

## ACCOUNT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

ACCOUNT AND ACCOUNTABILITY:  
PATROL CONSTABLES' PERCEPTIONS OF  
WIFE ASSAULT SENSITIVITY TRAINING,  
A QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

By

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## **Abstract**

This study is a qualitative evaluation of in-service wife assault sensitivity training provided to patrol constables. The stakeholder group from which the perspective is sought is patrol constables. In applying a contextual constructionist analysis to the study, I demonstrate that constables' rejection of the training largely stemmed from organizational factors (in particular, workplace accountability concerns) as well as constables' claims to define their *own* account of the violence. In addition, the feminist account of wife assault (which informs the training) is revealed to contain inconsistencies, contradictions, dramatizations, and oversimplifications. Overall, this study challenges the popular view of sensitivity training as a panacea for attitude change in the workplace.



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## Chapter One

### Introduction

The workplace of the last two decades has become an arena where workers' behaviour in dealing with members of special interest groups is an important component in the administration of workplace duties. Sensitivity training regarding issues relating to women,<sup>1</sup> racial minorities, gays, the elderly, and the physically challenged has emerged as a popular institutional response to concerns about workers' perceived sexism, bigotry, homophobia, ageism, and ableism. The assumption in sensitivity training is that alleged intolerance and misunderstanding, reflected in workers' attitudes and ultimately manifested in unacceptable workplace behaviour, stems from a lack of adequate and/or appropriate knowledge about the issue under consideration.<sup>2</sup> Training, therefore, is directed at correcting workers' perceived mistaken attitudes with the intention of conforming behaviour to workplace standards, the latter of which are influenced by pressure from relevant interest groups. Despite the recent popularity of sensitivity training, the degree to which it is an effective means of changing attitudes and, ultimately, behaviour has not been established.

This thesis is a qualitative evaluation from a patrol constable perspective of

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<sup>1</sup> Although there are 10.5 million women in Canada (Statistics Canada, 1994a: 15), women nevertheless are considered to constitute a special interest group given the legitimacy extended to "women's issues."

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted at the outset that this *informational* learning approach of sensitivity training is distinguished from the *emotional* learning in other types of sensitivity training where "a small group of participants discuss themselves and the way they see themselves relating to each other in a small, unstructured, face-to-face group" (Smith, 1973: 29).

in-service wife assault sensitivity training provided to front-line police officers.

Representing possibly the first qualitative evaluation of this nature,<sup>3</sup> the study (undertaken in late 1995) focuses on the training and practical experience of patrol constables.<sup>4</sup> Issues addressed include what is involved in and what theories underlie the training, effectiveness of the training in achieving its goals, and ways in which the training can be improved.

It will be demonstrated that patrol constables, motivated by the perceived need for “protective posturing,” reject both the message and the messenger connected with wife assault sensitivity training. The feminist account<sup>5</sup> of wife assault, as a singular category worthy of concentrated attention, is rejected by constables on the following bases: It not only is biased, but it also misrepresents the complex “grey” social reality routinely confronted by officers; furthermore, this misrepresentation purportedly gives rise to policies that carry the potential for significant unintended consequences. Rejection of the messengers or trainers (i.e., shelter workers and administrative police officers) is based on the trainers’ lack of legitimacy with patrol constables, the latter of whom make a case for the following: an unbridgeable chasm between police administration and front-line officers (i.e., supervisory sergeants and patrol constables); shelter bias in favour of women; long-

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<sup>3</sup> A literature search involving relevant journals published from 1985 to 1995 revealed no evaluation studies on this type of training.

<sup>4</sup> I acknowledge at the outset the potential for accusations of bias and distortion given that I am presenting only the perspective of patrol constables and given that “there is no organization in which things look the same from all positions” (Becker, 1972: 15). However, as indicated by Becker (1967: 245), “there is no position from which sociological research can be done that is not biased in one or another way.”

<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that, in this study, the term *account* does not reflect typical sociological understandings such as Mills’ (1967: 355) “vocabularies of motive” or Scott and Lyman’s (1981: 344) notion of accounts as excuses or justifications. Rather, here *account* reflects a common usage of the term; i.e., “narration or description” (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990: 8). When applied to feminist analysis, it refers to a description of that theoretical perspective.

standing hostility of shelters towards patrol constables; and an intimidating alliance between police trainers and shelters. Denounced by patrol constables as a political response designed to appease powerful radical women's groups and a weapon used by police administration to hold constables *accountable*, the training failed to accomplish its desired ends.

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it contributes to constructionist literature in general and contextual constructionist literature in particular by framing wife assault sensitivity training in terms of claims-making. This approach is useful not only in informing an understanding of the training, but more importantly in identifying organizational factors involved in the failure of trainers as wife assault claims-makers to successfully persuade their patrol constable audience. Second, the study provides support for the well-documented separation between workplace learning and its practical application (Becker, 1972: 90). Third, theoretical issues are raised which are important to successful claims-making undertaken in any form of police training. Fourth, the study's discussion of feminist-based wife assault claims-making contributes to the dearth of critical constructionist studies in this area and feminism in general.<sup>6</sup>

### Wife Assault As A Social Problem

#### *Wife Assault/Domestic Violence--Definitions*

Prior to commencing the discussion and for ease of reference, it will be useful to

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<sup>6</sup> Best (1995: 352) notes that although numerous studies abound regarding claims-making by groups such as feminists and peace activists, most are sympathetic.



provide definitions of wife assault and domestic violence. For the purpose of this study, wife assault is defined as:

physical assault, sexual assault, psychological abuse, stalking, threats of physical assault, directed by a man towards his female partner with whom there is or has been a relationship, whether or not the relationship has received legal sanction as a marriage and includes assaults in or outside the home (it does not matter that at the time of the wife assault the man did not live with the woman). (Solicitor General, 1994: 3)

Wife assault is regarded here as a *category* of domestic violence, the latter of which is defined as “conflicts between two or more persons who are associated with each other, whether living together or not” (Steering Committee on Wife Assault, 1991: 3). In addition to wife assault, domestic violence includes mutual combat, female violence, and violence in same sex relationships.<sup>7</sup>

### *Historical Background of Wife Assault*

Statistics from the 1993 national Violence Against Women (VAW) Survey of 12,300 women suggest that “three-in-ten women currently or previously married in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence at the hands of a marital partner”<sup>8</sup> (Rodgers, 1994: 1). Although these findings appear to constitute a serious social problem, even as recently as thirty years ago, the issue of wife assault largely went unrecognized (Loseke, 1987: 233; Fagan, 1988: 173). For example, Dixon (1995: 359) notes that over a thirty year period from 1939 to 1969, virtually no references to wife

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<sup>7</sup> Although for some theorists, domestic violence often incorporates child abuse and elder abuse (see Besharov, 1990; Mulligan, 1991), I have limited the definition to reflect violence among individuals who have or have had a romantic relationship.

<sup>8</sup> In this federally funded study, violence ranged from “threats of violence to threats or use of guns or other weapons, with the addition of sexual attack” (Rodgers, 1994: 3).

assault (or, for that matter, even domestic violence) are found in indexes of *Journal of Marriage and the Family*. Palmer and Brown (1989: 58) note that it was not until 1972 that the gender neutral term “spouse abuse” appeared as a specific category in the *Social Science Index*. Furthermore, Loseke (1989a: 191) indicates that prior to the mid 1970s, the labels “wife assault” or “wife abuse” did not exist.

In the late 1970s, sociological analysis and widespread awareness of violence against women began in Canada (Edwards, 1987: 14; Barrera et al., 1994: 334; MacLeod, 1994: 8). Family social interactions previously deemed “private” became legitimate subjects of public scrutiny and public policy (Tierney, 1982: 210; Fagan, 1988: 159; Kurz, 1989: 489, Prieur, 1996: 1). In 1972, there was only one shelter in Canada for battered women (located in Vancouver) (Government of Canada, 1992: 1). By 1994, shelters in this country had increased to four hundred (Rodgers and MacDonald, 1994: 10). In 1989, a Canadian poll revealed that “almost half of those interviewed considered family violence [read ‘wife assault’]<sup>9</sup> as the *first* or *second* most important social policy issue facing Canada” (emphasis mine) (Government of Canada, 1992: 1).

According to Fagan (1988: 159-60), the following two factors contributed to the recognition of wife assault as a social problem in need of public policy intervention: the “discovery” of child abuse in the mid 1960s which drew public attention to violence within the home; and the almost simultaneous reemergence of the women’s movement (the latter

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<sup>9</sup> Although in this study and for reasons of clarity, wife assault is differentiated from the more general domestic violence, in most literature and promotional material, wife assault is synonymous with domestic violence, family violence, and spousal assault (Lerman, 1992; Pagelow, 1992; Saunders, 1995: 147).

of which Loseke [1987: 232] suggests was the first to claim ownership of the issue). With the rise of domestic violence/wife assault to the status of “social problem” came several theoretical explanations that, as noted by Fagan (1988: 164), “varied according to the interests and perspectives of the definer.”<sup>10</sup> Two major competing sociological explanations for wife assault are the feminist perspective of wife assault and the family violence perspective (also referred to as the general systems theory [Straus, 1973]).<sup>11</sup>

As perceived seriousness of wife assault grew, public policy and its administration were scrutinized (Fagan, 1988: 160). Out of this focus came a recognition of the central role played by the criminal justice system in a comprehensive response to wife assault (ibid.: 165). As a component of the criminal justice system, the police especially were a critical point of interest inasmuch as police officers, often the first to become involved in reported cases of wife assault (Pagelow, 1992: 92), constituted “the ‘front line’ of the official response to battering” (Bouza, 1991: 192). For this reason, careful and deliberate intervention of the police was viewed as integral to providing appropriate victim support as well as negative sanction against perpetrators (Rosenbaum, 1987: 503-4).

However, the police came under heavy criticism, especially by women’s

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<sup>10</sup> Fagan (1988: 163) also argues that each theoretical approach “[is] informed and conditioned by different assumptions about, and definitions of, family violence which developed from separate bodies of knowledge.”

<sup>11</sup> Other sociological theories exist such as resource theory, exchange/social control theory, and subculture of violence theory (Palmer and Brown, 1989: 57; Landes, Jacobs and Siegel, 1995: 45). As well, there are psychological/clinical theories of wife assault/domestic violence including social learning theory, the masochism thesis and the mental illness hypothesis (McDonald, 1989: 94; Dutton, 1995: 71). Theoretical contributions towards this issue also have been made by psychiatry and sociobiology (Dutton, 1995: 45-6).

organizations, for perceived failure to respond effectively to wife assault<sup>12</sup> (Fagan, 1988: 166; Geller, 1988: 100; Buzawa and Buzawa, 1992: vii-viii; Pagelow, 1992: 92). This criticism was based on alleged negative attitudes of police officers towards wife assault victims that purportedly made officers reluctant to become involved in suspected cases of wife assault (Fusco, 1989: 126-7; Kantor and Straus, 1990: 482). When officers did become involved, they were criticized by women's advocates for avoiding arrest and other criminal sanctions as well as inappropriately using nonlegal remedies such as mediation (Fagan, 1988: 160).

Claims about failure by police to respond effectively persisted notwithstanding either legislation introduced in 1983 which relaxed guidelines for arrest of wife assaulters (Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services [hereafter called Ministry of Solicitor General], 1994a:5), or later national directives to Chiefs of Police to undertake more rigorous enforcement of charges (Westhues, 1989: 155). According to feminist literature, despite changes at the policy level, wife assault continued to be widely perceived as a private domestic relations matter and/or mutual combat situation--rather than a law violation or serious crime (Fagan, 1988: 160; Ferraro, 1989: 69; Loseke, 1989a: 205; Steinman, 1991: 5).

Responding to these criticisms, the Ontario Ministry of the Solicitor General and Correctional Services formed a Steering Committee on Wife Assault in 1991 comprised of

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<sup>12</sup> Fagan (1988: 168) notes that the police were not the only group within the criminal justice system to be criticized regarding response to wife assault. Rather, prosecutors and judges also were under censure, the former for lenient sentencing and the latter for the following: perceived disinterest in the issue; failure to file charges (by dismissing them); and failure to aggressively pursue convictions and sanctions against wife assaulters (ibid.).

representatives from women's organizations, government ministries, and Ontario Police College<sup>13</sup> (Steering Committee on Wife Assault, 1991: 4). This steering committee drafted the *Model Protocol on Police Response to Wife Assault* which called for the following: more accountability of the police; standardized police response to wife assault; and improved training of front-line officers regarding wife assault issues (ibid.: 3).<sup>14</sup> Although police training had occurred in the past, it was more or less generic in terms of domestic violence; it also failed to identify what feminist literature claimed to be different dynamics in wife assault and different needs of wife assault victims (Fagan, 1988: 162).<sup>15</sup> Police training on wife assault was to include discussion of power and control issues, effects of physical and psychological abuse, and wife assault "myths" (as identified in feminist literature) (Steering Committee on Wife Assault, 1991: 8). According to a report of a 1992 national police training workshop, adherence to these latter myths "constitute a major [investigative] barrier" to officers (O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog, 1994: 23).

Out of this model protocol came a provincial directive on wife assault designed to standardize police response, increase probability of arrest in cases of suspected wife assault, and remove from the victim responsibility for pressing charges by having responding police officers charge in cases where reasonable grounds had been established

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<sup>13</sup> According to Westhues (1989: 138), "Ontario has been at the forefront of the domestic violence (read wife assault) movement in Canada."

<sup>14</sup> In terms of provincial level police training, until the 1980s, recruits received only two ninety-minute training sessions. By 1993, training on wife assault issues increased by five sessions. At the time of this study, a total of eight training sessions were devoted to wife assault issues.

<sup>15</sup> The recognition of a need for better police training regarding response to wife assault was recognized at an international level in December 1993 in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (Coomaraswamy, 1995: 22).

(Ministry of Solicitor General, 1994: 3,7,8). The thrust of this directive was to reemphasize the criminal nature of wife assault (ibid.: 2).

This discussion will now turn to a consideration of the feminist account of wife assault, the latter of which informs wife assault sensitivity training and, as noted above, is one of two major social science perspectives on violence in intimate relationships. In order to equip the reader with a better understanding of the issues, a discussion (albeit to a lesser extent) also will be undertaken regarding the family violence perspective.

## Chapter Two

### Theory

#### *Theoretical Explanations for Domestic Violence*

##### Feminist perspective of wife assault

Although there is no unified feminist perspective of wife assault (Loseke, 1987: 230; Bograd, 1988: 13; Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 464; Lenton, 1995: 323), there are certain common assumptions and/or approaches characteristic of the feminist model (Bograd, 1988: 13-14; Kurz, 1989: 494). According to Bograd (1988: 13), the primary question asked by all feminist researchers, clinicians, and activists is, "Why do men beat their wives?" Rather than examine *individual* occurrences of wife assault, feminists focus on the issue of why men as a *group* use violence against their wives, and how that violence serves a social function within a specific historical context (*ibid.*).

In the feminist framework, the woman is the central unit of analysis with male dominance and female subordination as the central features (Fagan, 1988: 92; Kurz, 1989: 490,495,498). This focus gives rise to a consideration of violence in terms of its *consequences* for the female victim (Dixon, 1995: 363). According to the feminist account, consequences are considered as arising from gender inequality, women's subordination, and lack of female economic independence (Kurz, 1989: 490,497; Pagelow, 1992: 88). Given the foregoing, attention is directed to patriarchal social structures (Yllo, 1983: 277-8; Palmer and Brown, 1989: 60; Lenton, 1995a: 567). For the purpose of this

study, patriarchy is defined as “the system of inequality in society whereby males dominate females” (Smith, 1990: 257). According to Smith (1990: 257), any patriarchal system is characterized first by a structure in which men have more privilege and power than women, and, second, by an ideology<sup>1</sup> that legitimizes this inequality. In seeking to understand wife assault, feminist researchers specifically examine cultural and social supports which reinforce the maintenance of power and inequality in relationships and thereby perpetuate patriarchy (Clark, 1989: 431).

The feminist account of wife assault makes a claim for a relationship between wife assault and the historical development of the isolated nuclear family in a capitalist society (Bograd, 1988: 14). According to this argument, capitalism divided a hitherto singular sphere of life into public and private/domestic domains (ibid.). Within the domestic domain of the family, male and female family roles not only became specialized but also were accorded unequal status (ibid.: 15). For example, the female sex role (typically one of domestic worker and childcare provider) is regarded as holding significantly less social status than the male sex role of financial provider and decision-maker (Kurz, 1989: 496).

According to feminist researchers, males resort to violence in order to maintain their authority and control within the marriage (Bograd, 1988: 14; Letellier, 1994: 96; Dixon, 1995: 360). This violence arises not only out of institutionalized inequality in the marriage (Stith, 1990: 39), but also out of the following: a set of beliefs that legitimize the husband’s power and authority over the wife (Smith, 1990: 263; Letellier, 1994: 96;

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<sup>1</sup> In terms of familial ideology, Lenton (1995: 314) notes that prominent themes include “obedience, respect, loyalty, dependency, sexual access, sexual fidelity, and ownership.”



Dixon, 1995: 360); men's presumed drive to control their female partners (Ferraro, 1988: 130); and society's acceptance of physical force as a means of control (Kurz, 1989: 496; McDonald, 1989: 101; Coomaraswamy, 1995: 21).

Most feminist researchers incorporate into their understanding of violence *all* the means of control which men use to maintain their socially sanctioned dominance (Kurz, 1989: 495). This particular focus on power and control is central to the feminist account of wife assault (Palmer and Brown, 1989: 60; Ontario Women's Directorate [OWD], 1993: 2; MacLeod, 1994: 12). Typified in wife assault literature, public education, and training (OPC, 1994: 33; Pence and Paymar, 1993: 2-3) as "the Power and Control Wheel," wife assault dynamics are characterized as a "pattern of behaviours rather than *isolated incidents* of abuse or cyclical explosions of pent-up anger, frustration, or painful feelings" (emphasis mine) (Pence and Paymar, 1993: 2-3).<sup>2</sup> Within the spokes of this Power and Control Wheel, tactics are displayed which a male *systematically* undertakes to maintain power and control over his female partner. These tactics include use of the following: coercion and threats, intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, children, male privilege, and economic abuse. The rim of the wheel (purportedly what gives it strength and holds it together) is physical abuse (ibid.). According to the New Jersey Coalition for Battered Women (1995: 12), physical abuse represents the "ultimate control tactic."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Emphasis has been added.

<sup>3</sup> This power and control wheel formed part of a wife assault display in the foyer of a police station during the month of November, the latter of which has been designated in Ontario by women's advocates as "Wife Assault Prevention Month."

As noted above, consideration is not confined to physical violence and anger, but extends to other mechanisms by which husbands control their partners; i.e., psychological, emotional, and verbal abuse (Kurz, 1989: 495; Pressman, 1989b: 39; Westhues, 1989: 137). These latter forms of abuse are connected to men's alleged emotional maltreatment, harassment, and/or persistent denigration of women; insofar as these abusive behaviours are recognized as precursors of serious physical violence (Fagan, 1988: 165), another central feminist claim in wife assault is made: that of the chronic escalating nature of both the frequency and severity of the violence (ibid; 177; McDonald, 1989: 93; Loseke, 1989a: 198).

In the feminist analysis, then, the cultural notion of a safe home is rejected and replaced with a claim for the family as a patriarchal institution that provides a cultural milieu where men's use of physical force against women is promoted, maintained, and even supported (Bograd, 1988: 12,19). According to Bograd (1988: 19), as long as heterosexual intimate relations continue to be structured along the lines of gender and power, husband-to-wife violence will remain a "fundamental dimension in most normally functioning families."

While unequal sex roles in contemporary family life foster an abusive environment, other structural factors contribute to women remaining in abusive relationships. For example, and in connection with the argument noted earlier regarding patriarchal social structures, feminists maintain that victims of wife assault must contend with the following: a criminal justice system which not only lacks consistent strong legal sanctions against

offenders but also fails to provide adequate protection for women (Kohli, 1991: 14); a healthcare system in which hospital and medical personnel often fail to associate injuries with wife assault or acknowledge the seriousness of it, and/or engage in victim-blaming (McDonald, 1989: 104; Kurz, 1989: 497; Pagelow, 1992: 89); a mental healthcare system which bases its treatment on a definition of the problem as one of individual rather than social pathology; a social safety net devoid of adequate childcare and job training for women; and a sexist job market which makes it difficult for women to be economically independent (Kurz, 1989: 497). For feminist researchers, the foregoing conditions arise out of the patriarchal nature of our society and demonstrate institutional support of violence against women (Pagelow, 1992: 88).

In the feminist account, wife assault is viewed as the most overt and effective means of social control in maintaining women in oppressed social positions (Bograd, 1988: 14). Insofar as *all* men (not just men in relationships) can potentially subordinate women using this means, wife assault is regarded as a category of violence against *women* rather than one type of *family* violence (Kurz, 1989: 498). Accordingly, wife assault is studied in relation to rape, marital/date rape, sexual harassment, and incest instead of other forms of family violence such as child abuse, elder abuse, and sibling abuse (*ibid.*).

This is not to suggest, though, that a feminist perspective of wife assault fails to consider other forms of violence in the family. Rather, it is the contention of some feminist researchers that without a feminist perspective of wife assault, the latter's link to child abuse largely would go unrecognized (*ibid.*). In this area, feminists cite research that

demonstrates men who batter women often batter the children as well (ibid.).<sup>4</sup> Kurz (1989: 499) suggests that “for feminists, family violence [read wife assault and child abuse] is a direct outcome of men’s attempts to maintain control over the powerless members; i.e., women and children.”<sup>5</sup> Even in this broadened context, attention is on *male* violence directed against those in the family who are weak and/or perceived to be weak (Clark, 1989: 424; Pressman, 1989a: 16).

Given this focus, any reference to the phenomenon of wife assault as “domestic violence,” “family violence,” or “spouse abuse” is criticized for gender-laundering it (Pressman, 1989a: 16). According to Bograd (1988: 13), “generic terms ignore the context of the violence, its nature, and consequences, the role obligations of each family member, and the different mechanisms or transactional sequences that lead to various forms of abuse.” As well, these generic terms purportedly contribute to society’s denial of male violence against women, wrongly deflect attention from women, and overlook “one of the key places where women’s oppression occurs--in the family” (Kurz, 1989: 498-500). Overall, feminist researchers argue that there is a tendency in nonfeminist analysis to obscure dimensions of gender and power, the latter of which are considered fundamental to the feminist account of wife assault (Bograd, 1988: 13,19; Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 39-40).

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<sup>4</sup> Clark (1989: 424) locates an explanation for male violence against women and children in the observation that women and children historically were considered legal property of husbands and fathers.

<sup>5</sup> According to Pressman (1989a: 16), this observation extends to the elderly as well.

**Wife assault myths.** A common element in feminist discourse on wife assault is myth-making; that is, relegating to the status of myths rival explanations about wife assault (Bograd, 1988: 22; Jaffe, 1991: 3; Pagelow, 1992: 107-11; Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 5,56; OWD, 1993). Some of the myths which the feminist account seeks to debunk include the following:

1. "*Wife assault is not a widespread social problem*" (ibid.: 1). Referred to as "one of the first myths about wife assault" (Pagelow, 1992: 108), this claim is countered with statistics which support the observation that wife assault has reached proportions described by feminists as "epidemic" (Pressman, 1989b: 42).
2. "*Wife assault occurs more often among certain groups of people*" (OWD, 1993: 1). Feminist literature notes that studies support the existence of wife assault occurring in *all* ethnic, racial, economic, social, and age groups (Pressman, 1989b: 21; Thornton, 1991: 456). For those studies which indicate an unequal distribution across social classes, feminists insist that violence in more affluent groups often is hidden given that affluent women infrequently use shelters, legal clinics, and other social services which maintain records of wife assault victims (OWD, 1993: 1).
3. *Women who remain in abusive relationships are masochistic or psychologically ill* (Pressman, 1989a: 15; Pagelow, 1992: 108). This claim, rejected as a stereotype, is not regarded as descriptive of the vast majority of victims (Pagelow 1992: 108). According to feminist researcher Pressman (1989a: 13-14), remaining in an abusive relationship "is not

an indicator of female masochism but rather deeply imbedded social values and expectations of women that predispose them to stay in abusive relationships.”

4. *Men who assault their partners are mentally ill and cannot control their violence*

(OWD, 1993: 2). Feminists denounce this psychological explanation as myth based on their claim that most abusive men demonstrate a degree of control *uncharacteristic* of mental illness (ibid.; Pressman, 1989a: 11). That is, abusive men purportedly control where, when, and upon whom they inflict violence. For example, abusive men control *who* they abuse by confining their expressions of anger and physical violence to their female partners (Bograd, 1988: 17; Pressman, 1989a: 11); they control *when* they engage in violence; i.e., in the privacy of their homes and often with no witnesses (Bograd, 1988: 17); they control *where* they inflict injury by confining blows directed at their spouse to parts of the body where bruises are not evident (OWD, 1993: 2). While there is an admission in the feminist literature that *some* batterers are mentally ill, it is claimed that they do not present any *consistent* psychological pattern (Bograd, 1988: 17). For the most part, this out-of-control hypothesis is criticized for its failure to address the question of power (Smith, 1991: 517). It also is regarded as an excuse used by batterers to deny their deliberate efforts to control women, rationalize their violence, and overlook their accountability (ibid.).

5. *Assaulted women often provoke their husband's violence* (Palmer and Brown, 1989:

60). This claim is rejected in feminist analysis on three levels. On a theoretical level, feminists claim that it is not provocation but rather the batterer's desire for power and

control over his partner which is the true source of violence (ibid.). On a moral level, two issues are addressed. First, the notion that violence can ever be *justified* as a response to provocation is flatly rejected, and second, the claim for provocation is regarded as an example of blaming the victim (ibid.). On an empirical level, feminists note that real-life accounts provided by abused women challenge the claim for provocation (Ferraro, 1989: 135). In terms of this latter claim, real life accounts include descriptions of the trivial nature of events which can precede assaults such as preparing a casserole for dinner instead of meat, wearing a pony tail, mentioning a dislike for the wallpaper (ibid.: 135), having too much grease on a breakfast plate, and preparing tea too weak (Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 4). For feminists, then, any focus on the battered woman's behaviour is denounced as perpetuating the myth that she somehow is responsible for the violence (Bograd, 1988: 22).

6. "*Assaulted women could leave their abusive partners if they wanted to*" (OWD, 1993: 1). According to feminist researchers, this statement does not reflect the experience of abused women who remain in abusive relationships out of numerous considerations, some of which include concern for the following: safety (research demonstrates that women who leave abusive men are at risk of increased violence); economic situation (women often are either economically dependent or do not earn enough to be financially self-sufficient); lack of support network (abusers characteristically isolate their partner); low self-esteem (abused women begin to believe wrongfully that they deserve the abuse); fear of deportation of either themselves or their partner (this fear may arise out of lack of

information or threats from their abuser); lack of information regarding legal rights; perpetual hope that situation will improve; and/or reluctance to break up the family (ibid.: 1,3).

7. “*Alcohol causes men to assault their partners*” (ibid.: 2). The feminist account of wife assault acknowledges that “alcohol can make it easier for a man to be violent” (ibid.) and that frequently there is a high incidence of alcoholism present in wife assault (Pressman, 1989a: 11; Westhues, 1989: 140); however, it adamantly rejects alcoholism as a *causal* factor in the violence. Feminist researchers view this appeal to alcohol as an “excuse” which justifies the violence<sup>6</sup> (Coomaraswamy, 1995: 22) and a rationale which allows batterers to avoid taking responsibility for their behaviour (OWD, 1993: 2).

8. “*Men are abused by their partners as often as women are*” (ibid.). Here, feminists look to statistics to support their claim for the mythical status of mutual combat. In this regard, feminist analysis points out that almost all criminal charges related to spousal assault are laid against men (see Statistics Canada, 1995: 53-55). Furthermore, those rare situations where women are charged often reflect counter-charges laid by assaultive partners<sup>7</sup> (OWD, 1993: 2). As well, studies which support a relatively equal amount of intimate violence between men and women (Straus, 1992: 224) are rejected because of a failure to acknowledge who initiated the violence, the largely *self-defense* motivation of female violence (Pagelow, 1992: 109; Williams, 1992: 627), and the gender of the more seriously

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<sup>6</sup> Earlier in her article, Coomaraswamy (1995: 21) cites male alcoholism as “one of the major reasons for violence in family.” However, she later states that male alcoholism or, for that matter, *any* cause of violence “should not be understood as justifications for the use of violence against women” (ibid.).

<sup>7</sup> A police trainer also supported this claim.



*injured* (mainly women) (Kurz, 1989: 495; Williams, 1992: 627). Even if women *did* initiate the violence, they are regarded by feminist researchers as responding in a manner required to prevent other attacks (Williams, 1992: 627; Letellier, 1994: 101). On a more general level, studies which support competing claims are rejected by virtue of their arising from what Bograd (1988: 21) describes as “male-defined social knowledge.”

9. *Violence in wife assault often reflects isolated incidents and is usually a one-time occurrence* (OPC, 1994: 37). Here, a claim is made that violence almost *always* escalates (Fagan, 1988: 165; McDonald, 1989: 93; Loseke, 1989a: 198; OPC, 1994: 37). Evidence to support this claim often comes from a London, Ontario study by Jaffe and Burrell (1984) which demonstrates that a woman can be assaulted as many *thirty-five* times before calling the police (OPC: 1994: 37).

In general, then, the feminist account of wife assault rejects as myths any explanations which are perceived as engaging in any or all of the following: subtly blaming the victim; implicating the woman in the violence; and/or excusing, neutralizing or justifying the violence, the latter of which all by default fail to hold abusers accountable for the violence (Bograd, 1988: 15,21; Pressman, 1989b: 29). Moreover, according to the feminist argument, these myths revictimize battered women (Bograd, 1988: 15).

**Wife assault--solutions/recommended policy changes.** The way a problem is defined is linked to how that problem is approached and treated (Pressman, 1989a: 11; Lerman 1992: 219). Insofar as sexism is *the* rather than *a* factor in the feminist understanding of wife assault (Kurz, 1989: 498), feminist solutions address inequality

between men and women (*ibid.*: 500) and hold out a goal of gender equality and social justice (Palmer and Brown, 1989: 62). To achieve these ends, feminists call for a change in gendered social structures (Fried, 1994: 581). According to Clark (1989: 431) and Smith (1991: 518), to effect this change, patriarchal expectations and attitudes that lie at the core of wife assault must be exposed and challenged. This process requires the study of major institutions (other than the family) in order to determine not only how various forms of male violence are legitimated but how to curtail that legitimation (Kurz, 1989: 501). After identifying locations as well as processes by which violence against women is legitimated, feminists call for the resocialization of men with the aim of redirecting men's view of women and sex roles. Ultimately, the goal is to eliminate men's instrumental use of violence as a means to maintain power and control (Fagan, 1988: 171).

As part of the solution to wife assault, then, the criminal justice system, which traditionally has defined wife assault as a private family matter, needs to undertake the following: adequately protect women from their abusers--both during and after prosecution of a charge (Geller, 1988: 100; Lerman, 1992: 239); implement effective measures to prevent the violence (Coomaraswamy, 1995: 22); ensure proper enforcement of laws which criminalize this violence (Kurz, 1989: 500); and aggressively prosecute perpetrators of wife assault (Geller, 1988: 100; Lerman 1992: 221). As well, the healthcare system needs to relinquish its patriarchal medical ideologies and practices (Bograd, 1988: 20), legitimize victims of wife assault as "true medical cases" (Kurz as

cited in Kurz, 1989: 501), and provide compassionate care for these victims<sup>8</sup> (Bograd, 1988: 20). The mental healthcare system also needs to develop expertise on treatment of abusers (Lerman, 1992: 221) as well as adopt a feminist methodology in treating wife assault victims (Bograd, 1988: 20; Kurz, 1989: 497; Pressman, 1989b: 31; Pagelow, 1992: 90; Saunders, 1994: 41).

Not only are changes required *within* the foregoing institutions<sup>9</sup> but also *between* them so that a coordinated response to wife assault may occur (Clark, 1989: 429,431; Lerman, 1992: 220). In order to achieve this coordination, feminists recommend professionals dealing with the issue of wife assault be sensitized to the victimization of women.<sup>10</sup> For feminists, this sensitization involves educating professionals about the nature of the problem from a *feminist* perspective (Lerman, 1992: 221).

Feminists also focus on providing women with “sufficient options and means that allow them to take concrete steps to end the abuse” (Fagan, 1988: 163). To this end, and in order to have alternatives to violent marriages, there is a call for revamping the marketplace in order to bring women’s wages to levels which allow for their economic independence (Kurz, 1989: 497). Without the latter, feminists maintain that women remain disempowered, susceptible to violence, and “unable to challenge and fight against the

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<sup>8</sup> A recent report by the Ministry of Health (1993) indicates that sensitivity training programs for health professionals regarding male physical and sexual violence against women has risen to eighty across Ontario.

<sup>9</sup> Other institutions requiring examination of their role in male violence include male peer groups (Smith, 1991: 518), the military, sports, male fraternities, and male bonding rituals (Kurz, 1989: 501).

<sup>10</sup> That the feminist account of wife assault is not unified in either its approach or its recommendations is demonstrated by feminist researchers who reject efforts to sensitize professionals to wife assault issues on the basis that these efforts purportedly fail to address not only the role of the state in maintaining the status quo, but also *why* women are raped and battered (Geller, 1988: 101).

violence” (Coomaraswamy, 1995: 21). There also is a need for implementing services that protect victims of wife assault from further harm (ibid.: 163). As noted above, part of this protection involves making institutions more responsive to victims<sup>11</sup> (Kurz, 1989: 497).

Overlaying all these recommendations and reforms is the need for public education campaigns to encourage support for the issue (ibid.: 498) and to “send a clear message to the public that [wife assault] . . . is socially abhorrent and will be taken seriously” (Clark, 1989: 430). The implementation of the foregoing recommendations and reforms purportedly will give rise to what feminists regard as necessary to eliminate wife assault; i.e., a cooperative effort on behalf of *all* social institutions--including the criminal justice system, the medical community, government, labour, social services, religious organizations and schools (Pressman, 1989b: 21).

#### Family violence perspective

Unlike the feminist analysis, the family violence perspective takes as its central unit of analysis the *family* rather than the female victim<sup>12</sup> (Fagan, 1988: 163, Kurz, 1989: 492). Moreover, this perspective defines violence primarily in terms of *acts* of the perpetrator rather than *consequences* to the victim (although consequences are not overlooked entirely) (Dixon, 1995: 363). The focus here is on both family conflict (rather than male

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<sup>11</sup> Although the call for better protection of women is made, feminist researcher Geller (1988: 101) notes that “it is important that we [women] do not fall back on seeking women’s protection as an end in itself, when it is women’s liberation we are seeking.”

<sup>12</sup> The conceptions of “family violence” in social science research arose in the 1970s largely out of the work of Murray Straus and his colleagues (Lenton, 1995: 305). Kurz (1989: 490) notes that the largest body of social science research on domestic violence has been published by Straus, Gelles, and Steinmetz.

domination) and the power which underlies social arrangements (ibid.: 361; McDonald, 1989: 101; Straus, 1992: 219).

In the family violence perspective, the family is viewed as a system which responds to stress and conflict produced by various broad social-structural conditions (Straus, 1980a: 33). In contrast to the feminist account's strict gender categorization of victim (female) and perpetrator (male), family violence theorists view violence between husbands and wives as part of the pattern of violence that occurs among *all* family members, the latter of whom carry out and are victims of violence (Kurz, 1989: 490,491). Support for the claim that the family is a violent place for all family members comes from empirical evidence which demonstrates the following: an *equivalent* amount of violence committed by both husbands and wives;<sup>13</sup> physical violence of parents towards children and children towards elders; and sibling abuse (Straus, 1992: 223). These claims largely stem from the 1975 and 1985 American National Family Violence Surveys, the only two (American) nationally representative studies of family violence (Straus, 1990: 3,7; Straus and Gelles, 1990: 104). Insofar as violence occurs among all family members, family violence theorists reject gendered terms such as "wife assault" or "wife abuse" insofar as they fail to describe all the violence in familial relationships (Taborsky and Sommer, in press).

Like wife assault theorists, family violence researchers acknowledge the role of women's subordinate social position in intimate violence (Straus, 1980a: 35-6). However,

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<sup>13</sup> In terms of violence between marital partners, Straus and Gelles (1990: 104) note that intimate violence is experienced by just over one-in-six American couples.

they do not regard gender inequality as the *only* factor in the violence<sup>14</sup> (ibid.). Rather, they insist that a combination of factors gives rise to a proclivity towards violence within the family (ibid.). Apart from women's subordinated status, other factors include serious stresses that confront the family, wider social norms which condone violence as a means of solving conflict, and the basic structure of the contemporary family (ibid.: 33-5).

For family violence theorists, some of the stressors which impact upon the family arise from inequality produced by economic conditions. That is, within an affluent society, some individuals are faced with the frustration of difficult working conditions, low-status occupations, unemployment, health problems, and financial insecurity (Kurz, 1989: 492). In the family violence analysis, individuals confronted with high levels of stress that accompany these negative life conditions often adopt violence as a *coping* strategy (Smith, 1990a: 42). This stress theory does not hold that stress is a direct *cause* of the violence but rather "an important contributing factor mediated by other variables" (Lenton, 1995: 310).

Other factors in the violence include what Feld and Straus (1990: 493) describe as "cultural spillover." According to this explanation, "although there are important differences between types of violence, all violence has certain common elements and there is a spillover effect in which the existence of one type of violence tends to legitimate and increase the likelihood of other types" (ibid.). Family violence theorists point out that our society is characterized by cultural norms which legitimate physical force as a means of

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<sup>14</sup> Straus and Hotaling (1980: 39 - emphasis in original) warn that researchers should "avoid the trap of fixing on any one factor as the *cause*, or even the major cause, of family violence."

conflict resolution (Straus, 1980b: 41; Straus and Hotelling, 1980: 38).<sup>15</sup> This widespread public acceptance of violence spills over into the entertainment media where physical force in conflict resolution is legitimized; ultimately, media violence spills over into the family through socialization practices which endorse the use of violence as an acceptable practice of punishing children (Straus, 1980a: 34; Kurz, 1989: 492).

The family violence perspective suggests that violence within the family is affected not only by external stressors but internal ones as well. For example, the basic structure of the contemporary North American family is regarded as a contributing factor in the violence (Straus, 1980a: 33).<sup>16</sup> That is, the family, with its male dominant system and primary group characteristics, allows for intense interaction to occur privately between people of unequal status in terms of gender and age who share a relational history (Straus, 1992: 216,220; Willams, 1992: 627). This situation is exacerbated by the socializing nature of the family which socializes children into violence through the experience of witnessing it, experiencing it, or both (Straus, 1980a: 33). Straus (1990a: 421-22) argues that exposure to what we regard even as ordinary familial aggression teaches children that violence is a legitimate and/or effective conflict resolution strategy.

In this perspective, then, reciprocal aggression is regarded as a form of learned behaviour. This explanation for which there is considerable support in the literature (Straus, 1990a: 421) is variously referred to as the cycle of violence (Lenton, 1995: 308), the intergenerational transfer hypothesis (Carter, Stacey and Shupe, 1988: 271; Palmer

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<sup>15</sup> For additional evidence supporting these claims, see Straus (1980) and Gelles and Straus (1988).

<sup>16</sup> According to Straus (1980a: 33), the family is "the most violent of all civilian institutions."

and Brown, 1989: 62), and social learning theory (Hotaling, Straus and Lincoln, 1990: 441; Westhues, 1989: 141). Overall, family violence theorists suggest that the foregoing conditions produce within the family a conflict-bound context out of which arises a relatively high frequency of reciprocal aggression that is difficult to both monitor as well as control especially given the privacy accorded to the family (Kurz, 1989: 492; Williams, 1992: 627).

**Family violence perspective--solutions/recommended policy changes.** Given the purported relationship between family violence and the following issues including social stresses, various forms of social inequality, structure of the contemporary family, and cultural norms which legitimize violence, family violence theorists recommend the following: instituting programs which would reduce negative life conditions (such as unemployment, underemployment, and poverty) as well as improve the quality of life (for example, in the area of healthcare) (Kurz, 1989: 494); change the sexist character of society in general and the family in particular; integrate the family into a network of kin and community; and, initiate, eliminate, or temper various cultural practices (ibid.). In connection with the latter recommendation, family violence theorists call for changes including: the establishment of public awareness campaigns, introduction of gun control, abolition of the death penalty, elimination of corporal punishment, and reduction on military expenditure on armaments (ibid.; Westhues, 1989: 141).



### *Constructionism*

As indicated in the introduction, patrol constables largely were unreceptive to claims expressed in wife assault sensitivity training. Insofar as contextual constructionists argue that any claim can be evaluated (Best, 1995: 347), application of this particular perspective seemed appropriate in informing a theoretical understanding regarding claims made by trainers as well as the claims' acceptance or lack thereof by patrol constables. Given that I will be applying a contextual constructionist perspective to my data, it will be necessary to include a discussion of this theoretical perspective as well.

Constructionism assumes a *subjective* rather than *objective* definition of social problems (Best, 1989: 4-5). For constructionists, objective definitions of social problems (i.e., ones which define social problems in terms of objective conditions) are flawed in two central ways: First, the subjective judgment necessary to identify social conditions as a social problem is minimized or even ignored (Best, 1995: 4,337); second, objectivism cannot serve as a foundation for more general theories of social problems because not all harmful conditions are considered social problems (ibid.). According to Blumer (1971: 301), social problems "are not the result of an intrinsic malfunctioning of society, but are a result of a process of [collective] definition in which a given condition is picked out and identified as a social problem." Blumer (1971: 301) further states that "a social problem does not exist unless it is recognized by that society to exist." Inasmuch as social problems

are what people view as constituting social problems, they are social constructions<sup>17</sup> (Best, 1995: 4). These social constructions are produced or constructed through social activities (ibid.: 6). In constructionist literature, these social activities are referred to as “claims-making”<sup>18</sup> (Spector and Kitsuse, 1977: 73). According to Spector and Kitsuse (1977: 78), “the activity of making claims, complaints, or demands for change is the core of what we call social problem activities.” Constructionists, therefore, do not examine conditions themselves but rather what claims-makers *say* about conditions (Best, 1995: 6). Locating explanations of claims being made, then, is primary in constructionist analysis (ibid.: 349). Central to the constructionist perspective is an examination of the following: conditions under which claims are made; when and by whom claims are made; kinds of claims which get made; and kinds of responses which claims receive (ibid.: 7). In this view, attention is directed to “the processes by which issues are identified, legitimated, and responded to as social problems” (Kalmus and Straus, 1983: 363).

In terms of the focus on claims-makers, constructionists take the following into consideration: who claims-makers are; who actually makes the claims; who claims-makers purport to represent; what connection (if any) exists between claims-makers and organizations, social movements, professions, or interest groups; claims-makers’ alliances or links with other groups through previous contact; experience level of claims-makers (i.e., experienced or novice); claims-makers’ allegiance to any ideology; claims-makers’

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<sup>17</sup> This theoretical understanding is not meant to suggest that constructionists are unconcerned about social conditions which people call social problems (Best, 1995: 10). Rather, for constructionists, attention is on claims-making *about* conditions rather than the conditions themselves (ibid.).

<sup>18</sup> Best (1995: 6) states that “for objectivist sociologists, social problems are conditions [while] for constructionists, social problems are claims-making activities.”

interests in issues raised, policies promoted, and overall success of their campaign; and how particular people making claims shape the claims that get made (Best, 1995: 308). Best (1995: 350) notes that standard sources of claims include press coverage, scholarly and professional literature, popular media, testimony before state hearings, public opinion polls, interviews with claims-makers, and ephemeral materials such as pamphlets, flyers, and handouts.

Regardless of the nature of claims, Best (1987: 104) suggests that “in any argument, statements about grounds provide the basic facts which serve as the foundation for the discussion which follows.” According to Best (1987: 104), although, admittedly, facts nevertheless are socially constructed knowledge, there are various types of grounds statements that recur in many claims-making campaigns. In this connection, recurrent grounds statements involve definitions, examples, and numeric estimates (*ibid.*).

For constructionists like Best (1995: 8), claims-makers shape our sense of what the problem is by typifying social problems. Typification takes several forms, each of which serves to characterize a problem’s nature (*ibid.*). These forms include the following: naming the problem; giving an orientation towards the problem (for example, is the issue primarily medical, moral, criminal, political, and so forth?); and illustrating the problem through the use of examples which justify claims (*ibid.*: 8-9). As noted by Best (1995: 13), “claims-makers want to convince others that X is a social problem or that Y offers the solution.” Success, then, is dependent upon the degree to which claims-maker audiences are *persuaded*.

Based on the foregoing, claims-making is both an act of communication as well as an attempt to persuade (ibid.: 13). Insofar as claims-making is a rhetorical activity, rhetoric<sup>19</sup> also is used to analyze claims (ibid.). For the purpose of this study, rhetoric is defined as “the systematic study of the acts of communication by which people convince others of the reality of *truth* of their assertions” (emphasis mine) (Hunter, 1990: 4). Analysis of claims-making, then, extends to a consideration of how claims are presented in order to persuade audiences (Best, 1995: 350).

In terms of analyzing responses evoked by claims-makers, consideration is given to the following issues: audiences addressed by claims-makers; interests and concerns on the part of audiences which are brought to the social problem; ways in which audiences’ interests or concerns shape their response to claims; existence of rival claims presented by other claims-makers; and effect, if any, of the nature of claims and/or identity of claims-makers on audiences’ response (ibid.: 350-1).

### Contextual constructionism

Within the constructionist perspective, two schools of thought prevail; i.e., strict constructionism and contextual constructionism. Both schools focus on claims-making.<sup>20</sup> Strict constructionism, influenced by its phenomenological perspective,<sup>21</sup> has as its goal, assumption-free analysis (ibid.: 348). Although strict constructionists seek to understand claims, they do not presume to judge their accuracy (ibid.: 342). Contextual

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<sup>19</sup> Best (1987: 114) argues that rhetoric plays a central role in claims-making about social roles.

<sup>20</sup> Best (1995: 348) suggests that “the distinction between strict and contextual constructionism. . . [is] a matter of degree.”

constructionists, however, consider claims as historically and situationally specific (ibid.: 345-6). That is, they regard claims as made by particular claims-makers who address particular audiences while using particular rhetoric to address particular problems (ibid.). In order to understand claims, then, contextual constructionists argue that they must locate claims-making within at least part of the social context (ibid.: 346). To this end, they maintain that some assumptions about social conditions must be made (Best, 1989: 246). Contextual constructionists also consider in their analyses, issues including the following: basis for the claims; what might account for timing of the claims; any discrepancy between claims and other information about social conditions; and the extent to which it is likely that claims-makers either misrepresented or inaccurately described social conditions (ibid.: 251; Best, 1995: 347). Apart from a discussion of constructionist literature and inasmuch as this study involves an evaluation, a review of evaluation literature also is provided and will be addressed in the following chapter.

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<sup>21</sup> According to Best (1995: 342), phenomenological sociology argues that “all we know about the world is a social construction.”

## Chapter Three

### Evaluation Research--Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

Evaluation research is defined here as the systematic study of collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about the operation and effects of a human intervention (Patton, 1987a: 145; Law in Alkin, 1990: 82; McLaughlin in Alkin, 1990: 82; Alkin, 1990: 81). Central issues in evaluation literature include the following: (1) purpose, types, and functions of evaluation; (2) stakeholder identification and selection; (3) use/nonuse/misuse of evaluation findings; (4) politics of evaluations; (5) ethical concerns; (6) role of researcher; (7) choice of methodology and data collection strategies; (8) validity and reliability of findings; and (9) recommendations. In the discussion which follows, I will address issues “1” through “6;” however, comments regarding how these issues pertain to my study will be limited in this section to the first two issues. Issues above numbered “9” as well as “3” through “6” are taken up in more detail in appendices 1 to 5 respectively because a discussion of the findings needs to be undertaken before addressing these areas; issues “7” and “8” are discussed separately in chapter 4. Given the nature of these issues, there inevitably will be some overlap in the following discussion.

### *Evaluations--Purpose*

There is no clear agreement in the literature on what purpose evaluation is to serve. Some evaluation researchers, including Greene (1988: 33) and Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (1985: 3), regard the purpose of an evaluation as twofold; i.e., judge and assess a program's worth and value; and determine the extent to which a program is a success or failure. Other researchers, such as Caron (1993: 83), view the principal purpose of an evaluation as providing information so that better decisions can be made. While Patton (1987: 121) and Law (in Alkin, 1990: 82) agree that an evaluation is an aid to decision-making, they also regard it as a *process* which provides information. This information answers any or all of the following three questions about the program/project under evaluation: (1) Did the program/project accomplish its goals? (2) How well did it do it? (3) What happened as a result of it being undertaken? (ibid.). Rather than engage in generalizations about effectiveness, Patton and Law set out to determine in what way and to what extent the program under evaluation works for which people (Patton, 1988: 121). From this perspective, evaluations are undertaken for the purpose of adding to an understanding about the program (Weiss, 1990a: 211), illuminating the program's range of options and likely effects (ibid.), "creat[ing] a discussion around the topic" (Hendricks in Alkin, 1990: 94), and determining to what extent the working knowledge is confirmed or disconfirmed (ibid.). It is by this latter perspective that my study will be guided.

