INNER CITY WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF BATTERY AND POLICE RESPONSE TO IT:

A COMPARISON OF ABORIGINAL AND WHITE WOMEN

A Thesis Submitted to the College of
Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment for the
Degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Sociology
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

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Spring 1997

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the experiences and perceptions that Aboriginal and white women have about abusive relationships and about the police responses to these situations. Differences and similarities between these two groups of women will further highlight the need for resources and policing which are sensitive to the different needs of both groups. Assessments of the cultural differences between Aboriginal and white inner city women are particularly important as women seek to develop more and better alternatives to living in abusive relationships.

Theoretically, an examination of gender oppression through patriarchy and its effect on male violence towards women is provided. Understanding the influence of patriarchal social relations on the subordination of women in society is helpful in explaining the similarities in perceptions and experiences of male violence between Aboriginal and white inner city women. The subculture of violence theory is also examined and is used to help understand the differences in perceptions and experiences of these two groups of women. The argument is made that Aboriginal women have qualitatively different perceptions of both battery and the police response to their calls of battery due to the historical legacy of colonization of Aboriginal people in Canada.

The data were gathered via a questionnaire and in-person interviews which asked women respondents a wide variety of questions pertaining to their perceptions and experiences with battery, and any police involvement. The questionnaires obtained background information about respondents, responses to a

5 point Likert scale of attitudinal statements pertaining to battery and policing, and responses to specific questions which requested written responses.

Analysis of the quantitative data involved descriptive presentation examining relationships between the independent variable ethnic background and dependent variables, as indicated by the 25 questionnaire items, using bivariate distributions. The qualitative data were thematically coded and examined.

Importantly, the study revealed that there are significant differences between the perceptions of Aboriginal and white inner-city women. Aboriginal women were found to much more tolerant of abuse from their male partners, and were less likely to call the police in a time of crisis. It was also found that many Aboriginal women had very negative experiences with the police which further disadvantaged them when dealing with battery situations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to my supervisor, Dr. Peter Li who agreed to supervise this project without any hesitation. I also wish to thank my other committee members, Dr. Terry Wotherspoon, and Dr. Bernard Schissel, for their useful critiques of my thesis.

More generally, I wish to thank the faculty of the Department of Sociology for providing a supportive atmosphere in which to pursue my studies. I would also like to thank my family for their understanding and patience throughout this project. Finally, I would like to thank all of my friends, especially Kim, Jesse and Sam, who kept encouraging me to finish. Thanks for keeping the faith!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Physical and sexual assault by a male partner is a fact of life for many women. Their responses to these assaults vary from incident to incident and from batterer to batterer. One response, that of calling the police, has been shown to vary greatly as well (LaPrairie, 1994). In her study of Native People in the Inner City, LaPrairie (1994) found that although many women had serious physical injury, they did not report it to the police. The reason most often given was that they did not consider the assault important enough to bother the police with. She also reported that Aboriginal women who were living with partners were most vulnerable to assaults. This differs from studies on white women where divorced or separated women are often most vulnerable to assaults by their male partner.

Another important variable when discussing battery is the response of the police. The effect of police response to calls from battered women was first looked at seriously in Canada in 1983, in the work by Burris and Jaffe. The Burris and Jaffe (1983) study began with the implementation of a policy change for the London Police force. It set out clear guidelines directing police officers to lay charges in all cases where there was reasonable and probable grounds revealing an assault on a woman. Their research was presented as an experiment and their findings as scientific evidence that arrest was significantly more effective in deterring future violence than separation or mediation. They also found that decisive action and a positive response to battered

women affected abuse rates primarily by interrupting the cyclical pattern of violence and possibly preventing more serious injury and death. These findings, however, were based on the information provided by police and court records. The women involved in these situations were not asked about their opinions on police response.

The experiences and perceptions of inner-city Aboriginal and white women remain inadequately addressed, leaving the connections between marginalization, ethnicity, and poverty to battery unexplored. The perceptions of these women provide useful insight into understanding why they remain in abusive relationships, and also, what their needs from the criminal justice system are. Furthermore, greater attention must be paid to the differences between Aboriginal and white women in their experiences with abuse and the police, and other agents of the criminal justice system. The research proposed here seeks to address the disparate experiences of Aboriginal and white inner-city women with battery and treatment by the police when calling about battery.

The 1991 Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba (AJIM) is one of the most influential pieces of research which has focused on the needs and perceptions of Aboriginal women concerning violence. This report found that abuse in Aboriginal communities has reached "epidemic proportions". Further, this research suggested that societal attitudes play an important part in the treatment of abused women. An important perception that the AJIM found among women's groups, both Aboriginal and non-aboriginal, was that the abuse of Aboriginal women was more acceptable to the courts than abuse of non-aboriginal women. The AJIM found that

"at the heart of the problem is the belief that, fundamentally, justice authorities do not understand, and do not wish to understand, the unique issues facing Aboriginal women" (1991: 483).

The AJIM also reports that Aboriginal women indicated that "the police response received by others discouraged them from going to the police for help" (1991: 483). Many Aboriginal women complained of a lack of sensitivity, and lack of understanding of their problems by officers. Many of the women surveyed believed that the police do not understand the needs of the abused women and children (AJIM, 1991).

An important aspect of this research is that it clearly indicates that Aboriginal women in abusive relationships do not feel confident in turning to the police for help. This is especially true for women living in isolated communities. However, many women move away from these communities in order to escape family or community problems (AJIM, 1991). As the AJIM indicates, "in the new setting Aboriginal women experience personal, systemic, subtle and overt racial discrimination. What they are forced to run to is often as bad as what they had to run from" (1991: 485). It is this new setting in the inner city with its new set of problems, which will be further explored throughout this thesis.

This research examines the experiences and perceptions that inner city Aboriginal and white women have about abusive relationships and about the police responses to these situations. Differences and similarities between these two groups of women will further highlight the need for resources and policing which are sensitive to

the different needs of both groups. Such an analysis must be theoretically grounded in debates concerning violence against women, women's reactions to violence, and cultural differences between Aboriginal and white women. Experiences and perceptions held by both groups of women influence actions and reactions to police and other battered women. Assessments of cultural differences between Aboriginal and white inner-city women are particularly important as women seek to develop more and better alternatives to living in abusive relationships.

Specifically, this thesis examines the experiences and perceptions of inner-city Aboriginal and white women living in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Data were gathered during the summer and fall of 1995. This analysis is theoretically grounded in debates concerning the control of women in abusive relationships, and subcultural differences between Aboriginal and white women which affect their decisions to remain in abusive relationships. Subcultural differences also affect their decisions to involve the police in the crisis. The analysis must be grounded within the social, economic, and historical cultural context in which the abuse occurs. Of particular importance are dimensions of how Aboriginal and white women view themselves as victims of battery as well as their perceptions of police treatment and effectiveness when dealing with situations of battery. As noted by LaPrairie (1994) Aboriginal people are far more distrusting of the criminal justice system, particularly the police, than are white women of the same class background, and they may also have very different perceptions of violent behavior by their male partner than do white women.

The research question which addresses this issue is multidimensional: based on their experiences, what are Aboriginal and white women's perceptions of battery and police response to this battery. Do they differ, and if so why? My hypothesis is that the Aboriginal women suffer from greater levels of abuse from their male partners than do white women, and further because they mistrust the police in Saskatoon, they are less willing to call them in times of crisis. What this means for battered Aboriginal women is that there are fewer available resources, because the police are perceived by these women as unwilling to help.

In this thesis, I argue that not only do Aboriginal women suffer from far more abuse from their male partners than do white women, but also that they have a qualitatively different perception of the abusive behavior. These differences can be understood through an analysis of the cultural differences between inner-city Aboriginal and white women.

This thesis is organized in the following way. Chapter Two is a theoretical overview of patriarchy and its influence on behaviors of men in society. Within this framework, the similarities among the two groups of inner-city women concerning battery and police response to calls of battery are examined. The subculture of violence theory addresses the differences in experiences and perceptions between battered Aboriginal and white women. I argue that a synthesis of these positions yields a useful theoretical perspective with which to understand violence against women as it affects, specifically, inner-city marginalized women. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology. The research instruments are a survey questionnaire designed

to obtain information about inner-city women's experiences and perceptions of battery and police response to it, and qualitative interviews which further delineate the differences and similarities between Aboriginal and white battered women. Survey data analysis, the subject of chapter Four, relies on bivariate distributions and thematic analysis of the questionnaire. Chapter Five provides an analysis of the in-person data from the ten interviews with Aboriginal and white battered women. In chapter Six, the conclusion, the findings are overviewed and related to the specific research question and overall thesis theoretical orientation. These are briefly that there are similarities in perceptions of both battery and police response to it among Aboriginal and white women. These similarities seem to be related to the socio-economic status of inner city women. Due to their similar marginalization, these two groups of women face many common challenges when trying to leave an abusive situation, and trying to remain away from it. On the other hand, there are many differences between the two groups of women. One of the more significant differences is experiences and perceptions of police treatment of battered women. For Aboriginal women, there is a deep seated mistrust of the entire criminal justice system which discourages them from going to the police for help. For white women, this mistrust is less and they are more willing to involve the police in their own abusive situations. A more in-depth examination of the results will be provided throughout the body of the thesis.

CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

2.1 Overview

This chapter examines debates pertaining to violence against women, women's perceptions and experiences of this violence and police response to calls of male violence. The experiences of battery which women endure provide the context within which they decide to call the police. Their perceptions of the violent behavior and of the police are key to understanding women's responses to battery, and therefore, their decision regarding whether or not to call the police. A key factor in understanding the abuse of women by men is the social structures that create and sustain unequal power relations between men and women or patriarchal social relations. Messerschmidt defines patriarchy as "a set of social relations of power, in which men control the labor power and sexuality of women. It is this control - both in the home and labor market - that provides the material base of patriarchy" (1986: 32). The patriarchal organization of society is what many theorists believe to be the primary reason why male violence against women is permitted to continue (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). The Dobashes assert that "men who assault their wives are actually living up to cultural prescriptions that are cherished in Western society-aggressiveness, male dominance, female subordination - and they use physical force to enforce that domination" (1979: 24). Further, Messerschmidt contends that a man who beats his wife is punishing her for

failing to fulfill her obligations as a wife (in the gendered division of labour and power) and for challenging his dominance and his patriarchal rights (1993:145). Within this framework, male violence towards women and women's perceptions of this violence will be examined.

Another important aspect of this research is the differences between Aboriginal and white women and their perceptions and experiences of battery. For Aboriginal women, their history as First Nations people in Canada have greatly influenced their present perceptions and experiences of male violence. "The relationship between Canada's Aboriginal population and the state is commonly characterized as one of wardship and paternalism" (Wotherspoon and Satzewich, 1993: 76). Historically, the traditional cultural practices of many aboriginal people were undermined both ideologically and materially by the Eurocentric Canadian society. The effect of this colonialization was that Aboriginal people were subjected to "varying degrees of displacement, marginalization and integration with respect to their economic practices" (Wotherspoon and Satzewich, 1993: 78). As a result of this marginalization, culture conflict and loss of traditional practices, such problems as alcohol and substance abuse, economic problems, and generational violence have emerged.

Another important effect of the racial oppression of Aboriginal people is family breakdown. "The history of state intervention in aboriginal affairs has revolved in large part around such attempts to decenter and reconstruct family relations" (Wotherspoon and Satzewich, 1993: 83). Under these conditions, the position of Aboriginal women was diminished. With the development of residential schools and the welfare system,

Aboriginal people were unable to raise children adequately and it is within these systems that the cycle of abuse for many aboriginal people began. Family violence in Aboriginal communities throughout Canadian history is an important aspect in understanding Aboriginal women's perceptions and experiences of battery.

In summary, understanding the social structures of patriarchy and the unequal power relations between men and women is key to understanding inner city women's experiences with battery. This is the framework which will be used to understand Aboriginal and white women's fear of violence and their similar perceptions of police response to this violence. The following section elaborates on the patriarchal social structures which perpetuate and sustain male violence against women and women's fear of that violence.

2.2 Patriarchal Violence and Women's Fear

An important aspect of patriarchal social relations is the subordination of women. Research has shown that the fear of violence which many women feel is, in effect, a control mechanism which reinforces women's subordinate status to men (LaPrairie, 1994; Hanmer and Saunders, 1984). Here, what is important is the controlling effect of male violence and the fear of that violence. To understand why some women are controlled by the use of violence, an analysis of the fear of violence and the affects of this fear on the lives of women is required.

Physical and sexual violence and the fear of that violence constitute an integral part of the subordination of women by men. Key to this control are the social, rather than personal, factors such as the isolation of women in families, the prescribed role for wives to manage family tensions while preserving the family life as normal, and the economic dependency of women upon husbands (MacLeod, 1980: 40). Violence and the threat of such violence against women by men relies on and reinforces the sexual constructs which differentiate men and women. Male violence against women in whatever form - harassment, rape, battery - is a crucial mechanism by which male dominance and control is maintained over women (Hanmer & Maynard, 1987).

Women's experiences with patriarchy and subordination can only be examined in the context of cultural definitions of femininity and social control. Social control exerts power over women through formal and informal means. Informal social controls refer to structures such as the family, where the shaping of behavior occurs through the socialization process that is interrelational and coordinated through the normal process of developing into a mature adult (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). The informal forms of social control restrict women's choices of activities throughout their lives, determining which occupations are appropriate, when and whom to marry, and their position in the family structure. Violence and the fear of violence are central to the informal social control or subordination of women in society.

Hanmer and Saunders (1984) developed a circular model to explain women's fear of violence and the control that it exerts over women's public and private lives.

The five steps involved in the fear of violence and the effects it has, provide an excellent source for understanding the processes of social control of women's lives.

Step one begins by suggesting that fear of violence in public places is "fed by the media, informal rumour, personal experience of people known to us, and our own experience." (Hanmer and Saunders, 1984: 65). For women, this means that greater caution must be taken when they are in public places and near strangers and, when situations arise in which attacks may occur (being out alone at night) women are partially responsible for them. This, in turn, socially sanctions women's fear of violence and increases the belief that the home is (or should be) a safe place.

Step two furthers this by suggesting that this fear of violence lessens women's participation in the public arena. For each woman, the degree of participation will be different depending on the level of fear. "It is not a simple matter of being able to go anywhere during the day but highly restricted during the hours of night" (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984: 65). The reality is that many women are forced to take extreme cautionary steps when considering any public activity.

Step three suggests that the restrictions on women's participation in public result in a greater dependency on the protection of men they know, such as their husbands. "The pressure from the outside, or public world, creates a feeling of dependency that helps structure an actual dependence of women on men in their home" (1984: 65). This dependence is in addition to other social structural factors which promote women's dependence on men, especially in economic terms.

