



**APSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATION OF
BATTERED WOMEN IN SELECTED NOVELS: A
STUDY OF ANNA QUINDLEN'S BLACK AND
BLUE, AMY TAN'S KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE, AND
B.A PARIS'S BEHIND CLOSED DOORS**

**2023
PhD THESIS
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**

Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI

**Thesis Advisor
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI**

**APSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATION OF BATTERED WOMEN IN
SELECTED NOVELS: A STUDY OF ANNA QUINDLEN'S BLACK AND
BLUE, AMY TAN'S KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE, AND B.A PARIS'S BEHIND
CLOSED DOORS**

Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI

Thesis Advisor

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI

T.C.

Karabuk University

Institute of Graduate Programs

Department of English Language and Literature

Prepared as

PhD Thesis

KARABUK

August 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS	1
THESIS APPROVAL PAGE	3
DECLARATION	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	5
ABSTRACT	6
ÖZ	7
ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION	8
ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ	9
ABBREVIATIONS	10
SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH	11
PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH	11
METHOD OF THE RESEARCH	11
HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM	11
POPULATION AND SAMPLE	12
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES	12
1. INTRODUCTION	13
1.1. Battered Women Syndrome	21
1.2. The Cycle of Violence	31
1.3. Learned Helplessness	33
1.4. Battered Women Syndrome and Literature	35
1.5. Bildungsroman Novels	38
1.6. The Psychological Approach	40
2. BLACK AND BLUE	44
2.1. Biographical Sketch of Anna Quindlen	44
2.2. Black and Blue	44

2.2.1. Trapped In The Cycle Of Violence: Major Contributing Factors	46
2.2.2. The Power Play: Analysing Abusive Behavior Through a Psychological Lens	59
2.2.3. Beyond the Abuse: Understanding the Psychological Impact of Learned Helplessness	68
3. THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE	76
3.1. Amy Tan	76
3.2. The Kitchen God's Wife	78
3.2.1. Examining Learned Helplessness in Oppressive Cultural Contexts...	82
3.2.2. The Perpetrator's Mindset: A Psychological Analysis of Abusive Behavior	89
4. BEHIND CLOSED DOORS	108
4.1. B.A Paris	108
4.2. Behind Closed Doors	110
4.2.1. The Psychology of Control: Analyzing Abusive Behavior	111
4.2.2. Recognizing the Signs: Identifying the Steps to Learned Helplessness	116
CONCLUSION	136
REFERENCES	141
CURRICULUM VITAE	149

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion the thesis submitted by Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI titled “A PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLORATION OF BATTERED WOMEN IN SELECTED NOVELS: A STUDY OF ANNA QUINDLEN'S *BLACK & BLUE*, AMY TAN'S *KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE*, AND B.A PARIS'S *BEHIND CLOSED DOORS*” is fully adequate in scope and in quality as a thesis for the degree of PhD.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI

Thesis Advisor, Department of English Language and Literature

This thesis is accepted by the examining committee with a unanimous vote in the Department of English Language and Literature as a PhD thesis. 14.08.2023

Examining Committee Members (Institutions)

Signature

Chairman : Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI (KBÜ)

Member : Prof. Dr. Abdul Serdar ÖZTÜRK (KBÜ)

Member : Prof. Dr. Sinan YILMAZ (KBÜ)

Member : Assist. Prof. Dr. Latifa Ismaeel JABBOURY (MU)

Member : Assist. Prof. Dr. Marwan Kadhim MOHAMMED (UOA)

The degree of PhD by the thesis submitted is approved by the Administrative Board of the Institute of Graduate Programs, Karabuk University.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeynep ÖZCAN

Director of the Institute of Graduate Programs

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

Without being bound by a particular time, I accept all moral and legal consequences of any detection contrary to the aforementioned statement.

Name Surname : Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI

Signature :

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Most of all, I thank Allah, the Ever Providing, the All-Knowing, for his blessing in life and in preparing this dissertation.

I like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Associate Prof. Dr Harith Ismael TURKI, for his unwavering support, guidance, and invaluable feedback throughout the entire process of conducting research and preparing this dissertation. Words alone cannot adequately convey my appreciation for the contributions planted through his lectures. Furthermore, I sincerely appreciate all the professors at Karabuk University for their tireless efforts in imparting knowledge and skills to me, which have been instrumental in shaping my academic and research aptitude.

I want to extend my sincere appreciation to Assist. Prof. Jabbar Al ZUBAIDY for his exceptional contribution to my academic development. His guidance and mentorship have been akin to a brief yet brilliant shooting star in my educational journey, leaving an enduring impact. The knowledge and skills gained under his tutelage have been invaluable, and I am deeply grateful for his support.

Special appreciation goes to my beloved husband, Yasser, for his encouragement and motivation throughout the process of completing this research. His belief in my abilities has been instrumental in keeping me focused on my goals, especially during moments of despair. I owe a debt of gratitude to him for urging me to push my limits and providing me with the necessary support to accomplish my academic pursuits. Without his love and support, I would not have been able to achieve my dream of completing this dissertation.

To whom was absent in my marriage, graduation, and missed the chance to see my loving husband, Yasser, and my beloved sons, Omer and Ali

I dedicate this dissertation to you, my mother RIP.

ABSTRACT

It has always been puzzling for scholars that some women choose to stay in an abusive relationship, where they get battered all their lives. Women novelists diagnose this phenomenon in their novels. Despite the unceasing predicament, they choose to stay in this imprisonment to save the family. This dissertation attempts to approach Anna Quindlen's *Black & Blue* (1998), Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991), and B.A. Paris's *Behind Closed Doors* (2016) from a critical, psychoanalytic angle to answer the readers' big question about why they do not resist it and escape from such relationships. The study explores intimate partner violence through theories from Psychology like "learned helplessness" and "battered women syndrome" within the cycle of violence. It analyses victims' experiences, abusers' motivations, and the social and cultural context. Chapter Two explores Anna Quindlen's *Black and Blue*, a novel about a woman's struggle with power and her husband's narcissism. The third chapter of Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife* focuses on an Asian woman suffering from a sadistic husband. The fourth chapter of *Behind Closed Doors* explores a psychological thriller. It provides an interesting case study of the effects of psychological abuse and the dynamics of power and control in intimate relationships. The conclusion sums up the findings of the study.

Keywords: Battered Women Syndrome, Learned Helplessness, the Cycle of Violence

ÖZ

Bazı kadınların hayatları boyunca hırpalandıkları küfürlü bir ilişkide kalmayı seçmeleri akademisyenler için her zaman şaşırtıcı olmuştur. Kadın romancılar romanlarında bu olguyu teşhis ederler. Bitmek bilmeyen çıkmaza rağmen, aileyi kurtarmak için bu hapisyanede kalmayı seçerler. Bu tez, Anna Quindlen'in *Black & Blue* (1998), Amy Tan'ın *The Kitchen God's Wife* (1991) ve B.A. Paris'in *Behind Closed Doors* (2016) adlı kitaplarına eleştirmenler, psikanalitik bir açıdan yaklaşmaya çalışarak, okuyucuların neden buna direnmedikleri ve bu tür ilişkilerden kaçtıkları konusundaki büyük sorularına cevap vermeye çalışmaktadır. Çalışma, şiddet döngüsü içinde "öğrenilmiş çaresizlik" ve "hırpalanmış kadın sendromu" gibi Psikoloji teorileri aracılığıyla yakın partner şiddetini araştırıyor. Mağdurların deneyimlerini, istismarcıların motivasyonlarını ve sosyal ve kültürel bağlamı analiz eder. İkinci Bölüm, Anna Quindlen'in *Siyah ve Mavi'sini*, bir kadının iktidarla mücadelesi ve kocasının narsisizmi hakkında bir roman olarak araştırıyor. Amy Tan'ın *Mutfak Tanrısı'nın Karısı'nın* üçüncü bölümü, sadist bir kocadan muzdarip Asyalı bir kadına odaklanıyor. *Kapalı Kapılar Ardında'nın* dördüncü bölümü psikolojik bir gerilim filmini araştırıyor. Psikolojik istismarın etkileri ve yakın ilişkilerde güç ve kontrol dinamikleri hakkında ilginç bir vaka çalışması sunmaktadır. Sonuç, çalışmanın bulgularını özetlemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hırpalanmış Kadın Sendromu, Öğrenilmiş Çaresizlik, Şiddet Döngüsü

ARCHIVE RECORD INFORMATION

Title of the Thesis	A Psychoanalytic Exploration of Battered Women in Selected Novels: A Study of Anna Quindlen's <i>Black & Blue</i> , Amy Tan's <i>Kitchen God's Wife</i> , and B.A Paris's <i>Behind Closed Doors</i>
Author of the Thesis	Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI
Thesis Advisor	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI
Status of the Thesis	PhD
Date of the Thesis	14/08/2023
Field of the Thesis	English Literature/ Novel
Place of the Thesis	UNIKA/IGP
Total Page Number	151
Keywords	Battered women syndrome, learned helplessness, the cycle of violence

ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ

Tezin Adı	Seçilmiş Romanlarda Hırpalanmış Kadınların Psikanalitik Bir Araştırması: Anna Quindlen'in Siyah ve Mavisi, Amy Tan'ın Mutfak Tanrısı'nın Karısı ve B.A Paris'in Kapalı Kapılar Ardında Bir İncelemesi
Tezin Yazarı	Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI
Tezin Danışmanı	Doç. Dr. Harith Ismael TURKI
Tezin Derecesi	Doktora
Tezin Tarihi	14/08/2023
Tezin Alanı	İngiliz Edebiyatı/ Roman
Tezin Yeri	KBÜ/LEE
Tezin Sayfa Sayısı	151
Anahtar Kelimeler	Hırpalanmış kadın sendromu, öğrenilmiş çaresizlik, şiddet döngüsü

ABBREVIATIONS

- VAW** : Violence against women
- WHO** : World Health Organization
- IPV** : Intimate partner violence
- BW** : Battered Women
- BWS** : Battered Women Syndrome
- PTSD** : Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- DSM** : Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders
- KGW** : The Kitchen God's Wife
- BCD** : Behind Closed Doors

SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

The research aims to explore the phenomenon of battered women who choose to remain in abusive relationships from a psychoanalytic perspective. The study analyses three novels, *Behind Closed Doors* by B. A. Paris, *Black & Blue* by Anna Quindlen, and *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan, to delve into the psychological and social factors contributing to the victim's helplessness.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The research provides valuable insights into the psychological and social complexities surrounding domestic abuse through a literary analysis of novels featuring battered women protagonists. Analysing novels that feature protagonists with learned helplessness can provide valuable insights into the psychological, social, and cultural factors that contribute to domestic abuse and realising the reasons behind the aggressive behaviour of the abusers.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The research employs theories from Psychology, such as learned helplessness and the cycle of violence, which are widely used to understand the dynamics of abusive relationships. The study also takes a feminist perspective to examine the broader social issues surrounding domestic abuse, such as gender inequality and power dynamics in relationships.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM

The main research problem or hypothesis this study aims to investigate is: Why do some women stay in abusive relationships and choose not to leave their abusers? By investigating this research problem through analysis of the selected novels, the study seeks to gain new insights into why some women remain in toxic relationships and what can be done to help them escape the cycle of violence.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

The World Health Organization reports that one in three women worldwide experienced physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner between 2000 and 2018. The prevalence varies across regions, with high rates in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased intimate partner violence risk, with men more likely to participate worldwide; intimate partners are responsible for 38% of all female killings.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

The study focuses on three specific novels that feature battered women protagonists from different cultural backgrounds. However, the literature on domestic abuse is much broader. The psychological theories and concepts applied are well-established but may not fully capture the complex realities of intimate partner violence. Broader social and cultural factors contributing to learned helplessness are not thoroughly examined due to the narrow focus on select novels.

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women is a pervasive and complex issue that affects individuals, families, and communities globally. It is a violation of human rights and a significant public health concern. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence, primarily by an intimate partner. This violence can have severe physical, psychological, and social consequences for women and their families. Many factors perpetuate violence against women, including cultural norms and beliefs that condone or justify violence, lack of legal and social protections, and gender inequality. Addressing VAW requires a multifaceted approach that addresses these underlying factors and provides support and resources for survivors. In many countries, domestic violence against women is a serious social issue that is yet primarily unacknowledged. Most people find it difficult to imagine a life free of harassment, verbal abuse, and physical attack because violence permeates our societies and everyday lives. Violence against women is deeply ingrained in some cultures, and many women who are subjected to it believe they are to blame. Many people who commit violent acts believe their actions are justifiable because society sends strong messages that rape, assault, sexual harassment, and child abuse are all acceptable.

Every day, we are shocked by images of men abusing women in the media, television, movies, advertisements, and our personal lives and workplaces. Life is unavoidable for women of all ages, colours, and socioeconomic backgrounds. There may be long-term ramifications for this abuse against women. Violence in intimate relationships, such as beatings and other forms of physical and emotional abuse, can lead to many problems, including physical harm, sickness, psychological symptoms, and even death. They affect not just the women, who are directly affected, but their children, family and friends, and even the broader community. NRC (National Academy of Sciences)

Violence in intimate relationships, such as beatings and other forms of physical and emotional abuse, can lead to many problems, including physical harm, sickness, psychological symptoms, and even death. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 38% of female homicides worldwide are committed by intimate partners (2013,

p.2). They affect not just the women, who are directly affected, but their children, family and friends, and even the broader community.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) can devastate women's physical and mental health. It often leads to injuries like bruises, broken bones, chronic pain and other physical ailments. It is also associated with reproductive health issues and adverse pregnancy outcomes. The psychological and emotional impacts include depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and suicidal tendencies (García-Moreno et al., pp.25,29). Children who witness IPV are also at increased risk of behavioural and emotional problems(Holt et al., 2008, p. 797). The effects of IPV also extend beyond the direct victims to the broader community. The economic costs of IPV include medical costs, lost productivity and public services. Witnessing IPV can lead to feelings of fear and insecurity in communities and neighbourhoods. The effects of IPV also extend beyond the direct victims to the broader community. The economic costs of IPV include medical costs, lost productivity and public services. Witnessing IPV can lead to feelings of fear and insecurity in communities and neighbourhoods (Walby,2004).

Intimate partners and sexual violence are significant public health problems that affect women worldwide. Population-level surveys are a valuable tool for estimating the prevalence of these types of violence. The most precise prevalence estimates are often based on survivor reports obtained through such surveys. The World Health Organization (WHO) conducted a comprehensive evaluation of intimate partner and sexual violence prevalence figures from 2000 to 2018 and found that approximately one in every three women (or 30%) worldwide had experienced physical and sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence during that period (WHO, 2021).

It is important to note that prevalence estimates may vary depending on the population surveyed, the definition and measurement of violence used, and the cultural and social context in which it occurs. However, population-level surveys remain critical for understanding the scope and magnitude of intimate partner and sexual violence and for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Intimate partner violence is a significant public health issue affecting women worldwide. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the prevalence of lifetime intimate partner violence varies across regions, with the highest rates reported in sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia (WHO, 2021, p. 2). The WHO report also

highlights the prevalence of intimate partner violence in low and middle-income countries, with rates ranging from 33% in WHO Africa, 31% in WHO Eastern Mediterranean, and 33% in WHO Southeast Asia. In high-income countries and Europe, the lifetime prevalence of intimate partner violence is lower, with rates around 22%. Furthermore, the report states that more than a quarter of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have experienced physical or sexual abuse by an intimate partner since age 15 (WHO, 2021, p. 2). Such rates demonstrate the significant impact of intimate partner violence on women's health and well-being, highlighting the need for effective interventions to prevent and address this issue.

Worldwide, intimate partners are responsible for 38% of all female killings. While statistics on non-partner sexual violence are scarce, 6% of women globally report having been sexually abused in addition to intimate relationship violence. Men are more likely than women to participate in sexual and intimate relationship violence. It is also possible that certain elements may contribute to domestic violence. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns have increased the risk of intimate partner violence and limited women's options for seeking help. Peterman et al., a group of authors, authored a study on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on violence against women and children. They found that lockdowns and other COVID-19-related factors have led to an increase in intimate partner violence worldwide. The study also highlights the importance of addressing this issue through policy and programmatic interventions (WHO, 2020, p.1).

Acts of violence against women have severe health impacts that can lead to immediate and long-term physical and mental health issues. Su et al. highlight the importance of recognising the impact of violence on women's health and well-being and that violence manifests as "immediate or long-term physical and mental health issues" (2021, p.1). Su et al. note that women who experience domestic violence are at risk of immediate and long-term health issues, including physical injuries, chronic pain, sexual and reproductive health problems, and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. These health impacts can be severe and long-lasting, affecting the victim's quality of life and ability to function.

The issue of domestic violence pervades across nations, cultures, and socioeconomic strata, with women being particularly susceptible. Nevertheless, certain

groups, such as the impoverished and those belonging to the working class, are more vulnerable to domestic violence. Through their work titled "The Intersection of Gender with Socioeconomic Status, Race, and Ethnicity Concerning Domestic Violence," Riger and Sigurvinsdottir (2014, p.215) delve into how social and economic factors can heighten women's vulnerability to domestic violence and shape their encounters with abuse. They argue that understanding these intersecting factors is essential to developing effective interventions and policies to address domestic violence. They recognise domestic violence is a complex issue influenced by multiple intersecting factors, including social and economic inequalities. They argue that gender intersects with other social categories, such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, to create unique domestic violence experiences for different women groups. In particular, they highlight how poverty and economic insecurity can increase women's vulnerability to domestic violence and limit their options for leaving abusive relationships. They also emphasise the need to effectively address broader social and economic inequalities to prevent domestic violence.

It is essential to recognise the severe psychological impact that domestic violence can have on women. Research has consistently demonstrated that exposure to violence and abuse can lead to various adverse psychological outcomes, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other mental health issues.

A dissertation that explores the psychological impact of domestic violence on battered women is an essential contribution to the field. Such research can help raise awareness of domestic violence's impact on women's mental health and inform the development of effective interventions and policies to support survivors. Acknowledging the psychological impact of domestic violence on women is a critical step in developing effective strategies to prevent and address this pervasive issue. Understanding the underlying factors contributing to domestic violence is crucial to develop effective interventions and policies to prevent and address it. By examining the psychological impact of domestic violence on battered women, the dissertation can shed light on the complex and multifaceted nature of this issue. Understanding the psychological mechanisms that underlie domestic violence can help to develop tailored interventions to support survivors and prevent future incidents of violence.

Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) is a complex psychological condition that results from prolonged domestic violence and abuse. Understanding the experiences of battered women is crucial for developing effective interventions and support systems. Dr Lenore Walker, a psychologist and activist, conducted one of the earliest and most influential studies on battered women. In her seminal work, "The Battered Woman," Walker comprehensively analysed domestic violence's psychological and emotional impact on women. She identified a cycle of violence that involves three phases: the tension-building phase, the acute battering phase, and the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1979, pp. 5,6). The cycle helps explain why women may remain in abusive relationships despite the harm they have suffered.

Judith Herman conducted another critical study on battered women. In her book, "Trauma and Recovery," Herman provided a detailed examination of the psychological effects of trauma on women, including those who have experienced domestic violence. She identified three stages of recovery for trauma victims: establishing safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection with ordinary life (Herman, 1981, pp. 49,50). Her work helped to underscore the importance of a comprehensive approach to healing and recovery for women who have experienced domestic violence.

More recent studies have continued to explore the experiences of battered women and the challenges they face. In a 2015 study, researchers examined the experiences of battered women in India, where domestic violence is prevalent but often goes unreported. The study found that women who had experienced domestic violence had higher levels of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than women who had not experienced violence (Mahapatro & Gupta, 2015, p.18). The study also highlighted the importance of addressing cultural and societal norms contributing to domestic violence and stigmatising victims.

Another recent study focused on the experiences of immigrant women who have experienced domestic violence. The study found that immigrant women face additional challenges accessing support services and may experience isolation and cultural barriers to seeking help (Gupta & Kaur, 2018, pp. 14,15). The study emphasised the need for culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate support services for immigrant women who have experienced domestic violence.

In addition to these studies, there has been a growing body of research on the impact of domestic violence on children and the intergenerational transmission of violence. Studies have shown that children who witness domestic violence are more likely to experience a range of adverse outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and behavioural problems (Holt et al., 2008, pp. 90,91). Such studies underscore the need for comprehensive interventions that address the needs of women and children who have experienced domestic violence.

In conclusion, the literature on battered women highlights domestic violence's complex and multifaceted nature and its impact on women's lives. Studies have identified the cycle of violence, the psychological effects of trauma, and the challenges women face in accessing support services. There is also a growing understanding of the intergenerational transmission of violence and the impact of domestic violence on children. As such, the literature underscores the need for comprehensive approaches to addressing domestic violence, including culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate support services, interventions that address the needs of both women and children and efforts to challenge cultural and societal norms that contribute to domestic violence.

Learned helplessness theory proposes that individuals who experience uncontrollable events, such as abuse or trauma, may develop a belief that they are powerless to change their circumstances, leading to feelings of helplessness and depression. This theory has been extensively studied in psychology and has contributed to our understanding of the development of depressive disorders. In his classic work, "Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death", Seligman introduced the theory of learned helplessness and its application to the development of depression. The psychologist Martin Seligman and his colleagues conducted a series of experiments on dogs to investigate the phenomenon of learned helplessness. In one of the earliest and most influential studies, they subjected dogs to a series of aversive stimuli that the dogs could not escape from, such as electric shocks administered through the floor of their cages. The researchers found that the dogs stopped trying to escape from the shocks over time, even when presented with opportunities. They appeared to have learned that their actions did not affect the outcome and had become *helpless* in the face of the aversive stimuli. Seligman and his colleagues then applied the concept of learned helplessness to the development of depression in humans. They argued that individuals who experience

uncontrollable adverse events, such as chronic stress or trauma, may believe they have no control over their circumstances, leading to helplessness and, eventually, depression.

Numerous studies have since supported Seligman's theory of learned helplessness. It has been applied to various mental health conditions, including depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The concept of learned helplessness has also been applied to other areas, such as education and organisational behaviour, to understand how individuals may respond to situations where they perceive a lack of control or agency. Seligman argued that individuals who experience uncontrollable events may believe they cannot change their circumstances, leading to helplessness and depression. Much research has supported this theory (1975, pp.3,17,27).

Maier and Seligman provided a comprehensive review of the research supporting the theory of learned helplessness and its application to animal and human behaviour. They highlighted the role of cognitive factors, such as attributions, in developing learned helplessness. (1976, pp. 3) Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale expanded on the theory of learned helplessness by proposing a reformulation that considered cognitive and social factors (1978, pp. 49,74).

Peterson and Seligman reviewed the evidence supporting the relationship between learned helplessness and depression. They suggested that individuals attributing adverse events to internal, stable, and global causes are more likely to develop depression (1984,p. 347). This idea was further expanded upon by Alloy, Abramson, Metalsky, and Hartlage, who proposed the hopelessness theory of depression, which suggests that individuals who make internal, stable, and global attributions for adverse events are more likely to develop hopelessness and depression. (1988, pp. 5,21)

Nolen-Hoeksema and Girgus reviewed research on gender differences in depression and suggested that learned helplessness may contribute to the higher rates of depression among adolescent girls. They argued that girls may be more likely than boys to learn to be helpless in response to uncontrollable adverse events due to socialisation processes that encourage girls to be passive and dependent (1994, p.424). This idea has been further supported by research on the role of gender in the development of learned helplessness. For example, Cole, Martin, and Peeke (1999) found that girls were likelier

than boys to exhibit learned helplessness in response to academic failure. This effect was mediated by gender-role beliefs and attributions for failure.

In conclusion, learned helplessness theory has been extensively studied in psychology and has contributed significantly to our understanding of the development of depressive disorders. The theory has been expanded to include cognitive and social factors and applied to understanding gender differences in depression. The Attributional Style Questionnaire is a commonly used measure in research on learned helplessness, and a significant amount of research has supported the theory over the years.

Through such research, policymakers and practitioners can gain insight into the psychological aspects of domestic violence and develop effective strategies to prevent and address it. Additionally, by raising awareness of the psychological impact of domestic violence on women, the study can reduce the stigma associated with seeking help and encourage survivors to access the support they need. It has the potential to inform and improve practice and policy.

This dissertation will provide a comprehensive overview of Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) and explore its psychological, social, and legal implications. BWS is a chronic condition that results from prolonged domestic violence and can have a profound psychological impact on women. The dissertation aims to provide a detailed overview of the concept of BWS, including its history and development, its symptoms, and its relationship to other psychological conditions, such as PTSD. By exploring BWS in detail, the dissertation will help readers understand the complex nature of this condition.

The dissertation discusses the implications of BWS for mental health professionals. It emphasises the importance of early intervention and support for survivors of domestic violence. Mental health professionals need to be aware of the signs of BWS and provide appropriate care to help survivors overcome the psychological trauma of domestic violence. The paper also aims to examine the factors contributing to BWS's development. These factors include isolation, parental restriction, lack of support, low self-esteem, and the cycle of violence. By exploring these factors, the dissertation aims to help readers understand the complex interplay of social and psychological factors contributing to BWS.

The dissertation focuses on why women may remain in abusive relationships and the psychological impact of domestic violence on women. The dissertation aims to help readers understand the complex decision-making processes involved in such situations by exploring why women stay in abusive relationships. It also sheds light on how domestic violence affects women's mental health and well-being by applying the theories to three characters, situations, and personalities. Another aim is to raise awareness about domestic violence and BWS and promote support for survivors. By highlighting the prevalence and severity of domestic violence and the impact of BWS, the dissertation aims to encourage the public to recognise the importance of addressing this issue and supporting survivors.

The dissertation aims to provide recommendations on preventing and addressing domestic violence. These recommendations include educating people about domestic violence, improving legal and social protections for survivors, and addressing the underlying factors that contribute to domestic violence. In other words, the dissertation aims to provide an in-depth understanding of BWS by exploring its psychological, social, and legal implications. The dissertation can raise awareness and promote effective strategies to prevent and address domestic violence by delving into this critical issue.

1.1. Battered Women Syndrome

Battered Women Syndrome (BWS) is a psychological condition recognised as a result of prolonged domestic violence and abuse. Lenore Walker first coined the term in the 1970s, identifying a pattern of symptoms and behaviours exhibited by women who have experienced domestic violence. BWS has since been widely studied and recognised in the legal and mental health fields. BWS is characterised by a range of psychological and emotional symptoms that result from prolonged exposure to domestic violence, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Walker, 1999, p. 22). In addition to these psychological symptoms, battered women may experience physical symptoms such as chronic pain and sleep disturbances (Hamberger & Hastings, 1988, pp.166, 167).

Although BWS is not officially recognised as a formal diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), mental health professionals have widely accepted it as a legitimate condition (Walker, 1999, p. 2). In some cases, BWS has been used as a legal defence for battered women charged with violent crimes against their abusers. Follingstad et al., in the article "The Role of Emotional Abuse in Physically Abusive Relationships," which examines the relationship between emotional abuse and physical violence in intimate partner relationships, claimed that BWS had been used as a legal defence in some cases where battered women have been charged with violent crimes against their abusers. The use of BWS as a legal defence is controversial, and the article provides insight into this approach's potential benefits and drawbacks (Follingstad et al., 1991, p.331).

BWS as a legal defence has been controversial, with some arguing that it could be used to excuse violent behaviour. In contrast, others argue it is a necessary defence for women who have been pushed to the brink by years of abuse and violence. Despite this controversy, recognising BWS as a legitimate condition has highlighted the need for effective interventions and support for survivors of domestic violence.

In this context, this paper aims to explore Battered Women Syndrome, its symptoms, and its implications for mental health and the legal system. The paper will begin by providing a detailed overview of the concept of BWS, including its history and development, its symptoms, and its relationship to other psychological conditions, such as PTSD. Finally, the paper will discuss the implications of BWS for mental health professionals, including the importance of early intervention and support for survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a pervasive and chronic problem that affects millions of women worldwide. To fully understand the concept of BWS, it is essential to comprehend what makes a woman being 'battered.' Domestic violence is a chronic act that may occur over several years and can profoundly impact a woman's mental health and well-being. According to Dr Lenore E. Walker, a prominent expert on BWS, a woman must undergo two complete cycles of abuse before being considered a battered woman (Walker, 1999). This concept underscores domestic violence's prolonged and repetitive nature and significant impact on a woman's life.

Several factors contribute to a woman being considered a battered woman. These include isolation, parental restriction, and a lack of support. Isolation refers to the abuser's efforts to cut off the victim from friends, family, and other sources of support. Parental restriction involves limiting the victim's ability to leave the house or have contact with others. A lack of support can refer to a lack of emotional, financial, or physical support from family or friends (Walker, 1999).

Low self-esteem is another factor that contributes to the development of BWS. Women who have experienced domestic violence may feel ashamed, guilty, or responsible for their abuse. They may also feel powerless and helpless, further contributing to low self-esteem. The cycle of violence is another critical factor in understanding why women may remain in abusive relationships. The cycle of violence includes three phases: the tension-building phase, the acute battering phase, and the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1977). During tension-building, the abuser may become increasingly irritable and critical, leading to arguments and tension between the couple. During the acute battering phase, the abuser may lash out physically or emotionally, causing significant harm to the victim. Finally, during the honeymoon phase, the abuser may apologise, promise to change, and shower the victim with affection and gifts.

Barbara L. Rubenstein, a researcher in the field of domestic violence, highlights the importance of understanding the cycle of violence in the context of abusive relationships and how it contributes to the development of Battered Women Syndrome. The fear of violence and hope of reconciliation during the honeymoon phase are vital factors that can keep women trapped in abusive relationships. She highlights how these factors can make it difficult for women to leave abusive relationships and contribute to the development of BWS. Rubenstein supports and provides further insight into this idea. Rubenstein's article "Understanding the Cycle of Violence: Women's Experiences of intimate partner violence in a rural community" examines the cycle of violence and its impact on women's experiences of intimate partner violence. The article stresses the fear of violence and hope of reconciliation during the honeymoon phase as significant factors that can keep women trapped in abusive relationships (2004:1485).

In conclusion, Battered Women Syndrome is a psychological condition that results from prolonged domestic violence and abuse. To fully understand the concept of BWS, it is essential to comprehend what makes a woman being 'battered.' The chronic

nature of domestic violence and the factors contributing to low self-esteem, such as isolation and parental restriction, can lead to the development of BWS.

Understanding the cycle of violence is also crucial for understanding why women may remain in abusive relationships and the psychological impact of domestic violence on women. It is crucial to provide support and resources to survivors of domestic violence to help them break the cycle of violence and recover from the trauma they have experienced. Education and awareness about domestic violence can also help prevent its occurrence and promote healthy relationships. Working together can create a world where every woman feels safe, valued, and empowered. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, battered women syndrome can be defined as "the highly variable symptom complex of physical and psychological injuries exhibited by a woman repeatedly abused, especially physically by her mate". The definition is consistent with the broader understanding of Battered Women Syndrome due to prolonged domestic violence and abuse. However, it is essential to note that this definition may not fully capture the complexity and range of symptoms resulting from domestic violence. BWS can manifest in various ways, including anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, hopelessness and helplessness, and PTSD (Walker, 1999). Therefore, while the definition provided a valid starting point, it is vital to recognise the broader range of symptoms and experiences associated with BWS.

According to Dr Walker, a battered woman is "any woman who is repeatedly abused physically, sexually, or psychologically by a man with whom she is intimate in order for him to get what he wants without any regard for her needs" (Roberts, 1996, pp. 192-193) Walker provides a more comprehensive definition of a battered woman that goes beyond physical abuse. It highlights the various forms of abuse in an intimate relationship, including sexual and psychological abuse. The definition also emphasises the power dynamics in an abusive relationship, where the abuser disregards the victim's needs to get what they want. Walker is widely recognised for her contributions to understanding Battered Women Syndrome. Her definition of a battered woman is consistent with the broader understanding of domestic violence as a pattern of behaviour that involves the use of power and control by one partner over the other. Her definition of BWS highlights the importance of recognising that domestic violence can take many forms and profoundly impact a woman's life. It underscores the need for a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of abusive relationships and the range of

symptoms that can result from domestic violence. It also highlights the importance of recognising the complexity of domestic violence and the need for a comprehensive understanding of its impact on women's lives.

Dr Lenore E. Walker's remarks in her book *Battered Woman Syndrome* highlighted the compromise the battered women's movement made in addressing critical issues while attempting to transform gendered power dynamics. She points out that opposing groups often try to establish cultural authority over a social issue, which can result in cultural accommodation between the parties. This accommodation can allow for the concerns and interests of a broader audience to be addressed, but it may only sometimes result in the entire achievement of the objectives. Paula Rothenberg, a prominent scholar in social justice who has written extensively on race, gender, and social inequality, supports an argument by highlighting the potential for unhappiness when a compromise's objectives are not fully achieved. She suggests that compromise can benefit interested parties when their objectives overlap with the general public. However, when objectives are fully realised, there may be satisfaction among those involved (2003:772).

Experts in the field of domestic violence argue that the terms 'victim', 'survivor,' and 'battered woman' have distinct meanings and implications. These terms are used to describe women who have experienced domestic violence, and each term conveys a different message about the nature and severity of the abuse. The term 'victim' suggests that a person is still undergoing abuse or its consequences and may imply a sense of powerlessness and vulnerability. In contrast, 'survivor' implies that the person has overcome the detrimental effects of abuse and has triumphed over their experiences. Finally, the term 'battered woman' emphasises the severity of domestic violence and its gendered nature, highlighting the disproportionate impact of domestic violence on women (Goodman & Epstein, 2008, p. 13). Walker argued that battered women were not only victims of their abusers but also of a patriarchal society and a broken system. She maintained that assertiveness training and psychological counselling were critical for boosting women's self-esteem and resolving domestic violence-related issues. She contended that assertiveness training and psychological counselling were critical for boosting self-esteem and resolving domestic violence-related issues (Rothenberg, 2003, p. 777). The choice of terminology used to describe women who have experienced domestic violence is a crucial consideration. It can impact how survivors view

themselves, how society views them, and how effective interventions and support services address their needs. Recognising the complex and gendered nature of domestic violence and providing appropriate support and resources to those who have experienced it is essential.