### *Types of Evaluations*

Just as there is no clear agreement in the literature on the purpose of evaluations, there also is no clear agreement on how to categorize them. For example, Stufflebeam and Shinkfield (1985: 64) group evaluations under the following headings: objectives-based studies, decision-oriented studies, consumer-oriented studies, and client-centered studies. For Card, Greeno, and Peterson (1992: 77), evaluations are divided into two groups: impact evaluations and process evaluations. Patton (1990: 60), however, prefers to categorize evaluations as either basic research, applied research, action research, summative evaluations, or formative evaluations. Evaluations also have been classified as instrumental case studies (Stake, 1994: 23).

My evaluation study, with its broad purpose, does not fit neatly into any one of the foregoing types of evaluation but rather reflects a combination of three types, that of basic research, summative evaluation, and instrumental case study. For example, basic research evaluations contribute to theory and fundamental knowledge as well as focus on knowledge as an end in itself (Patton, 1990: 150,160). Summative evaluations focus on goals of the intervention (whether it be a program, policy, or product) and determine the intervention's effectiveness; as well, these types of evaluations make generalizations and judgments not only about effective types of interventions but also conditions under which those efforts are effective (ibid.). Instrumental case studies provide insight into an issue by examining a particular case (Stake, 1994: 23).



### *Functions of Evaluations*

In addition to noting several types of evaluations, the literature also identifies various functions of evaluations. Some of these functions include the following: reconceptualizing the nature of and/or providing insight into the issue; providing guidance for crafting program reforms; warning of problems; directly influencing change; following through on specific recommendations for improvement; directly affecting decisions; building coalitions of support (for say program or policy proposals); and/or contributing to theories that could inform problemsolving programs and interventions (Siegel and Tuckel, 1985: 307; Weiss, 1990: 183; Patton, 1990: 160; Stake, 1994: 23). These functions vary depending upon the reason(s) for which the evaluation is undertaken. For example, a commissioned evaluation would have to take into consideration concerns and/or mandates of management (Caron, 1990: 71,79; Michalos, 1992: 74). Inasmuch as my evaluation reflects a scholarly endeavour rather than a commissioned undertaking, its primary functions will involve reconceptualizing and providing insight into the nature of the issue as well as contributing to theory; a secondary function will entail providing recommendations for program reform.

### *Stakeholder Selection/Participation*

For the purpose of this study, “stakeholder” is defined as “the distinct groups interested in the results of an evaluation, either because they are directly affected by or involved in program activities, or because they must make a decision about the program at other locations or times” (Mark and Shotland, 1985: 605). Insofar as each stakeholder

group will be from a different social location and therefore will draw on different perspectives, each group also will conceptualize and judge differently a program's value as well as the meaning of the program in their lives (Neighor and Fishman, 1985: 268; Weiss in Alkin, 1990: 83). Of the various stakeholder groups which have an interest in wife assault sensitivity training for police officers, central ones include the police (both administrative and front-line personnel), wife assault victims, wife assault service providers, and criminal/legal system personnel.<sup>1</sup>

Insofar as my interest is in evaluating wife assault sensitivity training from the perspective of patrol constables, my primary stakeholder group is the police. Patrol constables provide the core of the data, while secondary data come from two sources: patrol constables' front-line supervisors (sergeants) and administrative police trainers.<sup>2</sup> Sergeants inform an understanding of the political location in which their subordinates find themselves, while police trainers provide a background for and understanding about the training.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, both sergeants and administrative officers act as validating groups in terms of their assessments of the training.

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<sup>1</sup> Although wife assaulters (alleged and actual) could be considered stakeholders, their voice most likely would be excluded from any evaluation given that they constitute what Mark and Shotland (1985: 613) describe as a "low-legitimacy group."

<sup>2</sup> Administrative police trainers also hold the rank of sergeant. However, to avoid confusion, I only refer to constables' front-line supervisors as sergeants.

<sup>3</sup> Like Becker (1972: 15) who studied medical school from the perspective of the students rather than the instructors, I, too, acknowledge that police trainers probably will not find what they consider to be full expression of the issues presented herein. However, I extend the following reminder to them that Becker (1972: 15) extended to the medical school instructors, "We remind [the instructors] that throughout the book we are saying, 'This is how things look and feel down under.'"

*Politics/Ethics/Utilization of Evaluation Research*

The politics, ethics, and utilization of evaluation research also figure prominently in the literature, and by virtue of their focus, often overlap (Rossi, 1985: 301,311-12; Greene, 1988: 35; Patton, 1988: 119; Alkin, 1990: 233,287,289-93; House in Alkin, 1990: 233, 278,283; McLaughlin in Alkin, 1990: 236; Patton in Alkin, 1990: 242-3,251-2,267-8; Weiss, 1990a: 210-11, 221; Michalos, 1992: 68; Madak, 1994: 3). Of the various political issues which confront evaluation research, three central ones include role of the researcher (Morse, 1994: 369; Punch 1994: 86,87; Neff Gurney, 1995), agendas of the researcher and stakeholders (Loseke, 1989b: 203,204,220; Alkin, 1990: 95,323), and decisions about whose questions get answered (Patton in Alkin, 1990: 236). Ethical concerns can be divided into the following three categories: (1) ethical and moral aspects of the evaluation's purpose; (2) conduct of the research; and (3) issues relating to the researcher's relationship with stakeholders (Punch, 1994: 88). The first category involves concerns such as lack of a balanced evaluation (Brown and Newman, 1992: 653). The second category focuses on issues which potentially could spoil the field for others (Punch, 1994: 93). The third category considers issues such as protection of stakeholders from harm, deception about research purpose and strategies, informed consent, right to privacy, confidentiality of data, promises and reciprocity, and data access and ownership (Patton, 1990: 356; Morse, 1994: 372; Punch, 1994: 88).

Both political and ethical concerns also are primary in another central theme in evaluation literature, that of use, nonuse, misuse, and unintended use of findings/

recommendations<sup>4</sup> (Alkin, 1990: 289-93; House in Alkin, 1990: 233,278,283; Patton in Alkin, 1990: 242-3,251-2,267-8; Weiss, 1990a: 210-11,221). According to Sadler (1984: 261), this particular topic receives a great deal of attention because recommendations for program improvement are commonly associated with evaluation reports.

### *Role of the Researcher*

Here, attention is directed to how respondents define the researcher's role. According to Becker (1958: 655), this definition will have an impact not only on what respondents reveal but also what they will allow the researcher to see. Several issues come into play, some of which include researcher bias, personality characteristics, political sensitivity, credibility, appearance, abilities, and so forth (Rossi, 1985: 304-5; Greene, 1988: 37; Alkin, 1990: 70-1,75; Patton, 1990: 460,474; Silverman, Ricci and Gunter, 1990: 66,71; Pagelow, 1992: 89; Parsons et al.: 1993: 131-2; Janesick, 1994: 212; Morse, 1994: 372; Punch, 1994: 86,88).

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<sup>4</sup> Even what constitutes use, nonuse, misuse and unintended use is debated in the literature (Law in Alkin, 1990: 273; McLaughlin in Alkin, 1990: 236-7).

## Chapter Four

### Methodology

#### *Introduction*

The following section addresses issues involving study design, access, recruitment of respondents, sampling, data collection techniques, trustworthiness of the data, and limitations of the study. Following the recommendation by Patton (1990: 482), this discussion on methodology is documented so that others can review the methodologies of this study for bias.

#### *Study Design*

According to Patton (1990: 492), insofar as no single methodological approach exists for all evaluation situations, an important challenge in evaluation research “is to appropriately match methods to evaluation questions and issues.” To some extent, the choice of evaluation design and methodology is dependent upon the purpose of the evaluation as well as the interests, abilities, and biases of the evaluator (Patton, 1987a: 69).

As noted earlier, my study can be considered a combination of various evaluation types because of its fairly broad purpose. Central, however, to this study is the goal of understanding patrol constables’ experience of the training by focusing on *their* perceptions, meanings, definitions, and concepts. In this connection, a qualitative

methodology is appropriate inasmuch as it provides an understanding of the motives, values, and interests of key actors (Barzansky, Berner and Beckman, 1985: 139), allows for an examination of program strengths and weaknesses from their point of view (Patton, 1990: 14), reveals unforeseen side-effects and unanticipated impacts (ibid.), and informs an understanding of the ways in which a program fits together (Barzansky, Berner and Beckman, 1985: 139). The foregoing features together with a qualitative methodology's characteristic flexibility in assessing various data sources such as observations, verbal reports, and written records (West, 1980: 39) as well as my familiarity with, and bias towards, qualitative methods, led me to choose a qualitative methodology for this study.

A qualitative methodology often is informed by a symbolic interactionist perspective which primarily comes out of the works of George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley, and John Dewey (Becker et al., 1961: 19). A term coined by Blumer in 1937, symbolic interactionism rests on the following three critical points: a focus on interaction between the actor and the world; a view of both the actor and the world interacting in a *dynamic* processes and not as static structures; and an appreciation of the actor's ability to interpret the social world (Ritzer, 1988: 174). According to this perspective, the ability to interpret stems from an ability to think, which, in turn, enables all people to act *reflectively* rather than just to react to external or internal forces beyond one's control (ibid.: 181). Important to this theoretical understanding are the *processes* by which actors, through reflection, construct meaning (ibid.: 175). In this regard, and as noted by Becker et al. (1961: 19), "human behaviour is to be understood as a process in

which the person shapes and controls his conduct by taking into account (through the mechanism of 'role-taking') the expectations of others with whom he interacts."

Meaning, a central concept in symbolic interactionism, is derived from actors' perceptions and understandings of their social world and ultimately informs attitudes and behaviour (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 112). For symbolic interactionists, "meaning does not stem from mental processes but from the process of interaction" (Ritzer, 1988: 182-3). Given the symbolic interactionist view that actors have some autonomy, meanings and symbols imposed on individuals from without need not be accepted by them (ibid.: 84). Rather, individuals "are capable of forming new meanings and new lines of meaning" (Meltzer, 1978: 7). Thomas and Thomas (1970: 572) describe this creative capacity with the concept of "definition of the situation" wherein what is defined as real by individuals becomes real in its consequences. Given this understanding, symbolic interactionism's primary concern involves examining "the impact of meanings and symbols on human action and interaction" (Ritzer, 1988: 184).

For the symbolic interactionist, the principal task becomes one of analyzing and capturing this interpretive process (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 112). By employing a symbolic interactionist perspective in this study, it is hoped that the data will shed light on "what is most important to the people [in this case, patrol constables], what is most resistant to change, and what will be most necessary to change if the program or organization is to move in new directions" (Patton, 1990: 76). Overall, this holistic analysis reflects an attempt at understanding patrol constables' total environment

(including social, cultural, and political conditions) that surrounds and impinges upon them. To this end, every effort has been made to present the patrol constable perspective.<sup>1</sup> As Wiseman (1974: 326) stated, “There is nothing that happens or that people tell you that ‘doesn’t make sense.’ It is part of their lives. They think it makes sense. It is up to you to make sociological sense of it.”

### *Access*

The process by which I obtained access to the police service initially involved meeting with a senior administrative police officer to whom I submitted a letter outlining my research (see appendix 6) as well as a notice about my study for posting in the stations (see appendix 7). At this initial meeting, I was provided with a tentative endorsement subject to the approval of senior police management. With this officer in attendance, I next met with a senior police personnel member who had been familiarized with my research request. At this meeting, access to both the setting and documents was granted in exchange for the following: assurance of anonymity regarding the police service, and provision of a summary report at the end of the study. Access included authorization to interview (and with their permission) audiotape police officers. It was agreed that interviews were to last from forty-five minutes to one hour and could take place at stations during regular work hours, but at non-peak periods, and with supervisory approval --which participating officers were to obtain prior to interviews.

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<sup>1</sup> As I indicated to respondents throughout my data collection stage, my study will have been successful if upon reading it, constables recognize their “world” as *they* understand it.



Two of the foregoing conditions, supervisory approval and a guarantee of anonymity regarding the police service, carried both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of the guarantee of anonymity was the potential for motivating more officers to participate as well as encouraging a more free expression of their views. However, a disadvantage is that anonymity precludes me from disclosing in this thesis certain organizational characteristics particular to this police service which I consider relevant to an informed understanding of the issues. In terms of the prerequisite for supervisory approval, an advantage was that it may have motivated some officers to participate because of the legitimacy conferred on my study by virtue of this approval. A disadvantage, though, was that supervisory approval may have discouraged some officers from volunteering,<sup>2</sup> or possibly caused those who participated to be guarded in their comments because of supervisory knowledge about their participation.

Having been granted formal access to this police service, I contacted by phone a senior administrative officer at a provincial police training college and requested access to the college library which contained several criminology journals not locally available. I not only was granted this access, but also was invited to attend a wife assault training session for recruits upon the condition that I provide the training college with a copy of my thesis.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This claim is related to the observation by Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980: 13) that researchers can be suspected of "a sort of guilt by association" because of their unavoidable involvement with authorities who grant access to the field setting.

<sup>3</sup> This condition as well as the one which involved providing a copy of my summary report to the police service carried the risk of compromising my study because of a possible desire on my part to submit an analysis supportive of the training--or, at least, the *need* for the training. This ethical concern is addressed in more detail in Appendix 4.

### *Recruitment of Respondents*

The unit of analysis in this study is patrol constables (Sechrest, 1985: 54; Patton, 1990: 17). To aid in my recruitment of respondents, the administration offered to write to station superintendents. This memorandum (a copy of which was provided to me) enclosed a copy of the notice about my study, indicated administration's support for my study, requested that this notice be posted within all stations, and advised superintendents to notify their sergeants that I would be contacting them to make arrangements to present my project during what are called "Sunday morning roll calls" or "parades." During these Sunday morning roll calls and prior to heading out on their shift, front-line officers gather together for 1 1/2 to 2 hours in a meeting room.<sup>4</sup> These sessions are presided over by one or two front-line sergeants and attended by a squad of front-line officers (which in this police service included anywhere from eight to forty patrol constables and one to three detective constables) and, on occasion, a superintendent. Used as informal venues for training on various policing and community issues, these sessions often include speakers such as supervisory personnel, other police officers from specialized units (either within or outside the organization), and community members (both professional and lay).

In order to access every front-line shift, administration recommended that I attend Sunday morning roll calls of each area station for four consecutive weeks. To this end, and in order to complete the recruitment stage of my study in the four week period, I needed

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<sup>4</sup> The setting of the meeting rooms varied. At some stations, officers, sergeants, and myself sat around tables placed together in the form of a closed rectangle. At other stations, officers sat at tables arranged in a U-shape, while I sat at a separate table which faced the officers and was raised on a podium. In these latter situations, sergeants usually stood against the wall (along with other officers if there was insufficient seating).

to attend various stations within the two hours allotted weekly to Sunday morning roll calls.<sup>5</sup> I therefore had to coordinate with respective front-line sergeants, specific times for my arrival and departure from various stations. The benefit of attending various stations on the same morning was that it enabled me to complete the recruitment stage of my study within a reasonable amount of time; i.e., one month. A drawback was that my consecutively scheduled presentations prevented me from engaging in informal conversations with officers following the sessions (except for the last session I attended each Sunday morning).

Whenever possible, I arranged to meet with sergeants before my presentations in order to familiarize them with my study, gain their support, provide them with an opportunity to ask questions, and invite them to participate as respondents. These meetings took place either directly before my presentation (in these cases, only when the station was my first scheduled presentation) or on the day preceding it. When I attended at stations on the day preceding my presentation, meetings with sergeants often lasted one to two hours. These informal sessions were valuable for facilitating the development of a good rapport, the latter of which proved beneficial in several ways. First, during Sunday morning roll calls, sergeants often would mention that they had spoken to me at length about my study, indicated their support, and encouraged participation by their officers. Given the high regard most sergeants appeared to have among patrol constables, their

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<sup>5</sup> Geographical distance between stations together with allotted time prevented me from attending at each station on four consecutive Sunday mornings. For those stations at which I was unable to attend on Sunday mornings, I made arrangements with front-line sergeants to present my study at roll calls through the week so that, over a four-week period, I had spoken to each shift.

endorsement may have enhanced participation. Second, my familiarity with the sergeants allowed me (once at my request and once at a sergeant's invitation) the opportunity to return to two Sunday morning roll calls following completion of my interview stage in order to obtain officer feedback on my preliminary findings. Third, several sergeants invited me to return at the end of my study and present my findings to their squads.

My recruitment sessions during Sunday morning rolls calls averaged twenty to thirty minutes; casual conversations with potential respondents lasted anywhere from ten to sixty minutes and depended upon whether I had to leave the station to attend another roll call elsewhere. During these sessions, I handed out to each officer the notice about my study (see appendix 7) and gave them a few minutes to review it. I then read my research statement (see appendix 8), spoke briefly about my study, and fielded questions and/or responded to comments. Following the advice of a senior administrative officer who indicated that awareness of administrative approval might make my study suspect to patrol constables, I focused on the independence of my research as well as my obligations to confidentiality and anonymity. Patrol constables volunteered to participate either during the presentation, outside the parade room following the session (the most popular method), or by phone at a later date. Over a period of four weeks, I attended parades at each station within the police service and presented my study to every squad of patrol constables. Allowing for absences for various reasons such as vacations, illnesses, and

“lieu” days for court appearances, I had contact with approximately two-third’s of the service’s patrol constables and their supervisors.<sup>6</sup>

### *Sampling*

In terms of sampling strategies, several forms were adopted in this study. Insofar as patrol constables constituted my unit of analysis, homogeneous sampling was my major sampling strategy. Snowball or chain sampling also was used throughout the study (albeit with limited success) either during casual conversations with officers or following formal interviews. This latter sampling strategy involves having respondents generate the sample by providing the researcher with names of others who also might participate (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 27). To this end, I not only asked for referrals but also requested that my respondents encourage others to volunteer. (Those respondents [only a handful] who volunteered after being encouraged by fellow officers informed me about positive feedback regarding my study.) I also employed purposeful sampling by freely passing out my business card when engaged in casual conversations with officers. Finally, opportunistic sampling or what Patton (1990: 183) calls “taking advantage of the unexpected” was undertaken and occurred on three occasions--once, when a patrol constable on desk duty provided an impromptu interview at the station reception desk, a second time when a constable volunteered for a formal interview on-the-spot just as I was preparing to leave the station, and a third time when a respondent with a pre-arranged

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<sup>6</sup> Constables absent from parades when I made my presentation still had an opportunity to become aware of my study through the station-wide posting of my notice.

interview came with a fellow officer which led to the two being interviewed simultaneously.

### *Data Collection*

#### Introduction

Several data collection strategies were used in this study including in-depth open-ended interviews, casual conversations, participant observation, focus groups, member checks, and document review. Each strategy will be addressed separately in the discussion which follows.

#### Interviews

The use of in-depth open-ended interviews was my major data collection method. Out of forty-three interviews, all but five were audiotaped.<sup>7</sup> During the interviews for the five who declined audiotaping, I took copious notes. Note-taking, albeit minimal, also was adopted during audiotaped interviews with the police trainers. However, and despite the recommendation in the literature to take notes during *all* audiotaped interviews (Eakin Hoffman, 1980: 52), for the most part, I refrained from this practice with front-line officers for the following two reasons: First, I wanted to create a more relaxed informal atmosphere which I hoped would encourage respondents' freer expression; second, I was

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<sup>7</sup> This response was surprising given warnings by administrative personnel to anticipate refusals from police officers in general and patrol constables in particular. Of the five who declined to be audiotaped, three were patrol constables. The positions of the other two officers cannot be disclosed because of anonymity concerns.

conscious of time constraints and concerned that note-taking might hinder the flow of the interview as well as amount of data received.

Interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis except in one instance (as noted earlier) where two constables were interviewed simultaneously.<sup>8</sup> Interviews lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to 2 hours; average length of the interviews was approximately 1 1/2 hours.<sup>9</sup> The exception to this was interviews with four administrative police trainers. With this group, a combined total of eighteen hours was spent interviewing. Almost all interviews were followed by casual conversations which often lasted anywhere from ten to thirty minutes.

At the beginning of each interview, I reviewed my research statement (read at roll calls) and obtained the respondent's signature on a consent form which guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality (see appendix 9). Apart from directly asking respondents about their exposure to training and obtaining their responses to hypothetical domestic violence/wife assault scenarios, I waited to determine if, and in what context, respondents independently raised other related issues. This approach was informed by Becker's (1958: 655) observation that there is less potential for volunteered (rather than direct) statements to reflect the researcher's preoccupations and biases (for this reason, volunteered statements are afforded greater evidential value).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> My initial concern that a simultaneous interview might cause participants to give similar responses was abated when respondents freely disagreed with each other on certain issues.

<sup>9</sup> Remaining conscious of the access deal made with administration in which I had indicated that interviews would not exceed one hour, I made it a point to advise respondents when the hour had passed; invariably, I was assured that the interview could continue.

<sup>10</sup> Notwithstanding this observation, as noted by Sanders (1980: 167), statements (particularly volunteered ones) need to be interpreted in the context of the social position and vested interests of the respondent.

At the end of interviews and once patterns began to emerge, I requested respondents' feedback on my tentative explanations for patterns. When interviews were over and immediately upon leaving the station, I invariably checked my tape recorder for successful audiotaping.<sup>11</sup> I then dictated an account of my general impressions of and observations about interview sessions as well as my recollection of any comments made by respondents after the tape recorder had been shut off. This practice of dictating my observations following any contact with officers was undertaken throughout my study and proved to be an invaluable source of additional data as well as a permanent reminder of impressions.<sup>12</sup> Given time constraints, verbatim transcription of audiotapes was limited to interviews with twenty-three patrol constables,<sup>13</sup> five sergeants, and four trainers. For the remaining audiotaped interviews, I transcribed only what I considered to be key phrases which not only supported and *challenged* existing patterns, but also suggested new patterns. (Insofar as saturation of my data existed *within* the twenty-three transcribed interviews, I believe this latter approach did not compromise my analysis.)

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<sup>11</sup> On one occasion, the recorder had malfunctioned and my entire interview with a trainer had not been audiotaped. Upon leaving the station, I dictated as much as I could recall from the session; fortunately, I had also taken a fair number of notes during this particular interview.

<sup>12</sup> Given my frequent visits to various stations over a period of six months, I was afforded with numerous opportunities to speak informally with officers, especially while waiting for respondents to arrive at stations for the interview.

<sup>13</sup> In selecting for transcription twenty-three of the thirty-eight interviews given by patrol constables, I considered the degree to which officers provided new information or had a unique perspective. I also was conscious of transcribing interviews for officers with varying degrees of exposure to the training as well as varying degrees of lengths of service.



In all but four cases,<sup>14</sup> setting for the interviews was a private room within the station out of which respondents worked. Although the room furnishings varied, the respondent and I inevitably sat either opposite each other across a desk or table or (where there was no desk or table) adjacent to each other on separate sofas or chairs. In terms of a setting, the police station carried both advantages and disadvantages. One advantage was that frequent attendance at stations gave rise to numerous opportunities for casual and informal conversations both with officers not participating in the study as well as those who *previously* had participated. These informal conversations not only were a valuable source of data in terms of obtaining feedback on emerging patterns, but also were a venue for promoting my study, seeking respondents, and establishing key informants (the latter of whom eventually included a trainer and a veteran patrol constable). Station interviews also were useful for observing respondents' behaviour which provided rich data that initially suggested and, then, reinforced emerging patterns.<sup>15</sup> Another advantage of interviewing at stations was that inasmuch as all but four respondents had been exposed to the same interview environment, a claim can be made for enhanced credibility of findings.

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<sup>14</sup> The reasons that respondents chose to be interviewed off duty and off site included holiday absence, medical leave, and an intention to exceed the time allotted to interviews because of unique circumstances. On average, these interviews lasted 2 to 2.5 hours.

<sup>15</sup> For example, several respondents insisted on leaving the door to the interview room somewhat ajar; one respondent chose to sit where he could be seen readily by fellow officers passing the room, and two respondents opened the blinds on a window which faced the hallway. In my opinion, these actions reinforced the perceived need by officers to protect themselves from potential accusations of untoward behaviour on their part towards me. I further believe that as a female, I represented a threat to the respondents given what they decried as the potentially lethal combination of rigid enforcement of an internal sexual harassment policy and police administration's unwavering position that "women do not lie."

Disadvantages of station interviews included the potential for the setting to be prohibitive not only in terms of volunteering but also in terms of the degree of candour expressed by respondents. For example, while I could guarantee respondents anonymity regarding what was reported in my study, I was unable to protect their anonymity at the station where they worked. Also, although a certain measure of privacy existed within the immediate environment of the room where interviews took place, it is possible that to some extent the larger environment of the station may have been restrictive (although an argument could be made that the station was not prohibitive entirely given that similar high levels of candour were expressed during on-site as well as off-site interviews). Another disadvantage of the station as a setting was that I was committed to a pre-established time frame for the interview. However, restrictions on time notwithstanding, I believe that there was sufficient opportunity not only to address adequately the issues under consideration, but also obtain feedback on emerging patterns. Overall, I would suggest that advantages of station interviews exceeded potential disadvantages.

#### Participant observation during police ride-alongs

The Ride-along Programme, a police project aimed at building community understanding about the role of the police, allows civilians (pursuant to security checks and adequate personal liability insurance) to accompany officers on their daily patrols. As a researcher, this opportunity allowed me to participate to some degree in the daily life of my respondents. The purpose of participant observation, the latter of which is foundational

to qualitative research (Becker, 1958: 652; Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 112), is to observe study subjects in order to determine what situations they ordinarily meet and how they respond to them (Becker, 1958: 652). Also important is engaging in informal conversations with some or all of the participants in these situations in order to discover their interpretations of observed events (*ibid.*).

A total of thirty hours during weekend evening shifts was spent in cruisers with four patrol constables, the latter of whom were from different stations throughout the region. During the ride-alongs, officers responded to various calls for service including stranger assaults, car accidents, outstanding warrants, theft, crowd control, public intoxication, and allegations of domestic-related violence (made by partners as well as siblings). Between calls, I was able to ask my host officers most of the questions on my interview schedule which by the time ride-alongs took place I had relegated to memory. My recollection of responses as well as observations about events were recorded as verbatim as possible immediately following the shift during my automobile ride home.

It is noted that while data from these sessions were used to some extent, host officers are not represented in my sample of thirty-two patrol constables. Reasons for their exclusion include the following: First, insofar as my host officers were chosen by the department, they represented a threat to unbiased sampling. Second, my recollection of comments was not recorded until the ride-along was over. With most ride-alongs lasting seven to nine hours and ending in the early morning hours (i.e., 2:30 A.M. to 5:30 A.M.), my recollection of specific responses was hampered. Third, the police service's permanent

record of participants and their ride-along host officers made problematic issues of anonymity and confidentiality.

Nevertheless, my participation in ride-alongs was considered useful. In this regard, it not only increased my legitimacy with front-line officers in general and patrol constables in particular, it also provided me with rich data that enhanced my understanding of the broader organizational context in which patrol constables find themselves. For example, I was given the opportunity to witness both the wide variety of calls to which officers must respond as well as officers' varying latitude of discretion across calls. Data obtained during ride-alongs also was useful in providing additional support for emerging hypotheses as well as challenging some patterns from previous interviews.

#### Observation of training programmes

Participant observation also occurred at two wife assault sensitivity training sessions for recruits. One session was held at a station within the police service, while the other took place at a provincial police training college. During the former session, and at the invitation of a police trainer, I observed the only occurrence of this training which took place during my research. Training involved a lecture-style presentation given by a police trainer and shelter worker to twenty-one recruits. At the training college, lecture-style presentations as well as wife assault simulations were directed at twenty-five recruits; these presentations were led by a six-member teaching team comprised of police college personnel, provincial/regional police officers, and a volunteer from a crime victim agency.

Copious notes were taken during both sessions which lasted two and four hours respectively.

Although my focus was on local training, my time at the police college was well spent. For example, by attending a provincial level training session, I was able to observe the training's content for consistencies at the local level. I also was afforded with several opportunities to speak informally about wife assault issues with some of the trainers during a coffee break and later over lunch. As well, the college provided me with substantial documentation that proved to be invaluable in understanding the foundation of the police approach to training in domestic violence issues.<sup>16</sup>

#### Focus groups

Lauded as a highly valued qualitative fieldwork method (Patton, 1990: 76), focus groups were used to obtain feedback on my findings and preliminary analysis. Following the completion of formal interviews, I presented my preliminary findings at two parades attended by a combined total of approximately thirty-six patrol constables and four sergeants. Although during these sessions (which lasted 1 hour and 2 1/2 hours respectively) I neither engaged in any systematic questioning nor obtained responses from the entire group (as recommended by Morse [1994: 364,365]), I estimate that close to three-quarters of the officers participated on an ad hoc basis in the lively discussions which took place.

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<sup>16</sup> This documentation consisted of three separate in-house wife assault training packages for recruits, veteran officers, and police trainers all at the local level.

In order not to disrupt the momentum of these discussions, I decided against note-taking and instead chose to audiotape my observations and recollection of comments immediately upon leaving the stations. While regrettably I did not have a verbatim account of officers' comments, I nevertheless was able to obtain a clear indication of the general sentiment.<sup>17</sup> As well, (and to some extent), I credit the degree of candour expressed by officers to the lack of observable audiotaping or note-taking.

#### Member checks

Although feedback from focus groups can serve as a major part of the data verification process in fieldwork (Patton, 1987a: 102), it may be influenced by the emerging group culture, the latter of which according to Morse (1994: 365) may interfere with individual expression. To determine the extent, if any, of this interference as well as obtain feedback regarding my findings and preliminary analyses, I also employed member checks. Similar to focus groups, this post interview strategy involves testing data and interpretations for correction, verification, and challenge by *individually* speaking with respondents (Barzansky, Berner and Beckman, 1985: 195,202-3; Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 109). In this connection, Patton (1990: 468) suggests that “evaluators can learn a great deal about the accuracy, fairness, and validity of their data analysis by having the people described in that data analysis react to what is described.”

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<sup>17</sup> Although a trainer insisted that, “police officers talk totally different when they’re by themselves,” for the most part, I generally did not find this to be the case. Rather, data obtained during focus groups largely supported patterns in one-on-one interviews.

Altogether, member checks were undertaken with eight respondents including five patrol constables, one sergeant, and two trainers. Half of the informal sessions with these respondents were pre-arranged; the other half occurred spontaneously when coming across the officers during my many visits to the stations. In addition to these eight sessions, I also routinely requested feedback on my preliminary findings and analysis during numerous informal conversations with officers afforded to me over my six months in the field.

#### Document review

As outlined earlier, I was granted access to documentation regarding provincial-level training packages for three levels of officers. As well, trainers at the local level provided me with two wife assault training videos and training handbooks, copies of all written training material provided to front-line officers, and a copy of the service's previous two years' domestic violence statistical reports. Overall, I encountered only one denial of access to documents. This denial, which purportedly arose from concerns about confidentiality, involved my request to peruse edited copies of written police reports about allegations of domestic violence and wife assault.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> In negotiating for this access, and in order to respect confidentiality of individuals named in reports, I suggested that any identifying notations be omitted. However, I was told that it would be too time-consuming to erase all this information and that, furthermore, if undertaken, reports would be almost incomprehensible. The basis of this denial is inconsistent with the disclosure by a trainer that community agencies (read shelter workers) periodically review police reports involving allegations of domestic violence and wife assault for transgressions or inconsistencies on the part of responding officers.

## Interview guides

Two separate interview guides were required for this study, one for the trainers (see appendix 10) and one for patrol constables and their supervisors (see appendix 11). Interview guides were informed by existing literature on both evaluation research and domestic violence/wife assault as well as data obtained from parades, meetings with sergeants, and informal conversations with officers.

In order to gather responses which would permit me to understand and capture respondents' perspectives in their own terms, the majority of questions on both interview guides were largely open-ended (Patton, 1990: 11). Demographic questions also were included primarily for two reasons: first, to determine limitations of the study by establishing the degree to which responses represented a homogeneous group, and second, to detect any possible connection between demographic characteristics, views, and effects of training.

The trainers' interview guide addressed seven areas: training, legislation/policy, understanding of domestic violence/wife assault, statistical information, response to hypothetical scenarios, administrative/organizational issues, and demographic questions. Questions on training focused on the following three issues: goals and goal measurement; literature which informed the training; and description and assessment of training sessions. Questions on policy and legislation were directed at obtaining not only an understanding of the political environment surrounding domestic violence/wife assault but also trainers' explanations for the source, purpose, and effectiveness of various policies and legislation.



Organizational/administrative questions were asked to determine the organizational environment in which trainers and front-line officers were located. Questions which would reveal trainers' understanding of domestic violence/wife assault were included first to establish consistency of responses among trainers and, second, to compare trainers' understanding with perspectives held by patrol constables. The former was sought as possible support for explanations regarding the degree to which the training was effective; the latter was considered important in revealing differences, if any, between administrative and front-line views of domestic violence/wife assault. Responses to domestic violence/wife assault scenarios were requested in order to determine a standard against which to judge responses of front-line officers in general and patrol constables in particular.

Demographic questions were asked in order to provide information which might be useful in explaining consistencies or lack thereof across trainers as well as between trainers and front-line officers. Sessions with trainers were completed at the beginning of the study prior to interviewing front-line officers. This approach was necessary in order to obtain data from trainers which was required in designing the interview schedule for the latter group.

While the questionnaire for trainers was fairly uniform, the one for front-line officers went through a series of changes as the study progressed. For example, a preliminary interview schedule was prepared using data obtained from reviewing the literature, interviewing trainers, attending parades, meeting with sergeants, and speaking informally with officers. This schedule underwent further changes after it was reviewed by

a front-line officer as well as a trainer for feedback on both clarity of questions as well as the questionnaire's comprehensiveness. After the first two or three interviews, the schedule again was amended when it became evident that some questions would have to be deleted if interviews were to be completed within the time frame allotted by administration. As interviews progressed and patterns began to emerge, questions were added, amended, and/or deleted resulting in the final questionnaire version outlined in appendix 11. It must be remembered, however, that given the open-ended nature of the interviews, this latter interview schedule does not reflect the only questions asked during interviews. Moreover, given time constraints, not all questions on the schedule may have been asked (although I consistently ensured that I asked questions considered to be the most important in revealing respondents' perspectives towards the training.

To facilitate comparison, I included the same questions in the trainers' interview guide concerning understanding of domestic violence/wife assault and response to hypothetical domestic violence/wife assault scenarios. Although other topics addressed in interviews with front-line officers were similar to those addressed in interviews with trainers, the focus was different in some cases. For example, questions regarding training centred around constables' description and assessment of, as well as reactions to, the training. In terms of organizational issues, attention was directed to the role of constables within the police organization. Finally, demographic questions were asked in order to provide information which might account for differences, if any, between constables.

### *Data Analysis*

Mindful of the observation by Becker (1958: 659) that “qualitative data and analytical procedures [in contrast to quantitative ones] are difficult to present adequately,” I make an attempt to provide an account of how I analyzed data obtained in this study. Following the recommendation by Sanders (1980: 159), my data collection stage was characterized by “focused, analytical attention to objects and activities . . . [as well as] an overt consciousness of self-presentation and interaction.” The purpose of this approach included looking for consistency in responses and behaviour, identifying various patterns, categorizing those patterns, and organizing them into some sort of grounded or inductive theory (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 18). Undertaken in this manner, data gathering and analysis occurred simultaneously (Becker et al., 1961: 31).

Following Becker (1958: 654-6), I assessed the value of items of evidence on the following bases: credibility of respondents (here, I considered respondents’ possible agendas in revealing information); whether or not statements were volunteered or directed (refer to my previous discussion on interviews); and my perception of respondents’ definition of my researcher role. With the foregoing taken into consideration, on an ongoing basis, I used data to formulate, test, and refine hypotheses (Becker, 1958: 653). This assessment caused my data collection to be influenced and shaped by emergent themes and hypotheses which developed during the course of my research (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 6).

As noted by Karp (1980: 88), “as the research progresses. . .and researchers begin to accumulate more detailed information, hypotheses begin to present themselves more systematically. . . .[Moreover,] the choice of events and persons for observation becomes increasingly focused.” Morse (1994: 231) suggests that this latter process “frequently depends on insight and on the process of linking data (both among categories and with established theory).”<sup>19</sup> Undertaken in this manner, my analytical approach largely was sequential (Becker, 1958: 653). Insofar as I remained open to what emerged from the data, formed provisional hypotheses, and engaged in ongoing reinterpretations of data (as new information became integrated with previous observations),<sup>20</sup> my analytical approach was inductive as well (Bromley and Shupe, 1980: 201; Patton, 1987: 62).

A deductive approach also was used, first, because the evaluation nature of this project necessitated asking specific questions which would reveal constables’ perspectives on training issues. Second, deduction was used insofar as I employed quantitative measures albeit to a minimal extent by obtaining respondents’ basic demographic characteristics.<sup>21</sup> Third, a deductive approach was adopted in data verification (ibid.) to the extent that I obtained feedback (regarding my preliminary findings and analysis) from officers, individually and as a group.

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<sup>19</sup> This claim notwithstanding, Becker (1958: 660) offers an insightful discussion on how “the analytic fieldwork characteristic of participant observation. . .consists of something more than merely immersing oneself in data and ‘having insights.’”

<sup>20</sup> This new information often came in the form of what West (1980: 41) describes as “serendipitous, unanticipated discoveries.”

<sup>21</sup> While primarily a qualitative methodological undertaking, this study also incorporated quantitative analysis for some points which “lent themselves easily to that mode of analysis” (Becker et al., 1961: 29).

In testing provisional hypotheses, I sought out both positive and negative cases (Becker et al., 1961: 27). As noted by Becker et al. (1961: 39), positive and negative items are statements or observed activities of the respondents which respectively express the perspective or challenge it. (Challenges are evident in respondents' adoption of "some alternative perspective in dealing with the problem" [ibid.].) The purpose of this approach is to revise, where necessary, hypothesized models which specify relationships among various elements (Becker, 1958: 658). Patton (1990: 94) observes that although induction is recognized as characterizing a qualitative approach, in practice, there may be continuous movement between open-ended, inductive and phenomenological encounters with programs and "more hypothetical-deductive attempts to verify 'hypotheses' or solidify ideas that emerged from those more open-ended experiences." Given this observation, my study can be regarded as reflecting a movement between induction and deduction.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 309), "the object of the game is continuously to refine a hypothesis until it *accounts for all known cases without exceptions*" (emphasis in original). When data consistently confirms existing patterns, no longer reveals new patterns, and allows for the accounting and understanding of variation (ibid.), *saturation* (or adequacy) of the data is reached (Morse, 1994: 230). In this study, saturation occurred well before the end of my interviewing stage. However, I interviewed all those who volunteered in order to strengthen the representativeness of my study.

Similar to the strategy adopted by Becker et al. (1961: 32), I transcribed interviews and observations from my field notes and labelled quotations and comments according to

categories which appeared to merit consideration. Making a second copy of each transcription, I then reassembled (in a cut-and-paste fashion) quotations and comments according to these categories so that, like Becker et al. (1961: 32), I had in one file “all the facts bearing on a given topic, thus making possible a relatively quick check of [my] data at any given point.” As new categories presented themselves, I made another copy of the original transcription and proceeded in the cut-and-paste fashion noted above. Illustrative quotations from these files are provided throughout the section on findings.

As noted earlier, while I was interested in the response of patrol constables to wife assault sensitivity training, I also wanted to obtain some sort of indication of the training’s impact. To this end, it was necessary to specify both subjective and objective indicators<sup>22</sup> (Becker, 1958: 654) of program goals (Card, Greeno and Peterson, 1992: 78) notwithstanding the ambiguity and vagueness of those goals; i.e., increase constables’ sensitivity to wife assault victims by increasing awareness of wife assault issues and encourage officers to respond to wife assault calls with a “victim-centred” approach. In this study, a subjective indicator of sensitivity involved examining verbal expressions used by constables in describing parties involved in wife assault calls (e.g., abuser, victim, alleged perpetrator, complainant, party, combatant, and so forth). Consistent reference to the male and female as abuser and victim respectively might indicate support for the feminist understanding of wife assault which espouses a (female) victim/(male) abuser dichotomy.

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<sup>22</sup> According to Becker (1958: 654), “conclusions about a single event also lead the observer to decide on specific items which might be used as indicators of less easily observed phenomenon.”

In order to identify constables' awareness of wife assault issues as understood according to the feminist account, and given trainers' consistent emphasis on the centrality of power and control in wife assault, an objective indicator for determining training impact was the extent to which patrol constables described wife assault in similar terms. A second objective indicator was level of officer support for the wife assault charge and arrest policies. As outlined in the upcoming discussion on training, trainers interpreted support for these policies as indicative of an informed (read, correct) understanding of wife assault issues. A third objective indicator of training impact was the extent to which patrol constables either adhered to or challenged feminist claims about wife assault myths. Finally, and in terms of ascertaining the degree to which constables might adopt a victim-centred approach, two additional objective indicators were adopted: the extent to which constables focused on the victim in their responses to hypothetical scenarios and constables' understanding of what it means to be sensitive at wife assault calls.

#### Trustworthiness of data

Having undertaken my analysis in the foregoing manner, I am confronted with the need identified in evaluation research literature to satisfy concerns about reliability and validity. However, applying positivist notions of reliability and validity in a qualitatively-driven evaluation is problematic given the indeterminacy of understandings obtained through using a qualitative methodology (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 300-1; Pearsol, 1985: 144). For Lincoln and Guba (1985: 300-1), the solution to this conundrum lies in replacing measures of reliability and validity with the concept of trustworthiness.

Trustworthy qualitative evaluations depend on four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; these latter four criterion correspond respectively to internal validity, external validity (or generalizability), reliability, and objectivity (ibid.). While Lincoln and Guba (1985: 109) admit that these criteria cannot fully guarantee balance and fairness, they nevertheless suggest that they provide a system of useful checks and balances which “while not compelling. . .can be quite persuasive.” With regard to this latter observation, Pearsol (1985: 144) argues that given the expected indeterminacy of the “real” world confronted by qualitative researchers, the claim for trustworthiness of data does not produce “*unassailable* defenses against counter-arguments. . .[but rather results in] “a *minimally persuasive* defense” (emphasis in original).

I would argue that my study satisfies (although not to the same degree) all four criteria for trustworthiness. In terms of the first criterion, my findings can be considered credible. To illustrate, one of the determinants of credibility of findings is “triangulation” (Patton, 1990: 464). According to Patton (1990: 464,467), triangulation reduces systematic bias in the data, contributes to validation and verification of qualitative analysis, and enhances quality of findings. It also protects the researcher from accusations that a study’s findings are an artifact of a single source, a single method, or a single investigator’s biases (ibid.: 470).

Of the several types of triangulation noted by Patton (1990: 464), three adopted in this study include methodological triangulation (use of multiple data-collection methods in



order to determine consistency of findings),<sup>23</sup> analyst/ investigator triangulation (use of several different researchers or evaluators in reviewing findings), and triangulation of data sources (use of comparison and cross-checking with regard to consistency of different information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods). According to Patton (1990: 470), triangulation protects the researcher from accusations that a study's findings are simply an artifact of a single source, a single method, or a single investigator's biases.

In terms of this study, adoption of three types of triangulation is evident. First, through the application of different data collection and sampling strategies (and to a lesser extent, different methodologies; i.e., qualitative and quantitative), *methodological triangulation* exists (ibid.: 183,188). Second, although I was the sole researcher in this study,<sup>24</sup> on a periodic basis, I nevertheless discussed my data with, and received direction from, members of my research committee. A claim, therefore (albeit qualified) can be made for *analyst triangulation*.<sup>25</sup> Third, *data source triangulation* occurred in this project with the adoption of the following strategies: comparison of interview data with observational data (ibid.: 467); comparison of public comments with what was said in private (ibid.); monitor for consistency over time in what people said about the same

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<sup>23</sup> Adoption of multiple methods gives rise to different types of data thus providing cross-data validity checks (Patton, 1990: 188). As well, given that each data collection strategy has its own strengths and weaknesses, the use of multiple methods allows the researcher to combine strengths and correct some of the deficiencies of any one source of data (Patton, 1987a: 60).

<sup>24</sup> The threat to analyst triangulation notwithstanding, the use of a sole researcher can be beneficial insofar as it eliminates at least one of many faults in data collection identified by Burstein et al. (1985: 72-3), that of inconsistent training of data collectors.

<sup>25</sup> Admittedly, this claim is limited by the fact that discussions with committee members were based on *my* description of the data rather than the committee's independent review of my field notes.

issues (ibid.); comparison of perspectives held by different stakeholders (ibid.); prolonged engagement in the field (Bussigel and Filling, 1985: 180); persistent observation<sup>26</sup> (ibid.); and member checks<sup>27</sup> (Barzansky, Berner and Beckman, 1985: 202).

In terms of data source triangulation, I compared interview data with observational data obtained from various sources such as ride-alongs, parades, informal conversations, training sessions, and training videos. As well, a comparison of public and private comments was undertaken on two levels: First, whenever the situation applied, I compared comments made in one-on-one interviews with comments made by respondents both during roll calls and during informal conversations with myself and other officers; second, I made a general comparison between data obtained from respondents during private interviews and data obtained from other officers during parades. I also checked for consistency over time in comments made by respondents about the same issue. This latter comparison was facilitated by subsequent informal conversations which I often had with respondents during my frequent station visits. Additionally, I compared perspectives of two groups of stakeholders: administrative trainers and patrol constables. Member checks were undertaken by obtaining feedback from respondents regarding my understanding of their perceptions. Finally, a claim for prolonged engagement can be made inasmuch as I was in the field for six months. Given the foregoing, I would suggest that credibility of findings (the first criterion of trustworthiness) was satisfied in my study.

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<sup>26</sup> Lincoln and Guba (1985: 304) argue that “if prolonged engagement provides scope, persistent observation provides depth.”

<sup>27</sup> Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980: 14) suggest that “one way to attack the validity problem is to play back one’s observations to one’s subjects either in verbal or written form.”

Transferability, a second criterion for trustworthiness, refers to “the *applicability* or fittingness of . . . results and interpretations to audiences in other contexts” (emphasis in original) (Greene et al., 1988: 353). Remaining cognizant of the observation by Woolcott (1990: 144) that in qualitative research there can be no single “correct” interpretation (given the qualitative focus on individuals and meaning in their lives), I nevertheless suggest to the extent that several patterns noted in my data can be confirmed in the literature on both domestic violence and training, there is some support for the claim that interpretations could apply to other police services as well. To the degree that I am able to make this claim, I also make a claim for transferability of my findings.

Dependability, a third criterion of trustworthiness, refers to professional soundness, competence, and quality of study design decisions (Greene et al., 1988: 353; Whitmore and Ray, 1989: 78). Insofar as dependability of qualitative data largely is reliant on the “methodological skill, sensibility, and integrity of the researcher” (Patton, 1990: 11), a claim made in this area involves a judgment call (Marshall, 1990: 196). In making a claim for dependability of my findings, I point to the supervision of my research committee as well as the detailed description of my methodology, which, I would suggest, allows for an assessment of my study design decisions.

Confirmability, the final criterion of trustworthiness, refers to the degree to which findings are grounded in the data (Whitmore and Ray, 1990: 78). According to Glaser and Strauss (1978: 53), insofar as theory is to be grounded in the research process, a grounded (inductive) approach to theorizing is taken. The objective of grounded theory is to acquire

“a systematic, grounded, theoretically coherent understanding of human behavior [*sic*] as it is constructed and played out in social situations” (Sanders, 1980: 159). This understanding is revealed in “thick description,” which requires developing a detailed picture of the program under evaluation (Barzansky, Berner and Beckman, 1985: 195). I make a claim for confirmability of my findings based on the following: application of various methodological strategies; detailed discussion of the data; and illustration of how the data informed a theoretical understanding of the training. Overall, I would argue that the foregoing discussion demonstrates the adoption of a system of checks and balances sufficient to persuade the reader of my data’s trustworthiness.

#### Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study are presented in order to give the reader an indication of the issues to which the study can and cannot speak. First, insofar as I am not measuring directly the phenomena (i.e., sensitivity), but rather *indices* of these phenomena (Stufflebeam and Shinkfield, 1985: 101), I am unable to comment definitively on constables’ sensitivity to wife assault issues. Also, I can only make a conjecture about sensitivity levels *as they relate to meeting training objectives*. That is, in this study, any assessment of sensitivity level is limited by the degree to which constables subscribe to the *feminist* account of wife assault.

Second, the connection between adopting this feminist account and appropriately (in this case, read sensitively) carrying out police functions is unclear. Without subjective assessments by wife assault victims concerning response by constables who have and have

not been exposed to training, it is difficult to determine this connection. (Although I acknowledge the value of [and do recommend for future research] interviewing wife assault victims to determine their perception of police response,<sup>28</sup> I chose to limit stakeholder participation to police officers inasmuch as the scope of this study would not allow for participation of more than one stakeholder group.)

Third, given confidentiality and anonymity assurances, I am prevented from disclosing what I consider to be pertinent information which, if revealed, would give rise to both a more informed understanding of issues in this study as well as additional suggestions for further research. In this connection, Letkemann (1980: 296) argues that while useful confidential information cannot be disclosed, it nevertheless retains much of its value in terms of “allowing the researcher to better understand those activities and attitudes that can be reported freely.” While I found this to be the case, I nevertheless regret my inability to present a more comprehensive understanding to the reader.