Step four indicates that the dependence on men provides the context where it is easy for men to assault "their women." In addition, Hanmer and Saunders (1984: 65) suggest that "men's behavior is supported by a general cultural understanding that defines women as responsible for male violence, and this responsibility increases with the closeness of the relationship." If, and when, the women decide to contact state agencies for assistance, they are discouraged from calling again because there is often insufficient assistance offered. "The problem of male violence is turned back upon the woman who becomes labeled inadequate or deviant" (1984: 66).

Step five reveals that when women contact the criminal justice system, specifically the police, there is no response or appears to be no response. They note, "if men are penalized for their crimes it occurs in some obscure way, divorced from the active participation of women in curtailing violence of particular men" (Hanmer and Saunders, 1984: 67). This results in an even greater dependence on the "collective male protection system" and reinforces the woman's dependence and helplessness. If women decide the police will not or cannot help, or they fear retribution, or they believe police involvement inappropriate, then the fear of abuse remains unchallenged.

Violence and the fear of violence represent significant social control over women, both informally - through the controlled behavior of women by male's violence, and formally - through the lack of response by state agencies and the criminal justice system. "The division of women's lives in public and private spheres is central to the process of enduring dependence on men, both as individuals (partner) and collectively (the police), and the greater the threat of attack, the more intense this is,

thus ensuring the perpetuation of the system " (Hanmer & Saunders, 1984: 69). It is through such a system, coupled with the acceptance of physical force as a means of control, that the wife becomes an "appropriate victim" of physical and psychological abuse (Dobash & Dobash, 1979).

2.3 Living with Violence - Subjective and Objective Dependency

Dependency is another key factor in understanding how women get involved in abusive relationships and more specifically, why they remain in them. Dependency refers to "a relationship between a person and another person, symbol, substance or material object characterized by two things: physiological or psychological withdrawal pains contingent upon its unavailability; and the absence of subjectively defined alternatives" (Kalmuss & Straus, 1982). Dependency helps explain why women stay in abusive relationships. Here again, the unequal power relations between men and women provide the backdrop for women's dependency on men.

There are two types of dependency, subjective and objective. Subjective dependency refers to the psychological or emotional ties that women have to the abusive partner and the relationship itself. Subjectively dependent women will stay in the relationship when there is minor violence but will leave when it increases or escalates.

Objective dependency refers to the economic dependency that women have on men. This is especially important for women who have young children as they are

more likely to be financially dependent on the male partner. Women who are objectively dependent on men are more likely to stay in the relationship even when there is severe and frequent violence.

Kalmuss and Straus (1982) suggest that as women's economic dependency on men decreases, less violence will occur in the long run. However, in the short run men who feel they are losing their position of authority in the relationship are more likely to wage greater violence against their female partners. The combined effects of subjective and objective dependency are that women will stay in relationships that are abusive, tolerating violence from their male partners. This theory suggests that some women remain in extremely violent relationships longer than others based on the level and type of dependency that the abused women have on their male partners. Financially or objectively dependent women are most likely to endure extreme violence as they believe they are unable to leave the situation. These women are dependent on their male partners for financial and mental security. The fear which creates this dependency is directly linked to women's standing in the social world.

In order to clearly understand why women are fearful, a more thorough investigation into gender roles, gender differences and exposure to violence and potential violence must be explored. The lack of a substantive response to battered women by the criminal justice system means that familial relationships are abandoned to the exploitation of power advantages of men under the guise of respect for privacy (Johnson, 1996). Although there have been changes made to policy regarding women abuse, such as mandatory charging by some police departments, and the creation of

separate courts to deal with women abuse, the true effects of these changes are yet to be seen. Further, research by a variety of social service and criminal justice departments is continually reviewing the effects of any policy changes.

2.4 Subcultural Theory - Subcultures of Violence

The subcultural theory (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967) emphasizes that subcultures of violence can emerge after years of chronic exposure to violence. The use of violence by a certain culture reflects the internalization of violence by that particular group of people. That is, a culture can learn to use violence regularly as an acceptable method of dealing with problems if specific conditions exist. For women in abusive relationships, the acceptance of some levels of violence will directly affect their perceptions of this violence. This theory suggests that some cultures learn values and norms facilitating violence through the process of differential learning, association, or identification because of historical factors such as colonialism. The learned response to violence will likely be different for Aboriginal and white women. This learned behavior is useful in understanding women's response to violence by their male partners, and their perceptions of police response to such violence.

Differences in perceptions of violence and responses to it are the kinds of factors that subcultural theorists believe are the most susceptible to a subculture of violence explanation (Ellis and DeKeseredy, 1996:97). In Canada, variations exist between Aboriginal people and white people in areas such as assault rates and homicide rates. Aboriginal wives in Canada are eight times more likely to kill their husbands than

non-aboriginal wives (Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1996: 93). Further, as noted by the Ontario Native Women's Association (1989), at least one in ten Canadian women has experienced a form of abuse while eight out of ten Aboriginal women have been abused or assaulted, or can expect to be abused or assaulted. The differences are partially due to the lack of police protection afforded to Aboriginal women which often leaves these women believing that their only form of self defense is killing the abuser.

The different experiences and perceptions that white and Aboriginal women have has also been noted in the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba. This report indicated "that while one in 10 women in Canada is abused by her partner, for Aboriginal women the figure is closer to one in three" (1991: 482). This report also indicates that "women endure from 11 to 39 episodes of abuse before seeking help; and then they seek help more often from a shelter than from the police. The Manitoba government Family Disputes Services branch says that abuse occurs at least 35 times before any outside assistance is sought" (AJIM, 1991: 483). This research suggests that Aboriginal women suffer from different levels of abuse than do white women and Aboriginal women are less likely to turn to the police in a time of crisis. A more in-depth report of these and other findings by the AJIM will be provided in chapter 4.

The subcultural theory begins with the assumption that "wife abuse occurs in a special kind of cultural setting" (Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1996: 197). This environment is one in which aggression is both condoned and reinforced through the regular use of violence to solve problems in a variety of situations. A violent subculture is an environment in which at least some individuals have learned to use violence regularly to

solve problems. As Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967:140) suggest, a subculture of violence exists wherever one finds a "potent theme of violence current in the cluster of values that make up the lifestyle, the socialization process, the interpersonal relationships of individuals living in similar conditions". This explanation emphasizes the violent subculture as part of that group's mainstream culture and violent behavior as conforming behavior.

In order to identify whether or not a subculture of violence exists, Wolfgang and Ferracuti (1967:158-161) developed a seven rule test (SRT). The following corollary propositions lend support to the thesis of a subculture of violence:

1. No subculture can be totally different from or totally in conflict with the society in which it is a part. This is true of the inner-city Aboriginal community which exists within the larger Canadian society.

2. To establish the existence of a subculture of violence does not require that the actors sharing in these basic value elements should express violence in all situations. Here again, there are many situations where violence is not used by Aboriginal people.

3. The potential resort or willingness to resort to violence in a variety of situations emphasizes the penetrating and diffusive character of this culture

theme. For example, in addition to wife abuse, violence often occurs at bars during drunken brawls.

4. The subculture ethos of violence may be shared by all ages in a sub society, but this ethos is most prominent in a limited age group, ranging from late adolescence to middle age. Here, Aboriginal persons aged 14 to 50 are most likely to share violence-facilitating values as reflected in Canadian crime statistics. (Ellis & DeKeseredy, 1996)

5. The counter-norm is nonviolence. In this case, the legal norm is non-violence, however, the social norm in Canadian society is violence. For Aboriginal people, violent behavior is consistent with pro-violence values which have been systematically directed at them by agents of the Canadian state for centuries (Silverman & Nielsen, 1992).

6. The development of favorable attitudes toward, and the use of, violence in a subculture usually involves learned behavior and a process of differential learning, association, or identification. Aboriginal people have experienced violence in a variety of situations, and this is especially relevant for men who batter, as many of them witnessed their own fathers abusing their mothers (Johnson, 1996).

7. The use of violence in a subculture is not necessarily viewed as illicit conduct and the users therefore do not have to deal with feelings of guilt about their aggression. Because violence is endemic in Aboriginal communities (AJIM, 1991), most of the members do not feel any remorse about utilizing force in any situation.

This approach is helpful in explaining the concentration of violence in specific socio-economic groups and ecological areas. This test has been applied to the 'spirit wrestlers' of Canada, the Doukhobor Sons of Freedom. Newman (1979) found that this sect was a 'prototypical subculture of violence' as they passed all of the rules except for that of the counter-norm of nonviolence. Here he found that the pro-violence norms of this group were not in conflict with anti-violence norms of the mainstream society. This is due to the fact that the Canadian state systematically directed violent behavior towards this group, encouraging a similar use of violence among their own group (Silverman & Nielsen, 1992).

A similar history has occurred for Aboriginal people in Canada. Power and oppression through the historical legacy of colonization set the stage for the contemporary levels of violence among Aboriginal people. As Ellis and DeKeseredy (1996: 98) note,

> First Nations peoples were peaceful before their capture or conquest by mainstream white Americans and Canadians. What they learned from their more numerous and powerful oppressors was not only how to coerce, beat, kill, harass, humiliate, and distress members of their own communities, but also that these are effective means of securing valued outcomes.

The historical injustices which Canada's First Nations people have incurred are indisputable. What is worth noting, however, are the various outcomes of this systemic abuse. Colonization, culture conflict and loss of traditional practices have created such problems as alcohol and substance abuse, economic problems, and generational violence which emerged directly from colonization (LaPrairie, 1994:19).

Colonization refers to the process of encroachment and subsequent subjugation of Aboriginal peoples since the arrival of Europeans. Prior to colonization, Aboriginal women enjoyed comparative honour, equality and even political power in a way European women did not at the same time in history. One can "trace the diminishing status of Aboriginal women with the progression of colonialism" (LaRocque, 1993). Colonization and racism, however, go hand in hand. One of the many consequences of racism is that, over time, racial stereotypes and societal rejection may be internalized by the colonized group. This internalization process is defined by LaRocque (1993) as a result of disintegrative processes inherent in colonization, in which Aboriginal peoples have come to see themselves through the images imposed by the dominant white culture. The internalization of violent behavior by Aboriginal people is key to understanding women's perceptions and experiences with battery. For Aboriginal women, living in an environment where violence is used regularly has led these women to believe that certain levels of violence are acceptable. The subculture of violence which has become part of everyday life for many Aboriginal women can help explain the perceptions of violence by their male partners. Aboriginal women's perceptions of

the police and other agents of the criminal justice system can also be better understood in light of the internalization of violence by Aboriginal people.

Other important factors linked to interpersonal and family violence are residential schools and the intrusion of the welfare system (Nahanee & McIvor, 1992), as both of these systems contributed to family breakdown and an increase in family tension. More than that, the abuse cycle for many Aboriginal people began here. Further, some research has identified geographic isolation as a important variable in the incidence of violence and the inability of women to find help (Tom, 1992). Kennedy and Dutton (1989), however, found the incidence of family violence to be generally higher in urban areas even though more resources are available. The potential for violence to become learned and normative behavior, in both urban and rural settings, is high for Aboriginal people due to their marginalization, poverty, and personal dysfunctions (LaPrairie, 1994). The association between family violence in Aboriginal communities and history is made clear by a participant at a conference on family violence held by the Carrier-Sekani Tribal Council:

> in order to understand the present day factors which have an impact upon Native families who experience family violence, it is imperative that we understand the historical context from which our Native people come from. The dominant society has eroded our beliefs and values over the years. Native spirituality was replaced with Christianity. Separation of our children, culturally and geographically, from parents and from their way of life had a drastic, negative impact on all our Native families (British Columbia Task Force on Family Violence, 1992: 191).

The recent history of Aboriginal women has been one of extreme marginalization. Their traditional position of respect and authority has been replaced by a position of subservience and fear. The tolerated levels of violence for Aboriginal women are in direct relation to the lack of resources which are available to them. Their perceptions of these resources as not readily available will further their disadvantaged position in the community.

A subculture of violence does not exist to the same degree among inner-city white women. They too, however, are marginalized. Their socio-economic status is remarkably low and due to this similar disadvantaged position their experiences with the police and other agents of the criminal justice system will be similar in some ways.

Most research to date has focused on white women, comparing women with different education and different income levels. Consistent with U.S. research (Straus et al., 1981), Canadian studies reveal an inverse relationship between income and wife abuse. Lupri's (1990) national study indicates that low-income men were more likely to assault their wives than males belonging to higher income groups. Similarly, Kennedy and Dutton (1989) and Smith (1985, 1990) found that low-income women are much more likely to experience male violence than their higher-income counterparts (DeKeseredy, 1991).

To explain violence against white women, the subculture of violence thesis would suggest that white women belonging to low-income families and communities will adhere to a different set of cultural values than white women belonging to high-income families. They may also be subjected to a greater pro-violence male subculture

which they may tolerate. This is especially true given the limited structural and cultural supports to counter this violence process. Here, it is a culture of violence in conjunction with a culture of poverty which is the breeding ground for higher levels of violence. In low-income communities, where women have fewer resources and often, lower levels of education, violence is more tolerable only because there is greater fear of losing the little control and stability they have. This reaction is closely linked to fear of retribution by the abuser as many men will threaten to hurt or kill the woman if she seeks help or attempts to leave. This further promotes acceptance of violence in the long run and provides a context in which children, male and female, will learn to accept violence.

The importance of the subculture of violence theory, however, is its ability to help explain the high rates of violence among Aboriginal people in the inner-city, and the experiences and perceptions of Aboriginal women to this violence. The most important critique of this theory is that the counter-norm of nonviolence is simply not the case. Here, similar to the Newman study, the pro-violence norms of Aboriginal people are not in conflict with the anti-violence norms of the mainstream society. The history of Aboriginal people in Canadian society is replete with examples of violent oppression. For Aboriginal people, violence has been learned from the greater society and is one of the primary causes of their own abusive relationships.

2.6 Summary

To understand Aboriginal and white women's experiences and perceptions of battery and police response to it, several factors must be examined. The similar perceptions of these two groups of women can be understood within the context of patriarchal social relations. This theory traces the "historical significance of the socioeceonomic and legal structures that have fostered male privilege and women's dependence on male partners" (Johnson, 1996: 21). This theory explores the ways in which social relationships enable male violence against women to occur. The existing social relationships and institutions perpetuate male violence against women, and inner-city Aboriginal and white women are faced with similar experiences with the criminal justice system, specifically the police.

In determining or anticipating the reaction of the battered woman, an understanding of her fear of violence is important. The anticipated reaction of law enforcement, or fear her spouse may discover the complaint and harm her further, is a distinct possibility in reality and in the mind of the battered woman. Inner-city women have also been conditioned not to trust the responses of the criminal justice system, especially male-based adversarialist policing in the inner city core.

