

Policing intimate partner violence involving female  
victims:  
An exploratory study of the influence of relationship stage  
on the victim-police encounter

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## Abstract

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a pervasive social problem associated with increased morbidity and mortality risk. Women experiencing IPV often seek assistance from police. Such help-seeking efforts are frequently perceived as problematic by both victims and police. Legal remedies, including orders of protection and criminal charges are the focus of most policing effectiveness research, despite being utilised at only a minority of attendances. Applying a symbolic interactionist and feminist perspective and guided by a constructivist grounded theory approach, this study aimed to explore a broader range of outcomes by examining the way police and victims understand their encounter, the consequences of those understandings and the influence of victims' relationship stage on such encounters. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 police officers and 16 female victims, with 14 victims participating in follow-up interviews. Processes previously associated with victimisation such as denial, minimisation and fear, as well as diminished sense of entitlement and the need to monitor their abusive partners' behaviour were found to inhibit victims from engaging fully with police. All victims sought to stop the violence. Their help-seeking aspirations included safety, ego-support and justice, which manifested differentially according to Landenburger's (1989) relationship stage model. Victims' safety and recovery was found to be enhanced when police name abuse, show intolerance for all forms of IPV, assume responsibility for victims' safety, including taking prescriptive action, and support victims to attain justice. Such outcomes are more likely to occur in the presence of a mutually empowering alliance. Victims seek an alliance at all relationship stages; however, police are more likely to engage in an alliance when victims are at the disengaging phase. Police decision making is influenced by their values and the attributions they make regarding level of physical violence, victim status and the likelihood of achieving long-term change in the victim-perpetrator dynamic. The limited ability of police to respond to psychological abuse, non-injurious physical violence, and ongoing harassment was perceived as particularly problematic by victims and police alike. Legal sanctions and formal processes to overcome these problems must be implemented if police are to continue their endeavours to uphold the rights of women experiencing IPV.

## Declaration

I, Kim Shearson, declare that the PhD thesis entitled “Policing intimate partner violence involving female victims: An exploratory study of the influence of relationship stage on the victim-police encounter,” is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature

Date 25/2/2014

The views expressed within this thesis are those of the author and individual participants and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Victoria Police.

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*No matter how hopeless you feel, no matter how alone you feel, always think of your children. There is something more out there. You don't have to put up with this because you don't feel you're a valid enough person; that you deserve all that happens to you, because you don't. There is always hope. No matter how awful it seems at the time, hopefully one day you'll be ready and you'll get away from it. Just educate yourself. Learn all the signs, get as much information as you can and get as much help as you can because that's the only way out.*

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# Chapter one: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a complex social, political, health and economic problem and human rights violation requiring a whole of Government approach with multiple levels of intervention across sectors (Council of Australian Governments: COAG, 2009; United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, 2013; United Nations General Assembly, 1993; VicHealth, 2007). Government departments, the justice system, community agencies and a range of service providers contribute to the community response to IPV. Victoria Police is one such organisation involved in the prevention of IPV and provision of protection to those experiencing it (Victoria Police, 2009). In the state of Victoria, police responded to 60,829 family violence incidents in the 2012-2013 reporting year (Victoria Police, 2013b). Although IPV occurs in all forms of intimate relationships, and is perpetrated by males and females, the majority of cases, and especially the majority of those reported to police, involve the perpetration of violence by men against women. Therefore, whilst not intending to undermine the importance of other forms of IPV, the focus of this thesis is on the perceptions of women who experience violence in heterosexual relationships.

Although Victoria Police has a commitment to a whole of community approach to the prevention of IPV (Victoria Police, 2010a, 2013a), the services of Victoria Police are delivered to women at the individual level. This study explores the micro-level interactions between police officers and women experiencing IPV; it emphasises the interpersonal, whilst recognising such interactions occur within a wider social context that must also be considered when examining individual interactions. Furthermore, individual social interactions both reflect and contribute to shared social attitudes (Mead, 1933/1964). Therefore, every individual interaction has the potential to contribute to social change when intolerance of IPV is demonstrated.

At its most extreme, IPV results in the death of victims and their children. According to Australian national homicide monitoring data (Chan & Payne, 2013), women are consistently more likely to be killed by an intimate partner than any other form of offender combined. There were 95 (0.85 per 100,000 population) female homicide victims in 2009-2010. Biennial 2008-2010 figures demonstrate although men were overrepresented as victims (68%) and offenders (88%) in overall homicides rates, in IPV related homicide, women were victims in 73% of incidents. Furthermore, filicide accounted for an alarming 14.9 % (n = 27) of overall domestic homicides. Similarly in a review of homicides in Victoria between 2000 and 2010 (Walsh, McIntyre, Brodie, Bugeja, & Hauge, 2012), 53% of all homicides were related to family violence and 47% involved intimate partners. The review identified there was a history of family violence in the majority of cases, many of which involved recent involvement with the police and justice system.

Policing IPV is complex and continues to be problematic despite legislative reform introduced across Australia in the late 1980s and early 1990s that broadened police and court powers to provide protection to victims (Australian Law Reform Commission: ALRC, 2010). In order to improve the police response to IPV, a better understanding of victims' needs when seeking help and their experience of policing is required. There is a paucity of research, particularly in Australia, that examines the effectiveness of the police response from the perspective of the victim. Such a perspective should not only include police effectiveness in terms of deterring offender behaviour but also consider the effect of the police encounter in terms of the interpretations a victim makes about herself, her partner, her experience of violence and her options for ending it. There is also a distinct lack of research that examines outcomes of encounters with police that do *not* result in formal police action such as initiating applications for orders of protection or criminal charges, and yet these encounters are consistently the most common (Victoria Police, 2012b).

In Australia, police have a great deal of discretion in deciding how to respond to an IPV incident and must make multiple assessments and decisions in exercising that discretion. Interpretations police make about the victim, the perpetrator, and contextual factors have been shown to influence the decision making process (Brownridge, 2004; Durfee, 2012; Hall, 2005; Robinson, 2000). Such

interpretations are likely to be influenced by officers' beliefs and values. However, there is also very little research in Australia that examines the values and beliefs of police in regard to responding to IPV. The limited research available in this area was conducted in the early 1990s shortly after legislative change was introduced and may not reflect current police values (Mugford, Eastal, & Edwards, 1993; Wearing, 1992). Research examining police attitudes and decision making typically uses surveys (e.g. Gover, Paul & Dodge, 2011) or hypothetical scenarios (e.g. Finn & Stalans, 2002, 2006). However, surveys elicit quite limited information and controlled scenarios are unlikely to reflect the complexity and demands police actually face when responding to real situations. There is a need to examine actual examples of police work and explore issues that are salient from the perspective of police.

Police have been found to express frustration when dealing with repeat calls to the same address and with women who remain in the relationship despite ongoing violence (Gover et al., 2011; Russell & Light, 2006). Similarly women who had multiple encounters with police experienced the police demeanour as extremely hostile and uncaring (Stephens & Sinden, 2000). A deeper understanding of problematic interactions is required. Survey and focus group research has identified a range of positive and negative victim experiences (Gillis et al., 2006; Johnson, 2007; Leisenring, 2012; Sullivan & Hagen, 2005). However, these findings are descriptive and lack a framework that explains the variation in victims' experience of police.

Women experience a great deal of relationship ambivalence. They are likely to endure repeated episodes of violence and make multiple attempts to leave before permanently ending an abusive relationship (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Griffing et al., 2006). The responsiveness of police during such difficult times may potentially facilitate or inhibit women's endeavours to escape violence.

Landenburger's (1989) stage model of entrapment in and recovery from abusive relationships suggests as women progress through a number of relationship stages, their understanding of themselves, their partners and their situation changes. Such changes may influence the way women understand their interactions with police. The application of Landenburger's model to the policing context has not been

examined. To date, no research has explored the complex interplay between women's needs across relationship stages and police values.

## **1.2 Study Aims**

Therefore, the aims of this research were to examine the interrelationships between female victims' relationship stage and the way police and IPV victims experience and understand their encounter, and the consequences of those understandings. It also aimed to specifically examine the meaning women attribute to those encounters with police that do not result in formal police action. These women are severely under-represented in the literature, and yet non-arrest is the most frequent outcome of police intervention in Victoria (Victoria Police, 2012b).

The specific objectives were to:

- Examine victims' needs during a help-seeking encounter with police;
- Describe how an encounter with the police influences the way a woman understands herself, her partner, her situation and her options, and how that understanding influences her subsequent behaviour and decision making;
- Explore the association between victims' relationship stage and their understanding of their encounter with the police;
- Examine police perceptions of their role and explore how underlying beliefs and values influence the police response;
- Investigate the police decision making process and how such decisions are perceived by victims;
- Examine the outcomes of police attendance at an IPV incident from the perspective of victims and police; and
- Explore the congruence between police values and victims' needs.

## **1.3 Orientation to the thesis**

The literature is reviewed in chapter two. The prevalence and implications of IPV are considered, followed by an examination of three complementary theories that elucidate the nature of IPV and the consequences of victimisation in terms of

entrapment in violent relationships. Attention is then turned to victims' help-seeking with an emphasis on police as a source of assistance to women resisting or escaping violence. The policing context in which the study is set is then described and factors affecting police action and effectiveness are considered.

Symbolic interactionism emphasises the centrality of individuals' interpretations of their social interactions in determining behaviour. In chapter three, it is argued this perspective, enhanced by a feminist research philosophy, was the most appropriate for exploring the meaning victims and police attribute to their encounters. Consistent with these perspectives, a constructivist grounded theory methodology was utilised.

The interpreted findings are presented in chapters four to six. Chapter four proposes psychological injuries inherent in victimisation processes constrain victims from seeking help and engaging fully with police. Subtle variations in victims' aspirations for safety, ego-support and justice were found across the binding, enduring, disengaging and recovery phases of Landenburger's (1989) model of entrapment in violent relationships. Chapter five examines the relationship between police values, assessments, and decision making. Implicit judgements of victim status and discernible level of violence were found to determine the approach taken by police. An empowering alliance model comprising seeking, maintaining, taking action and relinquishing processes was conceptualised. The likelihood of the alliance developing between police and victims was enhanced when their perspectives were aligned.

Chapter six explicates victims' interpretations of the outcomes of their encounter with police. The empowering alliance was a crucial element in validating victims' experiences and self-worth and providing protection and justice. Finally, findings are synthesized in chapter seven. The degree of fit between victims' aspirations and police values was shown to vary according to victims' relationship stage (Landenburger, 1989), with greater congruence in the disengaging phase. The thesis contends culture change is needed to extend the positive outcomes of this phase to all victims seeking assistance, and police must be empowered to act when psychological abuse and non-injurious violence are suspected.

## **Chapter two: Literature Review**

The literature on IPV is quite extensive. However, consistent with the grounded theory approach described in chapter three, the current review is relatively brief, aiming to provide the context and rationale for the aims of this exploratory study rather than identify specific constructs to investigate or hypotheses to test. The review is comprised of two main sections. Firstly the nature and consequences of IPV are considered. A review of the policing response to IPV follows.

### **2.1 Intimate partner violence**

#### **2.1.1 Terminology and definitions**

Many terms are used to describe violence that occurs within intimate relationships, for example domestic violence, wife abuse, family violence, spousal abuse, wife battering, and IPV. Whilst some labels highlight the gendered nature of such violence, others acknowledge whilst it occurs primarily between partners, the effects of violence permeate throughout the whole family (MacDonald, 1998). The focus of the current study was the perceptions of women who have experienced violence within a past or present intimate relationship. Therefore, the term IPV is used. However, it is necessary to note in Victoria, police respond to IPV within the broader context of family violence as legislated under the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) 2008, which superseded the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987 (Vic). Therefore, where Victoria Police sources are cited, the term family violence may be used. The definition of family violence recommended by the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC, 2010) is as follows:

Family violence is violent or threatening behaviour, or any other form of behaviour that coerces or controls a family member or causes that family member to be fearful. Such behaviour may include but is not limited to:

- (a) physical violence;
- (b) sexual assault and other sexually abusive behaviour;
- (c) economic abuse;

- (d) emotional or psychological abuse;
- (e) stalking;
- (f) kidnapping or deprivation of liberty;
- (g) damage to property, irrespective of whether the victim owns the property;
- (h) causing injury or death to an animal irrespective of whether the victim owns the animal; and
- (i) behaviour by the person using violence that causes a child to be exposed to the effects of behaviour referred to in (a)–(h) above (p.19).

This recommended definition is reflected in the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (hereafter referred to as the Code of Practice: Victoria Police, 2010a) and the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic). The Victorian legislation also acknowledges that:

- family violence is a fundamental violation of human rights and is unacceptable in any form;
- while anyone can be a victim or perpetrator of family violence, family violence is predominantly committed by men against women, children and other vulnerable persons; and
- family violence may involve overt or subtle exploitation of power imbalances and may consist of isolated incidents or patterns of abuse over time (p.1).

### **2.1.2 Prevalence in Australia**

The 2005 Personal Safety Survey (ABS, 2006) reported 39.9% of Australian women experienced violence, operationalized as physical violence (33.3%) or sexual violence (19.1%), at some time during their adult lives (i.e. since the age of 15). Violence was experienced during the 12 months preceding the survey by 5.8% of women. For those women experiencing physical assault at some time during their adult lives, the perpetrator was a current or former partner in 45.8% of cases, and another family member or friend in a further 36.5%. Sexual assault was perpetrated by a current or former partner in 23.2% of cases. Compared to the earlier Women's

Safety Survey (ABS, 1996), these figures reflect a slight increase in lifetime prevalence (up from 38%) and a decrease in prior 12 months prevalence rates (down from 7.1%). The decrease is likely to be attributable to a decrease in incidents reported by women in the 18-24 age range. Younger women were previously at substantially greater risk for violence than older women. However, the proportion of 18-24 year old women reporting physical violence in the 12 months prior to the survey decreased from 38% in 1996 to 26% in 2005, whilst the proportion of women aged 45 or over experiencing physical violence increased from 15% in 1996 to 25% in 2005 (ABS, 2006). This change may reflect greater success with younger adults of preventative measures initiated under the auspices of the Australian Government's Partnerships Against Domestic Violence initiative (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, 2001).

Lifetime prevalence rates of IPV were 15% by a previous partner, with 67.6% of those women reporting more than one incident of violence, and 2.1% by a current partner, with 45.8% reporting more than one incident (ABS, 2006). These rates are substantially lower than those found in the 1996 Survey (ABS, 1996), in which violence was perpetrated by a previous partner against 42% of women who had ever had a previous relationship. IPV perpetrated by a current partner was reported by 8% of women, with the violence occurring more than once for half of these women.

Reporting of violence to police has also increased during the ten year period between surveys (ABS, 2006). Physical assault perpetrated by a male was reported to police by 36% of women in 2005, compared to only 19% in 1996. Women who experienced sexual assault by a male perpetrator reported it to the police in 19% of cases in 2005 compared to 15% in 1996

### **2.1.3 The IPV Burden**

IPV is a serious social and health problem. It is well established in the literature that experience of and exposure to IPV is implicated in a range of deleterious physical and psychological consequences for victims and their families. Physical injury is the most readily discernible outcome, ranging from cuts and bruises to broken bones

and stabbing or gunshot wounds (Sutherland, Bybee & Sullivan, 2002). Abused women are at greater risk for a range of medical disorders including diabetes, gastrointestinal disorders, headaches, chronic pain, sexually transmitted diseases and cervical cancer (Coker, Smith, Bethea, King, & McKeown, 2000). Victimization has been implicated in changes to immune system function (Garcia-Linares, Sanchez-Lorente, Coe, & Martinez, 2004; Groer, Thomas, Evans, Helton, & Weldon, 2006; Pico-Alfonso, Garcia-Linares, Celda-Navarro, Herbert, & Martinez, 2004). Furthermore, Thomas, Joshi, Wittenberg and McCloskey (2008) suggested abused women's health is affected by a complex interplay of IPV directly affecting health, worsening pre-existing conditions and, therefore, increasing victims' reliance on partners, which results in increased exposure and further worsening health.

Numerous studies have shown IPV is a risk factor for psychological disorders. A meta-analysis (Golding, 1999) of 56 studies examining victim outcomes found average prevalence rates of 63.8% for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), 47.6% for depression, 18.5% for alcoholism, 17.9% for suicidality, and 8.9% for drug abuse. Compared to controls, IPV victims were 5.6 times more likely to abuse alcohol or other drugs, 3.8 times more likely to suffer depression or attempt suicide, and 3.7 times more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD. Recent research corroborates these earlier findings; psychological sequelae of IPV include a range of anxiety disorders (McCauley et al, 1995), depression and PTSD (Flicker, Cerulli, Swogger, & Talbot, 2012; Lewis et al, 2006; Mechanic, Weaver & Resick, 2008; Mertin & Mohr, 2000; Walker, 2006) drug and alcohol related problems (R.C. Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; McFarlane et al, 2005) and other self-harming behaviours, including suicide (Vos et al., 2006).

Vos et al. (2006) investigated the health problems attributable to IPV and its contribution to the disease burden in Victorian women. IPV attributed 34.7% of the disease burden related to depression and 27.3% of the disease burden related to anxiety. It also contributed to the disease burden related to suicide (10.71%), femicide (2.4%) tobacco use (14.2%) drug use (2.4%), alcohol use (5%), sexually transmitted disease (1.2%), cervical cancer (1%), eating disorders (0.5%), and physical injuries (0.6%). Thus mental health (73%) and harmful health behaviours (22%) were the largest IPV related contributors to the disease burden. Furthermore,

IPV was the largest contributing factor to the burden of disease in Victorian women aged 18-44 (7.9%), outweighing the contribution of other well known risk factors such as alcohol, tobacco and drug use, obesity, cholesterol, and high blood pressure.

The total economic cost to Australia of IPV was estimated to be \$8.1 billion for the 2002/03 year (Access Economics, 2004). Projected costs by 2021 are expected to exceed \$15 billion (KPMG, 2009). Direct costs are related to provision of services including: medical, hospital, and allied health services; counselling and welfare services; court costs and legal representation; emergency accommodation and social security payments; and the cost of policing. Indirect costs include: pain suffering and immature mortality; loss of productivity and loss of income for victims; prevention programs; property replacement costs and bad debts; and the cost associated with children witnessing and living with violence.

#### **2.1.4 The nature of IPV**

Many explanations for the occurrence and perpetuation of violence between intimate partners have been offered. Early research focussed on characteristics of the perpetrator such as socioeconomic and employment status, general criminality and violence, and use of alcohol (for review see Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh & Lewis, 2004). Subsequently, social learning theory was invoked in considerations of intergenerational transmission of violence (Gelles, 1976). Attention was then turned to victims of IPV with psychopathological theories of deviant personality characteristics such as masochism used to explain why women stay with abusive partners (Snell, Rosenwald & Robey, 1964; for critique see Hilberman, 1980). This was countered by behavioural theories of learned helplessness (Walker, 1984). In contrast, Straus and Gelles (1986) found women used violence against their partners to the same extent as men and proposed both parties contribute to dysfunctional patterns of violence that permeate throughout the family.

However, population data (Australian Institute of Criminology [AIC], 2012; Hirschel, Buzawa, Pattavina, & Faggiani, 2008; Victoria Police, 2012a, 2013b) indicate male violence against women (VAW) is disproportionate to female violence against men, and unequivocally demonstrate violence within familial

relationships, and within intimate partner relationships in particular, is predominantly perpetrated by men against women, supporting the feminist perspective that IPV is an act of control executed to maintain the dominant status of men and the subjugation of their female partners within a patriarchal social system (Yllö & Bograd, 1988; Dobash, Dobash, Wilson, & Daly, 2005; Ferraro, 1988). The feminist perspective argues IPV occurs within a socio-political context where women are disadvantaged by unequal access to resources and the perpetuation of a power differential that suppresses the needs and rights of women. The United Nations General Assembly (1993) Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women recognized that:

*Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.*

Although there are still those who argue there is validity in the notion of gender symmetry in IPV (e.g. see Straus, 2006), the assertion that IPV is gender biased and related to unequal power within relationships is now internationally acknowledged and supported by a vast body of evidence (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). Considerably higher prevalence rates of IPV are found in countries with more traditional, patriarchal social systems.

#### **2.1.4.1 Clinical manifestation of IPV**

IPV is typically comprised of long-term verbal and psychological abuse interspersed with episodes of physical violence; a pattern of behaviour that maintains the control and domination of the abuser (Walker, 1979). Denial and minimisation, along with intermittent acts of kindness and contrition by the perpetrator further maintain and prolong the abusive relationship. Hegarty, Hindmarsh and Gilles (2000) described the clinical presentation of IPV as a syndrome where victimisation results in low

self-esteem, self-blame, powerlessness, and dependency, along with a range of physical and psychological complaints. Battering syndrome also results in a distorted perception of the perpetrator as indomitable and omnipotent (Astbury et al., 2000; Walker, 2009). Such symptomology is an endpoint; the manifestation of many years of enduring an abusive relationship. To better understand the consequences of IPV, it is necessary to consider the victimisation process itself, firstly by examining the nature of violence within intimate relationships and the associated psychological implications of that violence, and secondly by examining the properties of the relationship itself.

#### **2.1.4.2 The nature of the violence**

Walker (1979, 1984) described the nature of IPV as occurring in a cycle that acts to maintain the abusive relationship whilst increasing the perpetrator's degree of control over the victim. As the relationship progresses through repeated cycles, the violence increases in severity and frequency. Walker's Cycle of Violence Theory (1979) postulates the violence begins with a tension building phase, where the perpetrator becomes increasingly hostile, whilst the victim endeavours to control the environment and appease her partner to prevent a violent outburst. Episodes of aggressive behaviour and minor violence may occur during this phase. The tension building phase culminates in an act of extreme violence. Walker defines this as the acute battering phase, which is typically limited to one major episode in which the accumulated tension and hostility is dispelled. During the final loving-contrition phase, which serves to maintain the relationship, the perpetrator fears he has gone too far and endeavours to make amends. It is interesting to note Walker (1984) found victims consistently interpreted their partners' behaviour during the loving-contrition phase, rather than other phases, to be representative of their "true" character. Such assumptions would undoubtedly contribute to a desire to remain in the relationship and try to resolve the problems that occur in other phases.

Curnow (1997) tested Walker's (1979) theory and further identified the open window phase; a brief time period immediately following the acute battering phase. During this phase the victim was more likely to seek help and investigate available

alternatives, more likely to view herself as a victim, and less likely to exhibit cognitive distortions such as denial and minimisation. This open window phase presents a prime opportunity for intervention. Curnow found 90% of victims turned to the police for assistance during this time. Other studies confirm calling the police is a common form of help-seeking for victims of IPV (Elder, 2000; Gist et al., 2001; Gondolf, 1998; Hutchison & Hirschel, 1998; Meyer, 2011). Given the decreased tendency to deny and minimise the violence described by Curnow in the open window phase, it is of the utmost importance police are responsive to the needs of victims. A negative response by police may confirm the victim's belief she is responsible for the violence or has no viable alternatives to her current situation. In contrast, a positive response from police may provide a powerful message that protection and assistance is available, either directly or through referral to support services.

#### **2.1.4.3 The psychological experience**

Kirkwood (1993) presented a model of IPV as a web of interrelated, psychological components resulting from the emotional, verbal, social and financial abuse that coexists with physical and sexual coercion and violence. Women experienced *degradation* through their partners' verbal abuse, sexual humiliation, and exploitation of any pre-existing vulnerabilities resulting in severely diminished self-worth. His negative appraisals of her were internalised and she consequently felt devalued and sullied. Eventually she defined herself according to his behaviour towards her. Women struggled to survive within a pervasive atmosphere of *fear*. Regardless of whether the abuse was physical or emotional, the imminence of or potential for violence was a constant. Women feared not only for their physical safety but for their psychological wellbeing. They also experienced *objectification*. Women were compelled to modify their appearance and behaviour to gratify the perpetrator's wishes thus depriving them of personal choice and individual expression. This was compounded by his extreme possessiveness and control or restriction of her social contacts, resulting in her feeling less than human. Her individuality, autonomy and rights were curtailed. Financial *deprivation* left women feeling uncertain about the future and unable to control their circumstances

no matter how much effort they put into managing their resources. Social *deprivation* resulted in isolation and loss of support systems. At the same time, women were *overburdened by responsibility*. Kirkwood described this as a subtle and insidious form of emotional abuse. Their partners refused to take responsibility for the functioning of the family, care of the children or contribution to the relationship. The abusive men displayed a childlike insistence on having their needs met and assigned responsibility for doing so solely to their partners. Consequently, women felt psychologically exhausted and unable to cope. The final component of the web was *the distortion of subjective reality*. Over time, women lost confidence in their own evaluations of their circumstances. Their partners constantly refuted their assertions about the dynamics of the relationship and even denied factual information. Eventually women began to doubt what was real and what was imagined, as well as experiencing confusion over right and wrong and a sense of estrangement from their own perceptions that for some resulted in them questioning their sanity.

According to Kirkwood (1993), it is the cumulative effect of the various psychological components described above that directly contributes to the abuser's control and power. She uses the metaphor of a web to depict women's sense of being trapped and under physical and psychological threat. As her abuser's control increases due to the combined effects of the emotional abuse, she spirals further into the vortex of the web. Her personal power diminishes, as does her ability to free herself.

#### **2.1.4.4 The violent relationship – a stage model of entrapment and recovery**

Whilst the violence within an intimate relationship appears to be cyclical, Landendburger (1989) found the relationship itself progresses through a number of phases, which she identified as *binding*, *enduring*, *disengaging* and *recovery*. Transition from one phase to another is dependent on changes in the victim's interpretations of herself, her abuse experiences, and her interactions with her partner. During the initial *binding phase* of the relationship, positive experiences

outweigh negative aspects of the relationship. The woman's focus is on building intimacy and settling down. Negative events or characteristics of the partner are overlooked and problems within the relationship are interpreted as being associated with a normal adjustment period. The woman attempts to give her partner everything he wants, to work hard on the relationship and to maintain affection and harmony. Eventually the woman begins to question why these efforts are not working and what she has done to trigger the abusive incidents. This period of confusion, questioning and disquiet mark the transition to the *enduring phase*, during which the woman is more aware there are significant problems but remains committed to the relationship and concentrates on finding a solution to the abuse. During the enduring phase, women take responsibility for the relationship, for the abuse, and for helping their partner. The woman's sense of self-worth and agency is severely diminished. Although she feels unable to leave the relationship, she simultaneously comes to the realisation she may not survive it. Consequently, she feels totally hopeless and trapped, marking the transition into the *disengaging phase*. During disengagement, the woman identifies with other abused women, signalling a rising awareness of her situation. Help-seeking efforts begin or become more concerted. Although she often feels she may be going crazy or would be better off dead, illusions begin to break down. Eventually the combination of fear and anger motivate her to break free from the relationship. The process of becoming self-sufficient and reclaiming her life is long and arduous and often the woman will return to the relationship for a period. Thus the stages are not linear. The *recovery phase* involves struggling for survival, overcoming guilt, grieving for the lost relationship, and finally trying to make sense of her experiences.

Responding to women in any of these stages would be extremely complex given the slowly evolving changes in victims' understanding of their situation, awareness of the problem and commitment to the relationship described by Landenburger (1989). It is plausible police intervention may act as a catalyst or inhibitor of the escape and recovery process, depending on the victim's stage-related interpretations of her situation and the reaction to those interpretations by police.

#### **2.1.4.5 Characteristic experiences and consequences of IPV**

A number of commonalities inherent in the experience of IPV can be discerned from the explanations proffered by the theorists cited above, and from a range of studies of victims' experiences of IPV and related consequences. IPV is predicated on an imbalance of power in the relationship (Kirkwood, 1993; Lempert, 1997) and use of coercive control tactics by the abuser (Dutton & Goodman, 2005). IPV is multidimensional; concomitant forms of abuse include physical, psychological, sexual, financial, social and emotional, as well as stalking behaviours (Flicker, et al, 2011; Kirkwood, 1993; Smith, Thornton, DeVillis, Earp & Cocker, 2002; Walker, 1984). Sinister tactics abusers use to induce fear and exert control over victims include threats or actual harm to children (McCloskey, 2001) and violence against pets (Turner, 2000). Thus physical violence is perpetrated in the context of ongoing verbal and emotional abuse that undermines every aspect of the victim's humanity (Kirkwood, 1993; Herman, 1992b). It can be understood as an escalation from one form of abuse to another, where initial abuse facilitates further abuse in ongoing and ever worsening cycles (Walker, 1979). Women who are subjected to IPV live with the constant fear of future violence. They struggle to make sense of the violence (Landenburger, 1989) and employ strategies to prevent or minimise abuse (Goodman, Dutton, Vankos, & Weinfurt, 2005; Walker, 1979, 1984). The realisation these strategies are futile and the unpredictability of the abuse further undermines the victim's sense of control over her life (Walker, 2009).

Humiliation and degradation are integral elements of IPV that severely erode self-worth (Lempert, 1997; Kirkwood, 1993). The traumatic sequelae of chronic abuse in intimate relationships result in dramatically altered identity and destruction of core aspects of the self (Herman, 1992b). The trauma associated with IPV has been found to disrupt cognitive schemata; expectations of future violence and severe violence, along with internal attributions of blame have been shown to predict negative cognitions of the self, others, and safety (Dutton, Burghardt, Perrin, Chrestman, & Halle, 1994). Victims also experience erosion of their confidence in their perceptions and sense of sanity. IPV is characterised by an ongoing series of interpersonal interactions involving denial, minimization, rationalization or distortion of events, refutation of the victim's perceptions of those events and false

assertions of cause and effect (Ferraro, 1983; Whiting, Oka & Fife, 2012). This process has been termed gaslighting (Gass & Nichols, 1988) in reference to the deceit and denial associated with extramarital affairs and described as “crazy making” in the context of VAW (Astbury, 1996; NiCarthy, 1991). Although an abused woman may struggle to accommodate conflicting realities, she ultimately defines herself and the violence according to her abuser’s version of reality (Lempert, 1997). Her isolation and shame inhibit her ability to seek alternative sources of reality testing. The conflict is experienced as growing doubt in the veracity of her interpretations of her subjective reality (Kirkwood, 1993; NiCarthy, 1991; Whiting et al., 2012). These doubts facilitate internalisation of blame; he blames her for the violence and eventually she accepts responsibility for it, along with responsibility for him and for the relationship (Kirkwood, 1993; Landenburger, 1989; Whiting et al, 2012). Although she feels a disproportionate duty of care for her partner, she also perceives him as omnipotent and omniscient (Astbury et al., 2000; Herman, 1992a; Herman, 1992b; Walker, 2009).

Thus, the insidious, gradually escalating nature of IPV undermines the victim’s agency and sense of self, and depletes her emotional resources so that when the first major episode of physical violence occurs, the victim is already vulnerable and susceptible to further abuse. The psychological web (Kirkwood, 1993) of entrapment (Landenburger, 1989) is compounded by the common desire to maintain the relationship but end the violence (Ben-Ari & Eisikovits, 2003; Bowker, 1983; Horton & Johnson, 1993; Lempert, 1997; Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh & Winstock, 2000). Nonetheless, most women who experience IPV eventually engage in help-seeking, with many employing multiple forms before they eventually free themselves from the violence in their lives. Similarly, most women who end abuse do so by leaving their partner (Horton & Johnson, 1993).

### **2.1.5 Help-seeking**

Flicker et al. (2011) retested Gondolf and Fisher’s (1988) proposition that women experiencing IPV resist their victimisation and seek help in response to increasing levels of violence. In a large sub-sample (n=1756) from national VAW data in the USA, they found physical violence severity was associated with increased help-

seeking efforts from all sources measured. However, they found concomitant sexual violence decreased help-seeking. Similarly, Fanslow and Robinson (2010), reporting on IPV data from the New Zealand component of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS) found women who experienced severe physical violence were more likely to tell someone than women who experienced sexual violence or moderate physical violence, indicating characteristics of the violent experience influence help-seeking.

Sources of help are described similarly across studies and typically categorised as informal or formal. Australian IVAWS data (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004) indicated 75% of victims of IPV tell someone about the violence, most commonly friends or neighbours (55%) or family members (42%). However, such sources are not always experienced as helpful (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010; Lempert, 1997; Moe, 2007), particularly when others try force victims to take particular courses of action such as leaving the relationship immediately. According to Lempert, the unintentional harming by informal helpers can mirror the disempowering behaviours of the abuser.

Formal sources of support include specialised agencies, legal and criminal justice providers, medical professionals, counsellors and mental health professionals, and the clergy. Mouzos and Makkai (2004) reported only 16% of women experiencing IPV contacted a specialised domestic violence service including shelters, crisis centres, women's health centres or community centres, whilst 9% told a doctor or nurse and 8% told a counsellor or psychologist. According to Fanslow & Robinson (2010), women who sought help from formal services were most likely to contact police (25%), general practitioners or other health care providers (24%), and mental health services (13%). Reasons for not seeking formal help included normalising or minimising the violence, feeling shame, fearing reprisals, believing they should deal with it alone and fear of losing their children. In contrast, the most common reason for seeking help was because they could not endure more (49%), suggesting women reach a help-seeking threshold. Women also sought help in response to attempts or threat to kill them (11%), serious injury (15%), fear of being killed (11%), concern for children (17%), violence or threats against children (8%) and encouragement to leave from friends and family (18%). Of those who contacted police, 31% were

satisfied (see also section 2.2.3.4 victims' perceptions of police), compared with 22% satisfied with mental health professionals and only 16% satisfied with medical professionals.

The finding that women's experiences of formal sources of help vary substantially and are also not always positive is a common feature of the help-seeking literature (Baker, Cook, & Norris, 2003; Moe, 2007; Postmus, Severson, Berry & Yoo, 2009). However, according to Goodman et al. (2005), women who try to cope with abuse on their own, especially those who use resistance strategies such as challenging the abuser or fighting back, are at greater risk of experiencing further abuse compared to women who obtain support.

Interestingly, Gondolf (1998) found victims of court ordered batterers differed from victims who sought help from shelters in their help-seeking efforts, relying primarily on informal strategies (e.g. threatening to leave him) or justice interventions rather than domestic violence services and tended to be more optimistic about their partners' engagement in services. Population data from the USA (Flicker et al., 2011) Australia (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004) and New Zealand (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010) indicate only a minority of women report violence to the police (27%, 14% & 13% respectively). According to Mouzos and Makkai, the most common reason for not reporting violence to the police is the belief that it was too minor (42%). Other reasons are consistent with various rationales for not seeking any form of help cited above and included: preferring to deal with it herself (27%); wanting to keep it private or shame (9% & 7% respectively); fear of the offender (7%) isolated incident (6%); and the belief that police would not believe her (3%) or could not do anything about it (5%). It seems whilst most women tell someone about the violence, only a proportion of those are active help-seekers. Simmons, Farrar, Frazer and Thompson (2011) suggested that disclosure is often not intentional; for example a victim may disclose violence when seeking medical attention but may not be actively seeking help in relation to the violence per se. Alternatively, disclosure may occur when abused women start questioning their experiences and thus may precede help-seeking.

Whilst most formal agencies tend to advocate leaving an abusive partner, and much research has investigated why women don't (see Rhodes & McKenzie, 1998), leaving is only one option, and certainly not likely to be the first help-seeking goal women pursue. According to Landenburger (1989), limited and typically ineffective help-seeking occurs in the earlier phases of the violent relationship. Help-seeking intensifies during the disengaging phase; however, the impetus for leaving the relationship is not experienced until the end of this phase, marking the transition to the recovery period. A greater understanding of abused women's help-seeking goals may facilitate a more victim-centred response from service providers. Similarly, a greater understanding of the characteristic experiences and outcomes of IPV may contribute to more helpful interactions between victims and those from whom they seek help. Furthermore, variation in help-seeking goals may be associated with differential avenues of support pursued. For example, women seeking refuge are likely to have different needs from those seeking counselling. As police are providers of direct services and a source of referral to further services, it is important to understand women's goals when seeking help from police.

However, there is limited research in this area; most studies tend to focus on women accessing domestic violence services or general help-seeking (e.g., Baker et al., 2003; Flicker et al., 2011; Lempert, 1997; Moe, 2007; Simmons, et al., 2011). Similarly, investigation of reasons for contacting police (e.g. Fanslow & Robinson, 2010) do not necessarily identify victims' underlying goals. Studies that have specifically examined aims when seeking help from police have found women tend to want to escape immediate danger, and may want the offender to be removed to achieve this, but the majority do not want him to be arrested or prosecuted, with only a small minority seeking judicial sanctions (Gillis, et al., 2006; Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Leisenring, 2012). Other goals included getting help for the abuser with addiction or mental health problems (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Leisenring, 2012) and help ending the relationship (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000). Whilst these descriptive studies provided important insights into abused women's motivations, they did not account for the observed differences or explore associated outcomes of women's help-seeking. Such investigation is needed to inform more responsive policing. It is also important to understand how police interpret women's help-

seeking goals. There may be a range of needs experienced by women to which police are not attuned.

## **2.2 Policing intimate partner violence**

IPV is a pervasive problem affecting all levels of the community. Police play a pivotal role in responding to IPV. Police statistics (Victoria Police, 2010b, 2011) indicate family violence most commonly occurs late in the day, with the highest incidence on weekends, particularly Sunday evenings. Thus higher rates tend to occur at times when police are usually the only service providers available to render assistance. It is possible the higher rate recorded by police during these times is due to the unavailability of alternative forms of assistance. However, it is also plausible the incidence peak encountered during this period is related to increased use at this time of alcohol and other drugs, which are known risk factors for violence (Brownridge, 2004; Thompson, Saltzman, & Johnson, 2003; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004; Willson et al, 2000). Furthermore, police are empowered in every Australian State and Territory through various legislation to enter any premises, without an arrest warrant, if they have reasonable belief that an act of family violence has occurred or is likely to occur (ALRC, 2010). Therefore, it can be reasonably assumed police are able to provide immediate protection and cessation of violence in emergency situations. However, the ability of police and of the criminal justice system they represent, to contribute to the long-term safety and wellbeing of victims is less clear, and therefore, warrants further investigation.

### **2.2.1 Development of the criminal-civil dual model of police intervention**

Traditionally, police used arrest only as a last resort in cases of extreme violence, preferring to adopt an informal, peacekeeping stance. Domestic violence was viewed as a private matter and not real police work both within Australia (Scutt, 1983) and internationally (Buzawa, & Buzawa, 2003). The women's movement brought the issue of public accountability for IPV to the fore in the early 1970s by successfully seeking Federal funding for women's refuges, thus achieving government acknowledgement of its responsibility to women escaping IPV (Laing,

2000). The political impetus for legal reform gathered momentum in the early 1980s culminating in the ALRC (1986) review of domestic violence. The report recognised existing criminal law provided inadequate protection to victims of IPV: applying the criminal burden of proof was exceedingly difficult in cases of IPV; criminal law did not have the capacity to provide protection against future violence, even when the potential for such violence was abundantly evident; and criminal law did not recognise many of the behaviours that constitute VAW.

The review resulted in the introduction of court orders of protection and enhanced police powers of entry in all Australian jurisdictions during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In Victoria, the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987 (Vic) was assented to on May 12, 1987 and commenced shortly afterwards. The introduction of protection order legislation provided a dual-remedy legal response to IPV and other forms of family violence (Alexander, 2002). Criminal law contains the mechanisms for punishing violent behaviour that has occurred, with the aim of deterring future violent behaviour. Civil law provides protection against future violence, in the form of summary protection orders, where there is evidence of the potential and likelihood of future violence. Protection order legislation has the ability to restrict a range of behaviours that are not necessarily criminal. For example, the defendant can be prohibited from phoning or approaching the protected person, or entering any premises where the protected person lives, works or frequents. It can also restrict access to joint property.

The fundamental advantage of this legislation is that it applies the civil burden of proof, which is on the balance of probabilities, rather than the criminal burden of proof, which is beyond reasonable doubt. Orders of protection are also more readily accessible, affordable and timely compared to other forms of protection such as a recognisance to keep the peace or a protective injunction under the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth). The contravention of a protection order constitutes a criminal offence. Therefore, prohibited conduct, including intimidating behaviours that are not in themselves criminal offences, can result in arrest and prosecution, which carries substantial penalties. Under the current Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic), this includes up to two years imprisonment, 240 penalty points or both. At July,

2013, 240 penalty points equated to \$34,646.40 (Monetary Units Act 2004 (Vic); Magistrates' Court of Victoria, 2013).

Despite these changes, which aimed to encourage a pro-active approach by police and to remove the onus for taking formal action from victims, reviews conducted after the new legislation was introduced revealed police continued to prefer a mediatory response (Mugford et al., 1993; Wearing, 1988). In a comprehensive systems level study, Wearing (1992) examined the implementation by Victoria Police and the Magistrate's Court system of the legislative changes introduced in the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987 (Vic). She found both police and magistrates continued to trivialise family violence and failed to fully enforce the new laws.

Victoria Police (2002) undertook an internal review, including consultation with external stakeholders, in response to the Victorian Government's Women's Safety Strategy. Despite continued commitment by Victoria Police to address problems in service delivery, they found the expectations of victims and the community were not being met. Failure to prosecute criminal behaviour, apply for intervention orders and investigate breaches of intervention orders were amongst the most problematic issues identified. The perception police decriminalise violence within the family still existed amongst the domestic violence service sector. Police themselves identified many problems with implementing processes. They were primarily concerned with the time taken to procure a complaint and warrant for an intervention order, and the safety of the victim during that time. Attitudinal issues, the need for better training, and the need for greater transparency and accountability were also identified.

The internal review resulted in the introduction of the Victoria Police Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2004) and eventually in legislative change to increase police arrest powers; in 2006 family violence legislation was amended to include the power to direct or detain (holding powers) when a police officer intends to apply for a Family Violence Intervention Order (FVIO). Holding powers ensure the safety of the victim until a warrant has been executed by eliminating the need to leave the victim unprotected whilst an application is made and then trying to locate the offender to execute it. The Code of Practice was an elaboration of existing standing orders contained in the police manual, and as such was as much a cultural change

tool as a procedural change document. It attempted to elucidate the most appropriate course of action for police to take when investigating family violence, providing more detailed guidelines. It also represented the renewed commitment of Victoria Police to the elimination of VAW. Ongoing changes to legislation and associated changes in police procedures culminated in the new Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic), which included the introduction of Family Violence Police Safety Notices (FVSN; effectively an interim order issued by police) and revised Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2010a).

However, despite these advances, which include more explicit guidelines for policing IPV, it is important to realise police still have considerable discretion. In fact, they have some degree of discretion in all the duties they perform. It is certainly not the argument of this thesis their discretion should be limited. However, it is important to examine how police discretion is influenced and exercised. Such examination should elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of the police response at the interpersonal level, and consequently facilitate the improvement of police services in relation to IPV.

### **2.2.2 Police processes in Victoria**

The Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2010a) states it is compulsory for police to investigate and take action on any incident of family violence reported to them, regardless of whether or not the victim the affected family member (AFM) makes a complaint. Police must commence with a risk assessment evaluating history of violence, presence of known risk factors (e.g. access to weapons; use of alcohol), and AFM's level of fear. They must then use their professional judgement to determine the level of risk, which subsequently informs decisions about the level of future protection required. The most appropriate course of action is determined according to a three-option model: criminal; civil; or referral only. Police must pursue criminal or civil options where there is sufficient evidence, regardless of any apparent reluctance on the part of the victim. They must also refer all parties to appropriate social services. Where criminal offences are detected, police may pursue charges by: charge and remand; charge and bail; charge and summons; or intent to

summons. Alternatively, no further police action may result from submission of a brief of evidence for authorisation.

The civil option involves making an application for a FVIO to the Magistrates' Court and may be initiated in conjunction with criminal proceedings or alone. When there are immediate concerns for the safety of the AFM or children, or to preserve property, an application may be made via: application and warrant, which conveys arrest and bail powers; a police issued FVSN; or an application for an interim order. All of these mechanisms function to bring the defendant to Court for an interim hearing of the application as quickly as possible (3-5 days) and all impose immediate restrictions on the defendant. Alternatively, if there are no immediate concerns for the safety of the AFM, police may proceed with an application and summons to protect the AFM from certain behaviours. This course of action typically brings the parties to Court within 14 days but imposes no restrictions in the interim.

The referral option, which aims to provide access to a range of specialist services for AFMs and perpetrators, is required to be followed in addition to the criminal or civil option. Police must refer formally, by relaying information directly to external services, whenever the criminal or civil option is invoked. When there are no immediate threats or welfare concerns, police refer informally by providing parties with contact details of appropriate services. They must also explain civil options available to the AFM, and make an appointment with the Court Registrar or provide contact details if the AFM so desires.

### **2.2.3 Examination of the policing response to IPV**

#### **2.2.3.1 Arrest effectiveness**

Early research into policing IPV concentrated on the effectiveness of arrest as a deterrent. This research was predominantly conducted in the USA and measured recidivism rates. The landmark study by Sherman and Berk (1984), which involved perpetrators of misdemeanour assault being randomly assigned to one of three

response options, found arrest, as opposed to ordering the perpetrator away or mediation, resulted in significantly less repeat offending over a twelve month follow-up period. These findings were the catalyst for legislative change that provided police with the power to make warrantless arrests for misdemeanour assaults and the adoption of mandatory or pro-arrest policies in most jurisdictions across the USA. It should be noted, in Australia, police still do not have such sweeping powers. That is, they cannot take perpetrators into custody for summary assault offences, although they do have a holding power when making FVIO applications.

The Sherman and Berk (1984) study was followed by a number of replication studies in other USA states, known as the Spouse Abuse Replication Program. However, these produced inconsistent results regarding the efficacy of arrest, including no effect, deterrence, and escalation of violence (e.g., see Dunford, Huizinga & Elliot, 1990). These findings resulted in the adoption of the Stake in Conformity Thesis (Sherman, Smith, Schmidt, & Rogan, 1992), which argues arrest is an effective deterrent only when there are potential social sanctions; for example, when perpetrators' social standing or careers may be jeopardised by the stigma of arrest. However, in populations where arrest is more common, the deterrent effect of arrest is negligible. Later meta-analysis (Maxwell, Garner & Fagan, 2002) revealed an overall small deterrent effect of arrest. However, a history of prior arrest was the biggest single predictor of recidivism.

Mandatory arrest and no drop policies remain in place across many USA jurisdictions, despite the finding in subsequent studies that they disproportionately, adversely affect women due to an associated increase in dual arrest or arrest of the victim (DeLeon-Granados, Wells, & Binsbacher, 2006; Durfee, 2012; Finn & Bettis, 2006; Hirschel, et al, 2008). Although many jurisdictions have consequently incorporated mechanisms for identifying and proceeding against the primary aggressor, the problem of victim arrest persists (Durfee, 2012), as does the tendency of police to be more lenient towards IPV assault compared to stranger or other relationship related assault (Avakame & Fyfe, 2001).

### 2.2.3.2 Decision to arrest

With or without mandatory arrest policies, police retain a great deal of discretion in the decision to arrest associated with judgements regarding probable cause and the primary aggressor. However, mandatory arrest has been found to increase the arrest rate and is a predictor of the decision to arrest (Eitle, 2005). There is a large body of research, mostly conducted in the USA using case vignettes or incident records, which has identified a range of other predictors of arrest. These include legal, organisational, and situational factors, as well as characteristics of victims, perpetrators and the police.

Legal factors have been found to contribute substantially to the decision to arrest; these include: the presence of violence and the co-occurrence of child abuse (Home, 1991); the presence of injury (Durfee, 2012; Eitle, 2005; Kane, 2000; Mignon & Holmes, 1995); the severity of the attack or injury (Dolon, Hendricks, & Meagher 1986; Hall, 2005; Friday, Metgar & Walters, 1991; Hirschel et al., 2008), level of risk (Kane, 2000; Trujillo & Ross, 2008) or the belief the partner would be injured if the aggressor remained in the home (Finn & Stalans, 2002; Dolon et al., 1986); use of a weapon (Dolon et al., 1986; Durfee, 2012; Eitle, 2005; Mignon & Holmes, 1995); threat to kill the victim (Hall, 2005) or a direct threat made against the officer (Dolon et al., 1986); and belligerent perpetrator behaviour or history of violence (Waaland & Keeley, 1985). Similarly, Gracia, Garcia and Lila, (2008) found perceived severity of incidents predicted officers' decision to take formal law enforcement action in the absence of victim co-operation. These findings highlight the emphasis police place on physical violence. However, women frequently report psychological abuse not only co-occurs with and enables physical violence, it is often experienced as more damaging (Dutton, Kaltman, Goodman, Weinfurt & Vankos, 2005; Herbert, Silver & Ellard, 1991; Kirkwood, 1993; Wearing, 1992).

Police characteristics found to be associated with police taking formal action include: sense of responsibility (Gracia et al., 2008; Gracia, Garcia & Lila, 2011); empathy for others (Gracia et al, 2011) lower levels of sexism (Finn & Stalans, 2002; Gracia et al; 2011), lower levels of victim blaming (Finn & Stalans, 2002); and level of experience (Stalans & Finn, 1995, 2006), with experienced officers

more likely to make pragmatic arrest decisions based on reliability of the witness, probability of successful prosecution and identification of the primary aggressor.

Perceived dangerousness of the perpetrator increases likelihood of arrest (Stalans & Finn, 1995, 2006). Substance use has frequently been found to influence arrest (Durfee, 2012; Eitle, 2005). However, use of alcohol by the victim decreases the likelihood of perpetrator arrest (Stalans & Finn, 2006) and increases the likelihood of arrest of the victim (Houry, Reddy & Paramour, 2006; Stalans & Finn, 2006). Dolon and colleagues (1986) also found victims' lack of co-operation with bringing criminal charges or tendency to drop charges were the largest factors influencing police not to arrest. Presence of the perpetrator at the scene (Hall, 2005) and presence of a witness (Mignon & Holmes, 1995; Robinson, 2000) has been found to increase officers' tendency to arrest. Race (Durfee, 2012; Eitle, 2005) and relationship status (Brownridge, 2004; Robinson, 2000) are also influential; non-whites and those who co-habit are more likely to be arrested.

Clearly, during the police response, police are making interpretations about the situation, the victim and the perpetrator. It is likely police officers' general understanding and attitudes towards IPV and policing IPV would mediate the influence of those interpretations on their responses. Patriarchal attitudes (DeJong, Burgess-Proctor & Elis, 2008; Saunders, 1995; Websdale, 1995) and attributing blame to victims (Finn & Stalans, 2002; DeJong et al., 2008) are particularly pertinent problems. Negative attitudes towards repeat calls to the same address and towards victims who remain with the partner despite ongoing violence have been demonstrated (Gover et al., 2011) and found to frustrate police and reduce the thoroughness of their response (Russel & Light, 2006). Kane (2000) found as the number of past events increases, the likelihood of arrest decreases. This is particularly worrisome as research has shown risk of injury is predicted by greater number of prior incidents (Thompson et al., 2003).

It is also disturbing to note police are frustrated (Johnson, 2004) or reluctant to act (Dolon et al., 1986; Stalans & Finn, 1995) when the victim expresses ambivalence about pressing charges. Victim reluctance to proceed with prosecution may be associated with the victim's overall ambivalence about terminating the relationship,

although this has not been established empirically. It is possible police interpret such situations as a waste of police time and resources. And yet, relationship ambivalence is very common. The decision to leave an abusive relationship involves a process that occurs over time (Anderson & Saunders, 2003; Landenburger, 1998, Wuest & Merrit-Gray, 1999). Even after a woman has left a violent partner, the likelihood of returning is high. Griffing and colleagues (2002) found 67% of women residing in a domestic violence shelter had previously left and returned to their abuser. Continued emotional attachment (Griffing et al., 2002), and forgiveness and costs of leaving the relationship (Gordon, Burton & Porter, 2004) predicted the decision to return. Interestingly, Stroshine and Robinson (2003) found victims were more likely to end a relationship when there had been a formal criminal justice response.

Apparent victim indecisiveness encountered by police may also be associated with the victim's emotional state. As noted, PTSD and depression are common outcomes of chronic abuse (Flicker, et al., 2012; Mechanic et al., 2008:). Symptoms associated with these conditions, such as numbing and avoidance, or hyperarousal, and associated maladaptive coping strategies (Lewis et al., 2006) may contribute to the victim's inability to think clearly and act decisively.

DeJong et Al. (2006) suggested differences in police attitudes may be associated with policing philosophy. In an exploratory study, they found support for the notion officers who had a community policy approach exhibited more progressive views towards policing IPV compared to officers with a traditional policing philosophy who tended to have more problematic views. Studies evaluating coordinated, interagency responses lend support to this view (Hoyle & Sanders, 2000; Russell & Light, 2006). Therefore, it is important to understand police officers' beliefs and values about their role in the overall societal response to IPV. Negative or constricted views may lead to decisions or behaviours by police with negative consequences for victims that may impede their escape from violent relationships.

There is a paucity of research in Australia that examines police decision making in regard to IPV. However, Holder (2007) examined Australian Capital Territory police data over a three year period and found factors indicative of assault, breach of court order, criminal damage, sexual assault, presence of a weapon, and presence of

injury were associated with formal police action. Stewart & Maddren (1997) used case vignettes to investigate the relationship between attributions of blame and the decision to arrest in a sample of Queensland police. The perceived likelihood of arrest was lower when the level of blame attributed to the victim was higher. No relationship was found between arrest and level of blame attributed to the perpetrator. Overall, perpetrators were more likely to be blamed; however, when the victim was intoxicated and the perpetrator was sober, the level of blame was equal despite the fact that in all cases the vignette depicted the perpetrator committing a summary offence with no retaliation by the victim.

In a later study, Trujillo and Ross (2008) investigated the relationship between police officers judgement of risk of future violence and use of risk management strategies (referral only, FVIO or criminal charges) in a Victorian sample. They found victim's level of fear, incident progression, previous incidents and drug or alcohol use predicted the level of risk determination. Application for FVIO was predicted by level of fear, level of assessed risk, and physical assault. Criminal charges were predicted by level of fear, active FVIO, previous incidents and physical assault. Trujillo and Ross noted the salience of victim fear as a predictor of risk and action, and suggested fear may substantiate the victim's account or victim distress may elicit a helpful response from police. They suggested other situational factors such as the interaction between the parties, interaction between the offender and police or emotions expressed by the perpetrator might account for the 57% unexplained variance. Further research in this area may be enhanced by a qualitative approach to explore, in depth, the dynamics of the interpersonal interactions at the scene.

Arrest is only one indicator of police responsiveness. Rollings and Taylor (2008) noted the lack of research in Australia on police performance and ability to respond to family violence. In order to evaluate strategies implemented under the Australasian policing strategy for the prevention and reduction of family violence (Australasian Police Commissioners, 2008), they suggested a set of robust indicators is needed to measure reduction in recidivism and victimisation, and increases in arrest, prosecution, willingness of victims to call police, and victim satisfaction.

### **2.2.3.3 Effectiveness of the broader legal response**

Police also play an important gatekeeper role influencing the effectiveness of the criminal justice system as a whole. In Australia, police initiate criminal charges, decide which charges to make and are responsible for compiling a brief of evidence to support the charge (Rollings & Taylor, 2008). It appears criminal charges afford protection to victims of IPV. Ventura and Davis (2005) found criminal conviction was an effective deterrent even when perpetrator history and characteristics are considered. Similarly, Willson, McFarlane, Lemmey, and Malecha (2001) found women who filed assault charges experienced significantly lower rates of threats of abuse, actual abuse and risk indicators for homicide over a six-month period.

Police can either facilitate or initiate civil orders of protection. In the USA, Gist et al. (2001) found nearly half the women seeking protection orders learned of them from police. Findings in relation to protection orders are mixed. In a meta-analysis of 32 studies conducted between 1985 and 2001 involving IPV and non-IPV stalking, Spitzberg (2002) found protection orders for stalking were violated in 40% of cases, including escalation in 21%. Being male, younger, and having prior protection orders are associated with defendants incurring criminal charges after the issuance of an order (Jordan, Pritchard, Duckett, & Charnigo, 2010). However, in a large USA study of 481 women who had contact with the police for an IPV incident, those who obtained and maintained a protection order had significantly lower risk of subsequent abuse (Holt, Kernic, Wolf, & Rivara, 2003). McFarlane and colleagues (2004) found lower levels of abuse over an 18-month follow-up period for all women who applied for a protection order, regardless of whether the order was granted or not. They suggested the very act of making the violence public and bringing it to the attention of the court may be enough to deter further violence. However, it is also possible terminating the relationship at the time of intervention was the more salient factor in reducing violence over time.

Australian research also indicates protection orders reduce the risk of future violence but do not eliminate it. Trimboli and Bonney (1997) found the majority of New South Wales participants granted a protection order experienced a reduction in a range of abusive behaviours including stalking, threats, and assaults over a six

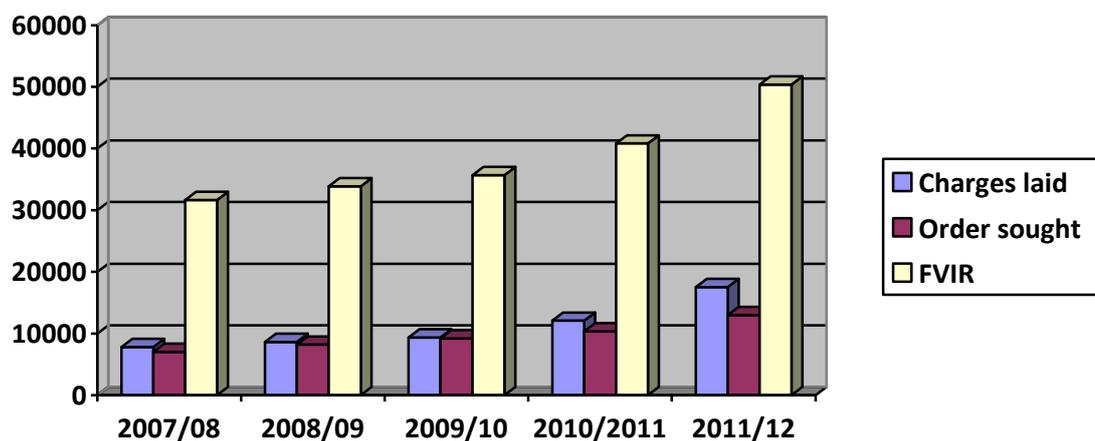
month follow-up period. Similarly, in a national sample of 493 young women (18-23 years), it was found those women who sought protection from both the police and Courts had the greatest reduction in severity of violence over a 12 month period (Young, Byles & Dobson, 2000). Therefore, it is important to understand the pathway from police intervention to Court; the ways in which police may possibly facilitate or inhibit victims' progress to Court warrants exploration.

Indeed, in New Zealand, Robertson et al. (2007) suggested that whilst orders were often effective, the ability of victims to obtain an order in the first place was extremely problematic. Examination of police data and victim feedback in the USA also identified multiple barriers to procuring protection orders (Logan, Shannon, & Walker, 2005). Barriers included lack of knowledge and resources, embarrassment, fear of retaliation, unhelpful Court staff and processes, applications not granted, and perceived ineffectiveness of orders. This raises the question of what happens when women come in contact with the justice system but are not granted the protection they seek.

Given the limitations of the criminal-justice system, innovative strategies to combat IPV have centred on implementing collaborative, multi-agency approaches to provide support, risk assessment and a broader range of safety strategies to victims. For example, in the USA Duluth model, police, Court and support services are co-located. In Wales, Robinson and Tregidga (2007) found 40% of high risk victims who engaged in multi-agency case conferences reported no further violence over a 12-month period. Evaluations of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Family Violence Intervention Program (Cussen & Lyneham, 2012 ) and the Tasmania Safe at Home interagency response (Success Works, 2009) indicated these programs have improved the overall response to women experiencing IPV and increased their perceived safety and protection.

Most research measures the police and criminal justice response in terms of the effect of formal intervention on perpetrators' recidivism. Changes in perpetrator behaviour are an extremely important goal; however, little is known of the direct effects of the police response on victims' perceptions, behaviour or wellbeing. Furthermore, Victoria Police (2012b) data from 2007/08 to 2011/12 (see Figure 2.1)

indicated formal action was taken in only a small proportion of family violence cases. Of the 31,660 incidents recorded for the 2007-2008 year, offenders were processed for offences in only 24.7% and police applied for a FVIO in only 22.3% of cases. Although it is not specified, it is highly likely these two figures were often related to the same incidents. A similar pattern is seen in subsequent years with intervention orders sought in approximately 25% of cases. In 2010/11 and 2011/2012 there was an increase in charges laid to 29.6% and 34.8% respectively, possibly reflecting renewed commitment by Victoria Police to combat VAW evident in the Living Free from Violence Strategy (Victoria Police, 2009). Nevertheless, formal action is taken by police in the minority of cases. Low rates of formal action have been identified elsewhere in Australia (Crime and Misconduct Commission: CMC, 2005). Similarly, findings from the IVAWS (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004) indicated of those women who report IPV to the police, their partner is charged with a crime in only 19% of instances. Therefore, the utility of examining the effectiveness of the police response only in terms of arrest and protection order effectiveness is questionable. Little is known of the outcome of the police response in the majority of incidents, particularly from the victim's perspective.



*Figure 2.1* Number of family violence incident reports including proportion where charges laid and intervention orders sought 2007/08 to 2011/12. Note: compiled from Victoria Police (2012b) Corporate Statistics, data extracted 18 July, 2012.

#### 2.2.3.4 Victims' perceptions of police

Australian research examining victims' perceptions of the police response to IPV is scant and typically limited to government reviews or program evaluations. The CMC (2005) reviewed the policing of domestic violence in Queensland. Half the victims surveyed (n=53) were not satisfied with the police response; the most frequent reasons were length of time to respond, not taking the matter seriously and behaving as if they didn't want to be there. Trimboli and Bonney (1997) interviewed a sample of 131 men and women granted protection orders in Sydney. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the police response. Those who were dissatisfied cited insufficient information given by police, inefficiency in processing the protection order application, failure to serve the order on defendants in a timely manner, and being rude, unsympathetic or indifferent to the victim as reasons for their dissatisfaction. It should be noted, a protection order had been applied for by police and granted by the Court. Thus, this sample is not representative of the majority of police-victim interactions in Australia. However, in a national sample, Mouzos and Makkai (2004) found 31% of women reporting IPV were satisfied and a further 28% very satisfied with the police response. Charging the perpetrator was associated with higher frequency of being very satisfied compared to not charging (51% vs. 21%). Women reporting IPV were more likely to be very dissatisfied than women reporting non-IPV violence.

Victims' perceptions of police in other jurisdictions include a range of both positive and negative experiences. Positive experiences described by victims are consistent with the findings in Australia and included: encouraging them to go ahead with a formal complaint or apply for an intervention order and providing practical advice to support those actions (Coulter, Kuehnle, Byers & Alfonso, 1999; Erez & Belknap, 1998); having a helpful or supportive attitude and providing ongoing information about their criminal case (Gillis et al, 2006; Johnson, 2007); and providing referral or transport to shelters (Coulter et al, 1999; Johnson, 2007). Negative experiences included a range of police behaviours that trivialised and decriminalised the violence women experienced such as: not listening or taking the victim or incident seriously (Erez & Belknap, 1998; Gillis et al., 2006; Leisenring, 2012; Sullivan & Hagan, 2005; Wolf, Ly, Hobart & Kernic, 2003); blaming the

victim (Erez & Belknap, 1998; Gillis et al 2006; Leisenring, 2012) siding with or being manipulated by the perpetrator (Wolf et al, 2003); advising against protection orders (Erez & Belknap, 1998); police discrimination due to ethnic or socioeconomic background (Wolf et al., 2003); minimizing the extent of victims' fear (Coulter et al., 1999) or injuries (Erez & Belknap, 1998); inadequate or inept investigation (Gilles et al., 2006; Sullivan & Hagan, 2005); failure to arrest or charge the perpetrator (Fleury, Sullivan, Bybee & Davidson, 1998; Johnson, 2007; Sullivan & Hagan, 2005; Wolf et al., 2003); and threatening the victim with arrest or loss of custody of her children (Coulter et al., 1999; Fleury et al., 1998 ).

The majority of this body of research relies on surveys assessing victim satisfaction or perceived helpfulness of police using likert ratings or dichotomous response items, some with the addition of a few open ended questions (e.g., Aspler, Cummins & Carl, 2003; Coulter et al., 1999; Miller 2003) or focus groups that generate general descriptions of positive and negative experiences (e.g., Gillis et al, 2006; Sullivan & Hagan, 2005). As such, the possibility of generating a deeper understanding of the outcomes of victims' positive or negative experiences is quite limited. However, Aspler et al. found police were rated most helpful when referral for counselling or arrest of the perpetrator was desired by the victim and provided by police but much less helpful when they did not receive the desired assistance. Similarly, Leisenring (2012) found being dissatisfied with the police response was most closely associated with an unwanted arrest (of the abuser or victim) or with no arrest being made when the victim believed it was warranted. Arrest of the victim has been found to result in feelings of shame, fear, worthlessness and powerlessness (Rajah, Frye, & Haviland, 2006). This is likely more pertinent in jurisdictions with mandatory arrest policies, such as the USA. In contrast, Miller found satisfaction with the police and concordance between arrest of suspect and victims' wishes were associated with higher levels of perceived legal power, although they were not related to perceived personal power ratings. In their qualitative study of police and victim perceptions of empowerment, Russell and Light (2006) also found proactive responses by police, respectful treatment of victims and the provision of information were believed to be empowering. However, the mechanisms and conditions underlying such empowerment were not elucidated.

As far as overall approval of police, findings are extremely mixed. For example, when Erez and Belknap (1998) interviewed IPV clients of a prosecutors' office in Ohio, USA, police were ranked the least helpful of all personnel associated with their encounter with the justice system. In contrast, police were given the highest rating of very helpful by 75% of victims in the study by Aspler et al. (2003) and were rated as not at all helpful by only 6% of the sample. Despite quite often reporting positive satisfaction, most studies tend to focus on the negative behaviours of police reported by women. The most widely reported consequence of negative encounters with police is the detrimental effect it has on victims' likelihood of calling the police for future assistance (Fleury et al., 1998; Johnson, 2007; Leisenring, 2012; Wolf et al., 2003) and engaging with the criminal justice system (Fleury-Steiner, Bybee, Sullivan, Belknap & Melton, 2006). It is also important to further explore positively perceived behaviours and ascertain the circumstances under which they occur, so these behaviours can be reinforced to police.

In a study of women attending police stations in central Israel to make a formal IPV complaint, Shoham (2000) found significant differences in victims' perceptions of the police encounter between women who persisted with the complaint and women who withdrew. Women who withdrew the complaint were: more likely to believe the police did not take the incident seriously; less likely to have been given information about their rights; more likely to believe the police sided with the husband; and more likely to believe police did not have the patience to listen to them. This finding indicates police behaviour directly influences victim behaviour.

Leisenring (2012) conducted in-depth interviews with women about their experience with police. She found victims who had multiple encounters with police believed police were particularly critical of them, expressing disdain and anger, and indicating their time was being wasted. Furthermore, Stephens and Sinden (2000) found marked differences in perceptions of IPV victims whose attackers had been arrested between women who had only one prior encounter with the police and women who had multiple encounters prior to the arrest incident. The former described generally positive experiences such as being reassured they had done the right thing in calling the police, practical support such as arranging transport, small acts of kindness such as making the victim a cup of coffee, listening patiently, and

allowing victims to work up to disclosing difficult details about the assault. Victims who had multiple police encounters typically described a harsh and uncaring response from police including minimizing the situation, disbelieving the victim, threatening to arrest the victim or take the children into protective custody, and being cold, uncaring, rude, arrogant, and contemptuous. These women did, however, describe more positive experiences during the final incident that led to the arrest of the perpetrator.

Gover et al. (2011) found further evidence of the negative relationship between multiple calls and police attitudes in their study of police officers attitudes towards domestic violence, in which 92.6% of police surveyed agreed “ a major problem with DV is repeat calls to the same address” (p.627). According to Russell and Light (2006), these victims are perceived by police to be undeserving of their assistance. These findings highlight the need to further investigate the consequences of the police response for women in incidents where an arrest is not made, and especially those involving women who have multiple encounters with the police. What is it about these situations that elicit such negative responses from police? Are similar, negative responses found within the Australian context? If police only value tangible outcomes such as arrest and prosecution, they may fail to provide a whole range of less concrete assistance, which may impede victims’ progress from entrapment to recovery.

### **2.3 Research Focus**

Although police response to IPV has been studied quite extensively, women’s experience of police and police experience with women has not been related to theories of the nature of IPV or to stages of violent relationships. These complementary theories may prove useful in providing a more comprehensive understanding of interactions between police and IPV victims, and may help explain the immense variation in victims’ perceptions of their experience with police.

The focus of this study was to examine the interaction between police and women experiencing IPV and to explore the ways in which women’s relationship stage

influences the subjective experience and subsequent outcomes of that encounter.

Thus, the primary questions addressed in the current research were:

Does the victim's relationship stage influence the victim-police encounter and how do victims and police understand and respond to that encounter?

As an exploratory study, the research aimed to examine the who, what, when, why, and how of the victim-police encounter:

- What are the help-seeking needs of women experiencing IPV and are these needs better understood in the context of a stage model of violent relationships?
- Who are police most likely to help; do police understand and respond to the needs of women across the various relationship stages?
- When are police most likely to help and when are they perceived as helpful?
- How do victims and police understand their encounter and how do police provide help?
- Why are police perceived as more helpful in certain circumstances?
- What are the subjective outcomes of the victim-police encounter?

Questions of who, what, when, why, and how lend themselves to a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 1995; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which is described in the following chapter.

## **Chapter three: Method**

### **3.1 Aim of the research**

As described in the previous chapter, the current study aimed to explore the interaction between female victims of IPV and police during a help-seeking encounter. It further sought to examine the interrelationship between victims' relationship stage and the way police and victims experience and understand each other, and the consequences of those understandings.

### **3.2 Theoretical perspective and epistemology**

This study was underpinned by a constructivist philosophical epistemology, which engendered a qualitative, naturalistic approach to the methodology. Constructivism assumes that reality is created and experienced individually, and therefore, acknowledges the possibility of multiple, equally valid realities that are contextually derived (Crotty, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Patton, 2002; Ponterotto, 2005; Schwandt, 2000). Thus constructivism is emic and idiopathic in nature. Such a relativist position contrasts sharply with the positivist view of a singular external reality or truth that can be discovered, verified and applied universally.

Research undertaken within a constructivist paradigm usually aims to understand lived experience from the viewpoint of the research participants, and does so by prolonged engagement, of one form or another, with people who have firsthand experience of the phenomenon of interest. Understanding is derived from deep reflection arising from the interactions between researcher and participants (Patton, 2002; Schwandt, 2000; Reissman, 2008). The answers to research questions are constructed through subjective, transactional, dialectical and interpretative processes (Ponterotto, 2005; Schwandt, 2000). This perspective results in a naturalistic inquiry, which, in the present study, comprised in-depth individual interviews with women experiencing IPV and with police, and incorporated a second interview with victim-participants approximately six months following the first.

A variety of theoretical perspectives fit within the constructivist paradigm, each addressing a focal question. Lincoln and Guba (2000) and Patton (2002) noted that there is some contradiction in the classification of different approaches (e.g., see Crotty, 1998 cf. Schwandt, 2000), which is further complicated by the tendency of researchers to combine perspectives to meet the specific needs of the research question. Further, some approaches are specialised derivatives of broader theoretical perspectives. In this study a phenomenological lens was used to holistically examine female victims' lived experience. A phenomenological perspective examines how the world is perceived, experienced and understood (Patton, 2002; Smith, 1995; Spinelli, 2005). However, in more specific terms, a symbolic interactionist perspective was applied to the central research question to examine the ways in which female victims of IPV and police understand their encounter and each other during the police response to an IPV incident. Symbolic interactionism emphasises the role of social interaction in determining how the world is perceived, experienced and understood, and, therefore, this approach, which can be considered a derivative of phenomenology (Patton, 2002), is beautifully suited to the central research question.

Symbolic interactionism assumes that human behaviour is based on the meanings people make about their environment, including physical objects, other people and groups, institutions, guiding ideals, and the actions of others and situations they encounter within their environment (Blumer, 1969; Charmaz, 1990; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Mead, 1934/1964 ). Each person's understanding of themselves and their environment arises from social interactions or communication (language and symbols) within that environment. Meanings, which are established and modified through interpretation, are used to guide behaviour. According to Blumer, it is meaning that plays the central role in the formation of behaviour. Meaning is neither inherent in the object, nor emanating solely from internal psychological processes of the individual, but rather it is derived from an interpretative process where the individual interacts with self to ascribe meaning to interactions with others. This perspective is well suited to analysing the meaning women attribute to their encounters with police, and the consequences for them of such attributions.

However, this study also emanated from a perspective that recognises that social interactions, particularly those between abuser and victim, but also those between police and victims, occur in an environment in which power distributions are predominantly gendered. Thus the current study was underpinned by a symbolic interactionist perspective augmented by feminist assumptions, which engendered a critical approach to the examination of research questions.

Fundamental to feminist inquiry is the acknowledgement of the privileged status of men and the consequent oppression of women (Wilkinson, 2000). Cutting across disciplines, epistemologies and methodologies, early feminist research sought to understand and give voice to women's experience, and to contribute to social action and reform (Olesen, 2000). It not only sought to describe women's experience from their own perspective but to "render the taken for granted problematic in ways that move towards social justice" (Olesen, 2007, p.421). As Harding (1987) noted, "defining what is in need of scientific explanation only from the perspective of bourgeois, white men's experiences leads to partial and even perverse understandings of social life" (p. 7). Feminist research legitimised the study of issues that were problematic for women, examining them contextually from women's perspectives, and using women's experiences as indicators of social realities. More recently the focus of research for, rather than about, women has shifted to a concern about the research process itself. In particular, this shift has foregrounded the researcher's and participant's role in the co-construction of knowledge, drawing attention to the researcher's own experience and the importance of reflexivity and to exploitation of participants and other ethical issues that can arise in the conduct of research (Olesen, 2000).

Therefore, this research attempted to redress the paucity of research that actually examines police effectiveness from the victim's perspective. Past research has predominantly focussed on outcomes in terms of the abusers' behaviour – recidivist arrest and intervention order studies (e.g. Sherman & Berk, 1984; Holt et al., 2003). The two perspectives given most attention have been that of the police and of the perpetrators. It is as if the women victimised by IPV are merely objects in the battle between these opposing forces or reduced to conduits through whom the battle is waged. The scant research that has attempted to give voice to female victims has

primarily relied on satisfaction ratings (e.g. Mouzos & Makkai, 2004) or sought descriptions of perceived helpful and non-helpful attitudes and actions of police (Erez & Belknap, 1998; Gillis et al., 2006; Leisenring, 2012; Sullivan & Hagan, 2005; Wolf et al., 2003). This study sought to engage with victims to further explore the meaning of such perceptions in terms of their safety, wellbeing and subsequent actions. It attempted to explore the ways in which women engage with police in their resistance of male violence and the problems they encounter when doing so. Furthermore, it attempted to conduct the research in a manner that valued the contribution of participants, and acknowledged their point of view as the authoritative one.

### **3.3 Methodology**

The framework outlined in the previous section required a research design which facilitates the exploration of the interaction between police and women, the understanding they derive from that and the outcomes or consequences of that understanding. Thus the methodology must enable the examination of social action, psychosocial processes and human behaviour. It must be inductive and flexible and driven by what arises from the data. It requires engagement with participants in order to construct understanding. The analysis should examine how victims and police make sense of their interactions

Grounded theory is a methodology informed by an interactionist framework (Charmaz, 1990, 1995, 2009; Corbin, 2009; Crotty, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, 2009). Whilst some qualitative approaches have been criticised as somewhat limited to producing detailed descriptions of the phenomena under investigation, grounded theory aims to inductively produce explanatory theory that accounts for the processes and change inherent in human experience (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Rather than describing participants' experiences or providing a synthesis of multiple experiences, grounded theory aims to provide an interpreted understanding of participants' experience, views and actions (Charmaz, 2006, 2009). As such, a grounded theory approach is consistent with the aims of the current research to not only describe women's encounters with police but to understand the process, meanings and outcomes of

their interactions. Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss to study sociological and social psychological processes and to bridge what they saw as the gap between theory and empirical research, grounded theory has historical links, through Strauss, with the Chicago tradition of social interactionism. Their aim was to develop a rigorous set of procedures to study the empirical world without necessarily using quantification or the hypothetico-deductive approach of theory testing. Thus the central purpose of grounded theory was discovery rather than verification. Nevertheless, the original conception of grounded theory still had a strong positivist basis in its attempt to produce a method whereby a theoretical explanation could be discovered, suggesting one external reality. Although they made reference to the insights and experience of the researcher, perhaps a prescience of the many future versions to emerge (Denzin, 2007), their method still espoused the prevailing view of researcher as objective observer of an external reality.

Since its original inception by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory has evolved considerably and several derivative methods such as dimensional analysis and situational analysis have been developed, each maintaining the basic principle that theory is induced from the data and generated by the research process (Morse, 2009). However, it was Charmaz's (1990, 1995, 2006, 2009) later use and development of the methodology that acknowledged the inherently subjective and interactional nature of the qualitative research process itself, and thus according to her, grounded theory can also be used within an interpretative and constructivist framework. Charmaz (2009) described the major shift from the original method to her own constructivist grounded theory approach as viewing data and explanations of data as being constructed:

As we constructivists develop our analyses we know full well that we offer an interpretation contingent on our knowledge of our participants and their situations. Constructivists view data as constructed rather than discovered, and we see our analyses as interpretive renderings not as objective reports or the only viewpoint on the topic. As a result we increase our awareness of the relativity not only in the empirical world with its multiple realities but also of our analysis. Such awareness fosters taking a reflexive stance throughout the research and writing processes (p.131).

Additionally, according to Charmaz (2009), constructivist grounded theorists purposefully look for socially derived assumptions that underpin the meanings participants make about their world, thus linking the subjective and the social; “we also try to locate participants’ meanings and actions in larger social structures and discourses of which they may be unaware. Participants meanings may reflect ideologies; their actions may reproduce current social conventions or power relationships” (p. 131). Accordingly, the questions asked during analysis also included:

- what judgements do the police make about women - what factors and social forces influence these judgements?
- what outcomes of the interaction are valued by police and what is the basis of those values?
- what strategies do they invoke to bring about these outcomes?
- how is a woman's self-concept, including her standing in society, affected by her encounter with police and what is her notion of justice? and
- how does she see her relationship, her partner and her options in light of her interaction with police?

Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory provides a methodological framework that allows for the collection and analysis of data through an interactionist conceptual lens. When first conceived, Glaser and Strauss (1967) envisaged their method being applied across disciplines, as indeed it has. Charmaz (1995) has argued that grounded theory is particularly useful in disciplines such as psychology that typically rely heavily on quantitative methods, as it provides a rigorous and systematic set of procedures for studying aspects of human experience and behaviour that do not readily lend themselves to quantification or verification. Grounded theory is not only suitable for studying social and social psychological processes, it can also be used by psychological researchers to gain a deeper understanding of intrapersonal as well as interpersonal processes. As such, in the current study, grounded theory provided an excellent means of examining psychological constructs such as self-concept and sense of agency of victims, and in determining how these were influenced by encounters with police. It also provided a framework for examining pertinent psychosocial processes such as seeking help and

forming an empowering alliance. It is Charmaz's (1990, 1995, 2006) constructivist derivative of the method that fits best with the research question at hand, and with the proclivities of this researcher.

### **3.4 Personal statement**

Within a constructivist framework, the researcher plays a central role in the production of knowledge. It is recognised that objectivity is an unattainable ideal of a positivist paradigm, which does not fit with the assumptions of a constructivist approach. The challenge for the qualitative researcher is to be aware of subjectivity and personal bias and to endeavour to identify the influence it may have on the analytic and interpretative process. Although we cannot separate our sociocultural history from our interpretive processes (Schwandt, 2000), we endeavour to be vigilant in ensuring our interpretations are grounded in the data rather than grounded in our own personal worldview. Nevertheless the prior experience, particular interests and characteristics of the researcher will unavoidably influence the data collection processes, from the wording of questions to the development of rapport, and in determining what issues will be probed within the interview setting. Similarly, during the analysis, the way we make sense of the vast amount of data collected will in part be influenced by the issues that stand out as most interesting or important. This is of course a matter of subjectivity; certain concepts will be more salient to us than others. As Charmaz (2009) argued, a reflexive stance, which is also a basic tenet of a feminist approach to research, is required.

To facilitate an awareness of and make explicit my own biases, and in acknowledgement of the subjective nature of the research process, it is appropriate to make a reflective, personal statement. In reporting this and in describing the steps taken in the analysis, it is common practice amongst qualitative researchers to use the personal pronoun in acknowledgement of the researcher's intrinsic involvement in the construction of findings (Ponterotto, 2005).

I first became professionally interested in the area of policing IPV when I was working under contract as a research officer in the Policing Research Unit (PRU) at

Victoria Police in 2003. Shortly after my employment, the PRU was assigned to design and conduct a feasibility study of proposed legislative and procedural changes to the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987 (Vic) that the Victoria Police Legal Policy Unit was considering progressing to the Police Minister. The brief was to canvass views on the appropriateness, implementation issues, and anticipated benefits and risks of the proposed changes, as well as to consider alternative or additional changes. One of the more substantial changes was the introduction of a police holding power, whereby police could take a suspected perpetrator into custody for the purpose of applying for an intervention order. I was assigned to take a leading role in the project, working alongside a Sergeant who brought to the project many years of organisational knowledge and policing experience, including several years in one of the now defunct community policing squads, which previously responded to IPV and child abuse. During the course of the project, interview data was collected from 30 police officers, two Magistrates, two Registrars, two men's behaviour change program workers and six domestic violence social workers.

The PRU was reluctant to directly seek the views of victims of IPV recognising their vulnerability and possible reliance on the police in the future, which they felt contributed to an unacceptable power differential between the researchers and potential victim-participants. Therefore, domestic violence social workers were recruited to represent the views of the women they work with. I was ambivalent about this decision. Although I believe it was made with the best interests of victims in mind, I felt it was somewhat paternalistic. I was also not convinced that the social workers views would necessarily mirror victims' views, particularly since not all women seeking assistance from police necessarily engage with domestic violence social workers. I felt there was a gap in the information sought, and therefore, when I initially undertook this study, although its focus and aims were quite different, I wanted to ensure that victims' views were central.

During my time at Victoria police, and particularly through my work on the feasibility study, I gained considerable firsthand experience of the police culture. I was exposed to many different personal views about the police response to family violence both formally in the interview process and incidentally when talking

casually to colleagues about the project. As an insider, I believe police responded to my questions with an openness that might not be apparent in their dealings with people outside the organisation. This insight was valuable during the current research as it facilitated rapport building and emboldened me to be more probing with my questioning than I might otherwise have been. My understanding of the police culture and behaviour influenced my construction of the interview questions (see section 3.5.1.7). I believe it also influenced, and indeed enhanced, the interpretative process during data analysis.

My personal belief, which evolved during my time at Victoria Police, about the police attitude towards policing IPV is that most officers start out with very idealistic hopes of helping victims and making a difference in people's lives. Their optimism is quickly eroded once they are confronted with the realities of the nature of violent relationships, and they become frustrated by the forces that operate to keep women entrapped. They are further frustrated by what is seen by many as time consuming and wasteful paperwork that ultimately results in achieving very little tangible change in the lives of the women to whom they respond. Some are further influenced by older and much more cynical members to see policing IPV as a futile effort. These officers come to have a much greater affinity for other areas of policing. However, there are also many officers who, although often frustrated and at a loss as to how to better help women escape IPV, remain committed to doing their utmost to enforce the law and contribute to women's safety. I was mindful of these members when writing the implications for policing in the discussion chapter.

My own personal life experience has also undoubtedly influenced my approach to the study. I understand relationship ambivalence. I understand how difficult it is to make the decision to leave a relationship, and how it is even more difficult and frightening to implement that decision, even when violence has not been present in the relationship. I also understand the insidious nature of destructive forces within a relationship. I have experienced the gradual, almost indiscernible deterioration of a relationship and the animosity that seemed to be unavoidably associated with its ending, compounded further by the adversarial nature of divorce. I felt tremendous empathy for the women I interviewed through these personal experiences. I believe my genuine compassion enhanced the interview experience. Additionally, my

knowledge of police processes and family violence legislation facilitated the interview process as I readily understood the procedural aspects of the encounters with police that the women described. My knowledge of policing and legislation sometimes provided an opportunity to reciprocate by answering questions that victim-participants may have had regarding police processes and intervention orders. On the other hand, I sometimes struggled when I inferred that some women still maintained a degree of ambivalence. I had to refrain from taking the stance of counsellor or advocate. This was particularly difficult with women who were still living with their abusers and even more difficult when women voiced concerns about the emotional welfare of their children.

Another issue that caused great difficulty for me was in the choice of terminology when referring to the women I interviewed. In order to acknowledge the strength and endurance of women who are victimised by their intimate partners, a feminist perspective advocates the use of the term survivor or at least victim-survivor. Undoubtedly, I saw resourcefulness, dignity, fortitude and a remarkably humbling lack of self-pity in the women I interviewed. However, I could not reconcile myself to use the survivor terminology as it seemed to denote that survival has been accomplished, and that the experience itself had been somehow one of enhancement. In my mind, it does not give credence to the loss and suffering that women continue to endure, even long after a violent relationship has ended. Although these women were resisting violence, and some were recovering, they were certainly far from thriving. Further, I believe all the women interviewed were still being victimised to an extent, and still struggling to exert their right to live their lives independently and free from abuse. Therefore, while still being far from ideal, and cognizant of the danger of reducing women to victims (Denzin, 1984; Lempert, 1997), I settled for the term *victim*.

When developing my candidature proposal a question that really interested me was: How can police help women extricate themselves from an abusive relationship? Embedded in that question was the more fundamental question of why women stay in a relationship once violence has occurred. Landenburger's (1989) stage model of the process of entrapment in and recovery from an abusive relationship helped answer that question. Leaving is a process, not an event, as is entrapment, or as

Kirkwood (1993) described it, entanglement in an inwardly spiralling web of power and control. Landenburger's theory really spoke to me, especially her emphasis on the importance of the ways in which women construct meaning about their experiences rather than the specific experiences per se. I found it enlightening and inspiring. It helped me understand how women struggle to find a way to survive or escape an abusive relationship. I did not want to disregard Landenburger's insights. As Charmaz (1995) advised, initial interests and perspectives can be used as points of departure, which enhance the development of ideas as long as we are also open to alternative ways of interpreting the data. Consequently, the Landenburger model was instrumental in developing my primary research question of whether relationship stage influences victim-police encounters. However, I also needed to be open to other ways of accounting for the victim-police encounter; I did not want to force the data to fit Landenburger's model.

In contemplating my biases, the question I thought most pertinent to ask myself was, do I have an agenda? First and foremost, I want to contribute to the improvement of the police response to women experiencing IPV. Secondly, I would like to help police feel more satisfied in this area of their work. I believe these goals are intrinsically linked and any improvements to the policing in this area would be mutually beneficial to police and victims. So do I have a personal agenda? Yes, I believe so. I would like to see a social milieu, within the police force and the broader community, where intolerance of abuse is a deeply embedded value and practice, not mere rhetoric. I would like to see instilled in police the belief that every encounter with an abused woman provides an opportunity to help in some way, at the very least by demonstrating an uncompromising intolerance of IPV. I would like every abused woman to have confidence in the police response to IPV. I recognise that these are idealistic aspirations but I hope the findings of this study will make some contribution to that aim. I also am aware that these aims could inadvertently lead me to see more potential in the police response than is actually warranted; again, this was an influence that needed to be monitored.

### 3.5 Study design.

The cornerstones of the grounded theory method include the concurrent collection and analysis of data, along with an emergent design, which allows the flexibility to explore and expand theoretical concepts identified during the analysis (Charmaz, 1995; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin; 1990). Glaser and Strauss' early descriptions of the method also referred to the resulting theory as emerging from the data. However, later developments acknowledge that although the design incorporates an inductive analysis, the findings are very much constructed through interpretive processes (Charmaz, 1995, 2006, 2009; Corbin, 2009). Associated defining characteristics of the method include: the development of conceptual codes; the constant comparison of data, codes, categories and cases; the refinement and explication of the properties and dimensions of codes through memo writing; theoretical sampling; and delayed review of the literature. The latter feature is somewhat contentious.

Charmaz (2006) described grounded theory methods as a set of guiding principles rather than rigid rules to be strictly applied. Although the method is explicit, it is not overly prescriptive. She sees the method as a tool for gathering and analysing rich data. Indeed dogmatic adherence was not the goal of Glaser and Strauss (1967) in their original formulation of grounded theory but rather they envisaged their work as a foundation for the development of improved methods of generating theory. These principles guided the design and conduct of the current study, with adaptations where necessary to meet the requirements of ethical approval and pragmatic considerations. There were also some concessions to fully accommodate the aims of the research. For example, the examination of the needs of chronic users of police intervention was an a priori consideration. In particular, the emphasis of the Landenburger (1989) model might be seen as contrary to the delayed literature search approach. Nonetheless, I was quite excited to take the findings of one grounded theory study and continue to use the original concepts in a further grounded theory study. Indeed, there has been ongoing debate as to the merit of a delayed literature search (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Glaser (2001) in particular, continued to warn against an early review of the literature, arguing that preconceived concepts preclude the generation of grounded concepts. Dissenters

argue that ignorance of the literature may result in erroneous claims of innovation and originality, and may impede theoretical sensitivity. Lempert (2007) uses the literature extensively throughout the research process:

A literature review provides me with the current parameters of the conversation I hope to enter. Utilizing comparisons from the literature alerts me to gaps in theorizing, as well as the ways that my data tells a different, or more nuanced, story. It does not, however, define my research (p.254).

In a typical grounded theory approach even the research question itself evolves and is refined by the data-driven analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In the current study, the research question, although exploratory, was identified through a review of the literature and was fairly well defined from the outset. However, answers to the question were very much grounded in the data, albeit influenced by my unique involvement in the interpretative process. Consistent with grounded theory, the literature was revisited for comparison once analytic concepts were derived.

### **3.5.1 Sampling and data collection.**

It was not feasible to go into the field to observe interactions between victims and police. Furthermore, the focus of the study was not on these events per se but on the meaning attributed to them by participants. Thus, in-depth interviews were considered the most appropriate form of data collection. Interviewing is an established qualitative data collection method (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Patton, 1990; Dey, 1993) and quite appropriate for a grounded theory study (Glaser & Stauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2006). Denzin (2001) described the collection of personal stories, supplemented by open-ended interviewing as an essential feature of the symbolic interactionist approach. In conducting the interviews I wanted to ensure that I collected rich data (Charmaz, 2006). I sought detailed descriptions of interactions between police and victims. I wanted to access the insider point of view. I needed to sample a range of perspectives and explore changes over time. I sought sufficient data to fully conceptualise emerging categories and analytical concepts. Therefore, I was mindful

of two fundamental principles of interviewing: good data is built from good questions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell & Alexander, 1990; Patton, 2002); and rapport, which is predicated on respect, is a prerequisite for gaining full and open answers to those questions (Charmaz, 2006). Respect is a fundamental aspect of a feminist approach to doing research (Olesen, 2000). As Charmaz (2006) so persuasively noted:

As we try to look at their world through their eyes, we offer our participants respect and, to the best of our ability, understanding, although we may not agree with them. We try to understand but do not necessarily adopt or reproduce their views as our own; rather we interpret them (p.19).

Consistent with a grounded theory approach, selection and recruitment of participants was progressive. The research design incorporated a degree of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 1995; Corbin, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 1990); the analysis of earlier interview data generated subsequent interview questions, furthering category conceptualisation. Charmaz (2006) described early analysis as playing a pivotal role in determining the source and content of later data collection. Data collection becomes more focussed as the study proceeds. According to Corbin, theoretical sampling is not just about who to recruit next but, more importantly, it is about which data to collect. That is, in a study such as this, which questions to ask next. Theoretical sampling may result in seeking new sources of data or it may result in going back to existing data with new questions in mind (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin, 2009). In the present study both approaches to theoretical sampling were incorporated in the recruitment strategy and analysis to develop and refine concepts.

Data collection consisted of three major components. Given the gendered nature of IPV (Victoria Police, 2003, Grug et al., 2002), the decision was made to focus only on the experiences of female victims. Thus, the first component comprised in-depth interviews with female victims of IPV who had sought help from police. The second component used story telling techniques to collect examples from the police of their response to IPV. The third component involved a follow-up interview with victims approximately six months after the initial interview. These components were conducted concurrently to allow issues raised by victims to be explored with police, and to facilitate the subsequent exploration and expansion of concepts derived from

early data analysis in later interviews. As data collection was conducted over an extended time period, follow-up interviews with some of the earlier participants were being conducted at the same time as initial interviews with participants recruited later. Interviews with police were timed to occur across both other components. The inclusion of follow-up interviews within the design also provided an excellent opportunity for further exploration of emerging themes. Thus the third component served as an innovative, in-built means of theoretical sampling. Sampling continued until saturation.

Ethical approval for the study was granted on March 30, 2006 by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix A). In the design, conduct and reporting of the study, I was vigilant in maintaining the confidentiality and safety of participants, which was the first priority of the recruitment process at all times. I was mindful of the World Health Organization's (Garcia-Moreno, 2001) guidelines for the conduct of research with IPV victims.

### **3.5.1.1 Female victim-participants.**

A non-random sample of 16 women who had experienced IPV and who had sought police intervention in response to the violence was recruited from Melbourne's western suburbs. The choice of locality was consistent with the Victorian Community Council Against Violence (2006) report, based on police and court data from the Victorian Family Violence Database, that the western metropolitan region had the highest population proportion of adult females who were victims of family violence.

Due to the in-depth and sensitive nature of the interviews, women whose fluency in English was severely limited were necessarily excluded from the study. Women who had recently arrived in Australia were also to be excluded as their experiences and the issues they faced may have been markedly different from other women, and beyond the scope of the current study. However, neither of these exclusion criteria were invoked as women fitting those descriptions did not volunteer to participate.

It was originally planned to limit recruitment to victims who had sought police assistance within the previous three months to facilitate accurate recall and ensure their accounts reflected current police practices. However, with the difficulties associated with accessing such a population the criterion was extended to within the previous 12 months, a timeframe that still ensured the data was current in terms of police procedures, although some participants who had multiple encounters with police also described previous events which had occurred outside the recruitment timeframe. Furthermore, once interviews commenced it became apparent that recency was not particularly related to accuracy. In fact many victim-participants whose encounters were quite recent still had difficulty recalling details of the event, whilst some vividly recalled details about events from the more distant past.

Demographic data has been condensed to protect participants' confidentiality. The age of victim-participants at the time of the first interview ranged from 28 to 52 years ( $M = 38.25$ ;  $SD = 6.09$ ). Nine women nominated their ethnic background as Australian, five were of European birth or descent, one woman was of Asian ethnicity and one was of African origin. All women were mothers: three had one child; seven had two children; four had three children; and two had four children. Eleven participants were currently occupied by full time home duties, three were working outside the home on a part-time basis, one was employed full-time and one was unemployed. Seven participants were homeowners, six were living in a rental house and three were a renting a unit or flat. Participants reported a varied educational background: four had not completed secondary school; three has completed secondary school; three had completed secondary school with further post-secondary vocational training; four had completed undergraduate degrees; and two had completed post-graduate studies.

The majority of participants were separated from their abusive partner at the time of the first interview. In two cases, the separation was facilitated by the incarceration of their partners. Two victim-participants were in new relationships. Two victims separated from their partner following police intervention but had resumed the relationship at the time of interview. Although participants had some form of contact with their abusers in the intervening period between initial and follow-up interviews, their overall relationship status remained stable.

### **3.5.1.2 Recruitment of victim-participants**

Victims of IPV use a number of resources and strategies in their help-seeking endeavours (Hutchison & Hirshel, 1998; Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). Therefore, a number of recruitment strategies were employed in an attempt to provide a heterogeneous sample. Initially, attempts were made to recruit victim-participants from Melbourne's western suburbs via four domestic violence outreach and community health services, and through police. Following organisational approval, domestic violence workers were asked to provide female victims of IPV who had recently sought assistance from police with a plain language statement describing the research (Appendix B) and asking for their participation. Participants were offered a \$30.00 gift card in appreciation of their time.

Women who were interested in participating were asked to provide details of their preferred means and time of contact via completing a consent to be contacted form (Appendix C). A reply-paid envelope was provided, allowing them to participate without the knowledge of their domestic violence worker if they wished. Due to the sensitive nature of the research, women were also given the option of contacting me directly, rather than being contacted. When contact was made, the nature of the research and the requirements of participation were further explained, and any questions were answered. An interview was then scheduled. Interviewees were given a choice of venue, including in their own home, at Victoria University or at one of the domestic violence centres. All victim-participants opted to be interviewed in their own homes. The participant was advised she could postpone or cancel the interview at any time, without being jeopardised in any way. Written, informed consent to participate was obtained prior to the commencement of the interview (Appendix D).

Similarly, police members participating in the research were asked to assist in recruitment, providing they felt it would be safe to do so and would not jeopardise the police-victim relationship. At the conclusion of the police interview, the protocols for distributing the recruitment documents were explained to the police to ensure they were sensitised to the ethics protocol, particularly to emphasise that victims should not feel police support was contingent upon their participation in the

project. Police were asked not to apply any pressure whatsoever to influence women to participate. Police were not asked to identify potential participants or release any identifying information. The documentation police distributed to potential participants contained all the necessary information for the women to contact me directly.

The former recruitment strategy resulted in five victims volunteering. None were recruited via police distribution of participant information. It was apparent further strategies were needed to provide an adequate sample. It was important to collect sufficient data in order to gain insight into multiple perspectives over a range of experiences and situations (Charmaz, 2006). I was also concerned recruiting participants solely through domestic violence services may result in a very biased sample, and may not provide participants at the various relationship stages (i.e. binding, enduring, disengaging and recovering). Women who had not identified themselves as abused, and women who were committed to maintaining their relationship despite continued abuse, may not seek assistance from agencies such as those involved in the study. Bowker (1983) and Gondolf (1998) found that many women who contact the police do not utilise formal domestic violence services. For example, Gondolf interviewed 482 partners of court-ordered batterers and found that whilst more than 58% had sought assistance from the criminal justice system in the past, only 31% had sought counselling or refuge.

Therefore, information about the study was released to local community newspapers in Melbourne's west and to publications directly targeting women such as the Women's Information and Referral Exchange Newsletter and the Scarlet Newsletter. Use of the media is a commonly used recruitment technique in this field and has been employed in many ground breaking studies (e.g., Bowker 1983; Kirkwood, 1993; Landenberger 1989; Patton, 2003; Walker, 1984). I also displayed posters of the media release at libraries, multipurpose community centres, and at Magistrates' Courts within Melbourne's west. These additional strategies resulted in a larger sample pool than was actually needed.

The media release contained my direct contact details allowing potential participants total control over the contact process. Some women who responded had not

previously accessed helping services apart from the police. Therefore, all women who made contact, irrespective of whether they decide to participate or not, were offered a comprehensive list of domestic violence support services, which was also provided during interviews (Appendix E).

### **3.5.1.3 Initial interviews with victim-participants**

Upon arrival at the participant's home, some time was spent chatting and choosing the best place to position ourselves. Most participants offered a cup of coffee, which I always accepted as I believe it helped establish the participant as the hostess of the meeting, helping her to relax and facilitating rapport. Prior to commencing the interview, the purpose of the study and nature of participation was reiterated and participants were given the opportunity to raise any questions before signing the consent form. The possibility of becoming distressed was also discussed with all participants prior to the commencement of the interviews and they were advised that they were free to stop the interview at any time. It was planned that if a participant became distressed the interview would be stopped and not proceed until the participant felt able to continue. It was also anticipated it might be necessary to abandon the interview, in which case the participant would be offered a referral to an experienced domestic violence counsellor and given the opportunity to reschedule if they would like to complete the interview at a later date. However, these contingencies did not eventuate. A few participants became a little teary at times and the interview was interrupted for a short time but none wanted to discontinue telling their stories, although one interview had to be curtailed due to unexpected childcare needs.

Participants were then asked to complete an information form eliciting demographic information including age, education, employment, religious affiliation, number and ages of children, and relationship status. (Appendix F). In order to contextualise victims' accounts, I needed to understand the extent and nature of the abuse they endured. However, I did not want to overburden victims by asking them to recount their experience of violence and I did not want it to become the focus of interviews. Therefore, the Composite Abuse Scale (CAS; Hegarty, Sheehan, & Schonfeld, 1999) was used. The CAS is a 30-item, reliable and valid instrument (Hegarty, Bush

& Sheehan, 2005) using a 6-point likert type scale to measure four dimensions of partner abuse: severe combined abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse and harassment. Although this data was not quantified in the present study, it provided a picture of the severity, frequency and type of abuse experienced by each victim. The time spent on these preliminary activities was about an hour.

A semi-structured interview format with a combination of open questions and additional prompts was then used to explore the following content domains:

- Relationship status and perceptions of current and past relationship with abusive partner;
- Descriptions of the most recent experience with the police, including triggering event, expectations, and police management, actions, and decisions;
- Interpretations about the experience with police;
- Emotional response to the encounter with police;
- Subsequent actions and decisions following the encounter with the police;
- Partner's response to the encounter with the police, as perceived by the victim;
- Perceptions of prior experiences with police; and
- Beliefs about the type of assistance police should provide.

Consistent with the exploratory and inductive nature of qualitative research, it is quite common to have very little structure, if any, in the use of questions. However, in constructing the interview schedule for the current study, I was mindful of the fact that victims of IPV are at high risk for post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety. It was possible that some participants may exhibit some degree of either numbing, hyper-arousal or general distress, which could make it difficult for them to respond to open-ended questions or to fully articulate their feelings and thoughts. Therefore, it was important to have a tool that would facilitate the collection of data, and at the same time make the interview process as comfortable and non-threatening as possible for participants. In conducting the interviews, the schedule (Appendix G) was used as a guide and prompt where necessary, whilst

maintaining flexibility to pursue issues as they arose. The focus of the interviews changed over time as concepts emerged from the ongoing analysis

Prior to commencing the interviews, the schedule had been trialled with a domestic violence counsellor who took the role of the victim-participant. Discussion with the worker and later reflection on the audiotape was very useful preparation for the interviews. The wording of some questions was refined. For example, the worker pointed out that a question about abuse might be inappropriate for women who did not think of their partners' behaviour in such terms. This insight was later confirmed in the interview data as many women spoke in terms of *bad behaviour* or *going off* rather than naming violence. Her knowledge helped alert me to potential reactions of participants and her insight allowed me to go into the field with additional sensitivity to their needs. The initial interviews were also used as a form of pilot in order to assess participants' reaction to the interview and ability to provide detailed data.

All participants were debriefed at the end of the interview to prepare them for the possibility of a delayed adverse reaction and given contact information for support services. They were also advised they could contact me at any time for referral or to discuss any concerns they had about the interview. Prior to leaving, tentative arrangements were made for the follow-up interview to be conducted in approximately six months.

#### **3.5.1.4 Follow up interviews with victim-participants.**

At the closure of the initial interview, all 16 victim-participants indicated they were willing to be contacted again for the follow-up interview and confirmed their preferred means of contact. Six months later, I again made contact with each participant to organise follow-up interviews. Thirteen women subsequently participated in face-to-face, in-depth interviews. One follow-up interview was conducted and recorded over the telephone at the participant's request. A number of attempts were made to schedule the final two interviews. However, both these participants had assumed additional work and study commitments since the first

interview, resulting in multiple postponements. Although they had not declined a further interview, I believed that they didn't really have the time or inclination to meet with me again but did not want to let me down. Furthermore, by that time I was confident I had sufficient data to reach saturation. Therefore, I indicated to them that it would not be necessary to interview them again. I also sought their permission to contact them once more to check their availability if further compelling questions arose. At the time of this conversation, one of the women briefly provided an update of her relationship status and progress towards living a life free from abuse, which was summarised but not recorded.

The first purpose of the second interview was to track changes in the participants' relationship status, experience of IPV, help-seeking behaviours, beliefs and sense of self, and to examine whether any of these changes were, from the participants' perspective, influenced by their encounter with the police. The second purpose was to seek additional data to further conceptualise emergent concepts (Charmaz, 2006). Each initial interview with victim-participants was summarised to provide a descriptive overview of each case. The case summary was very useful for checking and clarifying details of victims' accounts. Questions for follow-up interviews were formulated from this process, as well as from the ongoing analysis. Therefore, an individual interview schedule was developed for each follow-up interview (Appendix H). Questions derived from the analysis were more focused than those of the first interview, consistent with the aim of developing and refining analytical concepts.

#### **3.5.1.5 Police-participants**

Twelve police officers from Victoria Police, Region 2, which serves Melbourne's western suburbs, were recruited. Senior constables or leading senior constables were considered the most suitable police-participants, as they have considerable policing experience whilst still being actively involved in patrol car response. Police members at the level of sergeant and above are involved in supervision and management and less senior members may not have been exposed to a large enough range of incidents to provide the type of data needed. Therefore, initially a

purposeful recruitment strategy was used to recruit senior constables. As the study progressed, it was apparent from the analysis of victim and police data that further exploration with other members was warranted. Consequently, and consistent with the emergent design framework and theoretical sampling of grounded theory, two Family Violence Liaison Officers (one acting sergeant, one leading senior constable), one Officer in Charge of a police station (at acting senior sergeant level) and one junior member (constable) were also recruited. Eight police-participants were male and four were female. Their ages ranged from 24 to 46 years ( $M = 34.33$ ,  $SD = 7.55$ ). Length of service ranged from 1.5 to 25 years ( $M = 11.58$ ,  $SD = 6.82$ ).

### **3.5.1.6 Recruitment of police members**

Preliminary discussion with the Victoria Police, Policing Research and Innovation Unit resulted in informal support for the project and advice regarding recruitment strategies. Around that time, the Region 2 Superintendent had identified family violence as a priority policing issue for that area, and accordingly it was decided to recruit from suburban stations within that region. Furthermore, this was consistent with the strategy for recruiting victim-participants. Gaining access to police members involved a two-step process. All research conducted with police personnel, both internal and external, requires submission of a research proposal for approval by the Victoria Police Research Co-ordinating Committee, which provides a central gatekeeping and tracking function. Approval for the current study was granted on April 12, 2006 (Appendix I). Approval incorporated permission for members to be interviewed during their normal working hours and for the option of conducting interviews on police premises. As part of the approval process, a research officer of the research Co-ordinating Committee distributed information about the study to the relevant Region 2 management. It was decided to recruit a maximum of two members from each participating station to limit the burden on each station and to broaden the range of experiences sampled.

Contact was subsequently made with the officer in charge (i.e. Senior Sergeant) of each participating police station to organise distribution of police plain language statements (Appendix J) to members. When making contact, I would note that I had

approval for the study, briefly describe the aims and recruitment needs of the study, request assistance with distribution of information to members, and offer to attend the police station during the weekly station meeting to meet with members in order to personally describe the study and answer any questions they may have. This offer was not taken up at any stations. However, senior sergeants were supportive and co-operative, and recruitment was a relatively easy process. As much as possible, interviews with police members were conducted in tandem with victim interviews. As the initial recruitment of victims was very slow it was necessary to also slow down the recruitment of police members, and so each station was contacted as further police participants were needed.

Police members who were interested in participating were given the option of completing and returning the consent to be contacted form (Appendix C) providing their preferred means of contact or contacting me directly. When contact was made, the nature of the research and the requirements of participation were further explained, and any questions were answered. Police members were given the option of being interviewed in an office at Victoria University, at their station or at an alternative venue of their choice. One interview was conducted at Victoria University. All others were conducted on police premises in an interview room or office. Interviews were scheduled at police officers' convenience.

### **3.5.1.7 Interviews with police members.**

The purpose of the police interviews was to examine police values and beliefs about their role in responding to intimate partner violence. I wanted to collect information regarding police processes and action, but more importantly I was interested in their attitudes, decision making, strategies invoked, and the ways in which they interacted with victims. In designing the interview schedule, I was cognizant of the tendency of police, based on their training, to be factual when answering questions, whereas I sought their views and opinion rather than hard facts. I was doubtful that even careful use of open ended questions would elicit the type of answers I sought. Therefore, I borrowed from the narrative research tradition of storytelling (Reissman, 2008; Webster & Mertova, 2007) combined with an adaptation of the

Most Significant Change Technique (Dart & Davies, 2003; Dart, Drysdale, Cole, & Saddington, 2000) from program evaluation research. The technique asks program stakeholders to identify significant outcomes of the program and canvasses their views on the value of those outcomes. Accordingly, the bulk of the interview was devoted to asking police to describe two specific cases. They were first asked to provide an example of an IPV incident (involving a female victim) that they would describe as distinctly positive or satisfactory. For example, where they felt professionally satisfied, believed they had provided a valuable service, or believed the response involved a worthwhile use of police resources. They were then asked to provide an example of a negative or unsatisfactory case. Following each example, police were asked to explain the criteria or reasoning they used for choosing that particular case as an exemplar. Prompts were used as necessary to gather data on how they approached and handled the case, the outcomes of the intervention, the factors that influenced their decisions, and their feelings about the interaction. The story they told about each case provided data on processes, judgements, decisions and actions, whilst the question related to their criteria elicited data on their values and attitudes.

When initial contact was made with each police member, I explained the purpose of the study and the nature of participation. After answering any questions, and with the officer's willingness to participate confirmed, a convenient time was scheduled. After conducting the first few interviews I realised that it was a little difficult for police to identify a positive and negative case without some time for reflection. I believed they were just selecting whatever recent examples they could quickly remember. Therefore, when scheduling subsequent interviews, I posed the positive and negative case study questions and asked participants to select the cases before we met, thus giving them time to provide a considered response. This proved to be beneficial, with some police members even going to the trouble of perusing their files to select their cases and check information.

Prior to commencing the interviews, police officers were again given the opportunity to ask any questions about the study before providing written informed consent (Appendix K). The interviews commenced with background questions including length of service, experience in responding to IPV incidents, extent,

nature and timing of IPV related training, and general demographics. This was followed by the questions relating to the positive and negative cases. Additional questions were asked to explore general perceptions of their role in responding to IPV and the limitations of that role (Appendix L). Questions were added, deleted or adjusted as the study progressed consistent with the progress of the analysis. Additional questions were developed for interviewing the Family Violence Liaison Officers and the Officer in Charge.

### **3.5.2 Approach to the analysis**

The interaction between women reporting IPV and the police to whom they report the violence is complex and multifaceted. It would be overly ambitious to assume that a single study could produce a theoretical explanation that fully accounted for this interaction and all its aspects. Likewise, the influence police have on victims' final outcomes is difficult to extricate from the numerous other forces influencing their behaviour. Nevertheless, as representatives of the criminal justice system and of the values and attitudes of society in general, police have the potential to make a substantial difference in the lives of women experiencing IPV. This potential should not be underestimated and is certainly worthy of examination. Assuming it would not be possible to account fully for the processes and outcomes in every situation, the analysis sought to uncover the commonalities and patterns in the data that provided the most comprehensive and plausible interpretation of victims' experience. Therefore, the unique construction of meaning made by each victim of IPV and each police officer was paralleled by the construction of meaning made by me, as interviewer and researcher, as I firstly engaged with them at the time of the interviews, and later engaged with their stories during the analytic process. The findings are thus a regeneration or reconstruction (Charmaz, 1995, 2006) of each participant's unique experience and individual, subjective interpretation, influenced by my exposure to their multiple experiences. The analysis was the link that took each unique reality and created an understanding that best captured the shared experience of women who seek help from the police and also provided insight into the variation in their experience. Rather than generalising from a sample to the population, the analysis of data generated from these individual cases resulted in

“generalisation to theoretical propositions” (Reissman, 2008, p.13). The intention, therefore, was not to discover or verify causal explanations but to produce an understanding that can be shared (Schwandt, 2000). As Corbin noted, “out of these multiple constructions, analysts build something that they call knowledge” (p.39).

The analysis was underpinned by the assumptions inherent in Charmaz’s (1995, 2006, 2009) constructivist approach to grounded theory and guided by the techniques she explicates. The early analysis, particularly the line-by-line coding, was also informed by the very practical descriptions and advice of Corbin and Strauss (1990) and Dey (1993). The procedures and resultant analytical structure of a grounded theory analysis are hierarchical in nature (Charmaz, 1995, 2006, 2007; Straus & Corbin, 1990). All levels of analysis involve studying, contemplating, comparing and interpreting data. Initial coding involves staying very close to the data; taking small segments (e.g. line-by-line or incident-by-incident) and asking questions of it in order to define and label what is happening. The resultant codes are, therefore, induced from the data, which lessens the risk of forcing the data to fit preconceived ideas and prevents premature foreclosure. Thus line by line coding enhances the analyst’s ability to be open to new ideas and concepts. By examining what is happening and what it means, the analysis is able to go beyond the explicit views of the participant and also capture implicit meanings (Charmaz, 2006).

As the analysis proceeds, coding becomes more conceptual and focussed. Focussed coding is applied to larger segments of data. It involves selecting analytically important codes and then categorising further data accordingly, thus ensuring that categories fit the data (Charmaz, 2006). Categories, which are more conceptual and less descriptive than codes, constitute the developing analytical framework (Charmaz, 1995). Categories may encompass several related codes and may incorporate sub-categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Strauss and Corbin’s concept of axial coding, which identifies the properties and dimensions of codes along with determining whether codes relate to action, strategies, context or outcomes, proved to be useful for making connections between codes and categories, and between categories and sub-categories.

Although the coding system is hierarchical in nature, consisting of initial, focussed and axial coding processes and a category-subcategory-code structure, in application, the analytical process was iterative. At times, basic units of meaning were identified and then later combined to form more abstract concepts, consistent with the description of the process provided by Charmaz (2006) and Strauss and Corbin (1990). At other times, however, the superordinate was identified first, and then the subordinate properties emerged through asking axial questions of the data. For example, *seeking safety* (category) was identified first and *seeking removal* (strategy: subordinate category) was identified by asking how does she seek safety (axial coding). Other subcategories within the safety category were incorporated by constantly comparing different incidents of seeking safety. These were then connected to the overarching theme of women's needs, which is directly linked to the research aims. The end product, therefore, was an explanation that fits both the data and the research question.

Despite all the available guidance, as a novice qualitative researcher I was filled with trepidation and uncertainty. I wanted to be thorough, systematic and not make premature or unfounded interpretations but I was also fearful of missing important insights or forgetting early ideas as later ones emerged. Moreover I was concerned about failing to do justice to the trust participants placed in me as they shared their stories. However, I felt somewhat liberated by Corbin's (2009) reflection on the analytic process and quote her verbatim because I found her words so powerful at a time when I was still worried about "doing it properly."

Techniques and procedures are tools to be used by the researcher as he or she sees fit to solve methodological problems. They are not a set of directives to be rigidly adhered to. No researcher should become so obsessed with following a set of coding procedures that the fluid and dynamic nature of qualitative analysis is lost. The analytic process is first and foremost a thinking process. It requires stepping into the shoes of the other and trying to see the world from their perspective. Analysis should be relaxed, flexible, and driven by insight gained through interaction with data rather than being structured and based on procedures (pp. 40-41).

The importance of interacting with the data and the intuitive insights that can ensue was evident when, for example, I was re-reading the “Chelsea” transcript and was struck by her words, “I came to see him for what he is”. Although this line had not seemed to warrant much interest during earlier coding procedures, it suddenly stood out as an important factor in her eventual ability to terminate the relationship and regain her independence. That is, seeing him in a new light was part of her recovery process. It begged the question – how did she come to see him as he is? This insight and associated question, which was grounded in the data, was the catalyst for further analysis. Using the symbolic interactionist framework allowed me to examine the role of the police, or more precisely, the role of her interaction with the police and then her interaction with herself, in coming to see him as he is. Further questions ensued such as, what else did she come to see differently. And so the analysis evolved into a combination of thorough and systematic coding along with the flexibility of following up on sudden, exciting insights that arose from prolonged immersion in the data. As my analysis progressed I became more confident that I did not want to force it to fit with notions of “doing grounded theory”. Rather, my analysis was informed and enhanced by grounded theory principles and techniques. Importantly, the analysis was induced from the data, stayed close to the data initially, incorporated checks for fit, and become progressively more conceptual and focused as categories were constructed and refined.

### **3.5.3 Strategies of the analysis**

The process of analysis and writing was ongoing and non-linear but for the purpose of describing the steps and strategies used in the current study, they will be presented as phases. The central questions that guided the analysis and writing of the findings were:

- What is going on here?
- How is it understood by the participants and what are the consequences of that understanding?
- How does it contribute to my emerging understanding and explanatory framework? and
- How can I best convey my understanding to the reader?

### 3.5.3.1 Transcribing and recording early insights

With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded. The duration in minutes of the taped portion of the interviews ranged from 52 to 135 ( $M = 88.08$ ,  $SD = 24.49$ ), 46 to 114 ( $M = 70.55$ ,  $SD = 21.05$ ; and 54 to 90 ( $M = 69.60$ ,  $SD = 11.65$ ) for initial victim, follow-up victim and police interviews respectively. Analytical insight can be gained at any time from the very commencement of data collection (Patton, 2002). In order to capture early insights and ideas to pursue, I kept a notebook in which I recorded reflections on my experience of the interviews and early impressions of the interview material. Initially, the notebook was also used to record ideas that arose as I began transcribing each interview. Thus the initial phase of the analysis occurred during the transcribing of interview tapes. Transcribing the interviews, although laborious, is another means of studying and staying close to the data (Charmaz, 1995, 2006). Riessman (2008) asserts that interpretation begins as the transcript is created, and that it is in fact a representation of the interaction between participant and interviewer, a further acknowledgement of the constructed nature of research findings. As I made notes, I inserted footnotes in the actual transcript document so that I could refer directly to the relevant data when reviewing the notebook. Eventually, I relied on the footnotes rather than the notebook. I recorded ideas for possible codes, noted similarities and differences between participants, and formulated further questions for subsequent interviews. It was not unusual to have added 20 to 30 footnotes to a transcript. Footnotes ranged from a few pertinent words to remind me to follow up on a point to a deeper reflection on an issue or event described by a participant. These reflective notes informed coding and subsequent memo-writing. Some of the police and victim follow-up interviews were transcribed by a professional research transcriber. I reviewed the audio files with the typed transcripts, correcting any errors or omissions, whilst also making footnotes relevant to coding. Examples of footnotes from the initial and follow-up interviews with *Rita* are provided in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.

*Her initial aim is that they would help him see that his behaviour needs to be dealt with. She has been conditioned to believe that she is at fault, and she has internalised this to a degree but there is still some recognition that he has a problem. However, she knows that she cannot convince him of this or influence his perspective. She wants someone in a position of power, a position of influence to bring about a change in his perspective. She is looking for advocacy!!*  
**CODE ADVOCACY**

Figure 3.1. Sample footnote demonstrating reflection on a transcript passage and consideration of a possible code.

*Again, there is a real problem with follow-up. It seems that they don't take the time to discern the nature of her need. They just concentrate on her literal request i.e. for a copy of the statement rather than on her actual need, which is to get protection and find out about the intervention order. This results in her being left to fend for herself. This is similar to Jenny's experience when she went to the SOCA unit. They did not address her needs but only focused on the relevance of her being at the SOCA unit. It seems if they can find an excuse to fob her off then they will. Getting help from the local station is a real problem. It seems they will only take action if the nature of the approach "fits the system". They will help if someone calls 000 or if someone attends to report a crime (where there is some evidence that it is serious). There seems to be a need for something that hooks them in, something that facilitates forming a working alliance. At the home, it is being caught up in their drama, witnessing the emotion, seeing the wrecked furniture. At the station it is seeing a bruised, battered and visibly distressed victim. A cool calm victim, making steps to get protection after careful thought is just fobbed off. Do the police have an instinctive barrier that they put up to protect them from getting involved with every person who walks through the door? Do they start off keen and helpful but then learn to protect themselves?*

Figure 3.2. Sample of footnote noting the similarity between two participants in relation to the *cold call* and *feeling deterred* categories

### 3.5.3.2 Initial coding

The next phase of analysis involved initial or open coding. I started with a combination of line-by-line or sentence-by-sentence coding, depending on the content of each line. Several police and victim transcripts were subjected to the meticulous scrutiny of this form of coding. It facilitated the identification of actions, processes and feelings rather than identifying broader themes. Thereafter, I continued open coding using slightly larger segments of data corresponding to one or more complete sentences or natural conversation breaks (Corbin, 2009). Wherever possible emic or in vivo (Charmaz, 2006) codes were applied to the data. These use the participants own terms and language (their voice) to label codes. An example of line-by-line coding is provided in figure 3.3

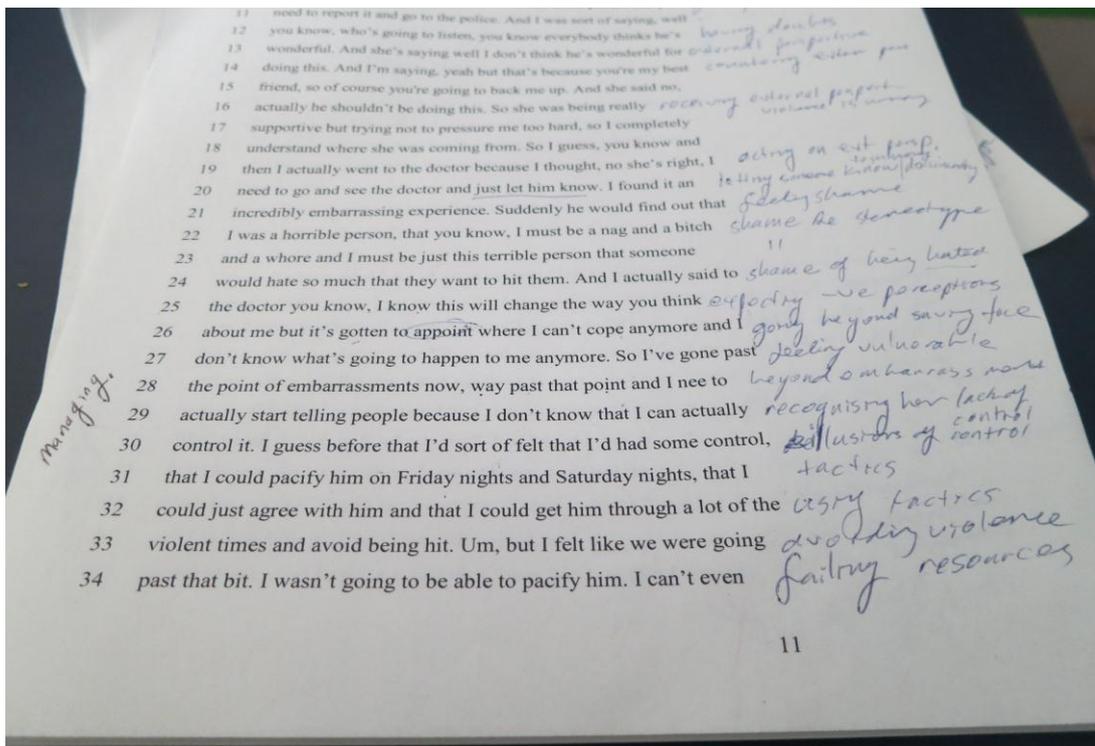


Figure 3.3. Line-by-line coding of victim-participant transcript.

Etic codes were kept to a minimum at this stage to ensure the analysis was inductive and to avoid the use of preconceived concepts and misinterpretation (MacQueen, McLellan, Kay & Milstein, 1998). Other codes arose directly from the interview questions (Dey, 1993). For example, victims were directly asked how they

accounted for their partners' violence when it first began. Explaining abuse was the resultant code. Initial explanations were later compared to explanations after police engagement.

In the early stages I concentrated on labelling data without considering the Landenburger (1989) stages or trying to categorise women according to a relationship stage. For example, all the *help-seeking* codes (e.g. *seeking respite*, *seeking safety*, *seeking ego support*) were derived directly from the data. It was not until I attempted to organise the seeking codes and come to a deeper understanding of what was happening that I examined whether the victims' help-seeking needs could be better understood in light of the stage model, as indeed they were. According to Charmaz (2006), early interests are a vantage point or point of departure. They must be tested to ensure they fit the data, and the researcher must remain open to looking at the data in other ways. One of the great benefits of grounded theory, and of all qualitative studies, is that we are not restricted to the study of preconceived, rigidly predetermined (i.e. operationalized) variables. Nevertheless, the influence of relationship stage was a central element of the research question. It is my belief the Landenburger model helped elucidate the findings in a deeper way. For example, all women making a crisis call were seeking safety but there were subtle differences and it is in these variations that the model was most illuminating. I believe it enhanced my theoretical sensitivity rather than detracted from it. I also made sure I looked at other ways of interpreting the data. For example, I examined the pertinence of hope in victims' help-seeking endeavours.

### **3.5.3.3 Focused and axial coding**

With one hour of tape equating to approximately 20 transcript pages, I had copious data. I entered the data into NVIVO qualitative data software to help manage the sorting and coding of larger segments of data. So as not to lose important information contained in the footnotes, they were copied to the main transcript between a "notes" and "end" heading. Subsequently a free node was generated using the software auto code function. This facilitated bringing all the footnotes together in one node (notes) with automatic access to the relevant section of the

original transcript. In this fashion, the footnotes formed a journal of the early interpretative process, which assisted in selecting codes for further analysis in the focused coding. Although the software was helpful, I returned to the hard copy transcripts for the bulk of the coding.

To further explore emerging concepts and to check the utility of codes and categories, I examined each victim participant's case and created a flow-chart of her interactions with police, detailing the preceding event, reason for calling, action taken, and outcomes. Using existing codes I was able to compare earlier interactions with later ones within the one case, and make comparisons across cases. This process facilitated axial coding and was fundamental to developing a framework that linked major categories.



Figure 3.4. Sample of flow-chart used to facilitate within-case comparison of incidents.

Flow-charts were then summarised in an analysis table displaying the victim's relationship stage, the trigger event, help-seeking aim, presence of alliance, police actions, and outcomes perceived by victims (Appendix M). Similarly, the positive and negative cases described by each police participant were constantly compared to refine codes and categories related to police values, assessments and actions.

#### **3.5.3.4 Writing as analysis**

Concepts were further explored and expanded through the process of writing. Charmaz (2000) described memo writing as an intermediary step between coding and developing the first draft of a completed analysis. It assists in exploring codes and elucidating the links between them. I found the most beneficial aspect of memo writing to be the very fact that it makes you start writing in a more structured way, which necessitates more conceptual thinking. Codes are discrete, and footnotes are disjointed and almost random in comparison to memo writing. Writing deepens interpretation and understanding, and contributes to the analysis. Initially I wrote individual memos for theoretical categories but as I started to connect them I progressed to writing drafts of chapter sections. Figure 3.5 contains a preliminary, brief memo exploring *feeling deterred*.

Memo writing was an exploratory exercise in itself, experimenting with what worked best. The process of memo writing that I eventually adopted was based on examples from Charmaz (2006) and involved taking the relevant code or category and exploring it by asking and answering conceptual questions, whilst inserting actual data extracts that illuminated the resulting interpretations. For example, in relation to the category, *taking her seriously*, I asked, what is the implicit meaning when victims invoke this term. I collated data from various participants to illuminate the concept and compare their use of the term. I explored how *taking her seriously* was constructed and acted upon. I asked further questions: how do they know when they are and when they are not *taken seriously*? Under which conditions is she *taken seriously*? What conclusions does she draw from their response, how does she feel and act subsequently, and what are the outcomes? How does *taking her seriously* connect with other codes and categories? This concept was further elucidated when

compared to data and codes from the police transcripts, specifically the *taking it on board* code. I also incorporated visual means of conceptualising relationships between codes and categories. I found concept maps, contingency tables, and property lists assisted in the interpretative process.

*I need a term or category for how the women feel when they go to the police for help and get redirected to Court.*

*I am talking about women who do the **cold calling**, as opposed to **crisis calling**. They have made a conscious decision to leave or they have left and are trying to assert their right to be left alone. These women are being **proactive** not **reactive**. They are the ones most **ready for change** and independence. However, it is still an enormous task for them to approach the police. It takes all their emotional energy. Some are fortified by anger, which is time limited. The window of opportunity and their ability to **engage with the justice system** is therefore fragile. They need the police to be responsive, decisive and supportive. They need the police to take action on their behalf because once they get to the police that is about the limit of their reserves. However because there is no crisis, no imminent danger, police redirect them to Court to apply for an intervention order. The police believe their story and affirm that they need protection but they don't take action to procure that protection for them. Most women give up at this point. They don't have the fortitude to keep going. They feel like once again it's up to them to do everything. If the police reject them, don't have time for them, don't think their problem is serious enough, then they rationalise that a Magistrate is going to be even less likely to take up their cause. They feel embarrassed and believe they have wasted police time. Instead of applying for an intervention order they remain in the relationship, believing that this is their lot in life. They may feel utterly hopeless and depressed at this stage. Those who have already left try to deal with his harassment themselves. They start **management strategies** that have parallels with the strategies previously used while they were in the relationship.*

Figure 3.5. Memo describing connections between codes within *feeling deterred*.

### **3.6 Orientation to the findings**

It was not the purpose of this study to produce a formal theory or even a middle-range theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) but rather an analytic framework or grounded analysis (Charmaz, 1995, 2006) that would be useful for understanding the interaction between victims and police, the consequences of such interactions, and the conditions under which they vary. The findings are presented in the following three chapters. This division is somewhat artificial because all the concepts are inter-related. However, it is hoped this structure provides the reader with a fluid unfolding of the identified analytic themes.

Chapter four explores the constraints on engagement associated with victimisation and then focuses on victims' help-seeking efforts and needs. It examines these needs in the context of Landenburger's (1989) entrapment and recovery model of violent relationships. Chapter five presents the analysis of the connections between police values, the judgements they make and their response to IPV. The formation of an empowering alliance is explored. The final results chapter further explores the empowering alliance, which was central to understanding the outcomes of the interaction between police and victims of IPV. It concludes by elucidating the meaning victims attribute to their encounter with police. Where appropriate, some initial discussion in light of relevant literature is provided.

Participants are quoted throughout the findings. This demonstrates the groundedness of concepts and retains the human story (Charmaz, 1995, 2000). Pseudonyms and other non-identifying descriptors (e.g. my daughter rather than a name; suburbs and police stations were not named) were used to protect confidentiality. The use of a series of periods (i.e. ...) at the end of a quote indicates an incomplete statement was made during the interview. The insertion of a series of periods within a quote reflects the decision to remove some text for the sake of brevity, to avoid confusion or because it was not essential in supporting the interpretation. For example, quite often a participant would start to make a point and then go off on a tangent or would refer back to something stated earlier, which would be confusing to the reader without context. Grammar was corrected and repetitive expressions removed to improve readability.

### 3.7 Reflection on trustworthiness

Standards for judging the merit of quantitative research do not transpose readily to the evaluation of qualitative research. Traditional notions of validity, reliability and generalizability are rejected by qualitative researchers due to the fundamental differences in the underlying aims of their research. The distinction centres on the positivist goal of *Erklaren* or explanation versus the constructivist goal of *Verstehen* or understanding (Ponterotto, 2005; Schwandt, 2000). Constructivist approaches acknowledge multiple ways of viewing and bringing meaning to each source of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), with each unique interpretation claiming merit. As Schwandt noted, many qualitative researchers question whether we should attempt to justify our interpretations at all. However, whilst I believe it is reasonable to ask the reader to consider the interpreted nature of the findings and assess them within the epistemological framework presented by the researcher, it is not reasonable to expect the reader to suspend all judgement on the soundness of those interpretations. It is apparent I am not alone in these expectations; an array of strategies has been espoused over the years to enhance the trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative research. Some focus on the depth of understanding gained whilst others are concerned with the rigour of techniques (Patton, 2002). Nevertheless, controversies persist in determining the criteria for judging the worth of qualitative research (Altheide & Johnson, 2011).

Glaser (2001) rejects many criteria commonly associated with trustworthiness of qualitative research as not being relevant to the aim of inducing theoretical explanations from the data. For example, he sees member checking as irrelevant and providing detailed description as unnecessary. “Grounded theory transcends the time, place and people of any and all units sampled and conceptually generates the fundamental patterns yielding hypotheses which can explain the behaviour of participants as they go through the patterns” (Glaser, 2001, p. 5). This view creates a tension between grounded theory and feminist research, which emphasises presenting findings from the perspective of women’s experience and giving voice to their concerns (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1995). Charmaz (2006) also rejects Glaser’s

*grab and fit* approach. She contends that the quality and credibility of the research is embedded in the richness and sufficiency of the data. However, there does appear to be consensus within the grounded theory field that the concepts generated are relevant to the social world from which the data is derived and that they should fit the data (Glaser, 2001, Charmaz & Bryant, 2007, Corbin, 2009). Corbin further argues that research quality should be judged on the usefulness of the findings. This of course resides with the subjectivity of the reader.

I have endeavoured to be transparent in my account of the methods employed, including my trials and trepidation, and I hope this account has demonstrated my prolonged engagement with participants and deep immersion in the data (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). My theoretical sensitivity has been enhanced by deep reflection, exploration of the literature and ongoing discussion with my supervisor, a respected leader in the VAW field. I believe my research has certainly been guided by the expertise of the grounded theorists previously cited. In particular, the initial use of line-by-line coding and then the use of flowcharts to compare incidents have helped ensure concepts were indeed induced from the data. To ensure the data was not forced to fit my categories, I frequently returned to the footnotes. Whenever I felt unsure about my interpretations, I found returning to line-by-line coding provided new insights. Good fit was also enhanced by the use of the analysis table. The groundedness of concepts is further demonstrated by the use of extracts from the transcripts throughout the findings chapters. The use of quotes also fulfils my desire to give voice to participants' experience and concerns. I have used their stories to depict my interpretation and I believe the credibility of the study resonates in their words as much as mine.

## **Chapter four: Findings – seeking help**

The focus of this chapter is the examination of the needs and help-seeking aspirations of women experiencing IPV when they elicit police intervention. The analysis was undertaken using Landenburger's (1989) stage model of violent relationships as a contextual framework. General needs, ranging in nature from embryonic to fully developed, were identified through open-coding and then analysed further to determine whether a relationship stage model could provide a deeper understanding of the differences in victims' needs. Firstly, however, findings are presented regarding the association between victimisation processes and barriers to seeking assistance from police. It is important to consider these perpetuating characteristics because they need to be overcome or diminished before effective intervention can occur. The ways in which women engage police intervention are briefly described. The remainder of the chapter is then devoted to the women's help-seeking aspirations and needs when engaging with police.

### **4.1 Perpetuating characteristics of abusive relationships – barriers to engagement with police.**

There are consequences of living in an abusive relationship that serve to further entrap and disempower women, limiting their ability to seek escape or to act on their own volition to end abuse. Such forces, which are well documented in the literature (see section 2.1.4.5 herein), were also identified in the current study. Furthermore, it is apparent many of these factors, which keep women trapped in an insidiously worsening cycle of abuse, also inhibit them from engaging with police and often prevent them benefitting fully from the services and assistance police are able to provide. The findings presented below demonstrate the ways in which distortion of subjective reality (Kirkwood, 1993; NiCarthy, 1991), normalisation or minimisation of violence (Walker, 2009), internalisation of blame (Kirkwood, 1993; Landenburger, 1989), emotional depletion (Kirkwood, 1993), eroded self-worth (Lempert, 1997), and shame and fear (Kirkwood, 1993) interact and culminate to severely impede victims ability to engage with police.

#### 4.1.1 Normalisation of the violence

Many victim interviewees did not identify themselves as being abused for a considerable time, even when the abuse reached a level where they required police intervention. Normalisation had two components: either the abuse and violence itself was seen as normal and part of everyday life; or accepting the violence as part of being in a relationship was seen as normal, as evident in the following observations.

*Kim: Did you recognise at any stage that he was abusive or did you think of yourself as being abused?*

*Lynette: I guess I felt sorry for myself and wondered why did I marry this guy. Why is this happening to me? But I never really did anything about it. My next door neighbour was getting abused as well by her husband..... I'd seen her with a black eye and stuff too and she never done anything about it. We could hear them sometimes arguing because their bedroom was close to our bedroom; we could hear them argue and her scream and stuff. But police never came. So it was kind of, well it happens to everyone, I'm not the only one.*

*Carol: Well I just thought that it was normal, maybe not normal for other people but that was just normal for us.*

*Rachael: It had probably been going on for days. I can't remember. Everything's still a blur. It was daily, so I don't actually know – it was normal to me and then sometimes it would just be worse.*

In some cases, normalisation of violence was conveyed inter-generationally. In the following passage, Sarah describes how her understanding and tolerance of her partner's violence was influenced by both his and her own family of origin.

*Kim: And his family saying it wasn't really that big a deal, did that influence you in the past?*

*Sarah: Yep, yeah. Get over it. Don't be a sook. The first time I probably left him, I actually went out to dinner with his dad and he told me stick with him. I was like that with his mum but she stuck with me and I'm fine now.....So I think back and think well I'm not sticking with it. That's the most silliest thing to say to somebody; stick with the violence and it will get better at the other end.*

*Kim: So do you think that at the time that it was happening, that in some way your judgement was affected about what was okay and what wasn't and what was normal and what wasn't?*

*Sarah: Yeah, I think because I grew up with my parents; my dad was very violent to my mum. I remember my dad trying to run my mum over. I remember him smashing stubbies over her head and try to throw things at her while she had my little baby brother in her arms.... I guess I minimised the violence between my partner and me too because he didn't actually do any of that to me. Like he didn't become that extreme and I guess that's how I thought oh well, I haven't been punched up or anything. Like my mum would be beaten to a pulp and hide behind me and my bed so he wouldn't beat her up any more. But that didn't happen to me so I guess that's where I got well it's not that bad. He's just pushing me around and verbally abusing me and a couple of slaps here and there but he's not trying to kill me. So I guess in my mind I thought, it's not as bad as my mum.*

Even when women seek to name the abuse in their lives they are often confronted with the forces of a patriarchal culture that promotes male dominance and demands suffering and endurance from women. Maria described the role of culture in the way her mother-in-law perpetuated the intergenerational cycle of violence within their extended family.

*Maria: I come from a culture where it is really a man's world. Men can do and say whatever they want to women and we have to accept that....His mother used to say, no, you haven't suffered enough, you have to keep going on; that's nothing. I've suffered more than you have. And I was intimidated and always thinking what will people think of me.*

Participants tended to attribute the abuse to problematic dynamics within the relationship rather than to controlling or violent behaviour of their partner. The ways in which victims labelled their partners' behaviour, demonstrated in a selection of quotes below, provides further evidence that IPV was not recognised.

*Lauren: Yeah, yeah, exactly, exactly right. That's not me, I'm not a victim of domestic violence, you know, he's just a really, really bad husband.*

*Rachael: I know I never deserved to be hit but I did cause a lot of the arguments, I did, but that doesn't justify being hit.*

*Rita: When I was pregnant I can remember that he threw very big shoes right on my tummy. So that's when I start to think he's having some problems. I didn't realise that he's, I think he's just angry, everybody can do it if you're angry. But then he started pushing, and then I've got some marks, whenever we had disagreements and fights, I've got some bruises. He started with this until finally he slapped me..... I never thought that I was an abused woman, not until I started attending the sessions (at a local domestic violence service).*

There was also a tendency to pathologise the partner's behaviour or attribute it to alcohol or drug problems. Under such circumstances, victims perceived a need to get help for their partner rather than seeking help for themselves.

*Kim: So what do you think stood in the way of working out the problems?  
Sophie: He's an alcoholic and also there's some sort of mental health thing that's never been formally assessed or diagnosed.....I tried to get him help but he wasn't interested. He'd sort of start, have one appointment and then just stop seeing people. Started on antidepressants and then stop them himself.*

*Erin: There was one time when he had a knife to my throat and I had my baby in my arms. I had to act tough. I said, look, I'm not scared; if you're going to do something, do it. My sister was there because she had said that he had cheated on me with the junkie girl. And I was upset. I didn't touch him or anything. I just said, look we'll go to her house and we'll find out what is going on. And he just lost the plot. At that time he was using Normison tablets. They're a jell capsule. They took them off the market because junkies were shooting them up, and they made him a bit funny, you know.*

Normalisation not only limits victims' ability to perceive the need for help, it limits the type of help they are likely to seek and the extent to which they will take up the services offered. There is often a disparity in perspectives between victims and the police that needs to be bridged before communication can be effective or before a course of action appropriate to the victim's circumstances can be determined and acted upon. Police can respond in ways that either confirm or challenge women's normalising interpretations. There was evidence that police can and do make an important contribution to counteracting the negative influence of normalisation of abuse by providing women with alternative perspectives that name abuse. These responses are explored in chapter six.

#### **4.1.2 Denial, minimisation and compromised subjective reality testing**

When victims do recognise and name abuse, it is frequently minimised or denied by their partners. Many of the women interviewed reported no longer having confidence in their ability to make judgements and to discern what is real from what is imagined. This is a product of their years of psychological abuse (Kirkwood,

1993) and their struggle to make sense of their experience in a context of mixed messages from their partners (Landenburger, 1998). It is closely linked to the normalisation processes they encounter. Victims reported they were abused and then blamed for that abuse. They were lied to and held responsible for incidents over which they had no control. Their abusers often denied that the abuse actually occurred or they minimised the extent of the abuse, explicitly telling their victims that they were exaggerating and inventing details. Abusers accused their partners of being crazy. Eventually the victims internalised these claims and lost confidence in their reality testing ability

*Jenny: Whenever I'd confronted him in the past and said, I don't want you to hit me, I don't want you to hurt me. He'd always said, I've never hurt you, I've never hit you. And he just said, you got those bruises from somewhere else. Yeah, complete denial.*

*Leanne: In the end he made me believe I was in wrong when he was in the wrong. People brainwash you sometimes. You try to think, well, was I that bad of a lady to him? But now I stop and think, no, he was the one that was in the wrong, abusing me. I always thought that I might have been too much of a bitch or too overbearing.*

Carol recounted a pattern of psychological abuse – confusing her, questioning her perception of reality and using her prior mental illness to induce self-doubt. Looking for an explanation compatible with an acceptable relationship, she didn't see it as an element of his violence and control but as a possible cognitive deficit. She protected herself from the struggle through avoidance, but the personal cost was continued endurance of abuse.

*Carol: He'd blatantly hit me or whatever he would do and then say, oh no, I didn't do it. You must have imagined it. You're not well. I didn't do it. And so then I thought that maybe he's got a problem where he doesn't remember what he does. So that was normal.....because I often thought, maybe he didn't do it. Then I'd sort of brush it aside and think, oh well, I'll just go and do the dishes or hang out the washing or think about something else.*

Not surprisingly many victims reported suffering mental health problems as a result of the psychological abuse they endured. Erin was treated for depression, a complaint commonly associated with IPV (Flicker et al., 2012; Lewis et al, 2006; Mechanic et al, 2008; Vos et al, 2006).

*Erin: And as I suggested to you before, I had to go on antidepressants because of all the times, pretty much on a daily basis, you're fat, you're ugly, you're crazy, all my friends say that you're crazy, you just yell at everything, you know it doesn't even make sense what you're yelling at. And then I started to believe him that I was losing the plot. And I started to take antidepressants.*

An alternative, external perspective, one that confirms the abuse, is necessary to counteract the crazy making (Astbury, 1996) inherent in the circumstances of their abuse-filled lives. Police can provide a powerful resource for countering the effects of the denial and minimisation the women endure. When women are exposed to an outside perspective that affirms their shaken beliefs about the abuse, a tentative awakening occurs. The police can enhance their trust in self. The power of an alternative perspective is demonstrated in the extract below and explored further in chapter six.

*Chelsea: This time when I actually sat down with police, you know, they spoke to me and they did show an understanding of domestic violence. They did show that they were on my side and you know, they were taking me seriously. I wasn't just crazy because I was starting to think that myself.*

Furthermore, perpetrators of IPV identify and take advantage of victims' doubts and vulnerabilities to deter them from seeking help or leaving the relationship. The extract from Erin's interview clearly demonstrates how her diminished self-esteem was exploited, while the extract from Marlene's demonstrates her husband's use of her postnatal depression to discredit her.

*Erin: From those many years of that verbal abuse, from what he said to me, I thought once he's gone life's finished. I could never find another man to love me. And he always said to me, no-one would want you with three kids, you're fat. Like he emphasised the fat and the crazy and the ugly. And like I told you, I was 120 kilos from the age of 14 through to 16 and I got picked on constantly. And he was the first boy to ask me out, that's why I went with him. And when he realised my weaknesses, you think you can open up to somebody. No, that was the worst thing I could have done.*

*Marlene: They came out fairly quickly but during that time my ex-partner was trying to convince me that nothing had happened and that I was over-reacting and why have I called the police, and yeah, what are you doing..... Calming down and pretending that I was just crazy. Then he told the police I had post natal depression. And then they sort of didn't take much notice; he took them off, the two policemen, to one corner and spoke to them about everything. And said, oh she's just depressed and she's having problems.*

*And they came back and convinced me to leave the children with him, the police, because I was going off to work. And they said, everything's settled down, it looks fine here.*

#### **4.1.3 Impoverished psychological resources – diminished agency and sense of entitlement to justice**

In a culture such as Australia's, most people believe in their right to safety and protection, and that society, represented by the police and legal system, will take action if those rights are violated. In contrast, the victims interviewed expressed an alternative perception of the justice system. They don't necessarily assume that police will be either willing or able to respond to their needs or provide help. Many reported no or very little understanding of their right to protection under the law. Some had heard of protection or restraining orders but due to the normalisation, denial, and minimisation of violence to which they were exposed, had not considered them in the context of their own situation. These barriers are further compounded by victims' attenuated sense of self-worth, lack of confidence in their own judgement and reality testing ability, and depletion of emotional resources, which combine to severely undermine any sense of personal agency and entitlement, resulting in low expectations of justice or protection. The ability of their partners to abuse them was taken as a given, and therefore, any rights to protection were negated. For example, Sophie accepted the loss of her right to live without violence and Jenny had not considered her right to seek protection from police.

*Sophie: So, I just thought you've made your bed, you have to lie in this bed.*

*Jenny: Up until that point, it wouldn't have occurred to me call triple 0 for domestic violence because they're supposed to be dealing with important stuff, you know, bank robberies and stuff like that.*

Additionally, some women had such a strong belief in their partners' omnipotence (Herman, 1992a; Walker, 2009) that they didn't believe the normal rules of society would be applied to them. They had little faith that the police would believe their tentative version of events over their partners' assertive and confident accounts.

*Jenny: I could hear them talking to him when I was in the bathroom and they were chatting away and he was chatting away and I'm thinking, he's sitting there like he normally does smooching up to people, making people think that he's a wonderful guy; he plays cricket and he's at football and oh well he'll fix up your lights for you no worries just pop in for a beer, he'll have you over for a barbie. And it's telling them what a wonderful bloke he is. And I'm thinking, well here we go again, that's it, I'm sunk, they're never going to believe me. Because the police officers that I was speaking to, they could hear him too and when they started like putting it across that they actually believed me, I said, didn't you hear him? You know, he seems like a really nice guy. And they said, we've heard a lot like that and we know that they're not nice at home.*

In the extract below, the police believed that he was making threats but did not believe he would carry them out. Their perception was inconsistent with hers and consequently presented a barrier to any exploration of how to stop the threats. The description of her husband to her counsellor, who was seeing them both, further exemplifies her perception of his omnipotence.

*Lynette: But they kind of like, we see this all the time. You know, if he wanted to kill you he would have killed you. And I said, you don't know my husband; no-one knows him like I know him.*

*Lynette: And she said to me, he loves you. He loves you and he wouldn't hurt you. He says these things but he wouldn't actually do it. She goes, I think he genuinely loves you. And I said, yeah, but you don't know what he is capable of. He's told me many times, like he says he redlines and he can't feel anything. He could go through a brick wall and he wouldn't feel it. He has that much adrenalin running through his body that nothing hurts him.*

In situations where the victim is fully believed and taken seriously, there may still be doubt that the police can actually stop his violence, even in the immediate short-term. Jenny's description of her continued fear, after at least six police officers had arrived, demonstrates her unshakable belief in her husband's power.

*Jenny: I still didn't feel as if I was safe yet because he was still in the house, so anything could go wrong at that point and they'd just introduced another, whole other form of weaponry, which was a lot quicker to kill someone or hurt someone with than a knife..... And they were saying, just come out of the bathroom. And I said, I can't come out the bathroom, I don't know what he is going to do. And they said, but we're here. And I couldn't quite get across to them that I was still pretty scared that there was extra guns in the house and stuff going on and I said, I can't come out while he's here cos I don't know what he's going to do. And in the end no matter what they said*

*about them being police and they'd protect me and they're not going to let him do anything, I was just refusing to come out of the bathroom.*

Antoinette's lack of knowledge of the system and resources and prevented her from seeking help.

*Antoinette: And sometimes it was so, you know, I was really depressed and felt hurt, how could he do this to me. I wanted to walk to the police but I didn't. My son was sleeping and you know, I'll hold him and I'll walk in the street but I don't know what is going to happen, so I'd rather stay here.*

Consistent with the literature (Johnson, 2007; Leisenring, 2012; Wolf et al., 2003), prior negative experiences with police or the justice system presented a barrier to help-seeking. It was evident that such experiences reinforced the victim's perception that her partner can abuse her with impunity.

*Chelsea: Well I felt hopeless and then I felt scared because I knew afterwards, once they'd gone, that he could taunt me again, I knew the argument could carry on. I knew he could do whatever he wanted because no one was going to help me. And that is what happened. Afterwards the argument carried on for maybe half the day while he ran around taunting me, calling me even more names; saying how hopeless I was, how stupid I was, even the police don't want to help me. So I was feeling suicidal at that stage.....Yeah, just go on mocking me now because even the police won't help me so that should just prove to me what a crap individual I am.*

*Kim: When he was calling you a hundred times a day, after he'd gone to Court for the assault charge, did you report that?*

*Bianca: No, because I've just basically given up. I feel like the whole time, he attacked me, he got away with it; no statement was taken. When it was and went to Court, he got away with it. He gets away with everything. I've got no faith. I believe that he could kill me and just get away with it.*

Victims' diminished expectations of justice are often further eroded by socialisation processes that condemn police involvement. Some victims believed that it was an injustice on their part to seek police help. Not only do they need to surmount normalisation of violence before they can identify the need to seek help, they must also overcome the resultant shame from indoctrination against involving the police.

*Kim: So was there something about calling the police?*

*Sarah: Yep. Because in growing up with my father police are dogs and if you call the police you're an informant. And especially same as my ex, if you call the police you're a dog, you're an informant*

Antoinette described the shame of being a disloyal wife:

*Antoinette: He told me from the beginning, just before I came there was, a very long story; his cousin was married to a lady from Scotland and she actually went to the refuge and they separated then. And everyone was telling me what a bad woman she is, how come after fifteen years of living together she called the police on her husband. So in my mind only a bad woman could call the police. You know, it was like to stab my husband in the back. He was kind of brainwashing me. I was even ashamed of myself to call gamblers help.*

This mindset also impedes victims' ability to take advantage of options police may offer, as Rachael described.

*Kim: Part of your reluctance about getting an intervention order you said was that he'd talked about his ex-partner and how she'd had one and he couldn't see his son. Did that influence you?*

*Rachael: Yes, it probably would have because I wanted to show that I was different.*

*Kim: So was he painting her in a really negative light?*

*Rachael: Oh definitely, definitely.*

Even when victims were aware of their rights, they were often prevented from seeking protection or justice by a lack of psychological resources. Many participants described being bereft of emotional energy. Coping with the abusive relationship depleted them emotionally and psychologically. Often they were only able to deal with the here and now of each incident as it occurred. The relationship consumed all their resources.

*Sarah: I guess I drained myself trying to make that relationship work*

Marlene was unable to fully prepare for or participate in the Court hearing of her contested intervention order application because she found recalling events to be extremely distressing. Although she struggled to find the words to describe her state of mind, it is apparent she was experiencing the numbing symptoms of a reaction to trauma.

*Marlene: And so they were just saying that I was, you know, it was post natal depression and that I was making it up and that I was crazy. Yeah the whole thing was really difficult. And he cried on the stand and I couldn't*

*really, I didn't even feel, like I'm so anxious that I didn't really, I didn't cry or anything. I could hold it all together but it felt like it wasn't real.*

*Kim: Alright so you were a little bit numb were you?*

*Marlene: Yes, yeah, definitely.....And I couldn't prepare for it because I didn't feel, like I couldn't think about it. It was just too horrible and traumatic.*

Consistent with Marlene's account, above, many participants believed they lacked the emotional resources to act on the advice of police. Carol knew that her husband deserved to be held responsible for his crimes but her description of her reaction when a police officer suggested he could be charged for sexual assault demonstrates the limiting effects of her depleted sense of agency.

*Carol: I mean half of me or a part of me wanted to do it because I knew what he was saying was true, the police officer. But I knew I didn't have the strength; I didn't have the resources; I didn't have the money. I just didn't have the emotional strength. I couldn't do it. No, I'm not going to stand in court and see him.*

#### **4.1.4 Stigma, shame and secrecy**

There is a stigma associated with being an abused woman that comes from the stereotypical view that victims are responsible for ending the abuse and, therefore, unworthy of compassion or respect if they don't. Participants described responding to this stigma with shame and secrecy, which constituted a powerful barrier to disclosure, as described by Jenny:

*Jenny: I found it an incredibly embarrassing experience. Suddenly he would find out that I was a horrible person. I must be a nag and a bitch and a whore and I must be just this terrible person that someone would hate so much that they want to hit them. And I actually said to the doctor, I know this will change the way you think about me but it's gotten to a point where I can't cope anymore and I don't know what's going to happen to me anymore. So I've gone past the point of embarrassment now, way past that point and I need to actually start telling people.*

Jenny's embarrassment was also evident in her reluctance to fully disclose information to the police.

*Jenny: And some of the things that he was saying to me, I couldn't even tell them because they were just too distressing, too horrible to mention, which I*

*guess looking back on it now, in some ways I wish I had have had the courage to say to them.*

Carol described tentatively trying to disclose the abuse and searching for a confidant. When she eventually found someone who shared a similar experience they entered into a conspiracy of secrecy about the abuse.

*Carol: Like I'd give away free information to some people and they would not really pick up on it.*

*Kim: So when you say give away a bit of information, you were testing the waters of disclosing?*

*Carol: Yes, well what happened one time we were at a meeting. It was a huge thing and this other woman let something slip about her and her husband. And this guy very, very high up in the organisation. And she let something slip and I picked up on it and we became very, very close because she was going through the same thing. Yeah, and so we would find time either on the telephone or whenever we got together. And we would talk about stuff.*

*Kim: So you'd confide in her?*

*Carol: And she confided in me too. And I never told anyone and she never told anybody but it was very helpful to know that there was another woman in the same line of work, in the same situation. So yeah that was testing the waters too and it was good to know that there was somebody else who I could identify with and they weren't going to blab.*

Similarly, stigma presents a barrier seeking formal protection. Lauren described her reaction when police first mentioned the option of getting an intervention order.

*Kim: And did you um understand what an intervention order was?*

*Lauren: Yes, I thought it was for poor beaten up ladies with tattoos basically. There was a big shame, stigma issue with the intervention order because I used to work in a gaming venue when I was younger. And some of the girls in there were fairly rugged types and they were constantly getting intervention orders against their deadbeat boyfriends. And I was thinking oh god how could she drag all her business through Court again. I could never do that; oh my goodness imagine having to do that. You know, it was something which didn't apply to me basically. That's how I saw it. Stupid but I've got a wake up now. There's a real stigma.*

#### **4.1.4 Fear of retribution**

Consistent with the literature (Fanslow & Robinson, 2010) fear of retribution was a barrier to help-seeking. Victims feared retribution from their partners for help-seeking and for attempting to leave the relationship. Fear of exposing the family to shame and fear of facing subsequent legal procedures were also factors in victims' reluctance to engage police.

Fear of leaving was typically a result of previous threats made by the perpetrator, as Antoinette described.