Fourth, and notwithstanding my earlier claim for transferability, limitations on my ability to generalize exist in terms of representativeness issues. For example, I am unable to determine definitively the degree to which my sample is representative of, on one level, the constable population in this particular police service, and, on another level, patrol constables in general. As well, insofar as the police service and surrounding community

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<sup>28</sup> However, even if victim assessments were obtained, they nevertheless would be limited by victims’ subjective understandings of, prior history with, and expectations about police response (Buzawa et al., 1992: 267). According to Buzawa et al. (1992: 267), these factors together with “variations in victim socio-demographic characteristics and urban/urban/rural distinctions” would give any study of victim satisfaction with police response “only limited external validity.”

may be unique, the degree to which the police service in this study is representative of other police services also cannot be established.

On a more narrow scale, representativeness issues arise both in terms of study participants as well as sample size (Stern, 1979: 32). For example, that I have no constables with less than five years experience raises some concerns. I also have only four female constables in my sample (the voluntary nature of participation precluded me from ensuring equal numbers of male and female respondents), and am unable to comment how gender interacted with the training about wife assault (often regarded as a woman's issue) in a male-centred patrol constable subculture. As well, it is not possible to determine the degree to which my data were influenced by various motives for participating such as a desire to promote organizational change, obtain social support for a particular perspective (Sanders, 1980: 167), avoid work by providing an on-duty interview, and/or gain favour with superiors (Letkemann, 1980: 295). However, to some extent, these concerns are abated inasmuch as I was able to recognize patterns in the data, locate documented support for the patterns, and confirm them through feedback from not only study participants but also constables who did not provide formal interviews. The discussion will now turn to a consideration of the study's findings.

## Chapter Five

### Findings

#### *Demographics*

Altogether, forty-three police officers<sup>1</sup> provided formal interviews including four administrative trainers and thirty-nine front-line officers, the latter of whom consisted of six sergeants, thirty-one patrol constables, and two detective constables. (An impromptu interview with a patrol constable assigned to desk duty is not included here although I did consider the data from that interview in my analysis. The same situation applies to conversations with my ride-along host officers.) Insofar as the core of my data is based on the perspective of patrol constables, the following demographics reflect this group of thirty-one patrol constables.

Experience with the police service ranged from five<sup>2</sup> to over twenty years with 55% (n=17) of the respondents serving five to ten years, and the remaining 45% (n=14) serving over ten years. Respondents were divided almost evenly in terms of those who had

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<sup>1</sup> All but two who volunteered to participate followed through with formal interviews. Reasons for nonparticipation are unknown because the two potential respondents did not return phone calls to arrange for an interview. Overall, I was satisfied with the number of officers who volunteered, especially given the dire predictions of some administrative and front-line officers regarding high refusal rates. In this regard, I recall comments of one patrol constable who, having heard about my study, stated that I would be “lucky” to obtain ten respondents. This officer also predicted that of these ten respondents, “most would be women.”

<sup>2</sup> One veteran officer offered the following explanation for lack of volunteers with less than five years experience, “To us, you’re not a police officer until you’ve been on the job five years because you really haven’t seen anything till then.” This informal five year initiation period has been documented in the literature for some time (Niederhoffer, 1963: 97).

worked only as patrol constables and those who had worked in other departments throughout their police career (45% and 55% respectively). Although officers are assigned to a particular station, almost all respondents had worked at each station within the region.

Respondents ranged in age from late twenties to late forties with most (71%) in the “thirty-one to forty” age category. All but four respondents were male. Two respondents were separated or divorced. Of the remaining twenty-nine respondents who were married or cohabiting, only three had been previously divorced and only two were sole income earners. The number of respondents whose partners worked full-time and part-time were nineteen (62%) and seven (23%) respectively.

During their childhood/adolescence, only two respondents had experienced their parents’ separation or divorce, and almost half (48%) had mothers who had worked outside the home. Childhood was described as “normal” by the majority (87%) of respondents. Of the four who recalled an abusive childhood, two were subjected to physical abuse and two had witnessed physical assaults of their mother by their father/stepfather. As adults, most respondents (84%) had exposure to domestic violence involving either family members or close acquaintances.

Surprisingly, percentages of respondents in categories of age, gender, and university education were almost identical to percentages in these areas for the police service as a whole.<sup>3</sup> The only major discrepancy was in percentage of respondents who were college-educated. Here, my sample had 25% less in this category than the percentage

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<sup>3</sup> This latter observation strengthens my sample’s representativeness and, ultimately, the claim for trustworthiness of my findings.



claimed by the police service. Excluding this latter exception, this sample is considered to be representative of the population from which it was drawn.

### *Background*

The police service in this study is located in a large Ontario city. Wife assault sensitivity training of front-line officers commenced at this police service in the early 1990s and was undertaken both jointly and separately by, at times, up to four administrative<sup>1</sup> police officers and two social workers from area shelters for battered women. Each administrative officer had received formal instruction from a provincial police training college, while some also had attended local shelters and obtained insight into wife assault issues from both shelter staff as well as residents. The latter approach is consistent with the recommendation in wife assault literature that “strong cooperative efforts between social workers and police. . . be forged” (Abel and Suh, 1987: 527).

Training occurred on a sporadic basis and took two main formats: lecture-style sessions and/or viewing of videos at specifically designated in-service sessions or during Sunday morning roll calls, and providing written material about domestic violence/wife assault issues and police procedure governing response to domestic violence/wife assault calls.<sup>2</sup> Given cost and staffing concerns associated with designated in-service training sessions, most training took place during the more informal Sunday morning rolls calls.

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<sup>1</sup> These officers work primarily in an administrative capacity. Attendance at calls for service largely is limited to investigating allegations of wife assault/domestic violence involving sworn and civilian employees of the police service.

<sup>2</sup> Some front-line officers also received training at a provincial police training college. Although not evaluated in this study, provincial level training nevertheless did contribute to officers' understanding of wife assault issues and, therefore, was a subject of some interest.

According to police trainers, ongoing informal training existed in the form of providing verbal and/or written feedback (either directly to the responding officers or indirectly through their supervisors) regarding constables' domestic violence/wife assault reports.

The training evaluated in this study had five interrelated goals:

1. Increase understanding of the dynamics involved in wife assault<sup>3</sup>
2. Encourage a victim-centred approach by heightening awareness of the needs of wife assault victims and their children (especially the need to validate victims' efforts to stop the violence)
3. Increase sensitivity to the perspective of the victim<sup>4</sup> (thereby increasing empathy for and sensitivity towards wife assault victims)
4. Engender support for both the provincial standard which instructs police officers to lay charges in all suspected cases of wife assault as well as the departmental policy of mandatory arrest<sup>5</sup> of alleged wife assaulters<sup>6</sup>
5. Instruct officers how to carry out proper criminal investigations involving allegations of domestic violence and wife assault (including improvement in documenting cases).

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<sup>3</sup> According to trainers, this goal is considered foundational to the other four goals.

<sup>4</sup> A 1992 national police trainers' workshop suggested the following topics be incorporated into a model training syllabus regarding the issue of victim sensitivity: "approach to the victim; victim fears; choice of words; cultural considerations, linguistic and behavioural; environment; victim statutes; support/accompaniment; victim service; [and] empowerment of victim, confirmation of victim status" (Skoog and O'Sullivan, 1993: 42).

<sup>5</sup> A provincial directive states that "when a charge is warranted, officers should arrest the accused if they believe on reasonable grounds that it is in the public interest to do so" (Ministry of Solicitor General, 1994: 8).

<sup>6</sup> Hirschel and Hutchison (1991: 67-8) suggest that negative reactions to "preferred arrest policies" stem from constables' opposition to policies that limit their discretion. According to these researchers, this opposition gives rise to the need for rigorous training programs that "seek to instill more positive attitudes both toward the plight of victims and the policies themselves" (ibid.).

To some extent, these goals are similar to the following recommendations put forth at a 1992 national police training workshop:

Training in the area of family violence [read, wife assault] must continue to be victim-centred stressing the following: empathy for, and sensitivity towards the victim; the utilization of community supports for victims; [and] the pursuit of case management with or without charges. (O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog, 1994: IX)

A central assumption of wife assault sensitivity training is that insofar as police often are the victims' first point of contact with the criminal justice system, proper police response is critical (Skoog and O'Sullivan, 1993: 1). According to O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog (1994: 3), "the nature of police officers' response to the initial complaint will affect the *quality* of disclosure,<sup>7</sup> and this will have a *direct* impact on the course of the investigation" (emphasis mine). In this view, inappropriate attitudes of investigating officers are regarded as responsible for inappropriate disclosures by wife assault victims (ibid.: 46). Furthermore, inappropriate disclosures are understood as having a *direct* impact on the course of police investigations (Roberts and O'Sullivan, 1993: 3). Given the foregoing understanding, the training workshop noted above identified an investigating officer's *attitude* towards the victim as the most important issue in wife assault sensitivity training<sup>8</sup> (O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog, 1994: X).

Police trainers in this study assess the training's effectiveness as well as identify areas where further training is required in two ways: consideration of the amount and

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<sup>7</sup> According to Kurz (1989: 502), victims need someone outside their situation to validate that something is wrong in order for them to perceive themselves as victims of abuse.

<sup>8</sup> O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog (1994: 16) note that the central importance of a 'correct' attitude towards wife assault issues should be reflected in changes for officer recruitment that would include identifying candidates who hold "*appropriate* values about violence against women" (emphasis mine).

severity of complaints from the public regarding responses by patrol constables to domestic violence/wife assault calls; and perusal of patrol constables' domestic violence/wife assault reports. In cases involving allegations of domestic violence and wife assault where charges have been laid, constables' reports are monitored by trainers to determine the extent to which proper police procedure has been followed. This monitoring encompasses the following:

1. reviewing the basis for reasonable grounds to lay charges<sup>9</sup>
2. assessing whether other charges may have been warranted
3. confirming that appropriate action was taken in terms of aiding and/or protecting the female victim (and children, if present).

“Appropriate action” could involve obtaining medical intervention where deemed necessary, transporting the victim to a place of safety, and/or advising the victim of various community-based services committed to victim support. In those cases involving allegations of wife assault (as opposed to domestic violence) where charges have *not* been laid, constables' reports are reviewed closely by trainers to confirm that a charge was *not* warranted. (Patrol constables are required to submit reports for all allegations of wife assault *regardless* of whether charges are laid.<sup>10</sup> This situation, however, does not apply to allegations involving domestic violence where charges are not laid.) In all reports by

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<sup>9</sup> Reasonable grounds is defined as “a set of circumstances which would satisfy an ordinary, cautious and prudent person that there is reason to believe a crime has been committed and which go beyond mere suspicion” (Steering Committee on Wife Assault, 1991: 3).

<sup>10</sup> According to administration, police have underenforced in the area of wife assault and have left women vulnerable. It is hoped that the requirement to submit a report for cases where charges are not laid will cause officers to reexamine more closely their decision not to charge.

constables involving either domestic violence or wife assault, and in order to uncover possible officer bias against the alleged victim, trainers not only examine constables' language for bias, but also note the absence of comments regarded by trainers as warranted in the circumstances. For example, one trainer had this to say:

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It's not what they [patrol constables] say but what they don't say. This is where we get the true message. . . where we identify trends. It takes someone experienced to read between the lines.

Although, as noted earlier, access to both of the foregoing administrative measures of effectiveness was denied because of purported confidentiality restrictions, this access (although potentially useful) was not considered crucial to this study given my focus on obtaining the perspectives of patrol constables.

Trainers' estimates of the number of constables exposed to some form of wife assault sensitivity training varied between 80% and 95%. On the one hand, there was a consensus among trainers that since the training had been instituted, amount and severity of complaints from the public regarding police response had decreased (although by no means had ceased entirely). On the other hand, ongoing review of police reports still indicated a dire need for further training in all areas involving domestic violence and wife assault. In general, trainers indicated that there was insufficient time to train to the degree they felt necessary to achieve stated goals.<sup>11</sup> They also indicated that effectiveness of the training had been hampered because of their failure to first train senior officers, many of whom, according to trainers, maintain a significant influence on purported biased attitudes

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<sup>11</sup> According to one trainer, the training "was effective for what there was." To another trainer, it was just "window dressing."

of patrol constables towards domestic violence/wife assault issues. Overall, trainers agreed that given the requisite time, patrol constables eventually would come to embrace the views reflected in the training.

*Constables' Description of Wife Assault:  
How violence is understood*

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It will be recalled that in the feminist account of wife assault, issues of male power and control over the female are central. As well, differentiation between assaults in terms of severity is *not* made except to point to the escalating nature of wife assault. In the feminist understanding, it is precisely because of this escalating nature that all incidents of wife assault are to be taken seriously (OWD, 1993a). Yet, as the comments below indicate, almost all patrol constables did not view wife assault in this manner. Rather, respondents persisted in differentiating between assaults based on levels of the violence. Take for example, the following comments made by respondents:

I'm talking about the superficial ones where he's pushed her away to get out the door. . . 'level ones' . . . very minor. . . no marks.

The one situation that I think needs more leeway [in discretion about charging] is the 'assault level ones.'<sup>1</sup> I'm not talking about the punch in the mouth or the black eye. . . I'm not talking about closed fists. I'm talking, 'Get out of my way' . . . level one by far. . . pushes her and storms out of the house. I'm talking about the minor assaults.

There is a distinction between grabbing a woman's throat and holding her and beating her than there is in, 'Come on, get out of my way!' Like, 'Honey, calm down' . . . or vice versa. It's technically an assault but. . . a lot of them are very minor.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Criminal Code, assault is differentiated on the following three levels: minor assault; assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm; and aggravated assault (Ogrodnik, 1994: 9). Respondents refer to these assaults respectively as "level ones," "level twos," and "level threes."

The majority of assaults are the borderline ones.

It's usually just a slap or pull or a push.

It's not often I'll have a woman who has been viciously assaulted for years and finally calls. I think I may have had one or two [over the years]. Most of the time, it's a push or a shove.

I haven't gone to too many domestics where the woman is black and blue. In five years, you go to a number of them but not where he's really hauled off and punched her, broke her nose, or given her a black eye.

You know the absolute destructive out-of-control ones. You know that. Kids are screwed up; the dog's cowering in the corner or whatever. . .you know. You know a dysfunctional family when you see it. It just jumps out all over you.

When respondents did acknowledge the role of power and control in wife assault, they restricted the explanation to one based on class considerations. That is, power and control issues were regarded as possible factors in the violence mainly in those cases involving individuals from middle or upper social classes. In this regard, two respondents had the following to say:

A lot of it out here. . .it's a different type of domestic out here. A lot of it is control and power. In the inner city where these people grew up in the poor neighbourhoods, Dad's on welfare, mom's on welfare. . .second, third generation. They're always getting beat up by their folks and they're living where it's rough and tough. It's a way of life, believe it or not.

There's two separate types of domestics. . .one where you see the husband into power and control. That usually occurs [named a suburban area] where the people are professional and educated. The second type is people drinking. He assaults her; she assaults him; or she wants him out of the house.

In addition to the foregoing understandings of violence, respondents also described incidents of mutual combat in which both the male and female engaged in violence. In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

I've been to situations where they both admit pushing each other.

She admits, 'Yah, I slapped him in the face. I kicked him as he was going down the stairs, I was going at him and he pushed me up against the wall.' She's crying, 'My kids. . . am I gonna be arrested.'

We go there and he's got a bloody nose. She's got a mark on her chin. And her words were, 'He hit me!' She was completely adamant that she was untouchable and that she had every right.

According to one respondent, an incident of mutual combat is differentiated from an assault in the following way:

An assault is using force against a person without their consent. If you stand and exchange blows, that's a fight. There's implied consent because you're fighting back. It's just a fight. And a fight is not an assault. It doesn't constitute an assault under the Criminal Code.<sup>2</sup> Less experienced officers [responding to a 'fight'] would just pop and charge them both.

Overall, then, respondents, for the most part, focused on differentiation in levels of violence, ignored issues of power and control, and noted the existence of mutual combat.

In those cases where they did acknowledge issues of power and control, class-based explanations were offered.

### *'Uniform'<sup>3</sup> Objections to a Uniform Policy*

As indicated in an earlier discussion, one of the goals of the training was to engender support for the wife assault charge policy. Given the tendency by patrol

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<sup>2</sup> According to Criminal Code Bill C-127, section 244, "A person commits an assault when (a) without the consent of another person, he applies force intentionally to that other person, directly or indirectly" (House of Commons, 1982).

<sup>3</sup> "Uniform" is police argot for uniformed officers. Other police argot includes "suits" for detectives, and "white shirts" for senior administrative police officers. Argot referring to police administration is reflected in the floor number within the building where administrative offices are located; however, to protect the service's anonymity, I am unable to disclose the floor number.



constables to differentiate between incidents of wife assault based on level of the violence, it is not surprising that respondents expressed objections to a charge policy which treats all suspected cases of wife assault in the same manner.<sup>4</sup> For respondents, the wife assault charge policy reflected a rigid “black-and-white” response to what they uniformly insisted was a “grey” reality. The following comments reflect this tendency by respondents to describe the perceived conundrum in terms of “black-and-white” and “grey”:

You’ve gotta understand. . .it’s not black-and-white. I don’t care how we write it that it’s black-and-white. Everything isn’t black-and-white. We have to deal in the grey area.<sup>5</sup>

If you could put it in an absolute nutshell, the problem is not black-and-white; it’s grey. You can’t deal with it with a black-and-white policy.

It’s black-and-white as far as the charges; but the whole domestic violence thing is grey.

Even a veteran officer generally supportive of the charge policy had this to say:

This service has changed a lot of things about how we respond to domestic assault and, to a large extent, they’re good. But, they don’t allow for the grey area.

Illustrations of what constitutes a “grey” reality include:

The hardest one is the threat.<sup>6</sup> You have no physical evidence. When she says there’s a threat, what can you do? How can you disprove there wasn’t a threat? That’s where you really gotta go the extra mile. With a threat, you really gotta do a good investigation. . . basically for your own butt. . . because if she’s lying. . . that’s a hard one to prove.

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<sup>4</sup> Although some respondents acknowledged various benefits of the policy such as removing responsibility from the woman for laying charges, acting as a deterrent in some cases, and preventing the abuse of police discretion, all raised objections (with some respondents more vocal in their objections than others).

<sup>5</sup> One respondent, noting that this claim was not limited to police work, but to life in general, stated: “Even in our own personal lives, everything’s not black-and-white. There’s an awful lot of grey. And in order to be able to negotiate through life, you have to. . .there’s some give and take.”

<sup>6</sup> One respondent described a situation where the female complainant stated in an apathetic manner, “He threatened to kill me and I’m afraid. Take him away.”

The ones that really frustrate you are the ones that. . .they've had a mutual fight. She's pushed him and he's pushed her. Or, she's gone to hit him, and he's grabbed her and held her to stop her from getting violent. Those are the difficult ones.

When I go to a call and the injuries are very obvious, I'm glad to arrest the offender.<sup>7</sup> But in cases where we're just not sure if it happened or not. . .a lot of cases where it's the victim's word against the offender's word. . .

You get to that one grey area, 'He shoved me.' 'What happened?' 'Well, I ended up sitting back into the chair when he shoved me.' 'Is this true?' 'Absolutely not! I would never lay a hand on her!' 'Ma'am, did anyone else see this?' 'No.' You go upstairs to the 14 year old, 'No, I was upstairs in my room. I didn't even hear them yelling.' He may have shoved her. He may have assaulted her. How in the heck do you know?

I got a call a few weeks ago. Both were just wired. There's also a third person in the apartment. She says, 'He slapped me.' He says, 'No way, officers. She's just wanting to get me out of here and I'll be damned if I'm leaving this time. She knows the law. She's just trying to screw me!' Then we've got another guy. . .old guy who lives in the apartment next door. [We ask,] 'What happened?' [He replies,] 'Well, they've been arguing all night but I haven't seen anybody hit.' We've got a semi-independent witness. So who do we believe?

In the respondents' view, consequences of this black-and-white policy were many.

For example, several respondents cited their lack of discretion as an obstacle to responding in a sensitive manner to allegations of wife assault. In this connection, constables had the following to say:

I've seen women crying hysterically to stop us. And I've seen us have to continue with the arrest because we're afraid to step above our own policy.

Some [women] have screamed that they will never call the police again. We've had some jump on our backs when we're taking him [the accused] out.

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<sup>7</sup> This sentiment was shared by other respondents as well. For example, one respondent stated, "I think most officers are more than happy to charge when it's quite evident that there's been abuse there. . .whether the woman wants it or not."

How many families do you sacrifice? We have caused people to lose their families because we have charged without the woman's consent. We've just gone arbitrarily and laid charges. And she's screaming, 'Don't do this! It's gonna ruin my marriage!' And it ends up ruining their marriage.<sup>8</sup>

It's a surprise to many. . . the first-timers. They often say, 'Had I known that [about the charge policy], I wouldn't have called.'

The [female] complainant a lot of times is shocked. . . [complainant:] 'Ah, I didn't mean. . . .' [officer:] 'Sorry, ma'am. You've told me. You've given me this information, and now I must act on it.' [complainant:] 'But I withdraw that information.' [officer:] 'Sorry, it's too late.' So what I'm finding in a lot of cases is shock and regret and remorse for having blurted out their anger.

They're [the female complainant] shocked. . . . They don't want it [spouse charged and arrested]. They try throwing us out of the house, but. . . 'Sorry, Lady, it's too late.'

What we get [from the female complainant] is, 'I don't want him arrested. I didn't call you here for this,' and, 'Don't arrest him.' And we have to sit there and say, 'Ma'am, I'm very sorry. We have no choice.'

I would rather help a couple if there's a chance of getting back [together]. Not all of them are bad. Just because one incident happened, it doesn't mean that's the end of the relationship. But we make it end.

They tell us to be sensitive and then they come out with a policy that doesn't allow us to be.<sup>9</sup>

According to respondents, that this policy was insensitive to the needs of some women was evident in its potential role of deterring women from recontacting police in cases where previous police response defied the women's wishes and resulted in charges

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<sup>8</sup> Lerman (1992: 229) suggests, however, that charging and arresting may not cause marital separation. Rather, it may be that the victim's earlier decision to separate sparks the violence which leads to arrest of the abuser (ibid.).

<sup>9</sup> For many respondents, their concerns about consequences of the charge policy reflected their sensitivity.

against the spouse.<sup>10</sup> Support for this observation is located in the following comments made by respondents:

A lot of people. . .if they called the police once and they know what happens, they probably won't call the police again.

It [wife assault charge policy] is making defense lawyers more rich. One of the negative things it's doing. . .it's probably making a lot of people not call the police as a result of they know if they call the police, somebody's going to jail. Now that ties their hands. If they don't want them arrested, who do they call? Nobody. . .so now it ties the public's hands. . .and they know. In fact, it didn't take long for them to figure it out.

It might prevent the person from seeking help. Some people just want to call for advice.

Some women who've gone through the system. . .she knows if she calls she'll lose her economic lifeline.

I can see how some people would be hesitant to call the police to stop the problem because they know, 'Yah, he may have done this,' or 'He may have pushed me to get out of the door.' Technically, it's an assault. But, what was his intent? They know if they call the police, he's gonna go to jail.

I think there are fewer second-timers because they [women] understand now what's gonna happen when they do call. And they reserve the situation to be a little more serious before they do it. In some ways, it's putting themselves in jeopardy.

We lock him [alleged wife assaulter] up. . . .She [alleged victim] gets angry. She will never ever call the cops. She'll close down. She'll shut up, and she'll never call the cops again. . .because she's scared the cops are gonna overreact.

There's probably lesser calls because they don't want to phone anymore. . . .Why would they phone. . .because they called before and their husband got arrested, and that's not what they wanted. What do you think will happen next? Now, she gets beat up even more, and she won't call the police. Now, it's okay for him to beat her because she won't call the police.

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<sup>10</sup> There is support for this claim in the literature (Sherman, 1992: 254).

Whether we're stopping the assaults or not. . . I'm not sure how much we're stopping the assaults. Or, we're just stopping the calls from coming in.

To reinforce their argument for an insensitive charge policy, respondents also appealed to the substantial number of women who request that charges be withdrawn and/or fail to follow through with the judicial process by undertaking any one or all of the following actions<sup>11</sup>: avoiding service of an order to attend court; ignoring a court-ordered appearance; refusing to testify; recanting statements made to investigating officers; and disregarding conditions in a court-mandated protection order.<sup>12</sup> Concerning this issue, respondents had the following to say:

I would have to guess that around 85%. . . almost 90% of the domestic charges I lay have been withdrawn either because the complainant doesn't show, you can't get a hold of them, you can't find them, they've moved, they disappeared, or they go to court to the Crown and say, 'I lied.'

Ninety nine-point-nine percent of all the ones I've arrested their spouse. . . they've all attended court and said, 'I don't want to pursue the charges'. . . 99.9%. Very rarely will I see a woman stand up. They're used to the situation. They claim they love the person. They're angry at the time.

They [alleged wife assault victims] either don't show up or they beg and plead that they just want a peace bond [in exchange for a conviction]. Most of them don't show up.

One year. . . I kind of kept track of my domestics because it's so frustrating. Again, like there was 23 out of 28 withdrawn. . . domestic charges. . . because (a)

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<sup>11</sup> In terms of this issue, a police trainer stated the following about constables' response to wife assault victims: "If they'd just treat her right at the scene, then we wouldn't have so much trouble with her not following through [with the judicial process]."

<sup>12</sup> According to respondents, even those women who supported charges at the scene often later reversed their position and routinely made desperate appeals to either the arresting officers or their sergeants for the charges to be withdrawn. In this regard, a respondent stated, "A lot of women are calling because they really need help and they're in a situation where they're relieved the husband is being taken away. It's only afterward. . . sometimes hours. . . sometimes days afterward when the situation's settled down. . . and they start thinking of the consequences of what's going to happen, and then they start to backtrack. I guess it has more to do with the fact that they may not see our ends as meeting their needs."

they either didn't show up, or 'I was too drunk to remember giving that statement.' And that's very frustrating. . .when you're going along with the policy for people's benefit.<sup>13</sup>

We could drag him out and lock him up. . .but he gets released tomorrow and you know where we're gonna find him?. . .back at their house because she's called him to come over. A lot of breeches. . .we arrest somebody. . .we drag him out, and these are good assaults, too. . .not just the mickey-mouse things, and we do lock them up gladly and put conditions on them. And then, you go back there another night, 'You're not supposed to be here.' 'Yah, well, she called me up and asked me over.'

The majority of domestics. . .the trials never go on. They're. . .they're dismissed because she doesn't show up, or they [court] give them [complainant and alleged perpetrator] peace bonds. . .You see that and you think, 'Why are we gonna be bothered? Why do we do all this work, and she doesn't show up at court? She doesn't care enough to show up.'

I cannot remember one domestic where I didn't have the woman pleading for the charges to be withdrawn. That's the most disheartening thing. . .This is my job. I enjoy my job. . .But, I am disheartened. You go through all that work and you see for the most part that most women don't even go through with it.<sup>14</sup>

Although criminal charges may be and have been laid against individuals for actions outlined in the above circumstances but involving *other* types of cases, to the chagrin of the respondents, this rarely occurs in cases of alleged wife assault. According to respondents, that women are not charged is due to the current political climate in which influential women's groups adamantly oppose charging women in these circumstances on the basis of revictimizing the victim. In this regard, respondents stated:

There was a case 5 years ago. . .a female complainant. . .a warrant was put out for her arrest because she never showed [at court] and there was such an outcry!

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<sup>13</sup> Respondents also were frustrated with this situation because, in their opinion, it diminished the intended deterrent effect of criminal sanctions against the assaultive spouse.

<sup>14</sup> Respondents also suggested that women might not follow through with the court process either because they were lying from the outset, or, in bona fide cases, feared retaliation by the abusive spouse.

I actually had one about a year ago. She came to court and lied on the stand. She said this right on the stand, 'Everything I told the officer was a lie. I made it all up. I just wanted him [the alleged assaultive spouse] out of the house. I lied so he would be arrested.' So, I'm making notes in the courtroom because I'm gonna be prepared to charge her with public mischief. . . . The Crown wouldn't allow it. So, I'm angry because I went through this whole investigation. There's a lot of paperwork to do. And now she's getting on the stand and says she lied to me and I can't do anything about it! She can't be charged for making me enter into an investigation. If they don't come to court, then let's start issuing material witness warrants. If they're gonna lie in court, then let's charge them with public mischief. Let's get the message out there that you can't call the police and say, 'He hit me,' and not come to court and follow it through. If we're going through this, we're going the whole nine yards here.<sup>15</sup>

The police [read administration] are so intimidated. They feel threatened by the public. They say they don't want to discourage any women that are actually being assaulted to report. They feel if a woman is charged with public mischief, that may discourage some women that are actually being assaulted from reporting. But there's people that are lying to the police every single day and making false allegations.

The 'ones' [level one assaults] never go through. They go to court and a deal is struck or she doesn't turn up or whatever. They never go through. When the woman doesn't turn up for court, we don't charge her. [me: What about a male?] You're bloody right we would and we'd put out a warrant for his arrest!

That women routinely undertake such actions with apparent impunity is a source of contention among respondents not only because of the drain on police resources and what officers perceive to be bias in women's favour, but also because of the fallout in the court system. Regarding this issue, respondents had the following to say:

Ever been to bail court? I was there yesterday. It was, 'Dismissed. . . dismissed. . . withdrawn. . . withdrawn.'

You're flooding the criminal justice system with all these alleged assaults which tend to turn out as dismissals or dropping the cases right there in court.

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<sup>15</sup> One respondent who was privy to this conversation stated, "I think if you don't do that, it diminishes the real cases."

You should go sit in a courtroom and listen, 'Withdrawn. . .peace bond. . .peace bond. . .withdrawn. . .dismissed.'

[The wife assault charge policy] is accomplishing chaos. . . .What is it doing in actual legal practice? Tying up the courts. . .not getting any more convictions . . .certainly not having the penalties increased which would seem to would be a way to cut back on the charges. . .have a more effective deterrent.

Respondents also directed criticism towards the court system for its perceived lack of regard in pursuing convictions on these charges. The court system also was criticized for issuing peace bonds in exchange for the withdrawal of wife assault charges, or as part of the sentence for wife assault convictions. For respondents, a peace bond could be criticized on the basis of, first, perceived limited deterrent effect on subsequent violence, second, victims' routine disregard of its conditions on the assaultive spouse, and third, costs incurred by the system in this process. In discussing the high percentage of wife assault charges dismissed by the court, a veteran officer stated:

In other words, what they [the state] are saying is that what was too important for us to ignore at the time is now no longer important enough to worry about. And that really puts us in a difficult position. It really goes to show you how far they're willing to hang police officers out on a limb. It's okay if we go out and sometimes risk our personal safety in order to bring these people in. By the time it gets to court, it almost becomes more of a paper shuffle.<sup>16</sup>

In terms of risk to officer safety, injuries sustained by the police during these types of calls is not high (Feldberg, 1985: 122). (Compilation by the police service in this study of separate statistics for officer injury at domestic calls is not undertaken.) However, as

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<sup>16</sup> That police officers are hostile towards and frustrated with a court system which fails to legitimate police response to wife assault is a common observation in the literature (Cahn and Lerman, 1991: 95; Hirschel and Hutchison, 1991: 67; Steinman, 1991: 11; Pagelow, 1992: 95; Neugebauer, 1992: 668).



indicated in the following comments, it is the *unpredictability* of these situations (which purportedly is exacerbated by making arrests) that officers find problematic<sup>17</sup>:

You don't know what you're walking into. You don't know the background in a lot of cases. It can flip at any time.<sup>18</sup>

You don't know how easy it [the situation] flips. All of a sudden something's gonna come flying or someone's gonna do something. The fight's on. Doesn't matter whether there's alcohol involved. You don't know if there's weapons. Like, you're going in blind. When the tempers get that bad, everything becomes a weapon, and everybody's a target. You never know what you're gonna walk in to.

If you get in a fight with somebody you're arresting, nine out of ten times, it's gonna be a domestic.

Domestics are the worst [calls for service] because you're there to remove somebody and they may have been tearing each other's hair out before you get there. Ultimately, as soon as you say, 'I'm taking your husband,' or 'your wife,' now you become the target.

This is probably the most dangerous type of call to go to because, yah, you were called there and you are a friend to the woman until you're taking that person's loved one. All of sudden, you become an enemy. I can't give you numbers, but it has happened.<sup>19</sup>

Another criticism directed by respondents towards the wife assault charge policy was that it was an ineffective means of dealing with the source of the problem. Support for this observation is located in the following comments:

Criminal charges aren't really solving their problem because it doesn't teach them how to handle their problem any better. It doesn't teach them how to communicate any better. It doesn't alleviate the problem that started it in the first place. It does. . .and I do agree with this. . .it does impose a consequence for doing something you shouldn't do. But, by the same token, if you don't fix the first two, what's gonna happen?

<sup>17</sup> This claim for unpredictability is stressed in recruit training at both the provincial and local levels.

<sup>18</sup> Feldberg (1985: 122) attributes the notion of "dangerous domestics" to police folklore.

<sup>19</sup> A sergeant supported this view with the following observation: "You always run the risk that. . . just in a flash. . . if you don't have it proper, she may jump on his side."

Why are we hauling someone off to jail? In a lot of cases, that doesn't solve anything. He gets let out of jail with conditions, and the underlying problem is still there which may lead to another type of domestic situation.

Some families I've had contact again and again and you see violence is escalating even with charging and arresting. How do you reach out to these people?

Some respondents also suggested that there was a relationship between social class and the policy's effectiveness. That is, charges and arrests were viewed as having less of a deterrent value on individuals from lower as opposed to higher social classes.<sup>20</sup> Evidence of this observation is found in the following comments:

Certain classes of people. . .yes, you do return because they don't know any better. Here, you get the middle class and up. They do learn.

It depends on what type of people they are. . .[like] middle income. . .somebody that's got a job. . .if they're not drunk, and they're gonna listen to reason. There's other people where. . .you know, sure they may leave this guy. . .but you'll be arresting somebody else with her.

I can understand why they go back [to an abusive relationship]. Again, with this [lower] socioeconomic group, that's their man, or that's their woman. They got to hang on. That's all they got.

Respondents also criticized the charge policy for its negative impact on the family unit in general and the alleged male perpetrator in particular, especially in cases involving what officers considered to be minor violence.<sup>21</sup> In discussing policy consequences to the family where minor violence was involved, respondents had this to say:

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<sup>20</sup> Support for this view is found in the literature and constitutes the basis for the recommendation by Sherman (1992) that wife assault mandatory charge policies be rescinded. This recommendation came eight years after the pivotal study by Sherman and Berk (1984) which made a case for a domestic violence mandatory charge policy and which served as the basis for the subsequent adoption of this type of policy by several American states.

<sup>21</sup> A sergeant, sympathetic to the views of his subordinates, made the following observation about patrol constables, "They know the ramifications of charge and assault. They know what it does to a family unit."

Many times, you go to a situation where there's a push or a minor altercation. Somebody shoved somebody. You sit down and talk to them. She doesn't want to split up. He doesn't want to split up. In the heat of the moment, something happened. But, now we're gonna add an extra burden to him by charging him, dragging him to court. He has to get a lawyer. She doesn't want this to happen. Now, a lot of family situations. . .arguments. . .result from financial problems. Now, they're gonna have another one.

There are some circumstances where all it might take is a meeting with the police and that person will smarten up. They know they came this close to a criminal record and going to jail. And there are some circumstances where to go in and charge somebody. . .we've just acted as a catalyst for a family breakup where there might've been some type of seed of hope either through relatives, pastors, a religious leader. . .to come in and work things out. All we've done is gone out and blown everybody off in different directions, and that's the end of the marriage.

It's devastation. Once you charge, it's criminal. It's not a misdemeanor. It's not a summary type of conviction offense. I don't care whether it's assault level one. You're gonna be finger-printed, photographed. You are now marked for life. No matter what, you are marked for life. And the thing is not only going to limit any type of growing. . .moving up in an organization. . .you are a criminal. You can't travel around the world for any business. You are now limited as a criminal to what you can do. Who suffers? The family stays together because they get over this problem, and now you're limited. Who suffers? Everyone. The kids suffer a lot. I mean, once the charge is laid, everybody suffers. And that's unfortunate. Once I place you under arrest and take you away, everybody in the family now will suffer for the rest of their life in some way or another. 'Daddy, take me down to Fantasy Island.' 'I can't cross the border.' You know, it's pretty drastic just in case mom and dad had a heated argument.

Let me give you a 'fer instance.' A young guy about 25. . .he was married recently to a woman about the same age who had recently started to act very, very strange. There were some problems. . .visits to [a psychiatric facility and hospital]. He'd just started a job selling [a product] up in [an area that was a two-hour drive away]. They had a baby. Her allegations. . .I'm not even sure she had any specific allegations because she was so out of control. But he said to us. . . he admitted pushing her down on the sofa. . .more or less. . .'Just get away

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This is not to say, however, that respondents believed a family breakdown was negative in all situations. In this regard, a veteran officer, generally antagonistic to the charge policy, provided the following account, "I had a lady [wife assault victim] and I arrested him [assaultive spouse]. He really deserved to be arrested. She had done nothing to deserve being in that situation. I got a letter from her later thanking me. She had split up. . .gone back to school. That was good. That had to happen for that family. It was a bad situation."

from me.' No injuries. Once somebody's told me something, they've told me that. I'm not gonna get hauled out on the rug and they'd [administration] say, 'We know you were told this. Why didn't you take any action?' So, if anybody tells me something, well, 'Maybe, it would've been better if you didn't tell me that. But, it's the only evidence I can go on. You just admitted it and I have to charge you.' This was one person I was trying to release that night. He said, 'If I don't show up for work in the morning, there goes my job. I've been out of work for months. She's out of control. I was trying to get away from her. For whatever reason, I pushed her down.' To try to mitigate things, I said, 'How can we get a hold of your boss?' He said, 'Well, maybe my father-in-law can talk to him.' So I speak with the father-in-law. He said, 'Oh, you're not arresting him, are you? My daughter's nuts. She's the problem. He been doing everything he can to keep that family together.' I had no alternative.

The following comment made by a veteran officer summarizes the sentiment of the majority of respondents regarding this issue:

There are many, many times when we think what we're doing is overkill.

Respondents' concerns about the wife assault charge policy also extended to its potential for abuse and/or false allegations by vindictive women intent on either temporarily removing their partner from the home, or,--in cases involving separation/divorce/child custody disputes--discrediting their former partner.<sup>22</sup> Support for this observation is located in the following comments:

I think people [read women] are using both us and the law as a tool to get back some kind of revenge against the other spouse whether it be for child custody . . . try and build a record on somebody. . . try and get somebody out of the house. When they're [alleged assaultive spouse] locked up and their bail opposed. . . which is mandatory, they [alleged victim] get to clean out their belongings and whatever they want and away they go. I've seen it.

If they're in the process of divorce, of separating. . . usually child custody ones spurn a lot of allegations. . . not just domestic violence but sexual abuse. We're

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<sup>22</sup> In most cases, respondents indicated that their perception of false allegations was based on their "gut instinct" or "gut feelings."

getting an awful lot of that. We're getting a lot of women making allegations against their husbands so they can get sole custody of their kids.

I just had one the other day and it made me so mad. We tried to get a peace bond. She wanted to go to trial even though there was the danger she was gonna lose the charge because her credibility was in question. Immediately after he was charged, she went to a lawyer and had a piece of paper drawn up saying she'd withdraw the charge if he relinquished half his interest in everything.

I see the other side. . . I see women manipulate the situation to their advantage.<sup>23</sup>

We charge them and they go right into family court, 'We got charges.' The lawyer can go, 'Well, we got this guy up for charges in criminal court right now.' Whether it's a warranted charge or it's gonna be tossed out or whatever, you can say that to the judge and it goes into the judge's mind that this man is being charged with a criminal offense.

When I worked at [name of station], there were some [women] that were using it to their advantage. 'I want him out of the house tonight because I want to watch Lucy and he wants to watch football.' Oh yah, I've been to those ones.

Since the pro-charge policy, I see more false accusations where there's no evidence to the contrary other than his word versus her word. I think everyone's educated in that. I think the quickest way unfortunately is, you know, 'I'm gonna get you outta here.' Dial. . . 'I want him out. He assaulted me.'

There's times where she just wants him out for the night.<sup>24</sup> So, she'll just phone and say, 'My husband pushed me.'

They [women who abuse the policy] know how to get to us. They just say the right thing.

She knows that all she's gotta do is say the right thing, and the wheels start turning.

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<sup>23</sup> One notable exception to this view came from a veteran self-described pro-charge officer who stated, "I would say 99% of all calls I go to are genuine calls and the women, for the most part, are telling the truth."

<sup>24</sup> According to a veteran officer, even neighbours of "battling" couples are abusing the policy: "You get a call to a domestic that's going really good. The caller is a neighbour. It's 1:00 A.M. . . . What you have basically is two drunks arguing with each other making a lot of noise. If the neighbour calls about a noise complaint, it's a 'Priority 3.' Neighbours know they'll get a quicker reaction from us if they mask it as a domestic." (Domestic-related calls to the police receive the highest priority and are assigned a "Priority 1" response at this particular police service.)

With domestics, I find that they [women] are really getting wise.<sup>25</sup>

For respondents, routine abuse of the charge policy diminishes what they perceive to be the serious cases of wife assault. In situations where the policy is used as a means of removing an unwanted spouse/partner from the home, respondents viewed themselves as merely “Saturday night bouncers.”

Respondents also criticized the charge policy for its perceived bias in favour of women and against men. This criticism stems from the observation that alleged cases of wife assault and domestic violence are not treated in a similar manner.<sup>26</sup> That is, police response to wife assault differs from response to domestic violence even though *levels* of violence could be, and often are, the same (particularly in terms of level one assaults). For example, in cases of alleged wife assault where reasonable grounds have been established, officers are instructed that they *must* charge and arrest the alleged wife assaulter. However, in cases of alleged domestic violence involving female violence against a male, officers are given discretion and instructed that they *may* charge the alleged female perpetrator. Also, in cases where an alleged wife assaulter makes a counterclaim that the female assaulted him, in most cases, only the male is charged and arrested. In this situation, departmental policy dictates that the police instruct the male to file his own report (when released from jail) with a justice-of-the-peace regarding his allegations. As well, in the event *both* parties are charged and children are in the home, only the male is

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<sup>25</sup> In discussing abuse of the charge policy, a sergeant stated the following, “Officers are seeing injustices being done, and they’re not happy with it.”

<sup>26</sup> A trainer who agreed that the policy was biased justified the bias on differences in size and strength between men and women.

arrested. The female is allowed to remain in the home and is provided by the police with a court appearance notice. Regarding this claim for bias, respondents had the following to say:

It seems as though we take it a lot more seriously when a woman's alleging assault. You never want to be criticized for not doing enough. So, for women, you're gonna go beyond. With the man. . . it's terrible. I don't think it's fair.

We're gonna get questioned on everything we did because we arrested a woman. I don't know where I heard it but if you want to arrest the woman, you should let the sergeant be notified why. It's a lot harder to arrest the woman. You get back to the shelters and the political pressure that's placed on this department. No one listens to men's groups. It doesn't happen.

I don't see women being charged enough. I don't see them being the focus of any action on our part.

I had a situation where she assaulted him, threw things at him, had taken a knife to him. He had minor cuts on him. He assaulted her after the fact. For him, it was a simple assault. For her, it was assault with a weapon. He got taken to jail for the night. She was given a 'promise to appear' and spent the night at home. There was kids in the house, and she's the caregiver.

It's completely unfair. They've taken all the decision-making process away from us and put it down into. . . 'You will do this,' and 'You will do that'. . . tied our hands.

There's a real gender bias. One day, we're gonna get caught.

Respondents also were critical of administrative sanctions surrounding the charge policy which they claimed pressured them to charge the male even in situations where investigating officers believed that there were insufficient grounds to lay a charge.

Illustrations of this concern are located in the following comments:

I know I've taken people in who I believe didn't do it, or didn't do it to the extent that I was told. If it wasn't a domestic, I wouldn't have arrested. But, based on the policy, I'm stuck.

I'm not quite as experienced as [shift partner] is. But, I'm getting to the point where I'm starting to feel a little more comfortable not charging. . . where I feel it's definitely not any type of abuse going on. You've got younger people who. . . 'Here's what the paper says' and that's gospel. So you go and in no matter what situation you're in, you arrest them.

I've charged a lot of people with no physical evidence at all based on her word.

It's a known fact that you send in a report like that [about an allegation of wife assault] and you haven't charged anybody, they [trainers] will come back and say, 'We want this person charged.'

When I go to a situation, I make an assessment. . . but I am forced into making unfair decisions.

I know there are officers here that if there's no charge there, they want to protect their butts so bad that they will dig and dig and dig until they charge somebody.<sup>27</sup>

Although respondents struggled with the foregoing issues, most nevertheless followed through with charges because of possible career and civil liability ramifications as well as a concern that violence (perhaps more severe) might reoccur if they did not charge.<sup>28</sup> In this connection, respondents stated:

I'd rather arrest just because I'd rather be held liable for arresting than not doing anything. If the person [female complainant] just indicates they were assaulted and there's no evidence, I don't think that's grounds to arrest, but we do. And I'll tell you why. You don't want it ever to come back that you weren't doing your job, or

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<sup>27</sup> As indicated in the following comments, and according to a veteran constable, there are consequences to officers charging when reasonable grounds are not present: "If you charge the people for the sake of covering your ass. . . CYA. . . okay. . . and it's discovered through the lawyers going through your reports. They [lawyers] go through that and say, 'You don't have reasonable and probable grounds to lay the charge'. . . it opens up a lawsuit for him [the accused] against me."

<sup>28</sup> Regarding officers who transgress the wife assault charge policy by not charging and/or not filing reports when charges have not been laid, one sergeant had this to say, "So, you play God. Sorry, but that's it. But, some officers won't do that because they don't want to take the chance. If they play God and they lose, they get crucified. Others will try it until they get burnt once, and then they'll never do it again. And then, somebody like me. . . still going along with it because I haven't been burned too much yet."



that you were too lenient to the accused by not arresting. What happens if you get called an hour later and he's killed her? That's what you always worry about.<sup>29</sup>

I'm scared. I'm scared of the Solicitor General. I'm scared of my boss. I'm scared of these people who go, 'Why didn't you do this?' Because that person. . .that woman can go to these women's rights groups and make a lot of noise. A woman made a lot of trouble for me once. . . I think the police have adopted an attitude . . . at least myself personally. . .I'm damned if I do. I'm damned if I don't. I'm going to be criticized irrespective [of what I do].

I'm looking after my family now. . . I could lose my job. I could be sued over laying the wrong charges. . .or not laying charges. Shit rolls downhill. . .If the officers are honest about it, I'd say probably 99.9% of the time, it's [consequences of a perceived wrongful action] in their mind all the time.

I care about my family, so I gotta do what I gotta do. Although I don't really believe what I'm doing, I've got a family to support. . .You gotta look out for number one.

Since every male [supposedly] is a potential serial killer. . .My job. . .[or] this guy in jail for the night? 'Sorry, Buddy!' We're put in that situation.

If she says it's happened, our policy is unless you can disprove it and disprove it with great clarity, if you don't charge, you're gonna wear it.

The ultimate concern is the [trainers]. How am I going to justify to the [trainers] if I don't charge? That's a serious concern.

In this situation [involving an allegation of wife assault], I could say, by the book, I didn't have to [charge]. But, I went ahead because of CYA [a popular acronym used by constables which denotes 'cover your ass'].<sup>30</sup>

Basically, that's what it is. . .policies. . .you know, in an age of fearing civil liabilities, we have to cover our behinds.

I'm talking about the ones where they're kind of 50/50. Is she telling the truth? That's when I just gotta cover my ass.

<sup>29</sup> This claim sheds some light on the following statement made by a respondent: "When you get a call on the radio for a domestic situation, it's sort of the worst. . .dreaded call because you want to have as little to do with domestics."

<sup>30</sup> According to one respondent, "Unfortunately, 'cover your ass' is important. But, you can become so obsessed with 'cover your ass' that. . .that it can mess up. Productivity just keeps going down and down because people are spending so much time, you know, covering themselves."

You go to those [wife assault] calls. You know you gotta cover your ass. You make the arrest.

You don't want to lose your job, so you go along with the policy.

It's the type of call that you're doing it [charging and arresting the male] just because of policy, not because you believe that an assault occurred. I've seen it quite a few times where we do it just to cover our butts. That's where you really get that hatred built up about the policy. I think the majority of officers make the arrests just because of CYA, not because they feel that an assault has occurred.

And I'll tell you, there's been times when I don't believe a woman's been assaulted. But, you feel as though you have to cover yourself.

If there is absolutely nothing to say that he didn't do it, and she's adamant that he did, [the trainers and] our policies make us feel as if our hands are tied.

If you're not good at trying to explain something away, well then, you take the other route [charge the male].

A lot of times it's just easier to arrest somebody than to write it on paper why you didn't.<sup>31</sup>

I guess the bottom line is you want to have a job. So, the policy's CYA.

