RISK, RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE

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TITLE: RISK, RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE OF HIGH-RISK WOMAN ABUSE SURVIVORS

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ABSTRACT

Once understood as a personal concern, violence against women has been re-conceptualized over the past thirty years as a societal problem (Standing Committee on Social Development, 1982). With increasing public attention to woman abuse, researchers have worked to understand what kinds of interventions might ameliorate this tragic phenomenon. Yet very few researchers have asked abused women for their views about interventions designed for their safety by social and police service agencies.

This interview study explored five women's experiences of a Community Safety Protection Program (CSPP), a program intended to prevent future violence or deaths of "high risk" women at the hands of male partners or former partners. The central aim in the research was to situate the CSPP in the context of abused women's struggles and achievements: to examine how the CSPP contributes to their sense of safety, how it enables their resistance, and how it supports their strengths.

The CSPP was found to have benefits beyond the stated intention of the program: it appears that the CSPP may be part of an important shift in the balance of power between a woman and her abusive former partner, changing the nature of her resistance and increasing her entitlement to safety. Interviews also reveal that women's risk of violence persists over time, and suggest careful attention to the match between women's circumstances and the length of time the program is offered. Interviews also highlighted a central paradox: the program's power to protect women can also work to oppress them. The positive impact the CSPP has on women's lives is undeniable; however changes in

practice need to take place to mitigate the potential for disempowerment of the recipients of the CSPP.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence against women has existed for centuries (Pressman, 1984). Historically, society has sanctioned patriarchal attitudes toward women, thereby creating an oppressive environment conducive to violence. Violence towards women has been perpetuated through religious teaching, historical and legal precedence, cultural norms, and socialization (Pressman, 1984).

Statistics reflect the current extent of violence against women in our society. One quarter of all violent crimes reported to a sample of police services in 2001 involved cases of family violence (Statistics Canada, 2003). Two-thirds of these cases were violence committed by a spouse or former spouse and 85% of the victims were female (Statistics Canada, 2003). Physical force and threats are the most common forms of woman abuse reported to police. A variety of weapons have been used to intimidate or inflict injury in these incidents (Statistics Canada, 2003). At its most tragic peak, violence takes the lives of many women. More than half of all women killed in Canada each year are killed by a current or former partner (United Way, 1998).

This research considers how social and police service agencies in a particular community attempt through a Community Safety Protection Program (CSPP) to prevent future violence or deaths of women at the hands of male partners or former partners. My central aim in this research is to situate the CSPP in the context of abused women's struggles and achievements: to examine how the CSPP eases their sense of risk, how it enables their resistance, and how it supports their strengths. I also consider the more

complicated and difficult aspects of the CSPP, highlighting how the power of the program can be both liberating and oppressive to abused women.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Terms and Definitions

The literature reveals a range of terminology concerning violence against women. The following terms have been used in the field: violent intimacy, inter-spousal violence, conjugal violence, family violence, domestic violence, and spousal violence (Bidgood, 1995). Authors have advocated that terms such as domestic violence or conjugal violence obscure the fact that these violent acts are perpetrated against women (Bidgood, 1995). Current research lacks consistent terminology of language, thereby making the interpretation and comparison of studies difficult and confusing. It is often difficult to determine validity in evaluation studies as it is sometimes unclear as to which construct is being measured. For example, several batterer treatment program studies have used dichotomous terms such as 'violent and 'non-violent,' without precisely defining their meaning (Browning, 1991). Therefore, in an effort to provide clarity and delineate a gender specific issue, this thesis will use the term violence against women or woman abuse to include all forms of violence against women perpetrated by men.

Although there are many definitions of woman abuse in use, most battered women's advocates (including myself) subscribe to a definition that includes the concepts of power and control. The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women defines violence against women as:

> any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such

> acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life. (Commission on Status of Women, 1993).

The ways in which these 'deprivations of liberty' have been operationalised are in the form of physical, emotional, sexual and financial abuse. The coercion aspect of the definition is an important one, as it forms the basis of the power and control framework used in many battered women's counselling services.

Another point of contention is based on what behavioural criterion constitutes violence. In the past, the majority of research has focused solely on physical abuse (Browning, 1991). As helping professionals in the field have recognized that violence and abuse exist in many forms, the terminology used to define the issue has been broadened (MacLeod, 1995). Abuse against women is manifested on the following levels: physical, psychological, verbal/emotional, sexual, and financial (MacLeod, 1995). Physical abuse often involves slapping, punching, kicking, biting, shoving, choking, or using a weapon to threaten. Psychological abuse consists of excessive jealousy, destruction of personal property, or comments about the woman's physical appearance. Men who use psychological abuse may isolate the woman by restricting her time outside the home, or her activities with other people, including family members and friends. In relationships where psychological abuse exists, it is not uncommon for the male partner to threaten to commit suicide, abduct the children, or hurt other people to whom the woman is connected. Verbal abuse often involves criticism, name calling, blaming, and false accusations. Sexual abuse consists of forcing the woman to engage in sexual acts without her consent. Finally, financial or economic abuse is defined as a lack of access to

the familial financial resources (MacLeod, 1995). As demonstrated by the broadened definition of violence and abuse, this is an issue that affects women on multiple levels. This research study recognizes all forms of abuse as mentioned above.

In North America, three levels of intervention to prevent violence against women are used: risk assessment, safety planning, and protection programs. I will discuss these in turn, and then describe the specific program at the centre of this research. In general, the voices of abuse survivors have been absent from the definition and design of violence prevention strategies.

Risk Factors and Risk Assessment

Because safety is the core of domestic violence intervention, much research has been concerned with developing lists of risk factors and corresponding risk assessment tools to predict future severe violence and/or homicide (Laing, 2004; Thompson, Saltzman, & Johnson, 2001; Heckert & Gondolf, 2004). Research into domestic homicides typically reveals these to be "crimes of cumulation in which men's violence and women's entrapment seems to intensify over time" (Websdale, 2000, p.1). Lists of risk factors for future severe violence and/or homicide have historically been developed by 'working backwards' from women's homicides by their partners, in an attempt to determine the events leading up to the homicide (Wilson & Daly, 1993). The most common risk factors are concerned with the woman's prior victimization and the batterer's behaviour along the following elements: drug and alcohol problems, obsessive-possessive behaviour and excessive jealousy, threats to kill the woman and/or her children, possession of, access to, familiarity with, and degree of fascination with

weapons, use of violence outside the home, stalking behaviour, suicidal ideation, and status of the relationship (Websdale, 2000; Campbell et al., 2003; Hassler, Johnson, Town & Websdale; Campbell, 1985). Although alcohol and drug use may occur with violence, it is not a cause of the violence (Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000).

An additional aspect of risk assessment that is not commonly identified is the spectrum of 'social risks' that may increase a battered woman's risk of future violence. Social risks include external conditions, pressures, norms, and practices that exacerbate the dangers to a battered woman (Jaaber & Dasgupta, 2003). Social risks often encompass structural issues of class, culture, and religion. Although battered women's advocates incorporate social risks into safety planning, none of the risk assessments I reviewed incorporated social risks. Most of the risk factors commonly used in risk assessments are focused on the batterer's behaviour.

As supported in much of the literature, the most dangerous time for an abused woman is when she has left the relationship (Burman, 2003). Women who leave their batterers are at a 75% greater risk of being killed by the batterer than those who stay. The risk of homicide is higher in the first two months after separation (Wilson & Daly, 1993). Wilson & Daly (1993) point out that batterers themselves often do exactly what they say they will do; that is, they threaten lethal violence if their partners threaten or attempt to leave, and they carry out that violence in the event of the partner's attempted departure from the relationship.

The majority of the initial assaults by an ex-partner take place soon after separation; Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee (2000) recruited 278 women from a shelter

program and found 51% of initial assaults by an ex-partner took place within 10 weeks of leaving the shelter. However, the link between violence and separation is complex. Many women do not leave abusive relationships because of their fear of retaliatory violence by their partners. In my clinical experience, many women are threatened in their relationships that if they leave, their partner will "hunt them down" or "if I can't have you, nobody will." These threats serve the batterer's intention of maintaining power and control over their partners. It is therefore not clear whether the violence in the relationship has escalated to such a degree that the woman is forced to leave, and therefore violence post-separation is a continuation of that risk, or whether separation is in itself a separate risk marker.

Risk Assessment

Reviewing the literature, formalized instruments of assessing risk of future violence are labeled "dangerousness assessments," "risk assessments" and "lethality assessments." Because the research has not proven any difference in the antecedents of lethal and non-lethal risk, the term "dangerousness assessment" is more readily used in the literature (Websdale, 2000). In my own practice with abused women and in the CSPP, the term risk assessment is used. While I acknowledge the debate in the literature regarding the usage of terms, for the purposes of this research project, the term risk assessment will be used throughout the paper. Risk assessments are commonly used in the field of violence against women, and I was surprised at the lack of research on the consistency of the instruments, their use, and the impact of the instruments on the abused women themselves.

Most risk assessments take the form of checklists composed of the risk factors outlined in the section above, with some room for a range of possible answers, rather than simple yes/no responses. None of the risk assessments in the literature identified social risks as necessary components of an effective risk assessment tool. The Danger Assessment Tool developed by Campbell (1988) is most widely referenced in the literature as the tool with greatest reliability. The Danger Assessment Tool was also based on retrospective studies of intimate partner homicide or injury, in consultation with battered women, their advocates, police, and other clinicians (Campbell, 1988). The risk assessment used by the CSPP to determine eligibility of women for the program is very similar in content to the Campbell's Danger Assessment Tool.

