

Examining Police Officer Safety at Domestic Violence Calls

by

Rahul Sharma

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Name: Rahul Sharma
Degree: Master of Arts (Criminology)
Title: *Examining Police Officer Safety at Domestic Violence Calls*
Examining Committee: **Chair:** Dr. Martin Andresen
Associate Professor

Dr. Rick Parent
Senior Supervisor
Associate Professor

Dr. Sheri Fabian
Supervisor
Senior Lecturer

Len Goerke
External Examiner
West Vancouver Police Department

Date Defended/Approved: March 30, 2015

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Abstract

The police occupation is viewed as dangerous; police officers work in adverse environments that include dealing with individuals with a mental illness or under the influence alcohol and/or drugs, arresting criminals, the potential for assault by criminals, and responding to traumatic scenes. Officers regularly attend domestic violence calls that include many of the above factors. Qualitative in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 police officers working in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia to better understand officer perceptions of the dangers associated with attending domestic violence calls. The majority of officers viewed domestic violence calls as one of the more dangerous calls that they attend, largely because of their unpredictable nature. Prevalent themes emerging from the data include volatile emotions, victims turning against officers, dangers of entering an unknown residence, alcohol use contributing to irrational or aggressive behaviour, and the challenges for officers working in rural areas.

Keywords: domestic violence; police officer safety; qualitative research; interviews

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my caring, loving, and supportive parents and brother. You are the best family anyone could ask for.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Much of the existing literature suggests that policing is one of the more dangerous and challenging occupations (Brandl & Strohshine, 2012; Moon & Jonson, 2012). This is largely due to the fact that police officers work in adverse environments that involve arresting criminals (with the possibility of injury arising from criminals resisting arrest), the potential for assault by criminals, dealing with individuals with mental illnesses or under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, responding to traumatic scenes, and being in contact with suffering and death (Brandl & Strohshine, 2012, Belvedere, Worrall, & Tibbetts, 2005, Ryan, Kriska, West, & Sacco, 2001; Kaminski & Sorensen, 1995; Brown, Fielding, & Grover, 1999).

Many of the factors that make police work dangerous occur in domestic violence calls. It was not until the 1970s that domestic violence came to be recognized as both a serious social and criminal problem (Erez, 1986). Prior to this, domestic violence was viewed as a private matter that did not warrant the attention of the police. As a result, police officers were reluctant to intervene in such matters (DeJong, Burgess-Proctor, & Ellis, 2008). Although police intervention methods in domestic violence calls have changed for the better, a large body of research suggests that police officers have concerns and frustrations when attending these calls. For instance, police officers note that it is difficult to determine the primary aggressor in these situations (DeJong et al., 2008). Police officers also experience role conflicts when attending domestic violence calls. At a domestic violence call, officers have to take on a role of a social worker, something they may not feel comfortable with or feel that they have not received enough training to take on such a roll (Balenovich, Grossi, & Hughes, 2008; DeJong et al., 2008). Police officers also express frustration over victim non-cooperation, difficulty in applying domestic violence laws, attending repeat calls at the same address and with victims continuing to stay in abusive relationships (Johnson, 2004; Sinden & Stephens, 1999).

Police officers also voice concerns about the unpredictability of domestic violence calls, which can leave officers feeling vulnerable (Horwitz et al., 2011). Domestic violence incidents are described as emotionally charged, and the presence of officers can exacerbate the situation (Lee, Zhang, & Hoover, 2013; MacDonald, 2003). In addition, domestic violence incidents often involve high rates of alcohol and/or drug usage by at least one of the parties involved (e.g., Leonard, 2001 or Sinden & Stephens, 1999). The use of alcohol and/or drugs by one of the parties at this call becomes a concern since the literature on assaults against police officers finds that suspect intoxication is often a factor in violence against officers (Kaminsiki & Sorensen, 1995). Additionally, quite often weapons (typically knives or other household items) are used in domestic violence incidents and there is a concern that these weapons can be used against responding officers (Lee et al., 2013).

Much effort was placed on researching the dangerousness of domestic violence call from a quantitative perspective between the 1970s and 1990s. The earliest and most influential work on the dangerousness of domestic violence calls was done by Bard (1970, as cited in Garner & Clemmer, 1986) who, using Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data, claimed that domestic disturbance calls were responsible for nearly one-fifth of all officer deaths. This claim was later found to be exaggerated because Bard (1970) incorrectly used the category of Disturbance Calls in his analysis. The category of Disturbance Calls included not only domestic disturbance calls, but also several other types of calls (e.g., bar fights, shots fired). Subsequent research into the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls was inconclusive and contradictory. Research into this area seems to have disappeared by the early 1990s. As noted above, all of the research done on the dangerousness of domestic violence/disturbance calls used a quantitative perspective (e.g., calculating danger rates and comparing the dangerousness of domestic violence calls against other calls that police officers attend). However, no attempt has been made to speak to those responsible for attending domestic violence calls (i.e., police officers) to understand what makes domestic violence calls dangerous. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is to extend the research on the dangerousness of domestic violence calls. Using a qualitative framework, this thesis aims to move beyond research that attempts to quantify the dangerousness of domestic violence calls and

seeks to understand what makes domestic violence calls so dangerous by speaking directly with those tasked with attending such calls.

Following this introductory chapter, chapter two, the literature review, provides an examination of prior quantitative research on the dangerousness of domestic violence calls, as well as research on aspects of domestic violence calls that can be dangerous for attending officers. Key British Columbia (BC) governmental documents on domestic violence are also presented in the literature review. In chapter three, the research methodology is addressed beginning with a discussion of the sampling and recruiting strategy followed by a discussion of the interview method used. Next, ethical considerations are addressed with the final part of that chapter focusing on the analysis of results, which covers transcription, coding, and the importance of demonstrating quality in qualitative research. Key findings are presented in chapter five, which includes the presentation of results as well as a broader discussion of the implications of the findings. The thesis concludes with chapter six, which begins by discussing the key findings and providing recommendations based on the findings of this study and, then, moves on to highlighting the strengths and limitations of this thesis. This final chapter concludes with suggestions for future research on this topic.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The literature review for this thesis begins with a review of key documents produced by governmental agencies about domestic violence in BC. The next part of the literature review presents an examination of the research on police officer attitudes and views toward domestic violence calls. The following section then highlights characteristics of domestic violence calls that may make them dangerous for police officers. The literature review concludes with a description of past primarily quantitative research that specifically examines the dangerousness of domestic violence calls.

2.1. Domestic Violence in British Columbia

2.1.1. Intimate Partner Violence in British Columbia, 2003-2011

The latest information on domestic violence related deaths in British Columbia is provided through the BC Coroner's Service report, *Intimate Partner Violence in British Columbia, 2003-2011* (BC Coroners Service, 2012). Between 2003 and 2011, 147 intimate partner violence (IPV) related deaths occurred in BC. In this report, IPV is defined as any "intentional harm or injury inflicted by a current spouse or former spouse, boy or girlfriend, or other romantic partner" (p. 4). Of the total number of homicides in BC during this time period (952), domestic violence related deaths make up 13% of the total homicides (120).

One-third of the 120 IPV related homicides were classified as pre-meditated and another third as spontaneous. The motivation for the IPV homicides was unknown for 55 of the 120 cases. After this, the two most common motivations are the end of a relationship (20 cases) and heat of anger (28 cases). The BC Coroner's Service cites that females are more likely to commit homicide resulting from heat of anger, whereas males are more likely to commit homicide following the end of a relationship. For IPV

related homicides, nearly three quarters of the victims are females, which is contrary to non-domestic violence related deaths. In non-domestic violence related deaths in BC between 2003 and 2011, the victims were male in more than 80% of the cases.

A current partner committed 75.8% of IPV homicides, and a former partner committed 14% of the IPV homicides. There were 46 homicide-suicides all perpetrated by men (22 female and 24 male victims). Further, there were 11 multiple homicide-suicides (6 female and 5 female victims). Of the 26 IPV related suicides committed between 2003 and 2011, all of these cases involved a male victim. An IPV related suicide is “defined as death by suicide following the homicide or attempted homicide of the decedent’s current or former spouse or other romantic partner” (p. 24). IPV related suicides represent less than 1% of the total suicides in BC between 2003 and 2011 (3,369) (BC Coroners Service, 2012).

The report also notes that “100.0% of peripheral victims (e.g., children, other family members, or unrelated individuals) were killed by males targeting a current or former female partner” (BC Coroners Service, 2012, p. 18). The report does highlight cases where children were victims or targets. For instance, in one case, a male killed two children and then failed in his attempt to kill his spouse. In another incident, following a severe attack on his spouse, a male attempted to kill his child.

The BC Coroner’s Service (2012) reports that between 2003 and 2011, a police officer shot and killed an assailant/abuser in a single incident. In this case, the police shot and killed the man after he had killed his spouse but no further details are provided about this case.

2.1.2. Recommendations of the Death Review Panel

In 2010, the Domestic Violence Death Review Panel, in BC, examined the circumstances of 11 incidents of domestic violence viewed as representing gaps in responding to domestic violence in BC (BC Coroner’s Service, 2010). The purpose of this panel was to “review the facts and circumstances of deaths that have certain key elements in common and provide advice to the chief coroner with respect to matters that may impact public health or safety and the prevention of death” (BC Coroner’s Service,

2010, p. 1). In this report, domestic violence is defined as any violence involving former or current spouses (or common-law spouses), boyfriend or girlfriend, or romantic partners. These 29 homicides resulted in the deaths of 14 females (all homicides) and 15 males (8 suicides and 7 homicides).

After examining the 11 incidents of domestic violence, the panel offered several recommendations for responding to domestic violence in BC. One suggestion is that since victims go through various services in the legal system, it is imperative that agencies, ministries, and service providers use a collaborative approach in responding to domestic violence (BC Coroner's Service, 2010). The panel highlighted the use of a collaborative approach by two police departments in BC: the Vancouver Police Department Violence and Criminal Harassment Unit (DVACH) and the Langley Domestic Violence Pilot Project. The Langley Domestic Violence Pilot Project, assisted by a domestic violence representative from Crown counsel, offers a victim-focused approach to domestic violence. The project also "developed and applied best practice guidelines for investigating and prosecuting high risk domestic violence cases" (BC Coroner's Service, 2010, p. 5). Results from this project reveal higher guilty rates among abusers, as well as lower rates of acquittals and witnesses recalling their statements (BC Coroner's Service, 2010).

The VPD's DVACH includes two units: the Criminal Harassment Unit and Domestic Violence Response Teams (DVRTs) (Vancouver Police Department, 2013). The Criminal Harassment Unit provides follow-ups for domestic violence and criminal harassment cases, and training to current patrol officers. There are three DVRTs at the VPD, each comprised of a police investigator and community counsellor. These units also have ties with representatives from Family Services of Greater Vancouver and the B.C. Ministry of Attorney General.

The Death Review Panel also provided recommendations to BC police departments for responding to domestic violence. The panel noted that police departments in BC need to participate in information sharing across jurisdictions. The panel also emphasized that the police cannot be expected to solely deal with domestic violence when the panel recommended that "assistance to be available from a provincial

domestic violence support resource that is easily accessible to police departments across British Columbia” (BC Coroner’s Service, 2010, p. 4). The availability of a standardized domestic violence guide for all police officers across BC was also recommended. The panel suggested that such a guide be installed into police records information management environment (PRIME) to allow for ease of access across police jurisdictions. The panel also recommended that police officers be provided with training and resources to overcome cultural and language barriers that may prevent them from adequately responding to domestic violence. Finally, the panel emphasized the need for on-going training and resources to identify high-risk domestic violence situations (BC Coroner’s Service, 2010).

2.1.3. Violence Against Women in Relationships

In 2010, the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Ministry of Attorney General, and Ministry of Children and Family Development released *Violence Against Women in Relationships: Policy 2010* (Ministry of Justice, 2010). This document highlighted the roles that various agencies in BC, including police, courts, corrections, Crown counsel, have in responding to domestic violence. The report noted that “as first responders, police have a key and important leadership role in managing issues associated with keeping victims safe. Police assume a critical responsibility in identifying highest risk cases of domestic violence...” (Ministry of Justice, 2010, p. 7). The report also noted that officers attending a domestic violence call should be gathering information on the following four risk factors: relationship history; victim’s perception of risk; abuser’s history; and access to firearms and/or weapons.

The report also briefly highlighted the importance of officer safety when responding to domestic violence calls referring to domestic violence calls as high-risk for officers. Accordingly, the report emphasized the need for police dispatchers to collect as much information as possible and relay this information to responding officers (Ministry of Justice, 2010).

2.2. Police Officer Views of Domestic Violence

Prior to the 1970s, domestic violence was seen as a private matter that did not need to warrant the attention of the police (Erez, 1986). As a result, police officers were reluctant to attend domestic violence calls (DeJong et al., 2008). Moreover, officers disliked the complex nature of domestic violence calls, in which it was difficult to distinguish between the victim and perpetrator (DeJong et al., 2008). Officers also had to take on the role of a social worker or counsellor, a role that they may not have felt completely comfortable with (DeJong et al., 2008). This view toward domestic violence among the police has drastically changed, and, since then, considerable research has been conducted on police attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence calls.

2.2.1. Police Officer Attitudes and Frustrations Related to Domestic Violence Calls

Gover, Paul, and Dodge (2011) explain that police officers have four main responsibilities when responding to a domestic violence call: protecting the victim, ensuring officer safety, keeping the peace, and enforcing the law. Using information from surveys completed by 309 police officers in a Western US state, their study examines police officer attitudes and stereotypes toward domestic violence calls.

Gover et al. (2011) explain that it is important to examine police officers' attitudes about domestic violence calls for several reasons. For instance, they explain that past research finds domestic violence calls to be a source of frustration and stress for officers. Although domestic violence is now viewed as a serious crime, this was not always the case among police officers in the past. Historically, police officers held negative attitudes about domestic violence calls. Gover et al. (2011) contend that the attitudes, myths, beliefs, or views that police officers have about domestic violence can influence how they respond to this type of call. This is particularly important because negative encounters between victims of domestic violence and the police can have an impact on the likelihood of victims calling the police again in the future for assistance (Johnson, 2007). Similarly, Logan, Shannon, and Walker (2006) explain that "police attitudes are important in facilitating a sense of safety and comfort in women seeking justice-system support for protection from partner violence" (p. 1365).

Gover et al. (2011) identified several sources of frustration among the police officers in their study about responding to domestic violence calls. More than eight in ten officers (84%) felt that domestic violence calls take too much time and effort. Male officers were more likely to agree that domestic violence calls take too much time and effort. Police officers in the sample also “showed a high level of frustration with repeat calls to the same address (93%)” (Gover et al., 2011, p. 626). Further, 44% of the officers note that it is difficult to determine who the primary aggressor is at a domestic violence call and one-third also indicate that it is difficult to figure out who to arrest at a domestic violence call. Thus, it seems as if some officers are confused about the appropriate actions to take at domestic violence calls. Interestingly, despite this confusion, less than a quarter of the officers agree that more training would help them in better evaluating and responding to domestic violence calls.

Officers were also asked to provide suggestions for how they could better respond to domestic violence calls. Suggestions included more resources and information for victims, as well as sending a domestic violence counsellor with officers to domestic violence calls (Gover et al., 2011). These two suggestions, especially the assistance of a domestic violence counselor, indicates that some police officers feel that they lack adequate equipment or training to handle domestic violence calls entirely by themselves. According to Balenovich et al. (2008), this is a common view among police officers. Officers may experience a role conflict when responding to domestic violence calls. The typical perception of the police role involves the police as crime-fighters. However, domestic violence calls require officers to take on more of a social worker/service position, and not all police officers embrace this social worker/service role (Balenovich et al., 2008). The domestic violence counsellor or advocate mentioned by some officers could be, according to Gover et al. (2011), part of an integrated domestic violence unit within a police department.

Johnson’s (2004) study of police officer frustrations when responding to domestic violence calls reveals five main sources of frustration for officers: victim behaviours; criminal courts; police department operations and policies; applying the law; and the complex nature of family violence calls. The data for this study consist of open-ended

responses from 74 Illinois police officers about their frustrations when attending domestic violence calls, following a domestic violence refresher course.

More than a third of the officers (37.8%) refer to victim behaviours as a frustrating aspect of responding to domestic violence calls. More than half of these frustrations center on actions of victims that obstruct the officer's ability to arrest and/or charge the suspect, such as un-cooperative victims, victims who take back their original statements made to the police, and victims who end up not laying charges against the abuser (Johnson, 2004).

The next source of frustration identified in the study by Johnson (2004) involves the criminal courts (expressed by 18.9% of the officers). Aspects of the courts that frustrate officers include abusers receiving lenient sentences, officers not being informed of case statuses, long delays in trials, and the complex nature of court proceedings. Johnson (2004) notes that officers describing lenient sentences for abusers as a source of frustration suggests that officers hold the view that domestic violence is a serious crime worthy of a punitive response, a view not necessarily held in the past.

The study by Johnson (2004) also finds that 12 officers expressed frustration with their police department's policies and operations on domestic violence calls. Six officers report "that their greatest frustration came from supervisors directing officers not to make arrests at domestic violence calls and ordering them to clear these calls quickly" (p. 212). Other sources of frustration included too much paper work for domestic violence calls and not enough information being shared by 911 dispatchers. This latter frustration may suggest that police officers are not receiving enough critical information from dispatchers to ensure their safety when responding to domestic violence calls. Unfortunately, there is no discussion of exactly what information officers are not receiving from dispatchers.

Ten of the 74 officers in Johnson's (2004) study expressed frustration with applying the law in domestic violence situations. For instance, officers mention difficulties in identifying the primary aggressor or figuring out whether there is enough evidence to arrest someone or which individual to arrest. This finding is similar to the findings of Gover et al. (2011), in which 44% of the officers indicated that it is difficult to

figure out who the primary aggressor was and 36% said that it is difficult to determine who to arrest at a domestic violence call.

Another source of frustration among the officers in the study by Johnson (2004) involves the complexity of family violence situations and calls. For instance, one officer expressed frustration with having to go to the same address repeatedly for a domestic violence call. This officer's frustration is similar with Gover et al.'s (2011) finding that 93% of the officers in their study felt that "a major problem with [domestic violence calls] is repeat calls to the same address" (p. 627). One of the more interesting findings in this study by Johnson (2004) is that none of the police officers mention the possibility of danger when responding to a domestic violence call, such as being assaulted or injured. Johnson (2004) contends that it is possible that "the officers in this sample no longer accept the myth that domestic violence incidents are the most dangerous calls for police" (p. 216). However, it would be unrealistic to generalize this finding to all police officers and assume that officers do not worry about their safety when responding to domestic violence calls.

Using focus groups with 22 police officers from New York, Horwitz et al. (2011) explored the experiences, frustrations, concerns, and challenges of police officers when they respond to domestic violence calls. Three themes emerged from the focus groups with the police officers: "Police Practice Patterns, Chronicity and Complexity of Domestic Violence, and Future Connections to Larger Systems" (Horwitz et al., 2011, p. 621).

The first theme involves police officers discussing their role in responding to domestic violence calls. Officers identify themselves as a first responder at a domestic violence call, in which they attend the call, ensure the victim's safety, enforce the law, arrest the offender, and provide the victim with resources (Horwitz et al., 2011)

The second theme focuses on the complexity of domestic violence cases. In this theme, many officers discuss their frustrations about domestic violence calls. Officers speak about un-cooperative victims, such as when victims do not follow through with the charges against the abuser. This would result in officers returning to the victim's home repeatedly for subsequent domestic violence incidents. As one officer explained his frustration: "You'd be amazed at how many [cases] are dropped because they [the

victim] don't show up. Yeah, I'm kind of numb to it. It's like, it's almost like we're wasting our time" (Horwitz et al., 2011, p. 622). Some officers feel futile in handling domestic violence calls and believe that they cannot truly help victims. This feeling of futility turns into disillusionment for some officers, in which officers "[find] themselves handling these cases in an insensitive manner and [are] eventually detached emotionally due to their constant exposure to the lack of resolution" (Horwitz et al. p. 622).

In the third theme, officers mention that they need the assistance of other agencies and organizations to respond successfully to domestic violence. Officers mention the need for debriefing and receiving feedback after they respond to domestic violence calls. One officer stated that positive feedback would allow officers to feel more optimistic and believe that they are being effective in dealing with domestic violence calls. Other officers mention the need for more resources, assistance from community services and programs, and updated domestic violence training (Horwitz et al., 2011).

Sinden and Stephens (1999) analyzed police perceptions of domestic violence calls using interviews with 21 police officers and six police of chiefs from six different police departments in New York. They find that officer perceptions and "definitions appear to reflect [police officer's] own fitting together [...] of their encounters with five elements that are central to the domestic situation...: event, law, victim, perpetrator, and self" (p. 319).

Officers in this study by Sinden and Stephens (1999) describe domestic violence calls as a heterogeneous type of call. Officers note that domestic violence occurs on a spectrum, ranging from physical to verbal altercations. Interviews reveal that the officers in the sample attend anywhere from five to 200 domestic violence calls in a year. Officers note that the victims of domestic violence only call the police about half the time. For the remaining incidents, either a neighbour or another family member calls the police. Further, 86% of officers in the sample note that the use of alcohol, particularly by the abuser, is evident at many of the domestic violence calls that they attend. Officers also speak about how the law around domestic violence can be imprecise and confusing at times. As an example, some officers remarked that it is difficult to make an arrest if

they have not personally witnessed any violence at a domestic violence call (Sinden and Stephens, 1999).

During the interviews, the officers spoke about domestic violence victims. Some paint victims as someone who has been harmed over a long period of time. Other officers recalled instances of un-cooperative victims, such as victims who refuse to press charges or testify during a trial. Officers were also able to recall times in which the victim became verbally or physically hostile towards them (Sinden and Stephens, 1999).

The next element of domestic violence calls that influences the perceptions that officers have about domestic violence involves the perpetrator. During the interviews, some officers noted that it is a “source of personal satisfaction when they [are] able to make an arrest and perhaps initiate a change for the better” (Sinden and Stephens, 1999, 322). However, it became clear during the interviews that it is not always clear-cut for officers to determine the primary aggressor at domestic violence calls. This finding is not surprising since the difficulty in determining the primary aggressor and which individual to arrest was also mentioned by officers in a study by Gover et al. (2011).

The final element that influences perceptions of domestic violence is the officers themselves. This involves officers trying to figure out what they can do to help the situation at a domestic violence call. Some officers indicate that their initial goal is to help restore order at a domestic violence call. Some officers see themselves in a helping role, similar to the social service/worker role that some officers take on (as discussed above in the study by Balenovich et al., 2008). Other officers mention their own safety when responding to domestic violence calls describing domestic violence calls as “an unknown and potentially hostile situation [that] is dangerous and requires them to be alert and to take appropriate actions to minimize their exposure to the risk” (Stephens and Sinden, 1999, p. 323). Consequently, officers mention that they would take steps to ensure their safety at this type of call but further details are not provided.

Using observational data from ride-alongs with police officers in Indianapolis, supplemented with interviews with some of those officers, Dejong et al. (2008) examined police officer perceptions toward domestic violence. They find that officers hold progressive views about domestic violence, which illustrates that officers understand that

domestic violence is a complex phenomenon. At the same time, many officers view domestic violence as a simple phenomenon and prescribe to several stereotypes and myths about domestic violence (i.e., a problematic view of domestic violence).

The problematic view of domestic violence among the officers in this study consists of four main themes: “simplification of [intimate partner violence], victim blaming, patriarchal attitudes toward women, and presumption of victim noncooperation” (Dejong et al., 2008, p. 688). Dejong et al. (2008) found that several officers dismiss domestic violence as a complex situation. Instead, these officers felt that victims can easily leave abusive relationships if they wanted to do so which tied into victim blaming. Thus, some officers felt that victims are responsible for being in an abusive relationship. Dejong et al. (2008) also found that officers hold certain patriarchal attitudes toward female victims, which was evident when one of the officers referred to a victim as a “bitch.” Additionally, there is a “why bother?” attitude [...] among officers who presume that victims will not cooperate with the police” (Dejong et al., 2008, p. 689).

In contrast, many officers held a progressive view of domestic violence. The progressive view regards domestic violence as a highly complex call that officers respond to, having barriers for the victim in wanting to leave an abusive relationship, and being worthy of police attention. As one officer commented, domestic violence calls, compared to some of the other calls that officers attend, are often not clear-cut. Instead, it can be difficult for officers to determine who the perpetrator and victim is at these calls. Officers also indicated that the decision for victims to leave an abusive relationship is never straightforward and easy. Instead, victims face barriers in leaving their abusive relationships, such as economic dependence on the abuser. Finally, officers spoke about domestic violence as a serious crime worthy of their attention. These officers do not hold the view that domestic violence is a private matter (Dejong et al., 2008).

2.2.2. Balancing the Roles That Police Officers Play at Domestic Violence Calls

Police officers are usually the first point of contact with the criminal justice system for many victims of domestic violence (Balenovich et al., 2008). Balenovich et al. (2008) explain that the typical perception of the police officer role is one of crime-control or

crime-fighter. This role is often the norm in police departments and subculture. Domestic violence calls require police officers to take on a social service role to best help the needs of a domestic violence victim. Alternatively, the social service role is seen as less valuable in the police subculture. According to Balenovich et al. (2008), domestic violence calls can result in role-conflict for some officers arising from competing expectations at the domestic violence call. Balenovich et al.'s (2008) study, using data from focus group interviews with ten domestic violence detectives, attempts to "explore and define the different police roles that can develop in police officers when they consistently face domestic violence situations" (p. 20). Data from the interviews reveal three police roles: strict enforcer, service officer, and integrated officer.

The first role, the strict enforcer, represents seven of the ten detectives in Balenovich et al.'s (2008) study. The strict enforcer focuses entirely on the legalistic/criminal issues around domestic violence, in part, because police officers are trained to approach crime in a legalistic manner. The strict enforcer ignores the social service/worker approach to domestic violence and leaves that role to other agencies. Neglecting the social service/worker role is the primary limitation of the strict enforcer since they approach domestic violence from only one angle.

The service officer sees investigative duties as secondary when responding to domestic violence. However, this opens up the service officer to the same limitation as the strict enforcer. The service officer does not have the flexibility to take on two roles simultaneously when responding to domestic violence. Balenovich et al. (2008) caution that the service officer may neglect the criminal/investigate aspect of domestic violence. When this happens, "service officers may be less effective as domestic violence investigators and that may be detrimental to the victim in terms of legal resolution of the current crime or protection from future victimization" (p. 27).

The last police role is the integrated officer, which, according to the Balenovich et al. (2008), should be the optimal role that officers take on when responding to domestic violence. However, only one detective in the study took on this role. The integrated officer understands that domestic violence needs to be approached from both a legalistic and social worker perspective. This officer employs a social worker approach to help the

needs of the victim, as well as brings a resolution to the domestic violence call using a legalistic approach. This officer also understands and challenges domestic violence myths within their police department.

2.2.3. Specialized Domestic Violence Training for Police Officers

Blaney (2010) explains that since the 1970s, several strategies and initiatives have been devised to improve police responses to domestic violence. One such strategy is the use of specialized domestic violence training for police officers. Blaney (2010) notes that some officers may restrict themselves from being more involved in investigating domestic violence calls because they do not have the necessary training. Thus, specialized domestic violence training can help officers better investigate and respond to domestic violence calls. Using data from focus groups with 30 police officers who completed a specialized domestic violence course in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Blaney (2010) examines officer preparedness and challenges when responding to domestic violence calls. The training course taught officers about the reality of domestic violence, educated officers on the important role that they play in responding to domestic violence, and showed officers how domestic violence calls can impact officers.

Blaney (2010) comments that police officers need to understand the scope and reality of domestic violence before they can react to it. In the training course, officers learned about the impact of domestic violence on children and victims, as well as the reluctance among victims to call the police for assistance. Officers were informed about the reasons why domestic violence victims stay in abusive relationships. In Johnson's (2004) study, officers mentioned that they are frustrated when victims are unwilling to leave their abusive relationships. Understanding why victims stay in abusive relationships is important in helping police officers realize that leaving is a complex and difficult decision for many victims.

During the focus groups, officers spoke about their frustrations about responding to domestic violence calls. For some officers, repeat domestic violence calls at the same location/address is a source of frustration. Officers also find victims who defend the actions of their abuser frustrating. Officers also discuss that they are not aware of some

of the existing domestic violence programs and resources for victims. Some officers note that they would like to do follow-ups with victims, but they are unable to do so because they lack the time and resources. This lack of time and resources by police officers does not allow them to spend as much time as they would like at each domestic violence call (Blaney, 2010).

