils, individual fundraising drives and philanthropic trusts. Many of these suggestions sound utopian, but to effect change ideas must be proffered.



## ***Educate The Public About Current Domestic Violence Issues***

As part of educating the public about the Domestic Violence Act, the realities of separation abuse need to be taught to counter the myth that women neurotically tolerate abuse and that leaving is the answer.

Emphasis on the importance of ‘interference’ by members of the community deserves consideration. Women turn to family and friends for help which indicates the need to increase education to potential support networks about the causes, tactics, intentions and impact of psychological abuse. The public needs to adopt the value that women’s safety is of higher priority than the privacy and preservation of the family. There should be financial incentives given to artists, musicians and writers to exhibit works carrying pro-social and anti-abuse messages to society.

## ***Educate Women About Their Rights***

The Ministry of Women’s Affairs could promote knowledge and awareness of women’s rights which would help to place the shame where it rightfully belongs. Women need to be taught that their individual experience is part of a larger system of socio-historical ‘power and control’. Everyone needs education to identify the difference between characteristics of healthy relationships and attributes of psychological abuse.

Women may perceive and respond to abuse differently if they were taught how to critique gender role expectations and were taught functional alternatives. However, this is still not going to stop them being abused, nor does it mean they are responsible for the social determinants which influence their beliefs.

## ***Change In Current Practices Which Impact Female Victims***

Work and Income New Zealand should reduce the stand-down period for women who leave a psychologically abusive partner. The government or the abuser should pay for women’s accommodation at women’s refuge. The women’s refuge ‘breaking the cycle of violence’ slogan needs to change to reflect that the cause of psychological abuse is related to social structures rather than reducing the problem to one being caused by

families. The Wellington Violence Intervention Project (VIP) campaign which instructs women to “dump him” if she is in a controlling relationship needs to change. Any change should place the responsibility on the male to “dump his behaviours” and place responsibility on the public to “dump their condoning of his abuse”. Further, any change in the VIP campaign should take into account the potential danger that “dumping him” may lead to separation abuse.

Programmes for female victims of domestic abuse need to be publicised much more widely than at present and available nationwide. Girls at all levels of schooling should receive education about how to critique gender socialisation and how to develop a variety of ways to define self-worth. Girls need male and female role models who reflect equality in relationships. These could be provided in literature, movies, computer games and TV programmes. Businesses could offer awards to people who write TV scripts about equality in relationships.

Protection orders, as opposed to undertakings, provide greater safety for women. Lawyers need to perceive undertakings within the context of the abuser’s history of broken promises. Court professionals should give the same seriousness to domestic abuse cases as they do crimes committed by strangers.

All professionals who have contact with families and female victims of psychological abuse should receive training in the dynamics of ‘power and control’. Counsellors need to help women to see their symptoms in light of the perpetrator’s intentions and the social context of gender power imbalances. Counsellors have a duty to warn women, who are contemplating leaving their psychologically abusive partner, about separation abuse and refer them to appropriate support agencies. Counsellors need to raise issues of equality and introduce new perspectives to men and women. It could be useful for counsellors to use a list of psychologically abusive tactics for clients to check. Finally, counsellors need to help women to connect with their own voice and act on their feelings, thoughts, values, goals, needs and creative potential.

Women being psychologically abused live in a secret world of ‘power and control’ by their male partner. The social values which hold to the family being a private domain and the privacy laws associated with the family court need to be changed. Privacy of this type is a breeding ground for psychological abuse in the family and in institutions.

There could be 'one stop shops' established to deal with all forms of abuse. These should be set up nationwide so that anyone who is a victim of any type of 'power and control' can readily access multidisciplinary teams. Members of the public could have easy and fast access to victim support facilities through the provision of a government funded national 0800 number.

### ***Modify the social patterns of hierarchical 'power and control'***

I believe it is imperative that the New Zealand government carries out its obligation to implement Article 4 of the United Nations Declaration of the Elimination of Violence Against Women 1993. Article 4 (j) suggests that governments adopt all appropriate measures, especially in the field of education, to modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women and to eliminate prejudices, customary practices based on the idea of the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on stereotyped roles for men and women (United Nations, 1993).