Most risk assessments are used by advocates as risk management to assist in women's safety planning. Being considered "high-risk" has meant that women rate the majority of risk markers as applicable in their case, or key risk markers such as threats of harm, weapon use, and severity of violence. Risk assessments are particularly powerful tools with abused women who tend to minimize their risk of harm by their former partners. However, many risk assessments can produce "false positives" marking some perpetrators as high risk who in fact, do not re-assault (Gondolf, 2002, in Laing, 2003). Conversely, many men who do re-assault are marked as low risk in risk assessment tools Gondolf, 2002, in Laing, 2003). The main difficulty with risk assessments in my experience is the lack of consistency in coding the assessment. Which markers receive the heaviest weight? Risk assessment tools need to be used cautiously, and should not be used as the sole method for determining future risk of harm to women (Laing, 2003). As

well, due to the nature of woman abuse, risk to women changes over time and risk assessment should not be seen as static.

Most lists of risk factors were developed and determined by researchers and clinicians. However, recently there has been increased attention given to the perceptions and predictions of survivors themselves (Fleury, Sullivan & Bybee, 2000, Heckert & Gondolf, 2004, Gondolf & Heckert, 2003; Weisz, Tolman & Saunders, 2000). Gondolf & Heckert (2003) found strength in women's predictions of re-assault during a 15-month follow-up of partners of battering men in treatment programs. The authors discovered that "women's perceptions were also predictive of the men's actual use of threats and re-assault, including repeat re-assault" (Gondolf & Heckert, 2003, p.372). Additionally, the authors found that women's predictions of repeated re-assault themselves were stronger than simulated versions of two out of three risk assessments used (Gondolf & Heckert, 2003). Gondolf & Heckert (2003) determined that women attend to the same risk markers incorporated into risk assessments; however they have a broader picture of the abuse, and "draw on a subconscious reservoir of experience" (p.373).

Safety Planning

As already mentioned, safety planning is a core intervention in the field of woman abuse. Risk assessment tools are used to guide clinicians in their interventions with abused women. While all abused women are at risk and benefit from safety planning, women identified as "high-risk" (as identified by a significant amount of risk markers in risk assessment tools) require more extensive safety planning.

There has been no empirical research addressed at women's safety planning and its prevention of future violence. However, in my clinical practice, many women have identified the need to address their physical safety by reinforcing the security of their home (installing reinforced locks on windows and doors, security systems, etc) and altering their routines so as to minimize contact with perpetrators who also stalk their former partners.

Safety planning strategies also incorporate an escape plan for the survivor and her children should violence occur, and other plans that may limit children's autonomy (limited sleepovers at friend's homes, not participating in camps, school trips, etc.). Goodkind, Sullivan, & Bybee (2004) developed a 28 item safety planning scale that they used as a questionnaire with 160 self-identified battered women referred from a victim services agency. The authors discovered that of the 28 possible safety plan items, women reported using 16 strategies on average (Goodkind, Sullivan & Bybee, 2004, p.519). Some of the authors' participants were still in a relationship with their abusive partner, and safety planning methods on the scale included placating the abuser – methods which do not relate to women who have left their partners. The authors discovered that women who used placating or attempting to negotiate with the batterer did so at the risk of their own self-esteem, evidenced by higher levels of depression in these survivors (Goodkind, Sullivan & Bybee, 2004).

Supported by Goodkind, Sullivan, & Bybee (2004), there is no one safety planning strategy that addresses every abused woman's situation. Each situation must be

assessed for its own complexities, and ultimately the woman herself needs to decide which strategies fit her needs, and which strategies are not useful.

Protection Programs

Protection programs have been developed for women whose situations are assessed as high risk. These programs are often collaborative efforts between police and women's services.

The CSPP at the centre of this research is coordinated by Victim Services, however the program is overseen by a committee comprised of the heads of organizations of law enforcement, legal system representatives, shelter, sexual assault centre, Children's Aid Society, Victim Services, and the Native shelter.

One of the debates surrounding protection programs revolves around public knowledge about the programs. Some agencies have taken the position that a perpetrator's awareness of the program acts as a deterrent, and publicize their programs widely. Other agencies, including the agencies that oversee the CSPP at the centre of the research, believe that knowledge about the existence and the specific workings of the program compromise its effectiveness. For this reason, I have not named the community in which the program operates, or described how it actually functions. Suffice to say that in protection programs in general, the women's names and situations are known to the police and women are able (via a mechanism separate from the usual 911 services) to alert police to the presence of the perpetrator. Because she is known to the police and is enrolled in the CSPP her call is considered first priority, and she has a stronger police response if she activates the mechanism in the form of increased number of officers.

The CSPP's intention was to be a short term solution of protection for women at risk of future violence. The CSPP's policy is to offer their service for a six month term to women, based on literature the committee reviewed. Of the single evaluation of a protection program I could find (Wallis & Tutty, 2001), the duration of program was a point of discussion. Initially made available for three months (after which risk was reassessed), the evaluation discovered that the need far outweighed the recommended three month term.

The research focus of this study is especially important because of the identified gaps in the literature. Battered women's experiences are often absent in the literature, and yet these women are the recipients of numerous community programs focused on protecting their safety. Should battered women not have a voice in shaping the services they receive? The process of women's decision making in accessing community protection programs and the effects of their level of risk on the women themselves is an important area that is yet to be investigated. This research will hopefully provide an additional layer of knowledge in the field that will enable communities to provide relevant services to protect high-risk battered women and their children.

METHODOLOGY

While confidentiality measures are important in any research project, research involving a vulnerable population such as abused women requires special consideration due to the physical and emotional safety risks to the participants and potentially to the researcher. Abused women are defined as a vulnerable population

> in terms of their victimization status, their compromised physical and mental health status, the documented gender bias of the criminal justice system, and the stigmatization that society inflicts on them. They may also be in physical danger and at emotional risk from ongoing abuse, a risk that may be increased by research participation. (Campbell & Dienemann, 2001).

In order to ensure that the participants are protected in the research process, it is recommended in the literature that a safety protocol be designed in addition to the research protocol. A safety protocol "outlines the steps taken to address potential threats to the physical safety of participants and those involved in data collection and analysis" (Langford, 2000, p. 134). In this project, the safety protocol addresses both the participants in the research and the Community Safety Protection Program itself. Because of the centrality of safety to this research project, I address safety first, and then go on to discuss other aspects of the research design.

Safety Protocol

Over the five years that the CSPP has been in place, a set of procedures has been established by this CSPP committee centred on confidentiality and safety. Procedures have been established to 1) protect the women involved in the program 2) limit public

awareness of the program and 3) to protect the safety of the staff providing services to women in the program. The safety protocol of the CSPP is in agreement with the safety protocol recommendations of research on woman abuse by Parker & Ulrich (1990). Additionally, Parker and Ulrich (1990) highlight the safety of the data, a point I discuss below. The research safety protocol was designed to conform with the safety and confidentiality operational procedures established by the CSPP committee and to extend them in keeping with principles of research ethics.

Program Confidentiality Measures

I attended a CSPP committee meeting where I presented the safety protocol for this research project. This provided the committee with the opportunity to address any concerns they may have had regarding the research. The committee was assured that the identities of committee members and names of their specific agencies, details of the program's operation, and identities of program participants are protected in the research process as well as in the publication of the research results. In keeping with CSPP procedures to protect the confidentiality of the program, CSPP is a pseudonym for the actual name of the program.The committee approved the safety protocol and research design before the ethics application was presented to the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

Confidentiality and Safety of Participants

In other research projects, recruitment might begin with a letter sent to potential research participants. However, in keeping with the CSPP practice of ensuring that information about the program does not become public, no letter was sent. In this case, a

letter about the research project would have had to have mentioned the program, and it would have been impossible to ensure the letter would have been destroyed or hidden as would have been requested. Therefore, three shelter volunteers made telephone contact with the women to invite them to speak with me about the research. The volunteers were asked to make all calls to the women from the shelter, since the shelter's telephone lines are blocked numbers (that cannot be unblocked) and do not appear on call-display technology. When telephoning potential participants, the volunteers did not leave messages, whether another female in the home or an answering machine answered the phone (leaving messages on answering machines could jeopardize a woman's confidentiality, if the message were listened to or overheard by someone other than herself). They were also instructed to not ask for the woman by name if a male answered the phone. The safety of the potential participants in recruitment via telephone calls is documented by Dutton et al. (2003). In their study, Dutton et al. trained study researchers to have a "safety script" ready if they were questioned by anyone on the phone. These researchers decided to state they were calling about a women's health study. While many researchers may need to devise creative methods of ensuring women's safety, the fact that three volunteers were calling in small increments of time over a longer period would not, I believed, arouse suspicion in any households, therefore not necessitating a "safety script." The volunteers were instructed to say they had a wrong number if a male answered the phone, and to ask the woman if it was safe to talk before they discussed the study. This is supported by Dutton et al. (2003) who trained their researchers to always assume that the perpetrator is standing behind the woman or is on the extension. In order

to protect the confidentiality of the participants in the research, no one outside of myself and the volunteers knew who had agreed to speak with me and who had completed research interviews.

The women who agreed to speak with me about the study and those who chose to participate in the study were informed that their confidentiality would be carefully maintained. They were informed that no names, and no facts that could identify them, would be recorded in any written material about the project, and that all project material including consent forms and audio tapes would be kept in a locked filing cabinet at my office in the shelter. They were informed that no one on the CSPP committee would know who participated and who did not, in order to ensure that their participation in the research and any critical feedback they provided does not affect their receipt of services from the CSPP.

Official consent forms required by ethics boards often mention details of the research and include the name and signature of the participant. Ideally, a research participant would have a copy of the consent form for their own information. However, for abused women, the consent form could pose a safety risk to her and the CSPP if the perpetrator were to become aware of her participation in the research, and of the existence of the CSPP (Parker & Ulrich, 1990). For these reasons, I informed the women that I needed to keep the consent forms in a locked filing cabinet in my office in the shelter once they were read and signed. Because it was important for the women to be able to contact me if they had any questions or concerns after the interview, I provided

each participant with my business card, which included my contact information and the phone number of the shelter crisis line.

