

Polygamy in South Africa : An Exploratory Study of Women's

Experiences

By

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ABSTRACT

Four Muslim senior wives, 35 years and older, were interviewed about their experiences in a polygamous marriage. The Theory of Gender and Power was used to understand some of the emerging themes in the gendered relationships between men and women in polygamous relationships. Thematic content analysis revealed the overarching theme of power. The women expressed helplessness in the face of a practice that they consider objectionable on the one hand, but that they feel compelled to tolerate because their religion permits it. In order to cope with their pain there was a need to assign blame for their husband's remarriage. Blame was attributed to both internal and external causes. Senior wives equate polygamy with "infidelity" and therefore perceived it as an act of betrayal. Consequently, this led to feelings of anger, rejection, pain and jealousy, and subsequently the nonacceptance of the junior wife into the marital dyad. The women reported feelings of loss with regard to the marital relationship, such as loss of financial support, trust, self esteem, identity, dignity and sense of self. For these senior wives, polygamy resulted in loss of sexual exclusivity, shared intimacy and security, which was accompanied by feelings of humiliation and degradation. The women believed that polygamy resulted in straining the relationship between children and their fathers. Children were reported to have experienced emotional, behavioural and academic problems.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 DEFINITION OF POLYGAMY

Polygamy is the marrying of more than one husband *or* wife and includes polyandry and polygyny (Horning, 1999). **Polygyny** is the marrying of more than one woman and can be dated to antiquity (Badawi, 2000). The term “polygamy” however, is generally used to refer to what is actually polygyny. In this research report, therefore the term polygamy will be used to refer to polygyny. **Polyandry**, which is also a form of polygamy, is the marrying of more than one husband. Unlike polygyny, polyandry is rare.

1.2 TYPES OF POLYGAMY

According to Badawi (2000), there are three types of polygamy practised in Western societies: serial polygamy, that is marriage, divorce, marriage, divorce, and so on, any number of times; a man married to one woman, but having and supporting one or more mistresses; and an unmarried man having a number of mistresses. Islam condones, but discourages the first, and forbids the other two.

In the sixth century, A.D., unlimited polygamy was practiced in Arabia, among Babylonians and the Persians and in nearly all pre-Islamic societies. In fact, many of the great prophets such as Moses, Solomon, David and Jacob were married to more than one

woman, in addition to having several concubines (Ashrafi, 1992). Polygamous marriages are still commonly practised in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Oceania (Brouda, 1994, as cited in Al-Krenawi, Graham, and Al-Krenawi, 1997). In Africa, polygamy is viewed as a sociological issue rather than a religious one (Doi, 1996), and in some countries polygamy has also become a legal issue. While sociologists view polygamy as “a reproductive strategy by which men maximise the number of their offspring, but minimise investment in each child” (White, 1988, as cited in Al-Krenawi et al., 1997, p. 871), others perceive it as a protective mechanism for women (Malik, 1994; Badawi, 2002).

1.3 POLYGAMY IN ISLAM

A general misperception is that Islam introduced the practice of polygamy. Although the Prophet Muhammed practised polygamy, he was monogamous during the twenty-five years of his marriage to his first wife, Khadija. He married his second wife after the death of Khadija, and had all his children, except one, from Khadija. During the remaining 13 years of his life, all his subsequent marriages were to widows or orphans, or for political and economic reasons (Malik, 1994; Badawi, 2000).

Prior to the advent of Islam, all other religions practised unlimited polygamy. Islam was the only religion that regulated its practice. Other religions make no mention of restriction on the number of wives. According to Islamic scriptures, upon the revelation of the Quran, the number of women a man was allowed to marry was limited to four and a woman was allowed to have only one husband. Muslim scholars advocate that the reasons for this stipulation were to establish lineal identity and paternity for the purposes of inheritance (Malik, 1994).

The revelation to the Prophet Muhammed, on polygamy, should be understood in context. It occurred after his migration from Mecca to Medina in 620 AD, and more specifically after the Battle of Uhud, in which the new Muslim community suffered the loss of many male lives. Many widows and young orphan children were left with no one to take care of them. Most Muslim scholars and theologians maintain that the rationale behind the granting of permission for limited polygamy was concern for the welfare of widows and orphans (Engineer, 1992; Doi, 1996), and was not meant to be a general institution (Helal, 2000). It was, therefore, a means of preventing illicit sex and prostitution, and thereby maintaining social stability.

There are only two verses in the Quran that give Muslim men permission to marry more than one woman. While the first verse grants men permission to marry more than one wife, the second part of this verse emphasises that if equality and justice among wives cannot be maintained then only one wife is allowed. The Quran (4: 3) states:

And if you fear that you cannot do justice to orphans, marry women of your choice; Two, three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one, or (a captive) that your right hand possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice” (Quran, 4:3).

And:

“And you cannot do justice between wives, even though you wish (it), but be not disinclined (from one) with total disinclination, so that you leave her in suspense” (Quran, 4:129).

The second verse is an implicit dissuasion with the caution that it is difficult, if not impossible to be equally “just” to all wives. As pointed out by Helal (2000, p. 9), “in this

Quranic verse, the inner psychology of the human being has been revealed....it is but natural that on marrying a second wife, the first wife is neglected and ill-treated, that is why so much emphasis on equality as a precondition to polygamy has been laid down by the Quran". In fact, some authors insist that polygamy is contingent on the husband's ability to be just in the treatment of all his wives and is allowed only if the conditions necessitate its practice (Haddad and Esposito, 1998). Others speculate that the proviso of justice and equality would be humanly almost impossible to fulfil (Doi, 1990). Engineer (1992, p.155), asserts that "among Muslims polygamy is legally permitted and some Muslims do take advantage of it by taking more than one wife". In addition, many men marry two or more wives and do not treat all of them equally, regarding this institution as a privilege and practice it arbitrarily (Mondal, 1997).

Engineer (1992) asserts that the above verses cannot be read in isolation, pointing out that the first verse "expressly and unambiguously permits marriage with more than one women, the second verse talks of doing justice to the orphans and third concerns polygamy, where he says "the emphasis is not on marrying more than one woman, but on doing justice to the orphans" (p.101). Helal (2000), maintains that the precondition of equal and just treatment has been successful in limiting polygamy among Muslims.

Opinions about the practice and legalisation of polygamy vary from unmitigated condemnation to outright approval. Polygamy is often perceived as oppressive to women. Yet most Muslims are of the view that polygamy protects women from a life of celibacy, saves single, unemployed mothers from economic hardship, provides widows with companionship and gives unmarried women the opportunity of having a husband and children (Badawi, 2000).

While Judaism and Christianity, do not explicitly prohibit polygamy, western society asserts that marriages should be monogamous. However, the traditional nuclear family is no longer a stable institution in society. Broken marriages, extra-marital affairs and the consequent breakdown of the nuclear family are on the increase. In many families, according to Rivett and Street (1993), extra marital affairs often result in children by one man in two households, with the man having close contact with both households.

Besant (as cited in Chaudhry, 1991, p. 92) argues in favour of polygamy, asserting that “there is pretended monogamy in the West, but there is really a polygamy without responsibility”; she suggests that polygamy is practised in the West but is just not labelled as such. She maintains that polygamy compels a married man to be responsible to the offspring of subsequent unions, giving both the woman and her children legitimate status. Unlike an extra marital affair where a woman can be easily discarded and her children seen as illegitimate, a polygamous marriage accords a woman respect and children born of that union, are regarded as legitimate.

1.4 MARRIAGE IN ISLAM

A discussion of Muslim marriage seems relevant here, since polygamy is about the plurality of marriages. In Islam, as in most religions (e.g. Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism), marriage is regarded as an institution. However, according to Roberts (1981) and Malik (1994), Islamic law regards marriage as a social contract and sacred covenant and not a religious ceremony. Islamic law states that no woman may be forced to marry against her will. Malik (1994), reports that no *Imam* (priest) can perform a legal marriage without the verbal sanction of the

bride or through her witnesses or guardians (*wakeels*). Although the bride does not attend the marriage ceremony (*nikaah*), she is represented by a male representative (*wakeel*), who consents to the marriage on the bride's behalf. A Muslim woman therefore has the free will to marry whom she pleases and has the right to choose whether or not to marry a single or married man. A second (junior) wife, unlike the first (senior) wife consents to a polygamous union by choice. A Muslim woman may also stipulate in the marital contract that her husband may not enter into a second marriage while married to her. If the husband subsequently takes on a second wife, the first wife has the option of requesting a divorce. This is one of the few reasons for which a Muslim woman has the right to request a divorce.

In Islam, marriage, including polygamy, is regarded as a virtuous deed that guards against unlawful and immoral sexual relations. According to Maududi (1996), "man" was given permission to marry for the procreation of the human race, and in order to satisfy "his" sexual needs, since the Quran forbids sexual relations outside of marriage. According to Maududi (1996, p. 187), the following *Hadeeth* (actions or 'sayings' of the Prophet) illustrates Islam's stance on marriage:

"You should marry, for that is the best way of saving yourself from casting evil eyes and of safeguarding against sexual immorality...." (Al-Tirmizi, as cited in Engineer, 1992).

Only within the confines of marriage are sexual relations between a man and a woman considered lawful (*halaal*), hence the sanctioning of multiple marriages in Islam is regarded as

more favourable than committing adultery. Polygamy is tolerated as the better alternative and lesser of two “evils”.

1.5 INHERITANCE IN ISLAM

In Islam, marriage, birth and divorce impact directly on inheritance provisions and proportions. The Islamic law of inheritance states that the general rule is that females inherit half the male’s share, except in cases in which a mother and a father receive equal share (Badawi, 1997). All the children born both within and outside of a marriage are entitled to inherit from their father’s estate. Before the advent of Islam, inheritance rights were confined exclusively to male children and relatives and according to Muslim historians, a woman was treated like a commodity (Mernissi, 1991). A widow had even fewer rights, as she was treated as an object to be claimed by male heirs (Mernissi, 1991). Hence she herself could be ‘inherited’ (Engineer, 1992). Therefore, women had no right to inherit from either their father’s or their husband’s property (Engineer, 1992). Islam abolished all these unjust customs by granting inheritance shares to females. Men inherit twice the female share, since it is argued that males have greater financial responsibility than females. A Muslim man who has more than one wife is obligated by *Shariah* to ensure that his wives inherit an equal share from his estate.

In South Africa, where Muslims find themselves at an interface between Islamic and Western ideologies, the majority of Muslim marriages are monogamous. Even though polygamy is religiously sanctioned, there is a degree of social disapproval, with such marriages

being ascribed second-class status. One explanation of this contradictory attitude may be that South African Muslims are searching for “some middle ground” (El-Khayat, 1997, p. 67), but that, having been socialized into the western norm of monogamy, perceive polygamy as socially unacceptable; this may also account for its rarity. According to Jivan (1997, p. 8), “because of the rarity of polygamous marriages and possibly because the South African Muslim community is a close knit and loyal society which has been isolated during the years of apartheid, Muslim women involved in such marriages have not voiced their opinions on polygamy and its effect on the family”. This study attempts to explore the feelings and perceptions of Muslim women in such marriages.

In **Chapter 2**, literature pertaining to polygamy is reviewed. **Chapter 3** is an outline of the Methodology of the study. The findings and discussion are presented in **Chapter 4**. In **Chapter 5** some conclusions and reflections are presented.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In South Africa, approximately two percent of the population are Muslims (Burger, 2000) of Malay, Indian, African and other descents and there are almost two million more Muslim females than males (Statistics, South Africa, 2001). In fact, Islam is the second largest religion in the world after Christianity and represents more or less one sixth of the world population (Burger, 2000).

In Islamic countries, fewer than 10% of marriages are polygamous (Malik, 1994). One reason could be financial, which would explain why polygamy is more common among the wealthy. In other eastern countries like India, the Muslim society is the least polygamous in comparison to other religions and tribes (Engineer, 1992). Al-Krenawi et al., (1997, p. 447), point out, however, that even in those cultures where polygamy is practised, it is “declining in popularity amongst the youth”.

The Quran does not explicitly specify either monogamy or polygamy as the norm, although current demographic data indicates that monogamy is the norm and polygamy the exception (Badawi, 2002). By far, monogamy is the most popular form of marriage among Muslims and is still deemed the ideal form of marriage. While polygamy is practised among Muslims in South Africa, it is not common or commonly accepted. Nevertheless, Muslim women in South Africa do find themselves having to deal with the possibility and reality of polygamy.

The following literature review will focus on the conditions and limitations related to polygamy in Islam; South African and Islamic law and jurisprudence; feminist and other perspectives on polygamy, family and life satisfaction; status and rights of Muslim women and lastly, the impact of the practice of polygamy on children.