The dependency which many women have on the men who abuse them is also extremely important in understanding why women remain in abusive relationships. This dependency is encouraged within the family structure for many women. Women are taught to uphold the family ties at any cost. Their own safety and the safety of their

children is often put at risk. Further, the dependency is often maintained through years of systematic verbal and psychological abuse, by the male partner, which convinces the women that they deserve the abuse, and in fact, are causing it. The effects of the dependency that women have on both their abusive partners and the predominantly male-based criminal justice system, is necessary in understanding why many women remain for so long, in severely abusive relationships.

In conjunction with a fear of violence, for both Aboriginal and white women, the objective and subjective dependency on the male partner creates barriers for women trying to leave an abusive relationship.

For many Aboriginal women, the use of violence has become entrenched in their lifestyles as a tolerated method of dealing with problems. Violence in the subculture has led to an increased acceptance of that violence. What was once a culture that celebrated the role of the matriarch has deteriorated into a situation that often condones and perpetuates violence as a means of social control. For white women, the subculture of violence can be adapted to help explain the prevalent use of violence among marginalized, low-income families. Here again, the regular use of violence by men and the acceptance of this violence by women, perpetuates violence in these communities.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction and Research Design

This chapter will discuss both the research methodology used in this thesis and the rationale for this methodology. The research question is: Based on their experiences, what are the Aboriginal and white women's perceptions of battery and police response to this battery. Do they differ, and if so, why? Past research (LaPrairie, 1994) has indicated that there is a difference in perception between Aboriginal and white women concerning battery, and therefore understanding these differences became important. A self reported questionnaire was used in a survey. The survey data were complemented by ten qualitative interviews, five with Aboriginal women and five with white women. The victimization survey provides data which official crime statistics are unable to capture and enables researchers to understand policing practices based on the experiences and perceptions of respondents. Ahluwalia (1992) has argued that victimization surveys are not designed to reproduce official crime statistics but are meant as a specific tool for demonstrating the ways in which women are victimized by males. Further, as propounded by Ahluwalia and MacLean (1986), questionnaire responses serve as valid indicators of policing practices. The strength of this method lies in its efficacy for capturing subtleties of culture, context, and processes that typically elude large-scale data collection efforts (Bart & Moran, 1993). Responses to the questionnaire items will be used as indicators of women's

experiences and perceptions of battery and the police, police responses to calls of battery, and perceptions of police treatments.

This study integrates both quantitative and qualitative methods. The survey questionnaire and the following in-depth interviews are used to study the perceptions, attitudes, experiences and grievances of women living in the inner city area of Saskatoon concerning police response to calls of battery and victim assistance agencies' responses to calls of battery. This questionnaire was developed as a joint research project, however, the focus of this research will remain solely on the policing aspect. Another co-researcher will be separately analyzing the victim agency data. A brief section about the limitations of the study is also presented.

3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire in this study of women's experience and opinion of police responses to calls of battery, employs a Likert scale with these available responses: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. The questions ask about their perceptions of battery, policing of battery, and perceived differences between perceptions of Aboriginal and white women. This particular design, which includes the neutral category of Undecided, allows the respondent an opportunity to indicate either a lack of knowledge on the particular question and/or offer the respondent the right not to answer the particular question. Proponents of the five category scale argue that researchers do not have the right to force a choice from the respondent (Francis, 1967). The Likert scale was also used in order to obtain

indicators of experiences and perceptions of women concerning police response to and treatment of women calling about battery. The questions were designed to obtain indicators of variations in perceptions of Aboriginal and white women who reside in the inner city area about police treatment of women who had called to report male violence.

The questionnaire asks specifically about physical and/or sexual assaults by male partners. The use of only these two types of physical abuse as prime examples of battery were chosen because they are punishable by law, whereas psychological and emotional abuses are not typically considered criminal acts. This does not dismiss the seriousness of psychological or emotional abuse, but the focus of this questionnaire on battery will remain thus limited.

The quantitative dimension of this study is designed to obtain indications of the perceptions of women concerning police responses to calls of battery by gauging attitudinal responses to a series of statements. A potential problem with measuring perceptions is that precise quantification is difficult because the contents of perceptions are difficult to delineate, and their intensity hard to measure. What is required, then, is the "grounding" of such statistical portrayals by providing a qualitative description of respondents' perceptions, concerns and ideas about their experiences.

The survey questionnaire was thus designed to employ both quantitative and qualitative dimensions (See Appendix I). The research questionnaire was received and approved by the University Research Ethics Committee.

3.3 Pretest

The research questionnaire was then pretested on a sample of inner city women. The pretest sample consisted of three inner-city Aboriginal women and three inner-city white women, who were asked to go over the questionnaire and comment on questions worded awkwardly or offensively. Another purpose of the pretest was to identify any racial biases in the questions which would prevent a complete understanding of the questions by respondents from different racial or ethnic backgrounds. Only minor typing errors were noted and these changes were made to enhance the readability of the questionnaire.

3.4 Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaire survey distribution was conducted by going door to door in the inner-city blocks. The surveyed areas of the city consisted of Riversdale, Caswell Hill, Pleasant Hill, Mount Royal and Meadow Green. These were chosen for their large population of Aboriginal people, as well as their inner-city location. This researcher and a colleague of mine distributed the surveys throughout the aforementioned areas. We identified ourselves as being from the University of Saskatchewan conducting research on the perceptions of inner city women concerning police response to and treatment of women who called about battery. In most cases we spoke to the woman/women of the household, if there were any, and asked if they would be interested in participating in the research project. If there were no women living in a particular household, we noted it and would not leave a questionnaire. The project and

its sensitive nature was explained to the women, as well as explicit instructions about the anonymity of their responses. The women were made aware of the types of questions being asked in the survey questionnaire in order to ensure that they would not be putting themselves in an awkward position, if indeed their partner was abusing them.

Those respondents who consented to participate were asked to complete the questionnaire within a week, at which time my colleague or I would return to collect them. After distributing 200 questionnaires, and returning for collection, it was decided to provide postage paid envelopes with the surveys in order to increase the response rate. This second method of collection improved the response rate significantly, as most respondents were unable to complete the survey within the one week period.

Once distributed, three attempts were made to collect the questionnaires. If after the third visit the questionnaire was not retrieved it was considered not available. The utility of the postage paid envelopes provided another opportunity to receive the finished questionnaire. The time of distribution varied initially, but after the first week in the field, it was decided that the most opportune time was Monday to Thursday evenings. Collection was also undertaken in the evenings with few exceptions when respondents indicated the time they wished the questionnaire to be picked up.

3.5 Response Rate

Six hundred and seventeen surveys were distributed at random through the inner-city areas. Of this total, 137 questionnaires were collected and/or sent in to the University, but two were deemed unusable as they did not complete the background data section. Another thirty-two were distributed and filled out at the Friendship Inn on 20th Street, where respondents were given an honorarium of three dollars to fill out the survey. This was done in order to increase the number of Aboriginal women respondents. Another thirty questionnaires were dropped off at the Community Clinic where women were asked if they would be interested in participating, and no honorarium was offered. Of this total, seven completed surveys were returned.

After distributing surveys at the Friendship Inn and Community Clinic, the total number of questionnaires completed by Aboriginal women was 82, translating into a response rate of 12.5 percent. The response rate for white women was slightly higher at 14.9 percent. A lower response rate was expected considering the sensitive nature of the survey questionnaire. Several factors contributed to the lower response rate in this study. First, the sensitive nature of the questionnaire resulted in a high number of refusals when delivering the surveys. Second, because many of the women in these inner-city areas are working, have children, or both, they often did not have time to complete the survey. The third problem had to do with the living conditions of many of these women. Because many of them are still living with the abusive partner, it was difficult for them to fill out the survey without jeopardizing their safety or the safety of their children. Of the total number of surveys completed, 52.3 percent of the

respondents were white women, and 47.7 percent were Aboriginal women. The lower response rate may not strongly affect the reliability of this study, as most of the results are very similar to other studies of this nature (LaPrairie, 1994). Another indication of its reliability is the reinforcement provided by the in-person interviews. The women who were interviewed indicated that the results of the survey were very similar to their opinions and they felt representative of other women from their racial or ethnic background. The possible bias due to the low response rate may be that women who were at that time involved in abusive relationships would be less likely to accept and answer the survey.

3.6 In-depth Qualitative Interviews

The second methodological tool employed in this study was in-depth qualitative interviews with Aboriginal and white women. The purpose of these interviews was to clarify some of the issues which were not fully developed in the quantitative surveys. The interview schedule included such items as the women's history of battery, whether or not they called the police, frequency of police calls, and their experiences with the police.

3.6.1 Data Collection

The women who were interviewed were located through a variety of resources. All of the Aboriginal women who agreed to be interviewed were located through the staff at the Friendship Inn. The women were first approached by a staff member at the centre and asked if they would consider discussing the details of the experiences of battery and the police with this researcher. If they agreed I would then approach them and ask them if they would feel comfortable with the topic of discussion and with me taping the interviews. If they agreed, we then proceeded to a quiet location and completed the interview. The white women I interviewed were located by contacting various battered women's shelters in Saskatoon. Because the women had to contact me if they were willing to do an interview, due to the confidentiality rules of the shelters, I put up posters in these homes explaining my research and my desire for the participation of these women. Once the women contacted me, we set up a meeting place and did the interview.

The interviews lasted anywhere from one to three hours. The interviews were very informal, and I started the interviews with the following question: "Could you tell me about your battering experience"? This simple statement elicited information about a variety of aspects of the battering situation. Throughout the interviews I would ask clarifying questions in an attempt to probe further into certain areas. The women discussed the abuser, the abuse, the police, why they did or did not call, and the responses of the police. Family background and other relationships were also

discussed. The women were very open and candid, and were interested in helping me understand their experiences with battery and the police responses.

3.7 Definitions and Measurement

In this study, battery has been defined as physical or sexual abuse by a male partner, although in the qualitative analysis emotional and psychological abuse have been addressed. The survey questionnaire focused primarily on physical and sexual abuse because these are the types of abuse which women most commonly report to the police. Addressing other types of abuse, it will be shown, helps in understanding the patterns of response by women to male violence. A 'male partner' refers to a boyfriend, spouse or common-law partner.

The independent variable in this study is ethnic background with the two categories being Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, and is established by the background section of the survey questionnaire. For the interviews, the independent variable was established simply by asking the women what their ethnic background was. The dependent variables were determined by the twenty-five survey questions which indicate certain perceptions held by the women towards battery and police response to battery. The dependent variables were further elucidated by the in-person interviews and again, these dependent variables are differences in perceptions towards battery and police responses to battery.

3.8 Limitations

This thesis is not without limitations. Methodologically, the use of survey questionnaires as the research instrument restricts data, as the highly structured nature of the questionnaire prevented in-depth responses. Although the final section of the questionnaire did provide an opportunity for the respondents to clarify their opinions, it was not required to be completed for the questionnaire to be considered as usable. Also when respondents were asked to give written answers to questions, they often responded ambiguously, leaving me to ponder over the true meaning. The in-depth personal interviews with women, however, clarified many of the issues and provided me with an opportunity to obtain important information about the knowledge and views of respondents. In defense of the initial survey methodological approach taken, time restraints, and the wish to give voice to a large sample of inner-city Aboriginal and white women, who have been notably missing from academic research (Rice, 1990: 57), were considerations which entered into the development of the methodology employed.

Although the response rate for the survey was relatively low, I am confident that the results are representative of many inner city Aboriginal and white women. I believe that the interview material provided the necessary information to ensure that the survey results are not simply limited to the individuals who responded to it. All of the women I spoke with believed that the survey results were a fair representation of many other Aboriginal and white women's experiences and perceptions. Also, after having

extended contact with members of this community, my perception is that many other women withstand similar experiences.

CHAPTER 4. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis is presented in three sections. First, descriptive aggregate data will provide information about the sample population. The second section examines relationships between the independent variable (racial background) and dependent variables, as indicated by the 25 questionnaire items and four questions regarding rates of assault, and rates of police reporting, using bivariate distributions. The third section moves from quantitative data to the presentation of the qualitative survey data, provided by the respondents to four structured and five open ended questions pertaining to police responses to battered women and women's perceptions and needs of police when responding to calls of male violence against women.

4.1 Part I: Demographic and Economic Background

The purpose of this section is to provide descriptive information about the sample and a brief overview of the sample. White women made up 52.3 percent and Aboriginal women made up 47.7 percent of the total respondents. Of the Aboriginal respondents, 60.9 percent stated that they were status Aboriginal, 21.9 percent indicated they were Metis and 10.9 percent indicated being non-status. The only noticeable demographic similarity between the Aboriginal and white women were the mean ages, 32 and 38, respectively. There are, however, many interesting differences

between the Aboriginal and white women surveyed. Of the Aboriginal respondents, 65 percent were raised in a rural town or reserve. For the white respondents, almost half (47.8 percent) indicated that they were raised in Saskatoon, with 29 percent being raised in rural Saskatchewan.

Regarding education completed, 36.6 percent of the Aboriginal women indicated having grade nine or less, whereas only 5.4 percent of the white respondents indicated having grade nine or less. 48.8 percent of the Aboriginal women indicated having between grade ten and twelve, and only 6.1 percent indicated having some college education. For the white respondents, 41.3 percent indicated having between grade ten and grade twelve, and 21.7 percent indicated having some college education. This information is similar to that found in the AJIM (1991) where 72 percent of the Aboriginal women they surveyed indicated not having a high school diploma.

For the Aboriginal respondents, 41.5 percent reported never being married, 42.7 percent were married or cohabiting, and 13.4 percent were separated or divorced. For the white respondents, 27.2 percent indicated never being married, 46.7 percent reported being married, and 23.9 percent were separated or divorced. Regarding employment, only 1.2 percent of the Aboriginal respondents reported having full-time work and 30.5 percent reported being unemployed. For the white respondents, 27.2 percent reported that they worked full-time, and only 13 percent reported being unemployed. There is a much greater percentage of unemployed Aboriginal women as compared to white women. Here again, this is similar to the AJIM findings which states, "while the official unemployment rate has been estimated at 16.5% for

Aboriginal women, official statistics typically do not count those who are not actively looking for work" (1991:481). This research did count the women not actively looking for work as unemployed which helps explain the higher rates for both Aboriginal and white inner city women.

Levels of family and personal income also show some interesting differences between Aboriginal and white women. For Aboriginal women, 30.5 percent indicated that they had an annual family income of less than 5000 dollars, and 46.3 percent stated that they had an annual personal income of less than 5000 dollars. This information may be an underestimate, as 18.3 percent of the Aboriginal women did not reveal their annual family income and 28 percent did not reveal their annual personal income. A factor involved in this under reporting is that many of the respondents who did not answer said they did not know their personal or family income. For white women, only 5.4 percent indicated having an annual family income of less than 5000 dollars, and 18 percent reported having an annual personal income of less than 5000 dollars. White women were also more likely to report their annual family and personal incomes. Here, the AJIM (1991) found that the average annual income for Manitoba's Aboriginal women is less than 75 percent of that for other women further indicating the differences between Aboriginal and white women.