For those cases where officers risked not charging, respondents spoke of the overwhelmingly unpopular requirement of having to complete detailed reports which outlined their rationale for not laying charges. Regarding this issue, respondents had the following to say:

Even in circumstances where we decided there's less than reasonable grounds or no grounds, we're still forced to write reams and reams to justify.

If you arrest the guy, it [paperwork] takes you two hours. If you don't arrest the guy, it takes you three hours to justify why you didn't!

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<sup>31</sup> In discussing the comfort level of subordinates in *not* charging in allegations of wife assault because of perceived lack of reasonable grounds, one sergeant had this to say, "They come to me every time. And I say, 'Hey, if you can back it, I'll back you.' They'll go, 'No, I'll hear about this for weeks' [from trainers]. If the officer doesn't charge and there has been no assault, [the trainers] will say, 'Keep monitoring them. Go back and ask them again.'"

You always gotta cover your bases. It's [the report outlining why charges were not laid] gonna be scrutinized and criticized. . . .By all means, CYA!

You know in the first five minutes whether this is gonna be a straightforward one, or if it's gonna be the 'call from hell.' You're thinking, 'Oh, this for sure they're gonna be looking at.' But, they're not here to see the way the furniture's arranged, so to speak. Sometimes words can't express what's going on there.

You have to put a bigger report in on reasons why you didn't charge someone than why you did charge someone.

It [the report justifying no charges] is scrutinized by the supervisors [sergeants], scrutinized by the inspectors. . . .as to why no charges. . . .and then, they [trainers] scrutinize as to why there was no charges.

There are guys who. . . .for lack of a better expression. . . .have the balls to do that [not charge]. There are others who do not want to cause waves, do not want to have to answer that 'shittygram' [term used by front-line officers to denote correspondence from trainers which questions investigating officers' actions] that comes back to them. They'll go with the flow.

You really have to be creative sometimes to avoid all those land mines they put in your way. You do get to learn what will get by. . . .what will justify something and what won't.

Respondents also expressed concern about perceived pressure to compromise various guidelines because of purported inconsistencies between policy and legislation concerning charge and arrest protocols. In this regard, respondents stated:

Like, the pro-arrest policy. . . .to a certain degree, I've made illegal arrests, especially the Bail Reform Act. . . .I've breached so many times.

They're [constables] expecting a wrongful arrest. If it happens, administration will [respondent extends his arms forward with palms up],. . . 'Not us!'

I think the Criminal Code indicates you have to have more than just her word. You have to have evidence. . . .not that I expect her to have a broken arm or anything. . . .just something to corroborate what she's saying.

What we're doing in a lot of cases. . . .we're putting bail conditions on people we don't have a right to. . . .It's just not been tested yet. It's gonna take one guy to be

so pissed off. . . a smart one. . . to test it in the legal system. And that's how law's are changed. Laws change all the time.

There's nothing in the Criminal Code that says you *have* to arrest somebody. It's 'you *may*.'<sup>32</sup> But the policy is if the grounds are there. . . and you have no reason to doubt the statement, or you can't disprove the statement, then you *will* arrest.

In disallowing alternative responses, the charge policy was viewed by many respondents as violating both their helping and peacekeeping (or mediating) roles. In this connection, respondents stated:

No one gets into this unless they want to help people. You just want to help people. Then, when you're not allowed to. . .

We're not sent in there [to wife assault calls] as help-givers. We're being sent in there as reactionaries now with the mandatory charge policy.

You go to a domestic. They take away your discretion as to whether you can arrest somebody or not. You're not put in a position where you can help that person by maybe not making an arrest.<sup>33</sup>

For the most part, respondents were clear that criticisms of the charge policy neither meant their denial of the existence of genuine victims nor their wholesale rejection of charges in alleged wife assault cases. Almost all officers acknowledged that the policy was effective in some situations. However, where objections to the charge policy arose was out of a concern for those incidents where constables--including self-described "pro-charge" officers--believed an alternative response might have been more helpful in resolving the situation. In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

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<sup>32</sup> Criminal Code Bill C-127, which deals with assault, includes subsection 246.8 that states, "a husband or wife *may* be charged with an offence under section[s]" (emphasis mine). However, as noted earlier, the provincial directive states that "police shall [ not may] lay charges in all incidents of wife assault where there are reasonable grounds to do so" (Ministry of Solicitor General, 1994: ).

<sup>33</sup> In terms of this issue, a sergeant had the following to say, "Policemen think they see what's wrong and they're frustrated because they see they can't fix it."

A lot of times it can be. . . assault can be as much as raising your fist. It can be a one time thing where you lose your temper where a charge isn't really going to solve things. . . where maybe they need some talking or advice for counselling. If I see a black eye, you don't have to tell me whether you want a charge or not. I will charge. But, a simple common assault. . .

This 'lock-them-up-and-throw-away-the-key' approach isn't always the best solution. We're often thrown into unusual situations where we can always use a little bit of leeway when we've got to help people.<sup>34</sup>

The only time I have a problem with what's going on today. . . is there was that 20 or 30% maybe of situations where I felt there was another solution. And back in those days, I would exercise that other solution. Whereas now there is very little if no flexibility whatsoever, and I don't think that a charge in all cases is the appropriate way to go.

If you go to a situation where the woman says, 'You know, it's really out of character for him,' and you're dealing with a minor assault, sometimes it's more harmful, I would think, to the marriage to drag them into court.

Instead of doing what you think will work, they give us the mandate.

Objections to the charge policy also stemmed from its perceived negative impact on officers' investigator role. Here, respondents insisted that insofar as the wife assault charge policy was biased in favour of women and against men, it negated their role as neutral information-gatherers.<sup>35</sup> As well, and even more problematic (for both younger and veteran constables alike), was the claim that the policy--by its tacit negation of intuition and "gut feelings"--discouraged support for, and development of, professional

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<sup>34</sup> This same respondent claimed that a contradiction existed between the spirit of the wife assault charge policy and the philosophy of administration's much touted community-based policing, the latter of which is "a philosophy rather than a program and is constructed on community consensus" (Ministry of the Solicitor General, 1992: 106). According to the respondent, "The whole thrust of community policing is to be creative. . . tailor our policing services to the needs of the community. We're told to be creative on a large scale, but when it comes to a specific situation like say, domestic violence, we're given no leeway. Those philosophies are at odds."

<sup>35</sup> One respondent, frustrated with perceived limitations placed on his investigative role, had this to say, "They train us [to investigate]. We're investigators. We just want to investigate!"

intuitiveness; intuition is considered by respondents to be a prerequisite for effective police work, especially given the purported “grey” reality they routinely confront. Support for this observation can be found in the following comments:

Why was I hired? Why was I given all this training in criminal law, family law and all that? They chose me because they figured I had the abilities to handle these situations and what-not. They say you’re responsible for all this and then they give you a situation where, ‘No, this is what’s gonna happen. You’re not gonna make a decision.’ Your gut feelings don’t mean a thing. Everyone has gut feelings. You develop that. A gut feeling is not something you’re gonna start with. Your gut feeling comes from experience in going to these situations. With the pro-charge policy, they’ve taken away that feeling that something’s not right there.<sup>36</sup>

We have to learn how to deal in the grey area. I can’t teach you how to deal in the grey area. You have to think about it.

You know what it is. . .it’s always intuition, and we’re not allowed to have intuition as officers.

You can’t police out of a manual just like you can’t supervise from out of a manual or parent from reading a book. You have to be out there. What they’re doing with a policy like the charge one is. . .they’re not allowing the officers to use their discretion to hone their skills at judging and assessing situations.<sup>37</sup> Because of that, they’re having officers that can’t make decisions, that don’t know how. The breed of officers they’re going to end up with won’t be able to make decisions.

According to veteran constables, without recourse to intuition and gut feelings, improper criminal investigations will result, especially by newer less experienced officers.

In this regard, respondents stated:

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<sup>36</sup> Although officers acknowledge the important role played by intuitiveness, they nevertheless admitted that it was not infallible. For example, one officer, critical of the charge policy, had this to say about serious wife assaulters, “Not only are these guys great at messing up families, they’re also good at putting it over on you. You can do this job for a long time and you still get hooked in.”

<sup>37</sup> For several respondents, this black-and-white charge policy was one more example of an administrative move towards what one veteran officer described as “policing by protocol.”

I think it's gonna pose a problem for newer cops on the job. It's not gonna be where an officer really conducts an investigation. . . . 'Was there really an assault?' 'Okay, yah?' 'He assaulted you?' 'You're gone!' . . . rather than taking the time to investigate. . . . 'Was there an assault or wasn't there?' So, I mean, there are officers that are gonna lack those skills.

You get some young officer. . . they go in and bingo! . . tunnel vision. . . charge, charge, charge, charge!

That's what every new officer's learning. Why put yourself in that position [of not charging]? The easiest thing to do is charge. You're not gonna gain a thing if you don't. Just charge and you've covered yourself.

The younger officers are in real trouble from my point of view.

Respondents did not single out the wife assault charge policy as the only policy to which they held objections. Rather, they were critical of any perceived rigid black-and-white policy. Regarding this observation, respondents made the following comments:

We still run into situations where what we are told to do and what's on paper and what the Criminal Code tells us to do doesn't always fit the circumstances. The law, our directives. . . they're fairly black-and-white. They don't leave us any room.

I don't care who writes it. You can't have one set policy for every situation. Every situation's different.

There shouldn't be anything mandatory. No two [cases] are the same. If I say it's mandatory, then they're making them all the same. . . and they're not.

You can never write a format for every set of circumstances. No matter how much you know. . . no matter how many books you wrote. . . you can never cover every circumstance you'll get involved in as a policeman.

Rigid policies also were criticized by respondents for prohibiting them from using common sense knowledge,<sup>38</sup> the latter of which is valued highly by front-line officers in general and patrol constables in particular. In this regard, a respondent stated:

When I got hired on this job, I asked my training officer what makes a good policeman? Common sense. . .it's just common sense. Nowadays, it doesn't exist.

In recalling past police practices, a sergeant summarized this view with the following comments:

Everything that was done by the police was all done with good intentions and done what was in the day normal practice, just out of demand and workload. Now, it's not. Doesn't matter. Common sense doesn't enter into the reality of what you have to do each day. It's a lot different to sit and have a paper that says this, this, and this. Take that paper out there and try to fit it so that everything fits into a slot. It doesn't work that way.

Other objections to rigid policies were related to what respondents described as an inability to fully abide by policies because of structural constraints, the most important of which was understaffing.<sup>39</sup> Related by a veteran officer, the following analogy which held a great deal of currency among respondents describes the perceived dilemma faced by patrol constables:

Ever heard of the circle. . .the policies and things we're supposed to do? In order for an officer to get the job done, we have to step outside that circle with one foot. But, we never get outside of it completely. We never lose our connection to that circle because it's very important there be some connection there. There is no officer I know of that doesn't step outside that circle.

Regarding the wife assault charge policy, another respondent stated:

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<sup>38</sup> This is not to say that respondents refused to acknowledge a lack of this attribute in some fellow officers. For example, a veteran officer readily admitted that "not all police officers have common sense."

<sup>39</sup> According to one veteran officer, the reality of understaffing has created "a serious morale problem" among patrol constables.



We try to dance around the policy. If you look at it as a big circle, you gotta keep that one foot in the circle. Then it depends how far out you can put the other foot. If something happens, you get that leg chopped off if it's outside of the circle.

That respondents maintained the necessity of stepping outside their policies in order to effectively police the community is evident in the following comments<sup>40</sup>:

If I was to do everything by the letter. . .the way they say it in the 'p and ps' [policies and procedures], I would get next to nothing done. You cannot do this job. . .I mean, effectively. . .without stepping outside that circle.

If we were to do everything the way the 'p and ps' set out, each of us would only do one call a day instead of the fifteen or twenty that we do. We have to mickey-mouse our way through a lot of stuff in order to keep the police department running. . .We cut corners to keep this department running. . .Real world, [investigation and report preparation takes] four or five hours. If you did it by the 'p and p' which says, 'You will talk to neighbours; you will interview friends; you will check all court documents; you will check all other police departments,' . . .I've never done one like that. I'd estimate it'd probably take two or three shifts to do one domestic. It's not just the domestics we're mickey-mousing; it's all kinds of investigations.

A sergeant agreed:

Administration puts out these stringent rules we must follow and everybody goes, 'Oh God!' And they all complain, and everybody yells and screams because they know there's a call waiting for them. They do the basics of the rules. If they followed all those 'p and ps' to the letter, this city would come to a standstill. If I, as a sergeant, said, 'You must follow these rules and regulations to a 'T,' you have no idea of the system. . .how it would come to a halt.

However, according to respondents, the dilemma they face is that this routine circumvention of policies--albeit necessary--will be used against them by police

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<sup>40</sup> This is not to say, though, that all officers circumvent policies. For example, in commenting on this issue, one veteran officer had this to say, "I don't take shortcuts. They send me to a call, and they want all that done. . .I do it. And if they say, 'We need guys to do this or do that,' unless an officer needs help, so what! This is what they tell me to do. This is what I'm gonna do. And that's the attitude a lot of guys have. When they're looking for officers to do calls in progress, the radio's silent because we're all tied up on calls where it's mandatory. . . 'You do this and this.'"

administration should constables' actions ever be called into question. This claim, which was almost unanimous among patrol constables, was not limited to circumvention of the wife assault charge policy.<sup>41</sup> In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

What it comes back to is, 'Here's your 'p and p' on it.' The bosses are covering their butts on it. 'Here's the 'p and p.' You should've known it. You're responsible for knowing it.'<sup>42</sup>

We voluntarily put our butts in a sling to keep this department running. But, the management whose responsibility it really is to keep this police department running will hang us. If you cut a corner to keep the department running, our butts are in a sling. But if we do it the way they want us to do it, we would cease to exist . . . literally cease to exist.

People do not realize the extent to which we put ourselves on the line in order to police this community. We know when we're stepping outside the circle that should something fall through, administration will not be there to back us.

Everyone just [can't] believe the way the system [is] going, and it's not just been for wife assault. It's been like that for almost everything. There's no backing for us whatsoever.

So, [regarding the wife assault charge policy] everybody's, 'Oh yah, just another thing to worry about.'

I think basically if you make a mistake in terms of a domestic assault, you're gonna wear it.

There's no support. They [administration] will hang you out to dry. It'll all come back on you.

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<sup>41</sup> The degree to which constables' perceived a lack of support from administration was made evident at a roll call I attended where a veteran constable, while pointing to a fellow officer entering the room and wearing a bullet-proof vest, stated, "See that vest there. The one in the front is to protect him from the bad guys; the one in the back is to protect him from the Chief [paraphrase]."

<sup>42</sup> An illustration of this dilemma as it relates to the policing of domestic violence is found in the following account provided by a veteran officer, "I'll give you an example. With domestics, the policy is if you arrest somebody, you are to check with the 'area' police forces to make sure this person has not had any contact with them. 'Area' is not defined. So, it could be [name of region]. It could be the OPP [Ontario Provincial Police]. It could be [name of community]. So, is there a main number to call? No, there isn't. And if I don't do this and the guy ends up killing her later, and there's an investigation, [administration] will say, 'Why didn't you do this?'"

I've been around long enough to know that when it hits the fan, it rolls downhill, and I'll be the puddle at the bottom of the hill.<sup>43</sup>

This lack of administrative support also is worrisome for constables given what they insist are inconsistent unofficial guidelines about what constitutes reasonable grounds in alleged wife assault cases. For example, respondents uniformly agreed that when the wife assault charge policy was introduced, police administration's position was that a woman's word alone was sufficient to constitute reasonable grounds (even though, to the respondents' chagrin, a man's testimony about female violence was *not* given similar consideration).<sup>44</sup> Some respondents maintain that administration's position has not changed. Others insist administration has "eased up" and is looking for evidence *in addition to* the woman's word.<sup>45</sup> Still others claimed that requirements for reasonable grounds differed among superior's officers. In connection with this latter observation, one respondent stated:

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<sup>43</sup> According to one veteran officer, the existence of administrative lack of support historically was not the case. For example, this respondent stated that, "I think that there used to sort of be an attitude that you had a certain amount of latitude as to what you did. And if you made a mistake, you might get your knuckles rapped, but you wouldn't necessarily lose your job over it. As long as your intentions were good, then you had a certain amount of support. I can remember a time when if I stepped outside of the circle and did something that was considered a no-no, usually if I turned around, my sergeant was right behind me, and there'd be a staff sergeant standing behind him and all the way up the line, right up to the Chief."

<sup>44</sup> The following comments made by a veteran officer shed some light on why respondents objected to what they insisted was outright bias: "I find that on this job what people say isn't usually what they mean. So, you can understand from an accused's point of view. . .if he makes a statement to you, you're not necessarily going to take that for a fact until you prove it to yourself. The same way should fall true for a victim. In reality, we've been lied to conveniently for many, many years by domestic violence victims."

<sup>45</sup> Although for the most part, respondents believed that corroborating evidence should be obtained, one veteran officer acknowledged the following: "I have to admit there's probably been times when I would accept at face value what someone said simply because it's been a tough night and I'm not gonna dig for it. And you'll run across that. There are times when I would think any officer chooses to ignore his sixth sense out of convenience."

I've asked the same question on reasonable grounds to twelve senior officers and I've gotten twelve different answers. It doesn't matter if it's a staff sergeant, CID [Criminal Investigative Division]. . . They all have different answers to that.

In addition to the ambiguity surrounding what constitutes "reasonable grounds," respondents also noted some confusion regarding the circumstances in which the wife assault charge policy was to apply. Regarding this issue, two respondents had the following to say:

The definition of 'wife' is very clouded in the department. People aren't really sure. Common-law does count. . . previous wife. . . previous girlfriend. . . sometimes counts.

With a boyfriend/girlfriend, is it a domestic? She didn't fear him coming to her apartment. He doesn't have a key. He's never stayed overnight. Although this policy's black-and-white, if nothing's done and two days later she gets hurt seriously, they [the trainers] will be reading every word [of my report] and criticizing.<sup>46</sup>

While respondents acknowledged that they were unclear about classifying alleged wife assault cases, and while they disagreed among themselves about what constituted reasonable grounds in those cases, they uniformly insisted that administration would use the perceived ambiguity of police policy against them should any public complaint be made about their response at domestic-related calls. According to one respondent,

The minute it [an internal investigation regarding a public complaint] gets into the public view, you stand alone.

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<sup>46</sup> Concerning this issue, a trainer stated, "The provincial guideline says as long as there's a relationship. Does two weeks dating constitute a relationship? This is problematic because the only persons who can define it are the ones involved in it" (paraphrase). Another trainer insisted that "power and control" issues had to be present for the violence to be categorized as "wife assault."

In the respondents' view, the reason that police administration fails to support its front-line is because it is too concerned with remaining accountable to, and protecting itself against, community and special interest groups (especially groups advocating for women's issues, minority rights, and gay rights). This accountability<sup>47</sup> explanation is reflected in the following comments made by respondents:

Our police department is paranoid of having one of these 'just take him out of the house' type deals go wrong. And they have in the past. And for every one thousand or ten thousand that are successful and you know, you do what the people want, there's that one that goes wrong. And then it involves a major lawsuit. It involves bad press on the police and that's what they're worried about. They're sacrificing a lot of people in these one-shot deals to cover themselves.<sup>48</sup>

The [trainers] try to make us accountable to every agency in the city. Accountability is a word that's used over and over and over again.

Fear of civil liability. . . it's in everything today. That's why they come back at you and criticize you, 'You should've charged him.'

After listening to one veteran officer's numerous objections to the charge policy, I asked what the policy was accomplishing to which the respondent replied:

It's protecting the administration of our police department from lawsuits.

A detective constable agreed:

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<sup>47</sup> Although there are no legal definitions of accountability in relation to the police, Brodeur and Viau (1994: 245) note various dictionary definitions such as "'liability to give account of and answer for, discharge of duties or conduct'. . . 'liable'. . . [and] 'being subject to give an account.'" According to Jolin and Moose (1997: 293), and as set out in the new community-based policing model, accountability involves the requirement of subjecting police policies to public scrutiny.

<sup>48</sup> The extent to which this situation has resulted in the demoralization of patrol constables is reflected in the following comments made by a veteran officer, "Put it this way. . . if [administration] didn't show up for work for a week, it'd still be business as usual. If one squad didn't show up for one shift, all hell would break loose. So, who do you need? You still need the grunts to do the work, so you should keep the grunts happy. All you need is the occasional pat on the back to say, 'Thanks for doing a good job.'"

The department is so sensitive now to criticism.<sup>49</sup> Everything's 'cover your ass' nowadays. The police department doesn't want to be the one that wears it if something develops.

One sergeant summarized the foregoing with the following observation:

'Monitor the situation' . . . that's the new buzz word. All you've got are people covering their butts.

For the most part, then, respondents uniformly regarded rigid black-and-white policies dictating mandatory charge and arrest as an ineffective response to wife assault insofar as the policies purportedly thwarted a sensitive response to wife assault calls, first, by overlooking individual dynamics within each family, second, by ignoring wishes of the parties involved, and, third, by disallowing possibly more effective approaches. As well, respondents criticized these policies on the basis that they (1) deterred women nonsupportive of charges from seeking help, (2) in some cases, negatively impacted upon the family unit as well as the accused by burdening already stressed families and leading, in many cases to their breakdown, (3) acted as a powerful tool in the hands of vindictive women, (4) gave rise to charges which officers considered unwarranted, and (5) resulted in unnecessary substantial costs to the criminal justice system in general and the police in particular. Respondents also directed criticisms at the wife assault charge and arrest policies for negating their helping role, hindering their investigative role, violating their keen sense of justice, forcing a compromise of their sense of ethics and fairness, thwarting

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<sup>49</sup> As indicated in the following comments made by a veteran constable, this departmental sensitivity to criticism has not always been the case: "I remember my boss telling me if you haven't had six complaints in say, a month, you're not doing your job. . . Now, it's the opposite. If you're not having any complaints, those are the ones they're promoting. But, if you're not getting any complaints, you're not doing anything!"

professional development of intuitiveness, contributing to the move towards rote policing, and serving as yet another example of administration's tacit sanctioning of policy violations (by virtue of staffing levels supposedly insufficient to allow for unabridged adherence to policies).<sup>50</sup>

It will be recalled that an objective indicator of the impact of sensitivity training was constables' support for the wife assault charge policy. The foregoing data demonstrate respondents' numerous objections to, and limited support for, what they deemed to be an insensitive policy. Moreover, the data suggest that not only did respondents deflect the charge of insensitivity from themselves towards the policy, they also (contrary to trainers) measured their sensitivity in terms of their objections to rather than their support for the mandatory charge directive.

### *Challenging the Myths of Wife Assault*

Another objective measure of the impact of training was the extent to which patrol constables adhered to the myths about wife assault stipulated in the feminist account. As indicated earlier, police trainers provided patrol constables with a sheet outlining statements about wife assault which were to be identified as either true or false. Any "incorrect" answer supposedly reflected a myth about wife assault. The following

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<sup>50</sup> According to a trainer and notwithstanding this list of criticisms, respondents' objections to the mandatory charge and arrest policies can be summarized in two words, "work avoidance."

discussion addresses respondents' views about these purported myths. (At the risk of being repetitive, it will be necessary to restate myths.)

One myth is that wife assault is not a widespread social problem. While respondents conceded that wife assault was a social problem, they stopped short of considering it widespread, and insisted rather that the broader category of domestic violence was more prevalent. Grounds for repudiation of the widespread occurrence of wife assault come from constables' claims about the misuse of statistics, the latter of which I was to learn hold little, if any, legitimacy with patrol constables. Keenly aware of their official role in the creation of these figures, patrol constables routinely denounced statistics in general and wife assault statistics in particular. Support for this observation can be found in the following comments made by respondents:

You can make statistics say whatever you want them to say.

Unfortunately, we are a society of statistics. They're a load of crap. . . .They'll bend them to fit whatever situation they want them to fit<sup>1</sup> [paraphrase].

Police officers don't believe in statistics. Look at the media. Crime is supposed to be down. That's not true. People are not reporting it as much. But, it looks good when they can say violent crime has gone down [paraphrase].

Statistics can say whatever the researcher wants them to say. . . .They're man-made. I worked [with statistics] in the department. . . .You alter the statistics to say what you want them to say.

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<sup>1</sup> A police trainer, sympathetic to constables' criticisms about creation and misuse of statistics, stated, "Whenever a study is done, things are defined so broadly that really it loses its significance. It does a disservice to the whole issue. . . .because people are not stupid. Police officers are not stupid. They go, 'You're just trying to manipulate statistics. You're playing with the numbers.' And, then, any small gain that has been made goes out the window."



In terms of reporting on wife assault, respondents claimed that statistics are skewed by the previously noted perceived administrative pressures placed on them--on the one hand, to charge men "at all costs," and on the other hand, to not charge women engaging in similar acts of violence.

Another wife assault myth in the feminist account is that men are assaulted as often as are women. Although most patrol constables did not subscribe to this myth, they nevertheless objected to the reality reflected in the significant statistical difference between men who assault women and the reverse.<sup>2</sup> Here, respondents appealed to their professional (and albeit to a lesser extent personal) experience in citing numerous incidents involving female violence, the latter of which in their view regularly occur but go unrecorded in statistics. Regarding the issue of female violence, respondents had this to say:

The women I've seen commit domestic assault really don't give a shit. You know, 'He deserved it. What are you gonna do to me!' They don't say that; but they're not too concerned about the consequences.

If we come into a situation where it is definitely her fault. . . she is the one that hit him. . . he has the mark. . . 'Yah, I slugged him!,' and he's saying, 'I want her charged,' here's what we do. . . 'Here's the report number. Go down to [address of criminal court] and file a complaint.' It's so unfair.

Even if we do go to something and there is direct evidence of an assault by a woman, we tell [the man] to lay their own charge.

Even a pro-charge veteran officer stated:

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<sup>2</sup> For example, one trainer claimed the following, "Stats tell us 97% of the abusers are men." Ogrodnik (1994: 24) confirms that the vast majority of spousal assaults recorded by the police involve male perpetrators and female victims. In 1994, "92% of spousal assault victims were female, and 93% of the accused were male (ibid.)."

Domestic violence is a two-way street. I've seen men strike women. I've seen women strike men. We hear unfortunately, media-wise. . . we hear more about men striking the woman, not the woman striking the man.

Almost all respondents also indicated that female violence had been directed towards them when responding to domestic calls. In this regard, a respondent recalled:

We [constables] have been hit with frying pans. . . I've been hit by women. I've been kicked by women. I've been bit by women.

In connection with the claim for skewed statistics, respondents maintain that the lack of recording of female violence is influenced by, first, the current political climate which discourages a focus on female violence, and, second, a biased wife assault charge policy which, with its perceived broad grounds for charging, produces statistics that validate the need for its existence. According to the respondents, police administration routinely appeals to these latter statistics to justify the wife assault charge policy. In this connection, a respondent stated the following:

What they [administration] are trying to do is. . . 'Look how many we're charging!'

Respondents' objections to statistics also stemmed from perceived inconsistencies in the reporting behaviour of men and women. According to respondents, cultural prescriptions for masculinity prevent many men from reporting incidents involving female violence and/or following through with the judicial process. In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

I've seen cases where they [men] have been hit with frying pans. . . hot grease poured on them. . . They'll say, 'No, I don't want her charged.'

We went to one on [street name] two weeks ago where the guy says he was just talking to her friend, but she says that he was flirting with her. He says after the

friend left, she went ballistic on him, threw stuff all over the house, and hit him with a hammer, and threw a glass at him. We got called just to keep the peace. And he says, 'I got assaulted by her. Look at this. Look at that. But, I don't want her charged.'

There was another time, too, just recently. We went to a domestic call, and she admitted hitting him, and he said nothing about being assaulted. When I was talking to him, he said nothing about being assaulted. . . So I go back to the guy and say, 'Did she slap you?' 'Yah, I don't want nothing to do with it.'

I recall another one where the husband was out drinking. He comes home at 3:00 A.M. He's drunk, goes upstairs, and the wife is very upset with him. She throws a saucer at him. . . skins his head nicely. He's got an indentation there. . . a little bit of blood. He said, 'Look, I don't want her charged.'

The reason men don't want to say anything is it's embarrassing. I've seen some small women who are pretty feisty give a guy six feet tall a backhand. He's got a black eye. He's not gonna admit to that. Everybody'd go, 'Ha! Ha! Look! He got beat up!'

There's also the cases where, you know, you get the six-foot-two guy and his wife is five foot two and 110 pounds or whatever, and he's embarrassed that she's hit him with the frying pan or whatever. And you know it's in court. It's in the public. And here's this bronze Adonis saying that, 'This little woman over here gave me a good zinger.' You know, in a public courtroom. . . and judges are, you know, 'Oh, come on! You expect me to believe this!' In real terms, it's an ongoing thing. The guy doesn't like ashtrays being bounced off his head every time he walks down the hall or being kicked in the shins. It's an ongoing thing.

Respondents were not making a claim for equal amounts of violence so much as pointing to the existence of female violence, the latter of which they claim fails to be reported accurately in the statistics.

Another myth in the feminist account challenged by respondents is the purported erroneous claim that wife assault occurs more often among certain classes of people.

Appealing again to their professional experience, patrol constables insisted that domestic

violence in general and wife assault in particular occur more often in *lower* socioeconomic classes. Support for this observation can be found in the following comments:

Generally, it's the poorer people who don't have the capabilities to. . . basically, they don't have the communication skills to handle things. Without communication you can't have a good marriage. And they can't express their problems to their spouse.

Generally, it's the poorly educated people who are the ones who are getting involved in domestics. They don't have the skills to handle problems. They've never been taught how to teach themselves to solve the problem.

I police an area that's in a lower socioeconomic scale. They have a tendency to call the police more because they don't have as much to lose.

We're talking real minor reasons for arguing. . . he wouldn't go get her cigarettes . . . she wanted something to eat and he wouldn't get it. . . we're dealing basically . . . here with a lower socioeconomic group. . . little schooling and no outside interests other than getting their cheque.

I would say low income people would fit into the profile [of a wife assaulter] more than higher income people.

I'm not gonna say they're all low-income people. . . but mostly.

I hate to stereotype but for the most part it's middle class or lower. . . not to say it doesn't happen in the upper class. Maybe the wife doesn't call because she doesn't want to embarrass the family. For the most part, it's lower income families. . . welfare.

You've gotta remember that women that go to shelters are a unique group. The women that go to shelters are usually way, way down on the economic level. They're usually dysfunctional themselves. They're following on welfare. . . no education. . . isolated. . . And those are the ones that probably have been assaulted twenty times. . . have come from the lower socioeconomic group. . . have probably grown up like that. But, the rest of them, the other 80% are usually only two or three times.

I think. . . it's only limited to our experience. . . lower socioeconomic, low education.

A class-based explanation also was adopted by respondents in their challenge of another purported wife assault myth in the feminist account; i.e., that violence in wife assault is an isolated incident. Here, respondents insisted that the degree to which violence is an isolated incident is positively correlated with social class. In this regard, respondents stated the following:

I think the higher income people have more to lose and they sometimes. . .that in itself acts like a deterrent. . .like they would bring their anger under control because most of them would realize. . .most of them are reasonably intelligent and would realize that this is going to cause more trouble for me than solve trouble for me.

Some of them are normal [read middle class] people that for just one instant lose control and it never happens again.

Some people [middle class] have never done it and they'll never do it again. But they did this once.

Apart from the class issue, even in individual cases where respondents did not dispute the recurring nature of the violence, they rejected the popular claim (in both their in-house training and wife assault promotional material) that a woman on average is assaulted thirty-five times prior to calling the police.<sup>3</sup> Respondents' rejection of this claim was based on victims' testimonies provided to investigating officers. Regarding this issue, two respondents had the following to say:

In my experience. . .at the most, it's been four or five times, and the violence has been minor. We go to the scene, and they're upset. They're agitated. They come out with the truth then. Why wouldn't they say they've been beaten thirty-five times? That's just not what we're finding out there. In fact, one officer did come across that, and he talked about it a lot because it was so unusual.

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<sup>3</sup> One police trainer, upon learning that respondents were recommending discretion be reinstated for cases involving minor violence (level one assaults), stated, "They know the probabilities! A woman's been assaulted thirty-five times. . .thirty-eight times before she calls the police!"

I've never heard anyone say that [about thirty-five beatings prior to contacting the police]. Most of them [female victims] will say, 'Once last year,' or 'Once three years ago.' I'm not hearing that out there.

Another myth challenged by many respondents was the one that attributes violence to the psychopathology of the perpetrator and/or the victim. While respondents did not claim that one or both of the parties *consistently* suffered from psychological disorders, they nevertheless did insist that psychopathology played a role in *some* incidents of wife assault.

Respondents also rejected the myth about assaulted women never provoking the violence. Here, constables appealed to not only their professional experience in terms of witnessing victims' behaviour at the scene, but also their personal experience in terms of what they observed as provocative behaviour. Regarding the claim for provocation as a factor in wife assault, respondents had the following to say:

I've gone to ones where they got into an argument. I went to one. . .she really got pissed off and dumped a pot of cold water on him while he was on the couch. So he got up and slapped her in the face. . .He assaulted her. But, she dumped the water on him.

She had initiated the reaction. She hit him with a [blunt object]. And then, she kicked him. And he's backing off. And then, he hit her to stop it from getting worse. And she wanted us to charge him with assault!

Sometimes, you look at her and you go, 'Oh God! No wonder he smacked her!' Because we're here now to protect you and you're still making him nuts. We've literally had to drag guys out of the house just to get them away from the wife. And she's calling us every name in the book. As a professional, I would never condone [violence]. But, let's call a spade a spade. She would never think of hitting him but she's got one tool. . .and nobody can push your buttons more than your partner. Who knows you better?

If you're in somebody's face continuously. . .not that I condone it [violence]. I still think he should be arrested. . .those are not the situations, in my opinion,

where there's a problem with that person assaulting his wife. I think he just couldn't take it no more. I figure that's about 30% of the cases. It's a high number. I think that any human being. . .and not to say that any type of violence is okay. . .but, you can understand it, even though you don't condone it.

I wouldn't say the women are just as much to blame for the violent aspect. But I can see them contributing just as much to the dysfunctional aspect which in its own way can be abusive as well.

Sometimes you're knowing she didn't know when enough was enough to lay off, and she's followed him around the house. . .nag, nag, nag. I know this doesn't justify assault. . .[but] some people are pushed too far. . .past their limit unfortunately. And there's a lot *more* involved than sometimes just a slap or a hit. And I certainly don't condone the violence. But, there's a lot more involved.

An example of what "more" involves is illustrated in the following account

provided by a respondent who insisted that he did not condone the violence, but nevertheless believed there needed to be some accountability on the part of the woman:

I had one lady. . .the poor thing. . .she was killed by her ex-husband. But, what she was doing. . .about two weeks before, what she was doing? She was sleeping with these other guys and having these younger guys call the ex-husband and have them tell him how good she was in bed. She just pushed him to the limit. Anyone can snap. He just got fed up with it, went down there, and killed her and killed himself. But, here's a situation where if she didn't do anything. . .just separated very amicable. . .but with the women's shelters, the woman is always the victim, has done no wrong. . .and look what's happened.

The claim most strongly challenged by respondents is the purported myth that alcohol is a causal factor in the violence. In their response to my question regarding the source of domestic violence/wife assault, respondents, in all cases but one, focused on the central role of alcohol. Support for this observation is located in the following comments made by respondents during discussions about causes of and/or factors involved in domestic violence/wife assault:

Alcohol underlies just about all the domestics.

Money, booze, children. . .booze, booze, booze.

[Alcohol]. . .I'd say big time. I mean, it's happened where I've gone to a call and alcohol is not a factor. But, it's alcohol 90% of the time.<sup>4</sup>

Shelters don't think alcohol is a problem, but I beg to differ. Alcohol is a problem.

We see only a handful where one party or no parties had not used alcohol [paraphrase].

That [alcohol] is the single most contributing factor to domestic violence as we see it.

Not to say that domestic violence doesn't happen without alcohol because it does. [But] the biggest catalyst I find is alcohol.

If there's any one single factor that precipitates violence, I would say that's it [alcohol].

I've probably been to hundreds of domestic calls in the last ten years, and I can count on one hand the ones that didn't involve alcohol.

Alcohol, money, and sex. . .pretty well in that order. . .alcohol because of money . . .if money's tight, everyone's drinking trying to get away from it. . .and one of the spouses fooling around.

~~Very seldom do we see abuse without some other factor like alcohol. It does happen, but very seldom.~~

Alcohol's big. . .very big. If it wasn't for alcohol, we'd be out of a job. . .not just for domestics. That fuels most of our calls. . .robberies, fights, everything.

I really believe that in 99.9% of the cases, domestic violence is the symptom and alcoholism is the sickness.

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<sup>4</sup> Although not disputing that alcohol may be involved in most cases of wife assault, two police trainers at the provincial level insisted that in only 23% of these cases is it a *factor* in the violence. (The basis for this latter claim was unclear.) For this reason, and insofar as trainers did not want officers to regard alcohol as an excuse for the violence, alcohol was not included in any wife assault simulations used in provincial level recruit training.



The class issue also entered into this discussion; inasmuch as respondents regarded alcohol as a greater risk factor in lower social classes, they believed alcohol played a role in the greater occurrence of violence both between intimates as well as strangers.<sup>5</sup> One respondent recalling a training session with shelter workers had this to say:

We were trying to explain to them that most [parties involved in domestic violence]. . .when we say most. . .we're talking probably 70%. . .in that area . . .that we're dealing with are drunk. They're of lower income, and there's probably a couple of kids. They may not even be married. They phone the police. We get there, and basically they're both drunk.

The following comments reflect a typical example of the perspective held by respondents concerning this issue:

Alcohol, drugs. . .more often than not, lower on the socioeconomic scale.

I'm not gonna say they're all low income, but mostly. . .and alcohol.

This is not to suggest that respondents excused the violence because of alcohol.

But, in their view, without serious consideration of the *extent* to which alcohol was present in violence in intimate relationships (in terms of the male mainly, and to a lesser, but significant extent, the female), any understanding of the issue remains limited.

Respondents believed that this limitation has given (and would continue to give) rise to ineffective responses (such as the wife assault charge policy) in dealing with the issue. As well, respondents maintained that ignoring the role of alcohol in domestically-violent situations possibly might endanger particularly younger officers who would be unprepared

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<sup>5</sup> For these reasons, respondents recommended that I participate in the ride-along programme at the end of the month when social assistance recipients were paid, and preferably when payment preceded a weekend, the latter of which was dubbed by respondents as "welfare weekend." In discussing the most likely time for domestic violence to occur, a sergeant had this to say, "There are those environmental conditions that just make it right. . .hot summer night, no air-conditioning, booze, end of the month, full moon."

for the unexpected which purportedly often occurs when responding to calls where alcohol is present.

Another claim for mythical status in the feminist account of wife assault which was challenged by respondents is the one that views wife assault as stemming from an argument that got out of hand. That respondents believed this view of the violence was not mythical but factual is illustrated in the following comments:

What starts out as an ant hill grows into a mountain. And there's a fight, an argument.

One thing's said, and then another thing's said, and then it gets out of hand, and then. . .boom!

My wife and I sometimes argue. I don't turn around and start pushing my wife around. But, I understand how it can be done. Can you hear what I'm saying? I understand that we can get very mad because my wife and I have had arguments . . .for whatever reason, and you're face to face, and it's heated. It's very easy to just [respondent makes a pushing movement with his hands]. . .that's an assault . . .or, just grab the arm and move her. . .that's an assault.

I've been myself on the verge of like some sort of violence. Who hasn't in their own home, right? Some huge frustration. . .some huge fight. . .you were just on the verge of it. Should you get arrested for that? Should you be arrested and put in jail for that? A lot of these people aren't criminals. They have to stop what they're doing. That's not acceptable. They have to be educated. . .anger management.<sup>6</sup>

In the heat of the moment, you get into an argument. Things are escalating and escalating and you're feeling frustrated, and something snaps in you, and you do something you shouldn't have done.

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<sup>6</sup> Although a police trainer maintained that "anger management's got absolutely nothing to do with it," the judicial system reinforces the respondents' perspective by often ordering convicted wife assaulters to seek counselling for anger management (Landes, Jacobs and Siegel, 1995: 55).

Regarding their understanding of the underlying causes of these “arguments,” most officers ascribed to the frustration aggression hypothesis as well as social learning theory. The former perspective argues that individuals respond to the emotional state of frustration with aggression (Farrington, 1980: 111), while the latter one suggests that the aggressive response is learned through socialization (Palmer and Brown, 1989: 62). Evidence of respondents’ support for these theories is located in the following comments:

They don’t know how to deal with their anger. They’re frustrated because today there’s no jobs. They just become frustrated, and they take it out on the person they’re in a relationship with.

If you’re a child that’s beaten up all the time, you become aggressive. You get frustrated. . .you become aggressive. You learn that’s the way to deal with problems. So you grow up and do it. Intellectually-speaking, you may realize that’s not the answer. . .the way to solve a problem. But on an emotional level, when you get frustrated to a point where you don’t know what else to do, guess what you do?

I think that probably anyone’s capable of it. Just the simple fact of having a relationship with somebody and sometimes things get very, very frustrating, and sometimes things can build up to the point where they get out of hand.

They [the feminists] want us to believe that the male assaulter is an evil person on a power trip. I hate to tell them, but it’s not always the way it is. Sometimes, it just living conditions. . .hot and humid in July.

I think a lot of it [violence] has to do with being abused yourself. You don’t see any problem with that.

I think it’s [violence] something that is definitely learned.

Some people are brought up watching this [domestic violence]. . . .If you, as a child, were brought up and saw Dad smacking Mom when he got mad, what do you think is right? I can tell you why it’s wrong. . .but, ‘Dad did it.’ And then, you know, when they get mad, they smack people.

If you’ve grown up with it [violence], you know, it’s a habit that’s been a long time forming. It’s hard to change.

In addition to the foregoing, respondents also pointed to economic issues as an important factor in wife assault. The following comments reflect typical responses made by respondents regarding their perception of the role of economic factors in wife assault:

I think finances causes the fights.

Usually, the reasons for the fights in the first place stem around finances, kids, out of work. I guess out of work and finances gotta be the biggest. The next, especially the way our society is now. . . guy's running around or girls running around.<sup>7</sup>

Overall, then, respondents qualified, objected to, and/or rejected wife assault myths as outlined in the feminist account.<sup>8</sup> Insofar as an objective indicator of the training's effectiveness was the extent to which patrol constables accepted feminist claims about wife assault, it would appear the training was less than effective in this area.

### *Victim(?) -centred Approach*

It will be recalled that another objective indicator of sensitivity was to determine the extent to which respondents focused on the victim in both their responses to hypothetical scenarios and their explanations on what it means to be sensitive at wife assault calls. The intent here was to obtain some indication of respondents' victim-centred approach, the latter of which (as noted earlier) was considered central in the training. In this respect, two patterns clearly emerged from the data: (1) respondents claimed that a

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<sup>7</sup> Marital infidelity, suspected or actual, was deemed by many respondents to be a significant factor in domestic violence.

<sup>8</sup> The degree to which the perspective held by police trainers was at variance with the one held by constables is reflected in the following statement made by a trainer concerning the 'true/false' myth sheet used in the training: "I think pretty well anyone with some common sense will be able to answer them all correctly."

victim-centred approach violated the requisite neutrality critical to their investigative role; and (2) respondents believed that sensitivity should be demonstrated to *both* parties involved in allegations of wife assault.

In responses to hypothetical scenarios, almost all respondents not only neglected to focus on the victim, but also failed to apply victim status at the outset to the female complainant. As indicated in an earlier discussion, routine application of victim status to female complainants making wife assault allegations is stressed in local and provincial level wife assault sensitivity training. This approach is based on the understanding that a female complainant's disclosure about the violence is affected by the degree to which responding officers demonstrate belief in her victim status.<sup>9</sup> However, respondents insisted that abiding by this requirement violated their neutral investigative role. In this connection, respondents had the following to say:

Let me try to give you an example. I could be speaking to [the complainant] and I hear her story. I have to try to remain impartial before I become too sensitive to her. I also have to hear the side [of the accused]. Usually we've got [the complainant] in one room and [the accused] in the other room. Usually one officer is speaking with [the complainant] and the other with [the accused]. Until you switch, you don't have all the details.

It's not up to us to say that she's absolutely right. That's not our role. We're neutral.

I'm not supposed to be the judge and jury. But we are set up to be the finder of the evidence.

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<sup>9</sup> The importance of believing the female complainant is demonstrated in the following observation made by a police trainer: "How's this for a statement? 'The victim *alleges*.' That's a statement of fact on the officer's position!"

The police position. . . which it is for everything. . . we're not the judge and jury. That's why we have the courts to decide whether it did happen or didn't happen, and to what extent.

You have to maintain that unbiased opinion because if you believe something, you're biased. You can't deal impartially then. If you're to believe the victim, then you've already determined that the bad guy is a horrible person and you're not gonna believe anything he says. Generally, neither of them tell the truth. But, you can determine from what they say what happened.

Usually what I do is take both stories and try to make the truth out of that. Like I said, both sides are trying to. . . she's failing to say that, 'Well, I went down to that bar, and I pulled him by the hair out that bar because I didn't want him there!' And she tells us, 'We came home from the bar and he hit me.' And he's telling you, 'She was down at the bar and she grabbed me by the hair, and we went home and she kept beeking at me the whole way home, and then we got in the driveway and she's still yelling at me. And then we went inside the house, and she was yelling and screaming at me and' . . . it's only at the end. . . 'and I pushed her away.' So, you try to get the two of them and get the truth.

We as police officers. . . our biggest and our strongest attribute is that we're impartial. I'm not gonna call you a liar unless I have some indication to prove that you are a liar. I'm not gonna say who's right and who's wrong. She says you did this. You say she did that. Let the judge decide. I'm not paid to decide who's right and who's wrong, or who's guilty and who's not. . . because nine times out of ten, they're both wrong. They're both changing their story just to suit their own purpose.

You can't take sides either way. . . I'm not there to tell them they're lying because I wasn't there. I didn't see what happened.

I'm not out there to choose sides. I'm there to get the truth.

For respondents, neutrality is connected to their unwavering position that in any allegation of wife assault/domestic violence (or for that matter, allegations of *any* criminal offense), there always exists at least two accounts of what occurred. Concerning this issue, respondents stated the following:

[There is] his side, her side, and the truth.

There's the truth, there's the lies, and there's your story. . .where are you in there?

You gotta stay in the middle. There's two sides to a story.

What it comes down to is there's two sides to every story. There's always two ways to look at something. It's up to us to determine where the truth lies.

I have to remain objective to both people. I have to be totally unbiased.

In order to determine if reasonable grounds to lay charges are present, respondents insist that they need to assess the two accounts. They also maintain that a fair assessment cannot take place if they confer victim status on the female complainant from the outset of the investigation. Additionally, respondents note that the presence of reasonable grounds does not necessarily imply culpability on the part of the accused but rather indicates that sufficient evidence (as mandated by policy) exists to support a charge. According to respondents, judgments about culpability cannot always be made (and, as noted above--in the opinion of some officers--should not even be made). In those cases, however, where the investigation supports victim status for the complainant, respondents claimed that they did not hesitate to demonstrate the requisite sensitivity they deemed appropriate for that particular circumstance. In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

A woman that's been really assaulted. . .and I mean assaulted. . .you have to differentiate. . .a woman's that's been assaulted deserves the compassion.

When I'm convinced that the assault is legitimate. . .instead of her [the female complainant] being at the base of an inquisition, she now becomes the victim . . .so that the whole approach changes towards trying to be comforting to her (and yet trying to remain professional to pull out more detailed information).

I haven't been to a domestic where there hasn't been compassion shown when it's warranted.

As indicated above, respondents believed that not all situations were worthy of the same level of sensitivity. Support for this observation is located in the following comments made by two respondents:

I've had women on my back while I'm trying to arrest him because he's been pummeling her. I'm supposed to understand that! There's no way in the world that you can sit me down and teach me to understand why she would do something like that. It makes no sense to me whatsoever. . .nor should it!

I have very little sympathy for these women who report an assault [under the following circumstances]. We arrest him, drag him out of the house, and the next thing I hear, she's got him back there. He's on conditions not to drink. They've got beer all over the place. And it ends up that he says something to her she doesn't like. Now, she calls the police. Not that he's hit her again. . .just because there's another fight. She wants him out now. A situation like that. . .you can't expect us to be too sympathetic.

Given their claim for the fundamental role played by neutrality and objectivity in investigations together with the frequent uncertainty about culpability, constables, for the most part, believed that it is incumbent upon them to demonstrate sensitivity to *both* parties involved in allegations of wife assault. For respondents, then, sensitivity meant the following:

- . . .being objective. . .you gotta listen to both sides.
- . . .going in with no preconceived attitudes and listening to people. . .both parties, showing them you care [paraphrase].
- . . .showing empathy for both. . .try to insert yourself into each other's position.
- . . .giving both sides respect and understanding.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this approach, one respondent stated, "I treat people with respect even people I arrest. I have no reason not to treat them any other way. They haven't done anything to me."



For many respondents, and as indicated in the following comments, this understanding of sensitivity is based on a belief in the dictum of treating others the way they would want to be treated under similar circumstances:

You've got to put yourself in the position of both parties.

I treat people the way I want to be treated.