2.1 CONDITIONS AND LIMITATIONS RELATED TO POLYGAMY

The conditions attached to the practice of polygamy are difficult to adhere to, consequently making it a rare practice. The Quran is clear about two points: (1) the restriction of no more than four wives, and (2) its emphasis on equality and justice to *all* wives and their children. Islamic scholars are of the view that man has no control over his heart (Sheikh Abu Bakr Ibn al-Arabi, as cited in Doi, 1989) and the love he has for one wife will not be the same as for the other/s. Also, it is not an easy task for any man to cope with two wives, two sets of children, and two households and still be just. Therefore, the general opinion is that it is better to avoid polygamy. According to Engineer (1992, p. 22), the Quranic verse on polygamy is a “contextual justification, not a normative one and hence should be seen as dated and not for all times to come”. Engineer (1992), further asserts that most Muslims (especially today) treat this permission to marry more than one wife “as a general license and insist on retaining it, but what should be kept in mind is that in today’s conditions it should be considered as good as impermissible except in highly exceptional circumstances” (p.101).

According to Doi (1990), Muslim scholars advocate that the conditions warranting polygamy are if the first wife is mentally ill, or is of unsound mind, if she is barren, if she has bad character and cannot be reformed, in times of war when women outnumber men and if a

man is so virile that one wife is unable to satisfy his carnal desires. The Quran however, makes no mention of these preconditions. Polygamy becomes unlawful if practised for other reasons or if full justice is not done. (Helal, 2000).

Polygamy should alleviate pain and suffering and not cause it, and according to Badawi (1997), practising polygamy only to substitute an older wife with a younger wife is an abuse of God's law. Each wife has to be treated equally in so far as her conjugal and other rights are concerned. Shad (1998), indicates that a polygamous husband has to share his time and attention with all his wives and should avoid any gesture or action that might provoke jealousy among wives. It is also unlawful to prefer one wife to the other with respect to lodging or clothing and all wives should be provided for according to his means. He is also required to have sufficient financial resources to look after the needs of all his wives. If, for whatever reason, a man believes that he does not possess these means, he should restrict himself to marrying only one wife (Doi, 1996).

2.2 SOUTH AFRICAN LAW AND ISLAMIC JURISPRUDENCE

The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act No 120 of 1998 (Government gazette, 1998), of South Africa, which came into operation in November 2000, recognises all customary and polygamous African marriages. This Act stipulates that the first wife as well as subsequent wives should have the matrimonial property divided equally among them in the event of the death of the spouse. Some lawyers believe that this Act makes it expensive to marry and fear that this will discourage men from formalising relationships. The concern is that women will be left with no security (Gertholtz, as cited in Horning, 1999).

In 1999, the South African Law Commission appointed a project committee who drafted a Bill on the Recognition of Muslim marriages and related matters. The committee has made certain recommendations in so far as legislation on Muslim marriages is concerned. These are included in Issue Paper 15, where the committee suggested that legislation should be similar to the Customary Marriages Act, but should take Muslim Personal Law into account. Although Islamic marriages are now recognised by the Customary Marriages Act, there is no legislation on Muslim polygamous marriages and they remain a contentious issue. The Islamic law or *Shariah* seems to be the only option for dealing with inheritance rights where co-wives are concerned (Horning, 1999).

According to Shoaib Omar (as cited in Horning, 1999), attorney and member of the project committee, the Bill seems to be flawed as it is not *Shariah* representative. For example, it has inexplicably left out the inheritance provisions related to polygamous marriages from the draft bill, and has made polygamy virtually impossible by imposing stringent preconditions on the prospective polygamist. The committee has drawn on the Malaysian legal model, where a man must apply to court for consent before taking a second wife and the judge must be sufficiently satisfied that there is a valid reason for a second marriage and that he can exercise justice according to the Quranic directive (Horning, 1999). The court also has to approve a written contract to regulate the future matrimonial system of all marriages and ensure that the first and subsequent wife or wives benefit or share in the matrimonial property. The committee advises that a senior wife can legally protect herself best if she insists on a civil marriage, since a couple in a subsisting customary marriage who are already parties to a civil marriage, may not validly contract a subsequent customary marriage. Hence, only one civil marriage is allowed to take place at a time. In South Africa, only the first Muslim Customary marriage is given

legal status under civil law, while any polygamous marriages contracted are not accorded similar status.

Horning (1999), points out that additional wives should ensure that they are equitably provided for in their husband's estate. This would assist in legally regulating the practice of polygamy as it is practised today, ensuring justice for all parties concerned. The new African Customary Marriages Act elevates the status of women and children in a polygamous marriage and it is hoped that similar results will be obtained when legislation is finally drawn up on Muslim customary marriages. At present, according to Shoaib Omar, the South African Law commission has completed its work and has submitted a report together with the Bill on the Recognition of Muslim marriages and related matters, to the Minister of Justice. The Bill has not yet been submitted to Parliament and to date, no legislation has been made regarding the recognition of Muslim polygamous marriages.

2.3 PERSPECTIVES ON POLYGAMY

Feminists perceive polygamy as 'the exploitation of women' (Moghissi, 1999). Ahmad (1991), in examining whether polygamy is the cause of social injustice, states that feminist researchers refer to the psychological, economic and cross-cultural aspects of polygamy, and that in their view it is not possible to maintain equality or give the same kind of attention to more than one wife at a time. Even if equality is possible, polygamy is likely to engender deep-seated jealousy, anger and feelings of betrayal among co-wives. Feminists argue that polygamy has no advantages for women, who would gain little benefit should it be legalised in this country

(Horning, 1999). It is perceived as oppressive and unjust and as lowering the status of women.

Similarly Richardson (1985, p. 95-97), maintains that polygamy can be disadvantageous, especially in terms of the emotional turmoil it causes the “cheated partner” (senior wife), who may feel profoundly jealous, desperate and hopeless, and the woman cast in the role of the “other woman” may also suffer grief and pain over sharing a lover. Yet this may also occur in a monogamous marriage, where one partner is having an extra-marital affair. While the legalisation of polygamy may help to curb current social ills, those who oppose polygamy would argue that it would perpetuate gender inequality. Polygamy is often regarded as a mechanism of social control, infused with the notion of an imbalance of power that favours men (Madhavan, 2002).

Jivan (1997, p. 2) argues that, “while there is justifiable concern for the position of Muslim women in polygamous unions, it is sometimes overlooked that the inequalities present in polygamous relationships have to do with the patriarchal society in which polygamy thrives, rather than the practice of polygamy itself”. For a senior wife, her husband’s additional wives are an imposition, since she is rarely consulted and the decision to enter into additional marriages is his prerogative. It is the man who decides who he will marry, how many wives he will marry and how he will divide his time, finances and other resources. In Islam, the senior wife’s consent and approval are not necessary. Polygamy therefore, is patriarchal in its ethos and patriarchy inevitably leads to the subjugation of women.

According to Horning (1999), feminists oppose polygamy because it gives men an unwarranted sense of status, sexual freedom and greater opportunity for sexual gratification. It appears that Muslim women are perceived as ‘property’, for men to do with as they please.

This 'proprietary attitude' seems to reinforce the practice of polygamy, giving men the power to abuse it. But despite this, polygamy is gaining support among women activists in the United States (Horning, 1999).

Murray (1994), arguing in favour of polygamy, asserts that while it may be true that women are sometimes oppressed in polygamous marriages, the alternate (i.e. monogamous marriage) may be no better, since women are often isolated and economically disadvantaged and probably worst off when a monogamous marriage disintegrates, often leaving the woman to join what she calls the "poorest class" in society, that of single mothers. Murray (1994, p. 39), further argues: "just as we recognise that western monogamous marriages do not guarantee equality, we cannot assume polygamy inevitably leads to oppression". Eskapa (1984, as cited in Overall, 1998), similarly asserts that while non-monogamous relationships can be distressing for some, they do appear quite liberating for others.

In France, Le Bon, who also argues in favour of the legalisation of polygamy says "...a return to polygamy, would remedy many evils: prostitution, venereal diseases, abortion, the misery of illegitimate children, the misfortune of millions of unmarried women, resulting from disproportion between the sexes, adultery and even jealousy, since the disregarded wife would find consolation in her cognisance of not being secretly deceived by her husband" (as cited in Malik, 1994, p. 57). This is highly debatable and somewhat simplistic, however, since it is likely that despite having knowledge of the second wife, a senior wife might still feel deceived by her husband.

2.4 FAMILY AND LIFE SATISFACTION

In an exploratory study (one of the few empirical studies on polygamy), conducted in rural Cameroon, the authors (Gwanfogbe, Schumm, Smith & Furrow, 1997) examined the possible effects of polygamy on family life. Results showed that life satisfaction for women was significantly related to wife order, marital satisfaction and socio-economic status. Junior wives were more satisfied with life than senior wives, while older senior wives were more satisfied with life than younger senior wives. Mothers with four or five children were generally happier than those with either fewer children or more children. Muslim husbands were seen as significantly more supportive than either Christian or non-affiliated husbands. In this society, polygamy was practised for both religious and socio-economic reasons and seems to have been a relatively common practice. In South Africa, however, polygamy, is not a commonly accepted practice and is generally not practised for socio-economic reasons.

Polygamy is widely practised amongst Africans and favoured by women, mainly because more wives mean less work, since the workload can be shared amongst them (Gwanfogbe et al., 1997). However, this “arrangement may be useful for women living from something like subsistence farming where extra hands and companionship are necessary” (Gerntholtz, as cited in Horning, 1999, p. 67). Moreover, polygamous unions would probably be favoured more among traditional women living in rural areas than more educated, westernised and urbanised women. Also, in the African culture the first wife is given the right to choose the second wife, and she has to consent to the marriage. This may help alleviate the pain and uncertainty that often occurs in many polygamous marriages where the marriage is effected without the knowledge of the senior wife and the co-wife is not known to the senior wife.

Al-Krenawi, et al's (1997) study on social work practice with Bedouin Arab polygamous families, describes the difficulties encountered by the senior wife in a polygamous marriage. Findings revealed that there is intense competition between junior and senior wives and their children for the husband's economic and social support. Coupled with this, is the degree of marital satisfaction within the tripartite union, which is almost always an area of contention. Senior wives in this study reported poor relations with their husbands. The authors found that the pain experienced by the betrayed spouse is likely to lead to low levels of spousal affection (Al-Krenawi, et al., 1997), which in turn could lead to a decline in marital satisfaction. Coupled with the decrease in marital satisfaction are the poor coping mechanisms occasionally employed by the senior wife. Love, affection and intimacy, most notably, become the focus of discord within the marriage, when these are perceived to be unequally distributed. Feelings of betrayal, anger and jealousy are likely to be experienced by the senior wife at the news of the husband's second marriage, as well as a loss of status within the marriage, contributing to a loss of self-esteem. (Al-Krenawi, et al., 1997).

Another common phenomenon in polygamous relationships is the often strained and vitriolic relationship between senior and junior wives. Al-Krenawi et al., (1997), report that, because a junior wife is likely to be younger than the senior wife, issues such as age and beauty, generally associated with femininity, coupled with the perception that the senior wife is unable to fulfil her normal obligations as a wife often lead to embarrassment and shame for the senior wife.

Overall (1998) proposes that the marital relationship is almost always strained with the knowledge of additional wives. Polygamy may be perceived as a form of adultery and a violation of the commitment that the couple have toward each other. However, Overall (1998,

p. 5) reports, “some writers have insisted that the pain experienced by the ‘betrayed’ partner is a consequence of cultural beliefs and conventions about love and sexually intimate relationships”. This implies that if social conventions do not hold that relationships should be monogamous, the “betrayed” partner would not experience pain.

In South Africa, while polygamy is religiously sanctioned among Muslims, socio-culturally it is regarded as unacceptable and therefore, often clandestine. The junior wife is often an “open secret”, while the senior wife has to pretend that her marital relationship is monogamous. The junior wife on the other hand, feels degraded since she is often seen as a “trophy wife” (Horning, 1999, p. 67).

2.5 WOMEN’S RIGHTS AND STATUS IN ISLAM

The issue of women’s rights in Islam is highly contentious. According to Doi (1996, p. 10) Islam regards women as the ‘spiritual and intellectual equals’ of men, and no woman is subordinate to a man. The Quran states:

“And for Women are rights over men similar to those of men over women”.

Yet the Quran also explicitly states that men are a degree above women (Maududi, 1996), and that because of *biological differences*, men and women are unequal due to the differences in their roles and responsibilities. What Islam does offer women, is legal and economic protection. A Muslim man is financially responsible for his wife, mother and sisters. An employed married woman is under no obligation to support the household, and does so by choice (Maududi, 1996). Her husband is not absolved from his responsibility to support her

and his children, and in the case of having more than one wife, it is incumbent on him to take full financial responsibility for all his wives and children. Islam also improved the status of women in so far as inheritance, right to obtain an education and own and acquire property in their own name is concerned.

With regard to inheritance, a Muslim widow is only entitled to one quarter of her dead husband's estate if they have no children, and if they have children, she inherits only one eighth (Badawi, 2000). Her husband's family is entitled to the rest.