Based on this background information, there are some interesting differences and similarities between Aboriginal and white inner-city women. The most dramatic differences are where they were raised. For Aboriginal women this tended to be on a reserve or in rural Saskatchewan. For white women, almost half were raised in

Saskatoon. Another striking difference between Aboriginal and white women is their level of education where Aboriginal women are more likely to have lower levels of education than white women. Finally, concerning the area of annual family and personal income, Aboriginal women have much lower levels of labour force participation, employment and income than their white counterparts. The white respondents are less likely to fall into the lowest income group.

The next section examines responses to the 25 questionnaire items, as well as the questions concerning personal experiences with battery, reported assaults to the police and satisfaction with police responses. For all of the responses to the survey questionnaire, see Appendix II.

4.2 Part II: Bivariate Distributions of Questionnaire Data

To examine the perceptions of Aboriginal and white women concerning battery and police response to it, bivariate distributions of the 25 questionnaire items by ethnic background are provided. At this level of analysis, differences and similarities between Aboriginal and white inner-city women can be seen. All of the questions asked the women to respond based on how they and other women of their ethnic background would feel about these issues. For the purpose of this analysis, the responses "strongly agree" and "agree" have been combined into one category and, a separate category has been created for "disagree" and "strongly disagree". Tables will be provided to highlight the magnitude of some of the differences and similarities in perceptions for these two groups of women. The tables which were chosen were those that were

found to be significant. However, the significance of each question and its responses are indicated in the Appendix. Following this section will be a bivariate analysis of the responses to the questions concerning personal battery and police experiences.

The first few statements attempt to delineate the perceptions of women concerning battery as a crime in comparison to other crimes. The importance of these questions is to understand how women rate battery. For example, do they consider it as serious as other crimes, and would they call the police for such a crime? Responses to statement 1 suggest that battered women are less likely to report battery to the police than other crimes such as theft. There is no significant difference between white and Aboriginal women and their perceptions concerning this statement. Seventy five point nine percent of white women and 82.5 percent of Aboriginal women agreed, which indicates that both white and Aboriginal women would report other crimes to the police before they would report battery. Statement 3 compares assault by a male partner to assault by a stranger, attempting to discover if women who are assaulted by a stranger receive more respect from police than women who are assaulted by a male partner. Here again, there is no difference between white and Aboriginal women as both groups of women agreed with the questionnaire item that women who report assault from a stranger receive more respect than women who report assault by their male partner.

Statements 4 and 5 compare physical assault and sexual assault. Statement 4 suggests respondents' beliefs that police are more likely to press charges against men who commit physical assault than men who commit sexual assault. Here the majority

of Aboriginal women agreed with the statement (55 percent), compared to only 30.7 percent of white women who agreed. However, there is no difference between the two groups of women in their likelihood of reporting sexual assault less than reporting physical assault. Aboriginal and white women agreed to statement 5 that stated they are less likely to report sexual assault than physical assault - 62.4 percent for Aboriginal women and 72.5 percent for non-Aboriginal women.

The next group of statements addresses why women do and do not report assaults to the police. Statement 2 reveals a significant difference between Aboriginal and white women concerning why they do not call the police, as presented in Table 4.2.1.

Table 4.2.1 Statement: Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report physical/sexual assault because they do not want to get the man in trouble with the law.

Racial Background	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Totals
White	39 44.3 %	13 14.8%	36 40.9%	88 100%
Aboriginal	67 81.7%	5 6.1%	10 12.2%	82 100 %

chi square = 25.46739
probability = .00000
phi = .38705

This table shows that most of the Aboriginal women agreed to statement 2, while the white women did not. This response suggests that Aboriginal women have very different reasons for calling the police. They have a greater reluctance to invoke

adversarial justice in violence situations, which is not surprising given historical and current factors. The next few responses to the questionnaire items will help elucidate these reasons.

Statement 6 suggests that women call the police to receive police protection for themselves as expected; however, significantly more white women agreed to this statement than Aboriginal women. Eighty two point eight percent of white women compared to only 58.8 percent of Aboriginal women agreed to this statement, showing a difference significant at the .05 level.

The next statement questions whether women call the police so that the police will prosecute the offender. Here Aboriginal women have a fairly strong opinion, with 51.3 percent agreeing to the statement, whereas 44.8 percent of white women agreed. An interesting result, however, is that 35.6 percent of the white respondents indicated that they were undecided, as compared to only 18.8 percent of the Aboriginal respondents who were undecided. This suggests that many white women had no opinion concerning this statement or did not understand the statement. Statement 9 addresses the perception that police can do nothing to stop further assaults and therefore women do not call them. There is not a significant difference between Aboriginal and white women, as 65.5 percent of white and 75 percent of Aboriginal women indicated that they agreed to this statement. Both groups of women view the police as unable to prevent future assaults.

Fear of the abuser, which is addressed in statement 10, is another important factor in women's decision to call the police. This bivariate distribution reveals that

most of the Aboriginal and white respondents do not believe that women of their ethnic group would report assaults to the police for fear that the abuser will try to get revenge on them. Eighty point five percent of the white respondents and 90 percent of the Aboriginal respondents agreed to the statement. Clearly, fear of the abuser is a major factor in not calling the police for both Aboriginal and white women. Statement 11 elicits information about the perceptions of the abuse itself in relation to calling the police as demonstrated in Table 4.2.2.

Table 4.2.2 Statement: Battered women of your racial or ethnic background do not report assaults to police because they believe the assaults are not important enough to bother police with.

Racial Background	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Totals
White	26	14	47	87
	29.9%	16.1%	54.0%	100%
Aboriginal	43	11	26	80
	53.8%	13.8%	32.5%	100%

chi square = 10.31421
probability = .00576
phi = .24852

This table shows that there is a significant difference between Aboriginal and white women in their perceptions of the assaults by their male partner. Over half of the Aboriginal respondents (53.8 percent) indicated that women of their ethnic group do not consider battery important enough to call police which suggests that many Aboriginal women will tolerate the abuse without calling the police for assistance.

Statement 12 also addresses why women do not report assaults. Table 4.2.3 illustrates the significant difference between Aboriginal and white women in their perceptions of battery. Sixty one point three percent of the Aboriginal respondents indicated that they consider the assaults as personal, whereas only 31 percent of the white respondents felt this way. The responses to the previous two statements would suggest that Aboriginal women are far less likely to call the police than white women who are battered.

Table 4.2.3 Statement: Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to police because they believe they are personal matters and not the business of the police or courts.

Racial Background	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Totals
White	27 31%	17 19.5%	43 49.4%	87 100%
Aboriginal	49 61.3%	9 11.3%	22 27.5%	80 100%

chi square = 15.34813
probability = .00046
phi = .30316

Statement 18 deals with the issue of past treatment by police and the effect this has on women calling the police when they are battered. Table 4.2.4 demonstrates yet another difference in perception between Aboriginal and white women.

Table 4.2.4 Statement: Most women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to the police because they have been treated badly in the past when they have reported assaults.

Racial Background	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Totals
White	39	35	13	87
	44.8%	40.2%	14.9%	100%
Aboriginal	51	19	10	80
	63.8%	23.8%	12.5%	100%

chi square = 6.4496
probability = .03976
phi = .19653

Here it can be seen that Aboriginal women are greatly affected by police treatment in the past, and that if treated badly, are less likely to re-call. What is also notable is that 40.2 percent of white women indicated that they were undecided about the statement, which may suggest that they have had fewer bad experiences and/or less knowledge about other white women here and therefore are unable to form an opinion concerning this statement. The perceptions of Aboriginal women are far more clear, while white women appear to be vague about this issue.

The final statement which addresses women calling the police is statement 20, and it suggests that women who make repeated calls to the police concerning battery feel they are taken less seriously by the police. Here, both the Aboriginal and white women agreed, 68.8 percent and 56.3 percent, respectively, that women who have made repeated complaints about their male partner are not taken seriously by the police. Both groups of women perceive the police as less respectful to women who make recurrent complaints of battery to the police.

The results of these nine statements show some interesting trends. Primarily, Aboriginal women do not call the police for four basic reasons: they do not want to get the man in trouble; they believe the police can do nothing to stop further assaults; they believe the assaults are not important enough to bother the police with; and they consider the assaults as personal matters and not the business of the police or courts. Another important factor for not calling the police for Aboriginal women is based on past treatment. Aboriginal women believe that those who have been treated badly in the past are less likely to call the police again. The white respondents, as well as the Aboriginal respondents, indicated not calling the police because they believed the police could do nothing to stop future assaults and because they fear retribution from the abuser.

Based on the questionnaire items, the reasons for calling the police for white women are to receive protection for themselves and their children. For Aboriginal women, the reasons for calling the police are to prosecute the offender. However, this seems contradictory, as many Aboriginal women indicated fear of getting the man in trouble as a reason for not calling the police.

The next six statements provide information about the perceptions of women concerning police response and effectiveness. The two groups of women had similar perceptions concerning all of the statements except for statement 14, which states that police officers of their racial or ethnic background are/would be better able to deal battered women of their ethnic background. The majority of Aboriginal respondents indicated that they strongly agreed to this statement (55.7 percent) whereas only 28.7

percent of white women agreed, perhaps because of past experience with white police officers. This significant difference suggests that the Aboriginal women feel that Aboriginal officers would be better qualified to deal with the issues affecting battered women of their ethnic background. Based on the other 5 statements, both the Aboriginal and white respondents agree that although police are doing a good job of protecting the rights of battered women and supplying information on crime, they do need more training in the area of battering and family violence intervention. Both the Aboriginal and white respondents were divided concerning why police do not want to get involved in in-home disputes. Statement 19 suggests that the reason is because domestic disputes can be dangerous for police and while many of the women agreed to this statement, there were almost as many who were undecided and/or disagreed. The women were very diverse in their perception concerning this statement.

The next group of statements deal with battering and pressing charges against the offender. The first statement (#22) suggests that women rarely press charges because they feel the courts will not punish the men. The majority of both the Aboriginal and white respondents, 71.3 percent and 74.7 percent respectively, agreed to this statement,. Similarly, a majority agreed to item 25 which states that battered women press charges more often when the police encourage them to do so. Sixty two point one percent of the white women and 63.8 percent of the Aboriginal women agreed which suggests that more women, regardless of their ethnic background, would press charges if the police encouraged them to do so. Statement 24, however, shows an interesting difference in perceptions for Aboriginal and white women as indicated in

Table 4.2.5. Eighty five percent of the Aboriginal women indicated that they do not press charges because they fear going to court, while only 69 percent of the white women fell into this category. Aboriginal women appear to have a much greater fear of the court process than do their white counterparts. This fear may also affect the previously discussed reasons for not calling the police. However, that can not be known for certain based on the survey questionnaire results.

Table 4.2.5 Statement: Women of your racial or ethnic group rarely press charges against men who batter because they fear having to go to court to testify.

Racial Background	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Totals
White	60	17	10	87
	69.0%	19.5%	11.5%	100%
Aboriginal	68	4	8	80
	85.0%	5.0%	10.0%	100%

chi square = 8.49135
probability = .01433
phi = .22549

Item 21 deals with police treatment of women based on their socio-economic status. Here Aboriginal and white women are comparable and agree with the statement that women with more money receive better treatment from the police than women with less money. However, 23.9 percent of the white respondents and 28.8 percent of the Aboriginal respondents fell under the category of undecided. Based on discussion with some of the women, the reason for the undecided responses was that they did not know any wealthy women and could not comment on their treatment by police. The final statement (23) addresses the issue of solutions to battery, and

suggests that longer jail sentences is one answer. There is no significant difference between Aboriginal and white women regarding this statement, with 47.5 percent of the Aboriginal women and 47.7 percent of the white women agreeing with the statement.

The inner-city respondents were also asked to respond to several questions regarding battery experienced, reports to police, and satisfaction with police response. Bivariate distributions were used to compare Aboriginal and white women and their responses to these questions. Table 4.2.6 allows an examination of the differences between Aboriginal and white women in comparison with battery.

Significantly more Aboriginal women reported being assaulted than white women. When asked about frequency of abuse, the Aboriginal and white women respondents showed no difference with 41.9 percent of white women stating they were abused fairly often, while 47.5 percent of Aboriginal women fell into this category.

Table 4.2.6 Ethnic Background by Being Assaulted

Racial Background	No	Yes	Totals
White	43 50.6%	42 49.4%	85 100%
Aboriginal	16 21.1%	60 78.9%	76 100%

chi-square = 15.97599
probability = .00034
phi = .31403

The respondents were also asked about reporting assaults to the police, as well as frequency of reporting. Table 4.2.7 shows that there is no significant difference between Aboriginal and white women in terms of reporting the assaults to police. The absence of difference between Aboriginal and white women and their reporting assaults to the police is not consistent with other research in this area. LaPrairie (1994) reports that Aboriginal women are less likely than white women to call the police. This inconsistency will be addressed further in this chapter. However, there was a significant difference between Aboriginal and white women in their satisfaction with the police response.

Table 4.2.7 Ethnic Background by Reporting Assaults to Police

Racial Background	No	Yes	Totals
White	23 54.8%	19 45.2%	42 100%
Aboriginal	24 40.7%	35 59.3%	59 100%

chi square = 1.95605
probability = .00627
phi = .13916

Table 4.2.8 indicates that while 36.8 percent of the white respondents indicated that they were very satisfied, only 8.8 percent of the Aboriginal women fell into this category. Aboriginal women appear to be significantly less highly satisfied with police response than white women.

Table 4.2.8 Ethnic Background by Satisfaction with Police Response

Racial Background	Not Satisfied	Fairly Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Totals
White	11 57.9%	1 5.3%	7 36.8%	19 100%
Aboriginal	18 52.9%	13 38.2%	3 8.8%	34 100%

chi square = 10.14250
probability = .00627
phi = .43746

The following qualitative survey data will help to clarify some of these differences and similarities between Aboriginal and white women. However, for clarification let us first summarize the present findings.

4.2.1 Summary of Bivariate Distributions

Based on the 25 questionnaire items, many differences and similarities between the Aboriginal and white respondents can be seen. The similarities are that both groups agree that they are less likely to report sexual assault as compared to physical assault, that police offer more respect to women who are assaulted by a stranger, and that police are often unable to prevent future assaults. Other similarities are that women do not report assaults to the police for fear of retribution by the abuser, and that women who make repeated complaints of battery to the police are not taken as seriously by the police. Also, both groups of women agreed that police officers need more training in the area of battery and domestic violence. Further, both groups similarly indicated that

women rarely press charges because they feel the courts will just let the man off, and that women press charges more often when the police encourage them to do so.