Initial face-to-face interviews were arranged on terms that afforded the participants both safety and comfort, and the location of the interview was negotiated between us within certain limits. It is a policy of the CSPP committee that, whenever possible, meetings with women involved in the CSPP take place in settings other than her home, in order to protect the safety of the participant and staff involved in the program. The participants were offered a choice in location for the interview between a private office at the women's shelter, a private office at Victim Services, a private room at the public library, or another private space outside of her home that she chose. Because many meetings with women involved in the CSPP take place at the shelter or Victim Services, it is not uncommon for women to travel to the shelter or Victim Services for a meeting. Women were offered transportation in the form of a taxi to the interview location and to her home at the completion of the interview. The taxi cab not only provided safe transportation, but also minimized any financial or geographic barriers to participation. Women were also offered childcare for their children at the shelter during the interview. One participant accessed childcare during the interview. All participants chose my office in the shelter for the location of the interview.

Safety of Data

As described earlier, abused women are vulnerable participants in research because if their abusive partner became aware of their participation, their safety could be jeopardized. Keeping this in mind, the list of names and contact information of potential

participants was kept in a locked filing cabinet in my office in the shelter. I arranged mutually agreeable 'calling time' sessions with volunteers, and provided them with the list of potential participants. When the volunteers completed their call sessions, I retrieved the list and re-secured it in the locked filing cabinet. Signed consent forms and audio tapes of interviews were also kept locked in the filing cabinet.

Names of participants were not in any way linked to the actual data of the project. Audio tapes were numbered and kept separate from signed consent forms. Keeping data separate from any identifying information is an important part of the safety protocol with abused women as research participants (Lutz, 1999). Additionally, because the audiotapes were transcribed by a professional transcriber, it was important that the safety protocol also extend to the transcriber. The transcriber was required to sign a confidentiality agreement where she agreed to not discuss the content of the audiotapes with anyone, and to remove identifying information from the transcripts, which included names of people, numbers of children, locations, etc (see Appendix A- Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement). In this regard, details about the location of the CSPP, names of the agencies involved, and how the program works would not be recorded in any of the written material about the project (the only exception being the ethics application, where I have named the agencies and their location). I gave audiotapes directly to the transcriber, and personally received the disks of transcripts and the tapes from the transcriber. When I reviewed the content of the transcription and ensured its accuracy, I contacted the transcriber, at which point she removed the copy of the transcription from her computer's memory.

Feminist Research Perspective

The research was undertaken in a feminist research perspective. Feminist philosophy is the foundation of my clinical practice with abused women. It is a lens of appreciation of the impact of oppression against women that informs not only my clinical interventions, but the way in which I view the world, including the social problem of woman abuse. Feminist theory helps me to understand issues of power and its interactions between the individual, the community and larger society. My analysis is one that includes the belief that women are oppressed through patriarchal systems that support the subjugation of women, of which woman abuse is only one form.

Feminist research methodology is "oriented toward contextualizing the research process, the researcher, and the subject of research, based on a nondualistic world view" (Driscoll & MacFarland, in Tomm, 1989, p.189). Feminist research methodology is used in this study because it is consistent with the feminist philosophy that informs the field of violence against women, and is consistent with my own personal and professional values. In addition, since this research is undertaken with a vulnerable population of abused women at high risk of future violence, the importance of a perspective that respects the women's experiences and pays attention to power and authority issues in the research is imperative. A non-judgmental approach was undertaken in the research process. A consideration of power dynamics was essential in this research due to the nature of trauma the women had experienced. It was important to provide women the opportunity to tell their story at their own pace and in their own way, supported by empathy and genuine curiosity on my part.

Research Design

The research design used is an emancipation paradigm "composed of critical theory, participatory action, and feminist research tradition, where qualitative data are collected in a collaborative process for the basic purpose of improving conditions for participants in the research process and the population they represent" (Campbell & Dienemann, 2001, p.58). Qualitative methodology is central to the phenomenological perspective, which understands people from their own frames of reference and experiences reality as they experience it (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Qualitative techniques allow the researcher greater access to women's experiences and locate it in a context, which is better able to incorporate the complexity of women's daily lives (Driscoll & McFarland, in Tomm, 1989).

The potential for anti-oppressive research is greater in qualitative methodology. For example, the impact of culture, class and literacy are more likely to be mitigated in an interview as opposed to a questionnaire which may at worst, pose a barrier to completion, and at best, neglect to capture the complexity of the issue central to the research. Qualitative methodology is also helpful in interviewing women as special attention may be required to nuances of language and experiences that are not easily captured by conventional linguistic forms (Driscoll & McFarland, in Tomm, 1989).

Following the feminist research perspective, my own participation and experience was consciously used in the research process (Driscoll & McFarland, in Tomm, 1989). I believed this would be helpful in mitigating the power and authority issues intrinsic to the research process. My own experiences of violence and the realities of being female in

our patriarchal society informs the research process through my interactions with participants and the non-expert stance I take in the research. Because I have many years of experience in the field of violence against women, I have extensive training in recognizing the emotional impact of sharing experiences of trauma and was able to assist women in managing these effects during the interview process. Even though women in the program have already received extensive safety planning, I was also able to augment their safety planning during the course of the research.

Eligibility

Each woman, as part of her participation in the CSPP, is required to be in a counselling relationship with a shelter counsellor, or another counsellor of her choice. Many of these women are receiving counselling in our program on an individual or group basis. I am one of four therapists in the program. I have personally provided counselling to many of the women who have received the program in the past, and women who are currently participating in the program. To preserve the therapeutic relationship I have with these women, only women for whom I am not the primary counsellor were eligible to participate in the study. Thus, women who receive counselling from other counsellors at the shelter, or from other counsellors in the city, were eligible to participate. Participants were recruited from 93 women involved in the CSPP program presently, or in the past, who have not had a counselling relationship with me.

Sampling

On a monthly basis, the community counselling program of the shelter in which I practice receives an updated list of recipients of the protection program. I obtained a

comprehensive list of CSPP participants (past and present) from Victim Services. I then removed the names of women with whom I had had a counselling relationship, and then forwarded that list back to Victim Services for the phone numbers to be recorded for the remaining women.

Because many of the participants' contact information was dated, many of the women on the list were difficult to contact. More than half (forty-seven) of the phone numbers were wrong numbers or were no longer in service. To prevent any potential future bias, I was not informed of the women who had declined to speak with me about the research. This also minimized the risk of others discovering who had declined to participate. Because of this, I was not able to determine how many women were potentially not answering the phone because of a blocked number, how many women declined to speak with me, and how many women were perhaps no longer at that phone number. A total of ten women agreed to speak with me about the research. Two women did not attend their scheduled research interviews and did not contact me to reschedule. Two other women declined to participate after I spoke with them; one woman declined because of health issues and the other because of scheduling difficulties. I was unsuccessful in contacting the fifth woman. A total of five women were interviewed.

In keeping with principles of purposive sampling, I had hoped to achieve variability in the sample in relation to the key questions I was pursuing. For instance, I was interested in interviewing women who were no longer on the program, and women who had been on (and off) for varying lengths of time. Three out of five participants were still in receipt of the program at the time of the interview (Carla, Janet and Laura).

One participant's CSPP was removed two weeks prior to the interview (Lisa), and the other participant's CSPP was removed three months prior to her interview (Audrey). The length of time participants were in receipt of the CSPP ranged from nine months to two years. Although detailed demographic information was not gathered, the women were white; between the ages of 25 and 55; and were in receipt of social assistance. The transferability of findings from this study may be limited, then, by the relative lack of social diversity among the participants. Audrey and Janet do not have children in the home. Laura, Lisa, and Carla each have children in their homes. In keeping with the safety protocol, pseudonyms for the participants have been used throughout this thesis.

Participant Recruitment

The potential of coercion for participants was high in this research, due to the fact that the women rely on the CSPP for their physical safety. For this reason, it was decided that I would not directly ask the women to participate. As described earlier, three shelter volunteers contacted the women to invite them to speak with me about the study. Shelter volunteers were chosen to make this contact because: 1) they had legitimate access to the women's phone numbers 2) they were not in a counselling relationship with the woman 3) they are not in a position of power in the agency (the latter two reasons minimized the potential of coercion for participants).

Prior to the volunteers making telephone contact, I met with the volunteers to discuss the safety protocols in the research, and rehearse the script (Appendix B-Volunteer Telephone Script). The volunteers were all female, and had received training

on woman abuse issues in the past. All three volunteers had between three and five years experience at the shelter.

Following the script, the volunteer briefly described the research project, explained who I am, and asked the women if they would be willing to be contacted by me. The volunteer explained that the research was not being conducted or sponsored by the shelter or Victim Services. She assured the women that they were not required to participate and that their decision to participate or not to participate would have no effect on the services they receive. The women were assured that neither the CSPP committee, the shelter, or any other agency in relation to the CSPP would be notified of their participation or their non-participation in the project.

Interviews

Before the interview began, I reviewed the consent form with the woman (Appendix C- Consent Form) and again offered her an opportunity to ask questions. Once her questions were fully answered I asked her to sign the consent form. Semi-structured interviews lasting between one and two hours were held with each participant (Appendix D- Interview Guide). Respondents were asked to give a personal narrative of their experience with the CSPP. While some background on the woman's situation prior to accessing the program was required, the interviews focused primarily on their experiences of the program itself. Areas that were explored through the narrative included how they came to the decision to become involved in the program, their experiences of receiving the services of the program, the benefits of the program, and their suggestions for changes in service delivery that would better meet their needs.

Consistent with the feminist research perspective, women were allowed to tell their story in their own way, using the "funnel questioning approach" using broad, open-ended questions to begin with, followed by more specific questions (Laing, 2003, p.8).

The World Health Organization recommends a "study design that includes actions aimed at reducing any possible distress caused to participants by the research" (WHO, 2001, p.22). The WHO frames domestic violence as a "sensitive and stigmatized issue" where women are often blamed for the violence they experience (WHO, 2001, p.22). Although the participants stated that talking about their experiences was beneficial, and expressed hope that other women may benefit from the research, discussion of violence involves the participant recalling "frightening, humiliating or extremely painful experiences which may cause a strong emotional reaction" (WHO, 2001, p.22).