*Antoinette: And he said, "I will cut you and shoot you with a million bullets if you decide to leave me." That's what he used to tell me in front of my son.  
Kim: Were you worried about what he would do to you if he called the police? Antoinette: Yes. I thought maybe he'll kill me or hurt me.*

Interestingly, more victims reported a positive change in his behaviour than reprisals.

*Kim: Then those times that you did call the police, afterwards was he vengeful about that?  
Antoinette: No, he was trying to ask me, how could you do that? You called the police on your husband? He was trying to calm me down somehow for the first couple of days to show me that he will be good.....he slowly tried to bring me back to under his control.*

Even when victims overcame their fear and called police, fear of reprisals still deterred victim's from engaging with the police to pursue criminal charges. This is particularly problematic because police attitudes towards victims have been found to be associated with their perceptions of the victim as a willing witness (Russel & Light, 2006).

*Lynette: He always threatened me that if I called the police or he got arrested or put in jail that I would suffer consequences. ....The police came here several times and they asked me if I wanted him charged. And at first, until it got really bad where I couldn't put up with it, I said no because I was fearful that it would cause me harm because he always said, If I end up in jail, if the police arrest me, I'll get you. So that kind of twisted my arm into not getting him charged earlier.*

Carol explained an entrenched fear of disclosure related to her concerns about losing control of her situation.

*Carol: I don't know because I don't know the system. But I just believe that what is happening now in society is that if this is happening to you and you do speak up whether it's to a doctor or whoever, then this can be taken further whether you like it or not. And I think it makes women pull back because they're always scared. You know, what if he does do something to my grandmother. You know, he has threatened my dad and my family. I don't like that. So even as I speak, I can feel the fear coming back into me. And I just hate the word fear because when you've got fear, you've got no freedom.*

#### **4.1.5 Commitment to the relationship**

Commitment is a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship (Rhatigan & Axsom, 2006). It also limits victims' ability to engage with police. Some victims would not call the police while they were still committed to the relationship. Others called to stop violence but did not engage fully in the solutions police offered, such as getting an intervention order. Family values and the desire for an intact family, love for their partner and hope that he will change, and determination to manage on their own prevented victims from engaging with police.

Bianca reflected on the difficulty of staying apart. She knows now that he won't change but it is still difficult to maintain her resolve.

*Bianca: I had my life planned out with him and he's the father of my kids and I didn't want a broken family. I always wanted my family to be together. And it's not reality but I think of a happy family, not a broken family. He keeps on saying, I've changed but I know he hasn't changed. I know that it's always going to be like that..... Even though I won't get back with him, I always wish, things didn't work out like this. I wish we had of been together. I still kind of feel like he's my right arm even though, he's not involved in my life, it still feels like he's my right arm.*

As Antoinette described, love and hope for change are intertwined. Leanne's love for her husband and hope that he would change was a barrier to disclosure and help-seeking. It was also a factor in the many times she revoked intervention orders.

*Antoinette: I loved him and I trusted him and so I was hoping he would change.*

*Leanne: No, I was even too scared to tell my mum because I didn't want her to hate my husband. I just kept it to myself until I told the lady down the road and that was only about three years ago.*

Leanne described her resistance to one particular police officer who urged her to leave him for good.

*Leanne: He's always told me to get rid of him. I believed him, but I was stupid. I just kept on taking my husband back because I felt sorry for him and I probably still loved him at that time. But in the end, love dies. You just wait till love dies and then you've had enough.*

*Kim: Okay and you said that you kept coming back because ...*

*Leanne: He'd say he'd change but he never did.*

The limiting effect of relationship commitment was explored further with Antoinette.

*Kim: So you never actually went through with calling the police until you were really starting to feel certain that you wanted to end the relationship?*

*Antoinette: Yes.*

*Kim: So were you just accepting that this was the way my life is or were you thinking that there are other things I can do to change the way he behaves?*

*Antoinette: Yes, I was hoping I could change him because I'm educated and intelligent and I thought it could not be a problem for me. If I love him I can do anything.*

*Kim: So it was while you still had hope for the relationship and hope that you could work it out, then calling the police wasn't an option for you, is that right?*

*Antoinette: Yes, I thought if I called the police I would feel bad.*

Relationship commitment did not prevent Erin calling police for help but it was a barrier when they tried to convince her to get an intervention order.

*Erin: And you know when I would call them, they would ask me the question, what do you want us to do. You know, he would state his case to them. I would state mine. And they're like, look we'll take him away. We'll tell him not to come back but you need to take further steps to keeping him away. Whether that be move or get this order. And for as long as I could, I tried not to get this order.*

Before seeking help, victims used strategies in an attempt to prevent or manage the violence in their lives, as Jenny described. Belief in their ability to manage on their own is a barrier to help-seeking.

*Jenny: I thought I was being really clever about it (laughs). Most people have been telling me that I've been stupid to have been going down that path in the first place. If he was coming home late enough on a Friday and Saturday night, which was the traditional hitting time, I'd try to be in bed, pretend I was asleep, and he usually wouldn't wake me up. It was pretty rare for him to bother waking me up. If he came home a little bit earlier, then I tried to be very pacifying. He would walk in and say, all women are whores. And the first time I made the mistake of saying, don't be stupid of course we're not, of course that's not true. And I got hit for it. So after that I realised, I started agreeing with whatever..... I'd try asking him, you know, please don't hurt me, please don't hit me but that never really seemed to have much of an effect. And I don't know why I kept saying that but for some reason I just kept saying that as well. It didn't really seem to change much.*

#### **4.1.6 The need to monitor his behaviour**

Constant surveillance in an attempt to anticipate and prevent violence (Walker, 1979), along with placating (Landenburger, 1989) are elements of living as an abused woman. Interestingly, in the current study, the need to monitor their partners' emotional state was found to be a factor in some victims' limited ability to maintain the injunctions set down in their intervention orders. There was considerable anxiety associated with not knowing his level of anger. Monitoring often provided the perpetrator with an opportunity to reconnect. Similarly, if their partner had left before police arrived, victims were extremely anxious about what phase in the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979) their partners were likely to be in on their return.

Rachael described her anxiety following a call to the police that resulted in him absconding.

*Rachael: Not knowing where he is, is a scary thing because I don't know what mood he's in. Is he just going to come and get in through a window and start? I think keeping him close at hand was better because then I knew the mood, whereas if he was away I didn't really know, like especially if he's been basically threatened by the police or my actions. What's he doing, you know, what's he thinking?*

As Sarah described in the following extract, primarily she wanted to evaluate the probability of another violent attack but there was also an element of monitoring the

risk he posed to himself. During one of many separations, Sarah continued to monitor his behaviour, attempting to evaluate and minimise her level of risk.

*Sarah: I sort of learnt this after a couple of times, the longest time I stayed away from him was when I had no contact with him at all. But when I would leave, I'd worry about him because every time I'd leave before he would hurt himself or he would say, I tried to kill myself or something like that. So when I left, I would sort of worry about him. I'd ring just to see how he was or I'd ring to find out how angry he was because it would sort of tell my level of what I had to worry about. If I had to worry about him coming after me because if I kept him calm, I knew he wouldn't come after me; I knew that he wouldn't come out and hurt me. So having that contact was still trying to be nice to him but trying to make him accept that it's over but it would give him that chance to sort of suck me back in, as my mum would say.*

Even when he was in jail Sarah continued to monitor his level of anger against her for a time.

*Sarah: Because I would pick things out of the conversation and sort of test it out and realise yeah he probably will get me if I do this. But realise in the end that he was just taking over my life and having the power in me, even through the telephone that I decided just to take it off (i.e. she blocked his calls from jail).*

As his release from jail approached, her anxiety increased. On the one hand she wanted to keep him away but her lack of knowledge of his state was perturbing.

*Sarah: Yeah because I don't have that contact with him and I haven't allowed contact with my children. I don't know his level of anger. I don't know if he's going to come look for me. So that was my fear I was facing when I was allowing him to have that contact. I was doing all that so I wouldn't be somebody he took revenge out on.*

This was an extremely anxious time for Leanne also. During the interview she repeatedly went back to her concerns about his release.

*Leanne: I'm scared when he gets out of jail. I don't know whether he's going to be a better person or a worse person. He might say Leanne I still love you but there's no way known I'm going to get back with him.*

*Leanne: And it really petrifies me when he's had two months in jail, what he's going to do. I don't know whether he's going to come out of jail a better person or an aggravated person that's going to hurt me for what I have never done. His mate put him in jail by ringing the cops, I didn't do it.*

It is apparent victims need support during this time to maintain the progress towards recovery they have made during his incarceration.

## **4.2 Engaging police assistance**

Given the complex array of barriers to seeking help, it is not surprising that most of the victims interviewed endeavoured to manage the violence on their own for a considerable amount of time. It is evident women who engage police intervention in relation to IPV do not do so lightly. To seek police assistance was a huge and daunting step, which was taken only when all other avenues had failed or when they believed police were the only ones capable of helping them.

*Chelsea: .....If I'd had maybe a big family or a whole bunch of big brothers and stuff, I would have rung them first rather than the police, but I didn't have anyone, so that was like my last thing and I had to fight to get to the police because half the time he'd be pulling the phone out of the wall or smashing my mobile or whatever so I couldn't ring anybody.*

### **4.2.1 Recognising the need for help or change**

The recognition that additional help is needed is not a discrete event but a process requiring a shift in the victim's interpretation of her situation. Seeking help from police can occur after exhausting other avenues of help or in tandem with them. Erin described progressing from eliciting help from her family to seeking police assistance

*Kim: Alright. So by this stage you were calling the police because....*  
*Erin: It wasn't working, what I had done prior. Calling my family and trying to put the scare into him, it didn't work. He knew that it was not going to happen. He knew my family wouldn't jeopardise their freedom for him. And it got to the point where my parents said, look, we can't do nothing. They were getting sick of me ringing them.....They said, we're sick of you ringing just to complain about him. If you're not going to do something about it, don't bother speaking to us.*

Consistent with Erin's description above, the trigger for first seeking police assistance was usually a recognition that established methods of managing the violence were no longer effective or viable, and that the violence was escalating, either qualitatively or in severity or duration. Changes in the dynamics of the abuse included a change in the type of abuse, or a change in the way the abuse was perceived. Carol described a change in the nature of the violence.

*Carol: The violence was deeper, because normally he would punch me on the leg or push me or hit me on the arm or – I don't even like to remember. But we went out to the garage to get something and we couldn't see because it was dark. I had the torch and I said, here, have the torch, and he just flung it around and started hitting me with the torch. Normally it was just his hands or his fist, but then it was like something really – oh, he put a knife to me but never pierced my skin or anything. But now he was like thrashing me with the torch. Then that night when I wouldn't watch The Footy Show with him, he just went mad and even the look on his face. He got me on the bed and with the pillow like trying to smother me and he had his knees on my shoulders. But then it was really sick because he pulled down his pants and said that he was going to urinate on me. And I thought, 'Nah, you're sick. That is just so sick.'*

The abuse was not only intensifying, it became more demeaning, increasing her fear and revulsion. Interestingly, many women made comments linking something about their partners' facial expressions and their level of fear, highlighting the implication of psychological factors in their fear.

*Marion: But the look in his eyes it was so pure, it was like pure hatred that I knew if I moved from there. You've got to see it to believe it. Nobody can tell you, but it was, I was petrified.*

*Bianca: I don't know if they realised it was as serious as what it was. I actually thought I was dead that night. I thought, he's going to kill me. I know like in his eyes the way he was and there was no, I couldn't say anything to stop him.*

In the extract below, Jenny recognised that the level of violence became more unpredictable as it escalated. Therefore, her means of managing or avoiding it were reduced. However, it was the subtle change in his attitude from denial to his assertion of his right to hurt her that Jenny found particularly menacing.

*Jenny: I guess before that I'd sort of felt that I'd had some control, that I could pacify him on Friday nights and Saturday nights; that I could just*

*agree with him and that I could get him through a lot of the violent times and avoid being hit but I felt like we were going past that. I wasn't going to be able to pacify him. I can't even justify why I felt like that, it was just a feeling that things were increasing, that things were just getting much more violent than they had been. There was an intensity going on that I hadn't experienced before. And the causes; sometimes I used to be able to see a fight coming but those two times, April and May, I couldn't see, I never picked those fights were coming. And that's what made me really scared because I had no opportunity to pacify the situation, to try and bring it down a little bit. There wasn't anything that I could do and I thought, well if the ground rules are shifting, if the posts are shifting and it's becoming increasingly violent to this level, I don't know if I'm going to be able to learn the new ground rules fast enough to prevent this.*

Jenny first started help-seeking after the following incident.

*Jenny: In April, he was holding me down on the bed and I said please don't hurt me and he came up really close to my ear and he said, why shouldn't I hurt you? And I thought that's a huge, huge change, not even a subtle change. It was a huge shift in how he was perceiving things. It was becoming not just pretending that I'm not doing this, it's like, I not only have a right, I really, really want to do this. I got really scared then.*

Another property of the abuse that can propel women to seek help is the involvement of children, as Rachael described.

*Rachael: I think I was so scared and the fact my daughter saw it. Yeah she saw it and I couldn't make him stop.*

*Kim: Okay was this the first time that she had witnessed it?*

*Rachael: She had heard us arguing and seen things you know, being thrown or me being shoved but not like that, no.*

Fear of losing children due to involvement of protective services can be a powerful barrier to calling police (Simmons et al., 2011). However, although participants often reported enduring abuse to keep the family intact because they did not want to deprive their children of a father, and some expressed concerns about calling police due to the association with children's services, ultimately those concerns were overshadowed by their fears for their children's welfare. Consistent with past research (Meyer, 2010), children witnessing the violence was a key determinant of help-seeking.

For some of the victims interviewed, but certainly not all, the progression to calling police occurred around the time that they were coming to the conclusion that they

had to get out of the relationship. In such cases, the barrier that commitment to the relationship presents was gradually being overcome. The findings indicated an external perspective that enabled them to see the viability of the relationship in a new light was a vital element of the cognitive shift associated with the transition from enduring abuse to disengaging from the relationship. Denial is integral to enduring abuse, and therefore, a counteractive force is required. Carol described how it took a combination of two external perspectives, plus her own perception of the changing nature of the violence (described above) to finally propel her to leave.

*Carol: I was counselling a woman who was in a very violent situation; it was like a mirror looking back on me and I was advising her out of my own, what I should be doing myself. I'm not a counsellor, but if you're advising someone, you can't tell them out of your own experience what they need to be doing, when you should be doing it yourself. So as I said, it was a mirror. And that was a turning point because that night, what he did to me was completely different to all the other times. And then after that it was like I could feel the blood going through my veins. It was almost like a spiritual, it was like he took my soul. And why that time was different, I don't know. But I just thought, no, it's over, I can't do this.....And then I rang my sister as well, and she said, no you've got to go. You've just got to go. And then the next day, or maybe a few days later, I just thought, if I don't do something he's just going to continue on. Because I had tried every which way and nothing was working. So the only thing I could do was leave.*

*Kim: So which factor do you think was the most important in that decision*

*Carol: It was a combination of that woman; trying my hardest to help her and knowing full well that she would go back. It was that and what he did to me, yeah – it was like I felt ants crawling through my blood. Never, ever had I been depressed but I just felt like something evil had come into me like a real deep-seated depression. It was like he just reached in and took out everything. What he did to me and the way he did it, I just prayed to God that he'd kill me. I didn't want it anymore. Let him put the pillow on my face. No, it's like he just ruined me then and there and I thought, if I continue to go down that track with whatever was inside of me now with the depression or whatever, I will just get weaker and weaker and I just wouldn't ever find a way out. But what happened on that particular day also, like it was the mirror with the lady, it was the abuse, but out of the blue, a girlfriend rang me and she said, what's the matter? And I said, nothing. She said, yes, there is. All I want to say to you is that I was brought up in an abusive, her parents used to hit each other and bash each other up and then the kids. She said it's only taken her 'til now to get over that as a child and she said, 'I'm just letting you know too that my parents are heading towards seventy and they're still doing it to each other. So it was the three things then.*

Landenburger (1989) characterised identification with other abused women as a property of the transition from enduring to engaging. However, these findings indicate that much more is needed; women must also identify the futility of their current management strategies. Police can make a valuable contribution to the provision of an external perspective that meets such needs (see chapter 6).

#### 4.2.2 Cold call versus crisis call

Contacting police for assistance can occur during or immediately after a violent incident, or it can be delayed. Proximity to the event is a central element for both women and police and influences the interaction between them ( see chapter 5.2.1 for police perspective). A crisis call to police involves contacting the police for immediate assistance at the time of a violent incident. A crisis call can also be made by another party at the address or by a neighbor who hears the disturbance. Crisis calls were reported by victims across all relationship stages. Although there is typically a gradual realisation that the violence is worsening and new strategies are needed, when victims call 000 for help it is spontaneous and motivated by fear for their immediate physical or psychological safety. A crisis call is reactive in nature. The fear can be related to physical violence that is actually happening or it can be the potential for violence that they fear. Indeed the potential for violence can be more terrorising than actual physical violence, as Jenny described in the chilling account of the first and only time she made a crisis call (for comparison see Jenny's cold call in 4.2.3.1).

*Jenny: ..... he'd always smashed glasses and things so that wasn't anything new, and we'd had holes in the walls before so that wasn't anything new, but he broke a broom over his knee and went to hit me with it and I was just on the floor cowering from him and had my hands over head. He didn't end up hitting me with the broom, which I was pretty pleased about because in the back of my mind I was thinking about the time when he'd been punching me in the scalp and I didn't know if he was going to stop. I thought with the broom he might start doing that and because it was broken it was actually quite jagged and I was thinking I don't know where this is going to go. He threw the broom down and then he said, I'm going to kill you and then he went into the kitchen and got the bread knife and he came back and said, I'm going to kill you. And he came up, right up to me and held the bread knife against me and said, I'm going to kill you. And I don't know, I couldn't really move and I couldn't really see anything and he kept pushing me to say*

*something, he kept pushing me to fight with him. He was saying the most horrible, horrible things and as if he wanted me to ark up, to get aggressive. He wanted me to fight with him, which you don't really want to fight with someone who's got a knife in their hand. And I was, I don't know if the word's catatonic, I couldn't speak, I couldn't move. I couldn't have blinked my eyes if I'd wanted to. And then he started to do something a bit weird. Usually he lets me clean up the mess but he started to do something a bit weird. He started cleaning up all the broken glass and that, and I thought this is really different. It was just such a different feel. And he started to take things, all the broken stuff out to the rubbish bin. He went out a couple of times and I kept thinking I have to get up and phone. I've got to get up, walk to the phone, dial triple 0 and keep walking as I'm doing that, and just walk down to the bedroom and just shut myself in the bathroom. And I actually started practising it in my head, while he's screaming at me I just started practising in my head what I would do. At that point he started to explain how I was going to die, what exactly he was going to do with the knife, how long I was going to take to die. He was actually thinking it through and I was thinking this isn't good. This is a really, really bad feeling and he's actually really lost it, he's not in control of himself. Then he'd come back and he'd start going through, I'm going to slice your stomach open and then all your intestines are going to come out, it's going to be extremely painful but you're going to bleed to death rather quickly, so it's going to be a fast painful death. And he started going, it might take two minutes, it might take four minutes and I'm, I don't know why but I started calculating in my head too how long would it take me to lose 8 pints of blood, and oh God, and then I'm thinking why am I even working this out. And then I thought, how long do I have left to live; it might only be a couple of minutes.*

Some women also report a fear that is related to their psychological safety. They describe being psychologically tormented to the end of their endurance and call police to stop the psychological siege.

*Sarah: Things were happening and you wouldn't call the police about them. But then, like all day long things and things that have been going on for a couple of days where you've had no sleep because you've been tortured and stuff. I think the last time the police got called he had been coming back home and forth all day. Coming back and saying really weird things and then just walking out again and then coming back. I wasn't allowed to sleep in his bed. Because anything that was owned by him, he said you know, don't touch my walls; don't touch my bed. I remember he kicked me out of bed and said don't sleep in my bed. So I went down into the lounge room and I fell asleep and I woke in the middle of the night and he was just staring at me. And he said what are you doing here. He goes you're not even supposed to be here, fuck off. And ripped the doona off me and tried to push me outside. So I just kept on walking. And he's like come back, like straight away because he knows I'm going to call the police..... I just wanted to get out of it now. I need peace in my life. I need to be able to sleep. I don't want to be tortured any more.*

Cold calls typically involve a victim seeking assistance to stop ongoing harassment or to report breaches of intervention orders. They can also consist of victims deciding to report an assault several days after it has occurred or victims seeking general advice regarding means of protection when they no longer feel capable of managing the violence in their relationship. Thus cold calls are much more proactive than crisis calls. When a victim makes a cold call to police, the violent episode has passed and the basic need for immediate safety is no longer a priority. Women seeking assistance in this mode are primarily seeking to secure long-term freedom from violence.

A cold call is often precipitated by the victim seeking help for her partner, in the hope of changing his behaviour, from other service providers who become the catalyst for them seeking police intervention. They do this by naming the partner's behaviour as violence. The victim has initiated help-seeking but the external perspective provided by such services changes the trajectory of the help-seeking endeavour.

*Lauren: I was ringing around wondering what to do, how to get him help. I rang up the hospital, their psychiatric department. He's just crazy, I've got to get him some help. He's done this, he's done that. And they're look love, come off it, he's abusing you. He's not crazy. There's lots of insane people who are not violent. Being violent doesn't make you insane, it just makes you violent. And I'm like what, what are you talking about. It never occurred to me that violence was a wrong behaviour. I'm not a violent person. I've never been violent towards anybody but having violence perpetrated on me was entirely reasonable obviously.*

*Kim: So this nurse that you rang for help for him actually...*

*Lauren: Yeah, she said get real love. Get an intervention order. He tries to come back, you ring the police. You say no, don't come back until you've stopped drinking and got some help with that basically.*

A cold call is motivated by fear of future violence and sometimes by anger or indignation. Before making a cold call, victims need to overcome the dread they feel. Carol described the courage need to report an assault perpetrated by her ex-partner some time after their separation.

*Carol: I found the number and I thought, no, I can't do it. Then I thought, oh, yes I can, and then I thought, no, I'll go and cook the tea and then I'll do it. So I kept delaying and then the kids were all settled and I thought, no,*

*that's it. I'm going to do it. So I sat on the bed, and I plucked up the courage, and I said a prayer, then I did it.*

### **4.2.3 Type and extent of use of police services: novice users, determined consumers, and chronic users**

None of the interviewees reported a single encounter with police, although some had only one attendance at an actual violent incident (i.e. crisis call). For all victims there was some form of further help-seeking, mostly related to breaches of intervention orders, and for one there was help-seeking before the event that finally triggered her calling 000 for police assistance. Two victim-participants had only made cold calls related to ongoing harassment after terminating the relationship.

#### **4.2.3.1 Novice users of police services**

Whether it was via a cold call or crisis call, and regardless of their relationship stage, victims initially engaged the police as novice service users. They were unfamiliar with police processes, protocols and obligations, and usually had little understanding of their rights in regard to protection from IPV. Therefore, there were usually no assumptions that police can or will help them. Some were not even sure whether calling 000 for help was an appropriate form of action for them to take. This contributed to their limited sense of agency or entitlement. As the following extracts demonstrate, although they were extremely hopeful about the response they would get from police, novice service users usually had either no expectations of police at all or they had highly idealised expectations; they saw the police as all powerful and able to provide an instant solution to their problem.

*Rita: I never expected that they would come because I had never heard of anyone calling the police because of domestic violence. I never heard, I didn't know that they would come as quick as that*

*Kim: So what did you think or expect that the police would do? When you rang for them to come, what were you thinking that they'd do?*

*Maria: That they'd take him away and I'm never gonna see him again.*

When police failed to meet these expectations, victims often became very disillusioned and resumed their former management strategies, feeling abandoned to cope on their own (see chapter 6). The novice user does not have a fully

conceptualised aim, especially in a crisis call, but rather a strong or urgent sense of needing help. Even in a cold call, the novice user is uncertain of her needs and even more uncertain of what the police can actually do to respond to those needs.

Confusion was evident in the extract from Jenny's account of her cold call to police.

*Jenny: When the April fight happened that's when I rang the Men's Referral Service. I said sorry, I just don't know who else to ring. They said, no, that's alright, you can call us. I'll send you out this brochure and I want you to go to the police SOCA unit. I said, well what's that? And he said, just go to the SOCA unit. So I went to my local police station and they said, we don't have a SOCA unit here, you'll have to go to this one. So I went there and they said, well do you have an appointment. I said, no, and that I was just told that I should come here. I don't know, there's been violence going on but other than that, I've just been told that I really need to come and see you. And they finally said look yeah that's alright, you don't have to have an appointment, we'll see you now. So that was about twenty minutes later. So I sat down with the police woman and she said, well is there any sexual abuse? And I said, no. And she said, well is there any child abuse? And I said, well no. She said, well you shouldn't be here because this is SOCA. And I go what does SOCA stand for? (laughs). So she told me (sexual offences and child abuse unit). And I said, okay no it's much different and I explained what had been happening. And she said, well you know, you can go and get an intervention order and it's really good and the Court's next door, you can just walk in there. I said, I wouldn't even know where to start. She said, well go in there and they'll walk you through it. And I said, I just don't know if I'm ready for that because I don't know if that's going to make him angrier. And she said, well that's your call. And I said, well maybe he'll settle down. And she said, well okay, just see how it goes, see if he'll move out.*

#### **4.2.3.2 Determined consumers**

A few of the participants described becoming determined consumers of police services. They learned the rules of engagement and persisted until they got a satisfactory response from police. Although they were sometimes still unsure of exactly what the police could do for them, they expressed a determination not to be dismissed or deterred from help-seeking. These women tended to have a higher level of assertiveness and a firmer belief in their rights. Determined consumers will not accept a police attempt to fob them off. They have an intact or renewed sense of entitlement and are typically in the disengaging or recovery phase. Sophie's

confidence in her rights was bolstered when she won a contested hearing for an intervention order:

*Kim: So now that you've got the intervention order what are your plans; if he breaches that what are going to do?*

*Sophie: Well I'm going to report it. I'm going to attempt to ring 000, even if it means I have to pull up on the side of the road; I've decided, if there's any following me there or anything like that. And I was going to try another police station next because they've got the domestic violence unit I've found out. So I was hoping they might be a little bit more understanding than the others that I've sort of dealt with so far. I've been told to go to a bigger police station because of the funding issue. They can't argue well they haven't got the money if this doesn't work sort of thing, rather than little stations*

*Kim: Okay, so you haven't given up?*

*Sophie: I haven't given up, no. If anything I'm more resolved now because I know, I think because it was a contested hearing (for the intervention order) and I know now when the facts were presented to someone I've never met in my life, they went no, no, no, enough's enough, you need this.*

#### **4.2.3.3 Chronic users**

Chronic user is the code used to denote victims who learn how to engage police and become familiar with police services and processes but rather than enlisting police to help end an abusive relationship or enforce their right to be left alone after a relationship has been ended, they use police intervention as an additional management strategy to deal with the ongoing violence they experience in the relationship. These participants were firmly entrenched in the enduring phase of a violent relationship, and the strategies used to stop the violence were effective only in the short-term. It should be noted that chronicity has two connotations. Women can be chronically entrapped in an abusive relationship but not necessarily chronic users of police services. For example, Carol endured many years of violence but did not actually seek police assistance at all until after she had ended the relationship. The defining feature of chronic police use is the cyclical nature of police engagement, which parallels Walker's (1979) cycle of violence. Police are called to intervene during the acute battering phase of the cycle, which effectively ends that phase, and may result in a separation of variable duration. The subsequent stage of loving contrition results in a reconciliation. Alternatively, if formal action is not taken by police, her partner may return shortly after the police have left, by which

time the tension and aggression has diffused, and the relationship continues, often because she is unable or too afraid not to continue with it. In either case, the cycle continues until the police are called in response to the next violent outburst.

The current findings are consistent with the research previously cited (Gover et al., 2011; Leisenring, 2012; Russel & Light, 2006; Stephens & Sinden, 2000), which points to the problematic nature of interactions between police and victims associated with multiple encounters; both parties tend to experience frustration and dissatisfaction. However, the current research differentiates women who have multiple encounters with police that are perceived as satisfactory from those that are unsatisfactory, and it is the chronic cyclic nature of the encounters that sets them apart. Chronic users are known to police and are usually viewed as beyond help or not really wanting help; they are deeply entangled in an ongoing, extremely violent relationship; they are capable of dealing only with the here and now, and they use police intervention as a strategy that enables them to cope with their immediate situation; they have very little sense of agency; they do not believe they are able to end the relationship; and they are extremely afraid of their partners' potential for violence.

Rachael's account provides an example of how victims can learn to use the police to manage the ongoing violence in their relationship. Rachael described her partner's response the first time she ever rang the police. She learned that if she called the police he would leave immediately.

*Rachael: It sort of was on all day, basically all day, little digs, pushes, shoves, slamming things. Then I remember something getting thrown and it smashed my glass coffee table. Then he got stuck into me and picked me up and threw me across the room and belted into me. And I can't even remember if it was actually me that called the police or if I'd spoken to my sister and said he'd gone nuts and she just called. The police came and he'd taken off by then. So maybe I rang, I don't know but I know he'd taken off when the police got there because they went and they found him. Because they rang me and said that they'd found him and he'd abused the hell out of them. And they had to take out like an AVO (i.e. intervention order). So yeah then I had that taken out on him.*

She also learned that afterwards, he would be contrite.

*Rachael: Like at the Court he didn't speak to me or anything. He was being real arrogant and that sort of thing. But then a couple of days later, I'm getting help, I'm going to go to counselling, some men's violence thing and all of this stuff. And he never did any of it. And then he had to come and get some more stuff, the police had to actually come with him. And then it would have probably not even been a week later and I gave in. I said to him just go back with the police and then when they've gone come back and talk to me because I had my cousin there. And then he didn't go then basically.*

Rachael called the police again about ten months later. This time she was more sure of what she wanted to achieve, and did not engage with police in taking any formal action, even though they suggested it. The police were less helpful than the first time but Rachael attributed that to her own attitude. She knew she only wanted him removed for the time being to stop the violence. He returned a few days later and the relationship continued.

*Rachael: There was nothing really done that time. It was just come around and have a sort of a chat and that sort of thing. He'd taken off once again and I was basically wasting their time. Because I knew that he would come back and we would try to work it out again.*

*Kim: Okay so when you called them that time what was your aim in calling them do you think?*

*Rachael: Probably once again just to get him out because I'm asking him to leave. He wouldn't leave. So it was more to get him out and to probably scare him into going.*

Rachael did not continue to engage police assistance in this manner and did end the relationship some time later when she realised that it was never going to improve. Leanne's story, however, provides a disturbing case of chronic police intervention. Leanne endured years of abuse, including two periods of hospitalisation, with regular police intervention. Initially there was a pattern of her going to her mother's for a few days and then later of police removing him and applying for intervention orders. When Leanne continually revoked these, police started taking him away and releasing him elsewhere. He was charged with assault on several occasions and ultimately served a jail sentence for assault and threat to kill. It wasn't until his custodial sentence that Leanne finally managed to break free from his hold on her. Leanne's story, which was confused and somewhat convoluted, is described in the following compilation of extracts.

*Leanne: I felt sorry for him. I was the one who did it. He said he'd change and I thought he would change after hitting me all these years. I thought, ok, I'll give him another go.'*

*Kim: So changing the intervention order meant that you were giving him another go. Is that what it meant to him as well?*

*Leanne: Well I thought so but it didn't happen like that. A couple of days down the road he called me a slut again, a mole.....Again, and again and again, I've got 14 intervention orders on him in my bedroom – 14! I've given him 14 chances. You know, I've been a good person by giving him a chance but he has never changed.*

Leanne described a particularly violent episode as the trigger for her increased fear of him, which ultimately led to her frequent police use.

*Leanne: He traumatised me for six hours one night and he wouldn't let me out of the house. He followed me to the toilet and he broke the bed over me. In the morning, I was full of bruises and his mate came around and he walked in and he told him you're going to be in trouble if she dobs you into the police, she's bruised everywhere. And from that time I just couldn't trust him. I stayed here because I thought he'd change.*

Leanne endured verbal abuse almost every day but the first time police intervened, it had started to escalate again.

*Leanne: He got me out in the driveway and he punched me in the stomach, he strangled me, he put a hammer to my head. There are marks still in the lounge room actually on the mantelpiece. He wouldn't let me get out the house. The only reason how I got out the house was he went out there to get an axe and I quickly locked the door and then I went out the back. And I went to the people that own the place, up the corner there and they rang the police. They come to the neighbour's place first and then they come here and they took him away. Then the police told me to come in here, get some clothes and stuff and go to my mum's for a few days. So that's what I did.....He was charged. He had to go to Court but I was stupid, I kept on changing the orders.....He got a two year suspended sentence.*

The impact of those two attacks was explored further. Leanne described not being able to trust him after the first episode of extreme physical violence after which she started calling the police whenever she feared his abuse was escalating. It is evident that when she called police she was influenced as much by his potential for violence as she was by the actual level of violence at that particular time.

*Leanne: He's bruised me, slapped me around. Twice he's nearly killed me; I've been in hospital. But other times I'm just so scared of him, what he's*

*done to me in the past that once he slaps me or hits me or even pushes me in the fireplace, that's when I will ring the police because I can't stand it no more..... He's done it twice to me and I know he'll do it again.*

Although police sought an intervention order 14 times over the years, there were many times they took no or little formal action. Leanne described the typical pattern:

*Leanne: It's been probably twice a week.*

*Kim: And what would they do?*

*Leanne: They'd take him either in the lock-up overnight or they'd tell him not to come back and take him to town so he can drink in the pub.....*

*Kim: When you called the police, did you used to wait until he'd actually hit you or would you call them as soon as he started calling you a slut and carrying on?*

*Leanne: It depends. Sometimes I'd put up with 'sluts' and 'moles' for about three hours. He'd get louder and louder and then I'd ring the police. He used to go out the front and he used to scream and scream and scream. And you could hear him. Mum could hear him on the phone when she was ringing me in the bedroom and he'd be out the front screaming his head off until I had enough. Or he'd belt me and then he'd go out and have a drink in the yard, talking to himself. Then that's when I got a chance to go and ring my Mum - ring the police. So it's either.*

Sometimes, if he changed his aggressive behaviour by the time police arrived, they would simply leave him there. The outcome of such a minimalistic approach is explored later. Eventually he was arrested, charged and sentenced.

*Leanne: But this time they've had so much trouble with him they've locked him up because the Magistrate just got sick and tired of him abusing me, with a two year sentence.*

*Kim: Do you think that the police waited too long to get sick and tired of him and do something about it?*

*Leanne: Yes. But it was my fault too because I kept going to Court and I kept on changing the orders. I was stupid. I changed it from 200 metres, being near me and the house, and I changed it for him allowed in the house when I feel safe to do so.*

It is evident that a concerted and sustained effort is needed by police to intervene effectively in such cases, as well as harsh penalties for such extreme and entrenched violence.

### 4.3 Help-seeking aspirations

As Gondolf and Fisher (1988) asserted, IPV victims do not passively accept the violence to which they are subjected; they actively resist violence and often engage assistance to do so. In the current study, victims sought help from police across the relationship. According to Landenburger (1989), women's understanding of their situation changes as they progress through phases from entrapment to recovery. These variations were evident in the victims' descriptions of their help-seeking needs.

One question domain of the first interview was related to victims' reasons for calling police, and what they wanted, hoped or expected police to do for them. However, as victims' aims were often inchoate, it was difficult for participants to fully identify or articulate their needs. Consequently, when generating the superordinate category for this section of the analysis, the label *help-seeking aspirations* was used because it better reflects the striving and desire to reach a better outcome that was evident, despite the lack of a clear path. Constant comparison analysis was then used to compare these aspirations in the context of victims' relationship stage at the time of the encounter with police. As many victims described contact with police at different stages of the relationship, it was possible to make comparisons both within and between cases.

When a victim makes a *crisis call* to police her fundamental need is to stop violence that is actually happening or prevent imminent violence. Although it is the physical violence, either perpetrated or threatened, that makes her fear him, this violence occurs in a psychological context of degradation, power and intimidation that is often terrorising. Lynette described calling the police to stop a violent attack that occurred a few months after she ended her relationship, which is a particularly dangerous time for women escaping violent relationships (J.C. Campbell et al., 2003; Dobash & Dobash, Cavanagh & Medina-Ariza, 2007).

*Lynette: Like I wasn't nasty to him or anything I just said do you have my money. And he's turned around and he's pointed the knife at me and asked me if I wanted that. And then my sister came into the kitchen and she had a go at him. And he ended up punching her, nearly knocking her out. Then he*

*grabbed a broom or mop or whatever it was with a stick. I think it was a broom and he started hitting me in the side. And he went to pick up a chair to throw at me and my sister stopped him. And then he was going on about the bible and how I should read the bible. And he went and grabbed a bible and then he just smashed it over my face and my glasses fell and broke on the floor. And then I just ran outside..... All I remember is I started, I grabbed the phone and my daughters went in the bedrooms and they were ringing on their mobiles to call police. I got the phone and I started dialling and that's when he started to chase me. Because she's like call the police and I started dialling the police and he's like, you call the police! And I just started running with the phone and he chased me.*

The crucial need to stop violence in the context of a crisis call was consistent across relationship stages, although it was more likely to be manifested during the enduring or disengaging phases. However, there were additional help-seeking aspirations that were also evident in the context of both crisis and cold calls. These included seeking safety, seeking ego-support and seeking justice. Although demonstrated across relationship stages, the manifestation and importance of these needs varied according to the victim's relationship stage at the time of the police encounter (see Table 4.1). For example, a victim who is recovering from an abusive relationship wants to be free to get on with her life without violence, harassment, intimidation or control from her former partner. She wants her right to leave the relationship to be confirmed and upheld. She seeks permanent safety. In comparison, a woman who is in the enduring phase of a violent relationship tends to seek police assistance when her capacity to endure is exhausted. Her needs relate to managing the relationship. She also wants to be free from abuse but is able to focus only on the present and so she seeks temporary escape from abuse and strategies to try to prevent or minimise abuse whilst maintaining the relationship.

Similarly, the need for ego-support takes different forms as women move through the stages of a violent relationship. During the binding and enduring phase, the victim needs police to name and show intolerance for IPV. In the enduring phase she also wants police to support her version of reality when it conflicts with her partner's; she wants police to tell him his behaviour is wrong and must stop. In the disengaging phase victims seek support to leave the relationship. In the recovery phase, they want their experience of ongoing abuse validated and support to stop it. These concepts are expounded in the following sections.

To meet these secondary aspirations victims hoped to find a powerful ally in police. The police have knowledge and expertise, power and authority, and they represent social values and justice.

*Kim: Was he scared of them?*

*Sarah: Yes. He would change his attitude as soon as they would arrive.*

*Kim: So how important was that for you to see that he was scared of them?*

*Sarah: It was good. It was like having you know, an assertive father around (laughs). It was like someone who's actually there to stand up for you like the police should be.*

Table 4.1

*Help-seeking aspirations across relationship stages*

	<i>Safety</i>	<i>Ego support</i>	<i>Justice</i>
<b>Binding</b>	Focus on immediate event only.	Explanation/name abuse. Guidance.	Tell her it is wrong.
<b>Enduring</b>	Respite from violence/ short-term safety	Validation/ take her seriously. Take her side.	Tell him it is wrong. Enforce her right to stay safely.
<b>Disengaging</b>	Long-term safety	Facilitate termination of relationship. Support intervention order to remove partner.	Establish her right to leave safely through formal protection.
<b>Recovery</b>	Freedom from ongoing abuse and harassment	Validation/ take her concerns re ongoing harassment seriously. Support intervention order to keep him away.	Uphold her right to leave the relationship. Enforce intervention order.

**4.3.1 Binding**

Although some victims experienced violence during the very early stage of their relationship, and many retrospectively identified signs of their partners' impending violence, only one victim actually had contact with the police during the binding phase. A very tentative interpretation of victims' helpseeking aspirations was made from Chelsea's account of her interaction with police during the binding phase.

Chelsea had been seeing her partner for about three months when he first attacked her to prevent her from going home. She managed to leave and called the local police from her taxi. Although Chelsea had no clear aim in calling the police, it is clear from the following extracts that the attack was incomprehensible and she needed help to come to terms with what had happened. She needed an explanation that named the violence as an episode of IPV, and she needed guidance to prevent further episodes.

*Kim: So the violence actually started before you were living together?*

*Chelsea: Yeah three months into the relationship. He gave me two black eyes when I tried to go home and he didn't want me to go home. Yeah. I first called the police then. ....I rang straight afterwards when I was in a taxi on the way home and they told me to go to the station near home. But once I got home I was in such a state I didn't think of going to the police station and foolishly I just sort of accepted it.*

*Kim: So when you first rang them, while you were in the taxi, what were you thinking that they would do?*

*Chelsea: Well, I wasn't sure. I just wanted help, you know. I was in shock and the taxi driver kept saying ring the police. And I rang the police, like I said, and they directed me to my suburb. And I sort felt as well, why should I have to go there. And I think that also sort of put me off at the time. And I found through later dealings with the police that a lot of the time they weren't interested.*

Feeling discouraged by this response, she went home and resolved not to see her partner again. Three days later she found herself calling him in tears, seeking an explanation for the attack.

*Kim: So why do you think you came home instead of going there when they said that?*

*Chelsea: I honestly don't know. At the time, I think I was just in shock, you know. I couldn't believe he'd done that to me. And you know at the time I thought to myself, that's it I'm not seeing him ever again. And then about three days later I found myself ringing him. And I was crying and saying how could you do this to me? And he*

*started crying and said he promised it would never happen again. And so I believed him and I didn't take it any further.*  
*Kim: And then you kept on seeing him?*  
*Chelsea: Yeah.*

This is a case of not only a lost opportunity to break the cycle, in fact to prevent the cycle of abuse from starting, but it actually made her even more dependent on him. Her persecutor had become her comforter, reminiscent of the traumatic bonding described by Herman (1992a).

*Kim: He said it would never happen again and you believed him. How did you make sense of what had happened?*  
*Chelsea: I think I just accepted it because coming from an abusive childhood, I suppose it wasn't an unusual occurrence to me.....If I'd have known at the time that things would escalate, I wouldn't have tried to seek an explanation. I would have just realised that he is an abusive man but I didn't have any information about domestic violence then. And like I said, coming from an abusive background, I suppose I just accepted it. I thought, 'He hasn't been sleeping,' you know, and I believed him when he said it wouldn't happen again because I was in love with him and I thought he loved me. Yeah, I thought it was a one off.*

Chelsea readily accepted an explanation of the violence that was plausible within the context of a loving, viable relationship, consistent with interpretations made during the binding phase (Landenburger, 1989). Consequently, she saw no need to seek further help to prevent future violence, as the notion of the violence continuing was not even contemplated at that time. Her focus was on that one single event. It was over; her safety and trust in the relationship intact. Similarly, she had no aspirations for justice because she did not see it as an act of power and domination, and a violation of her rights. Therefore, Chelsea needed to be shown that it was wrong and that it should not be tolerated. The relationship continued for a further six years, during which police were called for assistance on many more occasions as Chelsea moved through the phases to eventual recovery.

#### **4.3.2 Enduring**

Landenburger (1989) described the enduring phase as a period when women know that there is something wrong with the relationship but they are not ready to leave it. Women use strategies to minimise the occurrence of abuse with limited

effectiveness. Properties identified by Landenburger include placating, covering, and shrinking of self. These properties were evident in Carol's description of her efforts to avoid violence.

*Carol: I did everything. I prayed. I walked on eggshells. I avoided him. The more I did for him, the worse he treated me. I covered for him. I did his job when he was sick, which was a lot. I did everything. I bent over backwards. I cooked the meals he liked. As I said, I choose to forget so I'm trying to remember but oh, I did everything for him. The more I did, the worse he got.*

Help-seeking aspirations during the enduring phase focussed on achieving safety through respite, and ego-support to prevent future violence whilst maintaining the relationship.

#### **4.3.2.1 Seeking respite**

When efforts to avoid violence ultimately failed, victims invoked alternative strategies for managing violence as it occurred. One such strategy was respite. It can be achieved through either party leaving for the short-term, or through intervention that brings the violent event to an end, resulting in a shift from the acute battering phase of the cycle of violence (Walker, 1979) to the loving contrition phase. It brings about a change in the partner's behaviour and thus a change in the immediate situation, allowing tensions to abate and the continuance of the relationship. It is a strategy employed mostly by chronic users of police services.

Lauren provided evidence of looking for a short-term solution to an immediate situation rather than looking for long-term change. Her aim in calling the police was to stop the violence and achieve temporary respite from abuse.

*Lauren: It was just a case of, well that's how it is. I didn't think there was anything that could be done. It was just a stop-gap measure. It was just something to try to halt that particular occasion. I didn't really expect it to have any long-term implications, I don't think. At the time, I think I was in the frame of mind to just stop that now, the immediate situation rather than a path to any long-term change. It was okay. That was how it was.*

Respite can be achieved through temporary escape. It provides a modicum of safety and time for the victim to recoup her emotional resources; for example, she may go

to a family member for a few days. Temporary escape is particularly associated with high levels of physical violence and may be a well-established pattern of behaviour within an abusive relationship, long before police ever become involved.

*Carol: I didn't want to call police because I knew that the neighbours would see a police car in the driveway and we're exposed and I didn't want the degradation. I didn't want to upset the kids. So when he used to hit me or abuse me, I'd just run off. And then when I'd come back I would have cooled down and then he'd have cooled down as well. So that's the way I used to deal with it.*

Although Carol did not engage the police during this stage at all, other women did seek police to assist in their escape. Sarah described a long standing pattern of temporary escape, such as going to her mother's, going to refuges, and seeking respite with a youth housing service. When these avenues for help were exhausted she eventually came to rely on police.

*Sarah: Before all these police calls I probably would have run off to refuges and probably would have went to the Salvation Army rather than call the police.....sometimes when I would leave I would have those options. They were my first options before I started calling the police on him.*

*Kim: So what was it that you were you hoping or expecting from them?*

*Sarah: For them to get my children out. For them to help me to be able to grab some stuff and to get out.*

During the enduring phase the victim only deals with the short-term. There are no thoughts of formal action, and often no knowledge of such options, as Chelsea described.

*Kim: What was actually your aim in ringing them, what was your motivation?*

*Chelsea: Well so I could get out of the house. He wouldn't let me out and I was frightened, you know. And I wanted them there so I could get out of the house, basically. I didn't know that they had the power to do anything further. I just wanted to get out of the house. I saw it as my only way of getting out.*

*Kim: Did you want him punished? Did you want him charged?*

*Chelsea: No all I could think of was I just wanted to get out. He wouldn't let me get out.*

Similarly, respite is attained when the police action involves removing the perpetrator from the home. In some instances, police make an application for an

intervention order. In other cases, they use their position of authority to simply order him away or remove and release him elsewhere without invoking formal processes. In instances where police do not have serious concerns for the victim's safety, they often suggest that the partner go somewhere else for the night to cool off.

Erin described many calls to the police where she sought to manage the violence in her life through removing her partner.

*Erin: I was just so angry and upset. I just wanted them to get him out of my face. Just leave me alone. I just felt like I was losing it..... get him out of my face so I could relax and calm down. I was that worked up, that stressed, so angry.*

*Kim: So typically what would happen when the police arrived?*

*Erin: One officer would come in and speak to me. And one would stay outside and speak with him and find his side of the story. And then we would sort of come together and try and work something from there. But nothing was going to work and then he started saying, saying stuff. He would say to the police, oh you know, she's a drug dealer, he would say everything to try and take the blame off him and put it on to me.....And the police were like, look we're not going to get anywhere because we were bitching back and forth and they would just take him away. And they would warn him up not to come back for how long. But as soon, like they would tell me they will take him to the train station. But like I said to you before, give him an hour and he was back again, and it starts up again.....*

Even though Erin recognised the cycle of abuse, she was committed to the relationship and thought she could manage the violence. Police often applied for intervention orders but she had not, at that stage, reached the end of her endurance. Erin described an interaction with police and her typical attitude during the period when she was still strongly committed to preserving her relationship. She tried to resist police persuasion to get an intervention order and even when she eventually went along with the process of getting one, she knew she would not go through with it.

*Erin: I'll tell you the truth, every bit of paperwork they gave me, went into the cupboard. I didn't even take a second look at it. I'm thinking, look I can do this on my own. I just need you to move him away. Yeah, I just thought I could beat it myself you know, but as you can see, close to the end, I just lost. I could not.*

*Kim: So in your mind if you went ahead with charges or an intervention order or even with getting help from domestic violence services, did that mean that you were giving up on the relationship?*

*Erin: Yeah and I didn't want to do that. I didn't feel ready.*

Respite can also be gained through the perpetrator's reaction to the call to police. This pattern of behaviour is seen when a call for assistance results in him leaving before police arrive. The immediate incident is abruptly stopped, and when he later returns his behaviour is less violent. He may try to reconcile or may simply pretend nothing has happened. She will go along with whatever approach he uses and will readily placate him to avoid further conflict or violence.

*Leanne: He'd take off. Where are you going? I'm running away, he used to say, because of the cops.*

It is also achieved when calling the police results in him immediately calming down, thus ending the episode.

*Lauren: He was really obnoxious, scary, throwing things, threatening, really crazy, an absolute psycho at the time. And I rang the police. As soon as he realised the police were coming he was sitting down there drawing something, drawing up some mechanical thing. Completely in control, you can't call it out of control because he wasn't. He immediately snapped into, oh I'm not doing anything; she's a crazy mole*

*Kim: So he'd assaulted you and you'd called the police and he took off?  
Sarah: Yeah, which he was starting to do then anyway.*

#### **4.3.2.2 Seeking ego support**

Seeking respite addresses the immediate violence but it is ineffective in preventing recurrence of violence. Although victims were primarily concerned with the present moment, they also wanted ongoing safety within the relationship but lacked the agency, power and ego-strength to secure it. Therefore, they sought ego-support to stop violence from recurring. The first component was seeking confirmation that the abuse is occurring, she is not imagining it or exaggerating its seriousness. Victims sought validation of their experience. They wanted their concerns to be taken seriously and they wanted police to show intolerance of IPV. Secondly, they needed police to be on their side; they hoped a warning from police would prevent future violence

Chelsea wanted to be believed.

*Chelsea: I wanted support. I wanted somebody to believe me. I wanted to know that I had a choice; that if I decided to get out of the relationship that people would help me get away. I wouldn't have to live in fear that this person would come after me, but nobody gave me information. Nobody gave me any other options besides, 'Everybody just calm down and it will be sorted out.'*

Rachael identified retrospectively that she needed guidance; the police should have emphasised to her the violence was serious and shouldn't be tolerated.

*Rachael: I think there probably needs to be some more support for the female victim. So she knows there's people there supporting her and maybe giving a bit of a nudge to do that sort of thing. I think that would help.*

*Kim: So a bit of a nudge to?*

*Rachael: To go further, to press charges or anything really, some sort of counselling, support, something to let us know that it is okay to do that. You know, there is support out there. There are people who will protect you and that sort of thing.*

Rachael also wanted them to demonstrate intolerance to her partner.

*Kim: Is there anything else that you think they should have done?*

*Rachael: Maybe just locked him up for the night. Maybe that would have shown him well this is the consequences. If this keeps going it's not going to be just one night, you know, it could be a longer time than that. So maybe, yeah, just putting him away for the night. And then going to Court. And yeah he should have been charged in retrospect. He really should have been, I guess if it had have been someone out on the street he would have been.*

Lauren was unable to influence her partner's behaviour but was hoping police could. Her exposure of the violence was a tentative attempt to assert herself and she needed police support. Exposing him is beneficial in terms of naming abuse and reality testing. Police can confirm her interpretations of his behaviour and her floundering perceptions of what is or is not acceptable behaviour in an intimate relationship.

*Lauren: I remember thinking, oh there's no choice here. This guy's got to get under control somehow and I can't do it. Maybe the police can. I needed someone to come and stop the behaviour.*

*Kim: So you weren't thinking I'm going to call the police and this is going to help me get out of this relationship....*

*Lauren: No. I don't want out of the relationship. I still don't want out of the relationship. I want the relationship to be functioning.*

*Kim: What did you hope that they would do that night?*

*Lauren: I have no idea. I really don't know. I just felt that they might have something to help us but they didn't have much, other than this feeling to my husband that I would ring the police again, that I wasn't afraid to sort of say it out loud what he was up to.*

*Kim: Okay so in a way were you, I guess, outing him, were you exposing it?*

*Lauren: Yeah, yeah definitely. I'd come to the conclusion I wasn't going to keep the secrets any longer. I was going to tell people when he misbehaved. I'd been whinging to my parents for ages, been whinging to my friends, whinging to his relatives. They'd be, well you know what he's like. No support at all but from the police I was hoping there would be something, but not much.*

*Kim: So you were looking for the police to provide you with some ways to manage things better or did you want them to say listen mate, this isn't good enough...*

*Lauren: Yes, yes, yes. I wanted them to point the finger and go, listen buddy pull your head in, you shouldn't be drunk; you shouldn't be abusing her over trivialities that aren't her responsibility. Yes, I did want them to speak a bit of truth in the situation, yeah, yeah, that's it.*

Sarah needed the police to be on her side.

*Sarah: I've sort of learnt now that when the police came and you haven't got your children, the police sort of say well he's got the right to have the children as well. And I've said to the police at times, like he's off his face, he's drunk, who knows what else he's been doing. He doesn't know that he has a right to have the children, so don't tell him that because as soon as you say she's here to grab the kids, he'll hand the kids straight over. And I've asked them to probably do that every other time that they've come to the house. And I guess them seeing how intoxicated he was and explaining the situation to them they usually go by that anyway.*

Lauren also recognised that she wanted them on her side.

*Kim: Were they asking just specifically what's happened tonight or did they...*

*Lauren: I can't remember. But I do remember their attitude being very much me trying to get them on side and them not buying into it.*

*Kim: Okay, so they wanted to be neutral?*

*Lauren: They weren't interested in my side or his side; they were hostile to both of us.*

### 4.3.2 .3 Seeking justice

Justice aspirations are undeveloped and tentative during the enduring phase. Victims sought the most basic form of justice; they wanted their partners to acknowledge their wrongdoing and take responsibility for their behaviour. They wanted police advocacy in this regard.

*Rachael: I just wanted him gone. And for him to know, it's wrong; this is serious. But I think in my mind I probably didn't want him to be charged with anything, I don't know why.....*

*Kim: And were there any other things that you think that they could have done or that you would have liked them to have been able to do?*

*Rachael: Yes, there should be I guess part of maybe an AVO in that case should be that they have to have counselling or some sort of a men's violence course or something like that to prove that they understand what they've done and that it is wrong. And that it's not acceptable. Obviously they've got issues with other things that need to be addressed. So yeah I think it probably should be a compulsory thing to do some sort of course or counselling or something.*

This was explored further at the follow-up interview.

*Kim: Each time you called the police, both times, it seemed like you wanted two things: firstly for him to be gone so the violence would stop; so it's getting him out and then it stops, but secondly for him to know that it was wrong, that it was serious. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?*

*Rachael: I think it was just for him to face his actions and realise what he's doing is wrong. Standing over someone who's half his size and I think that I just wanted him to think about what he's doing. I've said to him, he's so much stronger than I am – he doesn't realise that he can just hit me and I'll be dead, but he doesn't realise it.*

*Kim: So do you think that he really doesn't realise the extent of how much he hurt you? Or do you think he really doesn't know how serious it is or is it just that he blames you for everything and he won't take responsibility?*

*Rachael: He won't ever take responsibility, ever. With everything it's always somebody else's fault; it's never his fault.*

*Kim: So in a way what you want is for somebody else to make him take responsibility, for him to be accountable to somebody?*

*Rachael: Yes.*

Chelsea recognised that the police intervention was inadequate, and yet she still only wanted a verbal warning.

*Kim: So looking back now what do you think they should have done in that situation?*

*Chelsea: Well obviously, knowing what I know now, they should have referred me to some sort of agency. They should have taken a statement and they should have followed it up. But they didn't.*

*Kim: Follow it up as in criminal charges?*

*Chelsea: Well no, maybe like go and have a talk to him and sort of say, you know, what are you doing, this isn't right or whatever. But they didn't do anything.*

### **4.3.3 Disengaging**

Disengaging involves identifying as an abused women and increased help-seeking efforts, which culminate in ending the relationship. According to Landenburger (1989), there may be a breaking point that acts as a catalyst for change. Thoughts of kill or be killed are more dominant. Towards the end of this stage the victim will use whatever energy she can muster, often fuelled by anger, to leave the relationship. A growing sense that her very survival is being compromised, accompanied by a strong feeling of being trapped is often a marker of the transition to disengaging. She begins to realise that she will not survive if she stays but she cannot see any possible way out. A heightened awareness of her situation is reached as she increasingly feels more and more trapped.

#### **4.3.3.1 Seeking long-term safety**

Some victims sought police assistance at the crucial time of transitioning to the disengaging phase. They had not actually made any decision about needing to leave the relationship before police intervention but had recognised the need for some sort of change and were open to the options police presented. Jenny was in transition when she first contacted police. She was emotionally disengaged, and did not feel any love for her husband at all but still felt trapped. She did not believe she could ever leave him but realised her management strategies were failing and her ability to avoid serious injury was diminishing. She described an intense fear of him accompanied by an even stronger fear of leaving but also a burgeoning sense of needing help as the following extracts show.

*Kim: How important do you think it was for you to try and stay in that relationship?*

*Jenny: Well it was important only from the point of view that he said that if I ever left him, he'd come and find me, threatened me that I wasn't to leave him. So from a physical point of view, from a safety point of view, it was important to stay in the relationship. But apart from that, if he had gone and wrapped himself around a tree, I wouldn't have worried about it....I don't know, at some points I was thinking I hope I die really young just so I can get away from him. You know that's a horrible thing to think, that's a horrible thing.*

Several days after a particularly brutal attack she initiated a cold call vaguely search for options (described in 4.2.3.1). However, her reflection on this particular interaction with police indicated what she actually needed was firstly for the abuse to be named and not tolerated. Secondly, she needed direction, support and facilitation. She needed police to assist her in safely bringing about a change in her situation.

*Kim: So what do you think of what happened at the SOCA unit?*  
*Jenny: I wish she had of helped me a bit more. I wish she had of turned around and said there's really some things that you can do and these are the things that you need to look at, these are some support services that you can contact. I wish there had been something like that. It was more me saying, look I think my decision is that I don't want to infuriate him. And she just said well fair enough. Police shouldn't be there to just say oh fair enough, that's your decision. I wish she had turned around and said, no it's actually not okay and these are the sort of support services that you can start accessing now and start figuring out what you can do. Even if police officially couldn't act at that point, I don't know what they can and can't do. I don't know where their boundaries are but I sort of felt like I could have had a bit more info at that point.*

A month later she made a crisis call (described in 4.2.2) to stop an attack and prevent her husband from carrying out his threat to kill her. During this event, her fear of leaving was outweighed by her fear of staying; an immediate and permanent change was needed. When the police started suggesting options, she realised she wanted him to be removed. However, she had no thoughts about getting an intervention order and lacked the knowledge and capacity to seek such solutions. She was, therefore, also seeking ego support. She needed police to lead her through the necessary processes. The police facilitated an intervention order application and the removal of her husband, followed with criminal charges.

*Jenny: Then I got a really, really cold feeling because I thought, he went from zero to I'm going to kill you, he went to that in a very, very, very short*

*space of time. And I'm thinking, I can't let him ever do this again, he's already told me how I'm going to die, he's already got it planned out. I thought. I can't ever let him get near me again.*

*Jenny: They started saying, is there anywhere that you can go? Can you go to your mum's? We can get a refuge for you. And I said, I'm not going to take two kids out at this time of night. This is my house. This is where I live. I'm not going anywhere. And mum can't look after me, she's nearly 80 years old. And they said, so you want us to take him away and I said, yes*

Prior to the point of police intervention she had thought ending the relationship was too dangerous. The intervention became a catalyst and she progressed from transition to disengaging to recovery in the space of one night. Her resolve to end the relationship became firm in subsequent days.

Other victims had moved further into the disengaging process. They had recognised the futility of short-term escape and were seeking permanent change and freedom from abuse. Some had already made the decision to end the relationship before seeking police assistance, although there was usually a trigger event resulting in police intervention. In this stage, victims sought long-term safety by having him removed from the home or prevented from returning if he had already left, or by leaving themselves and seeking refuge, as Chelsea described

*Chelsea: He assaulted me again, another head butting in the eye. That's when I called the police again. They came round and I was hysterical again. At this stage he'd taken my daughter down the street with his ex-girlfriend to go and have coffee or whatever. And you know, I was screaming, I want my daughter back. And they said just leave him; just let things calm down. And I said to them I want to go to a refuge. Because I had spoken to my doctor, and she'd said, you can go to a refuge. And I said please, I want to go to a refuge. And the policeman said well it doesn't look to me like you're in crisis. And I said I am; I've had years of this and I can't take it anymore. I want to go to a refuge. And they said sorry, places are limited and it's only for people in real crisis.*

Lauren's third contact with police was during the disengaging phase. A heated incident, during which she was assaulted, was followed by a week of brooding until her partner left her to go to his mother's house, which she recognised as part of his pattern of psychological abuse. Rather than accepting it and waiting for him to return and reconcile as she usually did, she decided to go to the police station to report his recent assault and seek an intervention order. Her aim was to get an

intervention order to keep him out. She also recognised that such formal action would set a boundary which prevented her from making contact with him. She was seeking to end the recurring pattern of their combined behaviour.

*Lauren: Christmas Eve, similar blow-up. The hole in the wall was from throwing a melon at me over there. New Year's day he left. So I thought well bugger you and I went to the police and I explained the situation. And I insisted they take out an interim order. They didn't want to but I really didn't want him back in the house. I thought, no this is too much. I'm not putting up with this anymore.....*

*Kim: Had it continued for that week?*

*Lauren: No. No, no, no, it was just this quiet brooding. Then New Years Eve he sat down and told my eldest, all my faults and why it was my fault and he had to look after the family, just general abuse towards him as well, bringing a child into the situation, making it his problem. I'm really thinking I don't want him hurting the kids anymore, hurting me anymore, trying to wreck the house anymore. He damaged the house as well.... he had grabbed me and shaken me and chased me upstairs. I went into my son's room and locked myself in there.*

*Kim: Alright, so you waited until he had left and you decided...*

*Lauren: He's not coming back. That was what triggered me. He'd left again as a form of sort of control. I've thought bugger you mate, you want to leave, you can stay out.*

#### **4.3.3.2 Ego support**

Help-seeking aspirations focus on long-term safety during the disengaging phase. However, due to victims' diminished ego-strength and capacity to take action, they have underlying needs that must also be met. Therefore, they also seek ego-support from police to facilitate leaving and sustain them through the process.

Antoinette had given up hope that her husband would change his violent and controlling behaviour. She realised she needed to get him out of her life but she lacked agency. As the following extracts demonstrate, she knew about intervention orders but had no idea how the process worked and she had no confidence that she would be believed.

At an earlier encounter with police, the officer had told her she should leave her husband.

*Antoinette: I was confused again. Thinking, what should I do? How can I leave here? The refuge is hard for me to go there and the intervention order would also be hard to get. What should I do?*

*Kim: So you're sort of thinking, well he's telling me I should leave, I know I need to leave but nobody's telling me how to do it?*

*Antoinette: Yes, yes, exactly. Yes. I was confused about going to court. What will I tell them? Will they trust me? Maybe they will think that she just wants to leave her husband and wants to you know, get the intervention order from him.*

*Kim: So you were worried that the courts would actually.....*

*Antoinette: Not support me because he would be there and he would be lying, my husband*

At a subsequent encounter she pleaded for help.

*Antoinette: Then he came to me and he struck me in the face and everything went dark in my eyes, and I fell....my whole head was numb and my ears were hurting me. I went inside to call the police. He followed me, and grabbed my hair and then his brother ran inside the house and he was separating him and we were arguing....He went and I called the police straight away and I told them that I was assaulted by my husband and I want the intervention order now against him so he never sees my son and me. I was really, you know, I made my decision. So the police came.....He looked at me. He said, you have no bruises, nothing at all. There's nothing I can do. I cannot make any intervention order now. I said, look, he assaulted my son yesterday. He assaulted me today. It happened before, it's going to happen again. I want him out of my life. Please I need your help.*

The officer made an appointment for her to come to the station three days later to make an application by summons. In the interim, her husband returned; she felt defeated and depressed, and lost her resolve. Eventually the assistant principal from her children's school gave her the support she needed; she made enquiries from several sources and accompanied her to Court where an interim order was granted.

#### **4.3.3.3 Seeking justice**

Seeking justice during the disengaging phase primarily focuses on the victim's right to leave the relationship. When police obtain an intervention order, they are not only enabling her to end the relationship, they are formalising her right to do so safely.

Maria's concern for her children's welfare had initially been a major barrier to leaving her partner but eventually she realised the abuse was affecting the way she interacted with her children; she needed to look after herself in order to look after them, and the only way to do that was to end the relationship. When she tried to make her partner leave, he became violent and threatened to put her in hospital. In the following extracts, Maria described trying to assert her right to leave him. Maria was seeking safety but she also needed a powerful ally to uphold her right to end the relationship.

*Maria: I was getting the courage to tell him that things weren't working out. But I was afraid and then he tried to hurt me. He threw things on the wall. You can see the scratch mark there. He threw things and he nearly hit my face.... he grabbed me and pushed me against the wall and I got very scared and I called the police.*

*Kim: So what was your main reason for calling them?*

*Maria: Because he threatened me; he said to me, I don't care if you go to the police I'm gonna hit you. I'm gonna leave in a way that nobody's ever done it. And, if I'm gonna hit you, I'm gonna do it the right way. I'm gonna send you to hospital.*

When she told him she was calling the police he was dismissive and taunted her. She wanted to demonstrate her resolve.

*Maria: I'm like, that's not right. You can't tell a young kid like that, your mum is a slut. You've got to call her a slut. You don't say those things to children. And the things he was saying to me, I just said no that's it. You either leave or I'll call the police. And he said no, I'm not leaving and if you keep behaving that way, I'm going to hit you. And then when he grabbed me, I was terrified.....And he said no, you wouldn't do it. And then I said yeah, I don't care even if you hit me or anything. And I wanted him to hit me to end the whole thing. And he said to me, I don't care whether you go to the police, whether you send me to jail. I'll do it if I have to. And he didn't think that I was going to call.*

#### **4.3.4 Recovery**

According to Landenburger (1989) the recovery phase begins after a woman leaves her abusive partner. It is a period of initial readjustment, grieving for the lost relationship, and making sense of her experience. Early in this stage the focus is on

the struggle to survive. In the current study, it was evident such a struggle included striving for safety.

#### **4.3.4.1 Seeking to maintain safety – keep him away**

Contrary to victims' hopes, ending the relationship was not automatically associated with an end to violence. Most victims reported a change in the nature of abuse after terminating their relationships. There was an increase in harassing behaviours such as stalking, frequent abusive phone calls, coming to her home, and sometimes intimidation of other family members. Verbal and physical abuse was often perpetrated at child access visits or when other incidental opportunities arose. Victims in the recovery phase sought police intervention to stop such opportunistic abuse, by either applying for or enforcing intervention orders.

*Sophie: One day I had something like about six phone calls and ten texts in the space of 30 minutes from him. And then when I wouldn't answer him, he rang my mother. And mum said, I just thought I'd better check because you didn't answer the phone. And I said no, I'm fine, I just don't need sixteen different contacts in 30 minutes; it's driving me nuts. And he knew the intervention order was coming at that point, so he went into overdrive.*

There were also occasions where the harassment escalated to extreme violence such as in Bianca's case. She had applied for an intervention order, which was granted in her ex-partner's absence. The full order needed to be served on him to come into effect. Following the hearing, he started hanging around, harassing her, often sleeping in his car outside her home. He had a history of extreme violence and Bianca felt intimidated and fearful. She made repeated calls to her local police station police to inform them he was at the property so they could serve the order and remove him. Her aim was on the one hand practical and concrete; she wanted him served and removed. At the same time she was attempting to assert her right to live her life without him. She was also seeking protection from future violence; his constant presence was a menacing threat. This was certainly not an unfounded fear; the violence escalated to a brutal attack, highlighting the devastating implications of police failing to serve the intervention order.

*Bianca: It was just like sometimes harassing me, putting the lights on and driving right up to the bedroom window and ringing me all the time and just parking in the paddock and then staying at the neighbours across the road and parking on my lawn and just sleeping in the car because he had nowhere else to go..... I went back to Court to get the final order. They couldn't find him to give it to him. And although he was sleeping in the paddock, or on my front lawn or in the paddock next door every night, I'd ring the police and say, look he's here. If you've got the papers there, can you serve them on him? They didn't have a car to send out and this went on for ages. And then he ended up breaking in one day, in my back door; he had a key cut previous. And come in and attacked me and everything. And it wasn't until that night that they actually served him with the order.*

He held her captive for over three hours during which time he assaulted her, attempted to rape her and threatened to kill her. Bianca feared for her life. The aim of this crisis call was immediate cessation of violence.

*Bianca: He had a key cut that I didn't know about. And he came in and that's when he actually attacked me. He had me in the house for three hours, in front of the kids and everything. And it wasn't until someone in my family turned up, they just come to the door and I said, ring the police. And then they left and then he made me ring them and he said to me if the police come you're dead and so all of us, none of you will get out of here alive. And so he made me ring them and say don't ring the police. But they went round to my mums and told her and she goes, I'm ringing the police. So then they came and he's kind of gone to me, don't you tell them anything. But as soon as I opened the door I was a mess, and I couldn't even speak. I just pointed in the bedroom. And then they come in and I'd showed them the knife and everything under the bed and all the stuff. And he'd actually said that he was getting something and took off out the back door, over the fence and took off, got away from them.*

*Kim: Had he threatened you with the knife?*

*Bianca: Oh yeah, he'd actually come in, he'd already gone to the pantry and got a knife, come in and held the knife to my throat against my bed and then was choking me. I actually, at one stage he wouldn't let me go, wouldn't let my throat go, I actually picked up the knife with both hands and I was scared and I actually pushed the knife into his stomach because he wasn't going to let my throat go but it just bounced off his stomach.*

#### 4.3.4.2 Seeking ego support.

In most cases, however, the ongoing abuse took the form of harassment, stalking and intimidation. When victims were exposed to new and often more subtle forms of abuse after ending their relationships, they sometimes sought to have that abuse named and their belief that they should not have to tolerate it validated. This need is a form of ego-support similar to that seen in the enduring phase. Indeed, many victims start to endure ongoing abuse during recovery. They need this form of abuse to be taken seriously. Ego-support is also needed for victims to assert their new independence and to follow through with formal processes, such as subsequent hearings for intervention orders and criminal charges. Victims often highlighted the importance to them of having an alliance with a particular police officer who they perceived as caring, protective and on their side through this difficult and sometimes lengthy period.

Chelsea has a long history of leaving and returning to the relationship. It was extremely difficult for her to resist his attempts to resume the relationship. However, the support of one particular officer helped her through this period. Her partner was eventually charged with breach of intervention order.

*Kim: Do you think that you would have been able to keep him away, keep him out without the police following up with the breach of intervention order?*

*Chelsea: No, because what actually happened, he started stalking me. And I was advised by the DV worker to start keeping a diary and to report every single incident to the police, which I did. I dealt with one senior constable there. He seemed very, very nice. But it took ages you know, I kept saying what's happening, why isn't he being arrested? He's breaching the order again. He's stalking me. And he kept saying, it takes time. We have to gather evidence; we have to investigate. He said, I'm taking a record of all this. He said, just keep the diary and keep reporting when everything happens. And then eventually they did manage to get hold of him and I think they must have said something to him because he stopped, stopped stalking me and he left me alone.*

Similarly, when Bianca's immediate safety had been restored, she made follow-up contact with police on several occasions. Initially she wanted to ascertain whether police had proceeded with criminal charges, and later she rang to report that her home had been broken into and she suspected that it was him. At this time Bianca

attempted to make contact with the police officers who responded on the night of the assault. As they had witnessed her trauma, she thought they were in a much better position to help her through the process of making her statement, and would be more likely to believe her.

*Bianca: It wasn't until, I think a couple of days later, I rang up and spoke to them and said, was he charged with assault. And they said, no if you want him charged, you'll have to come in and make a statement. And I was kind of like, well they're the ones doing their job, they should have told me that night to make a statement.*

*Kim: Did you ring the local station?*

*Bianca: Yeah, I spoke to the policeman that actually came out here that night. And I went in to see them as well and they basically told me they got into trouble that night for not doing their job properly. And if I wanted to make a statement I had to make it with somebody else. There was a female that I actually saw and made the statement to her. But even when I was making the statement, on that night he actually threatened that he was going to rape me and he actually pulled it out and threatened me. And when I was telling her what had happened that night, she said, oh that's pretty serious. I don't know if she didn't believe me; she didn't put it in the statement. And I just thought okay, whatever. She just didn't put it in the statement, she's typing it up and everything and so that's what happened. I don't think she believed me.....*

*Kim: So the ones that you actually asked for, did you think that they would be more likely to believe you?*

*Bianca: Yeah, I did because they came out on the night. But then again, they didn't take the statement. And I couldn't work out why they wouldn't take a statement when, you know, it was serious. And they saw the knife. I didn't touch anything. They saw the knife sticking out from under my bed. They saw the phone cord on the floor. I don't know, I just felt really let down, yeah.....I think they would have known a bit easier what I was saying. They'd seen him, knew what it was like. And the things that I'd said to them, they might recall. Sometimes you have to think about it and it might come to you later or something.*

*Kim: So if they had interviewed you, they would have been able to help you remember things because of what they'd seen?*

*Bianca: Yeah, because like I'd told them. It was just fresh that night and I'd told them. I actually remember saying to them, he is going to kill me; I'm telling you that he is going to kill me. I remember saying that to them, trying to tell them that I'm serious. I'm not just mucking around.*

Even though her partner had been charged, his abuse was unrelenting. Bianca also hoped those same officers would take her concerns about his ongoing harassment seriously. After he broke into her house again, she made further contact seeking an

alliance to keep him away. Bianca's story illustrates victims' need for an ongoing relationship with responding officers; they seek continuity of care.

*Bianca: I kept asking to see the police that attended on the night of the assault because I wanted them to know me and know what was going on. And when he'd broken in, even though I couldn't prove it was him, I knew it was him and I wanted to see them to see what I could do. My tyres were slashed on my car and I know that was him. My car was scratched. That was him. It was just proving things that I couldn't prove. But I asked to see them all the time but they kind of just brushed it off all the time.....It just seemed like he didn't want anything to do with it. I wanted to stick to ringing up the same person so that I could tell them anything that I needed to tell them, anything that was going on or happened or what I should do so they knew and I didn't want to keep going to someone different. It just seemed like he didn't want to know about anything else. I was like oh, alright.*

In contrast, Leanne received ongoing care, support, and protection prior to her partner's release from jail. She was extremely fearful of his potential for retaliatory violence. With the support of one particular officer, she went to Court to apply for an intervention order. When an alliance was formed, victims commonly perceived that the officer's efforts went beyond the requirements of their role, as Leanne described.

*Leanne: He was coming down to make sure that the grills were on the windows and to make sure I was safe. He's the best police officer I've ever met in my life. He was an A1 guy. When he knocked on the door I enjoyed seeing him because he was supportive to me through what I'd been through.*

*Kim: I know that you were very frightened. Did he help to make you feel a little bit safer in that time?*

*Leanne: Yes, all the time. He used to come up twice a week knocking on the door to see if I was alright. Not many police officers will do that; they just have their job and they just do it but he is the most gorgeous guy I think I've ever met as a police officer.*

*Kim: So do you feel like he took a real interest in your case?*

*Leanne: Yes, yes, and he still does. Mum's rung him and he's rung my Mum. He's very supportive in my life.*

Jenny sought validation of her concern prior to seeking an extension of her intervention order. The officer's support was needed to give her the confidence to proceed and the information he provided helped facilitate the process.

*Jenny: Because I asked for a meeting with the family violence liaison officer. I sat down with him, just before I sought the new intervention order. I said, this is where I'm standing; this is what's been happening. This is what I want to do. I want to go and get an extension to the intervention order. I wanted to sort of feel the water of how the police would feel about it, whether they would actually support that move, or whether I was out on my own. And he was very supportive of that. He was saying, oh of course. Yeah go ahead and do that. ....I'm glad I went to see him because he said, look, go and see the police liaison officer, the court liaison officer for the police. He said, oh so and so will be on that day. Go and speak to him. He's really nice. And that gave me the confidence to actually approach him and not think that I was just wasting his time. So you know, we get along famously, him and I.*

Sophie also made many cold calls to the local police to report breaches. Her aim was to officially record his ongoing harassment. Many victims fear their ex-partners' potential for violence. Sophie wanted the police to bear witness to the ongoing harassment in case it should escalate. Seeking testimony was a common feature of the recovery phase, where victims sought to formalise the validation of their concerns.

*Kim: And was an intervention order in place during that time?*

*Sophie: Oh yeah but they wouldn't do anything. I just documented it. I recorded the phone calls, put it in writing, went and gave it to police, my little bimonthly delivery. And they put it the file; must be a big file. I've got copies of it and I guess I just feel if he does do something major, it's all there. They can't turn around and say, well we didn't expect this, or whatever. I've done all I can do, really.*

*Kim: What do you mean by if he does something major?*

*Sophie: Well if he goes over the edge and does something to the kids or myself or my family members.*

#### **4.3.4.2 Seeking Justice.**

Several victims expressed the belief that their partner continued to harass them as a way of continuing his controlling presence in their lives or as an act of revenge for leaving. Contact with the police to report breaches or to obtain an intervention order if there wasn't one was common during recovery. Under these circumstances, she is not only seeking to stop the behaviours, she is seeking to have her right to end an abusive relationship without retribution upheld. She needs the police to take her

concerns seriously and send a powerful message that she has the right to be free from the relationship and does not deserve to be harassed for leaving.

Marlene described ongoing psychological abuse that was difficult to prove in court and impossible for her to prevent on her own.