The differences between these two groups of women are as follows. Primarily, Aboriginal women indicated that they do not call the police because they do not want to get the man in trouble, they consider the assaults not important enough to bother the police with, and they consider the assaults personal matters. White women were more likely to disagree with many of these statements. Aboriginal women also indicated that they call the police to prosecute the offender, whereas white women indicated that they called the police to receive police protection for themselves and their children.

Other differences between these two groups are that Aboriginal women do not press charges because they fear going to court, whereas white women did not indicate a similar fear. Also, Aboriginal women strongly agreed to the statement that Aboriginal officers would be better able to deal with Aboriginal issues, whereas white women did not indicate a similar perception perhaps because white women feel comfortable dealing with white police officers.

Concerning the questions about battery, reporting to the police, and police responses, there are also similarities and significant differences between the Aboriginal and white respondents. The most striking difference is that a significantly higher percentage of Aboriginal women reported being assaulted than white women. Also, although the Aboriginal and white respondents reported little or no difference in reporting assaults to the police, they did indicate significant differences in satisfaction with the police response. Aboriginal women indicated being significantly less satisfied

with police response than white women which is as expected considering the historical and theoretical statements already discussed.

4.3 Part III: Analysis of Qualitative Survey Data

The purpose of this section is to analyze the information provided by respondents to three open-ended questions offered at the conclusion of the survey questionnaire. Some of the respondents did not answer these questions. However a general overview of the results will be provided. First, I will examine the responses of the Aboriginal respondents followed by an examination of the white women's responses to the three open-ended questions

4.3.1 Aboriginal Women

The first question asked women to explain why they felt satisfied or not satisfied with the police response(s) to their call(s) about battery. The reasons for dissatisfaction with police response given by Aboriginal women who called the police will first be examined. For Aboriginal women, the most common reason for dissatisfaction was that the police did not listen to their side of the story. One woman clearly indicates this, "...they did not listen to me. My husband would be drunk and they assumed I was drunk. I do not drink". Another woman notes a similar dissatisfaction, "...2nd time they were so fast (911 call) I didn't have time to get myself together and they had already decided the charge (& outcome) before I had a chance to tell them what I wanted - they never ask". As these women's comments suggest, the

police are perceived as not interested in hearing what these women have to say. They tend to judge the situation without offering the battered woman a chance to speak.

Another common reason for dissatisfaction offered by the Aboriginal respondents was that the police made the women feel like they deserved it. One woman notes, "...I also felt they weren't there for me, but it was their job to do. Took my statement and they made me feel I was the one abusing my husband (common-law)." Similarly, "Police said in a way I might have deserved it". Many women are made to feel that they are responsible for their own victimization.

Still other women indicated they were dissatisfied because the police did not take action. "They never even picked him up, when they questioned him he denied everything". A similar experience was noted by this woman, "They could not do anything as they were unable to find him and the crime was not serious enough. I was still alive". For many battered Aboriginal women, involving the police in a violent situation is simply encouraging secondary victimization at the hands of the criminal justice system.

For these Aboriginal women, police provided unsatisfactory responses by not listening to their stories and needs, by making them feel like they were responsible for the own victimization, and by not locating or arresting the offender. According to many Aboriginal women, the police are ineffective when responding to calls of battery.

Many of the Aboriginal respondents who did not report the assaults to the police explained why they did not. As one woman indicated, fear of further abuse by the male partner is an important factor. "I was scared and didn't want him in trouble

and felt I deserved it." Another woman notes, "I would never phone the cops because he said I'll be really sorry if I ever did." Similarly, fear of losing their children can also play an important part in their decision to call the police. "Fear of losing my children, if also my life."

Still for other women, shame is an important factor in their decision to not call the police. "The partner with whom I lived with then was well liked by everyone, so when I was hit or knocked around I never told anyone because I was ashamed of what happened, and I would blame myself." Fear of the abuser, fear of losing their children, and self-blame are common factors in Aboriginal women's decisions to not call the police.

There were some Aboriginal women who explained why they were satisfied with the police response to their call of battery. The most common reason given for satisfaction with police response was quick response time. As some women note, "I was fairly satisfied because they came to my home soon after I've called them," "Fast response time to my home," and "Police responded quickly." For some of the Aboriginal respondents, a swift police response was the most important factor in ensuring their satisfaction.

The second open-ended question asked "What can women do to improve the response of police to battered women?" Most responses suggested that women are either unable to affect the police or that it is out of their hands. "I don't believe battered women can change the way police respond. I feel it is up to the police." Similarly, another woman notes, "As for women to improve on the response it is totally up to the

police. I wouldn't know how to improve it." Many Aboriginal women commented on the lack of ability they had for affecting change in the responses of the police in battery situations.

Another less common response of the Aboriginal women to the question of improving police response was that which suggested women press charges and follow through with those charges. "Battered women, once they have contacted the police after an assault should go through with the charges instead of backing out." Another woman responded similarly, "Women should not stay at just reporting, they should make sure to make the courts and police know that they want the battery and assaults to stop." These Aboriginal respondents felt that if more women agreed to press charges and follow through on those charges, then police would respond better. This suggests that some Aboriginal women are willing to help in changing police response to calls of battery by following through with charges and prosecution.

The next question asked: "What can police do to improve their responses to battered women?" An overwhelming number of Aboriginal women indicated that they felt the police should respond to the calls and/or situation more quickly. "Respond right away to the victim so as they call to stop the assault from continuing." Another woman notes, "Responding to the call right away because it might help the women and the children." Still another woman indicates the same view, "Show up sooner. The longer a woman has to wait the more time she has to change her mind about laying charges." Clearly, for Aboriginal women, the most important feature of police response is the time it takes the police to arrive at the scene of the crime. Because

many Aboriginal women call during a crisis, the police response time is of the utmost importance to stop the assaults before it is too late and someone is seriously injured or killed.

Another area of police response which Aboriginal women stressed was the police treatment of the victim. These women suggest that increased sensitivity and taking the call seriously will improve the police response. One woman indicates this viewpoint clearly, "Take the victim seriously and with some compassion." Another woman notes, "Take us single women seriously. Be more considerate and when we say something, take it serious."

Many of the Aboriginal women indicated that the police need to be more sensitive to the needs of battered women and take the calls more seriously. Taking the calls seriously and responding quickly to calls are associated as police who consider these calls as serious will likely have a quicker response time and more efficient methods of dealing with the issues.

Another related issue is police training in the area of battery intervention. Many of the Aboriginal respondents indicated that they felt police needed more specialized training in the area of battery. The following comments elucidate this belief. "Have a special office or sign to deal with cases like that," "Police can work with other community resources, Interval House, Hospital, Legal Aid, Dept. of S.S., etc., that are in contact with women to create a community response," and "Take more training on abuse as they treat Indian women like crap." Many Aboriginal women perceive the police as having very little training in this area and it affects their decisions

to call the police in a time of crisis, or just to report an assault. Next, an examination of the responses of white women to these same questions will be supplied.

4.3.2 White Women

Here again, not all white women responded to these questions but an overview of the answers will be provided. The white women who responded to the questionnaire as not being satisfied cited a variety of reasons for this perception. "The police involved were quite cold. First time I phoned was years ago approx. 1981 - I was battered by my 6'2" white, well educated husband - I was asked "What I had done to make him angry?" Other women's responses indicate the need for quick response times from the police. "Police almost always showed up late which put my life in danger.. Also they were reluctant to get involved almost always seeming to show the attitude that I somehow asked for it." Another woman noted, "You can be pushed through a wall, kneed in the chest. Permanent damage to the back, but all he was charged with is slapping on the face. What money can by." The most common theme was that the women were made to feel as if they were to blame for the battery which is comparable to the perceptions of the Aboriginal women who also stated they were made to feel responsible for their own victimization.

Other white respondents indicated being satisfied with the police response and cited some reasons for this perception. "I felt that they were very quick with their response. Very polite, considerate and very understanding." Another woman noted, "I only reported one incident of physical assault and I feel I was taken seriously." And,

"Because I went on my own to the police station and filed the complaint of assault on my own."

The white women who were satisfied with the police response felt this way because they were taken seriously, had a quick and courteous response by the police, or showed independence by making the report to the police on their own behalf and therefore received better treatment. The white respondents, like the Aboriginal respondents, noted that quick response to the scene was an important factor in providing satisfactory intervention.

Question #4 asked: "What can women do to improve the response of police to battered women?" The responses varied indicating the multidimensional nature of police intervention in calls of battery. The following are some of the responses: "If assaulted report it immediately."; "Report the assault the first time it happens."; "Accept the help the police offer and stop the battering the first time." Reporting the abuse immediately, listening to the police officer's advice, and making sure police do their jobs were the most commonly cited.

Comparing the responses of these white women with those of the Aboriginal women, it can be seen that white women have more positive suggestions about the ability of women to affect the responses of police. The white women believe that they can affect the police response whereas the Aboriginal women felt far more alienated from the police system as many indicated there was nothing women could do to improve police response.

Question #5 asked: "What can police do to improve their response to battered women?" Here again responses varied. However, speeding up response time, improving police education on battery and ensuring that battery is treated seriously, were the most commonly noted. Some responses were: "Start answering 911 calls and get to places a lot faster than what they do", "Sensitivity training on issues relevant to battered women of all ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds", and "Time is everything. Police response should be timely and all calls should be taken seriously and considered a possible life threat".

Similar to the Aboriginal respondents, the white respondents noted, primarily, that quick responses by the police to the scene of a battery situation would be a significant improvement.

4.4 Summary and Conclusions

For battered women, perceptions of police treatment and response is critical to understanding why women call or do not call the police. Based on the questionnaire survey information, we can speculate about some of these perceptions. The most notable difference between the Aboriginal and white women who responded to the questionnaire is the rates of assault. More Aboriginal women indicated that they were battered than white women. However, there appeared to be no difference in the rates at which women report the assaults. The survey questionnaire is unable to explain the slight variations between Aboriginal and white women concerning reporting the assaults to the police, perceptions of police response and perceptions of the battery

experience itself. There are other factors that have not been accounted for in the survey which can help explain why Aboriginal and white women have sometimes different and other times similar perceptions of battery and police responses. The next chapter, Interview Data analysis, will help to clarify some of the inconsistencies which have been illuminated by the results of the survey questionnaire.

CHAPTER 5: INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS

This chapter provides a comparison of Aboriginal and white women's experiences and perceptions of battery based on in-depth qualitative interviews. The purpose of this comparison is to provide a deeper understanding of the processes involved when women enter into battering relationships and remain in them. Further, their reasons for involving the police in these situations will also be explored. Providing an ethnographic account of the experiences of battery that these two groups of women experience helps link their history as marginalized women to their perceptions and responses to violence from their male partner. This chapter will also examine women's experiences with police who responded to their reports of battery and their perceptions of the police based mainly on these experiences. The purpose of this comparison is to highlight and help understand the reasons that women have for calling, or not calling, the police in a battery situation.

The decision to interview battered women came after the results from my previous survey research created some interesting and somewhat contradictory results. What became apparent from the survey results was that there was a significant difference in the assault rates for Aboriginal and white women. The questionnaire revealed that inner-city Aboriginal women experience battery significantly more often, and to a greater extent than white women. What is

interesting, however, is that when asked about reporting assaults to the police, there is no significant difference between Aboriginal and white women. Of the 42 white women who reported being assaulted, 45.2 percent reported calling the police. Similarly, of the 59 Aboriginal women who reported being assaulted, 59.3 percent reported the assault to the police. This, however, is not consistent with previous research. LaPrairie (1994) reported that Aboriginal women in her study were less likely than white women to call the police. This discrepancy is one of the reasons to pursue more in-depth research. Other findings in the present research, such as Aboriginal and white women's reasons for calling or not calling the police, were not self explanatory. Therefore, more in-depth interviews with Aboriginal and white women, in addition to the survey, were needed to allow the women themselves to explain the differences.

The following sections will provide a framework for understanding the differences and similarities in experiences of battery for Aboriginal and white women. The first section will examine the role of family background in women's lives and specifically their likelihood to enter into an abusive relationship. The second section will look at the dependency which occurs in an abusive relationship, and its effect on Aboriginal and white women. The third section considers the children of battered women, and the effects they have on women in abusive relationships. The fourth section will explore the role of the police in the lives of battered women and whether or not they have an impact on the decisions that battered women make.

5.1 Introduction

The existence of violence in the home for many Aboriginal women is all too familiar. The violence comes in many forms and affects each woman uniquely. Severe physical, sexual and emotional abuse by the male partner were noted by all of the women I spoke to. This section will examine the effects of family background, violent or not, on future abusive relationships.

5.2 The Effects of Family Background: Aboriginal Women

The most notable similarity between these Aboriginal women was that the use of violence, as a method of dealing with problems, was commonplace in both their relationships with their male partner and other familial relationships. In order to understand how this type of violence becomes acceptable, one has to understand the history of these women. Many of these women come from abusive homes where the use of alcohol and drugs were commonplace which as some literature suggests (LaPrairie, 1994), can increase the severity and frequency of violent behavior. Although not all of the women indicated that they went through child abuse at the hands of one or more of their parents, they all remembered seeing violence in their community, among other relatives or friends. Three of the five Aboriginal women I interviewed did suffer from physical and sexual abuse as children. Seeing violence in the home, as children, has provided the context through which Aboriginal women learn to deal with and accept violence from a male partner. The women I spoke to were aware of the effects of growing up with

violence, as one woman noted: "You know what causes that (abusive partners) it is they have seen it, they've lived it. When they see only violence, they end up learning violence...". These women also provided several examples of other women who were being abused in their community. "I know a lot of women who are getting abused, there is a lot of that on the reserve".

All of the women mentioned friends and/or relatives who had experienced, or were experiencing abuse from their male partners. Rather than providing a sense of support for these women, this led them to believe that violence from their male partners was the norm. Many battered women related stories of abuse which they characterized as normal interaction between intimates. As one woman noted: "A lot of that is the way we were brought up. That we were told that our husband is the boss of the family, and he is the money maker and you are to listen to him. You are to do what he says." Aboriginal women are taught that physical, sexual and emotional abuse is a family problem and is not to be taken outside the family (i.e., reported to social service agencies or the police).

All of the Aboriginal women I spoke to grew up in either rural areas or on reserves, which also provides the context through which to understand their experiences and perceptions of battery. The isolation and extreme poverty endured by many families living in these areas, is a significant factor which affects the levels of abuse from which Aboriginal women suffer. All of the women indicated that their parents were often unemployed and if employed, worked at relatively low paying jobs. These women attribute many of the crises in their

childhood lives to the extreme poverty and the added pressures that this marginalization caused. "We never had nothing, it was always scrimping and saving, and when we were short there was no food. Yes, my family always had to go without, and it was hard especially for my father, so he would drink." As this women noted, the poverty and isolation would often lead to drinking which as research (LaPrairie, 1994) has shown often precipitates violent behavior.