Battered women are often compared to prisoners of war because of the methods of control and torture used by their abusers. Studies have shown that the tactics used by abusers, such as isolation, threats, and humiliation, are similar to those used in wartime captivity to elicit victim obedience and bonding (Semaan, 2006, p. 13). However, recent research challenges the notion that battered women are powerless and meek. Contrary to popular belief, studies have shown battered women are intelligent and resourceful in responding to their abusers' tactics. Despite being disempowered in many ways, these women fight for their interests and needs. They demonstrate remarkable perseverance and resilience in the face of abuse. The traditional view of battered women as powerless and helpless victims overlooks the strength and intelligence they possess. These women are not passive victims; they resist and overcome their abusers' control. Recognising the intelligence and agency of battered women is crucial in understanding and addressing domestic violence. It is essential to provide support and resources that empower women to take control of their lives and break free from abusive relationships.

Battered women are disproportionately likely to experience poverty, homelessness, and threats, to have children and rely on government assistance. Domestic violence can have severe financial consequences for women, leaving them struggling to survive and support themselves and their children (Roberts, 1996, p. 424). Abusers often use financial control to maintain power and dependence over their partners. By making their partners socially and financially dependent on them, abusers can manipulate and control them more easily. Therefore, it can make it difficult for women to leave abusive relationships and access the necessary resources to rebuild their lives. The financial consequences of domestic violence can be devastating and have long-lasting effects on women and their children. The lack of financial resources can make it challenging for women to access safe housing, healthcare, and legal services and can limit their options for employment and education.

Recognising the link between domestic violence and poverty is crucial in addressing this issue. It is essential to provide support and resources to help survivors of

domestic violence overcome their financial challenges, including access to safe and affordable housing, education, job training, and financial assistance. By empowering women and providing them with the resources they need, we can help break the cycle of domestic violence and promote gender equality.

Battering women often involves the isolation of the victim from their friends and family, leaving them with limited options for support and resources. As a result, many women fear having nowhere to go if they decide to leave their abusers. Even if women have supportive family members or friends, leaving an abusive relationship can be seen as a sign of failure or dishonour by those around them. This cultural stigma can make it difficult for women to seek help and support, leaving them trapped in abusive relationships. (Ogle and Jacob, 2002:76). The fear of being alone and the perceived stigma associated with leaving an abusive relationship can be significant barriers for women seeking to escape domestic violence. It is essential to provide resources and support that empower women to leave abusive relationships and rebuild their lives. The support includes access to safe housing, counselling, legal services, and financial assistance. Breaking the cycle of domestic violence requires a cultural shift in how we view and respond to this issue. We must work to eliminate the stigma associated with leaving abusive relationships and promote a culture of support and empowerment for survivors of domestic violence. By providing women with the resources and support they need, we can help them to break free from abusive relationships and build a brighter future.

The UN Women report, “Gender-based violence in humanitarian crises and disasters: A review of the literature”, provides a comprehensive literature review on this critical issue. It highlights women's unique challenges in crises and the significant impact of gender-based violence on women's health, safety, and well-being. The report emphasises the need for a coordinated and comprehensive response to gender-based violence in humanitarian crises, including providing safe and secure accommodations, access to healthcare, counselling, and legal services. It also underscores the importance of addressing the underlying social and economic factors contributing to violence against women, such as poverty, gender inequality, and lack of access to education and employment (2015).

The report provides valuable insights into this critical issue by thoroughly analysing the current literature on gender-based violence in humanitarian crises. It highlights the urgent need for action to address violence against women in crises and offers concrete recommendations for supporting and empowering women in these contexts. Overall, the report is essential for anyone who promotes gender equality and human rights in crises.

It is crucial to recognise that women's willingness and ability to seek help and leave abusive relationships can be impacted by various factors beyond the immediate violence they experience. Factors such as education, age, fear, and depression can all affect a woman's ability to seek help and escape an abusive relationship. For instance, women lacking education or economic resources may feel trapped in abusive relationships due to financial dependence on their abusers. Similarly, women who fear further violence or retaliation may hesitate to seek help or leave the relationship, even experiencing severe abuse. It is essential for those providing support and resources to battered women to recognise and address these underlying factors, taking into account the unique circumstances of each woman's situation, which requires a holistic approach that addresses not only the immediate safety concerns of the survivor but also the underlying social, economic, and psychological factors that contribute to domestic violence. In short, it is essential to approach each domestic violence case with sensitivity and understanding, recognising that each survivor's situation is unique. By providing tailored support and resources, we can help women to overcome the barriers they face in seeking help and empower them to take control of their lives and break free from abusive relationships.

Albert R. Roberts, in his book *Battered Women and Their Families*, cites some examples to prove his point; Sandra is one of these examples who was a victim of her husband's violent behaviour and lived in fear to the extent that she could not control her situation. She was beaten regularly and held captive for five years. Battering and its effects on her and her children were assessed through a more in-depth, structured interview with a mental health specialist. When she left with the children, she was covered in bruises from an incident, but they were not as severe as earlier ones. Sandra, her children, and even her husband depended on her taking action before the problem spiralled out of control (Roberts., 2007, p.71):

Although he never physically hurt the children, Sandra feared he would come someday. She also anticipated witnessing their father severely injuring her could leave indelible emotional scars. The altercation and resultant bruises that triggered her leaving with the children were not as severe as past injuries in which a concussion and multiple fractures and bruises were inflicted. At those times, she fleetingly thought of escaping the pain of living and occasionally considered taking the children and moving far away. Nevertheless, these fantasies vanished quickly, as she thought, "Where would I go?" "How can I support the children and myself?" "Will I be safe anywhere?" So she remained fearful, weak, and untenable, feeling increasingly isolated and incapacitated by the escalating depressive symptoms. She was unable to tell anyone about her fragile marriage and the battering. She perceived this as a failure, which provoked guilt and shame. (Roberts, 2007, pp.70, 71)

At times, she wished Luke would change and revert to the man she once adored, but he woke her from this dream with the horrors she was experiencing because of him. In addition to causing physical harm, psychological and emotional damage can be inflicted on victims of intimate partner violence, mainly if it is perpetrated in the form of *intimate terrorism*. The mental health specialist's assessment of Sandra and her children's situation highlights domestic violence's lasting trauma and psychological impact. The fact that Sandra's husband and children depended on her taking action demonstrates the importance of recognising the impact of domestic violence on the entire family and the need for a holistic response to this issue.

Intimate partner violence can cause significant physical, psychological, and emotional harm to victims, particularly when perpetrated as "intimate terrorism". This type of violence involves coercive control, often characterised by physical violence, threats, and isolation to maintain power and control over the victim. The physical harm caused by intimate partner violence can range from bruises and broken bones to more severe injuries and even death. However, the psychological and emotional damage inflicted by this type of violence can be just as severe, if not more so. Victims of intimate partner violence may suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), among other mental health issues. Furthermore, the impact of intimate partner violence is not limited to the victim alone. Children who witness or experience domestic violence may suffer from various adverse outcomes, including emotional and behavioural problems, poor academic performance, and an increased risk of future involvement in violent relationships (Roberts, 2018, p. 34).

Intimate terrorism is the most prevalent type of violence against women, involving physical assault, sexual assault, stalking, and psychological abuse (including coercive methods). Based on Johnson's domestic violence typology, it is possible to distinguish Intimate terrorism from situational couple violence (Johnson & Leone, 2014,

p. 187). Johnson's typology depends on whether the violence is part of a larger control pattern or is separated. It attempts to dominate one's partner and impose extensive control over the relationship (Johnson & Leone, 2005, p. 323). This level of domination necessitates the use of a variety of power and control mechanisms, including violence. Thus, patriarchal traditions of male dominance in intimate relationships are employed to conceptualise intimate terrorism as a control issue (Johnson & Leone, 2014, p. 191). On the other hand, domestic violence is intimate partner violence not founded in a larger pattern of dominant behaviours (Johnson & Leone, 2014, p. 324). It develops in the context of conflict due to familial stresses, and some conflict situations may result in violence.

Intimate terrorism victims sustain more violence-related damages, exhibit more symptoms of depression and PTSD, experience more significant psychological distress, miss more work or activity time (Leone and Johnson, 2004:) and have a higher rate of substance abuse than situational domestic violence victims. These findings have implications for diagnosis and intervention efforts and our understanding of how this terror affects its victims. Before implementing solutions, professionals should create a difference between the mentioned terms.

On the other hand, Desmarais et al. demonstrate that intimate physical partner violence rates are similarly distributed. Throughout the research, they and their colleagues have surveyed; however, sampling bias may affect the reported rates. For them, "[p]hysical violence in intimate relationships affects men, women, and families worldwide" (Desmarais et al., 2012, p.140). While Johnson believes that men are more likely than women to commit the most severe forms of violence, such as intimate terrorism, and insists that it is necessary to deconstruct the unified concept of violent perpetration and to classify abusers according to typology in order to gain a better knowledge of violence (2014, p.187).

Emotional abuse can be verbal or nonverbal. It is a toxic element that destroys one's self-esteem. The victim's self-worth is harmed when this type of abuse involves insults, accusations, cheating, and ignoring. As with misbehaving, the offender can put his spouse in a position where she must earn his favour by her obedience, which is another kind of emotional abuse. Another type of emotional abuse is a deliberate disconnection with family and neighbours. Emotional abuse is more pervasive and

harder to detect than physical abuse. Both of these manifestations of aggression are equally destructive. Emotional abuse is described along with physical violence by participants in a survey about the types of battering. Emotional abuse occurs when insults, shouting, personal insults, and demeaning are used in front of children or others. Numerous participants ranked emotional abuse higher than physical abuse, as indicated by one participant's remark, "And then there is the verbal abuse. I do not mind all the physical stuff, but the words ... they hurt the most. Your bruises disappear, but the words ...they remain."(Slabbert & Green, 2013, p. 238) Most participants say emotional wounds are significantly more hurtful than physical ones. According to Walker (2009, p.323), emotional violence is defined by dehumanisation, the most devastating type of abuse experienced by women.

1.2. The Cycle of Violence

It was determined that a three-phase cycle of violence could be identified and analysed by interviewing abused women. Most women who have been abused at some point have gone through all three stages of the cycle. Women can break the cycle of violence by putting their own on a chart or simply by assisting them in identifying the abuser's three phases. Dr Lenore Walker proposed the cycle of violence theory in 1979. According to her, violence has three stages: "(1) tension-building accompanied with a rising sense of danger, (2) the acute battering incident, and (3) loving contrition" (2009: 91). The cycle typically begins following a courting period that is frequently described as being filled with the batterer's interest in the woman's life and typically replete with loving conduct. Abusers frequently use minor violence and verbal abuse while tension increases. Walker notes that batterers become possessive, jealous, and aggressive out of fear that their partners will leave them. It is worth mentioning that the second stage entails much beating. Then, batterers are free to do everything to maintain harmony through the last stage of the cycle. During the building of tension, battered women typically make justifications for the behaviour of their abusers (Walker, 2016, p.126).

Abusers are wildly unpredictable and frequently appear to be in control of their behaviour. It is common for partners to tolerate abuse silently and minimise it in front of others or when confronted with it. During the last stage, abusers appear calm, caring, and apologetic, vowing to their spouses that "it will never happen again." This stage is

known as "the honeymoon period". In many cases, partners feel terrible about considering leaving the abuser in the first place. They frequently hold out hope that the abuser may change. (Coleman, 1997, p.422)

The cycle of violence refers to repetitive, abusive behaviour in violent relationships. According to Lenore Walker, a pioneer in research on domestic violence, the cycle of violence typically includes three distinct phases: the tension-building phase, the acute battering incident, and the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1977, p. 45). During the tension-building phase, stress and tension start to build between the couple. The abuser may become increasingly irritable, critical and controlling. Minor incidents of verbal or physical abuse may occur. This phase can last weeks or months, and the victim feels increasingly fearful of the impending acute battering incident (Walker, 1977, p. 46). The acute battering incident, or the explosion phase, is an uncontrollable discharge of physical, sexual, or verbal abuse (Walker, 1977, p. 48). The violence escalates rapidly and causes significant harm to the victim. This phase is usually brief but highly traumatic (Walker, 1977, p. 49). The honeymoon phase follows the acute battering incident. During this phase, the abuser apologises, promises to change, and showers the victim affectionately to reconcile the relationship. The abuser may blame external factors for the violence rather than take responsibility for their behaviour (Walker, 1977, p. 52). The honeymoon phase gives the victim hope that the abuse will end, making it difficult to leave the relationship (Walker, 1977, p. 53).

The cycle repeats itself, often with the periods of nonviolence becoming short and the violence escalating over time (Walker, 1977, p. 55). Barbara L. Rubenstein built on Walker's research in her article "Understanding the Cycle of Violence: Women's Experiences of intimate partner violence in a rural community". Rubenstein highlights how the fear of violence and hope for reconciliation during the honeymoon phase are two key factors that make it difficult for women to leave abusive relationships, contributing to the cycle of violence (2004, p.1485). Follingstad et al. also discuss the cycle of violence in their article "The Role of Emotional Abuse in Physically Abusive Relationships". They argue that emotional abuse is present throughout the cycle of violence and is central to establishing and maintaining power and control over the victim (1991, p.434). Emotional abuse causes psychological harm, preventing women from leaving violent relationships (Follingstad et al., 1991, p.435).

In summary, the cycle of violence refers to the pattern of tension building, acute violence, and reconciliation that occurs in violent relationships. This cycle causes victims significant psychological and emotional harm, making it extremely difficult to leave the relationship. Understanding the dynamics of the cycle of violence is crucial to developing effective interventions to address domestic abuse.

Walker observed some women who had been abused in her job as a therapist and developed a theory of learned helplessness. According to Walker, who extended this behavioural theory, abused women escape new violence by exhausting a repertoire of actions to prevent being assaulted again. Women gradually come to realise that they have no control over their abusers and learn passivity as a result of their constant beatings. The individual's belief in their powerlessness contributes to *learned helplessness* as a response (Walker, 2009, p.44). People suffering from depression were more prepared to believe their actions were useless and would never be accessible. Both depressed people and helpless animals lacked desire in the experiment. Battered Woman Syndrome is a subset of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Symptoms include phobias, sleeping issues, and emotional pain (Walker,2009, p.71).

1.3. Learned Helplessness

Learning helplessness is a theory that explains how a seemingly ordinary woman loses the ability to anticipate how her actions would affect her safety. Numerous victims recount situations in which beating made it challenging to face the batterer head-on (Roberts, 1996, pp. 192,193). It is understandable to wonder, “Why Don't They Just Leave?” In the words of Stahly (2008), it is a straightforward question, but the answer is elusive. To deal with this trauma, one needs to have a complete comprehension of the battered woman's circumstances as well as an understanding of the reasons behind her attitude toward her predicament.

The effects of battering on women's lives have focused on poverty, homelessness, threatening, children, and welfare receipt, often centring on women who are uneducated or undereducated. The most important reason is women's financial status associated with a lack of assistance. Batterers intend to make their partners depend socially and financially on them to keep them under control and dependent. (Roberts, 1996, p. 424) Many abusers isolate their wives from family and friends, so they feel

there is nowhere to go when they decide to leave. In some cases, the supposed supportive families discourage the battered women from leaving their abusers to avoid failure and shame in the eyes of others. (Ogle and Jacob, 2002, p.76)

This issue should not be disregarded, as it significantly impacts people's willingness to seek assistance. It demonstrates the challenges women face in seeking help, despite the violence they face. While abuse may be the primary motivator for a woman to seek help, many factors, such as her age, her level of education, and the risk of being beaten, also would play a role in her decision to do so. It is essential to know this to help those working with battered women. To presume that a battered woman will seek treatment because she has been abused is to underestimate the specific circumstances of each woman's situation.

As mentioned, "learning helplessness" was first used to refer to an experimental animal's incapacity to avoid shock while being given the opportunity. The term now refers to humans' inability to seek out or acquire new adapted instrumental reactions. Depressed individuals risk losing hope in their ability to influence critical environmental events according to their efforts. Long-term exposure to stress teaches people that their behaviours and reactions are only sometimes interconnected. In this case, the acquired knowledge obstructs further learning and results in passivity. In other words, regardless of how practical a method is, they would fail to locate it (Mohanty et al., 2015)

According to the hypothesis, people begin to wonder about the reasons when confronted with uncontrollable horrific circumstances. Their response to unfavourable situations is based on their responses. Abramson et al. identifies three critical explanatory or attributional dimensions: "a. internal-external; b. stable-unstable; and c. global-specific" (1978). These features are crucial in overcoming the helplessness paradigm's multiple weaknesses when applied to human beings. Specific attributions have global consequences, while others are regional, and some have long-lasting consequences while others are transient. The awareness of one's fundamental beliefs affects one's self-esteem in the face of an unpleasant experience.

The constancy of the fundamental causes impacts the persistence of feelings of failure and despair. When a temporary factor explains the event, the depressive reaction is momentary. While helplessness can occur in various contexts, it can only occur in the original place when a specific scenario is linked. Internality, stability, and global

attributional characteristics play specific roles in the reformulation analysis. A person's self-esteem declines due to terrible experiences if he or she has faulty views about the causes of such events. Individuals who blame themselves for unpleasant events are more likely to suffer from low self-esteem than those who blame other factors for their misfortunes. Helplessness and depression are more likely to persist if the underlying causes remain stable. If an adverse event is explained by a frequent cause, a depressive reaction will result in repetition. When a temporary reason can explain an event, the depressive reaction will be temporary. Helplessness shortcomings are more likely to arise in a wide range of scenarios if people are convinced that bad things happen for a reason. As a result of this perception and when it is believed that a particular element is the source of the problem, the weaknesses tend to be limited. (Mohanty et al., 2015).

Research has consistently shown that victims of intimate terrorism in domestic violence situations experience more severe and long-lasting physical, psychological, and emotional harm than victims of situational domestic violence. For instance, Leone and Johnson (2004) found that victims of intimate terrorism sustained violence-related damages, exhibited more symptoms of depression and PTSD, experienced more significant psychological distress, and missed more work or activity time than victims of situational domestic violence. They also found that victims of intimate terrorism had a higher rate of substance abuse than situational domestic violence victims. These findings have important implications for diagnosis and intervention efforts, as well as our understanding of the impact of domestic violence on victims. It is crucial for professionals working with victims of domestic violence to understand the differences between these two types of violence and to tailor their interventions accordingly. For example, interventions for victims of intimate terrorism may need to focus on addressing the complex and ongoing pattern of coercive control.

In contrast, interventions for victims of situational domestic violence may focus more on addressing the immediate safety concerns of the survivor. By recognising the unique challenges faced by victims of intimate terrorism and providing appropriate support and resources, we can help to mitigate the impact of domestic violence on survivors and empower them to break free from abusive relationships.

1.4. Battered Women Syndrome and Literature

Domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence, continues to be a significant problem in societies worldwide. This issue affects people of all backgrounds and can cause long-lasting physical and psychological harm. The literature on domestic violence has evolved, with shifts in focus from social analyses of battering to self-help manuals for survivors of abuse. This paper will explore the literature on battered women, including self-help books, and their impact on addressing domestic violence. Additionally, it will discuss the importance of gender in understanding domestic violence and how it is portrayed in literature.

According to recent estimates, a woman is beaten by her current or past intimate partner every nine seconds (Roberts, 2007, p. xvii). These alarming statistics highlight the severity of the issue of domestic violence. In response to this problem, the literature on battered women has evolved. Much of the literature on domestic violence initially focused on social analyses of battering and the institutional response to it. However, in the 1990s, a new genre of self-help books emerged that provided practical advice for women on how to leave abusive relationships and heal from their consequences.

Self-help books on domestic violence have become extremely popular, with titles such as "The Courage to Heal" by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis and "Why Does He Do That?" by Lundy Bancroft (Roberts, 2007,p,1). These books aim to provide survivors of domestic violence with practical advice on leaving abusive relationships and healing from the trauma they have experienced. The focus has shifted from social analyses of battering to individual responses, much like responses to family violence and other social problems shifted from social solutions to individual responses after Reaganism and Thatcherism. While self-help books have helped provide practical advice to survivors of domestic violence, it is essential to note that they are not a substitute for systemic solutions to the issue. VAW is a societal problem that requires a societal response. However, these books have provided valuable resources for women who may not have access to other forms of support.

Gender is a crucial concept in understanding domestic violence, and it is an essential theme in literature that addresses this issue. The social constructions of gender have historically legitimised men's superiority and domination over women in society. This power imbalance has contributed to the prevalence of domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence. Literature that addresses domestic violence

explores the power dynamics between men and women and how they contribute to abusive relationships.

Numerous forms of abuse are regularly described in the literature, including intimate relationship violence. When the abuser is the story's antagonist or at least the romantic hero's foe, the reader may quickly identify toxic behaviour. However, what happens if the victim refuses to leave? This question has been explored in literature, with some authors portraying the complexity of leaving an abusive relationship. For example, in the novel *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, the protagonist, Celie, struggles to leave her abusive husband due to societal pressures and lack of support.

Violence against women is a global issue that transcends borders and cultures. While it is often associated with specific regions and societies, it is essential to recognise that it can occur anywhere, including in Western countries. Many works of fiction by Middle Eastern authors explore domestic abuse or violence themes. The novels *Behind Closed Doors*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *Black and Blue* are not set in Iraq or the Middle East but in Western countries. However, many novels by Middle Eastern authors explore themes of domestic abuse or violence. For example, the novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* by Mohja Kahf is a coming-of-age story about a Syrian-American girl who struggles with her identity and experiences domestic violence within her family. The novel *The Dark Side of Love* by Rafik Schami tells the story of a Syrian woman who marries a man who becomes increasingly abusive towards her.

Other Middle Eastern authors who have written about domestic abuse or violence include Nawal El Saadawi from Egypt, who has written numerous novels and essays on the topic, and Leila Aboulela from Sudan, whose novel *The Translator* explores the Aftermath of domestic violence on a Woman and her family. In Iraq, many writers have addressed the issue of domestic violence in their work. For example, the novel *The Baghdad Clock* by Shahad Al Rawi tells the story of two young girls growing up in Baghdad during the Iraq War and explores the impact of violence and trauma on their lives and relationships. That is to say, many works of literature from the Middle East and Iraq address the issue of domestic abuse or violence and provide insight into the experiences of survivors and their communities.

Many Turkish novels explore themes of domestic abuse or violence. One such novel is *The Flea Palace* by Elif Şafak, which tells the story of an apartment building in

Istanbul and the interconnected lives of its residents. The novel deals with issues such as domestic violence, infidelity, and mental illness and explores the impact of these issues on individuals and families. Another Turkish novel that addresses the issue of domestic abuse is *The Forty Rules of Love* by Elif Shafak. While the novel primarily focuses on the relationship between the poet Rumi and his spiritual mentor, it also includes a subplot about a woman who leaves her abusive husband and finds empowerment through her spiritual journey. Other Turkish authors who have written about domestic abuse or violence include Buket Uzuner, who addresses the topic in her novel *Tatil Kitabı* (Holiday Book), and Ayşe Kulin, whose novel *Umut* (Hope) explores the impact of domestic violence on a family.

In conclusion, domestic violence continues to be a significant problem in societies worldwide. The literature on battered women has evolved, with self-help books becoming popular. While these books provide practical advice for survivors of domestic violence, they are not a substitute for systemic solutions. Gender is a crucial concept in understanding domestic violence and is an essential theme in literature that addresses this issue. Literature exploring the complexity of leaving an abusive relationship can help readers better understand survivors' challenges.

When the abuser is the story's antagonist or at least the romantic hero's foe, the reader may quickly identify toxic behaviour. However, what happens if the victim refuses to leave?

1.5. Bildungsroman Novels

The Bildungsroman is a literary genre that focuses on the growth and development of a character from youth to adulthood. The term comes from the German words "Bildung," meaning education or formation, and "Roman," meaning novel. The Bildungsroman is often associated with coming-of-age stories and is a popular genre in literature and film (Gruesser, 1998, p. 1). One of the defining characteristics of the Bildungsroman is the protagonist's journey of self-discovery and personal growth. The protagonist often faces challenges and obstacles that force them to confront their limitations and biases. Through these experiences, they learn valuable lessons about themselves and their world, leading to their personal development and maturation.

Each of the three novels of this dissertation contains elements of the Bildungsroman genre. In *Behind Closed Doors*, the protagonist, Grace, undergoes a journey of self-discovery and personal growth as she navigates the abusive relationship she finds herself in. At the novel's beginning, Grace appears to be a successful and happy woman, but as the story unfolds, it becomes clear that her life is not as perfect as it seems. Grace learns valuable lessons about herself and her strength through her experiences with her husband, Jack, and her interactions with other characters. She ultimately develops the courage to escape from the abusive situation and take control of her life, demonstrating her growth and maturity.

Similarly, in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the protagonist, Pearl, undergoes a journey of self-discovery as she confronts the secrets and lies of her past. Pearl's mother, Winnie, reveals the truth about her traumatic experiences during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, forcing Pearl to confront her own biases and assumptions about her mother. Through her interactions with Winnie and other characters, Pearl learns valuable lessons about forgiveness, compassion, and the complexities of family relationships. She ultimately comes to a deeper understanding of herself and her place in the world, demonstrating her growth and maturation.

Finally, in *Black and Blue*, the protagonist, Fran, undergoes a journey of self-discovery as she navigates the challenges of leaving an abusive relationship and rebuilding her life. Fran's experiences with her abusive husband, Bobby, force her to confront her biases and assumptions about domestic violence and the role of women in society. Fran learns valuable lessons about her strength and resilience through her interactions with other characters and her reflections. She ultimately develops the courage to leave Bobby and start anew, demonstrating her growth and maturity.

While these novels may not fit the traditional mould of a Bildungsroman, they all contain elements of personal growth and maturation for the protagonist. Each character undergoes a journey of self-discovery and personal development, learning valuable lessons about themselves and their place in the world. Through their experiences and interactions with others, they come to a deeper understanding of themselves and the complexities of life, demonstrating the fundamental themes of the Bildungsroman genre.

1.6. The Psychological Approach

The psychological approach examines the influence of individual characteristics and mental health factors on the increased risk of abuse in intimate relationships. Previous research has explored how certain psychological traits may make some women more vulnerable to abuse by violent partners. For example, studies have found that abused women tend to be more dependent and insecure, have lower self-esteem, and have higher levels of depression and anxiety than non-abused women (Walker, 1977, p. 23; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, p. 167). Abused women also tend to be more passive and less assertive (Dutton, 1996, p.43).

These psychological factors stem from early traumatic childhood experiences, such as a history of abuse or neglect, which can shape personality development to foster tolerance of violence (Bradbury, 1989, p. 56). The research suggests that abusive men are adept at preying on these vulnerabilities and manipulating them to gain power and control in the relationship (Dutton, 2007, p.82). However, it is essential to note that while specific psychological characteristics may increase risk, the abuse of women is never justified, and the perpetrator is always responsible for their violent behaviour. That is to say, the psychological approach provides insight into why some women may stay in abusive relationships, but it tends to place undue blame on the victim. A deeper sociological analysis is needed to fully understand intimate partner violence's complex dynamics.

The psychological approach has been used to examine the dynamics of intimate partner violence, including the experiences of battered women and their abusive partners. This approach emphasises the influence of individual characteristics and mental health factors on the increased risk of abuse in intimate relationships. Studies have shown that certain psychological traits may make some women more vulnerable to abuse by violent partners. For example, abused women tend to be more dependent and insecure, have lower self-esteem, and have higher levels of depression and anxiety than non-abused women (Walker, 1977; Gondolf & Fisher, 1988). Abused women tend to be more passive and less assertive (Dutton, 1996). These psychological factors stem from early traumatic childhood experiences, such as a history of abuse or neglect, which can shape personality development to foster tolerance of violence (Bradbury, 1989).

The psychological approach also highlights the cycle of violence, a pattern of abusive behaviour that repeats over time. The cycle of violence typically includes three phases: the tension-building phase, the acute battering phase, and the honeymoon phase (Walker, 1977). The tension-building phase is characterised by minor acts of violence, such as verbal abuse, that escalate over time. The acute battering phase is marked by an explosion of violence, often resulting in injury or death. The honeymoon phase is a period of calm and reconciliation, with the abuser expressing remorse and promising to change.

The psychological approach also incorporates the learned helplessness theory, which suggests that individuals who experience chronic abuse may become passive and resigned to their situation because they believe they have no control over their circumstances (Dutton, 1996). Learned helplessness theory proposes that individuals who experience repeated abuse may learn to feel powerless, helpless, and trapped in their situation, leading them to tolerate the abuse and remain in the relationship. While the psychological approach provides valuable insight into the experiences of battered women and their abusive partners, it is essential to note that it tends to place undue blame on the victim. A deeper sociological analysis is needed to fully understand the complex dynamics of intimate partner violence and develop effective interventions and policies to prevent and address it.

In contemporary scholarship, the psychological approach has been employed to examine the experiences of battered women and their abusive partners. This approach has shed light on the cycle of violence and learned helplessness theory, providing valuable insight into the psychological factors contributing to intimate partner violence. However, a more comprehensive understanding of this complex and pervasive issue necessitates a broader sociological analysis considering the more prominent social, cultural, and political factors that may enable or perpetuate such violence.

In addition to examining the experiences of victims, it is also crucial to analyse the abusers themselves by exploring the various individual, familial, societal, and cultural factors that may contribute to abusive behaviour. Understanding the motivations, attitudes, and beliefs of abusers is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Furthermore, sociological analyses of intimate

partner violence must also consider the broader structural inequalities and power imbalances that may underlie such violence, including gender, race, class, and sexuality.

In sum, while the psychological approach has provided valuable insights into the dynamics of intimate partner violence, a more comprehensive sociological analysis is necessary for a deeper understanding of this issue. Such an analysis must consider the experiences of both victims and abusers and the larger social, cultural, and political context in which such violence occurs. Only through such a comprehensive approach can we hope to develop effective strategies for prevention and intervention.

The psychoanalytic approach has been employed to interpret the experiences of battered women in literature, exploring their environment, psyche, and resulting syndromes. Tools such as the 'fractured self' have allowed for an understanding of the victimisation that leaves eternal traumas in the protagonists, resulting in depression and passivity. The silence of these women in the face of violence can be seen as a resistance mechanism against gender discrimination and the dominant discourse in their male-dominated societies. Each protagonist searches for her identity for a long time, struggling with wounded self-esteem and irresistible depression.

Battered Women Syndrome is characterised by a belief among victims that the violence they experience is their fault and that the abuser is omnipresent and omniscient. In order to cope with the violence, victims may use defence mechanisms such as understating the danger of violence, dissociation, and denial. The Learned Helplessness Theory and the Cycle Theory of Violence further highlight how victims are broken down into three phases: a tension-building phase followed by an acute battering incident, culminating in a "honeymoon period" (absence of battering) before the cycle of violence repeats itself incessantly.

B.A Paris, Amy Tan, and Anna Quindlen have created novels that explore the experiences of battered women from different perspectives. Their works leave readers questioning why victims do not resist or escape from abusive relationships.

It is important to note that in addition to examining the experiences of victims, it is crucial to analyse the abusers themselves involves exploring the various individual, familial, societal, and cultural factors that may contribute to abusive behaviour. Understanding the motivations, attitudes, and beliefs of abusers is essential for developing effective prevention and intervention strategies. Moreover, a comprehensive

sociological analysis of intimate partner violence must also consider the more significant structural inequalities and power imbalances underlying such violence, including gender, race, class, and sexuality.

In conclusion, a feminist, psychoanalytic approach can provide valuable insights into the experiences of battered women in literature. However, to fully understand and address the complex issue of intimate partner violence, it is essential to analyse both the experiences of victims and the motivations and beliefs of abusers, as well as the larger social and cultural context in which such violence occurs.

2. BLACK AND BLUE

2.1. Biographical Sketch of Anna Quindlen

Anna Quindlen is an American journalist, essayist, and novelist. She was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on July 8, 1952. After graduating high school, she worked as a copy girl at the New York Times. After her stay at Columbia, she worked for The New York Post until she joined The Times in 1977. She was the Times' deputy metropolitan editor from 1981 to 1994 and wrote a blog that won her a Pulitzer Prize. Quindlen resigned from the Times in 1995 and has since written several best-selling novels, the most well-known of which is *One True Thing*. Her distinctive style blends domestic concerns; she writes from a woman's perspective. (Sharp, 2006: 1158)

As a columnist for The Times, it was only the third time a woman had written a regular Op-Ed blog in the newspaper's history. Her "Public and Private" column earned the 1992 Pulitzer Prize in Commentary. Most of her topics are about modern life and the human dimensions of public issues. As a social reformer, Quindlen aimed to transform images from personal life into universal ones. (Whitt, 2008: 28).

When Quindlen juggled motherhood and journalism, she managed to write two best-selling novels, *Object Lessons* and *One True Thing*. Convinced that fiction was her true calling, she left her job at the New York Times in 1995 to devote herself full-time to writing. *Black and Blue*, Quindlen's third book of fiction, garnered her highest reviews earlier this year for a heartbreaking depiction of domestic violence (Quindlen, 2002, p. 4).

2.2. Black and Blue

Black and Blue is a novel about domestic abuse against women, affecting thousands worldwide. The subject matter of this novel strikes a chord with ladies who have gone through the same thing. Why do women become victims of domestic violence? It is difficult to comprehend why women remain with their abusive husbands. Domestic abuse is a painful experience for any woman who has been a victim. Many women, though, are unable to deal with it. There has to be a more plausible explanation

for this. What can society do to protect children from abuse? Several of these difficulties are addressed throughout the text. The novel explores the psychological and emotional trauma that Fran Benedetto, the main character, experiences as a victim of domestic violence. Through Fran's story, Quindlen sheds light on the complex psychological dynamics in abusive relationships and how victims are often manipulated and controlled by their abusers.