During the focus groups, police officers were asked to comment on their remaining challenges in dealing with domestic violence calls. Findings from the focus groups reveal a multitude of challenges and obstacles for officers, such as the volume of domestic violence calls, un-cooperative victims, not having enough time to respond to victims in an empathic manner, lenient sentences for abusers, and long court delays. Further, “some officers [express] concern about their workload and how it may contribute to frustration and, ultimately, less effective intervention” (Blaney, 2010, p. 368). Officers who discussed concerns about their workload also felt that they were only providing a temporary, band-aid solution for victims of domestic violence.

The officers in the focus groups also hinted toward the usefulness of implementing specialized domestic violence units within police departments. Blaney (2010) notes that specialized units integrate resources from the courts, Crown counsel, and domestic violence services and programs. Vancouver Police Department’s Domestic Violence and Criminal Harassment Unit (DVACH) is one such example. With a specialized domestic violence unit, the burden is not placed entirely on the police to respond to domestic violence. Instead, a specialized and coordinated domestic violence unit would result in a move “away from long held assumptions that police can fix everything and toward a shared responsibility” (p. 370).

2.3. Elements of Domestic Violence Calls That May Make Them Dangerous For Police Officers

The following section of the literature review examines characteristics of domestic violence calls, such as the use of alcohol and/or drugs by the parties involved, the presence and availability of weapons inside a residence, and the demeanor and attitude of domestic violence abusers toward police intervention, and how these

characteristics might present a safety or danger concern for police officers. Research on challenges that female officers may face at domestic violence calls and police officer views on officer safety at domestic violence calls are also highlighted.

2.3.1. Alcohol and/or Drugs

The Use of Alcohol and/or Drugs in Domestic Violence

The use of alcohol and drugs in domestic violence is well documented. Cunradi, Caetano, and Schafer's (2002) study of married and common-law couples finds that male and female alcohol problems were significantly related to an increased risk of domestic violence. Sinden and Stephens' (1999) study, which involved interviewing 21 police officers about their perceptions of domestic violence calls, notes that "more than 86 per cent [of the officers] volunteered that the use of alcohol, especially by the offender, is evident at many abuse incidents" (p. 320). Leonard (2001) additionally cites that alcohol is used in anywhere from 25% to 50% of all domestic violence incidents. This assertion is supported by the findings in Rivera, Rosay, Wood, Postle, and TePas' (2009) study, which examined alcohol use by both victims and suspects, in domestic violence incidents, reported to Alaska State Troopers in 2004. Rivera et al. (2009) uncover that more than half of the male (58%) and female abusers (54%) in domestic violence incidents had used alcohol prior to the domestic violence incident. Rivera et al. (2009) also find that 35% of female and 27% of male victims had also used alcohol prior to a domestic violence incident. Overall, Rivera et al. (2009) cite that those involved in approximately six out of every ten domestic violence incidents had been drinking.¹

Kernsmith and Craun's (2008) analysis of 369 domestic violence incidents reported to the San Diego County Sheriff's department also finds a relatively high rate of alcohol and drug use among abusers. Nearly a third of the abusers (31%) used either drugs or alcohol at some point during the day prior to the domestic violence incident.

¹ Although most studies note when the parties had been consuming alcohol leading up to the domestic violence incident (e.g., right before the domestic violence incident, at some point during the day, at some point during the previous day), Rivera et al. (2009) do not specify exactly when victims and abusers had been consuming alcohol prior to the domestic violence incident.

Similarly, Houry et al. (2004) examined the characteristics of 1,505 domestic violence calls in Atlanta in 2002, and found that the abuser and victim were under the influence of alcohol in 34% and 11% of the domestic violence calls, respectively.

The Role of Alcohol and/or Drugs in Violence against Police Officers

The role of alcohol and drugs in domestic violence situations is worth noting because alcohol and drug use have been implicated as factors in research on violence against police officers. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck's (2007) study of police-citizen encounters in six American cities finds that citizens under the influence of drugs or alcohol are more likely to use violence against police officers. Kaminski and Sorensen's (1995) study of assaults against police finds that the suspect was intoxicated in more than two-thirds (67.5%) of all assaults against an officer. They further find that a drunk suspect is a significant predictor of assault toward an officer. The use of alcohol by suspects in assaults against officers is reinforced by Brown's (1994) study of 226 incidents of assaults against police in Bedfordshire, Greater Manchester, and South Yorkshire police during 1992, in which the suspect was under the influence of alcohol in nearly half of the cases (42%) and under the influence of drugs in 6% of the cases.

Johnson (2011) identified alcohol use by the abuser as one of five significant predictors of assault of an officer attending a domestic violence call in his study. The abuser was five times more likely to assault the responding officer if the abuser had been consuming alcohol. Johnson's (2008) study of firearm assaults against police officers at domestic violence calls found that the suspect had been consuming alcohol prior to the assault in 67% of cases.

Travis, Chaiken, and Kaminski (1999) note that police officers are more likely to engage in use of force during an encounter with an intoxicated suspect. The use of force by an officer may put them in a vulnerable position of possibly being assaulted back by the suspect. Using data from 5,688 police-citizen encounters from 13 different police departments across the United States, Engel's (2003) study on resistance and disrespect toward police officers finds that the "strongest and most consistent factor" (p. 476) predicting resistance toward police officers is the use of drugs or alcohol by a suspect. Engel (2003) reports the "suspects' use of drugs or alcohol increases the

likelihood of all forms of resistance – noncompliance, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and disrespect” (p. 488). The authors also found that suspects who are fighting with another citizen prior to police arrival is another significant predictor of suspect noncompliance, verbal resistance, and physical resistance. Kavanagh’s (1997) study also looked at factors associated with suspects resisting arrest by examining 1,108 police-citizen encounters at a bus stop. In that study, suspect intoxication was significantly related to suspect resistance. The study also found that individuals were more likely to resist arrest for more serious crimes. Although suspect resistance may not necessarily be violent, suspect resistance is important to consider because it can potentially lead to officer injuries.

How Alcohol and/or Drug Use Can Contribute to Violence against Police Officers

Intoxicated offenders or suspects, such as domestic violence abusers, can present a risk to police officers in several ways. The use of drugs and alcohol has been linked to overall violent or aggressive behaviour (Kernsmith and Craun, 2008). In relation to domestic violence, “it [is] hypothesized that alcohol and some drugs may lower inhibitions against severe violence, thus raising the likelihood of severe battering” (p. 590). Accordingly, alcohol and drugs may lower inhibitions against violence toward the police as well.

Kaminski, Digiovanni, and Downs (2004) identified two situations of concern for an officer’s safety: when officers encounter someone under the influence of alcohol or someone with a mental impairment. If the person is under the influence of alcohol, there is a higher likelihood that the person is in an irrational state of mind. Typically, officers are trained to deal with citizens/suspects through verbal communication to de-escalate a situation. However, officers are not always able to do so when dealing with an intoxicated and irrational suspect. Therefore, “when a civilian is in a highly irrational state of mind, the chances of the police officer having to use force presumably increase and the possibility of injury to both officer and civilian increases as well” (Kaminski et al., 2004, p. 312). Likewise, Muir (1997, as cited in Engel, 2003) contends that intoxicated suspects tend to be more detached and irrational, and, as a result, are less likely to think about the consequences of their actions and more likely to respond to police officer’s

authority with resistance. Similarly, Kavanagh (1997) offered several explanations for the relationship between suspect intoxication and resistance and/or violence toward officers, such as “a reduction of inhibitions against the use of violence [...], impairment of the intoxicated person’s decision making process, [which can lead to] a greater propensity for intoxicated persons to disrespect police officers” (p. 28).

The use of alcohol by domestic violence abusers can have serious implications for female officers responding to domestic violence calls. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck’s (2007) study found that during family conflict calls, impaired citizens were more likely to use violence against a female officer than against a male officer. A possible reason why a male abuser, especially one who is intoxicated, may use violence against a female officer is because the abuser transfers his anger from the (typically) female victim onto the female officer and may also perceive the female as challenging his masculinity and authority. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007, p. 415) explain that “when the offender is impaired by alcohol or drugs, the need to assert power in familial settings may be heightened,” especially in the presence of female officers.

2.3.2. The Presence and/or Use of Weapons in Domestic Violence Incidents

Another source of danger for police officers attending domestic violence calls is the possible presence of weapons inside a residence. Existing literature on domestic violence suggests that it is not uncommon for an abuser to use a weapon against a victim or threaten a victim with a weapon. After Berrios and Grady (1991) interviewed over 200 women admitted to a hospital with domestic violence related injuries, they found that a third of the women had a weapon used against them during their abuse incident. The two most common weapons were a household object and a knife. Houry et al.’s (2004) study of police reported incidents of domestic violence also finds that a weapon, such as knife or gun, was present in 14% of the incidents. Lee et al.’s (2013) analysis of 9,400 incidents of domestic violence reported to the Houston Police Department in 2005 reveals that “weapons were implicated in nearly 40% of the cases” (p. 170). Lee et al. (2013) explain that “the dangerousness of domestic violence escalates when suspects use weapons against...responding officers” (p. 165).

Additionally, Kernsmith and Craun's (2008) study of 369 incidents of domestic violence in San Diego finds that a weapon was used in a quarter (24.7%) of all incidents.

The most serious type of assault police officers face is one that involves the use of a firearm against them. Meyer and Carroll's (2011) study of police officers killed attending domestic violence calls in the United States between 1996 and 2009 reveals that 90% of the officers were killed with a firearm. Brown, Dameron, and Moore's (2000, as cited in Johnson, 2008) study finds that a firearm was either used or displayed by the abuser in 62% of domestic violence relationships. The danger for police officers is that these weapons, which may have been used either against a victim or to threaten a victim, might still be present at the scene or in possession of the abuser when officers attend a domestic violence call.

2.3.3. Characteristics of Domestic Violence Incidents and Abusers

Several characteristics of domestic violence incidents and abusers can make domestic violence calls dangerous for attending officers. For example, domestic violence calls are often characterized as volatile and highly emotional. Additionally, some domestic violence abusers can be viewed as angry and hostile individuals who may oppose the intervention of authority, such as the police.

Characteristics of Domestic Violence Incidents

Several aspects of domestic violence calls can result in danger and the possibility of harm to responding police officers. For example, MacDonald (2003) explains that:

domestic disturbance calls are highly charged situations that involve suspects with a propensity for violence. When responding [...] police are met with higher levels of active resistance and expect any suspects to be extremely hostile, combative, and/or just plain out of control. (p. 125)

Toch (1992, as cited in Lee et al., 2013) notes that the surprise appearance of a police officer may even provoke some suspects. This might be especially true for domestic violence situations, in which the abuser may not be aware that the police were called until the police arrive at the scene.

Following the death of a police officer killed attending a domestic violence call in Quebec, Darryl Davies, a former parole officer and researcher for the Liberal government, illustrates the danger of domestic violence calls for the police:

Any situation involving domestic violence is one of the riskiest situations a police officer can face...You often don't know the context and all homes have all manner of things that can be used as a weapon. The very nature of a domestic situation is emotionally charged. (as cited in Cobbs, 2013, para. 13)

Davies goes on to note that in many domestic violence situations, police officers are not welcomed. Although it may be an unrealistic suggestion, Davies suggests that police officers should not attend domestic violence calls without the assistance of a SWAT team (as cited in Cobbs, 2013). Thomas (2013), likewise, explains that domestic violence incidents are already emotionally charged. The addition of police officers only contributes to the emotions of that situation. Victims of domestic violence may even “lash out at the police when they realize that the police might be taking the abuser away” (para. 8). Although the victim in a study by Johnson (2011) perpetrated only three of the 147 cases of assault against an officer at a domestic violence call, his study shows that it is possible for victims to become aggressive toward police officers. Similarly, police officers in a study by Stephens and Sinden (1999) were able to recall instances of attending domestic violence calls where the victim became verbally or physically hostile.

Characteristics of Domestic Violence Abusers

Another source of danger for police officers attending domestic violence calls involves the traits and characteristics of abusers. Generally, domestic violence abusers are characterized as hostile and angry. For instance, Norlander and Eckhardt's (2005) meta-analysis of 38 studies on the characteristics of domestic violence abusers finds that abusers “consistently [report] moderately higher levels of anger and hostility” (p. 119). These findings mirror those from another meta-analysis of domestic violence abusers by Schumacher, Feldbau-Kohn, Smith Slep, and Heyman (2001), which also finds that anger and hostility were related to male-to-female physical aggression. Ellis, Choi, and Blaus (1993) identified four variables that were significantly related to police officer injuries at a domestic disturbance call. One of these variables is a hostile suspect, in which the likelihood of an officer being injured increases by 10%. Likewise, a hostile

demeanor by a domestic violence abuser toward an officer was the strongest statistically significant predictor of assault toward an officer in a study by Johnson (2011). In that study, Johnson (2011) reports that if the abuser displays a hostile demeanor toward an officer, the abuser is 13 times more likely to assault the officer.

Rode (2010) identified four different typologies of domestic violence abusers using a sample of 325 men convicted of harassing a family member.² The first typology was a reactively aggressive perpetrator. This type of individual is very emotionally reactive, emotionally excitable, emotionally aggressive, lacks the ability to control their aggressive behaviour, and reacts to situations with anger and irritation. The next typology, the perpetrator of low preventative competence, is characterized as being emotionally liable, in which individuals “manifest a wide spectrum of emotions ranging from anger and jealousy to fear and anxiety” (p. 5). The third typology is the psychopathic and retaliatory perpetrator, characterized as hostile, in opposition to authority and the law, and “predisposed to controlling an external situation by imposing their own will, using pressure or threats” (Rode, 2010, p. 6). The last typology of a domestic abuser, high adaptive potential perpetrators, involves individuals using violence and aggression largely because of an external frustration or irritation.

It is possible that anger and hostility among domestic violence abusers, as well as any of the traits outlined in the typologies of abusers by Rode (2010), may not only contribute to violence and aggression against the victim, but also to violence against police officers. For instance, the psychopathic and retaliatory perpetrator described by Rode (2010) is categorised as in opposition to authority. This type of abuser may respond to police (i.e., a source of authority) with violence or aggression.

² The sample for Rode’s (2010) study consisted of men who were convicted of criminal harassment of a family member under *The Polish Penal Law*. The researchers note that “the concept of harassment can be interpreted as an action or abandonment (active or passive violence) consisting in deliberate infliction of physical pain or acute moral suffering (physical or psychological violence) which are recurrent or isolated but intense and spread over time” (p. 2). This study is included because many of the aspects of criminal harassment described seem consistent with the definition of domestic violence. However, the men in Rode’s (2010) study were convicted of criminal harassment of a *family member* which contrasts with the definition of domestic violence used in this thesis (violence committed against a former or current boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, or common-law partner).

Explanations for Resistance and/or Violence against Police Officers by Domestic Violence Abusers

Johnson (2011) provides several reasons why domestic violence abusers may resist or assault police officers. He explains that married abusers may hold strong feelings of control over their spouse, might resist outside interference from officers, and could possibly respond to outside interference with resistance and violence. Johnson (2011) also suggests that abusers who live with their victims might be defensive of their territory and may view police officers as invading their space. Abusers may also be startled or surprised by the appearance of the police. As Johnson (2011) explains, “when offenders are surprised by the appearance of the police they may be more likely to resist or be antagonistic toward the officers” (p. 166).

2.3.4. Police Officer Perspectives on their Safety When Responding to Domestic Violence Calls

Police officers recognize that domestic violence calls can be a dangerous type of call to attend. In Gover et al.’s (2011) study, three-quarters of the 309 officers interviewed “felt that they were more likely to be injured during a domestic violence call” (p. 626). Police officers interviewed by Sinden and Stephens (1999) also express experiencing a sense of danger when responding to domestic violence calls. In that study, officers describe domestic violence calls as potentially hostile and dangerous, and this hostile and dangerous nature of domestic violence calls requires them to be highly alert. Horwitz et al. (2011) further explain the dangerousness of domestic violence calls for officers when they note elements of vulnerability for police officers attending domestic violence calls since these calls can involve unpredictability, emotion, and passion.

2.3.5. Unique Challenges for Female Officers Attending Domestic Violence Calls

Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) investigated whether gender differences in assaults against police officers exist. The data for this study consist of statistics on police-citizen encounters that involved an arrest from police departments, in six different

metropolitan cities in the United States. These data were further supplemented with a survey completed by arresting officers.

The findings from this study by Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) reveal that there were no gender differences in officer assaults in general unlike their examination of officer assaults during family violence calls. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) find that female officers, compared to male officers, are at a greater risk of assault when responding to family violence calls. The study also reports that citizens under the influence of alcohol or drugs are more likely to assault an officer. Moreover, during family violence calls, impaired citizens are more likely to use violence against a female officer. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) explain that:

because of the nature of substance abuse, citizens may be more likely to project blame onto responding female officers...This projection may be especially true in family violence incidents when the citizen transfers the anger and aggression from their family member, who is often a female, to the responding female officer. (p. 425)

Similarly, Toch (1992, as cited in Rabe-Hemp, 2007) suggests that an intoxicated abuser may see his masculinity and reputation as threatened or challenged by a female officer who arrives at the domestic violence call and starts asking questions about the situation. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) suggest that “it is possible that actions by female officers may be more likely to be perceived by offenders as challenging in family violence situations than are actions by male officers” (p. 415).

2.4. The Dangerousness of Domestic Violence Calls for Police Officers

The following section of the literature review examines research that addresses the dangerousness of domestic violence calls for police officers. Much of this research uses a quantitative approach. This section begins with an overview of research that compares the dangerousness of domestic violence calls against other calls that officers attend. Research on firearms assaults against officers and factors that predict assaults against officers at domestic violence calls is also highlighted.

2.4.1. The Dangerousness of Domestic Violence Calls against Other Types of Calls

The earliest and most influential research on the dangerousness of domestic violence calls for police officers is provided by Bard (1970, as cited in Garner and Clemmer, 1986). Using FBI data, Bard (1970) found that 22% of all police officers killed in the line of duty were responding to domestic disturbance calls (Hirschel et al., 1994). According to Johnson (2008) “this report went on to describe family disturbances as the single most dangerous call that police officers handle” (p. 25). Bard’s work was used by many researchers to emphasize the dangerousness of family disturbance calls and had an impact on police department policies, such as sending two officers to attend domestic disturbance calls (Hirschel et al., 1994). For instance, Ontario’s *Policing Standards Manual* (2000) for domestic violence calls notes that “every police service’s procedures should...set out the number of police officers to attend the scene, with two as the minimum” (p. 4). Ontario’s *Policing Standards Manual* (2000) has been used as an example of model provincial policing standards in response to domestic violence calls and can be found in Appendix D.

However, Bard’s (1970) data and the findings he produced were later found to be misleading. When assessing the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls, Bard looked at a category in the FBI statistics called Disturbance Calls (Garner and Clemmer, 1986). Although domestic disturbances did fall under this category, it was an amalgamation of several other types of calls (e.g., bar fights, shots fired, man with gun).

In 1982, the FBI separated domestic disturbance calls from the larger category of Disturbance Calls (Hirschel et al., 1994). This change allowed for the analysis of officer deaths while attending only domestic disturbance calls, which led to findings that domestic disturbance calls were not as dangerous as previously thought. In 1982, police officer deaths occurred at a domestic disturbance call in only 8% (7 out of 92) of all police officer deaths (Garner and Clemmer, 1986). Additionally, domestic disturbance calls were responsible for only 5.7% (62) of all police officers deaths between 1973 and 1982 (Garner and Clemmer, 1986). Garner and Clemmer (1986) claim that these findings “[undermine] the empirical basis used to substantiate the wide spread belief that domestic disturbance calls are particularly dangerous to the police” (p. 2).

Garner and Clemmer (1986) undertook their own assessment of the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls (which they do not define) for police officers. Garner and Clemmer (1986) argue that some calls would be more frequent than others, and that simply looking at the percentage of officer assaults, deaths, or injury at a type of call is misleading when comparing different types of calls. Instead, they looked for data on the frequency of calls. This helped them create danger rates/ratios (dividing a measure of harm, such as officer assault, injury, or death, by number of calls for that particular police activity/call) for comparison purposes. Domestic disturbance calls were compared against the following calls: burglary, robbery, traffic, other disturbances, and all other calls (undefined).

Garner and Clemmer's (1986) major finding is that the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls had been largely overestimated in prior research. They find that robbery was the most dangerous type of call in the likelihood of officer death. Domestic disturbance calls ranked sixth in the likelihood of officer death. The study also finds that domestic disturbance calls ranked third in the likelihood of officer assault and third in the likelihood of officer injury. Garner and Clemmer (1986) conclude that "the available evidence strongly suggests that researchers and police managers abandon the notion that domestic disturbance calls result in a large number of officer deaths" (p. 5).

Uchida, Brooks, and Kopers (1987) also assessed the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls (although they did not define domestic disturbance). The first part of their study simply examined 11 categories of calls that involved the most assaults against officers. Their analysis reveals that domestic disturbance calls accounted for more than a quarter (25.9%) of the total assaults against officers. The only category with more assaults against officers is the "other" category, which accounts for 29.5% of the assaults against officers.³ Next, Uchida et al. (1987) calculated danger rates for assaults and injuries for domestic disturbance calls and other calls that officers attend using the same method that Garner and Clemmer (1986) had used.

³ The "other" category comprises of legal intervention and alcohol problem calls, although it is not entirely clear if these are the only two calls that make up the "other" category.

Unlike Garner and Clemmer (1986), this study uses a more exhaustive list of calls/circumstances that officers respond to when creating danger rates (twenty circumstances for officer assaults and ten circumstances for officer injuries). The two most dangerous circumstances for assault were when officers were dealing with legal interventions and alcohol problems. Domestic disturbances ranked third in terms of the likelihood of officer assault and number one in terms of the likelihood of officer injury. These findings led the researchers to assert that “while recent research studies indicate that domestic disturbances are not as dangerous as originally believed, our data show that domestics present a high risk of danger to police” (p. 365).

Ellis et al. (1993) conducted the sole Canadian study to examine the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls. In addition to comparing the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls against other calls, the study identifies factors that predict injuries to officers attending domestic disturbance calls. Unlike much of the previous research highlighted, Ellis et al. (1993) define domestic disturbances in their study. A domestic disturbance is any disturbance involving family members (i.e., individuals who are or had been married, who have a child together, living in a common-law relationship, or related by blood or marriage).

Data for this study come from official police statistics and mail questionnaires completed by 379 police officers from three different police departments in Ontario. Official police statistics consisted of information about injuries sustained by officers and calls for service. Information on calls for service was obtained by looking at the number of calls made to police dispatchers in January, June, and November 1987, and “the total number of calls made during each of these weeks [was] used as a basis for calculating frequency of attendance relating to specific police tasks” (p. 152). Ellis et al. (1993) used the information on the calls for service to calculate danger rates/ratios for six different police calls/activities.

Data analysis in the study by Ellis et al. (1993) reveal that domestic disturbances were over-represented in injuries against officers. Domestic disturbance calls only represented 0.8% of all police calls, yet resulted in 2.5% of the injuries sustained by officers. After creating danger rates for each of the six police calls/activities (domestic

disturbances, robberies, investigative suspicious situations, arrest and controlling suspects, and other⁴), the authors found that domestic disturbances ranked third. Robbery and controlling suspects were ranked first and second.

Ellis et al. (1993) also examine factors that predict officer injuries at domestic disturbance calls. Results indicate no relationship between officer attributes and likelihood of injury at a domestic disturbance call. The researchers then looked at nine situational variables identified in previous literature examining officer injuries. Of the nine situational variables, Ellis et al. (1993) found that four of them have a significant relationship with police injuries at a domestic disturbance call (type of dwelling, hostile suspect, alleged assault, and decision to arrest).

Ellis et al. (1993) noted that officers attending a domestic disturbance call in a townhouse or apartment are more likely to be injured than if they attend a similar call at a detached house. The study also found that the odds of an officer being injured increases by 10% if the suspect is hostile toward the officer. Further, an officer was more likely to be injured if the domestic disturbance victim alleges that the abuser assaulted her. The likelihood of an officer being injured also increased by 12% if the officer decided to arrest the suspect.

Although Ellis et al. (1993) found that an officer attending a domestic disturbance call alone is not statistically significantly related to officer injury, the “the odds of an officer being injured increased by 12.8% if the officer [attends] the domestic disturbance alone” (p. 161-162). The researchers contend that police departments should make it mandatory to send more than one officer to all domestic disturbance calls.

In a study by Hirschel et al. (1994), the researchers found that domestic violence calls are not the most dangerous type of call for police officers. Using data on assaults against Charlotte Police Department officers, in North Carolina, between 1988 and 1990, the study compared the dangerousness of domestic disturbance calls against other calls that officers attend. A total of ten police activity categories were included in this study

⁴ Calls that make up the other category “vary from ‘abandoned auto,’ to ‘jumper,’ to ‘xing detail’ (Ellis et al., 1993, p. 153).

and were compared using calculate danger rates/ratios. Similar to some previous studies, Hirschel et al. (1994) do not define exactly what a domestic disturbance call.

Hirschel et al. (1994) found that domestic disturbances were over-represented in both assaults and injuries against officers, similar to the findings of Ellis et al. (1993). Domestic disturbances make up 8% of the total number of calls, yet they resulted in 12% of the assaults against officers and 10% of the injuries sustained by officers. Of the ten police activity categories examined, Hirschel et al. (1994) found that domestic disturbance calls are the most likely to result in multiple assaults against officers which they attribute to the fact that officers are more likely to attend domestic disturbance calls with another officer.

Hirschel et al. (1994) found that domestic disturbance calls ranked fourth and fifth in terms of likelihood of officer assault and risk of officer injury. These findings led the researchers to claim that “domestic disturbance calls are not a major source of assaults or injuries to the officers involved in relation to other types of calls” (p. 113). Although domestic disturbance calls were not a major source of assaults or injuries to officers, it is important to remember that domestic disturbances were over-represented in officer assaults and injuries and domestic disturbance calls were the most likely call to result in multiple officer assaults.

Understanding the risks involved in attending domestic violence calls, Hirschel et al. (1994) offer suggestions for police departments. For instance, residences where an assault against an officer took place should be red-flagged, so that future officers can be prepared to attend these residences knowing that an assault against an officer had once taken place there and that there is the potential for another assault. Police departments should also collect data on specific areas or neighbourhoods (i.e., high-risk locations) with a large number of domestic disturbance calls involving assaults against officers. Finally, Hirschel et al. (1994) stress the importance of training that takes place outside the classroom for officers, such as role-playing scenarios to better prepare officers for potential assaults when responding to domestic disturbance calls.

2.4.2. Predicting Assaults against Police Officers Attending Domestic Violence Calls

Johnson (2011) undertook a study to examine the characteristics of domestic violence abusers and domestic violence calls that predict assaults toward officers. Data consisted of 1,951 domestic violence calls from three different cities (Minneapolis, Milwaukee, and Miami). Of the 12 independent variables examined by Johnson (2011), five were significant in predicting assault toward an officer: abuser's employment status; abuser sharing residence with the victim; alcohol consumption by the abuser; property damage by the abuser; and hostile demeanor by the abuser toward officers. Of these factors, the strongest predictor is whether the abuser displays a hostile demeanor toward a responding officer. In these cases, the abuser to be 13 times more likely to assault an officer. The next strongest predictor is alcohol consumption by the abuser prior to police arrival where the abuser is five times more likely to assault an officer. If the abuser shares a residence with the victim, the abuser damages property, and the abuser is unemployed, the abuser is three times, two times, and one and a half times more likely to assault an officer, respectively.

Johnson (2011) explains that alcohol consumption can reduce inhibition toward violence against the police. Further, abusers who live or share a residence with their victim may feel a sense of control and power over their victim, which may be threatened when the police arrive at the abuser's home and take control of the situation. Johnson (2011) explains that unemployed abusers may already view themselves as lacking dominance or control in their own home. Abusers may become volatile and angry "when the police arrive to interject themselves into that situation, and limit the batterer's control to an even greater extent" (p. 168). The destruction of property by the abuser may be a display of the abuser's anger and rage, and it is possible that this anger and rage could be transferred onto a responding officer.

Of particular interest is how these results can be used to increase officer safety when responding to domestic violence calls. Johnson (2011) explains that of the five significant predictors of assault toward a police officer, a police dispatcher can easily collect information on four of these factors during the initial call about the domestic violence incident. For example, information on the abuser's employment status, whether

the abuser shares the residence with the victim, the use of alcohol, or damaged property can be easily obtained if the caller is the victim⁵ or a family member. In turn, the dispatcher can warn responding police officers about the presence of these factors. This would prepare a police officer for arrival at the scene, and thus, help to ensure the officer's safety when responding to the call. Therefore, police dispatchers have an important role in protecting the safety of officers attending domestic violence calls by providing these officers with important information. Johnson (2011) recommends the dispatch of multiple police officers to domestic violence calls that involve multiple factors.