The rule of thumb I go by is. . .you treat people the way you'd want to be treated if you were in the same situation.

Overall, then, in their discussion concerning police response to calls involving allegations of wife assault, respondents not only neglected to, but also *objected* to, adopting a victim-centred approach, the latter of which according to the trainers was a central measure of sensitivity. For many respondents, reference to the female complainant as victim denoted a judgment about the case which fell outside of (and for some, even violated) their role as information-gatherers. Given the foregoing, it would appear that the training was less than effective in this area as well.

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#### *Verbal Expressions Used by Respondents*

As indicated in an earlier discussion, a subjective indicator of sensitivity to wife assault issues was the verbal expressions used by patrol constables to describe parties involved in alleged cases of wife assault. Here, respondents chose to describe individuals in neutral terms such as female, male, woman, guy, complainant, parties, accused, and suspect. As well, almost all respondents avoided using the term, "wife assault," and chose

the more inclusive term, “domestic violence.”<sup>11</sup> For respondents, the term “wife assault” not only ignored the many cases where mutual combat was involved, but also portrayed an unrealistic reality characterized by a victim/offender dichotomy. According to constables, the female often (though not always) played a role in the violence and needed to be held accountable for that role.<sup>12</sup> I would suggest that this observation together with (as indicated earlier) constables’ resistance to routinely applying labels of victim and offender influenced their adoption of the neutral expressions noted above rather than the victim/offender dichotomy considered central in the feminist account of wife assault. Another possible explanation for this tendency, typically reflected in the following comments, involves constables’ lack of recognition of most female complainants as bona fide victims.

Very rarely do I see an actual victim. A lot of times, I see women making false allegations. They may have pushed their husband also. It’s very rare I actually see a woman that’s being brutalized by her husband. I’m sure it happens. But, unfortunately, that’s not the calls we’re getting. Women are not calling us for those types of situations.

For me, this latter observation was one of the most intriguing patterns to emerge from the data. It was not until approximately my eighteenth interview that I began to fully grasp that respondents simply were not talking about female victims, in general, and

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<sup>11</sup> The extent to which this tendency is common among patrol constables in general is reflected in an observation made by a police trainer that a provincial police training college altered the name of a training session from “wife assault training” to “crisis intervention” purportedly because of objections from patrol constables regarding the term, “wife assault.”

<sup>12</sup> That respondents did acknowledge cases reflected a victim/offender dichotomy is illustrated in the following description provided by a veteran officer, “And we spend so much damn money on making sure that these jokers [wife assaulters] get everything they need. You know, ‘You have the right to retain counsel. You can call 1-800. . .’ and you go right out of your way to make sure you don’t breach their rights. This person that’s here crying at the table. . .she didn’t ask for it.”

battered women, in particular, especially as depicted in the feminist account. Once aware of this pattern, I started to ask respondents how often they came across battered women. Below are typical examples of responses to this question as well as an indication of the respondents' years of experience in police work:

Very seldom. Almost never. A very small percentage of women are battered. I don't see battered women often. If she's out there, then she's not reporting it to the police. I think they're accessing other avenues [paraphrase; 6+ years experience].

Gees, I'm going back. . . I can't say. . . strictly battered women [8+ years experience]?

Gee, I couldn't say if I've even come across one. I can only say one [12+ years experience].

In twelve years, I've had one. And it was an ethnic situation [12 years experience].

I'd have to say a very, very small percentage. A battered woman in my mind is one who's been hit yesterday, hit several times in the past week, and she just crawls off into the corner and licks her wounds. It takes courage. She's staying in this relationship to protect her children. That's why she's enduring it. I don't know. . . I don't see a high percentage of these types of relationships [20+ years experience].

In connection with this observation, the degree to which constables come across battered women was estimated by a veteran sergeant to be the following:

One out of every hundred domestics although the politically correct response is 'everyone.'<sup>13</sup>

Given the discrepancy between wife assault statistics noted earlier and the infrequency with which respondents stated they had contact with battered women, two explanations present themselves: (1) respondents' understanding of "battered" or

<sup>13</sup> Another veteran sergeant dismissed the public image of the battered woman as a "a newspaper seller."

“abused” differed from the feminist understanding, and/or (2) battered women simply were not seeking police assistance. In terms of their understanding of “battered,” some respondents had this to say:

We’ve had reports where we go to the scene, charge him, and she keeps coming back. This is not a battered woman. You get two individuals who have nothing better to do than drink, and they assault each other. She’s not a battered woman syndrome. Usually, these people only drink when they get their [social assistance] cheques. . .no cheques, no alcohol, no abuse. Our domestics are usually related to the cheques. It may be the only time you’re dealing with these people. Their tempers get ugly. You see them during the week with no alcohol, and they’re perfectly content with each other [paraphrase].

See, you get your women’s shelters, and they’d say they’re all battered. That’s maybe their perception of things. To me, battered is. . .you get slapped around. You have marks on you generally. They call them ‘battered.’ I wouldn’t say, ‘battered,’ . . .maybe, ‘abused’ . . .‘poorly treated.’ That’s a pretty strong term. . . ‘battered.’

The battered women are the ones in the shelters. Now, whether they’re battered or not, that’s another argument in itself.

Overall, I would suggest that respondents’ preference for the more general classification of domestic violence together with their predilection to use neutral terms to describe parties involved in wife assault/domestic violence reflects adherence to their culturally prescribed “objective” role. However, given that neutrality is interpreted in the

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training as insensitivity to wife assault issues,<sup>14</sup> respondents' neutral language may be regarded as indicative of a lack of appropriate (read, feminist) understanding about and/or support for these issues.

### *Wife Assault Training Videos*

Although several respondents stated that they had seen wife assault videos, very few recalled the content. The following composite conversation reflects what typically occurred when I raised the issue of wife assault training videos:

Interviewer: Have you had any wife assault training?

Respondent: No.

Interviewer: Videos?

Respondent: Yah.

Interviewer: That constitutes training.

Respondent: Oh, I didn't know that./That's training?

Interviewer: Do you recall what was in it?

No./I may have [seen a video], but it doesn't ring a bell./I may have seen a video in Sunday school. . . a 7 minute video. In my viewpoint, that's not training.

Of those who did recall content of the videos, almost all commented on either the false reality presented and/or the ineffectiveness of the video in training about wife assault/domestic violence issues. In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

I would like to see a video that told the true story. . .you know, the dynamics of a dysfunctional or a violent family.

It's [wife assault video] not the whole truth. It shows the man coming home being sweet to the neighbours and going in and pounding out his wife. . .There are two

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<sup>14</sup> Criticism of a neutral police position in wife assault is reflected in feminist literature (Bograd, 1988: 13).

sides to every story. Nobody deserves to be beaten up. . .but driving someone right to the edge. . .we never see that [in the videos].

It was your basic domestic violence video. From what I can remember, it didn't touch on anything that was terribly earth-shattering. It was things that we all heard before.

It's almost like watching a cartoon for us. . .these training videos. We're so used to the real thing. . .the actual drama. . .the impact on you and the people involved in it. . .to watch a video's like watching a cartoon. . .The new ones they have are very poor quality and very corny. We spend more time laughing and making stupid comments about the cheesiness of the films and how superficial the message is. . .They're corny and they're not realistic. We don't take it serious.

A sergeant agreed:

The content [of wife assault videos] is not always realistic. They tend to water down what exactly takes place. They tend to stay politically correct rather than show what really happens<sup>1</sup> [paraphrase].

These comments stand in stark contrast to the following observation made by a police trainer who, incidentally, described wife assault videos not only as “high impact” and “devastating,” but also as representing the trainers’ most effective training tool, “Every time I show it to the community, everyone cries.”<sup>2</sup>

As training tools, videos in general, not just wife assault videos, appeared to have little impact on officers. In this connection, respondents stated the following:

A lot of videos. . .most of them. . .you just sit back, and there's a lot of joking back and forth. That goes on because they're poorly done, or they don't reflect reality. [Videos] would be fine for a recruit who hasn't been exposed to the real world.

<sup>1</sup> Making a claim for the politics in wife assault training videos, one respondent stated, “I think showing videos was probably as much to satisfy government. . .satisfy administrative goals that we receive training.”

<sup>2</sup> This trainer did admit, though, that constables’ reactions to the video went like this, “Okay, okay, okay, but it's not like that out there!”

I think in this particular job. . .you can train all you want and watch all the videos you want. But, there's no substitute for experience. The more domestics you go to. . .and I've been to hundreds. . .you get to kind of see who's telling you the truth. I've seen them say with their arm broken, 'No, I fell.' 'Yah, right!' . . .or vice-versa where, 'He slapped me. I want him out of here!' So, there's no substitute for experience.

Perceived by respondents not as reenactments but rather as dramatic unrealistic portrayals of wife assault situations, videos did not appear to have the impact sought by the training.

### *Wife Assault Booklets*

Although each patrol constable within the police service had been provided with a booklet which outlined wife assault issues and investigative procedures, and although police trainers boasted about the booklets' broad dissemination, most respondents could not recall where their handbook was, or even if they had read it. According to one respondent,

I would suspect that most people lost theirs. They were left sitting around.

Of the respondents, only one indicated that the handbook had assisted him procedurally in responding to wife assault calls. The few respondents knowledgeable about the handbook admitted familiarity because they were in the promotional process and would be tested on its contents.

Lack of interest in this particular training tool appeared to stem from three disparate sources. First, even without having read the booklet, respondents objected to it on the basis of bias because of its unequivocal endorsement of the wife assault theoretical

perspective, and its outline of the perceived biased procedural police response to wife assault calls. In this regard, one respondent stated:

It [booklet] was just kind of handed out and I picked it up of the parade table. And then I read the précis that came with it. . . .And I'm hearing a lot of 'he' and 'she.' I'm not hearing a lot of 'spouse.'

Second, respondents tended to dismiss in general any written information in favour of street level experience. In this regard, the following comments made by a patrol constable typically reflected the sentiment held by respondents:

You can learn anything from a book. But, in reality. . .reality is always different from a book. [There] is the theory about how things are done, but this is how it really happens.

I don't think you can just give a book out.

Third, respondents indicated a lack of available time to read not just this particular handbook. but the dearth of written material regularly provided to them by administration. According to respondents, the move towards policing by protocol (noted in an earlier discussion) has given rise to a voluminous amount of policies and procedures which constables regularly are to read and by which they are to be guided. Regarding this latter observation, two respondents made the following comments:

I have a reading table. I have my police reading table, and I have my enjoyment reading table. My police reading table is probably this high right now [respondent lifts hand about eighteen inches off the table]. . .full of things that I have to know as a police officer in order to function properly.

They've got all these 'p and ps.' 'Now go deal with the problem.' Try and do it within the boundaries of those 'p and ps.' You can't even read it all! But, as soon as you do something that's against one of those that you couldn't even read. . .

In terms of policies on domestic violence/wife assault, a sergeant stated the following:



See, they put out so many policies about domestic violence, and they changed their policies so often that no one can keep up with the policies. . . . There's been so many policies.

For respondents, then, the wife assault handbook considered biased and unrealistic in its presentation of and response to domestic violence was just one more item added to administration's policies and procedures which was to be read by constables in order to (as indicated in an earlier discussion) hold them accountable in the event of a complaint or investigation involving them. As a training tool about wife assault, the handbook did not appear to have its intended effect.

#### *Shelter Worker Presentations*

Only one-quarter (n=8) of the respondents had been exposed to this particular training format. According to these constables, shelter workers had focused on any or all of the following three areas: (1) shelter protocol in dealing with the police; (2) issues involved in wife assault; and (3) shelter's defense regarding their attitude towards men in general and police officers in particular, i.e., that it was not antagonistic. For the most part, respondents acknowledged that the discussion about shelter protocol was useful insofar as it corrected some misunderstandings on the part of constables. However, respondents largely criticized the discussion centering around wife assault issues and repudiated the shelters' defence of their attitude towards men and the police.

To illustrate, and in connection with the discussion on wife assault issues, one respondent recalled constables' reactions to the claim by shelter workers that alcohol was not a central factor in wife assault:

We said, 'You're wrong! They're all drunk that we deal with!' They said, 'No, we were wrong. They're not all drunk.' The drunk part is the part they just didn't seem to want to believe.

Other respondents had this to say about the training:

Some of the stories they were telling us. . .this is the problem we had. . .they were talking about mental abuse more than physical abuse. And there's nothing I can do about mental abuse. . .I don't think they understand that [these stories] don't help me on my job.

I don't think workers from a shelter should be training as far as the police role in domestic situations. . .because, sure, they might be able to tell you how the woman felt afterwards, or what problems she's having. . .Well, what purpose does that serve police officers when we get a serious domestic where first off, there's your own safety to consider?

She talked down to us. . .said police in the past have not really done anything constructive. I remember it just being antagonistic almost. . .at opposite ends of the scale. For me, I like to talk. If there's a problem, I like to wrestle it around and deal with it and talk. But, a lot of policemen just clam right up and say, 'Forget it! Why bother? She's not listening!'

The defense by shelter workers that they were not anti-male was rejected by most respondents who noted their experience of accompanying wife assault victims to shelters.

In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

They see us as the enemy as opposed to a cooperative type of thing. They see us as men who don't know how to deal with the problem.<sup>1</sup>

It's almost like you're talking to someone who's explaining that they're not man-haters, but they are.

If you're male, you're the enemy. I guard my words carefully [paraphrase].

You go there [to shelters] and they [shelter workers] treat you like you're the devil. You try to be so giving and so empathetic and so nice towards them, and they just have this one view that men are all bad.

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<sup>1</sup> My female respondents indicated that on occasion, they, too, have been subjected to this hostility.

According to all but a few respondents, shelter workers were not just anti-male but anti-police as well. This claim for an anti-police sentiment was reflected in what respondents (both male and female) perceived as indifferent bordering-on-hostile treatment directed by shelter workers towards them.<sup>2</sup> In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

It's just a real cold environment. As far as walking in as a male police officer . . . they're right there looking over your shoulder. They watch you all the time.

I don't know if they thought we're gonna to talk them [the female victim] into something or out of something. But, it was very uncomfortable for the victim and uncomfortable for us, too. . . sitting over your shoulder, or making commentary on a statement you're gonna use in court.

There's this friction between the police and the people at [name of local shelter]. Of course, when we respond. . . one guy who I know stood out for almost twenty minutes in the rain because they [shelter workers] wouldn't come and open the door for him until they were ready.

I was there once. . . a female officer there to help a person. Basically, they barely opened the door for me. . . maybe a crack. They wouldn't speak to me. All we have is this very quiet woman going into this strange atmosphere, and you've just spent ten hours with this person, and you can't even speak to this person at the shelter. There may have been a little more to that situation that I wanted to advise these [shelter] people of. . . like special needs that she may have, or whatever. I was just flabbergasted. I keep thinking about that clear message they're giving to my poor victim. They were almost acting as if we weren't sympathetic, or we weren't concerned about these victims. I'm just as concerned about any victim that's been assaulted as these people are.

As additional support for their claim about shelters' anti-police sentiment, respondents also noted how former shelter *residents* not only had spoken out publicly

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<sup>2</sup> To the chagrin of the respondents, this hostility apparently is expressed only towards front-line officers and not the police trainers who liaise with shelters. In discussing the relationship between shelters and trainers, one respondent stated, "I think there's a friendly 'back-slapping-how-do-you-do?' with those people. But when the worker bees come, so-to-speak, it's, 'Oh, who are you!'"

about the anti-male sentiment in shelters, but also had indicated to constables their reluctance to return to shelters *because* of it. In this regard, two respondents noted the following:

About three or four years ago. . . a lot of women were coming forward and were, 'Look, I went to these women shelters. And it was like anti-men sentiment.'

I don't know if you remember the publicity. One of the women that went through the system basically. . . she came public and said how they [shelter workers] were a male-bashing group, and they encourage anti-male [sentiments].

Given the foregoing, more than a few respondents stated that they were apprehensive about referring to shelters who they deemed to be vulnerable female complainants.<sup>3</sup> Support for this observation comes from the following comments:

Now you really hate referring them to some of these women's groups because you know what's gonna happen. The women's groups are gonna go, 'Go after him!'. Just like the lawyers, 'We can really get this guy!' They're gonna be so tied up in their lives with anger and frustration that they're not gonna be making a go of it. That's the wrong way to deal with this.

The shelters get these women in a really emotional state. Subsequently, they are able to brainwash them. They are in a very suggestive state. They're looking for guidance, answers. . . they're upset. So what do they get? They get the feminist radical agenda at a time when they're very vulnerable and looking for answers. And guess what happens to these women who go to these shelters? It only serves to make the problem worse. It [also] serves to make them antagonistic towards us.

They [shelter workers] tell her [wife assault victim] to leave her husband. She now becomes welfare-dependent unless she has a job. So the kids and her go into subsidized housing. . . They [shelter workers] offer her a quick fix for the temporary, but they don't offer a long term fix.

They're breaking up the families which may or may not be good. In some situations, yah, get the heck out of there. Meanwhile, it's a minor domestic. . . no

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to suggest that respondents failed to acknowledge a need for shelters. Rather, respondents were clear that their criticisms were directed towards the individual workers and not the shelter as an institution.

history, and they've gone to these women's shelters because someone's told them to, or we've given them the opportunity to go. So they decide they'll go. And then they get there, and from what I can see, they get brainwashed. And it's too bad because you feel bad because this family's getting broken up.

Although, as noted earlier, few respondents were exposed to this type of training, and although constables admitted to limited contact with shelters, it was clear from data obtained during both one-on-one interviews and focus group sessions that patrol constables as a group not only rejected the 'message' of wife assault (see discussion on myths) but the messenger as well. That is, shelter workers held little, if any, legitimacy with front-line officers in general and patrol constables in particular.

Not limited to the issues discussed above, the basis of this lack of legitimacy extended to several other areas. For example, constables viewed shelter workers (dubbed "feminazis" by some) as part of a radical women's movement which supposedly did not represent the interests of most women. Respondents supported this claim with the following two observations: First, women in their personal lives rejected the message of radical women's groups. Second, in wife assault investigations, female complainants routinely raised objections to the charge policy, the latter of which respondents deemed to be the result of intense lobbying by powerful radical women's groups. In this regard, respondents had the following to say:

There's an element of the feminist movement who need to be listened to less. That element is very much biased against men. They are behind a lot of this policy.

This hard core movement has the ear of the media and the politicians. They're behind a lot of this [wife assault] legislation and policy-setting because the squeaky wheel gets the grease.

They [politicians] hear a story from a left-wing radical women's group. . . . 'Well, we've seen such-and-such. Her husband beat her for a thousand years, and she's been this, and she's been that, and the police don't do anything!' So what they do is. . . they send out a blanket [wife assault charge] policy.<sup>4</sup>

Lack of legitimacy on the part of shelter workers also is related to respondents' claim that this group not only is antagonistic towards the nuclear family but also has a biased understanding of wife assault which invariably applies the status of victim and perpetrator to women and men respectively. The comments below reflect respondents' typical views in this area:

Lobby groups. . . the shelters. . . they have a mandate. . . an unwritten mandate that all men are bad. . . all family life is bad.

They [shelters] are very biased in what they say. . . . 'This woman is a victim. This woman has done no wrong and look what's happened to her.'

According to several respondents, this bias is the result of shelter workers' constant exposure to a select population (i.e., shelter residents) who do not represent the majority of women. In this regard, two respondents had the following to say:

Unfortunately, you see a socioeconomic group that is put into those shelters more often than not. And that's their voice. And I don't see them as representative of the whole picture.

Basically, all shelter workers are going to hear is one side of the story. I'm not saying it's always going to be wrong, but that is her perception of events. The police officer may have heard another set of circumstances [paraphrase].

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<sup>4</sup> This is not to say that respondents denied the role of the police as a contributing factor in the formation of this policy by not charging in previous wife assault investigations where charges clearly were warranted. For the most part, officers readily admitted that historically mistakes had been made by the police, but that these mistakes were, and continue to be, the result of a small number of officers with whom respondents refused to identify. In discussing this minority group, one respondent stated, "There's a few today who are like that, but they stand out from us."

In the view of many respondents, this bias also is related to shelter workers' abusive and/or dysfunctional personal history. Regarding this issue, respondents stated the following:

I think they're misguided. They're not fully aware. They don't have the big picture. I think a lot of them have been abused themselves and have a very limited picture. They quickly judge without having all the facts.

A lot of these people in the shelters aren't a lot different than the people that are in there. The people who are yelling the loudest in a lot of cases are [from] these same socioeconomic backgrounds.

Often, these women [shelter workers] come out of really bad relationships, bad childhoods. They have a real tainted view of men. They think all men are bad.

Another issue which contributed to lack of legitimacy with respondents is the perceived interference by shelters in police investigations. Support for this observation is located in the following comments:

I have not been thwarted in my efforts in dealing with them [shelters]. But, I know of other officers that have tried to retrieve information. That's a completely different story. They can be a real hindrance in an investigation if you're trying to follow something up. I can't speak from personal experience, but I do know a lot of guys who've been denied information or access where. . .damn it! We're the police! We gotta do something here! Help us! Everywhere else we go, people realize what we're trying to do. We're trying to help. We're trying to do something positive. . . You know, all of a sudden, you go to a shelter. . .and it's distrust. So, you're set back on your heels. And it's about the only place that I really get the cold shoulder. . .that kind of treatment.

You do it [have contact with the shelter] all through a buzzer. It's, 'No, we're not gonna give you that information. We're not gonna tell you, and you're not coming in!' And there's nothing you can do. You're stuck. It could be a family crisis where a family member has died, and you have to get a hold of them.

If we want to find out if a woman's in a shelter. . .sometimes, we had warrants for arrests of people for someone in the house and for them [shelter workers] not saying whether they're there or not, that's a criminal offense. . .obstruct police. . . but, we don't charge them. [The trainers] would freak! They'd go crazy! Some-

times, they won't let you in. We're there to investigate!<sup>5</sup>

That patrol constables have been denied access to shelters was confirmed by a police trainer who stated:

Two shelter residents got into a fight, and the one resident beat the hell out of the other. The other resident left the shelter, called the police, and the police officers went to get her side of the story and arrest her. The officers had every right to know she was in there, [but] the shelter wouldn't let the officers in [paraphrase].

Respondents also suggested that shelters' interference often has taken the form of embellishing incidents involving shelter residents and/or pressuring police administration about wife assault investigations where charges had not been laid. In connection with the latter, one respondent had this to say:

There've been incidents where outrageous allegations have been made, and there's physical evidence to disprove what she [the female complainant] said. A report went in, and she was taken to a shelter at her request. And they [responding officers] put in a report that said they don't believe that what she said happened, happened. If what did happen happened, there would've been evidence. They detailed it completely. Next day, the shelter calls up [the police trainers]. . . . They're in close contact. [The police trainers] send someone over there, takes a statement off of her. . . . Their hands are tied. They had to arrest him for what had happened.

Overall, then, respondents made a claim for shelter workers who (1) were perceived as biased and antagonistic, (2) were severely limited in their understanding of wife assault given their dysfunctional personal history as well as exposure to only a select population of victims, (3) often victimized wife assault victims with their radical dogma, (4) were responsible for breaking up families which otherwise might have been

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<sup>5</sup> However, according to another police trainer, given that not all officers are unwelcome in shelters, those who are denied access must have antagonized shelters with their attitudes and/or actions.



salvageable, (5) successfully lobbied for a wife assault charge policy which, as noted in an earlier discussion, resulted in innumerable unintended consequences, (6) often and with unequivocal impunity hindered police investigations, and (7) undermined the role of the criminal justice system in general and the police in particular by exposing wife assault victims to their antagonism towards the police.<sup>6</sup> Given the foregoing, it is not surprising that training by shelter workers was less than effective in achieving its desired impact.<sup>7</sup>

#### *Presentations by Administrative Police Trainers*

Of the various training formats, the one involving presentations/discussions by administrative police trainers was the most vilified by respondents. The basis of the vilification was twofold. First, respondents rejected the thrust of the training given its singular focus on the feminist perspective of wife assault which, as noted earlier, was criticized by respondents for its perceived unequivocal endorsement of the much scorned wife assault charge policy. Second, and apart from the message advocated by the trainers, the data overwhelmingly supported a lack of legitimacy by police trainers with front-line officers in general and patrol constables in particular.

The basis of this lack of legitimacy stemmed from several sources. For example, respondents viewed the training unit (supposedly specialized in police response to wife

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<sup>6</sup> These general sentiments belie the following claim made by a shelter worker at a training session for recruits that the relationship between shelters and the police, once “really bad,” now is “excellent.” I would suggest that a qualification to this claim might be necessary insofar as it appears that it is the police trainers, and not the patrol constables, who have forged an excellent relationship with this particular shelter.

<sup>7</sup> A sergeant summarized training by shelter workers in the following way, “Shelter workers might as well stay in the shelters.”

assault) not as a much needed resource but rather as a *political* response by the state designed to appease vocal radical women's groups which successfully had lobbied a left-wing government sympathetic to women's issues. In this connection, respondents had the following to say:

Their [police administration] actual purpose is political. . .to indicate to the public, especially women's groups, that they do have [trainers].

[Trainers] scrutinize our reports so you'll be able to tell the women's groups and the politicians, 'We have [trainers] here!'

It's being said to the women's groups, 'We are doing something.'

As far as I'm concerned, it's almost like [the trainers] are a P.R. [public relations] tool for the police departments and the shelters.

It was politically motivated. . . They can go on TV and say, 'Look what we're doing.' They had headlines in the paper. . .great P.R.

That the creation of these specialist positions occurred at a time, according to respondents, when much needed front-line personnel was downsized and valuable investigative units were disbanded only served to intensify respondents' animosity towards police administration generally and the training unit specifically.

As well, given on the one hand, the high regard patrol constables place on front-line work, and on the other hand, their low regard for administrative functions, trainers' primarily administrative responsibilities did not fare them well with respondents.

Moreover, despite trainers' claim to expertise in wife assault/domestic violence issues,

trainers, like all police administrators, were considered by respondents as too far removed from the front line to have an adequate grasp of the issues. Support for this observation is located in the following comments made by respondents:

They [trainers] don't go to the scene anymore. There's a lot of people in different spots on this job that as soon as they get put behind this desk, they forget everything they know. It's who you have to answer to. The people that they have to answer to are even further removed from the situation.

You've probably got people who haven't been to a domestic in ten years training people on domestics.<sup>1</sup>

Unless you're out there doing it everyday, you can't sit back and pass judgment on the type of work you're doing.

Those people that tell us what to do haven't been there.<sup>2</sup>

They're Monday morning quarterbacks up there. They don't go out there and talk to the people and investigate. They don't do the work. They're not there. . . just Monday morning quarterbacks. They don't investigate. They read your report, and they try and find. . . they're almost as 'weaselly' as defence lawyers in that they're looking for a hole. They're looking for some way to sneak something in there and pry it open. And that's all they're doing. Witch hunt isn't quite the proper term, but Monday morning quarterbacks, definitely!

The Monday morning quarterbacks don't see a lot of nuances at the call.

They [trainers] are not dealing with the calls; yet, they have the training. They don't deal with the reports; they don't make the arrests.

Feedback [by trainers] is all negative, and it's all nonsense. These [feedback reports] just don't come up in our [performance] reviews. It's just not a credible source of information as far as our performance.

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<sup>1</sup> In this connection, a sergeant stated, "All they [trainers] do is read reports and send them back and say, 'Why wasn't a charge laid here?' 'Why not there?'"

<sup>2</sup> Even a veteran officer, strongly in favour of the charge policy, had this to say about the value of trainers as a resource for front-line personnel, "I've actually had a couple situations where I was perplexed by the situation. It wasn't a charge-at-all-costs situation. . . I tried to get some help [from trainers]. I wasn't satisfied."

Superiors [are] hanging over your head who wouldn't know their butt from their elbow in a domestic situation passing judgment on what you're doing.

This sentiment was exacerbated in situations where, by their own admission, respondents did not have a clear understanding of the trainers' responsibilities. For example, a veteran officer stated,

Me, personally, I can say. . .what do they do? I don't know what they do.

When asked what the role of the trainers involved, two other respondents replied,

I have no idea. They're there just to scrutinize our reports.

I think that's all they do. . .read over the reports and plug in the numbers.

Trainers' lack of legitimacy also was related to their administrative function of reviewing constables' domestic violence/wife assault reports for adherence to police policy --after these reports have *already* been reviewed by constables' supervisory sergeants. Notwithstanding the review of these reports by the latter group, if, in the trainers' opinion, police policy has been violated, trainers correspond with patrol constables and/or their supervisors in order to make known the violations (or omissions) and request corrective action be taken where possible.<sup>3</sup> Alternately, if an investigation is deemed by trainers as exemplary, it is acknowledged in writing and forwarded to both the investigating officers and their supervisors. Given, as previously noted, patrol constables' critical views about

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<sup>3</sup> In terms of corrective action requested by trainers, more than a few respondents complained about the admonition to "be creative" in cases where wife assault charges had not been laid against the alleged perpetrator. In this connection, respondents indicated how they often were encouraged by police trainers to lay mischief charges against the male when there was property damage. According to one respondent, "Mischief, like a lot things, can be wrapped around a lot of circumstances to make them fit. [In most of these cases], it's an abuse of the spirit of the law, and it's really reaching. They [trainers] want to see a charge on paper. They want to stick it to the guy."

administration, this written feedback--whether negative *or* positive (and dubbed *shittygrams*<sup>4</sup> and *ataboys*<sup>5</sup> respectively by some respondents)--is neither welcomed by respondents nor considered worthwhile. Evidence for respondents' antagonism regarding this issue is reflected in the following comments:

I do a domestic. It's monitored by the sergeant. He looks at it. He breaks it down. He sends it over to the courts. In my opinion, he's the supervisor. He should know what he's doing. He's done all that's necessary. Now, all of a sudden, there's umpteen copies made. They have the meeting upstairs with all the [training] people.

To me, all they [trainers] are there for is to check our reports which our sergeants have already checked, and then, from on high, determine where we did right or wrong.

[The trainers'] mandate basically is to sit there in the office and review all the reports. We got a lot of high paid people sitting around a desk reading reports to see if I've done something wrong, or somebody else has.

We don't need a principal up above us grading our reports. We need someone who's gonna step in on those cases.

For respondents, the implicit assumption of this ongoing internal audit was that patrol constables did not know their job adequately and/or could not be trusted to administer proper police procedure. In this regard, a respondent had the following to say about trainers' perceived attitudes towards patrol constables:

They [trainers] are sergeants. . . . 'P.C.s [patrol constables] don't know nothing!' That's the way I feel.

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<sup>4</sup> According to trainers, the patrol constable's supervisor would be forwarded this type of memorandum only in those cases where the constable had been "corrected" by trainers on previous occasions, or where trainers believed the violation of police procedure was serious.

<sup>5</sup> According to one respondent, "ataboys" are issued by trainers only when patrol constables far exceed realistic expectations regarding service to the female complainant.

In terms of trust issues, a sergeant stated, “My understanding is they [trainers] don’t believe us [front-line officers] at all.”

Lack of legitimacy with patrol constables also stemmed from trainers’ front-line involvement which largely was limited to investigating allegations of domestic violence/ wife assault involving police personnel, both sworn and civilian.<sup>6</sup> According to respondents, in almost all cases concerning allegations against fellow officers, trainers’ investigations gave rise to purportedly unwarranted charges.<sup>7</sup> In the respondents’ view, these fellow officers often were subjected to harassment and undue persecution by trainers. Moreover, respondents insisted that fellow officers, not yet convicted, were treated by trainers more severely than would be the average citizen under similar circumstances. In discussing trainers’ internal wife assault investigations, respondents commented as follows:

They [trainers] have to investigate when there’s a domestic involving a policeman. You can guarantee there’s gonna be charges. . . whether they’re founded or not. And they will actively go and dig up new charges.

Our [trainers] suffered a lot because of those incidents [wife assault investigations] that involved officers. I have no idea of any civilian criminal cases involving domestics that [the trainers] moved in and made sure that the guy didn’t get bail. But, I do know for sure that a couple of policemen got locked up and they [the trainers] moved. . . and that’s a concern.

They [trainers] overzealously charge their own for political expediency. They’re just worried [about women’s groups]. . . . When a woman speaks, the whole department jumps all over you.

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<sup>6</sup> Although disputed by patrol constables, trainers categorized their periodic follow-up with alleged wife assault victims as front-line work.

<sup>7</sup> Respondents maintained that charges were unwarranted inasmuch as all but one were not pursued by the court prosecutor.

We're not one of theirs. Your credibility goes now when you see [the trainers] after a couple of past events. They lost all credibility with front-line officers because of the way they reacted to these situations [wife assault investigations involving fellow officers].<sup>8</sup>

In terms of trainers' "lost" credibility, a respondent had this to say when discussing a training session which occurred soon after a purported botched trainers' investigation of a fellow officer concerning an allegation of wife assault:

That particular time was earlier this year, and right after the incident where one of the officers got arrested. Timing was bad. So, from the blood rush in the ears, it's really hard to hear. So, I can't say it was really much of a training session because I don't recall what the gist of it was about.

The fallout of this particular situation is described below by a veteran officer:

When they [trainers] come here, guys [patrol constables] won't be here. [Patrol constables will say,] I've got a call out on the street'. . .zing!. . .They [patrol constables] won't listen!

Credibility also is an issue when, according to respondents, trainers (specialized in sensitivity training) have themselves demonstrated insensitivity, not only when referred to for assistance by patrol constables, but also when interacting within the organization. In this regard, two respondents had the following to say:

They get this sensitivity training apparently in reference to domestics. And I've actually heard them say in a group how stupid front-line officers are, [how] they don't have a clue what they're doing, [how] they have no compassion.

Now the unfortunate part of it is [the trainers] are all upwardly mobile and politically active, and they refuse to call a spade a spade. As far as sensitivity,

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<sup>8</sup> Additional support for this sentiment is reflected in the following comments provided by a sergeant who stated, "We had a guy [fellow officer]. . .his wife played the system. . .The [trainers] just jumped right on him. . .By the time it was over, they had locked him up, put him in [jail] for a week, took him off the street, suspended him,. . .did it all. And when it went to court, the judge says, 'That's your witness!' And the whole thing was thrown out. So, as a result, a lot of people [front-line officers] have no respect for [the trainers]."

they [trainers] need to be counselled, not the police officers [read patrol constables].

The following account provided by a respondent reflects a typical example of the types of situations involving trainers which respondents claimed they routinely confronted and to which they held objections:

There was obviously some follow-up that needed to be done [on a wife assault investigation]. I wrote an e-mail message to [the trainers] that I had some concerns about this. . . 'Could you please go to the shelter and talk to the lady? Get her statement concerning [a family member]. If necessary, arrest [the family member].' Well, when I came back in. . . I think I had a day off. . . so when I came back in four or five days later, the only thing I got was an e-mail message saying, 'We don't do that. Do it yourself.' She could've been killed. . . anything!

A sergeant offered a similar observation to the one noted above:

I've seen it [before]. We get that very violent person. He's gone and we can't track him down. They [trainers] won't take any responsibility for the investigation. They keep throwing it back. And I said, 'You should take it.' [Trainers:] 'No, no. . . that's your responsibility. You just turn it over to the next officer.' I said, 'You know the line of communication will break down. What are we gonna do if he goes back and kills her? Isn't that what it's all about. . . to make sure the woman doesn't get killed?' And we had one. . . the guy was the criminal of the week. We were all concerned. The woman's concern was justified that if he got at her, he might really do harm to her. And we couldn't locate him. Do you think we could get them [trainers] to get on this and really make a concerted effort? I mean, how much can our officers do when they gotta make calls, and then they got the problems that we're witnessing [with the trainers]? I get [from the trainers], 'Oh yah, I'll bring it up in our meeting *tomorrow*.'

Further to the latter comment regarding the postponement by trainers of critical issues, respondents also criticized trainers' unavailability to offer direction to them and liaise on their behalf with shelters because of what they claimed to be a structural conflict



between police protocol with shelters,<sup>9</sup> trainers' scheduled Monday-to-Friday day shifts, and usual time domestic calls are made (late night and early morning hours, especially during weekends). Although provision was made for trainers to be contacted outside their regular work hours, this practice was discouraged and was to be adopted on an emergency basis only with the result that constables' non-emergency investigations often were extended over several shifts

A further issue detracting from trainers' legitimacy involves respondents' perception that trainers (who act as liaisons with local women's groups) have aligned themselves with shelters, the latter of which as noted in an earlier discussion are denounced by respondents as biased against men and highly antagonistic toward patrol constables. (The perception that trainers and shelter workers are allied against patrol constables is reinforced by the shelter/police protocol noted above.) In describing the perceived relationship between police trainers and local shelters, respondents had this to say:

They [trainers] cow-tow to them [shelters]. 'Whatever you say. . .oh, I agree with you. . .the bad, bad men. . . Men are all bad.' Ask the trainers. They'll tell you!

I see a very cozy relationship with [the trainers] and the shelters and the Crown Attorney's department.

I think there's a friendly back-slapping-how-do-you-do with those people [trainers and shelter workers]. But, when the worker bees come, so to speak, it's, 'Oh, who are you!'

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<sup>9</sup> Departmental policy requires that patrol constables seeking access to or information from shelters refer requests to police trainers rather than communicate directly with the shelters.

A final illustration which reflects the degree to which trainers lacked legitimacy with patrol constables is provided in the following comments made by a sergeant concerning a wife assault training session:

They [police trainers] specifically asked that we, the sergeants, sit up with them to show a united front. . . because that's how much support they know they've got from the officers on the street. So, they [trainers] thought, 'If those supervisors sit with us, maybe they [patrol constables] won't be so critical of us.'<sup>10</sup>

Overall, then, training of respondents by administrative police trainers did not appear to have the impact desired because of respondents' rejection of the message in the training as well as trainers' lack of legitimacy, the latter of which was influenced by the following issues: perceived political nature of the training unit; historical chasm between administration and front-line officers; understaffing; respondents' unclear understanding of trainers' responsibilities; trainers' ongoing internal audit of constables' domestic violence/wife assault reports; trainers' purported botched wife assault investigations involving fellow officers; trainers' alleged insensitivity to actual wife assault situations; structured conflict between police protocol with shelters, trainers' scheduled day shifts, and usual timing of domestic calls; and perceived alliance between police trainers and shelters.

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<sup>10</sup> This account together with respondents' comments noted in this discussion concerning trainers' lack of legitimacy are inconsistent with claims made by some of the police trainers for their strong credibility within the police organization.

### *Summary of Respondents' Views on Training*

This section addresses respondents' views on wife assault sensitivity training in general. Several criticisms about this particular training are noted and relate to some extent to the broader issue of in-service training.

As indicated in the discussion on wife assault videos, at the beginning of interviews, almost all respondents stated they had not received any in-service wife assault sensitivity training.<sup>1</sup> Once I reviewed the forms of training such as videos, wife assault booklets, and sessions by police trainers and/or shelter workers, respondents indicated they had some exposure but nevertheless were reluctant to acknowledge it as training. I would suggest that this reluctance was related to both the context and content of the training. In terms of context, the informal nature of roll calls appeared to detract from respondents' estimation of the training's value.<sup>2</sup> Support for this observation can be found in the following comments which typically reflect respondents' sentiments regarding this issue:

A lot of people here look at Sunday school as a break. It's not a good forum [paraphrase].

It's very informal. . . more of a bull session than it is a structured learning experience.

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<sup>1</sup> In this connection, one respondent commented, "When you came to the parade and said, 'training,' I kind of laughed to myself and looked at [name of fellow officer], and he shrugged."

<sup>2</sup> Although formal in-service training did occur, it was directed at only a minority of constables and was undertaken less frequently than training during Sunday morning roll calls.

In terms of content, several respondents noted that insofar as the training largely was limited to policy discussions on wife assault and domestic violence, it did not constitute sensitivity training. In this regard, respondents stated the following:

It was a . . . 'This is what we're gonna do for you' type of thing. So, I don't know if that would qualify as training.

It was more policy than sensitivity training.

It was . . . what to do, why to do it, what you should be looking for, reasons for bail opposition, reasons for conditions. . . basically, all policy. I haven't gone through any real training.

A sergeant agreed:

When they [trainers] came out, they more or less told us what we were supposed to do. The training was . . . the party line. . . what the department tells you to do. . . 'Here's what we want you to do. Now, go and do it.'

As well as pointing to the policy focus of the training, respondents also criticized training content for its perceived bias in favour of females and against males. In this regard, respondents stated the following:

[We're getting] a very one-sided approach.

Everything as far as the posters go. . . the video training. . . any source of information. . . it's all, 'Husbands are the bad guy. The wife or the girlfriend is the good person. You should believe everything they say.'

I get the impression that. . . and this is from past experience. . . every man is a woman hitter. . . and you should arrest him, lock him up, and throw away the key. . . not in so many words. . . but I was born at night, not last night. . . almost to the point where it's insulting your intelligence.

Even a respondent in favour of the charge policy had this to say about the training:

I'd like to hear from both sides of the fence. I'd like to hear the man and the woman. Not always is the man wrong in domestic violence.

Respondents also objected to the training's reliance on statistics as support for training claims.<sup>3</sup> As indicated earlier, not only do constables for the most part reject statistics as a legitimate indicator of reality, but their perception of the *meaning* of statistics differs from that of the trainers. That is, statistics used by trainers to justify the wife assault charge policy were perceived by respondents as evidence of not only the degree to which police policy was biased, but also the degree to which police administration made officers vulnerable to accountability issues. Regarding the former issue, one respondent had this to say:

How much of those statistics are actual real complainants? How many of those are calls where we've responded to counsel which have turned out to be that we can't counsel now. . . We don't have that option. . . . Even raising you hand now towards someone is an assault. . . . They've opened up a can of worms. If those are the situations that are causing the overall statistics, then nobody's being fair. It's being very prejudiced.

Regarding the latter issue, the following comments made by a sergeant concerning a training session conducted by police trainers best summarize constables' perspective:

They would add some stats. 'We've got a [number] % arrest rate.' Well, yah, that's great. But, maybe it shouldn't have been that high. You know, because of guys putting their rear ends in a sling making an arrest when really they didn't have the evidence. But it looked good; it sounded good.

In addition to criticisms about training content, it was evident that respondents were unclear about what constituted sensitivity training. For example, most respondents understood this type of training to be directed at their personal levels of emotive sensitivity and compassion rather than informing a particular understanding about issues involved in a

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<sup>3</sup> This tendency to appeal to statistical support for training claims was confirmed during my interviews with trainers.

particular topic, in this case, wife assault. As well, respondents generally did not perceive a link between a particular understanding of wife assault and level of sensitivity. They also did not believe that individuals could be trained to be more sensitive. In regard to this particular issue, respondents had the following to say:

I truly believe it [sensitivity] is a characteristic you have to have.

You can't teach sensitivity in a classroom setting.

If you have to be trained in how to be compassionate, then you're in big trouble.

I don't know how you turn somebody around and teach them the sensitivity part. I guess [you] can talk till [you're] blue in the face. But, that isn't gonna teach [you] how to deal with the people or communicate with people.

First of all, there's people here who. . .they're not gonna be sensitive, no matter what. Fortunately, most people I work with. . .they'll bend over backwards to do as much as they can. I don't think you can train to be a nice person. You either have it, or you don't.

I guess sensitivity is built into a person. . . .It's not something that can be changed or even ordered.

Another obstacle to the training's acceptance was the role played by constables' previously noted high regard for "street-level" experience. The high value given to practical learning appeared to be a factor in the respondents' claim that effective training (regarding any issue for that matter) could not take place in a classroom setting but rather needed to occur "on the street." Support for this observation is located in the following comments made by respondents:

You can't teach somebody out of a, 'This is what domestic violence is, and this is how you treat somebody.' [You have to] go into it. . . .see the emotion . . . .Now you know what's going on. You can't teach that. I don't care what anybody says. You can't teach that. . . .no scenarios, no nothing's gonna change that. . . .because it can change. . . .the mood. . . .and everything can change so fast once you get in the house. It's not something you can teach. It's something you

gotta pick up. It's experiences. That's where I got my ideas. You learn on the street.

To really be able to develop the skill [at properly responding to domestic calls], you need the practical experience.

They can teach you the signs of this and the signs of that. Any skill you develop, you develop through experience.

A sergeant confirmed this sentiment with the following comment:

On the street. . .that's where we become sensitive [paraphrase].

Respondents also claimed that the training could not be effective because of structural constraints to sensitivity placed on them by virtue of the insensitive wife assault charge policy as well as lack of time. In this connection, respondents had the following to say:

If we are supposed to help. . .if we are just charging. . .if we are supposed to be sensitive to the family and the problems. . .if we are supposed to help them through things. . .whether we're actually counselling people. . .we've got to do more than just walk in, look at people, and take a statement. If we're supposed to do more than that, then give us the tools to do it. If that's all you want us to do, then you don't have to give us sensitivity training.

Our hands are tied. The government says, 'You will!' You don't have a choice anymore. 'You will lay the charge!'

The one thing I wanted to touch on before we came in here was that sensitivity training given what they ask us to do as far as charges has no purpose. Why do we have to know about the causes of domestic violence? Why do we have to know about. . .[why do] we have to get inside their heads?

The presumption is all wrong. The presumption is that we don't like women. That's wrong. I don't think the guys need sensitivity training. I think what they need is the proper tools [read discretion] to handle the situation.

If they really wanted us to be sensitive, they'd train us and they'd allow us to spend ten hours on a call to offer emotional support to these people. . . .They [the

trainers] got time to be sensitive. We have four or five hours of paperwork to do. . . . We don't have time to be sensitive.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the foregoing perceived structural constraints, respondents also rejected the training's premise that sensitive police response to wife assault calls had a positive impact on the parties involved. In the respondents' view, a claim about positive impact of sensitive police response was merely an *accountability* strategy used by the state, police administration, and women groups to scapegoat officers for any or all of the following: escalation in the violence; women returning to abusive relationships; and women failing to follow through with the judicial process. In this regard, respondents commented:

I believe it makes no difference how well we do our job. I'll do what I can to do my job. But, you can't stop absolutely everything from happening. It's gonna happen. I'm sure there's been times when officers have done their job. They conduct themselves totally professionally. They do their job. Their reports are completed. Everything is done properly. But something has gone wrong. . . and where does the finger point? . . . on the officer who was there.

It's [claim for positive impact of sensitive police response] cover your ass . . . blame the officer.

There's economic dependence, social dependence, kids. They[wife assault victims] don't see that they have any other alternatives except to stay in a [abusive] relationship. I can't help those people.

What we say [to the wife assault victim] doesn't really matter. What we say I think has nothing to do with what the victim does in the months to come. We're just there to pick up loose ends.

Counselling, education. . . even all that. . . some people [wife assault victims] will refuse to be helped.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Respondents almost all indicated their dislike for paperwork. According to police trainers, it is this dislike for paperwork which is the basis of constables' hostility towards the wife assault charge policy.



According to one respondent, even what is considered a substantial amount of time spent with a wife assault victim can have little effect:

It depends on the complainant. You can be the most compassionate and caring person, and I like to see myself that way. I've spent hours with a complainant, and it doesn't make a bit of difference.

Summarizing why constables reject the claim for positive impact of sensitive police response to wife assault, a sergeant had this to say:

They've [constables have] been burned. . .and I've been burned too. We get burned all the time.

Finally, respondents raised objections to the training because of the meaning they gave to it. That is, respondents perceived the underlying purpose of the training (involving any issue, not just domestic violence) as accountability-related. According to the respondents, during an investigation into a patrol constables' conduct, the issue of training often is raised to remove culpability from police administration. From this perspective, training is reduced to an accountability tool used by administration to protect itself from potential public complaints involving patrol constables. Regarding this matter, respondents had the following to say:

I think it [the training] is basically to cover their [administration's] own butts.

I think they [trainers] are there just for a political reason, and that is all. They don't do anything more than that. . .except the higher-up's can say, 'We've got [these trainers] here.' So, they [administration] are *not* gonna get blamed if something happens.

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<sup>5</sup> A respondent provided the following qualifier to this claim about positive impact of sensitive police response to wife assault, "It all has a big factor *if* they [wife assault victims] want to get out of the [abusive] situation."

As far as the training here. . . most of what it involves is, 'Here's a piece of paper. Here's the party line. Follow those rules. If you don't, we're gonna get you.'

The reason they're doing this training is. . . number one. . . to educate us, so we don't screw up. But, look out! If you screw up, at any inquest they'll bring in the officer who did the training and they'll say, 'I did this, this, and this,' and you're left hanging! You're dead meat! And *you've had the training*. I mean, you want the training, but you realize you get the training and you screw up, and you're left hanging.

If you go [to a domestic call and do not arrest the alleged wife assaulter] and something happens, you're just led to believe that the civil ramifications from that are we'd get fired. . . we'd get hung. You know, 'The department's *not* going down because *you've been trained* that you should charge!'

Overall, then, respondents rejected wife assault sensitivity training on the basis of the following claims: (1) the training was biased in favour of women; (2) training on policy issues was not considered legitimate sensitivity training; (3) the informal setting of the training hindered taking it seriously; (4) knowledge was not linked to higher levels of morality; (5) emotive sensitivity could not be taught but rather was a characteristic inherent within the individual officer; (6) the insensitive wife assault charge policy together with constables' time constraints precluded demonstration of sensitivity at domestic calls; (7) sensitive police response to wife assault had little, if any, impact on victims; (8) genuine police training took place through experience on the street, not within the classroom; (9) training in general and wife assault training in particular was an accountability weapon used by administration to divert culpability from itself in the event of public complaints against constables.