Due to various pressures, such as isolation, poverty and alcohol abuse, the Aboriginal women in this study lived with violence and abuse in their daily lives. The violent childhood abuses which all of the women either were involved in or saw, were attributed to this marginalization.

5.2.1 The Effects of Family Background: White women

All of the white women I spoke to revealed that they had suffered from some form of abuse. Four of the white women were verbally abused by their fathers often referring to them as "tyrants". The fifth woman was physically and sexually abused by her father. The women felt that the outcome of this violence, both physical and verbal, was low self-esteem. Another common sentiment from the white women was that their fathers were the controllers in the family especially in the area of finances. These women had similar perceptions of the male in the household, in that he often represented strength and authority, with the women in the family being subordinate. The white women considered the domination by

their fathers as a significant factor in their remaining in abusive relationships as adults.

All of the white women indicated that their mothers were also abused by their fathers. Seeing the abuse that their mothers endured, greatly affected their future relationships. All of the white women indicated that they had great respect for their mothers, for being able to tolerate the abuse which they endured. The victimized mother became the role model for all of the women. "He worked and supported us. That was his big claim to fame. He was a hero for that and my mother was victimized. That was what we three girls grew up with. That was our role model, our victim mother." The effect that the abuse of their mothers had on these women, was deemed very significant by all of the women I spoke to. They all perceived this victimization as a strength on the part of their mothers which then became a way of life for them. A strong woman was considered to be someone who could withstand extreme levels of abuse, and each of these women became what their mothers were.

Three of the five women suggested that they entered into abusive relationships just to get away from the abuse that took place at home. One woman notes, "I went from the frying pan into the fire, in that I was trying to escape from something only to get into something worse. If you live a certain way of life, you don't know anything different. But as you rub shoulders with other people, you figure out that there is something else out there." These women believe that they entered into relationships which not only freed them from the abuse of their

fathers, but also resembled the family life that they were familiar with. In these cases, their family background dictated their future relationships.

The effect of an abusive father on these white women is a very important determinant in future abusive relationships. The women felt that had they come from healthier families, without abusive fathers and victimized mothers, they would have been less likely to enter into abusive relationships themselves.

5.3 Subjective and Objective Dependence: Aboriginal Women

For many Aboriginal women, the violent abuse from a male partner begins immediately, and for the most part is associated with either drug or alcohol consumption, although not isolated to this as noted earlier. All of the Aboriginal women had difficulty defining their experiences of battery as battery. A common problem was that the women could remember only the very serious occasions. When asking one woman if she had ever been battered, after I defined battering as any form of physical violence from slaps to punches to kicks, she responded: "Battered, not often. Only when he was drinking... Slaps and couple of punches, wasn't where I had to go to the hospital or anything, just a couple of fat lips." All of the Aboriginal women considered shoving and slaps as behavior other than battery, something acceptable. These women would often minimize their male partners abuse. Only the extremely violent incidents, those that resulted in serious physical injury, were easily remembered and defined as battery. One woman notes: "When you live through that (severe beatings), it discounts how much suffering is

a black eye. Not a lot. When you live through extreme levels of violence in your daily life you learn to be more tolerant." Many Aboriginal woman have seen violence in the home and although they would prefer not to live with violence, they see no other option.

Dependency is also a key factor in understanding how women get involved in abusive relationships and more specifically, why they remain in them. For inner-city Aboriginal women, subjective (psychological) and objective (financial) dependency helps explain why these women often stay in violent relationships.

Subjective dependency refers to the emotional ties that women have to the relationship. For Aboriginal women these ties are very strong as the family structure is the heart of the community. Aboriginal women have been taught to uphold the tradition of family sometimes at the expense of their own safety. Further, the dependency is often maintained through years of systematic verbal and psychological abuse, by the male partner, which convinces the women that they deserve the abuse and, in fact, are causing it.

For Aboriginal women, an important aspect of the psychological dependency is the relationship with a man. As one woman indicates, "They don't want to lose the relationship, they don't want to lose the man. They just want the beatings to stop." Trying to explain why Aboriginal women remain in the relationship, one woman suggests, "when the crisis is over and he's bringing you flowers and he's just all kissing up, all pathetic, you buy into it. Because it is a repeated pattern. Conditioned response. And it takes something really

catastrophic to get you out of it". For other women, there still may be some redeeming qualities about the abuser which she does not want to leave. One Aboriginal woman, who has decided to remain in the home with her abusive husband, notes, "Now in the last six or seven months he hasn't drank, he hasn't bothered me." That her husband has remained sober and non-violent for six months, is sufficient improvement that she will remain in the home.

Another important aspect of psychological dependence is extreme fear of the abuser. It is not only fear for themselves, but fear that if they are killed their children will have no one to protect them.

> I guess it's the fear, because the man will threaten you and say I will find you and if I find you anywhere I'll kill you. And the woman thinks I might as well stay because if he finds me he might kill me. When you hear them threaten you it just seems to absorb and you think you don't know if he is talking or really means it. It is so scary. You're just like a little animal in fear and just crouch in a corner. That's how I describe the fear you go through with violence.

Although this is not only a consideration for Aboriginal women, it was a salient feature in the lives of all the Aboriginal women I spoke with. The fear prevents women from leaving the abusive relationship, while at the same time further undermines their own self-worth.

Objective dependency refers to the economic dependency which many women have on men. For Aboriginal women, the lack of employment, lack of education, and lack of job skills or training, make leaving an abusive man very difficult. Often, because they are reliant on welfare, Aboriginal women are unable to leave the abusive partner due primarily to financial concerns. For Aboriginal

women, it is not a choice between misery and poverty because poverty is often a given. The only variable that changes is the degree of poverty. For Aboriginal women, it is often easier to have an abusive partner who can provide some degree of financial security, than it is to leave the abuse only to become further impoverished. This is an even greater issue when the woman has many children, which will be addressed further in the section 5.4.

5.3.1 Subjective and Objective Dependence: White Women

Subjective or psychological dependence is also an important factor in understanding white women in abusive relationships. Part of this dependence involves the social control that men have over women. All of the white women indicated that they experienced being controlled by threats, verbal and otherwise. The women indicated that they were made to feel responsible for their own victimization. One woman recounts, "At one point he had me thoroughly convinced that everything was my fault. If I was a better cook, or worked harder or be more perfect he wouldn't do that (beat me)." Subjective dependency involves women being made to feel responsible for their own victimization which all of the white women in this study revealed feeling.

Another aspect of the dependence that all of the white women in this study experienced is false promises. The women, already believing that the abuse is their own fault, are promised by their male partners that they too will work at improving the relationship. As one woman indicated, the men will do just enough to keep the

women in the relationship. "He got extremely violent after my son was born. So I called one of his friends who was in AA to help, and he joined AA and I thought that was good. But he did just enough to keep me there. He quit shortly after." Another example of false promises is given by this woman: "He always held out the promise of moving back to Saskatoon where my parents are. So finally in 1987 when he made this promise again, I simply gave notice and arranged a moving van. Well I really paid for that one. I guess we weren't really supposed to move here." The women in abusive relationships are controlled by the male partners, not only through violence, but also through psychological manipulation.

Another aspect of subjective dependency is isolation. All of the white women experienced isolation from their families and friends which was forced by their male partners. This is a very important factor which helps explain why many women remain in an abusive relationship. As one woman notes, "I was so isolated, or we didn't even have a phone. I was cut off from all of my family, they didn't even know about the abuse." The isolation from families and friends puts more pressure on the women to become reliant on the male partner for all of their emotional needs. All of the white women indicated that their only form of support was their children, and the abusive partner when he was non-violent.

The objective dependency which involves being financially dependent on men is also a factor for white women. All of the women I spoke to felt that there was a conscious effort on the part of the male batterer to isolate the women, and take all financial control away from them. As one woman suggests:

> When our house was ready to sell, he promised me half of the profit. And I thought I am going to take it and leave. But he must have realized what was in my mind and of course keeping me broke kept me there. Anyway, he kept me basically awake for three days and ordered me to sign a paper, witnessed by a notary public, to sign over all of the profits to him...And I realized that he was not going to let me go very easily.

These women indicated that they had little control over the money, even that which was their own wages when working outside the home. They also indicated that the lack of money and the inability to save money forced them to remain in the abusive relationship.

All of the white women in the study believed that, had they more control over the finances in their relationships, they would have had an easier time of leaving the relationship. They also perceived the control over the money by their partner's as a conscious decision on his part, to keep them in the home and dependent on their partner.

5.4 The effects of Children: Aboriginal Women

Children are a key factor in Aboriginal women's lives and therefore in their responses to male violence. All of the Aboriginal women I spoke to had several children. Although this may not be the case for all Aboriginal women, it had a poignant effect on the decisions which these five women made. Three of the five women had three children, and two of them had five children. Because the home is considered such an important place for children, many Aboriginal women will choose to remain in the home with the abuse, rather than leave the home and

sacrifice what they perceive is the stability of the children. One woman stated, "take the man out of the house, not the family because that is their place. This is why women keep going back to the same thing and dealing with violence." This woman was forced from her home with three of her five children after her partner threatened to kill her. She had to leave the two youngest children because they were sleeping and she was too afraid of her husband to get them out safely. After recounting this story she noted, "and you wonder why there are so many of our children violent today, because they lived like that. Taking the woman out of the home is not the answer. The women and the children need to stay at home and feel safe." For these Aboriginal women, it appeared that to leave the abusive relationship would sacrifice the children's welfare. These women rationalized this primarily based on economic need. Although they were well aware of the ill effects of the violence their children witnessed, they still decided to stay to keep the children together.

Staying in the home and enduring the continued violent abuse is not only done out of concern for the stability of the children, but also because having many children makes it more difficult for a woman to leave and then provide for all those children. As one woman indicates the leaving process becomes more difficult with more children, "I'd hop on a train, it was easier for me when I just had the one child. Then when you have three or four it's not...My doctor told me to go on welfare but I knew better than that. I wouldn't have been able to survive and no matter where I would have been, he would have found me... Yes, its very hard,

and some have six children." The importance of children in the lives of Aboriginal women must be addressed to clearly understand how and why they tolerate abusive relationships.

Still, many Aboriginal women stay in the abusive relationship but at the same time attempt to effect change. One of the methods of trying to change abuse by a male partner is to threaten to call the police. Although this rarely does nothing more than cause the violence to escalate, women will repeatedly make this threat. After severe beatings, however, women will generally stop making the threat. The next reaction is to actually involve the police.

5.4.1 The effects of children: White Women

For the white women in this study, children had a very different effect, as compared to Aboriginal women, on their decisions to remain or leave the abusive relationship. Here, what was first noticeable was that protecting their children was the primary reason for leaving the relationship. This, however, was only the case if the batterer had not already threatened to take the children if the woman left him. Two of the five women remained in the abusive relationship only because they were afraid that the abuser would take the children away. When asked why women stay in these relationships, one woman answered, "I didn't have access to the support, and then there was the threat of him taking the child, he threatened to snatch right from the beginning. 'If you ever divorce me, I'll take the child.' Well

OK, that's reason enough to stay, that fear." The threat of losing their children to the abuser was given as a primary reason for staying in the relationship.

For the other three women, and eventually the two that remained in the beginning, leaving the abusive partner was done to protect the children. "I think the clincher was telling me that if I stayed my son would be a thousand times more likely to become abusive like his father, and I thought no way." These women also indicated that because of their own history with abusive fathers and the effect it had on them, they were more willing to leave the abusive relationship to protect their children from the abuse.

What is very different about the white women as compared to the Aboriginal women, is the number of children they had. The average number of children for the five white women was two, as opposed to four children for the Aboriginal women. The white women all commented on the relative ease that having fewer children meant when leaving the relationship. These women did not, however, harbor the same fear as Aboriginal women, about losing their children to child welfare services. The primary fear for white women, again, was that the abusive partner would snatch the children.

5.5 Involving the Police: Aboriginal Women's Experiences and Perceptions of Police

Among Aboriginal women, the decision to involve the police in a violent incident is based on many factors. The stated reasons for calling the police far outweigh the reasons for not calling them.

Losing the control that remains in their lives is an important issue for Aboriginal women. The option to call the police or any other outside agency often means giving up the little control they have left. "When I called them they did not ask me what I wanted, they just came and took him away. I had no control over what they did to my husband and my kids and me." These women perceived the police as unwilling to listen to their needs because they never asked for the women's input. A major factor in Aboriginal women's decision to not call the police for assistance is a deep-seated mistrust of the entire criminal justice system. This mistrust, however, is not necessarily dependent on the way they, themselves, have been treated by the police. It is often based on the experiences of other Aboriginal people they know in their families and communities. When I asked the women to give examples of the ways in which the police had mistreated them, they provided examples of other family members and/or Aboriginal friends who had been severely mistreated by the police.

> Indian kid is driving down the street in a red Camaro, gets four blocks from home, cops pull him over, stop him, run him through, search him, whole nine yards. A little white boy drives down the same street, at the same time, same car and just sails on by. My son when he used to drive my husbands car, where did you get it, where did you steal the

> car from? It's my moms. Sure it is. Never bothered to run the plates through before they stopped him.

This is another woman's story:

> My son got into trouble but he wasn't the one that was there. He was taking the blame. And they found out he was Native, like he don't look Indian...The officer who was in charge of the case wouldn't even listen to him...And he listened to the other (white) kid's side of the story but he would not listen to my son. And when I went to speak to him at the station, he was right at the front desk, it was like he was talking down to me. When he was talking to me it was like all Indians are the same.

These are examples of the types of incidents that help form the Aboriginal women's opinion of the police and which affect their judgment when deciding to call or not to call the police in a time of crisis.

The women in this study indicated that their opinions of police stemmed from mistrust of not only the police, but the entire criminal justice system. One woman stated "It's the system itself we don't trust, it's not the person they don't trust. If the officers weren't wearing uniforms and just came in as a person, like you or me, they probably would talk. But it's the uniform. The uniform stands for the government, and they've always given us the run around and they're going to keep giving us the run around... I don't know what the source is but we don't trust them and they don't trust us." All of the Aboriginal women mentioned that although they did not trust the police, they were forced to call them due to the severity of the situation.

The most common reason Aboriginal women gave for calling the police was to stop the immediate crisis. The women fear for their lives and perceived the

only method of preventing death was to have the police come to the home. "Only during crisis, it's the only time you call. You don't call them two weeks before when you can feel it coming, and say well I just know he's going to blow. There is no law against feeling tense." Only those occasions that the women perceived to be extremely violent were reported to the police. "I would only call them if I was severely injured in the past, like when I had to go to the hospital." Even in these incidents, however, the police call was seen as a last resort as Aboriginal women believe that the police will do little to help. One woman indicated the police did not provide her or her children with adequate treatment: "I called the police and the police asked if I had any friends who I could go to. Instead of doing something with the husband. And then I had to do the running around, I had to go to the doctor, I had to take him to court." For these Aboriginal women, calling the police did not provide them with a sense of security or justice, and they were once again forced to deal with the problem on their own.