2.4.3. The Use of Firearms against Police Officers Attending Domestic Violence Calls

The most serious type of assault against police officers attending domestic violence calls involves the use of firearms. Johnson (2008) sought to examine officer, offender, and incident characteristics in which a firearm was used against officers responding to a domestic violence call. The data for this study consist of 143 incidents of firearm assaults against officers attending a domestic violence call between 1999 and 2003. Of these 143 incidents, 76 officers did not suffer any injury. The remaining 67 incidents involved at least one officer being injured or killed.

Johnson's (2008) analysis reveals that firearm assaults are more likely to occur in the evening, with nearly half of the incidents (45.5%) occurring between 3:00 and 11:00 PM and the majority occurring at a private dwelling. A troubling finding is that 53 of the incidents were initially reported as a family disturbance, with no initial indication of physical violence. In all of these incidents, violence or threats of violence were used before the police had been called. However, police dispatchers did not receive this information. This reiterates the role police dispatchers play in ensuring the safety of officers attending domestic violence calls by gathering as much information and then providing officers with that information. Johnson (2008) emphasizes that "police dispatchers should be trained and required to gather pertinent information on the

⁵ Victims may not always been in a position to provide dispatchers with this information as, depending on the circumstances, it can be very dangerous for victims to stay on the phone. Thus, victims would only be able to provide this information if it is safe to do so.

batterer and relay this information to the responding units” (p. 42). This pertinent information should include information on the abuser’s past criminal/arrest history, access to firearms, current alcohol and drug use, and present location.

Johnson (2008) also finds that in 53 of the 143 cases, the officer was attacked with a firearm almost immediately after the officer arrived at the scene (e.g., as the officer exited his vehicle or walked up to the scene). This finding is consistent Meyer and Carroll’s (2011) study that found that nearly half of the officers were attacked almost immediately after attending a domestic violence call.

An analysis of offender characteristics in this study by Johnson (2008) reveals that alcohol plays a significant role in firearm assaults against officers. Two-thirds (67.1%) of offenders who assaulted a police officer with a firearm had consumed alcohol prior to the assault. Of the 143 incidents, 60 involved the police fatally shooting the offender and 36 involved suspects injured by police gunfire. Officers who were assaulted tended to be male and had less than 16 years of experience (Johnson, 2008).

Meyer and Carroll (2011) report that of the 685 law enforcement officers killed in the United States between 1996 and 2009, 106 were killed responding to a domestic violence call; 97% of these officers were killed by a firearm. More than half of the officers killed were killed in ambushes or unprovoked attacks prior to initiating contact with the suspect (13% of ambushes occurred immediately after the officer arrives at the scene, 27% as the officer approached the residence or scene, and 36% as the officer entered the residence).

Meyer and Carroll (2011) also find that 40% of the slain officers in their study died after making contact with the suspect. These cases follow one of three patterns. First, the interaction between the suspect and officer escalates immediately and without warning into a violent confrontation. Second, an officer approaches a suspect who is holding a weapon (usually a firearm). Last, there is a physical struggle between the officer and suspect, in which the officer is disarmed.

Meyer and Carroll (2011) also explain that several of the slain officers in their study were simply part of a larger killing event. These killing events usually involved

either the officer being killed by the suspect after or before the suspect had killed their own spouse and/or children. The results of their study also finds a total of 25 killing events, in which 29 officers were killed along with two firefighters and 19 women and children. Although Meyer and Carroll (2011) argue that police departments, including police officers, must prioritize safety and engage in risk management, they fail to provide any concrete suggestions.

2.5. The Current Study

More recent research regarding police safety at domestic violence calls suggests that, when compared to the other types of calls that police officers respond to, domestic violence calls are not as dangerous as previously thought. Even if domestic violence calls are not as dangerous as research previously reported, they, nevertheless, pose a risk to officer safety. The selected literature shows that the unique nature of domestic violence calls produces several safety concerns for responding officers. Rather than trying to rank or compare the dangerousness of domestic violence calls against other calls, the focus of this thesis is to provide a more in-depth understanding of what exactly are the safety and danger concerns around attending domestic violence calls for officers.

This thesis expands on the existing literature and research of police safety at domestic violence calls in several important ways. Much of the research on general attitudes toward domestic violence among police officers has utilized qualitative methods, such as focus groups and interviews. Alternatively, much of the research on the dangerousness of domestic violence calls for police officers relies on quantitative research methods, such as calculating danger rates or attempting to find out which variables or factors significantly predict officer assaults or injuries at domestic violence calls. No attempt has been made to speak with police officers about what is challenging or dangerous about domestic violence calls. Based on their quantitative findings, researchers often offer their own opinions about what they think may be dangerous about domestic violence calls and suggestions for responding safely to domestic violence calls without speaking to those who actually attend domestic violence calls. However, this is not the same as actual police officers providing their perspectives and thoughts on this topic. Further, little research regarding the dangerousness of domestic

violence calls for police officers since the 1990s exists and when available, it is restricted to the United States.

The current study expands our understanding of this topic using in-depth qualitative interviews with police officers. Through these interviews, a better understanding of dangerousness of domestic violence calls is developed by focusing on the subjective experiences, perceptions, and thoughts of police officers that move beyond the calculation of danger rates or ranking the dangerousness of domestic violence calls against other types of calls.

The next chapter, chapter three, presents a description of the research methodology used in this thesis.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

The following chapter presents the research methodology used in this thesis. I begin by explaining participant sampling, which includes a description of participant recruitment. Next, the structure of my in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants is explained. I then address the ethical considerations arising out of this type of research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of coding and analysis and demonstrating quality in qualitative research. In this chapter, I place a strong emphasis on being transparent about my research decisions and challenges.

3.1. Research Questions

The focus of this research is both exploratory and descriptive. In qualitative research, exploratory and descriptive research designs are sought when a researcher wishes to obtain a better understanding of a particular topic in which there is little or no previous knowledge (Babbie and Benaquisto, 2002; Dantzer and Hunter, 2012). Although prior research on this topic exists using a quantitative perspective, the same cannot be said of a qualitative understanding of this topic. That is, we may know how dangerous domestic violence calls are when compared to other types of calls, but we have limited knowledge of the perspective of police officers tasked with attending these calls and lack details regarding exactly what makes domestic violence calls dangerous. The guiding research question for this thesis is influenced by the exploratory and descriptive approach of this research. The guiding research question is:

What do police officers perceive to be the dangers of attending domestic violence calls?

For the purposes of this thesis, domestic violence⁶ is defined as any violence between former or current spouses (or common-law spouses), boyfriend or girlfriend, or romantic partners (BC Coroner's Service, 2010). This definition was consistent with how my participants defined domestic violence during the interviews.

3.2. Sampling

Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling methods. Purposive sampling deliberately selects participants based on particular characteristics (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). These participants are "most likely to have the experience and expertise to provide quality information and valuable insights on the research topic" (Denscombe, 2007, p. 34). The criteria for selecting participants is based on existing knowledge or literature on the topic or the purpose of the study, and is usually decided upon early in the research process (Ritchie, Lewis, Elam, Tennant, & Rahim, 2014). Participants in this study had to be active patrol officers in a police department in the Lower Mainland⁷ of British Columbia.

I spoke to active patrol officers for several reasons. Patrol officers often spend their entire shift on the street or field. As a result, they are usually the first to arrive at a 911 call, including domestic violence calls, since they are the officers most likely to be dispatched. Because they regularly attend domestic violence calls, patrol officers are in the best position to answer my research question. I contemplated including more senior ranked officers, such as sergeants and staff sergeants, within my sample. Although sergeants and staff sergeants sometimes do attend 911 calls, that is not their primary responsibility and if they do attend, it is usually after patrol officers have already responded.

⁶ Although Intimate Partner Violence is a more current term since it recognizes that domestic violence does not always occur within a domicile, such as dating violence, the decision to use the term domestic violence throughout this thesis was made for two reasons. First, much of the selected research in the literature review uses this term. Secondly, domestic violence also was the term used by officers in this study.

⁷ The Lower Mainland of British Columbia consists of the following cities/municipalities: Abbotsford, Burnaby, Coquitlam, Delta, Langley, Maple Ridge, Mission, North Vancouver, Pitt Meadows, Richmond, Surrey, Vancouver, and West Vancouver.

The second sampling strategy used in this study involved snowball sampling, in which the researcher seeks the help of participants in finding additional participants. Using this approach, the researcher asks one or more participants, who have already been interviewed, to recruit or refer other participants through their own personal networks (Babbie and Benaquisto, 2002; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

I decided to use the snowball sampling strategy for two reasons. First, since I only interviewed officers from two police departments at a time (this was done to help ensure I was not overwhelmed by scheduling, managing data, and having to keep track of participant contact information from seven different police departments), I did not know if I would run into future difficulties in recruiting participants from other police departments. Thus, seeking the help of already interviewed police officers in locating other officers at their department was used as a precautionary measure in case I was unable to recruit officers from other police departments in the future.

Second, I used snowball sampling strategy because of the perceived value attached to having a police officer vouch for me when finding other police officers for my study. Since interviewees refer potential participants to the researcher, “the researcher can use the nominator as some kind of reference to enhance his or her *bona fides* and credibility, rather than approach the new person cold” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 37). When an already interviewed participant vouches for a new participant, this can lead to greater trust, rapport, and connection between the researcher and new participant (Atkinson & Flint, 2001).

The primary limitation of snowball sampling is that participants may refer individuals who are similar to original participant, which can have an impact on the diversity of the sample (Ritchie et al., 2014). An additional concern is the use of participants as informal research assistants (Atkinson & Flint, 2001). While this may be a concern, it did not seem to affect my study. Participants appeared to have diverse views and did not appear like-minded to the participant that initiated the snowball sampling. Additionally, many of the participants did not mind in helping find additional participants for my study.

Qualitative research often uses small sample sizes for several reasons (Ritchie et al., 2014). For instance, qualitative research tends to produce data or information that is rich in detail. As an example, one piece of qualitative data (e.g., an interview) will have “hundreds of ‘bites’ of information” (p. 117). Sample sizes are small so that researchers can adequately analyze each piece of data without missing anything. A common misconception when doing qualitative research is that sample size is not important (Sandelowski, 1995). Instead, there needs to be a delicate balance between having a sample size that is too large and one that is too small. A small sample size too small is vulnerable to criticisms of not being able to support informational redundancy or theoretical saturation, whereas the ability to conduct a thorough, detailed analysis on a large sample is also questioned (Sandelowski, 1995).

I did not enter my research with a pre-determined number of participants to interview. Instead, I was guided by Kvale’s (1996, p. 101 as cited in Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) advice: “to the common question, ‘How many interview subjects do I need?’ the answer is simply, ‘Interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know’.” In qualitative research, sample size is something that should be determined at the end of the research rather than at the beginning (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Although the fairly large sample size (15 police officers) used in this study is more than often required, this sample size was the result of great interest among my population of study rather than a deliberate attempt by me to find that many participants. I decided to stop recruiting when I stopped finding new information from my participants, also referred to as the saturation or data saturation point (see Bowen, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

The final sample for this thesis consists of 15 (six female and nine male) patrol officers from seven different police departments in the Lower Mainland. Years of experience for these officers ranges from one year to 18 years.

3.3. Recruiting Participants

The recruitment of participants did not begin until the thesis research, designated minimal risk, received ethics approval from Simon Fraser University’s Research Ethics

Board (REB) on January 17th, 2014. A copy of the Study Details submitted to SFU's REB is found in Appendix A.

3.3.1. The Use of Gatekeepers

Participants were initially recruited through gatekeepers inside police departments. In qualitative research, "gatekeepers are people in a setting whose approval is crucial in order to gain access and acceptance" (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 223). My senior supervisor, Dr. Rick Parent, who was a police officer in the Lower Mainland for thirty years, provided the contact information of gatekeepers from seven different police departments.

I contacted all gatekeepers through email introducing myself as a current Master of Arts student in Criminology at Simon Fraser University who wished to study the topic of police officer safety at domestic violence calls. Gatekeepers were told that Dr. Rick Parent was my senior supervisor for my thesis, and that he had supplied me with their contact information. To gain trust and establish rapport, I also mentioned my volunteer experience with a community policing organization in Vancouver over the last several years. I then asked them if they would be able to help me find any patrol officers in their police department who would be interested in participating in my research study. I also attached the informed consent form for the gatekeeper to read and pass on to potential participants (see Appendix B for copy of informed consent form). I also told gatekeepers that I was approaching them independently and had not gone through official channels at their police departments to seek permission to interview employees.

Two of the seven gatekeepers needed permission and approval from their police department's administration team or senior management prior to finding participants for me. These gatekeepers requested copies of the informed consent form, a document outlining the details of my study, and sample interview questions. Approval from those two police departments was granted in less than a week.

There is the concern about whether or not gatekeepers give potential participants all of the information provided by the researcher and whether this information is correctly described (Webster, Lewis & Brown, 2014). Whenever participants contacted me, I

made sure to ask whether they had reviewed the informed consent form. Participants were also told that I had not gone (and was not going) through official channels at their police departments to seek permission for their participation in my study.

Although beneficial, several concerns arise from the use of gatekeepers. For example, an organization may purposely contact only potential participants who they know might give a more positive interview (Richie et al., 2014). Additionally, gatekeepers may pressure potential participants, whether indirectly or directly, to participate (Webster et al., 2014). This was possible since some of my gatekeepers were more senior-ranked members (e.g., sergeant, staff sergeant). Some police officers may feel pressure to participate if a senior-ranked member of their police department approached them. However, participants made no mention of this and there was no evidence to suggest that this was an issue.

When seeking gatekeeper assistance, researchers need be truthful when explaining the purpose of their research (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Any misleading information given to the gatekeeper can have a serious impact on the researcher's ability to recruit participants in the setting, field, or organization to which that gatekeeper belongs to (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Additionally, researchers should emphasize that the research will not harm or hurt the organization (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). When contacting gatekeepers, I emphasized that my research goal was to produce something that would be of use and benefit to police departments and police officers.

The second method of recruiting participants involved snowball sampling. At the end of an interview with a participant, I always asked if he or she was willing to find out if other patrol police officers at their department might be interested in participating in my research. I emailed those who agreed to help me a copy of the informed consent form to pass on to potential participants. I confirmed that these potential participants reviewed the informed consent form and were made aware of the fact that I had not gone through official channels at their police department to seek approval for their participation in my study before making any arrangements for interviews.

Before recruiting participants, I was concerned there would be difficulties finding police officers willing to speak with me. Fortunately, this was not the case. I was quite

surprised at the number of police officers willing to participate. Many participants were genuinely interested in and enthusiastic about my topic. Some officers commented that domestic violence calls were fairly common, yet few people understand how dangerous they can be. Many participants also thanked me for pursuing this topic. In particular, one officer commented that he looked forward to reading the final thesis and sending the thesis to senior management at his police department. Some of my participants and gatekeepers were previous Master of Arts students, and one of these gatekeepers sympathised with me about the difficult task of finding participants.

3.4. Conducting Interviews

My initial research plan involved face-to-face interviews, which was the case for the first two interviews. Although finding participants for my study was not difficult, waiting for participants to be available for interviews was a different matter. Busy work schedules (most patrol officers work four straight days, with shift lengths ranging from ten to 12 hours), as well as outside responsibilities made it difficult for some participants to find the time to meet in person. My third participant asked for a telephone interview as this would be more convenient. Although initially reluctant, I decided that other police officers would be in the same situation, and flexibility regarding the interview format was necessary. After that, participants were given the option of in-person or telephone interviews. Many participants appreciated the choice and 10 of the 15 interviews were conducted over the telephone. Telephone interviews can be appropriate, and necessary, when researching sensitive topics, interviewing participants from hard-to-reach populations, participants are too busy to meet in person, participants want to remain more anonymous, and interviewer safety is a concern (Irvine, 2010; Sturges & Hanarahan, 2004; Yeo, Legard, Keegan, Ward, Nicholls & Lewis, 2014).

Face-to-face interviews are the preferred method in qualitative interviewing since it allows researchers to better develop rapport with participants and to take into consideration non-verbal actions (Yeo et al., 2014). During a face-to-face interview, non-verbal actions and social cues can add additional information to verbal responses from participants (Opdenakker, 2006). Body language and facial expressions are also important in assisting researchers on whether they should probe participants for details

and information (Yeo et al., 2014). Since I could not see my participant's body language during the telephone interviews, it was difficult to determine whether I should probe further or stop asking questions. I could not tell if a pause meant that the participant was still thinking about a question or if the participant had nothing else to say. Additionally, I could not engage in any non-verbal probes myself to express that I wanted the participant to keep speaking, such as leaning forward, nodding, or taking notes as suggested by Rubin & Rubin (2005). Finally, the absence of visual cues can make it difficult to gauge whether participants are attentive or interested during telephone interviews (Sturges & Hanarahan, 2004). Researchers also have no control over where the participant decides to be interviewed over the telephone (Opdenakker, 2006).

Although I acknowledge the challenges and limitations of conducting interviews over the telephone, I do not believe interviewing participants over the telephone had serious consequences for my research and the data collected. Regardless of whether the interview was over the telephone or in person, I spent the first several minutes of each interview introducing myself to participants and telling them about my academic background and career goals. It is unclear whether there was a difficulty in establishing rapport with participants in telephone interviews, but one of my most interesting interviews was a telephone interview. However, since this individual was extremely enthusiastic about my topic, I believe I would have received the same quality of interview regardless of the format.

3.4.1. In-depth, semi-structured interviews

I opted to use a semi-structured interview format. In a semi-structured interview format, the interviewer may have a list of questions and topics that the interviewer would like the interviewee to discuss (Denscombe, 2007). However, this format also offers flexibility to "allow individual [interviewees] some latitude and freedom to talk about what is of interest and importance to them" (p. 102). The semi-structured format that I used included both open- and closed-ended questions. Although open-ended questions are preferred when the researcher is interested in hearing participants express their thoughts in their own words (Palys & Atchison, 2013), closed-ended questions were used to introduce new topics or lines of inquiry (e.g., have you ever been assaulted at a

domestic violence call?). After a new topic was introduced, probing questions were used to seek further detail or information from the interviewee (Roulston, 2010).

In a semi-structured interview format, the interviewer brings along questions and topics to be discussed as part of the interview guide. These questions and topics are inspired by existing literature on the research area or the researcher's research objectives (Arthur, Mitchell, Lewis & Nicholls, 2014). The interview guide should not be a structured schedule that needs to be followed exactly, but, instead, should be used as a reminder for the interviewer to make sure that he or she is covering all of the topics that they originally wanted to discuss (Matthews & Ross, 2010; Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). The interview guide also ensures that similar topics are addressed with participants in all of the interviews (Scott & Garner, 2013). Additionally, the interview guide should be constantly updated and revised, such as when the interviewer learns new information from a participant (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). My interview guide was an evolving document. For example, my initial interview guide consisted of too many scripted questions and I found myself more focused on making sure that I asked all of these questions rather than allowing my participants to speak about what was important to them. In response to this, I reduced the number of scripted questions and allowed myself to come up with questions as the interviews progressed. In addition, I regularly added new themes and topics to the interview guide based on new information learned from my interviews. For instance, I started asking my participants questions related to mandatory arrest laws only after a participant brought it up during his interview. A final copy of the interview guide is found in Appendix C.

I sought participant permission to record the interviews at the start of each interview, explaining that audio-recording ensures that I accurately represent what they said. Taking notes by hand or relying on memory to determine what participants said can result in misrepresentation of what participants say during interviews (Denscombe, 2007). Trying to write down everything the interviewee has said, especially verbatim, may disrupt the interview flow as it forces the interviewee to stop talking and wait for the interviewer to finish writing (Palys & Atchison, 2014). By not having to worry about recording everything that is being said during the interviewee, the interviewer gives the interviewee his or her complete attention, can pick up on cues, and come up with follow-

up questions (Patton, 2002). As noted by Patton (2002), “ironically, verbatim note taking can interfere with listening attentively. The interviewer can get so focused on note taking that the person speaking gets only secondary attention [emphasis removed]” (p. 381).

Recording the interview does not mean the interviewer should stop note-taking altogether. Patton (2002) suggests that strategic, rather than verbatim, note-taking can have several important purposes. During the interview, these notes can help the researcher come up with additional follow-up questions. Notes can be referred to during the data analysis stage to identify important quotes or possible themes and can also be used in case the audio file is destroyed before transcription or if the audio-recorder malfunctions. Finally, note taking can be used as a non-verbal probe that suggests that the researcher wishes the interviewee to keep talking.

Participants were interviewed in-person or by telephone between January and July 2014. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to one hour and 30 minutes. Of the 15 participants, five were interviewed in person and were on-duty while I interviewed them. They also selected the location of the interview. One interview was conducted at a community policing centre, while the other four were conducted at the officer’s police department. Scott and Garner (2013) caution that “interviewing in a workplace...may produce more formal answers than interviewing in a person’s home, a café, or a bar” (p. 285). Given the nature of my research, I did not perceive the participant’s police department as an interview location to be a concern.

I conducted the telephone interviews in my home office. Although there can be concerns about disturbances when working out of a home office (e.g., someone at the front door, someone accidentally walking into the office), I always scheduled interviews when I knew that I would be the only person at home. I was pleasantly surprised at the quality of audio coming over the telephone during the telephone interviews. However, on a few occasions, I found myself asking participants to repeat parts of their answer since it would not be entirely clear coming over the telephone.

All of my interviews were one-on-one interviews except for one unplanned group interview with two participants. This occurred when a participant emailed me, and included another participant in the email, to let me know his or her availability. I

interpreted this to mean that both participants were free during that time, and I would interview one after the other. When I met both participants on the day of the interview, at their police department, they took me into a conference room and asked to begin the interview.

Group-based interviews offer a different way of looking at a research topic, yet, at the same time, can pose challenges. On one hand, group-based interviews allow participants to hear multiple viewpoints, and, then, express support and disagreement for those viewpoints (Denscombe, 2007). On the other hand, participants can interrupt or speak over each other and talkative participants can dominate the interview (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998). Fortunately, these challenges did not occur. The two participants were respectful in that they always waited until the other participant finished speaking before they would start to speak. However, I was concerned with what Taylor and Bogdan (1998) refer to as a superficial consensus. On a few occasions, one participant would speak for a long time, and when it was time for the second participant to respond, she simply said she agreed with the first participant and did not have anything to add. When this happened, I was not sure if the second participant truly did not have anything else to add or if she was superficially agreeing with the other participant.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

As recommended by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), researchers should try to ask participants for their consent on multiple occasions. In addition to having participants review the informed consent form prior to making interview arrangements, the informed consent form was reviewed prior to each interview. When explaining the informed consent document, I told participants that any information from their interviews would be used solely for my thesis. They were also told that their participation was completely voluntary, and that they could withdraw their participation at any point in the study. I also stated that they could refuse to answer any questions, as well as not have certain responses given by them used in the thesis. Participants were also informed that pseudonyms would be used in place of their real names. Finally, participants were informed that I would not be using the names of their police

departments or any cities in my thesis. Participants were also informed of data storage protocols (which can be found in the Informed Consent form in Appendix B).

3.5.1. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is “the researcher’s ability to be able to self-consciously refer to him or herself in relation to the production of knowledge about research topics” (Roulston, 2010, p. 116) and has “entered the qualitative lexicon as a way of emphasizing the importance of self-awareness...and ownership of one's perspectives” (Patton, 2002, p. 64). In qualitative research, there is no such thing as knowledge being completely neutral or objective (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014). In fact, total detachment or objectivity from the research process is not only unrealistic, but it can hinder and negatively affect the research (Jootun, McGhee & Marland, 2009).

A reflexive researcher recognises and is open about any notions, beliefs, biases, or prejudices he or she may hold during the research process (Scott & Garner, 2013). The researcher is, after all, the instrument of qualitative research. He or she is the one who designs and asks interview questions, takes field notes, engages in participant observation, and analyses data (Patton, 2002). Acknowledging his or her subjectivities places the researcher in a better position to examine the research more openly and honestly (Jootun et al., 2009). Jootun et al. (2009) claim that engaging in reflective thinking should be part of any qualitative research since it adds credibility to the research. Additionally, being honest and clear about your thoughts, feelings, and emotions during the research process puts the reader in your shoes and provides the reader with an opportunity to understand the research decisions you made and how you reached your conclusions (Scott & Garner, 2013).

My research journal was essential to staying reflexive during the entire research process since the journal allows researchers to make their “experiences, opinions, thoughts, and feelings visible and an acknowledged part of the research design, data generation, analysis, and interpretation process” (Ortlipp, 2008, p. 703). As recommended by Halcomb (2006), I engaged in reflexive journaling immediately after every interview. Richards (2005, as cited in Bazeley, 2007) compares the research

journal to the ship's log, which is an account of the (research) journey or voyage. The journal raises awareness regarding the researcher's influence on the research and vice-versa (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). My research journal provided an opportunity to reflect on the interview. These reflections included notes about which questions a participant responded well to and what questions I wanted to ask future participants. Researchers should also reflect on what did not go well during the interview (Patton, 2002). The research journal also included notes on insights and ideas, research decisions and changes, and possible themes that I began to notice.

3.6. Analysis

The following sections present a description of the analysis of the interviews conducted. First, I provide a summary of the transcription process. Next, I explain how I coded the interview transcripts.

3.6.1. Transcribing

As recommended by qualitative researchers, interviews should be transcribed as soon as possible after an interview and before the next interview (Poland, 1995; Scott & Garner, 2013). Transcribing the interview immediately helped fill in any missing parts from memory, such as un-clear or inaudible audio. Secondly, transcription before the next interview, and, more specifically, writing in my journal during the transcription process, allowed for reflection upon questions that did or did not work. Finally, if I found any confusing parts during the interview or had additional questions, I could contact the participant right away to ask follow-up questions.⁸ Writing in my journal also allowed me to jot down notes about any early patterns that I began to notice.

I listened to each interview twice when transcribing. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and I removed any identifying information (e.g., names of police departments and cities). I listened to the interviews a second time several weeks later while going

⁸ There was only one instance where this happened, and I phoned the participant the next day to ask follow-up questions

through the accompanying transcript to ensure accuracy and make sure that I did not leave in any identifying information.

Although I initially transcribed my interviews verbatim, calling my transcripts truly verbatim would not be entirely correct. Oliver, Serovich and Mason (2005) note that qualitative researchers should be aware of and question their transcription decisions. One such decision involved whether I should keep response tokens and other distracting words (e.g., *hm*, *yeah*, *uh huh*, *um*, *like*) in the transcripts. On one hand, these response tokens are intentional and important pieces of data that have meaning attached to them (Oliver et al., 2005). For example, a *huh* could imply that the participant did not understand the question asked or an *mm* or *yeah* could imply that the participant agrees with the researcher (Oliver et al., 2005). At the same time, these response tokens can be distracting when the reader is reading a passage from an interview and it is littered with *hm* or *umms* that do not add any extra information. Although I was concerned that I would be altering what my participants said if I took out these response tokens, I decided to remove response tokens and other distracting words in cases where they would disrupt or distract the reading of a participant's passage. However, not all response tokens were removed. For example, an *mm* or *hm* signalling that a participant was thinking or pausing before providing a response was kept.

3.6.2. Coding

No pre-determined theory was selected for this research. Instead, a grounded theory approach was used. Those using the grounded theory approach argue that the research process should not begin with a theory, but allow for a theory to emerge from the data (Scott & Garner, 2013). In a grounded theory, "the researcher tries to avoid 'forcing the data', prematurely interpreting what is encountered, or shaping it through [predetermined] frameworks" (Price, 2002, p. 275). The grounded theory approach gives way to an inductive coding style or approach, in which the researcher comes up with new code categories as researcher goes through their data (Scott & Garner, 2013).

I used Saldaña's (2009) first and second cycle coding as a guide for coding. First cycle coding is the initial coding of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009). In particular, I used

In Vivo and Descriptive Coding.⁹ Both of these are a type of open coding, in which I carefully read and coded interview data line-by-line (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). I engaged in two rounds of first cycle coding to confirm all relevant sections were coded and to ensure that new codes were applied to previous transcripts. During first cycle coding, I coded only pieces of text related to my research question.

Second cycle coding involves reorganizing and reanalyzing the codes created during first cycle coding and includes axial coding (Saldaña, 2009). While open coding led to the initial formation of codes, axial coding helps to group the codes and form logical categories and subcategories (Scott & Garner, 2013).