Within marriage, a Muslim wife appears to have fewer rights than her husband. While Islam forbids the harsh treatment of a wife by her husband and he is expected to treat her with respect, kindness and sympathy, the *Shariah* (Islamic law) is explicit about the following: A Muslim wife is not allowed to leave her home without the permission of her husband and is accountable to her husband. The husband is regarded as the 'head of the household' and the one who makes the final decisions. A Muslim wife is expected to be obedient to her husband, guard his possessions, and serve him wholeheartedly (Shad, 1998).

Should a Muslim man decide to marry another woman, the senior wife does not need to be consulted and her consent is not necessary. Within polygamous unions, a wife's right to sexual pleasure appears to be confined to one quarter that of a man, yet the husband has several women at his disposal to satisfy his sexual needs (Moghissi, 1999). Women are not accorded the same right, since polyandry is forbidden. A Muslim husband can divorce his wife by oral pronouncement, while a Muslim wife does not have the same privilege. According to Islamic law, the custody of children is awarded to the man.

Theoretically, men and women appear to have similar rights to education, property and participation in political affairs. However, one needs to be aware of and make a distinction

between what the primary sources of Islam (*Quran and Hadith*) have to say about women's rights, and the opinions of Muslim scholars on specific issues, which may vary and be influenced by their times, circumstances and cultures (Badawi, 2002).

2.6 IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Studies (Al-Krenawi et al., 1997; Gwanfogbe et al., 1997) on polygamy, concluded that polygamy might have a negative impact on the family as a system. The Al-Krenawi et al., (1997) study on polygamous families concluded that from a systemic perspective, polygamy can cause a traumatic change to the family system. Findings revealed that the psychological impact of polygamy on children is often similar to that of divorce: academic problems, low self-esteem, and negative attitudes toward a parent.

Children of both the senior and junior wives are affected in a polygamous marriage. Some of the advantages (for junior wives' children) include legitimate status, the right to inherit, and a part-time father as opposed to an absent or nonexistent father as is commonly encountered in single parent homes. To the senior wife's children, these become disadvantages since the addition of extra siblings entails a smaller portion of the inheritance, knowledge of the second family strains their own family relationship and they have to share their father's economic, physical and social support with their half-siblings, and this often leads to competition for affection. Often the junior wife and her children are resented because they are perceived as an imposition.

Difficulties in maintaining fair and consistent contact with all the children may also impact negatively on children. Similar to children from divorced homes, children from polygamous families are likely to attach blame to themselves for the breakdown of, or problems in their parents' marriage and ultimately the family system. The break up of the family system, the absence of a father figure and controversies over leadership in the family are likely to produce children that are emotionally unbalanced and susceptible to psychological disorders, particularly depressive disorders and anti- social personality disorder as adults (Qutb, 1994). According to Kaplan and Sadock (1998), children from dysfunctional families (divorced and single parent families) are likely to experience emotional problems, low self esteem, increased risk of divorce when they eventually marry, present with dysfunctional behaviour patterns and difficulties coping academically. It is also probable that the senior wife's children will experience more psycho-social and behavioural problems than the junior wife's children (Al-Krenawi, et al., 1997), again perhaps because the junior wife's children are perceived as imposing on their territory. These children often have difficulty coping within such a system, and according to Al-Krenawi et al., (1997), how well a child copes depends on how well the mother (senior wife) is coping.

2.7 THE THEORY OF GENDER AND POWER

The theory of Gender and Power (Connell, 1987) will be described briefly as this social structural theoretical model was used to understand some of the emerging themes in the gendered relationships between men and women within polygamous relationships.

According to the Theory of Gender and Power (Wingood and DiClemente, 2002), three major social structures characterize the gendered relationships of men and women, namely the sexual division of labour, the sexual division of power and the structure of cathexis. The three structures exist at two different levels:

1. a higher societal level through historical and socio-political forces that segregate power and ascribe social norms on the basis of gender determined roles, and
2. a lower institutional (school, work, religion, media, etc.) level where gender based inequities are maintained through various social mechanisms.

2.7.1 The sexual division of labour

At the societal level, this refers to the assigning of women to unequal positions relative to men: “women’s work” that limits their economic potential. At the institutional level, women’s work is often unpaid or undervalued allowing men control of the family income.

2.7.2 The sexual division of power

According to the social-psychological literature, power is defined as the capacity to influence the action of others (Antonovsky, 1988). Inequalities of power between the sexes form the basis for the sexual division of power at the societal level. At the institutional level, the imbalance of power is maintained by interpersonal mechanisms such as abuse of authority and control in relationships.

2.7.3 The structure of cathexis

At the societal level, this structure constrains society's expectations of appropriate sexual behaviour for women. At the institutional level, social mechanisms produce biases such as how men and women should express their sexuality, so that women are expected to be monogamous, while having multiple sexual partners is an accepted norm for men. These three overlapping structures serve to explain the gender roles that men and women assume.

2.8 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

The motivation for this study emanated from my own interest in senior wives' experiences.

Much has been written on the legal, cultural and religious perspectives of polygamy as practised in Islam and other religions, but very little attention is paid to the women who are experiencing it. I chose to interview women in this study because women are often a neglected or excluded gender in research. As a Muslim woman, I was aware that my subjectivity and reflexivity would influence not only the data gathering process, but also the analysis of the data. However the social constructionist perspective accepts subjectivity, reflexivity and social context as inevitable.

Current trends in research tend to favour qualitative methodology. The qualitative researcher forms an integral part of qualitative work and focuses on the context and integrity of the material (Parker, 1995, in Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1995). This approach encourages the researcher and participant to work jointly, allowing for greater flexibility and reciprocal construction of the data. With qualitative research, face-to-face interaction allows for closeness between researcher and participant to be acknowledged, which

invariably affects the data that is gathered. The aim of this study was to explore experiences of Muslim 'senior wives' in polygamous marriages.

In the next chapter, the methodology employed to analyse the data collected from the women is discussed.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Since this was an exploratory study, I utilized the qualitative data gathering method.

Qualitative studies contain rich descriptive data and studies based on in-depth interviewing give “a feeling of ‘walking in the informants’ shoes’ and seeing things from their point of view” (Geertz, 1988, p. 124). Thus qualitative research is descriptive material that deals with meanings “that reside in social practice and not only in the heads of individuals” (Dey, 1993, p.11).

I used a focussed ethnographic approach, with semi structured, in-depth interviews, allowing and encouraging open interaction between the participants and myself. This, as Finch (1984) argues, prevents a hierarchical relationship from developing where the researcher is viewed as superior to the participants. The ethnographic approach allowed me as the researcher to challenge my own assumptions and theories regarding the nature of the social reality of the participants (D’Ammo and Price, 1990). One of the strengths of this approach is that it allows and promotes the understanding of the social life of the ‘community’ participants (D’Ammo & Price, 1990). One of its weaknesses, as in most qualitative methods, is the lack of generalizability of its findings.

A great deal of interpretation is required in ethnographic research. According to D'Amico and Price (1990, p. 78), "it is unclear whether different ethnographers using the same method with the same informants would obtain similar findings". As such, in terms of reliability and validity, ethnography is particularly challenged.

A qualitative approach was also chosen since the few empirical studies (e.g. Al-Krenawi et al., 1997; Gwanfogbe et al., 1997), conducted on polygamy have been mainly quantitative. With qualitative research, researchers try to convey a sense of being there and experiencing settings first hand. Polygamy is a sensitive issue and this approach allows for face-to-face contact between the researcher and the participants as opposed to filling in a questionnaire (as in quantitative research). It is also less structured than questionnaires and similar to everyday conversation, thereby helping to put participants at ease, allowing the researcher to be genuine and empathic toward the participants.

According to D'Amico & Price (1990), ethnography places great emphasis on the meaning of terms and ideas so as to obtain detailed explanations from the informant's point of view. A further reason for using ethnographic interviews as a data collection method in this study, was that it allowed the ethnographer (researcher) and the informant to "blend together to form a conversation" (D'Amico & Price, 1990, p. 76). The meaning of terms as used by the informants, how the terms are related to each other and how they differ helps the interviewer to understand the informant from his/her point of view. This, it is believed, would not have been achieved using a quantitative methodology.

3.2 Sample

Interviews were conducted with four Muslim women, who were all ‘senior wives’ in polygamous marriages and who lived in the more affluent areas of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. “Senior wife” in this context is defined as ‘any married woman who was followed by another wife in the marriage’ (Chaleby, 1985, p. 57). I chose to interview senior wives because they are the ones to have experienced the inclusion of a third party into the marital dyad, with all its consequences. A ‘junior wife’, unlike a senior wife, is generally aware that she is entering a tripartite union/relationship and does so by choice. The women ranged between 35 and 55 years in age. This age category was chosen, since it was more likely that women in this age category would be senior wives. In addition, all four participants had to be in polygamous marriages and still living with their husbands (they must not be separated or divorced).

3.3 Procedure

Initially I tried to recruit participants from Muslim women’s groups in the Durban area by sending them letters describing the aims and objectives of the study. Not a single woman from any of the women’s groups responded. This could be due to the following reasons: (1) the sensitive nature of the issue; some women might have felt ashamed or afraid to risk their anonymity by making their personal lives known to others, (2) for some women this may have been an issue they had long dealt with and speaking about it might have dredged up old pain that they would prefer to forget or not deal with; (3) fear of blame by society; and (4) polygamy is often regarded as a ‘taboo’ topic.

Next I placed an advertisement in the local community newspaper. That too turned out to be fruitless and rather embarrassing, since mainly men, who had misunderstood the advertisement, responded to what they thought to be an escort service. Only one of the women who participated in the study was recruited via the newspaper. The other three women were recruited informally.

Other forms of media were used in order to recruit women, to no avail. It took approximately nine months to recruit women and subsequently to collect the data. Participation in the study was voluntary and a stipend was paid per hour for participation in the study. As recommended by Terre Blanche & Durrheim (1999), after each woman had been recruited, she was verbally informed of the aims and objectives of the study, that participation in the study was voluntary and that she could withdraw from the study at any time.

Each participant signed Consent forms (see Appendix C), stating that their participation in the study was voluntary. Participants were informed of my availability to answer any queries that they might have at any stage of the project and that the final report on the study would be made available to them. Every effort was made to treat participants with respect, consideration and courtesy (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). Data was gathered utilising a semi-structured interview schedule. The duration of each interview was approximately 60-120 minutes. With the permission of the women, the interviews were audio-taped, and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Each woman was interviewed individually in her own home. The women were assured that pseudonyms would be used when the research was written so as to ensure anonymity. They were informed that my supervisor would have access to the data, but that their identities would remain anonymous.

The transcripts were analysed using Thematic Content Analysis. The objective of thematic content analysis is to define concepts, map the nature and range of phenomena, create typologies, find associations, provide explanations and develop strategies (Ritchie and Spencer, 1992). In addition, with this type of analysis, the researcher shifts and charts the data according to core themes, pulling together key characteristics, mapping and interpreting the data as a whole. According to Breakwell & Hammond (1995), thematic content analysis is subjective and not explicit about the process by which interpretation of the target materials occurs. Hence, emphasis is placed on the quality rather than the quantification of data. Data analysis yielded themes that emanated from the data. These were understood from a social constructionist framework.

As a Muslim woman (and researcher), I was aware that my personal opinions on polygamy could compromise objectivity during the research process. While I made every effort to minimise overt bias during all aspects of the study, it must be borne in mind that the methodology applied in this study lends itself to subjectivity. This must be taken into account in considering the outcomes of this study.

As a woman researcher I had to take cognisance of the role I played in the research process, both in the social phenomena under study as well as my interpretation of the emergent data. According to Hammersley (1983, p. 7), there needs to be recognition that “we are part of the social world we study....there is no way we can escape the social world in order to study it; nor, fortunately, is it necessary. We cannot avoid relying on common sense knowledge nor, often can we avoid having an effect on the social phenomena we study”.

The data and discussion of the findings are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

All four participants were senior Muslim wives in a polygamous relationship. The youngest participant was 35 years old and the oldest was 54 years old. The length of their marriages ranged from 20 to 24 years. The women each had between 2 to 4 children. All the participants were still married to their husbands, except for one woman who was unsure about the status of her marriage. It was only at the end of my interviews with her, that she mooted the probability that she was in fact divorced from her husband, but since her husband still spent time with her, she considered herself still married to him, even though he was married to a fourth wife. One participant's husband had divorced his second wife. Two participants were housewives by choice, while the other two held semi-professional jobs. All four women had received formal education. Two women were of lower socio-economic status, while the other two were of higher socio-economic status. To protect the identity of the women, the following pseudonyms will be used when quoting narratives from the interviews: Amina, Aneesa, Ruwaydah and Halima.