With respect to emotional risks in the interviews, my eight years of clinical experience with female victims of domestic violence has given me a well-grounded capacity to gauge when and how to delve into sensitive areas, thereby minimizing emotional distress to participants. The pacing and direction of the interview was determined in collaboration with the participant and with the participant's comfort as the central concern. 'Process consenting' was employed: I continued to check in with the participant about her willingness to continue with a particular line of questioning or with the interview itself if she seemed to be uncomfortable. Only one out of the five participants became distressed during the interview. We stopped the tape at that point, and debriefed her reaction. She was reminded of her right to discontinue the interview; however she chose to continue once she had regained her composure. Each woman was

encouraged to call her assigned counsellor if she was unsettled after the interview, or to access the shelter's 24-hour crisis service.

I provided one participant with information regarding her rights to information from her perpetrator's probation officer. I supported this participant after the interview to contact the probation office and register herself as a victim of the perpetrator, thereby being entitled to information regarding any of his probation breaches which may affect her safety.

These strategies for managing emotional risks are supported by Parker & Ulrich (1990) who state that research involving woman assault survivors involves "therapeutic communication and intervention in the form of phone numbers, legal information, and emotional support" (p. 249).

Because of the emotional risks identified in the interview process, it was important to end the interviews from a strength-based perspective, consistent with feminist research principles. The strength-based perspective entailed "reminding the participant that the information she provided was important and will help other women" (Parker & Ulrich, 1990, p.249). Also, I gave feedback to each woman about her strengths in surviving the violence, protecting her children, maintaining her safety, and other individual strengths I perceived during her narrative in the interview. Ending the interviews in a positive manner also provided an opportunity for debriefing the emotional impact of the interview, thereby enabling me to identify which participants required referrals to supports available in the community. Many of the women reiterated their

belief in having their voices heard thereby helping other women to benefit from the CSPP.

Data Analysis

Transcripts of the interviews were coded line by line using techniques from Grounded Theory and with reference to Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) voice-centred relational model. Grounded theory techniques were used to develop an initial sense of emerging categories and themes. The voice-centred relational model provided me with a more complementary method of understanding the women's narratives from a socio-political context. The voice-centred relational model involves four readings of the transcripts: 1st reading: reading for the plot and the researchers' response to the narrative 2) reading for the voice of the "I" 3) reading for relationships 4) placing people within cultural contexts and social structures (Mauthner & Doucet, in Ribbens & Edwards, 1998). The second stage of the analysis is the development of summaries, which is similar to the development of categories in grounded theory.

The role of reflexivity on the part of the researcher is central to the voice-centred relational method of qualitative analysis. Reflexivity is important "with regard to the story, as it occurs within a social context and we hear and read the story from within another social context and in a particular research relationship" (Mauthner & Doucet, in Ribbens & Edwards, 1998, p.136). The voice-centred relational method was helpful for me to understand my own reactions to the women's interviews and the role those reactions had in the development of my analysis.

FINDINGS

Participants were asked to discuss their experiences receiving the services of the Community Safety Protection Program. Interview questions focused particularly on how the women initially made the decision to access the program, and what factors contribute to their decision to continue accessing the CSPP's services. The findings are presented as themes. Three major themes emerged in the analysis: risk, resistance, and resilience. I have included quotations from the women's interviews to illustrate the themes. In order to preserve the women's confidentiality, some details of their specific situations have been removed from the quotes, as long as such removal did not affect the integrity of the content of their responses. I have included contextual material in square brackets where women were referencing an agency, person, or earlier historical material in order to provide clarity.

Risk of Harm

Risk in the Relationship

The themes that emerged related to the women's experiences of abuse in the relationship and ongoing factors that inform their decision to continue receiving the services of the CSPP. Receiving the CSPP affected not only their perceptions of safety, but also their reactions to the threats of violence and the ways in which they perceive themselves in relation to managing those threats.

When asked how they came to decide to receive the services of the CSPP, all participants relayed past and ongoing factors identified in the risk assessments discussed in the literature review. Violence in the relationship that was escalating in duration and

severity was the major factor, and for many women this led to one final incident of extreme violence. Related to the incidents of severe violence in the relationship, I quote the participants at length in order to provide context for their later comments.

> ...my ex husband come to my house and he sexually assaulted me. And uh I waited for a couple of days before I actually called the police. I'd seen my daughter...and she tried to convince me to go. I had marks on my arms and I did . . . phone the police and talk to them. They came out. They took pictures of my arms cause I had marks on my arms. (Carla)

> Next thing I know he's got his hands around my neck and he's just choking the life out of me, I don't know where I got the energy but I kneed him to stop and then he just looked at me and then he just lunged to my face and he bit my face. I've got all these scars on the side of my face. I'm just sitting there and I'm pounding on him trying to get him off me. So he finally stopped and I've got all this blood dripping on me and I thought 'what the hell now what?' So he got out of the car and he says 'fine you want to play this stupid game,' he goes 'we'll play it' so he goes around the car to sit on the driver's side and as soon as he enters the car from the driver's side I bolted it up the street... (Janet)

> ...at first he was outside on the steps and he kept carrying the knife with him so I was really paranoid. And uh he was banging on the door asking to come in and I said 'no I'm not letting you in.' I said 'get rid of that knife.' So he opened up the front door and threw the knife in the snow, it was wintertime. (Audrey)

> He was charged with [large number] counts of assault and weapons. . . there were other people in general that he hurt pretty badly but nobody came forward. When I came forward for me and the kids I came forward for everybody. (Laura)

These incidents of extreme violence were instrumental in the participants' decisions to leave the relationship and ensure their safety by accessing community supports such as police intervention and the CSPP.

Ongoing Risk Related to Perpetrator's Behaviour, Emotional State, and Ability To "Get at" her

Three participants had knowledge of their ex-partner since the separation that led them to believe that he still presented a risk to themselves and their children. The women who had this information primarily obtained it through mutual friends or family.

Lisa, for instance, knew through a friend that her ex-partner had tried to set up her current partner for an assault; she also knew about his ongoing break-and-enter activity:

> Well he's broken into like his ex sister-in-law's friend's house and took all her stuff and just knowing you know he's breaking into homes. Like I had him break into our house and you can't be comfortable (Lisa)

The women also referred to information they had about their ex-partner's emotional state:

> I do have friends who have met him [since the separation] and of course I'm the rotten, good for nothing piece of trash and everything whatnot. You know 'don't trust her, she's a cop caller and she's a rat'... I know him so well that if he hasn't been able to let go of talking about the anger that he still has towards me something will happen. (Janet)

> But I'm like and they're telling me he's not taking his medication properly so then yes I do, I don't trust him. (Lisa)

The women also spoke about the evidence they had, that the perpetrator could still 'get at' them and their children:

> Like he found out where I was so then he was doing a landscaping job across the street, hid behind a bush and grabbed my daughter. (Lisa)

> ...he phoned my girlfriend, he told my girlfriend exactly what we talked about and she was scared for me. She phoned me and told me. She said 'look around the house you've got something bugged.' And he knew word for word what we talked about even something I had said about my son he knew word for word. (Carla)

> ...he had left me with a warning, he put a crowbar outside my door to let me know he can get in at any time. (Lisa)

The women's knowledge about the perpetrator – that he was still attempting or engaging in breaking the law, that his emotional state was unstable in some way, and that he still had access to her – left them with a constant and enduring sense that he continued to pose a threat.

Risk vis a vis the perpetrator's family

Three of the five participants felt they were at continued risk from their ex-partner's family. The risks these individuals pose are comprised of either recent or historical threats made against the women. For example, for Laura, the threat to her life made by her ex-partner's mother persists as a risk:

> ...she threatened me, the mother threatened me the day that um he was in intensive care from overdosing. She phoned me and said 'if he goes 6 feet under you're going with him'... yes if something happens to him because of me I'm getting taken down. (Laura)

For Lisa, her ex-partner's mother was an extension of his power and control in the relationship, even in his absence:

> He would phone me and if I wasn't there to pick up that phone he would send his mother, they had a key to my home. (Lisa)

Perpetrators' family members also serve as conduits of threats of harm originating from the ex-partner to the woman herself, as illustrated by two participants:

> I'm still really nervous and I'll tell you why he has a nephew that has been in trouble with the law for break and enter. He can get inside anybody's place within 2 minutes. (Carla)

> ...a knock came at my door at 10 to 10 at night, its D [ex-partner's son] ... here he is he had mail for me... I was sitting here I was shaking cause I thought how did he get here? So my son he waited, he got outside, started walking down towards the plaza on X street and my son watched he got into my ex's pick up truck only not even a half block away. I phoned the police. (Carla)

Risk Related to Components of Legal System

The women I interviewed spoke appreciatively of how law enforcement and legal systems had validated the danger they were in, treated them with respect, and provided protection. At the same time, it was clear that legal systems sometimes failed to protect them, and failed to address their risk.

Janet spoke about the ways in which the police department and its officers had been the first "outsiders" to validate her abuse in an official way:

> ...once they did arrest him uh he went to jail, no bail was posted and after that they came and approached me and asked me you know if I wanted the CSPP because they felt he was a little bit dangerous. (Janet)

> You know she'd [police officer] say to me 'you know we'll just go through the steps and if you can take any more precautions.' And not only that but she didn't make me feel less of a woman because of what had happened to me kind of thing. There was just something about the way she spoke to me, she spoke to me on the same level as being a woman and **not having been the battered woman** [emphasis added]. (Janet)

Many of the participants were referred to the CSPP by the police and/or crown attorney's office. One participant spoke very highly of her experience with the District Attorney who referred her to the CSPP:

> Actually the District Attorney was, like I said, really really good... She was awesome. She did encourage me to come stay at the shelter cause she felt that I was at great risk from him and we weren't quite sure if he would make bail or . . . So she was really awesome. I have to give her a world of credit... Cause she really pointed me in the right direction. (Audrey)

Some of the participants stated that while they felt they needed to contact the police in order to leave the relationship, criminal charges against their ex-partner may have increased their risk of harm:

> ...but I'm worried now that that the charge is there that he's going to come after me now. (Carla)

> And yet at the same time if you don't [lay charges] then you don't have a way out. You're damned if you do and you're damned if you don't. (Laura)

While the women expressed gratitude for the validation of their abuse by law enforcement, they pointed at larger systemic problems that prevented them from feeling adequately protected:

> ...he might go for a bail hearing the following morning and if some women don't have enough evidence because they've never spoken up about it he'd have to be let go... And then she'll pay for that...with her life or end up in the hospital. (Laura).