## Chapter Six

### Discussion

#### *Wife Assault Sensitivity Training as Claims-making*

Prior to analyzing constables' response to claims made in the training, it first will be instructive to present the ways in which this training can be regarded as a claims-making activity. To this end and at the risk of being repetitive, it will be necessary to restate some wife assault issues. Within this discussion and in keeping with a contextual constructionist perspective, I will examine the basis for wife assault claims as well as any discrepancies between them and other information about social conditions.

As outlined earlier, the training evaluated in this study is informed by the feminist account of wife assault.<sup>1</sup> Wife assault claims-makers can include women's movement activists, social service providers<sup>2</sup> (i.e., shelter workers, social workers, etcetera), mass media personnel, academic and applied researchers (Loseke, 1987: 230), and in this study, police administrators and police trainers at the local and provincial levels. The social problem identified by these claims-makers is "wife assault."

According to Best (1987: 104-5), to define a problem is to identify the topic under discussion as well as set boundaries about what can be said about the topic. This identification and boundary-setting both guide the way we interpret the problem as well as

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<sup>1</sup> It will be recalled from a prior discussion that feminism is not a unitary theory. Therefore, similar to the approach taken by Loseke (1989: 175) in her study of shelters, I analyze only "the broad sweep of claims."

<sup>2</sup> Tierney (1982: 208) notes that in wife assault claims-making, "while some [claims-maker] groups are primarily feminist, many characterize themselves as mental health or social service organizations."

suggest appropriate avenues for response (ibid.). By virtue of the identification of “wife assault,” a distinction is made which sets apart wife assault as a category separate from other forms of intimate violence. This distinction allows claims-makers not only to overlook possible similarities to or connections with other forms of violence, but also identify dynamics particular to this phenomenon.

Having identified the social problem as wife assault, claims-makers need a mechanism to persuade audiences of the legitimacy of their claims. In this case, the rhetoric of victimization is adopted.<sup>3</sup> From a contextual constructionist perspective, the interpretive framework of victimization is regarded as an exercise in typification (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 106,120). According to Loseke (1993: 208), typification is necessary to claims-making insofar as claims-makers’ audiences often “do not experience the lived reality of the condition [social problem] category, nor are all, most, or even some category inhabitants biographically known others.” Loseke (1993: 208) argues that this latter situation compels claims-makers to construct “people-types.”

In the victimization framework, people-types include the mutually exclusive categories of victim and offender (McShane and Williams, 1992: 261). The degree to which the construction of people-types is integral to the construction of the social problem is dependent upon the extent to which “category inhabitants are unknown others” (Loseke, 1993: 208). Given the claim that wife assault is surrounded by secrecy and

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<sup>3</sup> Sykes (1992: 241) argues that “the culture of victimization is deeply entrenched [and that] powerful groups continue to have a vested economic, social and political stake in extending boundaries of the society of victims.”

silence (OWD, 1993a: 1), its category inhabitants (male batterer [offender] and battered woman [victim])<sup>4</sup> are to a great extent unknown others. It follows, then, that the construction of offender and victim is central to the wife assault claims-making exercise.

Claims-makers adopting the victimization interpretive framework typify people-types of victim and offender in terms of distinctive motives or behaviour patterns and/or personal characteristics such as gender, age, race, social class, and/or other background variables (Lowney and Best, 1995: 33). Timing, location, interaction patterns, and consequences of the violence also may be typified (*ibid.*). According to McShane and Williams (1992: 261), this typification serves to promote a particular understanding of the problematic behaviour, motives, and circumstances.

To illustrate, in the victimization framework, victims do *not* participate in offenses, and the victim-offender relationship is a static one (*ibid.*: 262). To appeal to the status of victim, then, is to invoke a claim of unjust harm caused by exogenous forces beyond the victim's control (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 106,108). This claim for lack of control over the abuse is central to the essence of victimization insofar as it not only exonerates the victim of any responsibility for the harm, but also enjoins claims-maker audiences to understand the victim as "a rather *passive*, indeed *helpless* recipient of injury or injustice"<sup>5</sup> (emphasis mine) (*ibid.*: 119). This latter observation leads Holstein and Miller (1990: 108)

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<sup>4</sup> Although wife assault claims-makers agree that women are victimized, some prefer the label "survivor" instead of "victim" (Pennington, 1995: 5). This preference reflects a concern in victimology literature in general and wife assault literature in particular over the degree to which the victim label is disempowering to the individual (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 116; Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 40; Smith, 1994: 124; Heer, 1995: 6).

<sup>5</sup> According to McShane and Williams (1992: 261-62), this popular conception of victim is "derived from a simplistic middle-class framework where all victims are innocent characters in a morality play."

to suggest that victimization rhetoric becomes useful for “deflecting responsibility,<sup>6</sup> assigning causes, specifying responses and remedies, and accounting for failure.”

In constructing people-types of victim and offender, the victimization framework also simultaneously constructs “ways to ‘think’ and ‘feel’ about the people categories” (Loseke, 1993: 212). For example, in the victimization paradigm, the victim is typified as “a moral unjustly harmed person [who] deserves ‘compassion and concern,’” while the offender is cast as “an immoral person who creates harm [and] deserves [not only] the emotional response of ‘condemnation’. . . [but also] its behavioral (*sic*) expression of ‘punishment’” (ibid.). These typifications are regarded as responsible for creating what Loseke (1993: 211) describes as “preferred *emotional* orientations towards constructed categories” (emphasis in original). In this case, preferred emotional orientations are “sympathy worthiness” of the victim, and “condemnation worthiness” of the offender (ibid.: 209- 210). For Loseke (1993: 211), then, victimization rhetoric also is an exercise in “emotion claims-making.”

When applied to wife assault claims-making, the rhetoric of victimization is evident in the content of claims. For example, violence in the feminist account of wife assault is depicted as recurrent and escalating “one-way violence” (Loseke, 1989: 175,190). Although this understanding of one-way victimization may be the “official definition of the victim” (McShane and Williams, 1992: 267), it is not the *only* understanding in a victimization interpretive framework. Rather, as noted by Emerson (1994: 20), the notion

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<sup>6</sup> According to Sykes (1992: 233), “victimist ideology. . .sets rigid limits to the sort of questions that can be asked, lest we engage in the primal sin of ‘blaming the victim.’”

of one-way victimization is a *distinctive* paradigm which contrasts with another victimization paradigm that views violence in *interactional* or *relational* terms. If viewed relationally, violence in wife assault would be understood as a product of what Emerson (1994: 20) describes as a “two-sided exchange. . . [where] there is no purely ‘innocent victim’ (nor heinous victimizer), but rather two parties each of whom is partially innocent and partially responsible--although not necessarily equally so.”<sup>7</sup>

A possible explanation for this rhetorical decision by wife assault claims-makers comes from McShane and Williams (1992: 262) who suggest that resistance to applying the relational victimization paradigm is class-based. That is, resistance stems from the concern that “middle-class citizens might have difficulty in conceiving of a system where offenders and victims trade places as they act, react, and retaliate in an emergent drama of the sort commonly played in lower-class communities,” and where labels of victim and offender do not exist *until* there is criminal justice intervention (ibid.). McShane and Williams (1992: 267) further suggest that the image of victim and offender interchanging roles challenges our cultural notions of the separation of good and evil.<sup>8</sup> In their view, a consequence of avoiding this challenge is that we are left with the artificiality of the “mythically pure and stereotypical vision of the victim” (ibid.) which serves to both “subvert any search for root causes of crime. . . [as well as] restrict the public view of the nature of crime.” (ibid.: 262).

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<sup>7</sup> Patrol constables’ understanding of violence in relational terms coincides with this latter paradigm.

<sup>8</sup> In terms of the wife assault issue, Rodgers (1994: 106) suggests that female aggression challenges our cultural notions of femininity.

According to wife assault claims-makers, one-way violence in wife assault is characterized by dynamics of power and control<sup>9</sup> (OWD, 1993: 2; MacLeod, 1994: 12). Building on this claim, wife assault claims-makers construct an image of the female victim as a passive recipient of injury who is subjected to extreme abuse over a period of time before seeking help (such as contacting the police). As noted earlier, a claim often is made in wife assault literature that women, on average, are beaten thirty-five times before seeking police intervention. It will be recalled that this claim of thirty-five beatings is considered a “true” statement on a list of true-or-false statements used in the training under evaluation. It also finds itself in other police training material on wife assault. For example, a police training manual states that “some surveys indicate that women are physically assaulted thirty-five times before the police are called” (OPC, 1993: 3 - appendix 14), while in another police resource, it is recorded that, “On average, 35 assaults take place before the police become involved” (Roberts and O’Sullivan, 1993: 30). According to Avis (1992), “severe, repeated violence occurs in 1 in 14 marriages [Dutton, 1988], with an average of 35 incidents before it is reported.” An article in a medical journal also recognizes this claim by stating that, “Canadian research indicates

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<sup>9</sup> In early claims-making about wife assault, a description of the recurring nature of the violence was taken largely from Walker’s (1983: 43) cycle of violence theory in which she posited the following three stages to a battering relationship: tension build-up, acute battering incident, and loving contrition (also called the “honeymoon period”). My previous association with wife assault claims-makers in 1994 revealed that Walker’s theory was considered “passé” and had been replaced by most claims-makers with the power and control wheel discussed earlier. However, this cycle continues to form a part of police training at the provincial level (OPC, 1994: 27).



that. . . on average, a woman will be assaulted 35 times before contacting police” (Bain, 1989: 20).<sup>10</sup>

What these wife assault claims-makers fail to underline is that this claim is based on *one* study conducted in 1979 in London, Ontario by Jaffe and Burris (1984) involving 222 females who reported assaults or threatened assaults by their partners (present or former).<sup>11</sup> This finding is challenged by the 1993 Canadian VAW Survey on violence against women which indicates that of those women surveyed who had experienced violence from a previous or present partner, less than half (41%) in the first category and 10% in the second category claimed they had been assaulted on more than ten occasions (Rodgers, 1994: 10). The substantial currency accorded this claim of thirty-five beatings as well as the tendency to overlook limitations of the study from which the claim arose support the observation by Lowney and Best (1995: 42) in their constructionist study of stalkers that a statistical estimate can “take on a life of its own” and often be repeated, but never examined or explained. It also lends credence to the argument by rival claims-makers that wife assault claims-makers can make sweeping and, at times, erroneous generalizations from small populations to all abused women (McDonald, 1989: 102,105).

In addition to making a claim for prolonged abuse, wife assault claims-makers also construct an image of the female victim as leaving the abusive relationship several times

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<sup>10</sup> Later in this article, the author, in discussing the victim’s decision to contact the police, provides physicians (the intended audience) with the following reminder: “Again, remember her decision to contact the police will be made, on average, after being beaten on 35 previous occasions” (ibid.: 24).

<sup>11</sup> An OPC (1994: 37) guide on wife assault initially credits this claim to one study. However, later in the guide, a more general claim is made that “women are typically beaten 35 time [*sic*] before they call the police” (ibid.: 53 - emphasis in original).

before finally terminating it (ibid.: 102). By appealing to this construction, wife assault claims-makers make the important claim for leaving as a *process*<sup>12</sup> (ibid.; Campbell et al., 1994: 101). (According to a police trainer, it is this process nature of relationship termination which should motivate, rather than discourage, patrol constables who often do not perceive any positive effects of their intervention.) Viewed in this way, terminating an abusive relationship becomes “a purposive process. . . [in which] the woman tests her internal and external resources until she is convinced that she can take care of herself and her children” (ibid.). For McDonald (1989: 102), women who eventually end an abusive relationship do so out of “abject fear of the batterer and concern for their children.”

Victimization rhetoric also is adopted by wife assault claims-makers in their appeal to the claim for revictimization of women by a patriarchal system in general and the criminal justice and medical systems in particular (Pressman, 1989b: 23; Loseke, 1989: 175; Hilton, 1991: 29,52; Canadian Panel on Violence Against Women [hereafter referred to as Canadian Panel], 1993: 15,214; Green, 1997: 7). According to McShane and Williams (1992: 261), this image of system victimization was developed by victimologists who “seemed to imply this second victimization was a mistake of ignorance [and] could easily be remedied by specialized training of criminal justice [and medical] personnel. . . [as well as] by increasing the availability of victims’ programs.” (It is to the prevention of revictimization by the criminal justice system that wife assault sensitivity training primarily is directed.)

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<sup>12</sup> Mills (1985: 103) notes that victimization itself is a “gradual process rather than an inherent quality of individual women.”

In addition to the foregoing typifications in wife assault, a claim also is made for the victim's middle class status.<sup>13</sup> An illustration of this claim is located in the following discussion by wife assault claims-maker Pressman (1989b: 22):

Wives are often accused of being sluts, of being unappealing, of being incompetent housekeepers and inadequate mothers. The attacks focus on those areas of their lives that are most relevant to a sense of self-worth and those aspects of life whereby they measure themselves as successful women: homemaking, childcare, attractiveness, sexual appeal and fidelity. These are the norms of a successful woman in our society, norms that they accept and to which they aspire.

Notwithstanding this typification of middle class status, research suggests that most reports of wife assault involve individuals from *lower* social classes<sup>14</sup> (Carter, Stacey and Shupe, 1988: 262; Smith, 1990: 261; Smith, 1990a: 55; Sherman, 1992: 7; Sommer, Barnes and Murray, 1992: 1316). The tendency by wife assault claims-makers to construct an image of a middle class victim may arise from attempts to resist the stigmatization of wife assault as a lower class phenomenon (Loseke, 1989a: 202). In her constructionist study of battered women, Loseke (1989a: 202) argues that middle class status of the victim is invoked deliberately by wife assault claims-makers as a means to not only engender public (read middle class) support, but also encourage identification with the victim. According to Loseke (1989a: 202), images of poor women subjected to violence (particularly minor violence) might not engender much sympathy among the middle class without which required public support for the plight of the victim may not be forthcoming.

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<sup>13</sup> It will be recalled that wife assault training videos also portrayed a middle class setting.

<sup>14</sup> Wife assault claims-makers often respond to this counter claim with the nonfalsifiable argument that wife assault occurs in higher social classes but is not reported because of fear of stigma and increased access to other sources of help (Hargot, 1984: 35; MacLeod, 1987: 21).

To summarize, in adopting a one-way victimization interpretive framework, wife assault claims-makers construct a middle class victim who “lives in an environment where terror reigns” (Edelson, Eisikovits and Guttman: 1985: 231), is *not* responsible for the violence in *any* way (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 109), is a “survivor of harrowing, life-threatening experiences” (Bograd, 1988: 15), and is revictimized by a patriarchal social system of which the criminal justice and medical systems form a critical part. In this construction, terminating the abusive relationship is typified as a process characterized by women leaving numerous times before leaving permanently (McDonald, 1989: 102).

According to McShane and Williams (1992: 363), the construction in the victimization framework of a passive and helpless individual contributes to the image of the victim’s “essential innocence” and “moral purity.” Holstein and Miller (1990: 109) suggest that in order to reinforce this image, claims-makers undertake various rhetorical strategies including emphasizing those aspects of a person’s character which *fit* with the image and/or ignoring or discounting those features which might *challenge* it. Support for the existence of these rhetorical strategies is evident in wife assault claims-making.

For example, wife assault claims-makers reinforce the image of the victims’ essential innocence and moral purity by making a claim that there is no basis on which to hold the female victim accountable for either her behaviour or that of the offender (ibid.). An illustration of this latter claim is reflected in the following proviso recorded in the introductory pages of the recent state-funded report by the Canadian Panel (1993: 4) regarding violence against women:

We flatly reject *any* analyses that place *any* degree of responsibility for violence on the women themselves no matter what their actions, appearance, demeanour or behaviour [emphasis mine].<sup>15</sup>

According to Loseke (1989a: 202), women regarded as somehow responsible for their victimization would not command the same level of willing support from middle class taxpayers. Therefore, an image of the innocent victim in whom there is no culpability becomes important in encouraging public support for victim assistance services (ibid.).

Should challenges to the victim's essential innocence and moral purity arise--for example, in the form of observations about the victim's behaviour--they are discounted by wife assault claims-makers with rhetorical claims that attribute the problematic behaviour to *effects* of victimization. For example, accounts of victims' alcoholism, drug addiction, verbal aggression, inattentive mothering, and even self-blame are reduced to *coping strategies* (Pressman, 1989b: 26; Hamberger and Potente, 1994: 133; Rodgers, 1994: 11; Day, 1995: 11) and/or *responses to victimization* (Campbell et al., 1994: 110; Loseke, 1989: 181; Hamberger and Potente, 1994: 133). Illustrations of this rhetorical strategy are found in the following comments taken respectively from a feminist newsletter committed to advocacy for battered women and a feminist publication on wife assault issues:

Women with histories as victims of violence experience the lack of personal power and trust in their decisions, thereby reducing their abilities to set boundaries. . . . They may engage in self-destructive behaviors [sic], like drug and alcohol abuse, for lack of a different *coping mechanism*<sup>16</sup> [emphasis mine]. (Schnaps, 1995: 4)

<sup>15</sup> Among other factors, it is this type of claim that leads Taborsky and Sommer (in press) to denounce the Canadian Panel as an example of "advocacy research in gender studies related to family violence."

<sup>16</sup> This author extends the claim to a concern about abused women's increased risk of HIV infection because of drug use (purportedly adopted as an *escape* from the violence) and an inability to insist on safe sex (given low self-esteem, the latter of which is regarded as a *consequence* of the violence) (Schnaps, 1995: 4). That the foregoing claim is achieving increasing currency with wife assault claims-makers is

Psychic numbing. . .and depression, which is [*sic*] common to abused women, may *render her unable* to be available to her children for guidance, for emotional support, and even for their physical well-being [emphasis mine]. (Pressman, 1989b: 23)

Accounts of the *victim's* violence (another perceived threat to the image of the victims' essential innocence and moral purity) are dismissed by wife assault claims-makers as self-defense and/or retaliation for previous beatings (Williams, 1992: 627; Hamberger and Potente, 1994: 125). Even women who kill their abusive partners are considered by wife assault claims-makers to have acted out of either self-defense, an attempt to escape the violent partner, or a psychological disorder called the Battered Woman's Syndrome<sup>17</sup> (Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 6,8; Canadian Panel, 1993: 225; Hamberger and Potente, 1994: 129; Gagné, 1996: 80). According to this view, then, "women in conflict with the law are *victims* before they become offenders"<sup>18</sup> (emphasis mine) (Canadian Panel, 1993: 224).

This rhetoric of self defense also is adopted by wife assault claims-makers as a means of discrediting rival studies such as the 1985 American National Family Violence Survey which, according to Straus (1991: 186), makes a claim for gender symmetry in

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demonstrated in a recent article devoted to this particular issue in *Vis-à-vis*, a national feminist newsletter (McPherson, 1996: 11).

<sup>17</sup> Stark (1992: 277-9) notes that the Battered Women Syndrome framework (adopted as "the battered woman's defense" in these cases) initially was developed by psychologist Lenore Walker who argued that battered women "possessed by an exaggerated sense of their assailant's control. . .conclude that escape is impossible and concentrate instead on sheer survival, including everything from denial and numbing through provocative or retaliatory violence."

<sup>18</sup> According to the Canadian Panel (1993: 224), "Even those [women] who have committed serious crimes pose little risk to the community."

in intimate relationships. An example of this rhetoric is located in the following comments made by wife assault claims-maker Lenton (1995: 324):

One problem with the . . . study . . . is that [the researchers] rely on a sample question which asks whether the husband or wife struck the first blow *in a particular situation*. This question does not identify cases where women who have been repeatedly beaten and who have come to know the warning signs of an imminent attack may strike first but nevertheless do so in self-defense<sup>19</sup> [emphasis in original].

Apart from the appeal to self defense and retaliation, wife assault claims-makers respond to accounts of female violence with the following claims: First, in relation to male violence, *impact* of female violence typically is less; second, when women do commit violence, it often is less *frequently* than men<sup>20</sup> (Hamberger and Potente, 1994: 128). Together, the foregoing explanations for and understandings of female violence assist in constructing an image of what Hamberger and Potente (1994: 128) describe as a “domestically violent [woman]. . . caught up in a [partner-perpetrated] system of control, terror, and violence [who] never would have chosen violence in any other situation.”

Inasmuch as female violence in this construction is deemed to be “an *understandable* response”<sup>21</sup> (emphasis mine) (ibid.: 130-1) to the abuse, the image of the victim’s essential innocence and moral purity remains intact.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted, however, that Lenton (1995a: 571), unlike most wife assault claims-makers, acknowledges that not all female aggression is a matter of self-defense and retaliation.

<sup>20</sup> Rival claims-maker Straus (1991: 186 - emphasis in original) maintains that despite the possible appeal of claims which justify or rationalize female violence, “it [nevertheless] is important *for the safety of women* to acknowledge the fact of their own violence as one of many steps to end that violence and violence by husbands that it unwittingly helps to legitimize.”

<sup>21</sup> Hamberger and Potente (1994: 131) also point out that “except in cases of documented diminished capacity, a woman is responsible for her behaviour and capable of continuing to seek nonviolent options for ensuring her safety and the safety of her children. [However,] the notion of ‘responsibility’. . . refers to behavioural choice and does *not* imply blameworthiness” (emphasis mine).

In keeping with the victimization framework and apart from constructing an image of the victim, wife assault claims-makers also undertake a complementary opposing construction of the offender or “perpetrator of harm” (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 110; Emerson, 1994: 4). In order to construct this complementary opposition to the essential innocence of the victim (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 109), the offender “*must* partake of an image that exemplifies evil” (McShane and Williams, 1992: 263). Evidence abounds in wife assault claims-making for this image of an evil offender--despite the claim by Lenton (1995: 323) that “feminist theory does not characterize males as evil predators against pure and innocent female victims.”

For example, in the construction of wife assault (and based on self-reports of victims [Barrera et al., 1994: 334]), the offender or victimizer often is portrayed as a “tyrant” (Lake, 1995: 50) who has an “explosive temper” (ibid.), is extremely possessive and suspicious (Walker, 1983: 37), and needs to dominate and control his present or former female partner (Bograd, 1988: 14; Ferraro, 1988: 130; Kurz, 1989: 499,501; Lerman, 1992: 220). An appeal to the vileness of the offender also can be found in the emotionally provocative language used by wife assault claims-makers to describe the experience of wife assault victims. In support of this observation, the following illustrations are provided: Bograd’s (1988: 118) account of battered women who are subjected to “repeated brutalization” and who, not unlike “victims of terrorism, . . . struggle to survive,” Pressman’s (1989b: 23) portrayal of “the horror of the abuse” in which many women experience “psychic numbing” and become “emotionally withdrawn and affectively



deadened;” Dobash and Dobash’s (1992: 1) depiction of the “individual terror” to which battered women are subjected; Avis’ (1992: 229) characterization of the “brain-numbing fear” experienced by battered women; MacLeod’s (1987: 21) description of the “brutal” lives of women who are “hit, kicked, beaten, punched, and terrorized by their husbands,” and the Canadian Panel’s (1993: 34) claim for “the horror of violent attacks against women,” of which those against pregnant women are “particularly heinous.”

For wife assault claims-makers, the evil offender is one who comes from *all* social classes, is indistinguishable socially from other men (Bograd, 1988: 17), privately confines his violence to his partner (and in many instances, his children) (Bograd, 1988: 17; Pressman, 1989a: 11; OPC, 1994: 54), is particularly prone to beating his pregnant partner (Canadian Panel, 1993: 34), and often can appear charming and seductive (Walker, 1983: 37). Support for the existence of this image is located in the following excerpts taken respectively from a provincial police training guide and a health-care promotional booklet on wife assault:

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The man who terrorizes and beats his partner and children may be a pleasant neighbour, caring relative, or co-operative co-worker. . . . The contradiction between his private and public selves works to control his victim who realizes only too well that should she complain no one would believe that such a charming man could be violent. (OPC, 1994: 53)

What is your picture of an abuser? Do you think of a loud mouthed, beer-drinking, under-educated bully? It’s an assumption too many of us make. But abusers come in all sizes and colours, from all occupations, from the man with the sixth grade education to the man with a PhD. It may be a man with charm and wit, except when the doors are closed. It may be a member of parliament, a clerk, your doctor, a plumber, your minister, or farmer. (Lake, 1995: 49)

I would suggest that this image of the “Jekyll-and-Hyde” (OPC, 1994: 53) abuser is socially constructed by wife assault claims-makers to persuade audiences of the possibility that an abusive personality may be lurking behind even the most outwardly respectable man. I also would suggest that this claim not only implicitly reinforces the notion that wife assault is *not* a lower class phenomenon, but it also heightens suspicion (and fear) of particularly the female audience with the result that women’s perception of their stake in a solution to wife assault is increased.

As noted earlier, one of the goals of constructing the evil offender is to elicit condemnation worthiness. Rival arguments which appear to challenge this goal are dismissed by wife assault claims-makers. Take, for example, the latter groups’ vehement objections to explanations for wife assault which consider alcohol as a causal factor in the violence.<sup>22</sup> I would argue that these explanations are unacceptable to wife assault claims-makers partly because of the medicalization of alcoholism which, by invoking the image of a disease, not only “weaken[s] the onus of responsibility on the chronic drunk for his condition” (Gusfield, 1989: 433) but also constructs the alcoholic as “someone to be helped and not merely condemned” (ibid.). This latter construction is antithetical to the previously discussed image of the tyrannical batterer who deserves *no* public sympathy or assistance.

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<sup>22</sup> According to the VAW Survey and in terms of the perpetrator, alcohol is present in wife assault 50% of the time (Rodgers, 1994: 7). Despite this frequency, its causal effect is a subject of considerable debate in the literature (see Kantor and Straus, 1990: 216-17; Stets, 1991: 677; Cantos, Neidig and O’Leary, 1993: 298; White, Katz and Scarborough, 1992: 158; Felson and Tedeshi, 1993: 296; Sommer, 1992).

Given that claims-makers in general must attract attention and enlist support (Best, 1995: 349), their adoption of rhetoric characterized by the dramatization of innocence and evil fares well (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 110; McShane and Williams, 1992: 267). In terms of wife assault claims-making, the construction of a victim who is “maligned, humiliated, shunned, screamed at, pushed, kicked, punched, assaulted, beaten, raped, physically disfigured, tortured, threatened with weapons and murdered” (Canadian Panel, 1993: 3), “bloodied, broken and/or violated” (Heer, 1995: 6), and subjected to “bruises, broken bones, disfigurement, [and] even death” (Government of Canada, 1992: 4) elicits from the audience (in this case, the public) sympathy for the victim and outrage against the offender.

In examining the basis for the dramatization of the evil offender, inconsistencies and discrepancies arise. For example, the popular claim for the battering of pregnant women overlooks the study by renowned rival claims-maker Gelles (1988: 841) which suggests that the relationship between wife assault and pregnancy is *spurious* once age is controlled.<sup>23</sup> Also, studies have indicated that not all abusive men confine their violence to their partners and children, but rather engage in violent interactions outside the family as well (Shields, McCall and Hanneke, 1988: 93). In addition and as noted earlier, research

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<sup>23</sup> This rival claim comes from an evaluation of findings taken the 1985 American National Family Violence Survey involving a sample of 6002 households (Gelles, 1988: 842). According to Gelles (1988: 841), data demonstrate that “women under 25 years of age are both more likely to be pregnant and to be hit and abused by husbands and partners” (ibid.). (This observation about age was reconfirmed in the 1993 VAW Survey in which the rate of wife assault for women under 25 years of age was four times the national average [Rodgers, 1994: 5].) Although Gelles (1988: 841) has demonstrated that pregnant women are not a “specially vulnerable group” (ibid.), wife assault claims-makers such as the Canadian Panel (1993: 34) continue to make claims that “the biological ability to bear children can leave women vulnerable to specific kinds of [physical] violence.”

consistently demonstrates that reports of wife assault occur more often in lower socioeconomic classes. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the image persists of an evil Jeekyll-and-Hyde (often educated and affluent) villain victimizing an innocent victim.

In his discussion about child abuse claims-making, Best (1995: 103) points out that evidence of victims victimized by villains is located in dramatic examples which often are based on first-person testimony. Described variously by Best (1987: 106,114; 1995: 15) as “horror stories,” “atrocities tales,” “horrific examples,” and “melodramatic claims,” these emotionally provocative accounts are designed to “mobilize sentiments of outraged anger” (Bromley and Shupe, 1980: 198) and elicit audience support, the latter of which is necessary in what Straus (1992: 220) describes as “the struggle for allocation of scarce resources.”<sup>24</sup> Horror stories also are found in wife assault claims-making with first-person testimony often coming from shelter clients or clients in counselling<sup>25</sup> (Carter, Stacey and Shupe, 1988: 260).

That the strategy of recounting horrific examples is considered central to the wife assault claims-making process is demonstrated in the illustrations provided below. First, in the report by the Canadian Panel (1993: 5), the following three (of six) dramatic examples are documented in the report’s *introduction* to illustrate the context of wife assault:

My husband struck me on our honeymoon. He killed our first child by kicking the four-month child out of my uterus.

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<sup>24</sup> Regarding this issue, Johnson and Sacco (1995: 282) note that between 1988 and 1995, \$176 million was directed by the federal government to special initiatives on family violence.

<sup>25</sup> Front-line officers also adopted the rhetoric of atrocity stories in an attempt to convince me of the basis for their understanding of domestic violence. Moreover, front-line officers and administrative trainers alike provided numerous dramatic accounts to persuade me about the other’s insensitivity.

. . . he strangles me and takes me into the garage and tells me, 'Now you're going to die.' He has one hand on my throat and pulls back the other one to slap me in the face; with his fist in the air, he looks me straight in the eye and says, 'You want to die?'

The nightmare started right after the birth, which was very hard. . . . When I asked my parents to give me some essential things for the baby, he kicked me in the coccyx, which had been injured by the particularly hard delivery. . . . He ripped out the telephone line to cut me off from all assistance and potential help.

Second, and I would suggest again to denote context, dramatic examples--twenty-three in total (of which one is provided below)--are recorded by Dobash and Dobash (1992: 1-5) in the introductory pages of their treatise on violence against women:

I have had glasses thrown at me. I have been kicked in the abdomen when I was visibly pregnant. I have been kicked off the bed and hit while lying on the floor --again, while I was pregnant. I have been whipped, kicked and thrown, picked up again and thrown down again. I have been punched and kicked in the head, chest, face, and abdomen more times than I can count.

Atrocity tales like the ones noted above contribute to the typification of wife assault as characterized by "events where husbands repeatedly and intentionally use extreme forms of violence which produce psychological and physical injuries to victims"<sup>26</sup>

(Loseke, 1989: 175). There is a claim in wife assault literature that research has demonstrated women (often shelter residents) who provide these atrocity tales are "reliable and valid informants about their families' violent situations" (Carter, Stacey and Shupe, 1988: 270). However, Straus (1990: 4) argues that findings based on data from shelter residents should be cited for "clinical fallacy;" i.e., erroneously generalizing to the

<sup>26</sup> I would suggest that similar to the observation by Best (1989) regarding horror stories about child abuse, horrific examples of wife assault are linked to requests for more public funding to address the problem (see Canadian Panel, 1993: 5).

general population from a clinical sample *unrepresentative* of the general population.

Given this criticism, the image of the tyrant in wife assault claims-making may hold more for spouses of shelter residents than the majority of assaulted women who do not use shelters.

Another problem with this typification is that, as noted by Best (1987: 106), “selecting horrific examples gives a sense of the problem’s frightening, harmful dimensions. . . . [However] the atrocity (usually selected for its extreme nature) becomes the referent for discussions of the problem in general”--even though the typical case is much different. Support for this observation in wife assault claims-making can be found in the inconsistency between the typification of *extreme* levels of violence in wife assault and the majority of police reports which reflect *minor* levels of violence. Faced with this discrepancy, wife assault claims-makers make a claim for the escalating nature of violence in wife assault, thereby establishing minor violence as worthy of attention (although not worthy enough to be incorporated into the typification).<sup>27</sup>

However, this claim for escalation in the violence can be debated (Feld and Straus, 1990: 503; Follingstad et al., 1992: 109). For example, wife assault claims-makers themselves have produced findings which demonstrate that violent relationships can become nonviolent (Campbell et al., 1994: 107). Also, findings from the 1993 VAW Survey indicate that only 3% of women (presently or formerly married/common-law) had been assaulted by their male partner (present or former) during the previous twelve

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<sup>27</sup> It is this claim for escalation in the violence which contributes to the typification of the woman as situated in what Loseke (1989: 176 - emphasis in original) describes as a “*current condition of . . . danger.*”

months, whereas the lifetime rate of 29% was over nine times higher (Rodgers, 1994: 4). I would argue that this difference supports the claim for desistance rather than escalation of violence in wife assault.<sup>28</sup>

To counter this challenge to their constructed image of the increasingly violent offender, wife assault claims-makers respond with the nonfalsifiable claim that the offender often replaces *physical* expressions of power and control with *other* expressions of coercive control such as emotional and/or psychological abuse (Ritmeester, 1993: 177; Campbell et al., 1994: 108; MacLeod, 1994: 11). Should the existence of these more innocuous manifestations of control be denied even by the victim, the denial is dismissed by wife assault claims-makers with another nonfalsifiable claim; i.e., that these women may be “cognitively minimiz[ing] their abuse in order to justify the continued relationship” (Campbell et al., 1994: 108).

Having constructed particular images of victim and offender--and regardless of any inconsistencies, discrepancies or insubstantial arguments in wife assault claims-making --claims-makers need to convince the general public as well as policy makers of the magnitude of the problem.<sup>29</sup> According to Best (1987: 106-8,115), claims-makers routinely appeal to statistics from *carefully selected* studies to validate their claims. Statistics commonly noted are incidence estimates, growth estimates, and range claims (ibid.). Incidence estimates suggest that the problem is widespread and demands attention;

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<sup>28</sup> According to Feld and Straus (1990: 492 - emphasis in original), “*desistance* refers to the cessation of a pattern of criminal behavior (sic).”

<sup>29</sup> Straus (1992: 220) notes that policy makers normally rely on prevalence rates in making policy decisions.

growth estimates serve to legitimate a need to take immediate action against the problem; range claims present the problem as existing throughout the social structure (thereby giving *everyone* a vested interest in the problem's solution) (ibid.: 106,108).

In wife assault claims-making, statistical studies routinely are appealed to as evidence that wife assault is widespread<sup>30</sup> (Dutton, 1984: 282; MacLeod, 1987: 6-7; Saunders, 1988: 97-8; Palmer and Brown, 1989: 57; Pressman, 1989b: 21; Avis, 1992: 226; Dobash et al., 1992: 74-5; Jaffe et al., 1992: 129; Pagelow, 1992: 100; Hamberger and Potente, 1994: 25; Coomaraswamy, 1995: 19; LoSasso, 1995: 3). An illustration of the central importance of these statistical claims is reflected in the considerable attention to and acclaim for Canada's first national survey on violence against women<sup>31</sup> (Rodgers, 1994: 2). This latter survey, with its exclusive focus on women's experiences (including their *fear* of victimization),<sup>32</sup> is lauded for both its "comprehensive focus" (Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 293) and "innovative and unique" approach (Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 458). Heralded by wife assault claims-makers as "a milestone in methodological

innovation and breadth of coverage" (ibid.: 459), the VAW Survey is praised for its

"elaboration of [an] understanding of the *broad* range of violence women experience and

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<sup>30</sup> As noted by Loseke (1989: 189-90), "social problems and social collectivities are not constructed once and for all. [Rather,] they continue to exist only because new cases are continually 'found.'" It would appear, then, that insofar as statistics reproduce the collective representation of wife assault victims and thereby validate their existence, the compilation of statistics is *ongoing* as claims-makers seek to maintain persuasive arguments.

<sup>31</sup> Taborsky and Sommer (in press) insist that the VAW Survey has been met with both acclaim and *uncritical* acceptance.

<sup>32</sup> Evidence of a shift towards including the role of fear in wife assault is found in recent discussions by Sacco (1995) and Keane (1995). For example, in his secondary analysis of VAW Survey data, Keane (1995: 450) states that the findings "allow us to gain a greater appreciation for [not only] the pervasiveness of fear experienced by half the population. . . [but also] the harm caused by many acts which are not likely to receive official police attention."



the impact of these experiences on women's lives" (emphasis mine) (Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 293). According to renowned British wife assault claims-makers Dobash and Dobash (1995: 457,458,481), this latter research, both with its "sophisticated and sensitive methodology" and observation of "the highest standards of scientific rigor," represents "the most comprehensive survey yet conducted on the nature of violence and coercion experienced by women in public and private settings." Dobash and Dobash (1995: 480) further suggest that "for some time to come, researchers will find the results of the VAW survey an important source of data to be used in expanding existing knowledge of violence against women."

For wife assault claims-makers such as Dobash and Dobash (1995: 462), the importance of survey statistics is reflected in the decision by the Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics to devote an entire volume of its Bulletin, *Juristat*, to an examination of the VAW Survey. It also is demonstrated by the publication of a special issue of the *Canadian Journal of Criminology* which undertook an analysis of this survey (Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 281).

Despite the apparent legitimacy given to this survey, as acknowledged by wife assault claims-maker Bograd (1988: 23), "data collection, its interpretation, and its use are all inherently political." To illustrate, although the special issue of the *Journal* was "dedicated to analysis of Statistics Canada's national survey" (Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 299), *all* journal articles reflected a feminist perspective of wife assault; notably absent

were articles informed by the family violence perspective.<sup>33</sup> The political nature of research also is reflected in the contradiction between wife assault claims-makers' praise for the VAW survey's adherence to "the highest standards of scientific rigor" (Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 457) and rival claims-makers' censure of its "flawed methods" and "cultural politics" (Sommer and Fekete, under review). In connection with the latter claim, Sommer and Fekete (under review) fault the VAW Survey on the following grounds:

(1) the unrepresentative nature of the sample, (2) the *misleading* use of 'double-barrelled' questions and over-inclusive questions, (3) the biases in wording, (4) the presentation of the context of abuse as the proportion of multiple relationships, rather than the proportion of responding women, (5) the reliance on anecdotal reports, (6) the emphasis on the prevalence rather than on the *incidence* of spousal abuse, (7) the false impression of criminality created by the use of Criminal Code definitions as measures of friction in intimate relationships, (8) the limitations of a single-sex survey with an *exclusive* focus on female victimization by men as the *only* form of violence under consideration, and (9) the *selective* citing of research literature to support the conceptual frameworks of feminist advocacy [emphasis mine].<sup>34</sup>

Support for selective citing of research comes from the tendency by wife assault claims-makers to overlook studies on same sex domestic violence (Merrill, 1996) which, according to Elliott (1996: 2), demonstrate that anywhere from "22% to 46% of all lesbians have been in a physically violent same-sex relationship."<sup>35</sup> Elliot (1996: 3) argues that "the phenomenon of same-sex domestic violence illustrates that the routine,

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<sup>33</sup> It should be noted, however, that one of the journal articles, although uncritical of the VAW Survey, nevertheless argued that the survey's findings gave *more* support to Straus' rival family violence perspective (or power theory) than the feminist perspective of wife assault (see Lenton [1995]). It also should be noted that this challenge to the feminist perspective was criticized in another article in the same journal publication (see Dobash and Dobash [1995: 463-6]) .

<sup>34</sup> Emphasis has been added.

<sup>35</sup> Elliot notes that these statistics of 26% and 46% respectively come from studies by Coleman (1990) and Lie et al. (1991).

intentional intimidation through abusive acts and words is not a gender issue, but a power issue.” For Letellier (1994: 95), these statistics represent a “fundamental challenge” to wife assault claims-makers’ strict gender categorizations of male victimizers and female victims.

Allegations of claims-makers’ selective citing of research are not limited to specific studies but, as noted by Best (1995: 348), extend to a more general *selective* interpretation of data in a manner *consistent* with claims-makers’ understanding of the issue. In wife assault claims-making, support for selective interpretation of data can be found in two recent reviews of the VAW Survey (see Dobash and Dobash [1995] and Johnson and Sacco [1995]). Both reviews focus on the survey’s lifetime or “ever” rate (Smith, 1994: 112) of wife assault which, when generalized to the population, translates into the finding that almost one-third (29%) of Canadian women have been assaulted physically or sexually by a marital partner (present or former, married or common-law) (Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 462; Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 296). What the reviews neglect to mention is that the survey also demonstrates that *most* men did *not* violently assault their partner --even though the feminist perspective of wife assault maintains that structured gender inequality is widespread (Lenton, 1995: 320).<sup>36</sup> In addition, the reviews disregard the survey’s low *annual* rate of violence which reveals that 3% of ever married/common-law

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<sup>36</sup> This admission by Lenton (1995: 320), a self-declared feminist researcher, is rare among wife assault claims-makers, some of whom (as noted above) are critical of Lenton’s views about wife assault in general and the VAW Survey in particular (see Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 463-6).

women indicated they had been assaulted in the previous twelve months<sup>37</sup> (see Rodgers, 1994: 4).

According to rival claims-makers Sommer and Fekete (under review), “it is equally important to know that only 3% of these same women were abused during the past year . . . [especially in terms of] developing intervention programs for women most at risk [and] giv[ing] immediacy to the problem of violence against women.” However, wife assault claims-maker Smith (1994: 112) argues that a focus on annual rates obscures the real scope of the violence. I would suggest that in view of the importance of high numbers in claims-making, wife assault claims-makers’ preference for, and objections to, the lifetime rate and annual rate respectively are understandable--especially given the observation by Smith (1994: 112) that lifetime rates usually result in an *increase* (sometimes dramatic) in reported victims. I also would suggest that this debate supports the observation by Best (1987: 115) that in making rhetorical decisions, claims-makers “inevitably. . .select from available arguments. . .and give some arguments particular emphasis.”

Another example of selective citing of research comes from the special issue of *Juristat* noted earlier which outlined the VAW survey’s findings about wife assault. In the report’s findings on requests for police intervention, it is noted that of the incidents of

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<sup>37</sup> In her Canadian study on estimated costs of violence against women, wife assault claims-maker Greaves (1995: 16) acknowledges this annual rate of 3%. But, she later generalizes it to the respective Canadian female population and then translates it into a numerical figure in order to make the claim that, “There are 200,700 women who are *battered* in Canada each year” (emphasis mine) (ibid.). Given that the definition of assault in the VAW Survey ranged from *threats* of violence to *threats* or use of guns or other weapons, and given that the most common forms of violence were pushing, grabbing, and shoving (see Rodgers, 1994: 3,7), I would suggest that Greave’s (1995: 16) strategies of generalizing the low annual rate and using the term “battered” serve as an illustration of attempts by wife assault claims-makers at dramatization.

abuse reported in the study, police were notified in only 29% of the cases (ibid.: 14-15). What this widely circulated state report fails to mention is that of those women who did not contact the police, fully *half* indicated they considered the violence too *minor* (see Statistics Canada, 1994: .C167,.C206). This latter finding (which, incidentally, serves as another challenge to wife assault claims-makers' typification of extreme levels of violence) is available in the much less accessible VAW Survey user's guide.<sup>38</sup>

In their appeal to official statistics and in addition to selective citing of research, wife assault claims-makers routinely suggest that actual numbers of seriously assaulted women *may* be higher<sup>39</sup> (Edelson, Eisikovits and Guttman, 1985: 239; Palmer and Brown, 1989: 58; Smith, 1994: 109-10,124; Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 282; Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 495). An example of this rhetorical strategy is found in the argument by Edelson, Eisikovits and Guttman (1985: 239) which states that although *identified* batterers are likely to come from lower socioeconomic classes,<sup>40</sup> "[it] cannot be certain that woman abuse is not common in middle and high socioeconomic groups." This popular suggestion that many more assaulted women exist but have not reported the offense allows claims-makers to invoke an image of the epidemic nature of wife assault. For example, an OPC (1994a: 18) wife assault training manual states that, "The problem [of wife assault] is clearly on the scale of a national epidemic," while Avis (1992: 226,230) and the Canadian

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<sup>38</sup> At the time of this study, this publication could be obtained only by ordering a copy from Statistics Canada and at a fee of \$30.00.

<sup>39</sup> This rhetorical strategy provides the basis for a common metaphor in wife assault claims-making that estimates regarding wife assault issues represent only "the tip of the iceberg" (see Day [1995] and LoSasso [1995: 3]).

<sup>40</sup> Edelson, Eisikovits and Guttman (1985: 239) base this argument on the strong association of high visibility and social control in lower social classes.

Panel (1993: C-1,4,23) make claims for “staggering,” “monumental,” and “crisis” levels of violence against women.<sup>41</sup>

Despite the frequency with which wife assault claims-makers appeal to the argument about underreporting, they give little credence to a rival argument (employing similar logic) about men underreporting female violence. In this latter argument, a claim is made that statistics on female-perpetrated domestic assaults may be higher insofar as men tend to underreport female violence because of cultural prescriptions of masculinity and greater resources both for accessing private help and avoiding public reporting (Straus, 1991: 186; Cook and Harris, 1995: 143).

In their attempts to convince their audiences of the magnitude of the problem, wife assault claims-makers also appeal to range claims. Here, a claim is made that wife assault victims include women of *all* age groups, faiths, cultures, socioeconomic classes, and geographical regions<sup>42</sup> (Pressman, 1989b: 21; Thornton, 1991: 456). While wife assault claims-makers make a general claim for victims of *all* ages, Gelles (1990: 283) notes that violence towards women thirty years of age or younger is roughly *double* the rate among women over this age. Moreover, the inference that *all* women are at risk is inconsistent with the previously noted middle class typification in wife assault claims-making. As well, while studies do not indicate that any group is immune to violence, there is considerable

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<sup>41</sup> For further illustrations, see Pressman (1989b: 42,44).

<sup>42</sup> Evidence of attempts by wife assault claims-makers to implicate *all* women as potential victims of wife assault is reflected in the following two examples. First, in answering the rhetorical question, “Who are victims of abuse?” a healthcare magazine article states, “It could be your next door neighbour. It could be you” (Lake, 1995: 49). Second, in a government publication, it is claimed that “none of us can afford to think of family violence [read wife assault] as somebody else’s problem” (Government of Canada, 1992: 1).

support for the claim that violence occurs *disproportionately* among various groups. As noted earlier, although most representative surveys support the occurrence of wife assault in all socioeconomic classes, the findings do not support a claim for uniform distribution but rather suggest that reports of wife assault *consistently* are associated with *lower* social classes. Wife assault claims-makers respond to this class-based argument with the nonfalsifiable claim that violence in more affluent groups often is hidden because of women in these groups who are more likely to use resources other than shelters, legal clinics, and other social services (OWD as cited by Denham and Gillespie, 1992: Handout 9; OPC, 1994: 37).

Claims-makers also attempt to elicit support for the wife assault issue by appealing to the tremendous monetary costs associated with this social problem. For example, MacLeod (1987: 36) states "the little that is known [about wife assault]. . . suggests that the financial costs of battering could be astronomical," while the Canadian Panel (1993: 3) suggests that monetary costs are substantive and an issue for *all* Canadians. Greaves (1995: 14) estimates annual costs at over \$4.2 billion,<sup>43</sup> while Day's (1995: 34) annual estimate of health-related costs exceeds \$1.6 billion.<sup>44</sup> As well, a chart located in a recent feminist newsletter and entitled, "*Everyone Pays for Family Violence: Services to Support Abused Women and Children*," addresses the following eight areas where funds of an

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<sup>43</sup> This figure breaks down into the following categories and costs: social services/education -- over \$2.3 billion; criminal justice -- over \$871 million; labour/employment -- over \$576 million; and health/medical -- over \$408 million (*ibid.*). Inasmuch as cost estimates extend to wife assault as well as sexual assault/rape and incest/child sexual assault (*ibid.*), separate costs for wife assault were not available.

<sup>44</sup> This figure is substantially higher than the one noted by Greaves (1995: 14), the latter of whom explains the discrepancy to Day's use of "a wider set of criteria for establishing costs."

undisclosed amount are directed at combating this social problem: police, justice system, social agencies, medical help, housing, employment, educational support, and income assistance (Vis-à-vis, 1996: 12). I would suggest that these cost claims are intended to enlist support from two audiences in particular: first, middle class taxpayers concerned about increased taxation and rising state expenditures; and, second, policy makers concerned about rising state expenditures and the middle class concern about increased taxation.

Should statistics not validate their claims to the extent deemed necessary, wife assault claims-makers can appeal to claims for other more innocuous forms of violence inflicted upon women by their partners such as “emotional abuse,<sup>45</sup> physical or emotional withdrawal, assaults against children, affairs with other women, or denial of money” (Ferraro, 1988: 13). While these latter actions do not reflect physical assaults against women, they are constructed by claims-makers as *forms* of violence against women. For some wife assault claims-makers, forms of violence have been extended to include the following: psychological, sexual, physical, financial, and spiritual abuse; abuse of trust; pornography; stalking; misuse of reproductive technologies (Canadian Panel, 1993: 26); sexist jokes; pornography; sexual harassment; prostitution; incest (Paquet-Deehy, 1993: 1); and suggestive comments and looks from men (Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 285).