The husbands of Aneesa and Halima were currently living with them, while the other two resided with their second wives, spending one or two days with the first wife or sometimes only visiting an hour to see the children. The women, while friendly and courteous during the

interviews, at times appeared to be perturbed by my questions. Halima, in particular, appeared to be protective of her husband, uncertain about elaborating on certain issues, and at times curt when responding to some of the questions. I speculated that this could be due to her loyalty to her husband as a “Muslim wife”. Incidentally, Halima’s husband is divorced from his second wife, and hence she may have felt that talking about her experiences was wrong, since she was no longer in a polygamous relationship. Halima was also the only participant who had to ask her husband’s permission to be interviewed. Despite being assured of anonymity and confidentiality, the women were at times reluctant to disclose information relating to their experiences as senior wives. Again this highlighted the sensitivity of the topic.

4.2 RESEARCHER’S OBSERVATIONS AND FEELINGS

Conducting this research project brought out an abundance of emotions in me. Initially, I felt anxious that a participant might cancel an appointment and either decide not to participate in the project at all or to discontinue halfway through an interview. This concern was heightened during my interview with the second participant, Ruwaydah, when I experienced a technical failure. The interview had to be stopped and rescheduled for the following weekend. On the day of our scheduled appointment, however, the participant was not home. After several attempts to contact Ruwaydah, the interview was rescheduled. In retrospect, this participant was far more at ease than the other interviewees and was less inhibited than they were.

I recall feeling distraught that I might never find sufficient or suitable candidates to complete my research on time. The difficulties and delays in finding suitable participants sometimes left

me feeling frustrated and helpless, wondering whether I would ever find a suitable sample, and when the entire process of data gathering would end.

On reflection, another concern was that, being a Muslim woman, I would be too sympathetic to the feelings of the participants. As the interviewees confided in me, I found myself internalising some of their beliefs about marriage, men and relationships. On a more positive note, my clinical skills as a psychologist helped in establishing rapport with the interviewees, allowing for the establishment of a trusting relationship. In retrospect, the fact that we shared the same culture, gender and religion helped to create a relaxed environment in which the women felt comfortable about disclosing personal details of their marriages.

Aware that I was unmarried and younger than they were, I thought that the women would question whether or not I was able to identify with their life experience, since my knowledge of marriage and children, by assumption, emanated from a textbook and was not experiential in nature. Another dynamic was that, because the participants were aware that I was a psychology masters student, each of them tended, at certain times during the interviews, to relate to me as a psychologist and not as a researcher. During these moments, I observed the “psychologist” in me emerge and respond to the participants, especially when traumatic or emotional aspects of their marriage were being discussed. I believe that my clinical skills helped me to provide a warm, supportive, non-judgmental situation in which the women could feel safe to disclose emotionally painful experiences.

Each interview commenced with an informal conversation that was not tape-recorded. While this helped to put the interviewees at ease, I suspect that it might have interfered with the formality of the interviews, and some effort was required to refocus. During these moments and also after the interviews, two of the women adopted a protective role towards me, warning

me about the choice of a life partner, the role I should play within a marriage, the pitfalls I should avoid, and that I should not repeat the mistakes they had made in their marriages. One participant even suggested that, given her personal experience, I should not consider marriage!

Despite my concerns, once the interviews commenced, the participants engaged more formally with me. I gathered that my need to be supportive stemmed from my own fear that the interviewees would assume that I was completing my research as part of a course requirement and therefore was not genuinely interested in their life situation or experiences. Two of the women were tearful throughout the interviews, and seemed relieved to have an empathic listener, knowing that confidentiality was not being compromised and that they were not being judged or blamed for their thoughts or feelings. In conclusion, the utilization of micro-skills aided in putting the interviewees at ease, and decreased the social distance between us, creating an comfortable atmosphere, within a formal setting.

As mentioned earlier, the data were analysed using Thematic Content Analysis. In the next section is a presentation of the research findings. After the interviews were transcribed verbatim, the transcripts were read and re-read, data was coded and categorised, and themes were generated.

4.3 THEMATIC CONTENT ANALYSIS

Five themes emerged consistently from the data; I have named them: *Power; Blame; Betrayal; Loss*; and *Impact on children*. The themes overlap at times and should be seen as complementary components of an integrated picture.

4.3.1 POWER

An overarching theme was that of power. Lamanna and Riedmann (1991) define power as the ability to exercise one's will over others and they distinguish between personal, social and conjugal power. Power exercised over oneself is *personal power*, *social power* is the ability to exercise one's will over others and *conjugal power* is power exercised between marital partners.

Conjugal power is clearly illustrated as residing with the male in the following comment:

Amina:

After we got married, straightaway I had a baby. I was very upset because he was leaving me alone and going out and having a good time with other girls and all that. But like I say....I had to accept that because I made my bed, and to me I had to lay in it. And it was very upsetting, but I got used to the idea, but I always told myself, he is young....I am young, I can't compete with him, I'm a woman, I can't lose my pride and dignity, because you know.... to get him back for what he is doing and I just used to sit. I didn't have a life for myself from the time I got married...I mean even before we got married, I

only went out whenever he took me out and the rest of the time I had to sit at home.

The idea that “going out and having a good time” is the norm for a man comes through clearly, with the woman excusing it by saying that “he is young”, implying that he will “grow out of it”. This kind of behaviour is not appropriate for a woman who can’t “compete” with him, because if she “gets him back for what he is doing” she will “lose my pride and dignity”.

Related to the broad issue of power, four subthemes were identified: divorce, helplessness, sexuality and abuse.

4.3.1.1 *Divorce*

While divorce is permitted in Islam, only the man is allowed to divorce his wife and this is done by oral pronouncement, while the woman must seek recourse through the (male) religious structures. In addition, there are powerful constraints preventing women from seeking divorce, so that conjugal power remains vested in the man:

Aneesha:

At that time....at that time, yes. You know somebody told me this as well, that if I can find courage, this...that....whatever, take a divorce from him, because there is no other way out, but a divorce right? You become a divorcee...a divorced woman now, and society...I'm talking of everybody hey, they look down upon you like it was your fault, I don't know why, why women are so inferior, in that way. You know they look down upon you, you're a nothing, you're a nobody. Also you get a lot of men that will perchance you then, 'Oh she's free' and actually that's what my husband said initially. Because I asked

him, I said, "how can you do a thing like that with that woman, knowing you are a married man?" He said, "you know what, she was free meat, anybody could have her", you know? I look at it that way; I would be that; I would be somebody like that, where I'd be free meat for anybody to pick and drop and see whatever, you know. I think I love my dignity too much for that.

A divorced woman is not only perceived as being a "nothing" without a man, but is therefore also "available" to men, and by implication, only complete with a man. The breakdown of the marriage is also ascribed to her because a "good Muslim woman" does not seek divorce (no matter what the husband does).

The unequal gendered power relationships with regard to divorce as established by religion often lead to abuse by men as a means of maintaining control when the wife might seek a legal divorce. The woman is then forced to remain in a polygamous relationship despite being legally divorced. According to Ruwaydah:

So then I asked for something. I said I am prepared to go through this divorce right now, on one condition, that I get my Islamic Talaq [divorce], because I think and know what he thought he was going to play at: divorce me legally, but Islamically hold onto me, which to date he has done....

4.3.1.2 *Helplessness*

The women expressed helplessness in the face of a practice that they consider objectionable on the

one hand, but that they feel compelled to tolerate because their religion permits it. The following observation by Aneesa is revealing:

Maybe upbringing.... maybe it's our upbringing, we're not liberal. You can be no matter how educated, you can be a doctor....I know a doctor, she was married to an ordinary businessman, and he took another wife and....she's around....she's around. I don't know how her life is, or what or how she accepted, or whatever her case, but she's around....she's around. With her profession she could have said "you know what....?" Like I said it is our upbringing....Islam allows it, you can't get away from that...Islam allows it....

Aneesa seems to be expressing here the dilemma of Muslims in general, and women in polygamous unions in particular: the feeling of being “trapped between fidelity to one’s own cultural identity and the necessity to assume a more flexible pluralist frame of reference” (Bibeau, 1997, p.10). She expresses the need to be more “liberal”, but acknowledges that, having been socialised to define herself as a Muslim, straying outside of this reality would place her in a state of apostasy. (El-Khayat, 1997).

4.3.1.3 *Sexuality*

Societal and religious norms promote the notion of a woman “belonging to one man” (Amina), thereby establishing and maintaining a power differential that Wingood and DiClemente (2002, p. 325) assert, “often translates into constraints on their sexual behaviour”. The women reported that

their husbands often only interacted with them sexually, and saw it as his prerogative to decide whether and when to have sexual intercourse. The women who were socialised into the notion that a Muslim woman should not refuse when her husband wishes to have sexual intercourse with her, usually submitted to the husband's demands despite feeling that they were valued only for their bodies and that the only purpose in their marriage was to serve their husbands sexually.

Amina :

....he used to come here, more like he was coming to visit me, I mean for all the years that he has been with that woman, and the third one too....but...he still like demanded.... he wanted to be intimate with me, telling me that I'm his only wife and things and unfortunately for my feelings for him I used to give in....

4.3.1.4 Abuse

According to Wingood & DiClemente (2002), women in power imbalanced relationships often are either financially or emotionally dependent on their spouses, and this appears to place them at risk of being exploited or abused. The men on the other hand, aware of their power, tend to abuse their authority and take advantage of the women. As Aneesa realised:

I say you [husband] took advantage of me, because we are not of those women where we'll stand up for anything, you know? Maybe because, oh I've got children, "where do you think she'll go? She can't go anywhere, she'll stay put, she got nowhere to go". That's what they do....they take advantage of the situation.

According to Lamanna & Riedmann (1991), men may also use violence to attempt to maintain

control over wives who might try to become independent of the relationship and battered wives' lack of personal power begins with fear, as reflected in the following:

Amina: *You know I can't bring up an argument, where he's gonna get angry...and alright. He did hit me a few times...because of that. He used to drink and went out with girls that drank and er....to avoid that and for my children not to know, I just used to keep quiet. As long as he got what he wanted, you know he was selfish and also when like.....you know because he was drinking, I was terrified to even pick an argument, because I was frightened he might hit me, because he is in the wrong and to avoid that I just used to keep quiet and I used to tell my children, "just don't say anything, ignore it".*

And:

Ruwaydah: *I'd rather them see him inside the house, but when I call him inside the house again, he was captain of the ship, he was in command, insulting me to the lowest, and I think most times he would have loved to hit me....he would have loved to have hit me.*

4.3.2 BLAME

In order to cope with their pain, the women needed to assign blame for their husbands' remarriage. They attributed blame to both internal and external factors as the locus of causality. According to Heider (in Mongeau, Hale and Alles, 1994, p. 327), in attributing blame, the locus of causality may be assumed to be rooted in the "actor, environment or some combination of both". The attribution may be either *situational* (caused by something in the environment) or *dispositional* (caused by

something in the person, such as a trait or motive) (Wade & Tavis, 1990).

4.3.2.1 *Internal attribution*

4.3.2.1.1 *Self blame*

In attributing blame to themselves, the women ascribed their husbands' polygamy to both situational and dispositional factors. They either questioned their own competency as a wife and lover, or blamed their fate. Like wives whose husbands have been involved in an extra marital affair, these women questioned whether they had done something wrong or had not done enough for their husbands. According to Al-Krenawi et al., (1997, p.451) "when a man takes on a second wife, the "senior wife" may be perceived by society to have been unable to fulfil her normal obligations as a wife".

Anesa: Hey to face anybody....forget the in-laws, face anybody and you feel like....they picking on you. What opinion they had of you....you know things like that....That I was what I did, for him to do a thing like that.....you blame yourself.

The women assume responsibility because societal norms dictate that it is the woman's role to "keep her husband happy", thereby preventing him from seeking other relationships. This engenders self blame leading to feelings of inadequacy, not least because the husbands would sometimes accuse them of nagging, not being passionate enough, or spending too much time with their families [of origin]. According to Ruwaydah:

He would then run me down and try and shoulder me with the blame, to say "you were the one, it was because of you that our marriage was broken". So when I would say what is it about me? Why don't you get to the point? Then if I tell you what it is....it use to be too feeble an excuse for me to accept: " Oh because of your family" . I have one sister, who has three children, two of which are living with her, so you have three people to contend with in my life and you think that's a problem. Is that where I broke up our marriage?

While self-blame is generally assumed to be maladaptive, Janoff-Bulman (1979), asserts that it is often a control maintenance strategy (in Fine and Carney, 2001), while others (Garner, 1969, as cited in Hewstone, 1983, p. 174), purport that self blame is "an attempt to gain control over a calamity, since personal control is strongly implied in the idea, 'It's my fault'".

The women clearly appear to be bewildered about their role in the "breakdown" of their marriage and self-attributing blame is their need to resume control. One respondent blamed herself because she felt that, by pointing out to her husband that his extramarital affair was a sin, she had "encouraged" him to enter into a polygamous union.