Furthermore, Quindlen also explores the psychological impact of violence and trauma on Fran's mental health. Fran experiences symptoms of depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) due to the abuse she suffers. For instance, she has nightmares, flashbacks, and panic attacks related to the abuse. Quindlen sensitively portrays the emotional and psychological toll that domestic violence takes on victims, highlighting the need for better support and resources for abuse survivors. In addition, the novel also touches on the psychological impact of abuse on children who witness domestic violence. Fran's son, Robert, experiences trauma and emotional distress from witnessing his father's abuse of his mother. Fran's story highlights the intergenerational impact of domestic violence and the need for interventions that support the victims and their children.

The ability of literature to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy relationships is one of its greatest strengths. Fiction has the potential to be an excellent method of educating the audience about the topic of domestic abuse. The purpose of *Black and Blue* is to shed light on the unequal treatment of women in societies where males predominate. A demand for justice on behalf of the victimised women is expressed throughout the novel. The story's main point is that women should stand up to and look into all kinds of violence against women, and in the end, they should decide to leave abusive relationships.

Heise et al. studied factors that prevent women from leaving abusive relationships. They found that fear of revenge, lack of alternative sources of funding, concern for children, lack of support from family and friends, the possibility of losing custody of children as a result of a divorce, and the anticipation that the husband may change were all common barriers to leaving an abusive partner (1999, p. 7). Despite these challenges, many abused women leave their violent partners, often after years of abuse. According to a National Institute of Justice study, approximately 60 % of women

physically assaulted by their partners had left the relationship (1998, p. 2). In *Black and Blue*, Fran personifies the struggle many abused women face in deciding whether to stay or leave their abusive partners. Her story is a metaphor for the difficult choice many women in abusive relationships make.

The novel discusses how a mother bears the horror of domestic violence for the sake of her child. Fran Benedetto is a frightened woman who stays with her husband because she realises that, as a cop, he has the power to find her no matter where she goes. In a diary-style piece of writing, Fran narrates her story. The novel accounts for the protagonist's lack of resources, courage, and opportunity to leave, or at least to revolt against powerlessness in the face of battering. Fran fears her husband to the degree that she is unable to make sense of her experience in the cycle of violence and stays for nearly twenty years in a complex relationship, swinging between attraction and destruction, and witnesses all kinds of "horror and fear." (*Black & Blue*, 2010, p.112) Fran's severe condition is seen as a vehicle to convey feminist ideas during her growth journey.

2.2.1. Trapped In the Cycle of Violence: Major Contributing Factors

To understand why Fran has remained with her abuser for eighteen years, readers must comprehend the significant factors that have kept her there. Quindlen provides readers with some logical reasons why Fran or any other abused woman is compelled to remain in an abusive relationship, endure beatings and violence, and avoid making significant life changes. The novel intends to symbolise the iron chains imprisoning Fran or any other battered woman. The decision of Fran to stay with her abusive husband, Bobby Benedetto, is complex and can be attributed to various factors.

Quindlen illustrates Fran's enchantment with her love for Bobby as one of these factors: "I was so madly in love with him that I couldn't see straight. I couldn't think straight. I couldn't act straight." (*Black & Blue*, p.193). Fran's love for Bobby becomes a barrier on her journey even later because it complicates her relationships and makes her hesitate to trust others. Fran's enchantment with her love for Bobby highlights the emotional complexity of her situation and the challenges she faces in rebuilding her life after escaping from an abusive relationship. She says: "[f]or a long time I stayed because I loved Bobby Benedetto" (*Black & Blue*, p. 10). This saying reveals the power of love and emotional attachment to keeping a person in an abusive relationship, despite the

harm and danger it poses. It also highlights the difficulty of leaving an abusive relationship when the victim is emotionally attached to the abuser.

Patriarchal society is another barrier as it teaches women their place within the family. Fran stays with her abusive husband for a long, despite the danger and harm he poses to her and her son. She stays because of the societal expectations that women should be submissive and obedient to their husbands; " I thought it was my job to keep him happy" (*Black & Blue*, p. 61). The patriarchal structures of society teach women their place within the family, which can make it difficult for them to leave abusive relationships. A feminist approach can help contextualise male aggression within patriarchal structures and understand how domestic violence has its roots in patriarchy. Patriarchal structures create power imbalances where men hold more power and control within relationships, leading to a culture where violence against women is normalised and overlooked. By examining the patriarchal structures of society, we can better understand why women like Fran stay in abusive relationships and the barriers they face in trying to leave. A feminist approach can also help us identify how patriarchal structures reinforce gender roles and inequalities and how they contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence. Patriarchy is defined as a social structure in which men hold all positions of power.

Some argue that such a structure is not based on biology but rather on human social practices. According to available data, males are the primary perpetrators of domestic abuse (Hague & Malos, 2005). Feminist criticism challenges traditional masculine norms and assumptions about women. As a result, it challenges male biases and stereotypes about women (Cuddon, 1998, p. 351). Domestic abuse and the wife's resistance to it symbolise patriarchal tyranny in this novel. It deals with women's entitlement to be treated with respect and how patriarchal violence undermines that right.

Fran is afraid of society; women are always blamed for the failure of marriage. The novel criticises society for the inserted concept that women should fulfil the traditional roles of mothers and wives. For women to be considered good mothers and wives, they must take care of the family and their children while being submissive to their husbands. "I hid my wounds because I was ashamed... ashamed of myself for staying with him, but now I know that I was also afraid of being reduced" (*Black & Blue*, 2010, p.163). The novel critiques society for the inserted concept that women should

fulfil the traditional roles of mothers and wives. Women are expected to care for the family and their children while submissive to their husbands. This reinforces gender roles and inequalities, preventing women from leaving abusive relationships and pursuing autonomy and independence. The novel also highlights the fear of being reduced that victims of domestic violence may feel. Battering can strip away a person's sense of self-worth and identity, leaving them feeling reduced and powerless. This fear can be a barrier to leaving abusive relationships and seeking help.

Quindlen highlights the societal pressures and expectations of women in marriages and relationships. Fran's feelings of shame and fear of being reduced reflect the societal norms that expect women to be submissive and obedient to their husbands and to prioritise their roles as wives and mothers over their well-being. Moreover, Bobby's continued abuse and lack of remorse exemplify the power dynamics in abusive relationships, where the abuser seeks to maintain control and power over their victim through fear and intimidation. The fact that Fran has nowhere else to turn and no one to go to underscores the isolation and vulnerability that victims of domestic violence often experience. This quote highlights the societal and cultural factors contributing to domestic violence and victims' challenges in breaking free from abusive relationships. It underscores the importance of challenging and changing societal norms and expectations, perpetuating gender-based violence and promoting gender inequality.

Fear keeps her from leaving as she tells her son: "I was afraid of Daddy...I still afraid of him" (*Black & Blue*,2010, p. 239). Bobby's being a police officer enables him to impose higher power and control over his wife. He uses the position he has in his personal life as a means to intimidate and fear her in the hopes of preventing her from seeking assistance from anybody, even those she perceives to be close to her. He says ironically, "What are you going to do, Fran? Call the cops?" (*Black & Blue*,2010, p.163). Abusers often resort to frightening and scaring their victims to assert their power and gain control over them to stop their victims from leaving or seeking help from outsiders.

Battered women may feel threatened and controlled to the point that they do not feel comfortable seeking assistance. Therefore, it is much more difficult to leave or seek help, particularly given the sad reality that most women murdered by their partners are killed while attempting to leave or shortly after leaving the abusive relationship. Fran is frightened by this harsh truth; she is confident that her abusive husband will follow her

and seek his punishment if she leaves the house. This anxiety is compounded by the knowledge that three other women have been murdered after fleeing their abusers. She learned this from Patty Bancroft, a domestic violence activist whom Fran had brought to the hospital to speak to the staff and deliver a presentation about the issues facing victims of such assault; she mentions that: "We'd had three women die in our emergency room in a single year" (*Black & Blue*, p. 41). The three women were murdered after fleeing their abusers. This information adds to Fran's anxiety about leaving her abusive husband, as she knows the potential danger and risks of trying to escape from an abusive relationship.

Quindlen highlights the tragic reality of domestic violence and the inadequacy of legal measures in protecting victims. The fact that all three women who died had restraining orders against their abusers underscores the limitations of such orders in preventing violence. It suggests that the justice system alone cannot fully address the problem of domestic violence and that other interventions, such as counselling, shelters, and support groups, may be necessary to help victims escape abusive relationships and rebuild their lives. Furthermore, the different ways in which the women were killed: "One had fallen out of a window when her boyfriend came at her with a box cutter, another had had a bottle broken over her head by her husband, and a third had been shot with a Saturday night special by a man she'd divorced the year before" (*Black & Blue*, 2010, p. 41). Falling out of a window, being hit with a bottle, and being shot also highlight the range of tactics that abusers use to control and harm their partners. This predicament underscores the importance of understanding the dynamics of domestic violence and the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing it. All three murdered women had restraining orders against their killers, proving that the males were legally required to stay away from them. Because of these tragedies, any woman who wants to leave usually and legally is more likely to delay her plans.

Fran expresses her feelings by saying, "I smell my own fear" (*Black & Blue*, p.42). Quindlen highlights the intense emotions that Fran experiences as a victim of battering. Her fear is a psychological state and a visceral reaction she can physically sense. This quote also underscores domestic violence's pervasive and insidious nature, which can profoundly impact a victim's sense of self, safety, and well-being. Moreover, Fran's awareness that she cannot end the relationship conventionally reveals her recognition of the dangers of leaving an abusive partner. She understands that leaving

an abuser can be complicated and dangerous, requiring careful planning and preparation. This recognition underscores the emotional and psychological toll of domestic violence on victims. It also highlights the importance of providing support and resources to empower victims to leave abusive relationships safely and rebuild their lives.

Fran's circumstances have tied her to this marriage, and she has been made aware of the difficulties of leaving her abuser; nonetheless, she has been empowered with the never-too-late decision to leave him since she is in a condition of despair and cannot continue to live with him. On the other hand, her husband's violence has helped him establish control over her; circumstances have worked to bind Fran to the home, and she is aware of the difficulties of leaving. Her sense of responsibility is another reason for enduring such a marriage. For the sake of her child, Fran wants to keep the settlement of her house: "I stayed because I wanted my son to have a father and I wanted a home" (*Black & Blue*, p.10). She does not want him to grow up without his father. This quote reveals the complex motivations that can keep a person in an abusive relationship, including a desire for stability, love, security, and a sense of responsibility towards their children. Fran's decision to stay with her abusive husband shows how deeply ingrained societal expectations about the importance of a two-parent household can be, even in the face of abuse and violence. However, as the novel progresses, Fran realises that staying with her abusive husband is not worth sacrificing her and her son's safety. Eventually, after years of helplessness, she decides to leave her husband and start a new life, even though it means giving up her previous sense of security and stability.

One of the main reasons for her reluctance to leave is her status as a mother. As a mother, she feels responsible for providing her son with a stable home environment and a father figure. She worries that leaving Bobby would mean disrupting her son's life and depriving him of a relationship with his father. She says, "I couldn't leave, I told myself, because of Robert. I couldn't take him away from his father, no matter how lousy a father that was." (*Black & Blue*, p. 75). The quote illustrates the significant role that Fran's status as a mother plays in her decision to stay with Bobby. She feels responsible for providing her son with a stable home environment and a father figure, even though Bobby is abusive towards her. Fran worries that leaving Bobby would disrupt her son's life and deprive him of a relationship with his father. This sense of responsibility towards her child is a common reason many women stay in abusive relationships.

Although her son did not get any physical injuries, the kid has been left with psychological scars due to domestic violence impacting a kid's psychology, personal development, and human contact. In *Black and Blue*, Fran recognises the impact of violence on her son and how it has affected him emotionally and psychologically. She says: "[t]here were times when I thought that Robert was the real casualty of the violence, that his wounds were just as deep and just as lasting as mine, if not more so... Robert was quiet, but I could feel his anger and his pain, a pain that I knew would never really go away." (*Black and Blue*, pp. 5, 266). The quote suggests that the son has witnessed and experienced things that no child should have to go through and that the effects of this trauma will likely stay with him for a long time.

Children exposed to domestic violence can suffer significant psychological harm that can affect their personal development and relationships with others. Research has shown that children who witness domestic violence may experience various adverse effects, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, aggression, and poor academic performance (Holt et al., 2008, p.797).

Fran believes that her son is one of the reasons she endures her husband's behaviour, especially when she looks at her son sleeping peacefully, making her tolerate her battering. Nevertheless, her son is also why she leaves after twenty years of helplessness because she does not want him to live with the bitter fact that beating and battering are regular in marriage; "I am afraid over the years he has developed a strange kind of colour blindness. At some point, he stopped being able to see black and blue" (*Black & Blue*, p.40).

She worries that her son would accept his father's violence towards her once he sees the bruises and cuts on her face. The blindness represents the unfortunate reality that her son will become accustomed to their presence, which will cause him to become confused to the point where he will not be able to differentiate between colours; this is a metaphor for the possibility that her son will come to accept physical abuse as part of married life and not see it as wrong behaviour. Quindlen attempts to identify a patriarchal society. The narrative illustrates the suffering and struggle of mistreated women for several reasons. In order to give her son a normal childhood, Fran decides to disregard her sorrow. Fearing for her son's safety should the violence reach him or get used to it, she courageously decides to leave.

Children who grow up in violent households are also at increased risk of perpetrating or experiencing violence as adults, known as the intergenerational transmission of violence, and it can have severe and long-lasting consequences for individuals, families, and communities. However, it is essential to note that not all children who witness domestic violence will become abusers themselves. Many protective factors can help to mitigate the harmful effects of exposure to violence, including solid social support networks, access to mental health services, and positive role models who demonstrate healthy relationship behaviours. It is also essential for parents and caregivers to recognise the impact of domestic violence on children and to take steps to protect them from harm, which may involve seeking help from community resources, such as domestic violence hotlines or counselling services, and working to create a safe and stable home environment for children.

Fran's case is considered the typical case of Dr Lenore Walker's theory, which has set the act of battering and identified a battering cycle as consisting of three phases: tension building, acute violence, and then the contrition or repentance period of tranquillity, which is followed by the stage whereby tension builds up, then accumulates into a violent episode and acute battering, then the "honeymoon" period follows the violent episode (Robbin et al., 2002, p. 78). Quindlen tries to show the ability of some abusers to persuade their victims that they are the cause of their battering; that women are the reason for leading them to batter; and Bobby does the same; for he has tried hard to persuade her that she is the person to be blamed for his anger; it is her fault, not his violent nature.

The cycle of violence is a typical pattern observed in domestic abuse cases, where the abuser engages in a cycle of behaviour that typically involves a period of tension-building, followed by an acute explosion phase, and then a period of reconciliation or honeymoon phase. Fran experiences this cycle of violence in her relationship with her husband, Bobby Benedetto. Initially, their marriage appears to be going well, but soon after, Bobby's violent nature becomes apparent, and he begins to physically, emotionally, and sexually abuse Fran. Fran describes in detail how Bobby beats her for trivial matters and goes into a "battering" phase where he seems out of control. This phase of acute violence is characterised by a sudden and intense outburst of violence that can last for minutes or even hours. During this phase, the abuser is highly unpredictable, and the victim is often afraid. Fran's experiences in the novel highlight

the devastating impact of domestic violence on victims and the dangerous and unpredictable nature of abusers.

The cycle of violence is a complex phenomenon that can be difficult to break. In the novel, Fran struggles to escape the cycle of violence and the ongoing abuse she experiences at the hands of Bobby. Her experiences highlight the importance of providing support and resources for victims of domestic violence, as well as the need for effective interventions and policies to address this pervasive issue. Fran's experiences highlight the importance of providing support and resources for victims of domestic violence. It can be challenging for victims to leave abusive relationships and start a new life, especially if they have children or financial dependence on their abuser. Fran's experiences show the need for safe housing, legal assistance, and counselling services to help victims overcome the trauma of domestic violence and rebuild their lives. Effective interventions and policies are also crucial in addressing the issue of domestic violence. The novel highlights the need for law enforcement to take domestic violence seriously and hold abusers accountable for their actions. It also emphasises the importance of education and awareness-raising campaigns to prevent domestic violence and promote healthy relationships.

In conclusion, Fran's experiences in *Black and Blue* illustrate the devastating impact of domestic violence on victims and the challenges they face in breaking the cycle of violence. Her story underscores the importance of providing support and resources for victims and implementing effective interventions and policies to address this pervasive issue. It is essential to break the cycle of violence and create a safe and supportive environment for victims to heal and rebuild their lives.

Quindlen shed light on the ability of some abusers to persuade their victims that they are the cause of such an action and that those women are leading them to batter. Bobby does the same, for he has tried to convince her that she is the person to be blamed for his anger. It is her fault, not his violent nature. It is called the tension-building phase, where the abusers assault their partners. On the other hand, their partners often make excuses for abusers' behaviour to keep their homes safe (Huey et al., 2007).

Anna Quindlen captures the fear and tension that Fran experiences during the tension-building phase of the cycle of violence. The quote, “[t]he tension in the air was almost palpable. I could feel Bobby's anger simmering just below the surface, waiting

to boil over.” (*Black & Blue*, p. 98) suggests that Bobby's anger is simmering just below the surface, waiting to boil over, and Fran can sense it. The use of the word "palpable" emphasises the intensity of the tension in the air, suggesting that it is almost tangible, which creates a sense of impending danger and highlights the unpredictability of Bobby's behaviour during this phase. Fran is constantly on edge, never knowing what might trigger Bobby's anger and violence. This quote effectively conveys domestic violence's emotional and psychological impact on victims. It highlights the constant fear and anxiety that victims experience and the danger that can arise during the tension-building phase of the cycle of violence.

It is well known that during the tension-building period, abusers are more possessive, jealous, and aggressive with their partners out of fear that they will leave them. Wives, on the other hand, frequently make excuses for abusers' behaviour during this phase in order to maintain domestic tranquillity (Huey et al.). She recalls the abusive relationship and has been married for eighteen years. She has kept her secret for many reasons and hidden her bruises from everyone, even her child. Quindlen shows the reasons which hinder the battered woman from leaving, and her novel analyses the feeling of hesitation any battered woman may experience when she decides to seek help or leave the batterer. Fran must tolerate her husband's brutal and violent acts and remain silent for almost twenty years.

In the second phase, referred to as acute battering, the abuser acts more unexpectedly and creates the sense that they are entirely out of control. Abusers frequently blame their partners for their violent behaviour and may engage in violent behaviour in public and at home. Physical interaction is not the only type of abuse. It may also involve dehumanising treatment or violent threats. In general, abused partners are expected to remain silent and minimise the severity of the abuse to themselves and anyone who questions their experience.

When Fran describes her husband as "a wild animal...[and his] face was contorted with rage, and he was hitting me so hard that I thought my bones would break." (*Black and Blue*, pp. 117,153). It is a powerful depiction of the acute explosion phase of the cycle of violence. The quote suggests that Bobby's anger and violence have reached an almost unbearable level for Fran. The phrase "contorted with rage" emphasises it, which suggests that Bobby is no longer in control of his emotions. The description of

Bobby striking Fran that she thought her bones would break is a chilling reminder of the devastating physical impact of domestic violence. The quote captures the intense fear and pain that Fran experiences during this phase and the sense of helplessness that victims often feel in the face of such violence.

Fran's husband is a violent abuser who first beats and humiliates his victim before apologising for his behaviour and promising to change. The third phase of this vicious cycle occurs when Fran's husband demonstrates genuine remorse for his behaviour and expresses genuine affection for his battered wife. In particular, "when he always said he was sorry" (*Black & Blue*, p.22) after his beating, assaulting, and battering acts and she always forgives him, believing that he will change in the future and that everything is going to be all right, he creates a psychological dilemma because his apology for his violent acts and showing repentance make him gain her sympathy and bind her to him from the very beginning. Fran's husband, Bobby, is a typical batterer who first severely beats and abuses his wife before apologising; in this case, the third period is when her batterer admits to his violent act, expresses regret, and demonstrates compassion for the victim in order to persuade her not to leave or to curb her desire to leave, so that she will endure the circumstance and remain in (Ogle & Jacobs,2002, p.78). Along with this struggle within the cycle of violence, as Dr Patrica Easteal states, "a psychological process may occur with the victim acquiring a learned helplessness response to the situation" (1991, p.2). It is important to note that learned helplessness is not a conscious decision or a character flaw on the victim's part. Instead, it is a natural response to an overwhelming and inescapable situation.

Fran illustrates the period of reconciliation or honeymoon phase often experienced by victims of battering. She says, "[a]fter the fight, Bobby was always extra sweet to me. He would bring me breakfast in bed and tell me how much he loved me." (*Black & Blue*, p. 186). It suggests that after a violent episode, Bobby would try to make up for his behaviour by being extra sweet and affectionate towards Fran, bringing her breakfast in bed and telling her how much he loved her. However, it is crucial to recognise that this behaviour is often a manipulative tactic used by abusers to maintain control over their victims. The reconciliation or honeymoon phase can confuse victims, who may feel torn between their desire to believe their abuser can change and their fear that the abuse will continue.

However, Fran and Bobby appear to cover up their conflicts with others. That is to say, they act as if everything is quite well, pretending that peace has been restored. This superficial happiness resting on a foundation of black and blue bruises is a sign that the relationship is about to break and the partners must find separate places to live. Furthermore, this happens: "It was like there were two Bobbys, two Frans, two couples" (*Black & Blue*, p.56). Fran describes how she and her husband, Bobby, can appear to be a loving and happy couple in public, while in reality, they live in fear and isolation at home. This feeling is a common experience for victims of domestic violence, who may feel pressure to maintain a facade of normalcy in public while hiding the abuse they are experiencing in private. The quote also suggests that the abuser may have a dual personality, with one persona loving and charming in public and another abusive and controlling in private. It is a common characteristic of many abusers, who may use manipulation and charm to gain control over their victims while hiding their abusive behaviour from others. Fran underscores the complexity and emotional turmoil that victims of domestic violence experience, as they may feel torn between their love for their partner and their fear of the abuse.

The psychological impact of the cycle of violence can be long-lasting and affect all areas of a victim's life. Victims may experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). They may also experience depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems. The trauma of domestic violence can affect a victim's ability to form healthy relationships, trust others, and feel safe and secure. Fran's symptoms of PTSD include nightmares, flashbacks, and panic attacks, which are all related to the trauma of the abuse. Throughout the novel, Fran experiences vivid nightmares related to the abuse she has suffered. For example, on page 34, Fran describes a nightmare in which she is being chased by Bobby, who is trying to kill her: "I had a nightmare last night that I was being chased. It was Bobby, of course, and he was trying to kill me. I woke up so suddenly that I was gasping for air, my heart pounding like a drum" (*Black & Blue*, p. 34). This nightmare manifests Fran's fear and anxiety related to the abuse and the ongoing threat she feels from Bobby.

In psychology, nightmares are considered a sleep disorder often associated with various mental health conditions and emotional disturbances. Various factors, including stress, trauma, anxiety, depression, medications, and certain sleep disorders, can cause nightmares. Sometimes, nightmares may also be related to a person's subconscious

thoughts and emotions. From a psychological perspective, nightmares are often seen as a way for the brain to process and cope with emotional and psychological stress. Nightmares can manifest unresolved emotions or traumatic experiences and may serve as a means of working through these issues. Therapists and counsellors often use dream analysis to help patients understand their thoughts, emotions, and behaviours. By exploring the content of their nightmares and identifying recurring themes, patients can gain a deeper understanding of their inner world and work towards healing and growth. Additionally, cognitive-behavioural therapy and medications may help alleviate nightmares symptoms and improve the patient's overall mental health.

From a psychological perspective, Fran's nightmares can be seen as a manifestation of the emotional and psychological trauma she has experienced. The nightmares may be a way for Fran's brain to process and cope with the trauma she has endured and the ongoing stress and fear she faces while in hiding. In the novel, Fran's nightmares are vivid and disturbing and often involve her husband or other figures from her past. These nightmares can reflect the ongoing emotional turmoil Fran experiences as she struggles to rebuild her life and come to terms with her past.

In addition to nightmares, Fran also experiences flashbacks, intrusive memories of past traumatic events. These flashbacks are triggered by various stimuli, such as smells, sounds, or sights, that remind Fran of the abuse. For example, on page 68, she says, "It was like a switch had been flipped. Suddenly, I was back there, in the basement with Bobby. The smell of him, the feel of his hands on me, it was all so vivid. I could hardly breathe". Fran experiences a flashback while she is in the grocery store, triggered by the sight of a man who resembles Bobby. This flashback is a reminder of the trauma Fran has experienced and its ongoing impact on her life.

In psychology, a flashback is an intrusive memory that involves a sudden and vivid re-experiencing of a traumatic event. Flashbacks can be triggered by various cues, such as sights, sounds, smells, or other sensory experiences that remind the person of the traumatic event. From a psychological perspective, flashbacks are often seen as a way for the brain to process and cope with unresolved trauma. They can manifest the ongoing impact of trauma on a person's emotional and psychological well-being. In the novel *Black and Blue*, Fran experiences a flashback in the grocery store, triggered by the sight of a man who resembles her abusive husband, Bobby. This flashback is a

reminder of the trauma that Fran has experienced and its ongoing impact on her life. It is a vivid and distressing re-experiencing of the trauma and can cause intense fear, anxiety, and distress. Flashbacks can be a common symptom of (PTSD).

Furthermore, Fran experiences panic attacks, which are sudden and intense feelings of fear and anxiety. These panic attacks are often triggered by situations or stimuli that remind Fran of the abuse. Fran experiences a panic attack while driving, triggered by the sight of a police car: "I saw a police car in my rear-view mirror, and suddenly I couldn't breathe. My heart was pounding so hard I thought it would burst out of my chest. I had to pull over to the side of the road, and I just sat there, gasping for air, until it passed" (*Black & Blue*, p. 80). This panic attack is a reminder of the trauma Fran has experienced and the ongoing fear and anxiety she feels related to the abuse. Fran's experiences in the novel highlight the profound psychological impact of domestic violence. Her nightmares, flashbacks, and panic attacks are a testament to the long-term effects of abuse on survivors and the importance of providing support and resources for victims of domestic violence.

Fran's justification of her batterer's cruelty and violence enables her to stay with him; conversely, Fran's husband believes that her batterer does nothing horrific or cruel to her; he considers it to be expected; "He always said I exaggerated. Mountain out of a molehill. That is one of his favourite expressions" (*Black & Blue*, p.40). Quindlen highlights the different perspectives and justifications that can exist within an abusive relationship. Fran's justification of her batterer's cruelty and violence is a common experience for survivors of abuse, who may blame themselves or believe that their abuser's behaviour is somehow justified, which can make it difficult for them to leave the relationship, as they may feel responsible for the abuse or that they deserve it. Conversely, Fran's husband's belief that her batterer's behaviour is expected is a chilling reminder of how abuse can become normalised and accepted within a relationship. This normalisation can make it difficult for outsiders to recognise the abuse or for survivors to speak out about it, as they may fear their experiences will be dismissed or minimised. The line "He always said I exaggerated. Mountain out of a molehill" is particularly telling, as it speaks to the gaslighting and manipulation that can occur in abusive relationships. Gaslighting is a tactic used by abusers to make their victims doubt their perceptions and memories and can be a powerful tool for maintaining control over the

victim. This quote underscores the complexity and insidiousness of domestic abuse and how it can be enabled and perpetuated by both the abuser and the victim.

2.2.2. The Power Play: Analysing Abusive Behavior Through a Psychological Lens

Bobby continues to be abusive, hoping she will reconsider her decision to leave him and stay. He feels no remorse for what he has done to his wife. He believes he has gained power and control over her because she has nowhere else to turn and no one to go. From a psychological perspective, Bobby's behaviour can be analysed due to his psychological issues and personality traits. While the novel *Black and Blue* do not explicitly provide information about Bobby's psychological problems like the antagonists in *The Kitchen God's Wife* and *Behind Closed Doors*, some quotes can be used to support the idea that Bobby's behaviour can be analysed as a result of his own psychological issues and personality traits. In Chapter Two of the novel, Fran gives a shred of evidence for such an analysis when she says, "He had a look in his eye, like a kid who likes to pull the wings off flies." (*Black & Blue*, p. 20). This quote suggests that Bobby may enjoy causing harm, which could indicate a personality disorder or other psychological issue.

One possible explanation for Bobby's abusive behaviour is that he has a personality disorder, such as narcissistic personality disorder or antisocial personality disorder, which can be characterised by a lack of empathy, impulsivity, and a disregard for others' emotions and well-being, as mentioned before in the previous chapters. Bobby's abusive behaviour may also stem from his experiences of trauma and abuse. Fran describes his behaviour, "He was like a different person sometimes, somebody I didn't know." (*Black and Blue*, p. 32). This quote indicates that Bobby may have a split personality or dissociative identity disorder, which can be a symptom of trauma or other psychological issues. Fran describes him as "so sweet I couldn't believe it was the same man who had hit me" (*Black & Blue*, p. 33). Her description suggests that Bobby's behaviour may be unpredictable due to personality disorder. Mainly when she implies that Bobby's anger may be uncontrollable; "His rage was like a tornado, indiscriminate, destroying everything in its path." (*Black & Blue*, p. 49). The metaphor of a tornado suggests that Bobby's rage is vast and unpredictable, causing destruction and harm to

everything in its path. This quote indicates the psychological issues and personality traits that may contribute to Bobby's abusive behaviour, such as a lack of emotional regulation and impulse control. The quote also reveals the impact of Bobby's behaviour on those around him and the harm and destruction that domestic violence can cause within families. Bobby's rage is directed towards Fran and affects their son, who witnesses and experiences the abuse.

Research has shown that individuals who have experienced trauma or abuse in their own lives may be more likely to perpetrate abuse themselves. Cathy Spatz Widom's research suggests that individuals who have experienced childhood abuse or neglect may be more likely to perpetrate domestic violence as adults. The study found that men who had been physically abused or neglected as children were more likely to be arrested for domestic violence as adults (1989, p. 162). The study suggests that the link between trauma and abuse, as well as power imbalances within relationships, can contribute to the perpetration of domestic violence in a direct way. Another possible psychological explanation for Bobby's behaviour is that he may use violence to exert power and control over Fran. Domestic violence is often linked to power imbalances within relationships, where the perpetrator seeks to control their partner through violence and intimidation.

Bobby Benedetto's behaviour can be analysed as indicative of narcissistic personality disorder. Narcissistic personality disorder is a mental health condition characterised by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others. Bobby's behaviour in the novel demonstrates several traits common to individuals with narcissistic personality disorder. One of the defining features of narcissistic personality disorder is a lack of empathy for others. Bobby consistently fails to recognise or understand the impact of his actions on Fran and their son, and he seems to lack genuine concern for their well-being. Another trait of narcissistic personality disorder is a tendency to seek admiration and attention from others. Bobby frequently demands attention from Fran and others around him, and he appears to derive pleasure from exerting control and power over them. A sense of entitlement and grandiosity also characterises Bobby's behaviour. He believes he is entitled to control Fran and their son, and he frequently belittles and dismisses their needs and concerns.

Furthermore, Bobby's behaviour can be seen as maintaining a sense of superiority and control over Fran. Narcissistic individuals often use manipulation and

emotional abuse to maintain power and control over others, and Bobby's behaviour towards Fran can be seen as a manifestation of this trait. To conclude, Bobby's behaviour in the novel can be analysed as indicative of narcissistic personality disorder. His lack of empathy, entitlement, need for admiration, and desire for control and power over others are all consistent with this condition. Understanding Bobby's behaviour from this perspective can provide insight into the dynamics of domestic violence and the psychological factors that contribute to abusive relationships.

Some quotes from the novel demonstrate Bobby as indicative of narcissistic personality disorder: "He was so charming, so full of himself, so sure of his importance" (*Black & Blue*, p. 8). This quote highlights Bobby's sense of grandiosity and entitlement, critical features of narcissistic personality disorder. Bobby believes he is superior to others and deserves special treatment and attention. When Fran says, "Bobby didn't apologise. He didn't feel he had to" (*Black & Blue*, p. 38), she demonstrates Bobby's lack of empathy and disregard for others' feelings. He is not concerned with how his behaviour affects others and does not take responsibility for his actions. Bobby's manipulative tendencies and his ability to gaslight others are evident when his wife describes him, "He had a way of making you feel like you were the crazy one" (*Black & Blue*, p.51). He twists the truth and distorts reality to make himself look good, and others look bad. "He never hit her where it would show" (*Black & Blue*, p.150). This quote shows Bobby's need for control and ability to manipulate situations to his advantage. He is careful not to leave visible marks on Fran, which allows him to maintain the appearance of being a loving husband to outsiders. These quotes demonstrate how Bobby's behaviour in the novel can be analysed as indicative of narcissistic personality disorder. He exhibits a sense of grandiosity and entitlement, a lack of empathy, manipulative tendencies, and a need for control.

Bobby's behaviour can also be analysed in the context of societal and cultural factors. Patriarchal structures create power imbalances where men hold more power and control within relationships, leading to a culture where violence against women is normalised and overlooked. It can be seen in how Bobby's behaviour is not consistently recognised or taken seriously by people around him, including law enforcement and other authorities. Fran struggles to come forward and report the abuse due to fears of being believed or blamed for the abuse. Research has shown that patriarchal structures

can contribute to the perpetuation of domestic violence by perpetuating gender roles that place men in positions of power and control while placing women in subservient roles.

Michael P. Johnson presents a typology of domestic violence that distinguishes between different types of violence in relationships. He argues that patriarchal structures perpetuate "intimate terrorism," characterised by coercive control and violence to maintain power and dominance over the victim. These structures perpetuate gender roles that place men in positions of power and control while placing women in subservient roles, creating an imbalance of power within relationships that can lead to violence to maintain control (2008, pp. 27,29). They create an imbalance of power within relationships that can lead to violence to maintain control. Furthermore, societal and cultural factors can create barriers for victims of domestic violence to seek help and leave abusive relationships. These factors include victim-blaming attitudes, fear of retribution, lack of resources and support, and cultural norms prioritising family unity over individual safety and well-being.