The coding process also involved analytic memo-ing. Engaging in memo-ing during the coding process allows researchers to

document and reflect on [the] coding process and code choices; how the process of inquiry is taking shape; and the emergent patterns, categories and subcategories, themes, and concepts in your data – all possibly leading toward theory. (Saldaña, 2009, p. 32)

Memo-ing allowed me to record the codes I developed and to consider tentative categories and subcategories. Memo-ing during the coding process provided a place to write down notes about codes that seemed to be consistent or inconsistent with the literature in my research area. I also used coding memos to make notes about negative cases.

3.7. Demonstrating Quality in Qualitative Research

Doing qualitative research is certainly not a soft option when deciding to conduct research, and, similar to quantitative research, it demands an examination of the research process (Silverman, 2010). The concepts of reliability and validity, first

⁹ In Vivo Coding, or literal or verbatim coding, involves creating a code using either an exact word or phrase said by the participant in the qualitative piece of data (Saldaña, 2009). Descriptive Coding involves summarizing what the participant has said either in a word or phrase (Saldaña, 2009).

developed in the natural sciences, are commonly used when assessing the quality of quantitative research, yet the appropriateness of these measures within the qualitative realm are questioned (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002; Silverman, 2001). Corbin states that she avoids using the terms validity and reliability when discussing the quality of qualitative research because of the quantitative implications connected with those terms. Alternatively, he prefers to use the term credibility instead (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Other qualitative researchers have similarly proposed alternative terms to use when discussing the quality of qualitative research, such as rigor, fairness, authenticity, trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, truthfulness, confirmability, plausibility, and transferability (Boeije, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Lincoln, 2002, Roulston, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Trustworthiness involves being transparent with the reader (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011), as demonstrated in this methods chapter where I report all research procedures, changes to research design, and rationale for changes. When researchers document their process it helps the reader judge whether the findings from the research can be trusted, which Boeije (2010) refers to as methodological accountability. An attempt to achieve trustworthiness was also made by ensuring the accuracy of transcripts. I went through each transcript twice to verify the initial transcription. Verbatim quotes from participants are used as much as possible so that those reading my thesis would feel as if they were in the field, and, in turn, see how I reached my findings.

Researchers can also demonstrate credibility and trustworthiness through examining negative cases, which are instances of the phenomenon that don't 'fit' the developing explanation, suggesting that the explanation is not yet complete" (Palys and Atchison, 2014, p. 423). One example is when some female participants acknowledged that they faced additional safety concerns at domestic violence calls, while other female participants claimed that being a female officer at a domestic violence was no different than being a female officer at any other type of call and did not pose any concerns.

The goal of this chapter was to present a transparent picture of my research methodology. The next chapter of my thesis presents the findings from interviews with

my participants and how they fit with the existing literature regarding police responses to domestic violence calls. Prior to doing so, I provide a summary of my sample.

Chapter 4. Study Results and Discussion

The data for this thesis are the product of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 15 police officers from seven different police departments in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. Interviews were conducted both in-person and over the telephone, with 10 of the 15 interviews being conducted over the telephone. Years of experience ranged from one year to 18 years. This chapter provides a discussion of the themes that emerged from the interviews with officers regarding their perceptions of the dangers of attending domestic violence calls.

4.1. The Unpredictability of Domestic Violence Calls

During the interviews, many of the officers perceived domestic violence calls to be one of the more unpredictable types of calls that they attend. For example, Eric points to the fact that domestic violence calls are so dangerous and unpredictable because of the ability for the parties involved to quickly “flip a switch”:

Eric¹⁰: I’ve had the suicide by cop file where you end up having to shoot somebody because, and, well, that’s definitely up there, at least it’s sensible, but the reaction within domestic violence, like, the ability for people to flip a switch and go from cooperative to non-cooperative or combative or assaultive is just quick. It’s so quick.

The first theme examines aspects of domestic violence calls that make them unpredictable, such as volatile emotions, parties under the influence of alcohol, and victims turning against police officers.

¹⁰ All of the participants in this study have been given pseudonyms to ensure the confidentiality of participants. All of the participants were assigned pseudonyms from popular birth names between 1913-2013 (<http://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/decades/century.html>) with the exception of one participant (Shak) who selected his own pseudonym.

4.1.1. Volatile Emotions

Several of the officers described domestic violence calls as a highly emotional call. According to Jessica, one of the reasons why domestic violence calls are highly emotional is that the two parties know each other and are part of an intimate relationship:

Jessica: Because domestic violence is just wrought with emotions on both parties [...], emotions are unpredictable and relationships can be tumultuous. They can be all kinds of different things...unknown to the officer walking in. [And you don't find these emotions in] most other calls because this is an intimate relationship...So there's intimate emotions between both parties, and there's this connection between the two of them that you don't find at, for instance, a break and enter or where the culprit or the suspect is unknown to the victim. These are two people that know each other, that are in an intimate physical relationship, and, therefore, the emotions and bond between them goes very deep, and you cannot underestimate the power of that relationship [...] which, I think, makes all the difference in the world.

As Emily explains it, the emotional aspects of a domestic violence call can mean the parties are not thinking clearly. She compares this with other calls that police attend where the parties are acting more calmly and rationally:

Emily: It's the volatility of it. People are in absolute crisis in a domestic call when they call. They're not calling because someone stole my lawn mower. They're calling because their whole life has been turned upside down and they don't know how to react. So, if the wife just said 'that's it, I'm leaving you'...The desperation for that guy¹¹ could be that 'my life is over and I'm gonna lose my kids, I'm gonna lose my wife, I'm gonna lose my job, I'm gonna lose my house.' So it is absolute [desolation] for this person, and that's all they're thinking...I would describe it as tunnel vision...So, they're not thinking as straight as they would have. People aren't thinking clearly when they're in that emotional state of domestics. Whereas, a lot of calls that you're going to that aren't urgent, people are more calm, rational. You still might have the ups and downs of that they don't agree with what you're presenting to them, but I think with the domestics, it's a

¹¹ At one point during their interview, all officers in my study noted that both males and females can be perpetrators of domestic violence. However, since males are more commonly the perpetrators of domestic violence and it is a female victim (again, a point made by all officers at one point during their interview), officers tended to refer to the abuser as male and the victim as female in all examples and hypothetical scenarios.

lot of emotions running high...I think the difference between a domestic is the heat of the moment and tempers are flaring.

For Paul, domestic violence calls rank high in terms of the potential for officer assault or injury. He attributes this to the fact that parties at a domestic violence call are highly emotional, which in turn, increases the unpredictability of the whole situation:

Paul: I wouldn't put a number on it, but I would certainly put it as high. And the reason I would put it as high is the emotions that are involved in a domestic situation. People are [...] very emotional when they're dealing with [...] whether it's an argument or whether it's actual physical assault...So, when you have that kind of emotion, people are unpredictable when their emotions are like that, and in a lot of cases...there's also substance abuse that's happening, whether it's alcohol or other type of drugs, and, of course, that adds to the even more unpredictable nature [of] the call.

When asked why an abuser might lash out at attending officers, Paul explains that the abuser, in some cases, would lash out at anyone, and not just the police, because of his or her emotional state:

Paul: If they're already in a situation where they are using violence, let's say it's beyond your verbal argument, if it's gotten to the point where they feel the need to lash out because they're so frustrated or angry, someone [might be] there who may control the situation, they may lash out at the person because they don't want to be controlled. So, they're so angry...that's just what they're feeling at the point. It doesn't matter who's there, they're gonna lash out whether it's police, fire, ambulance, other family members. That's just the [...] emotional state that they're in.

Several officers were quick to describe domestic violence calls as a highly emotional and volatile call and how these emotions, in turn, can lead to the unpredictable and dangerous nature of domestic violence calls.

4.1.2. Alcohol Turns Completely Normal People into Completely Horrible People: The Role of Alcohol and/or Drugs at Domestic Violence Calls

One aspect of domestic violence calls that makes them unpredictable and potentially dangerous for responding officers is the use of alcohol and/or drugs by the

parties involved. Many officers spoke about how drugs and/or alcohol are involved in almost every domestic violence call they attend. When I asked Andrew how often alcohol was a factor at the domestic violence calls he has attended, he reveals that “60 to 70%” [involve] alcohol use by at least one of the parties. When I asked Emily out of every ten domestic violence calls, how often are drugs and/or alcohol used, she suggests “probably eight or nine.” Similarly, Kate stated: “I’d say about [...] 60-70% have been related to [one of the parties] being on or drinking alcohol.” Another officer, Lisa, told me “I think, probably, 90% of the domestic calls I’ve gone to, alcohol was involved.” Eric spoke about how alcohol and drugs go hand-in-hand with domestic violence:

Eric: Because [alcohol] lowers, you know, because it’s a depressant and it has all kinds of [...] physiological effects, that it really increases the likelihood of a domestic violence incident as opposed to just a fight that happens between sober people...I can’t think of any domestic violence that doesn’t happen without alcohol or another drug as a lubricant.

The extent and use of alcohol or drugs at domestic violence calls comes as no surprise. My findings are consistent with much of the existing literature on the use of drugs and alcohol at domestic violence calls. Busch and Rosenberg (2004) found that 78% of the males and 60% of the females were under the influence of alcohol or drugs when they were arrested for domestic violence. Similarly, Hamberger and Guse (2002) discovered that 50% of the males and 80% of the females had used alcohol in the domestic violence incident that resulted in their arrest. Friend, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Eichold (2011) found that in cases reporting the use of alcohol or drugs on the day of the domestic violence incident, drugs or alcohol were used in 95 of 141 (67%) cases. The same study found alcohol was the most prevalent drug used (80 cases, 56.7%). Finally, in a study of females admitted to a hospital because of an acute injury resulting from a domestic violence incident, researchers found that nearly half of the women (22 out of 46) reported that their partner was intoxicated at the time (Kyriacou, McCabe, Anglin, Lapesarde, Winer, 1998).

According to a number of officers, alcohol use is not limited to the abuser. In fact, victims and other parties have also been consuming alcohol most of the time. As Jessica explains, “we deal with friends that may be there. Unfortunately, in these situations, one,

if not all of the parties, have consumed alcohol.” These factors present additional concerns for officers since they are no longer just dealing with multiple parties inside the residence, they may be dealing with multiple parties under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol and drug use leads to individuals acting unpredictably and irrationally

Several officers discussed the concerns with parties at a domestic violence call who are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, which make parties act more unpredictably and irrationally. For instance, Lisa voices concerns about abusers under the influence of alcohol, which, in turn, can make an already unpredictable situation even more unpredictable:

Lisa: People who are intoxicated are that much more unpredictable...I’m female and I can always see the idiotic males who get drunk and decide they wanna be tough. And then you’ve got the females who, literally, just go crazy...As soon as you hear that alcohol is involved, yes...a lot of the times you’re like ‘yeah, whatever, everyone’s drunk all of the time anyways,’ but, especially with domestics, because you have no idea what you’re about to walk into, and, just with alcohol making it so that people are so unpredictable, it just makes your safety concern that much higher.

For Paul, domestic violence calls, mostly because of the emotions involved, are an already unpredictable call. However, parties under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol amplifies the already unpredictable nature of that call:

Paul: Anyone who is intoxicated or under the influence of some other narcotics or drug is...unpredictable and you don’t know how they’re gonna react or how they’re going to respond to your presence or your suggestions...And [you are] constantly re-assessing [your safety] because, especially if there’s drugs and alcohol involved, then someone can be completely fine one minute and then flying off the handle the next. You never know.

Paul’s description of how an intoxicated party “can be completely fine one minute and then flying off the handle the next” describes the unpredictable nature of someone who is under the influence of alcohol, and fits well with an incident Karen had with an intoxicated abuser. In that case, the abuser was cooperative and calm one minute, but angry and agitated the next minute:

Karen: The female was calling [and] saying that her boyfriend, who she lived with, had been drinking and he was being abusive...And we go, and he is completely loaded [...] like probably drank a case of beer, if not more, [by] himself. And he's in the bedroom, sitting on the bed, and she's in the living room, and she's been drinking too, but she's completely fine to talk to...And he is just kind of sitting there, and one minute he's kinda joking and laughing, and the next minute he's really mad and he's trying to slam the door in my partner's face to the point where we have to throw [him] in handcuffs because he's just so up and down and completely unpredictable.

Officers also explained how alcohol use causes individuals to become irrational and act in ways that they might not have acted when they were sober. Jessica, for instance, touches upon this:

Jessica: Alcohol plays a huge role in domestic violence. Drugs, I think, play a role, but, predominantly it's alcohol-based, and the altercations that we go to, one or both parties, typically have consumed alcohol. It skews their judgment, it skews their, sort of, rational thinking, and they become irrational people. Nothing makes sense to them, and they react out of emotion and not common sense or logic anymore.

Citing an example of an intoxicated abuser who got into a wrestling match with Karen and other officers, Karen also discusses how alcohol can make individuals do things they would usually not do when they are sober:

Karen: He had been drinking and was not necessarily assaultive in that he was trying to fight us, but he was actively trying to prevent being arrested to the point where it ended up being an all-out brawl in the hallway with a bunch of us and one guy...With that one [...] he ended up writing a letter of apology. So, completely opposite...I find that alcohol is a tough one because it completely changes people's personalities...Some people want to fight. Some people get super emotional and cry. So many times we'll deal with people when they're drunk and you deal with them the next day when they're sober and they're 100% different...Complete opposites. Completely normal people that turn into [...] completely horrible people.

Views and concerns held by officers in this study about intoxicated parties at domestic violence calls acting unpredictably and irrationally are supported by much of the research on the effects of alcohol. Alcohol use can cause individuals to engage in aggressive or violent behaviour, lower their inhibitions, behave impulsively, focus on the

present without thinking about the consequences of their actions, become rude or disrespectful during normal social exchanges, and use alcohol consumption as an excuse to engage in normally un-acceptable behaviours (Bushman, Giancola, Parrott, & Roth, 2012; Bushman & Cooper, 1990; Giancola, 2002; Kernsmith & Craun, 2008; Lejuez et al., 2010; Pedersen, Aviles, Ito, Miller, & Pollock, 2002; Potenza & de Wit, 2010; Reiség, McCluskey, Mastroski, & Terrill, 2004).

Alcohol and drug use leads to violence and aggression

Many officers brought up the likelihood of individuals under the influence of alcohol becoming aggressive and violent. Certainly, this would be a concern from an officer safety point of view, especially considering how common alcohol use is at domestic violence calls. As Emily puts it: “I find a lot of people who are [...] quite intoxicated or high, those ones [have] more potential for aggression.” For example, Matthew speaks about how alcohol use, at any type of call, can fuel violent behaviour:

Matthew: Given the fact that [alcohol] impairs someone’s judgement...that a lot of people do get violent when they’re using...But that’s not just domestic. That’s every call [...] that you’re going to. As soon as booze or drugs is involved, the propensity for violence increases greatly.

Likewise, Andrew also acknowledges how alcohol always seems to be involved in violent crimes, such as domestic violence:

Andrew: I’ve always found with every crime involving alcohol, it obviously triggers aggression and, you know...I’ve never ever, ever encountered in 14 years someone that’s high on weed assaulting a parent or assaulting a spouse or [...] kids or anything like that...or even any kind of violent crime. It’s always been alcohol. [We see it] every day. It’s just such a bad drug for that. We see the end result that is, you know, whether it be bar fights or domestics.

Concerns about intoxicated parties at a domestic violence call becoming aggressive or violent towards police officers are certainly valid and are also supported by existing research on assaults against police officers. Alcohol use was found to be a consistent factor in the research on assaults against officers. For example, one study found that the suspect had consumed alcohol in 44% of incidents involving assaults

against officers (Covington, Huff-Corzine, & Corzine, 2014). In that study, the researchers claim that the odds of an assault against an officer were 40.8% higher if the suspect consumes alcohol. This finding mirrors that of Kaminski and Sorensen (1995) who found that the suspect was under the influence of alcohol in two-thirds of incidents involving officer assaults and that suspect intoxication was a significant predictor of assault toward an officer. Johnson's (2008) study of firearm assaults against officers attending domestic violence calls found that the suspect had been consuming alcohol in two-thirds of the firearm assaults. Finally, of the five factors found to be significant in predicting assault toward an officer at a domestic violence call, one study finds that alcohol was the second strongest predictor (Johnson, 2011).

4.1.3. “It’s all fine and dandy until they see you putting the handcuffs and taking him away”: Victims as a Source of Concern for Police Officers

Interviews with officers reveal that they not only have to worry about abusers becoming hostile, but, at the same time, officers need to be concerned about victims of domestic violence becoming hostile. A number of officers explained that it is not uncommon for victims to become aggressive and assaultive towards the police when the victim see their boyfriend/girlfriend or husband/wife (i.e., the abuser) being arrested. Victims can also become aggressive and assaultive when they do not want police assistance (this usually happens when a third party, such as a neighbour, has called the police), and the victim and the abuser sometimes becomes a united front against the police.

Victims Turning Against Police Officers When the Abuser is Being Arrested

Usually when a victim of domestic violence calls the police, the victim is looking upon the police to protect them and ensure their safety. Quite often, this is accomplished by the police arresting the abuser. However, the interviews reveal that officers perceive victims, and not just the abusers, as a safety concern when attending domestic violence calls. Although this seems counter-intuitive, especially if the victim is the one who originally called the police for help, almost all of the officers interviewed spoke about how the victim can become verbally or physically aggressive toward officers once she sees

the police arresting her partner. For example, Robert cautions that officers need to be aware of how victims may react once officers decide to arrest the abuser:

Robert: A main officer safety issue is [...] the Stockholm syndrome, where you have to be cognizant of how she's gonna react based on once she finds out he's [being arrested]. Sometimes you may get in there and you manage to calm things down, [but] once the victim realizes that their boyfriend or husband...is going to be removed from the house, it may turn the victim into non-compliant or even hostile... We've had females that have been the ones who call the police, and, once they realize that their boyfriend or husband is getting arrested, now, they're obstructing by physically holding back or just stepping in between the police officer and the aggressor...In domestic violence calls, you always have to be aware that once the decision is made to arrest the aggressor, that the female may turn. So, she may be completely co-operative...but once they realize that it's not up to them whether or not [the aggressor] gets arrested they may turn as soon as they see that their husband or boyfriend is getting arrested.

Paul also discusses how the police can be helping a "so called victim" one minute, and, then, have that same victim turn against officers:

Paul: It's happened before where [...] you're helping a so-called victim and, next thing [...] they see the person that they love being arrested or, in some cases, where the person is fighting back with police and then you've got one, two, three, sometimes, four officers on the one person, and now the victim is turning and she is now attacking police officers to help her loved one who is now perceived to be being hurt by the police. Yeah, that's happened.

During our interview, Emily spoke about instances where victims started yelling and grabbing at her once the victim realized the abuser was being arrested. As Emily put it, "it's all fine and dandy until [victims] see you putting the handcuffs [on the abuser] and taking him away." Since I was rather surprised that victims could become aggressive and assaultive toward officers, I asked officers why victims might react in this manner. In one example, Shak suggests that the victim may fear repercussion from the abuser who could blame the victim for his arrest:

Shak I think a lot of that stems from their fear that their partner is gonna think that they're the ones who are putting them in the spot, right? So, their fear is, ultimately, a repercussion once this whole event is done, right? Like, once police are gone [and] bad guy is allowed to come back into his house, then what's bad guy gonna do to

me, right? So, that might be their last sort of ploy of like 'hey, I wanna keep myself safe'...I know one of the things that we make sure that we do is we really make sure that both people are educated [on] the fact that neither one of them have a choice in this matter...that [the] victim doesn't have a choice [and the] accused doesn't have a choice. We [have] the Attorney General's policy [and if] it appears that there's been a criminal offence that's occurred here, and, you know what, you can provide a statement or not...but, if you don't, your partner is still going away, right? So, they don't have a choice. Where normally you would have choice. So, as long as you really sort of get them to understand that then hopefully [...] there's no sort of repercussions.

In this particular excerpt, Shak references the fact that under British Columbia's mandatory domestic violence arrest laws, the police are required to make an arrest if there is evidence that an assault has taken place (prior to such mandatory domestic violence arrest laws, the police did not always make an arrest in domestic violence incidents). This is a point that he makes sure to tell both parties at domestic violence calls.

Similar to Shak's view, Steven agrees that a victim might fear retaliation from an abuser if the abuser thinks it is the victim's fault he being arrested. However, he questions whether this is "a show or for real":

Steven: There have been members who have been attacked, right, not only by family members, [but] by the spouse who's calling it in. They don't want the guy go to jail, so they're jumping on you...doing whatever to make their point so they don't get beaten worse next time they show up...It could for real or it could be a show where, you know what, I just need to show this guy that I was scared, but I don't want him to go to jail. And when he comes back to the house, eventually, that she knows that she's gonna get it again. I have no idea if it's a show or for real or [just] emotions running high.

As some officers reminded me during the interviews, victims, in most cases, do still care for their partner who may be abusing them. Thus, when victims try to prevent their abuser's arrest by physically intervening, it might reflect genuine concern for their partner. For instance, Karen explains that "it can happen when you're trying to arrest [the abuser], and [the victim] is trying to intervene...because they care for their loved one and they don't want anything bad to happen to them." Kevin also reminds us that it is common for the victim and abuser to have been in a relationship for a long period of

time, and the victim may become angry with the police if the victim perceives the relationship to be over (usually signalled by the abuser's arrest):

Kevin: Sometimes, the problem is when the police get involved, we kind of have to act or we have to interfere. So, once we've been called, we have a responsibility to, sort of, protect both individuals involved. Sometimes it can be construed as all of a sudden the police get involved, and then it becomes a reality, like, maybe this person is going to be arrested because...the husband hit the wife...and all of a sudden the police are there, we have to arrest the husband, now the wife realizes, that, like, 'oh my god, the relationship is over', and then...her anger or frustration or emotions [turn] toward the police, and they become a united front...because [...] we're walking into a relationship that could have been going on for 20, 25 years.

Lisa recounted her experience with a victim of domestic violence who tried to assault her after seeing the abuser's arrest. In this particular example, the abuser was the one who actually remained calm:

Lisa: The females go crazy...I've gotten into a couple fights with them. And they always do the same way I used to fight with my brother of the kicking and flailing, so you can't pin someone down. Yeah, I've been punched. I've been kicked. The first time I got assaulted in [city name], it was [...] after the fact. Someone had reported that they saw this guy punching this girl. This was during the day [and] we were on night shift...Myself and another member went back to the house to go check to see if he had come back...The boyfriend and the girlfriend ended up being there. The boyfriend was, I don't know, definitely on steroids...He was pretty calm. The girlfriend went crazy. When [partner name] ended up arresting the boyfriend, I had her pinned on the ground, and she was just trying to head-butt me. She was trying to kick me...I had to grab her by the arm and drag her off the bed, onto the floor, and pin her to the floor.

Lisa also expresses frustration when a victim calls the police for assistance, and, then, turns against the police once she sees the police arresting her partner:

Lisa: It is one of those...you go in [and say] 'Susie, are you alright? Do you need paramedics?', and then it is [...] you definitely let your guard down 'cause, I dunno, in normal world, land of common sense, you would think that the person would be grateful that you're there. And, then, all of a sudden you turn around and they're running at you, trying to punch you.

One of my more surprising findings was when officers spoke about victims becoming aggressive towards them. There is little research about victims turning against the police, although it has been mentioned briefly by some studies. Johnson (2011) found that the victim perpetrated only three of 117 incidents of assaults against officers at domestic violence calls. In another study, each of the 27 officers interviewed recalled occasions “when the victim, rather than being one who was in need, was an adversary” at a domestic violence call (Sinden and Stephens, 1999, p. 321-322). These victims either became physically or verbally hostile toward officers. One way of interpreting victims lashing out against officers is through the concept of iatrogenic violence, which refers to “police interventions which precipitate violent reactions” (Barocas, 1971, p. 342).

Victims Who Do Not Want the Assistance of the Police

Often times, victims do not want police intervention in the first place. This usually occurs when a third-party, such as a neighbour or someone else inside the home, has called the police. In one study, officers revealed that victims of domestic violence only call the police about half the time (Stephen and Sinden, 1999). The other half of the time, a neighbour or other family member calls the police. In cases where the victim does not want police intervention, the victim can become frustrated and annoyed. This frustration and annoyance may contribute to the victim lashing out at the police:

Lisa: They’re pissed off from the get-go that you’re there ‘cause it’ll be, like, the neighbour had called or their kid had called. They didn’t call. Someone else called. Now, they’re really angry because they realize that their wonderful boyfriend is about to get arrested.

As Lisa explained, the victim may already have been angry over the fact that the police had been called, and, now, the victim is even angrier when she realizes her boyfriend or husband is being arrested. In cases where the victim does not want the police to be present, Jessica elaborates on how the victim can act much like the abuser:

Jessica: If it’s a third party that has called in, there’s, sort of, what we call, what I term, unwilling victims. They don’t want us there. So if it’s a third party complaint about hearing some sort of domestic happening, and the victim doesn’t know that we’re coming, they often will act in a similar manner to the suspect and say ‘oh, no, it’s fine. I’m

good. It's silly. He's been drinking. We're just having an argument.' And when we say that we're not going, they tend to display, often times, the same behaviour as the aggressor would display toward us.

In cases where the victim and abuser reconcile before the arrival of the police, Eric describes how the abuser and the victim can act as a united front against officers:

Eric: What had happened is they fought. They hit each other. She called the police. And then they reconciled in the meantime [prior] to me arriving. So, basically, he was hiding on us...So, you're entering a whole different relationship upon entry...Because they had already reconciled, we're now the enemy.

As noted by officers in the interviews, despite the victim no longer wanting the assistance of the police, the police still have a legal obligation, in many regions, to come inside the residence and carry out their investigation.

4.2. "You're literally going in blind, hoping for the best": Not Knowing What Awaits Officers on the Other Side of the Door

According to Robert, unlike most other calls that officers attend, domestic violence calls usually take place inside a residence as opposed to outside:

Robert: Because domestic violence calls are by and large inside a residence, it's very [...] occasionally we'll have a domestic violence situation that occurs outside, but, generally, it's inside a residence. Whereas most of the other calls we go to, especially ones dealing with violence, are outside or in a public area.

Since officers are attending domestic violence calls inside someone's residence, a large safety concern about attending domestic violence calls is not knowing what awaits officers behind the door at a residence. The following quote highlights many of the questions that go through an officer's mind when trying to assess what waits for them behind the door at a domestic violence call:

Jessica: It starts with not even knowing who's inside. So, my first concern is, one, history of the residence, right? How many times have

we been there before? What have we been there for? Those types of questions. And, secondly, when you get there...you don't even know who's behind the door, much less, you know, weapons and all those other things. My next concern is how many people are in there? And once we establish that, it's [that] a house is full of things that can be used as weapons when someone is angry and agitated and we don't know where they are and we don't know what they want to abuse. And, so, there's a huge safety factor when we go...just what's in our immediate reach? Where are the parties? Where is the victim? Where is the suspect? Is he upstairs? Well, what is he doing upstairs? Who knows what he has up there.

Robert brought up the dangers of not knowing what is behind the door at domestic violence call without prompting:

Robert: The other, I forgot to say, factor that makes domestic violence calls unpredictable is the fact that we're going into a residence where we don't know the layout of the residence. We don't know where weapons of opportunity are. Obviously every single house has a kitchen, so there's always knives there. And on top of that, 100% of the calls we go to are gun calls because we bring the gun to the call...Yeah. I'd say a lot of the biggest risks for domestic violence calls is, literally, the unknown.

The following discussion highlights four specific concerns raised by officers relating to the uncertainty of domestic violence calls: extra parties inside the residence complicating the situation; not knowing the layout of the residence; not having any previous contact with the parties involved; and the availability of weapons inside a residence that can potentially be used against officers.

4.2.1. “Trying to figure out who’s who in the zoo”: Extra parties Inside the Residence Complicate the Situation

Several officers spoke about the dangers of having extra parties inside the residence at a domestic violence call. This concern stems from being out-numbered, as well as not knowing how these parties will react to police intervention (e.g., if they see the abuser being arrested). There also are concerns about not knowing the background of these parties (e.g., whether they are anti- or pro-police, whether they have a criminal record), especially if the individual who calls 911 does not know if there are extra parties inside the residence, which does not allow the police to search the background of these

extra parties before arriving. In these cases, the officers are no longer dealing with just the abuser and victim. Now, officers are dealing with a whole host of other parties who have their own opinions and emotions. For Emily, the most dangerous part of attending a domestic violence call is the initial entry into the residence and determining exactly who the parties are, where they are located, and their motives and backgrounds:

Emily: You also have who's in the bedrooms or in the basements. Are there any tenants or any people who are supporting him? Does he have any affiliations? What if he has his brother in the backroom who has something too? You have all these elements when you enter that home. Until you've cleared that residence and know who's there and what you're dealing with, I think that's your most key time for danger...The unknown is more dangerous for us than dealing with somebody that we can see. But, again, it's who's in the bedrooms. Until you can see him, that's more of my fear. Once you're in the house, you'd wanna figure out how many people are in there...You don't wanna have any surprises. You're never relaxed, but once you've gone in, and everybody's under control, you can kind of breathe. But, just initially trying to figure out who's who in the zoo, that's your initial tricky part.