> Like I said before to you I feel that he should have an ankle bracelet and if he comes within so many miles of my house it goes off and he gets electrocuted or something... but that's what I felt. Why should I have to be the one? What did I do wrong he did this to me. (Janet)

> ...he has no respect for breach of probation as soon as he's out [of prison] I know that. (Laura)

> Just because I know him. You know he . . . I've got a Restraining Order for the next 3 years too where you know he can't have any contact with me... no contact at all... But I believe after that 3 years he will come looking for me. (Audrey)

Lisa spoke about her feelings about the injustice of the legal system, where even when her ex-partner was incarcerated, he seemed to be protected and receive benefits that were in direct opposition to her own quality of life and those of her children:

> Like he has to go under protective custody but the terror and the horror he's put me through and you're in protective custody like come on now you're suppose to be a big man. (Lisa)

> Alright before like it got bad and everything I use to go up [to the prison]. Ten men to a house. They had a barbecue, they got a Subway on the premises, they get to order take-out, they roller blade, they play pool, they

> work you know they get 35 dollars a month for take-out food. Like you tell me what punishment they're having. Like they're out here doing a crime I think they should be in an 8 by 10 cell not 10 men to a house, and they have a key to their door. (Lisa)

As illustrated, the participants showed satisfaction with some aspects of the legal system, and dissatisfaction with other aspects of the legal system. This is supported by Fleury (2002) who interviewed women who had experienced severe woman abuse about their experiences with the legal system. The women in the study were more likely to be satisfied with the legal system if they had experienced severe violence. Fleury (2002) postulated that this level of satisfaction could be because the legal system takes severe violence more seriously.

As described, the risk factors that women consider when continuing to make the decision to access the services of the CSPP are many and complex, ranging from past and current abusive behaviours of the ex-partner, threats from the ex-partner's family, and the inadequacy of the legal system and law enforcement to protect them from harm.

Resistance

Resistance for abused women is "to experience autonomy, to experience oneself as planning against one's assailant, and to interpret the assault as something avoidable or controllable" (Gordon, in Fisher & Davis, 1993, p. 142). In my experience, many abused women speak of their own resistance in the relationship as multilayered: an attempt to control or avoid abusive incidents, attempts to protect themselves and their children from physical and emotional harm during abusive incidents, attempts to maintain relationships with friends and family, and attempts to maintain their own dignity and sense of self. Many of the participants presented dichotomies in their resistance, contrasting the ways

in which they resisted the abuse in the relationship to ways they resist their ex-partner post-separation.

Resistance Towards the Partner in the Relationship

In the relationship, resistance was often manifested in the woman's attempts to placate her partner in order to avoid abuse, often termed by abused women as "walking on eggshells." Carla described an extraordinary incident of this phenomenon when her partner was threatening her life in their vehicle:

> ...[I said] 'let's go out or let's go and do this as a family,' trying to get him turned around so that he would get off the subject of talking about getting rid of a body. And I always thought at that time he was probably talking about me, trying to get rid of me, it would be easy to get rid of a body down there. (Carla)

Lisa described the control her partner exerted on her to isolate her from her family, and the way in which she resisted this isolation with incredible creativity:

> ...even to see my family I had to make a false appointment, call my doctor ok and make an appointment, [and later call the doctor to say] 'I'm not coming I'm going to see my mother.' (Lisa)

Avoidance is often another way women "walk on eggshells" to minimize the possibility of an abusive incident, as illustrated by Audrey:

> So I thought well so I'll go up to bed maybe he'll follow me and come up to bed and just sleep off his drunken state. (Audrey)

While "walking on eggshells" may not appear as resistance to people who have not experienced woman abuse, these women were not passive victims in their relationships. Like the women I have counselled at the shelter, the participants attempted many different things to keep themselves safe, and supported by Sev'er (2002), the participants "were active agents" in their own

lives. Sev'er (2002) interviewed thirty-nine women about their experiences with woman abuse, and many women in the study described similar forms of resistance or "coping strategies" as the participants in this research described. Sev'er (2002) supports the view that the women were active agents in the relationship because they "made choices, came up with plans and strategies and sheltered their children in the best way they knew" (Sev'er, 2002, p.135).

It is often the case that abused women that exercise resistance in the relationship experience self-blame, feeling responsible for the abuse. However, Harris and Dewdney (1994) discovered in their interviews with abused women that as the abuse increases, "women's perceptions about their responsibility shifts in the other direction – toward the perpetrator" (p.56). This shift in responsibility gives a context to the markedly different forms of resistance by the participants towards their ex-partner after separation, as described below.

Resistance Towards the Ex-Partner After Separation

The stance of resistance by the participants against their partners post-separation was markedly different from the resistance in the relationship; rather than "walking on eggshells," many participants illustrated a stance of strength and willingness to battle for their safety if necessary, as demonstrated by Lisa and Laura:

> ...he comes in my home I'm going to kill him and I've said straight out - because he's not going to get me and he's not going to get the kids. (Lisa)

> If I take self-defence they're going to teach me some stuff that would probably be quite handy...within 2 minutes a lot can happen too when I [activate the CSPP] if one day he was to show up... (Laura)

> In a way I'd feel safer if I had a gun but in another way I wouldn't because then I'd have to worry about the kids getting at the gun or whatever. (Laura)

Carla seems to have relieved herself of the responsibility for managing her ex-partner's abusive behaviour where she clearly sees the power and control tactics that were used by him in the relationship:

> And I thought 'you know what you're not playing games with me any more I'm done playing games with you or being in your control' (Carla)

Janet parallels Lisa's action of relieving herself of responsibility for her ex-partner's behaviour:

> So now I'm feeling rage and I'm sitting there going 'I'll be damned if I'm going to let him do this to me.' (Janet)

Janet describes what is termed as 'righteous anger' at the shelter in which I work. Righteous anger is when abused women have feelings of anger towards their former partners because of the abuse and trauma they have experienced at their hands. In my practice with abused women, I have witnessed righteous anger as a powerful force that women allow themselves to express in order to feel entitled to protect themselves from the abuse.

As illustrated by the participants, the resistance towards their partners post-separation is a contrast to their forms of resistance in the relationship. The forms of resistance in the relationship involved manoeuvring with and around their partner's behaviour in order to keep themselves safe. Post-separation, there is a complete absence of any discussion by the participants of managing their ex-partner's behaviour. This

absence may represent a shift from a position of "walking on eggshells" to a stance of strength and courage to engage in a battle for their safety if necessary.

Resistance as Safety-Planning Post-Separation

As women express new forms of resistance and gain more entitlement to their own safety post-separation, they engage more fully in safety planning, of which the CSPP is a major component. Although the CSPP has a place of prominence in the participants' safety planning, the participants have altered many aspects of their lives in order to give themselves 'space' from their ex-partner. This 'space-making' is an ongoing process that affects everything from the way the woman opens a door to where she shops, as illustrated by Carla:

> I changed my lifestyle a little bit where I don't do any of my shopping on the weekend because I know that that would be when he would be at the mall so I stay away from the malls generally on the weekend. (Carla)

Janet illustrates another aspect of safety planning related to her home in order to maintain the boundaries between herself and her ex-partner:

> They went through the procedures of you know barricading my doors, my windows, my this, my that you know. I had a suitcase by the door and I have everything in case I had to run out of the house quickly. So everything was done. My girlfriend A. felt that it wasn't sufficient so she for Christmas bought me an alarm system. (Janet)

Similar to Janet, Laura also has an escape plan, however broadens it to include neighbours who have agreed to provide her and the children with a place of safety:

> Basically we escape out of the house...and we run across to the neighbours and the neighbours are well aware of what's going on and they've welcomed us to go whenever we need to. (Laura)

Janet shared an aspect of her own resistance that has extended to all unwanted communications, whether from her ex-partner or strangers:

> I have a whistle beside my phone if somebody calls me and I don't like their phone call I blow the whistle in their ear and I hang up. (Janet)

While Janet's form of resistance may seem extreme in other contexts, when a woman has experienced severe violence and is experiencing a level of vulnerability unknown to most people, her response may be reframed as that of a survivor who is intent on maintaining her personal safety, whether it be physical safety or emotional safety.

Although many women maintain vigilance over their surroundings because of women's disadvantaged position in society, survivors of woman abuse know their attacker, and know the unpredictability of his behaviour. Protection from the unpredictability often results in a state of *hyper*vigilance, or a hyperawareness of all physical space around her, as illustrated by Janet:

> You know looking in my closet, I still do, I've always done that. I look in my car and make sure nobody's in the back seat. Look around and make sure your key is ready to get home. As soon as you walk in lock the door and stuff like that you know. (Janet)

Audrey was the only participant who relied heavily on the CSPP, neglecting other aspects of safety planning that were suggested to her:

> ...knowing that the police would come by just [activating the system] and I didn't really have to worry about too much safety planning or things of that nature. So I kind of slacked on the safety planning... I know one part of the safety planning was to kind of look at your surroundings before you went out and that I didn't do when I had the CSPP in. (Audrey)

When Audrey spoke about this with me, her tone and facial expressions appeared as if she was 'confessing.' While Audrey should have every right to live a life without needing to check for perpetrators around every corner, in the context of the CSPP program, Audrey's neglecting safety planning is of concern. As mentioned earlier in the safety planning literature review, it has been postulated that women's safety planning decreases their risk of re-assaults.