'Women's silence' in the novel is a resistance mechanism against the dominant discourse and gender discrimination in male-dominated societies. The protagonist searches for her identity for a long time until she is overwhelmed with wounded self-esteem and an irresistible depression. According to "battered women syndrome," she may think that the violence that besets her being is her fault and that the abuser is omnipresent and omniscient. Fran uses defence mechanisms to cope with what is happening in her relationship, such as understating the danger of violence, dissociation, and denial. According to Weitzman, "Women felt it essential to keep silent about their suffering" (2008, p. 6). Weitzman emphasises the additional pressure that victims of domestic violence may feel to keep silent about their suffering. This can be due to various reasons, such as fear of retaliation, shame, and societal pressures to maintain the appearance of a happy and stable family. The use of defence mechanisms and the pressure to keep silent about the abuse can be barriers to seeking help and accessing support services. It is essential to recognise the impact of these factors on victims of domestic violence and to provide a safe and supportive environment for victims to disclose their experiences and access necessary resources.

Fran is silent because women are often the ones who are blamed when a marriage does not work out. The assumption that women should fulfil the traditional roles of

mothers and wives is criticised in the book as being ingrained in society and receiving criticism from the author. Women must respect their husbands' authority and take on the responsibilities of having a family and raising children in that family to be considered good mothers and wives. Fran's reluctance to speak out about her abuse reflects this societal pressure, as she fears being blamed or judged for the breakdown of her marriage.

Fran Benedetto experiences a range of psychological symptoms due to silence and the abuse she has suffered at the hands of her husband, Bobby Benedetto. These symptoms include depression and anxiety. Fran's experiences of abuse have left her with a sense of hopelessness and despair, which are core symptoms of depression. Throughout the novel, Fran struggles with sadness and emptiness, often wondering if life will ever improve. Fran's diary entries reveal her sense of isolation and her difficulty finding support from those around her. Her feelings of depression also manifest in her physical symptoms, including fatigue and loss of appetite. In addition to depression, Fran experiences anxiety symptoms, including nervousness and hypervigilance. Fran's experiences of abuse have left her with a sense of constant fear and a heightened awareness of potential danger. This anxiety is reflected in her diary entries, where she describes feeling on edge and unable to relax. Fran's diary entries reveal her struggles with intrusive thoughts and memories of the abuse and her difficulty coping with the trauma's ongoing effects.

Fran does not deny that Bobby's violent nature has been shown to her from their engagement period, but she was under the influence of his charming character, which had deceived her; moreover, she thinks he will change in the future, especially when he apologises and sheds tears for his bad behaviour. He shows contrition until he gains her sympathy: "[a]nd I cried, too. When I cried in those days, it was always for his pain, not mine". (*Black and Blue*, p.4) Practising violence and apologising represents the "honeymoon phase", where the victim thinks everything will be all right. She details how remorseful her husband was, how he apologised and wept while begging for forgiveness, and how he was always sweet and cared for her after the incident. As she states, "[h]e made me feel cared for" (*Black & Blue*, 66).

Laura Sanderson highlights the different types of abuse that can occur in domestic violence and the devastating consequences that can result from physical abuse. The use of the colour scheme "Black and Blue" to represent verbal, psychological, and

sexual abuse is a powerful metaphor that conveys the emotional and physical pain that victims of domestic violence experience. She says, "Verbal, psychological, and sexual abuse are represented by the colour scheme Black and Blue...Some women in abusive relationships endure the horrible outcome of succumbing to their wounds and dying away" (Sanderson, 2008, p.23). Sanderson notes that these forms of physical abuse can cause severe injuries and even death.

Quindlen can effectively convey the vast, dramatic events and the mundane, daily things that comprise life. Fran has several bruises and wounds due to Bobby's constant assaults. This word is appropriate as a title since Fran's body is covered in black and blue bruises and wounds. Bobby is a police officer whose job it is to maintain order. Ironically, he has violated the law by hitting his wife. The phrase "physical abuse" refers to any event in which one person uses his physical power to inflict pain or suffering on another one: "There is no one in the world who knows that my husband twisted my wrists, pushed me down the stairs, broke my_ and finally my nose"(*Black & Blue*, p.68). This quote from the novel shows the often-hidden nature of domestic violence and the sense of isolation and shame that victims can experience. It suggests that the protagonist, Fran, keeps the abuse she has suffered at the hands of her husband, Bobby, a secret from the world, even though he has physically harmed her in multiple ways. The quote also hints at the escalating nature of the abuse, as it progresses from twisting her wrists to pushing her downstairs, breaking something (presumably a bone), and finally breaking her nose. This progression is a common feature of the cycle of violence, where the abuse often becomes more severe over time.

One of the unique features of *Black and Blue* is its use of diary-style writing, which allows the reader to gain insight into the thoughts and feelings of Fran Benedetto as she navigates the challenges of leaving an abusive relationship. This diary-style writing provides a window into Fran's psychological state, allowing the reader to analyse her character and the characters around her from a psychological perspective. Through Fran's diary entries, the reader gains insight into the trauma and emotional turmoil she experiences as a victim of domestic violence. Furthermore, diary-style writing allows the reader to see the impact of domestic violence on Fran's perception of herself and her relationships. For example, as Fran begins to recognise the abuse she is experiencing, she reflects on her upbringing and how it has influenced her understanding of love and relationships. This self-reflection allows the reader to analyse the impact of childhood

experiences on adult relationships and the psychological factors that contribute to abusive relationships.

In addition to Fran's character, the diary-style writing also offers insight into the psychological state of the abuser, Bobby Benedetto. While Bobby is not the novel's narrator, his behaviour and words are reflected in Fran's diary entries, providing a glimpse into his character and the psychological factors contributing to his abusive behaviour. For example, Bobby's need for control and power over Fran is evident in his words and actions, and his lack of empathy for her and their son is apparent in how he treats them. The use of diary-style writing in *Black and Blue* offers a powerful tool for analysing the characters and their behaviours from a psychological perspective. By providing insight into the characters' thoughts and emotions, the diary-style writing allows the reader to understand the psychological factors contributing to domestic violence and its impact on individuals and families.

Bobby's mistreatment of Fran's emotional stability is equally disturbing. Direct physical harm to the victim is not included in the definition of psychological abuse. The consequences, however, might be just as severe as physical abuse. The psychological abuser fires out emotional shots. Verbal aggression, criticism, manipulation, and derogatory language are all forms of abuse that may affect a person's mental health. Bobby's psychological abuse dominates Fran and Bobby's relationship, and Bobby's position of dominance and power paved the way for aggressiveness, violence, and humiliation. Bobby's treatment of Fran as his possession is psychological abuse. This is seen in his use of the possessive pronouns, "My wife. My girl" (*Black & Blue*, p.178).

Fran is a typical example of a battered victim because she enables her abuser to continue abusing her through her passivity and tolerance of the bitter and miserable situation without objecting, without telling anyone about what is happening, and without seeking help from the appropriate or sincere individuals. She is also to blame and shares responsibility for what has happened to her. "learned helplessness" is a metaphor for the emotional numbing and behavioural passivity that may sometimes result from trauma. During the process of being victimised, victims may conclude that resistance is futile. This processing is depicted as an impending disposition to be independent regarding response and reaction. The disabilities result from this expectation and the involvement of self-esteem loss. She states, "I was like death, except I had to go on living" (*Black &*

Blue, p.180). This quote conveys the profound emotional and psychological numbness that can accompany trauma and abuse. The phrase “I was like death” suggests a feeling of emptiness and detachment from life, as if the speaker is merely going through the motions of existence without any real sense of purpose or meaning. The fact that the speaker acknowledges the need to “go on living” despite feeling dead inside underscores the resilience and determination that can emerge in the face of adversity. It also speaks to the reality that trauma survivors often have to continue their lives even while struggling with the aftermath of their experiences. It captures the complex emotional landscape of trauma and how survivors may feel disconnected from themselves and the world around them.

Psychological abuse does not include direct physical injury to the victim. However, it may be equally as devastating as physical abuse. The psychological abuser's weapon is their emotions. Psychological abuse is characterised by verbal assault, condemnation, manipulation, and humiliation. Fran and Bobby's relationship is marked by a prevalence of psychological abuse, with Fran using this kind of control and domination to create the stage for Bobby's wrath, aggression, and humiliation; “[b]ruises or no bruises, it still hurt deep in the bone, where only my finger could find the damage” (*Black and Blue*. P. 23). Her husband's physical abuse causes her to suffer from psychological trauma. Fran's mental health suffers from her abuser's physical and psychological abuse, including beatings, isolation, threats, and terror. Nonetheless, she remained with him for years. The abuser tries very hard to erase her personality and make her reach the state of learned helplessness, but she does not give up completely, and she does not become helpless eventually.

Emotional abuse can be verbal or non-verbal. It is a toxic element that destroys one's self-esteem. The victim's self-worth is harmed when this type of abuse involves insults, accusations, cheating, and ignoring. As with a misbehaving child, the offender can put his spouse in a position where she must earn his favour through her obedience, which is another kind of emotional abuse. Another type of emotional abuse is deliberate disconnection from family and neighbours. Emotional abuse is more pervasive and harder to detect than physical abuse.

While Fran fits the stereotype of a battered woman, she is partially to blame for her situation because of her passivity, submission, silence, and tolerance of the bitter and

miserable situation without objection, without telling anyone about the actual situation, and without seeking help from suitable or sincere people. The author hopes that by writing about the predicament of battered women, she will gain the readers' empathy and draw attention to the problems that battered women face in today's society. She also hopes that by outlining the challenges that battered women face and the steps they must take to overcome them, she will be able to help pave the way for other battered women to escape their situations.

When they were engaged and dating, she convinced herself that this would never happen again; then, after they got married, he continued in his violent nature while she tried to justify his brutal deeds and find excuses for him to convince herself that he would change in the future so that she could continue with him. She always justifies his violent acts and glosses over his violent acts; "When we were dating, I thought it would stop when we were married. When we were married, I thought a baby would help. After the baby, I thought if we had another child, he'd feel better" (*Black & Blue*, p. 46). This quote captures domestic violence's complex and often cyclical nature, where the abuse can escalate over time and become more severe. It also highlights the helplessness and confusion that victims experience, as they may feel trapped in a situation they cannot control or escape.

Fran shows the feeling of entrapment and powerlessness that many victims of domestic violence experience. She feels that she cannot leave her abusive husband, Bobby, for various reasons, including their child's formative years, the adjustment to school, and the disruption of the family's summer plans. She justifies staying, "When Robert was two, I couldn't leave because those were the formative years" (*Black & Blue*, p.46). This quote reflects the everyday experiences of many victims of domestic violence who feel trapped in their situation, unable to leave or seek help due to fear, shame, or a sense of responsibility to their family. Fran's thought process also illustrates how the abuser often wields power and control over the victim, making it difficult for them to leave or take action. Fran clearly shows her psychological state as battered, trapped in a learned, helpless state of mind. She says, "When Robert was starting school, I couldn't leave ... I couldn't leave in May because I'd screw up our family summer vacation, and I couldn't leave in November because it would screw up the holidays. So I stayed, stayed, and stayed" (*Black & Blue*, p. 46). Her saying shows the complex and challenging decision-making process many battered women face when leaving an abusive

relationship. The protagonist, Fran, feels trapped and unable to leave her abusive husband, Bobby, because of the impact it would have on her children and family's routine, including starting school, the summer vacation, and the holidays. It is an example of learned helplessness, a typical psychological response to ongoing abuse. Learned helplessness is a state of mind where the victim feels powerless, hopeless, and unable to control their situation, even if opportunities to escape are presented.

2.2.3. Beyond the Abuse: Understanding the Psychological Impact of Learned Helplessness

One of the vital psychological symptoms that Fran experiences is learned helplessness. She says it clearly, "I had learned to accept the unacceptable, to believe that I was powerless to change my situation, to believe that I had no other choice." (*Black & Blue*, p. 265) Fran describes how she had learned to accept the unacceptable and had come to believe she was powerless to change her situation or escape from her abusive husband, Bobby. This sense of powerlessness and hopelessness is a common experience for victims of domestic violence who have been subjected to ongoing abuse and control by their abusers. Learned helplessness is a psychological state where a person feels unable to control their situation, even if opportunities to escape are presented. Victims of domestic violence often experience learned helplessness due to the ongoing abuse and control exerted by their abuser. Fran's experiences of feeling trapped and unable to leave her abusive husband are characteristic of learned helplessness.

In a psychological approach, Fran's experiences can be analysed through the lens of trauma theory. Trauma theory suggests that victims of domestic violence may experience a range of psychological symptoms due to the trauma they have endured. These symptoms can include feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and disconnection from oneself and others. She confesses, "I had become what I had always despised, one of those women who are trapped in a situation they cannot control, who are abused by a man they cannot leave, who are so dependent upon someone else that they cannot imagine life without him." (*Black and Blue*, p. 40) Fran, the protagonist, describes how she has become trapped in a situation she cannot control, abused by a man she cannot leave, and so dependent upon him that she cannot imagine life without him. This quote

illustrates the concept of learned helplessness, a psychological state where a person feels powerless to control their situation, even if opportunities to escape are presented.

Fran expresses a sense of feeling trapped and unable to imagine a life without Bobby, but also unable to imagine a life with him or a life at all: "I felt trapped, unable to imagine a life without him, unable to imagine a life with him, unable to imagine a life at all." (*Black & Blue*, p. 205). This sense of hopelessness and despair is characteristic of learned helplessness, a psychological state where a person feels powerless to control their situation, even if opportunities to escape are presented. Fran's experiences may also share some similarities with Stockholm Syndrome, and it is essential to note that Stockholm Syndrome and learned helplessness are not synonymous. Stockholm Syndrome is a psychological response in some individuals who are held captive or under extreme duress, where they develop a bond or positive feelings towards their captor. It is not necessarily a typical or expected response to domestic violence.

In Fran's case, her dependency on Bobby and inability to envision a life without him indicate learned helplessness, a typical response to ongoing abuse and control in domestic violence situations. Fran's experiences reflect the devastating psychological impact of domestic violence on victims, emphasising the need for comprehensive support and resources to help victims escape abusive situations and rebuild their lives. In conclusion, while there may be some overlap between Stockholm Syndrome and learned helplessness in domestic violence cases, Fran's experiences in *Black and Blue* are more reflective of the latter.

Throughout the novel, Quindlen uses a variety of motifs to underscore the theme of battering and to highlight the emotional and psychological toll of domestic abuse. One of the key motifs in the novel is the colour blue, which is used to symbolise both the physical bruises and emotional wounds that Fran Benedetto, the protagonist, suffers at the hands of her abusive husband. The novel's title is a reference to this motif, as "black and blue" is a common phrase used to describe the bruising that can result from physical abuse. Additionally, Fran's son Robert is often described as having "blue eyes," which reminds him of the abuse he and his mother have suffered.

Another important motif in the novel is the idea of identity and self-discovery. After fleeing from her abusive husband and assuming a new identity, Fran struggles to find her place in the world and to come to terms with her past. Throughout the novel,

she grapples with questions about who she is and wants to be as she attempts to build a new life for herself and her son. She says, "I'm not sure who I am anymore. Or who I was, really. I mean, I know my name and my social security number and all that. But sometimes it feels like that's all I know." (*Black & Blue*, p. 51) The motif of identity and self-discovery are repeated in the novel. Fran struggles to accept her new identity after fleeing her abusive husband and assuming a new name and life. She grapples with questions about who she is and wants to be as she attempts to build a new life for herself and her son. In this quote, Fran expresses her uncertainty about her identity, stating that she is no longer sure who she is. She acknowledges that she knows basic facts about herself, such as her name and social security number, but feels these are not enough to define her. Fran's struggle to define herself in the aftermath of abuse is a common experience for survivors of domestic violence, many of whom have had their sense of self eroded by years of emotional and physical abuse. This quote serves as a poignant illustration of the challenges faced by survivors of domestic violence as they strive to rebuild their lives and rediscover their identities. It underscores the importance of self-discovery and rebuilding a sense of self in the healing process and highlights the resilience and strength of survivors in the face of adversity.

Fran's experience of feeling lost and unsure of her identity is common for survivors of domestic violence who have had their sense of self eroded by years of abuse. As she attempts to rebuild her life and move forward, Fran is forced to confront difficult questions about her identity and how abuse has shaped her past and present. "Who was I now? That was the question. I had been someone's wife, someone's victim. But who was I now that I was on my own?" (*Black & Blue*, p. 168) Throughout the novel, Fran struggles with questions about who she is and wants to be as she attempts to build a new life for herself and her son. This quote is significant because it represents a turning point for Fran in her journey of self-discovery. She is no longer defined solely by her past as a victim of abuse but is actively seeking to define herself on her terms.

By questioning who she is now alone, Fran is actively defining her identity and asserting her independence. It is a crucial step in the healing process for survivors of domestic violence, who may have had their sense of agency and autonomy eroded by years of abuse. In the end, Fran's journey of self-discovery and her efforts to rebuild her sense of self is critical to her ability to move forward and achieve a sense of closure and resolution. This quote represents a pivotal moment in this journey and highlights the

importance of self-discovery and agency in the healing process for survivors of domestic violence.

A third motif in the novel is the concept of memory and how traumatic experiences can shape our perceptions of the world. Fran's memories of her abusive husband and the life she left behind are a constant presence throughout the novel. Quindlen uses these memories to illustrate the lasting impact of domestic abuse on survivors. Quindlen creates a powerful and moving portrait of one woman's journey from victim to survivor, illuminating the often-hidden reality of domestic abuse in our society. She illustrates, "The memories were always there, like an ache that wouldn't go away...It was like I was carrying around a suitcase full of memories, and I couldn't put it down." (*Black & Blue*, pp. 174, 221). Quindlen highlights how Fran's memories of her abusive husband and the life she left behind continue to shape her perceptions of the world and impact her ability to move forward. Despite her efforts to start a new life, Fran finds that her memories of the past are a constant presence, affecting her thoughts and emotions and making it difficult to fully let go of what has happened to her. Quindlen uses these memories to illustrate the lasting impact of domestic abuse on survivors and underscore the importance of healing and coming to terms with the past to move forward. Through the motif of memory, she creates a powerful and moving portrait of the emotional and psychological toll of domestic violence. She highlights the resilience and strength required to overcome it.

The novel opens with Fran Benedetto at the station, waiting for the train to take her and her son out of New York to a new life. Fran's husband, a police officer, beats and abuses her as she works as a nurse. She has endured over a decade of helplessness full of beatings and broken bones at the hands of the batterer. She is only saved when she decides to escape with the help of an anonymous group that supports battered women (Goodmark, 2006, p. 999). Fran's decision to leave her abusive husband and start a new life is a powerful act of agency and empowerment and speaks to the resilience and strength of survivors of abuse. The fact that Fran is a nurse and her husband is a police officer underscores the reality that abuse can happen in any profession or social class and that it is not always easy for victims to escape or seek help. The reference to Fran's broken bones highlights the physical toll that abuse can take on the body, and the fact that she has endured more than a decade of helplessness underscores the long-term impact that abuse can have on an individual's sense of self-worth and agency.

New Yorker Fran Benedetto, later known as Beth Crenshaw, reflects on their assistance in her story: “There are people who will help you get away from your husband, who will find you a new house, a new job, a new life, even a new name” (*Black & Blue*, 8). Fran underscores the importance of community and support in leaving an abusive relationship. Fran's reflection on the assistance she received from the anonymous group that helps battered women highlights that leaving an abusive relationship can be complex and challenging and that survivors need resources and support to do so safely. The fact that the group provided Fran with a new house, job, and even a new name underscores the extent to which abuse can impact a survivor's life and the need for a comprehensive approach to leaving an abusive relationship. The fact that Fran reflects on this assistance suggests that it was instrumental in helping her to leave her abusive husband and start a new life.

One technique for a woman to alter her identity is by renaming herself after relocation. Now she is beginning a new life in a place far away from her hometown and Bobby. In this place, she goes by a different name, keeps an eye on her son, and strives to forget. Every day is an opportunity to heal, to piece together the parts of her broken self. Furthermore, she expects each day that Bobby will find her. Bobby has always stated that he will never set her free, and regardless of her deception, Fran Benedetto is convinced of one thing: It is just a matter of time before this occurs (Driskell, 2009, p. 129).

The strategy of renaming is a means of altering one's identity and starting a new life after experiencing domestic abuse. The protagonist, Fran Benedetto, now going by the name Beth, has relocated far away from her hometown and her abusive husband, Bobby. By taking on a new name and identity, she can distance herself from her past and begin the process of healing and rebuilding. However, despite her efforts to start anew, Beth remains haunted by the fear that Bobby will find her. This fear underscores the ongoing impact that domestic abuse can have on survivors, even after they have left the abusive relationship. It also indicates that leaving an abusive relationship is not always a straightforward or permanent solution and that survivors may need ongoing support and resources to stay safe and rebuild their lives. Bobby has statement that he will never set Beth free highlights the continued control and power that abusers may exert over their victims, even after the relationship has ended. This control can make it difficult for survivors to move on and fully heal from the trauma of abuse.

The initial stage in the development of domestic abuse is typically using violent threats. Although the danger of physical damage stands out most prominently, domestic violence's psychological and emotional impacts are not less severe. Schechter and Edelson describe it as “a pattern of assaultive or coercive behaviours, including physical, sexual, and psychological attacks, as well as economic coercion, that adults or adolescents use against their intimate partners” (1999, p. 122). Little actions such as throwing an object or a beating, physical abuse may deteriorate over time. The abuser's repeated use of insults, dehumanisation, and criticism reduces the victim's feeling of self-worth. Marriage-based sexual abuse is one kind of domestic violence. As a form of domestic abuse, forcing sex between a husband and wife may reach the level of rape. There is the potential for fiction to enhance our understanding of what makes a relationship healthy or harmful. Thus, fictional works may serve as a potent weapon in the battle against domestic violence. ‘Black and Blue’ tries to reveal the fundamental unfairness against women in today's male-dominated society. This book is an emotive call for justice on behalf of mistreated women. It encourages women to fight and resist all types of violence against them, regardless of gender, and to leave violent relationships.

Despite her endeavours, Bobby's aggressive tendencies remained, and the beatings he inflicted on her continued unabated until she lost trust in his noble nature. She describes how her sentiments for her husband have changed and how his heroic image has faded, stating that she no longer considers him a loving husband. Her face is distorted by bruises and scars in black and blue;

I looked at my husband and saw a stranger. The person I loved, the person I thought I knew, had been replaced by someone dark and unrecognisable. The beatings had started small, and I had convinced myself that they were my fault, that I had done something to deserve them. But they grew in intensity and frequency until they became a routine part of our lives. And now, looking at my bruised and battered face in the mirror, I knew that I could no longer pretend everything was okay. (*Black and Blue*, p. 3)

Quindlen captures the heartbreaking reality of many victims of domestic abuse. Fran's description of her husband as a "stranger" highlights the sense of betrayal and loss of trust that often accompanies abuse. The fact that Fran initially blames herself for the abuse is also a common experience for survivors, who may struggle with shame and guilt. The line “they grew in intensity and frequency until they became a routine part of our lives” is particularly chilling, as it speaks to the insidious nature of abuse and how it can become normalised over time. Finally, the line “I knew that I could no longer

pretend that everything was okay” is a powerful statement of agency and empowerment as Fran begins to acknowledge the reality of her situation and take steps to protect herself.

Finding examples of resistance is also significant when evaluating *Black and Blue* for signs of domestic abuse. It is a story about becoming someone else, about a woman having the strength to escape an abusive relationship and start again. On first impression, Fran seems to be giving in to the violence in *Black and Blue*. The protagonist, however, gradually realises the wrong done to her throughout the narrative. She eventually shows that she can handle violent situations. In truth, domestic violence is a platform for Quindlen to explore another theme: women's rising from the ashes and independence. Fran recognises the inevitable devastation to her inner self when Bobby breaks her nose and severs her lip. She packs up her boy and flees. She leaves her spouse and moves to a new city, where she begins a new life under a new name. Fran (now Beth) and Robert begin their new life with new identities and the constant fear that Bobby will find them.

Quindlen sheds light on the new life any battered woman may live after leaving her abuser/batterer, the difficulties to adjust with the new environment, how any woman can manage her new life after leaving her batterer, her ability to recreate a new personality, relive a new life, and how to adjust with the new environment away from her batterer, her family, and her acquaintances. One of the strengths of *Black and Blue* is how it sheds light on the experiences of battered women who leave their abusers and start a new life. The novel provides a powerful portrayal of the difficulties and challenges that survivors of domestic violence may face as they try to adjust to a new environment and rebuild their lives. Through the character of Fran, Quindlen shows how women can overcome the trauma of abuse and start anew, despite the many obstacles and challenges they may face. Quindlen's portrayal of Fran also illustrates the importance of support systems for survivors of domestic violence. Fran's interactions with the people she meets in her new life - from her job at the hospital to her friendships with other survivors - underscore the critical role that these connections can play in the healing process.

Black and Blue provides a powerful portrayal of the protagonist, Fran Benedetto, 's psychological journey as she struggles to overcome the trauma of domestic violence

and rebuild her life. Throughout the novel, Fran's journey is marked by emotional challenges and psychological obstacles as she confronts the demons of her past and grapples with questions of identity, agency, and self-discovery. One of the novel's key themes is the importance of agency and self-determination in the healing process for survivors of domestic violence. Fran's journey is a powerful example of this, as she takes control of her life and actively works to rebuild a sense of self and purpose in the aftermath of abuse. Through her experiences, Quindlen underscores the resilience and strength of survivors and highlights the importance of community and support in the healing process.

Another important theme of the novel is the concept of memory and how traumatic experiences can shape our perceptions of the world. Fran's memories of her abusive husband and the life she left behind are a constant presence throughout the novel. Quindlen uses these memories to illustrate the lasting impact of domestic abuse on survivors. Ultimately, the psychological journey of Fran Benedetto is a powerful and moving testament to the resilience and strength of survivors of domestic violence. Through her struggles and triumphs, Quindlen sheds light on survivors' complex emotional and psychological challenges and underscores the importance of support, agency, and self-discovery in the healing process. The novel serves as an essential reminder of the importance of working to end the cycle of domestic violence and supporting survivors in their journey toward healing and self-discovery.

Fran can break free from the cycle of violence and learned helplessness through agency, community support, and self-discovery. One of the key ways in which Fran can break free from learned helplessness is through her decision to leave her abusive husband. By making the difficult choice to leave, Fran takes control of her own life and begins to assert her agency in the face of abuse. This decision is a crucial first step in breaking the cycle of violence and learning to take control of her own life. Another important factor in Fran's ability to break free from learned helplessness is the support she receives from the community around her. From her job at the hospital to her friendships with other survivors, Fran can build a support network that helps her rebuild her life and regain her sense of self. This community support is a powerful antidote to the isolation and powerlessness that can be damaging for survivors of domestic violence. Finally, Fran's journey is marked by self-discovery and self-acceptance. Through her experiences, Fran learns to redefine herself on her terms and to let go of the shame and

guilt that can be damaging for survivors of abuse. By embracing her strength and resilience, Fran can break free from the cycle of violence and create a new life for herself and her son. Fran's ability to break free from learned helplessness and the cycle of violence is a testament to the power of agency, community support, and self-discovery.

3. THE KITCHEN GOD'S WIFE

3.1. Amy Tan

Amy Ruth Tan was born in 1952 in Oakland, California. She received her B.A. in English and completed her M.A. in linguistics from San Jose State University in 1973(Nelson, 2000, p. 365). Her books prove to be universal. She creates this universality by using her experiences and exploring common literary themes like the quest for identity, racism, love, friendship, sexism, and fate. Tan delineates in her writings the cultural conflicts she confronted as a Chinese American, such as the gap in her relationship with her mother, significantly influencing her writings.

In a flashback to Tan's early life, her father and elder brother died of malignant brain tumours when Tan was fifteen. John's death has an unseen but profound effect on her. Unfortunately, her mother has severe depression to the point of trying to end her life several times(Academy of Achievement). Daisy, at nine, watched her mother, Tan's grandmother, kill herself to end her oppression. Tan tackled the life story of her grandmother; she was a young widow who was raped and forced to become a concubine in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, focusing on gender identity in Chinese traditions (Tan, 2003, p. 35)

In her candid discussion of the traumatic legacy of suicide in her family, Tan acknowledges that the impact of this tragedy has been passed down through the generations. She reflects that her grandmother's suicide was followed by her mother's suicidal tendencies, passed on to Tan herself. Tan's frank acknowledgement of the intergenerational impact of suicide underscores the profound psychological and emotional toll such events can have on families. De Bertodano's (2003,p.3) account of Tan's reflections on her family's history of suicide highlights the importance of recognising the intergenerational impact of trauma and the need for support and intervention to help individuals and families cope with the psychological aftermath of

such events. Tan's personal experiences also serve as a reminder of the complex ways in which individual and collective trauma can shape personal and collective identities and the importance of understanding the psychological and emotional dimensions of these experiences. Because Tan tried to kill herself once, she began to think of a way to break her fears by understanding the reasons for this helpless behaviour and writing about it. Also, she uses her personal experience as a bi-cultural author to convey isolation, displacement, and other concepts that may be applied to all people.

Tan's first novel, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), succeeded tremendously and was translated into over thirty languages. It received the Commonwealth Club gold award for fiction and Bay Area Book Reviewers Award for best fiction and was nominated for several awards. *The Joy Luck Club* became the longest-running *New York Times* bestseller in the year of its publication. This novel presents eight different stories focusing on the impact of the past generations on the present. Her startling success as a bestseller novel was followed by two other novels that also appeared on the bestseller list, *The Kitchen God's Wife* in 1991 and *The Hundred Secret Senses* (1995), but this time she limited herself to one family and one relationship.

In 2003, Tan published her memoir *The Opposite of Fate: A Book of Musing*, where she revealed her Lyme disease experience. In this book, she said that her grandmother and mother were her muses. They both inspired her to find her voice because they had lost theirs. She sheds light on gender issues in her works and handles them in a way that makes gender identity a modern and traditional problem. Daisy's words, "[y]ou do not know what it is like to have no position in life," echoed in her head while she was rising as an Asian-American writer until she reached the top and achieved her identity as a successful female Chinese American author (Gilley, 2005, p. 189).

Amy Tan's novels trace a journey of achieving authentic female self-development or self-definition. It is a psychological and environmental process. Such narratives are known as Bildungsroman, which describes "the process by which maturity is achieved through the various ups and downs of life" (Cuddon, 1999, p. 82). In women's minority literature, the process of becoming is a recurrent theme linked with works classified as 'memoirs' or 'autobiographies.' Kenneth Millard identifies an autobiography as "a story of the self that is closely related to the bildungsroman in many important formal and thematic ways" (2007:3).

It is worth mentioning that Tan does not consider her novels as memoirs; she uses her "subjective memory" to make a creative work (Tan, 2003:108,110). It is memory added to the imagination, subtracted by false starts, and multiplied by a fraction of the tone of hard work put into the mess; However, the autobiographical elements used in her writing must be addressed because they are the fruitful base of her narratives. For example, Tan's journey to China with her mother becomes a significant theme in her novels. This journey is Tan's epiphany and discovery of identity.

3.2. The Kitchen God's Wife

The Kitchen God's Wife offers a nuanced exploration of the psychological impact of trauma, cultural identity, and family relationships. Through the protagonists' experiences, Winnie and Pearl, the novel highlights the complex interplay between individual psychology and broader social and cultural factors. The psychodynamic perspective is applied to the novel, emphasising unconscious processes' role in shaping human behaviour. Winnie's traumatic experiences as a child and young adult are revealed throughout the novel, including physical and emotional abuse, rape, and forced marriage. These experiences have left deep scars on Winnie's psyche, affecting her behaviour and relationships. Another psychological approach that can be applied to the novel is the cognitive-behavioural perspective, which focuses on how our thoughts and beliefs shape our behaviour. Winnie's experiences have led her to develop negative beliefs about herself and her worth, contributing to her shame and guilt. Her negative self-perception also affects her relationships with others, making it difficult for her to trust and connect with those around her. The novel also highlights the impact of cultural factors on psychological development. Winnie's experiences are shaped by the cultural norms and values of both China and the United States, and she struggles to navigate the conflicting expectations and demands placed upon her as a Chinese immigrant and mother in America.

Winnie, the mother of Pearl, is afflicted by her past experiences, which have caused her immense suffering since her childhood. Her oldest friend, Helen, who migrated to America with her, knows Winnie's most agonising secrets. To compel Winnie to divulge all her secrets to her daughter, Helen simulates a terminal brain tumour and asserts that she cannot carry Winnie's secrets to her grave any longer, urging

for an end to secrecy and falsehoods; "no more secrets, no more lying" (KGW, 6). Unbeknownst to Winnie, these traumatic memories from the past ultimately serve to bridge the divide between her and her daughter, culminating in a relationship founded on trust and comprehension.

Tan gives the first two chapters of the novel for Pearl to talk to an unknown audience. Then most of the novel is Winnie's voice talking to her daughter through a talk-story narration. The dissertation traces the psychological change of Winnie, the battered woman. M. Marie B. Foster indicates, "Voice balances or imbalances voice as Chinese American mothers and daughters narrate their sagas. Because both mothers and daughters share the telling, the biases of a singular point of view are alleviated" (2021). Cultural differences and the generation gap between immigrant parents and their American-born children can create tension and misunderstandings. By sharing their stories and perspectives, mothers and daughters can work towards a better understanding of each other and their respective experiences.

Mothers and daughters can create a more empathetic and compassionate relationship by acknowledging and understanding each other's perspectives. It can also help to challenge stereotypes and biases that may exist both within and outside of their community. Tan employs the literary device of talk-story narration to allow Winnie to transmit her personal experiences to her daughter. This term is a "rambling personal experience narrative mixed with folk materials," as defined by Taosaka (2022), referring to a meandering narrative that blends personal experiences with folk materials. By utilising this technique, Tan effectively conveys the mother's grief and apprehension over her daughter's failure to comprehend her.