The traditional structure of the patriarchal family has to be reshaped so that both men and women have equal access to resources and provide equal care to children. This is a major task which effects our economic structure. The government needs to redress the unresolved problem that women still do not receive an income at equal levels to men. Interventions are necessary to enhance economic alternatives for women by providing continuing education and job training.

A prerequisite for social change is change within all institutions and businesses which operate by a hierarchy of 'power and control'. Institutions and businesses should participate in anti-abuse by starting within their own organisations by addressing sexist, racist, authoritarian structures. It would be strategic of institutions to develop systems of participatory democracy which honour every staff or student member in the decision making and negotiation processes. Institutions could introduce ongoing training in negotiation, conflict resolution, assertiveness and team building skills. Of course this would mean those in authority will have their power threatened; however, that is the cost of developing a society driven by partnership between genders.

Social attitudes must change. A communal effort is required by everyone, especially those willing and able to take a non-hierarchical leadership position, to give new meaning to the terms wife, psychological abuse, marriage and women. People can be reached through the media, especially movies and TV programmes which illustrate and name psychological abuse. The media is an ideal place to promote equality in relationships and endorse the image of assertive women whose self-worth is developed from many spheres other than catching a man. New narratives should demonstrate that women are entitled to receive care from men and that masculinity includes the ethic of care. Rather than marriage being the end goal for women, marriage should be promoted as an arena of mutual support for the ongoing growth of both men and women.

Change begins with the individual. This includes all policy makers, government officials, professionals working in social and legal institutions, business owners, school teachers, principals and every day New Zealand males and females. By looking at ourselves we will see micro images which reflect the cultural patterns of 'power and control'. Short term sacrifices are integral to change and must be accepted if we are each to honour the role of establishing a society built on equality. It is mandatory that we each understand and address our own competitive, domineering, controlling and abusive tendencies and make individual changes towards peace and equality in our own lives. Compassion for self and others depends on knowing oneself and others at a deep level.

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### *Information Sheet*

# Pākehā women's experiences of psychological abuse by their male partner

## **Would you like to participate in research?**

My name is Clare Murphy and I am a Masters student in psychology at the University of Waikato. For my thesis I am researching Pākehā women's experiences of psychological abuse by their male partner.

I am looking for 20 women who have left their psychologically abusive husband or defacto male partner. I need women who have experienced only psychological (but not physical) abuse. Women must have been out of their relationship for at least one year.

Interviews will last between 2 to 4 hours and will be conducted at a place you feel most comfortable and safe and anything you say is confidential.

You will be asked to sign a consent form and you will have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage, for any reason.

If you would like to be interviewed about your past relationship, please phone me on ..... to discuss this opportunity and to ask any questions about it.

If you would like any information about me you can contact my research supervisor Dr Jane Ritchie at Waikato University on phone.....



## Appendix 2

### Consent Form

University of Waikato, Psychology Department

#### CONSENT FORM

#### PARTICIPANT'S COPY

Research Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

University of Waikato, Psychology Department

#### CONSENT FORM

#### RESEARCHER'S COPY

Research Project: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Researcher: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Supervisor (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

I have received an information sheet about this research project or the researcher has explained the study to me. I have had the chance to ask any questions and discuss my participation with other people. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I may withdraw at any time. If I have any concerns about this project, I may contact the convenor of the Research and Ethics Committee.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 3

### *Questionnaire: Interview One*

#### **Guideline for semi-structured interview**

#### **How Pākehā Women Cope When Their Male Live-In Partner Psychologically Abuses Them**

##### **RESOURCES**

Did he attempt to diminish your resources? In what ways. What was your response?

Did he prevent you from growing your resources? What was your response?

Did he use resources to maintain superiority? What was your response?

##### **EXPECTATIONS ABOUT MARRIAGE/DEFACTO RELATIONSHIP**

What did getting married/committed mean to you?

What beliefs, expectations and hopes did you hold at the beginning of your relationship?

about marriage/being in a committed defacto relationship

about preserving family life.

about divorce.

about being a wife/female partner

about what you should accept within marriage/relationship?

about your rights within marriage? A husband's/male partner's rights?

e.g. your rights re sexual access

about the image the positions of husband and wife should have? (male/female partners)

Why did you get married/enter a committed relationship?