Another reason for not calling the police is women's perceptions of police racism. "It's like we are the lower class and that's the life we live." All of the Aboriginal women in this study, gave examples of police injustices which they witnessed. They understand it as racism and do not wish to be subject to similar treatment themselves. "There are a lot of Marc Fuhrman's everywhere except we don't have a lot of black people, we have a lot of Indians. We just get it. It's racism." The perceived racism that the police harbor is an important factor in Aboriginal women's decision to not call the police.

The fear of losing their children is very real to Aboriginal women. Many Aboriginal women have called the police for assistance, the police have come in, and shortly thereafter their children have been taken from them. "A lot of them are afraid to lose their families because you never know what side they're on." Not only is the fear of losing their children very real, but also the fear that their children will be abused by the authorities and/or raised in homes that are not of Aboriginal ancestry. One woman, after sustaining 13 years of severe physical, sexual and emotional abuse, attempted to kill her partner by stabbing him. She was unsuccessful and was consequently tried and convicted of attempted murder. Through this entire process she lost all four of her children. They were taken away and placed for adoption without her consent. This woman had called the police on numerous occasions and never received an adequate response from the police. This is a good example of the drastic measures some women feel compelled to take after years of inadequate police response. The fact that some Aboriginal women lose their children when they call the police for assistance is a strong motivator for other Aboriginal women not to call the police for assistance.

The response of police to Aboriginal women can be characterized by slow response, impatience while at the scene, suspicion of the woman's motives for calling, and ineffective means of communicating with the victim. The women in this study indicated that they were rarely asked what they would like to have done to the offender, nor were they given any options. All of the women indicated that the police suggested that they may have deserved the abuse. In some cases, the

women rather than the men are arrested after calling the police. One woman recounts:

> When the guy I was dating, he was a cop, called in the response, he had a swat team out there, with guns and dogs. But when I just called in, I'm just this stranger calling to enforce this guy's condition of release, I get this guy (police officer) and he says no I'm charging you with mischief. He's your husband and he has every right to be here...But does this mean that every time a woman wants protection from the police she has to sleep with them? That's kind of extreme.

The police response varies from time to time, depending on who calls them and all of the Aboriginal women in this study felt that they could not rely on the police to respond quickly or adequately.

For four of the Aboriginal women in this study, the police response has always been very slow. This is of the utmost importance as most women call during a time of crisis, if the police arrive half an hour later, the crisis is over and the damage has been done. This is a particularly difficult situation for Aboriginal women, as by the time the police have arrived, they have successfully managed to avoid death and are often too shaken to even determine what the best course of action should be. Another woman indicated, "I used to find it so scary, especially if you laid charges. You had to see a doctor...Half the time when you call the police they won't transfer you. You just have to find your own way out." Again, the fear of the justice system plays an important role in whether or not these Aboriginal women call the police.

In an attempt to illustrate how aboriginal women receive different treatment, one woman explained: "You see they deal with us on different levels. If they just arrested you the week before for a drug charge or prostitution or shoplifting, they are not going to be real sympathetic to helping you out when you have a fight with your old man". All of the Aboriginal women I spoke to perceived the police as having a bias towards them as Aboriginal people, and they felt the bias was based on their minority status.

There were a few occasions when the police responded fairly quickly and positively, however, even these were not positive experiences. One woman noted this when the police arrived on the scene of a violent incident very quickly:

> The police showed up, someone called them, I don't know who. They came and took him to jail and they charged him...Because it was very obvious that he assaulted me, they were charging him with assault causing bodily harm. I was pregnant at the time. If I wasn't pregnant I don't think they would have charged him, they would have waited for me to charge him.

Although the police did arrive quickly and decided to press charges, she still felt that had she not been pregnant, no charges would have been laid. The offender on this occasion only received three months in jail. The woman felt the lenient sentence was not adequate but she was unable to fight the decision because she did not have the resources. She was pregnant at the time and had three other children to care for.

5.5.1 Involving the Police: White Women's' Experiences and Perceptions of Police Intervention

For the white women in this study, the experiences with the police were far more positive than illustrated by the Aboriginal women. A notable difference for the white women, was that they perceived no racial bias, as most of the police officers were white. Several of the white women, however, did comment on the negative treatment of Aboriginal women that they witnessed. A woman notes, "The police officers have this stereotype about Indian people about being drunk and high and most abuse happens when they are drunk and high...because they see the woman is drunk too and I think that the officers say you deserved it...and that gives the police officers that bias." This woman felt that Aboriginal women were associated with alcoholism and drug abuse, whereas white women were not. She believes that she received better treatment based solely on this perceived police bias.

Another common perception of all of the white women in this study was that they felt confident, when calling the police the first time, that the police would come and help the women. This perception, however, was dashed as each woman noted that after their first call to the police, they realized very little would be done for them. One woman indicates:

> So I went to the police station and I talked to this real jerk. Because I said I want to charge someone with assault and he goes well when did it happen? And I say three weeks ago and he goes well I don't think we can do anything about it...I'll take your statement anyway and we'll get a detective to look at it. So while he was taking my statement I was telling the story about how we got into this huge fight and he

> was calling me a bitch and a slut and how useless I was and whatever, and I said fine you're never going to see your baby again. And that's when he started strangling me. And the cop said to me 'You made him mad and you deserved it. He got mad at you and you deserved it' And I was like I don't think I deserved being strangled...

This woman was horrified by the police response. Before this incident she had trusted that police would give her total support, and was therefore very dismayed after realizing, not only the lack of assistance from the police, but also that she was blamed for the incident. This woman made several attempts to get the police involved in battery situations and was, on each occasion, given little assistance.

Another commonality among all of the white women in my study, was that they based their perceptions of police on incidents which they were involved in. They provided examples of the police verbally abusing them, as well as police failing to take them seriously. A woman notes: "They kind of put me in a category, they were really nice at first and then they became jaded and I was crying. It was like they had seen it a million times before...They treated me like they knew exactly what I was going to do...They didn't treat me like an individual." The white women's perceptions of police were totally based on their own experiences. They were all similarly discouraged at what they perceived to be maltreatment.

The decision to involve the police, for the white women in this study, was based on several factors. The most common reason given by

these women was fear of physical harm to themselves and/or their children. All but one of the white women indicated that they had called the police before the abuse became extremely violent. These four women believed that calling the police before things became really violent would discourage the abuser from further violence. This, however, was not what actually took place. Because after calling the police, and having nothing done by the them (i.e., no arrest, no charge), they were again left with the abuser, and the violence did in fact escalate.

The most common reason for not calling the police, given by the white women in this study, was extreme fear of the abuser. These women all indicated that their abusive male partners had on several occasions threatened them with death if they called the police. When asked why she did not call the police, one woman said, "It was the fear of him. He always made it very clear that if he spent so much as a night in jail because of me, he would come out hating me. And I figured if he treats me this way and he says he loves me, God help me if he comes out hating me." All of the woman indicated that fear of the abuser was the primary reason for not calling the police.

Another common reason given by the white women in this study for not calling the police was extreme isolation. Four of the five women indicated at points during their relationships they were either without a phone or if they had a phone their calls were monitored by the abusive man.

The women felt that calling the police would have jeopardized their safety and the safety of their children.

5.6 Summary and Conclusions

Understanding Aboriginal women's responses to assaults and battery requires tracing the roots of violence in their lives. All of these women had lived with violence for many years as children, and violent behavior in adult life had become somewhat acceptable. For many Aboriginal women, then, chronic exposure to violence leads to the acceptance of the behavior as a normal part of life. In many inner-city communities, the stresses of life, including isolation and exclusion from mainstream culture, provides the context for the origin of a subculture of violence for Aboriginal people.

Extreme marginalization is an important factor in women's decisions to remain in an abusive relationship. For Aboriginal women, one of the greatest fears of disclosing violence in the home is that their children may be taken away from them by provincial or white authorities. This fear is based largely on the historical relationship between child welfare agencies and the Aboriginal community and these women are aware of the potential negative outcome of calling these agencies. Many Aboriginal women will stay in abusive relationships to keep their children and the perceived threat of losing their children keeps them silent.

The extreme levels of violence to which Aboriginal women are exposed creates a distinct disadvantage for them. Not only do they have fewer resources

than white woman, but the most available one, the police, tend to do little for these women. The perceived biases of the police, and their actual maltreatment of Aboriginal women, reinforces these Aboriginal women's perception that there is no source of help for them.

For white women, the case is somewhat different. Although their childhood experiences of abuse did affect them, it was to a much lesser extent than for the Aboriginal women. All of the white women recognized the physical abuse as abuse and were much more willing to leave the abusive relationship because of it.

The white women, like the Aboriginal women, did tend to blame themselves for the abuse. They were equally susceptible to the victimization due to the belief that they could make the relationship better. The white women were also very subjectively and objectively dependent on the male partner due in part to their low-self-esteem, and also because of the male's forced control over all financial decisions. The white women indicated that their partners were able to isolate them and create conditions in which they were completely dominated and dependent on the abusive men.

Another difference for the white women in this study was the effects that having children had on their experiences and perceptions. Typically, the white women felt protecting their children from further abuse was the most important reason for leaving the relationship. On the other hand, however, these women also indicated that when the abusive man threatened to snatch their children, they were

forced to stay. Here again, the fear of the abusive man's behavior and actions is the most important factor in their remaining or leaving the relationship.

What was substantially different for the white women was their perception of the police. They did not fear and mistrust the police like Aboriginal women did. The primary reason given for not calling the police was threats by the abusive man. The women felt that the police would be able and willing to assist them, and only after several incidents with the police did they perceive the police as unwilling. The white women, however, did indicate that even with the many negative experiences with the police, they would continue to call them for assistance.

This chapter examined the differences and similarities of perceptions between Aboriginal and white women concerning abusive relationships. Importantly, interpretation of the ten interviews with the women revealed that there are significant differences between these two groups of inner-city women, primarily in the areas of family background; effects of children; dependency; and police relations.

CHAPTER 6: IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Having examined both the qualitative and quantitative data, this chapter will first restate the objectives and intentions of this study, and secondly summarize and relate the findings to the theoretical perspectives. When originally proposed, this thesis sought to examine the perceptions and experiences that Aboriginal and white women hold regarding battery and police response to it. The research question asked: What are Aboriginal and white women's perceptions of battery and police response to it? Do they differ, and if so, why?

Based on the quantitative and qualitative research findings, there is evidence that Aboriginal and white women, although having some similarities in perceptions of both battery and police response to it, have qualitatively different experiences with battery and police response. The survey material revealed that the most significant differences between Aboriginal and white women were their reasons for not calling the police. Primarily, Aboriginal women do not call the police because they believe the police can do nothing to help them, they do not want to get the man in trouble, they believe the assaults are not important enough to bother police with, and they consider the assaults as a personal matter. These last two reasons are indicators of a unique difference between Aboriginal and white women. This difference was further elucidated by the interview material.

The interviews with the Aboriginal and white women were able to clarify some of the findings not thoroughly explained in the survey data. What became apparent was that Aboriginal women conceptualize violence from their male partner very differently than do white women. The most important difference is that Aboriginal have become very accepting of certain levels of violence. This acceptance, I found, was based on their histories as Aboriginal people in Canadian society. The regular use of violence in their communities has created a perception that violence is a normal part of every day life. For white women, violence from the male partner is more likely to be considered as wrongdoing, and these women therefore are more likely to call the police and try to leave the situation. This helps explain the lack of difference in report rates between Aboriginal and white women. Because Aboriginal women withstand a great deal of abuse, but often do not define it as battery, they are less likely to call the police. However, as the in-person interview data suggests, Aboriginal women withstand more violence than white women, giving them more opportunities to involve the police.

Based on the survey data, Aboriginal women also indicated that they experienced more extreme violence. The interview data reinforced this finding. What this suggests is that violence among the Aboriginal community has become both more common and more acceptable by these women. The reality, however, is that these women do not utilize the police force as often as white women do. Based on the interview data, Aboriginal women indicated far more abuse but did not consider it as such, therefore they were not calling the police for these

situations. This is different from white women who were more likely to call police about each violent situation. This lack of use is also dependent on the past and present treatment of these women in Canadian society. For many Aboriginal women, police racism and maltreatment has placed them in a position which inhibits their assistance from the police. The fear of the criminal justice system as a whole, has created a barrier between Aboriginal women and their ability to access the police for help.

The theoretical orientation of my thesis arose from an effort to integrate a gender analysis of patriarchy with an understanding of subcultural differences between Aboriginal and white women. As stated at the outset of this thesis, an understanding of women's perceptions of violence from the male partner requires an understanding of the different experiences which Aboriginal and white women go through. Understanding Aboriginal women's responses to assaults, requires tracing the roots of violence in their lives. For many Aboriginal women, violence has become an acceptable part of life. By utilizing the subculture of violence theory, we can better understand the specific perceptions of battery and needs of Aboriginal women in the inner city.

The subculture of violence theory is very useful in understanding these qualitative differences in perceptions. This theory accentuates the histories of people in explaining a level of violence which is tolerated. Aboriginal women deal with and accept much greater levels of violence. Their perception of battery is significantly different than that of white women. White women isolate physical

episodes and pinpoint them as abuse, whereas Aboriginal women are far more likely to consider similar incidents as mere family troubles.

Subjective and objective dependency on the male partner is also key to understanding why women remain in relationships. For Aboriginal women, the family structure is very important, and is at the heart of the community. For these women, then, upholding the tradition of family comes often at the expense of their own safety. Leaving an abusive relationship would mean leaving a very important support group. Often, for the sake of their children, they remain in the abusive relationship considering family cohesion more important than the destruction of constant abuse.

For white women, the dependency is significantly different. These women are more likely to be economically dependent on the male partner which keeps them in an abusive relationship. White women are less likely to be pressured by other family members, and more likely to find support systems outside of the community and close family. These differences between Aboriginal and white women are key to understanding why they remain in abusive relationships, and need to be addressed further in order to provide these women with the necessary resources to escape violence.

This thesis has argued that Aboriginal women have significantly different experiences of violence and perceptions of violence than do white women. These differences affect the responses that both Aboriginal and white women have to battery. That Aboriginal women have an outstanding mistrust of the criminal

justice system provides the basis for their responses. The family ties that exist among the Aboriginal communities serve to keep many of these women in very abusive relationships for extended periods of time. White women, although receiving relatively similar treatment from the police, have far more positive perceptions and are therefore more willing to call them. The fact that there is not a significant difference in calls to the police by Aboriginal and white women has little to do with perception, and a great deal to do with incidents and levels of violence. The interviews suggested that Aboriginal suffer from much higher levels of violence and generally at a much more frequent rate than did the survey data. This discrepancy can be explained by understanding Aboriginal women's perceptions of violence. Many of these women consider slaps, punches and shoves as part of everyday life and therefor they tended to under-report the abuse in the surveys. After completing the in-person interviews, it became apparent that much of the abuse that Aboriginal women endure is never reported to the police, and often not even considered abuse.