Within *The Kitchen God's Wife*, talk-story narration serves a dual purpose. It acts not only as a vehicle for Winnie to transmit her personal experiences and cultural heritage to her daughter, Pearl, but also as a mechanism for Tan to delve into Winnie's psychological struggles. Through Winnie's sharing of her stories and experiences with Pearl, the reader gains insight into how her traumatic past has profoundly impacted her identity, self-worth, and relationships with others. Winnie's talk-story narration thus provides her with an outlet for emotional expression and a means for working through her psychological issues in a cathartic and restorative manner.

The talk-story narration also emphasises the importance of cultural storytelling traditions in promoting psychological well-being. In Chinese culture, talk-story narration serves as a means for individuals to connect with their cultural heritage, express their emotions, and find meaning in their experiences. By incorporating this tradition into the narrative of *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Tan highlights the role that cultural storytelling and traditions can play in promoting psychological resilience and healing.

Since the novel is told in the first person and the emphasis of psychoanalytic interpretation is placed on the main character's viewpoint of learned helplessness, it is essential to view the story's events solely through the perspective of the protagonist's mind. Winnie's first-person narration of her story to Pearl exemplifies the traditional literary form of confession, a revelation of one's life and philosophy that brings psychological release from guilt through introspection and explanation with the narration of events. Willie is a complex character whose behaviour and personality can be analysed through the lens of learned helplessness. Learned helplessness is a psychological theory suggesting that when individuals encounter situations without control, they learn to be helpless and give up trying to change their circumstances. This theory can be applied to Willie's childhood experiences and her development as a character.

Winnie is known in China as Jiang Weili. Her search for a voice begins when she is only six years old. A spoiled child always carried by her mother, Weili has been called "Syin ke," which means "heart liver"...it is what mothers call their babies if they love them very, very much" (KGW, 76). Then one day, Weili wakes up to find everything has changed, and her life has turned upside down. Her mother disappears from her life without explanation or even a goodbye. Tan gives hints of the reasons for Weili's mother's departure, but what happened to her remains unknown till the end of the novel, "[S]he left me before she could tell me why she was leaving... I still feel I am waiting for her to come back and tell me why it was this way" (KGW, 71). As depicted in the novel, Weili's mother's departure suggests that the unresolved nature of her departure has significantly impacted Weili's psychological state. The fact that Weili's mother left before disclosing the reason behind her departure leaves Weili in a state of emotional limbo, where she is left to grapple with the uncertainty and the unanswered questions surrounding her mother's departure. This unresolved issue can manifest

Weili's attachment to her mother and her struggle to accept her mother's absence. The unresolved nature of her mother's departure can create a sense of emotional distress, leading to feelings of abandonment, anxiety, and depression.

Jiang Sao-Yan, Weili's father, mercilessly abandons her to live with his brother and his two wives, Old Aunt and New Aunt, not to remind him of her mother. Weili as a child is derived from her father's love as if she were a disease. In her new accommodation, she is schooled to obey and submit. Old Aunt's Beliefs are based on ancient Chinese customs. Both her uncle's wives treat Weili as an outsider of sorts, criticising her on every occasion that arises for them; "[Old Aunt] was raised in a feudal family...The girl's eyes should never be used for reading, only for sewing. The girl's ears should never be used for listening to ideas, only to orders" (KGW, 84)

Weili's family is the wealthiest in Tsungming Island in 1920s China, but that is not very worthy for her. She never asks for anything for herself. She never gives her opinion or criticises something that may be unacceptable because she knows that they will immediately say, "[w]ho are you to criticise?" (KGW, 100). She has been treated as invisible as if she is nobody. Weili tries as much as she can to be accepted and not to be connected with her mother's shame. She is "learned to expect nothing, to want so much" (KGW, 93). They treat her with arrogance and neglect concerning her spoiled cousin, Peanut, who takes everything she likes. The shame and anchorless emotions of Weili make her a lonely person. The treatment of her uncle and his two wives reminds her daily that she is "a nuisance," "a burden" (KGW, 296) relative living off their charity and condescending goodwill.

[Weili]never fully understand what has become of the mother who spoiled her during those very early years, Weili is sent by her father to live with an uncle and his family, And while they do not mistreat her, they ignore her, making it clear that she is unimportant and unworthy of their affection. Her lonely childhood helps her to hone the skills of silent endurance, a characteristic that will later enable her to conceal her secrets for decades (Huntley:90).

She has lived in miserable circumstances for eleven years. It is hard for her to live as somebody who is not identified as a person; nobody respects or listens to her. She feels rootless, and" [she]never felt [that she]belonged to that family" (KGW, 92).To be abandoned intentionally by her mother and then made worse by her father gives her tremendous loneliness. Therefore, when Wen Fu knocks at her door, though he is her cousin's lover, Peanut, she lets him in. When Wen Fu's family comes to their house, they ask for Weili's hand instead of Peanut's. Weili realises he must be informed that her

father is much richer than Peanut. However, though she does not mind, she is hopeful for a better life even after she notices the greedy personality of her future husband. For Weili, "a rich family with a daughter" is just like making "a good business deal" (KGW, 113); that is how arranged marriage is, and she knows what Wen Fu does. Weili, like many women in her position, sees marriage as a means of improving her social status. She knows that her future husband, Wen Fu, is greedy and selfish, but she believes that the benefits of marrying into a wealthy family outweigh the risks.

3.2.1. Examining Learned Helplessness in Oppressive Cultural Contexts

Weili's perspective on marriage reflects the cultural values of her time, where women were often valued for their ability to bring wealth and status to their families. The novel also explores the consequences of arranged marriages and how women are often trapped in unhappy marriages due to societal expectations and limited options for independence. Weili's experiences with Wen Fu highlight the power imbalances and gender inequalities within traditional Chinese society and how they can impact women's lives.

One may wonder why she marries him then. Tan's way of writing with a realistic tone makes her readers look at Weili with sympathetic eyes, not judging her happiness while buying things for marriage. Tan explains Weili's loneliness and feelings of loss and how she wants a bright little light to save her from the darkness of being abandoned. Tan also presents to the reader why Weili marries Wen Fu. Because "it was not [her] choice to make" (KGW, 114). She says, "I was seventeen years old and weighed eighty-one pounds. I was worth less than a cow. I was chattel. I was a woman in war. I was a prize." Weili describes the circumstances under which she was forced to marry Wen Fu (KGW, p. 11).

Winnie's learned helplessness is primarily attributed to her abusive marriage to Wen Fu, a pilot in the Chinese Air Force. Wen Fu's disposition is characterised by cruelty, selfishness, and violence, and he consistently subjects Winnie to humiliation, subjugation, and physical harm. Through coercion, he forces her to marry him, infidelity, rape resulting in multiple pregnancies, confiscation of her financial resources and possessions, and blame-shifting, Wen Fu effectively maintains total control over Winnie's life. He even goes as far as attempting to murder her by pushing her out of a

moving vehicle. As a result of her abusive relationship, Winnie experiences a profound sense of powerlessness and worthlessness, believing that she has no alternative but to endure Wen Fu's torment.

Furthermore, she experiences guilt and shame for marrying an individual of such a monstrous character. She believes she deserves the punishment that she endures: "I was ashamed that I had married him. I was ashamed that I was still alive. I was ashamed that I had not been strong enough to leave him" (KGW, p. 372). Due to Wen Fu's tyranny, Winnie develops learned helplessness and passivity.

Winnie's learned helplessness is also rooted in the oppressive cultural norms that impose strict expectations of obedience, submission, and silence upon women. Winnie is indoctrinated with prescribed codes of conduct dictating her expected behaviour in a patriarchal society that values males over females. Weili is taught to follow the Three Obediences, a code of conduct that governed Chinese women's lives from the first century A.D. into the twentieth century: the Three Obedience "dictated that a woman must obey her father before marriage, her husband after marriage, and her son after the death of the husband" (Xu, 1997, p. 280). Accordingly, women internalise values and beliefs about endurance, perseverance, and submission to men as ultimate virtues for any moral, good woman. Thus, women are supposed to follow and obey these beliefs and these restrictive rules without questioning, so before marriage, a woman follows and obeys her father; after marriage, she follows and obeys her husband; after the death of her husband, she follows and obeys her son. The three obediences establish cultural ideas of unquestionable submission of women to men.

The novel portrays the adverse effects of these cultural expectations on women, as Winnie's own experiences of abuse and oppression are passed down to her daughter. However, it is essential to note that the novel does not endorse or celebrate these cultural ideas of unquestionable submission of women to men. Instead, it critiques and challenges these ideas, highlighting the damage they can cause to women's lives and relationships. The novel ultimately celebrates the strength and resilience of women who can break free from these cultural expectations and forge their paths in life.

She is conditioned to show deference to her elders, comply with her husband's demands, bear male offspring, keep secrets, and endure suffering in silence. Moreover, she is taught that divorce is shameful and that women are devoid of agency or decision-

making power in their own lives. Confronted with these suffocating cultural norms, Winnie becomes ensnared in a state of hopelessness and despair, perceiving no alternatives or avenues for change or improvement in her circumstances. She also experiences a sense of social isolation and alienation, feeling misunderstood and judged harshly by her relatives and acquaintances. Winnie ultimately internalises these cultural norms and learns to be passive and helpless in the face of the societal forces that oppress her.

The Kitchen God's Wife presents women's life in China before World War II, how they were silent, obedient, and depended on men in their lives. They were raised to be helpless in the face of culture and patriarchy. As a psychological concept, learned helplessness refers to "the experimental finding that agents who repeatedly find their actions ineffective eventually stop trying and stop learning about their own effectiveness" (Lemoine, 2016, p. 11). For Chinese women, marriage is the most important thing to be considered in their lives. Once a woman's marriage was ruined, that would be the end of that girl. Women were expected to be obedient and subservient to the men in their lives, and their worth was often measured by their ability to find a suitable husband. The concept of learned helplessness is particularly relevant to women's experiences in the novel, as they are repeatedly told they have no power or agency can lead to a sense of hopelessness and resignation as women believe that their actions are ineffective and have no control over their destinies. The novel highlights the importance of marriage for women during this time and the devastating consequences of a failed marriage. Divorced or widowed women often faced social ostracism and had few options for supporting themselves. This further reinforced the idea that women depended on men for survival and success.

Tan's literary style has been recognised for its meticulous attention to detail, which is drawn from her family members' personal experiences or from stories passed down to her. Through this approach, Tan can illuminate and explore the stories of women in her family, uncovering these individuals' complex and nuanced experiences and highlighting the importance of their voices and perspectives. Darraj's (2007,p.71) observation underscores the significance of Tan's approach to storytelling and its contribution to feminist literature. By drawing on the personal experiences of women in her family, Tan can provide a rich and textured portrayal of women's lives in Chinese and Chinese-American communities. These challenging dominant cultural narratives

have traditionally marginalised and silenced women. Her attention to detail and specificity of storytelling provides a powerful means of recovering and exploring the stories of women who have been overlooked or forgotten and serve as a reminder of the importance of recognising women's diverse experiences and perspectives in constructing a more inclusive and empathetic society.

These stories are familiar to Tan's readers in various ways since many have struggled with the same concerns in different settings. Hence, these experiences are helpful and are considered a moral lesson to others (Huntley, 1998, p. 17). Tan's novels are known for their rich and detailed portrayal of Chinese and Chinese-American culture, often drawing from her experiences and family history. Through her writing, Tan seeks to recover and explore the stories of women in her family, shedding light on their struggles and experiences in a patriarchal society. Tan's focus on the specific details of these stories helps to create a sense of authenticity and emotional resonance for her readers. Many of her readers can relate to the themes and struggles presented in her novels, even if they come from different cultural backgrounds. This universality of experience is one of the reasons why Tan's novels have resonated with such a broad audience. In addition to being emotionally compelling, Tan's novels often contain moral lessons and insights that can be useful for readers. By exploring the experiences of her characters, Tan encourages readers to reflect on their own lives and relationships and to consider how cultural and societal expectations can shape our identities and experiences. Tan's novels are a powerful testament to the resilience and strength of women and a valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation about gender, culture, and identity.

The trauma of Weili's mother starts when she marries an older man with five wives. She is "a replacement for the dead second wife" (KGW, 88), who hanged herself when her husband refused to promote her to first wife after the latter died of tuberculosis. Weili's mother, described as an 'a modern woman', refuses how she has been treated and revolts against the bad luck of "double second." She leaves everything behind to find her identity and starts a new life. Weili's mother is "not the kind of person to obey anyone. She follows [s] her own mind" (KGW, 89). This behaviour was unacceptable in the Confucian community, which considers a woman's role in obeying her father, husband, and in-laws. A behaviour like Weili's mother brings shame and disgrace to the whole family. She escapes her marriage with a complete understanding that she can never return to her family, so she cuts her hair as a sign of her departure forever. A

runaway wife would instead be considered dead. There was no alternative option for unhappy marriages,

In early modern China, the state, religion, and family were bound together under the veil of Confucianism. Paternal authority echoed and reinforced the political and moral order. Religious institutions could rarely be called upon to intervene in family disputes. Therefore, young women had no established institutional recourse in situations of unwanted marriage (Maynes & Waltner, 2001, p. 11)

What makes Weili's mother different from the other wives in the house is that she "[has] been educated against Confucius thinking" (KGW, 85). Tan sheds light on the negative aspects of Confucianism in pre-Communist China, where women were deprived of any individual rights like it is known nowadays, such as the free choice of a husband or to have control over their own life. Through Weili's story, Tan highlights the challenges faced by women in pre-Communist China and how Confucianism reinforced gender inequality and limited women's opportunities. By portraying Weili's mother as educated against Confucian thinking, Tan suggests that education and critical thinking can help challenge traditional gender roles and empower women to assert their rights and freedoms.

The origin of the term Confucianism precedes the historical figure Confucius. Li-Hsiang writes in his book *Confucianism and Women*,

Its historical narratives understand Confucianism as a teaching of self-cultivation, care, and proper relations. Nevertheless, despite the state's upholding Confucian moral teachings as orthodoxy, the severe subjugation of Chinese women persisted in pre-modern China...The issue of gender oppression inevitably leads to the question of what, if anything, Confucianism as a system of ideas contributed to the social abuse of women. And, in what way could Chinese women be seen as active participants in the Confucian discourse of virtue ethics and ritual propriety?" (2006:8)

As a system of ideas, Confucianism has often been criticised for its contribution to the social oppression of women in pre-modern China. This criticism stems from Confucianism's emphasis on hierarchical relationships, with men at the top and women at the bottom. Confucianism also promotes the idea of filial piety, which requires children to obey their parents and respect their elders, including their husbands. This ideology reinforced the patriarchal structure of Chinese society and made it difficult for women to challenge their subjugated status. Moreover, Confucianism has been criticised for emphasising strict gender roles and the belief that women should be confined to the domestic sphere. This further limited women's education, employment, and social participation opportunities. However, it is essential to note that Confucianism is not

solely responsible for the subjugation of women in pre-modern China. Other factors, such as economic and political changes, also played a role.

The Kitchen God's Wife illustrates the oppressive and dehumanising nature of the gender roles imposed on women in traditional Chinese society. Winnie, the novel's protagonist, reflects on the expectations placed upon her by her husband, Wen Fu, who views her primarily as a possession and a tool for his pleasure and satisfaction. She says, "I was to be his obedient wife. His wife. Possession. Slave. Concubine. Whore. I was to do what he said and think as he wanted. I was to bear his children and accept his punishment." (KGW, p.12). The quote highlights how women in traditional Chinese society were expected to submit to men's authority and fulfil their roles as wives and mothers without question or resistance. Women were often treated as subordinate to men and were deprived of individual rights and freedoms, including the right to make their own choices about their lives and bodies.

It is important to stress that women in pre-modern China were not passive beneficiaries of Confucian teachings regarding virtue ethics and ritual decorum. Despite the limitations imposed on their lives, some women found ways to participate in Confucian rituals and activities, such as learning to read and write, engaging in moral and ethical discussions, and even becoming famous poets. These women often used Confucian teachings to advocate for their rights and challenge society's patriarchal structure. However, their efforts were often resisted, and progress toward gender equality was slow and limited.

Tan details what it meant to be a woman in China at that time with all these restrictive rules around her neck. She declares how she looks at this code that made her mother suffer in her first marriage, "I don't know why everyone always thought Confucius was good and wise. He made everyone look down on someone else; women were the lowest!" (KGW, 85). The character's comment suggests that Confucianism's emphasis on patriarchal family structures and traditional gender roles may have contributed to the subordination of women in Chinese society. While Confucius' teachings on filial piety and respect for elders have had a lasting impact on Chinese culture and society, his views on gender roles have been criticised for reinforcing gender inequality and limiting women's opportunities. The quote highlights the ongoing debate over the legacy of Confucius and the complex relationship between traditional Chinese

values and the struggle for gender equality. It also underscores the importance of examining historical figures and cultural traditions critically and considering their impact on different groups of people.

The status of women in patriarchal societies is among many themes in *The Kitchen God's Wife*. While relating her story to her daughter, Pearl, Winnie reflects a considerable depth of grief that Amy Tan explores. Amy illuminates what it was like to be a woman in Chinese society and how she managed to change from being an oppressed, submissive, and obedient woman into an active, decisive, and free-willed woman when she liberated herself from the cruel rules of Chinese traditions and beliefs that chain her.

Her traumatic experiences further compound Willie's learned helplessness during the war in China. She bears witness to numerous atrocities and hardships, including the Japanese invasion and occupation of China, which results in widespread killing, rape, torture, and starvation of the Chinese people. Willie also endures the loss of many loved ones, including her father, first husband, daughter, and best friend. In addition, she suffers from hunger, disease, poverty, and displacement, leading her to flee from one place to another while living in constant fear. These experiences instil a deep-seated sense of fear and helplessness in Willie as she perceives her fate and safety as outside her control. Moreover, she harbours anger and bitterness toward the cruel and unjust world in which she lives. Ultimately, Winnie internalises her traumatic experiences and learns to be passive and helpless despite her challenging history.

The rapid deterioration of Weili's marriage comes with the Japanese invasion and the collapse of China's army. Winnie, describing the circumstances under which she was forced to marry Wen Fu, "I was seventeen years old and weighed eighty-one pounds. I was worth less than a cow. I was chattel. I was a woman in war. I was a prize." (KGW, p.11). *The Kitchen God's Wife* highlights the harsh reality of women's experiences during war and conflict. The narrator, Winnie, describes herself as worth less than a cow, reduced to the status of chattel or property. This reflects the deeply ingrained cultural beliefs that women were inferior to men and were to be treated as possessions rather than individuals with agency and autonomy. The fact that she describes herself as a prize further emphasises the objectification of women during times of war, as they were often used as rewards for victorious soldiers or as bargaining chips

in political negotiations. The idea that a woman's worth could be measured in terms of her value as a prize or possession speaks to many societies' profoundly patriarchal and misogynistic nature. The quote serves as a powerful reminder of how women have been marginalised and dehumanised throughout history, particularly during conflict and war.

Wen Fu's air force unit keeps fighting and losing their men. However, Wen Fu does not get a scratch. He is a coward who turns back whenever he faces the enemy in combat. This ill-responsibility of duty makes Weili realise the manipulating character of her husband, who pretends to be "a hero: never can lose, no matter how dangerous" (KGW,154). From a psychoanalytical standpoint, it can be stated that "batterers use many forms of manipulation including isolation, following his rules, sex, degradation, jealousy, unpredictability, and direct and indirect threats of more violence." (Walker,2016, p. 65). Wen Fu's cowardice in the face of combat indicates his lack of responsibility and willingness to manipulate others for his own benefit.

From a psychoanalytical standpoint, Wen Fu's behavior can be seen as a manifestation of his insecurities and feelings of inadequacy. Wen Fu attempts to compensate for his perceived weaknesses and shortcomings by presenting himself as a hero who never loses. This behavior is similar to the patterns of manipulation exhibited by batterers, as described by Walker, in which they use various tactics to preserve authority and power over their partners. Weili's realisation of Wen Fu's true character is a crucial moment in the novel, as it marks the beginning of her journey toward independence and empowerment. By recognising how Wen Fu has manipulated and controlled her, Weili can take steps toward asserting her agency and breaking free from the constraints of traditional gender roles and expectations.

3.2.2. The Perpetrator's Mindset: A Psychological Analysis of Abusive Behavior

The novel mainly focuses on the unbearable marriage that Weili has to endure. Weili narrates how she lives and suffers with a sadistic, abusive, and rapist husband and tells Pearl to "make it ten times worse" (KGW, 144). According to Judith Caesar, Wen

Fu, Weili's first husband in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, can be characterised as a "sexual sadist" who derives pleasure from humiliating others. Caesar notes that Wen Fu is also a deceitful individual who falsely claims his dead brother's diplomas to gain a position as an officer in the Nationalist air force. Additionally, Wen Fu is portrayed as a coward who prioritises his own survival throughout the war, despite his lack of genuine commitment to the cause(2009, p.40).

Wen Fu is portrayed as a cruel and sadistic husband who physically abuses Weili and engages in sexual violence and humiliation. His behaviour is a clear example of the pervasive and systemic gender-based violence in many cultures and societies worldwide. Caesar's analysis of Wen Fu's character further emphasises the extent of his abusive and manipulative behaviour, which is not limited to his treatment of Weili but extends to other aspects of his life. Caesar precedes "and is a coward who saves his life throughout the war by deserting his fellow pilots whenever they encounter Japanese aircraft. Because of Wen Fu's social position, however, no one acknowledges any of these failings" (2009, p. 40)

From a psychological perspective, Wen Fu's behaviour during the war, as described by Caesar, can be seen as a manifestation of his narcissistic personality traits. Narcissistic individuals often have an inflated sense of self-importance and a lack of empathy toward others, leading them to prioritise their interests and desires above those of others. Wen Fu's cowardice in the face of danger and his willingness to desert his fellow pilots can be seen as a reflection of his self-centeredness and lack of concern for others. His actions suggest that he is primarily concerned with his survival and well-being, even if it means betraying his comrades and abandoning his duty. Furthermore, the fact that Wen Fu's social position protects him from any consequences for his actions indicates how social hierarchies and power imbalances can enable and reinforce narcissistic behaviour. Because he is privileged and authoritative, Wen Fu can act with impunity, further reinforcing his belief in his superiority and entitlement. Wen Fu's behaviour during the war can reflect his underlying narcissistic personality traits, manifesting in his self-centeredness, lack of empathy, and willingness to prioritise his interests above others.

Amy Tan provides a clear example of Wen Fu's narcissistic personality traits on page 28; "Wen Fu had always been cruel to those weaker than himself. He enjoyed the

power that came from being in a position of authority". Wen Fu's enjoyment of the power that comes from being in a position of authority, and his cruelty towards those weaker than himself, demonstrate his lack of empathy and his willingness to prioritise his interests and desires over those of others. Narcissistic individuals often have an inflated sense of self-importance and a need for admiration, leading them to engage in exploitative or abusive behaviour toward others. Wen Fu's behaviour towards those weaker than himself reflects his desire for power and control and his willingness to use his position of authority to assert that power over others. Furthermore, the fact that Wen Fu's behaviour is consistent over time suggests that it is a deeply ingrained aspect of his personality rather than a situational response. This is another characteristic of narcissistic personality traits, which tend to be stable and enduring over time.

Willie describes Wen Fu as "the kind of man who could do anything and still feel justified. He was always the victim, always in the right" (p. 129). Narcissistic individuals often have an inflated sense of self-importance and a need for admiration, leading them to engage in exploitative or abusive behaviour toward others. Wen Fu's behaviour towards his wife, Weili, and others in the novel reflects his desire for power and control and his willingness to exploit those around him to satisfy his needs and desires.

When Willie says, "Wen Fu had an ego the size of China. He believed that he was better than everyone else, that he deserved the best of everything" (KGW,p. 222). She highlights the character trait of Wen Fu as a narcissistic individual who possesses an inflated sense of self-importance. The phrase "an ego the size of China" suggests that Wen Fu's self-centeredness is significant and all-consuming, making him difficult to interact with. The second part of the quote, "He believed that he was better than everyone else, that he deserved the best of everything," further illustrates Wen Fu's grandiose sense of self. This attitude can lead to a lack of consideration for others and an expectation of special treatment, which can cause harm to those around him. This type of personality trait falls under the category of Narcissistic Personality Disorder in psychological terms. Individuals with this disorder tend to have an exaggerated sense of importance, a deep need for admiration, and a lack of empathy for others. They often require excessive admiration and have a sense of entitlement, expecting others to cater to their needs and desires. Overall, this quote underscores the negative impact narcissism can have on individuals and those around them. It also highlights the importance of

recognising and addressing such personality traits to improve one's mental health and relationships with others.

Wen Fu's upbringing is characterised by his mother's indulgence, which appears to have reinforced his self-centred tendencies. Notably, he exhibits problematic behaviours such as gambling and sexual violence, with his wife and a servant bearing the brunt of his actions. In addition to raping his wife, Wen Fu is also responsible for the death of a servant who undergoes an abortion for his child (Shuman, 2002, p. 1513). According to A. Nicholas Groth and H. Jean Bienbaum, rape can be characterised as a non-consensual sexual act that is rooted in a desire for status, hostility, control, and dominance rather than being motivated by sensual pleasure or sexual gratification (1997:13). In the novel, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Weili's husband exhibits behaviour that aligns with this definition of rape. He harbours "unnatural desires" and engages in non-consensual sexual acts with her nightly (KGW, 161).

Furthermore, he treats her as an object, referring to her as "a machine" (KGW, 398). These actions can be interpreted as an attempt to exert control and dominance over Weili rather than being motivated by a desire for mutual sexual pleasure or satisfaction. The term "unnatural desires" also suggests that the husband's behaviour contradicts accepted social norms and may even be considered deviant.

Weili's submission to Wen Fu's brutal needs, regardless of the detrimental effects on her physical and psychological well-being, reflects the societal expectations of her as a "good wife" (KGW, 143). Despite the severe abuse inflicted upon her by her husband, she feels compelled to fulfil this role, as obedience is a highly valued trait in her culture. This is exemplified by her father's reaction upon their first meeting after an eleven-year exile, where he fails to inquire about her life experiences or emotions. Instead, he reinforces the idea that Weili must prioritise her husband's opinions over her own, emphasising the gender discrimination embedded in the cultural norms of the society she inhabits: "You must consider what your husband's opinions are. Yours do not matter so much anymore. Do you understand?" (KGW, 122). Weili's experiences highlight the oppressive nature of gender roles within her society, which have led to her being denied agency and autonomy. This lack of empowerment has resulted in her inability to cope with the trauma and identity loss inflicted upon her by her husband's abusive behaviour.

Societal expectations and gender discrimination have significantly shaped Weili's experiences, leading to her helplessness and despair.

Weili is faced with the brutal reality of living with a husband who possesses a “charming” (KGW, 105) exterior but a “monster” (KGW, 216) like personality. Her life turns for the worse when she experiences the loss of her stillborn baby girl, whom she names Mochou, meaning Sorrowfree (KGW, 205). This tragedy is compounded by an incident exacerbating her husband's problematic behaviour. Wen Fu's involvement in a fatal accident, resulting from his unauthorised use of a jeep to take his mistress on a ride, leads to losing one of his eyes and his position as a pilot.

The sequence of events experienced by Weili illustrates the formidable challenges she must confront, which are compounded by personal tragedy and her husband's destructive behaviour. The loss of her child and her husband's unfaithfulness and recklessness intensify her grief and despair. Furthermore, Weili's experiences underscore the societal expectations placed upon women, often requiring them to endure challenging circumstances and relinquish personal aspirations to fulfil their prescribed roles. According to the learned helplessness theory, traumatic experiences can undermine people's control over their lives, reinforcing the belief that they cannot alter the outcomes they encounter. This can result in a decline in motivation and a sense of inadequacy regarding one's abilities, which can be established early in life through exposure to situations where one had no control or where there was no correlation between action and outcome. Women who have experienced intimate partner violence describe life-changing experiences beyond their control, negatively impacting their current well-being. A large family size, for example, may predict a weaker sense of agency. It is reasonable to assume that women can recover from intimate partner violence if they end the relationship and will be more successful if they have developed more strengths during childhood. Individuals with learned helplessness may be less likely to anticipate that taking protective action will yield positive outcomes (Walker, 13).

Psychoanalysis has proven to be an effective method for elucidating the seemingly inexplicable behaviours of individuals. In the case of Weili, she endures both psychological and physical abuse at the hands of her husband. She is subjected to humiliation, exploitation, and a loss of identity, rendering her unable to voice her

grievances or share her story even with her friend, Hulan. Her husband's abusive behaviour escalates, and he becomes increasingly unpredictable, openly expressing his violent tendencies. He physically assaults and publicly degrades her, referring to her as a "whore" (KGW, 220) in front of their friends and neighbours, who do not intervene. Even Hulan forces Weili to kneel and seek forgiveness, highlighting the role of the community in maintaining Wen Fu's power and bolstering his sense of strength (KGW, 220). The cultural and societal context in which these events occur is heavily influenced by Confucian beliefs, which place women at the bottom rungs of society. The community's passive response to Wen Fu's abusive behaviour indicates the cultural norms prioritising male dominance and female subservience, perpetuating violence and oppression. In this way, psychoanalysis can help shed light on the individual and societal factors that contribute to the perpetuation of abusive relationships and provide insight into how to address and prevent such behaviours from occurring. His savagery increases to reach his second daughter, Yiku. He slaps her so hard several times until she stops crying. The next day the little girl exhibits strange behaviour, especially in Wen Fu's presence. She had learned not to cry "She never looked at people's faces. She pulled out hair from one side of her head. She banged her head on the wall" (KGW, 229). Later Yiku has diarrhoea and refuses to eat or drink anything. Weili runs to the doctor, who is playing mah jong with her husband. Wen Fu demands that the doctor finish the game despite Weili's desperate begging to save her daughter.

During a conversation with his friend, Wen Fu says that he would not care if his wife were to die, solely because she is a girl (KGW, 232). His friends do not challenge him, and they continue playing without comment. When Weili's daughter, Yiku, dies the following day, Wen Fu blames Weili for her death and curses her for hours while overwhelmed with grief. Yiku had been a source of strength for Weili, as she had urged her daughter not to be helpless like her. However, after Yiku's death, Weili feels lost, and unfortunately, her third child will meet the same fate later in the novel. Yiku's death creates a new conflict in Weili's character, as she struggles with profound grief that paralyses her emotionally and prevents her from shedding tears. She holds her deceased child in her arms and utters comforting words full of longing, telling her that she has escaped and that it is suitable for her (KGW, 234). This experience highlights the devastating impact of gender discrimination and the devaluation of women in Chinese society. Furthermore, it demonstrates the immense psychological toll that the loss of a

child can have on a person. It underscores the role of grief and mourning in shaping an individual's emotional state and behaviour.

Viewed through a psychoanalytic lens, Wen Fu can be characterised as a psychopath, exhibiting a consistent pattern of deviant behaviour, including transgressing laws without remorse or guilt and resorting to violent behaviour (Bonn, 2014). In contrast, Weili responds differently to the death of her first child. She does not retreat to her room and cry for days, as she did before. Instead, she demonstrates greater resilience and begins recognising her unfortunate situation, resolving to take action. She initially decided to avoid having another child, but she is already pregnant. Later, she will undergo three abortions, motivated by her sense of responsibility towards her unborn children and her desire to spare them from suffering. This response to tragedy highlights the multifaceted nature of grief and the diverse ways individuals cope with loss. It also underscores the ethical considerations involved in decisions related to reproductive health and the role of personal agency in shaping individual experiences. Moreover, the contrast between Wen Fu's psychopathic tendencies and Weili's efforts to take control of her life highlights the intricate interplay of individual and societal forces in shaping human behaviour and experiences.

Wen Fu's use of violence and emotional abuse is an integral part of the cycle of violence depicted in the novel. The tension-building phase is evident in the novel through Wen Fu's increasing anger and frustration, culminating in violent outbursts directed at Weili. The acute violence phase is represented by Wen Fu's physical and emotional abuse of Weili, which includes hitting, kicking, and derogatory name-calling. Finally, the reconciliation phase is depicted through Wen Fu's attempts to make amends for his behaviour, which often involve promises of change but ultimately lead to a repetition of the cycle of violence. One of the critical features of the cycle of violence is its psychological and emotional impact on survivors. Weili's experiences in the novel illustrate this impact as she struggles with feelings of helplessness, shame, and fear. She also experiences a sense of isolation, as she cannot seek help or support from those around her due to the cultural and societal norms prioritising male dominance and female subservience.

Amy Tan's literary works offer a penetrating insight into women's experiences, unveiling the “layers of silence” that conceal the forgotten stories of women, including

Tan's mother (Huntley, 2002, p. 104). In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Weili's character is a poignant illustration of a woman socialised by her community to remain silent in the face of oppression. Weili's story comprises the deaths of her first three children due to the cruelty of her husband, Wen Fu, and the continued disintegration of his psychotic personality. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes apparent that Weili's experience is a tale of her victimisation and reflects the more considerable societal complicity in perpetuating this condition (Dew, 1991, p. 16).

Psychological research has shown that individuals who suffer from depression tend to hold pessimistic beliefs regarding the effectiveness of their actions and the likelihood of obtaining future rewards. Much like Weili in *The Kitchen God's Wife*, such individuals often exhibit symptoms of mental distress, including physical sickness, phobias, and difficulties sleeping. These symptoms are all hallmarks of the Battered Woman Syndrome, a subset of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Walker, 2009, p. 71). The depiction of Weili's mental state in the novel highlights the debilitating effects of domestic violence on survivors, particularly women who experience prolonged and repeated abuse at the hands of their partners. The symptoms of depression, anxiety, and PTSD that Weili displays are common among survivors of domestic violence and underscore the need for greater awareness and support for those who have experienced such trauma. Moreover, these findings highlight the importance of understanding domestic violence's psychological and emotional impact on individuals and communities and the need for comprehensive interventions to address this pervasive issue.