What was your perception of remaining single?

What were your perceptions about the responsibilities of husbands and wives?

(male/female)

What alternatives did you consider?

Did you discuss alternatives with your partner?

What comments did he make about men, women and marriage/committed relationships?

Changes in expectations

How did you become aware that you had the above expectations?

Once in the marriage/relationship what differed from your expectations and what was your response to that?

**INVESTMENTS** made in the beginning and throughout the relationship

What did you sacrifice to enter the relationship and make it work?

What did you believe about him and his potential?

What did you put on hold in order to make the relationship work?

How did trust play a part in your experience of abuse?

## Appendix 3 continued . . .

What were you hoping would happen by remaining in the relationship?  
Why did you stay as long as you did?

### COVERT ABUSE

#### Denying difference and women's responses and coping strategies to this

Did he:

attempt to make you talk and act alike

deny your individual tastes?

attempt to impair your judgement?

blame you

Say anything like: "This relationship is the best you could ever hope for? You need him?"

suggest it was "us" against the world?

try to convince you of his correctness, philosophy, rightness, values, morals and standards?

In what ways were you able to express your true self? What were the consequences?

Unable to express your true self? Consequences?

**Confusion:** Did you ever get confused about what he wanted?

Were you confused about how you should behave?

Were you confused about what you thought and felt?

**Secrecy:** Were there any rules about not talking about the relationship outside the house? If so what did you do?

Did you think other marriages/defacto relationships were like this?

Did you fear any consequences of publicising your situation?

#### Issues of responsibility:

Did he fail to live up to commitments? How did you respond?

Describe any ways psychological abuse arose in relation to financial issues/household responsibilities and your responses.

What did he refuse to take responsibility for? What was your response?

Describe decision making processes. What was your response?

**Neglect:** In what ways did he neglect you? Show indifference?

In what ways did he disregard your wants, needs and wishes?

What were your responses to his level of empathy for your feelings?

**Protecting Him:** How do you believe he felt his status was threatened by you? Did you attempt to diminish his fears? If so, how?

Did you ever feel you had to protect him? In what ways?

Ego                      reputation                      jealousy

## Appendix 3 continued . . .

Did he:

Monitor your behaviours

Monopolise mobility, information, social activity

Prevent you from

Being employed

Health treatment

Small private pleasures

Having private space to yourself

Call you selfish?

If so, how did you cope and what meaning did you place on these behaviours?

### Children:

Did he:

Make you feel guilty about the children

use the children to relay messages to you

threaten to take the children away

- Describe any other ways psychological abuse arose in relation to care of children.
- What were your responses and what did you think his behaviours meant?

### OVERT ABUSE and your responses to each

- Did you have to deal with any of the following treatment from your husband? If so, how did you respond and what did you think his behaviour meant?

Intimidation

Domination

Anger

Name calling

Criticising strengths

Humiliation

Comparing you to others

Put down how you look, think, act,  
status (wife/achievements/female)

What were your responses? What meaning did you place on his behaviours?

## INVOLVING OTHER PEOPLE

### Other people's responses and your reactions

- What were your help-seeking strategies and the responses you received?
- What was the role of outsiders' responses in the way you behaved?
- Who did you discuss your perception of the relationship with and what was their response and your subsequent reaction?
- What were the costs of not discussing your relationship?
- Your experience of public policies, organisations, social services, health professionals and the legal system.
- Have you had any experiences of victim blaming from friends, family or others? Describe what happened.
- Comments others made about you, about him at the beginning, middle and end of the relationship.

## **Appendix 3 continued . . .**

### **Isolation/deprivation and your responses to this**

From the familiar

From friends and family

From any of your interests, wants that he didn't like.

- How free were you to pursue the above - experience guilt or fear?
- How did he relate to your friends and family?
- What judgements did he make about your friends and family?

### **WHY DID HE BEHAVE AS HE DID?**

- Did he explain why he was behaving in any of the above ways?
- Why did you think he was?