Matthew and Paul also note that it is difficult to predict how the parties inside the residence are going to react to the police attending. That is, are the extra parties there to assist the police or to interfere? Both of them have experienced instances on both ends of that spectrum:

Matthew: [It] depends on who the family members are in relation to the people that are in the domestic. They might not like their own child. They might not like the other person. They can be of assistance or they can be a flashpoint as well because it's personalities and it's the human condition, right? It's emotions. And you never know if it's gonna, all of a sudden, something's gonna instigate them, right? Especially if you've arrested their child, and now their child's going to jail. I've had that happen, and, all of a sudden, they fly off the handle.

Paul: Maybe there's other family members or friends who may be in the residence that you're not aware of, who are on-board with the suspect or person that we're trying to deal with, and [are] willing to help him in a moment's notice. Sometimes they're there to help. Other times, they'll turn on us. Other times they're helping us right from the beginning. Sometimes they'll be holding down someone for us.

For Shak, there is a concern about possibly being out-numbered inside a residence at a domestic violence call, especially when it may not be entirely clear which side the extra parties are on. As he explains, his threat might not even be the parties he was originally called to deal with (i.e., the abuser and victim):

Shak: The reality is you don't know how many people are in the home either, right? So, you don't know if going in with two people, and they've got six people in there, right, like you don't know with all these multi-family or multi-people families...A lot of these places have a lot of people that are living within their homes, right? So, and they're picking sides and they're kinda getting involved as well, right?...So, really, even though I'm dealing with two people in a domestic violence situation, well my threat might not even be them. It'll be [...] two other people in the backroom who really hate [the] police.

According to a number of officers, the presence of extra parties inside a residence is often a reality when multi-generational families live inside a single residence. As Andrew puts it, "they rarely sit there quietly." Jessica illustrates this point particularly well:

Jessica: It just exacerbates the situation. The more people that are there [...] they all have an opinion, they all want to be heard. They're all protective of one party over another party, and, so, you'll get multicultural homes...you'll get moms and dads protecting their sons and their daughters. And they become aggressive toward us because they don't like what they see. They don't want to believe that we have the authority to do what we're doing, and they wanna protect their kids...They have a huge protective momma bear type attitude, and they will become aggressive toward us, whether we're taking away a male or female. It doesn't matter...if there are other family members there, they will often become aggressive toward us because they don't want to see this happen. Now we deal with not only the suspect, but we deal with other family members that are there. We deal with friends that may be there.

As explained by Jessica, family members often intervene when they witness the arrest of a family member. From the previous quotes, Jessica and Shak both express similar concerns about the uncertainty of who the real threats are when responding to calls when extra parties are involved.

Another concern voiced by several officers is when officers are not aware of extra parties inside the residence prior to arriving. This can occur when the person

calling 911 is a neighbour or when an individual inside the residence does not disclose such information. Several officers stated that they have attended calls where they did not know there were other parties inside until they arrived. At least when officers are dispatched to a residence, they can look up the background of the parties associated with the address (usually both the victim and abuser, if they live together). When the officers are not aware of other persons in the residence, they cannot look up their background. Jessica identifies some of the challenges of not knowing the backgrounds of the other parties inside a residence:

Jessica: If you run the history of a residence, you get a very basic overview of how many times police have been called to that residence, who the parties are at that time, and who that residence is, sort of, registered to. But that doesn't give you any indication of anybody else who may be there. So, that, again, is one of those unknowns that we go in and we don't know who else is there. And, having said that, we don't where each of those unknown people [are]...what their background is. So, there's so many unknowns and [...] we try...to keep ourselves safe and keep the victim safe, and, in turn, really, keep all the parties safe from [one] another because things do sometimes go sideways where other family members...[They] can start becoming aggressive toward each other. It can be very, very sensitive situations.

For Jessica, the presence of extra parties, such as friends and extended family members, at a residence presents a whole series of unknown variables, such as the criminal background of those parties, how the parties will react to police intervention, and where the parties are located inside the residence.

4.2.2. Not Knowing the Layout of a Residence

Another concern for officers attending domestic violence calls inside a residence is not knowing the layout of the residence. This can be worrying since officers may not know, for example, how many rooms, which can serve as hiding spots for the abuser or other parties, are in the residence. Police officers are expected to be tactically aware of the areas that they enter due to the nature of their job and depending on the severity of the call. As Lisa explains:

Lisa: [If] the call taker can hear screaming in the background, you're going in. There isn't the formal master-plan before going in. You get

there with whoever your backup is gonna be, and it'll be the whole you're literally going in blind. You still have to announce that you're the police, and it's just you're going in guns out, trying to figure out what's going on. There's the concern of how many people in the house, if there's kids in the house...You're literally going in blind, hoping for the best...And it's just going room by room, heartbeat going at a million beats per second, trying to figure out what's going on, clearing room by room...You're literally going into a house blind...of not knowing this could be the guy that's waiting for the zombie apocalypse and has been stock-piling guns forever.

Kevin echoes many of the comments made by Lisa when he describes a domestic violence call that he attended recently. He explains how he had to kick down the door and had no idea what could be waiting on the other side of the door:

Kevin: It comes to [the] whole unpredictability, you know? Some of the things you can be prepared, but [with] domestics, you usually have to act pretty quickly because it's really happening...You really don't have time to plan, so generally you're going in right away. For example [...] two nights ago, we had to kick a door in because it was a domestic violence type situation, and [there was] knocks and banging and stuff and yelling and screaming, and then we had no choice but to kick the door open, and, then, all of a sudden, you're going...you have no idea....could there be dogs, could there be...you don't know who's in the residence. There could be kids. You don't know the layout.

This particular quote highlights how officers may have to act quickly and enter the residence immediately upon arriving with little time to prepare for what may be waiting for them on the other side.

4.2.3. Not Having Any Previous Contact or History with the Parties Involved

Several officers spoke about the concerns that come along with attending a domestic violence call for the first time at a residence without prior contact with the parties. Although officers can look up information on the parties involved, they do not have other types of information gained through previous contact. Jessica highlights these types of concerns:

Jessica: [The] first time you get that domestic violence call for a residence that you have no history to, in particular, calls for domestic

or domestic violence reports, it's...I have always have a heightened sense of awareness...because I have no idea who the parties are, what their relationship is to each other. Is it a new relationship? Is it an old relationship? What kind of relationship is this? Who are the people involved? What are their backgrounds? So, there's lots of history that has to happen between the two in the residence, and, again, you don't know any of that until you get there and you sort of determine who is who, what their roles are, and you have to start going back into history, and the female is so inclined to disclose historic assaults and, sort of, the pattern of the relationship, and you can create that history, but you don't have that information when you knock on the door.

Karen also discusses how she feels more comfortable going to a domestic violence call where she has had previous contact with the parties involved:

Karen: I usually feel more comfortable going to a call, or a domestic, and having recent, previous history because at least you'll have an idea of who you're dealing with. If you don't know who the people are, you don't know who you're gonna get because sometimes you can get [...] somewhat normal and, other times, you can get people that are armed and dangerous, mental instability, anti-police.

Karen also gave an example of a couple that the police are called out to deal with on a regular basis. Through repeat calls involving those parties, she and other officers have learned that the abuser is extremely anti-police (and has been charged with assaulting police officers). Officers at her department now "know what you're gonna get with the guy" anytime they attend a domestic violence call involving him.

Even with previous contact with parties at a domestic violence call, several officers caution against officer complacency when an officer has dealt with individuals in the past without incident and past incidents are used as a basis for future decisions (e.g., whether to attend the call alone, whether to wait for back-up). When officers feel that they know a particular suspect/individual quite well, they may turn down back-up and attend the call alone:

Robert: What happens is that a lot of times members will turn down cover just because they don't wanna burden somebody else, but it ends up becoming a situation of complacency where nothing has happened in the past, so, what are the chances something is gonna happen? I might as well just go alone.

Emily: Those are the ones that scare me the most because you have a rapport with these people. You get quite confident, and 'oh, I know Bob', right? Well, Bob might have mental issues and has had quite a different day, so you're going in [thinking] 'don't worry about it, I don't need cover' 'cause you're confident that you've dealt with this guy 50 times and he's a dummy and he's had too many beers and that's the end of it...[but] he might surprise you. Those are the ones that I think you have to be quite mindful of as well. So, you may still wanna bring a second person with you, right?

As Emily explains it, although an officer may have numerous safe dealings with a suspect in the past, there is the possibility that the suspect may surprise the officer. This point is also shared by Steven, who told me that "you treat every call like it's your first time going there no matter how many times you've dealt with them."

4.2.4. Availability of Weapons inside a Residence That Can Be Used Against Officers

Another concern that officers have when attending domestic violence calls inside a residence is the availability of weapons. Multiple officers spoke about how this can range from deliberately hidden weapons, such as knives and, although rare, firearms, as well as every day household items that can be used as weapons. Andrew and Kevin discuss how rare it is to find firearms at domestic violence calls in large Canadian cities.

Andrew: Firearms are very, very rare. I mean, given the States, it's such a [different], you know, can of worms with everybody down there. It's such a pro-firearm nature, where here it's a lot harder to get a gun...I'm just trying to think of [a] domestic that I've been to involving a firearm...I don't think I've ever been to one where a gun was used. I've been to one where there's been stabbings.

Kevin: There are some people that do have firearms, but generally you're not seeing it like in the States. And if somebody does have firearms, after they've been arrested, we will seize all those firearms as well...just as a precaution.

Although it may be rare to find firearms with residences at a domestic violence call in large cities, several other types of weapons, especially knives and weapons of opportunity, can be used. Although the officer may not be familiar with the layout of the residence and the location of such items, this may not be true for individual who is the

subject of police attention and lives at the residence. As Jessica notes, a residence is full of items (including every day, household items) that can be easily used as weapons:

Jessica: A house is full of things that can be used as weapons when someone is angry and agitated and we don't know where they are and we don't know what they want to abuse. And, so, there's a huge safety factor when we go...just what's in our immediate reach? A kitchen is full of all kinds of weapons. I mean, anything can be used for a weapon. It doesn't have to be a firearm or a knife, it can be anything within that house that can be picked up and thrown at us or anything, and you have to look around and you have to really open your mind for a moment and just take it all in so that you know what is where. There's a screwdriver over there. There's a hanger over there.

For Shak, one of the more dangerous aspects of attending a domestic violence call is the initial entry into the residence, which involves scanning the residence to look for weapons that can possibly be used against him:

Shak: My main focus is safety right?. What's around that can hurt me [or them]? Kitchens typically have lots of knives and stuff like that, so you're never gonna interview anybody in the kitchen. Everything that you're doing as you're walking in and dealing with them, you're looking around [to see if] there [are] weapons? Is there scissors? Is there anything that could cause me harm if they can grab it? If there is, either I will grab it and completely remove it, put it in my pocket, move it completely out of sight between me and them. Because if I don't, then there's that opportunity that if this person feels threatened [...] will they attempt to do that? But if I can remove all the potential threats for myself, then it makes that call that much safer.

As Shak suggests, knives are just one type of weapon that an individual can obtain from the kitchen. The presence of knives, as well as the ability to retrieve them from the kitchen, was another concern raised by several officers during their interviews. Since knives are readily available inside homes, especially in the kitchen, many officers noted that they do not conduct their investigation inside kitchens.

4.3. When and Why Abusers Become Assaultive or Aggressive Toward Police Officers

During the interviews, officers explained when and why abusers would become angry, agitated, aggressive, or assaultive towards police officers. The themes that emerged included abusers realizing the consequences of being arrested and abusers feeling that the police are taking the victim's side. Abusers may also become angry, agitated, aggressive, or assaultive towards police officers when the police first arrive, such as when the abuser realizes that the police are not going away or when the abuser anticipates the arrival of the police.

4.3.1. Realization of consequences of being arrested

One reason why officers felt that an abuser might become aggressive or assaultive is when the abuser realizes the consequences of being arrested, such as losing employment or the ability to see his/her children. When this happens, some of the anger may be directed toward the arresting officers, who are seen as responsible for all of this happening. This point is illustrated below by Andrew and Lisa:

Andrew: If he thinks that he's going to jail, then it's anger toward the police. That's when the issues happen with us where he knows he's being taken away, which he doesn't wanna lose, whether it be he loses his kids, loses his job, loses his house. That's where they get very upset. I mean, you're taking them out of their house. You're taking him to jail. He's risking losing employment...Usually we're always to blame, right? He's rarely ever blamed...I find that a lot.

Lisa: I think that's when reality sets in. I think up until you get there, most people think they can talk their way out of it, like, [when] people think they can talk their way out of a speeding ticket. [When] the handcuffs go on, they know it's over. Because you put the handcuffs on and read them their rights, they think it's just...reality has set in. Handcuffs are extremely uncomfortable. And it's literally over.

Some of the consequences of being arrested, as noted by Andrew, may be that the abuser will not be able to contact his kids or wife/husband or girlfriend/boyfriend or may get fired for missing work. There may be additional consequences for the abuser if he is formally charged and/or convicted. Unlike a speeding ticket, as Lisa conveyed, abusers

cannot talk their way out of trouble at a domestic violence call. Robert shared a similar view to that of Andrew and Lisa:

Robert: It could be because now that they think when police arrive on scene, they're telling their story, which often are lies. So, they may think they're under control, and, once they're advised that they're under arrest, then they realize that they've lost all control. And they [...] have gone through the situation, so they realize what is coming once they're placed under arrest...They may see what the ramifications are. So, they're not gonna be allowed back to their house. They're not gonna be allowed to have any contact with their girlfriend or wife...They're generally not allowed to have any contact with kids either. So, what we find in some situations is people may have a no-contact, no-go, to the house, but the girlfriend or the wife will allow them back into the house because...They may decide to breach their conditions in cooperation with their wife, and, once the police arrive, they now know that they're not only gonna be arrested for assault, they're gonna be arrested for breach of their conditions. And after several breaches, they may not get out of jail until trial [...] in which case they would lose their jobs and whatever other ramifications come from that.

For abusers without previous contact with the police or those who have not been previously arrested, being arrested for the first time can be very emotional:

Eric: I've found that, consistently, after the handcuffs are on, that's when everybody gets brave [...] whether or not that has to do with the fact that we can't legally beat up handcuffed people, but [...] unlike arresting a drunk from the street [...] the domestic violence guys, they rage and spit...It also depends how many times they've gone through the dance. If you're dealing with experienced criminals, like people who have been arrested a million times, they know exactly what they have to do...They'll just sit here peacefully and quietly...But the ones that are really new, that have never been arrested by the police, they think it's the end of the world. They don't understand that arrest and criminal conviction are two different animals. And they go ape shit.

Eric goes on to provide an example of how an already agitated and emotional abuser can become even more agitated when he starts to think about the consequences of being arrested:

Eric: She decided to get drunk by herself. The husband came home. She got mad at him. She hit him, [so] we arrest her. And she gets worse. Like, she didn't turn off the rage button. So, this lady [...], she's never had dealings with the police before, but now she's thinking to

herself that she's gonna lose her kids. And she's screaming...The domestic violence files, I mean because there's such long-standing consequences, and that's what people really understand and that's why they get so mad. Everyone says 'I'm gonna lose my kids'...People certainly recognize when the police show up, the consequences are immediate, and that's one of the reasons they raise that temperature.

Of the fifteen officers interviewed, seven of them reported that they had been assaulted at a domestic violence call at least once. All seven officers were assaulted during the arrest stage or immediately after the arrest stage. Further, multiple officers identified the arrest stage as being the time where the abuser is most likely to lash out against or attack officers. This outlook is consistent with the findings of one study that found nine out of every ten (90.9%) assaults toward an officer occurred during the stage where the officer was either arresting or controlling the suspect (Brandl and Stroschine, 2012).

4.3.2. Abusers feel that they have been wronged

According to some officers, abusers can become angry with police officers when officers take the side of the victim, which is usually signalled by the fact that the abuser is being arrested. When this happens, some abusers see themselves as the victim and may feel wronged. Matthew and Emily touch on this point:

Matthew: My experience with it is that [...] the person that's the one who's being abusive or assaultive, I found that they typically perceive themselves somehow as the victim. The person who is in custody...the one who is probably going to jail, quite often I find that they somehow perceive themselves as a victim in this incident, and that when we arrest them for what they've done they've been treated unjustly.

Emily: Now you're gonna go arrest him...What if he thinks it's not his fault. 'Fuck you, fuck you, fuck you. You're not gonna arrest me'. Well now, what are you gonna do? You're gonna put hands on this person. Well, now, you're putting yourself in a position to be assaulted back.

Aggressive or assaultive actions toward officers by abusers who feel that the police have wronged them fits with an explanation proposed by Reisig et al. (2002). Adapting social interactionist theory, they note that a suspect is more likely to comply with police actions (e.g., being arrested) if the suspect perceives the police as acting

fairly. However, if police actions are “deemed unfair, illegitimate, or unnecessary, a grievance is likely” (Reiseg et al., 2002, 244). As described by Emily and Matthew, some abusers view the police taking the victim’s side and arresting the abuser as an unfair police action. Although Reiseg et al. (2002) imply that this grievance would come in the form of disrespect toward officers, it is possible for the grievance to escalate to aggression or assaultive actions toward officers.

4.3.3. When abusers realize that the police will not go away

In addition to the above reasons that lead to aggressive behaviour by abusers, a few officers also note that abusers can become aggressive and angry with officers when they realize that the police are not going away. Jessica explains how this can happen:

Jessica: [When] the suspect realizes that we’re not leaving, then they tend to get quite agitated. They get all worked up, right? ‘I told you. I told you. There’s nothing wrong.’ And they start to get themselves all worked up. So, now, they don’t like that you’re there. They haven’t been able to get rid of you successfully. They now figure out now this isn’t really going the way I want it go, so I gotta figure out another plan. So, they, typically, get very agitated, they get angry, they, oftentimes, become violent toward us...or will attempt to.

Emily similarly discusses how the abuser can become agitated when the police try to enter his or her home:

Emily: Or if someone just kicks in their door, right? They might have had an argument and they still might be bickering back and forth or he might have her pinned to the floor. And you’re standing outside the door and you’re hearing that it’s still going on, back and forth...and nobody comes to the door, so you kick it in. Well, now you’ve just kicked in the door and they’re not happy with you. ‘Who are you and why are you in my house. This is my house. You have no right to be in here. Where is your warrant?’

In an incident involving Robert, the abuser, who did not want the police to come inside, was waiting for officers with a knife on the other side of the door. The abuser came toward Robert and his partner after they kicked down the door:

Robert: [We] knock on the door and the dude is holding his girlfriend inside. He’s forcibly confining her...And then [he says] “fuck you, I’m not opening the door.” [We] kicked in the door, he came at us with a

knife, so we ended up having to...well, we tried to tazer him, but that doesn't work, [so] we ended up pepper spraying him.

As highlighted above, multiple officers note that abusers can become agitated and angry with police officers when officers try to enter the abuser's residence. One explanation for this is that since abusers typically need to demonstrate dominance and control, the abuser may feel threatened when the police are now entering their home, invading their territory, and taking control of the situation (Johnson, 2001). This explanation would seem to fit in with Emily's description of abuser's holding the opinion that "this is my castle and you can't come in" when the police try to enter the abuser's residence.

4.3.4. Abusers anticipating the arrival of police

Several officers highlighted their concerns when the abuser is aware that the police have been called. For instance, Jessica feels that if an abuser knows that the police are coming, the abuser can develop a game plan and be in control of the situation. The abuser, if he or she wanted to, could get a weapon and prepare for the arrival of the police. For her, this presents a safety concern:

Jessica: When we're given information that [the abuser is] aware that we are coming [...] that's another level of, just, acknowledgment to make that 'okay, he knows we're coming. Okay, so there's no element of surprise.' He's waiting for us to show up. So the officer safety part escalates...[It gives] the primary aggressor the time to, sort of, come up with a game plan. He is pretty much in control at that point. If he knows that we're showing up [...], he's the one that's calling the shots until we can get in and determine what's happening. So, it can send that opportunity if they want to get a weapon, if they want to flee, if they want to barricade themselves in that room. It gives them that opportunity to do that, and that...just makes it more challenging for us when we get there, and it's also just another level of safety for us.

Paul echoes some of Jessica's concerns about the opportunity to retrieve a weapon when an abuser knows the police have been called. During Paul's interview, he explains "it's happened before...where people are aware [that] the police are coming, so they'll hide weapons, typically a knife on their person." Emily also suggests that if the abuser is

aware that the police have been called, the abuser is in a position to prepare to attack officers:

Emily: If they know [that the police are coming], they're gonna be waiting. And if it takes us three minutes to get there, that's enough time for someone to go to the kitchen and grab a knife [or] go to the shed and grab something [like] golf clubs, firearms, whatever they might have handy. 'Fuck you, you're not gonna take me.' Or 'you're gonna take me dead if you're gonna take me'. And some people's rationale might be that.

According to Kevin, when the abuser is aware that the police are coming, this can potentially allow the abuser to set up an ambush for attending officers:

Kevin: I sometimes think if they know the police have been called...I think that can be more dangerous...For me, I'm thinking 'okay, he knows we're called'. That means if he's planning something or she's planning something...you're almost walking into an ambush type thing. But, then, at the same time, it can be just as dangerous when they don't know because you show up [and] they just react. So, I've seen both. I've seen people know that the police are coming and they're just sitting outside waiting with their hands up. And then the opposite where they're [...], like, 'come and get me'.

Although Kevin notes concerns arise when the abuser knows the police have been called, but he also notes that it can be just as concerning when the abuser is startled by the sudden appearance of the police.

The above quotes highlight the dangers inherent in the initial arrival and entry into the residence at a domestic violence call, and fit with some of the existing literature on assaults against officers at domestic violence calls. Of the 106 incidents of police officers killed while attending a domestic violence call between 1996 and 2009, more than half of the officers were killed in an ambush or unprovoked attack (Meyer and Carroll, 2011). These ambush attacks usually occurred when officers were approaching the residence, arriving on scene, or exiting their police vehicles. Johnson (2008) found that over one-third of the firearm assaults against officers occurred during the initial arrival and approach. One explanation is that it is easier for a suspect to obtain a gun and confront police officer officers when officers first arrive, especially when the suspect knows the police coming. In fact, many of the officers in my study described the

concerns that arise when the abuser is aware that the police are on their way, since it gives the abuser time to retrieve a weapon and prepare to attack attending officers.

4.4. “You’re no help to anybody if you go in and you’re dead”: The Dilemma between Attending Domestic Violence Calls Alone and Waiting for Back-up to Arrive

The following theme examines officer views on attending domestic violence calls alone. All of the officers interviewed agreed that a domestic violence call is one call that should not be attended alone. From the interviews, I ascertained that police departments require that more than one officer attends domestic violence calls (although this may not always happen in practice).¹² The following theme explores the dangers of attending domestic violence calls alone, the benefits to having multiple officers attend a domestic violence call, and circumstances when officers are forced to attend domestic violence calls alone.

4.4.1. Officer Safety Concerns When Attending Domestic Violence Calls Alone

Due to the potential for danger at domestic violence calls, multiple officers emphasized the importance of not attending such calls alone (unless there were extenuating circumstances). Although attending a domestic violence alone was not a significant predictor of officer injury in a study by Ellis et al. (1993), the researchers note that the probability of an officer being assaulted or injured increased by 9% when an officer attends alone. During one interview, Emily explained that victims have attacked

¹² There usually are provincial or municipal standards for how policing is to be carried out. For instance, police departments have policies dictating that domestic violence calls should be attended with at least two police officers. As an example, Ontario’s *Policing Standards Manual* (2000) outlines the procedures for when officers respond to a domestic violence call. In particular, this document notes that “every police service’s procedure should...set out the number of police officers to attend the scene, with two as the minimum” (p. 4). A copy of Ontario’s *Policing Standards Manual* (2000) for attending domestic violence calls can be found in Appendix D.

officers at domestic violence calls, and how dangerous it would be if only one officer attended. She strongly cautions against officers attending domestic violence calls alone:

Emily: We've had a couple stories where someone has jumped on [the officer's] back...We try to make sure we have an ample amount of officers when we go to a call like this. You'd never go alone, or, at least, I hope you wouldn't. At least a couple people, right? One officer has separated someone, and one officer has separated someone else...You're no help to anybody if you go in and you're dead. Right, so you're not helpful to the victim, the children, or anyone. So, why don't you wait and formulate your plan and go in strategically, so that it has the best outcome for everybody. I know there's thoughts to the other side...there's kids inside so what do you do? But again, if buddy comes at you and attacks you and knocks you out...there's definitely the chance that could happen. What are you gonna do? Now you just created another nightmare for somebody...Always two for those calls.

Jessica believes there are simply too many unknowns inside the residence for one officer to deal with alone:

Jessica: It just goes back to all that un-predictability. You don't know who's in there. You don't know what's happening. You don't know what they have, what they don't have. And I can't make all those judgements by myself.

For Chris, it is simply not realistic for one officer to be able keep an eye on both the victim and abuser:

Chris: One of the things is you're out-numbered. You can't keep an eye on both parties. You're trying to keep an eye on both parties...at once, so multi-tasking becomes a requirement, but it can be difficult.

Shak outlined what he perceived to be the dangers and issues of attending a domestic violence call alone:

Shak: It's a challenge [...] because you've got at least two parties that are emotionally escalated, so [...] even though you separate them, well, you don't have control of one, right? And there's the unknown of what's in either that other room or what's around them. So, I mean it can be [...] a little bit nerve-wrecking, right? Now, if I'm by myself...then things you would think about [are] do I have an exit point? But, at the same time, you're kind of doing it in a way that [...] if you're letting people go to different parts of the house, you don't know what they're going to get, you don't know what's going on.

Attending domestic violence calls alone places officers in a precarious situation as they cannot safely engage in dialogue with the parties involved as one is likely a victim, and, the other, an abuser. In addition to carrying out an investigation of the domestic dispute, there are other safety concerns, such as trying to maintain an exit strategy in the event that the officer must distance him/herself from the individuals at the scene due to danger. A single officer must also attempt to keep track of where the parties are and prevent the parties from going into other rooms, and will not be aware of other individuals being in the residence.

4.4.2. “Safety in numbers”: The Benefits of Having Multiple Police Officers at Domestic Violence Calls

Several officers highlighted the benefits of going with multiple officers to a domestic violence call. Karen spoke about the rationale behind sending multiple officers to this type of call. She explains that sending multiple officers helps to out-number the parties at a domestic violence call (rather than have the parties outnumber the police), which helps to better diffuse and control the situation. However, since Karen works for a police department that deploys one-person police vehicles, the availability of back-up depends on the availability of other officers:

Karen: You would never ever, ever go to a domestic by yourself. Never. Not a chance. The whole thought process that I’m aware of is that you outnumber them. And it’s much easier to diffuse the situation. Even on the street when we deal with people that are not in domestic situations, usually it’s two people. You have [...] your contact and your cover. So, you’re going to a situation that’s already super [...] escalated, like, with a domestic, and you think there are two people then you’re gonna have contacts and cover for both people involved, right? And, in saying that, lots of times, numbers don’t permit that.

The presence of multiple officers at the scene can help deter the abuser from being confrontational and violent toward officers because he is outnumbered. Just like Karen, Paul mentions the importance of out-numbering the abuser, who may also be angry and/or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Paul: Say you’ve got mental health issues or he’s under the influence of some kind of drug or alcohol or if he’s just really angry...one on one, just isn’t gonna cut it, right?...Someone feels a lot more confident that

they might be able to take one officer on as opposed to if they're confronted with numbers. You know, the more officers there are, the less likely there is violence on the suspect's part. It certainly decreases, you know, their thought process of trying to harm somebody when they know the numbers are against them.

When speaking about the importance and benefits of having multiple officers at a domestic violence call, Shak states that multiple officers provide "safety in numbers" and can sometimes immediately calm down the situation. Additionally, if he attends a domestic violence call with another officer, both officers can keep an eye on each other:

Shak: If you're with a partnership and you get turned to a home, I mean, obviously, you're first thing is to separate whatever problem is going on, but you're gonna separate it in a way that even though they might be in the other room, you still have a visual contact with your partner. So, if I'm in the living room and they're in a bedroom, well my partner would be at the doorway of that bedroom speaking to this person inside, and [...] we could both see each other so if something escalated on their end, I could be there to support...If you walk into a place with four police officers, things kind of settle down pretty quick, right? Like, once things are settled down, then you can get to the root of the issue, right? I would say it's, kind of, safety in numbers.