Aneesa:.....*Anyhow because I brought in Islam, I think maybe I made him the wiser....thinking that what you're doing is wrong Islam doesn't allow it....blah....blah....blah....like I said I made him the wiser. Wiser, he could have just had an affair and forgot about it, instead of now going deeper, marrying her and so forth.*

While blaming oneself might have been a way to maintain "control", blaming a situational factor

like “fate” was probably more comfortable. The fault lay not in oneself, but in some external, uncontrollable power. According to Aneesa:

I don't know, maybe it was put out, maybe it was your takdeer (fate), maybe it was meant for you this way, because you question “why me, where have I gone wrong?” You come so pure into a marriage, you never had boyfriends, you were so green (laughing).

4.3.2.2 External attributions

4.3.2.2.1 Husband's sexual desire

While polygamy is permitted in Islam, the women believed that their husbands had not entered into such unions for “Islamic” reasons, but because of sexual desire. In fact, all the polygamous marriages in this study began as extra marital affairs. According to Halima:

Well, he never....[abided by the Quranic criteria] because in the first place he never got married to her for Islamic reasons at all and he wasn't short of anything from me and I never did deny him sexthere was never anything he could say he wasn't satisfied about.

The women believed that they adequately fulfilled their obligations as a wife, and stating that they never denied sex to their husbands, suggests that they believed their husbands married a second time for sexual reasons. The following extracts illustrate their husbands' inability to control their sexual desire for other women:

Ruwaydahwhereas we have deviated from there, we are so far way from Shariah, because again it's for lust, it's not for the care of the person you are going to marry. You are attracted, it is for your physical gain, you are gaining from this thing physically....okay not that you are gaining financially maybe, but physically you are gaining and you are attracted, your eyes saw what they saw, you were attracted to that person.

Amina: Ya, maybe, he got involved with her because of the witchcraft or for lust. I think more for lust also, because he also had a partner that he used to sit and drink with.

4.3.2.2.2 Junior wife

Blame was also attributed to the junior wife; she was the person responsible for enticing the husband away from the senior wife, either by behaving helpless, or even by using witchcraft.

Halima: Well in my mind, it's just that she....er....like she got to him, like she maybe like....maybe her ways, the way she spoke to him, made him feel pity for her and so he fell for her....

Amina: Yes, she knew I was married, but in her mind she wanted my husband and she would go and do anything to take him away, even if she had.... this is what she did even if she had to use witchcraft, she would take him away from me, because he belongs to her.

There appears to be a compelling need to perceive the husband as a victim who succumbed to the

wives of the junior wife. The subtext then is that the husband would not have entered into the polygamous union if it were not for the “scheming” junior wife.

The Islamic ideal would be for the senior wife to accept the junior wife and for both to live amicably. However, as Hosseini (1994) maintains, “the literature on Islamic law and Muslim societies shows that there has always existed a gap between Sharia ideals and practice (as cited in El-Sohl & Mabro, 1994, p. 56) and as was found in this study, the introduction of an additional wife is seldom done in ways that conform to the teachings of Islam.

To these senior wives, it seems that marriage meant sexual exclusivity. Stephens (1963), recounts jealousy as a problem in many polygamous households, since western women consider it unnatural to share their husbands with other women (as cited in Ingoldsby, 1995). One might speculate that even if the second marriage had taken place according to the tenets of the Quran, the senior wife’s attitudes might have been no different.

Aneesa was the only interviewee whose perception of the second wife was less belligerent than the other three women in the study. Aneesa assigned blame to her husband, who she felt was the only person to blame for the change in his attitude and behaviour toward her and the children. She felt that his unwillingness to be just and equal toward her, and the concomitant marital disharmony, was his fault entirely and not as a result of the influence of his junior wife. Although she expressed anger at the junior wife, she expected her husband to be just and equal toward both of them. Aneesa’s greater religiosity and her fear of divine retribution may have influenced her slightly more tolerant attitude toward the junior wife.

4.3.2.2.3 In-laws

Unlike Aneesa and Halima, Ruwaydah and Amina, attributed blame to their in-laws for placing their marriages in jeopardy.

Amina: *No, they encouraged....they encouraged, they interfered, there were many times they told me off. Every woman my husband went out with was welcome in their home.*

Ruwaydah: *That's strange, why would you be looking for your sister in my home. He said because your husband is keeping her some place and if you want to know any more, then you ask your young sister-in-law, and now I was angry. I said why would you say this to me. He said because your sister-in-laws are encouraging this very strongly. As much as your husband does not want to, they are inviting him there the time when she (junior wife) is there and this is all of your sister-in-laws.*

These two interviewees regarded their in-laws as central to the problems in their marriages, in addition to playing a significant role in influencing the eventual polygamous relationship. They felt that had they received the appropriate support from their in-laws, their marriages might not have been so problematic or ended up being polygamous. On the other hand, although both Halima and Aneesa felt supported by their in-laws, their marriages did become polygamous anyway!

Despite their tacit acknowledgment that polygamy is permitted in Islam, the interviewees are clearly struggling to accept it in practice in their own lives and expect their in-laws to reject the

junior wife. Again, in an ideal Islamic situation, the in-laws would (and should) accord equal status to both wives.

In general, the junior wife is not openly recognized either by the in-laws or by the wider Muslim society, but is accorded a secondary status of a clandestine nature. Both the wider society, as well as the senior wives appear to be struggling with the contrary ideals of two different worlds: the western ideal of 'one husband-one wife', and the Islamic ideal of accepting and openly acknowledging polygamous unions.

4.3.3 BETRAYAL

This theme encompasses the four emotions expressed as a consequence of being betrayed by their husbands: anger, rejection, jealousy and pain. It is possible that the surreptitious relationship with the junior wife preceding the second marriages, carries connotations of "infidelity". Consequently, polygamy seems to have been equated with 'infidelity' and as such was experienced as an act of betrayal.

The women appeared to be emotionally devastated when they discovered that their husbands had taken a second wife. Similarly, Al-Krenawi et al., (1997) found in their study, that senior wives reported feelings of betrayal, anger and jealousy at the news of the husband's marriage to a second wife. However, it may be argued that if sexual exclusivity is not valued, or infidelity is not perceived as violating norms and boundaries in relationships, then it can be assumed that people would not react in this way.

4.3.3.1 *Anger*

Feelings of anger are likely to occur once the 'betrayed' spouse discovers that their husband or wife has been unfaithful, has breached the sexual exclusivity rule or has transgressed marital boundaries or norms (Lawson, 1988). The anger experienced by the women in this study appears to be linked to pain:

Ruwaydah: *In the beginning, like I said, there was so much anger....so much pain, that caused this anger....*

Aneesa: *.... but this....(finding out about the her husband's second marriage) you're boiling inside, you're hurting inside.*

According to Finkel, Rusbelt, Kumashiro and Hannon (2002, p. 957), spouses "who are betrayed may adopt negative behavioural tendencies in interaction with the perpetrator (junior wife), seeking vengeance. Two of the four women reported experiencing difficulty controlling their anger, by either physically attacking the junior wife or being verbally abusive. The depth of the anger and their inability to control their rage is evident in the following:

Aneesa : *....she caught my hand and when she (junior wife) caught my hand, I saw red. I gave her one slap (laughing)...mouth and all bleeding....and she's bigger than me, she's taller than me....bigger than me....older than me too.*

The anger was largely directed toward the junior wife who was perceived as being responsible for

the betrayal. As reported by the women, becoming angry with their husbands often led to verbal and physical abuse from their spouse, which may be one of the factors that deterred them from holding him responsible.

4.3.3.2 *Rejection*

When a spouse is betrayed, he or she may feel rejected in favour of the new person. The rejected spouse may feel hurt, demeaned, unloved, worthless and has a continuing fear of life without that person. According to Carson and Butcher (1992), the way in which we handle rejection depends on many self factors, our early childhood experiences and relationships. They further assert that adults who experience significant rejection in childhood, will experience serious difficulty in giving and receiving affection as an adult. Murray (2002), reports that adults with low self esteem, feel less valued in their relationship with others, which may account for feelings of rejection. Rejection by a loved one, is likely to put one over the edge, conjuring up feelings of guilt and self blame. As illustrated by Aneesa and Amina, feelings of rejection were accompanied by a loss of self-esteem and a sense of bewilderment:

***Aneesa:**.... firstly you must know they have been belittled by their own husbands, their self esteem is gone, they feel they're worth nothing....*

***Amina:** I just felt disgusted, I just felt hurt, rejected. I just felt why is he rejecting me?*

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4.3.3.3 *Jealousy*

According to Lamanna and Riedmann (1991, p. 258), “jealousy is emotional pain, anger and uncertainty arising when a valued relationship is threatened or perceived to be threatened”, and those who feel insecure or have poor self images are more inclined toward jealousy. The junior wife was perceived as a threat and aroused feelings of insecurity as reflected in the following:

Halima: *It's just that....I was never happy and umm....I didn't want any other woman to be better than me....like what if she's better than me in certain ways....*

The women reported that their husbands often described the junior wife as “sexually more competent”, engendering feelings of insecurity and jealousy. Because women tend to define themselves through their sexual partners (Overall, 1998), feelings of jealousy are therefore likely to occur. There is also a tendency to equate jealousy with sexual threats to the relationship (Lamanna & Riedmann, 1991). One reason that jealousy is so prevalent in polygamous relationships is perhaps because a sense of ‘owning’, or “belonging to” exists in a society where the ideal of duality in marriage is of central importance. In general, spouses may tend to view each other as ‘property’.

4.3.3.4 *Pain*

Some of the most vivid descriptions of the women’s feelings related to their husbands’ “betrayal” were in relation to the theme of pain. Their pain is almost palpable in the following excerpts:

Ruwaydah: *I don't think a knife inside your heart twisted around could cause more pain, than to see your husband walk away, knowing that he is with somebody else....*

Aneesah: *Because the sacrifices I've made, and what I've put up with, because you must know, when you're having a physical relationship with him, the thought is there of the other woman. You're not relaxed, and then you don't want to give totally, you think "blow you man". You want it that way, now go. The other day he told me, "You know what, you take my children, no problem, I'll make more". Imagine your own husband telling you this. I was so....you know when I say the heart bleeds. I used to....I felt a hot gush....inside....*

In an effort to protect themselves, the women tried to hold back a part of themselves, resulting in ambivalent feelings towards the spouse:

Halima: *It made me feel very hurt, it made me feel like I don't know whether I want him or not. Like I feel I want him, but at the same time, I feel like I want to kill him....like that sort of thing.*

4.3.4 LOSS

In most societies marriage entails commitment to one person and therefore also implies sexual exclusivity. People get married expecting that their partner will keep him or her primary in their

lives. Another expectation of marriage is permanence and that mutual affection will be lasting (Lamanna & Riedmann, 1991). However, when a marriage is no longer monogamous, the very concepts of love and sexual exclusivity are threatened and as a result, the monogamous spouse may experience several losses. As Lawson suggests (1988, p. 221-222), “for the betrayed spouse, it is less the pain of jealousy that is evident and more a sense of profound loss, of feeling unloved and unlovable”.

Two of the women stated that the pain of losing their husband to another woman was far *worse* than losing a husband through death. In a study on senior wives’ relationships with their husbands, Al-Krenawi et al., (1997), reported that Bedouin Arab senior wives mourn the loss of a husband when he enters into a polygamous union; this is also a common reaction in divorce. Similarly, in this study, polygamy was perceived as the loss of a husband and compared to loss as a result of death.

Ruwaydah: *I think it is the most painful, the most painful thing one could ever go through. I don't think there is a greater pain than that. You know when you lose your husband, through death he is gone to Allah (God), and that is something you can't control, it's way beyond your control. But when you watch your husband walk away, you know he is going to another woman, can you imagine the pain? How are you expected to be nice to that someone knowing that?*

Aneesa: *.....because you can accept, you can even accept it if he dies, but for him to have another wife like this, and still live with the issue, at least if Allah takes him you make the*

sabr (patience).

The following losses were identified: emotional loss, loss of trust, loss of identity and sense of self, loss of financial support, and loss of self esteem.

4.3.4.1 *Emotional loss*

This theme encompasses feelings of loss with regard to the marital relationship. Narratives of the women reveal that they experienced feelings of loss because they no longer shared a sexually exclusive relationship with their husbands with the concomitant loss of shared intimacy, security and an exclusive love.

Amina: *He wasn't a man who really showed his feelings or since he met the second woman he had changed. Before he met her, we were very loving, he use to carry me and wouldn't go to bed without me and every time he looked at me, he told me how much he loved me, you know and when he met her, I couldn't understand how the feeling just went away.*

Amina also reported feeling “used” by her husband:

All I wanted out of him was being fair. Not just coming here and being intimate with me and....okay here....you know, as the years went by I felt like a prostitute. I felt he is paying me to use my body and that use to upset me, because I cared for him, only after he had walked out, then I would feel....I use to tell him exactly....you know I feel so terrible, I said

I'm lonely, I need you, I need my husband, I don't only need you for sex. I need you to be here with me. It's like nothing is going....life can't go on without you and like....when you come here and visit and you walk out that front door, that's when I feel so terrible, because that's when I want you to be here with me.

