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**POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS AND PERITRAUMATIC
DISSOCIATION IN WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

**A thesis in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Psychology
at
Massey University**

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The aim of the present study was to examine the prevalence of PTSD symptoms in women who have experienced domestic violence. In addition, the relationship between PTSD and dissociation at the time of trauma (peritraumatic dissociation) was investigated. A community sample of 22 women who have experienced domestic violence completed a mailed self-report questionnaire. The following variables were assessed: frequency of physical and psychological abuse, general psychopathology, exposure to other traumatic experiences, peritraumatic dissociation and PTSD symptoms. As hypothesised, a significant proportion of women in the sample (32%) were classified as PTSD cases. The results of the study support previous research findings that have shown a positive relationship between current PTSD symptoms and chronicity of the abuse. A significant relationship was also found between peritraumatic dissociative experiences at the time of the abusive relationship and current PTSD symptoms and general psychopathology. Women classified as PTSD cases reported significantly higher rates of peritraumatic dissociative experiences than those classified as non-PTSD cases. The results of this investigation suggest that future research is needed to examine the association between peritraumatic dissociation and PTSD symptomatology in this population group.

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