Much to my surprise, a few officers noted that attending a domestic violence call with multiple officers can have drawbacks as well. Lisa and Kevin touch on this point:

Lisa: I have never, ever seen it have a positive effect. I'm sure with you talking to a bunch of police officers [...] most of us want to be in charge. So, you've got six people who all wanna be in charge. Then there's always one person who needs to stir the pot...You got everything calm. You're like 'okay, Tommy, you're under arrest for assault. Let's go'. And then you've got one member that decides that they need to just be, like, [...] 'you're a fuckin' loser. You hit women', and [that] just escalates everything back up. So, yeah there's the having six people there is good for your own safety, but, at the same, there's always one person that makes things worse.

Kevin: Sometimes [...] it can be the reverse effect where maybe one officer is better because they're just gonna talk, but all of a sudden more show up. Then [the abuser gets] this idea, like, we're there to take them away. It's kind of [...] the cornered animal type of thing.

Indeed, there are many benefits to having multiple officers at a domestic violence call. The presence of multiple officers inside a residence can deter the abuser from

engaging in violence against officers since the abuser is outnumbered. Additionally, multiple officers are able to keep an eye on each other during the course of their investigation. The presence of multiple officers inside a residence also helps to outnumber the extra parties that may be inside the residence. During the interviews, many officers discussed how officers often clear lower priority calls and, instead, assist officers at a domestic violence call. However, the presence of too many officers can sometimes exacerbate the situation.

4.4.3. Circumstances When Officers Have to Attend Domestic Violence Calls Alone

Although officers caution against attending domestic violence calls alone, several officers also acknowledge that there are circumstances where this may be necessary. However, I want to strongly emphasize that, as noted by the officers in the study, this is something that does not happen frequently. Instead, officers noted that this would happen in the most extreme of cases, such as when one of the parties at a domestic violence call is in imminent danger. For example:

Andrew: I think [on] one occasion I have...One time I was kind of ticked off at my partner because he was kind of being a little bit too cautious [...] but a husband had beat up his wife and she had barricaded herself in the bathroom and he was trying to kick in the door. So, that one I did. I did go in by myself. I felt that if I didn't, she would be in danger...If it's screaming and arguing and things like that, I'll always wait. You know, if there's severe violence going on, then I will, you know, I guess circumstantial, but I'll always, I guess, go in my own. Probably not the safest thing do.

Likewise, when I asked Jessica if she would ever attend a domestic violence call by herself, she firmly believes that it would have to be an extreme circumstance, such as imminent danger to the victim:

Jessica: Never. I would never. And part of that is being female, and part of that is officer safety. I would never ever, ever walk through that front door unless I saw something through the window which made me absolutely need to go through at that moment, by myself, knowing that backup was coming. So, if I look through the window and I see some horrific act happening, I would go through, but those would be the only situations.

Although Robert explained that he would only attend a domestic violence call alone in extreme circumstances, he spoke about how some officers, possibly younger officers, may turn down cover and attend domestic violence calls without extreme circumstances. He suggests that this may be because of officer complacency or an unselfish belief that the police are always there to help individuals in need of help and the officer's safety comes second:

Robert: What happens [...] over time, even for things like 911 hang-ups, the policy is that [the department] supposed to send two members. In general, the [department name] tends to understaff its resources. So, on a busy Friday night there may only be one vehicle available to go to a 911 hang-up. So, what happens is that a lot of times members will turn down cover just because they don't wanna burden somebody else, but it ends up becoming a situation of complacency where nothing has happened in the past, so, what are the chances something is gonna happen...I might as well just go alone. And, then, I think, too, some police officers have that altruistic motive that they're there to help people, so they'll put their own safety in jeopardy and go into domestic violence situations alone knowing that their cover units are still ten minutes away.

What I find, too, is that more junior members, especially ones that tend to be younger, they tend to have that bravado that comes with just being younger...The way I look at it is without officer safety there's no public safety. So, if you go into a call and you're attacked then there's no safety for other people in the house. But, like I said, there are members who will go into domestic violence situations alone.

For officers who work in police departments that deploy one-person police vehicles (13 of the 15 officers in this study), it is a reality that one officer will arrive at the residence before the other officer. Although there might be departmental policies in place for having at least two police officers attend a domestic violence call, a few officers discussed the dilemma of waiting outside a residence for back-up while someone inside might be in danger. For example, Matthew reveals how he would feel waiting for additional officers while someone inside at the domestic violence call was being hurt:

Matthew: I think [department policy] says something about the fact that you should [not be attending domestic violence calls alone], right, but as one person said to me one time, 'regulations, procedures, manuals are a bible to a fool and a guidebook to a wise man'...I would feel pretty crappy if I waited out in front of a building knowing that someone is being assaulted inside and I didn't go in simply because I was waiting for another person. I would feel pretty crappy. And part of

the job when you start is sometimes you do have to go. Waiting for all your resources just to build up before you go doesn't always happen, right? So, you might have to...I don't think I could wait [...] knowing full well that someone is being hurt, severely, or someone's being hurt inside. I don't think I would wait...I've been to calls where I've been single man and I've gone to domestics, and you can't wait.

Paul, who works for a police department that operates primarily using one-person police vehicles, expands on the tension between waiting for back-up while someone inside may be getting hurt. He seems to provide support for Robert's view that "some police officers have that altruistic motive that they're there to help people":

Paul: There will always be two [at a domestic violence call]. Now, having said that, two may be dispatched to the call and one may get there first. So, if you arrive as the initial responding officer and stuff is unfolding very quickly, that person may decide I'm gonna hold on and wait for a cover officer before I walk into this volatile situation or they may choose to go in and start dealing with it because someone is being physically hurt. So, very dangerous, obviously, for a single officer to go and deal with it, but it's one of those situations where you have to weigh the life and danger to somebody else opposed to ourselves...We get paid to put ourselves in harm's way sometimes.

Despite all of the officers in this study cautioning against attending domestic violence calls alone, officers acknowledged that sometimes they cannot avoid it. Sometimes, when there are extreme circumstances, such as when the victim or another party is in imminent danger, officers must attend alone. As highlighted by some officers, however, there is a dilemma between waiting for back-up and attending the domestic violence call alone. On one hand, some officers explain that they are paid to put themselves in harm's way. On the other hand, officers believe that without officer safety, there is no public safety.

4.5. Policing Domestic Violence Calls in Rural Areas

My initial research plan involved interviewing police officers who only worked in large cities in the Lower Mainland. During one interview, Robert pointed out that officers in rural areas may not have the luxury of waiting for back up:

Robert: I'm lucky being in the Lower Mainland. When you look at the Lower Mainland police departments, there's always backup very close by, but [through] talking with people who've worked in small towns...I've talked to members who've worked in places like Trail where they said [...] 'I sat talking to the aggressor for two hours waiting for back-up to arrive because I know once I tell him he's under arrest shit is gonna go sideways.' So, it's a different type of policing in a small town. Those officers tend to be very good at using their communication skills to de-escalate a situation versus Lower Mainland where we happen to be a bit more ego-driven and a little more assertive and aggressive, sometimes, just because we know there's back-up around.

What you'll actually find, from speaking to small-town people, because, as I said, sometimes we go to calls alone because the whole ego thing, the [department name] instituted a mandatory back-up policy for certain calls several years ago because of situations where police officers have been shot. In small towns, although technically they are bound by the mandatory back-up policy, you may have one police officer who is on-shift, at a certain hour, and although there is technically someone available for back-up, there's kind of that, you know, 'am I gonna wake up John when he's home with his family sleeping? I'll just risk it out and go to this call by myself'.

Attending domestic violence calls in rural settings brings its own set of safety and danger concerns. Themes that emerged include: the back-up policy at domestic violence calls in rural areas and the reality of officers attending domestic violence calls alone; the greater availability of firearms in rural areas; and the realities of small detachments that are responsible for large geographic areas and delays in the arrival of back-up.

4.5.1. The Back-Up Policy in Rural Areas and the Reality of Attending Domestic Violence Calls Alone

Eric was one of three participants who had previously policed in a rural area before policing in the Lower Mainland. He explained the back-up policy when it came to domestic violence calls in the rural area he policed and how this differs from how it is applied in a large city in the Lower Mainland:

Eric: The [department name] suffered through a dispatched member, way up north, and the guy got there and was killed. And the member who died, there was no other member actually attending. So, when I joined the [department name], they had already developed, essentially, they called it the back-up policy, in relationships in

domestic violence. And the back-up policy, and it actually applies nationwide, and it applies in the Lower Mainland, although we institute it differently in a place like [city name], but the actual ruling is you are dispatched to call, which you know is a domestic, another member needs to be notified and on route. That is the minimum requirement. So [...] you don't necessarily have to have two members attending the scene. What you have to do is have another member awake, putting their pants on, knowing that you're going to that area.

For Eric, when he policed in the rural town, there was only the requirement for the second officer to be "notified and on route." Eric agreed with my sentiment that it was extremely dangerous for police officers to attend domestic violence calls alone, but he also noted that responding to calls, as a single officer, regardless of whether it is a domestic violence call or another type of call, is something that officers in a rural setting do regularly. However, one of the benefits of working in a rural area is familiarity with the residents that played into his risk assessment in whether or not he would attend a domestic violence call alone or wait for back-up:

Eric: The other thing about policing in a rural setting is...[you] know the nature of the people you're going to for a call...And, so, you knew, going into those files, you said 'okay, I know who these players are. I know who these people are. I know what their behaviour is like'. In some cases, that changes your assessment because you say 'you know what, I can handle this on my own.'

Lisa also discussed familiarity with residents in rural towns and its role in an officer's risk assessment. An advantage of policing in a rural area for Lisa was that she was familiar with most of the residents who lived in the area and she could use this familiarity to rationalize with residents who may be agitated or emotional:

Lisa: One of the good, but bad things, [...] of being in a rural area is you end up knowing [...] basically all the people. So, it would be that you're going to the Smith residence, and I actually used to go the gym with a whole bunch of the drug dealers, and, so, I know I'm going to Tommy's place, so I can go and be like 'Tommy, it's Lisa. You don't wanna do this' or whatever. So you'd be able to talk them down, as compared to in [city name] where you have no idea who any of these people are.

Lisa's example of attending the same gym as some of the drug dealers in the town she policed in is consistent with Oliver and Meier's (2006) claim that, unlike police officers in

large cities who can become anonymous when they are off-duty, officers in rural settings may not have this advantage. At the same time, Lisa notes that her familiarity with the citizens of the town can also be beneficial when attending calls, such as when familiarity with the person she was dealing with would help her “talk them down.” This familiarity with citizens fits well with Donnermeyer, DeKeseredy, and Dragiewicz’s (2010) concept of insider status (although they refer to insider status if the officer, or the officer’s family, has grown up in the community in which the officer currently polices).

4.5.2. Smaller Detachments in Larger Geographical Areas and the Impact on Back-Up Response Time

One of the realities in policing in a rural setting is that officers work in smaller detachments (in terms of total number of officers), often covering a large geographic area. One consequence is that, unlike in a large city, there may not be many officers on duty and it can take a long time for back-up to arrive. Lisa policed in a rural area for the past two years and only began policing in a large city in September 2014. During our interview, she discusses how much smaller her department was in that rural area compared to the city that she works in now:

Lisa: There’s thirty members at the detachment, and you’re working with, on your watch, [...] there’s six people. But [...] with people being injured or on vacation, you’re usually working with four people on the road. And to drive from, [one end to the other] was about an hour and a half. So, it’s a large area to be covering for that few people. And then, it’s funny being in [city name] now of you go to a call of [...] a neighbour dispute and [...] six people show up. And I’m still getting used to that.

When Eric transferred from policing in a rural area to a larger, urban city in the Lower Mainland, he explains that it took him some time to get used to attending domestic violence calls with other officers. He depicts one incident where he attended a domestic violence call alone in the Lower Mainland and how his Corporal disapproved:

Eric: Afterwards, the on-duty Corporal [...] pulled me aside and he goes ‘you know, you can’t do this again. That was un-safe for the rest of your responding members. You went in by yourself’. And my jaw kinda hit the floor and [I] said ‘no, no, no, no, no. The woman was in there with her husband with a knife. Like, this is kinda the time when

we don't wait. We go in and we deal with this'. And he said 'well, no. Around here...now, you make yourself a risk, and we have enough members that it's incumbent on you to do it the way we're doing it here. And that's called wait for two guys'...I think in a lot of cases that would be quite correct, but the answer to that is, and this is where it comes down to it from a rural perspective, what can you live with. The policy is put in place for your safety and they always tell you police safety is just as important as public safety...we're always trying to preserve life, and your life counts, but in the end [the] answer is if people find out that you were basically sitting there, while you're fully armed and capable and trained [...] and waiting down the street, while someone is busy stabbing their spouse, you're gonna have to answer some questions to yourself. And the back-up policy isn't gonna be enough...The debate definitely rages in the rural areas. It's not as cut and dry as it is in the big city where they say 'hey, listen, wait for two guys [before] you go in.'

Eric emphasizes the dilemma of waiting for back-up while someone inside the residence may be in danger. This point was echoed by multiple officers during my interviews. Many officers spoke about the challenges of weighing officer safety against the safety of the victim or another party inside the residence. As Eric put it, if you decide to wait for back-up while someone inside may be getting hurt, "you're gonna have to answer some questions to yourself." Eric also spoke about how officers in large, urban cities are fortunate to have back-up in close proximity. He makes this point by illustrating how surprised he was at the number of officers at a suicide/traffic accident shortly after he began policing in a large city:

Eric: My first file in [city name] was actually a guy jumped in traffic on [a highway] and he killed himself...And so I went in and saw him dying in the hospital. And we went back and did the investigation...[There was] over fifteen officers on scene. And some of them were traffic control, generally, but, I mean, there's a luxury of people.

Eric also notes that, unlike officers in large cities who have back-up in close proximity, officers in rural areas may not be as aggressive or assertive dealing with individuals since their back-up may take time to arrive:

Eric: I've seen when guys are more aggressive when there's somebody standing right beside them...that they know they can be a little bit more lippy Whereas if you're by yourself, you have to recognize that [...] there isn't anybody coming right away and you're gonna have to own your work. For that, rural policing certainly has a

little bit of an improvement, I suppose. It teaches you something different. You have to know [...] when to deploy your authority and how far that extends.

Like Eric, Lisa also finds the number of available officers in a large city, who attend calls, even minor ones, compared to those in rural areas. She notes that, at minimum, back-up would take 11 minutes in the rural area where she previously policed. She also described an incident where she anxiously waited for her back-up to arrive:

Lisa: If needed back-up, my back-up, driving Code [three] was [...] 11 minutes...We know a lot can happen in 11 minutes. So, you've kind of got that in the back of your mind. And then [...] on a good day, there's four people working. I would be alone in [town name] and there would be three people in [town name]. And, so, it would be [...] trying to figure out [...] 'okay, it's a domestic in progress. Okay, I need to go now. How in the hell am I going to get it so I'm safe and everyone else is safe until I have back-up'. And then it would...I've definitely went to a couple calls of [...] the domestic in progress with a weapon, and of trying to get...I think I ended up, I dunno [...] basically barricading the guy with a knife in the bathroom [while] yelling at the woman in the kitchen to get out of the house. And it was just one of those things [where] you kind of become creative and figure out what to do.

Lisa's comment that on a good a day, there would be four officers working is certainly contrary to the experiences of police officers in large cities who told me it is not uncommon to see up to four officers attend a single domestic violence call. However, four officers attending a domestic violence call still leaves other on duty officers free to attend other calls. In Lisa's previous jurisdiction, four officers attending a domestic violence call meant that every on-duty officer was at that call.

Emphasizing the fact that back-up from other police officers may not always be quick to arrive in rural areas, Lisa highlights another incident where officers were assaulted at a domestic violence call and forced to call paramedics and volunteer firefighters for back-up:

Lisa: There ended up being one time that [some other officers] went to a domestic and the guy was [...] literally gone crazy, and the two members ended up fighting with him. They ended up calling the paramedics as back-up...They got the dispatch to call the paramedics and to try to get some of the volunteer firefighters out just 'cause it's like those are the only people that are up and out. Yeah, 'cause that

guy went nuts. He had [...] hit one of the members over the head with a chair...that's the only time I've ever heard of there being that type of situation of [...] literally calling the paramedics as back-up...just to get more people there to help out.

Officers with experience policing in rural settings made it clear that attending domestic violence calls alone is a reality. Not only do officers have to attend calls alone, it can take a long time for back-up to arrive. This finding is consistent with the literature on rural policing which identifies delays in arrival of back-up as a concern (Donnermeyer, DeKeseredy, & Dragiewicz, 2010; Eliason, 2006; Jobes, 2003; Lithopoulos & Ruddell, 2011; Mawby, 2010; Oliver & Meier, 2004; Weisheit et al., 1995). Oliver and Meier (2006) note that, unlike officers in large cities where back-up can arrive within minutes, the small number of officers who work in large geographic rural areas often means that it can take up to hours for back-up arrive. Halseth and Ryser (2006) looked at service delivery (e.g., police officers, medical, firefighters) in 19 rural and small towns across Canada and found that most of these towns were about 30 minutes from a police department. This finding not only shows that it may take officers a long time to respond to a call, but it also shows that it may take longer for officers to assist other officers who may already be at a call.

Jobes (2003) interviewed 54 police officers about the challenges they faced policing in rural areas in Australia. Several officers feared that back-up would not attend if something went wrong. In one edition of a Canadian police magazine, officers discuss some of the challenges of policing in remote and rural environments (Cook, Martin, & Boland, 2009). One officer identified the lack of back-up as one such challenge. The officer notes that "having only two police officers available when the closest help is three hours away by plane presents other challenges...Many calls require more than one member because of safety reasons" (Cook et al., 2009, p.12). The officer also goes on to describe a time he got his wife to guard a prisoner because he needed to attend a domestic violence call.

4.5.3. The Greater Availability of Firearms in Rural Areas

During my interviews with officers who had policed only in the Lower Mainland, almost all of them acknowledged that the presence of firearms inside residences is rare. However, officers who policed in rural areas had very different experiences. For example, Eric and Ashley explained that finding firearms inside residences was a reality:

Eric: It's completely different. Completely different. Yeah, firearms are a way of life...They're tools [...] and just having lived rurally, guys' have shotguns. When you're in a farm [and] your dog barks, you don't know what you're dealing with. It could be a bear, it could be...you're live to those circumstances. You're basically your own first line of defense...Yeah, there are a lot more firearms.

Although, as Eric put it, these firearms are mostly used for hunting, nevertheless, these firearms inside a residence can pose a danger for officers who attend a call at that residence. Ashley also discussed the availability of firearms in rural areas:

Ashley: Pretty much everyone had guns in their houses and they weren't secured, like, long-rifles beside every door. So, you know they're there, but you know most people are using them for hunting and not to hurt someone. You 100% know they're there. Like, everyone has one.

Again, like Eric, Ashley emphasizes the purpose of these firearms. However, given the right (or wrong) circumstances, firearms can just as easily be used by an individual at a residence where the police attend. Eric and Ashley's accounts are also supported by the literature (Carter, 2002; Weisheit, Wells, & Falcone, 1995). For example, Carter (2002) cites that "studies consistently report that the incidence of gun ownership is highest in rural areas and lowest in cities" (p. 138). Weisheit et al. (1995) also found that the most firearms in rural and small towns are used for legitimate purposes (e.g., hunting).

4.6. The Concerns and Benefits of Being a Female Police Officer at Domestic Violence Calls

I was fortunate to speak to multiple female officers (Emily, Jessica, Karen, Lisa, Ashley, and Kate). This allowed me to explore any gendered concerns they might have

attending domestic violence calls. I thought possible concerns might arise when an agitated, angry male abuser, who directed abuse toward his female partner, faces a female officer. Although some female officers expressed concerns as women attending domestic violence calls, others did not. Additionally, female officers spoke about the advantages of being a female officer at domestic violence calls.

4.6.1. “I’d look like such a dick if I beat up a girl cop”: No Concerns in Being a Female Officer at Domestic Violence Calls

One female officer felt attending a domestic violence call was like attending any other call. Kate, who had a year of experience as a police officer, does not view domestic violence calls as presenting any challenges or concerns for her as a female officer:

Kate: Challenges as a female...I try not to look at things as male and female. I find that going into it that the female, if she’s the victim, she will, if I’m there with another male, talk to me more than she will talk to him. I’ve noticed that. But, besides that, the guys treat me the same as any other police officer. I haven’t been to many calls that stand out that I’ve been treated any differently. Maybe my size might have an effect on the male, but, by the time I’ve been to a call, they’re, like, ‘oh shit. The cops are here’. I don’t see any big difference between being a man and a woman.

Similar to Kate, Ashley did not express any concerns about being a female officer at domestic violence calls. Her experience at domestic violence calls involves the male abuser simply not wanting to speak to her, and, instead, wanting to speak to other male officers at the call, or the male abuser believing there would be no honor in being assaultive toward a female (officer):

Rahul: Do males react to you differently at domestic calls because you’re a female officer?

Ashley: Well, I know from my experience, I’ve never really been in an altercation. Most people that I found in [rural area]...[it] was always more commented [on] it because [...] they don’t see as many female police officers...I think one of the best lines was the one where [someone said] ‘I’m not even gonna try to fight you. I’d look like such a dick if I beat up a girl cop’. He’s like ‘whatever. Let’s just go’. And [...] that was kind of the attitude out there...I’ve had it where they just

won't talk to me, like, they just won't acknowledge me. They're like 'yeah. I'm not talking to you. I'm wanna talk to the guy'.

The view that some male abuser's would "look like such a dick if I beat up a girl cop" suggests that some male abusers recognize there is no honour in assaulting female officers. Crewe's (2006) research on male prisoners' views of female prison officers found that many male prisoners "were particularly likely to regard female officers as worthy of forms of respect and protection not necessarily extended to male officers" (p. 407). This includes avoiding swearing in front of the female prison officers or apologizing when they swore, as well as being more mannered in the presence of female prison officers. A few male prisoners held the view that it was never acceptable to hit a female prison officer regardless of what the female prison officer might have said or done. The male prisoners did not share similar sentiments toward the male prison officers largely because the male prison officers were able to take care of themselves.

4.6.2. Not Having the Physical Presence as a Female Officer to Command the Scene at Domestic Violence Calls

Jessica, by far, expressed the most concern about attending domestic violence calls. She voiced how, unlike some male officers, she does not have the physical presence to command the situation at domestic violence calls:

Jessica: I don't know the scope of the other officers you've interviewed, if they're male or female, I come from a very [...] different mindset than a male officer. Umm I am a female. I am very aware of the fact that I am not six foot six. I don't have a physical presence in the room unless I command that, and, being five foot five, you go in, and I need to use other tools. I can't use my physical size, and I'm always aware that the people involved in the domestic, at least one of them, typically the male, is gonna be much bigger and much stronger than I am, and if [it's] alcohol-based and it's in the male, then it adds a whole new component of danger to me and to my safety...Sometimes the males are not as aggressive, and the females are more aggressive. And sometimes I have a better rapport with the male than I can establish with the female. But, having said that, just the un-predictability of the entire situation, I never ever underestimate who is going to react to me or how they're going to react.

Jessica also raised concern that a male abuser may liken her to the female wife or girlfriend who is being abused, in which similar disrespect may be reflected onto her:

Jessica: [The abuser] might liken me to the female that they may or may not be abusing, and they, typically, if you have a scenario where the male is the primary aggressor, there's very little respect for a female, and, so, when I walk in, that is reflected onto me.

Near the end of our interview, Jessica volunteered some of the challenges and concerns she felt attending a domestic violence call:

Jessica: Just from a female perspective, [...] they can be very, very, almost, scary and very unsettling for me to go to a domestic. Just for a number of reasons, and a lot if it is being a female, and typically, the victims are female. Not always, but typically. And, so, with that comes a whole host of [...] issues when you are trying to approach a male. And again, everything from physical stature to police presence to all those sorts of things, I have to create that in a very different way than my male counterparts who are [...] typically, not always, but typically, bigger than I am. So, I'm never not aware of my vulnerability at a domestic violence call. [It's] far more pronounced at domestic violence calls. So, anyways...I have a different sense of awareness when I go into a domestic violence call than, I think, perhaps, some of my male counterparts do. And that's just me, right? And I do feel vulnerable at them. I always do. And I would never go in by myself, as I said...And a female that's gonna tell him to sit down, what to do, I'm arresting you...like taking away all his power and, sort of, man-ness.

Similar to Jessica, Lisa expressed concerns about attending domestic violence calls that involve a male abuser who is larger than her:

Lisa: I was gonna get to that...Going alone is, obviously, there's a safety concern 'cause, like, I'm 5'5 and [...] 130 pounds. Some guy that is 6'4, 250 [pounds] could probably kill me... But, definitely, as a female, it is...the safety concern is higher because of size, gender...No matter what, a guy is gonna be able to beat me in a fight.

Karen also agrees that, unlike her larger male colleagues, her size may not grant her immediate compliance from the parties involved at the call. At the same time, she notes that her smaller size may make it easier for some parties to talk to her. As Karen explains it:

Karen: In general [...] being a female police officer is different than being a guy [officer]. You never know what you're gonna get. I find [...] for myself, I'm only 5'4...I don't necessarily have that presence that some people have. There are guys that I work with that are [...] 6'6, which they instantly go into a situation and [they] already have that presence and are able to get compliance based on their size. So, I don't know...I've had people that respond to me much better based on my size that I'm able to talk to over going hands on with somebody. I recognize if I were to get into a full on fight, even though I'm gonna try my hardest, I may not necessarily win versus I recognize that, in my four and half years of policing, I haven't been in too many [fights]...Like, I'm better at actually verbally de-escalating people down, which in any situation, doesn't even need to be in domestic, you don't know whether somebody is gonna respond to you better because they don't wanna hit a girl [...] or whether they just don't like females. 'Cause I've dealt with people [and] they 100% don't like females and it doesn't matter how you talk to them, they're gonna be aggressive with you or they're not gonna listen.

Emily explains that male abusers, who tend to view women as inferior, are not happy to see female officers come into their home:

Emily: I think the men that have issues are the people [...] that grew up in the psychology of their mom...They didn't like their mom, they didn't like women in general. I don't think everybody has that problem. And I think maybe across different cultures, it would be shameful to have a female in a position of power to arrest you. So, I think it might play on those people more than others...Some people, definitely, they're not happy to see you there. And they'll talk to the guy, but they won't talk to you. But, I mean, a lot of people that are in this cycle [of domestic violence]...why do you think they're in it? They're in it because they have these views of [...] women are second and third and fourth classes and I have all the money, the power, [and] the control economically.

Some of the female officers expressed concerns about attending domestic violence calls ranging from not having the physical size to command the situation (unlike some male officers) to the male abuser transferring disrespect from the female victim onto the female officer. These findings correspond with research indicating that female officers may be more likely to be assaulted at a family violence call (Rabe-Hemp & Schuck, 2007). Although female officers were no more likely to be assaulted than male officers, Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) found that female officers were more likely than male officers to be assaulted at family violence calls. Additionally, individuals who were

impaired at a family violence call were more likely to assault a female officer. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) explain that when the abuser is intoxicated, he may be more likely to transfer the blame, anger, or aggression from the female victim toward the female officer.

Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) also suggest that a male abuser may view his masculinity as being challenged if he is being questioned or taken control of by a female officer. This particular explanation seems to fit with some of Emily and Jessica's experiences of dealing with male abusers. As Emily explains, for some men, it "would be shameful to have a female in a position of power to arrest you." Similarly, Jessica noted that a male abuser may view a female officer coming into his home and taking control of the situation as challenging his masculinity: "And a female that's gonna tell him to sit down, what to do, I'm arresting you...like taking away all his power and [...] man-ness."

Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) note that when the abuser is under the influence alcohol or drugs, a need to assert their dominance may be heightened. During the interviews, several female officers mention how their size may not grant them immediate control of the situation upon entering a domestic violence call. Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) note that "it is tempting to conclude that a female officer's smaller physical structure and reluctance to display high levels of physical force is the explanation for these findings" (p. 424). The researchers suggested that since female officers tend to be smaller in size than male officers, suspects would be more likely to strike female officers in an attempt to flee. However, Rabe-Hemp and Schuck (2007) found that physical size of officer was not related to assaults against either male or female officers.