Theoretically, these differences can be understood from a subculture of violence approach. The existence of violence in Aboriginal families seems to be very prevalent and also widely accepted. This acceptance is based primarily on the fact that a subculture of violence exists among these communities which promotes both the use and acceptance of further violence. The history of state intervention in Aboriginal affairs is replete with examples of violence, subordination, and

racism. This history has created the environment which today perpetuates and maintains violence in Aboriginal families.

The similarities between these two groups of women can be understood by examining the existing patriarchal social relations. This feminist analysis suggests that as a result of the unequal status of women in society and the gendered division of labor and power, male violence towards women has become tolerable. The controlling ability of violent behavior situates women in a subordinate and disadvantaged position which can only continue because of the unequal status, authority, and power of men and women within the family and wider society. The extreme fear of violence which both Aboriginal and white women feel functions to keep these women in the abusive relationships. Violence and the fear of that violence represents a significant social control over women, both informally - through the controlled behavior of women, and formally - through the lack of response by the criminal justice system and the police.

By researching the experiences and perceptions of inner city Aboriginal and white women's abuse from the male partner, we can more adequately understand the connections between marginalization, ethnicity, and poverty. The perceptions of these women provide useful insight into understanding why they remain in abusive relationships, and also, what their needs from the criminal justice system are. Greater attention must be paid to the differences between Aboriginal and white women in their experiences with abuse and the police in order to effectively address the disparate perceptions of these women.

Future research should try to delineate the different needs of Aboriginal and white women. Special attention must be paid to the cultural differences of these two groups of women. Aboriginal women need to receive positive and compassionate police treatment, so that they may utilize this service more often. Under-policing of battery and violence towards women must be addressed. Mandatory charges and follow-up procedures need to be set in place and maintained while specialized training for all police officers in the area of battery and violence needs to occur. Relations between police and Aboriginal people need to be addressed in the context of wider social relations as the struggle that Aboriginal women face when dealing with battery and police involvement are reflective of the difficulties that Aboriginal people face in general within Canadian society.

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APPENDIX I

Inner City Women's Perceptions and Experiences with Battery Survey

Your age:____
What do you consider your racial or ethnic background:_____
If you are Aboriginal, are you:Status__non-status__Metis__
Where were you raised?

Saskatoon__ Rural Saskatchewan__
On Reserve__ Other area of Canada__
Another country__ Please specify_____

Education completed: Grade 9 or less__ Grade 10__ Grade 11__
Grade 12__
Some college/university training or technical training__
Certificate from technical institute___
Degree from university__ level of degree__

Marital status: Single/Never Married__ Married(including common-law)__
Separated or Divorced__ Widowed__

Children: No__Yes__ If yes, number of children:
Younger than 13__13-19 years old__20 or older__

Current employment: Full-time__ Part-time__
Unemployed__ Employed in the home__
Self-employed__ Other_____

What kind of job does your male partner boyfriend, spouse) do?_____

Estimated family income after tax (per year):

Less that $5000__ $25,000 to $29,999__
$5,000 to $9,999__ $30,000 to $39,999__
$10,000 to $14,999__ $40,000 to $49,999__
$15,000 to $19,999__ $50,000 to $59,999__
$20,000 to $24,999__ $60,000 to $69,999__
$70,000 and above___

Estimated personal income after tax (per year):

Less that $5000__ $25,000 to $29,999__
$5,000 to $9,999__ $30,000 to $39,999__
$10,000 to $14,999__ $40,000 to $49,999__
$15,000 to $19,999__ $50,000 to $59,999__
$20,000 to $24,999__ $60,000 to $69,999__
$70,000 and above___

How many years have you lived in Saskatoon?____
How many years have you lived in this area of Saskatoon?____

Survey Statements
The response options to the following questions were: Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree.

1. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group are less likely to report battery to the police than other crimes they experience such as theft or assault by a stranger.

2. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report physical/sexual assault because they do not want to get the man in trouble with the law.

3. Women of your racial or ethnic group who are battered by husbands or boyfriends receive less respect from police than women of your racial or ethnic group who are assaulted by a stranger.

4. Police are less likely to press charges against men who commit physical assault than men who commit sexual assault against their female partners.

5. Women of your racial or ethnic group are less likely to report sexual assault than physical assault by their partners to police.

6. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group report these assaults to the police so they can receive police protection for themselves.

7. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group report these assaults to the police so they can receive police protection for their children.

8. Battered women of your racial of ethnic group report assaults to the police so the police will prosecute the offender.

9. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to the police because they believe the police can do nothing to stop further assaults.

10. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to the police for fear that the batterer will try to get revenge on them.

11. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to police because they believe the assaults are not important enough to bother police with.

12. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to police because they believe they are personal matters and not the business of the police or courts.

13. Female police officers are/would be better dealing with battered women of your racial or ethnic group than male officers.

14. Police officers of your racial or ethnic background are/would be better able to deal with battered women of your racial or ethnic background.

15. Police need more training in the area of battering and family violence intervention.

16. Police officers are doing a good job of supplying information on crime, crime prevention, and victim services to people of your racial or ethnic group in your area of the city.

17. Police officers are doing a good job of protecting the legal rights of battered women of your racial or ethnic group.

18. Most women of your racial or ethnic group do not report assaults to the police because they have been treated badly in the past when they have reported assaults.

19. Police do not want to get involved in in-home disputes because they can be dangerous for police.

20. Women of your racial or ethnic group who have made repeated complaints of sexual or physical assault by their male partner are not taken seriously by the police.

21. Women with more money receive better treatment from the police if they report battering than do women with less money who also report battering.

22. women of your racial or ethnic group rarely press charges against men who batter them because they feel the courts will just let the man off.

23. The solution to battering of women of your racial or ethnic group is longer jail sentences for the men who batter them.

24. Women of your racial or ethnic group rarely press charges against men who batter them because they fear having to go to court to testify.

25. Battered women of your racial or ethnic group press charges more often when the police encourage them to do so.

Section II

1. Have you ever been assaulted, either sexually or physically, by a male partner?
No__Yes__

If yes, how frequently did these assaults occur?
Not very often__
Fairly often__
Very often__

2. Did you report the assault/s to the police?
Not applicable__No__Yes__

If yes, how frequently did you make such reports to the police?
Not very often__
Frequently__
Almost always__

3. If you have reported an assault to the police, how satisfied were you with their response?
Not satisfied__
Fairly satisfied__
Very satisfied__
Please explain why you felt as you did.

4. What can women do to improve the response of police to battered women?

5. What can police do to improve their response to battered women?

Appendix II

Part I Responses to Survey Questionnaire Statements

Agree = A, Undecided = U, Disagree = D

Statement 1

White women A 75.9% (N=66) U 12.6% (N=11) D 11.5% (N=10)
Aboriginal women A 82.9% (N=68) U 8.5% (N=7) D 8.5% (N=7)
Chi-square: 1.30136 Probability: .52168 Phi: .08775

Statement 2

White women A 44.3% (N=39) U 14.8% (N=13) D 40.9% (N=36)
Aboriginal women A 81.7% (N=67) U 6.1% (N=5) D 12.2% (N=10)
Chi-square: 24.46739 Probability: .00000 Phi: .35705

Statement 3

White women A 45.5% (N=40) U 28.4% (N=25) D 26.1% (N=23)
Aboriginal women A 54.4% (N=43) U 27.8% (N=22) D17.7% (N=14)
Chi-square: 2.00992 Probability: .36606 Phi: .10971

Statement 4

White women A 30.7% (N=27) U 35.2% (N=31) D 34.1% (N=30)
Aboriginal women A 55% (N=44) U 21.3% (N=17) D 23.8% (N=19)
Chi-square: 10.26547 Probability: .00590 Phi: .24719

Statement 5

White women A 62.4% (N=53) U 18.8% (N=16) D 18.8% (N=16)
Aboriginal women A 72.5% (N=58) U 13.8% (N=11) D 13.8% (N=11)
Chi-square: 1.92133 Probability: .38149 Phi: .10808

Statement 6

White women A 82.8% (N=72) U 10.3% (N=9) D 6.9% (N=6)
Aboriginal women A 58.8% (N=47) U 16.3% (N=13) D 25% (N=20)
Chi-square: 13.24770 Probability: .00133 Phi: .28165

Statement 7

White women A 93.1% (N=81) U 4.6% (N=4) D 2.3% (N=2)
Aboriginal women A 81.3% (N=65) U 8.8% (N=7) D 10% (N=8)
Chi-square: 5.88854 Probability: .05264 Phi: .18778

Statement 8

White women A 44.8% (N=39) U 35.6% (N=31) D 19.5% (N=17)
Aboriginal women A 51.3% (N=41) U 18.8% (N15) D 30% (N=24)
Chi-square: 6.52840 Probability: .03823 Phi: .19772

Statement 9

White women A 65.5% (N=57) U 19.5% (N=17) D 14.9% (N=13)
Aboriginal women A 75% (N=60) U 16.3% (N=13) D 8.8% (N=7)
Chi-square: 2.12057 Probability: .34636 Phi: .11269

Statement 10

White women A 80.5% (N=70) U 12.6% (N=11) D 6.9% (N=6)
Aboriginal women A 90% (N=72) U 7.5% (N=6) D 2.5% (N=2)
Chi-square: 3.21099 Probability: .20079 Phi: .13866

Statement 11

White women A 29.9% (N=26) U 16.1% (14) D 54% (N=47)
Aboriginal women A 53.8% (N=43) U 13.8% (11) D 32.5% (N=26)
Chi-square: Probability: Phi:

Statement 12

White women A 31% (N=27) U 19.5% (N=17) D 49.4% (N=43)
Aboriginal women A 61.3% (N=49) U 11.3% (N=9) D 27.5% (N=22)
Chi-square: 10.31421 Probability: .00576 Phi: .24852

Statement 13

White women A 59.8% (N=52) U 26.4% (N=23) D 13.8% (N=12)
Aboriginal women A 63.8% (N=51) U 22.5% (N=18) D 13.8% (N=11)
Chi-square: .37018 Probability: .83103 Phi: .30316

Statement 14

White women A 28.7% (N=25) U 31% (N=27) D 40.2% (N=35)
Aboriginal women A 55.7% (N=44) U 19% (N=15) D 25.3% (N=20)
Chi-square: 12.39461 Probability: .00203 Phi: .27325

Statement 15

White women A 78.2% (N=68) U 20.7% (N=18) D 1.1% (N=1)
Aboriginal women A 81% (N=64) U 13/9% (N=11) D 5.1% (N=4)
Chi-square: 3.23283 Probability: .19861 Phi: .13955

Statement 16

White women A 48.3% (N=42) U 28.7% (N=25) D 23% (N=20)
Aboriginal women A 37.5% (N=30) U 35% (N=28) D 27.5% (N=22)
Chi-square: 1.97511 Probability: .37249 Phi: .10875

Statement 17

White women A 42.5% (N=37) U 43.7% (N=38) D (N=12)
Aboriginal women A 41.3% (N=33) U 35% (N=28) D 23.8% (N=19)
Chi-square: 3.03629 Probability: .21912 Phi: .13484

Statement 18

White women A 44.8% (N=39) U 40.2% (N=35) D 14.9% (N=13)
Aboriginal women A 63.8% (N=51) U 23.8% (N=19) D 12.5% (N=10)
Chi-square: 6.44996 Probability: .03976 Phi: .19653

Statement 19

White women A 43.7% (N=38) U 25.3% (N=22) D 31% (N=27)
Aboriginal women A 27.5% (N=22) U 32.5% (N=26) D 40% (N=32)
Chi-square: 4.73864 Probability: .09354 Phi: .16845

Statement 20

White women A 56.3% (N=49) U 26.4% (N=23) D 17.3% (N=15)
Aboriginal women A 68.8% (N=55) U 18.8% (N=15) D 12.5% (N=10)
Chi-square: 2.74177 Probability: .25388 Phi: .12813

Statement 21
White women A 47.7% (N=42) U 23.9% (N=21) D 28.4% (N=25)
Aboriginal women A 47.5% (N=38) U 28.8% (N=23) D 23.8% (N=19)
Chi-square: .72979 Probability: .69427 Phi: .06591

Statement 22
White women A 74.7% (N=65) U 13.8% (N=23) D 11.5% (N=10)
Aboriginal women A 71.3% (N=57) U 13.8% (N=11) D 15% (N=12)
Chi-square: .45728 Probability: .79562 Phi: .05233

Statement 23
White women A 55.2% (N=48) U 24.1% (N=21) D 20.7% (N=18)
Aboriginal women A 60% (N=48) U 13.8% (N=11) D 26.3% (N=21)
Chi-square: 3.06775 Probability: .21570 Phi: .13554

Statement 24
White women A 69% (N=60) U 19.5% (N=17) D 11.5% (N=10)
Aboriginal women A 85% (N=68) U 5% (N=4) D 10% (N=8)
Chi-square: 8.49135 Probability: .01433 Phi: .22549

Statement 25
White women A 62.1% (N=54) U 29.9% (N=26) D 8% (N=7)
Aboriginal women A 63.8% (N=51) U 20% (N=16) D 16.3% (N=13)
Chi-square: 3.98025 Probability: .13668 Phi: .15438

Part II Responses to Personal Experiences with Assaults and Police

Assault
White women No 50% (N=43) Yes 48.8% (N=42)
Aboriginal women No 21.1% (N=16) Yes 78.9% (N=60)
Chi-square: 15.97599 Probability: .00034 Phi: .31403

Frequency of Assault
White women Not Very Often 58.1% (N=25) Frequently 41.9% (N=18)
Aboriginal women Not very Often 52.5% (N=31) Frequently 47.5% (N=28)
Chi-square: .31471 Probability: .57480 Phi: .05555

Report to Police
White women No 54.8% (N=23) Yes 45.2% (N=19)
Aboriginal women No 40.7% (N=24) Yes 59.3% (N=35)
Chi-square: 1.95605 Probability: .16194 Phi: .13916

Frequency of Reporting
White women Not Very Often 68.4% (N=13) Frequently 31.6% (N=6)
Aboriginal women Not Very Often 74.3% (N=26) Frequently 25.7% (N=9)
Chi-square: .21113 Probability: .64588 Phi: .06253

Satisfaction (Sat.) with Police
White women Not 57.9% (N=11) Fairly 5.3% (N=1) Very 36.8% (N=7)
Aboriginal women Not 52.9% (N=18) Fairly 38.2% (N=13) Very 8.8% (N=3)
Chi-square: 10.14250 Probability: .00627 Phi: 10.14250