*Marlene: The driving by is continuous. He comes over here sometimes at night and he'll drive in right to the back door. He sends me numerous SMSs. I've had heaps of abusive emails about how crazy I am. We have a communication book and he writes things continually, really horrible, horrible degrading things. For a little while there he wanted to meet me by myself and discuss things and I would never do it. And he got angrier and angrier with that and kept taking me back to Court.*

*Kim: So what have the police advised you now?*

*Marlene: They said I need to get an intervention order. But they never give you any advice on it.*

*Kim: So they don't say we will initiate that...*

*Marlene: No because it's not physical, he's not coming over here beating me up or he hasn't threatened to kill you; he's just said you're going to pay for this. It's very clever; it is very clever what he says.*

*Kim: So in all of this, what do you think his motive is?*

*Marlene: He wants revenge and he's going to make my life as miserable as possible and he loves it; he loves doing it. I haven't been able to stop him. I've been back to court for an intervention order and they said they'd give it to me but they said, we're really concerned that he's going to come and do a contested hearing again and you're going to have to pay the barristers. They basically said that it's not going to work*

During the recovery phase, abusive men often use the legal system to keep their ex-partners psychologically entrapped and engaged, as Sophie aptly described in the following extracts, her partner wanted to drag her back into his realm of control. A contested hearing for an intervention order becomes an opportunity to vindicate himself. He had also been using Family Law processes as a means of harassing her, constantly changing or not complying with access orders, and taking advantage of opportunities at court hearings to intimidate her.

*Sophie: Anyway he wanted me in that Magistrate's Court three weeks ago to get up on the stand and get into trouble from the judge for leaving him basically. That's what this is all about when you break it down.*

*Sophie: He hasn't snapped yet and I'm worried this Family Law stuff is probably going to be my most nerve wracking thing. If it doesn't go the way he wants it, that's when I think it will be. He's fed off this; he's used this as*

*his power and control over me since we separated really and that's going to all come to an end in February. So in one way, it's going to be a relief either way to me to just have someone rule on it; it's over, he can't keep dragging me back. I actually said to my lawyer, you know, this vexatious litigant business, when is he classed as that? He's had me in Court every month. One time I was in Court three times in two weeks.*

Sophie also described how he was trying to maintain his control over her while she was trying to assert herself. When he turned up on her door step and wouldn't leave, she called police in an effort to assert her rights.

*Kim: What was your main reason for calling them?*

*Sophie: I was frightened about what he was going to do. He seemed pretty persistent and he knew full well he shouldn't have been here. He had been advised in writing, numerous letters between lawyers; please be advised if your client turns up, my client will be calling the police. Yet he still did it.....*

*By the time they came here, he'd left. He actually went to the police station to report me.*

Both parties were told by police to contact their lawyers to sort out their custody issues. Sophie recognised his actions as an attempt to show his domination.

Although she understood that formal options were limited, she wanted police to use their authority to warn him to leave her alone.

*Kim: So when you called the police that night, was that part of a plan?*

*Sophie: My lawyer had advised me to do it, yeah,*

*Kim: What did you think or expect that they'd do?*

*Sophie: I thought he wouldn't leave. I was surprised he left, I thought he'd stay there and I just wanted them to tell him to go and leave us alone. I think given the circumstances, they did the right thing. There wasn't much they could do because of the Family Court orders overriding the intervention orders. I would have liked them probably to give him a warning, even though, he was technically in the right with Court orders, but the fact that there was an intervention order there.*

Many victims seek to assert their rights in this manner in the recovery phase; similar to the enduring phase, they want police to warn their ex-partner there will be consequences if the abuse continues. Again, they seek to have their rights upheld; only this time it is in regard to their rights to be free of the relationship.

*Jenny: I want to ask the police liaison officer to actually speak to my ex-partner; sit him down and tell him what it means. He actually offered to do that at one point.*

It is usually only when victims reach the end of their endurance that they finally get to the point of actually seeking charges.

*Kim: So ideally, what would you like the police to do?*

*Sophie: To charge him if he breaches it next time, yeah. There's too much water under the bridge now. It's not as if it's, fair enough it was a mistake or you know, a one-off*

#### **4.4 Seeking criminal charges – the need to avoid retribution**

Reluctance to pursue criminal charges was consistent across relationship stages, with only a few exceptions. When asked by police whether victims wanted their abuser charged, most did not, underpinned by fear of retribution and a well-established pattern of not antagonising him further. Victims also dreaded the ordeal of facing him in Court and having to recount their experiences. Concerns about the effect that a criminal conviction would have on other family members, especially their children, added to their reservations. All who proceeded with charges were concerned about their partners' reactions. It is only in hindsight, for those in recovery, that the idea of charges is more plausible.

Victims want the violence to end; they want to be left alone, but they rarely seek vengeance. Leanne was particularly concerned about the ramifications of calling police if her husband was charged.

*Kim: But you never, all those times that you called them, it was never your intention for him to be charged and taken to jail?*

*Leanne: No, I've only called the police to protect myself.*

*Kim: So was it protecting you and getting him away from you?*

*Leanne: Yes. Protecting himself and protecting myself as well because I didn't want my husband to go to jail. It hurts me still now even though I can't stand him here what he's done to me. But I wouldn't wish anyone in jail. So it's probably hard.*

However, they do want him to know that what he has done is wrong, and they want to ensure that it doesn't recur.

*Chelsea: And also that something would be done about him; that he wouldn't just get away with it. When he did move on to that next*

*relationship, he bashed her up as well and she didn't lay any charges either. It just makes him feel omnipotent. I can bash these women and they're too shit-scared to do anything about it, so I can just keep treating women like this. It compounds his poor opinion of women in the first place; that they're weak, pathetic, individuals and men can treat them how they want.*

Rachael recognised that the decision to charge him should reside with police.

*Rachael: It probably would make it easier if the police had that decision to make. If they could make that decision because it's very hard for me or other women to make that decision knowing sometimes what the repercussions are going to be. So if it is taken out of our hands then yeah, that's probably a good thing.*

At the time, Jenny only wanted him out of her life.

*Kim: What did you think about the fact that they were charging him? Is that what you wanted? Had you thought about?*

*Jenny: I hadn't really thought about what would happen to him. Really, all I want him is to go away and leave me alone. I don't care what happens to him. He can be a happy millionaire or he can be dying in the gutter, I really don't care as long as he's nowhere near me. He can be as happy or sad or as insane or joyful as he wants to be, I don't care, I just want him gone.*

On reflection, however, she recognised that charging him was a powerful reinforcement to her, that her rights had been violated.

*Jenny: In some ways it kind of gave me a bit more confidence that he was being charged that there was actually something that what I was objecting to, the behaviour, his behaviour that I was objecting to, it was realistic to object to it..... A justification I guess that, no that's the wrong thing to do.*

#### **4.5 Concluding interpretations**

Victims of IPV who seek assistance from police are motivated to do so by fear. Those who make a crisis call for assistance fear for their immediate physical and psychological safety. Those who make a cold call have grave concerns about their partners' potential for future violence and for the escalation of such violence beyond levels that they have previously been able to manage alone. Most victims of IPV initially have little understanding of police processes or of their rights to protection, and typically lack a sense of entitlement to justice. Therefore, it is difficult for them to conceptualise precisely what it is they expect or hope police will do. The most commonly expressed help-seeking aspiration is for police to simply "make it stop"

or “just make him leave.” Although it is abundantly evident that women who contact police in response to the violence in their lives are seeking safety and want to be free from abuse, their ability to identify their needs or articulate specific aims is severely compromised by the consequences of victimisation processes and by the devastating psychological demands of their situation. Victims who seek police assistance are desperate for help but not fully cognisant of how such help should be manifested.

A victim’s diminished confidence in her own reality testing ability, compounded by severely depleted psychological resources results in a profoundly impaired sense of personal agency, which limits her ability to advocate on her own behalf. Her voice is further silenced by the overwhelming emotions experienced as the result of a violent incident and her efforts to bring those emotions under control, all of which occur in the context of fear of retribution from a partner who is, in her eyes, an omnipotent force who dominates with impunity. Therefore, the ostensibly straightforward question that police often pose to victims when they are responding to IPV incidents, “What do you want us to do?” is actually quite difficult to answer and may contribute to erroneous assumptions by police that she is not serious about wanting help to increase her safety. These findings suggest that it is more appropriate for police to take the lead and adopt a more proactive, directive approach.

To provide more effective assistance and protection to victims of IPV, it may be helpful to consider their needs, and the ways in which these needs are differentially expressed, according to victims’ relationship stage. The findings explicated in this chapter suggest Landenburger’s (1989) model provides a useful framework for understanding victims’ needs. Although all the women interviewed sought safety, the way that safety was envisaged varied. During the binding and enduring phases, victims were primarily concerned with dealing with an immediate incident, and therefore, they were likely to seek safety via short-term escape. However, victims in the enduring phase also hoped for more long-term freedom from abuse, whilst still wishing to maintain the relationship, resulting in efforts to elicit informal police assistance in convincing perpetrators to desist from future violence.

During the disengaging phase, victims endeavoured to procure long-term safety and, therefore, they sought instrumental assistance to end or leave the relationship, along with protection from future violence, which they anticipated may be a repercussion of leaving. Such fear is well grounded, as the point of leaving a relationship has been identified in past research as extremely dangerous and a risk factor for IPV related femicide (J.C. Campbell et al., 2003; Walsh et al., 2012). During the recovery phase, victims often experienced continued violence and new forms of abuse. Their help-seeking needs centred on preventing escalation of such violence and making the perpetrator desist from these tactics of ongoing domination and intimidation. It is during this stage that reports of breaches of intervention orders are most likely to be made. It is also during this stage that women begin to tentatively assert their rights and seek some form of social sanction against the violence. It is not until the recovery phase that victims retrospectively realise that more formal action should have been pursued and at a much earlier time.

When calling police for assistance, victims of IPV are also seeking a powerful ally. They see police as having authority, expertise and power, and accordingly victims seek ego-support in the form of advocacy and facilitation. Police have the formal means and interpersonal resources to bolster victims' severely depleted psychological resources and limited sense of agency. Victims need police to adopt a directive, yet supportive, approach to enable victims to take steps towards securing safety that they would otherwise be unable to take on their own. They also need police to provide an external perspective against which the victim can evaluate her experience. Lack of confidence in her ability to judge the seriousness of the violence, quite often associated with concerns that she is going crazy, result in a need for confirmation and acknowledgement. Victims of IPV want police to confirm that the violence is a matter of concern and that they have a legitimate right to expect it to stop and to expect protection. They want their status as a victim to be validated and their right to be free from abuse defended. As such they seek justice.

The ways in which the need for justice is experienced and expressed also varies across relationship stages. In the binding phase, the most fundamental need is for IPV to be named so that the victim has a context in which she can make sense of her experience. The need for advocacy is experienced during the enduring phase.

Victims want the police to tell him it is wrong and he must stop. There is an element of exposing the violence, which is a stance against the “covering” (Landenburger, 1989, p.218) that dominates the enduring phase. In the disengaging phase, they want the police to support their right to leave the relationship. It is during this stage that a victim is most likely to want or agree to an intervention order. However, such decisions are tentative and fraught with apprehension. Therefore, a victim needs instrumental support in obtaining the intervention order and will want the police to apply for it on her behalf, validating her right to protection. During the recovering phase, victims gradually regain a sense of agency and attempt to assert themselves. There is more emphasis on showing him that the ongoing harassment won’t be tolerated. By the recovery phase, denial and minimisation of the violence are no longer as dominant, but there is still some reluctance to antagonise him by pursuing formal options. She wants her right to live her life separately, without recrimination or harassment, upheld. She wants police to obtain an intervention order if there isn’t already one in place or to enforce an existing one, although she does not necessarily seek criminal charges for a breach. Her preferred approach is still minimalistic, and so she seeks advocacy to make her abuser take the order seriously. In this respect, victims’ aspirations in the recovery phase often mirror those of the enduring phase. Therefore, a proactive approach by police is needed to counteract the victim’s persisting tendency to tolerate the inappropriate behaviour of her abuser.

## **Chapter five: Findings – the police response**

The previous chapter examined victims' differential needs and help-seeking aspirations within the context of Landenburger's (1989) relationship stage model. The current chapter explores the way police respond to those needs. The interplay between police values, assessments and consequent action taken when responding to victims is examined. The various ways victims are viewed by police is then considered. Finally, a crucial element of effective policing of IPV, the empowering alliance, is conceptualised, and is shown to be intricately related to the status afforded to victims by police.

### **5.1 Police values**

Police intervention is predicated on the assessments made when responding to IPV. As previously outlined (2.2.2), operational guidelines dictate police must determine whether there are concerns for the immediate safety of the AFM, taking into account the presence of risk factors and the level of fear expressed by the victim, and must take formal action when risk is identified. Not surprisingly, the level of physical violence apparent provides a powerful cue to police in regards to risk of future harm. However, the findings indicated police also take into account other cues, derived from their interaction with the victim and perpetrator. Particularly in ambiguous situations, police rely on their subjective interpretation of situational cues in exercising their discretion. Furthermore, as well as the formal resources available to police, they also possess, to varying degrees, intrapersonal resources that may be offered or withheld, entirely at their discretion.

Findings indicated judgements and decisions are made within the broader context of police cultural values and also within the micro-level context of the immediate situation. A deeper understanding of the police approach to IPV was reached when the mediating influence of police values was considered. A set of interrelated values was identified that influence police decision making. Valued outcomes were effecting change in problematic relationships and competently executing the

policing role. Valued resources associated with these outcomes were the power to act decisively and time. The most salient situational factor was proximity to the violent incident.

### **5.1.1 Police powers – avoiding ambiguity of action**

Police participants used different forms of power in executing their policing role. The most highly valued were formal police powers that are ratified by legislation and incorporated into policing practice by formal processes and documented guidelines. In particular, the power to arrest was seen as an effective tool in responding to IPV. Police are most comfortable in executing arrest powers when the criteria to do so are unequivocally met. Although the work involved may be extensive, it was seen as clear cut and easy. They do not have to expend additional time seeking or choosing options, as the most appropriate action is obvious. Formal powers enable police to *do all that they can* to respond to a victim in need. When there is sufficient physical evidence, police can act without victim co-operation or a victim statement. Although police preferred to act with the consent of the victim, the power to take prescriptive action is highly valued because it prevents possible accusations of police failing in their duties. It also allows them to deal directly with the perpetrator, removing any onus for action from the victim, and therefore, providing a shield against retribution from the abuser.

*P4. If I turn up and we've got a girl with a black eye or an injury or whatever it is, well that's just to me, far less stressful. That's easy, I know exactly what I've got to do in that situation. It gives me a whole range of powers. Particularly in the instance of injuries, we've got powers that extend to prosecuting the matter all the way to the end without even requiring any cooperation from the aggrieved family member.*

When police have concerns for the immediate safety of the victim they must apply for an intervention order, usually via an application and warrant. The warrant constitutes an arrest power that allows the officer to take the defendant into custody and bail him on conditions that replicate those applied for in the intervention order application, including the provision to not go within 200 metres of the victim. Thus the application process effectively removes the abuser from the property and prohibits his return.

The criterion of *concerns for the immediate safety of the victim* was interpreted by police as concerns for the physical safety of the victim. Although they may have concerns for the psychological safety and overall wellbeing of the victim, these concerns were not construed as meeting procedural prerequisites. Therefore, the judgements police make about the level of physical violence perpetrated are crucial in their decisions associated with invoking police powers. As well as operational guidelines, police were also influenced by their on the job experience of obtaining warrants from the on call Registrar. They know the circumstances under which a warrant is likely to be granted. Such knowledge is especially relevant when deciding how to proceed when the evidence of physical violence is not strong. In such cases, police discretion is foregrounded (see section 5.2.5).

When responding to IPV, police also used the power of their authority to intervene and manage the situation. Although less tangible, police authority is a formidable phenomenon inherent in the policing role itself and, therefore, is not contingent on the particulars of the immediate situation but resides with the officer. However, individual police officers will undoubtedly differ in the level of confidence with which they exercise this power. When an arrest power is not obvious or there is not enough evidence for criminal charges, police will sometimes use their authority to warn the perpetrator or the couple that they *need to pull their heads in*.

*Kim: After he was released, were you concerned about her safety afterwards?*

*P5: No, because if my memory serves me right he served a bit of time in the holding cell. He realized that this was it and a couple of the male members made it known to him that if he ever went there, that address was on our radar now and he's not to do anything. So I think it got through to him, even though he was arrogant for that long, it only took that wake up for him to know that it's not going to be tolerated.*

At other times, for example, when police detect psychological abuse or there is no obvious evidence of physical violence, they may use the power of persuasion. In contrast to explicit formal powers, powers of persuasion are very much dependent on the interpersonal skills and insight of individual police officers, and are utilised at their discretion. When police interpret that a relationship is harmful, but they have

no power to formally intervene, they endeavour to persuade the victim that she needs to end the relationship and should seek an intervention order herself to end it safely, as described in the following extract.

*Antoinette: The policeman told me, the way you live is not worth living in this house if you're not happy, so just do it. And I told him that I was scared that maybe he would kill me and he said, you'll never know until you try. Do it and get the intervention order and then we'll see what's happening. So he tried to very gently, he didn't tell me, you have to, he said, it's up to you.....I cannot help you right now when you're here and you're married and there's nothing wrong with you. We cannot help you, so if you're not happy you have to do something about it and then we'll help you.*

The police urged Antoinette to get an intervention order to give them the power to remove her partner and the ability to charge him with a breach of intervention order if he refused to stay away or continued to intimidate her. In this situation, an intervention order represents a form of power that is mediated by the action of the victim. Whilst the notion of police (Bowker, 1983) and the use of judicial sanctions (Ford, 1991) empowering victims is well established, the role of the victim in empowering police is perhaps more novel. As demonstrated by the following extract, an intervention order is valued because it allows police to take formal action against prohibited behaviours that would not be considered criminal in the absence of an order.

*P7: It just gives us an extra power to act. It gives us an actual criminal charge to charge someone with if they breach it, even if what they're doing in itself isn't being a criminal offence. Like if they're just being a bastard or intimidating or harassing, which is something that in and of itself you can't do anything about. But if there's an intervention order, you can do something, which is why we encourage people who are in relationships like that and have had enough of it, we encourage them to take up orders.*

### **5.1.2 Effecting change in the relationship**

Police feel rewarded when they perceive their intervention will result in long term change to a problematic relationship. This outcome was frequently described when police were asked to provide a positive and professionally satisfying example of policing IPV. They value taking decisive action that will bring about a demonstrable and permanent change for the better in victims' lives. The benefits of such change

are two-fold. First and foremost, positive change will result in a better life for the victim and her children. Police frequently appeal to the victim to consider seeking a better life; that is, a life without violence. Secondly, police perceive positive change will prevent re-attendance to respond to future violent episodes, thus saving valuable police resources.

In a relationship where abuse is an entrenched pattern of behavior or when severe physical violence is perpetrated, police endeavour to facilitate the termination of the relationship, which is expedited by initiating an application for an intervention order.

An alternative means of effecting change in the relationship also valued by police is to initiate judicial procedures with the aim of changing perpetrators' violent behaviour.

*P1: One which was a positive case was a young couple. He's assaulted her. The assault was fairly serious I'd say. She was more of a timid type. It took a lot of courage to come into the police station and report it. I've taken a statement, let her know what's going to happen. He's gone to court from that. She's been given a heap of liaison agencies and formal referrals. In the end they're back together but he's definitely pulled his head in, somewhat big time and he knows what the circumstances are and what the repercussions are because he's had to go the whole way, go to court. He didn't receive a conviction. He was given a diversion but in the end he's actually understood how serious domestic violence is. And although she's still with him, he understands where there's a line that he can't cross and that there's other ways to work things out instead of resorting to violence like he did on that day.*

However, this goal was not cited as frequently as terminating the relationship with regard to effecting change, which reflects the prevailing assumption made by police that violent men are rarely able to change their behaviour.

*P2: A positive case for us would be somebody's been involved in domestic violence for a long period of time, they've finally got to the point where they've called the police. We've taken the action that we need to take, and they've got the protection that they need and then they move on with their life, getting away from the perpetrator.....because more times than not, the perpetrators never change. And unfortunately we tell the victims this all the time but they believe somehow this man will change. And in my eighteen years, I don't see too many of them change. They might say they're gonna change, then the next Saturday night have a few beers or whatever; their*

*footy team doesn't win so they take it out on their wives. They never change. And I don't see that they will change.*

In situations deemed less violent or less entrenched police value an undertaking by the couple that they will access external support, such as relationship counselling, to help them find better ways of dealing with their problems. When the violence is attributed to a specific problem that the couple is experiencing it is often perceived as being amenable to a counselling intervention rather than needing a legal remedy (see also section 5.2.4.4.).

The notion of contributing to a better life for a victim and her children is a powerful incentive to police. When they are optimistic that their efforts will result in such positive change, police experience strong positive reinforcement of internal motivation. In contrast, police are frustrated by victims who seek assistance but remain committed to the relationship. This frustration is most apparent when police are confronted with victims who are seen as chronic users of police services. An implicit rule of engagement that police often refer to is that they can only help if the victim wants to be helped. When the abuse is evidenced by recurrent physical violence and chronic police attendance, help is interpreted as help to end the relationship. Victims who do not want to end the relationship are erroneously perceived as not wanting help. This finding is consistent with victim-blaming attitudes previously reported in the literature (DeJong et al., 2008; Russell & Light, 2006). The most common dissatisfaction reported by police was that although they had done everything required, there were no discernible gains; another call to the same address was deemed inevitable.

*P9: The police have been to this address many, many times and the last time we took out another order because one had lapsed and the victim just hadn't bothered to take it out again because the twelve months she'd had it for had lapsed and she'd thought oh it'll be okay now. When during that period of that twelve months it wasn't okay and he was still breaching the order in that twelve months and the police were still going there. And we were banging our heads against the wall because this person was inviting the male party to go there. He would be there for a couple of days and then they'd have a fight and she'd ring us and say, he's here breaching the order. That is quite common, not just for this one example but it is quite common across the board for that to happen. We went there and because of the violence on this occasion, we took out an urgent order, a complaint and warrant so we could arrest him, and we bailed him. We went to Court the*

*next day. She turned up to court and withdrew the complaint. That's extremely frustrating. Again, like I say, that is very common, very, very, common.*

### **5.1.3 Fulfilling police responsibilities**

Police valued competently executing the policing role. The police culture is action oriented and there exists amongst members a strong disposition to act decisively and quickly. In terms of policing IPV, police interpreted their role as: intervening in crisis situations to provide protection; initiating processes to get the matter to court for civil orders of protection or criminal charges or both; compiling a brief of evidence to support criminal justice proceedings; and supporting victims to attend Court.

Police also acknowledged their role is often broader and ill-defined, requiring interpersonal skills and more subtle intervention, which results in a level of discomfort and sometimes feelings of inadequacy.

*P.11: Every time we go to a family violence incident and we do a report, we always have to give a women's referral to the victim. So we fill out a form and that referral gets faxed straight there. They know about it, they've got the details of this victim and they'll give her a call to say, do you need any further assistance? How can we help you? So we sort of clear ourselves from that end so that they can get the appropriate support because we're obviously not social workers.*

The most credence was given to work that involves utilising formal processes. Police achieve a sense of satisfaction from progressing a case all the way through from initial intervention to the Court hearing. Their responsibility ends once the matter is brought before the Court, and most police officers try to not concern themselves with the outcomes of the judicial process, as they often feel quite disappointed by the perceived leniency of the Court. Nevertheless, police believe that bringing the defendant to Court shows him that police will not tolerate his violent behaviour and that he will be held accountable. Additionally, by fully implementing all their available options for action, police accomplish satisfaction from doing all that they possibly can to help the victim.

Police were also motivated to respond appropriately by their concerns regarding public criticism. They not only want to work effectively, they want to be seen to be meeting their policing responsibilities. Such concerns are closely linked to their apprehension regarding wasted time. When police are responding to one call for assistance, they are also mindful that time off the road results in not being available to respond to other calls, which can contribute to complaints of police inadequacy.

*P4: If we were to act on every single reported instance of people having a verbal or a disagreement or where they've been shoved and there's no evidence, there's no witnesses, there's nothing to support that it's happened, there's just their word that they've been shoved. There's not a great deal that we can do but in those instances, it would be great if someone else did a little bit of follow-up, perhaps prepare a recommendation and submit it to the court. We would not be criticised for ignoring those cases and it would remove the burden off us, we would still be able to do something just by performing the notification.... I suppose the feeling is at the moment from the courts and from the public that every time one of these cases is reported to us that we should respond by taking out an intervention order. Too time consuming; an area like this might have ten police for the whole dayshift between 7.00 and 7.00 and you're going to tie up between 4 to 6 of them doing intervention orders every day. Literally, there'd be no one left to deal with on the spot crime, which should be our response.*

However, apart from operational efficiency of not having to revisit the same victim, they also gain personal satisfaction from helping, from doing something beyond their legally required duty. For example, they feel a great sense of satisfaction from a simple thank-you call from an appreciative victim. On the whole, policing is a thankless job and police are actually quite sensitive to criticism from the public. Recognition that they have made a positive contribution to protecting and improving someone's life is a substantial reward.

*P7: When everything comes together neatly like that, that's quite satisfying. I know now that he has gotten help and they're now on speaking terms. And I think she might have actually got the order revoked or varied at least so now the channels of communication are open and a lot better. She was very happy. She called me to thank me which is nice and very rare, very rare. So yeah, that was a positive experience because everything came together nicely, I was able to empathise with both parties because, you know, he wasn't a really bad guy, he was just grieving because he'd lost his family and he still loves her. It was nice being in a position where you could actually talk reasonably to both parties and get a result.*

There have been waves of intense scrutiny and public criticism of the police response to IPV, resulting in the operational and legal changes outlined in section 2.2.2. It is evident the introduction of the Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2004, 2010a) has resulted in perceptions of a culture change within Victoria Police, which reinforces their desire to respond effectively.

P1 was quick to defend the Victoria Police position on IPV.

*P1: We're doing a lot for domestic violence, Victoria Police is, but a lot of times people don't want to help themselves. You can only help them so much and then after that they've got to take on some of the burden and help themselves..... And on top of that gone are those days many years ago when police would come and say yep, yep, statement of no complaint, all done. It's all changing now, you just can't do this. And if you do it again, you think this time it's bad, next time it will be twice as worse and the time after that it'll get worse and worse until you end up doing time because the magistrate is understanding that as well.*

Police are often in a situation where they take action, in particular the action of seeking an intervention order, even when they believe that it is futile in terms of effecting change. They take action to fulfil their duty of care and avoid repercussions associated with accountability, referred to as butt-covering in policing parlance (Chan, 2007). However, they also take action to satisfy their own personal sense of responsibility, as P4 described:

*P4: I know that I've taken the intervention order; if something happens now, at least I know that for my part on the day I did everything that I could do.*

Indeed if police don't feel that they have given their best they are likely to feel guilty.

*P7: I didn't lose any sleep over it because I feel like I've done my bit. But there are times when I've noticed I haven't done as much as I could. Sometimes you come away or you go home feeling like, I might have been a bit of a bitch or I might have been a bit insensitive; feeling like I could have done more. I don't know, I feel guilty when I don't.*

#### **5.1.4 Time – investing resources wisely**

Policing IPV constitutes a large proportion of the policing workload. Furthermore, it is seen as time consuming due to the dual processes of the intervention order application and separate paperwork for criminal charges. Police experience time pressures related to attending to these requirements versus being available to respond to other calls for assistance, in the context of ongoing concerns about public criticism. Thus, time is a much valued resource, which influences the approach police take; they can perfunctorily fulfill their responsibilities or they can invest additional time and personal involvement to do as much as they possibly can.

P9 described achieving positive outcomes through taking extra time.

*P9: I think this was probably the third time I'd been to this one place, just for them arguing. It was the neighbours calling the police. In the end my partner and I sat down with them and we nussed out their problems. We must have been in this place for well over an hour, just talking out their issues. To the best of my knowledge, after that time we were there, the police weren't back there again. I sort of had an undertaking from him that he was going to stop yelling and he was going to listen more to her point of view because that's what it came down to.....I felt we might have done some good here. They might have got something out of what we said because we took that time. It wasn't time we had. We didn't have that hour to be there but we had to make it.*

Time was invested because he believed the victim wanted help and there was potential for change.

*P9: You get the feeling from the people who want help and those who don't because those who want help will actually listen to what you're saying. They might not act on it but they'll actually listen. Those that don't really want any help, they won't even listen to you. I draw an inference: if they're willing to listen, they're willing to actually make a change here for the better. That's me.....Sometimes it's worth making that time. Because if it means down the track that we're not going to be going back there again, that's time well spent.*

The desire to not return is also a factor in the dissatisfaction police feel in regard to responding to chronic users. Chronicity is an abhorred phenomenon in the police culture. There is a deep seated frustration in the perceived futility of the work police undertake in these cases.

*P1: You're thinking there's so many other jobs out there, so many more people out there needing legitimate police help, yet we get called to this. And then we've got to follow this procedure, and then that's your thank-you for it.....The result was a waste of time because no-one appeared at court, she didn't offer us a statement, it was a waste of time, waste of resources. It was also bad because they continued calling police later on for further domestics and this procedure kept on happening and happening and we couldn't put a stop to it..... Fighting, screaming and every time police would go there it wasn't resolved. They'd tell police to fuck off. Police would follow the criteria, do everything by the book and then no-one would appear in court.....Ones gotta want to help themselves first too, and they didn't wanna help themselves.*

## **5.2 Making assessments**

When responding to an IPV incident police must first assess the situation in order to determine the appropriate course of action. When responding at the scene, the first priorities are to assess immediate safety issues, bring any disturbance under control, facilitate medical intervention if necessary, and calm the parties down so that they can begin to investigate the matter. Only the latter two issues are usually relevant when women report to the police station. Once the immediate situation is managed, police make a number of assessments to determine how to proceed. They firstly ascertain whether or not there is anything that they must do to satisfy legal and procedural requirements. Thereafter, any further intervention occurs at the discretion of the police officer. Police decide whether there is anything they could possibly do in addition to their mandated requirements that might be helpful. In reaching such a decision, police are in effect deciding whether or not to invest additional time to engage with the victim and seek an alliance. There are three pertinent aspects of the situation that influence the approach police take when responding to a woman seeking assistance for an IPV related matter: level of violence; relationship dynamics; and expected efficacy of interventions. Close proximity to the victim's experience facilitates awareness of these elements.

### **5.2.1 Proximity – being in the drama**

There are two elements of proximity that police experience; immediacy of the event and locality of the response. As previously described, police respond to either a

crisis call or a cold call. In a crisis call, the violent event is temporally close. Some victims flee directly to the police station or to someone they trust, such as a close friend or family member, who then convinces them that the assault should be reported and usually accompanies them to the police station. However, in the majority of situations described by both victim and police participants, police were called to attend at the home by the victim, another family member, a neighbour or even by the perpetrator to intervene in an incident as it is occurring or shortly afterwards. Temporally, both situations involve close proximity. However, the latter comprises an additional element of proximity due to the police presence at the scene and their experience of being involved in managing the immediate situation.

On arrival, police are usually confronted by one of two situations; the victim and aggressor may both be present; or the perpetrator may have left the scene upon realising that the police have been called. Both these situations involve close proximity to the experience, particularly the former. The police are witness to the emotional experience of the incident or exposed to the immediate aftermath of the incident in the latter case. The experience of being involved in the human drama of a violent relationship is heightened when the perpetrator is still present, and provides police with vital information as to the dynamics of the relationship (see section 5.2.3).

In the following extract, P4 described the personal nature and resultant additional stress associated with intervening at the scene. In managing the immediate incident, the police member becomes involved in the interaction between the victim and perpetrator and consequently has a role to play in bringing the event to a conclusion. This role goes beyond the procedures of routine policing, is experienced as stressful, and has a greater element of personal involvement for the police member.

*P4: Generally for me the part that's traumatic or stressful is actually being present and doing your referee role or that initial action at a scene. Because, I can't put it any better way than to say, you become part of the stress that's in the air. I mean you're in that person's house, in their home listening to them argue or tell you about an argument that's happened. I mean it's like if you were visiting a couple of friends and all of a sudden they were at it, into a domestic. You'd be really uncomfortable in that environment. And unfortunately the human side of our role is that we are there; we're just right in the middle of what's going on. And it's not an enjoyable thing to*

*have to witness, be a part of, and it's really personalised by the fact that you're in their home. I find a domestic much easier to take when the girl comes into the counter and says, oh, I've been assaulted, and we just sit down and do statements. It's in the realms of a regular criminal offence. She could come in and say, I've been assaulted by my partner or she could come in and say, I've just been robbed in the car park at Maccas. It's for me, it's the attendance at the home that really personalises it, makes it stressful.*

The extent of the initial police response is testament to the unpredictable, volatile and sometimes chaotic nature of policing IPV.

*P6: There were five children there at the time. It was a night shift so it was 1.00 or 2.00 in the morning, I think. And all the kids were up, and running around with all the noise.....There were a couple of vans in the end. We don't like going to them by ourselves. We like to have back up. I suppose, in a sense because with these situations, we don't know which way they're going to go down. We can walk in there and then they both turn against the police so it's better to be safe than sorry.....On this night we had the sergeant out there as well..... I think there were three cars all up that turned up for that one.*

In contrast, in a situation where police arrive at the scene and the perpetrator has left and there are no visible signs of any sort of disturbance, the experience is less intense, and they may not be inclined to engage with the victim.

Police are not altogether comfortable in the necessity to intervene in a situation involving intimate partners, particularly if there is no evidence of physical abuse. This attitude is all the more apparent when the response occurs in someone's home rather than in the public domain. Although there has been a substantial cultural change with a resultant ideological shift, there is still evidence at the micro, interpersonal level of police discomfort with intervening between those involved in an intimate relationship. It seems there are still some remnants of the era when domestic violence was considered a private matter, and not appropriate police work. Factors such as the age discrepancy between the police member and the victim or perpetrator exacerbate this discomfort. After five years of policing, P10 admits to occasionally feeling a level of discomfort when responding to IPV.

*P10: When I joined I was twenty two and I'm going into a house and telling people my parents' age what to do. I felt stupid, to be honest. Here's someone who's been married ten or twenty years or whatever and I'm just a kid who didn't even have a girlfriend and I'm telling them what to do in a*

*relationship.....and I still feel silly now when I'm telling someone ten years older than me how to have a relationship; like who am I to tell? But when it comes to the sense of one's breaking the law or something, then that's pretty clear cut in that sense. But as in how they're feeling or a psychological view, that's pretty hard on everyone really.....I don't think it's a case of not being there. We've obviously got a call and we're doing our job in being there. Sometimes we get called to a lot of things that aren't really – you know, everyone has arguments. A neighbour might hear that and call that in. Suddenly we're in their house and there's probably no need at times.*

Police feel more relaxed and in control of the situation when the victim seeks assistance at a police station. However, even at the police station, when the violent incident has temporal proximity, the impact it has on the victim is more tangible and the police more readily empathise with the victim. When reported shortly after it has occurred, police are exposed to the victim's distress, fear, shame, bewilderment, betrayal, and physical injuries.

*P4: He turned up at her place, basically made allegations that she was seeing someone. The situation escalated to the point where he actually beat her quite badly, very severely bruised over probably 90% of her body. Really quite horrific. And what she ends up doing is going and taking refuge with her sister. And the sister realises that she's quite upset, realises that she's hurt. The sister was really instrumental in dragging her down to the police station and I literally mean dragging her to the police station.*

In contrast, a cold call refers to help-seeking endeavours that are initiated, either by phone or in person at a police station, some time after the event has occurred. There is usually no immediate danger to the victim, nor is the aftermath of a violent incident apparent. Consequently, there is no need for immediate intervention to stop an abusive incident. Cold calls are temporally distal and removed from the scene. They are characterised by a lack of police exposure to the actual incident or aftermath of the incident.

*P4: A lot of the time we'll get called and it will be regarding a breach of an intervention..... Just for my own purposes I would probably classify that more as a criminal investigation than as a domestic dispute because it's cold, it's happened. It's past tense. And I'm then basically taking statements and interviewing the parties as opposed to coming and managing the actual incident.*

There is strong evidence to suggest that cold calls are less likely to elicit a satisfactory response from police. This is especially true when victims are reporting

a non-violent breach of intervention order; time invested to produce a brief of evidence is weighed against the likelihood of a reasonable outcome at Court.

*P10: Look, you'd love to be able to do some of these idiots that breach them a lot easier but I've been through the process a couple of times where it's been a waste of everyone's time at the end of the day and it can be downheartening. I guess that's just the Court again, without trying to bag them too much. If he drove past and yelled something at her and drove off and there are no witnesses, only her statement. If I put that brief into a Sergeant and he checks it, he'll say straight away, there's not enough evidence there. So it won't even get to court. That's an hour where I could be doing something that is going to get to court. I just try and be realistic about what would get to court and what would win or at least have a chance of getting there.*

A final factor that was mentioned frequently by police was their concern about the presence of children and their exposure to the violence. This no doubt reinforces the sense of being personally involved in the life drama.

*P5: I just feel for the kids....one was probably only about 11 months and the other about three. They don't need to see that at that age because they know exactly what's happening and that'll stay with them for a long time. And that's really annoying..... especially the fact it's in front of the kids and that's our main concern.*

### **5.2.2 Assessing level of violence**

Level of violence, at first glance, is a relatively straightforward concept. However, there are numerous forms of violence perpetrated in intimate relationships, all of which occur on a continuum. In contrast, there are a limited range of options available to police and most of these involve dichotomous decision making: Is there a problem? Is there an identifiable victim? Are there concerns for the immediate safety of the victim? Has a crime been committed? Is there an injury? Thus, level of violence contributes to the "Is there anything for me to do here?" question that police implicitly pose.

Physical violence is tangible and the most easily recognisable. It legitimises the victim's status as someone requiring police intervention. When there are observable

signs of physical violence, police are likely to take formal action. The more evident injuries are, the greater the likelihood of formal action. Serious injury is particularly critical in the decision to initiate criminal proceedings. In *top end* situations, where the level of physical violence is high, the appropriate course of action is quite clear. Police have the necessary powers to act immediately to take the perpetrator into custody and provide protection to the victim. Damage to property is also a cue to action. In differentiating the level of violence police do not appear to be making a moral judgement or condoning less injurious violence but rather are making assessments based on evidentiary needs and anticipated judicial outcomes.

*P2: Any sort of assault, to me, is serious, whether it be a slap or whether it be a punch but there's a difference in injuries, seriousness of injuries.*

Furthermore, physical violence is not always discernible, and as many victims described, their partners become adept at perpetrating physical violence that leaves no observable signs. In such cases, there is no immediate arrest power and the course of action to take is far more discretionary. It is more difficult for police to provide immediate protection. In cases involving a lower level of physical violence, greater emphasis is placed on victim co-operation and the onus for action is often relegated to the victim.

P4 described a situation where two parties presented different accounts of an incident with no corroborating evidence.

*P4: It may be a situation where we go around, the person's been slapped across the face. We're talking about an unlawful assault. Now that's a summary interview. It's conducted on the spot; I said – he said between the persons. At the end of the interview we say, okay we'll compile all the information and you might receive a summons. If our aggrieved family member is then not going to provide us with a statement, we've got nothing. We then basically say, okay well we've done an interview, if you provide us with a statement, we'll be able to take it further, if not, no. But we may then be able to say, based on what she's told me and based on what I've seen, I think there might be grounds for an intervention order. But until we go away, compile an affidavit, send it to the court and receive an intervention order, we can't arrest the person. So we have to leave that scene and potentially leave them both together still going at it; really frustrating.*

Moreover, physical violence is only one of many forms of violence perpetrated by men against their partners. Verbal, emotional and psychological abuse can be equally, if not more, damaging than physical violence (Dutton et al., 2005). In such instances, where the level of violence is *bottom end*, police need to have insight into the nature of IPV in order to discern that there is, indeed, a need for something to be done. In such cases, police are far more likely to identify abuse when they are responding to a crisis call rather than a cold call. When police are present at the scene, especially when the perpetrator is also present, they learn much about his behaviour towards the victim and they are able to witness the resultant psychological harm.

*P5: She wasn't physically abused in any way but we could tell that the emotional abuse was horrific. It took us about an hour before we could speak to her about what actually happened. The husband was very arrogant. This had been going on for probably about 20 years so he just thought nothing would happen.....He was arrested because there was some damage to the house. And we sat and spoke to this woman for a couple of hours and took her statement and just the story she told us of what the abuse that she suffered since probably her engagement night, and they'd been married 20 odd years, was horrific. And from there we took out an intervention order.*

Similarly, P4 was able to extrapolate from the immediate incident to conclude that he was witnessing a case of ongoing abuse.

*P4: I said have a look at this guy; he's just completely belligerent, completely rude, drunk, aggressive, just annoying her, abusing, just picking on her really. It was almost schoolyard; picking on her, all day, every day. And you know this has gone on to become the norm..... I wouldn't have wanted her to stay there under any circumstances and although I'm rationally aware this goes on day in and day out you can just see in her own attitude towards herself. You know, for me to say something so obvious as, do you think you deserve this? And for her to go, oh wow. The light bulb comes up; really do you think I don't deserve this? That's amazing to me that someone just day by day by day the situation worsens until the point where it's normal. And I think in that situation the abuse that she cops, for however long, had made her not feel like she deserved any better because it's obviously degrading her to the point where she finds it acceptable. And I think by us coming in at least just being an objective person and saying, well I don't think this is good enough.*

In order to discern psychological abuse, he was able to reject the victim's tendency to normalise the abuse and employ strategies to overcome the barrier to intervention

that normalisation processes present. However, even though he was obviously concerned for her psychological welfare, the most he could offer her was advice to go to Court for an intervention order.

*P4: There was no violence or damage involved in this particular case. It's a case, I suppose, mental abuse, name calling derogatory remarks, all that sort of thing. So it wasn't really a situation where we could apply the criminal procedure. There were no options for charges and so forth.*

The ability of police to recognise psychological abuse is valued by victims.

*Marlene: He said to me, he's really controlling at home, isn't he? He really understood and talked to me about it.*

In contrast, there are times police make the appraisal that they are dealing with a situation that does not involve any form of abuse, despite reports of physical violence. When abuse is not detected, but the situation is seen to have the potential to escalate, police will often take a peace-keeping approach and endeavour to provide a temporary cooling off period, which corresponds to the temporary respite often sought by victims.

*P10: He'd had a few drinks admittedly; he was intoxicated but not in a way that was bad. He'd had a few drinks at home. No drama with that. Anyway, he went on to say how they'd been having troubles. They've got an eleven month or nine month old daughter. I can tell straight away just from the way they were talking they were only staying together because of this child. They both obviously loved the child; there was no drama with that. They were great with the kid, but every time it got to an argument she was very possessive. She would take the child, she wouldn't let him touch it. She would stand in doorways even, and not let him through. If he said, look, I'm getting past, he'd glide past and she'd say, look, you've assaulted me. It was tit for tat. Of course when we talked to her, she was saying that he pushes through her in doorways. They were kind of alleging assaults but you could just tell they hadn't happened. But anyway it was obvious they just couldn't be in that house. They were seeking counselling but I don't think that was doing too much. In the end we came to an agreement [that she would go to her parents' home for a break].*

Alternatively, if a police officer has a tendency to minimise the harm inherent in non-physical abuse, he or she is likely to withdraw from the situation as quickly as possible, providing a minimal perfunctory service to fulfil operational requirements.

*P11: A lot of the time it's just verbal only and if there's not any major concerns for the AFM (affected family member), a lot of the times you wouldn't have to take an intervention order out. It will just be written on the report, verbal only, advice given to both parties to go seek their own orders.*

### **5.2.3 Assessing the victim-perpetrator dynamic**

When encountering what police refer to as bottom end violence, the same types of behaviour can be construed as occurring either as a result of a legitimate problem resulting in a level of stress that the couple responds to inappropriately or the behaviours can be interpreted as a more malevolent pattern of ongoing abuse in a relationship characterised by control, domination and violence. Even in cases where assault is obvious, police assign varying levels of culpability, which influences the approach they take when dealing with the victim and perpetrator. It was apparent that police rely on their instinct and subtle cues to assign responsibility for the violence and guide their decision making.

*Kim: So did you have any doubts about believing her story?*

*P1: No, being in the job now for six years you get your good foundation and you can read people a lot of times, and see where they're coming from; whether there's any hidden agendas. I mean, you don't always read them the best way but you get a grasp of what's happening exactly with the person. Because you're interacting with people so often, you tend to see which ones are the legitimate victims and which ones are actually using police as a pawn, which happens as well.*

#### **5.2.3.1 Abuse of power**

In assessing the situation, police evaluate whether or not a power imbalance exists between the victim and her partner, and the degree of that imbalance. Police act to address abuse of power in a relationship, not necessarily a power imbalance per se. Some police tended to conform with patriarchal views of the nature of relationships, where a certain level of male dominance is socially acceptable. When the imbalance is extreme or involves physical violence police are likely to act to redress the abuse of power. However, there are times that police seem to act in ways that aim to restore the accepted power imbalance. Thus police become the unofficial arbiters of power. For example, Maria perceived the police officer had taken a stance that

supported her ex-partner's parental rights to reprimand his son. His failure to support the victim's legal rights and the conditions set out in the intervention order, apart from being a failure to carry out his duty, left her feeling unsupported, unprotected and questioning the credibility of intervention orders.

*Maria: And then he asked me, but what did he say? He's got rights to talk to you about your children. I said, yeah he can talk to me, but he can't call me names. He can't yell at me; according to what I have in the restraining order, it says he can only have access about the children, and we can talk about them, not about my personal life, no yelling, no screaming. He said, but he has to have a say in your son's life. And I said, yeah but he has to say it properly, not yelling, not screaming, not calling me a slut. Not saying things like that. That paper says that he can't do all those things. Then he took the statement and I felt like he didn't believe me or that he wasn't there to talk to me, to defend me. I felt really disappointed. I thought, what's the use of having a restraining order when it's just a paper that the police don't even pay notice to?*

Evidence of physical violence perpetrated against the woman is an important consideration in determining that a power imbalance needs to be addressed. However, a judgement is also made regarding whether the victim shares some responsibility for initiating, provoking or contributing to the violence. The fact that a victim might have been violent in response to a violent attack does not necessarily negate a perceived power imbalance. Similarly, a lack of outward signs of violence is not always interpreted as a sign that there is not a power imbalance. In determining a power imbalance, the police are deciding whether or not one party was the primary aggressor, and whether that aggression is likely to be an isolated, atypical incident or evidence of a more sinister, entrenched pattern of behaviour. The victim's demeanour is taken into account, especially the level of distress and fear she conveys. If she is submissive to her partner or appears reluctant to contradict him at all, then police may be alerted to the power he wields over her. Another indicator of the power imbalance that police attend to is the victim's desire for rescue.

*P4: Because they quite often have the public thing that they have to say and the private way that they feel. An example is that we go to the address and we go to arrest the bloke and quite often the lady's saying no don't take him, I don't want you to take him, I didn't call you, all that sort of thing. And then as soon as we've got him in the back of the van and we go back inside and she says oh my god, thank god.*

In contrast when the victim is seen as being uncooperative towards police, her victim status is diminished. This is exacerbated if contempt or hostility toward police is detected. The partner's demeanour is also taken into account. If he displays aggression or signs of domination towards his partner in the presence of police, abuse of power is likely to be perceived. Similarly, signs of hostility or belligerence towards police increase the likelihood of a power imbalance being detected.

*P4: You'll have normally a male perpetrator and belligerence is the only polite way to describe them and they'll be giving me a hard time as a male and as a police officer and sometimes as accompanied by another male police officer. And I always think to myself if this is how you'll speak to two blokes in your house who are here to basically settle a domestic dispute, how will you speak to your partner when there's no one here. And it always frustrates me that we can't do more to stop that behaviour.... If they're swearing and carrying on and being rude, there's no offence to be rude in your own house, but I mean the ramifications when the police aren't there for often the female partner or the kids is a mess psychologically. They're the ones that really frustrate me the most.*

It appears police intuitively use typologies that differentiate men for whom violence is atypical and occurs as a consequence of extreme stress and insufficient coping resources to men whose violence stems from characteristics associated with antisocial or borderline personality disorders (Holzworth-Munroe & Meehan, 2004).

### **5.2.3.2 Pathology**

Pathologising decriminalises behaviour and voids victim status. Individual pathology can be attributed to the victim, the perpetrator or both. Police are influenced in their judgment by signs of mental health problems and drug or alcohol problems; one or both parties may be seen to be individually impaired. If pathology is perceived in a victim, she is much less likely to be taken seriously and viewed as a true victim. Furthermore, an abusive partner will often use this to his advantage to discredit her account of the situation. He may attempt to gain sympathy by portraying himself as the unfortunate party who has to cope with her irrational behaviour. Thus the stigma associated with mental illness can disadvantage victims directly and indirectly, and is therefore, even more deleterious to victim outcomes.

*Chelsea: A soon as he said to them, she's on antidepressants and he made that crazy motion with his fingers, that's when the whole attitude was – they treated me like there was something wrong with me mentally and I was just being an hysterical female. The policeman even said, look, calm down, you're hysterical; I don't understand what you're saying. Just calm down. Of course I couldn't calm down because I was so distressed..... It was like they weren't interested. They were like everybody fights sometimes. Just take a break from each other. It will all calm down.*

Individual pathology can also diminish the level of responsibility for the violence attributed to the perpetrator.

*P7: He suffers from a bit of depression, so he wasn't a crook or anything. He was quite co-operative but he was just very sad and just upset and confused, and everything. So we arrested him for breaching the order and we took him back. We just had a bit of a talk to him. I interviewed him in relation to breaching the order and I ended up referring him, trying to get him some help as well. I obviously gave her the necessary referrals. I ended up going ahead with the prosecution but putting him in for diversion. So I basically got him, diversion; avoiding a criminal conviction but as a condition of the diversion, he had to attend counselling or anger management.*

Police also discern pathology in the relationship. In this case the relationship itself is seen as chronically impaired. Police interpret the violence as a dysfunctional and entrenched characteristic of the relationship. The couple are not necessarily individually impaired but are caught up in a chronically unhealthy relationship that is perpetuated by both partners. In this situation, they are seen as equally responsible for the violence; neither is considered a true victim. Police are more likely to make such attributions when the victim has a history of repeatedly seeking police intervention, which results in a complaint and warrant for an intervention order being sought, and then failing to attend court for the hearing of the order or revoking it shortly after it is granted. Thus chronic use of police services is in itself pathologising, particularly when police interpret that she remains in the relationship by choice rather than by fear or domination; she is complicit in the perpetuation of the violence

*P5: A couple with two young children; she always fronts at the police station saying, I'm just so scared; I can't go home. He's thrown this at me; he's thrown that at me. We take out complaint and warrants, go serve them on him and by the next morning he's back living with them and they're all lovey-dovey until the next couple of days when she comes running back and goes through the whole thing again. As soon as we can hear her coming, you*

*know, we just don't want to go and speak to her because it's just a real big waste of time. Then when we go and speak to neighbours, we hear that she's just as bad as him. They're throwing things at each other in the front yard and yelling and screaming and punching walls in the house. But she just plays on it because she's the female. Like he can't do it to her, doesn't realize she can't do it to him either.*

When either individual or relationship pathology is identified, police believe that they are not the most appropriate source of assistance. They believe they lack the necessary expertise to intervene effectively in such situations. Although they concede a police presence is required to manage crisis situations, they see little value in using formal police interventions, which are deemed extremely unlikely to be effective in preventing future violence. Therefore, pathology not only influences victim status it also determines police perceptions of the utility of police interventions.

#### **5.2.4 Victim status**

The assessment of the victim-perpetrator dynamic, along with the attributions of responsibility inherent in such assessments, results in a formulation of victim status. The designated affected family member in family violence incidents is the female partner in approximately 76% of cases (Victoria Police, 2011). However, this rather innocuous label obfuscates the more complex ways in which victims are viewed. Dependent on the power dynamics observed and whether or not pathology is perceived, police implicitly assign victims to a typology (see Table 5.1). Although power and pathology are evaluated on a continuum, and undoubtedly not all victims fit neatly into the available categories, a tentative classification system helps explicate the contingencies and properties of the designated victim status, providing a framework for understanding the way police interact with victims.

Table 5.1.

*Police perceptions of victim status*

<i>Type</i>	<i>Power characteristics</i>	<i>Pathology perceived?</i>	Responsibility for incident
True victim	Abuse of power	No	Partner
Equally distressed	No abuse of power	No	Specific issue
Equal combatants	Both abuse power	Relationship Pathology	Both
Victim of circumstances	Misuse of power	Individual pathology	Mitigating factors
Nullified victim	No abuse of power*	No	Incident trivialised

\* In some situations the perpetrator may be seen as less powerful than the victim. Her status as a victim is consequently negated .

**5.2.4.1 True victim**

When police detect abuse of power in the absence of pathology, the victim’s status is legitimised. She is seen as a true victim, and police determine her situation warrants intervention. In some situations, women are seen by police as true victims of IPV, even when they do not identify themselves as such due to normalisation processes.

*Chelsea: They said you have a legitimate case. You have legitimate cause to get him arrested. I mean he’s got no right to go round bashing women and getting away with it, which was what he’s been doing.*

The judgement of the deserving versus undeserving victim is certainly not new and is usually associated with perceived character flaws of the victim and a victim-blaming attitude that censures the victim for failing to end the violence. Lea and Lynn (2012) found explanations for the violence that elicited sympathy for the

perpetrator were apparent in the discontinuance of case prosecution. Russel and Light (2006) found police perceived victims as deserving when the violence was deemed serious and the perpetrator was clearly culpable. In contrast, the current findings indicated level of physical violence was not a central determinant of perceived victim status, although it did influence what the police could actually do to help the victim. The most salient feature of the *true victim* was that she was seen as disempowered by the perpetrator.

#### **5.2.4.2 Equally distressed**

When neither abuse of power or pathology is detected, police interpret the incident as an argument between an otherwise functional couple that has become particularly stressful and escalated beyond a reasonable level. Neither party is thought of as being a perpetrator of violence, even though violence may have occurred. Police recognise a need for help but usually do not believe that formal police intervention is needed. The usual course of action is to suggest a cooling off period and encourage the couple to seek counseling. P10 expressed satisfaction in being able to use his interpersonal skills to help a distressed couple without evoking the powers of the Court. The victim contacted him again after seeking respite with her parents followed by a resumption of counselling.

*P 10: The next time they met was at their family counsellor.....She actually called up and had a further talk. We obviously explained intervention orders and things like that to her, if she wanted to seek one through the court. At that stage there wasn't probably anything that we could have – there was nothing for us to apply for one. There wasn't any feeling of violence or anyone in threat. They were actually both happy to be in the house. I just felt that they needed a break for their benefit. That was I guess rewarding in the sense that it doesn't all have to be an intervention order to separate the family. They maybe just needed that break and they're back living together now.*

#### **5.2.4.3 Equal combatants.**

When neither partner is necessarily individually impaired, but a chronic pattern of violence and intervention exists, the two parties are likely to be seen as equal combatants. Chronicity distinguishes an equally distressed from an equally

combatant couple. They are deeply entrenched in an ongoing volatile relationship with episodic violent outbursts requiring police intervention. The police assume both partners contribute to the violence. There is substantial abuse and violence but police do not take the victim seriously or believe she is really fearful.

Police recognise the pattern of behaviours, interpret them as manipulative, and are offended by the perceived abuse of their services. They do not recognise victimisation nor understand the psychological forces that entrap victims. On the contrary, they see the woman as having free will and agency. She stays by choice; she is perverse.

*P7: I have a theory about a certain tendency. Not getting too socio-technical here but I think with some people with a lower socioeconomic background, people who aren't employed, people who don't have a hell of a lot to do with their time, I have a theory that they get into these dramatic relationships. And because this particular aggrieved family member, she's a fiery little minx herself, we've been called there because she's like scratched him and stuff as well. And I see it all the time, where you get these relationships where they're either you know, sort of fighting or, am I allowed to say, fucking. That's what they're like. They're either passionately and madly life and death kind of in love or they're hitting each other or abusing each other. ....And part of my theory is that they feed off the drama of it all. That sounds terrible. Obviously there are relationships where the woman's definitely being abused and it's really serious and it's really terrible, but then I also think there are also relationships where it's kind of a bit of a tennis match and all a bit of a game.....*

Lauren also recognized this quality in her own relationship. She was not overly fearful of his potential for serious harm, although there were occasions when she sought safety and eventually he was charged with assault. She described the pattern of their behavior.

*Kim: You left, you went down to the foreshore and what did you do then?  
Lauren: Sat there and waited for it to become light so he'd sober up and I could go home. I went home; I sort of built up a bit of a scene by then. I was angry. I realised he'd ripped the phone off the wall and put it in a sink of water. Because that was a favourite stunt of his was disabling the phone so I couldn't ring my parents or I couldn't ring the police. So the phone had been damaged but I got it back going. And I remember I got his mobile phone and chucked it in the sink. So there was a lot of retaliation there. I came in and I was angry by then. I remember turning up the heat to full boar. So it was going to be about 40 degrees up in the bedroom where he was. I couldn't go back in the bedroom because he was in there, so I turned up the heat really,*

*really high; really irrational behaviour. It's a bit of a pattern. He'd go psycho, calm down and then it would be my turn to vent.*

#### **5.2.4.4 Victim of circumstances**

This category of victim is similar to equal combatants in that both parties can be seen as contributing to the problem. Equal combatants are both held to be individually responsible, and the relationship itself is seen as the crux of the problem. However, in this situation, the parties are seen as less manipulative and the problem is attributed to drug and alcohol addiction or mental health problems, in which case neither party is seen as capable of behaving normally and, therefore, individual responsibility for the violence is diminished. Intervention depends on the victim and perpetrator's willingness to engage with police.

*P1: If I can see that the drugs are what's causing the domestic, it's causing them not to have money for the groceries, it's causing them not to have money to feed themselves or go out or do anything, petrol in the car, I'd say listen you've got a problem, it's got to be sorted. You can't go living life like this, you know, you're gonna be dead in ten years or you're gonna end up in jail. What you need is help. And then from there on, I'll try to build that rapport to try to get them into that type of drug referral agency where they can go get that help.*

The attitude of both parties ranges from wariness of police to outright hostility, especially when the impairment is alcohol or drug related. The apprehension associated with close proximity to the event is heightened. Typically, neither party wants police involvement. The strategies police use to engage with true victims don't work; their unwillingness to communicate poses an insurmountable barrier. When both victim and perpetrator are addicted, their main concern is avoiding detention and separation. If only the perpetrator is addicted, she may fear him but fear losing the relationship more in which case she may conceal the true level of violence in order to protect him.

*P1: He thought he'd stabbed her. It was drug and alcohol affected so I'm tipping there might have been a knife involved. There was no blood at the scene or something like that. And he's called police thinking something's gone wrong. In the end they formulated a story where he thought she'd been cut by the picture frame. They end up covering each other.....It's hard when people are drug and alcohol affected. It's very hard because a lot of*

*times they gel and they form a story cos they know, gees we don't want to get police involved. They don't want to get locked up, they need their drugs.*

It is highly likely they are known to police through chronic re-attendance for IPV or through their drug related activities. Either party may call the police with the aim of stopping an incident but once the immediate situation is diffused, they want no further police involvement. Police are also often called by concerned neighbours, in which case they have an additional level of complexity and concerns about responding appropriately to a breach of the peace.

There are also situations where only one party's behavior is pathologised. If the victim is perceived to have mental health or drug or alcohol problems her credibility as a victim is often reduced. Similarly, a perpetrator may be perceived as less culpable if his behavior is attributed to such problems. In both situations, the violence is attributed to mitigating circumstances.

#### **5.2.4.5 Nullified victims**

When police perceive no abuse has occurred and there are no immediate safety concerns, the victim's status is nullified. These victims are most likely to be proactive help-seekers contacting police in the context of a cold call. Unless they are willing to make a formal complaint in relation to criminal charges, police will most likely redirect them to Court to apply for an intervention order. In such situations the victim may be believed, but the problem is not seen as warranting immediate police intervention. Therefore, her status as a victim is not established. A victim who is contemplating ending a relationship and who has concerns about her partner's reaction might also contact police. Similarly, if the help-seeking is about the potential for escalating violence, rather than a specific incident, she will be redirected to Court. However, the most frequent help-seeking issue in this category was related to reporting a breach of intervention order. Unless the breach is associated with additional criminal assault or property damage, police are likely to trivialise the incident and attempt to subtly dissuade the victim from making a formal complaint. Lack of evidence is typically cited as the reason for not investigating the complaint.

*P12: I think some people get this idea that we're superhuman and we're not. We still have to have evidence and we have to present it to a court to get a conviction..... I was down at the shop and he walked in; he breached the intervention order..... So, did he talk to you? No, but he walked in here near me and he looked at me. It's not a breach. It might be technically, he might have looked at her and given her a scowl or something but we have to prove beyond reasonable doubt that it was a breach and it was an intentional breach.....I know where their frustration comes from because they think we're not taking it seriously. We are taking it seriously; it's just that the evidence isn't there for us to put that to a court.*

### **5.3 Utility, police motivation and exercising discretion**

The final factor that influences the approach police take is their assessment of the likely utility of any actions they initiate. Perceptions of utility versus futility are related to police values and determine whether or not police are motivated to work with the victim. As previously mentioned, pathology, especially when it is associated with chronic police use, diminishes police expectations of being able to do anything to bring about lasting change to a violent or problematic relationship. Thus victim status is related to perceived utility, and consequently to police motivation.

Utility and police motivation are also related to victims' perceptions of the viability of the relationship. As Lauren described, police elicit information to determine whether or not a victim is considering ending the abusive relationship.

*Lauren: He said, well do you think there's any hope for the relationship? And I said, yeah I hope so. And he said well if there isn't, then get an intervention order. If you want things to be really over and finished get an intervention order. If it isn't, well, whatever.*

When abuse is detected and the victim indicates she wants to make permanent changes, police are intrinsically motivated to invest additional time to engage with her and offer their full support. Undertakings to get external help to improve the dynamics of the relationship are also viewed favourably by police. Such information informs how police manage the incident and engage with the victim, motivating police to do as much as possible to help the victim. Therefore, perceived utility and

relationship intent are important determinants of the use of police discretion and investment of valued resources.

Regardless of motivation level, when there are immediate concerns for the safety of the victim, police are required to initiate proceedings to obtain an intervention order for the protection of the victim. The onus for action lies with the police, and they will act with or without victim co-operation. However, the manner in which they engage with the victim, including the level of support they provide is still at the discretion of the individual police member. Police are likely to deliver a perfunctory performance if they perceive the victim is unwilling or reluctant to seek long term change, and seems only interested in using police intervention to manage the immediate situation. Police will seek an intervention order if the criteria are met, but their expectation the victim will follow through with the application is extremely low. The complaint and warrant for the order effectively removes the perpetrator from the home but without a full order being granted by the Court, he is free to return. Although such short-term measures to bring individual incidents to a halt are frequently employed, police gain very little satisfaction. Therefore, when police are extrinsically motivated by policing guidelines alone, they will usually not invest additional time and effort to engage with the victim in a supportive way.

When the risk of physical harm is not obvious, the degree of discretion available to police is more substantial. Police will then utilise the additional assessments made to determine how to proceed. When police are intrinsically motivated to assist the victim, they may use their power of authority or power of persuasion to intervene on behalf of the victim. They may also decide to err on the side of the victim and apply for an intervention order anyway, formulating the statement supporting the application to maximise the likelihood that it will be granted.

In contrast, when extrinsically motivated, and risks are assessed as low, police are likely to decide there is nothing further for them to do. In such situations they will avoid formal action, adopting a peacekeeping approach where their goal is to ensure order is restored. Police may advise the victim to call again if there is further trouble. They have the option of applying for an order by summons but typically

they inform victims of their right to seek an intervention order at Court. The onus for action is relegated to the victim.

*P12: If they've just had an argument and he's taken off and left and said, I'm going, I've had enough. If she wants an intervention order in that regard then she can get one but there are no immediate concerns because he's never been violent before.....If she's saying that she wants an intervention order because, I'm sick of it, I don't want him yelling at me like that again, she probably wouldn't get one but we'd advise her, if she wanted one to go to court.*

## **5.4 An empowering alliance**

Police use the assessments described above to inform the pivotal decision to seek an empowering alliance with the victim. Police initially endeavour to maintain an impartial attitude to the parties. Victims described having the impression of police not wanting to take sides, which is at odds with victims' needs. To be most effective, police need to provide support and validation to the victim. Similarly, they prefer victim co-operation and sometimes need her to apply for an intervention order to increase their ability to protect her. Thus, police and victims seek a mutually empowering alliance from each other. When an alliance is formed, police are willing to "go the extra yards" to help the victim. Victims experience police as compassionate and caring, which enhances their self-esteem, and affirms their dignity and right to justice and protection (see chapter 6).

### **5.4.1 Seeking the empowering alliance – getting on board**

Police do not seek an alliance in all situations. They must experience intrinsic motivation (see Table 5.2). They must believe in, or at least hope for, beneficial results from their efforts. Police and victims must come to a shared view of the nature of the violence and an appropriate course of action. An empowering alliance is most likely to be formed when the perceived victim status is that of a true victim or a distressed couple, who are open to advice and willing to listen to police.

Table 5.2  
*Prerequisites of the empowering alliance*

<i>Type</i>	<i>Level of violence</i>	<i>Source of Motivation</i>	<i>Approach</i>
True victim	High	Intrinsic	Seek alliance and utilise all powers
	Low	Intrinsic	Seek alliance with victim and use persuasion
Equally distressed	Low	Intrinsic	Seek alliance with both parties and use problem solving approach
Equal combatants	High	Extrinsic	Perfunctory use of formal powers
	Low	No motivation	Peacekeeping approach
Victim of circumstance	High	Extrinsic	Perfunctory use of formal powers
	Low	Slight motivation	Attempt referral
Nullified victim	Low	No motivation	Rebuff or redirect

A major factor in the formation of the empowering alliance is that both police and victims take each other and the abuse seriously. Police must be willing to accept the victim's account of the violent incident. They must look at the situation from her perspective and understand her point of view. Consequently, she feels understood and validated; they are on her side. Similarly, the police must trust her motivation for calling. They look for evidence that the victim is willing to consider their views, particularly their notion of the importance of making long term change. Police frequently expressed the view that they could not respond effectively unless the victim wanted help.

*P11: There's probably not much I can really do. My hands are tied, unless she wants to really help herself, there's not much that I can do. I can offer those services to her but if she doesn't take it on board, there's not much more that I can do.*

Police associate wanting help with victim willingness to get an intervention order. As P8 described, when physical evidence is lacking, police must rely on the victim to take action.

*P.8: It gets harder when there's no obvious evidence.... the victim needs to stand up and give evidence on oath, this is what's happening, I'm being controlled; I'm being psychologically abused. But getting them to take that step can be difficult.*

The victim must make a cognitive shift beyond the here and now of the most recent violent incident and contemplate long-term change. In agreeing to the order, she is shifting her allegiance away from her partner and decreasing his influence over her. Whilst police make the decision to invest personally in the alliance with the victim, she must make the decision to forfeit her investment in the relationship (Gordon et al., 2004; Rhatigan & Axsom, 2006; Rusbult & Martz, 1995). In addition to the legal meaning of the order, it has symbolic meaning to police and victims. The intervention order is a sign of definitive change in the relationship, providing a barrier to the continuation of the relationship. Lauren noted that the intervention order also prevented her from making contact with her husband.

*Lauren: And I took the order as much to keep me away from him as keeping him away from me; to stop me from needing him. If there was an order in place and I didn't want him coming near me, harassing me, I couldn't ring him up, oh I can't believe this is happening, we've got to work this out. It kept me away from him as much him away from me.*

An intervention order is also associated with enhancing police powers, particularly when the level of violence is low. The victim can increase the likelihood that police will intervene by increasing the salience of change. Her willingness to obtain an intervention order, not only signifies her readiness for change, but also indirectly increases the powers available to police to protect her during that period of change.

*P8: The orders give us a clear direction and a clear power to act. You sort of get there in the first scenario and you've got to find out what happened and you've got to come up with a course of action and it's a very grey and murky area at times. It's well and good to get there and someone's got a knife sticking out of them and everything's clear cut with what you're going to do because you've got a serious assault. Most of them aren't that way at all. Whereas you get there and there's an order and they're in breach of the order, clear cut; you are under arrest.*

When victims call police they are hopeful of receiving help. Similarly, police engagement is predicated on the presence of hope. They hope getting an intervention order will not only end the relationship, it will end recurring police attendance. Investing time to get an intervention order has the long-term goal of saving the police from intervening repeatedly. Police are making a personal investment, which is evidenced by their feelings of being let down if the victim fails to follow through with her previously stated intentions.

P1 discussed his hope for change despite the frustration of victims not following through with the hearing for an intervention order.

*P1: It's not so much it's a waste of time. The truth is you're thinking that but you're also thinking that if she takes this on board, there might be that 1% chance that she might take this on board. And you're thinking she might take it on board, he might adhere to it.*

Police recognise the advantages of having the victim as an ally and use strategies to engage her in the empowering alliance. They appeal to her desire for a better life and attempt to oppose normalisation processes by naming the perpetrator as an abuser. Before a victim is willing to relinquish her alliance with the perpetrator she must firstly give up hope that the relationship has the potential to change, she must overcome the negative self-image she holds that reinforces her belief that she cannot survive alone, and she must find the courage to oppose her partner's resistance to change. P4 described the importance of instilling new meaning into the victim's interpretation of her situation.

*P4: I actually took the time to sit her down and say, have a look at how you're living. If this was one of your best friends and her husband was speaking to her the way that he's speaking to you and treating her this way in an ongoing fashion and you were over visiting for a cuppa, what would you think about this, this whole situation. And she was like, I wouldn't wish this on anyone. And I said well if you wouldn't wish it on anyone what about yourself..... She also had said that, financially, it was a big consideration.... he supports us and all that sort of thing. And I said well whether you live with him or don't live with him he's still required to provide you with a division of assets. You're still going to be receiving maintenance to assist with the kids. I mean your financial situation might be marginally worse but.....that person's still got to provide some measure of financial assistance. And I just don't think that a lot of girls realise that.*

Sometimes, if police perceive that she is not ready to forsake her relationship with the perpetrator, they may encourage her to consider using an alliance with police in order to demonstrate intolerance of abuse. P6 was attuned to the psychological processes that inhibit victims. In the following extract, he invested personal resources to convince her that she shouldn't have to tolerate the abuse in order to maintain her relationship.

*P6: I think it's just talking. It's saying, look it's not a matter of you against your husband. I think this is where it comes down to personal skills and how you talk to people. It's not a matter of victim versus assailant, so to speak. It's more, look if you want this to stop the only way is to take a step forward. It's unacceptable behaviour. The only way that we are going to be able to stop this is for you to provide a statement, to follow it all the way through. At the end of the day, it doesn't matter whether you still love the person and you're going to stay together. They've got to know that it's the wrong thing to do and this may be the only way to tell him. If you don't follow this through, it's going to indicate to him that he can do it again and it's not going to go anywhere. But if you do it, bang it's there. There's nothing's saying he's going to go to jail. You give him a different option at court, to go seek anger management or something like that, that's going to help. And you sort of explain different processes to them and they sort of say, yes, I want to follow it through.*

#### **5.4.2 Maintaining the alliance – rules of engagement**

The empowering alliance is transitory in nature. It comes to a natural conclusion, the timing of which depends on the extent of formal action taken. When no formal action is taken, the alliance may end at the termination of the encounter between police and victim. Police may provide referrals to external agencies, which are perceived as the appropriate source of ongoing support for the victim. Referral satisfies their sense of responsibility for the welfare of the victim when safety concerns are low. When police apply for a complaint and warrant for an intervention order, the alliance is typically extended until shortly after the order is in place, depending on whether further police involvement is required. When the encounter results in criminal proceedings, police endeavour to sustain the alliance throughout their investigation. A collaborative, cooperative victim-witness is a substantial asset to police in their valued role of bringing the perpetrator before the Courts. The alliance is terminated when police transfer responsibility for the victim's safety to

the Court. However, victims are often not as ready as police to relinquish the alliance, consistent with their need for continuity of care (see 4.3.4.2 ).

Police interpret victims are committed to the alliance when they follow through with the course of action initiated, which may include getting help from other services, attending Court for the hearing of the intervention order application, providing statements for criminal proceedings, and appearing as a witness if necessary.

There are parallel processes in taking the violence seriously; police must confirm the violence as unacceptable and the victim must affirm the police role of providing protection and bringing the perpetrator to Court. For example, P6 felt professionally satisfied when the victim followed through with the application for an intervention order.

*P6: Even when it got to the point, just before the hearing for the intervention order, and he was saying, oh look we don't need this. We can work it out. I'm not going to be like that anymore. She stuck to her guns and said no, I need it.*

*Kim: And did you need to encourage her .....*

*P6: I'd spoken to her. I actually drove her over to the Court because she didn't drive at the time.....and I said, well what do you want to do? Do you still want to go ahead with it. I think I said, you should go ahead with it; there's no point going this far and then saying no, that's it. So with the encouragement, I guess, that I'd given her, she knew it was the right thing to do. And she already knew herself that was what she needed so I was just letting her know that she had made the right decision, I guess.*

In contrast, P3 described the difficulty of proceeding with criminal charges without victim testimony.

*P3: You're not going to have much strength to your case if your main witness is not prepared to give evidence. So that's what you're up against. And that's what I try to explain in the first instance. You know, do you want him charged? Yes I want him charged. Their gun's blazing straight away..... We have the complaint and warrant; we can actually take action now regardless of what the victim wants the police to do. But the charges, like quite often they will not want to proceed..... Where you're talking about punch to the face type of assault or assault even where there might be broken bones, it really depends on the victim..... If you haven't got a victim, you really haven't got a case. And it really doesn't matter what we say as police even going along to court. You've got to be able to show the court that this is what the injury was and this is how it's traumatised her and affected her life.*

Police expressed frustration with victims who reneged on their commitment to the course of action taken. The sense of working together for a common goal is lost and the personal commitment of the police officer may be attenuated. Despite acknowledging that he would have applied for an intervention order even without the victim's assurances that she would attend court, P10 described feeling let down when she failed to attend the original court date and a subsequent date.

*P10: After basically saying, look, I'll come to court with you, she said, no, no, I've got my friends here, we're going to go; no dramas, I'll be there. Of course she doesn't go this second time either and the magistrate said, well, he's here and she's not and she's the one making the complaint – no intervention order. We've done all that work; we've tried to do everything to help her and it's thrown back in your face... ..That's the frustrating bit. As soon as we started talking to her, I knew it probably wouldn't go anywhere. Like I said before – the instinct thing; she's a hopeless junkie and she won't do anything about it. Then she made the statement. She said, yes, we'll go ahead,' and I thought, well, hang on, maybe she is pretty serious here, she does want something done. That's when I was happy to go that extra yard and do everything for her. Then, sure enough, a week and a half later I'm sitting there angry at her again.*

Criminal investigations may be compromised if police believe the credibility of the victim is questionable. Chelsea believed the investigating officer lost faith in her when she contacted her ex-partner to look after their daughter, despite no contact in the previous five months. Her perceived loss of his support was quite distressing.

*Chelsea: I was really, really ill and my best friend was on holiday. So I had no-one to help me. So I ended up ringing him. And unfortunately that proved detrimental to the stalking investigation because he rang them up and said, oh she's harassing me, which I wasn't..... And I got a warning from that senior constable who was dealing with my case.....And I said, well has he told you that he's ringing me seven, eight, nine times a day now since I've made contact. And he said, well you should be staying away from him. I said, well I was sick, I had no-one, what am I supposed to do. He said, I understand that but for the investigation purposes you shouldn't have contacted him. So I said I'm sorry but there isn't anything I can do, I've got nobody and I needed his help to look after our daughter for a few days because I was really ill. And he said, well you know, you've just jeopardised the investigation. I advise you to just stay away from him.*

Similarly, the alliance is broken when police fail to provide the much promised protection that is supposed to be ensured by them going ahead with the intervention order.

*Maria: He's like, no we can't do anything about it and I said okay so the paper, my restraining order doesn't mean a thing, it doesn't protect me or my kids from him at all.*

Thus the empowering alliance comprises four processes – seeking, maintaining, taking action and relinquishing. Taking action, which directly affects victim outcomes, is further conceptualised in the next chapter.

## **5.5 Concluding interpretations**

Police members value the policing role. It is important to them to meet the obligations of the role, and in doing so they want to also achieve personally satisfying and subjectively worthwhile outcomes. In the context of policing IPV, the most valued outcome was to achieve enduring change in the lives of victims. The police members interviewed were disconcerted by a perceived lack of appreciation of their role by individual members of the public to whom they respond during the course of their duties. They were similarly concerned with the way they are perceived by the public in general and particularly sensitive to public criticism. Resources that enable police to execute their role effectively are, therefore, valued by association, whilst factors that impede the execution of their duties evoke frustration and disdain. The most notable resource was time, which, as a limited, non-renewable commodity, they perceived must be expended wisely and for worthwhile pursuits. Time-wasting was the most commonly voiced criticism of policing IPV.

Ambiguity is closely related to time expenditure. Incidents that lack objective, physical evidence that unequivocally identifies a victim, a perpetrator and immediate concerns for the safety of that victim take longer to evaluate and require more use of police discretion in deciding how to deal with the case. They also involve a degree of uncertainty about the appropriateness of using the power to arrest. Police are able to execute their duties more effectively and expeditiously when explicit criteria for utilising police powers are met. Thus power is also a much valued resource. Police prefer to deal with situations that are quickly and easily assessed and clearly meet guidelines for action. In IPV cases, the preferred course of

action, which is most consistent with their perceptions of appropriate police work, is to invoke formal police powers and processes to bring offenders before the Court for the hearing of an application for an intervention order or in relation to associated criminal charges. This is satisfying for police officers as it affirms that they have done everything within their power to meet their responsibilities and to help bring about a much valued change to victims' circumstances. It also allows them to transfer responsibility for the victim's welfare and for dealing with the offender to the Court system. Thus, there is a sense of completion accompanied by the hope that they won't have to re-attend at the same address in the future to respond to further incidents.