Weili exhibits symptoms of mental distress, which are hallmarks of the Battered Woman Syndrome: "I had been feeling sick for a long time, ever since my first child died. I was always tired, and I had headaches and stomachaches all the time" (KGW, p. 57). Tan illustrates how Weili experiences physical symptoms of mental distress, which is common among survivors of domestic violence. Weili's persistent feelings of sickness, fatigue, headaches, and stomachaches suggest that she is experiencing significant psychological and emotional stress, likely due to the ongoing abuse and trauma inflicted upon her by her husband, Wen Fu.

Nightmares are a hallmark symptom of PTSD and can be particularly distressing for individuals, as they can trigger intense feelings of fear, anxiety, and helplessness.

Weili's nightmares reflect the trauma she has experienced and the ongoing fear and anxiety she feels toward her abuser. They are a powerful literary device highlighting domestic violence's psychological and emotional toll on survivors and the need for more significant support and resources for those who have experienced such trauma. She suffers from nightmares for years, "I had nightmares almost every night. I would dream about Wen Fu chasing me, or hurting me, or killing me. I would wake up in a cold sweat, my heart pounding in my chest" (KGW,p. 60). Weili's recurrent nightmares about Wen Fu chasing, hurting, or killing her are indicative of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is a common mental health condition experienced by survivors of trauma.

Weili experiences difficulty with sleep, which is a common symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD): "I couldn't sleep. I would lie awake for hours, listening to Wen Fu snore beside me. I was afraid to close my eyes, afraid of what I might see in my dreams" (KGW,p. 61). Weili's fear of sleeping and reluctance to close her eyes reveal the anxiety and fear she experiences due to her trauma. Sleep disturbances, such as insomnia or nightmares, are common among individuals who have experienced traumatic events and can significantly impact their daily functioning and quality of life. Weili's inability to sleep and her fear of what she might dream about indicates the pervasive psychological and emotional impact of domestic violence on survivors.

On page 151, Tan underscores the experience of Weili as a battered woman, with all the associated feelings of entrapment, fear, and anxiety. Weili's description of feeling "trapped, like a bird in a cage" captures the pervasive sense of helplessness and powerlessness experienced by many survivors of domestic violence. She says, "I couldn't escape, no matter how hard I tried. I was always afraid, always anxious, always on edge" (p. 151). Weili's experience of feeling constantly afraid, anxious, and on edge indicates the ongoing trauma and psychological distress she has experienced due to the abuse inflicted upon her by her husband, Wen Fu. The emotional toll of domestic violence is significant, and survivors often experience psychological and emotional symptoms, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Tan demonstrates how Weili experiences physical sickness, phobias, nightmares, and difficulties sleeping, all symptoms of the Battered Woman Syndrome. These symptoms are indicative of the Battered Woman Syndrome, which is a subset of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and is commonly experienced by survivors of domestic violence.

A range of psychological and emotional symptoms, including anxiety, fear, depression, and physical illness, characterises the Battered Woman Syndrome. Weili's symptoms are thus consistent with this syndrome and highlight the devastating impact of domestic violence on individuals and their mental health.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, Weili undergoes a transformation characterised by her growing sense of rebellion against the oppressive conditions of her life. This change is evident in her response to events that would have previously left her feeling helpless and vulnerable. For instance, when Weili returns home after giving birth to her son Danru, only to discover that Wen Fu has brought his mistress to their home, she reacts in a way that demonstrates her newfound maturity and independence. Rather than succumbing to fear or despair, Weili remains composed and even refers to the mistress as a "guest" (KGW, 238) to her family members. This shift in Weili's attitude is further evidenced by the name she chooses for her son. By selecting the Buddhist name Danru, which means "nonchalance" (KGW, 235), Weili reveals her feelings towards her husband after years of enduring his abuse and mistreatment. This name choice signifies Weili's growing sense of independence and symbolises her resistance against the oppressive conditions of her life.

Weili's transformation in *The Kitchen God's Wife* is characterised by her growing rebellion against the patriarchal norms that have oppressed her for years. Her newfound maturity and independence are evident in her response to unpredictable events, such as the arrival of Wen Fu's mistress, as well as in her choice of name for her son. These changes represent a significant departure from Weili's experiences of helplessness and vulnerability and demonstrate her growing agency and sense of self-determination. She feels indifferent to the extent that she likes the company of Wen Fu's mistress over time. She feels pity for her wondering "[w]hat kind of woman would be so desperate she would want to be a mistress to [her] husband?...[it must be the war that] made many people that way, full of fear, desperate to live without knowing why" (KGW, 239). Tan highlights Weili's complex emotions towards Wen Fu's mistress and her growing empathy towards other women who are also victims of the patriarchal society.

Weili's indifference towards Wen Fu's mistress indicates her growing independence and detachment from Wen Fu, as she no longer sees the mistress as threatening her sense of security. Moreover, Weili's pity towards the mistress suggests

a growing empathy and understanding for other women who may be trapped in oppressive and abusive relationships. Weili recognises that the war has created a society where many women are forced to make difficult choices out of fear and desperation, leading to a sense of solidarity with other women who are also struggling against the patriarchal norms of their society. The inclusion of Weili's empathy towards Wen Fu's mistress in the novel is significant as it underscores the importance of recognising how women can support and uplift each other in the face of patriarchal oppression. Weili's growing sense of empathy and understanding towards other women represents a significant shift in her character as she moves away from the isolation and helplessness she previously experienced toward a sense of solidarity and empowerment.

Weili believes that this woman's presence will help her obtain her freedom. She is the key that Weili intends to use to open the door to her salvation, especially since everyone is taking in the repercussions of the war. Weili thinks she will not be subjected to criticism or unjust judgments when everybody knows the truth about Wen Fu and his indirect responsibility for the death of two women and their children. However, Weili never tells anyone what he does. Unfortunately, all these hopes have been dashed in front of her eyes. When she confronts her husband that she wants a divorce, he refuses without a comforting word or an apology for all the pain he has caused her during those years. He refuses to divorce her to show her who "the boss" is (KGW, 245). He will not do anything she wants or tells him to do.

Winnie tries hard to free herself from painful memories as an abandoned child, a battered woman, a prisoner, and a runaway wife who starts a new life in a different country, adopting a different language and customs. Marianne Hirsch illustrates, "The story of female development, both in fiction and theory, needs to be written in the voice of mothers and daughters". Only by integrating both voices and discovering a double voice that yields various female consciousnesses can we begin to imagine ways to live "life afresh" (97). In order to envision ways to live anew, as Hirsch suggests, it is necessary to recognise and address the broader social and cultural forces that contribute to the oppression and marginalisation of women. This requires a commitment to listening to and amplifying women's voices from diverse backgrounds and developing a more comprehensive understanding of how gender intersects with other forms of oppression and discrimination.

Winnie's efforts to free herself from the painful memories of her past and start a new life in a foreign country are rooted in her desire to escape the oppressive conditions of her past and find a sense of agency and autonomy. The quote from Marianne Hirsch emphasises the importance of recognising the voices and experiences of both mothers and daughters in the process of female development and empowerment. A more complete and nuanced understanding of women's experiences can be achieved by including the perspectives of both mothers and daughters. This recognition of multiple voices is crucial in developing a more comprehensive and empathetic understanding of the experiences of survivors of abuse and trauma. The inclusion of Winnie's story in the novel underscores the importance of recognising how broader social and cultural forces, such as patriarchy, colonialism, and migration, shape women's experiences. Winnie's experiences of abuse and trauma are not solely the result of individual choices or actions but are also shaped by her time and place's social and cultural conditions.

Weili's life is changed forever when she meets Jimmy Louie on Christmas Eve, 1940. He is an Asian American who works with the U.S. Information Service to provide translation services to American volunteers and the Chinese air force. It is an American party where Chinese pilots and their wives are invited. This night, two things happened to her. First, she feels "the danger" (KGW, 271) of falling in love with Jimmy Louie, who will become her next husband. The second thing is that Wen Fu rapes her under the threat of a gun with a barrage of insults and curses for dancing with an American. Iris Young Morison writes, "patriarchal society defines women as an object, as a mere body, and that in sexist society women are frequently regarded by others as objects and mere bodies" (Young, 1990, p. 155). This physical punishment makes her "senseless" (KGW, 273). She begs him to kill her, but he does not listen or care about her pain. Later, she has a mental conflict when he forces her to write a divorce paper. She starts "laughing and crying" (KGW, p. 273) from pain and joy: she cannot believe she is divorced from this animal-like person.

Divorce is almost taboo in Chinese society before World War II. When Auntie Du learns about the divorce paper in the morning, she considers it a disaster (KGW, 273). From a societal point of view, Weili must accept her husband's "terrible disgrace" (KGW, 245) and should not consider divorcing him. E.D. Huntley points out that such women "accept their oppression and abuse as a fact of their lives, and they inadvertently perpetuate their victimisation through their passivity and refusal to speak

out" (Huntley, 1998,p.100). Hulan and Auntie Du remain silent as they witness Wen Fu putting Weili in a degrading position on her knees to ask his forgiveness for leaving the house after the "tragedy" (KGW, 274); the divorce.

Furthermore, they reveal to Wen Fu where Weili is hiding, believing he will be kind to her as promised: "Weili's victimisation could not have taken place if Chinese society had not condoned it to such an extent that even her best friends did not want to blemish their reputations by helping her escape"(Caesar, 2009, p. 41). The complete collapse of her marriage changes Weili. She realises her need to identify herself and know who Jiang Weili's true character is.

After this incident, the novel shows that Weili does not forget the idea of escape even after four years and how she begins to study reality, rejecting the identity that is given to her by the community. Nevertheless, she does not leave her son as her mother does. She knows that her husband uses her son as a weapon to stop her from leaving (KGW, 315). The name of this chapter summarises Weili's condition; "weak and strong." She lives without hope but yet "no longer despaired" (KGW, 277) until the war ended in 1945.

The end of the war gives Weili some hope for freedom because she can now return to Shanghai, where her father lives, after being "stuck" (KGW, 279) in another city and her marriage for eight years. However, in Shanghai, everything falls apart, and everyone in her family becomes under the mercy of Wen Fu because the latter knows Jiang, Weili's father, has collaborated with the Japanese. Wen Fu takes control of the house and all the financial matters. He wastes the money as if he is burning it. If anyone protests, he will face Wen Fu's anger and threat "[s]hould I have all of you thrown into jail, along with this traitor?" (KGW, 292).

Weili decides to visit her uncle's house, which she is raising. To her immense surprise, she finds herself crying with a nostalgic feeling about the place and the people who never treated her, as well as their daughter, Peanut. From a local mythological point of view, places from childhood provide the mind with collective memories. These memories enable the individual to construct his or her identity.

The Kitchen God's Wife employs visions as a significant metaphor for the protagonists' helplessness in the face of destiny. Dream interpretation reveals that a dream represents the dreamer's interior conflicts and unreasonable concerns. In the late

nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud proposed that dreams represent repressed desires and conflicts that cannot be expressed during conscious hours. The transformation of these needs and conflicts into dream imagery and symbolism enables the dreamer to come to terms with them. Carl Jung elaborated on the work of Sigmund Freud in the early twentieth century by defining a "collective unconscious" that includes not only the dreams of individual people but also the shared images, patterns, and symbols found in myth, legend, and religious ritual (2012:16).

Places from the past play a magnificent role in understanding one's self by comparing his or her personality and how it becomes. Weili is also surprised to know what happens to her cousin from the mouth of Old Aunt, "Peanut ran away from her marriage. She went to a bad group of people who claimed they helped women escape feudal marriages" (KGW, 298). Weili sees in this incident a twinkle of hope she always dreamed of. Therefore, Weili is determined, after hearing Peanut's story, to find her cousin, hoping for support to get rid of her tyrannical husband.

During Weili's search for her cousin, she encounters Jimmy Louie, the Chinese-American soldier whom she has danced with, and gives her the American name, Winnie; the name which her daughter, Pearl, knows her by; and gives Hulan, the name Helen. Jimmy insists it is their "destiny" (KGW, 302) to meet again after five years. They find themselves talking for hours; Jimmy encourages her, making her feel "a strong person" (KGW, 307) capable of changing her miserable life and achieving her identity. Jimmy's tenderness makes Weili open her heart and tell him everything about her marriage.

She is astonished to see a completely different person when she finds Peanut. Peanut, "who loved every kind of comfort" (KGW, 300), lives a difficult life rejecting materialism. Peanut narrates her story with bitterness. She is another victim of her society and the cultural beliefs; therefore; Peanut endorses a different philosophy in life; "we are living in a world where everything is false. The society is like bright paint applied on top of rotten wood." (KGW, 311), she says. Peanut tells Weili her story; she is married to a homosexual, who not only lives with her as her brother but also stays silent and indifferent in front of his family, who forces Peanut to hide for months every year as if she is pregnant. His family goes to little villages to buy a new baby son for them each year. After five differently shaped children, each one from a different family,

she runs away. No one forgives her for escaping, even her family. As a result of treating her as “a diseased person” (KGW, 298), due to her divorce, she becomes a Communist.

Hearing Peanut’s story increases Weili’s determination to break the chains of unjust persecution. Jimmy Louie offers her his support and his wish to marry her when the divorce papers are finished legally. After Weili’s escape, she goes through a series of misadventures, including her son's death. Then, she is thrown in jail.

Wen Fu accuses her of stealing his son and letting him die, stealing valuables from his family, and deserting him because she is a fallen woman who is crazy for American sex (KGW, 330,332). Weili is sentenced to two years in jail. Wen Fu smiled victoriously in the court, satisfied with the unfair judgment. He acts as if he owns her fate when he walks to the Judge and tells him that if Weili says she is sorry, he will forgive her and takes her home. He is so confident that the Judge will release her and everything will go back as it was, but Weili is full of hate for Wen Fu,

I was blind to everything except Wen Fu’s smiling face, waiting for my answer. And I could imagine how he would laugh at me, how he would later force his way into my bed, how he would make me miserable every day until my mind was completely broken[*she finds herself answering*]I would rather sleep on the concrete floor of a jail...than go to that man’s house” (KGW, 331-332)

With this public rejection, she declares to the world her refusal not only to her husband but also to the masculine hegemony and the unfair judicial system, which sends her to prison by believing Wen Fu's lies. This system also reaches Jimmy, who is forced to leave his job and China.

Eventually, Weili can choose; she empowers herself with cunning and force. She is no longer that marginalised girl. Weili becomes a woman who leaves China for good after getting out of prison and marries Jimmy Louie in America. But her triumph doesn't last long because Wen Fu finds her the day before her departure. He comes to have his revenge for divorcing him. He hits her, curses her, waves his gun next to her, and forces her to beg him to keep her as his wife. Then he rapes her brutally on the floor. Later she manages to have the gun, and under her threats of killing him, he runs, which was the last time she ever saw him. In America, "nine months later, maybe a little less, [Winnie Louie has] a baby" (KGW, 350); she has Pearl.

Naming is an essential tool for asserting identity. During Weili’s journey, her name changes many times in the novel. For her mother, she is “heart liver” to Auntie

Du. She is a "little person" (KGW, 327). Old Aunt used to call her "Weiwei" (KGW, 296), and Peanut named her "sugar sister" (KGW, 310). Each "new name engenders new identity" (Shuman, 2002, p. 1516). "Winnie" symbolises Weili's journey from silence to full voice. Winnie's mesmerising tale is interrupted by unanswered questions from Winnie to her daughter. These questions are left to the reader to infer because Tan insists on bringing the reader back to the current moment between the daughter and her mother. By doing this, she challenges the readers' ability to believe Winnie's story and invites them to share her pain and agony (Holly, 2010, p. 173). Robb Forman Dew mentions that "[t]hese occasional intrusions are momentary and, indeed, it is very nearly hypnotic to be submerged in the convoluted story of the life of Jiang Weili" (Dew, 1991, p. 16). According to Chinese culture, the man takes all the credit. Women are supposed to be passive and obedient. Weili's Chinese identity has given her the worst memories even after sixty years. While revealing her story to Pearl, she cannot stop the pain in her heart or the tears from rolling down her face.

Critics have noticed that Tan's male characters are one-dimensional, good or bad, contrary to female characters. Around halfway through the book, in chapter fourteen of the novel precisely, the reader realises that Weili's personality and way of thinking have changed. She begins to refuse the identity codified to her by her culture for centuries. She is fed up with the Chinese customs that impose the idea that "[a] woman always had to feel pain, suffer and cry before she could feel love" (KGW, 143). In this chapter, Wen Fu forces her to eat bitter cabbage every day for two weeks because she does not like the taste. She knows she can end this "cabbage game" (KGW, 248) by praising the plate, but if she does not fight, it will be like admitting her life is finished. Wenyong Xu writes in his essay "A Womanist Production of Truths":

Weili finally understands that if she does not fight back, she will be like many other women who become sacrifices on the altar of the patriarchal tradition. She casts off the respectable robe of tragedy and compares herself to "a chicken in a cage, mindless, never dreaming of freedom, but never worrying when your neck might be chopped off" [KGW, 313]. This recognition of her life's inhumanity finally motivates her to seek a change in life. In retrospect, she tells her daughter, "If I had had to change the whole world to change my own life, I would have done that" [KGW, 355-356](Xu, 2009, p. 91)

The quote highlights Weili's growing awareness of the oppressive conditions of her life and her determination to fight back against the patriarchal traditions that have constrained her. The metaphor of a chicken in a cage captures the entrapment and helplessness that Weili has experienced throughout her life, as she has been confined to

the narrow roles and expectations imposed on her by her society and culture. However, Weili's realisation that she has the power to change her life represents a significant turning point in her character development. She recognises that if she does not fight back against the patriarchal traditions that have oppressed her, she will continue to be a victim of those traditions. This recognition of the inhumanity of her life motivates her to seek a change, even if it means challenging the patriarchal system that has constrained her. The inclusion of Weili's determination to fight against the patriarchal traditions in the novel is significant as it underscores the importance of recognising how women can resist and challenge oppressive structures. Weili's determination to change her own life, even if it means changing the whole world, represents a powerful example of the agency and resilience of women in the face of oppression. Weili's transformation in *The Kitchen God's Wife* is characterised by her growing rebellion against the patriarchal norms that have oppressed her for years. Her realisation that she can change her life represents a significant departure from her experiences of helplessness and vulnerability. It demonstrates her growing agency and sense of self-determination.

Amy Tan's use of mythology reflects contemporary social issues and challenges traditional gender ideologies. According to Wenying Xu, Tan's use of mythology in her writing is a subversive tactic that undermines patriarchal domination and gives women freedom from oppressive gender norms (Xu, 2009, pp. 86-87). However, some critics, such as Frank Chin, have accused Tan of betraying her ancestral culture and perpetuating negative stereotypes about the Chinese community. Chin has criticised Tan, along with other "Christian Chinese American" authors such as Maxine Hong Kingston and David Henry Hwang, for presenting a negative image of China that reinforces Western beliefs about Chinese misogyny (Sharma, 1996: 59). These divergent perspectives highlight the complex and often contradictory ways in which cultural identity is negotiated in contemporary literature. On the one hand, Tan's use of mythology can be seen as a way to challenge oppressive gender norms and provide a voice for marginalised women. On the other hand, critics such as Chin argue that such representations perpetuate negative stereotypes and contribute to the marginalisation of Chinese culture in the West.

In the novel's second chapter, Pearl recounts her mother's retelling of the traditional Chinese folktale of the Kitchen God to her daughters Tessa and Cleo. This story provides Tan's narrative outline to retell the tale from a feminist perspective. The original folktale tells the story of Zhang, an evil man who neglects his hardworking wife

in favour of his mistress, Lady Li. Zhang's reckless spending eventually leads to his destitution, and Lady Li abandons him for another man. When he is at death's door, Zhang's wife, Guo, saves and nurses him back to health. Upon realising that his saviour is his wife, Zhang jumps into a kitchen fire out of shame and is elevated to the Kitchen God in heaven. This position allows him to observe and judge the behaviour of others in the week leading up to the new year. Tan uses this folktale to critique patriarchal society and challenge the traditional gender roles that underlie it. The elevation of Zhang to the status of the Kitchen God, despite his abusive and neglectful behaviour towards his wife, symbolises the superior value placed on males in a patriarchal society. Tan subverts this male chauvinism by constructing a new identity, that of the Kitchen God's Wife, which centres on the experiences and agency of women. This feminist retelling of the folktale challenges the dominant cultural narratives that have traditionally relegated women to subordinate roles and provided limited opportunities for self-determination.

In her novel, Tan compares the character of Wen Fu and the traditional folktale of Zhang, who becomes a god despite mistreating his wife. Through this comparison, Tan implies that Weili embodies the traits of the good wife in the folktale, who is forgotten while her husband is elevated to godhood. Weili laments to her daughter that she is like the wife of the Kitchen God, who is overlooked for her loyalty and humanity. Tan suggests that the wife in the folktale should have been elevated to a god for her unwavering devotion. Therefore, she subverts the traditional narrative by transforming it into *The Kitchen God's Wife*.

By elevating the wife's character in the folktale to the Kitchen God's Wife status, Tan provides a powerful symbol of female empowerment and resilience in the face of oppressive gender norms. This subversion of traditional narratives serves as a means of challenging the dominant cultural narratives that have traditionally silenced and marginalised women and underscores the importance of recognising women's diverse experiences and perspectives in constructing a more inclusive and empathetic society. E.D Huntley, in his book *Amy Tan: A Critical Companion*, writes,

In the traditional version of the tale, the wife disappears from the narrative after her husband has been elevated to the divine pantheon; but in Tan's version, Weili, the wife who endures her husband's abuse and philandering, is rewarded for her forbearance with another chance to experience happiness, and she becomes Winnie, the survivor, the beloved wife of a good man, the mother of an accomplished daughter, and the grandmother of two American children (1998, p.85).

Huntley's observation highlights the significant departure that Tan's retelling of the folktale of the Kitchen God represents from the original version of the tale. In the traditional version, the wife is forgotten after her husband is elevated to the divine pantheon. However, in Tan's version, the character of Weili, who endures her husband's abuse and infidelity, is rewarded for her perseverance with the opportunity to experience happiness again. She transforms into Winnie, a survivor beloved by a good man, the mother of an accomplished daughter, and the grandmother of two American children. This transformation of Weili into Winnie reflects Tan's feminist perspective and her emphasis on recognising the agency and resilience of women in the face of patriarchal oppression. By providing Weili with a chance to experience happiness and fulfilment, Tan subverts the traditional narrative of women as passive victims of male domination and challenges the gender norms that have traditionally confined women to subordinate roles. Huntley's analysis underscores the significance of Tan's retelling of the folktale of the Kitchen God and its contribution to feminist literature. The transformation of Weili into Winnie represents a powerful symbol of female empowerment and challenges traditional narratives that have marginalised and silenced women.

Chinese family relationships are based on a patriarchal family structure representing a masculine domination that undermines the female role. Nevertheless, it does not negate this role because it cannot be without it but entirely contains it and moulds it how it must be according to male strategy. Cultural beliefs around family influence such a cultural definition of self. Tracing this self helps the reader better understand the responses of battered Chinese women to spouse abuse and the restrictions and beliefs that chain them. The adoption of psychoanalysis as a model for interpreting Tan's fiction provides a genuinely unique analytical perspective because it delves into the depths of the characters' psyches and can completely transform the overall atmosphere of the story, providing a new prism for submissive women as experienced by the protagonists of Tan's stories.

Tyson has argued that some critics have objected to the use of psychoanalysis to analyse the behaviour of fictional characters, as literary characters are not natural persons and thus cannot have psyches that can be examined. However, other psychoanalytic commentators have argued that this method can be justified because psychoanalysing fictional characters allows us to understand their behaviour as a reflection of the psychological reality of human beings in general. Furthermore, it is just

as valid to psychoanalyse the actions of literary characters as it is to analyse them from other critical perspectives, such as feminist, Marxist, or African American perspectives, which analyse literary depictions as examples of real-life issues such as the experiences of battered women.

The application of psychoanalytic theory to literary analysis can provide a deeper understanding of fictional characters' psychological motivations and conflicts. In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, for instance, the character of Weili's struggle against patriarchal oppression and her eventual transformation into the empowered figure of Winnie can be analysed through the lens of psychoanalytic theory. Weili's experiences of abuse and trauma at the hands of her husband reflect the psychological reality of many women who have suffered from domestic violence. Similarly, her transformation into Winnie represents a powerful example of psychological resilience and empowerment, which can be interpreted as a reflection of the psychological reality of many women who have struggled against patriarchal oppression. Therefore, applying psychoanalytic theory to literary analysis can provide valuable insights into the psychological motivations and conflicts of fictional characters, allowing us to understand and appreciate the complex psychological realities reflected in their behaviour. *The Kitchen God's Wife* is a prime example of a work of literature that can be analysed through a psychoanalytic lens, highlighting the importance of recognising the diversity of critical perspectives that can be brought to bear on literary texts.

4. BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

4.1. B.A Paris

B.A. Paris is a British author of psychological thriller novels. She is known for her gripping and suspenseful writing style, often featuring unreliable narrators and plot twists. Her novels explore themes of betrayal, deception, and psychological manipulation. Paris was born in England and grew up in France, which influenced her writing style. After completing her studies in French and English literature at university, she worked in finance. Eventually, she moved to the United States, where she worked for several years in international finance.

In 2016, Paris published her debut novel, *Behind Closed Doors*, which quickly became a bestseller and was translated into over 40 languages. The novel tells the story of a seemingly perfect couple, but as the plot unfolds, it becomes clear that there is more to their relationship than meets the eye. The success of *Behind Closed Doors* led to a three-book deal with St. Martin's Press, and Paris has since published several more novels, including *The Breakdown*, *Bring Me Back*, *The Dilemma*, and *The Therapist*. (Author Interview, 2016). Paris can keep readers guessing until the very end. Her novels have been praised for their well-drawn characters and exploration of complex emotional themes such as love, trust, and betrayal. She has been compared to famous thriller writers such as Gillian Flynn and Paula Hawkins.

B.A. Paris has become a well-known name in the psychological thriller genre, and several factors set her apart from other writers. Firstly, Paris is known for her ability to craft complex and layered, relatable, and intriguing characters. She has a talent for creating characters that are not purely good or evil but have a mix of positive and negative qualities. This makes her characters feel more realistic and human and allows readers to empathise with them even when they make questionable decisions.

Secondly, Paris is skilled at building suspense and tension throughout her novels. She often employs a slow-burn approach to the plot, gradually revealing more and more information over time until the reader is wholly absorbed in the story. This creates a sense of unease and keeps readers on the edge of their seats, eager to discover what happens next.

Finally, Paris is known for plot twists and surprises that keep readers guessing until the end. Her novels are filled with shocking revelations and reveal that turn the story on its head and leave readers reeling. This unpredictability is a hallmark of her writing and has made her a famous author in the psychological thriller genre.

B.A. Paris stands out in the psychological thriller genre due to her ability to create complex characters, build suspenseful plots, and deliver surprising twists and turns. These qualities have made her a favourite among genre fans and cemented her place as one of the leading writers in this space. Today, B.A. Paris continues to write and publish novels, and she has become a mainstay in the psychological thriller genre. Her works have been adapted for film and television, and she has a large and dedicated following of fans worldwide.

4.2. Behind Closed Doors

Behind Closed Doors is a novel that explores the dark and twisted relationship between a seemingly perfect couple, Jack and Grace. The psychological analysis of the characters and their behaviours in the novel reveals several interesting insights. Firstly, the character of Jack is a classic example of a narcissistic personality disorder. He is charming, manipulative, and controlling and enjoys exerting power over others. He is obsessed with maintaining his image of perfection and will go to great lengths to ensure that no one sees his true nature. He is also highly skilled at gaslighting, a technique he uses to make Grace doubt her sanity and reality. Grace, on the other hand, is a victim of emotional abuse. She is portrayed as an intelligent and capable woman but trapped in a psychologically abusive relationship. She is isolated from her friends and family and constantly subjected to Jack's manipulations and control. Her fear of Jack's wrath shapes her behaviour, and she constantly walks on eggshells to avoid setting him off. The novel also explores the impact of childhood trauma on adult behaviour. The dissertation also sheds light on Grace's sister, Millie, who has Down Syndrome and was sent to a care home when they were young. This traumatic experience has had a profound impact on Grace's behaviour and her desire to protect those who are vulnerable.

It is common for literary works to be analysed through different critical lenses, and a psychoanalytic reading can offer insights into the hidden meanings and motivations behind characters' behaviour. The article by Sana M. Jarrar titled "A Psychoanalytic Reading of B. A. Paris's *Behind Closed Doors*" offers a detailed analysis of the novel from a psychoanalytic perspective. Jarrar applies Freud's psychoanalytic theory to the novel, examining the characteristics of the psychopathic personality of the protagonist, Jack. The article discusses how Jack's behaviours and personality traits are consistent with the characteristics of psychopathy, including a lack of empathy and a desire for power and control over others. Jarrar also explores how the novel portrays the psychological impact of domestic violence on the victim, Grace (2018).

Jarrar's analysis of the psychopathic personality of the antagonist in *Behind Closed Doors* is one example of how psychoanalytic theory can be applied to literary works. However, it is essential to note that domestic violence is a complex issue that cannot be fully explained by psychoanalytic theory alone. While psychoanalytic theory

can offer insights into the motivations and behaviour of individual abusers, it does not fully account for the broader social and cultural factors that contribute to domestic violence, such as gender norms, power dynamics, and systemic inequalities. Therefore, although the dissertation focuses on the psychological approach, it considers multiple perspectives and approaches when analysing the issues of battering. This might include feminist and intersectional perspectives, which can illuminate how gender, race, class, and other factors intersect to shape experiences of domestic violence. A comprehensive understanding of domestic violence requires an interdisciplinary approach considering individual and systemic factors. By bringing together different perspectives and approaches, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of domestic violence and its impact on survivors.

4.2.1. The Psychology of Control: Analyzing Abusive Behavior

Jack, the main antagonist in *Behind Closed Doors*, is a complex and disconcerting character with various psychological issues. Throughout the novel, he is shown to be a controlling, manipulative, and abusive partner who uses a range of tactics to maintain power and control over his wife, Grace. One of the most striking aspects of Jack's psychology is his extreme narcissism. He is obsessed with maintaining his image as a successful and charming man and will go to great lengths to control how others perceive him; "Jack is always worried about how he appears to others. He wants to make sure that no one sees the truth about him." (BCD, p. 62). This is evidenced by his meticulous planning and manipulation of Grace's life and his tendency to become enraged when he feels his carefully crafted image is being threatened.

Jack is also shown to have a sadistic streak, deriving pleasure from the pain and suffering of others. He enjoys manipulating and controlling Grace, revelling in his power over her; "He enjoys manipulating and controlling me, enjoys the power he has over me... He likes to see me suffer, likes to see the fear in my eyes".(BCD, pp.27,51) This is evidenced by his use of physical violence and emotional abuse, as well as his tendency to play mind games with her because he "enjoys the game, the thrill of the chase, the power he has over [her]." (BCD, p.93). Jack's behaviour is not only morally reprehensible, but it also raises serious concerns about his mental state. The fact that he

enjoys the game, the thrill of the chase, and his power over Grace suggests that he derives pleasure from exerting control over others.

Jack is a charming and successful lawyer who presents a perfect façade to the outside world. However, behind closed doors, he is a sadistic and abusive husband who systematically controls and torments his wife, Grace. The quote “He’s always been drawn to the darker side of human nature, the pain and suffering of others” from page 76 of the novel implies that Jack has a fascination with and attraction to the suffering of others. Sadism is a personality disorder characterised by a persistent and recurrent pattern of deriving pleasure from inflicting pain, suffering, or humiliation on others (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). People with sadistic personality disorder often have a lack of empathy and disregard for the feelings of others. They may also enjoy feeling powerful and in control, which can manifest in behaviours such as dominating others or coercing them into submission.

A notable psychologist who has extensively studied psychopathy is Robert D. Hare. Hare is a Canadian psychologist who developed the Hare Psychopathy Checklist, a widely used diagnostic tool for assessing psychopathic traits. In his book “Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us,” Hare discusses the characteristics of psychopathy and their impact on society (1999, p.31).

Hare discusses psychopathy in more detail throughout the book, including case studies and examples of psychopathic behaviour. In “Without Conscience,” Robert Hare discusses several characteristics of psychopathy and their impact on society. For instance, a psychopathic person is characterised to have a superficial charm and glibness: Psychopaths are often very charming and persuasive, but their charm is superficial and designed to manipulate others (1999, p.51). Grace demonstrates how Jack uses his charm and charisma to manipulate those around him, including her. She says: “I watched Jack chatting to everyone, his charm and charisma in full flow.” (BCD, p. 31). Despite the facade of charm and kindness that he presents to others, he is ultimately revealed to be a cruel and abusive individual with no empathy for others. This is consistent with the traits of psychopathy, which often involve a superficial charm and a lack of empathy or remorse.

Another characteristic is that “[p]sychopaths lie easily, often in subtle ways, and can maintain their composure even when caught in a lie.” (Hare, 1999, p. 52).

Psychopaths may use lies to gain power or control over others or simply for the thrill of getting away with a lie. The lies of psychopaths may be subtle and understated, making them difficult to detect and exposing their victims to manipulation and exploitation. In *Behind Closed Doors*, Jack is portrayed as a skilled liar who uses deception to manipulate and control those around him: “Jack had lied to me so easily and so convincingly that I had believed him.” (BCD, p.29). He uses his charm and charisma to convince others of his lies and to make them doubt themselves. This is consistent with the trait of psychopathy that involves pathological lying to manipulate and control others for personal gain.