Amina's sense of emotional loss is accompanied by feelings of humiliation and degradation at the thought that her husband merely uses her to gratify his own sexual needs, while her own needs for love and affection are ignored. It seems as though the women felt like vulnerable "possessions" whose role it was to serve their husband sexually.

4.3.4.2 *Loss of trust*

Given that polygamy was perceived as an act of betrayal, the women declared a loss of trust in their husbands.

Ruwaydah: *Even now, even though things are not as bad as they used to be; we speak to each other in a more civilised way....there's that needling feeling that keeps coming to my mind, if I take my husband back, how long before he is back there (with the junior wife) again?*

Halima: *I always have the fear that maybe he will go to another woman.*

4.3.4.3 *Loss of identity, dignity and sense of self*

According to Lamanna & Riedmann (1991), women have been socialised to love and need their husbands. Without him the woman's sense of self is shaken. The following quote exemplifies Aneesa's desperate attempts to re-establish her sense of self by winning back her husband:

It's hard....your whole self esteem goes....nothing you feel. You know, I used to dress up, I was very, very, modern. I used to dress up ultra. My father used to turn around and say, "you know, I never brought you up like this, what are you doing?" You think all this is going to win him over?....and that too didn't like....[laughing].... you know you say let me try. You know like you say you'll try this avenue that avenue....

Overall (1998, p. 10) asserts: "from the point of view of the monogamous woman whose partner is non-monogamous, the partner's new sexual relationship may affect her own identity in ways over which she has no control, it is likely to appear as an invasion and violation of her person, a threat to her dignity, wholeness and integrity", as the following quote illustrates:

Aneesa: *....he stripped me naked, left me now to dry like a biltong. Really, because that's how you feel, that he stripped you of your dignity, your rights, your everything, your....you know you take that cockroach....that poor cockroach is dead, but you take and you squash it, that's what they do, you know. They take that little....you know at least bury that cockroach alive....you know whole, not smashed, like rubbing salt in the wounds, you know?*

The Self-in-relation theory proposes that women are socialized to develop a sense of self that is rooted in their relationship with others (Cano, Christian-Herman, O' Leary and Leaf, 2002). As Overall (1998) suggests, when a monogamous spouse does not want to share (her husband), she is actually saying she does not want to share herself, extend herself to include this new person (junior wife), "who is not chosen to be part of her self-assumed identity" (p. 10).

Halima's resentment about 'sharing' is evident in the following:

....everything, having to share time with another woman and to go to another woman.

Part of the loss of identity appears to be the societal (male) perception that a woman is not complete without a spouse. Once a man has entered into a polygamous relationship, the senior wife is regarded as 'in need of a man'. The following quote illustrates both the jolt to Ruwaydah's sense of self as well as the perception of her as being 'available':

But when you take a man and he gets to know that you now between the devil and the deep blue sea, and you don't know where you stand, and he uses that to his advantage, thinking that you are an easy target, thinking that he can actually have an affair going with you. But that's a bad thing, it gives you a bad feeling to think, what do these men think, are women such weak creatures, that the minute you're left alone you're going to look around for someone to sleep with....

4.3.4.4 *Loss of financial support*

Polygamous marriages almost inevitably result in a loss or reduction in financial support, as resources necessarily have to be shared. For the women in this study, however, it appears that the husbands used financial resources to maintain control and the power differential.

Amina:....you know we had to beg him for money. But maybe if he gave us a R200, then after a few weeks then we don't get or maybe months we don't get a cent out of him. Right now we don't get anything out of him.

Ruwaydah:

He didn't pay any attention to how I had to struggle, my lights use to get cut off, I use to walk to work because I had no money for transport, and walking from here to town is not a joke and it didn't matter, it didn't bother him. So of course financially I was now crippled, you know I could barely breathe....and of course my husband just didn't give a damn about us.

4.3.4.5 *Loss of Self Esteem*

According to Lamanna & Riedmann (1991, p. 98), "self esteem is part of a person's self concept and involves feelings people have about their own worth". They further assert that people with high self-esteem can lose it through some incident that prompts them to question their self worth. It seems that the women believed that their husbands had the power to take away their self-esteem

when he married his second wife.

Aneesha:

I wasn't myself...you know, you become like a zombie, you're not yourself, you do things irrationally, you don't have pride in yourself anymore, because he has taken all your self-esteem.

The husband is perceived as having the power to either elevate or damage their self-esteem. Although marrying a second wife does not automatically result in loss of self esteem, the transition from sole wife to senior wife can cause significant damage to one's self image. Charny and Parnass (1995), report similar results in their study. They found that betrayed husbands and wives suffered significant damage to their self-image and sexual confidence.

4.3.5 IMPACT ON CHILDREN

All four women reported that the polygamous union resulted in straining the relationship between their children and their fathers.

Aneesha: *They never liked their father. They used to be distant from him, you know.*

And....er.... more clinging to me, I suppose for security, thinking now my father's not here, where do we go to. A little.... actually, my elder one hey....to date his concentration....he wanders....things like that.

Hetherington (1973), asserts that this is also often the case in divorced homes, where the mother's

negative comments about the father encourages children to develop adverse feelings about their fathers (as cited in Lamanna & Riedmann, 1991). Ruwaydah's remarks are revealing:

....And I don't really know whether it is the parent who encourages children to be nasty to their fathers. I think that is entirely up to the mothers left behind with the kids, but I tried, I really did try to paint an ugly picture in the beginningof their father, and say look these are his faults, look at it!

The women reported that their children often witnessed open conflict between themselves and their husbands. According to Lamanna & Riedmann (1991, p. 553), "living in an intact family characterised by unresolved tension and alienating conflict can cause as great or greater emotional stress and lower self esteem in children than living in a supportive single-parent home".

The children were reported to have been angry, sad and emotionally withdrawn. They were also reported to have resorted to acting out tendencies, drug and/or alcohol abuse, and having experienced academic, emotional and behavioural problems during adolescence. Similar findings were reported by Al-Krenawi et al., (1997). Furthermore, younger children from divorced homes do not understand what is happening and often blame themselves, as did the children from polygamous families (Kaplan & Sadock, 1998).

Ruwaydah: *Now there's another thing about anger, the kids are angry, and you find that with the younger one it's not so bad, but with the older one, he is now 17 years, and this happened to him 5 years ago and over those 5 years all those tempers that have built up in*

him, is beginning to show. There again it is not only your feelings you have got to consider, you've got to consider your children's, so you've got to be a psychologist for them. You have to be talking to them and telling them things like "it's not your fault" or "it's not my fault". "The person who has left it is their fault".

The children in these polygamous families were compelled to become emotionally mature in order to provide psychological support for their mothers:

Ruwaydah*And then again in this whole time with what I have been going through, the children themselves were backing me up....they were encouraging me....helped me to see so many wrongs. There were so many situations I could have handled terribly wrong, if it wasn't for the kids....*

In this study, sons were reported to display behavioural problems such as aggression, alcohol and drug abuse, and academic problems such as poor concentration and poor academic progress.

Daughters, on the other hand, were reported to be more emotionally unstable and withdrawn.

Fathers were accused of emotionally neglecting their children and the impact of their behaviour appeared to be of little significance to them.

4.4 REFLECTION ON THE INTERVIEWS

Despite my initial anxieties about the sensitivity of the topic, the women were willing to talk about

their experiences and conversed openly with me. Even Halima who was initially blunt and curt, willingly expressed her feelings. Oakley (1981), suggests that, to develop relationships with participants and to understand their world view, one should empathize with them. Being a Muslim woman allowed me to identify with the women and enabled me to build rapport with the interviewees, helping to forge a trusting relationship between myself and the interviewees.

My awkwardness with long silences during the interviews was evident, and resulted in my failing to approach the interviewing process in a constructive manner. I was aware that the quality of the data depended on the interaction between myself and the women. Instead, at times, I asked irrelevant questions and was unable to remain neutral. Perhaps, if I approached the interviewing process with more confidence, I might have been more skillful at judging when it was appropriate to intervene and what questions to ask. My inability to do so might be a reflection of my inexperience as a researcher and the anxiety I felt in dealing with a sensitive topic.

Two overwhelming feelings enveloped me throughout the interviewing process and the analysis of the data. Firstly, I became disillusioned about being a Muslim woman and about marriage. I fought hard to hold onto my identity and my belief in marriage, as I found myself internalizing the perception of the participants. This highlighted for me the notion that the researcher can never remain neutral and objective. I believe that a researcher influences and is influenced by the data.

Secondly, I tried, unsuccessfully, to understand how polygamy could have been beneficial either to the participants or the junior wives. While polygamy may have been the answer to a social need at a specific time in history, it has established a gendered power differential that is abused more often than not.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The current research has explored the narratives of four Muslim senior wives in a polygamous marital structure. Research on women, often contains biases, one of which is that it fails to view women as individuals within their social context, but rather as adjuncts to research conducted on males (Riger,1992). Other studies on polygamy have adopted a quantitative methodology, thereby limiting our understanding of women's experiences. A qualitative methodology was favoured, taking into account the women's history, their cultural context and social circumstances. Doing so, I have endeavoured to give women the opportunity to voice their perspectives on polygamy and the meanings they attach to their life experiences.

The institution of polygamy, as reported in this study appears to have placed women in a disadvantageous position, allowing men to dominate and control women, treat them as 'property' and discriminate against them on the basis of their gender. Through no fault of their own, the women in this study appear to have been exploited, oppressed and treated unfairly. Polygamy appears to have been practised in an unethical and immoral way and appears to be loaded with controversy because it is rooted in patriarchy. Monogamy on the other hand, does not guarantee equality.

The women believed that polygamy impacted negatively on their marriages. The emotional

pain suffered as a result of, firstly, their husband's initial infidelity and subsequent marriage led to feelings of jealousy, rejection, pain and anger. The women assigned blame to themselves, their in-laws, witchcraft and their husband's sexual desire. At times, feeling vulnerable, the women succumbed to their husband's sexual desires, which resulted in them feeling like sexual objects, who were only valued for their bodies. The women also seemed to experience loss at many levels, most notably, financial loss, loss of trust, self esteem, intimacy, status as sole wife, power and sexual exclusivity. Children from these marriages were reported to have got on well with each other, however they were resentful toward their fathers and experienced behaviour and academic problems. In keeping with research conducted internationally, the women experienced difficulty adjusting and making the transition from sole wife to senior wife. The above suggests that the inclusion of the junior wife into the marital dyad with all its consequences, led to decreased marital satisfaction and spousal affection for the senior wife. However, it appeared on closer examination that the women had displayed resilience and coped fairly well despite the problems experienced. Islam allows polygamy only if men are able to comply with strict conditions pertaining to justice and equality. The women appeared powerless to challenge this injunction, because the patriarchal structure of polygamy allows men to operate from a position of power and exploit both women and the religion for their own ends.

From the narratives of the women, it was apparent that despite their belief in Islam, and their level of religiosity and spirituality, the women were unable or unwilling to accept the junior wife and the institution of polygamy. Perhaps South African Muslims are socialised into the ideal of monogamy and are in a precarious position, since they are caught between religion and ideology on the one hand, and living in a modern, westernised society on the other. Polygamy is also not commonly accepted within the South African Muslim culture, and senior wives feel perplexed

because they are often stereotyped and discriminated against by society. The various injustices and inequalities that prevail also seems to influences the women's perception of this practice. Lastly, the recommendation made by the South African Law commission regarding the 'Recognition of Muslim Marriages and Related matters', could pose problems for the senior wife should the Bill on polygamous marriages be passed before Parliament. The junior wife would be given legal recognition and would therefore be entitled to inherit from her husband's estate.

The passing of the Bill on Muslim marriages and related matters in Parliament, could however, act as deterrent, and should be seen as a protective mechanism for women, since a husband will have to apply to court for permission to contract a second marriage and the court has to be sufficiently satisfied that equality and justice will be maintained, before permission is granted.

While it may be argued that this study is biased because it focussed on the experiences of women, and was conducted by a woman, it must be kept in mind that women are often an excluded sample in research. Notwithstanding this, it would be interesting to conduct research on the experiences of men in polygamous marriages to fully comprehend the difficulties and complexities involved. Further research needs to also focus on the impact that polygamy has on the psychological well-being of children. This research has been hindered by its failure to conduct interviews with religious leaders who often deal with many polygamous marriages and who would have a wealth of experience and knowledge to share. I believe that religious leaders can be an influential medium in discouraging gender discrimination, injustices and inequalities against women. I strongly advocate that research on polygamy, regardless of the sample, should favour a qualitative methodology, which emphasizes a consideration for social context, idiosyncratic meaning and reflexivity.