As other participants have described, the CSPP seems to have a profound impact on women's sense of safety and seems to provide space between themselves and their ex-partners. Extrapolating from this theme, it is possible that intense sense of safety extends outside the home for some women. While this effect may be an empowering one for most women, encouraging even more sophisticated and comprehensive safety plans, the danger is that the CSPP may provide a false sense of security outside the home for other women.

As illustrated, safety planning in addition to the CSPP is multifaceted and multilayered. For four out of five participants, resistance against their ex-partners in the form of safety planning for themselves and their children is an ongoing, dynamic, reflexive process of evaluating their risk and readjusting the components of their safety plan to compensate for the risk. As Janet illustrated, safety planning is often informed by a feeling of righteous anger that enables the woman to feel entitled to maintain the space between herself and her ex-partner.

Resistance in the form of the CSPP

As described, many of the participants employ daily safety planning strategies to keep themselves safe. However, the participants felt that because of the severity of the violence they had experienced, and the extent of risk factors related to their ex-partner's behaviour, extra protection was required. Resisting the continuing abuse by their former partners by accessing the CSPP was a major factor in the participants' attempts to keep themselves safe. The impact the CSPP had on the participants' sense of safety was striking.

> I felt safer. I felt that I could sleep at night knowing that the [CSPP was in the home]. (Carla)
>
> I could go outside. I would [keep my CSPP with me]. I could play with the kids and do my, cut the grass and whatever and if I turn around and he was there I could just push it and be ok. (Lisa)
>
> Uh in case he was trying to hurt me again all I had to do was [activate the CSPP] instead of trying to fumble for the phone. (Audrey)
>
> And this was allowing me to have my life back. A little bit of glimpse to the future by having [the CSPP] with me... Working on also like . . . allowing you the freedom to be who you were before all this crap happened to you kind of thing you know. (Janet)

It seems that receiving the services of the CSPP provided the women with a higher sense of security than the other forms of safety planning mentioned by the participants earlier. The CSPP enabled women to participate in their lives more fully because of the added protection of immediate police response. Later, I discuss the positive impact of the CSPP on the participants' self-identities. However, the women's relationship to the CSPP proves to be much more complicated, as described below.

Resistance Against the CSPP

While the CSPP provides the women with a profound sense of safety and security over their lives and those of their children, one participant described her initial overpowering feeling of oppressiveness related to the CSPP system itself:

> I thought to myself like it was a constant reminder of what I had gone through and that I wasn't able to move on because I always had this thing [CSPP] reminding me of what had happened to me.(Janet)

Janet's sense of the system as a constant reminder of her vulnerability led her close to a decision to withdraw from the CSPP. Janet describes the process of struggling with the emotional impact of the system versus the level of protection it provides her:

> And I finally realized it wasn't going to hurt me it was going to help me and I couldn't look at it as a constant reminder of what happened but as a reminder of what it could save me from getting. (Janet)

Other participants' statements about the oppressiveness of the CSPP were less related to the meaning of the CSPP in their lives, and more to the way the program operates. All CSPP recipients are required to attend and participate in monthly safety planning sessions at Victim Services. One participant described the impact this requirement has on her:

> Um . . . victim's services seems to be, I find a little bit buggy, like they're on you too much. [Shelter counsellor]'s not, she sits back, if you want to come to her you come to her you come to her and any time you call her. I like that method at the shelter where you're there, they're not in your face, they make you make the choices on your own..... (Carla)

> It was very hard because you had to talk to, you know I'd already talked to how many people you know and I'm doing this all over again to get some service. I have to write it all down again, everything that's happened to me. And uh . . . sometimes you just want to be left alone. (Carla)

Carla extends her feedback so far as to compare the requirements of the CSPP to the control she suffered from her ex-partner in their relationship:

> [Victim Services staff member] comes you know 'this is what we're going to do.' I don't want that. I want, I should be making the decisions what to do. I've got to be in control you know. You know . . . he's been in control all this time . . .(Carla)

Janet spoke about the message of victim-hood she was receiving from all spheres after the severe incident of violence by her ex-partner, including the message implied by some CSPP requirements:

> ...it's called victim impact [statement]...the word victim seems to always be on everything. Like no I'm not the victim...The victim to me is like not having the control, not having the control over your own whatever. Someone took it away from you...I am a survivor in a fouled up situation. (Janet)

Loseke (1992) supports Janet's resistance to the social construction of a victim. Loseke describes the construction of the battered woman as "incompetent, unable to assist herself, out of touch with her own emotions...the identity is discrediting; no wonder so many women resist it" (Loseke, 1992, p. 24). While the social construction of the abused woman fosters assistance and sympathy to her plight, that very construction can be disempowering to the women on the receiving end of it.

An additional difficulty for one participant was her lack of knowledge of the need to reapply for the system once a period of time had lapsed. Audrey also found the process of the re-application emotionally difficult:

> I don't believe they should touch on you know the past experience so much... talked about maybe not including as much around the history of abuse which they already have from that first interview. They should focus more on if he's done anything in the interim that would be questionable. (Audrey)

As described, participants' resistance is as multilayered as the safety planning that they incorporate into their daily lives. The resistance against their partner's abuse seems to enable the women to strategize and maintain complex plans of safety in order to protect themselves and their children. While the notion of being a "victim" enabled the women to access the CSPP which is a major portion of their safety, that same label has had a potentially devastating effect on at least one participant. Janet's resistance enabled her to rise above the social construction of victimhood and not allow herself to become entrapped in its confines. Janet's ability to overcome these constraints is an example of her resilience, and the resilience of other participants to not only survive, but make meaning out of their experience. The critiques of the CSPP that these two women highlighted will be explored in more detail in the discussion.

Resilience

There has been very little research exploring women's resilience in a context of abuse. Given the multitude of barriers faced by women attempting to leave abusive relationships, I have always been impressed by how many women are able to successfully leave, and I have felt honoured to witness the journey of healing that can take place when they do. I have been and continue to be inspired by the wisdom and meaning that many women identify they have gained from their experiences.

Werner-Wilson, Zimmerman and Whalen (2000) define resilience of abused women as "the implication that a person...successfully engages the difficult situation rather than avoiding it" (Wener-Wilson, Zimmerman & Whalen, 2000, p.167). Given the significant resistance that women have generated to address the level of risk from their

partners, it would follow that the participants have fully engaged in their difficult situations and exhibit resilience.

Resilience as Empowerment

As mentioned earlier, woman abuse is a function of power and control over the woman by the perpetrator in the relationship. The notion of empowerment is a sense of regaining control over one's life. Carla confirms the definition of resilience presented earlier as she illustrates her position of regaining control over her own life:

> . . . it's about time for me to be in control of my own life and I have to do, have to be responsible. And this is one reason why I left is because you've got to take responsibility of your own self. I mean you can't keep saying poor me poor me. (Carla)

Carla also supports resilience as empowerment where she takes back control over the family's safety from her son:

> So and I always told my son it was not his job to protect me, his job isn't to protect me its to you now I'm to protect myself and I said 'when it comes to the time that you have to protect me is when you leave.' (Carla)

Audrey as well seems to feel confident in her ability to keep herself safe, which is in contrast to her previous admission of neglecting her safety planning:

> I believe as long as I continue to be aware of my surroundings and practice the safety plan that I'm pretty much covered if I do ever encounter him again. (Audrey)

Janet echoes Carla's strength as she described her process of shifting from a position of disempowerment to one of control over her own life:

> I was starting to just sit on the couch and watch TV and do nothing, be afraid to go out and I thought 'whoa'. And the whole time I was with my ex partner it was, 'I want my life back, I want my life back.' Here all of a

> sudden I had lost my life due to circumstances. So I decided – 'hey how do I get my life back?' (Janet)

The "poor me" phrase in Carla's description of empowerment echoes back to Janet's discussion of resistance to victimhood in previous sections. As mentioned earlier, the social construction of a victim is of a person without agency. The resistance to this notion of victimhood is a function of the resilience the women have to engage fully in their situations. Janet illustrates this point through her declaration of independence and strength:

> I'll be damned if anybody's going to say that to me 'you poor little thing you.' I mean...like understanding it if I'm going to crack up or bawl or whatever but I don't want to be treated like the poor little thing cause I'm not the poor little thing you know. (Janet)

Resilience as Believing in the Value of Her Own Life; Resilience as 'a better self'

While all of the complexities of safety planning and engaging social systems to aid in the women's protection is a form of long-term resilience, I am also interested in the reflections of some of the participants on their increased sense of personal value. For example, Lisa described her desperation to leave the relationship through a suicide attempt. She then went on to talk about the support she received from the CSPP and all of its components, one of which includes counselling and the availability of CSPP staff. She spoke about what this support means to her:

> Like if I didn't have like all the support and everything I think I probably would have taken myself... And that's just something that will never cross my mind again. Because before anybody can hurt me I'll hurt them first. (Lisa)

Lisa illustrated the way in which the availability of support with the CSPP had a profound impact on her life, enabling her to shift from a position of desperation

and lack of alternatives or escape from the abuse, to a position of strength. Lisa has regained a sense of value in her own life, and now holds the belief that her life is her own, and worth fighting for.

In a somewhat similar vein, two of the participants also spoke about their belief that they are 'better people' since they left the relationship and accessed the CSPP. While the exact definition of 'better person' for the participants is unclear, they spoke positively about the changes.

> And since I had the program and my counsellor I'm a whole different person. (Lisa)

> I changed a lot going to the shelter and the counselling and I'm just a lot better person that what I was. Just the fear thing, I'm so fearful of everything you know think the worst of everything and every situation I would have the worst imaginable thought out. Uh in terms of the support that I have now from the shelter and Victim's Services and everything I feel stronger. (Laura)

Challenges in Resilience

In this study, resilience in the form of increased value over their lives, resilience as empowerment and as a 'better self' are indicated in the participants' reflections on their personal changes and the control and strength they have gained.