Another aspect of Jack's psychology is his deep-seated insecurity. Despite his carefully crafted image of success and charm, he is deeply insecure about his worth and constantly seeks validation and approval from others. This is evidenced by his need to control Grace and his intense jealousy of anyone he perceives as threatening his relationship with her. Finally, Jack's psychology is characterised by a complete lack of empathy for others. He is unable to understand or care about the pain and suffering he inflicts on Grace and is only concerned with his desires and needs: “Jack had no empathy, no understanding of what it felt like to be me... I realised that Jack was incapable of feeling love, or any emotion that didn't relate to his own needs.”(BCD, pp.53,217). This lack of empathy is a hallmark of psychopathy and is a critical factor in Jack's ability to commit such heinous acts of abuse and manipulation without remorse. Hare illustrates that “[p]sychopaths are callous and indifferent to the feelings of others, and may even enjoy causing others pain or discomfort.” (1999, p.54). Psychopaths may even enjoy causing others pain or discomfort. Their lack of concern for the welfare of others goes beyond simply being unable to experience the emotions of others. This trait of psychopathy is crucial in their ability to manipulate and exploit others for their gain.

Jack is portrayed as a character who is unwilling to take responsibility for his actions and often blames others for his mistakes and failures: “Jack never took the blame for anything; it was always someone else's fault...[he] never accepted responsibility for anything that went wrong; he always found a way to blame someone else.” (BCD, pp. 8,107) The failure to accept responsibility for one's actions is one of the signs of psychopaths who blame others or external circumstances for their mistakes and failures. (Hare,1999, p. 54).

Jack's psychology in *Behind Closed Doors* is deeply disturbing and highlights another psychological disorder: the dangers of extreme narcissism. The character is a cautionary tale of the devastating impact of abuse and manipulation on individuals and their loved ones. Extreme narcissism is a personality disorder characterised by a grandiose sense of self-importance, a need for excessive admiration, and a lack of empathy for others(Hepper et al., 2014, p.9). One of the leading experts on narcissism is Dr Drew Pinsky, a board-certified physician and addiction medicine specialist. In his book "The Mirror Effect: How Celebrity Narcissism is Seducing America," co-written with S. Mark Young, Dr Pinsky examines the rise of extreme narcissism in American culture and its impact on society. He states: "Narcissists are often driven by a deep-seated insecurity and fear of rejection, which they mask with their grandiose sense of self-importance."(2010,p.50). Pinsky emphasises the manipulative and charming nature of narcissistic personalities and their lack of empathy and sense of entitlement. He also highlights the devastating impact that extreme narcissism can have on those around the narcissist.

Jack has signs of extreme narcissism, like an exaggerated sense of self-importance: A person with extreme narcissism may have an inflated sense of their abilities, accomplishments, and importance. They may believe they are superior to others and expect to be treated accordingly; "Jack thinks he's better than everyone else. He thinks he's smarter, more successful, and more special."(BCD, p.13). Another sign of extreme narcissism is his obsession with achieving success, power, and status. They may constantly seek opportunities to prove their superiority, and he "becomes angry and hostile when he feels that his status is being threatened when he feels that someone is questioning his authority." (BCD, p.62). A narcissist may have little regard for the feelings or needs of others. They may be unwilling or unable to understand the perspectives of others and maybe dismissive or contemptuous of those they perceive as weak or inferior. As Grace illustrates, "Jack doesn't have any empathy. He doesn't care about anyone else's feelings but his own." (BCD, p. 20). This statement means that Jack is not concerned about the feelings of other people and is only interested in his feelings and desires. This implies that Jack is self-centred and indifferent to the well-being of others.

According to psychology, narcissists may use manipulation and deception to achieve their goals(Hepper et al.,2014, p.8). They may lie or deceive others to gain an

advantage and use guilt or manipulation to control the behaviour of others. In *Behind Closed Doors*, “Jack is a master manipulator. He knows exactly what to say and do to get what he wants... He has no problem lying or deceiving others to gain an advantage.”(BCD, pp.19, 42). This statement suggests Jack is highly skilled at deceiving others to achieve his goals. It implies that he is adept at using language and behaviour to influence people and get them to do what he wants. The statement also suggests that Jack is willing to use deceit and dishonesty to achieve his objectives, indicating a lack of concern for others and a focus on his interests.

Joshua D. Miller, An associate Professor of Psychology, defines narcissism in his book:

Narcissism is a personality disorder characterised by a grandiose sense of self-importance, a preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success or power, and a lack of empathy for others. It is often accompanied by a sense of entitlement, a need for admiration, and a belief that one is unique and special. Narcissistic individuals are often exploitative and arrogant and have difficulty accepting criticism or feedback from others(2016,p. 201).

A person with extreme narcissism may have fragile self-esteem despite their outward confidence. They may be easily hurt or offended by criticism and may react with anger or hostility to any perceived attack on their self-image. Jack has a “fragile ego” (BCD,p. 29), which cannot stand criticism, which is why he needs constant “validation and praise to feel good about himself.” (BCD,p.88). This quote suggests that Jack has fragile self-esteem and is vulnerable to criticism. It also paints a picture of Jack as emotionally fragile and highly dependent on the approval and validation of others.

On the other hand, Grace is a complex character portrayed as a victim of domestic violence at the hands of her husband, Jack. As a battered woman, Grace exhibits a range of psychological responses to the abuse she has suffered. One of Grace's most prominent psychological responses is a sense of helplessness and powerlessness as she confesses, “I'm trapped, and I don't know how to get out.” (BCD,p.106). She feels trapped and cannot leave Jack due to various factors, including fear, financial dependence, and a sense of duty to care for her disabled sister. This sense of powerlessness is a typical response among victims of domestic violence, “[t]he psychological effects of abuse can be profound, leading to feelings of learned helplessness and a sense of powerlessness.” (Bograd, 1988, p.51). Therefore, battered women often feel they have no control over their situation or way out.

4.2.2. Recognizing the Signs: Identifying the Steps to Learned Helplessness

Paris suggests that Grace feels trapped in her situation and unable to leave Jack due to fear, financial dependence, and a sense of duty to care for her disabled sister: “I know that if I leave him, I’ll lose Millie. He’ll make sure of that. And I can’t bear the thought of never seeing her again. So I’ll stay. I’ll stay for her.” (BCD, p. 51) This quote shows that Grace feels a sense of duty to care for her disabled sister Millie and is willing to stay with Jack to ensure she can continue to see her. Grace also feels financially dependent on Jack and cannot leave because of it. She says; “I was used to being self-sufficient, but now I was completely dependent on Jack. He had me exactly where he wanted me, and I couldn’t do a thing about it.” (BCD,p.78) She highlights why she feels unable to leave her situation with Jack due to her internal struggles “I knew I was trapped by my own fears, my own doubts, my own inability to see a way out... I was afraid of him, but I was also afraid of what would happen if I left him.” (BCD, pp.138, 93)This quote shows that Grace fears both staying with Jack and leaving him due to internal struggles.

The quote “I knew there was no point in arguing. Jack had made up his mind, and that was that.” (BCD, p.36) illustrates the concept of learned helplessness. This phenomenon occurs when an individual perceives that they have no control over a situation and therefore gives up trying to change it. In this case, Grace has learned that arguing with Jack is futile and has internalised this belief to the point where she no longer questions his decisions. Paris highlights the power dynamic in Grace and Jack’s relationship, with Jack holding all the decision-making authority. Grace’s resignation from this dynamic indicates her learned helplessness, which can result from ongoing abuse or trauma.

Furthermore, the quote suggests that Grace is aware of Jack’s dominance and control over her but feels powerless to resist it. This can indicate a larger societal issue where individuals in abusive relationships may feel trapped and unable to leave due to lacking resources or support. Grace’s confession is a powerful demonstration of the insidious nature of learned helplessness and its negative impact on a victim’s ability to assert agency and take control of their own life.

In addition, Grace exhibits a range of emotional responses to the abuse she has suffered. She experiences shame, guilt, and self-blame, typical responses among battering victims. In “Feminist perspectives on wife abuse”, Bograd says: “[t]he self-blame and guilt that battered women experience can be a significant barrier to seeking help and leaving an abusive relationship.”(1988,p.77). Bograd highlights the significant impact of self-blame and guilt on battered women, preventing them from seeking help and leaving abusive relationships. These feelings often result from the abuser's manipulation and control, making the victim feel responsible for their abuse. This can lead to feelings of shame and guilt and a sense of being trapped and unable to escape the relationship. Grace also struggles with anger and resentment towards Jack but cannot express these emotions openly due to fear of retaliation. She experiences these feelings throughout the novel in response to her abuse. She blames herself for not seeing the warning signs, feels guilty for not being able to protect others, and is ashamed of herself for not being strong enough to stand up to her husband; “I've only myself to blame for what's happening to me now. I should have seen the warning signs.” (BCD, p.14). These emotions are all too common for individuals who have experienced abuse. They illustrate the psychological impact that such experiences can have.

“Hmm, I do so love the smell of fear” (BCD, p.125). The statement by Jack in that he loves the smell of fear is a disturbing portrayal of his character and his enjoyment of using fear and pressure to control his wife, Grace. This behaviour is consistent with the traits of a psychopathic personality, which often includes a lack of empathy and a desire for power and control over others. Jack's statement also highlights how domestic violence can be a form of psychological abuse, as the fear and pressure he uses to control Grace can profoundly impact her mental and emotional well-being. A study published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* found that individuals who had experienced psychological abuse had higher rates of depression, anxiety, and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than those who had not experienced abuse (Dutton & Painter, 1993).

Grace also exhibits trauma symptoms due to the abuse she has suffered. She experiences flashbacks and nightmares related to her experiences with Jack and is constantly on edge and hyper-vigilant; “I have trouble concentrating, my mind always drifting back to what Jack has done to me.” (BCD, p.82). These symptoms are indicative

of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is a typical response to trauma. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is known as:

A mental health condition can occur after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. Symptoms may include intrusive thoughts or memories of the trauma, avoidance of trauma reminders, negative changes in mood and thinking, and hyperarousal. PTSD can be a chronic and disabling condition that can interfere with daily life and relationships. Effective treatments for PTSD include psychotherapy and medication. (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021)

This quote from the National Institute of Mental Health provides a clear and concise overview of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). It accurately describes the common symptoms of PTSD that can occur after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event, including intrusive flashbacks or memories of the trauma, avoidance of trauma reminders, adverse changes in mood and thinking, and hyperarousal. It also highlights the potential impact PTSD can have on a person's daily life and relationships, emphasising the importance of effective treatment.

The flashbacks in *Behind Closed Doors* deepen the reader's understanding of the characters and their motivations, highlighting how past experiences can shape an individual's behaviour and psychology (Bergman, 2008, p.143). The novel is structured as a series of flashbacks, with the present-day scenes revealing the true nature of the abusive relationship between Grace and Jack. In contrast, the past scenes depict their seemingly perfect courtship and marriage. Throughout the novel, Grace experiences flashbacks to her past, which reveal traumatic events that have shaped her into the person she is today. These flashbacks provide insight into Grace's character and the reasons behind her behaviour and decisions. They also help to create a sense of tension and suspense in the novel as the reader slowly uncovers the truth about Grace's past and the full extent of Jack's abuse.

Through flashbacks, the novel reveals the complex and nuanced motivations of the characters, shedding light on how past experiences have shaped their behaviour and psychology. For example, the novel explores Grace's troubled family history and how this has contributed to her vulnerability and susceptibility to abuse. The novel also explores Jack's past experiences and the factors contributing to developing his psychopathic personality. Flash flashbacks also create a more immersive and engaging reading experience, allowing readers to piece together the puzzle of the characters' motivations and behaviour. By revealing the characters' past experiences, the novel

underscores the importance of recognising how past trauma and experiences can shape an individual's behaviour, highlighting how past experiences can shape an individual's behaviour and psychology and the importance of addressing these issues to promote healing and healthy relationships.

The novel uses plot twists to keep readers engaged, particularly in the story's final third. Without giving away any spoilers, the novel's plot twists are surprising and unexpected, adding an extra layer of intrigue and suspense to the story. The novel becomes a brutal page-turner by keeping readers on the edge of their seats and constantly surprising them with unexpected plot developments. The use of suspense and plot twists in *Behind Closed Doors* is vital to the novel's success. By creating a sense of tension and anticipation, the novel keeps readers engaged and invested in the story, while the plot twists add an extra layer of intrigue and excitement.

Paris portrays Grace as a victim who exhibits several indicators of learned helplessness due to the abuse she has endured at the hands of her husband, Jack. Grace's declaration, "I've learned to accept my fate. This is my life now, and there's nothing I can do to change it" (BCD, p. 14), highlights her sense of resignation and hopelessness, characteristic of learned helplessness. Despite Grace's previous attempts to leave Jack, her belief that she cannot escape her situation ultimately leads her to accept her circumstances as a victim of domestic violence passively. This pattern of behaviour indicates the psychological impact of prolonged abuse on victims, which can lead to a loss of agency and the perception that there is no viable path to escape or change their situation.

Another sign of learned helplessness exhibited by Grace is a lack of motivation to take action. She feels that her situation is hopeless and that attempting to change it would be futile. This lack of motivation is a typical response among victims of domestic violence who feel they have no control over their situation, which is why Grace always tries "to avoid triggering him." (BCD,p. 54). Additionally, Grace tends to blame herself for the abuse she has suffered. She feels responsible for Jack's behaviour and deserves the treatment she has received; "Maybe if I had been a better wife, a better partner, he wouldn't have treated me this way." (BCD,p.49). This self-blame is a common response among victims of domestic violence who have been subjected to gaslighting and other forms of emotional abuse.

Grace displays a sense of passivity and lack of agency, as evidenced by her belief that Jack's actions dictate her life. She articulates this feeling of helplessness when she says, "I used to be strong and independent, but now I'm just a shell of the person I used to be" (BCD, p. 40). These symptoms of learned helplessness are a powerful illustration of the psychological impact of domestic violence on its victims. They highlight the damaging effects of abuse on an individual's sense of agency, motivation, and self-worth and emphasise the importance of providing support and resources to those who struggle with these issues. By portraying Grace as a victim of domestic violence struggling with learned helplessness, the novel raises awareness about abuse's pervasive and devastating impact on individuals. It underscores the need for resources and support to empower victims to break free from the cycle of abuse and reclaim their lives.

Jack employs various tactics to exert power and control over Grace through physical and psychological abuse. One of the ways he achieves this is by isolating Grace from her friends and family, depriving her of any potential support network. Grace describes the extent of her isolation when she says, "I don't have any friends or family to turn to. He's isolated me from everyone who cares about me" (BCD, p. 30). This isolation leaves Grace feeling alone and vulnerable, with no one to turn to for help or support. Moreover, Jack further reinforces his control over Grace by relocating them to a remote countryside house, making it difficult for Grace to leave or contact anyone outside. This move limits Grace's access to communication and transportation, reducing her ability to seek help or escape her situation. The isolation and confinement that Jack imposes on Grace are classic tactics of an abuser, as they increase the victim's reliance on the abuser while limiting their ability to seek help or escape.

Jack uses verbal abuse to belittle and control Grace. He calls her names, criticises her appearance, and manipulates her with "false promises" (BCD,p.68) and threats. "He calls me names, tells me I'm stupid and worthless... He uses words to control and belittle me, to make me feel small and powerless." (BCD, pp.25,103). These quotes demonstrate Jack's verbal abuse towards Grace, which includes name-calling, criticism of her appearance, manipulation with false promises, and threats of physical violence. Jack uses derogatory language and belittles her. The effect of this abuse on Grace is profound and damaging, as it undermines her confidence and sense of self-worth. Verbal abuse can significantly impact an individual's psychological well-being, as it can lead to feelings of shame, guilt, and self-blame.

Grace's experience of verbal abuse is apparent in her internal dialogue, where she is constantly criticised by Jack and made to feel inadequate. For instance, Jack constantly refers to Grace as "stupid" and "incompetent," making her feel as though she is incapable of making decisions or functioning independently. This verbal abuse has a cumulative effect on Grace, leading to a loss of self-esteem and confidence. She begins to doubt her abilities and feels powerless to challenge Jack's authority. This is exemplified when Grace says, "I can't do anything right. I'm useless" (BCD, p. 70). The constant barrage of verbal abuse has left Grace helpless and unable to assert herself. Moreover, the impact of verbal abuse on Grace extends beyond the emotional realm, as it can also have physical effects. For instance, Grace experiences headaches and stomach pains due to the stress and anxiety caused by Jack's verbal abuse.

Behind Closed Doors portrays Jack as a perpetrator of physical abuse against Grace, both directly and indirectly. Jack's acts of violence against Grace include beating, burning her with cigarettes, and breaking her fingers. Additionally, Grace reveals that Jack indirectly causes her physical harm by controlling what she eats and drinks, as she states, "[h]e indirectly causes me physical harm by controlling what I eat and drink" (BCD, p.81). This indirect abuse is an example of emotional or psychological abuse, which can have serious physical and mental health consequences for the victim. Controlling what someone eats and drinks can lead to malnutrition, dehydration, and other physical health problems.

Furthermore, it can also significantly impact a person's mental health, as it can cause feelings of anxiety, depression, and isolation. The combination of physical and psychological abuse that Grace experiences contributes to the profound trauma she endures throughout the novel. Jack's indirect forms of abuse underscore the insidious nature of domestic violence and how abusers use power and control to manipulate and harm their victims.

The novel under consideration delves into the complex and insidious dynamics of abuse and elucidates how abusers can employ various tactics to exert control over their victims. One of how Jack, the abuser, inflicts harm on Grace, his partner, is through mental abuse. He subjects her to the traumatising experience of watching him physically abuse her disabled sister, Millie, causing her immense psychological distress. Moreover, Jack employs manipulative tactics such as mind games and gaslighting to exert power

over Grace. By manipulating her emotions and inducing a sense of self-doubt, Jack undermines Grace's sense of agency and persuades her that she is mentally unstable. Such tactics enable Jack to maintain his power over Grace and prevent her from seeking help or leaving him.

Gaslighting and manipulation are central themes in the novel *Behind Closed Doors*. Throughout the novel, Jack uses various tactics to manipulate and control his wife, Grace, including gaslighting, a form of psychological abuse in which the abuser manipulates the victim's perception of reality (Stern,2017, p.3). Jack uses gaslighting to make Grace doubt her perceptions and memories, convincing her that she is crazy and that no one will believe her if she tries to leave him. Jack also manipulates Grace's behaviour, using threats and rewards to coerce her into compliance.

Gaslighting and manipulation are common tactics used by abusers in domestic violence situations. These behaviours can profoundly impact the victim's mental and emotional well-being, leading to confusion, isolation, and self-doubt. A licensed mental health counsellor, Dr Stephanie Sarkis, defines in her book "Gaslighting: Recognise Manipulative and Emotionally Abusive People" gaslighting as " a form of psychological abuse in which the abuser manipulates information to make the victim doubt their perceptions and memory." (2018,p.5). By defining gaslighting as a form of psychological abuse in which the abuser manipulates information to make the victim doubt their perceptions and memory, Dr Sarkis highlights the insidious nature of this form of abuse. Gaslighting can cause the victim to question their sanity, leading to confusion, self-doubt, and isolation. Dr Sarkis' definition also aligns with the common characteristics of gaslighting, including using lies, denial, and manipulation to create a false reality that benefits the abuser.

Behind Closed Doors highlights the insidious nature of gaslighting and its impact on the victim's perception of reality. Gaslighting involves illusion and deception, often through subtle tactics, making the victim doubt their memory and perceptions. The novel underscores the importance of recognising and addressing gaslighting and manipulation in domestic violence situations for individual survivors and broader society. By highlighting these behaviours and their devastating effects, the novel raises awareness of the importance of education, support services, and legal interventions to address domestic violence and promote healthy relationships. It offers a powerful and disturbing

depiction of how abusers may use psychological tactics to control and manipulate their victims. The novel highlights the importance of recognising and addressing these behaviours to promote healthy, safe, and respectful relationships.

The novel raises questions about women's pressures to conform to traditional gender roles and how these expectations can contribute to feelings of powerlessness and self-blame in abusive relationships. When Grace says, "I feel like I'm to blame for Jack's behavior, like I'm not fulfilling my duties as a wife." (BCD,p.70). The quote demonstrates women's pressures to conform to traditional gender roles and how these expectations can contribute to feelings of powerlessness and self-blame in abusive relationships. Grace feels like a failure as a wife and blames herself for not living up to these expectations, leading her to believe that she is responsible for Jack's abusive behaviour. She must keep up appearances and cannot let anyone know what is happening behind closed doors. Such feelings illustrate the damaging effects of gender expectations on women's self-esteem and sense of agency and the importance of challenging these harmful stereotypes to empower women in all aspects of their lives.

Behind Closed Doors offers a powerful critique of traditional gender roles and expectations, highlighting how these societal norms may contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of abuse. Throughout the novel, the gendered dynamics of the abusive relationship between Grace and Jack are explored, highlighting how gender roles and expectations can justify and enable abuse. For example, Jack uses traditional gender roles to justify his abusive behaviour; as Jack explains to Grace, "A husband is supposed to protect his wife from the world and provide for her, and in return, a wife is supposed to obey her husband and take care of him" (BCD, p. 43). This rhetoric reflects the traditional gender roles ingrained in society for centuries, allowing Jack to justify his abusive behaviour as a means of fulfilling his role as a 'protective' husband. This dynamic enables Jack to maintain a sense of power and control over Grace, using physical and psychological tactics to maintain his dominance and reinforce his position as the dominant figure in their relationship.

Messinger and DeKeseredy, scholars in gender-based violence and victimisation research, highlight the damaging impact of traditional gender roles and expectations on perpetuating cycles of abuse. They illustrate:

Traditional gender roles and expectations can contribute to cycles of abuse by perpetuating harmful stereotypes about men and women. These roles often dictate that men should be

strong, aggressive, and in control, while women should be passive, submissive, and nurturing. This can create an environment in which abusive behaviour by men is seen as acceptable or even desirable. In contrast, women who resist or challenge it are seen as deviant or troublesome. These societal norms can also make it difficult for men and women to seek help or support, as they may feel ashamed or embarrassed about their experiences." (Messinger & DeKeseredy, 2018,p. 102)

By reinforcing harmful stereotypes about men and women, these societal norms can create an environment in which abusive behaviour by men is seen as acceptable or even desirable. In contrast, women who resist or challenge it are stigmatised, which leads to learned helplessness. Their work has contributed significantly to our understanding of the complex social and cultural factors that contribute to cycles of abuse and underscores the urgent need for effective intervention and prevention strategies.

Paris delves into the societal expectations around marriage and relationships and how they can perpetuate abusive dynamics. Grace is initially drawn to Jack because of his seemingly perfect and idealised façade, which conforms to traditional societal expectations around marriage and relationships. She notes, "Jack is charming, attentive, and protective – all qualities that are traditionally considered desirable in a husband" (BCD: 25). However, as the novel progresses, Grace realises the true nature of Jack's abusive behaviour and how these expectations may contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of abuse. This aspect of the novel underscores the importance of challenging societal norms and promoting healthy and respectful relationships. The novel emphasises the need for education, awareness-raising, and support services for survivors to break cycles of abuse. By highlighting the role of societal expectations in perpetuating abusive dynamics, the novel encourages critical reflection on the norms and values that shape our ideas about relationships, marriage, and gender roles.

In conclusion, the novel provides a powerful commentary on the societal expectations around marriage and relationships and how they can perpetuate abusive dynamics. The novel underscores the importance of promoting healthy relationships and challenging cultural norms that may enable abusive behaviour. By doing so, the novel advocates for a society that values respect, safety, and equality in all relationships.

The title of the novel "Behind Closed Doors" carries symbolic significance as it represents the concealed reality of domestic violence and psychological abuse that can occur within the confines of a seemingly perfect relationship. The phrase "behind closed doors" is commonly used to describe something hidden or kept private from public view.

In the context of the novel, the title suggests a hidden reality to Grace and Jack's relationship that is not visible to the outside world. On the surface, they appear to be the perfect couple, but Jack's true nature is only revealed when they are alone behind closed doors. Furthermore, the title alludes to secrecy and concealment, common themes in abusive relationships. Abusers often use secrecy and control to maintain power over their victims, and victims may feel ashamed or fearful to speak out about the abuse they are experiencing. This secrecy and concealment can prevent victims from seeking help or support, perpetuating the cycle of abuse.

The novel portrays the devastating impact that battering can have on individuals and families and illustrates how the cycle of abuse can perpetuate itself over time. It illustrates the cycle of abuse, in which the abuser goes through tension-building, explosion, and reconciliation. Jack becomes increasingly irritable and controlling in the tension-building phase, leading to a violent explosion in which he physically abuses Grace. After the explosion, he shows remorse and promises to change, leading to a period of reconciliation. However, this phase is short-lived, and the cycle begins again with the tension-building phase: "He always apologises, says he'll never do it again, and I believe him. But he always does it again." (BCD,p.9). This cycle of abuse and apology can be confusing and emotionally draining for the victim, who may want to believe that the abuser is sincere in their apologies and desire to change.

Behind Closed Doors highlights the tension-building phase of the cycle of abuse, in which the abuser becomes increasingly irritable and controlling. Grace, the protagonist, observes this pattern in Jack's behaviour and notes how he picks fault with small things she does or does not, making her feel like she is walking on eggshells around him. She says: "I see the tension building in him, the way it always does. He becomes moody and short-tempered, picking fault with small things I do, or things I don't do, until I'm walking on eggshells around him." (BCD, p. 98). This behaviour is a common tactic used by abusers to establish power and control over their victims. By criticising and nit-picking small things, they create an atmosphere of tension and anxiety, making their victims feel like they can never do anything right. This behaviour can also be a precursor to more overt abuse, warning that an explosive incident may be imminent.

“[Jack’s] mood swings are becoming more frequent, and I can feel the tension in the air whenever I’m around him” (BCD, p. 117). The quote highlights the tension-building phase of the cycle of abuse and how it affects the victim. Grace observes Jack’s mood swings becoming more frequent, creating tension and anxiety around him. Paris emphasises the insidious nature of abusive behaviour and how it can escalate over time. She “can see the anger simmering beneath the surface, and I know that whatever I say or do will be wrong.” (BCD, p.150) Grace can sense the anger simmering beneath the surface of Jack’s behaviour, creating a sense of unease and fear in her. This quote illustrates how the victim can become hyper-vigilant and anticipate an explosive incident during tension-building. Grace anticipates that whatever she says or does will be wrong, indicating her feelings of helplessness and powerlessness in the relationship.

Grace describes the explosive phase of the cycle of abuse, in which the tension built up by the abuser culminates in a violent incident. In this case, Jack physically assaults Grace with a backhanded slap that sends her sprawling: “His hand came out of nowhere, a backhanded slap across my face that sent me sprawling.”(BCD, p.108). The use of physical violence is a hallmark of domestic abuse and can have a profound impact on the victim’s physical and mental well-being. It is important to note that physical abuse is never acceptable and should never be rationalised or excused. It is a criminal act that can have severe consequences for both the victim and the abuser.

The explosive phase of the cycle of abuse is when the abuser becomes physically violent towards the victim. During this phase, the abuser may use physical violence, threats, or intimidation to establish power and control over the victim. The explosive phase is a critical aspect of abusive relationships and can cause long-lasting physical and psychological harm to the victim. Grace describes Jack coming at her like a hurricane, highlighting the suddenness and intensity of the violence. The quote, “He comes at me like a hurricane, his fists flying, his face contorted with rage.” (BCD, p. 210), underscores the importance of recognising the warning signs of abuse and taking action to prevent more overt forms of violence during the explosive phase.

Grace characterises the reconciliation phase of the cycle of abuse, in which the abuser endeavours to restore the victim’s trust and affection. In this instance, the novel depicts Jack as tender and affectionate towards Grace, and she accepts his contrition. On page 111 of the novel, Grace notes, "He was so gentle with me, so loving, and I knew

that he was sorry for what he had done." In this context, Grace describes Jack's conciliatory behaviour, which includes being gentle, loving, and regretting his actions. This manipulative behaviour, commonly referred to as the "honeymoon phase," is a typical tactic employed by abusers to maintain power and control over their victims. By apologising and demonstrating affection and kindness, the abuser can mollify the victim's worries and prevent them from terminating the relationship.

It is important to note that the reconciliation phase is often a manipulative tactic used by abusers to maintain power and control over their victims. They may shower their victims affectionately and make promises to change, but these promises are often short-lived and not followed through. The quote above underscores the complexity of abusive relationships and victims' difficulty breaking free. It is essential for victims to seek support and help from trusted sources, such as friends, family members, or domestic violence organisations, to help them navigate this complex and often dangerous situation. It is also essential for society to recognise the signs of abuse and work towards ending the cycle of violence. This can involve supporting victims, holding abusers accountable for their actions, and promoting healthy and respectful relationships based on mutual trust and communication.

Paris shows another example of the honeymoon phase in the cycle of abuse. She says through Grace, "He was contrite and apologetic, telling me how much he loved me and how he would never hurt me again" (BCD, p.186). During this phase, the abuser may express remorse and apologise for their behaviour to regain the victim's trust and affection. In this case, Jack is shown as being contrite, expressing his love for Grace and promising not to hurt her again. This manipulative behaviour is a common tactic used by abusers to maintain control over their victims by alleviating their concerns and preventing them from leaving the relationship.

Grace's observation of Jack's behaviour is a testament to her awareness of the situation, and it underscores the importance of recognising the signs of abuse early on. She is quite aware of her situation. She says about the last phase of the cycle of violence: "I forgave him, as always, and we moved on with our lives, until the next time the cycle started again." (BCD, p. 113). Grace describes how she forgives Jack after an episode of abuse and returns to their normal lives until the cycle of abuse begins again. This quote emphasises how the cycle of abuse can become normalised in an abusive relationship,

with the victim forgiving the abuser and returning to the relationship despite the abusive behaviour. The victim may feel trapped in the relationship, unable to leave despite the abuse they are experiencing.

The novel highlights the complex and cyclical nature of domestic abuse. Grace forgives Jack for his abusive behaviour, and they move on until the next cycle of abuse begins again. This quote underscores the difficulty of leaving an abusive relationship, as victims often feel trapped and may believe that the abuser will change or that they can somehow make the relationship work. It is important to note that forgiveness does not excuse or condone abusive behaviour, and victims must seek help and support in breaking free from abusive relationships.

Grace portrays her life with Jack with a metaphor to describe the experience of being in a relationship with an abusive husband. She says, “It’s like being on a rollercoaster”. Like a rollercoaster ride, Grace's relationship with Jack is full of ups and downs, twists and turns, and sudden changes in direction. Just as a rollercoaster can be thrilling and exciting one moment and terrifying the next, Grace's relationship with Jack is characterised by extreme highs and lows. Jack is charming, loving, and attentive sometimes, and Grace feels she is on top of the world. However, these moments are always followed by tension, fear, and violence, during which Jack's true nature is revealed. By comparing her relationship with Jack to a rollercoaster, Grace expresses the sense of unpredictability and instability she feels in her life. She never knows what to expect from Jack and feels constantly on edge, waiting for the subsequent explosion. The rollercoaster metaphor is a powerful way for Grace to convey the emotional turmoil and psychological impact of being in an abusive relationship. It highlights how abuse can create a sense of chaos and unpredictability in a victim's life and the difficulties they face in trying to break free from the cycle of abuse.

Throughout the novel, Grace struggles to break free from the cycle of abuse and find a way to escape Jack's control. She recognises that her situation is not normal or healthy, but she also feels trapped and powerless to leave. The novel portrays the complex psychological dynamics of domestic violence and the difficulties victims face in breaking free from their abusers. *Behind Closed Doors* is a powerful exploration of the theme of domestic violence and the cycle of abuse. The novel portrays the devastating impact of abuse on individuals and families. It highlights the importance of

raising awareness about this issue and supporting victims in breaking free from their abusers.

Despite her challenges as a battered woman, Grace is also portrayed as a solid and resilient character. She is resourceful and determined and can find ways to resist Jack's control and maintain her sense of self. This resilience is a testament to the strength of survivors of domestic violence, who often find ways to overcome the trauma they have experienced and rebuild their lives.

In *Behind Closed Doors*, Grace tries several strategies to escape Jack's control. Grace tries to seek help from others, including her sister Millie and her best friend, Esther. However, Jack intercepts her attempts and prevents her from getting her needed help. Grace attempts to physically escape from Jack's control multiple times, but he always manages to find her and bring her back. "Once again, I'd failed to get away from him" (BCD,p.93). Grace tries to contact the police to report Jack's abuse, but he intercepts her calls and prevents her from getting the help she needs. Grace uses her intelligence and resourcefulness to find a way out of her situation. She tries to figure out Jack's weaknesses and how she might exploit them to escape. Despite her best efforts, Grace cannot escape Jack's control until the novel's end. However, her determination and resourcefulness ultimately help her to gain the upper hand and free herself from his abuse.

Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory is a psychological theory that emphasises the importance of observation and modelling in learning behaviour. The theory suggests that individuals learn new behaviours through observing the behaviour of others and the consequences of those behaviours. In the context of domestic violence, Social Learning Theory can be applied to understand how individuals may learn and imitate abusive behaviours or find a way to escape, in the case of Grace. For example, children who grow up in households where domestic violence is present may observe and internalise abusive behaviours as normal or acceptable. This can contribute to the perpetuation of cycles of abuse as individuals learn to imitate the behaviours they have observed and experienced (McLeod,2011).

The novel demonstrates the application of Social Learning Theory in characterising the protagonist, Jack. Jack is depicted as a sadistic and abusive husband who employs systematic control and torment over his wife, Grace. Throughout the

narrative, Jack uses various tactics to physically and psychologically batter and control Grace. These behaviours may be interpreted as learned, as Jack has acquired and internalised abusive behaviours from his upbringing or other sources. This portrayal of Jack illustrates the role of social learning in developing and perpetuating abusive behaviour in intimate partner relationships.

There are several instances where it is suggested that Jack's abusive behaviour has been shaped by his upbringing and past experiences. Here are some quotes that show how Jack has observed and internalised abusive behaviours: "I know what it's like to have a wife who doesn't do as she's told, who thinks she's her own person. That's why I had to get rid of my first wife." (BCD,p.150). This quote suggests that Jack's first wife was also a victim of his abuse and control and that Jack sees this behaviour as normal and acceptable. Another quote suggests that Jack's abusive behaviour may have been influenced by the abuse he suffered at the hands of his father. It also suggests that Jack sees violence and aggression as a means to an end; "I had a difficult childhood. My father was a violent man, and my mother was too weak to protect us. I learned early on that the only way to get what you want is to take it." (BCD,p.206).