Ambivalence on the part of the victim about the future of the intimate relationship or about complying with police assertions that action needs to be taken adds to expectations by police that their time may be wasted. Thus the most valued use of police time, with associated anticipated valuable outcomes, occurs when the police member and victim have a shared understanding of the incident and are in agreement as to the most appropriate course of action. Such an understanding includes acknowledgement that violence has occurred and action is warranted. Taking action demonstrates intolerance of IPV and initiates the implementation of legal means of providing protection. When the police and victim take each other and the violence seriously, an empowering alliance is formed which results in co-operative efforts to achieve the common goal of freeing the victim from violence.

When police respond to an IPV incident, they make a number of assessments that determine how they will proceed and whether they will attempt to form an empowering alliance with the victim. Police assess victim-perpetrator dynamics and make attributions concerning abuse of power, presence of pathology within the individual or the relationship, and responsibility for the incident. Based on these judgements, victims are assigned to a typology that influences the likelihood of police endeavouring to form an alliance with the victim. The type and degree of violence is also assessed. Such assessments directly affect the outcomes of police decision making. When police detect serious physical violence, they are compelled to take formal action, with or without victim co-operation.

When police recognise abuse, and confer true victim status on the aggrieved family member, they are internally motivated to do all that they can to stop the violence and protect the victim. When the level of physical violence is high, police have the power to act independently of the victim, thus shielding her from the responsibility of action and possibly from reprisals from the perpetrator. In such situations, police powers are unambiguous. When the level of violence is low, but the perceived victim status remains true, the formation of an empowering alliance with the victim becomes a crucial element in providing protection. The victim must assume the onus for action by applying for an intervention order on her own behalf. In doing so, she must relinquish her allegiance to her partner in order to enter into an empowering alliance with police. Once the victim obtains the intervention order, police gain additional powers to act in the event of further violence and abuse. Thus in the case of lower levels of violence, police power is mediated by the alliance, rather than immediately evident.

When abuse is not recognised, the victim's status is negated and police determine that there is no need for their involvement. They may perfunctorily advise the victim that she has the option to pursue protection directly with the Court.

## **Chapter six: Findings – the empowering alliance and victim outcomes**

The previous chapter described the prerequisite conditions and properties of the empowering alliance. The manner in which police engage with victims is determined by the quality of the empowering alliance. However, the action taken also depends on the perceived level of violence. This chapter explores the consequences of police action from victims' perspectives.

### **6.1 The empowering alliance and taking action**

Police action is dependent upon the level of violence detected and the degree of alliance between police and victims (see Figure 6.1). A strong alliance is associated with compassionate and collaborative police action, which has positive outcomes for police and victims. Communication is enhanced and both victims and police feel heard, understood and valued. As detailed in the subsequent sections of this chapter, when police name and respond appropriately to abuse, victims feel safe, supported, protected, valued, validated, and ultimately, empowered. They begin to gain a new perspective of themselves and their abuser, which ultimately increases their sense of worth and agency and empowers them to take steps towards independence and freedom from violence. When the level of physical violence is high, police action includes invoking formal legal processes to procure protection for the victim and may also include processes to bring the perpetrator before the Court to face criminal charges. When the level of violence does not present concerns for the immediate physical safety of the victim, police action is limited to advice, referral and informal sanctions against abuse. Although the former course of action appears to be most effective in terms of providing safety and protection to the victim, the latter approach, when delivered with support and compassion, can also have an empowering effect on the victim.

Even when police are unable to provide any tangible action, the victim can still experience an alliance as supportive and empowering. For example, after trying

unsuccessfully on many occasions to get police to take her seriously when reporting breaches of an intervention order, Sophie felt enormous relief when a policewoman finally understood her concerns and engaged with her in developing some strategies to eventually hold her abusive ex-partner accountable.

*Sophie: The last police officer I spoke to said, no, he shouldn't be doing that to you. Just hearing that you think, oh great, she gets it. You know, he shouldn't be doing that to you. Don't worry, he obviously sounds like he's cocky. He'll slip up soon and we'll get him when he does. And I just thought, oh hallelujah. It's like a relief when you're believed.....So this Constable was really good. She ended up taking me out the back and we had a big chat about it. She's taken all the details and said, just ring me. She gave me her name on a card. She said, just ring me. We'll nail him. As soon as he does anything major, we'll nail him..... She just said look, if ever he drives past your house, you just ring me straight away and we'll get him. He'll slip up. They all do because he's got away with so much..... You're not on your own, it's ok, I believe what you're telling me. I know the mentality.*

Sophie described the collaborative approach of the officer, symbolised by penetrating the barrier of the front counter.

*Sophie: And it was like taken out the back of the station whereas I can't usually get past the front counter. You know, come out here and we'll have a chat about it..... She was just a lot more interested and a lot more empathetic. She showed empathy towards the situation. She wasn't fobbing me off.*

In the absence of an alliance, police are more likely to provide a perfunctory service with the primary aim of fulfilling their policing obligations and satisfying their own sense of responsibility. When the level of violence is high, police will apply for a complaint and warrant for an intervention order. The likelihood of criminal charges being initiated and progressed is low without the victim's cooperation as a willing witness. Without support and encouragement, there is a higher likelihood that the victim will not follow through to a full hearing of the intervention order application. When the level of physical violence detected is low, police are likely to take a peacekeeping approach to restore order in the case of a crisis call, or in the case of a cold call, police are likely to redirect the victim to other services. Redirection is experienced by victims as dismissive and leaves them feeling unprotected, forsaken, and hopeless. They are deterred from further help-seeking and are likely to retreat to

their former isolated, ineffective management strategies. Victims interpret a peacekeeping approach as evidence that the violence perpetrated against them is not serious enough to warrant police intervention. In both contexts, their status as a victim and someone worthy of help and protection is not validated.

When responding to Lauren, police implemented a peacekeeping approach in the absence of an alliance. Lauren's status as a victim was not recognised and her interpretation of the police response was that they did not want to be involved in her attempts to manage the violence in her life or encourage her to seek help from them in the future; they wanted to do the absolute minimum and leave as quickly as possible. They took a peace keeping approach by asking her to leave the house, suggesting she go to her parents' for the night, which would ensure the incident was over and eliminate the need for them to return in the immediate future.

*Lauren: They told me to leave house because he'd been drinking, he couldn't drive anywhere, even though his mother lived around the street, as I pointed out. They told me to get out of the house. So I was sitting at the foreshore in the car, freezing with a new born baby and a three year old and a ten year old. So what am I doing here, you know? I didn't have the money to go to a motel or anything.....This is the position I'm stuck in. This is my life; that's how it made me feel. It made me feel as if it was completely warranted, completely reasonable statement to make; you leave the house, you have to get out.....I don't think they listen to either side. I think they get the facts, determine whether or not he's got a gun in the house, whether he looks the type where he's going to wipe everybody out, which is going to look bad on them because they were called that night..... What's the minimum we can do here to get out of here? That's how their attitude is..... We were treated as arguing drunk idiots.....If they were going to give me sympathy there was every chance that I would keep ringing them back and taking up more of their time with no intention of actually doing anything about the situation. I know what they were doing. They weren't going, oh, you poor thing so that there'd be every Friday night I'd give them a call to come around and deal with the naughty man. I mean, they didn't want to encourage that kind of behaviour either.*

Police often suggest going to a relative or friend when victim status is interpreted as an equally distressed couple, assuming a supportive environment will be provided by her family. However, Lauren's case exemplifies that this is not always so. Lempert (1997) found many women experienced a hostile and victim-blaming response when seeking help from such informal sources. Lauren attributed her reluctance to seek help from her parents to feelings of shame and not wanting to

burden them. On this occasion, the action taken by police contributed to the violation of her basic human rights to protection and shelter, and highlights the importance of taking time to ensure the needs of the victim and her children are met.

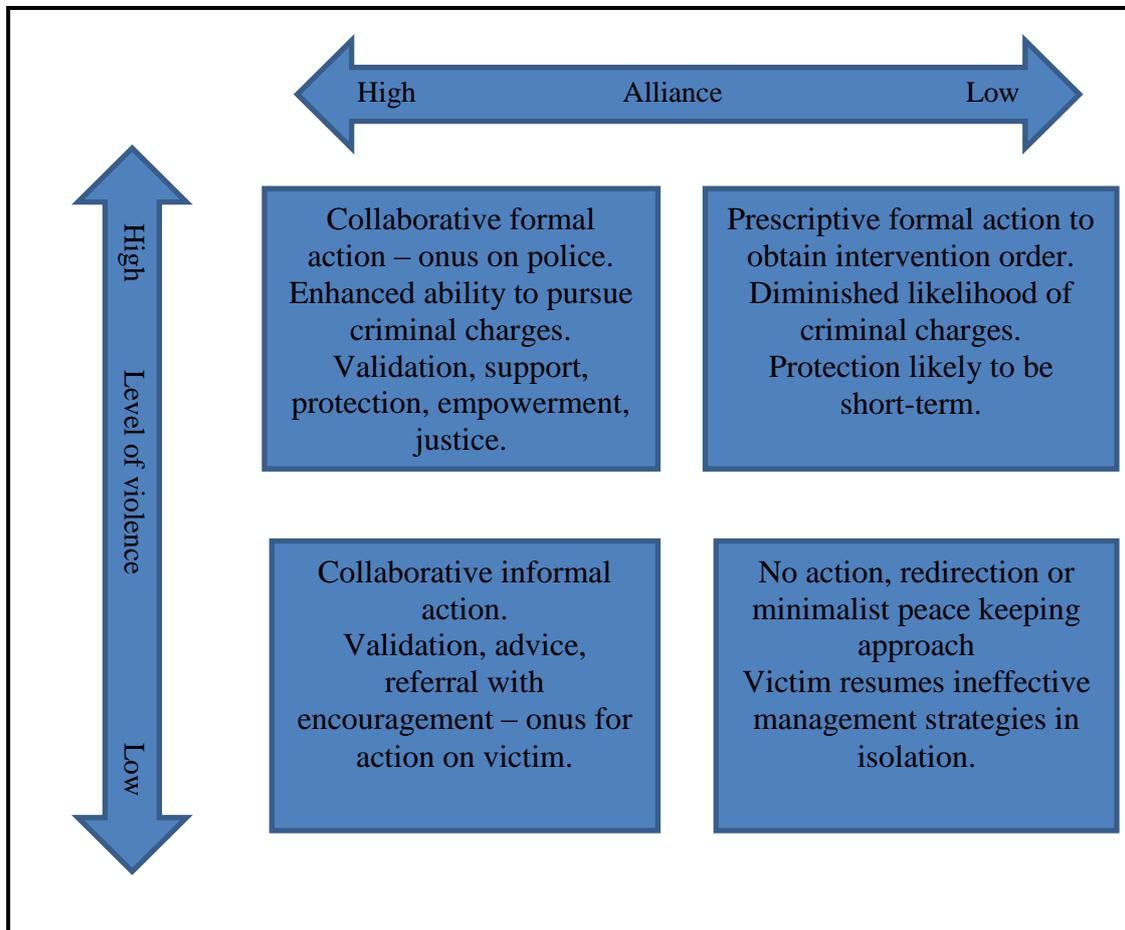


Figure 6.1. Police action and alliance contingencies

## 6.2 Victim outcomes

When police act in ways that demonstrate support for the victim and intolerance of abuse, a number of inter-related outcomes are achieved that support positive change in victims' lives. When police name and show intolerance of abuse, they provide an important point of reference for reality checking. They validate the victim's experience and bring new perspectives to the way she sees herself, her partner and her situation. When police form an alliance with the victim, she is empowered. When police take the time to fully explore her problem, the victim feels heard and understood. When they subsequently provide direction, she gains more effective

strategies than she has previously used. Furthermore, when they take the onus for action, they affirm her right to protection, providing a metaphorical shield against retribution and essential support for her to move towards change. Protection affords reassurance and respite from abuse. When the period of respite is substantial, the victim learns that she can cope alone and begins to experience a better life. The victim experiences validation of her rights and a sense of justice when her partner is held accountable for the violence. These outcomes are further elucidated in the remainder of this chapter.

In contrast, when police fail to identify and act on abuse, victims feel unprotected, unsupported, invalidated and disempowered. They interpret the lack of police action as evidence that the violence in their life is not serious enough to warrant police involvement. This confirms their understanding that violence is a normal and acceptable part of their life and they have no other option than to tolerate it. Victims become disheartened and deterred from further help-seeking. Those victims who were attempting to disengage from their abusive relationships are likely to abandon such attempts and remain in the relationship, enduring further violence. They believe they must cope alone and resort to former ineffective strategies in an attempt to minimise the violence in their lives. When police show tolerance of IPV, in any of its many forms, perpetrators are empowered and their ability to dominate, control and abuse is ameliorated.

### **6.2.1 Validation – naming and condemning violence against women**

Victims experience validation when abuse is named and intolerance of abuse is shown by police. When police believe a victim's account of the violence she has experienced, the victim experiences an enormous sense of relief. Victimisation processes impair victims' capacity to trust their own judgements. Victims of IPV have been found to have higher levels of externalised self-perception than non-abused women; they judge themselves by the standards of others (Woods, 2010). They also attribute the perpetrator with omnipotence and omniscience (Herman, 1992a; Herman 1992b; Walker, 2009). As the abuser is the most dominant and influential "other" in an abused woman's life, she is likely to judge herself

according to his perspective. The self-silencing, denial and blaming that occurs whilst enduring abuse, distorts victims' perceptions of the violence they experience and of who is responsible for that violence. The most powerful message that police can give to victims is that: yes, this is violence; it should not be happening; you are not to blame and you do not deserve to be treated in this way; and we are going to protect you and hold your abuser accountable. When victims infer from their interaction with police that they are being taken seriously, that the incident warrants police time and intervention, and that they are worthy of police assistance, their doubts are diminished. The victim is able to start thinking of herself, her abuser, her experience of abuse and her options differently.

*Jenny: What I felt with the police stuff was there was actually a reality to it. That I wasn't just imaging it and my judgement call that it wasn't the right thing to do was actually validated. That no, it wasn't the right thing to do. That he shouldn't be doing that. That he's perfectly entitled to be angry with me and to think that I'm a horrible person but it's not okay for him to do that. And I guess up to that point I didn't really feel like I had much of a leg to stand on. I mean in some ways it's almost trying to tell him too that he was in the wrong. He's still saying that it's all nothing.*

*Rita: And then they asked what else did he say? He told me he's going to kill me. This is a serious offence, he told me. And then they asked him to go to the station..... They handcuffed him and he was taken to the station..... I didn't know this was a grave mistake to tell somebody that they are going to kill him or her. And because of this serious offence, I don't know why, they have to handcuff him.*

Lauren recognised the importance of naming abuse. She sought counselling subsequent to police engagement and obtaining an intervention order.

*Lauren: I'd been to counselling many times before, been to lots of counsellors and they never said, look this is abuse love, this is domestic violence. And I never said that. When I got to DV services, I spoke to a trauma counsellor there, she really started out initially that this was abuse.*  
*Kim: And was that helpful to have that...*  
*Lauren: Oh of course; it was lifesaving, absolutely.*  
*Kim: That was while you were separated?*  
*Lauren: Yeah I got the interim order, got the order, and then got on to them for the help with the trauma.*

### 6.2.1.1 The beginning of new perspectives

When police convey that violence should be taken seriously and intervention is warranted, even in the most fleeting of alliances, the victim can be profoundly affected in terms of how she sees herself and her situation. Due to the indoctrination that occurs with the normalisation of abuse and their precarious sense of reality, victims of IPV often need an external, more objective point of view to restore trust in their own judgement. According to Landenburger (1989), identification with other abused women is an important factor in progressing from entrapment to recovery. In the current study, victims were often propelled from the enduring to disengaging phase by not only comparing themselves to other abused women, but by also comparing their relationship and family dynamics to others. Shortly before first seeking police intervention, Antoinette contrasted her dysfunctional family with happier families.

*Antoinette: So he was just yelling and my son and I were really distressed and his face was a green colour, always scary, depressed, and we felt like we were sitting in a cave next to him. Then he said, I'm going with you. So we went to pick up my daughter and she'd asked me, mum, please don't tell dad that I'm going to the birthday party. But he came; I had to tell him and so we went there. And I saw all fathers joking with their kids and the kids were happy and (in tears) I felt sorry for my children because they have to go sit with him in the car in front of the people, to see him.*

Exposure of the violence impedes denial processes. Antoinette's attempts to avoid stigma and pass (Goffman, 1963/1986) as a normal, happy family failed when her husband had an angry outburst at her son in response to him hitting his tennis racket on the ground during a match.

*Antoinette: They were very intelligent, well educated people, these two fathers and the son. And I tried to show that my husband was an intelligent man in front of them; that he was a good man and father.*

*Antoinette: I was embarrassed because my son had been angry; it didn't look nice. I was standing with the fathers and we were discussing the match and my husband was at the back. My son came out and he came to him and he grabbed him and slapped him on the face. I heard the slap and I ran to them. Everyone froze; there were people in the courts all around. You can hear everything because you are not allowed to talk. So it was loud. All the people stopped playing and started looking..... I tried to show everyone he*

*is an intelligent man because most of the people are intelligent over there. And this was crashed.*

Antoinette was understandably distraught by these events. However, the resultant questioning of her loyalty to her husband and diminishing hopes of maintaining a positive family identity eventually led her to more disclosure of her experiences. Subsequent disclosure to her child's teacher involved less loss and provided additional reinforcement that she should not tolerate abuse or expose her children to it.

*Antoinette: I told them that I have a very bad situation that's causing fighting. And this teacher told me you have to take them out of the house or go to a refuge. The children are abused, this situation, the whole situation, if he's even just abusing you, it's still child abuse. The kids, they're seeing all this; this is child abuse. You cannot stay with him.*

Her new perspective ultimately enabled her to seek police intervention. Her encounter with the police further reinforced her growing awareness that she needed to leave the relationship. The police provided encouragement and attempted to allay the fears she had about leaving.

*Antoinette: The policeman told me there's a lot of help for women in your situation. And he looked at the house and said, well it's a nice house but it's not worth wasting your life. What's so special about this house.... what's holding you here? Just go and look after yourself.*

Similarly, Leanne's perspective changed and her self-blaming was challenged when she sought an intervention order with the encouragement of her local police family violence liaison officer.

*Leanne: At first when she said I had to stand up in the stand, I thought, oh no! She said to me, what happened? So I told her and she said, you're joking, what else did he do? I kept telling her, and telling her and telling her and everyone in the court room was looking like this, you poor lady! And she said to me, you don't have to say anything anymore. He got a restraining order for life. She was shocked – even the judge – at what he's done to me..... I thought, I haven't done anything. It's all his fault. It's not my fault. I've been a good wife.*

Police also contribute to the process of gaining perspective, and for women who are particularly isolated, they may be the only available source of new insights. Even for

women who have other sources of disclosure, as representatives of social standards, the police perspective may be seen as more objective and valid than others and possibly more influential than friends or family members.

*Jenny: I saw her very soon after the April event and I had some pretty bad bruising on my arms. So she sort of became aware and she was saying you need to go to a doctor, you need to go and report it at least. I know you don't want to but you need to take some photos and you need to report it and go to the police. And I was saying, well who's going to listen, you know everybody thinks he's wonderful. And she's saying well I don't think he's wonderful for doing this. And I'm saying, yeah but that's because you're my best friend, so of course you're going to back me up. And she said no, actually he shouldn't be doing this. So she was being really supportive but trying not to pressure me too hard.*

In contrast, by simply believing what was happening to her, police provided Jenny with validation of her experience and new insight into its criminality.

*Jenny: I thought they would think I was stupid and what an idiot to be in that situation and you know, why didn't you leave him before. And they actually asked me that but not in a judgemental way, just like so what are the reasons you haven't left him before. So it was more fact finding, rather than being judgemental. I was actually really surprised that they believed me. I kind of thought they would probably just say look, stop being so over the top. He's already told us you're over the top..... So I was a little bit surprised that they actually believed me for starters and then they actually thought it was quite important, that it shouldn't be happening. Because, you know, it's not a bank robbery or anything like that. So it kind of just really surprised me.*

Erin's self-image and sense of worth had been severely undermined by her partner's emotional abuse, resulting in her reluctance to leave him. In the following extract, the police officer attempted to challenge her negative self-beliefs and encouraged her to seek additional assistance.

*Erin: As they're typing, they're talking and they're just making suggestions that I should move on. And out of some of the conversations, how he says I'm ugly and the police officer would reassure me, there's nothing wrong with you. You don't need him in your life. They gave me the domestic violence phone numbers and told me, feel free to ring them. Don't be scared to ring. There are people out there who will understand and will help you.*

Validating the victim's experience is an important element in providing her with a new perspective of her partner and the dynamics of the violent relationship she has

been enduring. Police provide an alternative point of reference for reality testing and help contradict the denial, normalising of abuse and blaming she has been subjected to by her partner, and sometimes by others in her immediate circle. With ongoing support and encouragement, along with prescriptive action by police, Erin eventually started to recognise her partner's pattern of behaviour, seeing him with new insight and recognising her own responses to his manipulative behaviour.

*Erin: I feel really stupid now; there was one instance where there was this fantastic policeman that came around. And he was more concerned about my kids than anything else. He said to me, do you want to press charges about the smashing up of my car. And I'm like no because I don't want to get him in any more trouble than he's already in. And he says, you know what, bad luck. You don't want to do it. He goes, I'm going to have to do it because you can't keep doing this to yourself and those children. You've got beautiful children; someone's got to put a stop to it... I finally learnt the word of what he is; a manipulator, manipulating. I didn't know what that word was. And now that suits him to a tee. Now I know everything he had done.*

*Kim: So if he had done something and he ended up in trouble would he then be....*

*Erin: Sweet and nice to me and tell me things will change. It won't happen, it just happened because you didn't do what I asked you to do. And I'm thirsty for affection and someone to love me. He was my first partner. I didn't know any different. And I have three kids to him and that's why a few nice words out of his mouth changed a lot of things.*

Chelsea also identified that gaining a new perspective of her partner was a crucial factor in maintaining her independence from him.

*Chelsea: I'm more secure in myself because I know him for the person he is now and there's no way I'm going to be taken in by all the lies any more. I don't believe anything he says any more.*

Prior to police intervention, Rita accepted responsibility for her husband's violence. Her contact with police contributed to her new perspective of her husband's limited potential for change.

*Rita: He always says, it's all your fault. You provoke me. Maybe I was wrong, I said to myself, but he has to manage his anger as well. And he should have to accept that yes, I've got anger management problems too. Always the fault is on myself... ..*

*Kim: So the police coming and finding out the way that the police can intervene in family violence in Australia, did that change the way you were thinking about you being to blame?*

*Rita: It started some questions in me, yes, but I couldn't open up to anyone. I don't have any person that I could confide in that he has this problem and I don't know what to do or is it really me who is at fault this time? Only when we went to court for the intervention order, I saw some brochures in the court like mediation and things like that. And I said to the policeman with me then, who applied for the intervention order, maybe we should do a mediation and then he said, I've seen your husband and I think mediation won't work in this kind of person (small laugh).*

When there is not a clear legal solution, the police will often try to convince those involved to take action that will bring about permanent change to the relationship. Police attempted to influence Antoinette's husband's views of the relationship. In the following extract the police officer used his power of persuasion to convince him to leave her alone. He subsequently used his power of authority to make him leave the scene.

*Antoinette: My husband told me, the policeman told him be a man, be a man and leave her now, just go. Leave your wife alone. And he said, I think your relationship is over; there's nothing else you can do. Be a man and go. That's the policeman talking to my husband.*

During a follow-up attendance, the police attempted to show Antoinette her husband's true nature.

*Antoinette: I didn't actually realise my husband made a complaint until I saw it written when this same police officer came by the house in one week. He said, how's everything going? Have things settled down? We just wanted to see how you're going and he made the complaint here and he has to sign that he doesn't want to go through with anything. I was surprised that it was actually him making a complaint against me and probably the officer wanted to show me what sort of scumbag my husband is, and that I shouldn't trust him if things have settled down. He's not really a good man. So he's the one who made the complaint against me – I didn't. I was assaulted but I didn't. But he – for the scratch made the complaint. It got me thinking. When I showed it to my husband, I said, you actually did the complaint, and he said, oh look at these people, what pigs they are – they want to make trouble in the family.*

Naming abuse is a powerful means of challenging victims' understanding of the violence they experience, which results in a shift from self-blaming to seeing their partners' culpability and malevolence.

### 6.2.1.2 Failing to name abuse

In contrast, when police fail to name abuse they are complicit with the forces that subjugate and entrap the victim. Chelsea's encounters with police included times when they had tolerated abuse and times when they had not. She was able to compare the different approaches and provide insight into the ramifications of both. Chelsea provided an example of the extent of the hopelessness and desperation women can feel when abuse is tolerated; the repeated failure of her only avenue for help resulted in her experiencing homicidal ideation.

*Chelsea: Oh it was a big change. This time they were willing. This time they referred me to all sorts of places. This time, they were adamant I should get him charged; that he should be punished for this. They were a lot less tolerant of his behaviour. The previous times it was almost like a big blokey thing with him and the cops. He'd sort of say, oh she's whatever. And then afterwards, they'd be leaving and say, oh see you mate and all that stuff to him. And this time they were very serious. They sent a woman police officer around and she interviewed me. They took statements and everything. I was really impressed this time.*

*Kim: How were you feeling about it this time, in contrast?*

*Chelsea: Well I was much happier. I felt this time no-one's taking me for a lunatic. This time somebody's actually listening to me and they're believing me that he is dangerous, he has got problems and I need help. Whereas before there wasn't; it was all like she's crazy, just leave him and it will be alright.*

*Kim So do you think they were making some sort of judgement about that, the fact that you didn't leave him?*

*Chelsea: Yeah, I think they were. I think they sort of thought, well obviously she's nuts; he said she is and if she's not going to do anything about it, she obviously is nuts. I didn't feel there was any understanding of domestic violence. I didn't feel there was any understanding of the way these men operate. Whereas this time, when I actually sat down with police, they spoke to me and they did show an understanding of domestic violence. They did show that they were on my side and were taking me seriously. I wasn't just crazy because I was starting to think that myself. They said you have a legitimate case. You have legitimate cause to get him arrested. I mean he's got no right to go round bashing women and getting away with it, which was what he's been doing.....*

*Kim: So what did it mean to you to feel finally that they were on your side?*

*Chelsea: Well I wasn't so afraid anymore. I didn't feel like my last resort to get rid of him would probably be to have to kill him. I mean I hate to say I was thinking like that but at one stage I was thinking I'm at such, I've been pushed so far that I'm ready to kill him, you know. But the thought of my daughter was the only thing that prevented me from actually doing that. A number of times I did actually go at him with the knife. Because day after*

*day with someone speeding off their head and coming home and just yelling and criticising and smashing things, you can't take it.*

### **6.2.2 Providing direction and prescriptive action**

As previously described, in both crisis and cold calls, most women have only a vague, ill-defined notion of the various options available to them and of what is entailed in obtaining protection. They also have little understanding of policing and legal processes and of the facilitative role of the police. Victims of IPV are, therefore, limited in their ability to advocate for themselves. Consequently, it is necessary for police to invest time to elicit a more fully conceptualised understanding of victims' needs and to then provide some direction as to how those needs can be addressed. Women need information, guidance, encouragement and direction. These needs are most effectively met within the context of an empowering alliance.

It was necessary for police to provide direction during Rita's first encounter with police as she had no knowledge of available options whatsoever.

*Rita: Then they helped me to get away, which was really good. I felt good. Then after that, after we took everything I think I went to the police station and gave my statement. And they told me that the best way is to have an intervention order; you can go back to your house and he cannot go to your house. That was the first time I heard about intervention orders. And then they told me that the Court hearing would be set on this date.*

In contrast, Rita was met with stony indifference when she made a cold call to police for assistance after spending ten days in a refuge following another violent incident. She sought a copy of the statement they had previously taken with the intention of applying for an intervention order, unaware that an application had been made by police on the night of the incident. It wasn't until she went to the Magistrates' Court that she learned of the existing application.

*Rita: This time I came back from the refuge centre after ten days and then I was trying to call the police to get a copy at least of the statement, my statement or his statement so that it can help me out to go and send it for an intervention order. They said they are not releasing any statement. So that's the only misfortune with the police; they were very, they just drove me out.*

*So I had to do it for myself. I told them that I had this incident and they're not giving any copies but they didn't even tell me that they have applied for an intervention order on my behalf. So this time they were very authoritative, I'm sorry and then they just put down the phone.*

It is apparent they did not take the time to discern the real nature of her needs, concentrating on her literal request for a copy of the statement rather than on her actual need to procure protection. Her status as a victim requiring protection was not recognised and she was consequently left to fend for herself. Failure to explore the problem adequately resulted in the victim feeling unsupported and misunderstood, and believing that her problem was not serious enough to warrant police intervention. This lack of engagement by police is particularly problematic in the case of cold calls to report an incident or when victims seek follow-up after an incident, and usually results in the victim having to take on the onus for any further action (see 6.2.2.2)

Police can also fail to discern the overall nature of the problem within the context of a crisis call. When Lynette sought help because her husband was threatening to kill her and himself, police focussed on her literal request for mental health intervention for him, rather than dealing with the fact he had threatened her on several occasions, whilst an intervention order was in place. They failed to recognise that she felt intimidated and feared for her life, and ignored the intervention order breaches. This is particularly worrisome as prior suicide threats and being an estranged husband are risk factors for femicide-suicide (Koziol-McLain et al., 2006). Lynette needed police to provide direction, protection and appropriate intervention. It was not until her husband assaulted her on another occasion that he was arrested and charged with assault.

*Lynette: The police were here and he was actually on the phone and making threats to me and telling me he's going to kill me, he's going to kill himself. And they're saying to me, well we have to see him and assess him in person. And we can't take these threats. I knew it was him on the phone, but they're kind of like, we don't know that's him on the phone; they needed proof.*

*Kim: Did they hear him?*

*Lynette: Yes! My sister's like, here's the phone you can hear. She's saying, what was that and making him repeat stuff and the police were standing right there, they could hear everything. I said to them, can you hear what he's saying. He needs help. He needs psychiatric help. He's going crazy and*

*no wonder because he was on antidepressant tablets plus he was drinking all this alcohol. He was going mental and then doing stupid things.*

*Kim: So you felt that he was mentally unstable but you couldn't convince people of that?*

*Lynette: Yeah, police said, we need to see him in person and assess him under some section of section of something or other Act.*

*Kim: Mental Health Act?*

*Lynette: Yeah, like we need to actually see him. And I'm going, that is him on the phone. He is making these threats to me and you can't do anything! And they're like, we don't know where he is. Oh, it was like frustration. All along I kept saying to people, he needs help, he needs mental help.*

*Kim: So these threats, was he actually threatening you or threatening to hurt himself?*

*Lynette: Both, both.*

Providing direction occurs on a continuum. On one end of the continuum, police and the victim collaborate; police provide advice and guidance, and use their power of persuasion to encourage the victim to take particular steps. Police are affirmative in their approach and advocate for preventative measures to be implemented, such as applying for an intervention order. On the other end of the continuum, police take quite a prescriptive stance, not only advocating but insisting on what needs to be done. Prescriptive action can be taken without victim co-operation. On the lower end of the continuum, the onus for action and decision making is still with the victim. At the upper end, the police take the onus for action, which helps overcome victims' fears, doubts, and ambivalence. When police take the onus for action, they are able to assist the victim in resisting her partner's attempts to convince her to withdraw her application or complaint and shield her from retribution (see 6.2.3.2). It also demonstrates unequivocal intolerance of abuse.

#### **6.2.2.1 Onus for action assumed by police – providing prescriptive action**

Victims provided evidence of police assuming responsibility and subsequently taking action with regard to applying for intervention orders, ensuring intervention orders were not revoked, and pursuing criminal charges. Once a complaint and warrant for an intervention order was in place and the perpetrator was bailed on the conditions of an order, police would also often take the initiative to make sure the victim attended Court for the hearing of the intervention order by organising to pick her up and take her.

Erin had a long history of chronic police intervention, which typically involved a peace-keeping approach with removal of her partner from the property. Despite police advice, she resisted getting an order because she wanted to maintain the relationship. Police eventually took prescriptive action on two occasions. In an earlier incident the police proceeded with charges of criminal damage to her car, despite Erin trying several times to get them to drop the charges. The following extract is related to her partner threatening to burn the house down. The police insisted on applying for a complaint and warrant for an intervention order and directed her to go to Court for the hearing.

*Erin: I'm like, I don't need it. I'm not going to stop the father from seeing the kids. And then when the police called again, that's when they took it upon themselves.....This officer has come out on many occasions and he's had other dealings with my ex before. I didn't even know that and he's known him for a long time apparently. And my ex tried to talk to him in their language; you know how they have that communication thing. He [the officer] goes, you can speak English.....So this officer told me, look it has to be done. And he did all the paperwork on the weekend. I thought it wouldn't actually come into effect until you actually attend Court but they have the power to enforce one. And that was done on the weekend and I just had to attend Court with him too; I didn't have to but he told me to make sure I'm there. And I don't know the law too well, so I attended.*

*Kim: Because the police officer told you make sure you're there?*

*Erin: Yeah.*

Erin's account exemplifies the perseverance needed in responding to chronic cases. The officer made the application and used his power of authority to convince her to attend court for the hearing. Furthermore, the police officer rejected her partner's attempt to form an alliance, demonstrating to Erin that he was on her side. Police persistence, along with fears of child protection involvement, eventually convinced her to retain the order. Subsequent separation facilitated her recognition of her partner's manipulative abuse (described previously at 6.2.1.1).

One of the most debilitating aspects of cases involving chronic police attendance is the perpetrators absolute dominance over the victim. Police frequently reported feeling frustrated and discouraged when victims revoked orders. However, as Sarah described, victims are not necessarily acting on their own volition when this occurs.

*Sarah: I'd be thinking, I know I shouldn't be with him. And half the time, when I had an intervention order, my partner would make me go back and get them off him. So having an intervention order would just make him break back in the house and like sort of being forced to be with him and him saying, you go and take the intervention order off me now. So I would have to go back to Court and say, listen I don't need an intervention order, we want to work things out. In the end the police said, no, we don't want to take the intervention off, she needs one. We've been to her house that many times it's ridiculous.....And so the Magistrate said, well if she wants to take it off, let her take it off. There were a couple of times when they were taken off; they were put on and then they were taken off. But one of the times in the end, there was an order made where he was allowed to live in the house but he still wasn't allowed to threaten or assault. That was probably coming up to the end of the relationship because he breached that order about four times and that's what he was charged with in the end.*

In such cases, police need to use their own judgement and knowledge of her history to ensure an intervention order is in place. The order did not prevent a further assault. However, when it occurred, Sarah's partner was charged with a breach as well as assault, showing the Court the ongoing nature of the violence, thus giving credibility to a harsher sentence. Police also took prescriptive action in pursuing these charges, providing Sarah with an alternative perspective and reinforcing the criminality of the abuse.

*Kim: So how much responsibility did you have for bringing those assault charges against him? Was that something that the police took control over or was it you and the police working together?*

*Sarah: No, in the end it was all the police and it made it good for me. It made it a lot better for me because I knew that him knowing that I actually charged him with all that would probably make the anger levels towards me a lot more. Where the police doing it made me feel like I more deserved, having somebody else say alright he needs to be charged with assault and everything made me feel that it wasn't just me being a sook or something like that..... It was what was needed. I couldn't cope with doing that. But having someone else do it for me just took my fear level off*

Sarah's partner was given a custodial sentence, which provided her with long-term respite and the time needed to recover and grow stronger and more independent.

*Sarah: I say to myself, putting him in jail was the best thing that's ever happened, for me.... I think to myself I got dragged in and out of schools everywhere and I guess not wanting to do that to my kids probably would have made me just stay there. So I say that jail is probably the best thing that happened.*

### **6.2.2.2 Onus for action relegated to victim – feeling deterred**

When police are not willing to act on behalf of the victim to obtain formal protection or investigate complaints of assault or harassment, victims are usually deterred from continuing their help-seeking endeavours; the barriers to obtaining protection seem insurmountable. Victims feel dissuaded, discouraged, rebuffed, and sometimes blamed. Left to cope alone, they resort to their former management strategies and are vulnerable to further violence and harassment.

There are three modes of being deterred. Victims can be rebuffed; their complaint and needs are trivialised or they are accused of being responsible for the problem or fabricating it. Victims can be referred; their need for protection and assistance is validated but the police do not get involved. The abuse is acknowledged but it is not serious enough for police involvement beyond keeping the peace. Rather than police taking onus for action, the victim is redirected to Court to apply for an intervention order herself. Victims can be delayed; they are told to return later, for example, when the officer they dealt with previously is on duty, or go to Court after the weekend. There is usually a sense of urgency for the victim but not for the police. They don't see any immediate danger and, therefore, no need to take immediate action. However, the victim understands that her drive to act is time limited. Without action, her resources are depleted and she becomes demoralised. In the interim, there is the likelihood that he will return and the relationship will continue until the next episode. Delays in getting protection result in continued abuse and further violence (see failing to protect).

Antoinette had three encounters with the police where the onus for action was relegated to her. In the first extract, the police were willing to apply for a complaint and warrant for an intervention order but the decision to proceed was left up to her. Although Antoinette had no hope of her relationship improving and wanted to end it, she still had concerns about how she would cope on her own. Her partner used those concerns to subtly dissuade her from taking formal action. Police subsequently used their informal powers to convince him to leave for the night. He returned 36 hours later.

*Antoinette: She said, make your decision. We can take him out from here now and you can live your life. You can stay in the house, we can take him from the house now..... And my husband said, officer, I have a question for you. The car loan is under my name and I need the car. The policeman looked at me and he said, I understand that you have the kids and you need the car but I cannot stop him from taking it. And he told him you have to leave the home now and leave your wife alone. So he left and I was without the car.....*

*Kim: Did they take him to the station, did they do an intervention order?*

*Antoinette: No, it was up to me to make the intervention order if I want to take him out.*

The following extract provides an example of when the onus was placed on Antoinette to go to Court and make the application for an intervention order herself. This was despite the fact that her husband had hit her across the head, hard enough to cause ringing in her ears. Without visible evidence of physical violence, and as the perpetrator had already left the scene, the police did not invoke formal powers.

*Antoinette: I had to tell them what happened. There were no marks on my face. I was not hurt in any way or bleeding or anything. I told them what happened. We cannot arrest him or make an intervention order against him. He said, you don't have to open the door if you feel you're in danger. If he comes back and hurts you, just don't open the door to him. If you want to stop the relationship, you have to get the intervention order against him from the Court; it was Friday, so next week you have to ring them up and tell them. Tell the Court, make an appointment and make the intervention order against him.*

The officer attempted to influence Antoinette about the appropriate course of action but the responsibility for taking that action was left to her. In the following extract, the officer is using his power of persuasion to convince Antoinette to get an intervention order so that they could subsequently deal with him more effectively if the violence recurred. This is an example of the police not having immediate powers to act and, therefore, needing her to empower them by obtaining an intervention order.

*Antoinette: Yeah, I told them he was threatening to kill me if I leave him and I was thinking many times how to leave him but I have no family, I don't know really what to do. .... I said, he will chase me. And he said, when you do everything and he will still chase you, then we can take care of him; we can protect you. The law will let us protect you once you kick him out, you want to go on with your life, you don't want him anymore and we will protect you then. That's what he actually he made me believe that I will*

*be protected even from him stalking me or you know, like he told me he will shoot me and kill me.*

Antoinette's case illustrates the futility of redirecting victims to court. Police fail to understand how overwhelming and intimidating it can be for victims to attend Court without support. From the police perspective going to Court is a routine, almost mundane, event.

*Kim: What do you think was the outcome? They said go to Court, we can't do anything tonight...*

*Antoinette: So I'll have to do everything by myself.*

*Kim: How did you feel about that?*

*Antoinette: Confused, still confused. And actually I wanted to go to the Court. I wanted to ring up by myself and start to free myself from the whole situation. But then that night his son came. He was living near here and my husband went and stayed with him. And he started saying, yes he's a gambler, and he's abusive, and he's angry but it's all because of gambling. And he will stop and the kids need a father and everything.*

On three occasions the police did not help Antoinette get an intervention order, leaving him free to return, thus, facilitating the continuance of the relationship, which resulted in her being subjected to further verbal and emotional abuse and eventually additional physical violence.

*Antoinette: Yeah because the thing is, I know they were telling me you have to go the Court, you have to. I would have had to go by myself to the Court and make the complaint. I was thinking it's hard for me to go by myself and do it. I need someone to be with me and to help me do it. That's why, like it's taken four visits.*

*Kim: Is there any way at all that you feel that they actually helped you?*

*Antoinette: Not really. They gave me advice but that's it. They told me if he's going to hurt me or attack me then call 000 again. If the act of violence will happen, they can protect me but not preventing him from hurting me. They couldn't, they have no power to stop him.*

This is somewhat ironic because a common complaint made by police is the necessity to re-attend for further incidents because victims don't want an intervention order. In this instance, the advice was to call again if the violence worsens and then they'll take action.

Similarly, Jenny attended her local police station about a week after her husband's violent behaviour escalated sharply. She realised she could no longer manage on her

own. The police officer advised her she could get an intervention order. The decision and responsibility for action was Jenny's. The policewoman provided no encouragement or reassurance when Jenny expressed concerns. Jenny's reaction to the encounter also demonstrates the futility of redirecting victims to court without facilitation or support.

*Jenny: I explained what had been happening to her. And she said, well you know, you can go and get an intervention order and it's really good and the Court's next door, you can just walk in there. I said, I wouldn't even know where to start. She said, well go in there and they'll walk you through it. And I said, I just don't know if I'm ready for that because I don't know if that's going to make him angrier. If he's already raised about divorce, perhaps that's going to make him angrier if I start pulling out an intervention order on him. And she said, well that's your call.....*

*Kim: So you didn't actually follow through with that?*

*Jenny: Oh God no, yeah no, no. Well, if I've just been wasting her time, I'm not going to go and waste a Magistrate's time as well.*

There was only one instance, described by Marlene in the following extracts, where being directed to court for an intervention order at the time of an incident was considered helpful. Following assertions from her partner that Marlene was just depressed and having problems, the police assessed the situation as not warranting immediate intervention. Taking a peacekeeping approach, they advised her to go to work and leave the children with her partner. However, one officer at the scene also informed her of the option of seeking an intervention order herself.

*Marlene: But one policeman said to me, he came up to me and said, you can get an intervention order you know. So I went off to Court straight away and got one and they were all here and I had to have the police come with me and he was removed immediately from the house. But he was yelling at me the whole time, saying, why have you done this and you're destroying the family. And the kids were around, so it was pretty traumatic.*

*Kim: If you look back over everything, is there one thing that really stands out about the police? What would you say was the most important thing that they've done?*

*Marlene: Probably advised me that I could get an intervention order, like at the first incident.*

*Kim: And why was it do you think that that was important?*

*Marlene: Because I couldn't go back into the house and I didn't know any other way out. So it would have been really hard. I wouldn't have known what to do. I would have been really distressed.*

*Kim: Had you heard about intervention orders before?*

*Marlene: No.*

The difference in this situation, compared to other crisis incidents where victims believed their concerns were not taken seriously and consequently felt deterred was that Marlene had an immediate need that was not being met. In other crisis call situations, police had already made him leave and then advised her to follow-up by going to court on the next working day. In Marlene's case, they had allowed him to stay in the house. It was only by chance, as they were leaving, that one of the police officers in attendance mentioned that she had the option of going to Court for an intervention order, which she was able to do straight away. In other cases, such as Jenny's, the advice was in response to a cold call where the need was not immediate. Although Marlene also believed the police were not taking her concerns seriously, it is likely her continued sense of urgency outweighed her fears of also not being taken seriously at Court, and so she persisted with help-seeking.

In the most negative of responses, victims are completely rebuffed. Marion sought protection from ongoing harassment after leaving her partner. She tried to contact the officer who had helped her when she left the refuge but he was on leave. The response she got from another officer trivialised her concerns and normalised the harassment as being typical of divorce.

*Marion: And he told me not to worry about it because he's had a divorce. And I said, look I don't want to listen to your problems, I want to know can you protect me. You know, because to get an intervention order unfortunately now, he's going to have to actually bash me up or things like that because it just doesn't work, emotional abuse. I mean he's calling me all the time. Calling me all sorts of names, telling me I'm going to get it, this and that. He was simply ignoring this.....My other contact was away for a couple of months so I was led to believe that there was nothing they can do. He can abuse me, harass me, he can do anything he wants and there's no protection for people like me.....I felt betrayed somehow you know. And really scared because I thought if he gets to me anywhere outside of my home, because as I said I had all the locks put in, who am I going to call? They're not even going to come. Because with domestic violence they just turn a blind eye, the police.*

When providing a minimal, perfunctory service, police sometimes seem to place the onus on the victim in order to circumvent any further involvement. Chelsea's status as a victim was not taken seriously. There was a cursory offer to charge her partner,

with no compassion or encouragement; the decision was left solely with her. Not surprisingly, Chelsea did not want to proceed. This interaction with police was extremely disempowering and left her feeling depressed and helpless.

*Chelsea: The policeman talking to me said to me, well look I can't see any injury. And I said can't you see my eye is going is red. And he goes, well I can't see any injuries And he looked over to where my ex-partner was talking to the other one, and he was you know, making that crazy motion with his hands and saying, ooh, you know she's on anti-depressants, she's unstable, she's basically crazy. And after he said that, their attitude changed. They treated me like a total retard. They really looked really bored and they said, well do you want to charge him or not? And I said, no. And he said, well there's nothing we can do. And they started to get really rude with me after that and then they drove off. And he mocked me afterwards. He said, this is what's going to happen every time you call the police because you're a loony tune. And after that I was really depressed and really disheartened. I sort of thought well now I've got no-one to help me, if they're going to treat me like this.*

### **6.2.3 Providing protection**

The ability of the police to respond quickly, manage the situation effectively, restrain the perpetrator if necessary, and remove him from the property provides immediate and definitive protection.

*Leanne: At first I was a bit worried about him. A couple of years ago, when they first started taking him away I thought, what have I done to my husband? But then when I think about it these other couple of years, I think what has he done to me and I'm not going to let him hurt me no more. So when the police take him away, I feel secure, even though I'm secluded out here, although I've got the owners here that own the place. But I feel I can go to bed and sleep and I don't feel scared.*

However, the duration of the protection provided is dependent on the degree of formal intervention undertaken by police. Leanne, who was a chronic user of police services, always contacted police with the aim of procuring short-term protection; she just wanted him gone for the night. Although at times, the provision of short-term respite was effective, in many instances her violent partner would simply return and the abuse would continue (see 6.2.3.4). When police took the onus for action and obtained intervention orders, he would stay away a little bit longer.

However, consistent with other participants who were chronic users of police intervention, Leanne had a long history of being persuaded or forced by her partner to revoke the intervention order. In cases such as Leanne's, pending criminal charges were more effective in keeping abusive partners away, and jail terms provided the much needed long-term respite, which facilitated a more enduring recovery.

Lauren gained long-term respite after getting an intervention order and proceeding with criminal charges, which resulted in a suspended sentence.

*Kim: So your attitude towards that abuse and that being acceptable has changed and in part you attribute that to the work you have done with domestic services...and in part to the influence of the police and them saying no...*

*Lauren: They were like holding the tide back. Yeah just holding his behaviour back and giving me clear thinking space in which to get better, basically yeah. And controlling his behaviour long enough for me to get some breathing space.*

*Kim: And do you think the way that you think about yourself has changed?*

*Lauren: Oh yeah absolutely, yeah, yeah. I've gone back to who I was to start with before he's ever really got to me I suppose.*

### **6.2.3.1 Someone to protect me - reassurance and sense of safety**

Psychological sense of safety is enhanced when victims perceive that the police are on their side; when an alliance is formed, victims' sense of being protected is intensified.

*Kim: You said that the first time the police came, you felt they were on your side?*

*Rita: Yes.*

*Kim: What did that mean to you, to feel that they were on your side?*

*Rita: It means protection to me. It means a lot to me that no one will hurt me. This man who's living in my house with me couldn't hurt me because I've got other people to protect me.*

*Kim: Before the police came, did you feel that you had anyone at all that would protect you?*

*Rita: No, I can't talk to friends. He's going to know. If he found out that I'd told this to friends, he's going to get more angry and he's going to be more violent. I couldn't tell it to my relatives because they would always put the blame on me. I told you before to leave, all things like that. The blame will*

*be put on me. I was so helpless.....The only person that could help me were the police. Those were my feelings during that time.*

According to Lempert, (1997) most victims first seek support from their social networks and this can often leave victims feeling misunderstood and blamed for their situation. Rita's story emphasizes that in such cases it is crucial formal services such as police provide a non-judgemental and supportive response that recognises the perpetrators culpability.

Police engagement with victims beyond the initial crisis intervention provides victims with much needed reassurance and nurtures their emergent sense of safety. Marion was provided with police assistance to return to her home following a period in a refuge. She believed she would have been unable to return to the family home with her two daughters without police support and protection

*Kim: So how important was that for you to have police protection at that time?*

*Marion: Oh extremely. I couldn't do it, you see, if they didn't come, I probably wouldn't have moved back.....I think that every woman needs to have the police in the initial stage of getting back into the house from a refuge. You know that you are just not going to walk back in and find somebody waiting behind the door for you.*

*Kim: So what did that, when you say every woman should have a police officer, what is it that they do?*

*Marion: If nothing else, at least number one, they can protect you and they can be a witness because we have lived, you know, without any form of, nobody sees our pain, nobody, okay. So sometimes you just want to know that somebody else is there that knows that you are in trouble. And that somebody cares.*

Quite often when police are leaving, they instruct the victim to call 000 again if there is any further disturbance. Permission to call is an important factor in making her feel safe. By explicitly stating that it is appropriate to call again, police circumvent any reluctance on the part of the victim. It is extremely reassuring for her to know that she has someone she can rely on who has the capacity to respond quickly to protect her. She not only feels safer, she is empowered because it provides her with the means to make something happen; it provides a degree of agency that she previously lacked.

*Maria: Well they told me you got power that I didn't know. They told me, you got rights; you can't put up with that. You can call us if he comes back again or tries to do anything. He's got a warning now but later he'll be in trouble. I felt like that was something good for me. I had someone to look out for me; something that I didn't have before.*

*Kim: They'd said that you could call them again and that made you feel safe?*

*Maria: Yeah, because I knew that I could count with them; that they would come. They will come and protect me..... It was really reassuring. That was really simple and safe. But court is like something scary, especially if you've never been through it or if you've been there before, it's like, like a nightmare. I didn't want to go back there. I had an intervention order for my mum's ex because he had tried to sexually abuse me. I was scared of reliving that again.*

The immediacy of the police response is appealing to victims, and seen as being far less daunting and intimidating than going to Court. However, consistent with the police preference to implement civil orders of protection, evidence suggests long term protection is better afforded when police intervention and civil orders are combined (Young et al., 2000). Therefore, police need to be aware that going to court comprises a considerable ordeal for victims and accordingly they should invest time to fully explain to victims the benefits of overcoming their reluctance to proceed to Court. Police presence at Court enhances victims' sense of safety.

### **6.2.3.2 Shielding**

When police assume the onus for laying charges or applying for intervention orders, victims believe they will be less likely to be blamed by their partners and, therefore, less likely to be subjected to retaliatory abuse. Shielding is most obvious when police take prescriptive action, but it can also occur when police take collaborative formal action and in other circumstances such as when police accompany the victim to Court. Therefore, shielding can occur with or without an empowering alliance. In the absence of an alliance, the victim doesn't appear to want prescriptive action or shielding. It is in situations of chronic police attendance associated with entrenched, severe physical violence that police are likely to take prescriptive action without an alliance with the victim. It is also in these cases that shielding is probably the most important. When police are able to provide enough time and distance between the

victim and perpetrator, for example, when criminal charges are pending, and especially when they result in a jail sentence, the victim is able to retrospectively appreciate the value of both the shielding and prescriptive action.

Leanne was only able to extricate herself from an extremely violent, seven-year relationship involving multiple assaults and chronic police intervention when prescriptive action was taken by police, which finally eventuated in her husband receiving a two month jail sentence.

*Kim: So looking back now, what do you think about the police?*

*Leanne: I reckon, they're great and they've helped me a lot. My ex-husband reckons they're arseholes but I reckon they've just helped me so much. If it wasn't for the police I'd probably be dead by now.*

*Kim: So would you say that the most helpful thing that they've actually done then is....*

*Leanne: Putting him away.....Even though I wouldn't wish my worst enemy going to jail but I didn't put him away the police did and it gave me time to think. It's given me time to think, well what a waste of seven years.*

Marion similarly experienced shielding when the police initiated an intervention order on her behalf. The officer explicitly told Marion to redirect any harassment from her husband about the application to him.

*Marion: The constable said no, he's been terrorising you a lot, if he's got any problems they are taking the intervention order on my behalf. So if he's got any problems, he should call him, which well it made me feel very good.*

*Kim: So the police officer said if your husband's got an issue with this, he can contact me because I'm the one initiating it?*

*Marion: Yes, that's right.*

*Kim: How did that feel?*

*Marion: Oh it felt good because I mean, after all there was somebody looking out for me, you know because nobody is here at all. It made me feel good.*

Although at times police interpret victim reluctance as a sign of not wanting help, there are also occasions when they recognise the source of her reluctance and recognise the need to shield her from retribution.

*P4: You know, often the girls are afraid to make their statements or they don't want to make their statements and for me, as a police officer, if I turn up and I see that she's injured I'll pursue the matter based on my own observations and that's good for me because I'm able to proceed*

*regardless. It's also really good quite often for the victim because they don't have to put themselves in the limelight. It's almost like we get in there and shield them and we're able to take that approach with the offender that, oh look this isn't really about her this is about me turning up and, I don't like what you've done. I can see what you've done. I'll be able to take it to court. I'm the one processing you. I've taken out the intervention order. And they'll be quite often saying, oh but she doesn't want it. And I'll say, well this is my requirements in the situation. I have to do it.*

In contrast, without evidence of injury, the burden for taking action is often placed on the victim, which precludes shielding. Reform is needed to extend the ability of the police to relieve the victim of the responsibility and consequences of seeking formal protection.

### **6.2.3.3 Failing to protect – Coping alone.**

Failing to provide adequate protection leaves the victim to cope alone with ongoing harassment and violence. Bianca described repeatedly trying to get an intervention order served to prevent her ex-partner from remaining in the vicinity of her property. This extract demonstrates the dangerous consequences when police not only failed to provide protection, but failed to adequately grasp the nature of her problem. They focussed on her request to have the order served, which was not seen as an urgent matter, rather than on the fact that his presence was intimidating and increased the potential of him perpetrating further violence.

*Bianca: I'd called them to say that he was sleeping out the front. I often called them, could they get someone to serve the order on him and they always said, oh we haven't got time or we've got no cars that can come out; it never happened. And I was getting pretty angry thinking, well he's sleeping out the front of my house every night, harassing me all the time. I didn't feel safe. And then one afternoon he actually broke in through the backdoor. He had a key cut previously that I didn't know about. And he came in and that's when he actually attacked me. He had me like in the house for three hours, in front of the kids and everything. And it wasn't until someone in my family turned up at the door and he made me say to them that, you know, everything was okay. And I kind of said to them before they left, because they didn't even sort of get in the door, they just come to the door and I kind of said, ring the police, you know, he's doing this, he's doing that. And then they left and then he made me ring them and he said to me if the police come you're dead and so all of us, none of you will get out of here alive. And so he made me ring them and say don't ring the police. But my*

*sister-in-law and my brother went round to my mums and told her what happened and she goes, I'm ringing the police. So they rang and then they came here and he's kind of gone to me, don't you tell them anything. But as soon as I opened the door I was a mess, and I couldn't even speak. I just pointed in the bedroom. And then they come in and he'd actually, like I'd showed them the knife and everything under the bed and all the stuff. And he'd actually said that he was getting something and took off out the back door, over the fence and took off, got away from them.*

Leanne was also assaulted subsequent to police failing to provide protection.

*Leanne: Then when they'd come, he was just trying to act so nice, and then he says, why should I go? You're the one that's hitting me. You go and sleep on the streets, man, or sleep in the cells. But he used to go in there patting the rabbits and half the time they'd say, well, there's no problem. The police would go and then I'd get fuckin' hit again.....And then other times they used to just take him up to the pub; they'd just drop him off and then later on he'd be back here hitting me again.*

When police take a peacekeeping approach and simply order him away there is a strong likelihood that he will return within a very short time. Although this is an outcome that is actually wanted by many women in the enduring phase of a relationship, it provides very little protection. Erin often succumbed to her partner's financial abuse following a peace-keeping response from police.

*Kim: And what about all the times the police had come previously and just taken him away and then let him go. How did that influence him?*  
*Erin: He thought it was all a big joke. Like I said, he'd come back within an hour, however long it took him to walk from the train station to here. And he'd act like nothing had happened. And I went along with it too. That's what I mean, like I'm not crazy but silly I think that I'd open the door for him again..... I knew he would come back and he would manipulate me. And it did happen every time. And that's what I hated; I'd give in. I'd give him money that was meant for me and the kids. I'd give it to him to go score drugs. Then he'd have his hit and he'd try to be the good dad. When all that ran out and I had nothing, I would pawn my stuff. You don't know how much I've lost. Yeah it's a vicious cycle.*

Lynette first contacted police when her husband threatened her and rammed their car into the fence. An intervention order was granted and they separated. However, he continued to harass and threaten her throughout their separation. Lynette had grave fears about his potential for further violence and took his threats very

seriously. On more than one occasion, the police did not. Lynette described the outcome of reporting his threatening phone calls.

*Lynette: Anyway they never found him and they basically said to me look love, we've dealt with this situation a lot. If he was going to do it, he would have done it. It's all hot air type of thing. He's not going to do it, so don't sort of stress too much. He wouldn't be making all these threats, he would just do it.*

*Kim: So did that reassure you at all?*

*Lynette: No (starts crying).*

Even on the night he was arrested and charged, Lynette believed the police did not take her concerns seriously enough.

*Lynette: I wasn't nasty to him or anything I just said do you have my money. And he's turned around and he's pointed the knife at me and asked me if I wanted that. So she (Lynette's sister) came into the kitchen and had a go at him and he ended up punching her, nearly knocking her out. Then he grabbed a broom or mop or whatever it was with a stick. I think it was a broom and he started hitting me in the side. And he went to pick up a chair to throw at me and my sister stopped him. Then he was going on about the bible and how I should read the bible. He went and grabbed a bible and then he just smashed it over my face and my glasses fell and broke on the floor. Then I just ran outside; I just started running with the phone and he chased me..... I think I hid on the neighbour's side of the garden so he couldn't see me. In the meantime I'd called the police. I've got a feeling that might have been the time they took half an hour; one time they took half an hour to come and I was so distressed. I said to them, it takes you half an hour to get to me and I'm in danger. I was so upset about it and they said, well we had another matter we were attending to; we couldn't get here any quicker. And I said to them, I could have been dead in that time. But they kind of like, we see this all the time; if he wanted to kill you, he would have killed you. And I said, you don't know my husband; no-one knows him like I know him.*

*Kim: So they didn't believe you how dangerous he was?*

*Lynette: No I don't think they did.*

Although the police may have been trying to reassure her, their inability to grasp the full extent of her fears had the opposite effect. It is likely they perceived his threats as a controlling tactic. However, Lynette was convinced he was mentally unstable and capable of carrying out his threats. Although the police have an important role to play in providing victims with alternative perspectives, simply dismissing his potential for violence did not alter her belief in his omnipotence. Eventually Lynette decided she would be safer if she accommodated his demands. She believed she understood and could manage him better than the police. She varied the order to

allow him to visit in order to pacify him, which was her pre-separation strategy of managing the violence in her life.

*Kim: When was it that he convinced you to go back to Court to let him come round and visit? Was that once he started not drinking or was that earlier?*

*Lynette: To tell you the truth I don't remember. I think it was before because my theory was to try and keep peace. If I kept some peace with him that I wouldn't be in the firing line so much from him....*

*Kim: And was that a normal way for you to deal with him, even before the intervention order and before you were separated from him, were you always the pacifier?*

*Lynette: Yeah, yeah.*

*Kim: So that's a fairly normal pattern for you?*

*Lynette: Yeah to try and keep the peace, to try and smooth things down so they're not as bad.*

Eventually her reliance on this management strategy contributed to the decision to reconcile. At the time of the follow-up interview, they were still married and living together, and she was still silencing herself in order to avoid his violence.

*Kim: Do you still feel that you're safer if you're here keeping an eye on him?*

*Lynette: I did before because I knew he was just mentally unstable but no one wanted to listen or no one wanted to do anything about it. Plus he admitted that he was drinking a bottle of whiskey a day and then he was getting in the car and coming here and harassing us.*

*Lynette: Things are pretty much okay as long as he's not drinking. And I have to keep, like a lot of stuff that I want to say I can't say. I need to keep it inside so it doesn't cause arguments.*

Many victims interpreted police failure to act as an indication that their abuse was too minor to warrant police concern. It seems the frustration police experience in situations where they recognise abuse but are powerless to act is not being conveyed to victims. Rather, victims interpret that police are only concerned about severe physical violence.

Marlene had lost a contested hearing for an intervention order.

*Kim: When you tried to get help again because of the ongoing harassment, they said they can't do anything because there's no intervention order and there's no physical abuse?*

*Marlene: Yes.*

*Kim: So what does that mean to you?*

*Marlene: That means that basically you have to be physically abused before you get any help. So emotional abuse means nothing and controlling whatever, financial control, the whole lot, doesn't mean anything except for bruises.*

*Kim: What do you think of that? I mean if someone says that it's only emotional abuse?*

*Marlene: It makes you feel like I'm making it up, that I can't handle it. You know, I can't handle someone being abusive to me.*

*Kim: So you're just not tough enough?*

*Marlene: Yes, that I should have been able to survive it.*

*Kim: So is that the message that you're getting from the system?*

*Marlene: Oh definitely.*

The problem of police failing to act is most evident in cases involving breaches of intervention orders. This is particularly distressful to victims because they are told so adamantly that they should get an intervention order. Sophie, who might be considered a determined consumer, attempted on numerous occasions to engage police in investigating her ex-husband's breaches of the order. In most cases she was met with indifference. Her resolve often waned, and she would resort to using her own strategies to try to minimise the ongoing harassment. At other times, gathering her reserves, she would doggedly continue to report her ex-partner's opportunistic abusive behaviour in the hope of eventually finding someone who would help her. Consistent with many victims' accounts, she also wanted to record the abuse he was perpetuating in the event that his behaviour escalated to something more sinister. Sophie believed he had the potential to act with tragic consequences.

*Sophie: Well I think when you've got an intervention order you just think what have I got this for. What's the point? Yeah the amount of stuff he's done under an intervention order. I've only just got another one recently and you just think, oh what am I doing this for. But then it's other people around you that say, yeah but it's there to protect you and the kids. But when you actually have to come to enact it, it's like they're hesitant to even go anywhere with it.*

*Kim: The police are hesitant?*

*Sophie: The police, I've been told, oh well the Magistrate will just say this or they won't take that seriously enough, or whatever. If we take it to Court and we don't win then it comes out of our station budget and we just haven't got the money to lose on things like this, so we have to make sure that it's really serious. You need a knife in your stomach or a bullet in your head.*

Police provided a range of rationalisations for their failure to act. It is apparent their reasons are based on their own or others previous experience of unsuccessful

prosecutions. However, these are interpreted by victims as a failure to take the behaviour of their abusers seriously.

*Sophie: You get this multi answer really, multifactorial answer. You get the Magistrate won't take it seriously enough; we've been through this before and they just throw it out of Court. And there was one comment, something like, that'd even make him more cocky if he won. If he wins, he'll think oh well I've got away with that, yahoo. So trying to turn it that really you don't want to pursue this because he's going to be even worse if he wins and doesn't get charged. And then you have the big thing about money all the time, oh our police station budget, we can only prosecute stuff that we've got definitive evidence, basically, because that's how it sort of sounds.*

Many abusive men attempt to intimidate their partners by maintaining a presence in their lives. For example, they telephone frequently on the pretext of wanting to discuss the children or they drive past or park near the house. Shortly after he had threatened to kill her with a knife, Jenny's husband started parking outside a neighbour's house. This behaviour was not formally investigated. Jenny was told the breach was borderline, which is a misnomer.

*Jenny: Because he might have just been visiting the neighbours across the road. And I'm thinking, are we reading the same intervention order because I'm seeing 200 metres in there and that ain't 200 metres distance! Twenty if you're lucky! He's saying, oh, he may have just been visiting them to see how they were..... So that was the borderline one.*

*Jenny: And he was saying that he would have to get the neighbours involved in order to find out what my ex husband had been speaking to them about. This is quite apart from all the evidence that it had actually happened – like you know, there was also that body of evidence that had to be established as well. So what he said was that, rather than chase this all through and make a big deal about it and get your ex-husband all upset and angry with you – because he sounds like he's a keg going to explode – maybe we'll just, I'll call him in, I'll sit him down. I'll tell him straight. This is what you have to do in the intervention order. This is what you can do. This is what you can't do. And you stick to it or I'm coming after you with the Court behind me. And I'll put the fear of God into him, and I can do that. I said, well, okay. Let's go down that path and see if it works. Then when I rang back two weeks later that's when he was saying, oh I never got around to talking to him. I've been busy and da, da, da.*

It is particularly disconcerting that police apparently fail to act on breaches due to concerns of inflaming the situation. They are reinforcing the attitude that it is better to ignore or placate him in the hope of avoiding further escalation. They are in fact

supporting and duplicating the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to her entrapment in an abusive relationship in the first place, rather than upholding her right to safety. It reinforces that appropriate behaviour is not expected from her abuser; he eludes consequences and social sanctions once again.

*Jenny: So it's sort of almost like, yeah, it just all fell through. And you get the feeling that he's a nice guy and he believes in what he's saying but he needs more time to actually do it. I don't know. I sort of wished that – like I don't want to make the situation explosive either – but I'd almost like the police to turn around and say, we don't care if the situation gets explosive because we're going to pour some water on that one. That's not on. He doesn't get the right to make it explosive. You know, it's almost like I want them to turn around and say that.*

*Kim: They're saying, well he's a pretty volatile guy – we'd better walk on eggshells.*

*Jenny: Yeah, they're walking on eggshells with him too! [Laughs] And you're asking me if I was still feeling frightened of him. Yeah, yeah I am. Yeah.*

Treating breaches of the intervention order as trivial and failure to investigate and enforce the order leaves victims feeling disillusioned, unprotected, betrayed, and disregarded. The intervention order is consequently seen as a worthless piece of paper, and not the means of protection it was purported to be by police when they previously advocated strongly for its application. The official police position becomes empty rhetoric.

*Maria: I just think that the police should be more aware, especially of women. And disregarding all the situation because they listen to the fathers.....And not to be listened to is even worse. It's a big put down, you know. Something that no women have to feel that they're not worth it or there's no protection for them even though they advocate in a sense that there is.*

They feel that they must cope with the ongoing harassment as best as they can on their own, and resort to modified management strategies similar to those used during the enduring stage of a violent relationship. The following extract where Maria described her approach after unsuccessfully reporting breaches of her intervention order demonstrates her renewed tolerance of abuse and attempts to minimise its impact on her.

*Maria: But ever since I thought, okay let that go. I asked God for strength and now I see things differently. I'm like okay, whatever he does I won't pay*

*attention. If he comes around and starts getting upset or something, I just think who cares, it's your problem not mine.*

*Kim: So you feel like you're just back to just having to cope with it on your own?*

*Maria: Yeah, I do things differently now. I don't react to whatever he does, and by doing that he doesn't have a hold on me. And he feels what's going on, she's moving on with her life, and whatever I do doesn't matter to her anymore. Because it doesn't anymore. I just learned to take a different strategy; a strategy that helps me and doesn't affect me at all. Now I laugh about whatever he does. If he follows me, I'm like oh there he is again.*

#### **6.2.4 Support – the renewal of self-worth**

When police demonstrate care and concern, and provide ongoing support, the victim feels safer. She begins to see herself as someone deserving of protection, which is extremely important in terms of reinforcing her rights. She also begins to see herself as someone deserving of compassion, which can help alleviate the shame and humiliation she experiences, and consequently contributes to a nascent sense of self-worth. Support occurs within the context of an empowering alliance.

Jenny formed an alliance with one particular officer who continued to keep her informed and provided ongoing support including accompanying her to the Court hearing.

*Jenny: That same police officer, the one that was being really nice, the one that had her own experiences, she actually rang me that night and she made a few disparaging remarks about my ex-husband. That cheered me up no end (laughs). Apparently she doesn't like him very much. And she just said, make sure the house is locked up. Do you need me to come back; I'm happy to come back tonight. So that was really nice of her. And I said, no, that's fine, the house is locked up, I'll be fine. And she said, we'll be charging him.....it must have been midnight or past midnight and I didn't ask her about anything. I think I was sort of stressed out at that point. But on the next day she rang me again. She said, how are you going? She said, there's some sort of thing that they were able to put on him, restraining order or something.*

*Jenny: I think it was really good that that police woman kept in contact with me and let me keep in contact with her and encouraged me to contact her saying, it's okay, you're not wasting my time. It's fine, I'm happy to speak to you and I care about what happens to you.*

Sarah formed an alliance with police and developed a strategy with them for leaving her partner safely. Police had attended Court and prevented her from revoking an intervention order, which she had tried to do at her partner's insistence. She continued to live with her partner with an order that allowed him to remain at the property but prohibited a range of abusive behaviours. Sarah knew he was going to be charged with drink driving. She assisted police with another brief of evidence for charges of breach of intervention order. However, Sarah did not tell her partner she was leaving him until he was actually given a jail sentence, and even pretended to support him throughout the trial process.

*Sarah: The nice policeman that was helping me, he actually was the one that called me, saying, Sarah we've got him and he's going to be locked up tonight.*

Furthermore, the police took prescriptive action in laying the charges, which not only shielded Sarah but also helped overcome her tendency to trivialise the violence and her own worth.

*Kim: So having the police say no we have to go ahead with these charges made it more real?*

*Sarah: Yeah, made it more real, whereas me doing it sort of made it feel petty. Like it was still a lot of the things do feel petty to me but I have to think to myself you know, it's not the way to live you don't deserve that.*

*Kim: And is that the kind of things the police would say to you?*

*Sarah: Yeah*

*Kim: That you don't deserve that?*

*Sarah: Yeah, my mom said, like one police officer dropped her off once and she said they really care about you. He was like make sure you keep her here don't let her go back to that bastard. And one had driven me all the way to where my mom lived and she said, they really cared about you and they didn't want you to go back.*

### **6.2.5 Empowerment – shifting the balance of power**

The cycle of violence is perpetuated by the abuser's ubiquitous power and control over the victim (Walker, 2009). The current findings confirmed the perpetrator's sense of omnipotence was often so unfaltering that even when the victim was calling police, he did not believe she would go through with it. Many victims reported

being taunted by their partners when they threatened to call the police. Proceeding with the call represents, therefore, an attempt by the victim to assert herself.

*Maria: He thought that I wasn't going to do it. He knew me that well. He knew the power he had over me and he thought that I was bluffing or calling someone else.*

Even when police have been called, many perpetrators still believe there will be no discernible consequences for their actions. This is a view that is shared by many victims because they have been indoctrinated to believe in the ascendancy of his reality and rights over hers. Therefore, when police respond to a call for assistance it is an opportunity to either reinforce his ability to manipulate and dominate or an opportunity to influence the way she sees him. Holding him accountable for his violence influences the way she sees him, and consequently contributes to the subtle shift of power in the dynamics of the relationship and the gradual attenuation of his omnipotence.

*Jenny: So in a way it's been good that I'm not just this evil woman that he's told everybody I only married him for his money and I've driven him to this state and he hasn't really done anything, you know, I'm making it all up. So in a way I can say, well I'm not making it all up. The police actually believe, from what he said and from what I've said, the police believe, and from what they saw at the house that night, they believe this has happened and they believe it strongly enough that they believe that they can take him to Court for it.*

Similarly, Chelsea experienced a shift in the balance of power when her ex-partner realised she was no longer afraid to report his abuse. She had an alliance with one particular officer who was compiling a brief of evidence. Chelsea's former tolerance of his abuse diminished through her persistent engagement with the police, and her empowerment subsequently induced a change in her partner's perceptions and behaviour.

*Chelsea: I think once he realised, because the policeman said to him, she's been coming in every time, she's made a statement every time she's seen you. He said to me on the phone after, when I contacted him, he said, I realised that you were pretty serious and I realised that I would have to watch my step.*

*Kim: He said that you repeatedly reporting it made him take you seriously?*

*Chelsea: I'd never done that before. So that's why I'm not really scared of him anymore because I know, and he knows, that the more these charges build up it means that if he does something he will end up going to jail.....*

*Kim: So does that act as a little bit of a protection for you?*

*Chelsea: Yeah that's why I'm not frightened of him. Because I know he's in a way, like he said to me, I'm scared of you now in a way because I know that you're serious about going through with things.*

*Kim: Okay and how does that make you feel?*

*Chelsea: I wouldn't say powerful but it makes me feel a bit more secure in myself, you know.*

*Kim: Okay, so your attitude towards him has changed?*

*Chelsea: Yeah there's almost like there's been a shifting in the balance of power. Do you know what I mean? He's more wary of me now. He knows that I won't be afraid to go ahead with what I say I will. Whereas before, you know, I've always procrastinated or I've listened to him and I've done what he wanted, whereas, I don't do that anymore.*

Similarly, Rita felt empowered by her alliance with police when she witnessed her partner's fear.

*Kim: So do you think that he was scared of the police?*

*Rita: Yes.*

*Kim: And how did that make you feel seeing him scared?*

*Rita: That made me more brave because now somebody is on my side.*

### **6.2.5.1 Empowering him – disempowering her.**

In stark contrast to the effects described above, when police fail to take action against violent men, the perpetrators are further empowered. Their belief that they are free to act with impunity is reinforced. Furthermore, victims often reported their partners would taunt them about the lack of police action.

*Antoinette: So at this time, after the fight, all these ugly things, he said no-one can protect you, no-one will listen and no-one will believe you.*

Police are unlikely to act, and perpetrators are, therefore, likely to be empowered in cases involving emotional abuse or minimal physical violence.

*Antoinette: He thought I'm not scared of the police any more.*

*Kim: So it gave him a bit more confidence?*

*Antoinette: Yeah, I cannot do anything, just keep calling the police three, four times; doesn't matter, they will come and go. He knew, he understood he could yell at me, he could threaten me but just threats, he even slapped*

*me on the face, there were no bruises at all, you know, so I cannot prove to the police that I've been abused and he can do it.*

There is an inverse relationship between the perpetrator's sense of power and the victim's; the more empowered he becomes, the more helpless and hopeless she feels. Over time victims lose volition; inertia envelops them as their emotional resources and, indeed, physical resources are depleted. Antoinette's third encounter with police resulted in an appointment being made for her to come to the station three days later, at which time the police officer was going to apply for a summons for an intervention order. Her partner returned in the interim and the relationship continued. Antoinette described feeling overwhelmingly depressed.

*Antoinette: He went to buy shoes for me and he did some shopping for the kids. I was really sick. I didn't have any flu or anything but I was sick. I couldn't do anything. I felt this inside me. You know, I was not happy. I didn't want to do anything. I couldn't even take my kids to school. I couldn't pick them up. I couldn't cook. He bought lasagne for them from the shop. I was nothing; nothing was left of me. I had this hope and it was killed. So that week, Wednesday and Thursday and Friday, it was all the same. I was really depressed. I called my friend on Friday after all that happened. And I said, I feel so depressed. I was crying. I said, I cannot do anything, I just sit on the chair. I'm just a mess, you know, nothing.*

Whilst the inability to form an alliance with police is extremely disheartening for victims of IPV, it is even more damaging when victims interpret police behaviour as constituting an alliance with the perpetrator.

*Marlene: I once went to the police station and I had a dealing with a police officer, a female police officer after he didn't turn up; he didn't bring the children back to the meeting point in the holidays. And I told her what was happening and she went off and called him. And he told her that I had post-natal depression and she came back and she said, do you think you need counselling and was really degrading to me and she was sort of saying that I needed help. And I was upset and crying because my children hadn't come back. I was pretty traumatised after that... .. Even if they'd said, no, sorry, we can't help you, that's better than saying, you've got PND and you're just making it all up. That was really devastating and that she wouldn't help me. She was basically saying, go away.*

### 6.2.6 Justice – upholding rights and restoring dignity

VAW violates their fundamental rights and freedom (United Nations, 1993, 2013). The Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic) affirms “human rights are essential in a democratic and inclusive society that respects the rule of law, human dignity, equality and freedom” (p.1). The psychological processes and consequent erosion of self-worth inherent in the experience of IPV leaves victims with a distorted perception and expectation of their basic rights to safety, freedom and autonomy. Victims’ ability to seek justice for themselves is severely diminished. Therefore, police must advocate on their behalf.

Just as police provide a basis for reality testing and validation of the victim’s experience when they take her account of violence seriously, they engender a sense of justice when they take action to uphold her basic human rights. Arresting the perpetrator delivers a powerful message to the victim that society prohibits the use of violence and that her right to live without violence will be upheld.

*Antoinette. I did feel protected when they arrested my husband.....I felt satisfied. I felt protected and satisfied that somebody finally stood up for me.*

An intervention order was perceived by Lauren as a public statement that abuse is a violation her rights.

*Kim: Did it make you think differently about your rights?  
Lauren: Oh living in my own home, unmolested, unabused? Definitely. Yeah I just thought you know, you took it as it came. Yeah, definitely my rights not to be abused, which again in turn made me look at my responsibility not to abuse other people. My own behaviour wasn’t acceptable, you know. All sorts, at every level. It made me look at everything.*

At the time of police intervention, all victims sought to stop the violence, and some were attempting to extricate themselves from the relationship. Desire for punishment and retribution was not apparent. However, victims described wanting their partner to be held accountable to show him that his behaviour was wrong and that her assertions that it was wrong were justified. Recognition of these needs manifested some time after the initial police intervention at the violent incident.