### **TURNING POINT AND LEAVING**

- What did you have to experience before you decided you had to end the relationship?
- Tell me about the process of ending the relationship.  
How long did it take?  
Who helped?  
What might have helped?  
Where did you go?  
What things did you have to consider, e.g. children, finances, etc.  
What were his responses leading up to you leaving and when you left?
- What was your perception about becoming single again?

### **After the Relationship**

- What have been the consequences of leaving? Positive and Negative.
- Did you ever return after leaving him?
- In what ways have you experienced an escalation of abuse from him?
- Tell me about your life now.  
Can you delineate stages you've been going through after the relationship?  
Have you developed precautionary strategies to prevent abuse from future partners?

### **REFLECTING BACK**

- Knowing what you know now about psychological abuse, do you think there were early warning signs?
- What could have made you label his behaviours abusive earlier?

## Appendix 3 continued . . .

### LOOKING FORWARD

- Do you have any thoughts for other women?  
Advice for women who have just left their relationship?  
Advice for women who are in a psychologically abusive relationship?
- Changes in services available to women in a psychologically abusive relationship and services available to women who have left their husband.

The following questions will be interwoven throughout the above questions.

### COPING

#### Cognitive, affective, behavioural strategies you used

- Who was responsible for making the relationship work?
- What was your plan of action to make the relationship work?
- What changes did you make so things would turn out right?
- What actions did you take to prevent, avoid or control emotional distress?
- What were your greatest fears in the relationship? What did you do about them?
- What thoughts, beliefs and attitudes did you develop in order to cope?
- What ways did you try to make yourself safe?
- What ways did you try to make the relationship safer, better, more tolerable, loving, respectful, caring, responsive?
- What ways did you comply with his wishes and why?  
What ways did you resist?
- How did you each communicate about problems?
- What was your ability to determine if he or yourself was deviant/at fault/responsible?

**Appendix 3 continued . . .**

**Interview Questions  
Pākehā Women's Responses to Psychological Abuse by their  
Husband/Partner**

Participant Number .....

Today's Date.....

**HISTORY OF RELATIONSHIPS**

**Age and Length of time in Marriage**

What is your age now?.....

Age and date when you started

going out with the man in question.....

living together.....

when you got married.....

when you separated.....

How long were you together?.....

**Previous experience with marriage**

Have you been married/lived with a man before this one? .....

How many?.....

For how long each time?.....

Were any abusive - physical/sexual/psychological?.....

**Appendix 3 continued . . .**

**RESOURCES**

Participant Number.....

What resources existed at the *beginning* of the relationship for both husband/partner and wife/partner?

HUSBAND/MALE PARTNER

WIFE/FEMALE PARTNER

Income .....

.....

Employment .....

.....

position.....

.....

full/part time/unemployed.....

.....

Possessions/assets.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Money - savings.....

.....

Debts.....

.....

Education level.....

.....

Individual achievements.....

.....

.....

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.....

Self-esteem.....

.....

Intelligence.....

.....

Health.....

.....

Physical ability.....

.....



**Appendix 3 continued . . .**

Participant Number.....

What resources existed at the *end* of the relationship for both husband/partner and wife/partner?

HUSBAND/MALE PARTNER

WIFE/FEMALE PARTNER

Income .....

Employment .....

position.....

full/part time/unemployed.....

Possessions/assets.....

.....

.....

Money - savings.....

Debts.....

Education level.....

Individual achievements.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Self-esteem.....

Intelligence.....

Health.....

Physical ability.....

## Appendix 4

### Questionnaire: Follow-up Interview

#### ***Individualised for each participant...***

*The Leaving Process*

Karen - hierarchy of solo mothers

Karen - WINZ debt?

All - who had their own car

Victoria - job after - which town, why?

*The point it got worse what do the women think it meant?*

Heather,

*Was there a point it got worse for*

Victoria, Karen

*If it had been Physical what would they have thought?*

Karen and Heather

*Those in defacto rels.....*

Karen, Heather

Did they take in the same commitment and assume the same vows as if they would if they were married i.e. the same social contract?

*After leaving*

How long after leaving did you start dealing with it?

*How long after did they label it PA?*

Pauline 18 months

Elizabeth 6 months

Elsie one month

Raewyn 2 weeks before

Teresa 3-6 months

#### ***Ask all women . . .***

What were the positive and negative effects of

Partaking in the interview

Reading the transcript

Reading the pen portrait

Did you have any misconceptions about the process?