CHAPTER SIX

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APPENDIX A

LETTER SEEKING PERMISSION TO OBTAIN SAMPLE

Att: The secretary
The women's cultural group
Mariam Bee
Kenilworth Road

MADAM

RE: RECRUITMENT OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS FOR STUDY ON POLYGAMY

My name is Shariefa Hendricks and I am presently studying Clinical Psychology at the University of Durban-Westville. As part of the course I am expected to complete a research project (Thesis). As such the title of my research is Polygamy in Islam and I am particularly interested in senior (first) wife's experiences of this sensitive, though somewhat controversial practice.

Therefore, I humbly seek your assistance in helping me recruit five (5) Muslim women from your group who would be interested in participating in the research. Criteria for participation is as follows:

1. Participants must be married and should be between the ages of 40-65 years;

2. They should be Muslim and residing within the Kwa-Zulu Natal area;
3. They should be “senior” wives in a polygamous marriage

Should any of the women in your group be interested, they can be assured that their identities would remain anonymous and all information disclosed to me will remain strictly confidential. Furthermore, it would be appreciated if you could inform them that I would need to interview each one of them for approximately 60-90 minutes. They would also be remunerated at R50.00 per hour for their participation in the project. Participation should be voluntary. Each participant will be briefed further at the interview. In addition, if required, a copy of the completed research report could be made available for their perusal.

It would be appreciated if you would table my correspondence at your next meeting. Should you have any queries or questions, you are welcome to contact me on telephone number _____ or on my cellphone at _____. Interested participants may also contact me at the above numbers.

Thank you/Jazaakallah

Shariefa Hendricks

APPENDIX B:
INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Tell me about your marriage:
 - 1.1 How did you and your husband meet?
 - 1.2 How many children do you have?
 - 1.3 What attracted you to your husband?
2. How and when did you find out about the second wife?
3. What were your main concerns and feelings when your husband married his second wife?
4. What do you think are the benefits of being in a polygamous relationship?
5. What are the shortcomings of polygamous relationships as you have experienced it?
6. What are your perceptions of the other wife?
7. Tell me about your relationship with the other wife?
8. In terms of the Shariah, do you feel that your husband treats his wives equally?
9. Is your relationship with your husband different now than when you were an only wife? If yes, how?
10. How did you cope with being in a polygamous relationship?
11. Why do you think men of today enter into polygamous marriages?
12. In your opinion, what were the reasons your husband married another woman?
13. What are the main conflicts, if any, surrounding your relationship with your husband?
14. Islam awards certain rights to women. Do you feel that any of your rights have been violated since your husband became involved in a polygamous relationship, and if so, how?
15. What effects does his relationship with his new wife have on your family?

16. Has your husband's relationship with his other wife had any impact on your children? If yes, explain.

APPENDIX C:
CONSENT FORM

I _____ hereby voluntarily give my consent to serve as participant in the research project entitled **“Polygamy in South Africa: An exploratory study of Muslim women’s experiences”**, being conducted by Miss Shariefa Hendricks.

I have accordingly been informed by Miss Hendricks about the general purpose of the project, its aims, and objectives. I fully understand that it may not be possible for the researcher to explain all aspects of the study until after I have completed my participation in the study. The researcher and the University of Durban-Westville cannot be held responsible for any loss or damage as a result of any action arising from the research project. I have been informed that a summary of the study will be made available for my perusal. I have also been assured that all information disclosed by me will remain confidential and my anonymity is guaranteed. I also understand that I may terminate my participation in the study at any time.

Signature: Researcher : _____

Participant : _____

APPENDIX D:

EXCERPTS FROM THE TRANSCRIBED INTERVIEWS

The following excerpts from the transcribed interviews relate to the extracts quoted in the results and discussion section. The excerpts are listed under themes in order to facilitate a contextual understanding of the quotations.

THEME 1 : POWER

> Divorce:

Interviewer: So you're likening his second marriage almost like a death?

Anesa: At that time....at that time, yes. You know somebody told me this as well, that if I can find courage, this....that....whatever, take a divorce from him, because there is no other way out, but a divorce right? You become a divorcee....a divorced woman now, and society....I'm talking of everybody hey, they look down upon you like it was your fault, I don't know why, why women are so inferior, in that way. You know they look down upon you, you're a nothing, you're a nobody. Also you get a lot of men that will perchance you then, 'Oh she's free' and actually that's what my husband said initially. Because I asked him, I said, "how can you do a thing like that with that woman, knowing you are a married man?". He said, "you know what, she was free meat, anybody could have her", you know. I look at it that way, I would be that. I would be somebody like that, where I'd be free meat for anybody to pick and drop and see whatever, you know. I think I love my dignity too much for that".

> Helplessness:

Interviewer: How many children do you have?

Aneesha: I've got 4. That's the age they need you. And they use to see us having all these commotions and I use to tell him "don't you realize how hurt I am, what you're doing to me"? He use to always put the buck on me, "no you asked for it". So I said okay, fair enough, I accept it, I asked for it, I was the bad one, I was this or I was that then why you still living with me? If something is wrong somewhere, you get rid of it, you destroy it, you wash your hands off it and you start afresh. Do not add to your problems. I even told him that. I said, you can let me go, I am.... I'll be happy if you say, "you know what, go away" I'll make a new life. I say you took advantage of me, because we are not those women where we'll stand up for anything. You know maybe because, oh I've got children, "where do you think she'll go?she can't go anywhere, she'll stay put, she got nowhere to go". That's what they do, they take advantage of the situation.

Interviewer: **Do you think this is particular to Muslim women or women in general?**

Aneesha:in general. And then you hear about the Indians too, the Hindus and the Tamils or whatever. But with Islam why we er.... "disthing" it....because it is allowed. Nobody else allows it....nobody else allows it. If it was a white woman and her husband was just having an affair, she calls it a day or she has a bitter affair you know to compromise or even things up a bit.

Interviewer: **Why do you think Muslim women are different?**

Aneesha: Maybe upbringing, maybe it's our upbringing, we're not liberal. You can be no matter how educated, you can be a doctor. I know a doctor, she was married to an ordinary businessman, and he took another wife and she's...she's around. I don't know how her life is or what or how she accepted or whatever her case is, but she's around..... she's around. With her profession she could have said "you know what...." Like I said it's our upbringing. Islam allows it, you can't get away from that....Islam allows it. That's why we have to....where did they say

this....somewhere I heard one of the lectures... we must teach our children that there is a thing like that, that is acceptable, because it wasn't done in my family or family's before that, nothing on my side, so it was difficult for me to accept. But if I had come from a home like that, it was very easy for me to accept.

➤ **Sexuality**

Interviewer: Do you think your children were treated equally, were they ever treated equally?

Amina: No, never ever, those children benefited everything. They had everything, the love, the affection, the entertainment, everything, financially, where he put his one daughter through Natal University and my third child, from the day she was born, she had no love, no affection from him. He used to come here more like he was coming to visit me. I mean for all the years that he's been with that women, and the third one too, but, he like still demanded....he wanted to be intimate with me, telling me that I am his only wife and things and unfortunately for my feelings for him I use to give in and I didn't know what was going on about the fourth woman until I found out now in January.

➤ **Abuse**

Segment 1:

Interviewer: When you say you had no choice, do you mean as a Muslim woman?

Amina: No, as a wife. He was always said that I found him a "joller" and I must accept that.... and there was a time when I realized there's no point in arguing, there's the children. You know I can't bring up an argument, where he's gonna get angry....and alright. He did hit me a few times....because of that. He use to drink and went out with girls that drank and er....to avoid that and for my children not to know, I just use to keep quiet. As long as he got what he wanted, you know he was selfish and also when like....you know because he was drinking, I was

terrified to even pick an argument, because I was frightened he might hit me, because he is in the wrong and to avoid that I just use to keep quiet and I use to tell my children, 'just don't say anything, ignore it'.

Segment 2:

Interviewer: You said, he used er....a lot of words on you, that were not very nice....

Aneesa: All hurtful things

Interviewer: Give me some examples?

Aneesa: Well like...."take my children, I'll make more", you know....things like that, I can't even remember, but very hurtful things.

Interviewer: Did he ever use abusive language on you?

Aneesa: Oh yes! He was very violent too.

Interviewer: During that time or after?

Aneesa: During that time was more.

Interviewer: Physically violent?

Aneesa: Physically, yes.

Interviewer: That must have been quite terrible for you, having to deal with a second wife plus that?

Aneesa: Definitely

Interviewer: I was wondering what were your reasons....

Aneesa: [Interrupting] Is there a better life for the divorced like I just told you?

THEME 2 : BLAME

➤ Self blame:

Interviewer: How did you feel when he was newly married to her and you had to go to your in-laws, how did it make you feel?

Aneesa: Hey! To face anybody, forget the in-laws, face anybody you feel like they picking on you....what opinion they had of you, you know things like that.

Interviewer: What opinion do you think they had of you?

Aneesa: That I was....what I did, for him to do a thing like that.

Interviewer: So you were to blame in other words?

Aneesa: Exactly! You blame yourself

➤ Husbands sexual desire

Interviewer: So in your opinion what was your husband's reasons for taking a second wife?

Ruwaydah: Must I honestly tell you what was this mans' reason for taking another woman and maybe that very same woman? It was more LUST, because admittedly, I'm going to say something to you just now and maybe that ties up. Because to my knowledge, it was lust. I asked him, tell me what you would have wanted in another woman that you couldn't get from me. And he said "sexually she is the best". He said she does things that "you wouldn't even dream of doing". He said that even a 'blue movie' stands no show in front of this lady. So what does that tell you?

Interviewer: Did his father have a problem with him having two wives?

Aneesa: He wasn't happy, yet his father had done it. You know you learn, I say you learn from other people's mistakes, but sometimes...I don't know, maybe it was put out, maybe it was your *takdeer* (fate), maybe it was meant for you this way, because you question, "why me?", "Where have I gone wrong?". You come so pure into a marriage, you never had boyfriends, you were so green (laughing). At one stage I even told him, if you are not satisfied with me sexually, you're to blame, because

you were my teacher. I never had anybody else.

➤ **Junior wife:**

Segment 1:

Interviewer: What was your perception of this woman?

Halima: I never liked her because she took my husband away from me. She even made a statement to my husband once that if I had to leave him, she would look after my children

Interviewer: In terms of the Quran and what the Quran stipulates, in Surah Nisa about taking on two, three, four wives, and the criteria set out for polygamy, do you think your husband was abiding by the criteria?

Halima: Well, he never.... [abided by the Quranic criteria] because in the first place he never got married to her for Islamic reasons at all and he wasn't short of anything from me and I never did deny him sexthere was never anything he could say he wasn't satisfied about.

Interviewer: What do you think was the reasons?

Halima: Well according to him it was for the business, so I really won't know what his reasons were, because she never had beauty

Interviewer: Those were his reasons, when you sat alone and thought about it, what were some of the things that came up, in your mind?

Halima: Well, in my mind its just that she er....like she got to him, like she maybe like... maybe her ways, the way she spoke to him, made him feel pity for her and....so he fell for her

Interviewer: And how did you cope at that time being that kind of relationship, with another woman in the marriage?

Halima: It was very difficult to cope (silence)

Segment 2:

Interviewer: What were your perceptions of his other wives?

Amina: Well with the second wife, I wouldn't, I wouldn't....you know I did tell my husband....look

Interviewer: Was she aware that you were married, she knew you had two children?

Amina: Yes, she knew I was married, but in her mind she wanted my husband and she would go and do anything to take him away, even if she had....this is what she did ...even if she had to use witchcraft, she would take him away from me, because he belongs to her.

Interviewer: In terms of the Shariah, do you think that your husband was being equal to you and the other wives, was he treating you equally the way he was treating the other wives, in terms of money, his love for you and for them?

Amina: No, ever since he met this second woman, like I did mention about what she said, she used witchcraft on him, he became horrible to me, he couldn't look at me, he just wanted to bark at me and fight with me and say ugly things to me and I couldn't understand. I mean our love was strong and how could this man look at me like he wants to put a knife through me? And then as time went by, I found out things about what she was doing, you know to turn him against me and things like that and everything she did she used to say I did. He used to believe her and not me and I was the innocent one here, living my life innocent, clean, pure with my children at home and er....then he went to Cape Town and married the third woman.

➤ In-laws

Interviewer: Were your in-laws supportive?

Amina: No they encouraged, they encouraged, they interfered....there were times they told me off....every woman my husband went out with was welcome in their home....

Interviewer: What kinds of things would your children say?

Amina: That they [her children] can't understand how I stuck it for so many years. For all that he did to me, how can I still be nice to him. He never stayed away from me, even though he lived with this woman and had three children. To him, I'm still his wife, he still loves me and er....there won't be any other man that will own me....I belong to him.