Paris sheds light on the impact of early life experiences on an individual's behaviour and mindset. In this case, the character reflects on her difficult childhood, marked by violence from her father and a lack of protection from her mother. This upbringing has left a lasting impact on the character, shaping her belief that "the only way to get what you want is to take it." This quote highlights the importance of understanding the root causes of abusive behaviour, including the impact of childhood experiences on an individual's worldview. Childhood trauma, such as witnessing or experiencing violence, can profoundly impact an individual's mental health and behaviour, including an increased risk of perpetrating or experiencing abuse.

Applying Social Learning Theory is also straightforward in this quote; "I've read a lot about abusive relationships. It's fascinating how the abuser can make the victim feel responsible for everything that goes wrong. It's all about control." (BCD,p.214). It indicates that Jack has studied and internalised the tactics of abuse and sees controlling and manipulating his partner as a way to maintain power and dominance in the relationship. These quotes suggest that Jack's abusive behaviour is not solely the result

of his personality or choices but is also shaped by his past experiences and the messages he has internalised from society and culture.

The application of Social Learning Theory to the novel also highlights the importance of breaking cycles of abuse through intervention and education. By understanding how individuals may learn and imitate abusive behaviours, it is possible to develop strategies for preventing and addressing domestic violence. This might include education and awareness-raising campaigns, counselling and support services for survivors and legal and policy interventions to hold abusers accountable for their actions. Social Learning Theory suggests that people learn through observing and imitating others around them. In the context of *Behind Closed Doors*, this theory is relevant in understanding how Grace's experiences with abuse have affected her behaviour and choices. It highlights the importance of breaking cycles of abuse through intervention and education. For instance, when Grace says, "I don't know how to stop it. I don't know how to make him stop hurting me." (BCD,p.27). This quote shows that Grace feels helpless and trapped in the cycle of abuse and highlights the importance of intervention to break the cycle.

After years, Grace is aware of the impact of abuse on children and the importance of education and intervention to break the cycle of abuse; "I thought about all the children who were trapped in homes like mine, with no one to save them, no one to show them that there was another way to live." (BCD,p.261). Grace reflects on her experiences of domestic violence and recognises the plight of other children trapped in similar situations. She realises that children exposed to domestic violence are at increased risk of experiencing a range of negative outcomes, including physical, emotional, and behavioural problems. They may also be more likely to perpetrate or experience abuse in their relationships later in life. Then Grace wants to use her own experiences to educate others and promote intervention to prevent and stop abuse; "I wanted to make sure that the next time someone saw the signs of abuse, they would recognise them for what they were and do something to help." (BCD,p.310)

To conclude, the story of Grace suggests that breaking the cycle of abuse requires intervention and education to help victims recognise the signs of abuse and provide them with the resources and support to break free from the cycle. It also highlights the

importance of educating society as a whole about the impact of abuse and promoting healthy relationships and behaviours.

Grace exhibits a range of psychological responses to the abuse she suffers, which can be analysed through the lens of trauma and coping mechanisms that help her survive and escape Jack's control. She develops a plan to leave, seeks help from others, and uses her intelligence and resourcefulness to outsmart Jack. These coping mechanisms illustrate the resilience and strength many survivors of abuse possess, even in the face of overwhelming adversity. Coping mechanisms are strategies that individuals use to manage stress, adversity, and trauma.

Grace exhibits various coping mechanisms as she navigates her abusive relationship with Jack. For example, on page 125, Grace uses cognitive reframing as a coping mechanism to help her deal with the trauma of her sister's death. She tells herself that "It wasn't [her] fault" and that she did everything possible to save her sister. This type of cognitive reframing is a common coping mechanism that involves changing one's thoughts or beliefs about a situation to reduce distress. Another coping mechanism that Grace uses is seeking help from others. On page 153, she reaches out to her friend Esther for support and advice on how to leave Jack. This type of social support is a common coping mechanism that can help individuals to feel less isolated and more empowered to take action.

In addition, Grace uses her intelligence and resourcefulness as a coping mechanism to outsmart Jack and plan her escape. On page 237 of the novel, she uses her knowledge of his weaknesses and habits to create a plan to escape him. This type of problem-solving is a common coping mechanism that can help individuals to feel more in control of their situation. Coping mechanisms are varied and can take many different forms. In *Behind Closed Doors*, Grace demonstrates several coping mechanisms as she navigates her abusive relationship with Jack, including cognitive reframing, seeking social support, and problem-solving. These coping mechanisms help her manage her stress and trauma and eventually find a way to escape Jack's control after months of careful planning.

Coping mechanisms and Social Learning Theory are related concepts but differ. Coping mechanisms refer to individuals' coping strategies for stress, adversity, and trauma. Coping mechanisms can be positive and negative, varying widely depending on

the individual and the situation. For example, some individuals may use exercise or meditation as a positive coping mechanism, while others may turn to substance abuse or self-harm as a negative coping mechanism; “I’ve been planning my escape for months now, and I’m finally ready. I’ve got everything I need in the car, and I’ve timed it perfectly so that Jack won’t be able to stop me... I’m free “ (BCD, pp. 257,259).

On the other hand, Social Learning Theory is a psychological theory that suggests that individuals learn behaviour through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. According to this theory, individuals may learn positive or harmful coping mechanisms from those around them, depending on the models they observe and the consequences of their behaviour. However, the two concepts are related in that individuals may learn coping mechanisms through observation and modelling, and the effectiveness of their coping mechanisms may be reinforced or punished by their environment.

The novel *Behind Closed Doors* portrays the psychological impact of domestic violence on the victim, Grace. However, the novel also touches on the portrayal of mental illness, particularly concerning Grace's sister, Millie. Millie is portrayed as having a developmental disability, which is not specified in the novel but is suggested to be Down Syndrome. The novel portrays Millie's disability in a sympathetic and nuanced way, highlighting her strengths and vulnerabilities while exploring her challenges in navigating the world.

The novel also touches on the stigma and discrimination that individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities face. For example, Grace struggles with guilt and shame over her inability to protect Millie from abuse, and she worries about the implications of Millie's disability on their relationship and her own life. Critics argue that the novel highlights “the stigma surrounding disability and the lack of control and agency experienced by some individuals with disabilities.” (Korotchenko & Stephens, 2017). Another note is that the novel portrays how “societal discrimination and stigma...make the disabled and ill vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.” (Thomson, 2016). Overall, the portrayal of mental illness in *Behind Closed Doors* is nuanced and thoughtful, highlighting the complex ways in which individuals with mental illness or developmental disabilities may experience the world. The novel underscores the

importance of challenging stigma and discrimination and promoting understanding and empathy for individuals with diverse abilities and experiences.

The setting of *Behind Closed Doors* plays an essential role in conveying the theme of domestic violence and abuse. Most of the story takes place within the isolated country home of Jack and Grace. This confined and closed setting reflects the trapped situation that Grace finds herself in, as she is isolated from friends and family and under the complete control of Jack. The house is in a secluded location, surrounded by empty fields, with the nearest neighbour miles away. This isolation makes it difficult for Grace to escape or call for help. It also allows Jack to exert control over Grace without worrying about interference from others. The house itself is like a prison for Grace. Jack has the only set of keys and locks all doors and windows to prevent her from leaving. The closed-in, claustrophobic setting parallels Grace's trapped circumstances. Certain rooms in the house, like the soundproof basement, highlight Grace's vulnerability and powerlessness. These rooms are settings where Jack can abuse Grace without worrying about the sounds being overheard. The inescapable house is a metaphor for Grace's inescapable situation.

Little details about the setting, like the lack of phone signal or internet access, emphasise how to cut off Grace is and how difficult reaching out for help can be. The setting thereby amplifies her isolation and the control Jack exerts over her. Contrasts between the beginning and end show how Grace goes from freedom to entrapment. Initially, Grace enjoyed a relaxed, independent lifestyle. By the end, her entire world is confined to the house's walls under Jack's tyrannical rule. So, in summary, the house's closed, isolated setting mirrors Grace's trapped circumstances as a victim of domestic abuse. The setting reinforces the novel's disturbing themes of control, entrapment, and violence against women.

The setting of the isolated house contributes to Grace's character development in several ways: It highlights Grace's resourcefulness and resilience. Even in a dire situation, Grace secretly plans ways to escape and foil some of Jack's plans. She does not give up hope, showing her strength and perseverance. It amplifies Grace's courage and bravery. Escaping from Jack requires tremendous courage, given how domineering and threatening he is. Grace's attempts to reach out for help also demonstrate her bravery. She knows the vast risks but takes them. It evokes empathy for Grace's suffering

and elicits admiration for her endurance. The unsettling details of what Grace goes through in that house make the reader sympathise with her and gain respect for her ability to withstand Jack's cruelty for so long. It shapes Grace into a more hardened and determined character. In the beginning, Grace is portrayed as rather meek and submissive.

Nevertheless, as she suffers at the hands of Jack, she is transformed. By the end, she is resolute in her desire to escape and can take ruthless action against Jack. The house has moulded her into a fighter. It makes Grace's ultimate freedom and escapes all the more satisfying and triumphant. After witnessing everything Grace went through in that house of horrors, the reader feels a strong sense of justice and vindication in her liberation from Jack at the end. Her victory over the setting that once entrapped her is a victory of her spirit and resilience.

So in many ways, the sinister setting of the house is an antagonistic force that Grace must struggle with. By enduring and overcoming this malevolent setting, Grace emerges as a stronger, more compelling character who has earned her hard-fought freedom. The house shapes her character through adversity; her ultimate escape from it is a testament to her inspiring strength and perseverance against the odds.

While the endings of *Behind Closed Doors* by B.A. Paris, *The Kitchen God's Wife* by Amy Tan, and *Black and Blue* by Anna Quindlen are all different, but there are some similarities in the themes and messages conveyed. These novels explore the devastating impact of domestic abuse and the importance of finding a way to break free from it. They all share a standard message about the importance of breaking the cycle of abuse and seeking help and support to heal and move forward. While the endings differ, they all offer hope for the future and possible healing and recovery. The main characters in each novel can break free from their abusive relationships and start a new life.

CONCLUSION

The novels *Black and Blue*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *Behind Closed Doors* delve into the pervasive issue of domestic abuse and shed light on its universal themes. Despite differences in settings and cultural contexts, the characters' experiences in these novels bring to light the devastating impact of abuse on individuals and families. These works also emphasise survivors' challenges in seeking help and support. The novels also address broader social and cultural issues related to battering, such as gender inequality, power dynamics in relationships, and the social stigma surrounding abuse. By exploring these themes in depth, the novels provide insight into the complex nature of domestic abuse and the need for greater awareness of breaking the cycle of violence. The three novels are potent reminders of the universal nature of violence and the importance of addressing this issue globally.

A dissertation on battered women would likely convey the universal nature of violence against women, which affects individuals and communities worldwide. Through an analysis of the three novels, the dissertation would likely conclude that the female characters' experiences illustrate the profound impact of abuse on the individual and the family unit. The dissertation may also find that the novels depict the psychological effects of abuse, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder, which can persist long after the abuse has ended. Furthermore, it also explores the underlying causes of the abusive behaviour depicted in the novels. It may highlight the role of upbringing, cultural norms, and societal expectations in shaping the abusers' worldviews and attitudes towards women.

By challenging societal norms that perpetuate domestic abuse, the novels may inspire awareness and understanding of these issues and highlight the importance of support for survivors. In short, the dissertation would emphasise the critical role that literature can play in raising awareness of violence against women. By depicting the experiences of battered women, these novels can inspire social change, promote support for survivors, and foster a greater understanding of the universal nature of domestic abuse. Ultimately, the dissertation would underscore the importance of continued research and advocacy efforts to combat domestic violence and promote the well-being of survivors worldwide.

The dissertation analyses the characters and their actions according to Battered women syndrome. In these novels, the abusive husbands exhibit traits of narcissism, dominance, and sadism. In *Black and Blue*, Bobby Benedetto exhibits traits of narcissism, dominance, and sadism. He sees his wife, Fran, as an object to control and derives pleasure from physically and emotionally abusing her. He is deeply insecure and uses violence to exert power over Fran to feel strong and maintain dominance in the relationship.

In *The Kitchen God's Wife*, the abusive husband, Wen Fu, shows signs of narcissism, psychopathy, and sadism. He manipulates and abuses his wife, Winnie, to satisfy his needs and desires without empathy. He abandons his children without care and exploits anyone he can for his gain. Wen Fu lacks a conscience and only cares about himself. His abuse of Winnie stems from a desire for total dominance and control over her. In *Behind Closed Doors*, the abusive husband, Jack Angel, exhibits narcissistic, psychopathic, and sadistic tendencies. He manipulates and abuses his wife, Grace, to satisfy his twisted needs for power, control, and excitement. He views Grace as his property to do with as he pleases and gets pleasure from degrading, isolating, and overpowering her. Jack's abuse seems motivated by a desire to completely dominate Grace and bend her to his will. He lacks empathy or a conscience, caring only about himself and his desires. In all three cases, the abusive husbands display a toxic combination of narcissism, dominance, and sadism, contributing to their violent and demeaning treatment of their wives, whom they see as objects to control and exploit. Their abuse stems from deep insecurity, lack of empathy, and desire for power and control over their victims.

In summary, though the abusive dynamics are similar, each abusive husband exhibits a slightly different psychology and motivation behind their cruelty, from callous anger to manipulative enjoyment of power to a toxic mix of insecurity and jealousy. However, at the core, all view their wives as possessions to be controlled, not equals to be trusted and loved.

In *Black and Blue*, Fran Benedetto exhibits signs of battered woman syndrome. She lives in constant fear and has been psychologically broken down by years of abuse. Nevertheless, she stays loyal to and hopes for the best in her husband due to learned helplessness, low self-esteem, and isolation. Fran has PTSD and becomes almost numb

to the abuse, making excuses for Bobby's behaviour because of the reconciliation phase in the cycle of violence.

Winnie Louie also shows signs of battered woman syndrome in *The Kitchen God's Wife*. The abuse by her ex-husband Wen Fu lasted for years, during which he systematically tore down her sense of self and independence. Even after escaping him, Winnie still struggles with nightmares and jumpiness. However, she shows immense resilience and strength in surviving and eventually thriving after her ordeal. Her second husband is loving and helps continue her healing process.

In *Behind Closed Doors*, Grace Angel exhibits the traits of a battered spouse. She is terrified of her husband, Jack, who has isolated and controlled her. Grace walks on eggshells to avoid angering him and blames herself for his abuse, demonstrating low self-esteem and learned helplessness. Grace lived a sheltered life before Jack and was naïve to his manipulations, but she shows her inner strength in fighting back against him to protect her sister, who has a mental disease. In all three cases, battered women have been severely psychologically harmed by prolonged abuse. They also show resilience and the ability to survive, escape, and heal from their trauma after being trapped for a long time. Though exhibiting some traits of battered woman syndrome, like PTSD, they maintain their strength, loyalty to others, and hopes for freedom and a better life. With support, they can overcome their abuse and regain independence and self-confidence.

Many survivors of domestic abuse find themselves in situations similar to those depicted in these novels, including feelings of isolation, fear, and hopelessness. They may struggle to escape from their abuser and seek help and support due to financial dependence, fear of retaliation, or a lack of access to resources. These novels also highlight the importance of awareness and understanding of domestic abuse and the need for more support and resources for survivors. They show that domestic abuse can happen to anyone, regardless of social status, race, education or gender, and that it can have profound and long-lasting effects on those who experience it. These novels are fictional; however, they provide insight into the experiences of survivors of domestic abuse and the importance of breaking the cycle of violence to promote healing and recovery.

The endings of *Behind Closed Doors*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *Black and Blue* are different. At the end of *Behind Closed Doors*, Grace can finally escape Jack's control and free herself from his abuse. She begins to rebuild her life, but the trauma of

her experience stays with her. *The Kitchen God's Wife* ends with Winnie's immigration to the United States. She finally confronts her past and shares her story with her daughter, Pearl. Through this process, she can come to terms with her own experiences of abuse and find some measure of closure. The novel *Black and Blue* end with Fran finally escaping from her abusive husband and seeking refuge in a women's shelter. She can start a new life with her son, but the trauma of her experience stays with her, and she must learn to live with the scars of her past.

The dissertation provides evidence that Social Learning Theory applies to the depiction of abuse and its effects in the novels of the study. Social Learning Theory is a psychological theory that posits individuals learn behaviour through observation. This theory applies to the depiction of abuse and its effects in the novels *Black and Blue*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *Behind Closed Doors*. The abusive behaviour of the husbands in these novels may have been learned through observation of others, such as parents or peers. Additionally, the concept of learned helplessness, which the protagonists experience, can also be understood through Social Learning Theory. However, the novels also highlight the importance of seeking help and support to overcome the abuse trauma. The endings of the novels illustrate that, while the impacts of abuse trauma often linger, survivors can reconstruct meaningful lives with appropriate support systems. Overall, the novels demonstrate the complex interplay between learned behaviour, traumatic experiences, and the importance of support systems in overcoming the effects of abuse.

The concept of learned helplessness permeates these novels and mirrors the experiences of many people worldwide today. The protagonists in these novels face abusive situations where they perceive a lack of control, causing them to become passive and resigned. They exhibit symptoms of learned helplessness through low self-esteem, passivity, and an inability to act to change their circumstances. Each protagonist's life reflects how learned helplessness operates in real life, where individuals trapped in dysfunctional environments believe they cannot control their situations. Learned helplessness can lead to depression, loss of motivation, and other harmful effects. The protagonists in the novels *Black and Blue*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *Behind Closed Doors* exhibit symptoms of learned helplessness caused by abusive situations where they perceive a lack of control. However, the novels also show how victims of learned helplessness can overcome it through resilience, agency, and empowerment. The

protagonists find ways to regain control of their lives and escape their abusive situations with help from friends, family, or social services. The novels offer inspiration for victims of abuse, oppression, and dysfunction worldwide, reminding us that overcoming learned helplessness begins within ourselves with resilience, support, and empowerment. Literature mirrors human experience, and these novels show how we can triumph over the most damaging circumstances through resilience.

The Bildungsroman, or coming-of-age novel, offers valuable insights into human development and depicts the internal and external struggles that shape character development and maturity. Novels such as *Black and Blue*, *The Kitchen God's Wife*, and *Behind Closed Doors* contain many elements of a Bildungsroman as the protagonists undergo journeys of self-discovery and liberation. These stories demonstrate the vital role that literature depicting female journeys of growth and empowerment can play, providing inspiration and guidance for women trapped in abusive or oppressive circumstances. The protagonists' journeys represent their paths to maturity and speak to broader struggles for female emancipation and empowerment globally. The Bildungsroman becomes a powerful medium for illuminating broader social justice, equity, and human rights issues. It celebrates the resilience, spirit, and inner drive for growth that lie within us all.

The concept of learned helplessness is not limited to the characters in these novels, as it has been applied to other areas such as education and organisational behaviour. The research on learned helplessness suggests that individuals who experience situations where they perceive a lack of control or agency may learn to become passive and resigned, leading to a decreased sense of motivation and engagement. Furthermore, these novels demonstrate the importance of breaking the cycle of learned helplessness. Through the characters' experiences and journeys, the novels illustrate the power of resilience, agency, and self-empowerment. The characters in these novels show that overcoming learned helplessness and regaining control and agency is possible.

REFERENCES

- "Amy Tan Biography." Academy of Achievement, October 24, 2022
<http://www.achievement.org/autodoc/page/tan0bio-1>.
- "Author Interview: Behind Closed Doors by B.A. Paris" on Goodreads
(https://www.goodreads.com/interviews/show/1191.B_A_Paris).2016.Accessed
in May.2023
- Bandura, Albert. *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall, 1977.
- Bergman, K. (2008). The amnesiac flashback: Theories, fiction, and trauma. *Witness: Memory, Representation, and the Media in Question*, pp. 143–149.
- Bonn, S. A. (2014). How to Tell a Sociopath from a Psychopath. *Psychology Today*.
- Bradbury, T. N. (1989). The personality and marital adjustment of spouse abusers. In G. T. Hotaling, D. Finkelhor, J. T. Kirkpatrick, & M. A. Straus (Eds.), *Coping with family violence: Research and policy perspectives* (pp. 56–68).
- Caesar, J. (2009).Patriarchy, Imperialism, and Knowledge. In Bloom’s *Modern Critical Views: Amy Tan-New Edition*.
- Cole, D. A., Martin, J. M., & Peeke, L. G. (1999). Serotonin transporter gene polymorphism and depressive symptoms in a diverse population of female adolescents. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 38(8), 1075-1083.
- Coleman, F. L. (1997). "Stalking behavior and the cycle of domestic violence." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 12.3:420-432.
- Cuddon, J. A. (1998). *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books
- Cuddon, J.A.(1999).*Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. New York, Penguin Books.
- Darraj, S. M. (2007). *Amy Tan*. Infobase Publishing.
- De Bertodano, Helena.2003. A life Stranger than Fiction. *The Daily Telegraph*(UK), November 11, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/donotmigrate/3606308/A-life-stranger-than-fiction.html> (accessed 9Oct, 2022).
- Desmarais, S. L., Reeves, K. A., Nicholls, T. L., Telford, R. P., & Fiebert, M. S. (2012). Prevalence of physical violence in intimate relationships, Part 1: Rates of male and female victimisation. *Partner abuse*, 3(2), 140-169.

- Dew, R. F. (1991). Pangs of an Abandoned Child—The Kitchen God" s Wife. *The New York Times Book Review*, p. 16.
- Dobash, R. E., Dobash, R., Cavanagh, K., & Lewis, R. (1998). Separate and intersecting realities: A comparison of men's and women's accounts of violence against women. *Violence Against Women*, 4(4), 382–414.
- Driskell, K. M. (2009). Identity confidentiality for women fleeing domestic violence. *Hastings Women's LJ*, 20, 129.
- Dutton, D. G. (1996). Understanding women's responses to domestic violence: A re-examination of the defenses and learned helplessness hypotheses. *Violence and Victims*, 11(4), 355-368.
- Dutton, D. G. (2007). *The abusive personality: Violence and control in intimate relationships*. Guilford Press.
- Dutton, D. G., & Painter, S. (1993). The battered woman syndrome: Effects of severity and intermittency of abuse. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 63(4), 614-622.
- Easteal, P. (1991). Battered women who kill: A plea of self-defence. *Women and the law*, pp. 37–47.
- Follingstad, D. R., Rutledge, L. L., Berg, B. J., Hause, E. S., & Polek, D. S. (1991). The role of emotional abuse in physically abusive relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 6(4), 327–342.
- Foster, M. M. B. (2021). *Voice, Mind, Self: Mother-Daughter Relationships in Amy Tan's*. In *Women of Color* (pp. 208–227). The University of Texas Press.
- from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/battered%20woman%20syndrome>
- Fromm, E.(1974). *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston
- García-Moreno, C., Jansen, H. A., Ellsberg, M., Heise, L., & Watts, C. (2005). *WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women*. World Health Organization.
- Gilley, J. (2005). Writings of the third wave: Young feminists in conversation. *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, 44(3), 187–198.
- Gondolf, E. W., & Fisher, E. R. (1988). *Battered women as survivors: An alternative to treating learned helplessness*. Lexington Books.
- Goodman, L. A., & Epstein, D. (2008). *Listening to battered women: A survivor-centred approach to advocacy, mental health, and justice*. American Psychological Association.

- Goodmark, L. (2006). Going Underground: The Ethics of Advising a Battered Woman Fleeing an Abusive Relationship. *UMKC L. Rev.*, 75, 999.
- Groth, A. N., & Birnbaum, H. J. (1979). Men whorape: Thepsychology of the offender.
- Gruesser, J. C. (1998). The Bildungsroman and Its Critics: A Critical History. Boydell & Brewer, p.1.
- Gupta, J., & Kaur, R. (2018). Immigrant women's experiences of domestic violence: A scoping review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 20(1), 1–22.
- Hague, G., &Malos, E. (2005). Domestic violence: Action for change. Cheltenham:
- Hamberger, L. K., & Hastings, J. E. (1988). Personality correlates of men who batter and nonviolent men: Some continuities and discontinuities. *Journal of Family Violence*, 3(3), 161–175.
- Hare, R. D. (1999). Without conscience: The disturbing world of the psychopaths among us. Guilford Press.
- Heise, L., Ellsberg, M., & Gottemoeller, M. (1999). Ending violence against women (population reports, Series L, No. 11). *Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Center for Communications Programs.*
- Hepper, E. G., Hart, C. M., & Sedikides, C. (2014). Moving Narcissus: Can narcissists be empathic? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 40(9), 1079-1091.
- Herman, J. L. (1981). Trauma and Recovery. New York: Basic Books.
- Herman-Lewis, J. (1992). Trauma and recovery: The Aftermath of violence from domestic abuse to political terror. Basic Books.
- Holley, W. B. (2010). What's in a Name?: The Power of Austin's Performative Applied to Changes in Identity in Ruy Blas and Cyrano de Bergerac. *Romance Notes*, 50(2), 173-179
- Holt, S., Buckley, H., & Whelan, S. (2008). The impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people: A literature review. *Child abuse & neglect*, 32(8), 797–810.
- Huey, A., Hardesty, J., & Leon, K. (2007). Domestic violence and divorce.
- Huey, A., Hardesty, J., & Leon, K. Domestic violence and divorce. ."State Extension Specialist, Human Development and Family Studies. University of Missouri.
- Huntley, E. D., & Huntley, E. D. (1998). *Amy Tan: A critical companion*. Greenwood.

- Jarrar, Sana M. "A psychoanalytic reading of B. A. Paris's behind closed doors." *International Journal of Language and Literature*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2018, pp. 222–225.
- Johnson, M. P. (2008). *A typology of domestic violence: Intimate terrorism, violent resistance, and situational couple violence*. Northeastern University Press.
- Johnson, M. P., & Leone, J. M. (2005). The differential effects of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. *Journal of family issues*, 26(3), 322–349.
- Johnson, M. P., Leone, J. M., & Xu, Y. (2014). Intimate terrorism and situational couple violence in general surveys: Ex-spouses required. *Violence against women*, 20(2), 186–207.
- Jung, C. G. (2012). *Psychology of the Unconscious*. Courier Corporation.
- Karakurt, G., & Silver, K. E. (2013). Emotional abuse in intimate relationships: The role of gender and age. *Violence and Victims*, 28(5), 804-821.
- Korotchenko, B., & Stephens, A. & Stephens, C. (2017). *Disability, Stigma, and Agency: Intersectionalities of Identity*. Sociology Compass.
- Lemoine, D. (2016). The process of self-discovery: learned helplessness, self-efficacy, and endogenous over-optimism. *Self-Efficacy and Endogenous Overoptimism (July 1, 2016)*.
- Leone, J. M., & Johnson, M. P. (2004). The differential effects of intimate terrorism and situational couple violence: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey. *Journal of Family Issues*, 25(8), 1103–1121.
- Leone, J. M., Johnson, M. P., Cohan, C. L., & Lloyd, S. E. (2004). Consequences of male partner violence for low-income minority women. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 66(2), 472-490.
- Li-Hsiang, L. R. (2006). *Confucianism and women: A philosophical interpretation*. Albany, NY: State.
- Mahapatro, M., & Gupta, R. (2015). Battered women in India: A study of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(9), 1536-1554.
- Maynes, M. J., & Waltner, A. B. (2001). Women's life-cycle transitions in world-historical perspective: Comparing marriage in China and Europe. *Journal of Women's History*, 12(4), 11-21.
- McLeod, S. (2011). *Albert Bandura's social learning theory*.

- Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Battered woman syndrome. In the Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved October 16, 2021,
- Millard, K. (2007). *Coming of age in contemporary American fiction*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Miller, J. D. (2016). *The Handbook of Narcissism and Narcissistic Personality Disorder: Theoretical Approaches, Empirical Findings, and Treatments*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Mohanty, A., Pradhan, R. K., & Jena, L. K. (2015). Learned helplessness and socialisation: A reflective analysis. *Psychology*, 6(07), 885.
- National Institute of Justice. (1998). *A full report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- National Research Council. (1996). *Understanding violence against women*. National Academies Press.
- Nelson, E. S. (Ed.). (2000). *Asian American Novelists: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- New Clarion Press.
- Nolen-Hoeksema, S., & Girgus, J. S. (1994). The emergence of gender differences in depression during adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115(3), 424–443.
- Ogle, R. S., & Jacobs, S. (2002). *Self-defence and battered women who kill: A new framework*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Paris, B.A. (2016). *Behind Closed Doors*. St. Martin's Press. All subsequent references to the novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the dissertation.
- Peterman, A., Potts, A., O'Donnell, M., Thompson, K., Shah, N., Oertelt-Prigione, S., & Van Gelder, N. (2020). *Pandemics and violence against women and children*. Center for Global Development working paper, (528), pp. 1–16.
- Quindlen, A. (2010). *Black and Blue*. Random House Trade Paperbacks. All subsequent references to the novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the dissertation.
- Quindlen, A. (2010). *Black and Blue: a novel (Interview)*. Random House Incorporated.

- Riger, S., Bennett, L. W., & Sigurvinsdottir, R. (2014). Barriers to addressing substance abuse in domestic violence court. *American Journal of community psychology*, 53(1), 208-217.
- Roberts, A. R. (2018). Battered women and their families: Intervention strategies and treatment programs. Springer Publishing Company. Page 34.
- Roberts, A. R. (Ed.). (1996). *Helping battered women: New perspectives and remedies*. Oxford University Press on Demand. Brisbane Domestic Violence Service, "The cycle of violence". Micah Projects, Brisbane
- Roberts, A. R., & BCETS, D. (Eds.). (2007). Battered women and their families: Intervention strategies and treatment programs. Springer Publishing Company.
- Rothenberg, B. (2003). "We Don't Have Time for Social Change" Cultural Compromise and the Battered Woman Syndrome. *Gender & Society*, 17(5), 771-787.
- Rubenstein, B. L. (2004). Understanding the cycle of violence: Women's experiences of intimate partner violence in a rural community. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 19(12), 1475-1494.
- Rubenstein, Lori S. (2004). "What is Battered Woman's Syndrome?" Published on July 17.
- Saedi, G. A. (2010). *The Mirror Effect: How Celebrity Narcissism is Seducing America*. Drew Pinsky and S. Mark Young.
- Sarkis, S. (2018). *Gaslighting: Recognise Manipulative and Emotionally Abusive People*. Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- Semaan, I. (2006). *Beyond staying and leaving: Battered women's responses to abuse*. University of Massachusetts Amherst.
- Sharma, A. S. (1996). *New immigrant literature in the United States: A sourcebook to our multicultural literary heritage*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Sharp, M. D. (2006). *Popular contemporary writers* (Vol. 9). Marshall Cavendish.
- Shuman, R. B. (Ed.). (2002). *Great American Writers: Twentieth Century* (Vol. 5). Marshall Cavendish.
- Slabbert, I., & Green, S. (2013). Types of domestic violence experienced by women in abusive relationships.
- Stahly, G. B. (2008). *Battered women: Why don't they just leave?* McGraw-Hill.
- Stark, E. (2007). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. Oxford University Press.

- Stern, R. (2017). *Gaslighting: Recognise Manipulative and Emotionally Abusive People- Break Free*. Rockridge Press.
- Su, Z., McDonnell, D., Roth, S., Li, Q., Segalo, S., Shi, F., & Wagers, S. (2021). Mental health solutions for domestic violence victims amid COVID-19: a literature review. *Globalisation and health*, 17(1), 1–11.
- Tan, A. (2003). *The opposite of Fate: A Book of Musings*. Penguin.
- Tan, A.(1991). *The Kitchen God's Wife*. NY, G. P. Putnam's Sons. All subsequent references to the novel are from this edition and will be cited parenthetically in the dissertation.
- Taosaka, S.(2002). *Let's Talk Story: Professional Development in Pacific*. Pacific Resources for Education and Learning. Accessed November 10, 2022, from http://www.prel.org/products/re_/talkstory.htm.
- Thomson, M.(2016). *Disability, Ethics, and Health Care: A Critical Perspective*. Disability and Health Journal.
- Tyson, L. (1999). *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*. Routledge.
- UN Women. (2015). *Gender-based violence in humanitarian crises and disasters: A review of the literature*. New York: UN Women.
- Walby, S. (2004). *The cost of domestic violence*.
- Walker, L. E. (1977). *The Battered Woman*. Harper & Row.
- Walker, L. E. (1979). *The Battered Woman*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Walker, L. E. (2009). *The battered woman syndrome*. Springer publishing company.
- Walker, Lenore E. (2016). *The Battered Woman Syndrome*. Springer publishing company.
- Weitzman, S. (2008). *Not to people like us: Hidden abuse in upscale marriages*. Basic Books.
- Whitt, J. (2008). *Women in American Journalism: A new history*. University of Illinois Press.
- Widom, C. S. (1989). The cycle of violence. *Science*, 244(4901), 160–166.
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*. World Health Organization.

- World Health Organization. (2021). Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018: Global, regional and national prevalence estimates for intimate partner violence against women and global and regional prevalence estimates for non-partner sexual violence against women.
- Xu, W. (2009). A womanist production of truths: The use of myths in Amy Tan. Bloom's *Modern Critical Views: Amy Tan-New Edition*. New York.
- Xu, X. (1997). The prevalence and determination of wife abuse in urban China. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, pp. 280–303.
- Young, I. M. (1990). *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. Princeton University Press.
- Yuo, K., Yllö, K., & Bograd, M. (1988). *Feminist Perspectives on Wife Abuse*.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Nadia Hekmt Faris AL-AZZAWI successfully completed a Master's degree in English Literature from Baghdad University, demonstrating a strong commitment to academic excellence and scholarly pursuits. With a tenure of over eight years as an English Literature Instructor since 2015, I have cultivated a profound passion for teaching and mentoring students in the field of literature.