Did you perceive any power imbalance in the interview and throughout my contact with you?

How has the entire process influenced you?

Any alterations to the pen portrait or transcript? - Especially the pseudonyms used.

## Appendix 5

### ***Note Requesting Participants Read Their Transcript***

27 May 2001

Dear . . .

Enclosed is a copy of your interview and a copy of the pen portrait. Would you please read both to ensure

- (a) They are correct
- (b) The names used ensure confidentiality
- (c) Check any other identifying details to ensure confidentiality

You can write on the pages.

(d) Page 6 in capitals says “is there a piece missing here?” Did Anthony grab Toni or something?

(e) Note any issues you may recall that you want to tell me about at the follow-up interview.

There is no hurry for this. I will be phoning you in a couple of months for the follow-up interview and can get your feedback then.

Thanks.

Best wishes

Clare Murphy

## Appendix 6

### ***Note Requesting Participants Read the Findings***

21 November 2001

Dear

I know you're super busy and you don't have to do any of the following. But here's what I'd like if you can spare the time . . .

I have completed my findings about how women coped with psychological abuse by their male partner. This means your story is interwoven with 11 other women's and I need to check with you that:

- (a) I have not misinterpreted anything you told me
- (b) The names Heather and Luke ensure confidentiality

I have used pieces of your transcript; therefore, your entire transcript will not be in the thesis so it does not matter so much if I made any mistakes in that. However, I do need to be sure you are happy with the small compressed "pen portrait" that I sent recently.

I've conducted the follow-up interview with most of the women and it only took 10 to 30 minutes. This means I can easily ask you those questions over the phone at your convenience. Would you be able to give me a call when you're in Hamilton or let me know your number and a time I could ring you where you're living?

Again you don't have to participate in the follow-up interview. If you do, however, it is the last thing I need to ask you to do.

Best wishes  
Clare Murphy

WOULD YOU PLEASE READ THE FINDINGS AND CHECK . . .

- (a) Where your name ..... is mentioned check that your story is correct and that it should be in this category. (Your partner's name is.....)
- (b) In any category where your name is NOT mentioned - please enter your name if you did enter into behaviours that do fit that category.
- (c) Not all aspects of women's stories fit all themes. I have endeavoured to mention if a woman specifically did not behave in a way that resembled a category. If you believe your name should be there, please enter it.

Could you do this by end December? My phone number .... My address ....

## **Appendix 7**

### ***Letter to Professionals***

21 December 2001

Dear

**MASTERS THESIS: How women cope when they are psychologically abused by their male live-in partner**

Thanks for agreeing to critique my Findings and Discussion. Asking professionals to critique my work is part of my method - called "Investigator Triangulation" - which is aimed to give more trustworthiness and thoroughness to my research.

If at any time you would prefer not to continue with doing this please do not hesitate to say "no" and if you can only do a certain amount, that's fine.

Here's what I want:

- Could you read the 'Findings' and the 'Discussion' and give me feedback about what you think it is and isn't saying. I would like you to critique and challenge anything in it.

I've also attached the 'Pen Portraits'. You don't have to read them. They're there in case you want some more background about the 12 women and the psychological abuse they incurred.

I don't need your feedback until the end of January.

Best wishes for a good Christmas and New Year

Clare Murphy

## **Appendix 8**

### ***Places Where Information Sheet Was Posted***

My psychology practice supervisor  
HAIP  
Women's Refuge  
Link House  
Cecil House  
Three counselling friends  
Participants from courses I've taught  
University noticeboard - psychology department  
University doctors' and counsellors' rooms  
University Women's Rights Office  
University Women's Room  
Hamilton East Doctors Rooms  
Linkage  
Dimensions Women's Bookshop  
The Psychology Centre, Von Tempsky Street  
The odd acquaintance who has shown an interest  
Six public libraries  
Citizens' Advice Bureau  
Cross Rose  
Relationship Services  
Anglican Services  
Barnardos  
Birthright  
James Family Presbyterian Support  
The Nest  
Parentline  
Parents' Place, Little London Lane  
Parents as First Teachers  
Parent to Parent