4.6.3. Advantages of Being a Female Officer at Domestic Violence Calls

Despite some of the concerns as women attending domestic violence calls, all of my female participants stated there are benefits to being a female officer at these calls. For instance, Lisa spoke about the fact that female officers at domestic violence calls can have a calming presence. Unlike some male officers, who may be concerned only with arresting the abuser right away, she notes that, as a female officer, she is always more inclined to talk to the parties involved:

Lisa: I've gone to domestics with [...] three other guys, and I'm the only person that's willing to try to talk to the people and rationalize with them. And the guys are just interested in arresting them. So, I have no idea if that has to do with me being female or just [...] that's how I kind of do things....Yeah, it's really weird in, like, if you go with a larger male, like, I used to work with a guy who was [...] 6'4 and worked out a lot. The male would immediately try to fight him just to [...] show the dominance. And you could [...] go to a cat in a tree call and that would happen. So, I figured it was just the [...] male ego.

Lisa and Jessica both point out that some female victims may find it easier to speak to a female officer:

Lisa: I don't know, you know, traditionally, females are more compassionate, anyways...If it's a female victim, they will immediately start speaking to me, and only me. I think it's just [...] they just, literally, got their ass kicked by their boyfriend or their husband, so they don't wanna have anything to do with any male.

Jessica: I think often times we can build a better rapport with the female than a male can. I think we have different roles at domestic violence. Depending on who the victim is, if it's a female, often times, they will respond better to a female because a male, of course, is perhaps the one that is the aggressor toward them, and then you get some big, burly guy coming in, in uniform...and that can be very intimidating to them. They don't necessarily like that. So, again, here's where it's just so unpredictable. Sometimes they like the females, but sometimes they don't like us. So, sometimes they build a better rapport with us because they don't feel intimidated by us because we are, sort of, one of them, and we can, sort of [say] 'I understand. It's okay. You're gonna be safe. We're gonna take care of this. I get your relationship', [whereas] the male can't say that.

Interestingly, one of the male officers I interviewed also acknowledged the benefits of having female officers at a domestic violence call:

Andrew: I've seen where [the abuser] will react to a female differently than they would to a male because [...] traditionally we've grown up to not hit women, so...they're more inclined to follow a woman-cop's direction as opposed to us because it's always instances of testosterone and it's [...] two chests bumping back and forth...where a female he doesn't consider that much of a threat, so he's more inclined to listen.

Andrew believes that having a female officer at the domestic violence call can help since the male abuser may be more likely to listen to the female officer. Although his explanation of male abusers reacting more positively to a female officer because males have been taught not to hit women seems to contradict why police would be there in the first place (i.e., because the abuser has been abusive towards a female). Nevertheless, he suggests that the presence of male officers dealing with the male abuser could lead testosterone fueled “chests bumping back and forth.”

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

My interviews with police officers made it clear that domestic violence calls are one of the more dangerous calls that officers attend, as well as one of the more frequent types of calls that officers attend. When asked how common domestic violence calls are for her department, Jessica told me that “domestic violence is a very common [call] within [city name]...Probably a third to a half are domestic related.” As Matthew put it, “I wouldn’t be surprised if I’m not dealing with some type of [domestic violence call] at least once a shift regardless of the shift we’re working.” Thus, officers are often exposed to domestic violence calls, and dangerous and unpredictable elements that make up domestic violence calls, multiple times throughout their shift.

The final chapter of thesis begins with a summary of the main findings, as well as recommendations for officers based on those findings. Next, I address the strengths and limitations of this thesis, followed by directions for future research on this topic.

Realizing that alcohol and/or drug use and volatile emotions at domestic violence calls makes parties act unpredictably, irrationally and/or violently

From the interviews, it became clear that the majority of police officers view domestic violence calls as one of the more dangerous calls that they attend. The unpredictable nature of domestic violence calls is one of the main reasons they are viewed as dangerous. A number of officers noted it is very likely that at least one of the parties at a domestic violence call is under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs. Although, as one officer put it, alcohol sometimes turns people into “happy drunks,” officers need to be aware of the fact that those who have consumed alcohol may not be thinking clearly and can act irrationally and unpredictably without a moment’s notice. Additionally, officers need to be cognizant of the fact that alcohol use can lead to aggressive and violent behaviours. Officers need to recognize that the literature on violence against police suggests that there is a high likelihood that an individual will

assault an officer while under the influence of alcohol. Officers at domestic violence calls can also expect individuals other than the abuser to have consumed alcohol and/or drugs as well, such as the victim and extra parties inside the residence.

Additionally, officers should be aware of the fact that the parties at a domestic violence call are usually part of an intimate relationship. This is one reason why multiple officers characterize domestic violence calls as very emotionally charged and volatile. Similar to alcohol use, this may also explain why the parties involved in a domestic violence call are not thinking clearly.

Being aware of how victims can turn against police officers and how abusers react to the arrival of the police

Officers also need to be mindful of how victims, who may initially have called the police and been cooperative, may react when their partner/the abuser is arrested. Multiple officers recalled instances where they were attacked either verbally or physically by the victim while the officers arrested the abuser. Again, this example supports having multiple officers at a domestic violence call. To carry out an arrest of the abuser successfully and safely, multiple officers are needed. For example, one officer can be arresting the abuser while the other officer can take the victim into another room to prevent him or her from physically intervening in the arrest. According to some officers, victims can become physically aggressive towards officers in attempt to avoid repercussions in case the abuser thinks it is the victim's fault that he or she is being arrested. To avoid this, officers should make sure both the victim and abuser understand that the officer, and not the victim, is making the decision to arrest under the mandatory arrest in domestic violence policy in BC. Officers also need to be alert when they attend a domestic violence call where the victim has not called the police and does not want their assistance. In these cases, the victim can act much like the abuser and the two can form a united front.

A number of interviewed officers expressed concerns about how the abuser will react when the police attempt to enter the residence. Since domestic violence abusers need to demonstrate control and power, officers need to remember that abusers can become confrontational with the police during this initial arrival stage and refuse to let

the police inside the residence. Additionally, officers need a heightened awareness when attending domestic violence calls when the abuser is aware that the police are on their way, since potentially this allows the abuser time to retrieve weapons and develop a plan to attack officers.

Understanding the dangers of entering an unknown residence

Once officers get past the dangers associated with arriving at and entering the residence, additional dangers emerge related to not knowing what awaits them behind the door, including the layout of the residence, who and where people are in the home, or not having previous contact with the parties. The presence of extra parties inside a residence is often a reality with multi-generational families living together. Officers need be mindful of the fact that these extra parties can either help or become confrontational with officers, especially, just like victims of domestic violence, during the arrest stage. This is another example of the importance of having multiple officers when there are many extra parties involved to outnumber the parties. Officers may have police dispatchers ask the caller to provide information on how many parties are inside the residence, and, if possible, their names. This information allows police to run background checks on the extra parties. Finally, officers need to remember that a home is full of potential weapons, including standard household items that can be used by someone who is agitated or angry.

Being mindful of how abusers react to being arrested

Once a decision is made to arrest the abuser, officers should be aware of several safety concerns, especially because the majority of the participants identified the arrest stage as the most dangerous aspect of a domestic violence call because this is when the abuser is most likely to become aggressive or violent. While some abusers may be familiar with “the drill” and allow an arrest without incident, others can become violent and aggressive towards officers when they realize they are being arrested. Officers suggest that this occurs because the abuser realizes the consequences of being arrested (e.g., going to jail, being charged, being fired from work, losing contact with wife or kids). Again, this speaks to the importance of having multiple officers at this call. In one example, an officer was head-butted shortly after arresting the abuser and taking the abuser to his police vehicle. Fortunately, the officer had attended this domestic

violence call with another officer who was able to seize control of the abuser while the assaulted officer was temporarily stunned.

Female officers being cognizant of how male abusers react to the presence of female officers

One of my study's main findings was the challenges female officers face when attending domestic violence calls. Most female officers voiced their concerns about attending domestic violence calls as females. Female officers at domestic violence calls should expect reactions from the typically male abuser that range from simply wanting to talk to a male officer instead of the female officer to displacing some of the anger at the female victim onto the female officer. At the same time, police departments need to be aware of some of the advantages of sending female officers to domestic violence calls (e.g., female victims may find it easier to speak to a female officer). Findings on the challenges that female officers face at domestic violence calls are contradictory and not conclusive since not all of the female officers in this study felt that they faced any challenges at a domestic violence call. Also, some female officers also pointed out the benefits of being a female officer at a domestic violence call. The different reactions that female officers receive from male abusers at different domestic violence calls can possibly be attributed to the unpredictable nature of this call.

Understanding and being cautious of the dangers of attending domestic violence calls alone

Another major finding was that most officers believe that domestic violence calls require a multiple officer response. This is attributed largely to the unpredictable and potentially dangerous nature of domestic violence calls. Officers believe that having multiple officers at domestic violence calls deters the abuser from being violent with officers since the abuser is outnumbered. However, the reality is that officers sometimes have to attend domestic violence calls alone. At times one party inside the residence may be in imminent danger, and the officer must make the difficult decision of going in alone. This dilemma may be particularly real for officers who work for police departments that operate using one-person police vehicles, in which, two officers are dispatched, but one officer arrives first. Police departments, including on-duty road bosses, sergeants, and staff sergeants, should strongly discourage officers from attending domestic

violence calls alone unless there are extreme circumstances (e.g., someone inside is in imminent danger). Additionally, officers who decide to attend domestic violence calls alone need to understand the enormous risks before doing so. In particular, officers should avoid attending domestic violence calls alone when the parties are under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs, when there are multiple parties inside the residence, and when there is no previous history or contact with the parties involved.

Attending domestic violence calls alone is often a reality for officers working in rural areas when only three or four officers work the same shift. The reality of attending domestic violence calls alone for officers in rural areas was another major finding of this study. An obvious recommendation for these rural officers is simply to wait for back-up to arrive. However, in most rural areas, a small number of officers covering a large geographic area and waiting for back-up can take hours, in contrast with officers working in large cities who have an abundance of back-up that may be minutes away. As mentioned by some officers, familiarity with residents in rural areas can play into an officer's risk assessment (e.g., whether the officer should attend alone). However, as cautioned by some officers, relying on past incidents with residents can lead to officer complacency.

The role of scenario-based training for domestic violence calls

During the interviews, officers were asked about the training they received as police recruits on attending domestic violence calls. A major component was scenario-based where officers would deal with agitated, emotional parties (played by actors) working together with the other attending officer to safely deal with the parties, and identifying and securing weapons. Multiple officers spoke about the importance of scenario-based training for this particular call. When asked about the importance of domestic violence call scenario-based training one officer responded: "It's extremely important. It's so much more important than watching an online course versus actually going there and acting out and having actors. You learn a lot more." However, officers pointed out limitations:

Robert: Scenarios can only go so far in being realistic. You can only be so realistic in scenario-based training because the idea is you're not

gonna put the cadet into a situation where it's gonna be an all-out brawl.

Jessica: They're all in a very controlled environment and, you know, unfortunately, when we go to these calls, [there's] nothing controlled about the environment at all.

Thus, one of the limitations of scenario-based training when it comes to domestic violence calls is difficulty in replicating the environment. As Jessica put it, domestic violence training scenarios are usually in a very controlled environment, which does not adequately reflect her experiences because actual domestic violence calls do not have controlled environments. As another officer, Emily, explained, there is no one single mould for domestic violence calls, unlike other more routine calls, which limits the value of scenario-based training.

5.1. Strengths

A key strength of this thesis was the diversity of police officers across the Lower Mainland. Rather than interviewing officers at one or two departments, I interviewed police officers from multiple departments across the Lower Mainland. In the end, my sample consisted of officers from seven different police departments across the Lower Mainland. Interviewing officers from multiple police departments proved valuable as police departments differ in many ways. Of particular importance to my thesis was that not all police departments operated using two-person police vehicles. This has a large impact on how police officers approach attending domestic violence calls if one officer arrived at the call before back-up arrived. Not only were officers from several different police departments interviewed, both female (six) and male (nine) officers were interviewed. This was even more important considering that females only make up one-fifth of the police officers in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2012). The willingness of six female officers to speak with me allowed me to discuss one of the key findings of this thesis: concerns that female officers may have attending domestic violence calls.

Additionally, by speaking to female officers, I was able to discover that not all female officers hold concerns about attending domestic violence calls.

An additional strength is the exploratory and descriptive, qualitative nature of this thesis. The topic of the dangerousness of domestic violence calls was previously examined using a quantitative perspective. Using a qualitative approach to explore this issue allowed those who are actually tasked with responding to domestic violence calls to share their stories, experiences, and thoughts. The in-depth interview structure allowed participants to talk about what was important to them during the interviews, which was helpful in uncovering themes and ideas not previously considered. The ability to audio-record the interviews was also beneficial. In addition to allowing me to capture exactly what my participants said, the luxury of being able to audio-record the interviews allowed me to come up with additional questions as the interviews progressed rather than having to worry about trying to write down everything that participants said during their interviews.

Another strength of this thesis is the genuine interest and enthusiasm that participants held about my research topic. Many participants expressed that they felt this was an important area of research and thanked me for pursuing it. The benefit of this interest and support for my research came to when I actually sat down to interview participants. Participants were eager, enthusiastic, and open to share their thoughts, opinions, and experiences related to my topic. In addition, having a gatekeeper vouch for me allowed participants to open up and share many experiences related to my topic.

Moreover, the provision of contact information for initial gatekeepers at police departments contributes to the success of this study. As noted in the methodology section, Dr. Rick Parent, Senior Supervisor for the thesis, provided contact information. His experience as a 30-year veteran of a Lower Mainland police department had a tremendous impact on my ability to obtain participants, in part because my contacts all knew Dr. Parent personally. I believe that this relationship added a certain degree of comfort for these contacts and enhanced my credibility as a researcher. Obtaining contact information from a former police officer certainly was more advantageous than the alternative of cold-calling police departments to see if they would help me recruit participants. Similarly, additional participants were recruited using snowball sampling. Having an already interviewed police officer vouch for me while trying to recruit other police officers at their department was invaluable as it also enhanced my credibility.

Although not part of the original research design, another strength of this thesis involves a consideration of the challenges of attending domestic violence calls in rural areas. The challenges of attending domestic violence calls in rural areas and how this differs from attending domestic violence calls in large cities proved to be one of the key findings in the thesis.

5.2. Limitations

Although necessary, the decision to interview participants over telephone has several limitations. One of the main limitations is concerns of developing rapport over the telephone. Prior to beginning a telephone interview with a participant, the only other forms of contact I had with the participant was e-mail. Although I did not think I was discussing a particularly sensitive topic or issue, the reality is that participants may not feel entirely comfortable opening up and disclosing information to someone they have not met and cannot physically see. Another limitation is the inability to pick up on non-verbal actions and social cues. For example, I was not able to determine whether a pause meant that the participant was still thinking about a question or was simply done speaking. Additionally, since the participants could not see me, I could not offer non-verbal cues (e.g., head nodding, writing down notes) to encourage the participant to continue speaking. Additionally, although I could ensure that I was in a quiet, comfortable environment during telephone interviews, I could not ensure participants were in a similar environment.

5.3. Directions for Future Research

My initial research plan involved interviewing police dispatchers from E-Comm 9-1-1 and instructors from the JIBC. These individuals were not sought out for two reasons. First, not all of police departments that my participants worked for used the services of E-Comm 9-1-1 (some police departments used their own in-house police dispatchers) and not all of participants went for their recruit training at the JIBC. Second, I became concerned that including these two groups in my thesis might be overly ambitious and detract from the focus on police officers and their experiences,

perspectives, and thoughts on the dangerousness of domestic violence calls. However, the research decision not to include police dispatchers and police officer instructors in this thesis opens up the possibility for future research. From my interviews, it was clear that officers felt that the police dispatchers play a rather crucial role at any call, but, in particular, at domestic violence calls. Future research could involve interview with police dispatchers about the challenges and stresses they face in trying to relay information about potentially dangerous domestic violence calls to responding police officers. Additionally, to say that police instructors play an important role in educating, training, and preparing recruits would be an understatement. Again, future research could involve asking police instructors about the training that recruits receive in responding to domestic violence calls and areas for improvement.

The focus of this research was to learn about the dangerousness of domestic violence calls from the point of view of patrol officers. Thus, more senior-ranked officers (e.g., staff-sergeants, sergeants) were not included in this study. Future research should also interview officers in higher-ranked positions about their views on the dangerousness of domestic violence.

One of my major findings is that victims can be a danger and safety concern for police officers at domestic violence calls. In fact, multiple officers recalled instances when victims became aggressive or assaultive toward them. This would most often happen when the victim realized that the police were arresting the abuser. Future research could include interviews with victims of domestic violence regarding their perceptions of police officers and the role officers play at domestic violence calls. Additionally, interviews could also be conducted with arrested abusers to find out about their perceptions of police intervention in domestic violence and which actions by police officers may cause abusers to become agitated, aggressive, or violent.

The policing occupation is both a challenging and dangerous occupation. The findings from this thesis suggest that domestic violence calls contribute to this dangerous and challenging nature of policing. The goal of this exploratory and descriptive research is to move beyond examining the dangerousness of domestic violence calls through a quantitative framework and, instead, investigate exactly what

makes domestic violence calls dangerous by speaking directly with officers responsible for attending this call. Moreover, the use of a qualitative interview approach provides an opportunity for officers to discuss this topic in their own words. Much of this thesis also utilizes direct quotes from officers so that the reader can see exactly what officers perceive to be the dangers, concerns, and risks of attending domestic violence calls and, in turn, also make their own judgements and conclusions about this topic.

The findings from my interviews suggest that officers perceive domestic violence calls to be one of the more dangerous calls that they attend, largely due to the unpredictable nature of this call. The findings should also be interpreted while realizing that officers usually have to attend multiple domestic violence calls throughout their shifts, as domestic violence calls are one of the more common calls for police departments. Officers not only have to deal with the many dangerous and unpredictable elements of domestic violence calls, but officers may also have to deal with these dangerous and unpredictable elements multiple times throughout their shifts.

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Appendix A.

Study Details: Approved Ethics Application

The following is part of the ethics application for a proposed study to satisfy the thesis component of the Master of Arts in Criminology degree in the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University for Rahul Sharma (student number [REDACTED]). The details of the proposed study are outlined herein.

Study title: Examining Police Officer Safety at Domestic Violence Calls

Primary investigator: Rahul Sharma, Master of Arts student, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University

Senior supervisor/co-investigator: Dr. Rick Parent, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University

Director of School of Criminology (Simon Fraser University): Neil Boyd

Background:

The police occupation is considered to be one of the more dangerous occupations. Past research has suggested that domestic violence calls, in particular, are among the most dangerous types of calls that a police officer can respond to (in terms of risk of injury, death, or assault). The more recent research on this topic has found that these earlier claims had been largely exaggerated. Nevertheless, this more recent research still maintains that domestic violence calls can be a great source of danger for police officers. Much of the research on the topic of police officer safety at domestic violence calls has been done from a quantitative angle. Thus, this issue has not been explored through qualitative research methods, such as interviews. Further, since the 1990's, research on this topic has been virtually non-existent. Finally, among the existing research on this topic, there has been very little research done in Canada.

Purpose:

The purpose of this thesis project is to investigate the dangerousness of domestic violence calls for police officers in the Lower Mainland. Through the use of face-to-face interviews with police officers, police dispatchers, and police officer instructors, it is hoped that this research will highlight which aspects of domestic violence calls pose safety concerns for officers, areas of concern among officers when they respond to domestic violence calls, the type of training that officers receive for responding to domestic violence calls, and what can be better done to ensure the safety of officers when they respond to domestic violence calls.

Sample:

The sample for this thesis project will consist of police officers from the following police departments in the Lower Mainland: Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Vancouver Police Department (including its Domestic Violence & Criminal Harassment Unit), Delta Police Department, New Westminster Police Department, Abbotsford Police

Department, Port Moody Police Department, and West Vancouver Police Department. Further, police dispatchers from E-Comm 911 and police officer instructors from the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC) will also make up the sample. E-Comm 911 provides emergency dispatch services for most of the police departments in BC, and the JIBC provides training for all new, non-RCMP municipal officers in BC.

The total sample size for this thesis project will consist of 10 to 15 participants. Participants will be explained their rights as participants through an informed consent form. Participants have the right to withdraw their participation from the study at any point, as well as have the right to not have any future contact with the primary investigator.

Type of data to be collected:

The primary data to be collected for this thesis project will be qualitative data, through the use of face-to-face interviews with police officers, police dispatchers, and police officer instructors. Police officers will be asked questions about their safety concerns when responding to domestic violence calls, instances where they have been assaulted at a domestic violence call, thoughts on the training they receive, and any suggestions for better ensuring their safety at domestic violence calls. Police dispatchers will be asked questions regarding the type of information and how much information is provided to police officers when they respond to domestic violence calls. Finally, police officer instructors will be asked what new, incoming police officers are taught about for safely responding to domestic violence calls and whether there can be any areas for improvement in the training given to officers.

Participant recruitment:

My thesis supervisor for this project, Dr. Rick Parent (also referred to as the co-investigator in this application), has previously been a police officer for thirty years. During that time, he was part of police crisis negotiation teams. These crisis negotiation teams would often deal with domestic violence calls. As a consequence, he has made a long list of professional contacts from various police departments, the JIBC, and E-Comm 911. Thus, he will be providing me with the contact information (email addresses) for these professional colleagues/contacts. However, I will not approach/make contact with a contact unless Dr. Rick Parent obtains prior permission from them to pass on their contact information to me. Only after the thesis supervisor/co-investigator, Dr. Rick Parent, obtains permission to pass on participant contact information, I will contact these participants, through email, explaining the purpose of my research, and, ultimately, to see if they would be willing to participate in my research study. A sample of this email is included as Appendix B (Sample Email to Prospective Participants). In this email, I will also attach a two-and-a-half page PDF document that provides prospective participants with further, detailed information about the study. I have provided this further, detailed study information as a separate document in order to avoid a lengthy email that may overwhelm prospective participants. This document will give prospective participants all the necessary information for my study in order for them to make fully informed consent. The document for prospective participants providing them with greater detail about my study is included as Appendix C (Additional Study Information for Prospective Participants).

Both in the initial email to prospective participants and informed consent form, participants will be clearly notified that I have not obtained permission, and that I will not be seeking permission, from their respective organization/department for their participation in my study. Instead, participants will be told that I am approaching them independently.

Data collection: Interviews

As noted earlier, the primary data collection method will be through the use of face-to-face interviews with police officers, police dispatchers, and police officer instructors.

Research location:

All of the data collection for this thesis project will be taking place in the Lower Mainland of BC. Participants, who will be from the Lower Mainland, will be allowed to select a location of their choice to be interviewed.

Informed consent

Prior to my interviews with any participants, informed consent will be obtained from them. The informed consent will begin with an invitation to the participant to participate in this research project. Participants will also be told of the purpose of this research project, which is to investigate the dangers of attending domestic violence calls for police officers. Participants will be told that this research project is part of the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts degree in Criminology at Simon Fraser University. Participants will be told that the final product is to be an approximately 100 page long thesis, along with an accompanying presentation on the thesis in front of faculty members, university students, and an examiner. Participants will be notified that they are able to receive copies of the final thesis project upon request. Participants also have the right to refuse any future contact with the primary investigator. Participants will be told that I have not obtained approval from their respective department/organization for their participation in my research study. Instead, participants will be told that I am approaching them independently.

Participants will also be given my contact information (i.e. the contact information of the primary investigator), as well as the contact information of the senior supervisor/co-investigator for this thesis project (Dr. Rick Parent). Participants will also be told that this project has received ethics approval from the Office of Research Ethics at Simon Fraser University, and they will also be supplied with the ethics application number (2013s0779). Participants will be given the appropriate contact information for the Office of Research Ethics if they have any concerns or comments about their rights as a research participant (Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics, [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]).

Participants will also be told about the duration and nature of their participation. It is expected that participants will be interviewed either two or three times, with each interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. Participants will also be informed of the benefits of their participation in this research project, which is to highlight dangerous aspects of attending domestic violence calls for police officers and to hopefully provide

recommendations to better ensure the safety of officers when responding to this type of call. Participants will also be informed of the potential risks of their participation.

Participants will also be informed that their participation in this research project is completely voluntary. Participants have no obligation to participate in the study, and participants have the right to withdraw at any point in the study. If a participant withdraws their participation during the project, any of the data collected from them, such as transcripts or audio-recorded interviews, will be destroyed and not used in the thesis project whatsoever. Participants will also be provided with information throughout their participation that may be relevant to their decision to either continue or discontinue participation in the project. Participants also have the right to not have certain information collected from them during the study used in the final thesis project, such as something a participant might have said during an interview.

Participants will be informed of how the data collected from them will be used. Participants will be notified that information collected from them will be used as a part of an approximately 100 page thesis, which is also to be presented before university faculty, university students, and an examiner. Participants will be told that all of the information gathered from this study will be used to explain how police officers view domestic violence calls in terms of safety and danger, the training officers receive for responding to domestic violence calls, and provide recommendations for ensuring the safety of officers at domestic violence calls. Participants will also be given the contact information of a faculty member who they can contact if they have questions regarding scholarly or academic components of the thesis project. This faculty member will be Dr. Rick Parent (senior supervisor/co-investigator). Participants will also be given contact information for the Office of Research Ethics in case they have any concerns or questions about ethics issues.

A copy of the informed consent letter to be given to participants is included in this application (see Appendix B (Informed Consent Form for Participant)). At the end of the informed consent form, participants will be asked if they would like to participate in the research study. If the participant agrees to participate, there is a spot at the end of the informed consent form for the pseudonym given to them instead of their actual name (their actual name will not appear on the informed consent form).

Recording of interviews

Participants will be told that any information collected from them will be used toward the final thesis project, which seeks to investigate the dangers of attending domestic violence calls for police officers.

As noted earlier, the primary data collection method will be face-to-face interviews with participants. Participants will be asked if it is acceptable for their interviews to be audio-recorded using a tape recorder. Participants will be told that audio-recording their interviews will assist in ensuring that their responses during the interviews are accurately recorded. Audio-recorded interviews would then be able to assist in accurately portraying what the participants said during their interviews when it comes to writing up the final thesis paper. If participants agree to have their interviews recorded, they will then be informed of the following information for the storage of data. Participants will be informed that their interviews will be recorded using a tape recorder. Participants will be told that audio files from the tape recorder would be transferred onto

a USB device, and the original audio files would be deleted from the tape recorder. Participants will be told that their audio files would then be transcribed. The typed up/transcribed transcripts would also be kept on the same USB device that contains the audio files. Participants will be informed that the USB device would only be kept at the home of the primary investigator in a locked cabinet. Participants will be told that only I and the senior supervisor/co-investigator would have access to both the audio files and transcripts.

If a participant does not consent to having their interview audio-recorded, participants will then be asked if it is acceptable for me to take notes during their interviews. If a participant consents to this, any notes taken during an interview will be typed up and saved to a USB device. This USB device will be kept at the home of the primary investigator in a locked cabinet and only I and the senior supervisor/co-investigator will have access to those notes. The original notes taken at the interviews will then be shredded.

All files on the USB device will be kept on the USB device until August 31st, 2016. On this date, all files on the USB device will be deleted.

Data analysis plan

Interview transcripts and notes will be entered into NVivo Qualitative Analysis software and subsequently analyzed to uncover themes.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be offered to the fullest extent as permitted by law. Participants will be ensured that their real name will not appear anywhere in the final paper. Instead, participants will be given pseudonyms. The names of participants and any other identifying information (e.g. names of colleagues or family members) will be removed when the researcher is transcribing the audio-recorded interviews. Further, notes from interviews that are typed up by the researcher will not include the names of participants and any other identifying information (e.g. names of family members or colleagues). Additionally, the names of police departments, the JIBC, and E-Comm 911 will not be used in the final thesis paper.

Level of risk

The present research project is designated to be minimal risk. Participants will be asked questions regarding police officer safety at domestic violence calls. Police officers will be asked about their experiences when attending domestic violence calls, to recall instances where they might have been assaulted, and to provide suggestions for better ensuring their safety when responding to domestic violence calls. Although some of these discussions and stories may result in discomfort for some officers, this discomfort should not be greater than any discomfort that they would normally face in their everyday lives. Police dispatchers will be asked to provide information about the information they relay to police officers who respond to domestic violence calls. Police officer instructors will be asked to discuss what they teach new, incoming police officers about safely responding to domestic violence calls. Further, there is no risk to the researcher.