*Kim: So you really want these charges to go ahead.... there's a significance about that?*

*Jenny: That's something official to him saying, no it's not okay to hit her. You can't do it, because as far as he's concerned, it's okay.*

The form of justice that Jenny and other victims sought was denunciation, a principle of sentencing under the law that aims to reflect society's condemnation of the offender's behaviour (Lowenstein, 2012). Denunciation also focuses on portraying to the offender the harm he has caused to the victim and to society at large. The provision of social sanctions against IPV are crucial if we hope to consolidate the shift from viewing IPV as a private family matter to recognising it as a serious crime and social problem. Furthermore, upholding the victim's rights is a crucial element in enhancing her self-worth and dignity.

*Kim: So from that police intervention, has that changed the way that you think about yourself?*

*Jenny: I guess, I don't know if that changed me but I guess since it happened and I've been talking to some counsellors, I've been going to a woman's group and I think all those things have combined, it's just making me start to feel that I'm a worthwhile person and that I've got a right to feel safe and I've got a right to feel happy and that he just doesn't have the right to do that. I think it's a lot of things combined though.*

#### **6.2.6.1 Oppression – failure of the justice system**

In contrast, police failure to take abuse seriously leaves women believing IPV is not worthy of police intervention, and by extension, social sanction. Such inferences, which are most likely to occur in the absence of serious physical injury, undermine victims' rights and dignity. Chelsea was not taken seriously by police on a number of occasions. She described the detrimental effects of those encounters on her sense of self and expectations of justice.

*Chelsea: Well you start to doubt yourself as a person. You start to maybe believe what he says to you: that you're not a person to be respected; you're not an individual in your own right; that you are hopeless; that you are useless because nobody seems to believe you and nobody wants to help you..... Nobody understands how that kind of person can change the way you think and feel about yourself through constantly wearing you down.....Because you're doubting yourself as an individual, you don't even think maybe you have the right to be protected. It makes you sort of feel, well*

*this is all my fault anyway and it's up to me to pull myself out. And you know that but you don't, because you don't have the support, and you're not feeling strong enough as a person, you can't actually make the right steps.*

Marlene's partner continued to exert control over her life after their separation through surveillance, subtle intimidation and undermining her parenting. She struggled to have his harassment taken seriously

*Kim: So how does that make you feel where you know you're being abused, emotionally, psychologically, and you're being intimidated, harassed? How does that make you feel when the police are saying it's not really serious enough for us to act; the lawyer is saying it's not the worst I've ever seen? Marlene: It makes me feel that I have no rights as a human being. That I've just got to accept it and just accept my lot in life that I'm going to be spoken to or used in that way or written to in that way.*

Additionally Marlene perceived his engagement in protracted court processes as a form of retribution.

*Marlene: He wants revenge and he's going to make my life as miserable as possible and he loves it; he loves doing it. I haven't been able to stop him. I've been back to court for an intervention order and they said they'd give it (i.e. an interim order) to me but they said, we're really concerned that he's going to come and do a contested hearing again and you're going to have to pay the barristers.' They basically said that it's not going to work.....So then I was concerned because I knew that he would come back and fight it again and then I would have that stress as well. I didn't really think it would stop him because he thinks he's right and he hasn't been proven wrong yet. He thinks he's right with everything. He's been rewarded by his behaviour.*

Victims' are limited in their ability to take steps to ensure their own safety and to achieve justice by their fear of the perpetrator and belief in his ability to act with impunity. Consequently, it is imperative that police take responsibility for holding him accountable. Unfortunately, even when police are able to get the matter to Court, a lenient outcome or failure to convict can reinforce those beliefs in both the victim and perpetrator. Bianca's ex-partner avoided a conviction despite breaking into her home, assaulting her, holding her hostage, and threatening her with a knife.

*Bianca: And I just thought after what I've been through and he's been to Court with me charging him for the assault and he got out of it. And it just made me feel like I'm worthless. You know, he went to Court after what he did to me and he just got away with it..... after that he laughed about it and said, ha ha ha I could kill you and no-one would even know and I'd get*

*away with it. I just thought, no, I've got no faith. He could do anything and just go to Court and get out of it like he always does... ..*

*Kim: So how does that make him feel?*

*Bianca: Oh, he just thinks he's invincible. He can do whatever he wants and get out of it. He'll just lie. He just makes up things, all sort of excuses and he gets out of everything... .. But I just felt worthless when he went to Court after what he did to me and he's got out of it.*

Fear not only prevents victims from seeking police assistance, it also prevents them from participating fully and freely once police initiate justice seeking processes. As Sarah's account shows, despite an alliance with police, her oppression continued throughout and beyond justice proceedings. Hoping for a custodial sentence, Sarah delayed telling her partner she was leaving him. She attended court with him when he appealed his sentence and was coerced into writing a letter of support. His four year jail sentence was subsequently reduced to 18 months.

*Sarah: Because that many times we've been to Court and I'm thinking yeah grouse, he's going to get locked up; he's going to get locked up and he doesn't. So I was you don't show up to Court and he gets out, what's he going to do to me. So I always had that fear... I was still worried that he was going to get out so I went to Court.*

*Sarah: He ended up getting four years. He made me write a letter to try to help him. Where the first letter I wrote, his lawyer said I would probably get him more jail with that letter. Because I would try to write a letter to the judge to be able to give it to him on the sly just to tell him what he was really like. I wanted it to be known because I'd been making out that he wasn't so bad... .. Writing a support letter to me was a downer because it was like he was getting what he deserved. So then I had to write him another one.*

Sarah's fear was so great, it was not until several months into his jail-term that she took steps to prevent him telephoning her from prison. Nevertheless, the 18 month respite was crucial in allowing her to finally escape from the relationship.

*Sarah: A lot of it's to do with fear of him. Taking his phone calls in jail was in fear of what's he going to do to me if I don't. So having the telephone calls taken off him was a really big step for me.*

## **6.2 Concluding interpretations**

*Kim: If you look back over everything that the police have done, what stands out to you as the most important?*

*Sarah: That they always came and that they were always compassionate and all their advice. They never once downgraded me, made me feel like I was nothing..... I felt like I was looked after. I felt like I really had people looking out for my wellbeing and my kids' wellbeing.*

*Kim: So how did that influence the way you thought about yourself?*

*Sarah: Well when my partner would say to me things like, they're not going to help you, look how many times you called them, I would still be thinking, I would know in my mind that they will come and help me when I need them. They will be there and I know they will be. So I guess I had that. I kept that inside and never allowed it out..... In the end he would be like, oh you're going to call the police, and I'm like, yes I am because you don't deserve to treat me like this. So knowing that they didn't make me feel like an idiot, made me have that will to call them again and stand up in the end. Even though I wouldn't be able to charge him with assault myself, knowing that they would, and that they didn't think I was a bloody idiot and everything else. That they were on my side made it so much easier to call them and to charge him in the end and to end all this.*

Sarah experienced multiple forms of severe violence, over many years often resulting in police intervention. Hers was a case that would cause police much frustration and make them question whether she really wanted their help. However, it is an exemplar of the vital role police play in the liberation of victims from overwhelming entrapment in violent relationships. It demonstrates the interconnectedness of the positive outcomes described in this chapter, and highlights the need for them to be delivered within a compassionate, empowering alliance. Police played a vital role in Sarah's journey from entrapment to recovery (Landenburger, 1989) and in her reclaimed sense of dignity. Police took the violence seriously and validated her experience. They correctly assessed the power imbalance in the relationship, and therefore interpreted her use of police services as legitimate rather than as a misuse. They collaborated with her to develop strategies to leave safely but ultimately took responsibility for pursuing criminal charges, and took prescriptive action to prevent the revocation of her intervention order. This action contributed to his eventual incarceration, which provided her with the much needed long-term respite and safety in which to begin her recovery and consolidate her independence. Their compassion enhanced her self-worth. The continued support and protection empowered her. Their stance against IPV provided her with justice and a new perspective of her rights.

The findings presented in this chapter illustrate the potential police have to facilitate positive change in the lives of IPV victims. It seems, however, police are not always aware of this potential and do not always fully use the opportunity to assist victims. When police fail to show intolerance of IPV, through either their own lack of understanding or the limitations of the system in which they work, victims inevitably endure further violence and are denied protection and justice.

# Chapter seven: Discussion

## 7.1 Overview

This study examined the complex interaction between victims' relationship stage and the way police and IPV victims experience and understand their encounter. The literature review revealed a paucity of research that considers the effectiveness of policing from the perspective of the victim. This study goes beyond identifying and describing victims' satisfactions and dissatisfaction with policing IPV, to link such perceptions to victims' relationship stage and police values. These were implicated in the formation of an empowering alliance, which was found to predicate positive outcomes for victims.

Using a symbolic interactionist perspective and a grounded theory methodology, the current study contributes to our understanding of policing IPV by applying a unique interpretative approach to the analysis that synthesises police and victims' understanding of their experiences during a victim-police interaction, providing a framework for understanding the ramifications of police action or inaction. The first section of this chapter discusses a stage related approach to understanding victims' experiences of the police response, and the second section explores implications for policing.

## 7.2 Relationship stage and victim-police encounter

A major component of the data analysis was the examination of the victim-police encounter in the context of the Landenburger (1989) stage model of violent intimate relationships. The interpreted findings are further discussed in the following section with emphasis on victims' helpseeking, police responsiveness to victims' needs, and the dynamics and outcomes of the interaction between police and victims.

### 7.2.1 Help-seeking in the context of the Landenburger (1989) model

All women who contact police in response to the violence they experience within their intimate relationships seek to reduce such violence and increase their safety.

However, there is a great deal of variation in how their needs and aspirations for safety are expressed. The Landenburger (1989) model of entrapment in and recovery from violent relationships was found to provide an illuminating framework for understanding victims' help-seeking aspirations when they make contact with police. As IPV victims move through the binding, enduring, disengaging and recovery phases, their understanding of their partners' behaviour and their own situation changes with corresponding differences in help-seeking aspirations.

According to Landenburger (1989), during the binding phase women attend to positive aspects of the relationship, overlooking warning signals and events that challenge their desire for a loving relationship. Problems in the relationship are rationalised and attributed to the newness of the relationship. Victims become introspective; they seek to regain a sense of harmony by identifying and attempting to rectify what it is about themselves that provokes the violence. Exploration in the current study of victims' help-seeking needs during the binding phase was limited to data obtained from one victim-participant and one account from a police-participant. This may reflect the possibility that not many women actually seek police assistance during this early stage, and indeed Landenburger characterises help-seeking as a property of the disengaging phase. In contrast, the current findings suggested victims frequently seek police assistance across the enduring, disengaging and recovery phases. The limited data pertaining to the binding phase may also reflect that women who had multiple encounters with police tended to have poor recall of earlier attempts to seek police assistance. The interpretations of this aspect of the findings are, therefore, tentative at best but were, nonetheless, consistent with the characteristics of Landenburger's model. It was apparent during the binding phase victims primarily seek an explanation and guidance. The violent event is likely to be incomprehensible and overwhelming and the victim is likely to lack a context for understanding why it has happened or what she should do about it.

Drawing from the limited specific data and from victims' retrospective contemplation of what eventually proved to be helpful to them, it can be concluded that during the binding phase the victim needs an explanation of the violence that explicitly exposes the violence as a strategy of control and domination perpetrated against her by a violent man who is likely to continue to be violent towards her, and

that the violence is likely to increase in frequency and intensity. Police need to show complete intolerance for violence and take affirmative action to protect the victim and hold the perpetrator accountable. Even when such an explanation is provided by police, the victim may still be susceptible to an alternative explanation by her partner that positions the violence as aberrant behaviour, perpetrated under mitigating circumstances. The violent partner is likely to minimise the extent and pertinence of the violence in an attempt to enhance the apparent viability of the relationship. If and when victims fail to fully grasp the seriousness and ongoing ramifications of the violence, rather than feeling frustrated, as they do, police need to remain hopeful that should further violence occur, they will have provided victims with a frame of reference that helps them see the violence for what it is. Indeed, across relationship stages, police need to provide victims with an external perspective that names abuse and promotes safety seeking strategies.

Landenburger (1989) characterises the enduring phase as one of putting up with and covering up abuse. Results indicated the focus of the victim's help-seeking during this stage is to manage and minimise the violence in her life, whilst maintaining the relationship. She seeks safety through short term escape or short term respite. She also seeks a powerful ally or protector but she is not ready to abandon her allegiance to her partner. She wants police to acknowledge her experience, take her concerns seriously and advocate on her behalf by telling the perpetrator that he must stop the violence. She is unlikely to appear to want formal criminal or civil remedies during the enduring phase, in part due to her fear of inciting him to further violence and in part due to concerns for his welfare. Her need to monitor his behaviour is very strong; she is likely to want to reconnect with him once the immediate incident is diffused to assess his current state and continue to placate him. During this stage, use of police services may become chronic. Victims who learn calling police is an effective means of diffusing a violent incident by temporarily removing their partner, may adopt this pattern of behaviour as an additional coping strategy. These short term strategies frustrate police because they are perceived as time wasting and interpreted by police as indicating the victim is not serious about wanting help. Police often fail to understand the victim does indeed desperately want to end the violence in her life but also desperately hopes to achieve this without relinquishing the relationship. Unless there is readily discernible evidence of physical violence,

police are likely to adopt a peacekeeping approach, take no formal action, and disengage themselves from the situation as quickly as possible. Victims intuit the frustration experienced by police and subsequently feel worthless and shameful.

During the enduring phase, and persisting into the disengaging phase (Landenburger, 1989), there is a prevailing belief by victims that the perpetrator does not know or fully understand his behaviour is unacceptable. Although victims don't necessarily want him punished, they want him held accountable in some way so that he learns the behaviour is not acceptable, in the hope such knowledge will decrease the likelihood of further violence. During the enduring phase there is the hope that if he comes to understand it is wrong, then he will change his behaviour. In the disengaging phase, there is the hope that if he recognises the extent of his wrongdoing then he won't blame her for leaving; she didn't irrationally abandon him over a triviality but rather, she reasonably left him because of serious and unwarranted violent behaviour on his part. When victims seek help from police, they need acknowledgement the violence has occurred and should not be tolerated, and validation of their status as a victim and right to expect protection and justice. When police provide confirmation of their perceptions of the violence and the appropriateness of questioning it, victims experience enormous relief.

Landenburger's (1989) disengaging phase encompasses self-identification as a victim of abuse, intensified help-seeking, reaching a breaking point, leaving the relationship and re-emergence of the self. It is a time fraught with intense emotions as the defensive mechanisms of denial and minimisation gradually break down. Victims often experience anger intermingled with intense fear of being killed or of killing to survive. The intense emotions provide the driving force that enables her to finally leave. The participants in the current study also identified loss of hope for the relationship as a powerful catalyst for leaving. The realisation that the relationship is untenable and she must leave it in order to secure a better future for herself and her children was a dominant theme in victims' accounts. Once hope for the relationship was abandoned, there appeared to be a shift from using respite strategies to manage individual incidents to attempting to escape the violent situation on a more permanent basis. At this point, the victim is primed to enter into an empowering alliance with police. Some victims call police during the

disengaging stage without actually making the decision to leave but rather as a result of reaching a breaking point where the violence, physical or psychological, becomes unbearable. The decision to leave is actually reached during the course of their interaction with police and is, in some cases, a direct result of the choices, and support to make such choices, provided by police. Nonetheless, victims are still readily influenced by their partners. Victims vacillate enormously in their decision to leave an abusive partner, and once made, such decisions are usually extremely tenuous and fraught with fear. Victims need reassurance they are taking the appropriate course of action and support and encouragement to follow through with their decision. In particular, support at Court was perceived as essential to many victims. Although some victims in the disengaging phase wanted police assistance to actually leave their homes safely, the majority wanted to remain in their home with their children and thus, preferred for the relationship to end with the perpetrator leaving. This is the option advocated by domestic violence peak bodies (WESTNET, 2014), supported by government policy (COAG, 2009; Mitchell, 2011; Victorian Department of Human Services, 2012) and acknowledged by policing agencies (Victoria Police, 2010a). Accordingly, during the disengaging stage, most victims seek police assistance to have their violent partner removed and prevented from returning through the application for a FVIO. However, not all victims will necessarily verbalise this need, particularly in the presence of their partner. Therefore, they need police to take an active, directive approach, and shield the victim from responsibility and repercussions.

The recovery phase is one of adjustment, survival, searching for meaning, and learning to focus on the self (Landenburger, 1989). It is not unusual for a victim to remain in contact with her partner during this phase and, where there are children, it is often unavoidable. To remain apart from her partner, a victim must come to terms with guilt and self-doubt about abandoning her partner and separating her children from their father. She must work through the grief associated with the loss of the relationship and she must adjust to daily life on her own when she is unused to exercising autonomy. All this must be accomplished in the face of fear of retribution as well as efforts from the partner to re-establish the relationship. The stressors associated with this period pose serious risks to victims' physical and mental health

(Logan & Walker, 2004). It is not surprising many women require several attempts before they finally manage to leave their partner (Wuest & Merritt-Gray, 1999).

Victims who seek help from police during the recovery stage are attempting to maintain their safety and assert their right to live independently. Some women are physically attacked during this stage; others are explicitly, verbally threatened but the majority report more subtle forms of ongoing abuse. Stalking behaviour increased and, in extreme cases, former partners slept in their cars in close proximity to victims' property. Additional interventions are needed for these men. Perpetrators use every opportunity to intimidate the victim, erode her confidence and undermine her control over her own life. Behaviours include following her or repeatedly driving past the property, incessant phone calls, breaking into her property, and failing to return the children at designated times. Access and custody issues become a means of further harassment. There is the common perception amongst victims in the recovery phase that her ex-partner wants to punish her for leaving and to continuously remind her of his presence in her life. Anger and a sense of injustice or fear that the violence will escalate provide the impetus for contacting police.

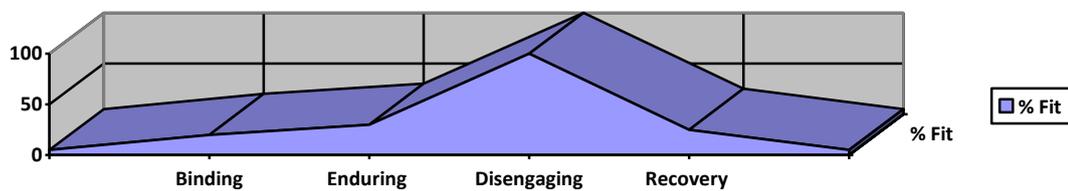
During the recovery phase, victims want FVIOs enforced and the perpetrator held accountable for his behaviour. However, it is apparent victims struggle to have this kind of abuse taken seriously by police; when viewed in isolation, many incidents are trivialised. Given the fragile nature of the victim's newly established independence, she desperately needs support and recognition of her experience. It is vital breaches of FVIOs are investigated and responded to with the same vigilance as any other crime. Police need to see past each individual incident and identify the pattern of behaviour as one of abuse and intimidation, and consequently uphold victims' rights to protection. Failure to do so not only leaves victims vulnerable to further violence, it also increases the likelihood of them resorting to former management strategies and resuming the violent relationship. Police need to understand that becoming free from violence is not necessarily achieved with the removal of the perpetrator from the home. Victims need the continued support of the empowering alliance through this protracted process.

### 7.2.2 Police responsiveness in the context of the Landenburger Model

Police can and do provide safety, protection and other important outcomes such as validation, empowerment and enhancing the self-esteem and dignity of victims of IPV across relationship stages. However, police are more likely to recognise the need for their intervention and consequently value the importance of their response, when victims seek help during the disengaging phase. That is, victims' aspirations are better aligned with police values during the disengaging phase. Police and victims actively seek an alliance; however, they don't always do so at the same time or with common goals. The degree of fit between victims' aspirations, and police responsiveness to those needs occurs on a continuum. At one end of the continuum, there is a very good fit. The victim is ready to make permanent change and wants to extricate herself from the violent relationship. Police acknowledge the importance of such readiness in terms of making a commitment to "*help us (the police) to help her*". The victim's intent to leave the relationship is highly valued by the police who have the means, power, and motivation to help her, especially when physical violence or serious threat is evident. In such circumstances, police face no barriers to fully exercising all their powers and can take on the onus for action, thus relieving the victim from responsibility and shielding her from repercussions. With full victim co-operation, police are able to bring the perpetrator before the Courts. These situations are the most closely aligned to the preferred policing role.

At the other end of the continuum is a victim who is deeply entrenched in a violent relationship and is seeking assistance only to deal with an immediate violent episode. In some cases, the victim may not have actually sought police assistance herself, such as when police are called by neighbours reporting a disturbance. When police determine that a victim's intent is to stay in the relationship, they are less likely to seek an alliance and tend to take action only when compelled to do so; for example, in cases where physical violence is clearly apparent and there are concerns for the immediate physical safety of the victim. Although police may proceed with a complaint and warrant for a FVIO, the application is unlikely to progress further than the interim or complaint and warrant stage. Without an alliance between the victim and police, criminal charges are unlikely to proceed, and other valuable outcomes such as support, validation and empowerment are less likely to occur.

The best fit occurs with victims in Landenburger's (1989) disengaging phase. The fit decreases, with consequent reduced satisfaction for police and victims, the further the victim is from the point of disengagement (see Figure 7.1). Interestingly, this phenomenon is seen whether she is still in the enduring phase or has moved into the recovery phase. This is a disconcerting quandary; police bemoan the all too common occurrence of victims returning to their abusive partner and yet, they seem just as reluctant to support those victims who do not. Once the police have dealt with a particular incident to their satisfaction, that is, the perpetrator is removed and a FVIO is in place, they do not seem to want to be involved in supporting her efforts to remain apart from him without harassment. This suggests police see escaping a violent relationship as a circumscribed event, rather than a complex process involving not only physical separation, but psychological disengagement, which requires considerable effort and time. Police appear to be reluctant to engage with the victim to help enforce the order they have previously assured her will guarantee continued protection.



*Figure 7.1* Diagrammatic representation of association between relationship stage and degree of fit between police responsiveness and victim aspirations.

The degree of fit directly influences the likelihood of an empowering alliance. Thus, the most likely time for an empowering alliance to occur is during the disengaging phase. Once women have actually left an abusive partner, the fit lessens, and their victim status is revoked. The formation of an empowering alliance between the victim and police is predicated on two vital factors. Firstly, the victim and police must have a shared understanding of the nature of the violence and both must take it

seriously, recognising that police intervention is necessary and appropriate, in order to commit to a course of action. Police must confer *true victim* status on the victim, and she must also identify herself as abused. A shared understanding is most likely to occur in the disengaging phase (Landenburger, 1989), which is the time that recognition of abuse develops into identification as a victim. In contrast, the disparity in views increases as we move away in either direction from the disengaging phase. In the binding phase, and persisting through the enduring phase, a victim does not fully recognise her own victimisation. She knows the abuse is happening but she is still struggling to identify why and is likely to accept some responsibility for its occurrence. In the recovery phase, her previous status as a victim is likely to be revoked. The victim recognises the ongoing victimisation but the police are less likely to share her understanding. The victim interprets the perpetrator's ongoing harassment as attempts to intimidate her and punish her for leaving; he wants to show that he can still exert some level of control and wants to remind her of his powerful presence in her life. Subtle behaviours such as driving by her property or phoning her on the pretext of making sure she or the children are alright are weakly veiled attempts to intimidate her and weaken her resolve to start a new life. Whilst she takes such behaviour very seriously, police may not.

Secondly, the victim must be ready to relinquish her allegiance to her partner and focus fully on her own needs. This too is more likely to occur in the disengaging phase and persist into the recovery phase. For their part, the police must recognise the power imbalance that exists between the victim and perpetrator and be willing to redress that imbalance by taking the victim's side, thus empowering her. Police are more likely to detect a power imbalance when the victim and perpetrator are still living together, and are more likely to engage willingly with the victim when her commitment to maintaining the relationship is less evident. However, police also seek an alliance with victims in the binding and enduring phases when they detect immediate danger and take the threat to the victim's safety seriously or when there is clear evidence a crime has been committed. At this stage, however, the victim is not ready to abandon the relationship so she either rejects the alliance by refusing to engage in the FVIO application process or accepts it temporarily to deal with the immediate crisis. Once the crisis is over, she breaks the alliance by not following through with the application or providing evidence, or by revoking the order shortly

after is granted. Revocation of the order is commonly seen in cases of chronic police use, and typically occurs under duress at the insistence of the perpetrator.

There is also a disparity of views between victims and police in terms of notions of immediacy that creates a mistiming in alliance seeking. The incongruence is directly related to the temporal proximity of the violent incident. Victims who have reflected on their situation and realised changes are needed to the way they manage the violence in their lives, may proactively seek police assistance to procure long term safety some time after an incident has occurred. However, they are less likely to engage police in an empowering alliance than if they were to seek help in response to an immediate crisis. Victims in the disengaging phase who realise they need to make permanent change may seek advice or instrumental assistance in leaving the relationship. Those in the recovery phase often seek an alliance to keep him away. However, if police perceive no immediate threat, they are unable to take action and the victim is likely to be rejected or redirected to Court to apply for a FVIO herself. Victims interpret failure to take action as not taking their concerns about the potential for future violence seriously. It is a disconcerting paradox that those most ready to take the steps advocated by police are least likely to gain police assistance to do so.

Similarly, when police respond at the scene of an incident where the violence is psychological or there is no clear evidence of physical injury, police may feel unable to apply for a FVIO due to no immediate safety concerns, particularly if the perpetrator has left the scene. Police often describe such circumstances as “*he said, she said*” situations when there is a lack of corroborating evidence. If the victim indicates she is seeking a solution that goes beyond a peacekeeping approach, she is often advised to go to Court to apply for an order so that if the violence recurs police will be able to take formal action. In both situations, police fail to see victims’ need for immediate action. Victims’ resolve to make change is so tenuous, and their emotional reserves so depleted that if action is not taken immediately, their impetus for change will quickly dissipate and feelings of isolation and hopelessness return.

Opportunities for intervention and prevention of future violence are similarly lost when the interaction with police involves a victim who may not be ready to take

action but wants to report an incident to police after it has occurred because she wants the police to bear witness. Her aim is to document the abuse to create a history, which can be used to support an investigation should the violence escalate. The police are put off by the fact that she wants to report but not take action. Given their strong action orientation, they see this as a waste of time and she is deterred. The opportunity to form a preventative, empowering alliance is lost.

### **7.2.3 The interaction – resolving the power struggle and forming an empowering alliance.**

Any interaction between police and the victim involves three distinct parties; the police, the victim and the perpetrator, whether the perpetrator is present or not. Each has their own perspective and agenda. When the perpetrator is not present, his perspective is interpreted by each of the other parties by their understanding of the situation. For example, when a victim reports harassing phone calls, a police officer may interpret the perpetrator's motivation as needing access to his children, and may not discern an abuse of power or may even assume the victim has the more powerful position. Alternatively, when the police encounter a frightened victim shortly after the perpetrator has fled the scene, his very act of fleeing may be construed as evidence of his guilt and of her status as a victim.

#### **7.2.3.1 A triangulated power struggle**

A crucial element of the victim-police encounter involves a power struggle during which each of the three parties endeavours to get the other on side. When an alliance is formed between two of the three parties, they are both empowered, whilst the third party is disempowered. The victim wants the police to believe her account of the situation, recognise her victimisation and support her needs, which will be expressed according to her relationship stage. The perpetrator wants to avoid responsibility for the violence and maintain his position of power and control over the victim. Accordingly, he seeks her compliance in maintaining the established position of denial and minimisation. He also attempts to co-opt the police by trivialising the incident and discrediting his partner. Once derogatory statements are

made by the perpetrator, the victim is immediately demoralised. Such statements are in themselves an act of domination, intended to reinforce his omnipotence in the eyes of the victim and manipulate police reactions. It is vital police do not inadvertently collude with the perpetrator to further disempower the victim.

Police must determine whether to maintain their initial position of neutrality or align themselves with the victim or perpetrator to shift the perceived balance of power. When police confer true victim status on the victim, they seek an alliance with her and commitment to proceed with their preferred course of action, namely to take steps to terminate the relationship. They want her to follow through with the FVIO processes they initiate and may also need her as a witness against the perpetrator in regards to criminal charges. The victim empowers the police in their role of bringing an offender to Court. Police are particularly dependent on the victim in situations where their power to arrest is not clearly evident. In such situations, they need the victim to take responsibility for applying for a FVIO; once in place, if violence recurs, they are then empowered to charge with breach of FVIO.

### **7.2.3.2 Alliance contingencies**

Resolution of the struggle for power results in one of four alliance contingencies. When no offence is detected and there are no concerns for the wellbeing of the victim, an empowering alliance is not formed. The victim must proceed to cope alone, which usually results in the continuation of her current situation and management strategies for dealing with the violence in her life. When police and the victim have a shared understanding of the violence and of the appropriate way to respond to such violence, an empowering alliance between them is likely. When police reject the victim's account of the incident and situation and appear to accept the perpetrator's version, the victim may perceive an alliance between the police and perpetrator. Finally, when police interpret the situation as resulting from two equally distressed parties experiencing a particular problem, they may attempt to form an alliance with both parties as a couple. It must be noted this contingency was described frequently by police but was not reported by victims in the current study. It is possible any attempts by police to meet the needs of the perpetrator may be

construed by victims as siding with the perpetrator and a rejection of her status as a victim. It is also possible women in this situation do not identify as victims and, therefore, did not participate in the study.

#### **7.2.4 Outcomes of the alliance – police action and victim wellbeing**

The establishment of an empowering alliance between the victim and police influences the outcomes of their subsequent interaction. Along with perceptions of the level of physical violence and concerns for the immediate safety of the victim, the presence of an empowering alliance influences the approach taken by police, their level of motivation to help the victim, and their own personal sense of satisfaction with their work.

It is the interpersonal qualities police bring to the alliance that victims experience as particularly beneficial. In attempting to form the alliance, police name abuse and endeavour to provide the victim with a new perspective for understanding the violence. This, in itself, is of great value as it helps overcome the minimisation and denial that keeps women trapped in violent relationships (Walker, 2009). It also provides relief to the victim whose faith in her own reality testing ability is compromised, and alleviates her concern that she must be going mad (Astbury, 1996; NiCarthy, 1991). It is vital police not only believe her about the violence she has experienced but that they take the violation of her basic right to safety seriously. When police tell her she doesn't deserve the violence she has endured, they act in direct opposition to her violent partner who blames her for provoking the violence. Thus they help overcome self-blaming and shame. Care and compassion shown by police contrasts sharply with the denigration she experiences from her partner.

Furthermore, when police provide direction and accept the onus for action, they provide the victim with alternatives she may not even have been aware of and relieve her of the burden of responsibility at a time when her strength and psychological resources are at their lowest ebb. They also help shield her from retribution from the perpetrator or attempts on his part to make her withdraw the application for a FVIO or criminal charges. Accompanying her to Court similarly shields her from the perpetrator and provides much needed support to face what is

considered by victims to be an overwhelming ordeal. When victims perceive the police as a powerful ally, their sense of safety is enhanced, and knowing they can call the police provides them with a sense of empowerment that shifts the balance of power in their favour, enabling them to finally assert themselves. When police act in ways that show intolerance of VAW in its many forms, they uphold the rights of the victim and provide her with a sense of justice and dignity.

In contrast, without an empowering alliance and the changed perspective it brings, many victims will receive temporary respite from the violence at best. Victims accept the denial and normalisation of violence or struggle alone against it. They resume their prior, predominantly ineffective management strategies and continue to believe it is their lot in life to live with a violent man or to be punished by him for leaving. Any intervention by police that fails to empower the victim consequently contributes to her oppression and empowers the perpetrator.

### **7.3 Implications for policing**

The intent of this study was not to evaluate Victoria Police. Rather, it was a micro-level examination of the influences and outcomes of the interaction between police and victims of IPV drawing on data collected from participants working and living in Melbourne's western metropolitan region. The findings do, therefore, have implications for policing in Victoria as well as for policing in other jurisdictions where civil orders of protection are used as a preventative adjunct to criminal remedies for intimate partner violence (e.g. across Australia and many international jurisdictions).

The current study found the essential prerequisites for recovery provided by police to victims of IPV were the provision of safety and justice, and the fostering of empowerment through the cultivation of alternative views of herself, her partner and her situation. Such outcomes are more likely to be achieved for victims in the disengaging phase (Landenburger, 1989) and particularly for those experiencing severe physical violence. The question arises then of how to promote more positive outcomes for victims in other relationship stages and how to extend protection to

victims experiencing less evident forms of IPV. In considering this question, two crucial problems were identified in terms of the prevention of IPV and providing effective services to victims: redirecting women who experience so-called *low level* physical or psychological violence to Court; and failure to investigate breaches of FVIOs.

### **7.3.1 Failure to respond to psychological abuse and non-injurious physical violence - the futility and harm of delay and redirection**

Consistent with Herman's (1992a) conceptualisation of complex trauma, victims retrospectively recognised the soul destroying erosion of the self that results from the ongoing psychological abuse they endure and the harassment, intimidation and deprivation such abuse involves. In the current study, some police officers demonstrated they too understand the cumulative, detrimental effects of ongoing psychological abuse. However, there were others who either failed to recognise psychological abuse or failed to comprehend its seriousness. Even those officers who recognised the harm of psychological abuse believed responding to such abuse was beyond their role and that there were inadequate provisions within their operational procedures to empower them to take formal action.

As a society, we recognise the harm of psychological abuse. Bullying, harassment and intimidation are not tolerated in other contexts such as the workplace, schools, sporting groups and community organisations (Crimes, Amendment (Bullying) Act 2011; Fair Work Amendment Act 2013) and yet it endures, largely unchallenged, within the private domain. That is not to suggest every argument between intimate partners should be open to scrutiny and intervention, just as every argument between co-workers is not considered abusive. However, in the workplace and other domains, concerns and accusations of harassment and abuse are taken seriously, investigated, and appropriate interventions and sanctions applied. Furthermore, as Astbury (2010) noted, the opportunity and capacity for bullying in the home is far greater than in the workplace; tolerance of such bullying contributes to the oppression of women. These findings further indicate the family home is the last bastion of rampant bullying. Such an exculpatory attitude towards the psychological abuse of intimate partners needs to be challenged. When police detect psychological

abuse, and particularly when victims are actively seeking help, they need to be empowered to formally demonstrate such abuse will not be tolerated.

Police were similarly constrained when the physical violence perpetrated resulted in no visible evidence of harm or injury. This is a serious deficit in the protection of victims, particularly given that according to victims' accounts, perpetrators become adept at not leaving signs of their violence.

According to the provisions of the Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2004) in operation at the time of data collection, and consistent with the revised version (Victoria Police, 2010a), police must make an application for a FVIO "wherever the safety, welfare or property of a family member appears to be endangered by another" (p.38). It would surely be expected these guidelines would encompass non-injurious physical violence and psychological abuse. However, there is a problem of interpretation when one examines the more detailed directions for the various alternatives for proceeding with the application. The most timely and, therefore, effective means is via a complaint and warrant, which comprises an arrest power. However, instructions for the use of this path or for a police issued FVSN are limited to situations where the safety or property of the victim is in danger and immediate civil protection is needed (Victoria Police 2004, 2010a). The *welfare* criterion is omitted. It is apparent when considering whether to make an application via warrant, police evaluate the risk of physical danger only. This is a grave shortcoming, particularly in light of the extensive psychological abuse described by some participants and the way it is often perpetrated in an unrelenting, siege-like manner.

It also seems police tend to apply a criminal burden of proof rather than a judgement based on the balance of probabilities required for civil matters. They fail to apply for an order of protection due to lack of evidence, not lack of violence. It is a real concern police feel more confident proceeding with a warrant application when confronted with a broken coffee table than with a victim who has been grabbed, pushed or hit. Findings suggest police are more comfortable exercising arrest powers when the violence fits their conception of indictable assault (e.g. involving serious intentional injury or assault with a weapon). The notion that no

blood equates to no action prevails amongst victims. Surely if the situation has escalated to the point of police attendance, then there is the potential for it to escalate again, indicating the victim is at risk and protection from further violence is needed.

Failure to respond appropriately to non-injurious violence leaves the victim at risk of further, escalating violence. Findings of an 11-site femicide study (Campbell et al, 2003) found prior arrest was a protective factor for femicide. However, further analysis (J.C. Campbell, 2004) revealed it was protective for women identified as most at risk but for women identified as low risk, it increased the likelihood of femicide or attempted femicide. J.C. Campbell suggested arrest is protective when it sets further criminal justice system responses in place but exposes the victim to further violence when it does not. Similarly, victims in the current study reported exposure to further harm when police did not take formal action.

When no immediate concerns for the safety of the victim are discerned, but protection from certain behaviours is needed, police have the option of proceeding with an application by summons (Victoria Police, 2004, 2010a). It is assumed this pathway incorporates the welfare criterion included in the general directives for applying for a FVIO but missing in the subsequent instructions pertaining to complaint and warrant or FVSN options. A summons functions to bring the perpetrator to Court for the hearing of an application within seven to 14 days. It does not remove the perpetrator from the home or convey an arrest power. As it does not result in bail conditions or the provision of an interim order, it does not carry the power to immediately prohibit specific behaviours. If the victim feels unsafe in her own home, she will have no other option than to remain in fear or leave, which directly contradicts Victoria Police (2009) aims.

The delay in bringing the matter to Court provides an opportunity for the perpetrator to use his considerable power of persuasion to convince the victim he is sorry thus marking a return to the loving-contrition phase of the cycle of violence (Walker, 2009) and continuation of the enduring phase of the relationship (Landenburger, 1989). Alternatively, he may resort to intimidation and use the lack of police action to further disempower her; if the police didn't take her seriously, the

Courts are unlikely to as well. Her resolve to proceed to Court whilst her violent partner still has access to her is likely to be eroded. Although the summons pathway may be considered appropriate in situations where the violence perpetrated involves harassment, intimidation and other forms of psychological abuse, the likelihood of the matter ever coming before the Court for the hearing of an application is very low. Furthermore, in the current study there was very little evidence to suggest police actually use this option; they tend to redirect the victim to Court.

When police do not make an application for a FVIO, they are instructed to explain the civil options available to victims and can refer victims directly to the Magistrate's Court by making an appointment with the Court Registrar (Victoria Police, 2004, 2010a). The most recent Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2010a) also includes specific instructions not to simply tell the victim to go to Court. If the referral to Court occurs after hours then police must at least provide the contact details of the local Court. However, redirection places a burden on the victim, which the findings suggest is beyond her capacity. Victims who contact police feel overwhelmed by the notion of pursuing the application themselves, and are unlikely to proceed. When police indicate they are unable to help her, she interprets the violence in her life as not being serious enough to warrant intervention and extrapolates that conclusion to include intervention by the Court.

This is not so much a failure on the part of individual police but a failure due to the constraints of the system in which they work, and suggests some forms of VAW are considered less dangerous, less detrimental to the welfare of the victim, and more tolerable than others. It is apparent implementation of powers and processes for police to take action against psychological and non-injurious violence is needed. However, Hirschel et al. (2008) found even in jurisdictions with mandatory arrest, offence characteristics have been found to predict arrest; aggravated assault was much more likely to result in arrest than simple assault or intimidation. Therefore, any legislative change will need to be supported by education and comprehensive culture change endeavours within the policing context. Furthermore, police have an important role in demonstrating to victims that such violence is unacceptable. The repudiation of cultural norms that endorse the subjugation of women has important implications for women's psychological health (Jack & Astbury, 2014).

Delay and redirection are futile avenues of intervention, and constitute lost opportunities to prevent future violence. Feeling disempowered and unsupported, the victim is unlikely to proceed on her own. Given the marked tendency of violence within intimate relationships to escalate, it is highly likely to recur, resulting in further harm to the victim and necessitating a repeat attendance by the police, which are the very outcomes they most wish to avoid. Redirection likely compounds victimisation and entrapment. It fails to take into account the insidious, cumulative effects of IPV, where the various forms of abuse interact to isolate, traumatise, and disempower the victim, eroding her spirit, agency and sense of self (Dutton et al., 2005; Herman 1992b). It also places an additional responsibility on the victim when she is already overburdened by the responsibilities placed on her by her abusive partner (Kirkwood, 1993).

### **7.3.2 The breach of intervention order paradox**

Failure to investigate and act upon reported breaches of Court orders of protection is a prevalent problem identified in many past reviews of policing (ALRC, 2010; CMC, 2005; Robertson et al., 2007; Victorian Law Reform Commission, 2006). Results of the current study indicate such failure further empowers perpetrators, whilst disempowering and demoralising victims and eroding their trust in the justice system. Failure to act on breaches exposes victims to ongoing harassment and increases the risk of additional physical violence. Furthermore, it can severely diminish or impede victims' progress towards recovery and freedom from violence. Victims feel empowered and liberated by police at the time of a crisis response when the application is initiated but abandoned and disillusioned when help-seeking regarding breaches. Thus, failure to act undermines the advances made in policing IPV and negates the intervention most commonly advocated by police.

A FVIO is intended to be a preventative mechanism of protection. It prohibits not only physically harmful behaviours but also intimidating, threatening and potentially harmful behaviours thus minimising the escalation of harassment and risk of future violence. In most cases it is formulated to keep abusers away from

their victim-partners thus preventing violence. To do so it contains conditions such as not coming within 200 metres of the victim to prevent the repetition or escalation of prior violence or intimidation. However, it is apparent from victims' accounts that the order is rarely ever enforced until the violence does actually escalate or recur. The reluctance of police to respond in a meaningful way to victims reporting breaches of FVIOs, unless that breach is also associated with other criminal acts such as physical assault or drug related crime is consistent with Rigakos's (1997) finding that police rely on physical evidence such as forced entry and signs of a struggle when arresting for breaches. This is a great concern, particularly given stalking and threatening behaviours are associated with increased risk of lethality for abused women (McFarlane, Campbell & Watson, 2002). Furthermore, in the current study, victims were especially at risk from partners who remained in close proximity after FVIOs were granted; for example, sleeping in cars and sheds. These actions are reminiscent of the highly possessive (Dobash et al., 2007) and dependent (Liem, 2009) behaviours found to be associated with lethal IPV and suggest intensive interventions are needed for these men.

Help-seeking in relation to breach of FVIO most commonly occurs during Landenburger's (1989) recovery phase. Post-separation is considered a particularly dangerous time with an associated increased risk of femicide and injury (J.C. Campbell et al., 2003; McFarlane et al, 1999; Walsh et al, 2012) and yet, in this very dangerous period police are more likely to withdraw their support. Victims face many barriers to leaving a relationship and a pattern of returning, which police find extremely frustrating. However, it is paramount police recognise when a victim is reporting a breach then she is most likely trying to do exactly what the police have advised – obtain a FVIO and end the relationship. Police are, therefore, failing to support the very course of action they have recommended so strongly. Furthermore, failure to act on breaches undermines the credibility of legal protection and social sanctions against IPV.

Without police protection, victims have no other option than to resort to their old pattern of monitoring and appeasing their partners. Whether they remain separated or not, victims continue to endure abuse. Such management strategies may even increase the potential for victims to return to the relationship. Indeed, if victims

believe they can't rely on police then they are more likely to believe they are safer living with their partner because at least they feel they have some level of control over his behaviour and they do not have to cope with the fear of the unknown. This notion of control and relative safety relieves the anxiety victims feel. Victims' assessment of their safety has been found to be accurate more often than not (Bennet, Cattaneo, Bell & Dutton, 2007). Such assessments may very well take into account their increased risk in the absence of police action.

Furthermore, when breaches of FVIOs are not taken seriously by police, perpetrators are further emboldened to continue their harassing and intimidating behaviours. Failure to act sends a clear message to both victim and perpetrator that once the Court component of the application process is finalised, the order itself is not taken seriously. Victoria Police (2004, 2010a) guidelines acknowledge the importance of investigating breaches and specifically warns against minimising contraventions of FVIOs on the grounds that the act which constitutes a breach is minor, sometimes referred to as a "*technical breach*". However, it is apparent operational police are reluctant to invest time in the investigation of a breach if they perceive their supervisor will not progress the brief of evidence to prosecution. Such perceptions are based on their knowledge of the prevailing police culture and on past experiences of prosecution outcomes. Breach of FVIO has carried a criminal charge since the introduction of the Crimes (Family Violence) Act 1987 (Vic) and police standing orders have directed police to investigate such offences. However, it is evident this continues to be problematic. Additional strategies are needed to combat the continued culture of minimisation evident in these findings.

### **7.3.3 The question of relationship intent**

The intrinsic motivation of police to help victims and the associated satisfaction they feel from doing good work needs to be extended beyond interventions with victims in Landenburger's (1989) disengaging phase. In particular, the issue of police reliance on interpretations of relationship intent when exercising discretion needs to be addressed. When victims confirm their desire to remain in the relationship or when relationship ambivalence is discerned, police are likely to

assume their intervention will be futile and time invested will constitute a waste of valuable resources. Police interpret victim reluctance to leave an abusive relationship as not being willing to cooperate with police in their attempts to help her. The assumption by police that the victim does not *want* help may mask a victim blaming bias (Gover et al., 2011), which only serves to further empower the perpetrator whilst leaving the victim even more isolated and vulnerable. It also assumes violence cannot be prevented if the victim remains in the relationship. It is not acceptable to limit protection to only those who are at the point of leaving the relationship. Regardless of relationship stage, victims want, need and deserve protection. Offering anything less reinforces the notion violence within the family home is acceptable.

Furthermore, the findings indicated police are able to make important contributions to victims' eventual escape by naming and showing intolerance of violence and by helping the victim see herself and her partner differently. Police need to recognise change is incremental and recovery is a process requiring time, encouragement and support. The perception of time wasting needs to be replaced with the notion of time being invested to increase the likelihood of change in the future. The question of relationship intent is an inappropriate one. Police must ask themselves whether she wants the violence to end; without exception, the answer is yes, she does.

Current legislation contains provisions for FVIOs to be applied in situations where the couple co-reside. Opinion regarding the effectiveness of such strategies was divided amongst police participants. However, the very act of naming abuse and bringing the perpetrator to court empowers victims and shows both victim and perpetrator that violence will not be tolerated. The FVIO carries a symbolic meaning that sets boundaries and proscribes certain behaviours. As such it expounds social standards. Furthermore it empowers victims by providing tangible confirmation that violence is inappropriate, regardless of her decision to stay or leave. Additionally, it empowers police to act if they are recalled to the same address and confronted with a "*he said, she said*" situation.

Police recognise use of police intervention by some victims during the enduring stage as a management strategy to achieve short term respite. Police interpret such

strategies as manipulative and time wasting and consequently feel frustrated; victims interpret police frustration as rejecting their needs. Police perception of what they can do to help in these cases needs to be broadened. Instead of disdain, police need to use the opportunity to show support and compassion to the victim to promote self-esteem and empowerment. Just as naming abuse is important in terms of providing victims with alternative perspectives, naming short-term management strategies as ineffective may also be beneficial. In the most extreme cases of repeated police intervention, involving those who may be considered chronic users of police services, the most effective intervention was the provision of long-term respite through the incarceration of the perpetrator. This was achieved by police pursuing criminal charges, irrespective of victim cooperation.

#### **7.3.4 Need for a directive approach**

The recognition of IPV as a government responsibility and social issue requiring a concerted, whole of community response was a key struggle of second wave feminism of the 1970's. The success of these efforts was evidenced, in part, by the introduction of major law reforms in the 1980's that provided dual criminal and civil responses to intimate partner violence. Underpinned by a feminist philosophy, there has been an increasing focus on delivering interventions in ways that facilitate the empowerment of women who experience IPV. Such interventions focus on choice, listening to the victim, and privileging her knowledge of her situation and the perpetrator over that of the service provider (Ford, 1991; Peled, Eisikovits, Enosh, & Winstock, 2000). That is, a non-directive approach is advocated. Policing agencies have, to a degree, tried to incorporate these philosophies in their own approach. However, the appropriateness of this ideology in the policing context has not been adequately tested. Indeed, the evidence gathered in this study suggests a more directive approach is needed.

Policing guidelines instruct police to assess the victim's level of fear when making risk assessments (Victoria Police, 2010a). Fears should certainly be listened to and taken seriously but an apparent lack of fear should not be reason to dismiss the seriousness of the situation. Past research has shown victims of IPV are highly

likely to underestimate their level of danger (J.C. Campbell, 2004). Victimisation is associated with a high risk of depression and PTSD (Flicker et al., 2012; Mechanic et al., 2008); both involve numbing symptoms, which may inhibit the level of fear experienced and expressed by the victim. Victims are likely to minimise the extent of the violence, particularly in the presence of the perpetrator. Victims' fear of repercussions, and associated reluctance to aggravate the perpetrator should not result in police failure to act. If police accept victims assurances the incident is now resolved and they prefer not to risk inflaming the situation again, they may be inadvertently colluding with the perpetrator to reinforce the victim's perception of his omnipotence. Similarly, apparent lack of fear when victims make a *cold call* should not mistakenly result in a lack of concern for victim safety. All help-seeking, regardless of the context, should be considered as requiring urgent and immediate attention. When victims are fearful of proceeding with FVIO applications or criminal charges, they need police to take a directive approach, which assumes responsibility for decisions made and shields the victim from being blamed by the perpetrator.

When police are unable to take prescriptive action, the abuse still needs to be recognised and named in order to counter normalisation processes. Tentative beliefs that she is undeserving of abuse need to be confirmed. As far as possible, abuse needs to be exposed and the perpetrator held accountable. Regardless of the nature of the violence, it needs to be taken seriously and the victim should be shown care and compassion. She is likely to be physically and emotionally exhausted, and very fearful. As such, she needs a great deal of support to enable her to take any necessary action, and wherever possible, such action should be facilitated by police.

A directive approach may be construed as disempowering. Victim choice and empowerment are strongly intertwined in the literature, warning against the negative consequences of disregarding victims' wishes. Perhaps some of these misgivings are ideologically rather than empirically based. The findings presented here indicate under certain circumstances, women are actually disadvantaged when the decision to proceed with formal action is delegated to them, and in the long term are empowered by police using their own judgement. Victims need information, advice and direction. They need to be shown they have the right to live without

intimidation, harassment or violence. To these ends, the police approach needs to be directive, prescriptive, supportive and facilitative.

#### **7.4 Significance**

This study examined the needs and experiences of Australian women who seek help from police for IPV. It contributes to the understanding of police effectiveness in an Australian context. Furthermore, it provided a framework for understanding a comprehensive range of victim needs and outcomes.

Across Australian jurisdictions, Walker's (1979, 2009) cycle of violence theory is used to enhance police understanding of the nature of IPV (e.g. Western Australia Police, 2009; South Australia Police, 2012) and the need to break the cycle is well recognised (Victoria Police, 2010a; New South Wales Police, 2013; Northern Territory Police, 2012) It is envisaged the current findings will similarly help police understand the differential needs of women experiencing IPV, which were found to vary in a manner consistent with the Landenburger (1989) stage model of violent relationships. The current research provides further evidence to support Landenburger's conceptualisation of entrapment in and recovery from violent relationships, and suggests it can be applied in a policing context.

Furthermore, the study explored the needs and experiences of victims who developed a chronic pattern of police utilisation in an attempt to endure and survive violence, and identified why police are frustrated by those victims. A number of discrepancies between victims' needs and police values were identified, as well as a disparity in perceptions of victim status and notions of immediacy that result in missed opportunities to effectively respond to victims and prevent future violence. A more comprehensive, stage-related understanding of the needs of victims will enable police to make better use of their time and resources, provide a more victim-centred response, and hopefully increase their work satisfaction. A supportive approach by police, even in non-arrest situations, was found to have a profound effect on the victim's understanding of her situation, her right to justice and her sense of dignity. This research identified the properties, prerequisites and

contingencies of the empowering alliance, which contributed to both victim and police satisfaction, and was a core mechanism for procuring victim safety and justice.

Australia has experience repeated waves of criticism, review, and reform in relation to policing IPV since the early 1980s. Each wave brings renewed commitment, and gradual change, and yet the problem of IPV remains endemic. The need for additional training and stronger, more proactive policing was recognised in the national plan to reduce violence and against women and their children (COAG, 2009). Priorities identified by the Australasian Police Commissioners (2008) included increasing the understanding of police, progression from reactive policing to prevention, and provision of responses commensurate with the needs of victims. It is hoped these findings have elucidated such needs and can inform more proactive policing.

## **7.5 Limitations and future research**

All research designs have inherent limitations. Those relevant to this study were discussed previously along with steps taken to enhance trustworthiness (see 3.7). Although theoretical sampling was appropriately used, it is possible victims who were disgruntled by their interactions with police may have been more motivated to participate. However, even those participants who described extremely poor responses from police demonstrated a surprising lack of resentment. Furthermore, most victims described a range of interactions, which included both positive and negative accounts.

The examination of victim-police dyads to gain both perspectives of single incidents might help overcome these limitations in future research. It was not possible to do so in this study due to concerns regarding victim anonymity.

There was extremely limited data relating to interactions with police during the binding phase. Alternative recruitment strategies or research design may be needed to explore the experiences of victims in the earliest relationship stage. A focus on

police response to women who experience violence during dating relationships may augment the findings of the current study.

Participants who had recent encounters with police were recruited. However, as well as details of recent specific incidents, victim-participants sometimes referred to more distant encounters with police, which would also contribute to their general impression of police attitudes and responsiveness. Some of these encounters may have predated the launch of the Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2004). Both police and victims recognised a culture change and associated improvement in response since the launch. However, analysis of interactions based on encounters occurring after the introduction of the Code suggests there is still a disparity between the aims of the Code and the execution of processes to provide protection to victims. These discrepancies relate to matters of interpretation by members, and indicate many problematic practices evident before the culture change have persisted. Data was collected before the introduction of the new Family violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) and associated revised Code of Practice (Victoria Police, 2010a). The revised code contains some changed wording to emphasise a proactive approach, suggesting Victoria Police is aware of some of the problems identified in the current study. It is hoped these findings further elucidate such problems and ways of overcoming them.

Providing protection to victims during the enduring phase (Landenburger, 1989) was identified as particularly problematic. Changing perpetrator behaviour was a common goal of many victim-participants. Two participants had returned to their partner after lengthy separations subsequent to police intervention. Although the hallmark signs of IPV such as hypervigilance and placating were still present, they believed police intervention had indeed changed their partners' violence. Some interventions acknowledge the potential for recovery from violence within intimate relationships (e.g. Dienemann, Campbell, Landenburger, & Curry, 2002). The role of police in providing protection during this process warrants investigation. Police and victims' understanding of the effect of policing on perpetrator behaviour was examined. A further avenue for research is to directly explore perpetrators experiences and perceptions of policing to identify practices resulting in behaviour change.

IPV occurs in all relationship types. This research was limited to the female-victim – male-perpetrator, heterosexual relationship dyad, which is the most common (AIC, 2012; Victoria Police, 2010b, 2011). Whether similar problems in the victim-police encounter arise in the context of same sex relationships requires elucidation through additional research. Although the sample was ethnically diverse, the role of culture was not explored. Furthermore, no participants identified as aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. An interesting avenue for future research would be to explore whether there are additional, culture specific prerequisites for the empowering alliance.

Although IPV is the most common form of family violence, it occurs frequently in other familial relationships. The degree to which IPV pervades the family dynamic and the mechanisms by which it manifests in other family interactions warrants exploration. According to recent Victoria Police (2013) statistics, there was a parent-child relationship between the parties in 13,337 (21.9%) family violence reports. Although exact specifics were not provided, it appears the incidence of police responding to violence against women perpetrated by their adolescent and young adult offspring is of serious concern. Violence perpetrated by extended family members is also problematic (12.4%). More research into violence of this nature is needed, including the exploration of policing such violence. Furthermore, some victims in the current study expressed concerns regarding the way their own behaviour was affected by their victimisation. Some reported using violence in self-defence or in retaliation. Others were concerned about the effect of their experience of violence on their interactions with their children and their ability to parent effectively, with concerns expressed about violence permeating all family dynamics.

Police training is needed to enhance understanding of the nature of victimisation and entrapment. It is likely policing will improve if police recognise escape from violence is an arduous, iterative process and not a single event. They also need a greater awareness of the role psychological abuse plays in women's entrapment. Research is needed to evaluate training and explore mechanisms to better assist women enduring psychological abuse.

## 7.7 Final comment

Policing IPV is a difficult and complex responsibility, typically executed in an emotionally charged and volatile environment fraught with ambiguity and the potential for frustration and disappointment for victims and police alike. Police make a substantial contribution to the safety and wellbeing of victims of IPV but they can do more. As representatives of a society that upholds the right to protection and safety of all its citizens, police must demonstrate they will act on behalf of victims in all circumstances to procure such safety and will protect those who are not able to protect themselves. The notion that women remaining in a violent relationship do not want help must be unequivocally rejected. Victims strive to be free from abuse. They yearn for acknowledgment, affirmation of their worth and validation of their rights. They hope for justice and a better life. The Victoria Police motto is to “*Uphold the Right.*” Victoria Police acknowledges responding to violence against women is a core policing responsibility and is vocal about its commitment to take violence against women and children seriously (Victoria Police, 2009, 2013a). Police must recognise and respond to abuse in *all* its forms to prevent VAW and promote social justice for all. Improved policing is essential if we, as a society, ever hope to finally eradicate violence perpetrated against women and their children.

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## Appendix A Ethics approval



**VICTORIA  
UNIVERSITY**

**A NEW  
SCHOOL OF  
THOUGHT**

# MEMO

TO Professor Jill Astbury DATE 30/03/2006

FROM Prof. Michael Polonsky  
Chair  
Victoria University Human Research Ethics  
Committee

CC: Dr Denise Charman

SUBJECT Ethics Approval - HRETH.05/97

Dear Jill,

Thank you for your submission detailing amendments to the research protocol for the project titled "**Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter**" (HRETH.05/97)

The proposed amendments have been accepted by the Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee and approval for application HRETH.05/97 has been granted from 30/03/06 to 30/03/08.

Please note that the Human Research Ethics Committee must be informed of the following: any changes to the approved research protocol, project timelines, any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants, and unforeseen events that may effect continued ethical acceptability of the project. In these unlikely events, researchers must immediately cease all data collection until the Committee has approved the changes.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the Coordinator, Ethics and Research Training Projects on 9919 4148.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Polonsky'.

Prof. Michael Polonsky  
Chair  
Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee

## Appendix B Plain language statement to victim-participants



**Victoria University**  
PO Box 14428  
MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001 (03) 9919 4000  
Australia

**Telephone:**  
(03) 9919 4000

### Plain Language Statement to Participants

#### **Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter.**

We are seeking your participation in a research project that aims to examine the way police and female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) experience and understand their encounter when police are responding to an IPV incident. The study seeks to examine whether a female victim's relationship stage influences the victim-police encounter, and how that encounter then influences the victim's understanding of her situation and options, and subsequent help-seeking behaviour.

Police play a pivotal role in responding to IPV, particularly in providing protection in emergency situations. Last year Victoria Police recorded 29,162 Family Violence incidents, with the majority involving intimate partners. Arrests were made in less than 20% of these incidents. Some women report very positive experiences with police. However, many women describe very negative encounters with the police. Research is needed to better understand the immense variation in victims' experiences with police. Some women may be attempting to escape an abusive relationship; others may be endeavouring to establish independence, whilst others may be committed to maintaining their relationship. It is important to understand the needs and expectations of women at various relationship stages. The study will examine the direct effects on victims of a police attendance, especially in those cases where an arrest is not made. It will also examine police experiences and beliefs about their role in responding to IPV.

Participation in the project involves being interviewed about your needs, expectations, experiences and perceived outcomes of an encounter with police. It also involves completing three short questionnaires and a brief (30 minutes) follow-up interview six months after the initial interview. Interviews will take 1 – 1.5 hours and will be tape recorded with your permission.

We understand that participation in this project may place you at risk if you participate without your partner's knowledge. Safety measures will be adopted to minimise this risk. It is also possible that describing your experiences may be distressful. Counselling services will be available if needed. Participation is voluntary and confidential. You will not be identified in any documents, including interview transcripts that are produced from this project. You are free to withdraw from the project at any time, without being jeopardized in any way. If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached Consent to be Contacted Form and return it in the reply paid envelope. Alternatively, you can call Kim Shearson directly on 0403 500 474 or 9315 6554 to arrange a convenient interview time at your choice of venue.

Yours sincerely,

Professor Jill Astbury  
candidate.

Dr. Densie Charman

Kim Shearson, PhD

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Kim Shearson ph. 9919 2200 or 0403 500 474). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).

## Appendix C Consent to contact victim-participants

### Victoria University

PO Box 14428

MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001 (03) 9919 4000

Australia

Telephone:



## Consent Form To Be Contacted About Research

### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study, described in the attached plain language statement, which aims to examine the way police and female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) experience and understand their encounter when police are responding to an IPV incident.

**If you agree to be contacted to discuss participating in this research, please complete the following certification and your preferred contact details, and return this form in the reply paid envelope.**

### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,  
of

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to be contacted about the research project entitled:

Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter.

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by: Professor Jill Astbury, Dr Denise Charman and Kim Shearson.

Signed: .....

Date: .....

### Contact details.

Phone number: .....

Days of the week on which you can be contacted:

.....

**Time of day you wish to be contacted:**

.....

**Any other instructions about contact you that you wish to make:**

.....

.....

.....

Alternatively, you can contact Kim Shearson directly on 0403 500 474 or

9919 2200 to discuss participation in this project.

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Kim Shearson ph. 9919 2200 or 0403 500 474). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9919 4710).

## Appendix D Informed consent victim-participants

### Victoria University

PO Box 14428

MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001 (03) 9919 4000

Australia

### Telephone:

(03) 9919 4000



## Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research

### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study, described in the attached plain language statement, which aims to examine the way police and female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) experience and understand their encounter when police are responding to an IPV incident.

### CERTIFICATION BY PARTICIPANT

I,  
of

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study entitled:

Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter.

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by: Professor Jill Astbury, Dr Denise Charman and Kim Shearson.

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by: **Kim Shearson**

and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures.

**Procedures:** Participate in research interview; complete three questionnaires; participate in follow-up interview six months after initial interview.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed: ..... **Date:** .....

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Kim Shearson ph. 9919 2200 or 0403 500 474). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710).

## **Appendix E Support and Information Services for Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence**

### **Support and Information Services for Women Experiencing Intimate Partner Violence**

**Victoria Police – Call 000**  
For cases of immediate danger

### **Women’s Health West (including Western Region Domestic Violence Outreach Services)**

Call us for information and referral during business hours on **9689 9588**.  
If you need support outside business hours, call **9373 0123** or **1800 015 188**.  
These services offer women and children who are enduring or escaping from a violent partner practical support and information about safe accommodation options, obtaining legal advice, accessing financial entitlements, referrals to counselling and other services. Contact times are usually within business hours. Support workers specifically for children may be available through your local service.

**Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria (24 hour crisis support)**  
Crisis telephone support, information about options and developing a safety plan, referral to safe accommodation (refuge) for women experiencing abuse in their relationships. 24 hrs.  
Ph. 9373-0123, or country toll free : Ph. 1800 015 188.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline (24 hour advice line)**  
1800 65 64 63

**Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE).** Melbourne  
Information, support and referral for women.  
Phone service: 9am - 5pm Ph. 1300-134-130. Women's Information Centre open: 210 Lonsdale St, Melbourne, 10:30am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Website: [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au)

**Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA)**  
Crisis support, counselling, information for people who have been sexually assaulted as adults or as children. There are Centres Against Sexual Assault in regions across Victoria - see <http://www.casa.org.au/>  
Ph: 9344-2210 (daytime) or After Hours Telephone Service: Ph. 9349-1766. Country: Ph. 1800 806292.

**Immigrant Women’s Domestic Violence Service**  
For immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence. Mon-Fri 9-5. Ph. 9898-3145 Website: [www.iwdvs.org.au](http://www.iwdvs.org.au)

**Child Protection Crisis Line**

Contact this number to report concerns of child sexual abuse. Toll free for all of Victoria (24 hours) Ph: 131-278. For more information on child protection see the Department of Human Services Office for Children page - [About Child Abuse](#)

**ISIS Primary Care – Community Health Services**

For general counselling services you can contact your local ISIS centre.

Deer Park – 9219 7412

St Albans – 9296 1200

Taylors Lakes – 9449 6900

Delahey – 9307 0358

Altona Meadows – 8368 3000

Williamstown – 9393 0252

Hoppers Crossing – 8734 1400

**Appendix F Victim-participant demographics**

**Your Details**

1. What is your age ? ..... 2. What is your ethnic background?  
.....

3. Employment: Please tick the box (or boxes) that best matches your current situation:

- Full-time home duties  Working full-time  Working  
Part-time or casually   
Studying full-time  Studying part-time   
Unemployed

What is your occupation? ..... What is your partner/expartner's occupation? .....

4. Housing: Please tick the box (or boxes) that best matches your current situation:

- Homeowner  Renting House  Renting  
Unit or flat   
Sharing accommodation  Supported accommodation (eg. refuge)  
 What is your postcode? .....

Not at all ..... Extremely  
5. What is your religion? ..... How important is your faith in  
your everyday life? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Education/Training: Please tick the box that best matches your highest educational level attained.

- Completed Year 12  Completed Year 11   
Completed Year 10  Completed Year 9   
Completed apprenticeship  Completed TAFE certificate   
Completed TAFE diploma   
Completed degree  Completed postgraduate studies

7. How many children do you have? .....

For each child please provide the following details:

1. Age ..... Gender: Male  Female   
Does the child live with you? Yes  No

Is the child's father the man who was involved in the recent police attendance?  
Yes  No

2. Age ..... Gender: Male  Female   
Does the child live with you? Yes  No

Is the child's father the man who was involved in the recent police attendance?  
Yes  No

3. Age ..... Gender: Male  Female   
Does the child live with you? Yes  No

Is the child's father the man who was involved in the recent police attendance?  
Yes  No

4. Age ..... Gender: Male  Female   
Does the child live with you? Yes  No

Is the child's father the man who was involved in the recent police attendance?  
Yes  No

5. Age ..... Gender: Male  Female   
Does the child live with you? Yes  No

Is the child's father the man who was involved in the recent police attendance?  
Yes  No

(please let me know if you need another answer sheet)

## Appendix G Interview guide for victim-participants

### Interview Guide

#### *Introduction*

- Start by providing an overview of the interview including:
  - Safety precautions (alibi for this visit, switching to health care questionnaire if necessary);
  - Preparation for emotional response (you might get distressed let me know if you want to stop);
  - Aim and focus (ie. **your** understanding of your encounter with police); and
  - Components of the interview – demographics, questionnaires, relationship stage, precipitating event, police response including initial management, gathering information, decisions and actions, outcomes, partners response, and your recommendations.
  
- Administer PTSD, then Composite Abuse Scale, then Demographics

#### *Relationship stage (at time of police visit)*

At the time of the police visit were you living with your partner?    Yes  
No

If yes, go to Part A.

Prompt: And now?

If no, go to part B.

Prompt: And now?

#### *A: ( if current partner)*

How long ago did this relationship begin?

How important is it to you to try to stay in this relationship?

What is it about the relationship that you most value (what keeps you hanging in there)?

Have you ever thought about leaving or tried to leave your relationship?

    If yes, number and duration of separations

Do you think you and your partner will be able to sort your problems out?

What stands in the way of working out your problems?

When trying to make sense of what has happened to you, how do you account for your partner's behaviour?

What one word would you use to describe this type of behaviour?

#### *B: (if former partner):*

How long were you with your ex-partner before ending the relationship (from the very beginning)?

How long have you been apart?

Have you separated before?

If yes, number and duration of separation  
Do you still want to try to stay in the relationship?  
How important was it to try to make the relationship work in the past?  
What stood in the way of working out the problems?  
How difficult is it for you to remain apart?  
Do you think you would ever consider resuming your relationship?  
How do you see your long-term future?  
When trying to make sense of what has happened to you, how do you account for your partner's behaviour?  
What one word would you use to describe this type of behaviour?  
How did you account for it while you were together?  
Did you think of yourself as being an abused woman while you were in the relationship?  
How do you think of yourself now?  
Did you think of your partner as a wife batterer?  
And now?

### **Police Attendance at IPV incident**

You have recently had the police attend in relation to IPV. When was this?

Have there been previous encounters with police?

### **Description of precipitating event**

(I will ask you more about prior experiences later, but) I would now like you to describe in your own words what happened the last time the police came? The focus is on what happened between you and the police, but it might be best to first tell me a little bit about what led up to them being called.

**\*\*\* Can you describe the incident that resulted in the police coming.**

Additional Details/ the facts:

\* Who called for police?

How long did they take to arrive?

Was your partner still there when they arrived?

Did you have any trouble getting through to 000 or convincing them that you needed police quickly?

Were you injured?

### **Police Response**

I'd now like to ask you about your views of the way the police handled the call. I'll ask about their initial handling of the situation, how they gathered information, what action they took, and what effect you think their attendance had.

### **Expectations**

If participant called for police herself or knew that they had been called:

**\*\*\* What were your main reasons for calling the police?**

**\*\*\* Was calling the police pre-planned e.g. as part of a safety strategy, or a spur of the moment decision?**

**\*\*\* What did you think or expect the police would do?**

**\*\*\* What did you hope the police would do for you?**

Prompts: safety, to document abuse, assist leaving, access refuge, remove perpetrator.

What did you think police would do for him?

OR

If police arrived unexpectedly eg called by neighbour:

\* What was your reaction when the police arrived?

\* After you realised why they were there, what did you expect they would do?

**\*\*\* How were you feeling before the police arrived?**

**\*\*\* How did you feel when they first arrived?**

### ***Initial management.***

**\*\*\* Can you tell me what happened when they first arrived?**

(Purpose: Description of police initial management of the situation)

Prompts:

What did the police do when they arrived?

Did they tell you their names and station?

### **Gathering evidence**

**\*\*\* How did they go about finding out what had happened?**

Prompts:

Did the police spend much time talking to you about what had happened?

What type of questions did they ask?

Did the questions they asked help you describe what had happened?

Did their questions help you describe any physical abuse?

Did their questions help you describe any emotional abuse?

Did they spend much time talking to your partner about what happened?

Did they do anything else such as take photos, talk to neighbours? Were there any witnesses?

**\*\*\* What was this like for you?**

Prompts:

Had you ever talked about your experience of abuse before?

How difficult was it to talk about what had happened?

Have you tried to get help from other sources in the past?

**\*\*\* How did the police react to what you were telling them?**

Prompts:

Did you feel believed, supported, dismissed?

Did the police officer(s) do or say anything to make it easier for you to tell your story?

How did the police refer to the incident – did they name what had happened? Eg. This is abuse, this is a crime, you have been assaulted.

**\*\* Where were children the children?**

**\*\* How did the police handle this?**

Prompt: What was it like for you to have your children present? Did the police help with this in any way?

## **Police Action/decisions**

**\*\*\*** What did the police decide to do about your situation?

E.g. Remove perpetrator                      remove victim                      arrest                      charge  
intervention order                      mediation                      referral                      advice                      information

**\*\*\*** Were you given options or included in the decision?

**\*\*\*** Do you think the police took your wishes into consideration?

**\*\*\*** What would you have liked the police to do with your partner?

Prompt:

For example,

Remove for cooling off

Official warning

Remove for cautioning

Arrest and charge for criminal offences

Arrest and organize intervention order

**\*\*\*** How did you feel about the decision?

**\*\*\*** Would a mandatory arrest policy have been useful in this situation?

## **Police exit**

**\*\*\*** What did the police do before leaving?

Prompts:

Did they give advice about what to do if anything else happened?

Did they indicate that it was okay to call again?

Did they say they would be in contact for eg further information, to let you know what was happening?

**\*\*\*** How did you feel when the police left?

Prompt:

Did you feel safe when they left?

### **Participants' perceptions of overall experience (thoughts, feelings)**

**\*\*\* How would you describe the police attitude towards you?**

Prompt: How did that make you feel?

**\*\*\* And to your partner?**

Prompt: How did that make you feel?

**\*\*\* Can you describe the approach the police used?**

Prompt:

For example, authoritative, investigative, mediatory, counselled).

**\*\*\* Looking back now, what do you think about your encounter with the police?**

**\*\*\* How did the overall experience of police attending this incident make you feel?**

**\*\*\* What or what else would you have liked them to do or say or feel?**

**\*\*\* Is there any one thing, positive or negative, that the police said or did that particularly stands out?**

Prompt: Did your encounter with the police have a lasting impact on you?

### **Participants' perceptions of outcomes (thoughts, feelings, behaviours)**

**\*\*\* Did you do anything in response to the police encounter?**

**\*\*\* Have things changed at all?**

**\*\*\* Have you seen any changes in your partner/ do you get a different response from him now?**

Prompt:

**Did arresting him make a difference for you? In what way?**

Or

Did not arresting make a difference for you? In what way?

**\*\*\* How did the police visit make you think about yourself?**

Prompt: Was this a new way of thinking?

**\*\*\* How did it make you feel about yourself?**

Prompts: Stronger-weaker Valued-worthless supported- abandoned alone or not alone understood- misunderstood Guilt Shame

**\*\*\* Did the police visit make you think about your relationship in a different way?**

**\*\*\* How did it make you think about your options?**

**\*\*\* Has your relationship changed at all since the police attended?**

\*\*\* Do you think you gained any knowledge?

**\*\*\* Did police put you in contact with any other services?**

Prompt: What, if anything, has resulted from this?

**\*\*\* Have you had any ongoing contact with the police or legal system?**

**\*\*\* Would you call the police again in the future?**

(For those who found police unhelpful, why would you call again?)

\*\*\* Did you feel that you were taking a risk in calling the police?

**\*\*\* Were these fears confirmed?**

Prompt:

How did your partner react to you calling them?

How was he when they left (if not removed) ? OR How was he the next time you saw him?

Did he try to get you to alter statements/drop charges?

Was he contrite/coercive/threatening?

Prompt: Would you be more or less fearful of calling the police than you were this time?

### **For those with prior police contact**

How does this most recent encounter with the police compare to your previous experience(s)?

**What do you think the police could have done the first or other times they came to prevent the violence recurring?**

#### **➤ If there is time**

\*\*\* What types of assistance do you think the police should provide?

➤ Thank participant, let her know we are nearly finished, acknowledge emotional drain, acknowledge her contribution

➤ Debrief

➤ Give list of contacts

## **Appendix H Case Summaries and follow-up questions**

Note: Pseudonyms are used and demographic information has been removed from the following summaries in an attempt to protect victims' identities. The summaries are available to examiners only and will not be included in the publicly available version of the thesis.

### **Maria's Story**

At the time of the interview Maria had been separated from her defacto partner for approximately 12 months. She was living with her children in a rented flat that she had once shared with her partner.

#### **Relationship history.**

Maria had a nine year history with her partner before deciding to end the relationship. This decision was extremely difficult for Maria due to her religious beliefs. She also had a strong conviction that it was important for her children to be raised in an intact nuclear family and she wanted them to have a normal, steady relationship with their father. Maria longed for a stable home life and this stemmed in part from the fact that her own childhood was marred by childhood abuse and neglect. She did not grow up with her father. Maria was also pressured by her partner's parents to stay in the relationship. Her mother-in-law downplayed the abuse, telling her that she hadn't suffered enough. Maria was also worried about what people would think of her if she left her partner.

Maria endured verbal and emotional abuse for many years. Her partner controlled her, criticised her, called her names, humiliated her in front of people, isolated her from family and friends, restricted her from working outside the home, grabbed and pushed her, and raped her. He was extremely selfish and would often leave her and the children alone. Maria felt that he was disloyal to her and valued his extended family and friends more than her. Maria felt like a shadow walking behind her partner, without a life of her own.

Maria used to blame herself for the abuse, believing that her partner was right in the things he said to her. She had very low self esteem stemming from being raised without a father and not being cared for properly by her mother. It was through reflection and reading her diaries that she came to realise that the abuse was wrong. At first Maria believed that she had to keep the family together regardless of the cost. She sacrificed personal happiness and health for the sake of her children. Eventually Maria realised that the effect the abuse was having on her was also affecting her children. She was starting to take things out on the children. She realised that it wasn't good for them to constantly see their mother upset or unwell. It also wasn't good for them to witness their father's verbal abuse.

#### **Police intervention**

Eventually Maria decided that in order to look after her children properly she had to be sane, had to feel alright with herself and had to stop being frightened. She had to end her relationship. She was extremely fearful of confronting her partner with her decision and had to build up the courage to do so. When she broke the news he

became enraged. He threatened her, threw things at the wall, narrowly missing her face, and grabbed her and pushed her against the wall. Maria was extremely frightened, so frightened that she didn't even dare argue back with him. She was frozen as she listened to his abuse. He said if he was leaving, he was going to hurt her and hurt her so badly she would have to go to hospital. She told him to leave or she was calling the police. He taunted her and said she wouldn't do it and threatened her even more. Maria was terrified and called the police.

Maria was extremely frightened after she called the police. She was worried about his reaction but she also felt a bit blank. Prior to that night Maria had not considered calling the police so she hadn't really any preconceived expectations. She just thought they would take him away and she wouldn't have to see him any more.

When the police arrived Maria was relieved. To her it was like they were her saviours. Maria felt very emotional but she tried to control it, to be strong. Her partner tried to leave but the police told him he had to stay. He was scared of them and did as he was told. The police separated Maria and her partner, which helped Maria relax a little bit. They then asked her questions to find out what had happened. The police were also very reassuring and supportive to Maria's young son.

The police asked Maria a lot of questions, too many questions, which was distressing. But they did believe her and asked her what she wanted them to do. Maria just wanted them to send him away.

### **Police decisions and actions**

The police described his behaviour as verbal abuse and said it wasn't acceptable. They decided to give him a warning. The police told him to leave and not to bother her again or else he would be in trouble. They also told Maria to call again if he did come back. Maria felt comforted by the police officers' assertiveness and was impressed by their ability to control her partner.

The police provided Maria with information on a range of resources including:  
She could go to court for an intervention order if he got worse;  
There are special workers who can help her with the court aspect;  
They gave her information about women's health west; and  
They said she could go to a refuge. They could organise that for her.