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<sup>45</sup> That emotional abuse is accepted by some claims-makers as a form of violence sustained in wife assault is evident in the observation by Pressman (1989b: 21) that, “Many shelters include verbal and emotional abuse *alone* as prerequisites for admittance” (emphasis mine). This admissions policy raises questions about the *forms* of violence that shelter statistics represent, especially given “the image of a shelter client [as] a woman who ‘grabs her children and flees her violent husband in the middle of the night’” (as cited by Martin in Loseke, 1989: 176).



The foregoing description confirms the observation by both MacLeod (1989: 3) and Edwards (1987: 14) that definitions of wife assault have become more complex.<sup>46</sup> Although complex definitions “prevent the data from being definitive” (Westhues, 1989: 137), their adoption by wife-assault claims-makers is understandable given the combination of the need for high numbers in eliciting audience support and the observation by Smith (1994: 110) that “the broader the definition of violence, the higher the reported level of victimization.” In connection with the latter claim, Pressman (1989b: 21), in her discussion about the incidence of wife assault, notes that “if one includes psychological and emotional assaults such as intimidation and verbal denigration, that figure would *expand significantly*” (emphasis mine).

Broadened definitions of wife assault also have allowed claims-makers to bring this issue under the more general categories of *male violence against women* (Edwards, 1987: 15) and *male violence against women and children* (Freedman, 1985; Clark, 1989: 424; Avis, 1992: 228; Canadian Panel, 1993: 48). According to Edwards (1987: 15), this “significant shift. . . within feminist thought [has given rise to]. . . an appreciation of male violence overall as being at some level a unitary phenomenon.”<sup>47</sup> I would suggest that the rhetorical strategy of subsuming wife assault under the category of ‘male violence against women and children’ is functional for wife assault claims-makers in the following ways:

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<sup>46</sup> This expansion of a social problem’s domain is noted by Best (1995: 190) in his discussion on the social construction of child abuse.

<sup>47</sup> Illustrations of a shift away from defining the problem as ‘wife assault’ come from a provincial training college’s expressed intention to rename ‘Wife Assault Training’ to ‘Training on Violence against Women in Relationships’ as well as a 1992 national police training workshop report which states that, “Officers need to recognize that ‘wife assault’ is a narrow term [and that] violence in intimate relationships is more appropriate” (O’Sullivan et al., 1994: 19).

First, through its link with child abuse, wife assault gains increased public support as a legitimate social problem by tapping into already established support for the child abuse movement. Second, in linking together women and children, wife assault claims-makers reinforce the image of the victim's essential innocence (and blamelessness) by drawing on what Best (1990: 34) describes as the image of the innocent blameless child constructed in child abuse claims-making. Third, in placing women and children in the same category, wife assault claims-makers direct attention *away* from women as abusers of children thereby protecting the image of the victim's moral purity.

These broadened definitions of wife assault have resulted in a reconstruction of levels of violence from *disconnected* categories to related categories situated on a *continuum* (Edwards, 1987: 26; Kurz, 1989: 501). For example, according to the Canadian Panel (1993: 3), "violence must be understood as a continuum that ranges from verbal insults through physical blows to murder." This notion of a continuum also is found in the VAW Survey insofar as this survey as measures "the *broad* range of violence women experience" (Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 293). The significance of applying the concept of a continuum to wife assault is illustrated in the following discussion by Kelly (1989: 58) regarding male sexual violence against women:

The common underlying factor is that men use a variety of methods of abuse, coercion and force to control women. . . . Using the concept of a continuum highlights the fact that *all* women experience sexual violence at some point in their lives. . . . An important implication of this way of viewing sexual violence is that a clear distinction *cannot* be made between 'victims' and other women. . . . The use of the term 'victim' in order to separate one group of women from other women's

lives and experience must be questioned. *The same logic applies to the definition of 'offenders'*<sup>48</sup> [emphasis mine].

I would argue that the rhetoric of a continuum serves three central purposes for wife assault claims-makers. First--and theoretically--it allows for a perspective which can link all forms of male violence, abuse, and exploitation to men's struggle to maintain patriarchy (Edwards, 1987: 23-24); second--and theoretically as well as practically--it legitimates even the most minor forms of violence as worthy of both attention *and* statistical measurement; third--and on a practical level--the notion of a continuum "raises women's level of awareness of this violence and lowers their level of tolerance towards it" (Paquet-Deehy, 1993: 1). This latter situation is intended to augment an increase in audience support by implicitly suggesting that women as victims (or, at the very least, *potential* victims) all have a stake in the resolution of this issue.<sup>49</sup> However, although the notion of a continuum is useful in one respect for wife assault claims-makers, it nevertheless is inconsistent with the image of *extreme* violence portrayed in atrocity stories. As well, it contradicts early wife assault claims that the issue was *not* a problem that directly affected the majority in society (Tierney, 1982: 213).

Armed with selected statistical support regarding their claim for wife assault victims as "passive and helpless recipients of injury" (Holstein and Miller, 1990: 119) perpetrated on them by vile offenders, claims-makers mobilize social concern,<sup>50</sup> justify

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<sup>48</sup> Emphasis has been added.

<sup>49</sup> I suggest that the concept of a continuum also is useful in reinforcing the claim noted earlier for the escalating nature of violence in wife assault.

<sup>50</sup> According to wife assault claims-maker Avis (1992: 228), "[Statistical] data lead us to the unavoidable conclusion that male violence and abuse directed against women and children in families are extremely

various forms of intervention, and lobby for policies designed to resolve this problem (Loseke, 1989a: 202). According to Loseke (1989a: 197-98), while many claims have been made regarding the solution to the problem of wife assault, the most common are that the violence should be defined by the police as criminal, and the abuser should be arrested.<sup>51</sup>

Lobbying by claims-makers for mandatory charge/arrest policies largely was based on Sherman and Berk's (1984) pilot study which demonstrated that recidivism rates for domestic violence and wife assault were reduced in those cases where charges and arrests were made (Jolin and Moose, 1997: 280).<sup>52</sup> Although Sherman and Berk (1984: 270) advocated a mandatory charge and arrest policy, they stated that they "[did] not favor (*sic*) requiring arrests in all misdemeanor domestic assault cases" (emphasis in original). This proviso was based on findings which demonstrated that "there [was] a good chance that arrest work[ed] far better for some kinds of offenders than others and in some kinds of situations better than others" (*ibid.*). For this reason, Sherman and Berk (1984: 270) indicated that they "[felt] it best to leave police a loophole to capitalize on that variation."

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common in Canadian and American families and that consequences are highly destructive for individuals, families, and our *collective* well-being as societies" (emphasis mine).

<sup>51</sup> Despite this observation, there is an ongoing debate in the literature regarding effects of charging and arresting not only between wife assault claims-makers and rival claims-makers but also *among* the former group (see Berk et al., 1980; J. Rådford, 1989; Fagan, 1988: 266; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1988; Clark, 1989: 476; Ellis and Dekeseredy, 1989; Stanko, 1989: 67; DeKeseredy and Hinch, 1991: 33; Egley, 1991; Hilton, 1991: 38; Jaffe et al., 1991; Berk et al.: 1992: 704; Hirschel and Hutchison, 1991: 68; Lerman, 1992: 230; Sherman, 1992: 206; Grasmick et al., 1993: 323; Bourg and Stock, 1994; Keilitz, 1994; Choi and Edelson, 1995; Saunders, 1995).

<sup>52</sup> Buzawa and Buzawa (1992: 79) note that "the legal impetus forcing changes in police practices. . . [stemmed from] the feminist movement, . . . new social research and advocacy papers. . . [which] favour[ed] an interventionist role for the police."

Additionally, these researchers recommended that their study be replicated in order to reconfirm findings (*ibid.*).

A total of six replication studies were undertaken out of which three demonstrated the following consequences to a mandatory charge and arrest policy: (1) reducing domestic violence/wife assault in some cities, but increasing it in others; (2) reducing domestic violence/wife assault among the employed, but increasing it among the unemployed; and (3) reducing domestic violence/wife assault in the short term, but increasing it in the long run (Sherman, 1992: 19,21,260). Based on these findings, Sherman (1992: 187) called for a repeal of mandatory arrest policies and a return to police discretion.<sup>53</sup>

However, wife assault claims-makers such as Pagelow (1992: 93) not only overlook Sherman and Berk's (1984: 270) qualified endorsement of the original arrest experiment, but also discount findings of the replication studies on the basis of questions about generalizability. For example, Pagelow (1992: 93) focuses on findings from the original experiment (which she notes indicated that "arrests [were] clearly an improvement over sending the suspect away") rather than focus on findings from the replication studies in which "no clear pro-arrest mandate emerged" (Jolin and Moose, 1997: 283). Some wife assault claims-makers such as Pressman (1989a: 18) choose to overlook entirely the

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<sup>53</sup> A partial explanation for lobbying by claims-makers for a charge policy which eliminated police discretion was the claim that officers were not properly enforcing the policing of wife assault because they were biased against women (Ferraro, 1989: 69; Steinman, 1991: 5; Lerman, 1992: 239; McCord, 1992: 234). However, Sherman (1992: 25,39), Choi (1994: 34) and Klinger (1995: 308) all note that studies consistently demonstrate underenforcement is common in police response to *all* violence associated with interpersonal conflicts, not just wife assault. For this reason, Sherman (1992: 39) argues that "police are not discriminating against women, but against violence in general."

results of the replication studies and make a general claim for arrest as a “powerful” deterrent. Others such as Lerman (1992: 218,226) attribute the recommendation about reinstating police discretion to Sherman’s (1992: 187) “myopic view,” the latter of which purportedly is based on “narrow” and “misguided” replication studies that ignore context.

As indicated earlier, claims-makers may overlook official data or selectively interpret it in a manner consistent with their claims. An illustration of the strategy as it relates to research on arrests is located in the discussion by Lerman (1992: 239) concerning justification for retaining the mandatory charge/arrest policy. According to Lerman (1992: 239), “the entire system would grind to a halt if policy initiatives were contingent upon empirical proof of the effectiveness.” Yet, part of the impetus for feminists lobbying for a mandatory charge/arrest policy stemmed from studies which provided empirical evidence of its effectiveness (Fagan, 1988: 167). Given this inconsistency, an argument can be made that rival studies purposefully may be overlooked by wife assault claims-makers in order to preserve established favoured policy. Brownstein (1995: 23) who suggests that this latter situation extends to claims-makers in general notes the following:

They [claims-makers] begin to believe they know what policies should be initiated independent of empirical evidence either in support of or contrary to their opinion. So they use official statistics not to test their claims about policy ideas, but rather to support their claims about favored [*sic*] policies.

In their attempts to persuade the public about the content and magnitude of the social problem, claims-makers often are met with rival claims that typify competing and often very different representations of the issue (Best, 1995: 103). In addition to the

various strategies already noted, wife assault claims-makers undertake other rhetorical strategies in their ongoing battle against competing claims. One important strategy they adopt is the rhetoric of myths.<sup>54</sup> ‘Myth’ is defined here as a “widely held but false notion” (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1990: 784). Denouncing rival explanations as myths figures prominently in wife assault promotional material as well as academic literature; it also forms a component of wife assault sensitivity training for police officers (for illustrations see Berk et al., 1983: 197; Cannings, 1984; Hargot, 1984: 33-6; Bograd, 1988: 22; Pressman, 1989b: 38; Jaffe et al., 1991: 3; Steering Committee on Wife Assault, 1991: 8; Pagelow, 1992: 107-11; Dobash and Dobash, 1992: 5,56; Dobash et al., 1992: 71; Canadian Panel, 1993: 47,214; Ministry of Solicitor General, 1994: 14-15).

In addition to the list of myths and facts used in the training under evaluation (and addressed at length in earlier discussions), other illustrations include the following: Loseke’s (1991: 163) denouncement of the intergenerational transfer hypothesis as “a folk theory;” Heer’s (1995: 6) description of rival claims as “a thinly veiled version of past myths, misconceptions, and victim-blaming pronouncements;” Mitsch Bush’s (1992: 59) criticism of the “persistence of the belief in victim precipitation;” and the Canadian Panel’s (1993: 4) claim that “myths and misinformation surround violence against women.” I would argue that the rhetoric of myths accomplishes two ends: first, it pejoratively dismisses rival accounts of the phenomenon as widely held mistaken beliefs or

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<sup>54</sup> Rhetoric of myths and facts also has been adopted by claims-makers for the Men’s Rights Movement as indicated in a brochure that lists the “facts” or “neglected issues of domestic violence” (Men’s Television Network: n.d.). That this rhetoric of myths has extended to other sorts of claims as well is evident in some recent promotional direct mail material which I received entitled, “The Myths and Facts about Aspirin” (Bayer Consumer Care Division, n.d.).

misconceptions; second, it implicitly makes a singular claim for *truth* on the part of wife assault claims-makers.<sup>55</sup> In this regard, Carter, Stacey and Shupe (1988: 271) note that “in any field of research where passionate concerns for equality and justice are involved, . . . plausible explanations easily become incorporated into ideology and accepted/ disseminated as truth.”

Another rhetorical strategy adopted by wife assault claims-makers is to ignore or discount competing claims. For example, feminist author Kurz (1989: 489) notes that researchers have played a critical role in making wife assault a social issue by providing statistical evidence which documents its extent. However, the author fails to disclose that selection of this statistical evidence overlooks empirical support for the competing claim of gender symmetry in domestic violence (Brinkerhoff and Lupri, 1988; Sommer, Barnes and Murray, 1992; Straus, 1992; Cantos, Neidig and O’Leary, 1993). According to Straus (1992: 223), statistical support for roughly equivalent amounts of male and female violence in the home comes from the 1975 and 1985 American National Family Violence Surveys as well as studies by at least *twenty* other investigators.<sup>56</sup>

Wife assault claims-makers respond to rival statistics by discrediting the measurement (Conflict Tactics Scale [CTS]) used in the rival research. For example, the CTS routinely is criticized by wife assault claims-makers for ignoring the following:

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<sup>55</sup> Straus (1991: 181), in responding to criticisms directed against his research by wife assault claims-makers, Kurz and Loseke, had this to say, “In my opinion, they believe they know the truth, and . . . everyone must conform to that[account of the] truth.”

<sup>56</sup> Straus (1992: 224) suggests that this statistical support is regarded by wife assault claims-makers as “a threat that must be destroyed” insofar as it is perceived as a threat not only to wife assault claims-makers, but also to women in general.



context and consequences of the violence; gendered power imbalances within the marriage context; and social desirability and impression management factors which might preclude people from answering the CTS accurately (Berk et al., 1983: 211-12; Tolman, 1989: 160; Smith, 1994: 109; Dobash and Dobash, 1995: 459; Dutton, 1995: 14; Johnson and Sacco, 1995: 291). In terms of consequences, wife assault claims-makers point to how women are injured more severely than men in intimate violence (Berk et al., 1983: 206; Saunders, 1988: 97; Kurz, 1989: 495; Dobash et al., 1992: 75; Lenton, 1995a: 571). Even rival claims-maker Straus (1991:186) admits that “assaults by men are seven times more likely than assaults by women to produce injury that requires medical treatment.” However, what often goes without mention is the low rate of assaults resulting in injuries *serious enough* to require medical attention (ibid.: 187). According to Straus (1991: 187), basing the rate of wife assault on the rate of women who require medical attention for injuries sustained in the violence reduces wife assault incidence statistics by 97 %.<sup>57</sup> It would appear, then, that while the claim for injury is useful for wife assault claims-makers on one level (i.e., in discounting rival claims of mutual combat), it diminishes claims on another level (i.e., in reducing wife assault incidence rates).

Stets and Straus (1990: 165) suggest that “there is no simple answer to the question of whether violence should be defined in terms of assaultive *acts* or *injuries*” (emphasis in original). Violence measured by acts demonstrates that women are as violent

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<sup>57</sup> Although beyond the scope of this study, investigation is warranted into the discrepancy between Straus’ finding and the one in the 1993 VAW Survey which indicates that approximately 40% of wife assault victims sought medical attention (Rodgers, 1994: 9).

as men, whereas violence measured by injuries demonstrates that men are more violent than women (ibid.). If, as wife assault claims-makers declare, “no amount of violence is acceptable” (emphasis mine) (Canadian Panel, 1993: 24), and if “the attitudes and values that generate *all* forms of violence are the same” (emphasis mine) (Pressman, 1989b: 38), then--assuming the preceding statements apply equally to *both* genders--a case could be made for measuring violence based on assaultive *acts*.

Other rhetorical strategies used by wife assault claims-makers to repudiate rival arguments include the following: denouncement of alternative explanations for wife assault as “excuses;” claim for a lack of attention to “root causes;” and insistence that perceived challenges to the victim’s essential innocence revictimize the victim. For example, Bograd (1988: 21) labels as revictimization the question of why victims do not leave abusive partners. Instead, Bograd (1988: 21) insists that researchers need to ask, “What social factors constrain a woman from leaving? or ‘Why do men use physical force against their wives?’” Coomaraswamy (1995: 22) states that, “Whatever the *causes* for violence against women, they should not be understood as *justifications* for the use of violence against women” (emphasis in original). The Canadian Panel (1993: 6) claims that rival explanations for violence such as loss of control, stress, alcohol, anxiety, depression, and economic conditions--while *possibly* factors in wife assault are “neither acceptable *excuses* nor *root causes*” (emphasis mine).

The basis for these rhetorical strategies appears to be twofold. First, I would suggest there exists a concern by wife assault claims-makers that consideration of *any*

cause of wife assault *other than* the male's need to maintain power and control somehow *justifies* the violence (Bograd, 1988: 15; Palmer and Brown, 1989: 64). Second, as noted by Straus (1991: 184),

If anything except male dominance and other aspects of social inequality were to be recognized as causing wife beating, it would [be regarded as] undermin[ing] efforts to [both] create an egalitarian society and. . . allocate resources to protect victims of wife beating.

Another rhetorical strategy adopted by wife assault claims-makers is to discredit rival accounts by pointing out that a *direct* causal connection cannot be made because of *disconfirming* cases (see Avis, 1992: 229). For example, Kurz (1989: 497) rejects a pathological family history as a primary explanation for wife assault because of empirical data which suggest that, "It is not invariably predictive that witnessing abuse in one's family of origin leads to later abusive behaviour." Edelson, Eisikovits and Guttman (1985: 234), who agree with this position, state that, "Violence in the family of origin cannot explain battering by men who neither witnessed abuse in their family of origin or were victimized as children." Using similar logic, wife assault claims-makers also reject stress and alcohol as causal explanations in the violence on the basis that neither *all* men under stress nor *all* men who drink beat their wives (Freedman, 1985: 48; Palmer and Brown, 1989: 59; Pressman, 1989a: 13).

If the existence of disconfirming cases is sufficient to dismiss an argument, then wife assault claims-makers need to reevaluate their central argument for the patriarchy

thesis insofar as *most* men do *not* beat their wives (Landes, Jacobs and Siegel, 1995: 29).<sup>58</sup>

In this regard, and although wife assault claims-makers appeal to the VAW Survey as *support* for their claims, they largely overlook findings from this survey which challenge the patriarchy thesis.<sup>59</sup> For example, the survey demonstrates that in present or former married/common-law relationships, 97% of men did *not* assault their wives/partners in the past twelve months; in addition, it notes that over two-thirds of present or former married/common-law men have *never* assaulted women in intimate relationships (Rodgers, 1994: 4). Reevaluation of the patriarchy thesis also is warranted given the observation by Merrill (1996: 14) that “the *absence* of gender inequity, as in same sex relationships, by no means precludes the possibility that battering will occur” (emphasis mine).

A final rhetorical strategy adopted by wife-assault claims-makers in their attempt to preserve constructed images of victim and offender is to undermine rival claims-makers by directing personal criticisms at them. The nature of the criticism often is related to the gender of the claims-maker. For example, male rival claims-makers--of whom police are considered to form a part--have been accused of sexism (Saunders and Size, 1986: 39; Edwards, 1987: 14; Radford, 1989: 40) and misogyny (Straus, 1990: 3). Academic rival claims-makers have been accused (especially by front-line claims-makers such as shelter workers) of being insulated from the “real world”<sup>60</sup> (Heer, 1995: 6), while rival claims-

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<sup>58</sup> According to Landes, Jacobs and Siegel (1995: 29), “It is extremely important to remember that. . .even in families in which all the indicators show a greater likelihood that abuse might occur, most husbands do not beat their wives.”

<sup>59</sup> Not all feminist researchers ignore this evidence though (see Lenton, 1995a: 571).

<sup>60</sup> An example of criticism directed towards female academic rival claims-makers comes from Heer (1995:6) who states the following, “None of these women have experienced a serious violation. . .They

makers more generally are referred to as biased (Edwards, 1987: 14; Canadian Panel, 1993: 274) or anti-feminist<sup>61</sup> (Straus, 1992: 226). Straus (1991: 180,182,184) who credits these strategies to writing in an advocacy framework rather than a scientific one<sup>62</sup> suggests that “attempts [by wife assault claims-makers] to advance a moral agenda by denigrating efforts of those who have a slightly different agenda. . .[reflect] a zero sum and self-defeating approach.” With regard to the argument for an advocacy framework, wife assault claims-maker Bograd (1988:11) admits that “feminist scholarship is not simply about women. Instead, it is dedicated to advocacy *for* women” (emphasis in original). Feminist author Avis (1992: 231) agrees and states the following, “Taking a feminist position in relation to male power means taking a *non-neutral* position, challenging male control and domination, naming the abuse, and naming the abuser [read men]” (emphasis mine).

To summarize, the claims-making nature of wife assault as a phenomenon distinct from other forms of violence has been demonstrated. Inconsistencies within the claims and with rival claims also have been addressed. I would suggest that claims-making issues central to the construction of wife assault include the following: (1) images of good and

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view the world through the artificial environment of academia. . .[They] express their unsubstantiated personal opinion for their own agenda.”

<sup>61</sup> Straus (1992: 226) describes a situation where perceived antagonism towards a female rival claims-maker was so intense that wife assault claims-makers obstructed her presentations by booing, shouting and picketing, initiated a letter-writing campaign to oppose her career promotion, engaged in threatening phone calls directed at the her and her family, and made a bomb threat at a conference where she spoke. Straus (1991) indicates that attempts also were made to discredit him as a scholar; as well, his public presentations concerning rival evidence have been met by wife assault claims-makers with picketing and booing.

<sup>62</sup> According to Taborsky and Sommer (in press), advocacy research is characterized by inadequate methodology, unreliable conclusions, and a practice which “impedes the ethical interactions of the population.”

evil; (2) fostering of sympathy worthiness for the victim and condemnation worthiness for the offender; (3) violence characterized by dynamics of power and control; (4) termination of the abusive relationship as a process; (5) perception of wife assault as *not* a lower class phenomenon; (6) widespread occurrence of wife assault; (7) focus on consequences of wife assault, and (8) dismissal of explanations perceived as excusing or justifying the violence. Various rhetorical strategies adopted by wife assault claims-makers to persuade audiences of central claims include: appealing to the rhetoric of victimization with its (good) victim/(evil) offender dichotomy; appealing to the rhetoric of myths and dramatic examples; attributing to effects of victimization any challenges to the female victim's moral purity and essential innocence; alleging that rival explanations revictimize the victim; engaging in selective citing of research; overlooking official data; appealing to non-falsifiable claims; casting aspersions on the character of rival claims-makers; expanding the definition of wife assault to include other forms of violence; and, focusing on disconfirming cases in rival explanations only.

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As indicated earlier, in this province, wife assault claims-makers successfully lobbied not only for a mandatory charge policy to deal with offenders, but also sensitivity training for criminal justice officials in general and police officers in particular (Steering Committee on Wife Assault, 1991: 4,6; Ministry of Solicitor General, 1994: 14-15). The discussion will now turn to a consideration of the role played by the context of the police organization in patrol constables' perceptions of claims made in wife assault sensitivity training.

### *The Police Organization as Context for the Audience*

Data from this study clearly reveal the political realities of claims-making. As noted by Best (1987: 117), “claims-makers articulate their claims in ways which they find (and believe their audiences will find) persuasive.” As an audience, however, patrol constables did not find claims in the training persuasive but rather disputed them. I would suggest that several factors related to the larger “institutional reality” (Douglas as cited in Loseke, 1989: 190) of the police organization shaped this response. Among these factors, police organizational culture in general and the patrol constable subculture in particular figure prominently. For the purpose of this study, organizational culture is defined as “a patterned system of perceptions, meanings, and beliefs about the organization which facilitates sense-making amongst a group of people sharing common experiences and guides individual behaviour at work” (Bloor and Dawson, 1994: 277). Patrol constable subculture refers to patrol constables’ collective understandings about issues related to *their* particular role within the larger police organization (Becker et al.: 1961: 46).

The training claim for status assignment of victim and offender was made within a patrol constable subculture characterized by a general distrust of civilians<sup>1</sup> (Stansfield, 1996: 176) and a larger police culture ideologically committed to neutrality (Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 20-1) or what Cohen and Feldberg (1991: XV) describe as “non-partisan

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<sup>1</sup> Drawing on his experience as a former police officer, Stansfield (1996: 176) had the following to say about police lack of trust: “Police distrust everyone who is not a member of the police subculture or family. This distrust is revealed in the informal police expression, ‘everybody lies, all the time.’”

objectivity.”<sup>2</sup> Insofar as the criminal justice system’s ideological foundations focus on the individual rather than the group (Fagan, 1988: 170-1,176), this neutrality leads police officers to investigate not on the basis of typifications but rather on the assessment of each case on its own merits.

The extent to which neutrality is considered central in the patrol constable subculture is revealed in the special language developed by constables.<sup>3</sup> For example, patrol constables used neutral terms such as complainant, aggressor, alleged offender, combatant, and so forth, to identify parties involved in criminal allegations. Referred to as “argot,” this “special vocabulary is composed of special words or special meanings given to ordinary words” that describe the subculture’s world (Best and Luckinbill, 1982: 37, 86). Insofar as argot develops out of a group’s collective understandings, argot is significant in revealing shared perspectives.

The shared perspective held by constables that neutrality is important is reinforced in their response to domestic calls. For example, constables investigate in a *disconnected*

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<sup>2</sup> According to Loseke (1989a: 199-200), this expectation of objectivity precludes officers from “merely assum[ing] moral fault.”

<sup>3</sup> This neutrality, however, may be perceived as cynicism by outsiders. Becker et al. (1961: 420-1), in their classic study on medical students, note that the students, as a result of their structured school experience, acquired a point of view and terminology of a technical kind about patients and diseases that lay people would regard as “cruel, heartless, and cynical.” The researchers, however, argue that cynicism is not a general trait of individuals but rather a “judgment made by either the actor or someone else about his activity and feelings in circumstances” (ibid.). Cynicism, then, is both situationally dependent and contingent on another person’s assessment. For Becker et al. (1961: 421), this explains why “many things may appear cynical to laymen which would appear neutral or even idealistic to medical students or practising physicians.” I believe that a similar argument could be made for the public perception of patrol constable cynicism. In managing their role, constables adopt a particular viewpoint and terminology that reflects the professionalism they perceive necessary for the fulfillment of that role. Even though constables may view their actions as professional, civilians or police administration (pressured by civilian expectations) may regard the same actions as insensitive.



manner each allegation of a specific violent *act* rather than consider the impact of various acts in the *context* of the alleged abusive relationship. Given that they rarely witness the violence, patrol constables need to rely not only on accounts provided by parties to the allegation but also physical evidence of the assault (Loseke, 1989a: 200). Depending upon accounts obtained and extent of evidence collected, investigations may *not* support victim status for the female. This observation leads constables to reject the training claim for automatic status assignment of victim and offender. It also supports the constructionist argument by Holstein and Miller (1990: 113) that “victim assignments are always open-ended.” That is, victim status does not *inhere* in the individual or in situations, but rather is constituted through “interactional and descriptive practices” (ibid.).

Support for the open-ended status of victim also is found in Loseke’s (1989) constructionist study on the admissions process of shelter clients. According to Loseke (1989: 175), actual case selection for admission to shelters is characterized by “confusion, ambiguities, complexities, and indeterminacies”<sup>4</sup> (Loseke, 1989: 175). This difficult situation leads shelters (motivated by organizational dictates) to engage in a *selective* assignment of victim status for women seeking admission (ibid.). Loseke (1989: 185,189) notes that it is only *after* victim status has been assigned that shelters flatten “complicated and heterogeneous stories” given by victims into the homogeneity of the underlying social type of “battered women.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> This observation supports the previously noted popular claim by patrol constables for the existence of a ‘grey’ reality.

<sup>5</sup> Loseke (1989: 189) points out that this process reinforces the image of the battered woman in wife assault claims-making.

What hinders its identification is that wife assault purportedly is a fluid “complex social *process*. . . [rather than] “a concrete easily identifiable phenomenon that can be simply observed, measured, and then treated” (emphasis mine) (Bograd, 1988: 20). Understood not simply as an act, wife assault is regarded a *series* of acts in which the abuse is intensified through the cumulative impact of a combination of physical *and* psychological harm (Loseke, 1987: 232; Tolman, 1989: 160). Apprehending evidence, then, of the abusive *process* of wife assault is problematic for patrol constables trained to look for tangible evidence as support for these allegations.

It also will be recalled that the current provincial policy on enforcement of wife assault includes psychological abuse. In reality, however, wife assault charges are limited to physical violence and threats of physical violence. According to respondents, this situation occurs because of the difficulties associated with determining psychological harm and, then, establishing existence of reasonable grounds for it. (Given that psychological harm in the form of say fear and intimidation is not subject to measurement, its identification is discouraged [Loseke, 1987: 232]). Nevertheless, I would suggest that police administration’s sanctioned *nonenforcement* of charges involving psychological abuse delegitimizes this form of violence and thereby reinforces constables’ exclusion of it both as a bona fide form of criminal behaviour and an important component in wife assault.

Another organizational factor which impeded acceptance of training claims in general is that given the nature of their work, the patrol constable audience (unlike the

general public audience) is *not* dependent upon images presented by claims-makers to form an understanding of wife assault issues. According to Loseke (1993: 212), audiences “often are asked to evaluate and respond to some anonymous and unknown others as victims, and to evaluate and respond to unknown others as victimizers.” However, this situation does not apply to patrol constables. Rather, constables’ understanding of wife assault as well as their evaluation of and response to “victims” and “victimizees” are determined not by images but by the individuals themselves with whom they interact in their professional experience. According to patrol constables, this interaction is *inconsistent* with images presented in the training.

As noted by McShane and Williams (1992: 267), images often become reality *only* in those cases where a person “has not had a very significant experience or impression to counteract the . . . image of criminal victimization.” In this case, constables maintain that they *rarely* are confronted with the brutalized images of women typified in wife assault. Instead, they insist they more frequently come across incidents involving minor violence or threats of violence as well as mutual combat, gay/lesbian violence, and less frequently, unidirectional female violence. As well, unlike wife assault claims-makers who present a simplistic victim/offender dichotomy, constables portray a complex social reality where victim/offender status is not always (or even easily) apprehended, and does not always exist. I would suggest that it is on the basis of their professional (not to mention personal) exposure to the complexities of social life that patrol constables were hindered from subjectively apprehending the simplistic dichotomy constructed by wife assault claims-

makers. This observation lends credence to the argument by McShane and Williams (1992: 262) that “the stereotypical victim/offender dichotomy simply is not capable of incorporating the true complexity of crime.” It also reinforces the claim by Felson and Tedeschi (1993: 107) regarding the importance of social interaction between antagonists in the escalation process which often characterizes dispute-related violence.

Another explanation for constables’ resistance to images in the training comes from the discussion by Loseke (1989a: 204) who suggests that officers fail to apprehend constructed wife assault images *not* because of misperception but rather because of the tendency by wife assault claims-makers to create images based on *extreme* cases which are not reflected in many concrete situations.<sup>6</sup> In this respect, Loseke (1987: 233) maintains that “most violence as experienced is not unambiguously identifiable as severe *and* frequent *and* consequential” (emphasis in original). When wife assault trainers responded to this contradiction by appealing to the argument for the important escalating role played by *minor* forms of violence (including psychological harm), constables remained unpersuaded --first, because their professional experience largely did *not* confirm escalation, and, second, because organizational dictates call for the police investigative role to focus on *specific* acts rather than a *series* of incidents (tangible or otherwise).

Constables’ direct exposure to parties involved in allegations of wife assault also conflicted with a central goal in the training noted earlier, that of procuring front-line

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<sup>6</sup> It should be noted, however, that Loseke’s (1989a: 203) criticisms about the construction of extreme images stem from her position that less extreme cases *worthy* of attention go disregarded by support services.

support for the wife assault mandatory charge and arrest policies. According to constables, this exposure routinely confronted them with the policies' ineffectual intervention and unintended consequences. Although discussed at length at Chapter 5, some of these unintended consequences included the following: frequent objections by female complainants about laying charges;<sup>7</sup> financial strain on and/or breakdown of otherwise salvageable families; long-term consequences to the family in general and the charged offender in particular; reluctance by women nonsupportive of charges to contact (or recontact) police; failure by women to appear and/or testify at court; financial drain on the criminal justice system (including the police); potential for abuse of the policy by vindictive women; false allegations of wife assault; possible escalation of the violence; and overall lack of resolution to the problem.

Support for the constables' argument about unintended policy consequences can be found in the literature. For example, Jolin and Moose (1997: 281) suggest that theories such as the feminist account of wife assault which "fail to consider either multiple factors or multiple levels when accounting for domestic violence are bound to yield unsatisfactory results when they are used in the development of intervention strategies." As well, Loseke (1989a: 201-3) notes that policies often work better in theory than in practice because they are designed on the basis of social problem images which, it will be recalled, often are

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<sup>7</sup> According to Buzawa et al. (1992: 267), a significant consequence of mandatory charge and arrest policies is "the simultaneous removal of victim discretion." However, the authors note that victim preference in determining appropriate criminal justice responses is rejected by some policy analysts on the basis that "a victim who has frequently suffered repeated injuries, is often unable to escape the psychological constraints of tolerating violence without outside intervention."

based on extreme examples and do not reflect the *complexities* of social life.<sup>8</sup> In this regard, Baker (1996: 88-9) states that “a major problem with preferred and arrest policies is that they do not take into consideration the complexities of the battered woman’s needs and interest.” According to Loseke (1989a: 200-1), arrest policies that may be “very sensible” for the *image* of the wife assault victim may seem less attractive to individual women. Furthermore, “the public images of the ‘wife abuse’ problem can differ from the characteristics of *real* situations and actors encountered by police” (emphasis mine) (ibid.). In this argument, the more that characteristics of individual cases diverge from the image, the less sensible policies become (ibid: 201). In terms of the wife assault charge policy, then, benefits would apply more to women who clearly conform to the image of the victim *and* want their partner arrested than to women who do not reflect the image *or* do not regard a charge as the best course of action (ibid.).<sup>9</sup> Taking a position not unlike that of patrol constables, Loseke (1990a: 201) suggests that regrettably “many concrete [wife assault] cases lie somewhere in a vast and undefined *grey* area” (emphasis mine).

A more general explanation for unintended policy consequences is located in the introductory comments by Buzawa and Buzawa (1992: 3-4) concerning Binder and Meeker’s (1992) discussion on the development of social attitudes towards wife assault:

When key political and social elites view a problem such as family violence [read wife assault) as of paramount importance and as neglected in practice, the agencies responsible for control are subject to attack and lower their resolve to handle

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<sup>8</sup> Sykes (1992: 232-3) argues that images which stem from the victimization framework have the effect of effect of “distracting attention from actual cases and from legitimate policy responses to those problems.”

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted, however, that Loseke (1989a) is critical towards the wife assault charge policy because it results in special treatment and social sympathy *only* for women who *conform* to the image of the battered woman. According to Loseke (1989a: 203), women should not have to conform to *any* image in order to be protected from violence.

problems in older, established ways. Not surprisingly, the response of many agencies is to demonstrate changes, even before these changes are subjected to careful empirical analysis.

Apart from challenging wife assault images and undermining support of wife assault policies, constables' organizational experience also influenced their rejection of statistics cited in the training. Here, I would argue that statistical claims designed to persuade constables of the magnitude of wife assault largely were unsuccessful for three primary reasons. First, constables have difficulty accepting any claim for statistics as representative of an objective social reality given their conflicting professional (reinforced by personal) experience of that reality. Second, for patrol constables and in terms of the wife assault issue, statistics represent not violent acts so much as the extent to which constables are exposed to situations which aggravate accountability concerns. Third, statistical claims are made in a police subculture self-conscious about its *own* role in the creation of statistics generally and wife assault/domestic violence statistics specifically (Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 19). In connection with this latter issue, constables suggest that the role they play in the creation of statistics is a function of state policies, administrative sanctions, and the patrol constable subculture. According to constables, changes from drug enforcement in the 1970s to drunk driving in the 1980s to wife assault in the 1990s<sup>10</sup> have had a corresponding effect on increases in related police statistics.

For example, constables regard the recent increase in wife assault statistics as owing not only to the introduction of the wife assault charge policy but also other

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<sup>10</sup> According to some respondents, this decade's focus on the enforcement of wife assault will give way by the year 2000 to a focus on "hate crimes."

organizational factors including slackened grounds for laying charges in allegations of wife assault (i.e., a woman's statement alone), administration's informal sanctions about charging males and not charging females, perceived undue administrative monitoring of wife assault/domestic violence reports, a police administration deemed nonsupportive of its front line, and constables' heightened sensitivity to accountability concerns. Constables' understanding of the role of these factors in contributing to a process that becomes both self-fulfilling and self-sustaining rendered unconvincing statistical claims made in the training.

Support for the socially constructed nature of statistics can be found in the observation by Best (1995: 348) that criminal justice statistics are products of the organizational practices of police departments. To this end, Hendricks (1994: 13) notes that "changes in the definition of assault and police charging practices influenced the overall increases in the [1994 Canadian] rates of reported violent incidents and of persons charged with assault." As well, Koenig (1993: 13) observes that police staffing levels also can have an effect on crime statistics insofar as increased capability of police to report a crime leads to an increase in statistics. Despite the support for the argument about their social construction and to the chagrin of the constables, statistics continue to be invoked as evidence that men assault women in great numbers and that establishment (and retention of) the wife assault mandatory charge policy is justified.

Other organizational factors which negatively affected acceptance of training claims involved consideration of issues surrounding enforcement and accountability.



Although a central component of the police role is enforcement of laws and policies (Ericson, 1982: 7), Stansfield (1996: 13), in his discussion on the Canadian police, argues that full enforcement is unrealistic inasmuch as it would overwhelm the criminal justice system. According to Stansfield (1996: 13), “the fact that full enforcement is not possible nor even desirable tells us that the law is intended as a *guide*, not as a rigid set of rules that always must be enforced” (emphasis in original). Despite this informal understanding of enforcement, Cohen and Feldberg (1991: XVI) note that police services (regardless of their size) “tend to hold officers accountable for living up to *published* rules and regulations, policies and procedures” (emphasis mine). As well, *outcome* of events and choices typically falls on the individual officer<sup>11</sup> (ibid.: 4). Furthermore, consequences for perceived misconduct generally are much more severe for police officers than for other professionals (Stansfield, 1996: 163, 176); officers deemed to have engaged in misconduct can face fines, demotion, admonitions, dismissal, and imprisonment (ibid.: 170).<sup>12</sup>

When the preceding circumstances and potentialities combine with the larger police environment increasingly open to scrutiny<sup>13</sup> and devoid of administrative support (Cohen and Feldberg, 1991: XVI), the result is a patrol constable subculture preoccupied

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<sup>11</sup> According to Sherman (1992: 259), insofar as no documented causal connection exists between police decisions in minor assaults and serious subsequent injuries, police should be exempt from civil liability in cases where, arrests were not made for minor violence, and then (although rare) homicide or serious injury occurred.

<sup>12</sup> For Stansfield (1996: 163), these circumstances make the Canadian police “extraordinarily accountable.”

<sup>13</sup> A recent report by the Ministry of the Solicitor General (1992: 94) indicates that “police forces in general, and individual police officers in particular, have come under increased scrutiny in the past few years.” Accordingly, “accountability will play a major role in the future of policing” (ibid.: 95). Moreover, the report argues that part of this accountability stems from pressure by special interest groups “often highly critical of the police [who] are emerging. . . in reaction to perceptions. . . that the police are not being receptive to their needs and expectations” (emphasis mine) (ibid.).

with possible career ramifications of inquests, civil liability suits, and bad publicity for wrong decisions<sup>14</sup> (Sherman, 1992: 186). For constables, this preoccupation informs the popular injunction noted earlier of ‘cover your ass’ and finds expression in what I call “protective posturing.” Rooted directly in accountability concerns, protective posturing is characterized by patrol constables’ assessment of situations on the basis of the “worst case scenario” for themselves professionally. I would suggest that constables’ perceived need for protective posturing is significant in contributing to their frame of reference, the latter of which organizes their response to organizational dictates.<sup>15</sup>

Like the significance of constables’ neutral language noted earlier, the importance of accountability issues also is reflected in the subculture’s argot. In this regard, the terms in italics which follow reflect the manner in which constables typically framed the dilemma they confronted regarding enforcement of the wife assault mandatory charge policy. In seeking to manage the tension between a perceived *grey* reality and enforcement of a *black-and-white* charge policy which supposedly *ties their hands*, patrol constables maintained that they often are forced to *step outside the circle* of police policies and procedures; insofar as this action places them at risk of attack--not just by powerful *feminazis*--but by police administration as well, constables insist they need to operate (at all times) under the injunction of *cover your ass*. To the extent that constables developed

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<sup>14</sup> This preoccupation is intensified in an occupational climate characterized by serious concerns about job stability (Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 17).

<sup>15</sup> This is not to suggest, though, that awareness of the need for protective posturing results in similar responses by patrol constables. Although responses may differ, constables nevertheless make decisions (especially in terms of response at domestic calls) *cognizant* of potential effects of their action (or lack thereof) in a worst case scenario.

an argot that expressed issues involving ambiguity, vulnerability, malevolence, and self-preservation, accountability concerns can be considered central in constables' collective understandings about the workplace.

Accountability concerns played a significant role in constables' rejection of wife assault sensitivity training. As noted earlier, a primary goal of the training was to engender support for the wife assault mandatory charge policy; however, constables' claims about the following organizational issues fed their concerns about accountability and hindered their endorsement of this policy: ongoing close monitoring of reports by superiors deemed ineffectual and antagonistic; difficulty in committing to written reports the social complexities involved in wife assault/domestic violence situations;<sup>16</sup> potential for unsubstantiated complaints from women who, as a group, purportedly wield a great deal of political power over police administration;<sup>17</sup> potential for lawsuits when officers (allegedly pressured by administrative sanctions) charge and/or arrest without a belief that reasonable grounds exist;<sup>18</sup> a police administration nonsupportive of its front-line; and contradiction between wife assault investigation guidelines and administration's tacit acceptance of constables' routine informal violation of policies and procedures (the latter

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<sup>16</sup> According to Emerson (1994: 10), "lived experiences of domestic violence are difficult to render through mere words."

<sup>17</sup> Vincent (1990: 160) notes that "in purely [police] work situations, women are threats. The police officer prefers to steer clear of arresting females and dislikes domestic calls that involve women." I would suggest that this threat has intensified with the introduction and aggressive enforcement of an internal sexual harassment policy which male respondents claim can cost their career on a woman's statement alone.

<sup>18</sup> Stansfield (1996: 134) observes that, "if police lay a charge when they do *not* have reasonable grounds to believe an offense was committed, they may be guilty of 'malicious prosecution'" (emphasis mine), the latter of which is a civil tort.

guidelines of which purportedly do not permit [and are not expected to permit] full enforcement).

Accountability concerns become paramount and constables' perceived need for protective posturing intensifies when these latter issues combine with other organizational factors such as excessive workload, understaffing, twelve-hour workshifts, a dislike for overtime, excessive paperwork in filing wife assault/domestic violence reports, unpredictability of violence when responding to wife assault calls (especially when arresting), conflict between moral convictions and constables' enforcement role, and concern about internal investigations into past police response should escalation in the violence occur in the future.<sup>19</sup> Training aimed at engendering constable support for the wife assault policies also was problematic insofar the policies' perceived bias conflicted with constables' professional expectations of "enforc[ing] the law in a fair and even-handed manner" (Cohen and Feldberg, 1991: 60).

Organizational culture also influenced constables' resistance to the training by contributing to a legitimacy crisis on the part of the trainers, both internal (i.e., police trainers) and external (i.e., shelter workers). Primary to the trainers' lack of legitimacy with patrol constables was the role played by both groups in constables' concerns, once again, about accountability. For example, accountability concerns figured prominently in police trainers' responsibility for routine monitoring of constables' domestic violence/wife

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<sup>19</sup> Constables' clear lack of support for the wife assault charge policy together with their claim for its numerous unintended consequences stand in stark contrast to the London, Ontario study conducted by wife assault claims-makers Jaffe et al. (1991). In this study, researchers laud the effects of the wife assault charge policy as well as note a *positive* front-line attitude regarding the policy's importance (ibid.: 32-34).

assault reports as well as undertaking wife assault investigations involving fellow officers. Regarding the former issue, the long-standing chasm between administration and the front line (documented in the literature [Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 2-4]) reinforced constables' perception that administration cannot adequately assess front-line response and simultaneously increased constables' vulnerability to that assessment.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the latter issue, additional concerns about vulnerability arose from claims about police trainers' mismanagement of internal wife assault investigations which, incidentally, did not fare well within a patrol constable subculture noted for its "a strong allegiance to peers"<sup>21</sup> (Punch, 1985: 185). Accountability concerns associated with shelter workers stemmed from, first, the intimidating combination of the close relationship between shelter workers and police administration, second, the potential for shelter workers (historically antagonistic towards front-line officers) to lodge or encourage lodging unwarranted complaints against patrol constables, and, third, the apparent unfettered ability of shelter workers to interfere in police investigations. Together, the preceding factors exacerbated accountability concerns, reinforced constables' perception of the need for protective posturing, eroded trainers' legitimacy, and detracted from the training.

Trainers' legitimacy also was eroded by constables' rejection of both groups as holders of expert knowledge in domestic violence/wife assault issues. This position

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<sup>20</sup> According to Reuss-Ianni (1983: 2-4), "street cop culture" is juxtaposed to police administration or "management cop culture," the latter of which is characterized by value systems antithetical to those held by front-line officers. Reuss-Ianni (1983: 68) further notes that these two police cultures "increasingly have different objectives" and "no longer share a common vocabulary [or] a common set of work experiences."

<sup>21</sup> According to Punch (1985: 124), feelings of loyalty stem from constables' "unspoken appreciation of their mutual predicament and their unbridgeable separation from straight society and outsiders."

stemmed from patrol constables' claims about the following issues: administration's relative lack of participation in front-line work; inconsistencies between training claims and constables' subjectively apprehended experiences; shelters' singular (read, biased) involvement with women; the patrol constable subculture's general mistrust of the social work profession; inconsistencies between female complainants' protestations about and shelter workers' unequivocal support for the wife assault charge and arrest policies; and resistance by trainers in acknowledging counter claims about wife assault and domestic violence.

Trainers' legitimacy with patrol constables also was threatened by constables' experience in responding to domestic calls which led them to make their *own* claims for expert knowledge about issues relating to domestic violence in general and wife assault in particular. According to Darrah (1995: 40), "workers. . .live in a world of differentiated claims to knowledge in which they recognize the claims of others. . .but develop [their own] *working* knowledge" (emphasis mine). In making claims for expert knowledge, constables contested "ownership" (Gusfield, 1989: 433) of the social problem of wife assault. However, this competition for ownership occurred in an arena where, as a group and because of previously noted claims of bias towards women and improper police response, patrol constables had no legitimacy and, therefore, no political power in defining domestic violence/wife assault issues.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The recognition that they lack political power in defining issues is illustrated in the following comments made by three patrol constables concerning their motivation for participating in this study: (1) "This is the first time in ten years anybody ever asked me what I thought." (2) "I just wanted someone to hear what it's like out there. . .to hear our side. . .what it's like. Now, someone else will know. . .not just us, not just our wives (paraphrase)." (3) "We can't go to the paper. . .We can't write letters to the editor. . .can't run for

Other organizational factors which contributed to constables' resistance of the training included undertaking the training on one level in an environment considered informal and more of a "break" for officers (i.e., Sunday morning roll calls), and on another level, in a larger environment where training in general was perceived as an accountability weapon used by administration against the front line. Also, class instruction about police response held little legitimacy with patrol constables who regard common sense knowledge as more relevant because of perceived uncertainty and ambiguity both on the street *and* within the police organization (Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 67; McNulty, 1994: 282-3). According to Reuss-Ianni (1983: 7), constables' common sense "street" knowledge is based not on "internalized standardized rules and procedures" but rather "a reactive 'gut level' ability to recognize, identify, and respond to a situation." In the patrol constable subculture, then, to the extent that rigid policies and procedures are perceived as denying the situational uncertainty routinely confronted by officers, they are deemed antithetical to "good police work" (ibid.).<sup>23</sup>

I would suggest that this latter perspective (characteristic of the patrol constable subculture) is reinforced by a police profession which, according to Stansfield (1996: 92), receives substantially less in-class training in comparison to other major occupational groups.<sup>24</sup> For example, the structure of this training results in police recruits spending the

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office. We have no voice, and our association can't speak out on these issues. . . . If we don't take this opportunity, how many others are gonna come along? It's the first time I've had in eight years to actually say what I feel."