An important feature of participants' comments here is how positive changes in their lives and identities are attributed to people and services outside themselves. In the quotes above, counsellors at the shelter, as well as CSPP staff, often receive credit for the 'new selves' and the new strengths women have. It

seems that the attribution of power to others may still play a role in the women's lives.

Although the resilience of abused women has received little attention in the research, it seems to be related to women's resistance to the power and control that has been exerted over them. The more fully they resist, the greater likelihood they will maintain their resilience in the face of future adversity or difficulty. While it is important for programs such as the CSPP to continue as they offer formidable safety to the women, the potential danger of the program is the very strength the women engage to protect themselves. I discuss this further below.

DISCUSSION

This research examined women's experiences of abuse in the context of receiving a Community Safety Protection Program. Women were asked what factors influenced their decision to access the support of the CSPP and their continuing wish to be part of the program. This question proved to have a complex set of answers that illustrated the interweaving of individual and systemic issues, ranging from the abusive behaviours of their ex-partner to the inadequacies of the legal system to offer protection from their perpetrator. The findings were organized into three key themes: risk, resistance and resilience.

Persistent Risk: A need to extend the program's commitment to women

As illustrated, all of the women were in abusive relationships that involved physical, emotional and in some cases sexual abuse that culminated into one final episode of extreme violence in which the police were involved. All of the participants described the police as treating them with respect and being the first to officially validate their abuse and most were referred to the CSPP by the police department (one participant was referred to the CSPP by a Crown Attorney and expressed her gratitude for the referral).

After separation from their ex-partners, the participants identified ongoing abuse or threats of abuse as a major factor in their decision to continue accessing the program. One of the ongoing risk factors was related to information about their ex-partner that the participants received from family or friends. Information was assessed by the participants with the context of their knowledge of his

behaviour and attitudes in the relationship. As just one example, Janet talked about her knowledge that her ex partner continued to speak angrily about her, as a sign of possible future violence. In the men's program at the shelter, this process in the perpetrator is termed rumination, a process in which the abusive man focuses and replays his belief in his own persecution, which often escalates feelings of anger, revenge, etc. that often lead to abuse. Rumination by the abusive man most often occurs in the tension building stage of the cycle of violence. Given that the women have experienced these processes in their relationships, it seems logical that the participants would be wary of their safety when they learn of an ex-partner's anger, perhaps feeling similarly to the tension building stage in their relationships.

Another ongoing risk factor for some of the participants was risk vis a vis their ex-partners' family members. It is not uncommon for women to experience abuse and/or power and control tactics by their partner's family members. Many women I have met with at the shelter have described harassment and threats from their ex-partner's family members in an attempt to coerce or intimidate them into dropping criminal charges, or punishing the women for leaving the relationship. In my experience, the cases where family and friends augment the perpetrator's power and control is in the cases of bail conditions or probation/parole orders that do not allow contact with the woman. While a perpetrator's disrespect for law and authority is a risk factor in most risk assessments (Campbell, 1988), respect for law and authority does not necessarily decrease a woman's risk if the perpetrator

substitutes a family member for himself in abuse towards his partner. Given this finding in the research, this is an area that would benefit further exploration in the field of violence against women.

While the former partner's family posed a direct risk through overt threats of violence for two of the women in this study, Carla described an incident where her ex-partner's son was used by him as a conduit of communication to her. While this may not necessarily pose an immediate risk, many women described feeling their safety would be in jeopardy over time if their ex-partner was able to maintain communication with them. Many safety plans with abused women, particularly in cases of stalking, suggest that women block any communication from their former partner. Communicating with her even indirectly through family or friends is often a way that perpetrators perform surveillance over their ex-partners and can escalate the woman's risk as he obtains more information about her and/or attempts to reassert control. While ongoing communication is not considered to be a risk factor in the formal risk assessment process, in my experience and in this research ongoing communication does symbolize a threat.

It is important to note, as well, that blocking communication is extremely difficult or impossible in custody/access issues with children. While custody/access issues are a factor for many abused women, the participants did not indicate this was an issue for them. The three women who had children in the home had obtained full custody of their children and the Children's Aid Society was not allowing their former partners access to the children because of the risk

he posed to the family. In this way, the women in this study received support from the social service community by way of the Children's Aid Society to block the perpetrator's access to the children – and to eliminate his reasons to communicate with her - thereby protecting both the children and the women.

Finally, the inadequacy of the legal and law enforcement systems resulted in ongoing risks for women. Carla, for instance, described her fear and uncertainty regarding her level of risk depending on the outcome of her ex-partner's court case for assaulting her. If he is found not guilty, she felt concerned that he would continue to pose a threat to her for retaliatory violence, or because of a lack of any legal restrictions for him to contact her; similarly, Laura spoke about abusive men being released on bail after an assault, which places a woman at risk for retaliatory violence. Like many abused women, Carla was concerned that if her ex partner were convicted, the sentence he would receive would be inadequate, or subsequent probation conditions would be inadequate in providing her with protection against him. As well, Carla's former partner had still not been on trial for her sexual assault one year after the event. Because of the system inadequacies, then, the women's risks persist over a longer period of time. The inadequacy of the system to protect women is confirmed by Gondolf & Fisher (1988) who state that "difficulties encountered by battered women who seek assistance are often derived... from deficiencies in system responses" (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, in Harris & Dewdney, 1994, p. 57).

As discussed earlier in the thesis, the CSPP was intended to be available to women for a maximum six month period, until the woman had accessed other supports for her safety. As well, concerns about women becoming dependent on the program have been raised. Yet it is clear from this research that women's dependence (reliance) on the CSPP is a function of their ongoing risk from their violent partners and their partner's family members. It may be that participants' need for the CSPP is framed as short-term not because risk ends, but because of the program's limited resources. In fact, it seems that the definition of the participants' problem by the CSPP is a function of organizational needs, rather than needs as defined by the participant herself (Eisikovitz & Buchbinder, 2000).

Given the persistence of risk, the six month period does not seem adequate for the participants' needs. Additionally, from the participants' narratives, it did not appear that the women were aware of the CSPP's intended six month term, and in fact, did not have any idea of how long the program would be available to them. Making women aware of the intention of the program, making it available to them over a longer period of time, and explaining the process of re-application may ease their concern over losing such a valuable safety resource.

Participants' Resistance: Shifts in the balance of power

One of the key insights of this research revolves around the ways that the CSPP is part of a shift in the balance of power between a woman and her abusive former partner. This shift in power takes different forms and has both positive and negative aspects.

For participants in this research, accessing the CSPP seemed to be part of a change in how they related to their partners' violence. As illustrated in the findings, the nature of the women's resistance after separation was in direct contrast to the ways in which they resisted the abuse during the relationship. Accessing the CSPP seemed to help the women to shift from a position of "walking on eggshells" to righteous anger. While many abused women blame themselves for the violence, all of the participants seemed to place the responsibility for the abuse with their former partners. This is consistent with Harris and Dewdney's finding that "with increasing violence in the relationship, women come to see that the problem lies with their partners and with the failure of the social service delivery system to protect them" (Harris and Dewdney, 1994, p.56). After separation, all of the participants accessed community supports to assist them in their protection from their former partners.

The CSPP also seemed to be part of participants' increasing sense of entitlement to safety, an entitlement that had different outcomes in terms of safety planning. While four out of five participants clearly illustrated the intricacies of their safety planning and the importance of it, Audrey spoke about her not pursuing other forms of safety planning once she obtained the CSPP. While she is the exception in this study, the theme in Audrey's 'confession' also exists in the other women's narratives. With the readjustment in power, four of the participants seemed to have felt more empowered (and more entitled) to access a range of other forms of safety planning. That same sense of increased power and entitlement existed for Audrey, although translated in a different way. Audrey

was in fact, asserting her right to a normal life, a life without violence and the need to look behind every corner. While the sense of power that is represented by the CSPP is very important and very beneficial for all of the participants, the power needs to be directed in a way that does not jeopardize the woman's safety. As noted earlier, while Audrey has every right to be entitled to safety outside of her home, not attending to safety planning is concerning because of the potential importance of safety planning in decreased re-assaults (Gondolf & Heckert, 2003).

One of the problematic consequences of the shift in power offered by the CSPP led Janet to struggle with her participation in the program. For her, the CSPP was a symbol of her oppression by her ex-partner, and her role as a "victim." However, the CSPP also offered a material shift in the balance of power, which Janet recognized. She described her struggle in understanding the two meanings, and weighing the impact each meaning had on her. For Janet and perhaps many other women, the oppressive and stigmatizing social construction of the victim was competing with the safety the CSPP could offer her. It is possible that the essence of Janet's struggle was weighing protecting her physical safety over protecting the safety of her identity and sense of self.

In addition, it appeared that only when the participants' had achieved a minimal level of safety offered by the CSPP, could they be critical of the systems that support their victimization (Eisikovitz and Buchbinder, 2000). In this

respect, the fact that participants in this research are able to talk about the CSPP's inadequacies is in a certain way evidence of their empowerment.

Power and the CSPP: Structural issues

The system that supports woman abuse to continue by inadequate legislation and policies to hold abusive men accountable is the same system the women need to access for protection. Given this paradox, it is understandable that the women have mixed feelings towards the greater social system in general and the CSPP specifically. While it is important for programs such as the CSPP to continue because they offer formidable safety to women, the potential danger of the program is the very strength the women engage to protect themselves. Although this area requires further research, it is possible that because of its power and strength, the program has the potential to become another oppressor, albeit a benevolent one. The positive impact the program has on the women's lives is undeniable; however sensitivity and changes in practice need to take place to mitigate the potential for disempowerment of the recipients of the CSPP.