Potential benefits for participants:

The police occupation is generally regarded as one of the more dangerous occupations. During the 1980's, research on police safety revealed that domestic violence calls represented one of the most dangerous calls that a police officer could respond to. Later research found that these reports were largely exaggerated, yet this later research still maintained that domestic violence calls were still a source of danger for police officers. Since the 1990's, there has been almost no research done on this topic. Of the research on this topic, research in Canada is virtually non-existent. Further, almost all of the research on this topic is from a quantitative standpoint (e.g. comparing assault rates across types of calls). Thus, qualitative research to help understand the voices and experiences of police officers on this topic has been neglected. Through their participation, my participants will be able to help carry on research on this topic. Further, my participants will be able to offer insight into police officer safety and danger at domestic violence calls, which in turn will allow me to offer suggestions to help ensure the safety of officers who attend domestic violence

Future use of data:

None of the data collected from this study/participants will be used for future projects beyond this thesis project.

Dissemination of results:

As noted earlier, the data collected from this study will be used toward an approximately 100 page long thesis paper. Participants will be given the contact information of the primary investigator if they wish to request a copy of the final thesis paper.

Appendix B.

Participant Informed Consent Form

SFU Office of Research Ethics Application Number: 2013s0779

You are being asked to participate in the following research study:

Title: Examining Police Officer Safety at Domestic Violence Calls

Primary investigator: Rahul Sharma, Master of Arts student, School of Criminology, Simon Fraser University

Senior supervisor/co-investigator: Dr. Rick Parent, School of Criminology

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this study to investigate the dangerousness of attending domestic violence calls for police officers. It is hoped that, through interviews, you will be able to share thoughts, experiences, and information on this topic. Through your participation, it is hoped that this study will provide insight into officer experiences attending domestic violence calls, elements of these calls that can result in safety concerns for officers, and provide recommendations and suggestions for ensuring officer safety at domestic violence calls.

This study will also satisfy the thesis component of the Master of Arts in Criminology degree at Simon Fraser University (SFU) for Rahul Sharma. This study has also received ethics approval from the Office of Research Ethics at SFU (Ethics Application Number 2013s0779).

Note: Please note that I have not gone (and will not be going) through official channels at your organization/department to seek permission for your participation in this study. Instead, I am approaching you independently.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For any questions about this research study, you can contact Rahul Sharma at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] or Dr. Rick Parent (senior supervisor/co-investigator) at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. Further, for any questions or concerns regarding ethical issues or your participation in this study as a research participant, you can contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

PROCEDURE:

Your participation in this study will consist of two or three interviews, with each interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. You will have the option of allowing for the interview to be audio-recorded. You will also have the option of selecting the location for the interview.

INTERVIEWS:

The data collected from you during the interviews will be used in the final thesis paper, which will also be presented in front of university faculty and students and an examiner from another university.

You will be asked if it is acceptable to have your interviews audio-recorded with a tape recorder. If you consent to this, all audio files will be copied from the tape recorder onto a USB device. Original audio files will then be deleted. Audio files will then be transcribed, and transcripts will be saved on the USB device. The USB device will be stored at the home of the primary investigator in a locked cabinet, and only the primary investigator and the senior supervisor/co-investigator will have access to the contents of the USB device. If you do not consent to having interviews audio-recorded, any hand-written notes made during interviews will be transcribed and saved onto the USB device. Again, the USB device will be kept at the home of the primary researcher in a locked cabinet and only the primary researcher and senior supervisor will have access to the USB device. The original hand-written notes will be shredded.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Confidentiality will be offered to you to fullest extent as permitted by law. Your confidentiality will be ensured by safely and securely storing any data collected from you, as described in the previous section. Also, pseudonyms will be used in place of your real name in transcripts and the final thesis paper. Further, no other identifying information will appear in any transcripts or the final thesis paper (e.g. names of colleagues, names of family members). Finally, the name of your department/organization will not appear in the final thesis paper.

POTENTIAL RISKS:

It is unlikely that any harm will result from your participation in this study. During the interviews, you may recall uncomfortable or sensitive instances related to the study topic. As a participant in this study, you will always have the right to refuse to answer certain questions or stop your participation in this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS:

There is a general consensus in the literature that the police occupation is one of the more dangerous occupations. Research in the 1980's suggested that domestic violence calls represented the single most dangerous call that police officers could respond to (although later studies found domestic violence call to be not as dangerous, but still a dangerous call, as previously thought). Since then, the research on this topic has been almost non-existent, especially in Canada. You, as a participant, would have the opportunity to shed light on the dangers faced by police officers when they respond to domestic violence calls. Information from your interviews would also assist in providing recommendations for helping ensure the safety of officers when they respond to domestic violence calls.

RIGHTS OF THE PARTICIPANT:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any point in the study. If you decide to withdraw participation once

the study has started, any of the data collected from you will be destroyed and not used in the study. You also have the right to refuse to answer any questions during the interviews, as well as the right to not have certain responses given by you in the interviews used in the final thesis paper.

Once the final thesis paper is complete, you can request a copy by contacting Rahul Sharma at either [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant or any concerns/complaints or questions about the study you can contact Dr. Jeffrey Toward, Director, Office of Research Ethics at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Do you consent to participate in this research study? Yes No

Do you consent to having your interviews audio-recorded? Yes No

Participant name (pseudonym only): _____

Date (yyyy/mm/dd): _____

Appendix C.

Interview Guide

General/Introduction

How long have you been a police officer with your department?

Have you policed anywhere else?

What comes to mind when someone says “domestic violence call”?

What are the emotions like at a domestic violence call?

How frequent of a call is a domestic violence call for your department?

Where would you rank domestic violence calls in terms of potential risk of injury and/or assault (compared to other calls) for a police officer?

What stage of attending a domestic violence call can be the most dangerous?

Why do you think an abuser at a domestic violence call might act aggressively toward police officers?

Can victims be a source of concern?

If you work in a one-person police vehicle, what are the challenges associated with that?

Once you’re at a domestic violence call

What information do your policing databases give about an address that you’re responding to?

When would your department send more than two officers?

How do parties react when you first arrive at the residence for a domestic violence call?

Are there particular types of residences that pose greater concerns?

Can you talk about the danger in responding to a residence where you don’t know what is behind the door?

What is the protocol if you are told the suspect is drunk? Or if there are weapons inside the home or if there is past history of assault against officer?

How do you assess your safety once at a domestic violence call?

Can extra parties inside the residence at the call be a source of concern?

How do you control the environment to ensure your safety at DV calls?

How do you check for weapons at a DV call, including the less obvious ones, like, household items?

Can difficulties in identifying the primary aggressor have an impact on officer safety?

Alcohol use

How extensive is alcohol/drug use at domestic violence calls (both among victims and abusers)?

How does intoxication make it difficult to use your traditional methods of dealing with a suspect (e.g. communication)?

How does alcohol/drug use at a domestic violence call have an impact on your safety?

Assaults against officers at domestic violence calls

Have you been attacked or assaulted at a domestic violence call (either by the victim or abuser)?

If yes, was alcohol used or was a weapon used?

If you have not been assaulted at a domestic violence call, has your partner been assaulted at a domestic violence call?

Street supervisor/sergeant

Is there anything that a street supervisor/sergeant can do to assist in dealing with the call? Or ensuring the safety of officers who are attending DV calls?

Mandatory arrest

How do the parties react when you tell them that it is the officers' decision to arrest the abuser (and not the victim's)?

Training

What kind of training did you receive as a recruit for responding to domestic violence calls?

How long was this training, compared to other types of training you received?

What type of format(s) did this training involve?

How did this training prepare you for attending domestic violence calls?

Would you make any changes to the training that new recruits receive on domestic violence calls?

Dispatcher

How important of a role does a 911 dispatcher have in ensuring your safety at domestic violence calls (as well as in general at calls)?

What information do you get from the dispatcher for a typical domestic violence call?

What sort of information would you like to be provided by dispatchers that you may not get?

How is your level of preparedness going into domestic violence calls given the information provided to you by police dispatchers?

Departmental level

Do you receive on-going training from your police department on responding to domestic violence calls?

Is there anything your department can do to better ensure the safety of officers at domestic violence calls?

Does your department require two police officers to attend domestic violence calls?

How is it helpful to have multiple officers at this type of call?

Are two police officers enough for attending domestic violence calls?

Would you respond by yourself to a domestic violence call?

Policing Domestic Violence Calls in Rural Areas

How big would your detachment be?

How often would you attend domestic violence calls alone?

How long would it take for back-up to arrive?

What are some of the differences in policing domestic violence calls in a large city versus in a rural area?

Female Police Officers

How do male abusers react to a female officer coming in and taking control of the situation?

Do you think male abusers treat female officers differently than male officers?

What are some of the concerns or challenges in attending domestic violence calls as a female officer?

Appendix D.

Ontario Policing Standards Manual: Domestic Violence Occurrences

Legislative/Regulatory Requirements

Section 29 of the Adequacy Standards Regulation requires a police services board to have a policy on investigations into domestic violence occurrences. In addition, section 12(1)(d) requires the Chief of Police to develop and maintain procedures on and processes for undertaking and managing investigations into domestic violence occurrences.

The focus of these policies and procedures should be on domestic violence occurrences. For the purposes of this guideline, domestic violence occurrence means:

Domestic violence is any use of physical or sexual force, actual or threatened, in an intimate relationship, including emotional/psychological abuse or harassing behaviour. Although both women and men can be victims of domestic violence, the overwhelming majority of this violence involves men abusing women.

Intimate relationships include those between the opposite-sex and same-sex partners. These relationships vary in duration and legal formality, and include current and former dating, common-law and married couples.

Criminal Code offences include, but are not limited to homicide, assault, sexual assault, threatening death or bodily harm, forcible confinement, harassment/stalking, abduction, breaches of court orders and property-related offences.

These crimes are often committed in a context where there is a pattern of assaultive and/or controlling behaviour. This violence may include physical assault, and emotional, psychological and sexual abuse. It can include threats to harm children, other family members, pets and property. The violence is used to intimidate, humiliate or frighten victims, or to make them powerless. Domestic violence may include a single act of abuse. It may also include a number of acts that may appear minor or trivial when viewed in isolation, but collectively form a pattern that amounts to abuse.

Sample Board Policy

Board Policy # _____

It is the policy of the _____ Police Services Board with respect to domestic violence occurrences that the Chief of Police will:

- a) in partnership with the police service's local Crown, Probation and Parole Services, Victim/Witness Assistance Programme (VWAP), Victim Crisis and Referral

- Service (VCARS), municipalities, local Children’s Aid Societies and other local service providers and community representatives responsible for issues related to domestic violence, including women’s shelters, work to establish and maintain one or more domestic violence coordinating committees that cover the geographic areas that fall within the jurisdiction of the police service;
- b) implement one or more of the models set out in Ministry guidelines for the investigation of domestic violence occurrences and ensure that the police service has access to trained domestic violence investigators;
 - c) develop and maintain procedures for undertaking and managing investigations into domestic violence occurrences that address:
 - i) communications and dispatch;
 - ii) initial response;
 - iii) enhanced investigative procedures;
 - iv) the mandatory laying of charges where there are reasonable grounds to do so, including in cases where there is a breach of a bail condition, probation, parole or a restraining order;
 - v) the use of a risk indicators tool;
 - vi) children at risk;
 - vii) high risk cases and repeat offenders;
 - viii) occurrences involving members of a police service;
 - ix) post-arrest procedures;
 - x) victim assistance; and
 - xi) safety planning;
 - d) ensure that the police service’s response to domestic violence occurrences are monitored and evaluated; and
 - e) ensure that officers and other appropriate members receive the appropriate Ministry accredited training.

Police Service Guidelines

Domestic Violence Coordinating Committee

1. Every Chief of Police, in partnership with the local Crown, Probation and Parole Services, VWAP, VCARS, local Children’s Aid Society, municipalities, and other local service providers and community representatives responsible for issues related to domestic violence, including women’s shelters, should work to establish one or more domestic violence coordinating committees that cover the geographic areas that fall within the jurisdiction of the police service. The suggested terms of reference for the domestic violence coordinating committee include:
 - a) establishing a protocol for the operation of the committee;
 - b) establishing criteria for case and/or systems review;
 - c) reviewing cases that meet the established criteria, and subject to confidentiality requirements, sharing case specific information among relevant member organizations in order to provide a coordinated response;

- d) monitoring and evaluating the response to cases by organizations participating on the domestic violence coordinating committee;
- e) reviewing the availability of services to victims of domestic violence, including the provision of safety planning;
- f) coordinating the development of local written protocols on domestic violence that address:
 - i) the roles and responsibilities of organizations involved in providing services to victims, including notifying and informing the victim about release of the accused, bail conditions, and the criminal justice process;
 - ii) information sharing among the organizations; and
 - iii) referrals for service, including the provision of assistance to victims and children in cases which do not proceed to court, or where no charges have been laid;
- g) developing local community strategies and responses to address and prevent repeat victimization, including promoting and supporting follow-up with victims of domestic violence; and
- h) developing initiatives/programs for the prevention and early intervention, including:
 - i) Domestic Violence Emergency Response System (DVERS), where practical;
 - ii) addressing the needs of child witnesses of violence; and
 - iii) awareness and information programs on domestic violence occurrences for students and other service providers.

**Domestic
Violence
Investigators**

2. Every police service should ensure that it has access to trained domestic violence investigators.
3. Domestic violence investigators will have the primary responsibility for undertaking, managing or reviewing the investigation of domestic violence occurrences, except where the type of occurrence involves an offence which is addressed by the police service's criminal investigation management plan established pursuant to section 11 of the *Regulation on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of Police Services* or is a threshold major case as defined in the *Ontario Major Case Management Manual*.
4. A Chief of Police should not designate a person as a domestic violence investigator unless that person is a police officer and has successfully completed the required training accredited by the Ministry or has equivalent qualifications and skills as designated by the Ministry.
5. A police service may meet its obligations under paragraph 2 by either:
 - a) ensuring that an adequate number of patrol officers are designated as domestic violence investigators;

- b) establishing a specialized unit of domestic violence investigators that will be responsible for undertaking, managing or reviewing the investigation of domestic violence occurrences;
 - c) designating a domestic violence occurrence as a threshold occurrence under the police service's criminal investigation management plan, thereby requiring that the investigation be undertaken or managed by a criminal investigator; or
 - d) designating patrol supervisors as domestic violence investigators who will be responsible for undertaking, managing or reviewing all domestic violence occurrence investigations.
6. Where a police service decides to meet its obligations under paragraph 2 by one of the methods set out in paragraph 5(b)-(d), it should also ensure that its patrol officers receive the required training accredited by the Ministry on the police response to domestic violence occurrences.

- Follow-Up** 7. Every police service, in conjunction with the domestic violence coordinating committee and local community and social service agencies, should consider the need for, and the feasibility of, implementing a multi-disciplinary follow-up support for victims of domestic violence in their jurisdiction. This support could focus on victims' assistance, counselling, attendance at court, children who witness violence, and intervention strategies, such as safety planning, in cases where there is repeat victimization or high risk to the victim.

- Communications and Dispatch Procedures** 8. Every police service's procedures should:
- a) require that all domestic violence occurrence calls be responded to as a priority call for service even if the call is withdrawn, including calls relating to a possible breach of a bail, parole or probation condition, peace bond or a restraining order;
 - b) require that when a call is received and the suspect has threatened violence and there is reason to believe that the suspect intends to go to the victim's location the police will go to the victim's location;
 - c) set out the number of police officers to attend at the scene, with two as a minimum;
 - d) indicate the type of information to be gathered by communications and dispatch personnel and provided to responding officers, including at minimum:
 - i) caller's name, address, telephone number and relation to the incident (e. g., witness, victim);
 - ii) information about the suspect (e.g., relationship to victim, current location, description, any known mental illnesses, suicidal threats, history of abuse/violence);
 - iii) extent of injuries, if known;
 - iv) whether the suspect or other residents of the household are under the influence of drugs or alcohol;

- v) whether firearms or other weapons are known to be present at the scene or accessible to the suspect from some other location;
 - vi) whether the suspect or anyone in the household has been issued or refused an authorization to acquire a firearm, Firearms Licence or registration certificate;
 - vii) whether the suspect is known to have access to firearms;
 - viii) whether children or other persons are present in the household and their location within the dwelling;
 - ix) whether there has been one or more previous domestic violence occurrence calls to the address, the nature of previous incidents and whether weapons have been involved; and
 - x) whether a current peace bond/restraining order or bail/probation condition exists against anyone in the household or suspect; and
- e) require communications and dispatch personnel to be provided with a checklist or reference sheet that sets out the information to be gathered and provided to responding officers.

**Initial
Response
Procedures**

9. The procedures should provide that whenever possible at least one of the minimum two officers responding to a domestic violence occurrence should be a patrol officer who has received training on the police response to domestic violence occurrences or a domestic violence investigator.
10. The procedures should provide that upon arrival at the scene the officers should:
- a) try to quickly separate the parties;
 - b) assist any party in obtaining medical assistance, if necessary;
 - c) ensure that any children at the scene are provided with appropriate support/assistance; and
 - d) gather and preserve evidence in accordance with the police service's procedures on the collection, preservation and control of evidence and property.
11. The procedures should provide that:
- a) all officers responding to a domestic violence occurrence should make detailed notes, including on the actions and utterances of the parties; and
 - b) a detailed occurrence report should be completed for every domestic violence occurrence regardless of whether any charges were laid or an offence alleged.

**Interviewing
Procedures**

12. The procedures should address the interviewing of the victim(s), suspect and witnesses, including:
- a) where available, practical and appropriate, the use of audio or video taping of statements in accordance with the *R. v. KGB* guidelines;
 - b) separate interviews where practical and safe for officers and the parties;

- c) if required, the use of an interpreter by a person outside the family where practical;
- d) that the officers should ask the victim and other witnesses direct questions about:
 - i) any history of abuse/violence and stalking/criminal harassment;
 - ii) any history of personal threats, including threats to life;
 - iii) any concerns over the safety of the victim;
 - iv) the presence of, or access to, firearms and registration certificates;
 - v) the previous use of weapons;
 - vi) any history of drug or alcohol abuse; and
 - vii) any history of mental health or stability issues;
- e) the processes and considerations for interviewing child witnesses, including the appropriateness of asking the child any of the questions set out in (d);
- f) that the officer should ask the victim any other questions relevant to the completion of the risk indicators part of the domestic violence supplementary report form;
- g) requesting that the victim review and sign the officer's record of their statement, or any other statement that has been provided, and the statements should include the date; and
- h) interviewing third party witnesses, including neighbours, other emergency personnel who have responded to the scene and medical personnel who treat the victim.

**Evidence
Procedures**

13. The procedures should address the gathering and documenting of evidence, including:
- a) asking whether the victim was physically assaulted and whether any internal or external injuries occurred and noting their response (including where possible on a diagram);
 - b) photographing the crime scene (e.g., overturned furniture or destroyed property), including the use of video taping, where available and practical;
 - c) with the victim's consent, photographing the victim's injuries and taking additional photographs within 24-48 hours of the initial occurrence when the injuries are more visibly apparent (if possible by a member of the same gender; consideration should be given to using Polaroid photographs when appropriate);
 - d) gathering any other evidence, including answering machine tapes, hospital records, torn and/or blood stained clothing, or fingerprint evidence if the suspect has broken into the victim's residence (including any evidence obtained for a Sexual Assault Treatment Centre whose mandate has been expanded to include domestic violence);
 - e) the review and preserving of 911 tapes that record the call for service;
 - f) the names and date of birth of all children present, or who normally reside, in the home; and
 - g) the use of search warrants to obtain relevant evidence.

**Mandatory
Charge
Policy**

14. The procedures should provide that in any domestic violence occurrence, which is a threshold major case, the investigation will be in accordance with the Ministry's designated *Ontario Major Case Management Manual*.
15. The procedures should provide that in all domestic violence occurrences an officer is to lay a charge where there are reasonable grounds to do so, including:
- where a person has breached a condition of bail, parole, probation or a peace bond;
 - for any offence committed under the *Criminal Code*, including obstruction of justice (i.e., dissuading the victim from testifying); or
 - when there is a contravention of a valid order under sections 24 and 46 of the *Family Law Act* and section 35 of the *Children's Law Reform Act*.
16. A decision to lay charges should not be influenced by any of the following factors:
- marital status/cohabitation of the parties;
 - disposition of previous police calls involving the same victim and suspect;
 - the victim's unwillingness to attend court proceedings or the officer's belief that the victim will not cooperate;
 - likelihood of obtaining a conviction in court;
 - verbal assurances by either party that the violence will cease;
 - denial by either party that the violence occurred;
 - the officer's concern about reprisals against the victim by the suspect; or
 - gender, race, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status or occupation of the victim and suspect.
17. The procedures should provide that an officer should explain to both the victim and the suspect that it is their duty to lay a charge when there are reasonable grounds to believe that an offence has been committed, and that only a Crown can withdraw the charge.
18. The procedures should address the use of warrants to enter a dwelling house for the purpose of arrest or apprehension in accordance with the relevant sections of the *Criminal Code*.
19. The procedures should provide that if the suspect is not present when officers arrive, and reasonable grounds exist to lay a charge, a warrant for the arrest of the accused should be obtained as soon as possible. Once obtained, a warrant should be entered on CPIC as soon as practicable and no later than within 24 hours. Every reasonable effort should be made to locate and apprehend the suspect.
20. The procedures should address dual arrest, as well as the laying of counter-charges, and highlight the importance of determining the primary offender in order to distinguish assault from defensive self-protection.

- Criminal Harassment** 21. The procedures should provide that in all domestic violence occurrences, officers should consider whether there is any evidence of criminal harassment, and should also follow the police service's procedures on criminal harassment investigations.
- Firearms** 22. The procedures should provide that in all domestic violence occurrences the officers involved will:
- a) follow the police service's procedures on preventing/responding to occurrences involving firearms, regardless of whether any charges are laid; and
 - b) where appropriate, determine whether there is compliance with the sections of the *Criminal Code* and *Firearms Act* relating to safe storage of firearms.
- Risk Indicators Tool** 23. The procedures should provide that, as soon as possible, whenever a charge is laid in a domestic violence occurrence, the domestic violence supplementary report form will also be completed, including the part of the report relating to the risk indicators checklist. Where a suspect has been arrested, the procedures should provide that the risk indicators part of the report will be completed prior to any decision to release the suspect or detain for a bail hearing, and will be included with the Crown brief/show cause report.
24. The procedures should address the use of behavioural science services in domestic violence occurrences if the circumstances of the case require a risk assessment, and how these services can be accessed in accordance with the requirements of the *Regulation on the Adequacy and Effectiveness of Police Services*.
25. The domestic violence supplementary report should be based on the Ministry's designated report form and should include, at minimum, the risk indicators set out by the Ministry.
- Children at Risk** 26. The procedures should require police officers to address issues relating to children, who are under 16, in accordance with the police service's procedures on child abuse and neglect and the police service's protocol with the local Children's Aid Societies.
- High Risk Cases and Repeat Offenders** 27. The procedures should address the investigative supports that may be available to assist in cases determined to be high risk, or where there is a repeat offender with a history of domestic violence with the same or multiple victims, including:
- a) the use of physical surveillance;
 - b) electronic interception;
 - c) video and photographic surveillance; and
 - d) victim/witness protection services.

28. The procedures should provide that in cases involving high risk, or where there is a repeat offender, that the offender should be entered into the ‘SIP’ category on CPIC as soon as possible, and no later than within 24 hours.

29. The procedures should provide that where an offender has engaged in a pattern of offending that may indicate hate/bias motivation towards women, that the domestic violence investigator raise with the Crown the possibility of introducing evidence of hate/bias motivation as an aggravating factor for the purposes of sentencing the offender if convicted.

**Occurrences
Involving
Members**

30. The procedures should set out the steps to be followed when a domestic violence occurrence involves a member of its police service or another police service.

**Bail
Procedures**

31. The procedures should provide that in all domestic violence occurrences officers will comply with the police service’s procedures relating to bail and violent crime.

32. The procedures should provide that in all domestic violence occurrences where there has been a breach of bail, or there is about to be a breach, officers will comply with the police service’s procedures relating to breach of bail.

33. Consistent with local protocols, the procedures should set out the roles and responsibilities for notifying and informing the victim as soon as possible about the release of the accused, time and location of bail hearing, bail conditions and the criminal justice process.

**Victims’
Assistance**

34. The procedures should provide that officers who respond to domestic violence occurrences will provide assistance to the victim based on the police service’s local procedures, including:

- a) assisting the victim in obtaining medical assistance, if necessary;
- b) remaining at the scene until they are satisfied that there is no further immediate threat to the victim;
- c) addressing any special needs of the victim (e.g., dealing with communication barriers);
- d) addressing the needs of child witnesses of domestic violence occurrences, including encouraging the child’s primary caregiver to consider obtaining assistance for the child from a counsellor with experience in assisting child witnesses of domestic violence;
- e) if requested by the victim, attending the residence of the victim to ensure peaceful entry when the victim or accused returns to take possession of personal belongings and when concerns for the victim’s safety exist because of the presence of the accused in the residence, unless peaceful entry of the residence cannot be achieved, or the removal of certain property is contested by either party,

in which case the officers should advise the parties of the need to seek a civil remedy;

- f) arranging for transportation to a shelter or place of safety, if necessary, with the location remaining confidential to the suspect/accused and third parties; and
- g) providing information to the victim on services that are available, and offer to make initial contact with victims' services.

35. Police services should provide, in conjunction with local victims' services, a localized pamphlet on domestic violence that includes information on local resources to assist victims.

**Safety
Planning**

36. The procedures should provide that officers who respond to domestic violence occurrences should ensure that issues surrounding the victim's safety are addressed, including directly providing the victim with information on safety planning or providing information to the victim on the availability of safety planning information and assistance within the community.

37. The procedures should provide in cases where it is determined that there is a high risk, or repeat victimization, a domestic violence investigator or another member of the police service, should warn the victim about the potential risk to the victim or any children, and offer to meet with the victim to assist in developing or reviewing the victim's safety plan and to identify other measures that may be taken to help safeguard the victim and any children.

**Monitoring
and
Supervision**

38. Every police service shall require supervisors to monitor, and ensure, compliance with the police service's procedures related to domestic violence occurrences.

39. Every police service should designate a domestic violence coordinator who will be responsible for:
- a) monitoring the response to, and investigation of domestic violence occurrences, including compliance with the police service's procedures by supervisors, officers and other members;
 - b) monitoring and evaluating follow-up to domestic violence cases;
 - c) liaising with the Crown, Probation and Parole Services, VWAP, VCARS, the local Children's Aid Society, and other local services and community representatives responsible for responding to issues related to domestic violence occurrences;
 - d) informing the public and media about the police service's domestic violence occurrences procedures; and
 - e) ensuring that statistical data are kept on domestic violence occurrences and provided to the Ministry in the form designated by the Ministry.

40. Every police service should periodically review the police service's procedures to ensure consistency with legislative and case law changes.
41. Every police service should ensure that persons who provide communications and dispatch functions are trained regarding domestic violence occurrence calls for service.
- Ministry Accredited Training**
42. Every police service should ensure that its domestic violence investigators have successfully completed Ministry accredited training, or have the equivalent qualifications and skills designated by the Ministry, that addresses:
- the dynamics of abusive relationships including the effects of physical assault and psychological abuse;
 - the initial police response to domestic violence occurrences, including officer safety;
 - interviewing, including interviewing child witnesses;
 - collection, care and handling of evidence;
 - search, seizure and warrants;
 - firearms seizures and legislation;
 - the mandatory charge policy, dual arrest and counter-charging;
 - court orders (e.g., restraining orders), judicial interim release orders, parole certificates, other relevant legislation and probation;
 - victim assistance and local victim services, as well as victims with special needs;
 - risk indicators and assessment, including the completion of the domestic violence supplementary report form;
 - procedures relating to post-arrest;
 - strategies for addressing repeat victimization and high risk cases;
 - safety planning; and
 - issues relating to children who witness violence.
43. Where a police service decides to meet its obligations under paragraph 2 by one of the methods set out in paragraph 5(b)-(d), it should also ensure that an adequate number of its patrol officers have received Ministry accredited training on the police response to domestic violence occurrences that addresses:
- the dynamics of abusive relationships including the effects of physical assault and psychological abuse;
 - the initial police response to domestic violence occurrences, including officer safety;
 - preservation of the crime scene, and initial collection of evidence and interviewing;
 - court orders (e.g., restraining orders), judicial interim release orders, parole certificates, other relevant legislation and probation;
 - firearms seizures and legislation;

- f) the role of the domestic violence investigator;
- g) procedures relating to children at risk;
- h) the completion of the domestic violence supplementary report, including risk indicators;
- i) procedures relating to post-arrest;
- j) victims' assistance and local victim services, as well as victims with special needs; and
- k) issues relating to children who witness violence.