<sup>23</sup> Given this sentiment, it is not surprising that the training failed in its attempts to engender constable support for the perceived rigid wife assault mandatory charge and arrest policies.

<sup>24</sup> Stansfield (1996: 92) notes that in-class instruction of recruits at the provincial training college is limited to three months after which regular duty commences.

majority of their time (approximately 70%) in an applied setting (*ibid.*). While on the one hand, this training format reinforces the value of learning “on the street” (Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 20), on the other hand, it devalues in-class instruction.

Apart from consideration of the foregoing structural constraints to acceptance of training claims, an argument can be made that the training had little positive effect on patrol constables simply because class-room instruction, in general, fails to train adequately for the “real world” of work<sup>25</sup> (Becker, 1972: 107). According to Becker (1972: 90), “educational mythology presents an unrealistic picture of the efficacy of schooling [or training].” In his study involving medical students, Becker (1972: 90) notes that there is only a minimal relationship between medical school training and the quality of medicine a physician practices. In Becker’s (1972: 4) opinion, “science and skill do not make a physician; [rather] one must be *initiated* into the status of a physician” (emphasis mine). The same argument could be made for patrol constables who, it will be recalled, informally subscribe to a five-year initiation period before one has developed the requisite skills to be considered a “real cop.” In his study of production floor workers, Darrah (1995: 39) notes that the production floor (a parallel, I would suggest, to the “street”) is a “far more powerful and compelling than a brief classroom interlude.” Similar to the experience of production floor workers who learned “on the production floor,” the “street” rather than the classroom may reflect patrol constables’ “*final* arena for learning” (emphasis mine) that structures their experiences (*ibid.*: 39,40).

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<sup>25</sup> Although expressed with guarded optimism, Becker (1972: 107) suggests that “on-the-job training . . . is more likely to produce educational successes.”



The foregoing discussion on the influence of organizational factors in the training supports the argument by Holstein and Miller (1990: 112) that concerns about accountability are central to the world of work. As well, the conundrums noted above lend credence to the argument by Darrah (1995: 40) that workplace training needs to be considered in the *context* of workplace learning in order to determine how the workplace structures learning independently of any formal training. According to Darrah (1995: 41), without a consideration of context, “organizational impediments to learning and action may appear as deficiencies of workers requiring better skills.” In Darrah’s (1995: 41) view, this (mis)perception of workers’ deficiencies ironically may (and often does) justify the need for further training.<sup>26</sup> This study not only clearly demonstrates the important role of structural factors in constables’ unreceptivity to wife assault sensitivity training but also points to the potential for that unreceptivity to be defined (from a feminist perspective) as *insensitivity* to wife assault issues.

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<sup>26</sup> Becker et al. (1961: 443) observe that “institutional practices that create situations and their constraints are deeply rooted in organizational structure and culture.” Therefore, attempts at changing institutional practices should involve prior consideration of first the “organizational trouble and ‘politics’” that will be “stir[red] up” by any attempts at change, and, second, the ramifications of these changes which inevitably will go beyond the targeted areas because of the nature of the organization (ibid.).

## Chapter Seven

### Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between sensitivity training and attitude change by undertaking a qualitative evaluation of wife assault sensitivity training provided to front-line police officers. The stakeholder perspective sought was that of patrol constables. A symbolic interactionist approach was adopted in order to understand patrol constables' total environment (including social, cultural, and political conditions) that surrounds and impinges upon them.

Findings demonstrated that patrol constables largely were unpersuaded by the training which, for the most part, was informed by the feminist account of wife assault. Application of a contextual constructionist approach to the training was useful in informing an understanding of constables' unreceptivity. When applied to the feminist account of wife assault, this approach (which assumes a subjective rather than objective definition of social problems) revealed that presentation of the following issues are central to the construction of wife assault as a social problem: wife assault as a category *separate from* other forms of intimate violence; a one-way victimization interpretive framework with its mutually exclusive categories of victim and offender; images of good (i.e., victim) and evil (i.e., offender); fostering of sympathy worthiness for the victim and condemnation worthiness for the offender; violence characterized by the dynamics of power and control as well as escalation; termination of the abusive relationship as a process; revictimization

by a patriarchal social system; wife assault as *not* a lower class phenomenon; widespread occurrence of wife assault; and focus on the *consequences* of wife assault.

A contextual constructionist analysis further noted that to convince audiences of, obtain support for, and thwart challenges to this particular construction, wife assault claims-makers adopt several rhetorical strategies, some of which include the following:

1. recounting atrocity stories or dramatic accounts based on first-person testimony
2. attributing reports of the *victim*'s problematic behaviour (such as alcoholism, drug addiction, verbal aggression, inattentive mothering, and self-blame) to *effects* of victimization
3. dismissing accounts of the *victim*'s violence as self-defense or retaliation
4. rejecting *any* explanation for the *offender*'s violence (including alcoholism, drug addiction, psychological disorders, and so forth) except a desire to maintain power and control over the female partner (present or former)
5. increasing women's perception of their stake in a solution to wife assault by suggesting that an abusive personality lurks behind even the most outwardly respectable man
6. constructing a continuum on which is found other *forms* of violence against women
7. subsuming the issue of wife assault under the more general category of *male* violence against women *and children*

8. disregarding the discrepancy between, on the one hand, an appeal for recognition of *minor* levels of violence as situated on a continuum and, on the other hand, a focus on *extreme* levels of violence in atrocity stories
9. overlooking the contradiction between the typification of *extreme* levels of violence in atrocity stories and *minor* levels of violence reflected in the majority of police reports
10. ignoring the inconsistency between the claim that all women are at risk and the typification of the middle class victim
11. discrediting measurements used in rival research
12. focusing on disconfirming cases in *rival* explanations only
13. criticizing rival explanations for perpetuating myths, proffering excuses, revictimizing the victim, and/or overlooking attention to *root* causes
14. appealing to nonfalsifiable claims but rejecting similar logic when appealed to by rival claims-makers
15. appealing to statistics from *carefully selected* studies to validate claims
16. selectively interpreting data in a manner consistent with the feminist account
17. ignoring, discounting, or overlooking findings inconsistent with the feminist account.

Regarded in this manner, an argument can be made for wife assault claims-making as a social construction fraught with oversimplifications, dramatizations, inconsistencies, and contradictions. When this claims-making activity in the form of wife assault sensitivity training is directed to a patrol constable audience, acceptance by officers of the feminist account of wife assault is hindered further by police organizational culture in general and

the patrol constable subculture in particular. In this connection, numerous factors relating to the larger institutional reality shaped constables' rejection of the feminist account, some of which included the following:

1. lack of dependence on images constructed by wife assault claims-makers (because of constables' professional exposure to wife assault situations)
2. professional exposure to wife assault situations which (a) afforded constables with perceptions *inconsistent* with those constructed in the feminist account (such as the claim for escalation, the simplistic victim/offender dichotomy, and the merit of *á priori* status assignment of victim and offender), (b) routinely confronted constables with numerous perceived unintended consequences of the wife assault mandatory charge and arrest policies, and (c) gave rise to constables contesting ownership of the social problem of wife assault in order to make their *own* claims as holders of expert knowledge in this area
3. a patrol constable subculture characterized by a general distrust of civilians and a larger police culture ideologically committed to neutrality, the latter two of which contributed to, first, constables' objections to the perceived biased wife assault mandatory charge and arrest policies and, second, constables' resistance to the training's *á priori* status assignment of victim and offender
4. police procedure which requires constables to investigate in a *disconnected* manner each allegation of a specific violent *act* (rather than consider the *impact* of various acts in the *context* of the alleged abusive relationship as proposed in the feminist account)

5. difficulty in establishing grounds for psychological harm in wife assault as well as *delegitimation* of psychological abuse vis-à-vis police administration's sanctioned nonenforcement of these types of charges
6. patrol constable subculture's lack of regard for not just wife assault statistics but statistical reporting in general, the latter of which is deemed by constables to be a function of state policies, administrative sanctions, and the patrol constable subculture
7. constables' *structured* inability to fully enforce police policies and procedures in a police organization considered extraordinarily accountable, increasingly open to scrutiny, and void of administrative support
8. internal police procedures (such as undue administrative monitoring of wife assault/domestic violence reports as well as sanctions regarding charging males only) that persistently exacerbated accountability concerns and gave rise to a perceived need for "protective posturing;" i.e., an approach adopted by constables whereby they assess situations based on the worst case scenario and organize their responses to organizational dictates based on those assessments
9. legitimacy crisis on behalf of the trainers (both administrative police officers and shelter workers) because of various internal procedures and protocols as well as the historical administration/front-line chasm and the long-standing hostility between shelter workers and patrol constables
10. patrol constables' perception of training in general as an accountability weapon used by administration against the front line

11. patrol constable subculture's high value given to common sense street knowledge and low value given to standardized rules and procedures
12. structure of recruit training which reinforces at the outset of a constable's career the importance of street-level experience.

In noting the foregoing, the following theoretical contributions are made:

1. support for the usefulness of applying a contextual constructionist perspective to training in general and sensitivity training in particular
  2. support for the argument that polices often work better in theory than in practice inasmuch as policies are designed on the basis of social problem *images*, the latter of which often are based on extreme examples and do not reflect the complexities of social life
  3. support for the argument that the "street" (or "shop floor") rather than the classroom not only reflects the final arena for learning but also structures experiences of workers in general and patrol constables in particular *independent* of any formal training
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4. support for the position that workplace training needs to be considered in the context of workplace learning
  5. challenge to the utility of workplace sensitivity training in substantive attitude change.

In summary, claims-making attempts in the training to replace constables' subjective definitions of wife assault with official (read feminist) definitions were unsuccessful. Patrol constables' rejection of the feminist account of wife assault largely stemmed from workplace accountability concerns as well as constables' claims to define

their *own* account of the violence. This latter account, although rooted in constables' widespread professional exposure to intimate violence, is afforded no legitimacy in a politically charged environment where (at least in Ontario) power currently belongs to the feminist movement to define both what occurs in intimate violence as well as suggest solutions.<sup>1</sup> This power extends to labeling as *insensitivity* any rejection of or resistance to the feminist account of wife assault<sup>2</sup> regardless of the latter's inconsistencies, contradictions, dramatizations, and oversimplifications. In revealing the political realities of the claims-making process involved in sensitivity training as well as the myriad factors which can impinge upon and frustrate that process, this study challenges the popular view of sensitivity training as a panacea for attitude change in the workplace.

#### Implications for Further Research

It is hoped that previous discussions on possible unintended consequences of policies mandating charge and arrest in cases involving allegations of wife assault give impetus to researching this issue with patrol constables from other services. In the event similar findings are obtained, a province-wide evaluation of these policies appears to be in order. Other areas for further research include examining the following: (1) ways in which patrol constables resist mandatory directives; (2) processes by which constables' perceptions of parties' accounts get reinterpreted into written accounts suitable for

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<sup>1</sup> According to Darrah (1995: 35), "the right by some parties to call for and then to define the transfer of *specific* knowledge. . . is an act of *power*" (emphasis mine).

<sup>2</sup> According to Sykes (1992: 169), "'sensitivity' has proven to be a powerful political weapon. By redefining *ideology* in nonideological terms, it has provided a pretext for sweeping changes. . . in the larger society."



administrative monitoring; (3) extent to which patrol constables encounter alcohol and female aggression when responding to domestic calls; (4) victims' perception of police response; and (5) effects of standardized rules in policing. As well, given that patrol constables routinely confront domestically violent situations in a manner unlike *any* other professional group connected with this issue, further articulation of front-line officers' perceptions and understandings is recommended. In my opinion, these studies would be useful in contributing to the theoretical debate regarding domestic violence in general and wife assault in particular.

Overall, it is hoped that this undertaking provides an opportunity to better understand both what is involved in claims-making about wife assault as well as what accounts for the perspective of patrol constables who daily are faced with what they perceive to be inconsistencies between their lived experience and the foregoing claims. It also is hoped that this evaluation will lead to more effective training of patrol constables regarding their understanding of and response to domestic violence.

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## Appendix 1

### Recommendations

Based on this study's findings, several recommendations regarding wife assault sensitivity training are offered:

1. Training needs to be adapted to a patrol constable audience. This adaptation requires consideration not only of the apparent contradiction between officer neutrality and *à priori* status assignments of victim and offender, but also administration's awareness of and responsibility for effects on front-line personnel of possible inconsistencies between written policies and implicit sanctions regarding constable violation.
2. Avoid making singular claims for truth. To this end, there needs to be an acknowledgment that wife assault sensitivity training is based on one of *several* competing perspectives on intimate violence.
3. Clearly state goals of the training as well as what is expected of patrol constables.
4. Avoid adopting the rhetoric of myths unless a direct link is made to the relevant perspective from which the myths originate.
5. Include speakers with other theoretical orientations about wife assault/domestic violence as well as experts on victimology; this approach should encourage a more free exchange of ideas.
6. Minimize reliance on statistical information to support training claims.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This recommendation conflicts with the one noted by a 1992 national police training workshop that "officers should be provided with more accurate statistical information" (O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog, 1994: 19). Given the lack of legitimacy which statistics have with patrol constables, I believe this recommendation warrants serious consideration.

7. Eliminate the use of wife assault training videos adapted for general audiences.
8. Provide constables with concise written guidelines on what constitutes reasonable grounds in cases involving allegations of domestic violence and wife assault.
9. Where available, have victims (female *and* male) discuss their perception of police response, both positive and negative.<sup>2</sup>
10. Insofar as legitimacy of trainers is critical, two options suggest themselves: (a) replace existing trainers with those who currently hold legitimacy with patrol constables such as front-line supervisors;<sup>3</sup> or (b) examine those areas where existing trainers' legitimacy is undermined with the intent of eliminating or reducing these areas. In connection with the first recommendation, a poll of constables' views might be useful. With regard to the latter recommendation, the following is suggested: (a) police trainers no longer undertake investigations of wife assault/domestic violence complaints involving sworn members; (b) expand police trainers' role to include front-line work *with* constables; (c) amend protocol with shelters in order to establish front-line sergeants as liaisons with shelters when information from and/or access to shelters is required; (d) have shelter workers participate in police ride-alongs, and alternately, have constables spend time at shelters; (e) include patrol constables in police training of shelter workers.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This recommendation resembles the one reflected in the previously noted police workshop report except for my suggestion that victims be both female *and* male (ibid.: 41).

<sup>3</sup> This recommendation also conflicts with another recommendation in the previously noted police workshop report which calls for "the increased use of front-line/shelter workers from the women's community as trainers and facilitators" (ibid.: 25).

<sup>4</sup> This suggestion is similar to one made at the workshop noted above and purportedly reflects a benefit of an "inter-disciplinary approach for police training" (ibid.: 41).

11. Encourage and document discussion around perceived consequences of any mandatory policy (including the wife assault charge policy) for the purpose of identifying and resolving problematic areas. If necessary, share concerns with other police services in order to work towards solutions, the latter of which may necessitate communication with state authorities.
  12. Include patrol constables in police workshops about domestic violence/wife assault as well as related community discussions regarding where police involvement is requested.
  13. Given the move towards national consistency in police officer training (Roberts and O'Sullivan, 1993: iii; O'Sullivan, Roberts and Skoog, 1994: 50), share these research findings with other police services across Canada.
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## Appendix 2

### Use/Nonuse/Misuse of Findings

In terms of my study, concerns about use/nonuse/misuse of my findings revolve around several issues. Concerns about *nonuse* are twofold. First, and on a general level, insofar as my findings are not “politically correct,” they may be ignored to the detriment of individuals involved in intimate violence. Second, and on a more immediate level, nonuse may intensify “realities of factionalism” (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 24) between administration and front-line officers in the field setting. That is, insofar as my study may be regarded as support for rather than articulation of perspectives held by patrol constables, refusal or reluctance by administration to acknowledge and/or incorporate any or all of the recommendations may deepen this factionalism.

Concerns about potential for *misuse* of my findings centre around the following issues: (1) perception of having undermined police administration by questioning and/or challenging aspects of the training; (2) potential backlash by administration against patrol constables because of the unanticipated degree of openness expressed by the latter group;<sup>1</sup> (3) reluctance by administration to allow further studies because of the openness expressed by officers; (4) prospect of increasing hostility between front-line officers and women’s groups thereby undermining positive strides made to date by police administration to reduce that hostility; (5) potential to misunderstand my attention to

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<sup>1</sup> The basis of this concern stems from the following comments made by patrol constables regarding the potential for misuse of my findings by police administration: “The department [read administration] is looking at it [this study] from. . . ‘What can we pull out of it to use against the officers?’” “It doesn’t matter what you do. . . what you write, they [administration] are gonna turn it [this study], and they’re gonna twist it, and they’re gonna throw it at us.”

female violence as an invalidation of women's experience of male violence; and (6) possibility that my critical analysis of the feminist account of wife assault may be misinterpreted as, first, my unequivocal endorsement of the rival family violence perspective,<sup>2</sup> second, validation of men's violence, third, repudiation of all feminist goals (including gender equality), and fourth, endorsement of the men's rights movement.

Concerns about *use* of my findings are twofold. First, there may be unforeseen unintended consequences to my recommendations on training. Given the serious nature of police work, unintended consequences could involve placing at risk both police officers and civilians. Second, my study may contribute to the impetus for what I maintain is a long overdue evaluation of the provincial wife assault charge policy. However, an evaluation may result in the repeal of this directive possibly endangering some lives. In connection with the possibility of this latter situation--and most importantly--my concerns about either use, nonuse, or misuse of my findings center around unintentionally increasing the potential for serious harm to those individuals connected with domestic violence, whether they be civilians engaged in or patrol constables responding to domestic violence.

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<sup>2</sup> In my opinion, although the family violence perspective is a more compelling argument, it nevertheless is open to criticism on various grounds. However, the scope of this study precludes me from entering into a more detailed discussion on this topic.

### Appendix 3

#### Political Considerations

As indicated above, I approached this research from an academic viewpoint of obtaining an understanding of the training. In terms of whose questions got answered, I (as the researcher) chose to articulate patrol constables' experiences of the training. Unlike my research agenda which was to obtain and, then, analyze these experiences for the purpose of making theoretical contributions and some practical recommendations, the agenda of stakeholders was different. For police officers generally, the agenda revolved around occupational and career concerns. For front-line officers, specifically, I would suggest that the agenda may have been based on any one or more of the following considerations: (1) influencing the nature and/or existence of the training; (2) voicing concerns about government policy as well as internal police procedure; (3) convincing me of the need or lack thereof for the training;<sup>1</sup> (4) taking advantage of time off from a shift; and/or (5) impressing superiors with their involvement.

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For police trainers and similar to observation made by Haas and Shaffir (1980: 246) in their discussion on research involving administrative hospital personnel, participation in this study may have occurred in order to ensure compatibility between this research and administrative interests, the latter of which for trainers hopefully would include a favourable assessment of administrative activities. To this end, any one or combination of the following reasons for participation could have applied: (1) convince the

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<sup>1</sup> Attempts to this end likely would reflect more of a self-reporting bias in which respondents would want to convince me of at least their own sensitivity, if not that of their peers as well.

researcher of the value of this training; (2) justify what the training involved; (3) explain on what grounds the training could be considered a success or failure; and/or (4) demonstrate why patrol constables needed the training. Participation also may have been motivated by impression management concerns as they related not only to myself, but more importantly, immediate superiors (who trainers knew endorsed my work) and relevant provincial bodies (including the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the provincial training college, the latter two of which may be interested in this study's findings).

In addition to the foregoing, my research was faced with other political considerations. For example, not only did I have to address what turned out to be a highly charged issue (i.e.; wife assault) within this particular police service,<sup>2</sup> but I also was forced to confront the split in the police culture between front-line officers and administration/management. One of the challenges this situation presented was determining to what extent patrol constables' negativity expressed towards sensitivity training arose out of either sentiment towards the issue or what I refer to as the "administrative/front-line divide."

Another challenge was developing a rapport with two clearly antagonistic groups, the members of whom were aware I was interviewing both.<sup>3</sup> Not unlike the experience faced by Bromley and Shupe (1980: 202) in their research on two conflicting religious

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<sup>2</sup> Dutton (1995: 61) notes that "wife assault is a topic that arouses passions and political opinions."

<sup>3</sup> Although I sought to manage this hostility between the two groups, upon leaving one group and going to the other, I often felt as if I was entering "enemy" territory.



groups, I was confronted with each group not only fervently believing in their version of reality but also believing (or at least hoping) that the research ultimately would vindicate their respective version. Like Bromley and Shupe (1980: 201-2), as I became more deeply involved with each group, I experienced subtle as well as direct pressures to “go native;” i.e., align myself with beliefs of the group with whom I was interacting (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 115).

In this connection, Sanders (1980: 158) notes that it is “only through the ongoing, problematic process of assuming the perspectives of the actors in the field [that] qualitative researchers [can] develop a disciplined and descriptively grounded understanding of social behavior (*sic*) encountered.” However, Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980: 187) warn that should this process result in a situation of “overrapport” (or going native), the researcher’s objectivity will be weakened, if not destroyed. Other documented consequences of going native include interference with the researcher’s ability to obtain certain kinds of data and complicating the researcher’s disengagement from the setting (Prus, 1980: 143). While tenuous, the politically charged environment of the police organization was not without research merit inasmuch as it provided me with data which revealed how each group sought to not only legitimate itself but also discredit its opponent (Bromley and Shupe, 1980: 191-2). Moreover, this data became useful for revealing weaknesses in the training and ultimately giving rise to what I consider to be useful recommendations.

## Appendix 4

### Ethical Concerns

In this discussion, I address ethical concerns which arose during this research notwithstanding my attempts to abide by McMaster University's academic research guidelines as well as Standards for Evaluation in Educational Research. During my negotiations for access, the issue of data ownership was not raised. Once my research was underway, I was approached by a senior administrative officer who suggested that at the end of my study I withhold providing participating officers with a copy of my summary report until it received administration's endorsement. This request presented the following ethical dilemma: On the one hand, if I sought administrative approval, I risked refusal of that endorsement without which I would be obligated to withhold my summary report from respondents. Moreover, to deny respondents this access carried two essential risks: (1) potentially widening the administrative/front-line chasm because of possible front-line resentment about being denied access to this information; and (2) spoiling the field for others in terms of demotivating already discouraged officers to participate in future studies. On the other hand, if I circumvented administration's request for prior approval, I again risked spoiling the field for others--but more in terms of administration denying future requests for access. Ultimately, I decided to provide all respondents with a copy of my summary report on the basis that any information in the report also was documented in my thesis, the latter of which was a public document filed at the university library.

Another ethical issue which I confronted involved negotiations for access. As noted by Becker (1967: 239), all researchers have biases. My biases going into this research were that I was sympathetic to the feminist account of wife assault and supportive of sensitivity training. I made these biases known to senior administrative police officials, the latter of whom appeared to hold similar sentiments. It is possible that my access may have been granted because of assumptions about the potential for a favourable report--or at least one supportive of the training.<sup>1</sup> This possibility together with the generous access granted to me created a situation whereby I felt somewhat beholden to administration while at the same time committed to my sense of academic integrity. It was not without some difficulty, then, that in analyzing my data I have drawn up a report which is expected to receive a less than enthusiastic reception by those without whose approval this study would not have occurred.

Other ethical concerns revolved around situations in which I became aware of policy transgressions by front-line officers. In one respect, disclosing these transgressions would have violated confidentiality promised to my respondents,<sup>2</sup> damaged my credibility, possibly destroyed my rapport with patrol constables, potentially spoiled the field for others, and/or may have resulted in some form of professional discipline of involved parties. In another respect, remaining silent risked not only continuation of what might be considered improper responses to domestic violence calls, but also possible injury to the

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<sup>1</sup> Although there were no conditions on my access to the police college, the request by the latter institution for a copy of my thesis carried unspoken pressures for an endorsement of the perspective (read feminist) about wife assault advocated by police college wife assault trainers.

<sup>2</sup> Becker (1972: 15) notes that for a researcher to report everything observed is to "violate confidences and otherwise do harm."

party (or parties) involved because of improper police response. This type of dilemma is addressed in fieldwork literature and, as noted by Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980: 16), the consensus appears to be that “there is no shared consensus concerning the researcher’s duties and responsibilities either to those studied or to the discipline itself.” According to these researchers, given the subjective nature of researcher responsibility to their respondents, thorny issues (not unlike this one) are resolved according to the conscience of the individual researcher (ibid.). Being sufficiently vague, I disclosed my dilemma to an administrative officer who recommended that I not report any constable transgressions, suspected or otherwise. The latter recommendation together with the considerations outlined above (including my commitment to academic research guidelines) led me to remain silent on this matter.

A final ethical issue in this study involved questions of self-interest. Upon completion of this academic undertaking, I was interested in pursuing a career with the police or a state agency which deals with domestic violence/wife assault issues. Yet, during the course of the study, I became aware that the data was supportive of an analysis incompatible with the prevailing political climate insofar as it challenged the explanation of intimate violence which presently has the most currency in this province; i.e., the feminist account of wife assault. While I remained faithful to my understanding of the data,<sup>3</sup> I

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<sup>3</sup> According to Becker (1972: 15), “when we [researchers] report what we have learned, it is important that we do so faithfully.”

nevertheless did not undergo this particular research experience without a great deal of personal struggle.

## Appendix 5

### Role of the Researcher

As a researcher in a patrol constable subculture, I was confronted with many challenges, the foremost of which was the documented strongly felt insider/outsider dichotomy among police officers (Reuss-Ianni, 1983: 30). As indicated in comments made during and following recruitment sessions, my identity was suspected as that of (1) an administrative spy “working for the chief” (the latter of which placed me in “enemy” territory because of the patrol constable subculture mistrust of and dislike for administration); (2) a much maligned “feminazi” determined to castigate constables for their role in responding to wife assault situations; and/or (3) an idealistic social worker destined to make impractical recommendations about police response. Apart from the foregoing, my female gender in a largely male police culture made me even more suspect. Given the central importance in fieldwork of presenting oneself as nonthreatening (Sanders, 1980: 164), allaying these suspicions was critical. To this end, I focused on my commitment to neutrality, confidentiality, and anonymity. I also openly discussed the professional consequences of any violation of my commitment. (In this discussion, I also included an honest [and often interpreted by constables as humourous] admission of my reluctance to “cross” police officers.)<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This reluctance was reinforced by the following comments made by one of the respondents, “Like, I’m talking to you now. I put my complete trust in what you said from the start. I have no reason to doubt you. If I ever found out otherwise, look out! Because I wouldn’t be a friend. That’s just the way I am. Don’t deceive me.”

Having convinced some (but regrettably not all) constables of my commitment and obligations to academic integrity, I surprisingly found my gender proved beneficial. Once constables witnessed what they considered to be my openness to hearing “their story,” they regarded my gender as an opportunity to obtain much needed *gendered* support for their particular perspective. However, perceived by constables *as well as* administrative trainers as a “potentially useful. . . disseminator of ‘the truth’” (Bromley and Shupe, 1980: 199), I needed to be continually vigilant about effects of any behaviour on my part which might have been interpreted as an indication of an alliance with either group (ibid.: 191-2).

In addition to my gender, two other personal identities valued by police officers became important; i.e.; my middle class membership and my heterosexual identity.<sup>2</sup> I would suggest that common social class membership was central in establishing rapport (Kleinman, 1980: 179) given the strong identification by police with middle class values (Cohen and Feldberg, 1991: 6). I also would suggest that my heterosexual identity was critical in allaying fears that I might be a “man-hating” lesbian. Furthermore, I believe that as interviews progressed and my understanding of the respondents’ perspectives deepened, these points of identification strengthened.

Sharing personal experiences also encouraged my acceptance by respondents (Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz, 1980: 114). Although Maines, Shaffir and Turowetz (1980: 274) argue that researchers have to manage “the tension between being overly personalized and overly detached,” I was not conscious of that tension because of my

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<sup>2</sup> Similar to Kleinman (1980: 180), I, too, found that identities irrelevant to my researcher status played an important role in my acceptance by respondents.

position that interviews--if they are to be successful--require two-way communication and disclosure between researcher and respondent. In terms of disclosures about myself, I found that issues of particular interest to constables included my previous experience with and acknowledgment of female violence as well as my former profession as a credit officer, the latter of which involved working under lending guidelines that increasingly formalized decisions, limited discretion, and denied the role of intuition.

In addition to encouraging acceptance by constables, sharing experiences such as the foregoing was intended to increase respondents' view of the likelihood that I would present their points of view fairly (Eakin Hoffman, 1980: 50). Sharing personal experiences also may have contributed to the trust necessary for subsequent disclosure by respondents of "backstage" or "insider" information (Kleinman, 1980: 180; Eakin Hoffman, 1980: 49,51-2). Given not only warnings by administration but also the documented claim regarding the propensity by police for secrecy and silence (Punch, 1985: 183; Vincent, 1990: 13), I was surprised by both the degree of backstage information disclosed as well as the openness expressed by front-line officers in general and patrol constables in particular--especially given the potentially charged (no pun intended) combination of my gender, the nature of the topic under study, and the stereotypical male macho police culture (Vincent, 1990: 125-6; Punch, 1994: 87).

Aside from the role played by common identities and shared personal experiences, I would suggest that my ability to converse easily in "police talk" (learned from previous research on police) contributed to both my acceptance by and disclosures from officers. According to Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980: 115-6), familiarity with respondents'



argot not only is valuable in facilitating communication, but also “provides significant clues about the group’s basic assumptions about themselves and how outsiders are defined.” By the end of the study, it appeared that constables’ perceptions of me had evolved from a naive and threatening outsider to an insider<sup>3</sup> who understood and adequately articulated their perspective.

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<sup>3</sup> An indication of my insider status was revealed when, on a few occasions, respondents described incidents currently under investigation and requested my views. In their discussion on fieldwork predicaments, Shaffir, Stebbins and Turowetz (1980: 13) note that researchers often may be called upon to act as mediators and/or problemsolvers within the field setting.

## Appendix 6

### Research Proposal

September 14, 1995

Dear -----,

I am enrolled in the masters degree program in sociology at McMaster University and am interested in domestic violence sensitivity training for police officers as a topic for my thesis. I believe that domestic violence is an extremely important issue. The existence of sensitivity training workshops at your police service indicates a shared concern with this topic. It also reflects an important expenditure of your own resources. As a consequence, you may be interested in determining the effects of this training on your officers.

This letter requests authorization to interview officers who have received the training as well as officers who administer it. In addition, in order to be provided with a comparison group, it would be useful to interview some officers who have not received the training. Prior to conducting the interviews, I would provide you with drafts of the interview schedules. A sample of the type of questions that would be asked is attached to this letter. Any officer participating in the project would be assured of confidentiality. A summary of my findings and/or copy of my completed thesis will be made available upon request.

Please note that approval will be obtained from the McMaster University Ethics Committee prior to the commencement of this project. In addition, all research will be undertaken under the guidance of Dr. ----- at McMaster University who may be reached at -----.

The proposed study will provide you with valuable feedback from your officers concerning what appears to be the most effective strategies for dealing with domestic violence as well as possible recommendations for future training. Although I will not be interviewing victims of domestic violence as part of this thesis, my results nevertheless may serve as a useful pilot study for addressing at a later point the impact of this training upon victims.

I believe this study will be mutually beneficial. I am extremely committed to the topic and in order for me to complete my thesis, access to police officers is crucial. I would like to thank you in advance for any consideration that you can give this project. Please feel free to contact me directly at -----, or if you prefer, Dr. ----- at ----- . I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

### Interview Guide

1. What do the officers know about the training program?
2. Do the officers feel they know enough about the program to assess its effectiveness?
3. What is the program designed to accomplish?
4. How is the program administered?
5. What do the officers consider to be the major accomplishments, strengths, and weaknesses of the program?
6. Were there any issues presented during the training that have been challenged by the officers' direct experience with situations involving domestic violence?
7. Where applicable, how would the officers recommend the training be changed to accommodate their experience?
8. What recommendations do the officers have for improving the program?

**Appendix 7**

## Notice for Study

ATTENTION OFFICERS

OCTOBER 1995

RE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SENSITIVITY TRAININGRESEARCH PROJECT

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN:

- \* PROVIDING YOUR OPINIONS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SENSITIVITY TRAINING TO AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER?
- \* MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES THAT BETTER REFLECT YOUR EXPERIENCE IN POLICING 'DOMESTICS'?
- \* HAVING AN OPPORTUNITY TO POSSIBLY INFLUENCE FUTURE SENSITIVITY TRAINING PROGRAMS?

IF INTERESTED, PLEASE CALL ----- AT ----- TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION AND/OR ARRANGE FOR A CONFIDENTIAL INTERVIEW. INTERVIEWS CAN BE IN PERSON OR ON THE PHONE AND SHOULD LAST APPROXIMATELY 45 MINUTES TO ONE HOUR. I WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM ANY OFFICERS WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE TRAINING AT ----- STATION AND/OR . . . POLICE COLLEGE, SENIOR CONSTABLES WHO HAVE ATTENDED IN-SERVICE SESSIONS (BOTH CLASSROOM AND SUNDAY MORNING ROLL CALL) AND/OR ADVANCED TRAINING COURSES, AS WELL AS ANY OFFICERS WHO HAVE RECEIVED ONLY SOME OR NONE OF THE TRAINING.

I REALIZE THAT I AM ASKING FOR A REASONABLE INVESTMENT OF YOUR TIME. BUT THERE IS NO WAY FOR ME TO PROCEED WITH THIS PROJECT WITHOUT YOUR WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST ME. I WOULD APPRECIATE ANY CONSIDERATION YOU CAN GIVE TO THIS PROJECT.

(THIS PROJECT IS TO COMPLETE A MASTERS THESIS IN THE SOCIOLOGY MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM AT MCMASTER UNIVERSITY. ALL RESEARCH WILL BE UNDERTAKEN UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF DR. ----- WHO MAY BE REACHED AT -----, IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROJECT.)

## Appendix 8

### Research Statement

Hi, my name is -----. I'm in the sociology masters program at McMaster University. Last year, I did some work with police officers. Out of that work, there arose issues involving domestics as well as domestic violence sensitivity training. It became clear that there was an opportunity to evaluate this training from the officers' perspective.

My project will examine police officers' views on domestic violence sensitivity training. You will be invited to comment on the training ranging from formal courses at ----- Police College to viewing videos and listening to speakers during Sunday morning roll calls. The types of questions asked will be: Do you find this training helpful? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not? If you could make some changes in the training, what would they be? In your opinion, is there even a need for this type of training?

Your views also will be sought on the pro-charge/arrest policy in cases of domestic violence. As well, you will be able to discuss how you see your role in these situations and how and whether you consider that role to be changing--either positively or negatively. In addition, any recommendations you have regarding this issue will form an integral component of this study.

Sensitivity training for all kinds of professions seems to be the response of the 90s in dealing with various issues like domestic violence, race relations, gay/lesbian issues, etcetera. There is a considerable volume of literature written from the perspective of criminologists, psychologists, social workers, and special interest groups. However, I have yet to locate any study that evaluates domestic violence sensitivity training from the police officers' perspective. I also have yet to read any literature that incorporates recommendations from those officers who deal with 'domestics' on a routine basis.

I'm here this evening/morning to invite you to participate in this project. Participation involves a one-on-one interview with you during regular work hours. The interview should last between 45 minutes and 1 hour. You can decline to answer any questions or discontinue the interview at any time. All comments will be kept confidential in my report. As well, no departmental member will have access to the results of any interview.

I'm interested in talking with those of you who have had any of the training at ----- station. As well, I also would like to speak to those officers who have had the training elsewhere or even no training at all.

If you would like to participate or want more information about the study, you can call me at the number listed on the blue sheet I handed out. Interviews should start in November.

I understand that this participation would involve another demand on your limited time. However, from my speaking with administration, it is clear that there is an interest in hearing your comments and assessing the training in light of those comments.

This project, then, serves two purposes. It not only fulfills the thesis portion of my masters program; but, it also allows you the opportunity to voice your opinions in a

confidential manner to an independent researcher about an issue I understand to be a 'hot topic.' In doing so, you get to have your views and concerns considered by those who have the power to make changes.

## Appendix 9

### Consent Form

SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SENSITIVITY TRAINING STUDY

“INFORMED CONSENT” FORM

TELEPHONE -----  
(HOME -----)

RESEARCHER

-----, B. A., M. A. Candidate, McMaster University

I have heard ----- describe the training assessment project.

I have read this consent form and I agree to participate in an interview at a time agreed upon by both of us. I do/do not (circle) to have the interview audiotaped.

I understand that my involvement is completely voluntary, and that I may withdraw from the study at any time, or refuse to answer specific questions if I so choose.

I understand that my name will not appear anywhere on the interview schedule, and will not be connected in any way with my responses. All my responses will be kept confidential.

I understand that if I have further questions, I may call the above telephone numbers.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher

## Appendix 10

### Interview Guide For Police Trainers

#### Training Questions

1. I know that the [training] unit opened in . . . Can you tell me why it was established?
2. On what basis do people get chosen to work here?
3. Your unit has experienced some changes over the past couple of months. Can you tell me what they were? What was the impetus for these changes? I understand there was some concern expressed by shelters about these changes. What role did they play in the final decisions about the changes?
4. Do other police services have a comparable department? If not, do they have domestic violence specialists within the service?
5. When did the first sensitivity training on domestic violence start here?
6. Do you call it 'wife assault' or 'domestic violence' sensitivity training?
7. How often did it occur?
8. Who were the trainers?
9. What were their qualifications?
10. Who received the training (numbers and rank)?
11. Was the training voluntary or mandatory? If voluntary, what was the attendance rate? If mandatory, were there any conditions under which officers could be excused from the training? If yes, what were these conditions?
12. When did the training stop and why?
13. What were the goal(s) of the training?
14. If more than one goal, which is the most/least important one(s) and why?
15. What are the objective measures of the goals?
16. What was involved in the training?
17. How did you decide what to incorporate into the training?
18. What literature did you draw on in designing the training?
19. How do you measure success?
20. How do you measure failure?
21. Do you have an idea of a time frame before you could expect measurable outcomes to appear?
22. In your opinion, what did the training accomplish? Have you noticed any changes in this area that you attribute to the training?
23. What did the training not accomplish?
24. What do you consider to be the strengths of the training? Weaknesses?
25. In what area do you feel you made the greatest changes and why?
26. In your view, how effective was the training?
27. Were there any unanticipated benefits of the training? If yes, what were they? Any unanticipated consequences? If yes, how did you deal with them?



28. Were there any components of the training that were dropped or modified? If yes, could you describe them?
29. What do you regard as your most effective training tool and why?
30. Do you see any ways the training could be improved? If yes, what are they?
31. Is there a documented cost of the training? If yes, would you be able to tell me what that is?
32. How receptive were the officers to the training? What factors do you account for that?
33. Why did you choose senior officers for separate training?
34. I know from previous conversations that talks by shelter workers and viewing videos were a large component of the training? What videos did you use? What made you decide to use those ones? Would I be able to view them? If yes, what arrangements do I need to make? If no, can I get access to videos elsewhere?
35. When you had shelter workers come in, did you use all the shelters? If no, on what basis did you choose them?
36. Did you set the agenda for these shelter workers? If yes, how did you decide what to include? If no, were there any parameters given?
37. Were police trainers in attendance at the sessions run by the shelter workers?
38. What did a typical training session by shelter workers look like?
39. You indicated a while ago that officers evaluated the program at the end of the training sessions. Would I be able to have access to those evaluations? Alternately, could you tell me the results of that evaluation (what was the range of responses? what was the consensus, if any?)
40. I've heard the training by shelter workers referred to as "shouting matches." What could account for that?
41. I've heard the relationship between shelters and the officers on the street is a hostile one. Yet, I understand the police trainers have a good relationship with the shelters. Why is your relationship different?
42. Have you ever done any training at the shelters? If so, what did it involve?
43. On what other issues do officers receive sensitivity training?
44. Is there anything about domestic violence sensitivity training that makes it distinct from the other types of training the officers receive?
45. In general, are there minimum standards of training for police recruits and investigators in dealing with domestic violence situations? If yes, what are they?

### Policy Questions

1. When did the police start differentiating wife assault as a form of domestic violence that needed to be administered by a separate policy? What accounted for that change?
2. What do you see as the factors responsible for the following legislative changes: Not having to witness the assault in order to lay charges? The mandatory charge directive from the Solicitor General?
3. What do you understand to be the purpose of the wife assault charge policy?

4. In your opinion, how effective is the charge policy in reducing incidents of wife assault?
5. In what percentage of cases would you say you are laying charges in allegations of wife assault and domestic violence?
6. How long does it normally take for a charge to be dealt with in court?
7. Is your arrest policy particular to this police service? If yes, why was it introduced?
8. What was the organizational procedure for introducing the arrest policy (hold a meeting/discuss with officers/get front-line feedback?)
9. What do you see as the officers' role in domestic violence/wife assault situations?
10. I know from last year that when you go in to a situation and the victim presents to you that she (or he) has been assaulted, you have to form 'reasonable grounds' to believe that an offense has occurred. What constitutes reasonable grounds?
11. What would you do in a situation where both the man and the woman are both claiming assault and/or threats against themselves and there is no physical evidence?
12. Can there ever be 'good' reasons not to arrest?
13. How do you justify to the officers a separate procedure for dealing with wife assault?
14. What are some examples of the types of conditions for release that you would recommend for someone charged with a domestic assault? Is the victim's input requested?
15. Under what conditions do you oppose bail?
16. How often do your recommendations on bail opposition get followed by the court?
17. I've heard some officers question why the ----- recommendations are applied to cases of domestic violence when the ----- incident did not involve domestic violence. What can you say about that situation?
18. What do you regard as the purpose of sentencing (deterrence/punishment/rehabilitation)?
19. What is your opinion on the effectiveness of the different types of sentences for domestic assault in terms of reducing recidivism: Jail and probation? (How long do you think the jail term needs to be in order to deter the offender from reoffending?) Probation only? Probation and fine? Protection order? Counselling?
20. If in a situation where cost was not a factor, what would be the optimum sentence? Given the reality of cost restraints, what would you consider to be the optimum sentence?
21. Your officers appear to resent having what they consider to be no discretion in cases involving domestic violence. Some have recommended withdrawing the charge policy for level one assaults. What is your opinion of this recommendation?

#### Organizational Issues

1. Does response to domestic calls enter into an officer's performance? If yes, in what ways?
2. Can officers be held personally or civilly liable for not arresting in cases involving allegations of domestic violence/wife assault?

3. Has this department or have any officers ever been sued in connection with a domestic situation? If yes, what was the background and how was it resolved? If no, has this occurred elsewhere? To what extent? Is this common knowledge among the officers?
4. What is the role of the police officer in general?
5. How can I get this police service's statistics on the following: Profile of officers in terms of number, gender, seniority, age, and education? Profile of individuals in senior administrative positions (gender/age/promotion from the ranks)? Number and category of calls for service over the past three years? All charges for any offense over the past three years? Breakdown of these statistics by station? Demographic characteristics of victims and suspects? Number of cases over the past three years in which victims request that charges be withdrawn, refuse to testify, or retract testimony in court? Copies of Monthly Spousal Assault Summary Forms since the training unit opened?
6. What do you see as the various reasons why victims request that charges be withdrawn, refuse to testify or appear in court, or retract their testimony?
7. How often do 'stayed' charges result in the victim coming forward within the year and the alleged offender being convicted?

#### Questions about Domestic Violence

1. What are your own view about the factors involved in domestic violence?
2. What do you see as the reasons for why men are violent towards women?
3. What is the impact, if any, upon children who witness domestic violence?
4. What do you regard as solutions to domestic violence?
5. From your perspective, what are the major problems constables have to confront in dealing with domestic violence situations?
6. In speaking with constables at the parades, it appears that many understand charging in a domestic situation as 'breaking up' the family instead of 'breaking the cycle of violence.' Why do you think they interpret their actions this way?
7. I'm getting a sense of low morale with some constables. Aside from the sentiments about domestic violence/wife assault policies, what other factors might account for the low morale?
8. What is your opinion regarding police specialists in the area of domestic violence?
9. A 1991 study done by the London Family Court Clinic on the perspectives of police officers towards a mandatory charge policy claims that the officers had a positive attitude towards the policy. How do you account for the negativity I've heard expressed at the parades?
10. I understand that none of the trainers from this unit attend at the scene of a domestic call. How long has it been since you attended at a domestic call? How long were you involved in responding to these types of calls?
11. In interviewing constables about their views on domestic violence, wife assault, and relevant training, are there some questions I should be sure to ask?
12. Are there any issues that we didn't cover that you think I need to know for this project?

## Demographic Questions

1. How many years have you been with the police?
2. What is your current position?
3. What other positions have you held?
4. What is your age? Educational background? Marital status? If married, is your spouse employed outside the home? If yes, is your spouse employed on a full-time or part-time basis?
5. Do you have any children? If yes, how many and what are their ages?
6. Have you ever been divorced or separated? If yes, do you have custody of your children?

## Appendix 11

### Interview Guide For Patrol Constables

1. What sort of training involving domestic violence issues have you had?
2. How long ago did the training occur?
3. What do you understand to be the reasons why this training was done?
4. Can you describe what the training session was like?
5. Can you recall your reactions upon hearing the speakers and/or viewing the videos?
6. Has the training changed the way you regard domestic violence issues? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
7. What is your opinion about the training in terms of its strengths? Weaknesses?
8. What part of the training did you like the most? Why? Liked the least? Why?
9. Were there any issues presented during the training that have been challenged by your direct experience with policing domestic calls? If so, please describe them?
10. If you were exposed to more than one form of training, what would you consider to be the most effective and why? The least effective and why?
11. If you were responsible for training on domestic violence issues, what sort of training would you set up?
12. What would make your training more effective than the training you've seen or know about?
13. Do you recall if an evaluation of the training session was done? If yes, how did you evaluate the training at that time? If your evaluation now is different, what do you account for the difference?

### Policy Issues

1. What do you see as responsible for the mandate to charge from the Solicitor General?
2. What is the purpose of the wife assault mandatory charge policy?
3. What is this policy accomplishing based on your experience of policing domestic calls?
4. If there was an evaluation of this policy, what would be your feedback about it?
5. How would you respond to the following scenarios: A woman tells you that the man assaulted her but there is no physical evidence ; both the man and woman are claiming assault and/or threats against themselves by each other, and there is no physical evidence in terms of injuries or damage to property?
6. I've heard some allegations of domestic violence are false. How do you determine this?
7. What effect do you regard yourself as having on the ultimate case once you respond to a domestic in terms of the victim following through with the court process, not returning to the abusive relationship, etcetera?
8. How often would you estimate you go back to the same couple for domestic-related calls?

9. In what percentage of domestic calls would you estimate you are responding to a situation where it is the first time that violence has occurred?

### Organizational Questions

1. What do you see as your role as a police officer in responding to any type of call?
2. What do you see as your role in responding to domestic calls?
3. What do you see as the role of the domestic violence training unit?
4. What do you know about the reason(s) why the training unit was formed?
5. What is your relationship like with the trainers?
6. What is your rapport like with local shelters? Is this rapport the same with most constables? If no, why not? Has the rapport changed with the introduction of the training unit? If yes, in what ways?
7. In your opinion, what are the major problems that you have to confront in dealing with domestic situations?
8. What percentage of your time do you estimate is devoted to responding to calls for service involving domestic violence? How does this compare with other types of calls?
9. In what percentage of domestic-related calls would you estimate you are laying charges?
10. On the whole, what percentage of charges laid by you are level ones?
11. Have you ever been injured responding to a domestic call? If yes, please describe the situation(s).
12. In what ways, if any, does your handling of domestic situations affect your annual work performance review?

### General Questions

1. Based on your experience, what do you see as the causes of or factors involved in domestic violence?
2. Are there any ways in which your opinion about causes and factors differs from what you've been taught in the training? If yes, please describe.
3. What do you regard as solutions to domestic violence?
4. What is your experience with the victim: Not being aware of the charge policy when you respond to the domestic call? Requesting charges be withdrawn/refusing to testify/retracting testimony in court? What do you see as the reasons for the foregoing?
5. What is your experience with the complainant reconciling with the offender? What do you see as the reasons why this happens?
6. Although no two domestic calls are the same, from all the ones that you have attended, what do you see as the commonalities?
7. What is your understanding of what it means to be sensitive at a domestic call?
8. What are the characteristics of the profile (if any) of an abuser?

9. What are the characteristics of the profile (if any) of a battered woman? How often do you come across a battered woman?
10. Are there any issues that we didn't cover that you think I need to know for this project?
11. In interviewing the trainers, are there any questions I should be sure to ask?

#### Demographic Questions

1. How many years have you been with the police?
2. What is your current position?
3. What other positions have you held?
4. Have you worked at other stations within the service? If yes, which one(s)?
5. What is your age? Educational background?
6. Have you ever taken any courses outside the police or read any material dealing with domestic violence? If yes, can you describe them?
7. What is your marital status? If married, is your partner employed outside the home? If yes, is the employment full-time or part-time?
8. Do you have any children? If yes, how many and what are their ages?
9. Have you ever been separated or divorced? If yes, do you have custody of your children? If no, briefly describe your experience with the court system.
10. Are your parents separated or divorced? Did your mother work while you were a child?
11. Briefly, how would you describe your childhood?
12. Have you ever known anyone on a personal basis who was involved in domestic violence? If yes, do you feel free in talking about it? In what ways, if at all, has that situation changed the way you regard domestic violence?

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