The CSPP is a program that is heavily influenced by the police department because it is housed within the police department through Victim Services. The program is heavily supported and informed then, by a highly patriarchal system "that can damage women psychologically by the internalization of oppressive patriarchal messages" (Flynn Saulnier, in Lehmann & Coady, 2001, p. 261). The slippery slope of victim-blaming, (ie. revictimization of the woman) is high in the CSPP due to the requirement that women pursue counselling and attend regular

safety planning sessions in order to "learn ways to keep themselves safe." If this requirement is not presented as an opportunity to heal from the abuse, the implicit message is that the woman requires the CSPP because she lacks the internal resources for safety, rather than an acknowledgement that the violence against her is perpetuated in part by the inadequacy of social systems to protect her.

Although violence against women has been reconceptualized as a social problem over the last twenty years (Pressman, 1982), many of the interventions are still focused solely on the woman herself, rather than as part of a larger system intended to hold the perpetrator accountable for his behaviour. While protection for the abused woman is of prime importance, focusing on her at the exclusion of the perpetrator and the wider legal and social system reinforces victim blaming and perpetuates the philosophy of violence against women being a 'private matter' (Hoff, 1990).

A sensitivity to language in the program could mitigate the effects of labelling on women accessing the CSPP. As discussed by Janet, "the word 'victim' is on everything" – meaning paperwork, pamphlets, forms, etc. Perhaps it would be beneficial to have a discussion with women about the use of this language and the meaning of it. Presenting the philosophy of the CSPP as an intention to equalize power imbalances between women and their abusive partners, and sharing this intention with women, could mitigate the potentially disempowering effect of the language in the program.

If the CSPP were to approach their interventions from an empowerment perspective, the women would be more aware, educated, and informed of not only the CSPP policies, but the requirements for participation in the program. If monthly safety planning sessions are part of the policy, it is important to relay this information to the women, rather than having them feel harassed or coerced into participation without knowing its purposes. Additionally, the purpose of ongoing safety planning sessions was not clear for two of the five participants. Perhaps if this too was explained, the nature and frequency of the sessions could be mutually negotiated between the Victim Services staff and the woman. The empowerment philosophy "helps a woman regain control of her life by actually taking control of her life, even in acute emotional crisis" (Hoff, 1990, p.161).

CONCLUSION

Women's voices are often absent in research in the area of woman abuse. My goal in this thesis was to give high-risk abused women a vehicle for their voices to speak to the system that simultaneously protects them and perpetuates their abuse.

The risks that participants in this research face on a daily basis, in addition to their need to interpret the meanings and impact of the systems set up to provide them with assistance, combined with the challenges of single parenting, poverty, gender oppression, etc. would lead one to believe that no one person could successfully face such a multitude of challenges. The resilience of the women to not only face their situations by actively engaging themselves in problem-solving

these challenges, but to also see themselves as personally benefiting from the struggle was a testament to their strength. Their belief in their becoming "better people" is perhaps the greatest symbol of their move from a victim to a survivor.

In order to provide a comprehensive strategy to address the social problem of woman abuse, survivors must be part of the process of developing such strategies. Abused women are the experts in their situations, and as Hoff notes, "fail[ing] to engage clients in developing and implementing service plans results in creating still greater dependency in distressed people" (Hoff, 1990, p.161). Although they are vulnerable to the many factors outlined in this thesis, the women themselves have a critical eye on structural issues and give messages of the need for system change. It seems that the participants in this research share in the view that they will not be adequately protected until there is wider systemic change to hold their ex-partners accountable for their behaviour. This is a daunting task and not an immediate solution, but rather a long term goal. In the meantime, service providers and policy makers need to keep the needs of the women and their children at the forefront and listen to their voices.

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APPENDIX A
TRANSCRIBER CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

AGREEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

Title of Research Project: High Risk Battered Women's Experiences of Receiving a Community Safety Protection Program

FACULTY INVESTIGATOR: Chris Sinding
STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Tamara Vukelic
TRANSCRIBER: Karen Rachner

Purpose of the Confidentiality Agreement:

- Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity of research participants is a requirement of all research projects
- The women who are taking part in this particular study are at high risk of violence from former male partners. We must therefore take special care to ensure the security of tapes and documents, and the confidentiality and anonymity of participants.
- This document is our agreement about the process by which confidentiality of research participants will be maintained.

Procedures

Tamara or Chris will personally hand audiotapes directly to the transcriber. Once they are transcribed, the transcriber will hand tapes, and disks with the transcribed interview, directly to Tamara or Chris. Under no circumstances will a tape or disk be transferred by any other person or delivered in any other manner. Tapes and disks will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at all times that they are not being used.

When transcribing:

- No names will appear in any written documentation from this study. Where the participant uses a name, this will be replaced with [partner] [former partner] [participant] [counselor] etc.
- Names of geographic locations and particular institutions will be replaced with [city] [police service] [counseling agency] [hospital] etc.
- The name of the Community Safety Protection Program will be replaced with [CSPP].
- No information that reveals how the CSPP works will be transcribed. Tamara and the transcriber will discuss this issue before transcribing begins, and Tamara will be available to answer questions by phone as they arise.
- Any other information which has the potential to identity the woman (something very unusual about her or her situation, for instance) will be discussed with Tamara by phone before it is transcribed.

When transcribing is complete, the transcriber will copy the transcript to a floppy disk. At no point will the transcriber generate a hard-copy transcript of any interview. Within 48 hours of receiving the disk, Tamara will ensure the transcript is complete, and contact the transcriber. The transcriber will then delete the transcript from her computer.

The transcriber will not discuss anything heard on the tapes with anyone other than Tamara or Chris.

Signing below indicates understanding and commitment to the terms of this agreement.

Karen Rachner	Tamara Vukelic	Chris Sinding
Transcriber	Student Investigator	Faculty Investigator
Date:_____	Date:_____	Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Volunteer's Telephone Script:
Invitation to Speak with Tamara about the Research

Hello, my name is _____ and I am a volunteer at [SHELTER]. I am calling to tell you about a research project that is being conducted by one of the counsellors, Tamara, who is completing her Master of Social Work degree at McMaster University. Her project is to find out from the women who receive the [NAME OF PROGRAM] what their experiences have been like receiving the program

This project is not being done by [SHELTER] or the [NAME OF PROGRAM] committee; it is Tamara's school project.

You are certainly not required to participate in this study. If you decide not to participate at this point, I am the only person who will know this. If you do decide to take part, your participation will be confidential: No one on the committee will know that you are involved.

Whatever you decide, it will not affect services from [SHELTER] or [NAME OF PROGRAM], or any of the agencies involved.

If you're interested in participating, it would entail a one to two hour interview with Tamara.

If you are wiling to speak with Tamara she will tell you more about the study, and you can decide whether or not to take part.

Would you be willing to have Tamara call you, to speak with you more about the study?

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

Women's Experiences of a Community Safety Protection Program

You are being asked to take part in a study about the personal experiences of women receiving a community safety protection program.

Purpose of the study
The purpose of the research is to better understand the factors that contribute to a woman's decision to become involved in the CSPP, women's experiences of the program, and the reasons women wish to continue to be part of the program over time. To date, an evaluation has not been done on the program. As well, there has been very little research done on the safety and protection needs of women at risk for future violence. Your input is extremely valuable to assist not only the program, but other programs in providing the best service possible for women in your situation.

What is involved in this study?
Participation in this study is your choice. You can refuse to take part, and if you take part, you can quit at any time.

Taking part in this study involves taking part in an interview of one to two hours. During this interview, you will be asked about your expectations of the program before you became involved, what the process of accessing the program was like, the beneficial things about the program and the difficult things about it, and your feelings about continuing with the program. A shorter follow-up telephone interview may be requested, which you may participate in or not as you wish. With your permission, the interview(s) will be tape-recorded.

As you know, women often experience feelings of sadness, fear and anger when speaking about violence and the need for a protection program. Your comfort in the interview is a central concern. The interview will happen at your own pace, and if you do not wish to speak further on any topic we will go on to something else, and again, you may stop the interview at any time you wish.

What about confidentiality?
No names, and no facts that could identify you, will be recorded in any written material about the research. No one on the CSPP committee will know who participates in this research and who does not.

All information you provide will be kept in a locked filing cabinet at [NAME OF SHELTER]. If you decide to quit the study at any point, all information you have

provided will be destroyed. At the completion of the research, all written materials will be destroyed, and any audio tapes will be erased.

Who is doing this study?
Tamara Vukelic is doing this research as part of the requirements to complete her Master of Social Work degree at McMaster University. Contact information: [ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER OF SHELTER].

This project is being supervised by a McMaster University faculty member Dr. Christina Sinding. Contact information: C/O Health Studies Programme & School of Social Work, Kenneth Taylor Hall, Room 212, McMaster University, 1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 4M4, (905)525-9140 extension 22740 sinding@mcmaster.ca.

Your rights
You are under no obligation to participate in this study and you may withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question. Your participation (or not) in this study will have no affect on the services you receive from any of the agencies associated with CSPP. If you have any questions about the study, you may contact Tamara Vukelic at [CONTACT PHONE NUMBER]. This study has been approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns about your rights in this research project, you may contact the McMaster Research Ethics Board at (905) 525-9140 extension 23142.

I have had a chance to ask questions about the study and I have had all of my questions answered to my satisfaction. I understand that a signed copy of this form will be kept at [NAME OF SHELTER]. I understand that the form will be kept at the shelter in order to protect my confidentiality and the confidentiality of the program, and that I may review the form at my request.

I agree to take part in this study.

Participant:
Name (print) _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Researcher
Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

Interview Guide

Preamble: Topics to be included in the interview are listed below.

Broad areas for questions and probes will include:

- How did you find out about the program?
- How did you come to the decision to become involved in the program?
- What did you know about the program before becoming involved?
- What were your expectations of the program?
- What was the process of becoming involved in the program like for you?
- Was there anything about the program that you were surprised to discover?
- What has been most beneficial about being involved in the program?
- What has been most difficult about being involved in the program?
- What effect has the program has on your daily life?
- How would you describe this effect?
- What factors contribute to your decision to remain involved in the program?
- What would need to happen for you to decide to withdraw from the program?