The police said they could not arrest him because there was not enough evidence of physical violence; she wasn't bleeding or anything like that. This made Maria feel that she had to prove herself. On reflection, Maria believes police should take verbal abuse more seriously. Even though Maria felt they weren't treating the incident as a serious offence, the police were very serious in their dealings with her partner. They took a tough stance with him and he really listened. He was scared of them.

### **Outcomes**

Maria's partner went to his mother's house that night and did not come back. One of the major concerns Maria had in calling the police was the reaction her partner would have. He did get angry about it and was later abusive to her over the

telephone but he wasn't as bad as she expected. He was still abusive afterwards but he changed his tactics. He started hanging around outside and phoning her.

Maria learned many things that night. Maria had heard about intervention orders before but didn't know that she could get one for her situation. This was a weapon she could use if she needed to. She saw that police had power over her partner and that they would stand up for her. She was reassured by the police. It was simple and safe to call them if she needed them. She felt supported, protected and safe. She learned that she has rights and can make choices.

Maria did not take these new options and choices lightly. She was scared about making decisions and spent two months thinking about whether to go ahead with getting an intervention order. She was worried about the effect it would have on her children, and was especially concerned that it would prevent them from ever seeing their father again. However, he started hanging around outside her son's school and this was an even bigger concern so Maria went to Court for the order. This was an ordeal as it brought back distressing memories. Court was scary.

Maria now feels that she has a new life. She is happier and can laugh again. She is stronger, more certain and more secure. She is not a shadow any more; she is a winner.

## QUESTIONS

1. How long into the relationship did the abuse start?  
Clarify – were they actually living together prior to that night or was it during one of the separations.
2. Was it just fear that made you call the police or was it also to show him you were serious and would go through with it? (page 6)
3. Can you tell me a little bit more about feeling blank (page 7). Also what did your partner do after you called the police?
4. What did you think of the police saying it was verbal abuse and not acceptable? Had other people said things like that to you? If so, how was it different coming from the police?
5. How did seeing that your partner was scared of the police change your image of him?
6. You said after that night that he started acting a little crazy, can you tell me a bit more about that?  
How long did the hanging around and phoning last for? (page 17). Did you think about calling the police during that period?
7. You were reluctant to go ahead with getting the intervention order because you thought it would stop the children from seeing their father? (page 17). How much did the police explain about what an intervention order could do?

8. You were also put off by your past experience with getting an intervention order against your stepfather, can you explain about that a bit more? (page 20)

9. Did getting the intervention order make a difference to his behaviour?

10. Now that you know what the intervention order can do, do you think it would have been better for the police to get that started on the night?

11. How is it going now? How is his behaviour around access visits?

Clarify page 8 & 12. Did they say she had to go to court herself or did they offer to get the order for her?

Clarify page 11 line 9. Well, I felt safe because they said .....

## **Jenny's Story**

At the time of the interview Jenny had been separated from her husband for 13 weeks. She was living with her children in the family home that she had once shared with her partner..

Relationship history.

Jenny started dating her husband in early 1991 and they were married late the following year. She was a happy young bride, in love with her husband. They were building their own home and she was looking forward to settling down and raising a family. She expected to have a very good life. These expectations were brutally shattered when, still on their honeymoon, her husband hit her for the first time. When they returned from the honeymoon she didn't even want to move in with him but friends had organised a party for her and she didn't know how to deal with everybody's expectations. And so began her years of hiding the abuse and playing the role of a happy wife, while he was seen by everybody as a really wonderful bloke. At first Jenny stayed because she hoped that things would change; that he would change. Eventually Jenny lost all hope, and as the abuse continued to get worse, it was fear that kept her tied to her husband. He threatened to come after her and really hurt her if she ever left. Jenny had no doubt that he would.

Jenny endured verbal, emotional, and physical abuse for many years. Her husband swore and called her names, told her she was stupid and ugly, isolated her from family and friends, smashed things in the house, grabbed, pushed her and hit her, and beat her up on weekly basis. These weekly beatings usually coincided with his drinking.

At first Jenny used to be outraged that he was hitting her. She was a good, worthwhile person and didn't deserve to be treated like that. If Jenny ever brought up the subject of his violence in an attempt to get him to change his behaviour or seek help, he would always deny that it had ever happened. It was during a particularly violent incident that occurred in 2000 that Jenny's outrage turned to

intense fear. He was punching her in the head and she began to feel faint. It was then that she questioned whether he actually had enough self-control to stop hitting her. She became very, very frightened of him from that day on. Leaving him was out of the question so she focussed on pacifying him and avoiding violent outbursts.

### **Police Intervention**

Approximately six months prior to Jenny calling 000 for police assistance, she noticed a change in her husband's behaviour and thinking. The violence was escalating. Jenny was walking on eggshells just that little bit more, and she had a sense that something was brewing. In April (2006), a month prior to the police visit, he made a huge shift in the way he perceived his behaviour. He went from total denial of the violence to not only believing he had a right to hurt her, but admitting that he wanted to hurt her. This was terrifying. Jenny had always thought that she had some level of control over the situation but she began to realise that he was getting less predictable. The rules were changing and she didn't know if she could learn the new rules quickly enough. She needed help in managing him.

When the violence started getting worse Jenny tentatively began to disclose. She told her best friend and her sister. After the violent incident in April, Jenny's best friend convinced her she needed to tell her doctor and report what had been going on to the police. Telling her doctor was very difficult. She thought it would change the way he saw her; that he would think she must be a nag, a whore, or a bitch. She must be a really terrible person if her husband hated her so much that he wanted to hurt her. She rang the Men's Referral Service to see if she could get some help for him. They sent her a brochure about abuse and advised her to contact the police SOCA (sexual offences and child abuse) Unit.

Jenny's first attempt at reporting the violence did not go smoothly. She tried the local police station but they didn't have a SOCA Unit so they referred her to another station. When she found the SOCA Unit she was made to wait because she didn't have an appointment. When she was finally seen, she was told she was in the wrong place because there was no sexual abuse or child abuse involved. However, the police woman did listen to her story and advised her to seek an intervention order from the nearby Magistrate's Court. Jenny was worried that an intervention order would infuriate her husband even further. The police woman just said fair enough, it was her call.

Jenny left the police station feeling drained and stupid, and embarrassed for wasting police time. One thing she was sure of was that she wasn't going to make things worse by wasting a Magistrate's time as well. However, there was one thing that the police woman said that turned out to be very important – she told Jenny if he ever hit her again to call 000 straight away.

Less than a month later, on a Wednesday night in May, when she was cowering on the floor while he threatened her with a knife, Jenny realised she had to do something. She shouldn't be living like this and neither should her children. As soon as he was distracted she picked up the phone, hid in the bathroom and dialled the police. Jenny doesn't know how long the police took to get there but even when they arrived, she was still terrified and wouldn't come out of the bathroom until her

husband was removed from the house. There were up to eight police members in the house. Jenny found the presence of all those people, as well as the fact that they were carrying guns, quite overwhelming. She still didn't feel safe.

The first response of the police was for Jenny to go somewhere for the night. Jenny didn't want to leave her home and was later very glad that she insisted on staying. Jenny believes now that if she left that night, there would have been tremendous additional burdens on her and the children. So two officers took her husband to the station, two other officers returned to another station and four officers remained at the house to take her statement. Although the police officers were being very kind, Jenny perceived a subtle undertone of time pressure. They had other work to do and had to get back to their stations to finish reports.

Providing the police with a statement was an extremely difficult task. Jenny's recall was distorted and she had no sense of the timing or order of events. She had completely blacked out important details like being threatened with a knife. The police slowly teased out the facts and used details from the 000 call to assist them in getting the full story. But most significantly, Jenny was reluctant to reveal humiliating information to these strangers. She didn't want them to think badly of her.

Jenny was quite surprised that the police believed her and actually thought that what had happened was important. It was a relief to be believed after so many years of having her version of events distorted by her husband. It was as though the police were affirming her sense of reality. Jenny experienced an enormous emotional release after many years of holding things in. One female officer in particular was very warm and supportive.

This officer rang Jenny later that night to inform her that an application for an intervention order had been made and that her husband was going to be charged. The fact that he was going to be charged was important to Jenny because it validated to her that his behaviour was wrong and she was justified in objecting to it. The fact that the officer didn't like her husband also cheered Jenny. The policewoman accompanied Jenny to the intervention order hearing the following Monday and was very protective of Jenny when she had to face her husband. She made it clear to him that he was not to approach or intimidate her while they were in Court. Jenny maintained contact with this officer for a period of time and felt a sense of loss when she was later transferred to another station.

Jenny's subsequent dealings with the police have been far from successful. Her husband has been subtly breaching the order, for example visiting the next door neighbour and therefore breaching the within 200 metres condition. Jenny informed the police but no investigation or action was taken. In fact Jenny was informed that he could breach it three times before they were able to do anything! The officer seemed to be defending his rights to visit the neighbour. This made Jenny feel that the whole process she had been through was pointless. She is also currently having trouble finding out what is happening about the criminal charges.

Although Jenny has experienced some difficulty with police follow-up, she would still call the police for help in the future. She still has hope that they would respond and help her. She doesn't want to lose that feeling of hope.

## Questions.

Q.1 Disclosing to other people – how is it different disclosing to police compared to your friend or doctor? (P7)

Q.2 First contact with police – at sunshine SOCA. What was the aim of that? What did you expect or hope for?

Q.3 The policewoman at SOCA said it was up to you whether or not to go ahead with getting an intervention order. You thought she should have said, “No that’s not okay. But she was actually quite cold about it. She just accepted your fear of upsetting him. What did this tell you? What did you think about this? (Did it confirm your fear of him? Did it make you think you couldn’t be protected).

Q.4. The night of the 000 call. How did you feel about them discussing the reports and other duties? What did it tell you about how they saw the situation?

Q. 5. Why do you think it was important to you that the female officer didn’t like him?

Q6. What were the direct results of the police intervention that night? What has changed?

What about your attitude or beliefs about him?

Do you think his attitude or behaviour has changed?

Did it change the way you see yourself or your situation or your options?

How important was their involvement in you being able to end the relationship?

Could you have left him or got him to leave without their help?

Q7. What do you think would have happened that night if you hadn’t called the police?

Q.8. Police exit. What did they do or say before leaving? Did they organise a referral at any time? Did they give you their names? How did you feel after they left?

Q.9. What was their overall attitude towards you on the night?

How does that compare to your later dealings with them?

Q.10. How would you describe their approach on the night?

e.g. authoritative, investigative, mediatory, counselling

Q.11. How did they make you feel? (list)

Q. 12. How would you describe their ability or effectiveness in dealing with the crisis on that night?

- Q.13. How would you describe their effectiveness in following up after the incident?
- Q.14. What information or advice about intervention orders and breaches were you given after the order was granted from police or from the Court?
- Q.15. Last time we met you said your ex-husband was finding subtle ways to breach the intervention order? How are things going with him now? Are there any further problems with breaches or problems around access?
- Q.16. Have you had to call the police again?
- Q.17. Have you heard anything about the criminal charges?
- Q.18. Have you had any other contact with the police?
- Q.19. You took a big risk that night calling 000. You were worried about his reaction. How did he react – how was he the next time you saw or spoke to him?
- Q.20. Has he tried to get you to have the charges dropped?
- Q.21. What advice would you give to other women who might feel too afraid to end an abusive relationship?
- Q.22. What advice would you give police about improving their service to women?

## **Sophie's Story**

At the time of the interview Sophie was divorced and had been separated from her ex-husband for approximately 2 ½ years. She was living in a rented house with her two children

### **Relationship history**

Sophie had been with her partner for 13 years before separating in July 2004. They originally lived in a rural area where he was born and raised. There were always problems in their relationship, which Sophie attributed to him being a very controlling type of person, but these problems escalated dramatically when they moved to Melbourne. He is an alcoholic and his behaviour could be quite erratic at times. Sophie also believes he has an underlying mental health problem. She had tried to get help for him but he would never follow through with treatment. He had started anti-depressants at one stage.

Sophie's parents were in Melbourne so the move gave her more support but most important to Sophie in the decision to move was the fact that the children both got accepted into the special needs school. Unlike Sophie, her partner did not want to

move and didn't see the advantages of being in Melbourne. Sophie saw the escalation in his abusive behaviour as retaliation for the move to Melbourne.

Sophie endured verbal and emotional abuse. He was critical, harassed her over the phone, tried to isolate her and turn friends and family against her. He blamed her for his behaviour and tried to convince her and others that she was crazy. He was physically abusive at times, shaking, pushing and grabbing her. There were also behaviours that Sophie now recognises as sexually abusive.

Sophie tried to avoid upsetting him. She had to be very vigilant and was often prepared to escape through the back door. Whenever she was particularly concerned about his behaviour she would ring her mother and ask her to call back a little later to check that everything was alright. For the last six months that they lived together Sophie was sleeping in a separate room with a baseball bat nearby. Sophie had tried to leave him twice before the final separation but he convinced her to come back. Sophie made the final decision to end the relationship in July 2004 when he grabbed one of their sons and shook him. On the advice of her lawyer she went to Court and got an interim intervention order.

### **Police intervention**

Even before the interim intervention order was served, he started harassing her by constantly phoning and sending text messages. Whenever they were in Family Court he would use it as an opportunity to intimidate her; for example, whacking her in the shoulder as she came out of the café. Sophie rang the local police station but they said there was nothing they could do. Sophie's ability to engage the assistance of police is complicated by the needs of her autistic children. The oldest child in particular is very wary of the police, so Sophie is very reluctant to seek assistance while the children are with her. She started documenting every breach of intervention order he committed and taking it to the local police. They put it in a file but as far as Sophie knows none of her complaints have been investigated.

The first time Sophie rang 000 was May 14<sup>th</sup> 2005 when her ex-husband turned up on her doorstep, without prior arrangement, to pick up the children on a Saturday night for an overnight stay. He persisted at the door for about 15 minutes. Sophie rang the police because she had been advised by her lawyer to do so but she was also extremely frightened. There were Court orders in place stipulating that he was to have supervised access for three months and then unsupervised visits after that. He tried to circumvent the supervision by just not having the children during that time. The night he turned up was at the end of the three month period. Technically there were orders in place saying he should be able to have them but in the meantime there had been correspondence between lawyers to arrange supervised visits at a local contact centre. These visits were due to commence the following Monday.

Due to the Family Law orders the police said they were unable to pursue the matter as a breach of intervention order because Federal, Family Law overrides the intervention order under State law. Sophie's ex-husband in the meantime had gone

to the local station and wanted to press charges against Sophie. Both parties were advised to seek advice from their lawyers the following Monday.

Although the police indicated that they could not do anything in regards to enforcing the intervention order, Sophie felt that the police officer was very supportive. He stayed at the house for about 45 minutes. She had actually met him before when she had taken her son to the local police station in an attempt to help him overcome his fear of police. The sergeant at the station who was talking to Sophie's ex-husband was very casual about the incident. Even though there was officially nothing the police could do, given the Family Court orders, Sophie felt he could have at the very least warned her ex-husband about breaching the intervention order. It really made her question the value of having an intervention order.

Sophie has tried repeatedly to get the police to do something about her ex-husband's lack of compliance with the intervention order. She has found that they are very hesitant to take action. They have given her a range of excuses for not investigating or charging him with breach of intervention order, including that based on their past experience the Magistrate won't take it seriously, they are concerned about their budget if they have to cover Court costs if they lose, if they lose it might empower him, and they don't have enough "definitive evidence". Sophie feels they just want to talk her out of pursuing it and they keep telling her to ring 000 if anything happens again. On one occasion she reported to police that he had chased her several times on the road after access visits. Police indicated there was nothing they could do unless the cars connected.

On three occasions the police have given him warning calls but he is not deterred by the calls and has described them as a joke. After one warning call in relation to elbowing the social worker in the stomach during supervised access, he retaliated by complaining about the social worker to her employer, the education department. Sophie's ex-husband's ability to interact with the police is probably influenced by his knowledge of the police and police system gained through actually living with a member of the police force after the separation.

Sophie has resorted to avoiding her ex-husband by not being home on occasions when he might attempt to access the children – times when he would have been eligible to see them under previous Court orders.

One particularly upsetting interaction with police occurred in May or June 2006, when Sophie was having handovers for child access at a local police station. Her ex-husband was supposed to have his sister with him as a supervisor but came alone. Her ex-husband wanted the police to call the Federal police to have the children handed over to him. Sophie just wanted to be seen to her car by an officer so she could safely take her children home. The sergeant refused to get involved in "this Family Court stuff" because it always backfires.

Although the sergeant was supposedly maintaining a neutral position he actually said some things that demonstrated a level of support for Sophie's ex-husband. For example when he complained that the Magistrates give out intervention orders too easily, the sergeant agreed that sometimes they do. He also said that he couldn't

make Sophie hand the children over, just like he couldn't do anything if her ex-husband didn't bring them back. Sophie was furious about the influence this kind of statement could have on her ex-husband. It also frightened her children. Sophie felt totally disillusioned and just wanted to leave as quickly as possible. She also felt that the sergeant was very matey and blokey with her ex-husband. After Sophie left the police station she went to the local shops and noticed her ex-husband's car still at the station 45 minutes later. She also later learned from the children's psychologist, who had rung the police that the sergeant indicated it was Sophie causing all the trouble.

It seems that Sophie's ex-husband wants to maintain a connection to her through harassment. He constantly tries to discredit her, claiming that she is a lesbian and drug addict. He tries to prevent her from getting support, for example he successfully complained to the education department to prevent the school social worker from accompanying her to Court. He claims that she tries to prevent him from seeing the children and has influenced their perception of him. He also discredits her to professionals by inferring that she is exaggerating and over reacting to the problems around access and it is her who is causing the trouble. He has reported her to Child Protection and then admitted to the Magistrate that he found the term Munchausen's in a book. He uses the legal system as a form of harassment, with about 20 Court dates over contact and now a pending custody trial. She has no option but to engage with him. It is a form of power and control. He filed the papers for custody two days after the intervention order was granted, suggesting that it is a gesture of retaliation. He intimidates her at Court and follows her dangerously in the car after handovers. In Sophie's words, he uses the kids to keep going with the abuse.

Sophie believes that nothing has been done at all to stop his behaviour. The failure of the police to protect her and take action with him has actually reinforced his behaviour to the point where it has escalated to include her parents and associates. Sophie believes that early intervention to nip it in the bud might have prevented him from continuing the abuse although she realises there is no way to be sure.

Sophie has two main concerns: firstly she has to contend with his current abusive behaviour; but there is also a lot of fear about his future behaviour. She feels that he is getting more and more brazen. She also has concerns about his mental stability stemming from her past experiences with him when he was suffering from alcohol induced paranoia, and a prior suicide attempt. Police look at each individual incident and treat it as trivial and petty but they fail to see the escalating pattern of his psychological abuse. Not being believed by police is particularly distressing to Sophie.

In contrast, in February 2006 while doing a hand over at Sunshine police, two police officers recognised the malice in Sophie's ex-husband's behaviour. One young officer asked Sophie if he had tried to lure her into the car park and questioned her about his previous behaviour. They recommended Sophie apply for an intervention order the very next day. They were not concerned that a Family Law order was in place and even suggested that in future the police could collect the children from the car park for her.

Sophie subsequently applied for an intervention order in February 2006, which was finally granted in early December 2006 after a full day contested hearing. One of the most positive outcomes of the intervention order hearing was the support Sophie received from the Magistrate. Sophie felt that finally someone could see what had been happening. So far there has been no harassment but there has also been no opportunity. There have been no phone calls. If there are any breaches Sophie intends to keep trying to get the police to enforce the intervention order. She believes it is a matter of seeking out who will help you.

Follow – up Questions.

1. I just want to verify the relationship length; approximately when did you first start dating?  
Date married?

2. Problems got worse when you moved to Melbourne. When was that?

What type of issues or problems was there before you moved from Gippsland?

3. I have two conflicting times for custody trials was it June 5<sup>th</sup> (p.21) or was it February (p.32)?  
What was the outcome?

4. You said there was no further harassment after the last intervention order was granted in December 2006 and no phone calls. Was he making calls before the order? Was in interim intervention order in place?

5. I asked about getting help and you mentioned in terms of validating what you've gone through but I redirected you to in terms of getting protection.

So now I'd like to ask you about that now, about the importance of having what you've been through validated.

6. The time that the police were helpful in February 2006, how would you describe their attitude and approach to your ex-husband?

7. What was his reaction to them?

8. The time at Sunshine with the sergeant, you asked him to escort you and the kids to the car and he refused. What did that mean to you?

9. Have you had any problems with him since the first interview?

10. Have the police been involved?

How did they handle it?

What did that mean to you?

## **Marion's Story**

At the time of the interview, Marion had been separated from her husband for approximately 21 months, and was living with her children in the family home.

### **Relationship history**

Marion was married in 1991 after five years of serious dating. She thought she knew her husband and believed that they got along well. However, everything changed as soon as they were married. He became very controlling, secretive and distant. He also isolated her from friends and family.

Throughout their marriage, Marion's husband was financially and verbally abusive. Although he earned a good income as a solicitor, he was extremely frugal and complained about her spending money, even on food. Marion felt forced to live like a miser and made all the children's clothes to appease him. The abuse Marion endured included constant criticism and insults such as telling her that she was ugly and crazy, becoming angry when housework or meals were not to his liking, following her, leaving her stranded, coercing her to have sex, and on several occasions, shaking her.

Marion had strong family values and wanted her marriage to work. She wanted to raise her daughters as a family and then grow old with her husband. This was her second marriage. She left her first husband because he was a violent alcoholic. She did not want to go through another divorce. So for many years Marion coped by denial and rationalisation; she believed him, made excuses for his behaviour and tried to do everything she could to please him and make him happy. But eventually the excuses became implausible and she recognised that this was a form of abuse.

In April 2005 there was an argument on the way to a family Easter celebration. Marion's husband grabbed her by the arm and told her that the marriage was over. He had a look of pure hatred in his eyes, which made her feel petrified. Although Marion had been unhappy for several years, it was at this time that she actually became frightened and started to think about leaving. However, Marion had doubts. She questioned her own judgement. Was she over-reacting? For a week she contemplated her future. But suddenly everything changed with the death of her mother. Following the funeral, Marion spent two weeks at their holiday home near her father's. She thought about the loving relationship her parents had, which made her realise that her own marriage was a lie. Her time away from her husband helped her resolve her doubts. She wanted to leave; all she needed was somewhere to stay.

### **Police intervention**

Marion was frightened that her husband would come after her, and believed that if he found her he would kill her. Although domestic violence services wanted her to go to a hotel because she had money, she felt her only option was to go to a refuge.

She needed to know that he could not find her. She needed sanctuary; safety and someone to look after her. Marion went into a refuge in May 2005 for a period of three weeks.

Marion's husband contacted the police and reported they were missing. He got a recovery order for the children. Marion arrived at the refuge late in the evening and the very next morning the police wanted to interview her. Although the refuge staff asked her permission, Marion felt obliged to be interviewed because the police wanted to see her for themselves. A male detective arrived. Marion felt extremely frightened. The last thing she wanted was a man anywhere near her. She was confused; it made her feel that she had done something wrong, even though she was the victim. The detective plunged straight into asking her questions. Even though Marion was not happy with the way things were handled and would have preferred a female officer, she was grateful to the police officer. He agreed to inform the girls' principal of their situation, and offered a police van to accompany her to return to the house if she needed to get any personal belongings.

Marion attended Court, and the Magistrate awarded temporary custody to her. Afterward she rang the detective, who organised for two uniformed officers to follow her back to the house so she could collect to her daughters' school uniforms. Marion was very grateful because she knows she wouldn't have been able to do this alone.

Similarly, following the second hearing two weeks later, when the Magistrate decided Marion, with her daughters, should have occupancy of the family home, two uniformed officers accompanied her on her return to the house. They checked through all the rooms for her to reassure her that he was not at the house. Marion believes she would not have returned to her house without this support.

Around June 2005 Marion went to the police station after discovering that her husband had placed a number of properties in her name. She suspected he had been engaging in illegal financial activities. She was worried about what he would do to keep her from exposing this. The police officer was very dismissive of her concerns and ignored that she was being harassed and threatened with phone calls, which made Marion feel unprotected and betrayed. She believed the police would only help people who were physically abused but her husband was too clever for that. She resorted to cutting herself off from everybody, and would not go out alone. This continued until the matter was dealt with in Court (page 16 of transcript).

Marion again went to the police station in October 2006 following a particularly abusive and frightening phone call from her husband. Marion was actually surprised by the response she got from the police. They made her feel important. They believed her and took the matter seriously, offering to organise a refuge for her. However, this time Marion did not want to go to a refuge. She was not going to run from him any more. The police applied for a complaint and warrant for an intervention order. Marion's husband was taken into custody, his guns were confiscated and he was bailed under the condition that he not come within 200 metres of her. The fact that it was the police taking out the intervention order made Marion feel that someone was looking out for her. They were shielding her from retaliation from her husband if he had any issues about the initiation of the order. To

some extent it restored her faith in society. The intervention order gave her the freedom to go out again and the opportunity to start living her life.

Unfortunately at the full hearing for the intervention order the Magistrate took into account that Marion's husband was an officer of the Court and so made him undertake to be of good behaviour rather than grant the intervention order. Marion believes that the Magistrate was biased in his dealings with the matter, and that his actions send a social message diminishing the value and rights of women. Marion also felt that she was doubly victimised by her status as the wife of solicitor.

Marion's husband immediately started harassing her and even taunted her about being powerless to stop him. The police were extremely surprised that the order was not granted and want to investigate what happened. On the advice of police, Marion is documenting details of the continued abuse. She is dealing with a particular constable who is currently on holidays. Marion feels that she and the police are on the same side, trying to seek a just outcome. On his return they will meet to decide on their course of action.

## Questions

1. Easter: You were petrified when you saw a look of pure hatred on his face. You had already started to recognise that his behaviour was a form of abuse; that his complaints and attitudes about money weren't logical but was this a new realisation? Is this what made you start thinking that you had to leave? Is this where your fear that he was capable of killing came from?
2. You started considering leaving, although you still had some doubts. You questioned your own credibility, were you making a mistake? Did this happen often, when there had been incidences, that you would question your own sense of reality?
3. He mentioned that the marriage was over at Easter. Did he mention anything again? Do you think he was serious or was it just talk?
4. About you being reported missing: did he report that all of you were missing or just the children? Did he know that you had left and taken them?
5. I just need to clarify the timeline of events. When did he get the recovery order? Did the detective serve it that morning? Did you have to go to Court that first day in the refuge? And then you went back again, that's when the judge said you and the girls should stay in the house, when was that?
6. Re: The detective the next morning. You said it made you feel like you had done something wrong – how did that affect your sense of reality? And your belief in your right to leave him?
7. You went back to the police around June 2005 once you found out about all the finances and that you were holding his freeholds. You felt most at risk

then about exposing the financial dealings up until going to Court. When was the Court hearing? How long did you live with that fear? The policeman was very dismissive; what did that mean to you in terms of your rights?

8. You went back to the police in October 2006 when you reported his harassing phone call. They offered a refuge but you decided that you were not running from him anymore - What was behind that decision? What was this feeling like? Where did that strength come from?
9. Do you think you took a stand, stood up for your rights not to be harassed?
10. While he was on bail, you felt like you started to live again. You had freedom for three weeks. How important was it for you to have that time? What did you learn about yourself?
11. The intervention order wasn't granted, only an undertaking to be of good behaviour. But he continued to harass you; what was it that prevented you from going back to the Magistrate and reporting his lack of good behaviour?
12. Did you feel defeated, like you had no rights to protection from him?
13. Last time we spoke, you were waiting to meet with the police constable again to see about having another attempt to get an intervention order? Did that happen? What was the outcome?
14. Have you had any problems with your husband since the last interview? Have the police been involved? How did they handle it? What did that mean to you?
15. In all your dealings with the police, is there any one thing, either positive or negative that really stands? (or one of each).
16. Marion when we spoke recently, you mentioned that you are still involved in really difficult financial and legal battles. Do you see any links between this and the financial abuse you suffered when you were with your husband?
17. You said you felt like you were being punished for being a married woman in Australia, especially as a mother of children. You said it's like we've dropped back 600 years. Can you tell me about that?

## **Bianca's Story**

At the time of the interview Bianca was living in her own home with her children.

### **Relationship History**

Bianca and her ex-partner started living together in a defacto relationship in 1992, when she was 19. The first two boys were born and they were a relatively happy family, although even then he was sometimes violent and would push her around. In 1998 Bianca had a stillborn child and this was the catalyst for the deterioration of the relationship and the start of his downward spiral into unemployment, drugs, and

violence. Bianca's third son was born in 1999 and not long afterwards they separated for about twelve months. Bianca's ex-partner came to her with a story about his troubles, and managed to convince her to give him another chance. She didn't really want to reconcile but she felt sorry for him and they reunited. After only three months together, he broke her nose and she went into a refuge, where she stayed with the three boys for about four months, after which she rented a house and then eventually bought her own home.

Again Bianca felt sorry for her ex-partner and let him move into the house. Shortly afterwards they resumed their relationship and things were okay for a short while. Bianca became pregnant with her fourth child and by the time her daughter was born she realised there was no hope for the relationship. They separated for the final time around September 2005, after her daughter's first birthday.

Bianca's relationship was really important to her. She wanted an intact family and tried everything she could to make things work. They had planned a life together, and even though Bianca realises that the dreams she had will never be a reality, she still wishes that they could have been a happy family. Despite everything she has endured, and even though she is now seeing someone else, she still feels a bond with her ex-partner, and sometimes feels like her right arm is missing. It is particularly difficult for Bianca not to be living with her two oldest boys.

During the relationship Bianca's ex-partner grabbed, pushed, hit and threw her on a monthly basis. He tried to isolate her from family and friends and turn them against her. He was verbally abusive and would harass her over the phone. On several occasions he beat her up and threatened her with weapons. The most violent incident occurred after the final separation when he kept her captive in her home, terrorising her for over three hours. He tried to rape her, strangled her with a telephone cord and threatened her with a knife.

### **Police Intervention**

Bianca finds it difficult to recall exactly what happened with the police. Her memory is fragmented and she just remembers bits and pieces. There were many incidents with the police being at the house. However she does recall their involvement in September 2005 when she was trying to end the relationship. She had asked him to leave but he wouldn't go so she went to Court and was granted an interim intervention order. The police came round to serve the interim and summons for him to go to Court for the hearing for the full order. They intercepted him out the front of the house, served the papers and then he came inside to get some belongings. While he was inside, he took her keys.

Bianca went to Court, and although her ex-partner did not appear, a full intervention order was granted. The police had trouble locating him to serve the order. Bianca called the local police station many times to report that he was sleeping in the car out the front of the house or in the paddocks across the road. She felt unsafe and harassed by her ex-partner's continuous presence outside her home and wanted the police to serve the order so they could make him leave her alone. However, every time she rang they made excuses that they did not have a car to send or they didn't have time.

It was not until he actually broke into the house and attacked her that the police served the order. Bianca believes that he used the key he had taken when the summons was served to get back in. He entered the house in the afternoon and went to the kitchen to get a knife while she was on the phone. He kept her in the house for three hours abusing her in front of the children. He dragged her around the house by her hair, held the knife to her throat, tried to choke her, sexually assaulted her, and threatened to kill her.

Bianca's brother and sister-in-law came to the house but he made her get them to leave. She managed to ask them to call the police for her but then her ex-partner made her ring them and tell them not to call. He threatened that if they called the police none of them, including the children, would get out alive. Fortunately they told Bianca's mother who rang the police. When the police arrived her partner told her not to tell them anything. She opened the door and was so distressed that she couldn't even speak; she just pointed to the bedroom.

Bianca's ex-partner told the police he just needed to get something and managed to escape out the back door and over the fence. This occurred after Bianca had shown them the knife and other things he had threatened her with. The police tried to chase after him but gave up and returned to the house. They told Bianca to pack some things and leave as quickly as possible. They did not take a statement or appear to gather any evidence. Shortly after the police left, Bianca's ex-partner returned to the house. Bianca was on the phone to a friend who quickly called the police again. Fortunately his rage had dissipated by that stage and he was no longer violent or menacing.

The police arrived and searched him. He was charged with offences related to possession of marijuana. Bianca believes the police possibly did not realise how serious the assault and threats were. It was not until Bianca contacted the police several days later to ask about the outcome that assault charges were added. Bianca was told if she wanted him to be charged with assault she needed to come to the station to make a statement. Bianca wasn't given this information on the night of the assault and felt that the police did not take responsibility for following up and in fact tried to convey that it was her responsibility.

Bianca went to the police station to make the statement. She dealt with a female officer who had not been present on the night. Apparently the officers who responded on the night had been reprimanded for not doing their job properly and were not allowed to be involved further. Bianca believes this officer either did not take her allegations seriously or simply did not believe her. There were things that Bianca told her about such as the attempted rape that the police officer omitted from the statement. Bianca was taking her time and trying to be accurate but the policewoman made her feel stupid and gave the impression that she thought Bianca was making it up.

Bianca's ex-partner pleaded guilty to the assault charges. Bianca did not have to appear in Court. Bianca is not sure if he got a conviction but knows he did not get a jail sentence. She feels like there were no repercussions for him. She believes he got

away with it, and in fact he has taunted her that he can do anything to her and get away with it.

After the Court case Bianca's ex-partner continued to harass her for several months. He called her incessantly, slashed her tyres and would break in when she wasn't home. Bianca was extremely frightened and traumatised by the harassment. She couldn't sleep, had nightmares and was extremely jumpy all the time. Bianca tried to get the police to help her but she felt they just brushed her off. In the end she just gave up. Bianca did manage to get security cameras installed through Victims of Crime. She also tried to get security shutters to prevent him from breaking in but she gave up on the application after learning that the police statement to the Court had said that she keeps on letting him back into her life. Bianca felt bewildered by this. The statement was made by the same policewoman who took her statement regarding the assault. She felt this policewoman was making assumptions that were totally wrong and unfounded. This officer had no previous knowledge of Bianca, and did not know the history of the relationship. Bianca had not let him come back at all since obtaining the intervention order.

### Questions

1. Check dates: When did he move into your house with you, that is the final reunion?
2. You mentioned there had been other times, other incidents when the police had been to the house, other times when he had assaulted you. What usually happened these earlier times; how would the police handle it?  
Prompt: Was there ever any charges or intervention order? Or would they just come and settle things down and leave?
3. After we finished taping last time you mentioned there were a couple of other times when he was particularly violent. One time he held a knife to your throat and another time he threatened you with a drill. Did you call the police about these things?
4. Were the police involved when you left him after your youngest son was born? This was in 1999 was it? If not, did you think of calling them at all? If yes, what happened?
5. Were the police involved when you left him and went to the refuge for four months? When was that? If not, did you think of calling them at all? If yes, what happened?
6. During that time that you were waiting for the police to serve the order on him and he was sleeping in the paddocks, you were frightened of him. What was he doing; was he trying to get you to take him back, was he making threats? How long did this go on for? How would you describe his state of mind?

7. The final incident: How many police arrived? You showed the police the knife and other stuff he had under the bed. Can you remember what else he had? Did they take notes or photos or take the items?
8. Did the police know that he had threatened to kill you all? Or that he had asked you how you want to die.
9. The police left to chase after him when he took off out the back. Did they both (all) go? Did they go after him on foot or in the car?
10. They couldn't find him and returned to the house. They told you to pack and leave. Did they do anything else? What was their approach? What was their attitude?
11. Your ex-partner came back to the house. Your friend called the police and they returned. Was it the same police? They charged him with marijuana related offences. Was he taken into custody? And that was when they finally served him with the intervention order? Did they do or say anything to you before leaving? What was their attitude? What was their approach?
12. When you went to the police station to make the statement, you had a different officer, a female. Would you have preferred to have someone who had actually been there? What difference do you think it would have made?
13. Once the order was served that night, did that help keep him away? What about the time leading up to him going to Court on the charges; what was he doing then?
14. Did you attend Court? How informed were you of what was happening? For example did you have a list of the charges?
- 15.
16. He went to Court. Do you think he learned anything from that? Was this the first time you had gone all the way with having him charged with assault? Do you think that made any difference to the way he saw you? Did it make any difference to the way you saw yourself?
17. After the Court case he continued to harass you for several months. Eventually his behaviour started to improve after your second eldest son went to live with him some time in November 2005. Why do you think that changed his behaviour?
18. You applied to Victims of Crime to get roller shutters but gave up after hearing what the policewoman had written in the statement to the Court. What did that make you think about your rights to be protected? How did it make you feel? How do you think that policewoman saw you?

19. You said they wanted you to get a solicitor about the shutters. Who was encouraging you to do that?
20. The police did a terrible job on the night that you were assaulted. He managed to get away. They didn't gather evidence or take a statement or even charge him with assault until you followed up on it. They could have done things a lot better. How do you make sense of this? What do you put it down to?
21. Do you think if the police had managed to serve the intervention order earlier that last assault might have been prevented?
22. You said you started to feel safe once you had a new partner. When did you start seeing him? How does he make you feel safe?
23. You endured a lot of harassment, abuse including a vicious attack from the time you tried to end the relationship. How helpful or effective were the police in dealing with that? What does their response say to you about your rights to be protected and safe? What does it say about your rights to leave him?
24. Have you had any more dealings with the police since last time we spoke? What happened?
25. Have you had any more harassment from him?
26. How would you describe the way things are between you and your ex-partner now? Are you satisfied with this or how would you prefer things to be?

## **Rita's Story**

The interview took place in the house Rita rents for herself and her children.

### **Relationship History**

Rita and her husband started dating in 1997 and married two years later. From the time of the marriage there were signs that he was abusive, such as throwing things and damaging property. The abuse started subtly but gradually got worse. Rita's husband started to physically abuse her in 2002 when she was pregnant. When the baby was three months old she went to stay with relatives after a violent incident and the police applied for an intervention order. When he learned that he had to appear in Court, her husband fled to the Philippines.

With considerable persuasion from her husband and his relatives Rita went to the Philippines to work things out. They returned to Australia together but he continued to be physically abusive. It was important to Rita to make the marriage work. She had a new baby and she wanted her daughter to have a father. She had strong Christian values and believed in staying together in spite of everything.

During her marriage, Rita endured verbal and physical abuse. Her husband was very controlling, to the extent that she couldn't even choose what television programs she watched or when she could read. He told her she was stupid, ugly and crazy; he tried to isolate her from family and friends; he slapped, pushed and shook her; he blamed her for his violence, and finally in August 2006 he banged her head against a wall, strangled her and threatened to kill her.

### **Police Intervention**

The first time Rita called the police was in 2002 after her husband slapped her so hard across the side of the head that she could not hear properly for several minutes. Rita was frightened that he would hurt her again and so she called the police. The police suggested Rita leave the house, so she went to stay with relatives for the night. They asked her to come into the station the next day. Rita decided she wanted to stay with her relatives for a while to let things cool down. She returned to her house the next morning to collect some belongings. Her husband tried to prevent her from leaving so she called for police assistance again. They helped her to leave and then she went to the police station to give a statement. It was difficult for Rita to talk about what her husband had done. She had never told anybody before but the police made her understand that they needed her to do this so they could help her. She felt that the police were on her side. Their matter of fact manner and the procedural approach was comforting.

It was at this time that the police explained to Rita that she could get an intervention order. The Court date was set for a few days later. However, the police did not manage to serve the summons on Rita's husband, and the application was put aside. He fled the country to avoid appearing in Court. Rita felt safe and protected when the police intervened but she was ill-informed and didn't really understand the legal processes. She still is not quite sure why the intervention order wasn't served on her husband. In the end she felt that she was in limbo. She didn't understand the procedure, she wasn't sure what she was supposed to do and she believed that without the intervention order her husband could come back whenever he wanted. The police simply told her to let them know if she saw her husband. She was not referred to support services. Criminal charges were not mentioned at all, and as far as Rita knows her husband was not taken into custody at all.

Rita's husband started contacting her by phone and in a month, they were reunited (early 2003 – Check this). Unfortunately his behaviour did not improve after the separation, and in fact the physical abuse got worse. Eventually Rita started thinking about leaving him. She got the number for a women's refuge and talked to them about escaping and having a safety plan. However Rita felt that she couldn't go to the refuge because she was on a work contract that she did not want to break.

In August 2006 there was a particularly frightening incident where Rita's husband banged her head against a wall, and strangled her until she was gasping for air. He threatened to kill her. Rita contacted the refuge and they offered to find a house for her but she thought she would wait and see if her husband calmed down and changed his attitude. The next day he continued to threaten to kill her. This was very frightening, so she called the police.

This time the police took Rita's husband into custody. He was handcuffed and taken to the station. Rita's husband was very scared. Their attitude to her was also slightly different; they gave her more time to collect all her belongings and helped her put her things in the car. They informed Rita that her husband had committed a serious offence. Rita was asked to come straight to the station to make a statement, after which a refuge was organised. Rita went to the refuge not knowing that the police had made an application for an intervention order. She still does not know whether criminal charges were laid.

When Rita returned home after ten days in the refuge, she contacted the local police station. At this stage she still didn't know anything at all about a police application for an intervention order. She thought she would have to get one by herself. She even wondered whether the police believed her husband's statement rather than her own. The policeman was extremely unhelpful, simply stating that they don't release statements. The policeman was unapproachable to the extent of being rude. He was very authoritarian and practically hung up on her. Rita felt driven out.

It was not until Rita went to apply for an intervention order herself, that she learned that police had already made an application and Rita had missed the Court date. Although the clerk told her that she was not obliged to appear, Rita felt very upset that she had not been properly informed. Additionally, Rita's husband failed to appear and fled the country a second time. Once again Rita was left unprotected and confused. Rita feels vulnerable. Her husband could return at any time, and may attempt to take their child out of the country.

## Questions

1. I just need to check that it was early 2003 that you re-united after the separation.
2. Did they use an interpreter at any time or ask you if you needed an interpreter? Did they give you any written information explaining the intervention order process and what you were required to do?
3. With the second incident, you went straight to a refuge. When did you learn that your husband had again fled the country?
4. When did your husband start physically abusing you, you mentioned that he threw shoes at your tummy while you were pregnant, was that the first time or did it start before that?
5. Did you think about calling the police then?

6. The first time that you called the police you said you were quite surprised that they came. You didn't think that the police would intervene in family problems. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
7. When you did call that first time, what did you expect the police would do?
8. You said that when the police came the first time, you felt like they were on your side. What did that mean to you, to have the police on your side?
9. For a long time you still had hope that the relationship would work. When did you realise that it was hopeless? Is this when you started contacting the refuge?
10. You were in contact with the refuge lots of times but didn't leave because of your work. How long did you stay with your husband when you really wanted to end the relationship?
11. What do you think you have learned about your right to live without abuse through your dealings with the police?
12. The second time you called the police after he threatened to kill you, you waited until the next day. You waited to see if he would calm down and realise what he had been doing. Had this sort of thing happened before? How was this time different to other times?
13. The last time we met you still didn't know what the situation was regarding the intervention order and what would happen if he returned to Australia. Have you learned anything more since then?
14. Have you had any more contact with the police?
15. What is happening with your husband now; is the harassment continuing? Has custody been settled?
16. Review emotions.

## **Leanne's Story**

At the time of the interview Leanne was separated from her second husband and was living alone in a rented house.

### **Relationship History**

Leanne met her second husband, Dave, in 2000 and they married in May of that year after a whirlwind six week romance. There were problems from the time of the marriage due to her husband making sexual advances to her mother and sister. He denied this but Leanne's trust was destroyed. The marriage quickly went downhill but she stayed with him because she still loved him. There were some good aspects

to the marriage. He was a hard worker and earned good money plastering. Leanne worked with him and got a lot of enjoyment and satisfaction from this.

In 2003 Dave had an accident at work. He fell out of a window and badly injured his arm. Leanne identifies this as the beginning of his deterioration. He became very angry and his drinking got a lot worse. She remembers that he became physically abusive at this time. Leanne recalls one particularly violent episode where he locked her in the house, traumatising her for six hours. He wouldn't let her out of his sight, even following her to the toilet. He smashed a bed over her and the next day she was covered in bruises. She knew she couldn't trust him from that time but she was too scared to tell anyone. Although Leanne is extremely close to her mother, she couldn't even confide in her because she didn't want her mum to hate her husband.

Leanne reported that during the last twelve months prior to him being jailed, her husband locked her in the bedroom, kept money from her, told her she was stupid and crazy, and beat her up on a daily basis. He also tried to turn her family against her and convince them she was crazy. He always blamed Leanne for his violence. Over the course of the relationship Dave had threatened to kill her with a hammer, a tomahawk, and broken glass, and had tried to strangle her. He humiliated her by bringing another woman into their home and hitting Leanne in front of her. He urinated in their bed, on the couch and on her. On two occasions Leanne was hospitalised as a result of Dave's assaults.

### **Police Intervention**

When the violence started Leanne would go and stay with her mother until her husband came to take her home. Things would be fine for a few days but then the arguments would always start again. The first incident Leanne remembers police were involved in occurred in 2005. He attacked her in the driveway of their house, pushing her to the ground and punching her in the stomach. He dragged her by the hair to the garage wall and started to strangle her. He then attacked her in the house with a hammer. She managed to escape to the neighbour's when he went to get an axe from outside. The neighbours called the police who took her husband into custody and advised Leanne to go to her mother's house. Dave was charged with assault and threats to kill and received a two-year suspended sentence.

An intervention order was in place and Dave was staying with a friend who lived close by. He kept coming around and trying to make up with her, telling her that he still loved her. Leanne felt sorry for him because he had nowhere to go, so she had the intervention order varied so that he could be there when she felt that it was safe to do so. Leanne did not want to resume an intimate relationship with her husband but he had difficulty accepting the arrangement of living apart under the same roof.

The violence continued and a pattern of chronic police intervention developed. Leanne would ring her mother whenever her husband was abusive and her mother would call the police. Police would attend and take steps to separate the couple in order to diffuse the situation. Sometimes they would simply remove him from the premises and take him into town to the pub. Other times they would lock him up overnight. If Dave knew that the police were on their way he would leave before

they arrived and hide in the paddocks surrounding their house, in which case the police would say there was nothing more they could do.

In all of these instances, Leanne's aim in calling the police was simply to stop the violence in the short term. She knew that if the police took him away she would at least be safe for a little while; she would be able to get some sleep that night. She didn't really want him to be charged or jailed; he was her husband and she felt a strong sense of loyalty towards him. The police tried many times to convince Leanne to get another intervention order but she was frightened of what her husband would do to her if she did. She also always hoped that he would change his violent behaviour.

Including the incident in 2005 and the final incident in early 2007 when he was finally jailed, there were about six times that Dave was officially interviewed and possibly charged. Leanne has the police tapes from three of these incidents. At these times the police would apply for an intervention order and Dave would either stay with a friend or stay in a derelict house a short distance from Leanne's home. But he would always manage to convince her to give him another chance, and she would go to Court and have the order varied.

Police frequently tried to convince her to end the relationship. When she had the order varied they checked that she wasn't being coerced and questioned why she would want to go back to him, pointing out that he was an abusive drunk. Leanne was confused and didn't know whether she still loved him or not. She felt sorry for him and knew that he didn't have anyone else. Leanne believes the police saw them as a pair of hopeless drunks. Dave would always try to discredit her statements by claiming she was a lying drunk and a slut. Although the police believed that Dave was violent, they didn't really take it seriously. They often left her feeling alone and unprotected, especially when Dave hid in the paddocks and they refused to go looking for him. She felt anger towards the police on these occasions. Leanne believes the police got sick and tired of her changing the order and them being constantly called to the house, usually several times a week. They even threatened to run them both out of town.

Eventually in February 2007 the police were so frustrated with the chronic situation that they finally took some action to ensure that Dave was sent to jail. He was charged with threat to kill and breach of intervention order, and was sentenced to two months imprisonment. The jail sentence, although not long enough, has given Leanne time and space to think about her relationship. She now realises that he will not change. She does not want him back in her life. On reflection Leanne believes they should have taken these steps a lot sooner. However, she does not feel angry or blame the police because she believes that they tried to help her; she was the one that kept on disobeying the rules. Leanne believes without the police she would probably be dead by now.

At the time of the interview, Dave was due to be released from jail in three weeks time. Leanne was very anxious about his release and was terrified that he would break into the house and attack her. Leanne, with a lot of help from her mother, was in the process of trying to put some protective measures in place. She had been to Court and a new indefinite intervention order had been granted. The Magistrate had

also advised her to seek assistance from Victims of Crime. She had met with a sergeant at the station to discuss safety issues. One constable was calling in regularly to provide support and was helping her with her claim for security bars on the windows. Leanne believes that since the police have seen her sober and with her mother, they now see her in a new light.

## Questions

1. Did you identify yourself as an abused woman? Did you know about any services that could help you? See the domestic violence adds on TV?
2. You said the violence started in 2003, after he had the accident. Did it start with a little bit of violence and then slowly get worse or did it start with a really bad incident?
3. You said you used to go and stay at your mums and then he'd come and get you. Did you start doing that after he injured his arm or earlier in the marriage? (clarify: Lyn said right from the start; was it after arguments or only after assaults?).
4. You said that during the first three years your mum hated him but you thought he would change. What was it that you wanted him to change?
5. We talked about one really bad night when he terrorised you for six hours, broke the bed over you and the next day his mate said, oh my god Linda. You couldn't trust him from that time on. That seems to be an important event in how you saw him. Can you tell me about how your view of him changed? (was this when she became really frightened? Was this when she started calling the police all the time?)
6. Mark always managed to convince you to change the orders. How did he do that? What style of persuasion did he use; was it sweet talk, I'll be good, or bullying?
7. Why do you think it was important to him to have the order changed? (was it about being his house? Was it about resuming the relationship)
8. In fact many times he did just ignore the order; many times he'd leave the police station and come straight back and kick the door in. What would he do then?
9. You would have brief times when things would be okay for a day or two but he always ended up getting angry, calling you horrible names, turning the music or TV up really loud, pushing you around, and eventually hitting you. When this started would he ever calm down by himself or would it always end up with you or your mum calling the police?
10. At what point would you call the police? Did you try to call as soon as you recognised that he was going to get violent or would you wait until he had actually hit or hurt you in some way?

11. When we spoke last time when I returned the tapes, you said being believed by the police and the Magistrate was really important to you because he always denied everything, which made you question yourself. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
12. You said that you didn't really blame the police for not taking more action because you were the one who kept on changing the order and disobeying the rules. What rules were you breaking? Do you think this in some way meant that you didn't really deserve their protection?
13. You said it was his mate (the black guy) that called the police the last time. So it was due to him not you that he ended up in jail. Do you think it is a bad thing to call the police? Or do you believe that Mark thinks it is a bad thing to call the police?
14. Can you tell me if Mark's attitude towards the police changed over time? (Did he become less fearful of them?)
15. Lots of people were trying to get you to leave this house when he was in jail so that you would be safer. You didn't want to leave because it was your home and you had your pets. But you also said, why should I have to go? Can you tell me about this feeling? (explore beginning sense of the injustice of it).
16. When we were talking on the day I returned the tapes you said you felt some guilt about putting your husband in jail. Why was that?
17. Do you still feel like that? (explore was it her fault or his fault; does she see that he was sent to jail because of his own behaviour)
18. Do you think now that he deserved to be punished for what he did to you? What about back then when he was in jail, what did you think then?
19. What happened when he got out of jail?
20. Have you had anymore involvement with the police since we last spoke?
21. While he was in jail, you had time to think about your future and time to put some safety measures in place. How important was it to you to have police support during that stage?
22. Before he went into jail, did you ever think about the future and your long term safety?
23. How do you feel about him now?

## **Marie's Story**

Marie currently lives in the family home with her three children. At the time of the interview Marie had only been separated from her husband for about a week.

### **Relationship history**

Marie's overseas-born husband was settled in Australia when they met in Europe while he was travelling overseas. They dated for about 1 ½ years before marrying. Some time later he returned to Australia and started a small business while Marie waited for a visa. At the time of her arrival in Australia she was 5 ½ months pregnant with their first child. Marie remembers being very happy and excited to be coming to Australia to join her husband. She loved him and was looking forward to starting a new family and a new life.

Marie's happiness soon disappeared. When she arrived in Australia her husband was under a lot of pressure. The business had been burned down and he was under investigation for arson as a result. He was gambling, was never home, and would spend all their money, including payments Marie received from Centrelink. Marie remembers having nothing but cornflakes to eat all day. The abuse started within a month and was initially financial and verbal. However, after the birth of their child he would slap her to shut her up if she asked for money.

In late 1996 he was jailed for 18 months. Marie trusted in his innocence and supported him throughout the investigation and trial, and visited him every weekend throughout his sentence, travelling to the country prison by train. She couldn't wait for him to be released and hoped they could make a fresh start. He was also happy to be reunited. A week later he took Marie's Centrelink payment, and the gambling and fighting started again. He was extremely financially controlling. He would also throw furniture and occasionally slap her. Over the years the abuse gradually became worse and worse. Marie would have left him if she had family to go to. She didn't know who to turn to for help and was extremely reluctant to call the police because she had been indoctrinated by her husband and his family to believe that calling the police on your husband was socially unacceptable; only a bad woman would do such a terrible thing.

During the last twelve months of the relationship Marie endured verbal abuse on a daily basis. Her husband would tell her that she was stupid, not good enough and no-one else would ever want her. He regularly tried to convince her and others that she was crazy. He isolated her and would not allow her to work outside the home. He would hit or slap her, throw her around, and rape her on a weekly basis. He kicked, bit or punched her, and threatened to kill her every month and on several occasions she was beaten.

### **Police intervention**

In July 2006 Marie finally called the police for the first time.

## **Questions**

How long did they live together in Europe?

Even ashamed to call gambler's help – explain?

## **Carol's Story**

At the time of the interview Carol had been separated for about 20 months and was living in a rented house with her three children.

### **Relationship history**

Carol and her husband started dating in 1991 and were married in 1992. They were ministers of the Salvation Army, living and working in small country towns where they were pillars of the community and were expected to be role models. During their thirteen-year marriage they moved to five different country towns in three states. Carol spent a lot of her time helping women who were abused by their husbands. No-one knew that she was also being abused. She was very good at pretending everything was fine and perfect. Carol did everything she could to make the marriage work. She took her marriage vows seriously and did not want to raise her children alone. She did everything for her husband but the more she did for him, the worse he became. Carol didn't know where to turn for help. Early attempts to disclose the abuse to doctors and to someone at the Salvation Army led to nothing.

Carol's husband started abusing her as soon as they returned from their honeymoon. Over the years she left him on six occasions but always returned. During the last year of her marriage Carol endured verbal and emotional abuse on a daily basis. Her husband would tell her she was stupid, ugly and crazy, and that no-one would ever want her. He tried to isolate her, turn friends and family against her and convince them that she was crazy. He would hit and shake her every week. On several occasions he threw her, used a weapon against her and beat her up, and once raped her. He always blamed Carol for his violence.

In August 2005 after a particularly abusive episode Carol decided that she had to leave him. She had tried everything to save the marriage and nothing was working. She realised it was just going to continue on. A few days later, he came home and they were gone.

### **Police Intervention**

The first time Carol contacted the police was a couple of months after the separation. Her ex-husband attacked her when she came to collect the children. In front of witnesses, including the children, he grabbed her, pushed her up against the car pressing against her with his body and grabbed her breast. Carol was outraged. When she got home she called the police to report the incident. The officer described the incident as sexual assault and told her it was serious; he could be charged. Carol did not want to pursue charges but she did want a record of the

incident in case things escalated. The officer advised her that her best option was to go to the Magistrate's Court and apply for an intervention order. Carol felt let down and on her own (need a code word).

The second time Carol contacted the police was about a year later, late 2006. Carol's son, who was only 12 at the time, had gone to spend the night with his father but he had forgotten and the boy ended up in the house alone until 11.00 o'clock at night. Carol was really angry about this neglect and went to the local police station the next day to report it. The police were not helpful at all. They said it was a DHS issue and advised Carol to report it to them. They also advised her again to go to Court for an intervention order. This was quite a daunting prospect but this time Carol was fuelled by anger and followed through with the advice. She went to the local Magistrate's Court only to be told that she needed an appointment. She was asked to return five days later. Carol made an appointment to return but in the meantime she lost her motivation. The delay also gave her ex-husband the opportunity to initiate his usual tactics of trying to make things up to her. The opportunity to get legal protection was lost. Once again Carol was left to deal with her ex-husband's ongoing harassment and abusive behaviour.

## Questions

1. You left about six times. You went to your parent's the first time and other places after that. Where would you go? What would make you go back?
2. You said that pride and fear kept you from leaving. He made threats about hurting your family if you left. What was the pride about?
3. You rang the domestic violence line and the woman said it's a big wide world out there, you're better off where you are. What did that make you think about your situation?
4. The decision to finally leave for good: You mentioned two things. You saw yourself in the woman that you had helped, it was like looking in a mirror. Also he did something different, took something from you, took your soul. Which factor played the most significant role in deciding to leave? (Or was it a combination?)
5. You left a few days later. How did you actually leave?
6. When you were living together, did you ever threaten to call the police for help? How did he react?
7. The first police contact was after he abused you in the caravan park. He attacked you in front of people, sexually assaulted you, squeezed your breast, then denied it. You were thinking, I've left him and he's still doing this to me, how dare he? What were you feeling at the time? Were you frightened, humiliated, angry or indignant?

8. What was it mostly that made you feel like that? Was it the attack itself, that it was so public, the denial, or the fact that he still thought he could do this to you?
9. When you reported it to the police, you wanted a record of it in case things got worse. Was there anything else that you wanted?
10. When you rang the police station. He asked you why you were ringing. What do you think he was trying to find out from you?
11. The officer said it was sexual abuse. He said, look you can't put up with that. What did that mean to you? What did it say to you about your rights?
12. The officer advised you to go to Court for an intervention order? You said to yourself, everything's always up to me. This is very common with the other women I have interviewed and I'm trying to understand exactly what this feeling is? How were you feeling? How did it make you feel? (Is it feeling overburdened?).
13. You did say that ringing the police was a feather in your cap. It was part of taking baby steps. You felt stronger, empowered. Was the empowerment just from the fact that you had called or was there something in the police officer's attitude or statements that made you feel stronger? Made you feel, I can do this again if I have to?
14. You didn't want to go to Court for an intervention order. You ended up dealing with it yourself by threatening him. It has to stop. I've told the police. Then he threatened you about the kids. How much did this reflect your old pattern?
15. Did it make a difference to his behaviour, knowing that you had actually taken that step of contacting the police?
16. The second time you went to the police you were on a mission. This is the day. You took their advice and went to Court. But the lady said come back next Tuesday. By next Tuesday you had calmed down. This happens a lot. What would it have meant to you to be able to get the intervention order then and there?
17. At the police station the female officer gave you her card and said if you have any problems you can ring me anytime. What did that mean to you?
18. After the second incident, he bought you chocolates and a card with \$50.00 in it. You recognise that is his pattern. And then he goes back to making threats again. You don't have the same level of fear of him any more but you're still sort of tied up in his games. Why do you think that is? (is there a pay off – the compliments, I still love you? Do you still need some contact with him?).

19. You mentioned that he feels angry about you leaving him and blames you for everything; “how dare you leave me.” How do you feel about your rights to leave?
20. You don’t want to have to fight him. You don’t want to have to drag everything through court. You want to be left alone to have a happy life and live in peace. Is there a way for you to achieve this? Does anyone uphold your right to this? (Have the police supported your right to this).
21. I’m curious about your reluctance to go to Court for an intervention order? Is this because you feel you don’t have the resources or is there fear about exposing everything that happened? (and your own guilt about the kids)
22. You would like him to admit what he did to your son, privately, but you don’t want any public accountability. Do you feel some sort of protectiveness or responsibility for him? Or is it shame?
23. You said when you’ve got fear, you’ve got no freedom. This is a really telling statement. What is the fear that keeps you trapped? (Worried about things being taken out of her hands e.g. Doctor will report abuse?)
24. Have you had any problems with him since the first interview?
25. Have the police been involved?  
How did they handle it?  
What did that mean to you?
26. You mentioned being very angry with the Salvation Army. Can you tell me about that?

Need to clarify with her – if the order is made by consent then it isn’t heard in Court.

## **Lauren’s Story**

At the time of the interview Lauren was living with her husband and four children in the family home.

### **Relationship History**

Lauren and her husband started dating in 1993. They bought a house and moved in together in 1997 and were married two years later. From the time that they dated, Lauren’s partner used intimidation as a way to get what he wanted from the relationship. Lauren did not recognise that his behaviour was abusive until years later when she sought specialised domestic violence counselling. She did not think

of herself as a victim of domestic violence. He was just a really, really bad husband. Throughout the relationship they had a pattern of arguing and separating. Initially Lauren used to pack a bag and take her son to her parent's house to get away from him. Later, after more children came along, her husband would leave and go to his mother's whenever things weren't going his way.

Lauren attributes their relationship difficulties to a mutual lack of respect and inability to communicate effectively to resolve issues. She believes it is important to keep striving to improve their communication skills so that their children can learn how to have a successful relationship. She values the history and bond she has with her husband, and the deep understanding they have of each other. She is committed to maintaining and improving her marriage. She also believes that she is a better parent with her husband's help. They are better parents together. In terms of parenting, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The greatest change in their relationship came about when Lauren was granted an intervention order in early 2006 and was subsequently separated from her husband for a period of 12 months. During this time Lauren sought counselling. She learned a lot about the nature of abusive relationships but she also learned that some of her own reactions stemmed from her background and upbringing. Since reconciling with her husband she now believes she has a lot more power in the relationship and that her attitudes and reactions determine how the relationship progresses. However she still sometimes catches herself slipping into the old pattern of apologising for his bad behaviour.

In the 12 months prior to the separation Lauren endured verbal and emotional abuse on a daily basis. Her husband constantly told her she was stupid, ugly, crazy and not good enough. He became angry about perceived inadequacies in her domestic performance. He tried to prevent her from having contact with friends and family and tried to turn people against her or convince them she was crazy. Occasionally he would push and shove her and once he hit and shook her. He disregarded her needs and rights. He would drink and behave obnoxiously, play loud music, come home late and wake her and bring people into the house without consultation. He always blamed her for his outbursts.

### **Police intervention**

The first time Lauren called the police was in 2003 when her daughter was only a few months old. Her husband had come home late at night, angry and drunk, and woken her to reprimand her for not reminding him it was his mother's birthday. His behaviour was frightening and seemed out of control. He started threatening her and throwing things. Lauren was concerned about the baby's safety and called the police. As soon as he knew the police were coming he immediately calmed down and started to act as if nothing had happened.

The police asked Lauren about her intentions for the future of the relationship. When she indicated that she hoped they still had a future, they treated the incident as just another domestic dispute. Their response was to separate the couple to give them time to cool off. They told her if she wanted the relationship to end she could get an intervention order. The impression they gave was that while she intended to

stay in the relationship there was really no help or protection that they could give her.

Lauren's husband had been drinking and couldn't drive so she was told to leave the house. Lauren had nowhere to go. She took her three young children, drove to the beach and sat in the car until she thought it would be safe to return to the house. This was her life and she was stuck with it. Lauren believes the police treated her like an hysterical, stupid slut. They made her feel that it was perfectly normal for her to be expected to leave her home as the only means of being safe.

The next time Lauren sought help from the police was New Years Day 2006. There had been an incident on Christmas Eve where he threw a watermelon at her damaging the wall, and grabbed and shook her bruising her. She locked herself in her son's room to get away from him. This was followed by several days of brooding until he left her on New Year's Day. Lauren recognised the pattern of behaviour as a controlling strategy on his part. This was the last straw. She decided that she did not want him to be come back. She went to the police station, reported the assault and requested they apply for an intervention order. At first the police were reluctant to assist, giving the impression that she wasn't injured badly enough to warrant their involvement. However, Lauren was insistent and eventually a complaint and warrant was issued. The matter went to Court and a five year intervention order was granted.

The police contacted Lauren intermittently after that to see if everything was okay. She found their attitude during these calls to be quite patronising and paternalistic. Lauren expressed frustration that the police did not contact her husband at all to see if he was getting help. Lauren did not see her husband until four months later when they met in a local park so he could spend some time with the children. She thought he had sorted himself out a bit. They managed to spend some pleasant family time together, and started to tentatively rebuild their relationship. Some time later Lauren became pregnant and the following Christmas they started living together again.

In March 2007 the police contacted Lauren about pursuing the criminal charges. Although Lauren did not want to go ahead with it, the police decided to charge him with reckless assault. They told Lauren that his file would be marked for diversion and persuaded her that it was a way to get counselling for him. This was a Godsend; getting help for him was everything she ever wanted. They also influenced her viewpoint by arguing that she shouldn't have to go on indefinitely trying to manage his behaviour.

At Court Lauren discovered that his file hadn't been marked for diversion as indicated by the police. This was very stressful for Lauren as she did not want her husband to have a criminal conviction. The situation was made even worse when her husband's solicitor blamed her for putting him in the situation in the first place. It is gravely concerning that such an inflammatory statement would be made by an officer of the Court.

Lauren's husband pleaded guilty and was given 12 months probation and ordered to attend a men's behaviour change program. Since the Court appearance Lauren has noticed a change in her husband's behaviour. He has realised he can't do it.

However, on reflection Lauren doubts that his he truly understands that his past behaviour was abusive and not acceptable.

## Questions

**First police contact that we talked about was in 2003 (daughter is a few months old).**

1. You called the police for help, which in itself is quite a daunting thing to do. Their response was to tell you to leave. So in a way they are acknowledging that the situation isn't safe. But they didn't take any action themselves. How did you feel?  
How did you interpret that?
2. After similar experiences of not getting any help other women have described thinking, well that's it. I'm on my own. Everything is always up to me. Does this ring true for you?  
How do you describe this feeling?
3. He says to the police that you're crazy. Was he trying to discredit you? Were police influenced?
4. The police saw him as a crazy drunk little Italian man. Did they take him seriously? Did they see him as dangerous?
5. You said they weren't interested in your side or his side. They were hostile to both of us. Why do you think that was?
6. When police attend a scene they tend to assess that there is either: a true victim and true perpetrator; a chronically dysfunctional couple seen as equal combatants; a distressed couple dealing with a specific crisis who need help; someone trying to manipulate the system and get police on side; or a trivial victim. How do you think they saw you? What makes you choose that option?
7. You said looking back they treated you like a dopey slut and gave the impression that it was perfectly reasonable for you to leave. What does this do to your feelings of worth and dignity? And to your thoughts about your rights and options?
8. They asked you if there was any hope for the relationship? Why do you think they asked this?
9. It seems that the police are looking for a commitment from women to leave the relationship before they are willing to engage. What do you think about this.

10. Their attitude was if it's over get an intervention order, if it isn't well, whatever, Can you explain the whatever. (If it's not over, it's not our problem. We don't care. Not interested?)
11. What does this say to you about a married woman's right to protection?
12. They suggested you to go to your parent's but you went to the beach. Can you tell me about that?
13. We talked about the stigma of getting an intervention order. You said, "That's not me. I'm not a victim of domestic violence, he's just a really, really bad husband." Did the police say or do anything to counter that perception; to say this is violence or you have the right to be safe in your own home?
14. I asked you about whether they offered a referral. You said no, they acted as though it was perfectly normal reasonable behaviour for a man. So you were thinking about a referral for him. Is that how you saw things then? That he needed help, not you?
15. You said you would have liked the police to speak a bit of truth in the situation, to tell him that his behaviour was wrong. And in fact you struggled yourself with what was appropriate or normal behaviour in a relationship. Was this something of an ongoing battle between you both; you trying to convince him his behaviour was wrong, him not taking any responsibility for it? How did the police lack of action influence that struggle?
16. Your biggest fear at that time was losing the relationship. Was this also a part of your struggle? Do you still feel like that?
17. You said that one outcome of this incident was that it showed him that you weren't afraid of calling the police and you weren't going to keep secrets anymore. We talked about exposing the abuse. How did it feel Did you notice any change in him after that?
18. Not long after this incident he left for about a year. Why was that? During that year were you thinking about moving on with your life or were you in a sort of holding pattern waiting for him to come back?

**Second contact New Years Day 2006.**

19. When you went to the police station what type of evidence did they collect?
20. You were granted an intervention order which he followed to the letter. Was there ever any retribution from him about you seeking the intervention order?
21. You said that having the intervention order stopped him from doing things he normally did while you were separated like coming round late at night

and climbing up on the balcony. So would you say it changed the dynamics or the pattern of your separations? What impact did that have?

22. You also said that having the intervention order provided breathing space in which to get better. What did getting better entail?
23. Eventually, around May, you started to see him again. You said it took him a while to decide that he wanted to come back, and he moved back in at Christmas time. How long did it take you to decide you wanted him to come back? Were there conditions to that?

### **Third contact March 2007 for criminal proceedings.**

24. In March 2007 police contacted you about following up with the criminal charges. You wanted to drop them but the police decided to go ahead anyway. He was ordered to attend a men's behaviour change program. You saw this as a godsend; a way to get help for him. Has he attended? Has it influenced or changed him?
25. Last time we spoke you said there an improvement in his behaviour; he knows he can't do it any more. But you doubt that he really knows why, that he recognises that it is abusive, unacceptable behaviour. Has that changed at all?
26. You also said that it took you a long time to realise it was abuse. You'd hear it but it didn't really penetrate. For a long time at your core you believed that behaviour was okay. I'm thinking that this is a change in your basic values. What do you think?
27. Is it also a change in how you value yourself?
28. You attribute the old acceptance of the abuse to your upbringing. How difficult is it to overcome this?
29. Have you had any further contact with the police since the first interview?
30. You said that you have gone back to who you were before he ever got to you? Can you explain that?

## **Rachael's Story**

Rachael was separated from her defacto partner and living with their child in a rented property.

### **Relationship history**

Rachael was only about 14 or 15 years old when she met her ex-partner who, at the time, was a friend of her brother's. However it wasn't until about 10 years later, in 1999, that their relationship began. Over the course of the relationship there had

been several brief separations that usually lasted for a few weeks before they reconciled. Rachael recalls that the first time he was ever physically abusive occurred in 2001 shortly after the birth of her child, when the baby was only about three weeks old. The violence gradually increased in intensity after that. Even though Rachael recognised that she was being abused, she was committed to maintaining the relationship. She had strong family values and did not want to raise her daughter as a single parent.

By the time her daughter was 14 months old Rachael's partner was beating her up. During the last year that she lived with her partner Rachael endured pushing and shoving on a daily basis. He would hit her every week and the abuse escalated to beating her on a monthly basis, during which he would throw her around, and hit her with a fist or kick her. He would also verbally abuse her, harass her over the phone, try to isolate her, and try to convince others that she was crazy. If he was in a bad mood he would wake her and drag her from bed in the middle of the night. Rachael suffered fat lips, black eyes, and swollen cheeks. He always blamed her for his violence.

### **Police intervention**

Despite suffering these severe, violent attacks Rachael did not call the police for several years. When the violence first started she was simply too shocked. As time went on and the violence escalated she was inhibited by feelings of embarrassment and shame. She did not want to involve other people and she did not want others to see police cars outside her home. She also believed that she could manage on her own. She had threatened to call the police many times but had never actually followed through.

Finally, in September 2004 Rachael called the police for the first time. Her recollection of the abuse and calling the police is a little vague. Rachael experienced an altered sense of time. It seemed to happen relatively quickly but she knows that it started in the morning and it was dark when the police came. At first there was verbal abuse, pushing her around, and slamming things. This escalated slowly throughout the day. Eventually he picked her up and threw her across the room and then started beating her. Rachael remembers talking to her sister on the telephone, and being very, very frightened. Her sister urged her to call the police but she does not actually remember ringing. It is possible her sister rang for her.

Her partner must have known the police had been called because he was gone when they arrived. Rachael found the police very helpful. They chatted to her about other things to help her relax. They asked her about the history of violence in the relationship as well as taking a statement about that particular incident. The police obtained a complaint and warrant for an intervention order and Rachael's partner was arrested and bailed. The hearing for the order was two days later. The police contacted Rachael several times and guided her through what to expect at Court. One officer attended Court with her, which Rachael found especially supportive and protective. It would have been very difficult to face him alone. Without the proactive approach of the police Rachael doubts she would have sought an intervention order on her own.

The intervention order was granted. Rachael believes it might have scared him a little bit but given that his previous partner had also had an intervention order against him, she doubts that it really had much affect on her partner. He was angry at Court but a few days later he started ringing her, trying to make amends and convince her that he would change. He promised to seek help through counselling or a men's behaviour change program. About a week later they reconciled. A few weeks later the abuse slowly started again. He became moody and started pushing and shoving her. Soon the only difference was that when he attacked her, he would hold a pillow over her so that the bruises weren't as obvious.

Rachael called the police again about 8 to 10 months later, around mid 2005, when her partner was being abusive and she couldn't make him leave. Again he was gone before the police arrived. This time the police did not initiate any action. The police were less helpful than the first time but Rachael attributes this to her own attitude. She knew that she only wanted him removed for the time being to stop the violence. She knew he would return and they would work things out. She did not want to waste police time by pursuing any formal action. The police were satisfied with her assurances that she was fine as long as he was gone. They told her to ring 000 if he returned and there was further trouble. He returned a few days later and the relationship continued.

Over a year later, towards the end of 2006 they finally separated permanently after being evicted from their home because he hadn't paid the rent.

## **Questions**

1. The relationship started in 1999. Was this when you started dating or living together?
2. You had several brief separations during the relationship, did these start before or after you first called the police?

## **First police intervention**

3. The first time you called the police you were very frightened, he had been abusing you all day, and you couldn't make him stop. Was this incident somehow different from previous ones? How did you get him to stop before?
4. How did you manage the violence over the course of the day?
5. You also mentioned this was the first time Tiana had seen it. How did that influence you?

6. You left with your parents the first time the police came. When did you call them, before or after the police arrived?
7. When you were on the phone you only told your sister he pushed you; was covering up or minimising the extent of the violence a pattern? Friends knew about it, were you more open with them?
8. You said that you probably would not have got an intervention order yourself, without the police initiating the application. Then it was a matter of going with the flow. It was set in motion, so you had to follow through. Can you tell me a little bit more about this?
9. Your reluctance to get an intervention order, had you been influenced by the way he talked about his previous partner getting one?
10. He denied ever hitting his previous partner; only you drove him to it. How did this influence you?
11. At that point in time, when they were there, did you think you wanted him gone for good? Had you thought about leaving him at all in the weeks before calling the police?
12. You said the intervention order probably didn't have much affect on him. But he was nice afterwards and said he didn't mean these things. You thought it might have scared him a little bit. Was that a little bit of fear of the police; that you might call them again? Or was it fear about losing the relationship? Scared that you would not take him back?
13. After you got the intervention order he said he would get help, counselling or a men's program. What did you think about that?
14. What factors were important in deciding to take him back?
15. The police got an intervention order. You took him back. Did this make you more reluctant to call them in the future? Did you feel guilty/less deserving/you had broken the rules?
16. Looking back you thought the police should have charged him. If it had happened to someone on the street there would have been criminal charges. What does this say to you? (rights).

### **Second police intervention.**

17. The second time you called the police he was being abusive and you could not make him leave. Was it verbal or physical? Did police take a statement or ask you about the assault or any injuries?

18. You said, I'm fine as long as he's gone. Did they try to change your perspective at all? For example, tell you it's only going to continue to get worse. Did they tell you that you deserve better?
19. When police attend a scene they tend to assess that there is either: a true victim and true perpetrator; a chronically dysfunctional couple seen as equal combatants; a distressed couple dealing with a specific crisis who need help; someone trying to manipulate the system and get police on side; or a trivial victim. How do you think they saw you and your partner the first time? What makes you choose that option?
20. How did the police see you the second time? What makes you choose that option?
21. You said the second time the police came around you felt a bit like they were giving you the brush off. Can you tell me a bit more about that? Were they dismissive, abrupt, impatient, frustrated? What do you think they were thinking about the situation?
22. How did that make you feel?
23. After the second visit he stayed away for a couple of days or he may have even been staying in the garage. What were you thinking and feeling during those few days?
24. Each time you called the police you seemed to want two things. Firstly, for him to be gone so that the violence would stop. And secondly for him to know that it was wrong; that it was serious. Can you tell me a bit more about that? (Exposure/social sanctions against the behaviour)
25. After the final separation, he still came over regularly to see your daughter and you would often argue. Did he ever become physically violent? If yes, how did you handle that?
26. Have you had any involvement with the police since the last visit?
27. Is he still visiting regularly? How difficult is it for you to remain apart from him now?

## **Erin's Story**

Erin lives in a rented unit with her three children.

### **Relationship History.**

Erin has only ever had an intimate or romantic relationship with her ex-partner. She attributes this to being extremely overweight as an adolescent and never having any boyfriends. Erin underwent gastric stapling surgery and subsequently achieved a normal weight. It was after this, in 1993, that she met her ex-partner. They moved in

together three months later. Erin's ex-partner was a heroin user when she met him, and even though Erin was not a drug user, this did not deter her from establishing a life with him. She believed that she could change him.

From the beginning, they did not have a typical co-habiting relationship. He would stay with her as long as she met his needs, which mostly involved giving him money for drugs or taking him to buy them. Whenever she couldn't support his habit he would leave to pursue other means of obtaining drugs. There were also three longer periods of separation during the relationship when he was jailed for drug related offences. During these periods, which ranged from six months to two years, Erin remained committed to the relationship and would travel by rail to the country jail to visit him every weekend.

Erin's partner was demanding and manipulative. The financial abuse started early in the relationship, along with verbal abuse. The physical abuse escalated later when Erin started to stand up for herself and refused to give him money. At these times he would go into a rage, threatening her and damaging property, sometimes hitting and shoving her. The increased violence also coincided with his use of ice and speed, later in the relationship. Erin's ex-partner eventually moved out when she stopped supplying him with money.

During the last year they were together Erin endured verbal abuse on a daily basis. He would tell her that she was ugly, not good enough and no-one would ever want her. He repeatedly told her she was stupid and crazy. He tried to prevent her from seeing her family and tried to turn them against her and convince them she was crazy. She was hit, shoved and threatened with a knife. He threatened to burn the house down while she and the children were sleeping.