THEME 3: BETRAYAL

> Anger

Interviewer: **How do you cope with being in a polygamous relationship?**

Ruwaydah: Not too well actually, it's been very, very tough being a first wife. I could say that I am beginning to....how would I put it....I am now starting to live and understand just exactly what is happening to me. In the beginning, like I said there was so much anger....so much of pain that caused this anger. Now there's another thing about anger, the kids are angry, and you find that with the younger one it's not so bad, but with the older one, he is now 17 years, and this happened to him 5 years ago and over those 5 years all those tempers that have built up in him, is beginning to show. There again it is not only your feelings you have got to consider, you've got to consider your children's, so you've got to be a psychologist for them. You've have to be talking to them and telling them things like "it's not your fault" or "it's not my fault". "The person who has left it is their fault". "You have realised that, but you love him so much that you don't know what to do. You would like to say this and that to him.... you would like to do this or that to him, but you can't, because Allah will say you are not allowed to disrespect your parents". And then again in this whole time with what I have been going through the children themselves were backing me up they were encouraging me, they helped me to see so many wrongs. There were so many situations I would have handled terribly wrongly, if it wasn't for these kids. They said to me no mum you cannot get angry, we can understand how you feel, but if you are going to show daddy your anger, then he knows you are still wanting him back badly. But if you act as if nothing has happened you will find daddy will be

drawn closer to you. The things he'd say to me if I said that I saw him somewhere....is abuse and that is the part that I couldn't handle. I use to be so depressed, but I couldn't show it to the whole world or to the children, but in the mean time I had to put up a brave front and in the mean time only I knew what I was going through. The only place I could give vent to my feelings was in my bedroom, in my bed, while the kids were asleep.

➤ **Rejection**

Interviewer: **What were your main feelings and concerns when he married his second and third wife?**

Amina: I just felt disgusted, I just felt hurt, rejected. I just felt why is he rejecting me. You know it was obvious to me, to him, to everybody that we were meant for each other and up to today everyone will say, oh like you know....they don't understand why we broke up. To me I also feel that way.

Interviewer: **Do you still cry these days?**

Amina: Yes the hurt is still there. When he went the second time back to Cape Town, my daughter and son took him to the airport and they only told me they took him, that evening. My son came here to spend the evening with his wife and children and him and I had a very big argument. I don't know....I can't tell anybody where I cried...I cried like I'm telling them, I can't explain anything to them (her children)....you know....what their father and I use to talk about and things like that....I just felt rejected....how can he leave a woman who brought him right down to the pits and go to another woman, when he could have come back to me?

➤ **Pain:**

Interviewer: **How does it feel to have "lost" your husband?**

Ruwaydah: I think it is the most painful....the most painful thing one could ever go through. I

don't think there is a greater pain than that. You know when you lose your husband through death, he is gone to Allah, and that is something you can't control, it's way beyond your control. But when you watch your husband walk away, you know he is going to another woman, can you imagine the pain? How are you expected to be nice to that someone knowing that? I mean I don't think a knife inside your heart twisted around could cause more pain, than to see your husband walk away, knowing that he is with someone else.

Interviewer: What were the arrangements like, after he made the Nikaah, like you said, Islam allows Polygamy?

Aneesa: Like I say, he didn't say anything, one night it was my birthday, which I'll never forget. He leaves this beautiful card, like I say too good to be true, with a gift and he doesn't pitch up the whole night. In other words I'm nothing, I'm a nobody, you don't consult me, you don't tell me. Look I've been through very bad patches, you know where he said terribly hurtful things which to date, no matter how I've accepted it, I cannot forget.

Interviewer: You've been living 22 years, well 14 years of those 22 years as a first wife, and I told you over the phone, about how difficult it's been for me to get women to interview, being the first wife, I thought maybe you could tell me, why you think its so difficult for women to talk about this?

Aneesa: Firstly, you must know, they're already been belittled, by their own husbands, their self esteem is gone, they feel they're worth nothing, but not me, I feel after like I say you know, you think, Allah says the wife that makes the *sabr* (has patience), the first wife, can make the *sabr* of her husband taking on another wife, is guaranteed *Jannah* (paradise). Till today I tell my husband, 'me I'm going to *Jannah* with my shoes'. Because the sacrifices I've made and what I've put up with, because you must know, when you're having a physical relationship with him, the thought is there of the other woman. You're not relaxed, and then you don't want to give totally, you think "blow you man". You want it that way, now go. The other day he told me, you know what, you take my children, no problem, I'll make more. Imagine your own husband telling you this. I was so....you know

when I say the heart bleeds. I used to....I felt a hot gush....inside.

THEME 4: LOSS

Segment 1:

Interviewer: Earlier on you accused the junior wife of using witchcraft...?

Amina: Which she did, I wouldn't want to get involved with her, she's not a nice person. She got no *Imaan*, (faith) she has no respect, she does not even have respect for herself or her children with the way she carries on. The third wife....she didn't want to....I tried to help her and she wouldn't, so I didn't really, but I always told my husband, I said look the way it is now, you took the second wife, I begged him. I said why don't we just get together as a family, when I mean as a family, I don't mean me coming to visit that woman's home and being friends with her, but you know you be fair with us too. You live with her, you don't even have to live with me, but be equal. I said it's your choice if you want to come and spend a week with me and if you want to spend a week with that woman, but be equal, half and half. And this was even before I divorced my husband [legally]. I even told him that. I said, you know how we feel for each other, why don't you just be a man and be fair. All I wanted out of him was being fair. Not just coming here and being intimate with me and....okay here....You know, as the years went by I felt like a prostitute. I felt he is paying me to use my body and that use to upset me, because I cared for him, only after he had walked out, then I would feel....I use to tell him exactly....you know I feel so terrible, I said I'm lonely, I need you, I need my husband, I don't only need you for sex. I need you to be here with me. It's like nothing is going....life can't go on without you and like....when you come here and visit and you walk out that front door, that's when I feel so terrible, because that's when I want you to be here with me. He wasn't a man who really showed his feelings or since he met the second woman he had changed. Before he met her, we were very loving, he use to carry me and wouldn't go to bed without me and every time he looked at me, he told me how much he loved me, you know and when he met her, I couldn't understand how the feeling just went away.

Segment 2:

Interviewer: In terms of the Shariah, do you think your husband treated you both equally?

Halima: No he did not treat us equal, but he treated me better than her.

Interviewer: In what ways did he treat you better?

Halima: He spent more time with us than he spent with her.

Interviewer: Financially?

Halima: I should get more than her.

Interviewer: Having known your husband had started that second relationship, what has that done to the trust between the two of you?

Halima: I always have the fear that maybe he will....go to another women.

Segment 3:

Interviewer: What I hear you saying, initially, it was very bad for you and it was that general sense of jealousy, envy, feeling cheated, betrayed?

Aneesa It's hard. Your whole self-esteem goes, nothing, you feel. You know I use to dress up, I was very, very modern. I use to dress up ultra. My father use to turn around and say, "you know I never brought you up to this, what are you doing?" "You think all this is going to win him over?" They don't see, they say love is blind, there's it I'm telling you, if love is blind....its got like purdah on I'm telling you (laughs). You can be with yellow on, he don't see you.

Interviewer: Your rights were also violated when you were on your own....how did you put it....er....openly, what did you say, you said earlier on you felt available to other men, since he had taken a second wife?

Aneesa: Yes, yes I know his own family came one day, I took him like a brother....he came if you need anything, if the children need anything, must let me know and on the other hand he was trying to "chaff" me huh?

Interviewer: Is she Muslim?

Aneesa: Yes. Alhamdoelillah, if that's how you think (laughs). But I look at it this way, if that was the case what you did to me was what? He stripped me naked, left me now to dry like a biltong. Really, because that's how you feel, that he stripped you of your dignity, your rights, your everything, your...you know you take that cockroach....that poor cockroach is dead, but you take and you squash it, that's what they do, you know. They take that little....you know at least bury that cockroach alive....you know whole, not smashed, like rubbing salt in the wounds, you know?

THEME 5: IMPACT ON CHILDREN

Segment 1:

Interviewer: But it does affect the way you're living, it affects the children....

Aneesa: Of course it must affect, it has to. My two bigger boys can understand what I went through and all that. The two small ones, they think it is normal, for them this type of life is quite normal.

Interviewer: Of having their father there the one day and not having him there the other?

Aneesa: Yes, now I send them 'go that's your father, let her do to'.

Interviewer: But what effect did it have on your children, I'm sure especially on the two elder boys?

Aneesa: It must have had an effect on them, they won't talk about it

Interviewer: They never said anything to you?

Aneesa: Pause. They say "mummy it is allowed", they were too small.

Interviewer: At that time, did you notice a change in behaviour, attitude toward you, toward their father?

Aneesa: They never liked their father. They use to be distant from him, you know. And....er.... more clinging to me, I suppose for security, thinking now my father's

not here, where do we go to.

Interviewer: Did you experience any problems with them at school?

Aneesa: A little....actually, my elder one hey....to date his concentration....he wanders....things like that. But like I make him strong, I say, that's our life, we must live for ourselves and you must have a career, and you know things like that I suppose. And he has a daughter, who comes here too, I got no problem with that.

Interviewer: At that time what would you say you were going through?

Aneesa: At that time ooh....

Interviewer: Tell me about it?

Aneesa: I wasn't myself. You know, you become like a zombie, you're not yourself, you do things irrationally, you don't have pride in yourself anymore, because he has taken all your self-esteem away. You don't have pride in your home, if anything was falling down, you couldn't be bothered, the children were neglected, their schooling was going all haywire.

Segment 2:

Interviewer: Up until that point, did your children know anything that was going on?

Ruwaydah: Everything. My son then told me the whole story. So finally....at that time I worked in Verulem, and believe me you, the strain that I was under, is something I can't really put into words, he was not supporting the kids he left me in a home that we were renting and the rent at that time was R1500. He took his car away, so we had no transport, he didn't bother whether we had food or we didn't have food. I had to pay for the psychologist, because my kids were in very, very bad shape. I mean their dad was so close to them, he was....I don't even know how to explain this, close as in mother and child, that is how close they were, it was of mother and child. You know they wouldn't breath without this man, they won't sleep without him, so of course they were highly affected and I was under a lot of strain I didn't know who to talk to, how to handle them. But the best I could do for my children was to allow him to see them everyday, at first I use to allow him

into the house, but he continued as if nothing had happened he was still the boss in my home. He didn't pay any attention to how I had to struggle, my lights use to get cut off, I use to walk to work because I had no money for transport, and walking from here to town is not a joke and it didn't matter, it didn't bother him. So, of course financially I was now crippled, you know I could barely breath.

Interviewer: You said earlier that your children were seeing a psychologist, what were they seeing a psychologist for?

Ruwaydah: They were not coping with the fact that their dad had left, I was so hurt I was being horrible to the children.

Interviewer: So it was affecting you and as a result you were taking it out on the kids. What impact was this having on them? Are you talking about it i.t.o their behaviour or their academic progress?

Ruwaydah: Their academic progress.

Interviewer: Tell me about that?

Ruwaydah: Okay, now with the kids, my one child is somebody who is a jolly little guy. He became withdrawn, very, very angry, he had so much of anger inside of him, because I was trying to tell them what their father was up to. They were seeing him differently. They were a lot younger than they are now; and he wouldn't sleep, he would stay up at night and not say a word, not a word....he would draw....he would take his pen and paper and draw his dad and this woman and he would call her a witch, she took his dad away from him. And of course I had to sit and watch all of this. There were days *Moosa was so much younger than *Ismail. He'd say lets go there mummy, lets go bring daddy, lets go with the police and tell the police to bring daddy back home. I said no that's not the way you do it. Daddy has to come because he loves you or he loves me. If we are going to get the police to bring him, then we are forcing him to come back to us, when he doesn't want to.

Interviewer: So you had your moments alone where you cried, at that point in time had the thought of suicide crossed your mind as you mentioned earlier?

Ruwaydah: Many times, many, many times but you look down at your kids and say what

would happen to them if I did away with myself, but there were plenty of times believe me. You know all you want to do is walk away from the situation, go to some place where nobody knows you and start all over again and then you ask yourself is that going to help, because what you feel is going with you. You think let me go to another town and start afresh, maybe things will be different, but you find the kids don't even want to think about leaving so you're handicapped in so many ways as well, it wasn't only you, it wasn't only your decision, it was a decision you took with the kids and then you find there was a conflict of opinion. You know, one would say, "I would like to stay where daddy is" and the other would say, "mum lets go where you'd like to go". Like the other night, I said "why don't we leave town?" and they said "why don't we ask daddy to come with us". They don't let go, the kids don't let go really. And I don't know whether it's the parent that encourages children to be nasty to their fathers'. I think that is entirely up to the mother that's left behind with the kids, but I tried, I really did try to paint an ugly picture in the beginning, of their father to them and say look these are his faults, look at it!