### **Police intervention**

Erin was extremely reluctant to call the police for assistance. She craved his love and attention and did not want to lose the relationship. Her ex-partner already had a criminal record and she did not want to get him into any more trouble. She was also worried that police intervention would result in a DHS investigation of the safety of the children. At first she turned to her parents for help. She would call her father or escape to their house. However, her parents eventually recognised that they couldn't help her while she stayed with him and withdrew their support. She started threatening to call the police and when this didn't work she actually pretended to ring. For a little while this would work and he would leave the house. Eventually when all else failed and she was unable to stop his outbursts she started ringing the police. The first few calls occurred while they were still living together but the majority of police involvement happened after they had separated and he was just coming round to get money from her.

Initially the police adopted a peace keeping approach. They would listen to both parties and try to calm the situation down. The usual action taken was to remove him from the home, take him to the local train station, and warn him not to return. On the first two occasions that the police attended there was no physical violence. Later incidences involved physical violence and property damage. The police started suggesting that more formal action needed to be taken but Erin would not press

charges or seek an intervention order. The police went along with her decisions for a considerable time, continuing to simply remove him from the scene.

This was the course of action that Erin preferred. She just wanted him gone so that she could have peace for a little while and calm down. However in most instances he would be back in about an hour. He would then use whatever tactics worked best to get some money out of her. This usually involved manipulation; being nice to her and using sweet talk. But sometimes it included intimidation. For the sake of peace she would give in. After he got his drugs things would be pleasant and he would adopt the good dad role for a while.

Erin believes it was a combination of concern for the children and frustration with repeatedly being called to the house that prompted the police to take action regardless of her assertion that she didn't want to pursue the matter to Court. On one occasion the police charged him with property damage to her car. When the matter went to Court Erin appeared on his behalf and told the Magistrate that he had paid for the damages. On a later occasion another police officer applied for a complaint and warrant for an intervention order. This time Erin felt that she had to get the intervention order because she had been contacted by DHS. She was frantic at the thought of losing her children and even though she had tried to manage everything herself for such a long time, she realised she was losing the battle. The order was granted on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2005. At first the police couldn't find him to serve the order. During this period Erin only had occasional contact with him. He would breach the order and still try to see her for money. If things got out of hand she would threaten or pretend to call the police and he would leave. Erin only reported the breach once but he escaped from the police by jumping the back fence. The incident was not pursued further.

Erin continues to see her ex-partner occasionally when he comes to visit the children but she is no longer intimately involved with him. Even though Erin didn't want the police to take formal action at the time, she is now grateful that they did. She realises that without their intervention she would still be living a life of abuse and control. She started to learn that she is worthy of a better life.

## **Questions**

1. Try to do a time line? Moved in 1993 or 1994? First started calling. Criminal charges. Intervention order. Started seeing Women's Health West.
2. Final termination due to her not giving him money and him going to the prostitute or was it due to the intervention order?
3. How much energy did you put into monitoring his moods etc?
4. How long did it go on before the police took it upon themselves??
5. In the early stages you never called the police; you didn't want any trouble for him. Was that not wanting him to suffer or not wanting to be without him?

6. The usual police action was to just take him away to the train station. What did you think about that? How did that make you feel? (Was she happy with that because she just wanted a break).
7. You knew he would be back in an hour or so. How were you feeling during that time? Any fear?
8. He keeps coming back. How did that make her feel about her options?
9. He would come back and just act like nothing happened. Would he ever come back and be worse? (was the situation diffused?) Did you always then give him what he wanted?). Did you ever call the police when he came back?
10. You said you were silly for opening the door. Did you mean that literally as in opening the front door and letting him inside. Or did you mean opening the door for the relationship to continue as usual.
11. The police told you they were getting tired of coming all the time and you never press charges. What did you think when the police said they might not turn up? On reflection, looking back you can now say you understand this – there were more serious cases than you. But how did you feel at the time? Why did you think your case wasn't very serious?
12. When he broke the \$800.00 pane of glass you said you had no choice but to call the police. Did you feel guilty; were you worried about losing the relationship?
13. You used to say I'm going to call big brother as a code for calling the police. Was this big brother in the sense of the big brother who looks after you or the all seeing big brother/officialdom ready to get you if you disobey the rules?
14. When the police started suggesting you need to take further steps move or get an intervention order were they offering to get it or just telling you to go the Magistrate Court?
15. The policeman who pressed the charges, did he come around often? Did a helping relationship develop? He was mostly concerned about the kids. What was his attitude to you? How did this make you feel?
16. The police man told you to come down to the station re criminal charges. You didn't want to but you did. Why was that?
17. When he was charged with property damage to your car, you testified for him – what was the outcome of the case? Did the police officer say anything about you testifying?
18. What about the Vietnamese officer. What was your relationship with him like? Your partner tried to make a connection with him by talking in Vietnamese but he wouldn't buy into it. What about with you?

19. The intervention order – was that related to threats to burn down the house? And then they were patrolling the house. (i.e. took it seriously) What did you think about that? How did that make you feel?
20. You said I rejected it once before, I didn't want to stop the kids seeing their father. Had the police sought an intervention order and you withdrew? (when was it)
21. You said, I realise I don't need the tablets I just need him out of my life. Is this on reflection or part of the realisation that you need to go ahead with the intervention order? Did he know you were worried about ending up like your mum?
22. He would say to the police that you were crazy. This would really upset you. Did he push your buttons in front of the police?
23. The doctor tried to organise some help for him for his drug problem. What about help for you about the abuse?
24. The police felt sorry for you at first but you think they later thought you were an idiot for putting up with it. Can you tell me a bit more about that? How did they act? What did they say? You're an idiot and so .... (how did it influence their interaction with you).
25. You used words that indicated you were fighting a battle, you were defeated, you tried but lost. Was this a battle against his drug addiction or a battle to keep the relationship together despite his addiction?
26. The one time that you reported him coming round after the intervention order, he pushed you too far – what had he done?
27. Any more trouble?      32. Any more police intervention?
28. You said they helped you realise you are worth something – explore. When no action – not worth something?
29. Life is better without him. You are happy with just you and the kids. What is the biggest difference?
30. You said you still see him every now and then and that keeps you going. What do you mean by this?
31. The verbal abuse really stuffed you up – what did you mean by this?

### **Chelsea's Story**

At the time of the interview Chelsea was separated from her partner and was living with her child in a rented unit.

## **Relationship History**

Chelsea started seeing her ex-partner in 1999. The first violent episode occurred three months later, while they were still dating. Although Chelsea was extremely shocked by his violence, she was in love with her partner and believed him when he said he loved her and it would never happen again. However, the violence continued. Multiple assaults ensued, eventually resulting in her arm being broken. This incident, instead of being a catalyst for ending the relationship, actually further cemented their bond. Chelsea was incapacitated for nine months and moved in with him to be cared for. She became totally dependent on him. Over the course of the relationship there were many separations including a two month period when Chelsea and her young daughter stayed in a refuge. The abuse continued unabated until her partner was finally arrested and charged in July 2005.

Chelsea endured 11 beatings over a seven year period. During the last 12 months they lived together he slapped, shook, grabbed and pushed her on a monthly basis. He stole from her, hit her and coerced her into having sex every week. He harassed her over the phone and verbally abused her everyday. He tried to keep her away from friends and convince others that she was crazy. On several occasions he threw her, used a weapon against her, and head-butted her. She was blamed for his violence every day.

## **Police Intervention**

Chelsea first contacted the police in 1999 immediately after the first physical attack, which he perpetrated to prevent her from going home. She managed to leave and called the local police from her taxi. The police officer she spoke to was quite abrupt and simply redirected her to the local police station in her own suburb, saying that they would be able to help her. Chelsea felt upset and put off by this response. She was also shocked by the attack itself. She went home and resolved not to see him again. But three days later she found herself calling him in tears, seeking an explanation for the attack. He started crying and promising it would never happen again, and so the relationship continued.

Later that year or early 2000 another incident occurred where he would not let her leave his house. On this occasion Chelsea used her mobile phone to call the police while she hid in the toilet. The police attended at the scene, and even though Chelsea and her partner had struggled over a knife, the police trivialised the incident, treating it as just a tiff. Chelsea's partner tried to discredit her, telling the police she was mentally unstable and a drug user. They took Chelsea home in the police van and advised her not to see him again. There was no investigation, no statements were taken, no referrals made or intervention order sought. Chelsea thought that was the normal way for police to respond to domestic violence.

The next time Chelsea called the police for assistance they were living together. The incident resulting in her sustaining a broken arm had occurred in the interim but she had not called the police that time. The third call was in 2000 after he hit her in the eye and head-butted her. The police attended at the scene. Chelsea tried to explain what had happened but she was in a very agitated state. She pointed out her reddening eye but the officer said he couldn't see any injuries. Chelsea's partner

tried to convince the police that she was unstable, crazy on medication. They asked Chelsea if she wanted to press charges. When she declined they became rude and said there was nothing they could do for her if she didn't want to press charges and simply left. Chelsea felt really disheartened and became depressed. She felt as if there was no-one who could help her. Her partner taunted her that this was all she could expect from the police because she was crazy; a loony tune.

Chelsea called the police again when her daughter was about six months old after another head butting incident. When the police arrived her ex-partner had left and taken their daughter with him. Chelsea wanted to go to a refuge but they refused to assist her. They advised her to just let things calm down.

There were several more police attendances after that. The police started taking longer and longer to respond. Chelsea and her partner became known to them. The police continued to tell her she needed to lay charges and when she didn't they treated her like she was just a waste of time. Chelsea gave up on the police. She eventually went to Women's Health West and with their help to a refuge.

She stayed in the refuge for a few months but during that time secretly started meeting with her partner. On one occasion he became verbally abusive and wouldn't give their daughter back to her. With the encouragement of refuge staff, Chelsea sought and was granted an intervention order in December 2002. She was resettled into her current housing.

Shortly afterwards her ex-partner was fired from his job and then evicted. Chelsea felt responsible and allowed him to stay with her for a few weeks until he found somewhere to live. The few weeks turned into three years. The police were called several times and even though there was an indefinite intervention order in place, they never arrested or charged him with breaching the order.

Eventually in July 2005 after another violent assault, he was arrested and charged with breach of intervention order and assault. Finally the police showed intolerance of the abuse and provided support to Chelsea. They took statements, photographed her injuries, and referred her to domestic violence services. They were adamant that he should be charged and punished. Chelsea's ex-partner and his family convinced her to drop the charges. However, the police decided to proceed with the charge of breach of intervention order. He went to Court and was fined.

Chelsea managed to remain apart from him after that. Her ex-partner then started to stalk and harass her. Chelsea started keeping a record of these breaches and reporting them to her local police station, dealing with one particular senior constable who was undertaking the investigation. Chelsea had no contact with her partner for about four or five months but then contacted him because she was very ill and needed him to look after their daughter. This contact resulted in the police abandoning the investigation and not charging him with any of the stalking offences. Chelsea noted a change in the officer's manner and tone and felt that once again she was not being taken seriously. The officer did interview Chelsea's ex-partner about the harassment. Shortly afterwards the stalking stopped, possibly because of the police interview but also because he was seeing somebody else. When that relationship ended he started pressuring Chelsea to let him move back in again.

At the time of the interview, Chelsea was managing to keep him at a distance. He was, however, visiting regularly to see their daughter, and on some occasions spending the night with Chelsea. Chelsea now feels more secure and more in control. Her ex-partner knows that she is serious about eliciting police help if he breaches the intervention order and proceeding with assault charges if he were ever violent again.

## Questions

### **First attempt at reporting violence (approx April 1999)**

1. You called the police from the taxi and they just redirected you to another station. How did that influence what you did next?

#### Prompts

How did that make you feel? What were you thinking? That was part of the reason you didn't bother going to Kensington station. Can you tell me more about that? (what did it make you think about the likelihood of getting help and protection?)

2. Did you tell anyone else about the attack? Did anyone see your injuries? He said it would never happen again and you believed him. How did you make sense of the incident to yourself?

### **Second intervention (end 1999 or early 2000)**

3. The police came to his flat in Ivanhoe. He told the police you were a drug user? Was there any evidence or foundation for this claim? Do you think they believed him? Do you think this assumption influenced them?
4. They acted like it was just a tiff. What did you think of that? What did it make you think about the role of the police? How did they treat you? What do you think they were thinking about the two of you and the situation?
5. They took you home in the back of the police van. What did you think of this? It was as though they couldn't wait to get rid of you. How did that make you feel?
6. You rang them because you needed help to get out of his flat. At that point in your relationship were you still trying to make things work or were you trying to end the relationship?
7. You said the police should have had a talk with him and told him that what he was doing isn't right. A lot of women have said similar things. Why do you think this is important to them?

#### Broken arm

8. Sometime after that he broke your arm. When was that? Why didn't you report it?

When did you move in together?

### **Third visit (some time in 2000)**

9. He had hit you and head butted you in the eye, and ripped your pyjamas. The policeman said, well I can't see anything. What did you think of that? They asked you if you wanted to press charges and you said no. How much information or support did they give you in making that decision? Did they offer any alternatives (intervention order?). What do you think you wanted from them at that stage? Were you thinking about leaving him then or just trying to cope with that particular situation? Did they ask you about your relationship intentions? They just drove off and left you with him. How did you feel? How did that influence what you did next? (brother helps her to convince him to leave). How did you cope with being left with him? What was he like after they left?

#### **Fourth visit (Zahara 6 months old ? mid 2002)**

10. You separated not long after that but some time later started seeing him and became pregnant. You moved in together again. There was another head butting incident and you called the police. When was that? You told them you wanted to go to a refuge but they said you weren't in crisis. Did you feel that were in crisis?
11. You said I can't take it any more. At that point in time were you thinking about ending the relationship or were you exhausted by it and needing a break?

#### **After refuge**

12. There were several more attendances by police after you left the refuge. Even though there was an intervention order in place, he wasn't charged. What did they do and say?
13. There seems to have been a pattern of either suggesting you leave him, just leave him and it will be alright or telling you that you have to charge him. What did you think about this? How did those suggestions influence you? How did their lack of action influence your partner?
14. You spoke about the police not taking you seriously. How does this make you feel and think about yourself?

#### **July 2005**

15. Finally in July 2005 he is arrested and charged. The difference in their response is impressive. For a time you go along with having him charged. Why was this? In the past you never wanted him charged.
16. Was it guilt or other people's influence or fear that made you withdraw the charges?
17. At this point were you feeling sure about ending the relationship?
18. How did being charged with the breach of intervention order influence your ex-partner's behaviour?

### **Stalking**

19. How soon after the breach of intervention order charge did he start the stalking and harassment behaviour? How long did the investigation go on.? How did you cope with the ongoing stalking?
20. There was a period of about 4-5 months while the investigation was going on that you didn't see him at all. What did having that time away from him mean to you?
21. Last time we spoke you said you now feel more in control now. Is that in control of him or in control of yourself, more able to stop yourself from being sucked back in by him?
22. You also said he knows that if he ever hurt you again you would have him prosecuted. How does he know this?

### **Now**

23. On the phone you mentioned that there has been more trouble and you are moving. Can you tell me about what's been happening?

## **Sarah's Story**

At the time of the interview Sarah was living in a rented house with her children and had been separated from her defacto partner for 18 months.

### **Relationship History**

Sarah had a difficult and unstable childhood. Her father was extremely violent towards her mother and her mother was abusive towards Sarah. Sarah remembers changing schools and staying in refuges many times during her childhood. Despite her violent intimate relationship she is determined to provide a better life for her own daughters.

Sarah's relationship with her ex-partner began in 1999. She had gone to stay with her father but his behaviour was difficult so she moved into a shared house with friends where her ex-partner was also living. At first they were only friends. He was charming and always treated her well, and eventually an intimate relationship began. About six months later Sarah became pregnant with her first child. This marked the beginning of his violence and extremely abusive treatment of her. Sarah now regrets not leaving him after that first episode but she was pregnant and did not want to have to go home to her mother who would have insisted she have an abortion. Sarah felt stuck in a really bad situation with nowhere to turn. The violence continued after the birth of her daughter. Over their years together Sarah tried to leave him at least 20 times; sometimes going to her mother's and other times to refuges. The longest separation they had was probably about three months. However both these avenues of escape were unsatisfactory. Her mother did not treat her well and Sarah felt extremely uncomfortable in the company of the other women in the refuges who were often alcoholics and drug addicts. Ironically returning to her ex-partner seemed

to be a safer option. Sarah sought help from the Salvation Army and youth housing services before eventually calling the police.

Sarah suffered multiple forms of abuse throughout the relationship. Sarah's ex-partner would torment her relentlessly for days at a time, depriving her of sleep and totally dominating her. The most innocent action such as turning the heater on would provoke a slap across the face. When he was displeased with her he would often lock her out of the house; one such time she was naked. During the last 12 months they lived together, on several occasions Sarah's partner hit, shook, threw, and punched her. He beat her up and raped her. He also verbally and financially abused her and tried to isolate her from friends and family.

### **Police Intervention**

At first Sarah was very reluctant to call the police. She had been socialised to believe that calling the police was unacceptable; only an informant would call the police. She was also fearful of reprisals from her partner. However, once they left the shared house and were living on their own, she no longer had the protection of the presence of other people. She had also tried going to her mum's and to refuges. Eventually she had no other choice but to call the police. During the relationship the police were called many times. Sarah finds it difficult to recall each separate incident but knows the police applied for an intervention order on five occasions. There was also one occasion where he was charged with assault and given a community based order. Finally in June 2005 he was arrested for drink driving and remanded in custody. He pleaded guilty to 10 traffic offences and 9 criminal charges relating to his assault against Sarah and breach of intervention order. He was given a five year jail sentence, which was reduced to 18 months on appeal.

With the help of her intervention order documentation Sarah recalled the first time the police applied for an intervention order, which was in May 2002. She knows the police were probably called to the house on prior occasions but she cannot remember any details. The first time the police made an intervention order application Sarah was actively trying to end the relationship. She had sought help from a youth housing service and was on their waiting list. She had been told a house would be available in about a week. It was this information that triggered the event that ultimately led to the first police application for an intervention order. When she told her ex-partner she would be leaving in a week he became angry and abusive, eventually assaulting her several times, threatening to cave her head in, and forcing her out of the house whilst keeping the children from her. When she tried to leave he ran out and grabbed her car keys. Sarah ran away to the nearest phone box and called the police, who directed her to return to the house and meet them there. When the police arrived her ex-partner kicked the children out in a manner that disgusted the police.

In this situation, and most others that resulted in Sarah calling the police, her main aim in calling was to be able to get her children and leave the house safely. Sarah knew that the police didn't actually have the power to remove the children from their father. But each time she explained the situation to them, they would always help her to get the children. Sarah felt that they were on her side and supported her. Sarah believed that the police, especially the police she dealt with later, once she

moved to a new suburb, genuinely cared about her and wanted to help her get away from her ex-partner.

There is only one time that Sarah recalls the police made her feel bad about herself. Her ex-partner had come home in the middle of the night very drunk and started abusing her. Sarah ran from the house to call the police, which is how she usually escaped from him but on this occasion he actually chased her down the street, leaving the children asleep in the house on their own. A police officer chastised her for leaving the children alone and warned her that Children's Services might need to become involved. Sarah felt that he did not understand that she had no alternative but to keep going once her ex-partner started to pursue her down the street. They did not have the phone on at the house.

On the whole though Sarah felt the police cared about her and wanted to help her. Because of this she often felt that she was letting them down when she reconciled with her ex-partner after calling them. When she saw them she felt a deep sense of shame.

After the first intervention order Sarah's ex-partner broke into the house two days later and assaulted her for calling the police. The police applied for intervention orders five times. Each time he would break back into the house and force her to revoke the intervention order. She felt as though she was forced to be in the relationship. Eventually, towards the end of the relationship, the police contested her cancellation of the intervention order, telling the Magistrate that it was ridiculous to cancel the order when they were called to the house so many times. A variation was made to the order that allowed him to be in the house but prohibited him from threatening or assaulting her. He breached that order at least four times. When he was finally arrested and jailed these breaches constituted part of the charges that were laid against him.

In June 2005 Sarah finally managed to free herself. Her ex-partner was on bail related to drink driving charges. When he assaulted her, breaching the intervention order again she called the police and gave them a statement but told them that she was just waiting for him to be sent to jail to make a permanent break from him. Sarah did not need to face him herself about the assault and breach charges. A short time later he was again caught drink driving. He was arrested, his bail was revoked and he was remanded in custody. Twenty-four charges were laid, and he was given a custodial sentence of five years, reduced to 18 months on appeal. At last Sarah had the opportunity to get stronger and build a new life for herself and her daughters. This has not been easy and she has still had to face the difficulties of stopping his phone contact with her.

On the day of the interview Sarah's ex-partner was due for release. She is hoping that he will leave her alone. She doesn't want to have to deal with his needs. She is fearful that he will try to contact her and try to manipulate his way back into her life.

### **Questions**

1. Clarify was it 2000 or before 2000 that they got together.

2. You tried refuges, your mum, transition housing, and then finally the police. Once you started calling the police did you stop using the other resources? Discuss the notion of miss-timing. Did the intervention order give her those few days of respite? How long would he stay away for?
3. When he went to Court for the first assault you were thinking he needs something, he deserves something, he gets away with everything. Can you tell me what it meant to you when he got the community based order? (What were you hoping would happen? Was this the same as the last time – were you waiting for him to go to jail so you could leave? Or were you still hoping that something would help him change? )
4. How does this compare to the last time when he was finally sent to jail? What did that mean to you?
5. You moved to Hoppers Crossing and the police there were very helpful. What year did you move? Were they different from the North Altona Police?[He used to say the police just think you're an idiot? Were you more likely to believe that about the Altona Police than the Hoppers police]. Or was it just that one particular officer?
6. What was it about this one policeman? How was he or the situation different from the police in Altona?
7. A few other women have described feeling a bond with a particular officer. That this is someone they can turn to for help or someone who is closely involved in their case. I call this a helping alliance – did you have this. What does it mean to you?
8. We talked about you feeling that they really cared about you. Despite all the times you called them and then withdrew the intervention order they never warned you that next time they won't come. How important was this to you?
9. You said they weren't like your mum. You also compared them to your mum when you described how they would talk to you and try to make you see that he would never change. Can you tell me a little bit more about how their attitude or approach was different to your mum's?
10. You said that they were compassionate and never downgraded you. Can you tell me what that meant to you? (my interpretation is that they enhanced your dignity).
11. What about the time they told you off for leaving the children. What kind of effect did that have on you? (Deterred from calling again?).
12. It was also important to you that they were saying, no he needs to be charged. It made it more real. You weren't just being a sook. You felt more deserving. How did this influence the way you thought about your rights?

13. You wrote letters of support for him when he was trying to get his sentence reduced. He was in custody at the time. How did he communicate with you?
14. You wanted to let the Magistrate know the truth. You said you tried to slip him a different letter. What did it mean to you, writing those letters of support.
15. Check aim of calling the very last time. Was it to stop the actual incident or was it, I can't wait any longer I need to get away from him now.
16. When he was finally caught with the kids in the car his bail was revoked. What did the fact that he was being held in remand mean to you?
17. You said having his phone calls stopped was a huge step. How long did you wait? What did it mean to you? (strength, a sense of agency, being able to exert your own will)
18. He was scared of the police. You described this as having someone to stand up for you, like an assertive father. What does that mean to you?
19. On the phone you said you have an intervention order. When did you get this?
20. What else has been happening since he got out of jail?

### **Marlene's Story**

At the time of the interview Marlene had been separated from her husband for approximately 16 months and was living with the children in the family home.

#### **Relationship History.**

Marlene and her husband started dating in 1989 and married in 1991. Even while they were still dating her husband was very controlling and always wanted to know where she was. When she was pregnant with their first child, he became more emotionally and psychologically abusive. Marlene had strong family values and wanted to make the marriage work. He always blamed her for all their problems and Marlene began to think there was something wrong with her. She tried to do more and more to keep him happy. When he was in a good mood the relationship seemed to be good; they would do things as a family and he would be helpful. However, if Marlene ever argued with him or didn't do what he wanted he would become withdrawn and emotionally abusive.

Marlene contemplated leaving him several times. The first time he was abusive after their marriage she was so shocked she packed a bag and left but returned several hours later. She threatened to leave him another time when they were living interstate but he warned her he would never let her take the children, so she stayed.

During the last 12 months they lived together Marlene endured verbal abuse on a daily basis. He told her she was crazy and became upset with her about housework and meals. He constantly harassed her over the phone and when she was at work. He isolated her from family and friends, and tried to turn them against her and convince them she was crazy. He always blamed her for his abusive behaviour and told her she was stupid and not good enough on a weekly basis. He shook and threw her several times. He also hit and slapped her. Marlene was also very concerned about his obsession with cleanliness, especially the effect this was having on the children as he was constantly washing them or telling Marlene to wash them. He was also very critical of the children and would often yell at them, hit them over the head or slap them across the face, especially the eldest son. Shortly before she finally left him his sexual behaviour became quite strange. He pressured her for sex relentlessly and would not let her sleep.

### **Police intervention**

Marlene did not seek police intervention for many years. She knew they needed help and she tried to convince her husband to go to marriage counselling. She became depressed after the birth of their first child but did not seek help because he taunted her that she was crazy and would be locked up. After the birth of their third child Marlene was hospitalised for two and a half weeks with post natal depression. She was told, and believes, that the depression was a consequence of the abuse that was occurring in her relationship. Finally in May 2005 things came to a head. The abuse had been escalating. He was pushing and threatening her more, and becoming more irrational. He became very angry one morning over a disagreement about washing their young daughter yet again. He took the toddler into the bathroom and pushed Marlene out and up against a wall. The children were screaming. Marlene managed to get her daughter and when her husband went to have a shower she tried to take the children and leave the house. He came running after her and took her keys. Marlene called the police.

As soon as Marlene's husband realised she had called the police he calmed down and tried to convince her that nothing was wrong; she was just over-reacting. When the police arrived he convinced them that she was suffering from depression and having problems. Marlene's eldest son heard him lying to the police. The police were satisfied that everything had settled down. They did not consider Marlene or the children were at risk and convinced Marlene to leave the children with her husband and go to work.

Marlene is not sure the police fully believed her story, and felt that they were suspicious of her. However, she believes they could tell something had happened. One officer told her she could go to Court and get an intervention order if she wanted. Up until then Marlene had not ever considered that as an option. She didn't really know anything about intervention orders. Marlene was too scared to go back into the house with her husband so she went straight to the local Magistrate's Court and an interim intervention order was granted. The police returned to the house to serve the order and remove him from the house. They called later that night to make sure she was alright.

About six weeks after this incident Marlene was unwell and asked her mother-in-law for help with looking after the children. Her husband came with his mother and used this opening to start working towards reconciliation. He promised to go to counselling with her and attend an anger management course. He started coming to the house regularly, and crying because he wanted to come home. He returned permanently in October 2005.

By January things were really bad. The abuse and sexual harassment was escalating, and his behaviour was becoming more disturbing. He could sense her concerns and one morning in late February said he was going to have it out with her when he came home that night. Marlene was extremely frightened. She thought he might hurt her or throw her out of the house with nothing. He had been threatening her that if she left, she would lose the house and he would get the children 50% of the time. She was particularly concerned about what this would mean for her two year old daughter. She asked her parents to come over because she did not want to face him alone and went back to Court for an intervention order. An interim order was granted, but because there was no crisis event, the Magistrate allowed Marlene's husband 24 hours to get out of the house.

Marlene's husband came home early, picking the boys up for school on his way. Marlene went to the police station to inform them that he was home so they could serve the order. She returned to the house with the police, collected the children and left. The police served the order. Marlene returned home after the 24 hour period. The house had been stripped of furniture. He also took all their financial documents and many of her personal belongings as well.

Even though an interim intervention order was in place, he started driving by all the time to see what she was doing. Marlene tried reporting this to the police but they were very unhelpful. They would ask her to come in to discuss it but then just tell her that there wasn't enough evidence. Despite him failing to abide by the intervention order, when Marlene went back to Court for the full hearing for the order in June 2006, it was not granted. Marlene was questioned for three hours. She showed little emotion and actually felt numb, that it wasn't real. She had not been able to prepare herself very well because she could not face thinking about it. In contrast her husband's preparation was meticulous. Marlene was portrayed as an unbalanced, depressed woman who was not coping and was making exaggerated claims about her husband. The Court appointed psychologist said that his behaviour was controlling but said she thought the mother influenced the children's accounts of their father's behaviour towards them. Marlene was devastated and is disillusioned about her chances of a just outcome in future dealings with the Court. It is only concern for her children's welfare that prevents her giving in to all his demands about property and custody.

Following the Court hearing, Marlene's husband continued driving past the property. He also started coming to the house on the pretext of seeing the children or getting things. He started harassing her by phone, email and text and using their communication book as a way to criticise and torment her.

Marlene has sought help from a community based agency. A domestic violence worker from the agency is liaising with the local police family violence liaison

officer, who is confident she will at least be successful in getting an interim intervention order. However Marlene is not as optimistic. She is starting to believe that she just has to put up with the harassment. This is her lot in life; the price she pays for leaving her husband.

## **Questions**

### **First intervention order June 2005**

1. The policeman said, you know you can get an intervention order. Was he assuming that you knew all about intervention orders? How do you think the police thought of the situation?
2. Did they know that you were going to go straight down and get an intervention order? Did they realise that she was actually quite serious about it.
3. Once you had the interim, that is when you went to the station and then they served it, was their attitude any different? (Did they treat the situation more seriously once they saw her commitment).
4. When that first interim intervention order was granted in June 2005, did he breach it (driving by, calling, emails, text etc) or was it only the after the second time? (He said something about being worried when he came with his mother when you called her for help). That is, did his attitude towards the intervention order change over time?
5. He convinced you not to follow through with the intervention order full hearing. Did you actually go back to Court to withdraw the order, ring the registrar or just not show up? What did that action mean to him? What did it mean to you?
6. How long after he moved back in did he start to become abusive again?

### **Second intervention order application February 2006**

7. You got the second interim intervention order in February 2006. Did he start breaching it straight away?
8. You tried to get the police to help you when he was driving by all the time. What did you want them to do? You said, they just didn't handle it very well. Can you tell me a bit more about that?
9. When the second intervention order wasn't granted at the full hearing, what did that mean to you?
10. What affect did that have on your husband's attitude and behaviour? (did the harassment increase?)

11. Then when you tried to get police help again because of the ongoing harassment, they said, they can't do anything because there's no intervention order, and there's not physical abuse. What does that mean to you (in terms of rights).
12. What do you think the police thought about you and your situation? (what was their attitude?). And about him?
13. What effect does the harassment have on you?

### **Overall**

14. Many women have told me about times that their partners have convinced or tried to convince the police that they are mentally ill, taking medication, or have a drug problem. What effect does this seem to have on police?
15. You described a similar experience, especially when you went to report that he hadn't returned the children after an access visit. Can you tell me a little bit more about that?
16. Were there other things you wanted to tell me about? I think you had some things in a diary.

### **Follow-up**

17. Last time we met you were considering going for another intervention order. What happened with that? What did it mean to you?
18. How do you want things to be; what do you think you deserve?
19. Some very cynical police say that women often try to manipulate the intervention order system to help them do better in the Family Court system. They obviously need to be educated about that. What do we need to tell them?

## Lynette's Story

Lynette and her husband reconciled approximately six months prior to the interview after an extremely difficult separation, which lasted over a year. They were living in the family home with their two children.

### **Relationship history.**

Lynette and her husband started dating in 1983, she can even recall the exact date in May. They married about 20 months later in January 1985. Lynette recalls her husband has always had a temper. He comes from a violent family and harbours a lot of bitterness towards his violent, alcoholic father. Lynette has a difficult relationship with her mother-in-law, who tries to exclude her from family interactions. The first physically violent episode occurred when they were still dating; he hit her in the face. At the time Lynette thought of it as a one-off isolated incident. After they married there were spasmodic incidents when he would become

very aggressive, punching holes in the wall and damaging furniture. As the relationship progressed he would sometimes become physical, mainly grabbing Lynette.

Shortly after the birth of their second daughter, Lynette's husband threw an object at her, which missed Lynette but hit their baby daughter. Lynette remembers he was in a temper after an argument over the phone with his brother. Lynette left the house to take the baby to the emergency department of the hospital. Fortunately her daughter was not seriously hurt. However this incident prompted Lynette to seek refuge at her sister's house. She did not return to her husband for several days.

The abuse continued intermittently. Lynette knew the abuse wasn't normal but she really did not know what to do about it. She often felt sorry for herself for marrying this man but her strong faith and family values compelled her to accept her lot in life. She could not see herself leaving him and being faced with being alone or finding another partner. As his drinking got worse so did his violence, particularly after he lost his job.

### **Police intervention**

Over the years there were many, many incidences of verbal and sometimes physical abuse. For the most part, Lynette did not think they were serious enough to call the police. Finally in November 2005 Lynette called the police. They had been arguing about his drinking, which evoked his obsession about losing his house. He started threatening Lynette and then suddenly went to the car and started repeatedly ramming the car into the fence. Lynette grabbed the phone, called the police and hid in a laundry cupboard. She could hear him ranting through the house looking for her. The police arrived quickly. Lynette's husband was taken into custody and an intervention order was sought. Lynette gave a statement and recalls the police asked her if she wanted him charged, which she didn't. In fact she was hesitant to take out the intervention order. A female officer spoke to her about her own marriage and suggested that a separation might actually be a catalyst for change and improve their relationship. This gave Lynette hope and helped her decide to go ahead with the intervention order.

Lynette's husband was allowed to return to the house to collect some personal belongings. Following the intervention order he started stalking and harassing Lynette. He threatened her and some of her family members over the phone and started sleeping in his car in nearby streets. Lynette recalls this as a period of living in fear, as if they were on the run. She was also concerned about the deterioration in her husband's self care and mental health. He eventually found a unit but continued to deteriorate, drinking heavily every night even though he was on anti-depressants. Lynette feared he was going crazy. He was also obsessed by the thought that he was dispossessed of the house he had worked all his life for. This was an issue that fuelled his hostility.

Shortly after the intervention order was granted Lynette returned home to find his car in the front of the house. She immediately called the police but by the time they arrived he had moved it a few houses away. Lynette's husband convinced the policewoman attending that the car was not within the 250 metres restricted by the intervention order. The police consequently did not charge him with a breach of intervention order and took a lenient stance, telling Lynette that it was early days and he needed some time to adjust. They then escorted him out of the street and followed him to the outskirts of the suburb, failing to contact Lynette and let her know that it was safe. Lynette felt unprotected and confused. What was the point in

having an intervention order if it was not going to be enforced. Furthermore, Lynette's husband later told her that he was within the 250 metre limit and bragged about how easy it was to fool the police.

Lynette called the police several times in the ensuing months to report threats that he was making to kill her and himself. On one occasion the police even heard him making these threats over the phone. Another time she was at her mum's and he called to say he was going to drive his car in front of a train. She called the CAT team who sent police. The police checked the nearby train station but were not optimistic about finding him. Each time Lynette tried to get the police to take these threats seriously they always seemed to have reason for dismissing her concerns. They said they would have to see him in person to arrest him under the Mental Health Act or there was no proof that it was him on the phone. They tried to convince her that he was just being manipulative and that if he was serious he would have done it by now. There were also several terrifying episodes when he returned to the house and she hid in the garden or garage. Recalling how difficult it was to get anybody to take her fears seriously still evokes a strong emotional reaction. Lynette was convinced that he was mentally unstable and capable of carrying out his threats. The police seemed to be distracted by the mental health issue and Lynette's insistence that her husband needed assessment and help. They did not treat it as a breach of intervention order and no investigation was undertaken. Lynette's attempt to get help for her husband from her doctor and counsellor were similarly fraught with frustration. Lynette felt unprotected, disbelieved and terrified of her husband's potential for harm.

Eventually Lynette felt that the only way to minimise her risk was to let him have some access to the house. She went to Court and varied the order so that he could visit the children and have some time with them at the house. This strategy worked for a while until one day their eldest daughter's boyfriend came to the house to meet her father. Lynette's husband became enraged, ordering him out of the house and pushing his daughter. Lynette and the girls went to a refuge for a few days to get away from him. When they failed to return to the house he called Lynette threatening to burn the house down.

In April 2006 an incident occurred that in Lynette's eyes really crossed the line. He was at the house and Lynette asked him about some money that he had borrowed a few days earlier for petrol. They were in the kitchen at the time and he threatened her with a knife, then hit her on the torso with a broom and across the face with a bible. Lynette's sister came to her assistance and he punched her in the face. Lynette grabbed the phone and ran. Her husband chased her outside and she fell over some bricks and building rubble. He stopped and abruptly went inside. Lynette hid in the trees and called the police before he came outside looking for her again. At the same time her daughters were calling the police on their mobile phones from the bedroom. The police arrived en masse, at least four police cars. They subdued Lynette's husband in the backyard and had capsicum spray ready to use on him if necessary. He was arrested, taken to hospital for psychiatric assessment, released, charged with assault, and sentenced to community service. Lynette cannot remember being involved in the decision about the criminal charges. The police took control of the situation and she was not even informed about the Court dates. However, she believes that it was necessary for him to be charged. There needed to be consequences. She could not let him get away with it any more. In retrospect Lynette believes the penalty was too lenient. It didn't seem fair after all he had put her through.

Around the time of the Court case Lynette's husband went into a residential facility for homeless men and underwent detox. He started going to AA meetings, attending church and going to the gym. Lynette valued his attempts to get help for his drinking problems. He said he wanted his family back. She agreed to a trial of living under the same roof. They reconciled in December 2006. Lynette does not believe that the experience of being charged and going to Court contributed to his change. She believes he still has not respect for the law. She attributes the changes to his realisation that he had gone too far. Punching his sister-in-law in the face crossed his own personal boundaries of acceptable behaviour. Additionally he did not want to lose his family; he did not want his daughters to hate him.

At the time of the interview they had been living together again for approximately six months. Lynette says he still has a temper but now he just yells or goes to for a walk to let off steam. She had noticed that he has started having a few drinks when he takes the dog for a walk but he does not drink at home. He has stopped going to AA meetings. Lynette feels a little bit let down that the changes he made are not being maintained or were not as substantial as he claimed. However, she is still tentatively hopeful that things will work out. He has recently found work and that has made it easier for them. Although they girls were reluctant to have him back in their lives they now seem to have a better relationship with their father than they did before the separation. There is more family togetherness whereas previously Lynette and the girls spent all their time together and he was alone, drinking at the other end of the house. Lynette believes that after all they have been through, they will stay together. She believes her husband's fear of losing his family and home will keep him on the straight and narrow. However, she is adamant that if the violent behaviour resumes she will call the police and she will divorce him.

### **Questions**

1. You said a few years ago he lost his job and started to drink more. Did you notice a change in his behaviour at that time (did the violence increase in intensity, frequency, or type. When she was hiding garage, ensuite, trees – did she call? What did they do?

### **First incident when she got the intervention order.**

2. The first time you rang the police, the time they got the intervention order, you had been arguing about his drinking and you said something about him being obsessed about the house. Were you talking about leaving him at that time? Had you been thinking about it at all?
3. That first time you called the police what was your main aim?
4. The police asked you if you wanted him charged and you said no. Why do you think that was?
5. Looking back do you think it might have been better if they had just charged him anyway? He didn't seem to take much notice of the intervention order, do you think he would have stalked you less if he was on criminal charges?
6. The first time police came, what do you think they thought about you and your situation?

7. What did they seem to think about your husband?
8. You mentioned the female officer who gave you some hope. Did you have any more contact with her? Did any of the police contact you after that night?

**Post intervention order**

9. After the intervention order he started threatening and stalking you. He even rang your brother. How did you brother react to this? What was your family advising you to do?
  10. You needed to go back to the house to feed the pets but he had already started threatening you. You rang the police. What did they say about the threats? (i.e or was it all about the dogs?) Did they do anything?
  11. Then he came and parked in the Court and the police were fooled into believing he was outside the 250 metres. He had no respect for the law. You didn't actually want him charged but you were frustrated about their approach. Can you tell me a bit more about this? (She wants to assert herself; show him that she is serious and that she has back-up. I wanted him to know that I do have the intervention order and I will rely on police to enforce it).
  12. Not wanting him charged, was this fear or concern for him?
  13. His condition deteriorated and he was threatening to kill himself and you. You called the police several times. What was your main aim in calling them?
  14. What do you think they thought about you and your situation?
  15. You said the house was a bit issue for him. Did he think his rights were being violated?
  16. What about your rights?
  17. When did you decide to vary the intervention order to allow him to have some access to the house? How did this come about (reduce risk or concern for him suffering terribly?)
  18. How much later was it that he threatened the boyfriend?
  19. What do you think now about that strategy?
- Arrest and charged incident (April 2006)**
20. When you called the police that night what was your main aim?
  21. You said the police came in abundance. What did this mean to you?

22. Did the arrest and charging of your husband change your view of his powerfulness? (Did she see that in fact the police could take control of him and the situation).
23. Can you compare their attitude this time to the other times, when you were telling them about all the threats?
24. You mentioned senior constable Johnson. Can you tell me a bit more about your dealings with him?
25. He says this is your house and you shouldn't be afraid. What did that make you think about your situation? And your rights?

**Overall**

26. There were lots of time you felt uninformed. They didn't let you know what was happening. How did this make you feel?
27. Were there ever times that you felt the police were working with you, to keep you safe?
28. Need to get her to do another survey B of before the separation.

**Reconciled.**

29. He moved back into the house in December 2006 on a trial basis, but living in different rooms. When did the relationship resume?
30. When did you notice the little bit of drinking start?
31. When you mentioned the drinking he had an outburst and you and the girls just got in the car and left for a few hours. How this is different from before you separated?
32. Was there in change in the drinking situation after this?
- 33. If you were in that situation again how would you handle it now?**
34. How have things been since we last met?

## Appendix 1 Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee Approval



**RESEARCH & PPROJECT GOVERNANCE**  
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Reference RCC: 451

12 April 2006

Kim Shearson  
13 Hosie Street  
Altona Meadows  
Vic 3028

Dear Kim

**Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study  
of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter**

It is my pleasure to advise you that the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee has approved your request to undertake the above research involving Victoria Police.

Please complete and return the accompanying Conditions of Access form at your earliest convenience. To speed up the process, you might like to send the signed document by fax (9247 6712).

Please do not hesitate to contact me by phone (9247 6732) or facsimile (9247 6712) if you have any questions you wish to raise.

Yours faithfully,

Dr. Joseph Poznanski  
Secretary to the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee

## Appendix J Plain language statement to police-participants

### Victoria University

PO Box 14428

MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001 (03) 9919 4000

Australia

### Telephone:

(03) 9919 4000



## Plain Language Statement to Police Members

### **Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter.**

We are seeking your participation in a research project that aims to examine the way police and female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) experience and understand their encounter when police are responding to an IPV incident. The study seeks to examine whether a female victim's relationship stage influences the victim-police encounter, and how that encounter then influences the victim's understanding of her situation and options, and subsequent help-seeking behaviour.

Police play a pivotal role in responding to IPV, particularly in providing protection in emergency situations. Last year Victoria Police recorded 29,162 Family Violence incidents. Police deal with a wide range of situations and victims. Some women are committed to maintaining their relationship, others may be considering or attempting to leave, whilst others are endeavouring to establish or maintain independence. The needs and expectations women have of police may vary according to their relationship stage. I will be interviewing women across these relationship stages to examine their needs, expectations, experiences, and perceived outcomes of an encounter with police responding to an IPV incident.

It is also important to understand the issues and difficulties that challenge police when they are working with victims of IPV. Are police able to understand the needs of women in the various relationship stages? How do police see their role and can police really assist women in all stages? We believe it is imperative to also examine the encounter from the police perspective to gain a deeper understanding of the possibilities and limitations of police intervention in IPV.

Participation in the project involves being interviewed about your experiences and understanding of the police response to IPV. You will be asked to provide an example of a professionally satisfying incident; one where you felt you provided a valuable service that constituted a worthwhile use of police resources. You will also be asked to provide an example of a case where you were dissatisfied or frustrated with the outcome, you were not able to provide a valuable service or you believed the attendance was not a good use of police resources. With your permission, the interview will be tape-recorded. Interviews will take approximately 40 minutes to one hour.

Participation is voluntary and confidential. You will not be identified in any documents, including interview transcripts that are produced from this project. You are free to withdraw

from the project at any time, without being jeopardized in any way. This includes revoking permission to use interview content after the interview has been conducted. You will be provided with a summary of the study results and will have access to the full report if desired.

Participants should be aware that Section 127A Police Regulation Act 1958, 'Unauthorised disclosure of information and documents' states:

(1) Any member of the police force who publishes or communicates, except to some person to whom he is authorised to publish or communicate it, any fact or document which comes to his knowledge or into his possession by virtue of this office and which it is his duty not to disclose shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.

Section 95 of the Constitution Act 1975 provides that officers in the public service must not:

- (a) publicly comment upon the administration of any department of the State of Victoria.
- (b) use exception in or for the discharge of this official duties, any information gained by or conveyed to him through connection with the public service; or
- (c) directly or indirectly use or attempt to use any influence with respect to the remuneration or position of himself or of any person in the public service.

If you have any questions about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Kim Shearson. If you agree to participate, please complete the attached Consent to be Contacted Form and return it in the reply paid envelope. Alternatively, you can call Kim Shearson directly on 0403 500 474 or 9315 6554 to arrange a convenient interview time, at your choice of venue.

Should you have any complaints or concerns in the manner in which this research has been conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the Research Coordinating Committee:

The Secretary to the Research Coordinating Committee  
Policing Research Unit  
Victoria Police Centre  
637 Flinders Street  
Melbourne 3005  
Tel: (03) 9247 6732  
Fax: (03) 9347 6712

Yours sincerely,

Professor Jill Astbury  
candidate.

Dr. Densie Charman

Kim Shearson, PhD

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Kim Shearson ph. 9919 2200 or 0403 500 474). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9688 4710). You may also contact the Secretary to the Victoria Police, Research Coordinating Committee, 637 Flinders Street, Melbourne 3005 Tel: 9247 6732.

## Appendix K Informed consent police-participants

### Victoria University

PO Box 14428  
MELBOURNE CITY MC VIC 8001 (03) 9919 4000  
Australia

### Telephone:



## Consent Form for Participants Involved in Research

### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study, described in the attached plain language statement, which aims to examine the way police and female victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) experience and understand their encounter when police are responding to an IPV incident.

### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I,  
of

certify that I am at least 18 years old and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study entitled:

Policing Intimate Partner Violence Involving Female Victims: An Exploratory Study of the Influence of Relationship Stage on the Victim-Police Encounter.

being conducted at Victoria University of Technology by: Professor Jill Astbury, Dr Denise Charman and Kim Shearson

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by: **Kim Shearson**

and that I freely consent to participation involving the use on me of these procedures.

**Procedures:** Participate in research interview.

I certify that I have had the opportunity to ask questions about this research and I have received answers that are satisfactory to me. I have read and kept a copy of the plain language statement and understand the general purpose, risks and methods of this research. I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

My agreement is based on the understanding that:

1. I am aware of what I am expected to do.
2. I have read the plain language statement and understand the general purpose, methods and demands of the study. All my questions have been answered.
3. I understand that the project may not be of direct benefit to me.
4. I can withdraw from the study at any time without prejudicing me.
5. I am satisfied with the explanation given in relation to the project so far as it affects me and my consent is freely given.
6. I can obtain overall results of the study.
7. I consent to the publication of results from this study provided details that might identify me are removed.

Signatures

Signed by the participant:-

\_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by the researcher: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the researcher (Name: Kim Shearson ph. 9919 2200 or 0403 500 474). If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Secretary, University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University of Technology, PO Box 14428 MCMC, Melbourne, 8001 (telephone no: 03-9919 4710). You may also contact the Secretary to the Victoria Police, Research Coordinating Committee, 637 Flinders Street, Melbourne 3005 Tel: 9247 6732.

**Appendix L Interview guide police-participants.**

**Police Interviews**

Demographics

Gender ..... Age .....  
Rank ..... No. years service .....

**Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence Incidents**

The purpose of this section is to approximately ascertain your level of experience in responding to IPV/FV incidents.

Approximate number of FV incidents attended during the last 12 months where the victim was female? .....  
How does this compare to previous years? .....

Percentage arrested ..... Number  
Percentage intervention orders sought  
Percentage charged .....

**IPV Training**

You would have had basic training at the academy regarding FV. Is this correct?

Have you had additional training in relation to FV/IPV, for example on training days?

How well do you think this training prepares you for dealing with the complex issues surrounding IPV?

What type of topics are covered?

Prompt: What about topics such as the cycle of violence, victimisation and entrapment  
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**Positive Case Study**

I would now like to ask you to provide an example of a FV incident (involving a female victim and intimate partner) that you would describe as positive or satisfactory.

[Prompt: For example: where you felt professionally satisfied with your work; you believe that you provided a valuable service; and/or you believed the response involved a worthwhile use of police resources]

**Description of case**

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Prompts for eliciting detailed description of case:

How did you plan, approach and handle this case?

**How did you gather evidence?**

**How do you know who to believe?**

What actions did you take?

What do you think you achieved?

**How would you prefer to handle this case?**

**What else would you have liked to be able to do**

What factors influenced your decision making in this case?

Was an intervention order in place?

What was the victim's relationship status at the time?

Did you/do you have ongoing contact with the victim?

Do you know the long-term outcome of this case?

Do you know the victim's current relationship status?

What criteria did you use to pick this particular case?

What was it about this case that was satisfying for you?

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How did/do you feel about this case?

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**Do you think this was a chronic abuse case?**

**How much insight do you think the victim had?**

**How ready did she seem to make change?**

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Can you describe the victim's emotional/ psychological state at the time?

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Can you rate the level of this state on a scale from 0 to 10.

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0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Were you concerned about her physical safety?

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Were you concerned about her psychological wellbeing?

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### Negative Case Study

I would now like you to provide an example of an IPV incident that you would describe as negative or unsatisfactory.

[Prompt: For example: where you felt professionally dissatisfied with your work; you believe that you did not provide a valuable service; and/or you believed the response involved a waste of police resources]

### Description of case

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Prompts for eliciting detailed description of case:

How did you plan, approach and handle this case?

**How did you gather evidence?**

**How do you know who to believe?**

What actions did you take?

What do you think you achieved?

How would you prefer to handle this case?

What factors influenced your decision making in this case?

Was an intervention order in place?

What criteria did you use to pick this particular case?

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How did/do you feel about this case?

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What was it about this case that was dissatisfying for you?

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What was the victim's relationship status at the time?

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**Do you think this was a chronic abuse case?**  
**How much insight do you think the victim had?**  
**How ready did she seem to make change?**

Can you describe the victim's emotional/ psychological state at the time?

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Can you rate the level of this state on a scale from 0 to 10.

**I**     **I**     **I**     **I**     **I**     **I**     **I**     **I**     **I**     **I**  
0     1     2     3     4     5     6     7     8     9     10

Were you concerned about her physical safety?

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Were you concerned about her psychological wellbeing?

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Did you/do you have ongoing contact with the victim?

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Do you know the long-term outcome of this case?

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Do you know the victim's current relationship status?

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**Police Role**

What are the different roles you take on when responding to IPV?

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What type of situation/incident do you most commonly deal with?

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...

\*\*\* What type of situation/incident is the most difficult to deal with?

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\*\*\* What type of situation/incident is the most disturbing to deal with?

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What concerns you most about policing IPV/FV?

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When do you feel most useful?

How does policing IPV differ from responding to stranger assault?

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**How can police stop abuse from escalating in the future?**

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**How effective are intervention orders in preventing future violence?  
What are the difficulties or problems associated with enforcing intervention orders?**

What happens if all incidents are treated as equally serious; does the response lose its impact?

What is the role of Victoria Police in reducing the overall level of IPV in the community?

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What is needed to help VicPol achieve that aim?

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If you were allocating additional resources earmarked for IPV intervention what would you do?

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...

How concerned for your own safety are you when dealing with IPV incidents?

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...

How does this compare to other patrol duties?



## Appendix M Analysis table –

The following table was a tool I used to summarise individual participant flow-charts, make comparisons across cases and check my conceptual framework.

<i>Pseudonym ReIn stage</i>	<i>Event / Victim status</i>	<i>Aims/ underlying needs</i>	<i>Alliance?</i>	<i>Strategies/actions</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>
Maria Reaches end of endurance =Disengaging	/true victim/ low violence. Threatens her when she tries to end reln (I'll put you in hosp). Throws vase at her. Close prox – at house Fear ++ qualitatively different.	Remove him. Panacea – they'd take him away and I'm never going to see him again.	yes	Collaborative informal action/send him away/informal warning. Advised to get intervention order, Referral offered Options explained Info re dv services, refuges & IOs	Abuse is named and not tolerated. She sees his fear. There is a shift in power. She feels supported, safer. Permission to call, agency and rights. Contemplates her options and seeks order with Dv support. Order granted – laws to protect women; justice, validation (FU p. 17). 4-5 months of no harassment. Then starts again.
Maria later Recovery/	nullified/ verbal abuse and. Ongoing harassment , Incident at handover – close		No She perceives alliance with perp!!	Dismissive Rights of father protected. Takes statement but not follow-up. Contacts partner –	Abuse/breach trivialised. Unless I'm bleeding. Rejected, unprotected, order is seen as worthless. Betrayed, disregarded, alone. Tolerates harassment and adopts new management strategies.

	prox at station			friendly warning. Offers to mediate,	
Jenny 1 <sup>st</sup> contact Disengaging but fearful of leaving.	Seeking new strategies to manage escalating and qualitatively different violence	Cold call to station to seek general help. Not sure what she wants – needs direction.	No alliance. Believed but not taken seriously.	Redirected to Crt. Officer fails to counter her fears about antagonising him. Her ambivalence or reluctance accepted and onus on her. But given an important message – call 000 if it happens again.	Interprets that io's are not police business. Selfworth decreases. Entrapment reinforced. Left to cope alone. I month later major episode experienced. Calls 000 as directed.
Jenny 2 <sup>nd</sup> Disengaging/.	Becomes aware she can never let herself be in that situation again Crisis call to house. Threat to kill with knife. Believes he will kill her.	Crisis call. Stop violence.	Yes. Believed and taken seriously. Forms bond with Supportive officer	Removed and charged with threat to kill. Intervention order sought. Prescriptive action. Suggest go to mums but she feels safe with him removed/	Feels believed, supported, empowered, sees him thru policewoman's eyes. She may have been stabbed/killed without police. Protected, valued/ Reality check – validation of experience and her judgement. Post event support and info. Shielding. Social sanctions.
Jenny 3 <sup>rd</sup> Recovery.	Cold calls to report breaches.		No.	Fobbed off. Conflicting info given. His reights to visit neighbours defened. Reluctance to pursue – might antagonise him. Suggests informal warning	Police affirm eggshell approach.

Sophie 1 Recovery	Got intervention order herself from crt at lawyers suggestion. Harrassment continued so reported breaches. Several cold calls	Multiple calls, texts etc on the pretext of making sure she was ok. Harrassment causing psychological distress – wants it to stop.	No.	Her documentation of incidents breaching order are filed. No action taken. Multiple excuses for not pursuing investigation or charges.	Testimony of harassment recorded for future use. Feels fobbed off. Multiple excuses to put her off. IOs are worthless. No accountability. Harrassment continues. Resorts to using strategies to manage on her own.
Sophie 2 Recovery	He comes to house. She calls police to assert herself and intervention order. He then goes to police station to make a complaint against her.	Fear of potential for violence. Seeking to enforce intervention order. Assert herself/ her right to be left alone.	Neutral stand – some signs of alliance. ? equally distressed seen as custody issue. .	Has met police officer before (with kids). He reassures the kids. Peace keeping/ problem solving approach – get solicitor to sort it out. Power of authority used to get him to go home.	Feels believed; agrees that family crt orders complicate matter. Police officer is seen as caring but limited. Liaises with other officer at station to get him to drop in and go home. Supported.
Sophie 3 Recovery	Intervention order expired. Doing handovers at station. Police notice luring behaviour.		Alliance.	Police encourage and advise her to get another intervention order. Detain him so she can leave safely	Validation. Support. Believed. Protected.
Sophie 4 Recovery	Handovers at station. A different officer. Asks him to walk	Seeking acknowledgement of intimidation. Seeking a	No alliance or alliance with perp.	Refuses assistance. She is seen as troublemaker. Matey, blokey attitude.	Believes perp was empowered by lack of action.

	out to carpark with her.	protector.			
Sophie 5 Recovery	Cold call after going to FV seminar. FVU facilitates contact with local officer.		Alliance	No action taken at the time. Advice and strategies developed to protect her and gather evidence -direction	Believed – relief. Empathy support.
Marion Disengaging/ recovery	Returning to family home after refuge.	Cold call but immediate need to return safely. Worried he will be waiting for her	Alliance. Seen as true victim due to Crt order etc	Checked house. Reassuring and showed compassion	Felt safe and supported. Believes she would not have be able to return to her home without police protection
Marion recovery	Cold call to station. To report suspected illegal activities financial and threats.	Wants husband investigated. Wants harrassmetn to stop	Nullified. Police focus on her financial matters raised.	No actions taken. Threats not central to interaction.	Feels dismissed and unprotected. Threats escalate. She becomes scared to leave the house. Lost opportunity to prevent further abuse.
Marion Recovery	Cold call to report threats	Wants protection	Alliance	Fears taken seriously. C&W for IO. Arrested and bailed. Offered refuge.	Feels safe and protected. Starts to engage in normal activities. Feels free to leave the house.
Marion recovery	Full order not granted at Crt. Police sympathetic.	Husband taunts her and continues harassment.	Alliance. Ongoing contact with 1 officer to document harrassment	Developing strategies for safety and evidence to apply for another IO	Feels supported in attempts to remain free from violence.
Bianca					

Multiple calls during enduring stage					
Bianca Disengaging Sept 2005	She goes to crt herself and is granted interim order.	Aims to end relationship and have him removed from her house	No alliance – police performing routine service of order.	Police serve interim order and summons for hearing for full order.	He is removed. He does not attend crt – full order granted ex-parte.
Bianca recovery	Shortly after crt, he starts hanging round the house, sleeping in the car. She calls the local station many times (cold call)	Wants full order served and for police to make his stop harassing him	No alliance. Police do not take her concerns seriously.	They repeatedly tell her they are too busy or don't have a car. Order not served	She feels rebuffed. Not worthy of help. Fear. He subsequently breaks in and attacks her (see next entry
Bianca recovery	3 hour ordeal, physically and sexually assaulted, choked, threatened with knife	Not able to call police herself. Mum calls them after brother attempts to visit. Wants full police action.	No alliance. Criminality minimised. No statement taken or evidence gathered.	He escapes (tells them he needs to get something). Short chase. Police return to house and tell her to pack and leave. They leave her. He returns. Police are called again. Eventually arrested. Charged with possession of drugs.	Felt police did not care about her or take the extent of the assault seriously.
Bianca recovery	Cold call to see what was	Information about charges. Seeking	No alliance – felt she had	Criminal charges added.	Onus was on her to seek justice. Made to feel it was her responsibility to

	happening about charges	justice.	to convince police that is was serious. Some of the events she reported were omitted from her statement.	Demoralising experience of giving statement and not being fully believed. He was given a non custodial sentence	follow up re assault rather than police responsibility.  Harassment continues. He taunts her that he can do whatever he wants – he is empowered. She believes there were no repercussions for him.
Bianca recovery	Following crt he continues to harass, phone her, slashed her tyres	Cold call to report breaches	No alliance – “fobbed off”	Breaches not pursued – e.g. can’t prove he was the one who slashed her tyres	She gives up on police. Gets security cameras. Applies for shutter thru victims of crime – police report says she always takes him back. Feels judged and worthless.
Rita 1 Enduring/transition	Crisis call Slaps her really hard.		Alliance “on my side”	Help her leave to aunty’s. Directive action. Come to station re summons. Go with her to Crt. He flees country,	Support. Helpful. Protection Professional approach. Learns that police will intervene in DV. Sees his fear & they are on her side – empowered. Police attitude and assertions about him counter his blaming of her – reality check Crt dismissed (or order not served?) as he failed to appear – in limbo. Period of respite then reconciled.
Rita 2 Disengaging	Physical abuse and threat to kill		Alliance – ends abruptly when she goes into	Help her pack, give her time. He is cuffed. Take them both to station for statements.	Provides perspective – this is a serious offence. Quick response – felt safe. Lack of information and communication re

			refuge due to loss of contact.	Refuge organised. Husband flees country again. She doesn't realise an intervention order application has been made.	intervention order; misses crt date – I have to be more vigilant, do it myself.
Rita 3 Disengaging/ transition to recovery	10 days later (when she leaves refuge). Seeks information re her case. Cold call to station. Can't remember officers name from incident.		No alliance	Her vague aims are not clarified. Officer refuses to provide statements and fails to ascertain her needs or provide any information or helped.	Rebuffed – they were rude. Still enduring abusive text messages. She is relatively safe because he is overseas but she doesn't know what will happen if he returns.
Rita 4 Recovery	One year later. Believes husband may be returning to country. Wants him put on immigration watch list. Daughter is on watch list to prevent him taking her out of country – wants to know if she can		No Alliance	Officer makes note in logbook (to appease her). Told to contact the officer she dealt with previously (absent colleague technique).	Fobbed off. Trivialised. Situation and her concerns not taken seriously.

	be alerted on his return				
Leanne Enduring 2005	Beaten in drive way. High level violence. Pathological reln	Neighbour calls police. Take him away. Send him to his father in qld.	No alliance	Criminal charges and intervention order. Suspended sentence	He moves in with a friend who lives close by. He maintains contact and appeals to sense responsibility for him. He convinces her to vary order because he has nowhere else to live.
Leanne enduring	Multiple calls for varying levels of violence. Pathologised reln “police saw us as a couple of drunks”	Heightened sense of fear after previous incident – rings police quickly if violence starts. Aim to stop violence and remove him (lock him up for the night). Further action not wanted.	No alliance. Some attempts by police to convince her to end the relationship but she resisted. All action was prescriptive.	He would often leave before they arrived – police would not follow up. Various peacekeeping tactics ranging from telling them to stop, taking him to next suburb, sometimes taking him into custody. Often got intervention orders (14 orders over the years).	Temporary respite. Often returned immediately and beat her for calling police. If intervention order in place he would convince her to vary it. She remained fearful and trapped; alone and unprotected She had conflicted feelings about him.
Leanne enduring 4/2/2007	High level violence and threat to kill	Guest calls police	No alliance – perceives police are fed up with both of them	Criminal charges. Custodial sentence (reduced to 2 months).	Long term respite – new views of self; likes it on her own; awakened sense of justice; increased self-respect. Moves to disengaging and recovery. Regrets staying with him for so long
Leanne recovery	Contacts police station before he is due to be	Looking for safety strategies	Alliance with one particular officer	Advises intervention order. Provides support. Calls round to see her –	Intervention order in place. She has confidence in police response. He tries to get into house but she calls police

	released from jail. Fearful			reinforces alliance. Tell her that he'll be back in jail if he does anything.	immediately and does not let him in. Empowered.
Antoinette 1. Disengaging July 2006	Incident at house. Low level violence. Aim to get him out of her life. Wanted him arrested and charged.		Alliance	He leaves before police arrive. Encouraged her to go to crt the following Monday for intervention order. i.e referred. No visible evidence. No action. Threats to kill (if you leave I'll kill you) dismissed.	Perspective – there is nothing to stop you leaving, forget about the house. Advice. Feels she has to do it herself. Husband returns in the interim and reconciles – resumes enduring stage. Abuse continues. Lost opportunity. Attempts refuge some time later – returns because it was disgusting.
Antoinette 2 Dec 2006	Argument – pushes, kicks, grabs her by face. She scratches him. Aim – stop incident. End relationship Note: her abuse is mainly financial as are her barriers to leaving. Police don't understand.		Alliance	Both parties present when police arrive. Police offer intervention order but onus on her to decide. He makes a statement of complaint against her (later withdrawn).	Try to influence him – relationship is over – leave her alone. Perspective – try to show her he is a scumbag. She declines as they can't stop him taking the car. Relationship continues.
Antoinette 3 March 2007 Disengaging			No alliance at first and then a very weak	Officer is abrupt. Not interested in yesterday, only today. Rebuffed.	He returns in the interim. Depressed ++ 9 days later seeks order from crt with

			alliance with neighbour's advocacy	Refuses to come inside. No bruises – no intervention order. Reluctantly agrees to help her with summons for order if she comes to station – apt for 9.00 p.m 3 days later. Delayed. c&w – arrested. After order is in place police are more helpful – she followed rules.	school's assistance' granted. He stays away. Overall effects – failure to act empowers husband; suffers additional violence due to long delay. Sense of justice when he is arrested. Put on priority list.
Antoinette Recovery April 2007	Several calls to police when he phones – alternates between pleading and threatening		Alliance - collaborative	Police go to see her and then go to his place and warn him. Ask her about breach charges but she declines – onus on her – feels a bit sorry for him.	He backs off. She feels protected. Continues to use kids to try to convince her to reconcile.
Carol Recovery	When returning children he grabbed and pushed her against the car, pressing into her and grabbing her breast.	Cold call to police by phone to report assault at handover of children. Aim: wants it recorded (in case of escalation). Seeking guidance – I don't know the	Attempted alliance. Officer suggests charges but she doesn't want to. They both take it seriously but	Police name sexual assault. She should come in and make a statement. She sees multiple barriers to criminal charges: lack of emotional resources; kids; stigma; not wanting to be	Nothing recorded – felt let down, no outcome. Resumes management strategies. Redirected to crt – it's always up to me. However, contacting police experienced as taking a small step towards asserting herself. Violence is named – police told her she should not put up with it.

		law.	do not share a view of course of action.	responsible. Advised to go to crt for intervention order but she doesn't want to	New perspective of the abuse – this is more serious than I thought. Felt more confident to contact police in future – empowered. He sees her in new light – you actually called them
Carol recovery	He leaves 12 year old son home alone till 11.00pm on custody visit.	Cold call to police station in person to report neglect. Also reports ongoing harassment .	Alliance. Taken seriously/ agreed action	Police advise her to report neglect to DHS and go to crt for intervention order. Female officer gives Carol her card – call anytime.	Officer perceived as kind and caring but not able to do more. She goes straight to crt. Clerk makes an appointment for her for 5 days later (she thinks to lodge paperwork) – no interim; very little information. She feels let down and alone. Loses motivation to proceed. “5 days to cool off”. 5 days for him to make it up to her. Continues to manage abuse alone. Pattern during marriage continues. At follow-up, less fear, more power and confidence to call and proceed if necessary. New experience of rights to live her own life; no stressj.
Lauren Enduring 2003	Threatening behaviour, yelling and throwing things. Distressed couple	Fears for her baby's safety. Wants him stopped. Wants to name the abuse. Tell him to behave (ego support)	No. Asked about intentions to remain in reln	Separate and cool off. She is asked to go to her mum's. Advised re intervention order if she wants to end reln. Onus on her.	He stops abuse as soon as she calls – pretends nothing has been going on. She learns that police are unlikely to help her unless she agrees to end relationship. Unprotected . Abuse normalised. Treated like an “hysterical dumb slut”

Lauren 2006 Disengaging	Building verbal abuse and low level violence (shook and bruised her). Walks out on her – an aspect of his ongoing emotional abuse	Recognises pattern of abuse and wants to stop it. Cold call visit to station seeking intervention order and reporting assault.	Reluctant alliance – she has to be assertive to get them to take the assault. Afterwards they continue to follow-up.	Police decide to press charges.	5 year intervention order granted. 12 month period of separation. She seeks counselling. She heals and gains new perspectives. He seems to change. They reconcile but she feels empowered and more confident this time.
Lauren – has resumed relationship. Some “bad behaviour” but less than before (? Enduring again)	Follow up re charges	Police contact her re proceeding with assault charges, She wants them dropped as they are back together.	Reluctant alliance – police convince her to go ahead with charges, offering a diversion to anger management.	Charges are pursued. Prescriptive action and shielding.  Living in intervention order.	12 month suspended sentence. Men’s program mandated. Her rights are re-enforced. She feels stronger, less fear. He learns appropriate behaviour – as per intervention order (although probably his underlying belief system is not altered).
Rachael enduring	Full day of verbal abuse and minor physical abuse escalating as the day progressed until he threw her across the room and started beating her,	Extreme fear. Aim – stop the attack. Does not want him there.	Alliance formed. Police take the lead and she accepts their course of action.	Police attend crt for intervention order hearing. Intervention order granted. No criminal charges,	Felt supported and protected. Would never have sought intervention order on her own initiative. Shortly after he starts contacting her. Promises to get help – relationship resumes. Retrospectively believes he should have been charged – stranger assault would have been.

Rachael enduring	Partner is abusive; he refuses to leave.	Wants him to leave; aim temporary respite	No alliance. Victim and police recognise her short term strategy.	He is gone before police arrive. She says she is happy with that. No action. They tell her to call again if he returns.	He stays away for 3 days. Feels police were less caring than previously but attributed to her “breaking the rules” last time. Feels confident to call police in future. Eventually ends relationship without assistance, although has much contact due to access to child. He continues abuse in this context, which she continues to tolerate.
Erin Enduring	Multiple calls. Long term intermittent relationship. Financial abuse escalating to physical if she refused to give him money for drugs. Reln pathology	Temporary respite. Make him go. Stop rampage.	No alliance – police would try to convince her she deserved better/get an intervention order but she was desperate to keep the reln.	He would leave before they arrived or they would make him go. Warn him not to come back No formal actions for a long time.	He would leave for a while. When he returned, she usually gave him money – intimidation or manipulation. She would not call police again because they were getting sick of her. Status quo maintained. Perceives some police pitied her; other showed contempt. Very low self esteem reinforced. He was empowered by no action – a big joke.
	Another episode demanding money. He damages her car in frustration	Aim: stop the abuse and damage to car	No alliance. Police want to press charges but she just wants respite.	Police take prescriptive action and charge him with property damage. He gets her to call them to drop charges. They proceed – shielding.	Police officer is perceived as caring, especially about her children. She appears with him in court and lies that he has paid her for the damage.

Erin reluctantly disengaging (fear of DHS taking her kids if she didn't get an intervention order)	Another episode	Wants abuse to stop.	More receptive to police due to fears re losing custody	Police take prescriptive action re intervention order. She complies and attends court.	Order granted. He continued to come round for money but having the order made it easier for her to make him leave – she was empowered. His hold on her slowly weakens. She comes to see him as a manipulator and the relationship as unviable. Police helped her realise no-one should live like that. She would never have ended it without their insights. Self-worth increases
Chelsea 1 Binding & 1 <sup>st</sup> violence	Assaults her. Calls police from taxi. Shocked, confused, seeking explanation and direction,		No.	Redirected. Police tell her to go to her local station to report.	Feels rejected. Violence minimised. Goes home. Contacts him several days later seeking explanation. Relationship continues. Violence increases.
Chelsea 2 Enduring but still not cohabiting	Assault. Won't let her leave his place/ Aim: help her get out.		No.	Advised to end relationship. No investigation or intervention order. Partner discredits her re depression. They take her home in the back of a van.	Pathologised, Abuse decriminalised. Treated like a crazy lady. Isolated; desperate. Learns it is not helpful to call police. Rel continues. He breaks her arm. She moves in with him so he can care for her.
Chelsea 3 Enduring. cohabiting	Hit in eye. Head butted.			Police attend at scene. Offer to charge – onus on her. She declines. They become rude.	Learns rule of engagement. Partner empowered. Taunts her – police won't help you. Depressed, suicidal.

				Partner discredits her. Not true victim. Leave her there; no action	Abuse continues. Short separation with brother's help. Resumes relationship - pregnant
Chelsea 4. Disengaging	Head butts her again. Wants to leave him. Requests refuge.		No	He leaves before police arrive. Police – not serious enough for refuge. Peacekeeping approach. Advice –let things calm down.	Trapped.
Chelsea Several more calls	Enduring. Non specific aim – help me		No alliance	Becomes known to police – chronic user. Peacekeeping approach. Police keep telling her to charge. She keeps refusing. onus on her.	Gives up on police. Goes to refuge with help from whw 2002. Gets intervention order. Resettles in new housing. Stays apart for a while but he is evicted and comes to her for temp accom. Relationship resumes.
Chelsea enduring again From early 2003	Several more calls for help as assaults occur			Intervention order in place but no charges re breach. He is taken for questioning a few times but released with no further action. Advised to vary intervention order to living in – she doesn't.	
Chelsea 5 Disengaging 2005	Tries to make him leave. Assaults her – calls for		Yes	She is taken seriously for the first time. True victim. Arrested and	Intolerance of abuse shown. Supported. Referral to DV provided. Feels worthy.

	help			charged with assault and breach. Police visit several times to check on her.	
Chelsea 6 Disengaging - recovery	Partner and his family intervene; manipulate her to drop charges. She agrees and contacts police.		Alliance weakened	Police officer is disappointed in her but proceeds with breach charges. Police take onus. Assault charges dropped.	Prescriptive action. Court. He is fined. She stays apart.
Chelsea 7	One week after court he starts stalking and harassing her. She documents and reports breaches.		Alliance with officer compiling brief.	Ongoing investigation. Partner interviewed.	Stalking stops. She is empowered. He learns that she can and will enact police intervention. Balance of power shifts.
Chelsea 8	She is very sick – contacts him for help with daughter		Alliance weakened	He tells police she harassed him. She is reprimanded for jeopardising investigation.	Charges delayed. Eventually goes to crt on stalking and unrelated drug charges. Harassing phone calls continue. She is relocating. Feels stronger and determined to stay apart.
Sarah Multiple calls when enduring	No definite recollection	escape		Peacekeeping	
Sarah Disengaging (waiting on	Assault. Threat to cave her head in. threw her out of	Called police from phone box and met them outside	Alliance. Police helped her get the	Intervention order sought.	Supported. Felt cared about Partner broke into house a few days later and forced her to revoke the order.

emerg accom youth housing) 2002	house; kept the 2 children inside with him. True victim (he is seen as the problem)	house. Aim to get her children and leave safely.	children even though officially they had no authority re custody.		Sarah did not report breach. Relationship resumes
Sarah enduring/ attempting to disengage	Multiple calls to police for assault	Aim leave safely or get children	Alliance (one time she was chastised for leaving the kids)	5 intervention orders sought by police across the years.	Supported. Helped. Like having a big brother looking out for you. Some attempts at refuge or living with mum but both intolerable so reconciliation and return to crt to revoke order. She felt she was letting police down each time she returned – shame.
Sarah enduring	At court to revoke order			Prescriptive action. Police attend to contest variation	Living in order granted.
Sarah disengaging. Waiting and hoping he would be sent to jail for other pending charges (repeated drink driving)	Assault	Make him stop.	Alliance. She gives statement but says she doesn't want to leave him – hope for jail.	Police add assault and breach charges. Eventually arrested and remanded in custody.	24 charges laid against him. Shielded by police re charges. 5 year sentence – reduced to 18 months on appeal (he intimidated her into appearing for him at appeal). Long term respite gave her time to establish a new life – like a normal person. She started studying and found work. Continued to live independently after his release.
Marlene 1 Transition to disengaging	Husband displays increasing erratic behaviour. Sexual		Not at incident but yes when	Husband says she has PND. Peacekeeping approach. Everything	Redirected Onus on her. Not taken seriously

	harassment. OCD re washing kids. Pushes her out of bathroom. Tries to leave house. Stops her.		serving FVIO	seems fine now. Referred to crt - she follows through gets iio.	Pathologised.  Helpful and supportive when removing him.
Marlene 2 Disengaging	She seeks interventFVIO order again after 2-3 month reconciliation. Police attend to serve iFVIO		Not really sought as the attendance was via crt procedures	Police helpful and supportive. He is told he has 24 hrs to leave. Full order not granted	Separate again. Separation persisting at time of follow-up. He is empowered.
Marlene 3 Recovery	Reporting breaches. Drivebys, scared rings then attends station. Aim – stop harassment.		No	Believed but lack of evidence. Advice about types of evidence. Breaches not investigated.	Deterred.
Marlene 4 Recovery	Children not returned after access.		Alliance with him	Ring him – he discredits her and is believed re PND and manipulation.	Traumatised. He is empowered. Keeps kids another 3 days. Feels accused, devastated. Rebuffed and blamed.
Lynette Enduring	Argument, husband threatens her then starts ramming car in fence	Crisis call to stop incident. No thoughts of ending relationship when calling	Alliance. I female officer is very supportive.	Arrested, c&w for FVIO.	Feels relieved when he is taken into custody but very unsure and upset. Fears reprisals. Transitions to disengaging Multiple calls and threats after his

			Encourages her re trial separation.		release, which she does not report.
Lynette early recovery	Comes home to find him parked in the street	Crisis call to remove him and enforce FVIO	No alliance. She is very worried about his presence. Husband argues he is outside 200m radius. They don't dispute this claim with him	Peace keeping approach. Husband is escorted away.	Dismayed that FVIO is not enforced. Husband taunts her that he tricked the police and uses their lack of action to scare her. Harassment and threats continue. Drives into driveway and shines lights through window. Family hides at night, keeps lights off– don't want to let him know they are home.
Lynette recovery	Ongoing threats to kill himself and other, burn down house	Multiple calls to report his disturbing behaviour to police and also police via CAT. Wants help for him. Believes he is suicidal	No alliance. Concerns not taken seriously.	Police look for him at train station. Say there is little they can do without being there when he makes threats. Focus is on her concerns re his mental health, not on the fact he is threatening her too.	Feels unprotected and unsafe. Thinks no one takes his potential for serious violence seriously. Eventually varies the order to allow him to visit in an attempt to placate and manage him.
Lynette Recovery	When his is on a visit with the children, her husband suddenly becomes violent	Crisis call to stop violence and remove him	Partial Alliance – she feels they still didn't understand	Arrested. Taken to psych hospital for assesment. Released and charged with assault. FVIO sought	Police helpful at the time of incident. Less supportive afterwards – feel she was not kept informed. Husband prosecuted – community service. Lynette dismayed at leniency.

	and attacks her and her sister.		his potential for violence. He is aggressive with police. Takes a number of officers to subdue and arrest him	and granted	Husband goes into residential facility for treatment. 8 months later they reconcile. She still feels safer if she can monitor him. Believes he is better than before but placating and managing environment to minimise risk of inciting him still occurring.
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